THE HISTORY OF CURRICULAR CONTROL:
LITERARY EDUCATION IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 1912 – 2012

PATRICIA CATHERINE DOWSETT
19414921
B.A., Grad.Dip.Ed. (Sec.), Grad.Dip. Arts (Public Policy), HDR (Prelim.)

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Abstract

The development of English in Western Australia is a history of conflict and contestation that has shaped the subject’s strength, content and intelligibility. Since the establishment of the state’s first university in 1912, the control of English by various groups and individuals has positioned English at the centre of recurrent political debates about literacy, literature and language according to the priorities and agendas pursued by policy-makers of the day. A ‘core’ learning area that is compulsory for secondary certification and tertiary entrance, English stands as a subject in which many internal and external stakeholders vie for power and influence. Chronologically, this thesis examines how English in Western Australia has been formed as a negotiated product of these networks and exchanges, an amalgam that has sometimes been weakened but often strengthened by the links between institutions, educational bureaucrats and teachers.

The story of English in Western Australia provides insights into why and how English has developed in one state context. Historically, it is characterised by a composite of cultural heritage, functional literacy skills, critical and cultural literacies, and personal growth models of English which articulate collaborative or dictatorial control systems operating at the state, national and international levels of education. With a national curriculum presently framing secondary English, state-based subject histories play an important role in helping to understand how curricula, teaching and examination practices came to be authorised for the enhancement of student experiences of English in secondary schools.

A substantial amount has been written about the history of education in Western Australia, but until now not specifically about the control and subsequent development of subject English in the State. Including an archival study of letters, minutes, syllabuses, examination papers and other historical documents, this thesis reveals that the first two Professors of English at the University of Western Australia played significant roles in establishing and determining the form of secondary English. Notable for their differing propagation of Imperial values, Professors Walter Murdoch and Allan Edwards were reluctant examiners of secondary English. They believed that real education was about independent thinking, not rote-learning and rehearsing examination responses. Their questionably innovative but indisputably formative emphases stemmed from alternative traditions. Murdoch’s Oxford English and Writing orientation preceded Edwards’s Cambridge English and Reading orientation.
By analysing professional journals, Government Reports such as those by Dettman (1969), Martin (1980), Beazley (1984), McGaw (1984) and Andrich (1995), and socio-cultural histories by Fred Alexander, Leigh Dale, John La Nauze, Marnie O'Neill, Bill Green and Robin Peel, Annette Patterson and Jeanne Gerlach, this thesis demonstrates how the bureaucratisation of English in Western Australia since the 1960s, marked a significant transition from an autocracy controlled by the University and the Professor of English. It distinguishes the Western Australian story of secondary English within Australian education, by considering the particular effects of the ‘London School’, the Petch Report (1964), the teacher-writer figure, and the specialised study of Media. These historical aspects of subject English in Western Australia still influence English teachers today as they engage with a ‘national’ English curriculum, exemplifying that it is not the existence of conflict and contestation within the subject that alone is destabilising, but rather, how power is wielded within the conflict of enacting curriculum change.
Declaration

This thesis is my own composition. All sources have been acknowledged and my contribution is clearly identified in the thesis.

This thesis has been substantially completed during the course of enrolment in this degree at UWA and has not previously been accepted for a degree at this or another institution.

This thesis contains only sole-authored work. Some of Chapter One has been published as: ‘Teaching and Professing English in Western Australia: Acknowledging the Anglophilia and Democratic Ideals of a figure that shaped the discipline.’ *Antipodes*, 28.1 (2014): 23-24.

Patricia Dowsett
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<tr>
<td>AATE</td>
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<td>ACARA</td>
<td>Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority</td>
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<td>ACER</td>
<td>Australian Council of Educational Research</td>
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<td>AEC</td>
<td>Australian Education Council</td>
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<td>ALIAS</td>
<td>Analysis of Literature in Australian Schools (database)</td>
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<td>BSE</td>
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<td>CCAS</td>
<td>Year 12 Curriculum Content and Achievement Standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLF</td>
<td>The Commonwealth Literary Fund</td>
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<td>CRTS</td>
<td>The Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme</td>
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<td>ESD</td>
<td>English as a Second Dialect</td>
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<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<td>ETA</td>
<td>English Teachers’ Association</td>
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<td>ETAWA</td>
<td>English Teachers’ Association of Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAWWA</td>
<td>Fellowship of Australian Writers of Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSC</td>
<td>Higher School Certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>LATE</td>
<td>London Association for the Teaching of English</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATE</td>
<td>National Association for the Teaching of English (UK)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBE</td>
<td>Outcomes Based Education</td>
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<td>PEB</td>
<td>Public Examinations Board</td>
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<td>SCSA</td>
<td>School Curriculum and Standards Authority</td>
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<td>TAE</td>
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<td>WACE</td>
<td>Western Australian Certificate of Education</td>
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<td>WAIT</td>
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Introduction

_Retrieving intellectual history is not an antiquarian pursuit. Anyone wanting to be a well informed professional needs to understand certain continuities that link English curriculum discourses and practices with previous discourses and practices._

— IAN REID – The Persistent Pedagogy of ‘Growth’

In 2010, the year before I began this research, my interest in Australian literary history was heightened after learning that three of my teachers were retiring. One was the retirement of my high school ‘Lit’ teacher who introduced me to Oscar Wilde through a study of _The Importance of being Ernest_. This encounter with clever characters, epigrammatic language and Victorian satire secured my loyalty to literature forever. The other two were the retirements of lecturers who had taught me when I was an undergraduate. While neither of them knew me well, they had operated within a world of literary education which appealed to me greatly. They offered experiences of literature that exposed its potential to ‘move us emotionally, provoke thoughtful responses and lay bare what it means to be human’ (Wilkinson 29). My own decision to become a secondary English teacher was motivated by my interests in English and Education, and ten years later, when I heard about those retirements, I pondered the legacies of my teachers and professors - How did they, personally and individually, change English and the study of literature in their respective institutions? Did they know that they (and their work) would be remembered? Where does all that knowledge and experience go in retirement? It was a process that led me to thinking about the English in schools and in universities - do we know the story of the people who have taught it before us? How is current English a product of those individuals? Why does English take the form that it does today, and as Ian Reid intimates in the above quotation, how can understanding continuities in ‘English curriculum discourses and practices’ help me today to be a better practitioner?

My choice to locate this research within a Western Australian context was determined by the fact that it is in that state that I have taught and been educated. I have no particular wish to be parochial. English in Western Australia is simply the version of the subject I know best, and the one about which I am most curious and eager to better understand. In addition, there was greater appeal in undertaking such research knowing there is less written about English and its teaching in Western Australia than in other states, a product of Western Australia’s relatively small population and the variant amounts of support and leadership in English circles at different times throughout past decades. The history of curricular control in Western Australia...
is a story of one hundred years of significant variation in the determinants of, and key decision-makers in, secondary subject English. Whereas changes in education in the early twentieth century can be directly attributed to the actions of specific individuals, predominantly males, today those changes can be attributed to the collaborative efforts of bands of cross-sector representatives or committees. In fact, the history of subject English in Western Australia is a remarkable sequence of networks and exchanges, beginning with Western Australia’s first Professor of English, Walter Murdoch, who retained control of secondary English for over twenty-five years. The situation is starkly different now. Control of English began with an intimate relationship between secondary English and the state’s only Professor of English who was respected, and even revered, by nature of the eminence of his position as professor and public intellectual. Since those beginnings, there have been wholesale changes in the management and direction of senior secondary English in Western Australia. The power of the university has been gradually eroded by changing student demographics, a growing State Education Department and by an increase in political interest in literacy which has, to some extent, threatened the place of literature within English. Now disjunct from tertiary English, secondary English retains a central place in secondary schooling, owing to its compulsory nature and its alignment with literacy competence.

In undertaking this research I am asking, ‘Who has the real power when it comes to secondary English?’ and ‘How does that power distribution shape the enactment of English in the secondary classroom’? On a more basic level I am also seeking to know why English appears as it does today. In this respect, while the material I have examined and discussed is not taken as evidence of exactly what was taking place in the English classroom over the century, it is taken as evidence that there was debate about what could and should have been done in classrooms. Some of these materials are primary sources, located in the archives of the University of Western Australia. These sources include minutes of meetings for Examination Boards and Teachers and Examiners of English Committees, university staff files, the Manual of Public Examinations (early syllabuses), examination papers, university calendars and some of the secondary sources discussing the development of education in the State.

Leigh Dale, Ken Willis and John La Nauze have examined the archives for their own research purposes. Their findings have all been consulted in examining the history of the subject, and for the early chapters, the histories of the ‘English men’ – Walter Murdoch and Allan Edwards – who controlled the subject. Chapters One and Two of this thesis focus on the biographies of Murdoch and Edwards respectively because secondary school English was initially governed by the University of Western Australia through the examination process which was controlled by
these two successive Professors of English for six decades. Previous commentators have not paid much attention to Murdoch’s influence upon secondary education and to some extent Edwards has been wrongly characterised as a Leavisite. This thesis makes an original contribution for the way in which it adds to the body of knowledge about Murdoch and his involvement in English and challenges this representation of Edwards.

The history of formal institutions in Western Australia moved slowly by contrast to the more rapid pace of change in education in recent years, but that early history is by no means less important. In recent times, Brenton Doecke reminds us that we are all faced with the challenge of critically examining our own circumstances and developing a perspective on the conditions which have shaped us (‘Editorial’ 1). With respect to English and its teaching, the subject’s history shapes how we teach it, yet sentiment espousing the importance of education history has been limited over the last two decades (see Seddon; Green and Beavis; and Goodson, The Making, ‘School Subjects’, Social History, Studying Curriculum; for example). Terri Seddon is critical of the fact that teachers ‘do not know their own past; neither the curricular past nor the history of their own profession’ (‘Curriculum’ 1). Likewise Bill Green and Catherine Beavis argue the importance of supplementing the current and ‘striking dearth of historical perspective and imagination apparent in curriculum work in and on the teaching of English, and in research and teacher education in language in literacy education’ (1). In response to such a ‘dearth’, a deeper understanding of the subject’s history for all parties participating in the design and delivery of subject English would see today’s English guided with an understanding of its past. That is, the connections and continuities in past curricula and pedagogies inform teaching and learning practices today. Historian Frank K. Crowley declared: ‘The prize of all history is the understanding of modern times.’ Applied to English, acquiring knowledge of the subject’s history reduces the likelihood of schools perpetuating inferior curricula and ineffective pedagogies because historical struggles to reform them have been forgotten. This makes the history of a subject like English a valuable acquisition for the purpose of sustaining ongoing educational improvement.

‘Secondary English’ is a term which was not substantive until the 1950s when more students were retained at high school in the senior years and ‘secondary schooling became more systematically part of public education’ (Green, Cormack and Reid 7). Despite this, and the fact that defining subject English is not without its problems, we talk of English as a recognisable subject, albeit, as Cal Durrant identities, ‘an ever-shifting one that has always been open to contestation’ (‘English’ 6). While there are many variations in subject English across sectors and eras, this thesis assumes the recognisable nature of English irrespective of its title, defining
its core elements as reading, writing, speaking and listening. Green and Beavis identify this constant thread:

In short, while no simple subject-disciplinary identity can be assigned, nonetheless there is an abiding sense of a cluster of ‘subjects’ organised historically and practically by the notion of ‘English’, and this is something which is clearly evident in Australian education. (3)

English is an important part of a Western education system, a ‘core’ curriculum area in all sectors for more than a century (Patterson, ‘Hub’ 57). The history of subject English reveals varying emphases and prevailing trends strongly influenced by public policy and key personnel at both the secondary and tertiary levels, and according to Ivor Goodson and Peter Medway, ‘Attempts to control and define the subject move beyond the subject community because changing English […] is changing schooling’ (vii).

During times of educational change, conflict among educational bureaucrats and teachers is exacerbated. By ‘educational bureaucrats’, also referred to as ‘educationists’ or ‘bureaucrats’ I mean public servants employed by state or federal departments who participate in school curriculum decision-making but may or may not be teachers. In using the term ‘teachers’ I am referring to specialist classroom teachers with the primary responsibility for interpreting and enacting the curriculum on a daily basis. Periods of change are times of added pressure and often criticism for teachers. Marnie O’Neill explains how this has traditionally played out in the context of changes to the English curriculum in Western Australia. While the term ‘negotiation’ has been used to connote consensus and collaboration, in the reality of curriculum change, the process is characterised more vividly by contestation, with the resulting syllabus statements becoming ‘documents manifesting deep ideological divisions produced by a series of trade-offs and compromises between competing positions and interest groups’ (O’Neill, ‘Shifting’ 164). This is clear in the history of subject English where the centralised bodies, the Education Department of Western Australia and the variously named secondary examination authorities, have been chiefly responsible for curriculum change.1 In the state’s more recent history, curriculum changes have been motivated by media criticism and by Government reports such as those by Dettman, Martin, Beazley, McGaw and Andrich (Upper; A Report), as well as those pertaining to the Curriculum Framework (Andrich, Review; Education and Health Standing Committee (Interim; Changes) and the Australian Curriculum.

1 These examination and certification authorities include the Public Examinations Board (1915-1969), the Board of Secondary Education (1970-1984), the Secondary Education Authority (1985-1996), the Curriculum Council of Western Australia (1997–2010), and the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (2010 to present). Also see Appendix I: Boards involved in the provision of secondary examinations in Western Australia.
Significantly, the history of secondary subject English has produced debates over the binaries within literacy discourse and pedagogy. These include the critical literacy and Cultural Heritage models, the emergence and predominance of cultural studies in secondary English, approaches to the teaching of grammatical skills, and the teaching of moral and civics education within subject English (see Hunter, *Rethinking*; Peel, Patterson and Gerlach; for example). I define these terms below using Mary Macken-Horarik’s ‘Making Productive Use of Four Models of School English’ as a basis. I refer to these models during this thesis to highlight the various emphases pronounced in the curriculum throughout this subject history and to examine how the potential of different approaches to learning in English have evolved over this period. English tends to absorb the new approaches as additions rather than as substitutions. These approaches or models have their limitations as terms in research but I include them as a framework for thinking about how English has orientated according to social and economic movements, far from being an autonomous subject area driven by English theory and discourse internally. The terms are applied and expanded upon as this thesis develops:

‘Growth’ model – also known as the personal growth model and the ‘New English’.

Growth in English starts with an interest in students their experiences and ‘ways of talking and writing’ as a point of entry to classroom work on texts. In preparing students to read a text, for example, teachers prioritise the ‘here and now of you and me’ in interacting with students. They are keen to ensure that all students can read a text with understanding and they want to explore their reactions to this.’ (Macken-Horarik 9-10)

Cultural Heritage model -

The Cultural Heritage model of English is part of a longer tradition, linked to induction of readers and writers into the great works of the literary canon. [...] It calls for specialised ways of knowing and privileges immersion in and close study of poetry, novels and drama. [...] From a linguistic point of view, complex and highly crafted texts constitute the field of study. Students read and write their way into literate textuality. (Macken-Horarik 10)

Skills model – also known as ‘Skills and Processes’.

In this orientation, students learn how to structure an essay, identify figurative language in a poem, to handle the apostrophe, correct spelling and so on. Generally speaking, learners are ‘apprentices’, guided by an expert into practical mastery of particular competences. The skills model is explicit in its pedagogy, emphasising the application of knowledge to language and texts. (Macken-Horarik 10)

Critical literacy – Macken-Horarik terms this, ‘Cultural Analysis’

[This involves] asking questions, challenging assumptions, resisting a reading position invited by a text. This model takes the social context as a starting point rather than the text. Students are encouraged to relate texts to the social and cultural practices out of which they are produced and from which they are interpreted. (Macken-Horarik 10)
Debates concerning the various models and practices enacted in subject English disclose underlying power struggles within the subject, which have varied as the times have, and inevitably accompany bureaucratic or institutional change imposed upon the secondary curriculum. Such a consequence is especially pertinent for subject English in Western Australia because English is compulsory for students wishing to attend university. Thus its mandatory nature secures its greater status, but also greater vulnerability for English within that curriculum. English’s central position in the secondary curriculum makes it susceptible to intrusion by individuals and groups external to the subject whose interests lie in developing various parts of the subject’s role in developing social values, moral education, national identity and functional literacy. Accordingly, the Education Department of Western Australia, secondary teachers, the English Teachers Association of Western Australia (ETAWA), secondary education examining boards or authorities, and professors of English are among those deeply invested in the past and present of secondary English in Western Australia. Examining the history of curricular control in Western Australia attempts to reclaim a sense of community in which teachers of English collaborate as advocates of subject English for the sake of their students. It is also an attempt to claim direction of the social power exercised both through and over the English curriculum which has been used to control schooling more broadly.

Tracing the story of the development of secondary English in Western Australia has necessitated exclusions, inclusions and various emphases. I have privileged and marginalised different aspects of the story as my judgment and word limit permit, and I acknowledge the difficulties in not being able to include all parts of the story. I have not explored the history of teacher training in the state, for example, except to refer to the influence of particular individuals who were involved in it and also shaped subject English. This thesis is a story of ‘urban’ English and concentrates on externally-assessed senior secondary English first examined by the Public Examinations Board in Western Australia in 1914 at the University of Western Australia.\(^2\) The story of wholly school-assessed English, known at various times as Essential English, Stage 1 English, Senior English, General English or Vocational English, is largely omitted, because this thesis focuses upon the dominant or mainstream English subject. It is not my intention to devalue vocational curricula by asserting the hegemony of the academic curriculum and exploit a binary of academic and non-academic subjects; rather, my aim is to question the dominant form of English and how it has come to be as it is. I have not addressed the evolution of English as a Second Language in Western Australia for the same reason. Secondary subject English Literature has secured more of a presence within the body

\(^2\) The Public Examinations Board represented the University of Western Australia’s Professorial Board, the state’s Education Department, and the independent secondary schools (Mossenson 114).
of the thesis, not to legitimise a body of knowledge ‘based on the interests and needs of the most powerful and influential social groups’ (Lamb 95), but because some of its changes have impacted upon subject English more deliberately.

This research shows that over time university power was replaced, in part, by political power in the control of secondary subject English. I conclude this having conducted archival work and having analysed curriculum documents from the State Library of Western Australia, the State Records Office and the National Library of Australia. The thesis also features archival studies of various rare letters, meeting minutes and personnel files from the University of Western Australia Archives, the Scotch College Archives and the State Library. It was difficult research made arduous and frustrating at times by the disjointed and fragmented nature of record-keeping and my own lack of training as an historian. Various name changes to institutions, education boards and systems of examination also complicated the process, and there has been a tendency for organisations to shred documents with name changes which problematised critical review. Some agencies were uncompromising in their roles as guardians of history and were inflexible to the point of being unhelpful in aiding the recovery of archival and curriculum documents. Another challenge was the fact that not one institution in Western Australia (that I could find to date) holds a complete set of secondary English examinations and syllabuses. The most complete set is housed in the State Library of Western Australia. It is catalogued (quite rightly) under the respective names of the state assessment authorities, but owing to the numerous name changes over one hundred years, this requires familiarity with those name changes, when they occurred, and the assistance of helpful librarians to locate the papers.3 Many of the documents I accessed were classified as ‘rare materials’ and as such were accessible only in special locations during set times. While these restrictions are testament to the value of the materials they also limit their availability.

In addition to curriculum documents I studied the writings of Walter Murdoch and consulted other sources which have been integral to my research. The secondary sources include those by Leigh Dale (English Men; Enchantment), John La Nauze, Fred Alexander (Campus), W.D. Neal, David Mossenson, John Dixon, Bill Green (‘Dividing’; After), Marnie O’Neill (Conceptual) and Annette Patterson (‘Teaching English’), as well as several institutional histories. Most of these texts discuss the history of English or education during the first half of the twentieth century, indicative of the more difficult task of gathering relevant information prior to the

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3 The public examinations for example have been known at various times as the Leaving examinations, the Tertiary Admissions Examinations, Tertiary Entrance Examinations and the Western Australian Certificate of Education examinations. See Appendix I for dates.
1960s. During that decade, however, booms in technology, communications and publishing produced an explosion in the number and range of materials available to consult, including books, pamphlets, videos, curriculum materials and government reports. It parallels the explosion in the size of Western Australia’s population, student retention rates, and eventually the increasing number of external stakeholders intervening in curriculum decisions about secondary subject English.

Chapter One: Controlling subject English in the Early Nineteenth Century: the dominance of the ‘English Men’ in Western Australia

In Western Australia the University of Western Australia was the sole university until 1975 when Murdoch University was established. In this capacity the state’s first university monopolised tertiary education and played a significant role in secondary education which helped shape the growth of Western Australia for at least the first half of the twentieth century. As Western Australia’s first Professor of English, Murdoch was also the chief examiner in secondary English, and ‘the key influence as to what constituted English for twenty-five years’ (Willis 99). Historically, the expectations of secondary English and its candidates have been determined by the external examinations, and with professors of English also being chief examiners of Leaving English, they exerted significant influence upon the subject’s development. This is a similar situation to that of George Mackaness, Senior English Lecturer at Sydney Teacher’s College (1924-46) where he was an examiner of the Intermediate Certificate. In these examples, the power of the chief examiner is clearly evident, and while the history of the Professor’s influence upon subject English in Western Australia has been largely unwritten, it is closest to having been done by Leigh Dale. Dale argues that the pedagogies and practices in Australia’s tertiary institutions were largely shaped by the British qualifications and characteristics of professors of English, all ‘English Men’, thus producing a system of inculcating patriarchal and imperialist sentiment. With the importation of Walter Murdoch and the early Inspectors in the Department of Education in Western Australia such as Cyril Jackson and Cecil Andrews, it is unsurprising that the subject central to education became ‘English’ by name and by nature.

The dominance of the English canon, taught within a pedagogical framework that propagated the cultural idealising of England, perpetuated the authority of England in subject English during the first half of the twentieth century in Western Australia. While these practices and ideologies are still apparent in the design and implementation of modern English curriculum, the subject’s past justifies such a claim to some extent, with England’s curricular trends being
transported to Western Australia in orientations or models of English such as cultural heritage. Of course, Murdoch was a more complex figure than suggested here. He was hardly a power-hungry and unabashed Anglophile. He was a reluctant examiner, a chief examiner who refuted the value of examinations. Murdoch brought an Oxford *belles lettres* English to Western Australia having been educated in such a version of English at the University of Melbourne. As the state’s first ‘teacher-writer’ he played a crucial part in the teaching of literature, developing ‘two sides of the one coin’ with an emphasis on writing.

Chapter Two: ‘Un-Respectability’: The legacy of Allan Edwards and his Cambridge Networks

Arriving from the University of Cape Town, Allan Edwards was Western Australia’s second Professor of English between 1941 and 1973. Like Murdoch before him, Edwards espoused the virtue of independent thinking and the civilising function of English. Both professors argued for strengthening the links between literature and the world, and viewed as ‘un-respectable’ the non-thinking that lingered behind unquestioned, rehearsed examination responses. Unlike Murdoch, Edwards brought with him the innovations of I.A. Richards and F.R. Leavis. Thus he introduced practical criticism to the university and a focus on reading. Consistent with Leavisite beliefs, Edwards valued literary criticism for the way in which ‘uncompromising expressions of opinion’ would energise English (Dale, *Enchantment* 191). However, Edwards’ appointments, broad involvement in cultural activities and attitudes to teaching suggest he is less Leavisite than Dale characterises. Edwards was renowned for his energy, and along with Alec King, he expanded the study of American literature and the modern poets. Edwards also injected great enthusiasm for Drama into the university’s department, creating a formidable teaching team in theatre that included David Bradley and Jeana (Tweedie) Bradley. Edwards also continued the teacher-writer tradition by appointing local writers Dorothy Hewett (Lilley) and Peter Cowan. Cowan returned to the university as a tutor in the 1960s having been a student there during the 1930s, and he was greeted with a revitalised department, a change that appealed to his modernist philosophies.

There were major phases of development in Education in Western Australia during the latter decades of Edwards’s tenure. Social and economic expansion significantly impacted upon education, thus creating a period of relatively rapid change. In this context, the size and the role of the State Education Department grew dramatically and bureaucratisation increased. Dr Jean (‘Jeana’) Tweedie became Jean (‘Jeana’) Bradley (Dunstone).
T.L. Robertson was appointed Director of Education and during the 1950s he was responsible for the development of the co-educational, comprehensive community high school which became the established model for public secondary education (Helm 224). There emerged an increasing need to cater for the growing number of matriculants, and this growth incited change.

Chapter Three - The times they are a-changin: Advancing secondary subject English in Western Australia in the 1960s and 1970s

When Bob Dylan sang about changing times in the early 1960s he might have been referring to the enormity of the social upheaval affecting Western Australia’s secondary education system during that era. Chapters Three and Four of this thesis examine the challenges presented to subject English as part of a rapidly expanding education system. Student retention rates increased dramatically during the 1960s and, with students no longer destined solely for academic pathways, new methods and subjects were introduced to cater for students not intending to study at university. Media studies, for example, emerged in this context, and the Western Australian Media curriculum was exported to several countries, so great was its innovation and success in the classroom. It impacted upon the study of English because media texts and viewing practices were incorporated into English, but not without controversy.

During the 1960s and 1970s subject English underwent dramatic change to the extent that it caused marked disciplinary transformation and engendered a public perception of ‘crisis’. It was the subject most affected by curriculum and pedagogical change, articulated in the division of English into two subjects, English and English Literature, as a result of the Petch Report. The Petch Report marks a high point of power-mongering in Western Australia, where an ‘external’ authority was invited by the university’s Public Examinations Board to report on Western Australia’s public examination system. Englishman James A. Petch recommended the division of English into ‘Expression’ and ‘Literature’. This subject segregation obeyed convention of the time but was a backward step which sympathised with vocational and Science advocates who believed Literature to be a specialist subject area irrelevant in non-literary contexts. It is an example of the ways in which education networks outside English controlled curricular direction in Western Australia.
Chapter Four – Inhibiting the ‘Growth’: The ‘Right’ Measure of Skills in an Era of Diversity

At Dartmouth College delegates from the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada met to examine the state of English in schools and universities. Despite its distance from Western Australia, it nevertheless was influential upon secondary English there. A product of the seminar was John Dixon’s *Growth through English* (1966) which introduced the ‘New English’ or ‘Growth’ model of English. This approach was in accordance with the contemporary education theory of English educators James Britton and Nancy Martin who endorsed personal and democratic uses of literacy through ‘language across the curriculum’ (Pradl 525). Its importation highlights the way in which the ‘Growth’ model took hold in Western Australia, evidence of the influence of the ‘London School’ upon secondary English. This ‘School’ comprised educators from the Institute of Education at the University of London, and its impact in Australia was particularly noticeable in Western Australia and represents a return to an emphasis on writing, evident in the approach of academic and Australian literature specialist Bruce Bennett who also trained at the Institute. The ‘Growth’ model of English privileges personal and creative responses to texts, and moved away from de-contextualised grammar teaching. These characteristics stimulated recurring debate over the role and significance of literature. Interpreted by its critics as transacting a polarization of literature and literacy, this ‘Growth’ model is but one example of how English in Australia was product of, and participant in, internecine contestation imported and authorised by individuals with institutional and cultural power.

In 1965 the Public Examinations Board was disbanded and Leaving examinations became the responsibility of an independent body, the Board of Secondary Education. Accompanying this bureaucratisation of secondary education was the ‘merciful decline of the God Professor tradition’ (Bennett 19). This decline in status significantly altered the role of the English Professor in shaping secondary English curriculum. It was a symptom of dispersed power in curriculum design and of wider societal trends which questioned the relevance and authority of figures and institutions traditionally regarded as omnipotent. What emerged from this era was an English subject no longer dominated by the ‘Professor’ figure and the traditions of cultural heritage upheld by the University of Western Australia. When Murdoch University was established in 1975 it offered alternative approaches to education and literature which saw tertiary studies in Western Australia, and subject English, diversify. This broadening of English was aided by changing social values and improved understandings of students’ learning capabilities. Susan Cullen’s thesis examines the impact of the competing interests and agendas of the universities which contorted the negotiations of the English Literature course in the
1980s. This study sheds light on some of the curricular control issues for subject English with its similar ‘post-modern additions’ (Cullen 186). Educational theory and government policy focused on inclusivity, which implicated subject English in the way it incorporated strategies and pedagogies for students with special needs and those for whom English was a second language.

Chapter Five: Political negotiations in the Wild West: How Outcomes-Based Education influenced English in Western Australia

By contrast to the social democratic emphases of the 1960s and 1970s, the 1980s and 1990s were decades of economic rationalism. In 1987 Paul Nay-Brock, then from the Department of English at the University of New England, declared Western Australia’s educational system to be ‘in the greatest state of flux’ out of the eight in Australia (91, emphasis in the original). The public perception of educational ‘crisis’ increased government intervention in education during the 1980s and 1990s, particularly at the federal level, which emphasised employment, training and therefore ‘functional’ literacy. This shift to vocational priorities is critiqued in this chapter because many teachers seem ‘to be caught in the conflict between the practical needs of classroom control and their theoretical vision of English teaching’ (Louden, ‘What’ 8). Many of the demands placed upon teachers of English during these decades were imposed by hasty curriculum change resulting from government reports by Martin, Beazley and McGaw. In addition, teachers and schools experienced ‘top-down’ management, invoking professional disempowerment and public criticism from the media and from parents seeking greater accountability and transparency in education. These externally-imposed changes to education directly impacted upon subject English because literacy became a priority for educationists who pursued the measurement of ‘results’ in the forms of standardised testing and outcomes via the Curriculum Framework. During the implementation of outcomes-based education (OBE) at the senior secondary level I was teaching at a school that strongly resisted the changes. It is impossible for that experience not to have shaped my interpretation of the rise and fall of the English course of study. Accordingly I have told the story across Chapters Five and Six, such was the magnitude of the change and the media coverage that sought to quash it. Alongside the drama of OBE, English opened itself up to creative writing, indigenous literatures, and communications and information technologies which ensured that a greater variety of text types was incorporated into the curriculum. The inclusion of postmodernist and critical theories also made English vulnerable to media scrutiny and public ‘attack’ as it appeared to be a relativist subject without real content.
Chapter Six: Nationalising English: Locating the Common Wealth

Media reports exacerbated the perceived ‘crisis’ surrounding the form and function of subject English in the early twenty-first century. The local press employed a military discourse to convey the discord ignited when English in Western Australia was converted into a ‘course of study’, an outcomes-based programme of learning that was arranged in semester units. Courses in English and their teachers were reported as being ‘under attack’, engaged in ‘warfare’, and having to ‘neutralise’ the effects of outcomes based education. The controversy and sense of struggle surrounding its implementation exposed entrenched ideological struggles within and beyond the subject area. These conflicts were far-reaching and deeply-rooted, testament to the centrality of English in the secondary curriculum, and to the power of the groups intervening in management of the subject.

The implementation of the Australian curriculum presents an opportunity to embrace a more democratic process between tertiary and secondary educators. Ideally, the control of a national curriculum would be collegial and negotiatory, a means of reclaiming English for subject teachers for the benefit of students. While tertiary representatives still participate in curricular decision-making via their presence on subject committees, they are no longer placed to monopolise proceedings in the manner of the state’s first Professor of English. The conditions supporting a balance of power in curriculum change are aided by the greater roles leveraged by the Department of Education of Western Australia and the independent body responsible for senior secondary curriculum, assessment and certification, currently known as the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA). This is a centralised authority, representative of tertiary and secondary institutions both in numbers and in practice.

Conclusion

The history of English is marked by a sequence of developments which highlight the intricate connections between educational bureaucrats, university academics, and classroom teachers in shaping secondary English curriculum. Subject English has migrated from the control of one, to the domain of many, and as such, is more accessible and democratic. It raises concerns over the extent to which the changes and appearance of English have been shaped by its compulsory nature. If English is to continue as a ‘core’ subject in which students develop skills in reading, writing, viewing, speaking and listening, and are exposed to the values of a civic, moral and literate society, then English needs to be re-claimed by subject specialists.
Subject English in Western Australia reproduces Australian cultural values, memories and stories, and teaches students how to make meaning, informed by reflection upon the traditions of the self and others. Annette Patterson acknowledges that there is strong evidence suggesting that subject English has ‘undergone a significant shift over the past four decades’ (‘Teaching Literature’ 311). The purposes of English - including identity-formation, moral-formation, cultural accessibility, pleasure and play - appear to be no longer valued in the same way as they once were, thus exposing it to infiltration by various textual forms and studies of culture. Patterson describes this exposure as a movement from ‘a study of Culture’ to ‘cultural studies’ (‘Teaching Literature’ 311). This increased openness to texts is mirrored in the decision-making for the subject, which has opened up to a wider scheme of influences privileging vocational over civic needs.

In Western Australia, the curriculum of the past century reflects changes in the ways English, the economy, and education were perceived and organised. These changes see the prioritisation of contextual understandings and Leavisite tendencies to value literature as a conduit of moral and ethical imperatives, and a reflection of life. Because so many teachers in Western Australia were inducted into Leavisite perspectives at the university, subject English exhibits strong remnants of this orientation. The strength of this Leavisism was diluted, however, by the establishment of additional universities in Perth which diversified subject English through their alternative and progressive approaches to literary and cultural studies in both theory and practice.

In the study of English, binaries such as the old and new and the conservative and progressive, readily intersect. Subject English is made remarkable and vital, in part, because of the dynamic caused by combining the study of canonical literary texts with contemporary media texts, and individually rote-learning different types of rhyme, metre and literary definitions on one day then applying post-modernist reading theories in a collaborative environment the next. It is this ‘life’ of English which sustains that original spark of interest nurtured by my own teachers many years ago, and it is this ‘life’ of English which motivated this story of the history of subject English in Western Australia. Researching this topic has helped me understand the contexts in which my own teachers were working. My hope now is that it will nurture the sparks of others and generate greater understanding of how and why subject English has evaded simple definition but continues to stimulate complex conversations about literature, language and the wider world.
Chapter One: Controlling Subject English in the Early Twentieth Century: the dominance of the ‘English Men’ in Western Australia

Western Australia’s first university was founded in 1911, and the two decades immediately before and after its foundation were formative years in schooling and, more specifically, in subject English. The networks controlling education during these decades included ‘English Men’, who brought English to the people of Western Australia as part of a wider campaign of educating the colonies.\(^5\) Progressive leaders of the state’s Education Department were appointed during this period, including Cyril Jackson, and the state’s first Professor of English was chosen, Walter Murdoch. Jackson ceased to be the Inspector-General of Schools prior to the establishment of the University and Western Australia’s first public secondary school, Perth Modern School, but his contribution to English education in Western Australia is no less significant. Jackson’s leadership inspired rapid improvement in Western Australia’s educational system, and influenced subject English through his application of the New Education approach to reading and composition. These views were in common with those of the Murdoch. The many debates in circulation then, about the function of English, the Britishness of its values and canonical texts, and the place of grammar, are still relevant now, even if ‘subject English’ as a curricular entity did not exist at the turn of the twentieth century. Since then, the organisation and planning of secondary education in Western Australia has been closely linked with developments in tertiary education in the state. Local control of senior secondary school subjects was sanctioned by the university via its affiliated Public Examinations Board, of which Walter Murdoch was a member. In his capacity as Professor of English, Murdoch was also chief examiner of Leaving English, a position which he held for twenty-five years. For this reason this chapter, as with Chapter Two, focuses upon subject English in terms of biography because the professor was solely responsible for English syllabuses and examinations and it was his educational and cultural experiences that impacted upon the form of English that developed in Western Australia. During his tenure, Murdoch was an influential writer, professor and public intellectual who shaped the teaching of English and Literature at both the secondary and tertiary levels in Western Australia from its early stages.

Subject English in Western Australia emerged in a climate of widespread allegiance to the Empire, its literature and teaching methods. Since subordination to the Mother Country was firmly embedded in the culture of middle class white Australians at the beginning of the 1900s,\(^5\) This reference to ‘English Men’ applies Leigh Dale’s term to the foundation professors of English in Australia, born or educated in England, who were responsible for the Anglophilic beginnings of tertiary and secondary English in Australia. Cyril Jackson and Cecil Andrews were English, born in London; Walter Murdoch was born in Scotland.
these attitudes were adopted by teachers and students in Western Australia who were loyal to England as much as Australia. Historically, nationalist sentiment became a marked feature of classroom practice as a result of the post-Federation nationalistic surge. Prior to the Great War, ‘the [Australian] child learnt about the British Empire, the kings and queens, the Empire heroes and the supremacy of the British race. It was the greatest Empire the world had ever known upon which the sun never set’ (Bessant 4). Thus the centrality of the Empire, in values and policy, was reinforced by the classroom practices of the era including nationalistic content of reading and writing lessons. During the years of the First World War in Western Australia, the state’s Department of Education prioritised patriotism and it mandated that, ‘suitable stories and poems should be read and recited and appropriate songs sung’ (Helm 232). This was common to all Australian states and territories, and was a significant moment in the formation of national identity and an important step in state-building. It was just one example of how the goals of secondary education aligned with those of secondary English.

According to Stephen Ball, Alex Kenny and David Gardiner, English was introduced to schools in England as a form of control over the working classes (49). This Marxian view of education is shared by Nathalie O’Carroll who claims that outside England English ‘was a means of colonisation’ (82). It follows then that English developed in Western Australia with the purpose of shaping the calibre of citizens and not just for teaching skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening but for controlling the masses. In this way, and as these Marxist theorists contend, English became part of the educational apparatus that legitimised the state’s dominant ideology and capitalist economy (Althusser 106). While later in this chapter I take up the notion of English’s foundations as an instrument of control, I argue here that it is not that simple, however, to claim a single origin and purpose of English. The idea that English was introduced to schools as a form of control over the working class is extended by Ian Hunter and Denise Meredyth. For these theorists, developing a secondary education system was not a deliberate attempt to soothe the masses but was the result of local administrators (in this case, ‘English men’) responding to the social and political needs of the State at the time (Hunter, Culture). Meredyth assigns English the responsibility for character formation alongside discipline and amidst state-building imperatives.

6 At this point, the popular schools’ long-standing role in modelling the conscience of the child and the moral conduct of a population became more systematically linked to the equally well-established role of the state in developing the

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6 See ‘Culture as a duty of the Citizen’, for example, which was published in Education Circular in June 1900. It was taken from an address on ‘The Duties of a Citizen’ delivered to the boys of the Manchester Grammar School by the Ven. James Wilson, M.A., Vicar of Rockdale and Archdeacon of Manchester. Also see F.G. Brown’s ‘Morality and Suggestion’ column in October 1901 which explains that ‘A child’s moral training requires great care on the part of its teacher’ (216).
population as an economic and industrial resource as well as to political rationales and governmental programmes concerned with an emerging complex of social welfare, citizenship and social rights. (Meredith 83)

Along these lines, English was founded as a contingent response to a range of local issues that a public state education system sought to alleviate. Thus issues of developing an adequate secondary school system that was tied to university entrance (thus allocating a scarce resource) were implicated in matters of curricular control and the power of the Public Examinations Board to make decisions made about English.

‘English’

Western Australia’s history ensures that English began, as its name suggests, strongly Anglophilic. The name ‘English’ discloses Australia’s colonial ties with England as well as the influence of English teachers and teaching practices on the development of subject English in Australia. During the nineteenth century, this translated into traditional learning practices such as recitation and memorisation, and a strong reliance on the canon. Subject English became a means of accessing the language and status afforded by the study of literary ‘greats’, seen as an education in respectability so sought after by a booming white population. Former Director-General of Education in Western Australia, H.W. Dettman, states that the first schools established in Western Australia were modelled on the English system in their programmes, organization and teaching methods, and that this was the system with which most parents and teachers were acquainted:

> The curriculum was an English one, the text books were English and the subjects and teaching methods were those to be found in the schools in England at that time. Many of these early characteristics continued to be features of the Western Australian education system until well into the present century and despite the great changes which had taken place in education, particularly during the last forty years [prior to 1979], the English influence is still quite strong in our schools. (qtd. in Neal 296)

This process reinforced a set of beliefs renewing connective ties between the imperial centre and the colony (Pratt 437). The problem with conserving cultural ties in this form is that the nature of canonicity invariably includes and excludes, without acknowledging that which is both omitted and privileged. Schools and universities played a significant role in canon formation. While they continue to do so to some extent, the syllabus text list for English has broadened considerably as the years have passed, to accommodate a range of student needs, interests, abilities and experiences but also because expansion in the publishing industry has made this a more practical possibility.
English evolved with a canonical focus and a prescribed set of Anglophilic values that were imported to the colony then state. Dale critiques the foundations of English which was produced by a hierarchical, value-laden syllabus where the centrality of the text was paramount and where the text determined the content of the classes. In these classes, Dale argues, the ‘proper mode of responding to the text’ is taught, rather than the text itself (English Men 4). Supporting this view of institutional framing is Ian Reid’s model of the Literary Workshop. Reid contrasts a workshop model of English teaching to the Literature Gallery where students are privy to viewing valuable textual artefacts from a distance; they can admire them without being able to touch them or attempt to create them (The Making 10).7 This idea of texts as artefacts parallels Ivor Goodson’s views of the school curriculum. As Goodson sees it, the curriculum was a social artefact treated ‘as a given’ ('Subjects' 260). Goodson contends that the problem with this assumption is compounded ‘by treating the written curriculum as a neutral given embedded in an otherwise meaningful, complex situation’ ('Subjects' 260). In a similar fashion, the canon was assumed as ‘a given’ in the study in English. The canon adopts a tendentious position in the teaching of English in Western Australia, however, for it is never a neutral inclusion and never has been.

An Anglophilic syllabus, where the English canon assumes central position, reproduces a more culturally-elite version of history. Leigh Dale critiques the dangerous social consequences of such exclusivity, arguing that the system ‘disadvantages those unwilling or unable to operate within Anglocentric cultural paradigms’ (English Men 3). Privileging cultural monism (ahead of pluralism), these paradigms at work in the history of English teaching in universities in Australia were passed down to secondary schools through Professors of English who served as subject examiners:

In the period around 1920 there began to be subtle but significant shifts in critical discourses: universal values came to be English not classical. This was reflected in and sustained by Shakespeare’s positioning as the supreme symbol of the grandeur of the English cultural heritage. At the same time, and by the same process, Australia’s violent colonial history was erased by discourse that idealised the culture and manners of the imperial centre. (English Men 90)

There is no question that the ‘Britishness’ in education policy and practice, of which Dale is highly critical, pervaded the values and texts taught in Australian schools. This came to affect

7 Reid distinguishes the ‘gallery’ from the ‘workshop’ model where students create, shape and build creatively with language and create their own works, in a ‘fusion of play and work [...]’ (The Making 14). Reid develops these binaries with an emphasis on critiquing the ‘vacuous “appreciation”’ encouraged in public examinations. He discredits how texts are used as cultural artefacts - arranged and displayed out of reach - as objects from which students are taught their ‘true meaning’ without engaging in more onerous, constructive reading practices (14).
the primacy of the ethical imperative in schools which pursued literary study for ‘ways of finding out about the human world’ (Kermode 39), but had the effect of preserving the heritage of the cultural past. While two decades have passed since the ‘canon wars’ (see Lauter; Hirsch, ‘Schools’, ‘Cultural’; Graff; H.Bloom), literary scholars continue to be concerned with questions of canonicity (Insko; Gluzman; Low and Wynne-Davies; Bérubé), and the origins of English as a discipline in Australia still create (dis)order in the discipline and subject of English today. This (dis)order is branded ‘conflict and contestation’ by Marnie O’Neill, who suggests that the canonical texts and their study ‘came to occupy a prime place in the educational scheme – venerated as art objects, but also as a means of defining life, acceptable ways of being and behaving, and ‘civilising’ otherwise unruly masses’ (‘Competing’ 91). The Anglophilic foundations of the English curriculum incarnated as repetitive, teacher-centred pedagogy and the study of canonical texts for the purpose of moral and social formation. This purpose increased the status of English and Literature within Western Australia’s education system, as it had in the context of English in England.

Controlling the masses: English in England

Historically, English in Western Australia was positioned centrally in the secular curriculum because it provided non-coercive moral and civic formation of the ‘citizenry’ and was thus a powerful determinant of the kinds of citizens produced in the growing colony. Similarly, English came to hold ‘a key position in the political construction of what is to count as education within advanced capitalist British society’ because of ‘the vital role played by literacy, or a certain form of literacy, in the development of a mass schooling system in England in the late nineteenth century’ (Ball, Kenny and Gardiner 48). In this context, subject English grew, as did the fear of a rapidly increasing urban working mass population: ‘The phenomenal growth of urban society in the nineteenth century profoundly disturbed the moral fabric of the existing social order’ (48). In England therefore, English gained importance because teaching working class children how to read and write was seen as a way of ‘taming the wild’ thus reducing crime.8 ‘From the earliest days of state education, writers and authorities on English teaching began to blur the distinction between literacy as a technical skill and as a moral technology’ (49). In an Australian context, around the turn of the century, the appearance of ‘modern English’ was prompted by the introduction of literary studies as a means of improving the minds and habits of working-class children.

8 The Education Circular of February 1902 gives evidence of this practice in Western Australia where it published a column declaring that, ‘an increase of education leads to a decrease of crime, and that money expended upon education by the State is a good investment, as it leads to a decrease of expenditure on criminal matters’ (‘Education’ 260).
Modern English differed from ‘old’ English in that it did not focus on the merely utilitarian aspects of language, with its emphasis on rote learning and recitation, but forged a link between literature and the moral and ethical development of this child. The means by which this link was forged was through the concurrent appearance of an anti-utilitarian literary studies and a progressive education movement. (Patterson, *Freedom* 108)

The progressive education movement to which Patterson refers was imported to Australia most notably by Cyril Jackson who, in his position of Inspector-General of Schools in Western Australia, was able to promulgate the virtues of child-centred learning, and learning as a tool of empowerment for the learner. Jackson was an advocate of the ‘New Education’ movement, one of the most influential educational systems of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its proponents claimed that students learn better through reason and experience rather than rote-learning and it ‘represented a growing groundswell of new thinking about education and children’ (Green, Cormack, and Reid 5).

Accordingly, Jackson specified practical curriculum for the purpose of empowering students to think for themselves thus moving away from the traditional practice of students memorising facts soon forgotten. The curriculum was based on the three ‘R’s, but under the leadership of Jackson ‘English’ concentrated upon comprehension while also emphasising ‘the use of a variety of books in reading’ (Mossenson 97). Jackson also emphasised the importance of Composition, describing it in an 1898 edition of the *Education Circular* as ‘the “best test of a school”. [...] If the education of the children does not lead them to express their thoughts clearly, little has been done for their real education’ (‘Composition’ 35). And while there were critics of the changes Jackson made, changes considered to be too radical, Jackson’s syllabus was ahead of its time, ‘certainly when compared with the eastern colonies’ (A. Burrows 11). It served as a basis for Western Australian primary schools for many years, a testament to its suitability, relevance and design. According to Jackson, students went to school to learn; literacy was a part of this, as was the formation of dutiful moral citizens.

In Western Australia, subject English was charged with the moral education of its pupils and the formation of the state. The link between literature, and the moral and ethical development of the child, is untenable to Hunter who, in Patterson’s words, sees English ‘as a series of

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9 Green, Cormack and Reid argue that the ‘New Education’ united elements of Romanticism and (later named) Progressivism. ‘Thus the ‘art’ and ‘science’ of teaching and schooling was drawn into a sometimes uncomfortable synthesis with the programmes of people such as Pestalozzi, Froebel, Herbart, Montessori, G. Stanley Hall and (later) Dewey’ (5).

10 This point, advocating writing as a primary indicator of a student’s success, enters into ongoing debates about the primacy of the Writing outcome in contemporary English curriculum and examination practices.
historically contingent techniques and practices for shaping the self-managing capacities of children’ (*Legacy* 89). For Hunter (‘After English’), such a version of the subject devalues the teaching of reading and writing, and presumes a substantial degree of ethical and political competence in teachers of English. While criticised for over-relying on Foucauldian paradigms (of another cultural and educational context), Hunter is critical of the coercive effects of schooling, a bold challenge to existing ways of thinking about English in schools:

> Hunter’s claim - that the school subject English is neither knowledge nor ideology, but ‘the name of an instituted means of forming a particular type of person’ - began a process of questioning core English teaching values and unsettling long-held beliefs about the nature of the work of English and its history [...]. (Patterson, *Legacy* 89)

Questioning these beliefs is ‘unsettling’ because the questions return to the origins of English in Australia and undermine deep-rooted and long-established conceptualisations of English and its purposes. Such conceptualisations secure the status, credibility and curricular-centrality of English. Accordingly, the Kermode-O’Neill emphases, and the aforementioned Dale argument, support O’Carroll’s conclusion that ‘teaching English is therefore a political activity’. It follows that English is a constructed subject with educational and political consequences (87). Furthermore, English is an amalgam, ‘a rare and peculiar means for forming a patchwork range of ethical and literate capacities’ (Meredyth 74), and these capacities often co-exist in a state of disequilibrium, depending upon the educator and institution within which English is taught.

In the past, English performed a crucial political and social function that was foundational for a people and a colonised nation seeking to identify as ‘literate’ and ‘civil’. It followed then, that if English teachers were to carry out these formative roles effectively. In the light of these bureaucratic and pastoral responsibilities, English teachers were required to call upon personal attributes that could produce good citizens, and as such, English is associated with ‘a highly specific role for the teacher, one of moral influence and character formation’ (Meredyth 86). The literary pedagogy of the time relied upon a special relationship between student and teacher ‘as a sympathetic guide and unintrusive exemplar’ (Hunter, ‘After English’ 324). Hunter, however, assigns a ‘culpable degree of self-absorption’ to a profession (of English teachers) in presuming ‘that it possesses the range of intellectual and moral qualifications necessary to teach about such matters competently in a civic setting’ (332-33). Certainly, in being charged with the responsibility of moral formation, teachers, and literature, are apportioned significant responsibility, somewhat imprudently, as Hunter critiques:
In assuming that language and experience mediate each other in a single metropolitan space (subjectivity), the theorists of English have imagined that the discipline processes a privileged moral insight into all the departments of ethical life – private and public, political and religious, personal and professional. The result is that the reading of literary texts is presumed to equip teachers and students of English with a general purpose moral competence, adequate to each and every sphere of existence. (‘After English’ 332)

Hunter argues that moral reading was deployed in the emerging school system as a technique of spiritual discipline and social management, a response to justify the needs of a growing state. His perspective here differs from the Marxian view of English presented by Ball, Kenny and Gardiner, and O’Carroll in the way that it distinguishes the network of ‘English men’ that implicated English in their pursuit of social and political reform at the local level by developing a publicly-funded, inclusive secondary school system alongside fostering a love of literature.

*Cyril Jackson and ‘New Education’*

When Jackson took up his appointment he proceeded to modify the existing curriculum to focus more closely on the Western Australian context, despite being born and educated in England. In many ways Jackson was autocratic, a reflection of the centralised model of the Education Department at that time, and came to epitomise the liberal-bureaucratic nature of Western Australia’s education system. But when Jackson implemented this New Education system early in 1898, it was the product of a collaborative project between Jackson, his inspectors and leading headmasters who devised a syllabus considered the best of what other states and nations had to offer (Rankin 130). Jackson’s 1899 report foregrounds his belief in the need for relevant and accessible lessons if student learning is to be effective and meaningful:

> Reading, it is intended shall lead, not to the acquisition of perfection in certain text books, but to a general capacity to read and understand: and in the same way children are to learn to express themselves readily and correctly in speech by means of oral composition. It is more practical to teach correct speaking about home incidents than merely the rules of grammar which they keep for school purposes and discard outside its walls. (qtd. in M.White, ‘Extending’ 100)

In the above example Ken Willis critiques the emphasis on ‘correctness’ in speech ahead of ‘appropriateness to context’ (101). He also notes that there is little sign of needing to nurture and build on the language of the home (which the child brings to school). Willis quite rightly identifies, however, traces of theory and pedagogy in the above extract which contemporary teachers would accept wholeheartedly including:

> [l]anguage activities that have a clear sense of purpose; the need for the language of the classroom to relate to the language of the wider world outside the school; and the value of using children’s life experiences as the basis for language activities. (101)
This evaluation endorses an integrated approach to language learning which values the contextualisation of grammar teaching in English. In fact, the *Education Circular* of September 1901 reports in sympathy, that ‘spelling taken by itself is uninteresting and generally unprofitable: what is wanted is more reading and writing’ (‘Spelling’ 201). This is pertinent in the light of the ‘grammar wars’ and the ongoing debates about the teaching of spelling, grammar and ‘functional’ literacy, more broadly.\(^\text{11}\)

Current debates surrounding the place of grammar teaching in English are often incited by some critics and educators who lament the decline in ‘standards’ and attribute sole responsibility for this to English teaching. These contentions concern the exertion of authority and the will to control. Grammar teaching was a means of ‘reinforcing institutionalised power structures in society’ (O’Carroll 85). With debates about grammar representing a ‘clash between proponents of social control and proponents of social autonomy’, Snyder argues that these ‘clashes’ are as much about ‘the restoration and renewal of traditional hierarchical relations in society as they are about schooling’ (38). The debates about grammar teaching therefore are historically important as they disclose deeper tensions in the way theorists, teachers, students, and wider society have thought about English and the purposes it serves, and emphases in grammar teaching have correlated historically with shifts in government policy. Moreover, Bill Green and Catherine Beavis argue, as I do, that ‘the teaching of grammar, in whatever form, is historically crucial in the self-identity of English teaching’ (7).

This ‘self-identity’ undergoes constant renewal, informed and instigated by changes in educational policy and social attitudes, including those concerning grammar and curricular control. In a global context, Laurence Walker discusses the colonising power of English grammar in Newfoundland in 1894, claiming that teaching English grammar contributed ‘to the achievement of that nineteenth-century ambition, respectability’ (178). Calling for revision of ‘the basics’ some commentators in education assign subject English alone the task of remedying the situation, ignoring the complexity of developing more advanced language skills, and of improving grammatical skills and student writing overall (see Donnelly, for instance).\(^\text{12}\)

\(^{11}\) The ‘grammar wars’ is a term used in Australia to describe the debate about the place of grammar teaching in the late 1960s and the 1970s. The abstract for *Beyond the Grammar Wars* describes that the conflict and re-evaluation of English during this time went beyond purely grammar to the heart of ‘the purposes and preoccupations of subject English’ more generally (Christie, ‘Grammar’ 55).

\(^{12}\) Kevin Donnelly claims ‘the situation’ is ‘dumbing down’ secondary English because the importance of literature study and grammar is downgraded in contemporary English study. As an example, Donnelly describes the 2005 draft Victorian Year 11 and 12 English curriculum as ‘weak and insipid gruel guaranteed to make them [the students] culturally illiterate and in danger of being emotionally and morally adrift’ (‘Hasta’ 19). This sensationalised and emotive discourse is destructive to networks within
Assigning blame in such a way upholds the belief that ‘fixing’ a problem in English will ‘fix’ the problem in other learning areas and it blurs the definition of literacy and its place in English teaching today and in the past.

Jackson’s leadership relied upon powerful oration and the Education Circular, which was a monthly journal for teachers he launched in 1898. This magazine was written for educators in the Department and was one way of communicating ideas, discussion papers, samples lessons and providing examples of good teaching from local and international sources (Willis 100). One of the primary roles of the Education Circular was to interpret the curriculum. In September 1912, by which time Cecil Andrews had succeeded Jackson as Inspector-General of Schools, the Education Circular carried a forum on ‘The Place of Grammar in the Teaching of English’ reprinted from an earlier Circular (753) of the Board of Education in England on ‘The Teaching of English in Secondary Schools’. It advises:

Grammar should not bulk largely in the regular school teaching of English, and it should not be isolated from composition and literature and made into an abstract exercise. Whole lesson-periods should not be systematically given up to formal grammar. (‘Place of Grammar’ 111)

Edward Sharwood Smith was Headmaster of the Newbury Grammar School between 1902 and 1924 (‘School’). He was quoted in the forum in the same edition of the Circular, claiming that unless contextualised, grammar teaching is an impediment to understanding in subject English: ‘(f)ormal grammar teaching from a formal teacher (and what else could he be?) is a nicely calculated method of killing originality, creative power, and all love of art and literature’ (‘Place of Grammar’ 114). He added that, ‘All this formal grammar teaching is part of that gigantic conspiracy to cheat children into believing that learning is difficult, and thereby to exalt the authority of the teacher’ (114). So despite explicit grammar teaching being an integral component of language teaching, at this time in Western Australia there was no endorsement of a decontextualised, skills-based approach to teaching grammar; and if this was practised in the classroom, it was against the directives and understanding of best practice at that time.

Labelled a ‘forceful visionary’, Jackson arrived to take control of the Education Department just as an economic boom meant that school enrolments, and therefore teacher shortages, were rapidly increasing (Rubinich 4). Jackson knew that he had to work to make Western Australia’s...
educational system self-supporting because so many teaching positions during his tenure of office were occupied by interstate personnel. He had the vision for the State's Teachers' College which opened with thirty seven students in 1902 with Cecil Andrews as its principal. When Jackson commenced as Inspector-General in 1896, only 16 out of 208 of the teachers in Western Australia had been formally trained. He transformed the situation dramatically, increasing the number of trained teachers to approximately 800 prior to his return to England in 1903 (Rubinich 2). The Teachers' College's first principal, Cecil Andrews, lectured on English literature, reading and elocution (among other subjects) thus representing his sphere of influence upon the educators of the past and their students. Andrews succeeded Jackson as Inspector-General of Education in 1903, and was then appointed as Director of Education in 1912. He initiated state secondary education when Perth Modern School was opened in 1911, the same year that the University of Western Australia was established.

The Professor

Another 'English man' who was influential in Western Australian education was Walter Murdoch, the state's first Professor of English. He was appointed to the University of Western Australia in 1911, the era of the 'God Professor' when the status of university teachers was high (Bennett 19). In this context, the professor's curricular control was vast. More than fifty years after Murdoch's appointment, Bruce Bennett explains that it was only 'with the merciful decline' of this tradition 'that the curriculum could be broadened' (20), a reflection of Bennett's own democratic views of education as much as his disappointment in the static nature of the curriculum during Murdoch's tenure. The Anglophilic curriculum in Western Australia bears witness to its colonial origins where English began 'marked by a sense of uncertainty or inferiority' (Dale, Enchantment 31). In attempts to resist this uncertainty, teachers turned to what they knew best—classical literary works—to help make sense of the 'new world' (33). These authors included Scott, Mcaulay and Shakespeare, and to a lesser extent Bacon, Thackeray and Chaucer, included almost every year of Murdoch's tenure as Professor of English and Chief Examiner of Leaving English (UWA, Manuals). Murdoch was of the first generation of locally trained professors who slowly replaced the existing Anglophile and Oxbridge cadre. His 'classical curriculum' emphasised literary history, tradition, philology and scholarship, in stark contrast to the Cambridge model of English that was to be championed by F.R. Leavis in England two decades later.  

The Cambridge model of English developed between the World Wars. It replaced the peripheral linguistic and philological English that first came to Cambridge University in 1884 as an optional language in the Medieval and Modern Languages Tripos (Heath 20). The 'Cambridge English' of the 1930s, by contrast, instituted F.R. Leavis's ideas about practical criticism, reader response theory, a-contextual reading and interpretation, and a view that literature was 'civilising' and 'humanising' (A.
The study of literature as opposed to language, which included commentary on the meaning and significance of the text, was ‘pejoratively associated with an intellectual “softening” of the discipline’ (Dale, *Enchantment* 35). In this case it is fair to say that it produced a pedagogy that was as unpopular as Murdoch’s approach to teaching literature. This approach included an emphasis upon the symbiosis of life and literature which reflects the liberal humanist values of Murdoch, who recognized the importance of active citizenship, free education, and the ‘public good.’ He strengthened the connections between them and foregrounded them in his writing such as in his since-published address to the Literature Society of Melbourne, May 23, 1907, entitled *The Enemies of Literature* (21).

Although very racist, and somewhat sexist like his peers, Murdoch’s vision of culture was more democratic than most. Early in his career, he argued that ‘the nobility of a nation does not depend on its literature or its art or its culture; the nobility of a nation may be gauged by the extent to which these things are shared by all’. (Dale, *English Men* 56)

Democratic values such as Murdoch’s are often marginalised in today’s competitive climate in education where the success of universities and its staff are measured by productive outputs and performance management systems. But Murdoch’s model of the public university—one that emerged from the community and served the community— was more egalitarian and democratic than those of many other scholars and institutions of his era. What we hold onto, and part of Murdoch’s legacy, is the inclusivity of his version of tertiary education that extends the narrative of the discipline of English and resists its elitist ties.

*The life of Sir Walter Murdoch*

I turn now to a more biographical study of Murdoch because of his monopoly over the first three decades of Western Australia’s English’s curriculum and examinations. Murdoch’s roots, influences and philosophies inevitably shaped the form of English he valued. He was born in Aberdeen, Scotland in 1874 (La Nauze 1). Murdoch was the youngest of fourteen children and was aged only ten when the family moved to Melbourne, Australia in search of better

Green and McIntyre 12). While this model was elitist and literature-centred, the later-occurring ‘New English’ or ‘Growth’ model was anti-elitist and language-centred. The ‘New English’ originated at the University of London’s Institute of Education around the same time as Richard Hoggart founded the Birmingham model emphasising Cultural Studies. Bill Green devised a schema of the Cambridge, London and Birmingham schools of influence in English teaching since the 1960s. See Appendix IV for his representation of the different orientations that he intended as an indication of ‘how the movement through and beyond the New English might be theorised’ (B.Green, ‘Re”Right“ing’ 398). These later models of English gained popularity in a global context, and in Western Australia retrospectively, they made Oxford English and aspects of Murdoch’s teaching appear provincial.

15 The author of Murdoch’s biography, John La Nauze, was an historian and former student of Murdoch’s at the University of Western Australia. Chapter One of the biographical memoir provides the details of Murdoch’s background outlined above.
health and opportunity. He published his first essay, ‘The New School of Australian Poets’ in 1899 which marked the beginning of a distinguished writing career. That essay critiqued the Australian poets and some readers, including some of the poets concerned rejected his claims and wrote angry letters against them (Hetherington 2). Murdoch also began writing a textbook, also a reasonably common practice among academics today. His most profitable books were his three school textbooks, written when he was a young man (4). Murdoch’s writing plus various teaching roles including a stint as headmaster supported his family until 1904 when he took up the position of assistant lecturer in English at the University of Melbourne under the leadership of Classics lecturer, Thomas George Tucker (Alexander, Murdoch). So at the University of Melbourne in the early twentieth century, Tucker looked so favourably upon the character and loyalty of Murdoch that before long Murdoch was solely responsible for administering the English Literature and Language courses.

Tucker is a significant figure in the story of Murdoch and his professorship in Western Australia for three main reasons. The first is that Tucker’s Classics training had a significant impact upon the teaching of Murdoch with Murdoch spending ten years working with Tucker, one of the most conservative teachers of literature in the country. Tucker’s Classical training and his love of literature are just two attributes that influenced Murdoch during his time at Melbourne and continued to shape Murdoch’s educational philosophies in Western Australia.16

Surely, argued Tucker, culture was as essential to a satisfying life as the development of industry and the accumulation of wealth. The university which emphasised professional training and neglected a liberal education was concerning itself more with means than with ends, and in fact it was not a university. (Blainey 109)

Ian Reid contends that Tucker was not ‘sufficiently Romantic for Murdoch’s liking (Wordsworth 141). Tucker was a Cambridge graduate and in the light of Murdoch’s philosophies, their views differed. Reid cites one of Murdoch’s letters to Deakin expressing Murdoch’s complaint ‘that Tucker’s classicist training imposed “certain well-defined limitations” on his taste’ (142). The second reason is because Tucker co-authored one of Murdoch’s textbooks, The New Primer of English Literature. This textbook earned Tucker inclusion in the secondary English syllabus in Western Australia when the 1918 syllabus for example, specifies that the standard of the Outlines of the History of English Literature ‘will be about that of Tucker and Murdoch’s “New Primer of English Literature”; but this book is not prescribed’ (UWA, Manual 1918 21). The book was not included on the syllabus from 1921 onwards despite several reprints. In addition, the ‘History of English Literature’ as a component of study was removed from the Leaving

16 Tucker was referred to as a ‘living library’ (McKay). This description could be comfortably said of Murdoch also.
English syllabuses in the late 1920s, evidence of the privileging of literature over philology. The third reason is that Tucker was directly involved in making two decisions that were crushing for Murdoch, one of which motivated Murdoch’s application to the University of Western Australia in 1911.

By 1911 Murdoch could reasonably claim that for six years he had been ‘virtually Acting Professor’ at the University of Melbourne and at the same time, students regarded him as the English Department, for there was no one else (La Nauze 30).  

There was no Professor of English at that time; Murdoch was in charge of the whole of teaching. But this was not enough to secure a permanent position and understandably Murdoch was deeply disappointed when the University appointed a Chair of English and he came in second place. It was largely an unpopular decision, with both the Argus and the Age receiving letters protesting the appointment. The matter was also raised in State parliament (Dale, English Men 36). Murdoch was ranked second to Robert Wallace, an overseas applicant with overseas credentials, which stood him in a more favourable position than locally-trained Murdoch.

The rejection of Murdoch relates to his local training, his preference for literature over language study, the nature of his literary criticism, and his interest in Australian literature. Many of Murdoch’s newspaper essays of this period can be read as a direct refutation of Tucker’s often-repeated assertion that, since life was short, it was best for students and readers to stick to classical literature. (Dale English Men 36-7)

Despite the apparent respect between Tucker and Murdoch, Tucker was one of the committee members on the selection panel for the Melbourne position just as he was one of the examiners for Murdoch’s thesis, ‘The Life and Work of Alfred Deakin’ which Murdoch submitted to the University of Melbourne in October 1922 for the degree of Doctor of Letters. This was also rejected, and once again, Murdoch was ‘hurt and indignant’ (La Nauze 93). Clearly devastated by the decision (to employ Wallace over him), Murdoch assumed full-time work as a journalist for the Argus, proving it to be fortunate in some regards that Murdoch had continued to write for the newspaper during his tenure at Melbourne. In a full-time capacity, this was to be a short-lived venture, however, for after one year, Walter Murdoch headed west as the newly appointed Professor of English at the University of Western Australia.

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17 Murdoch was a popular teacher with strong connections in the wider literary and educational community, and several hundred of his current and former students had petitioned the University Council to express their support for his application’ (Dale, English Men 35).
18 Dale cites her source as the Victorian Parliamentary Debates for the Legislative Assembly 127, 1911, pp.550-55, 593 (English Men 36).
19 Dale asserts it likely that Tucker, ‘Professor of Classics, whose views on literature differed drastically from those of Murdoch, would have seen his qualifications in language and classics as being inadequate’ ('Walter').
At the turn of the twentieth century, Western Australia’s social and economic advancements imposed greater demands upon the state’s education system and the needs arose for an extension in the secondary sector and the establishment of a local university. Prior to 1912 students wishing to matriculate were required to sit public examinations set by the University of Adelaide, a practice established in 1895. By the turn of the century this arrangement became increasingly ‘unsatisfactory’ (Garratt 243). Key figures in the formation of the university were Cecil Andrews and John Winthrop Hackett, newspaper editor and owner, politician and philanthropist. Andrews recognised that external examinations exerted a dominant influence on the entire secondary curriculum, both directly and indirectly, and he wanted a local university established to administer the examinations thus localising the influence. Andrews had always been an advocate and spokesperson for state-funded secondary education whereas Hackett opposed it. Andrews believed in its tremendous benefits to both individuals and to the wider community but Hackett objected primarily to the cost of funding a state secondary school (Perth Modern School) and the other state high schools that would follow because it would be pointless to increase access to secondary education without there being a local university (234-35). Andrews pointed to the irrefutable fact that plans for university education relied upon the expansion of secondary education as a source of matriculants and he even found support in the writings of Walter Murdoch who argued that Australia, for its own good, needed to fall in line with the rest of the world by making secondary education a state priority (232). So while Andrews and Hackett did not always agree, they eventually united to bring about the establishment of Western Australia’s first university (237).

The establishment of the University of Western Australia generated expectations of academic standards and general education which passed through the educational structure via the system of public examinations (M. White, ‘Extending’ 100). These examinations governed schooling in the senior years because they determined the school programmes. This situation was common to other states at that time, including New South Wales for example, where

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20 Hackett had been in Melbourne as had Murdoch, albeit ‘a generation previously when, the Irish lawyer Winthrop Hackett had been a tutor at Melbourne University and an aspiring politician, before he headed west’ (Mead, ‘Remembering’ 7). Philip Mead argues that ‘with his own wealth having derived from newspapers and the growth in Western Australia following the gold discoveries of the 1890s, Hackett also had a conservative/liberal understanding of the ways in which mineral wealth can be turned into cultural institutions, particularly educational ones’ (9). Both men were visionary in this regard.

21 At the University’s first senate meeting in February 1912, Hackett was elected Chancellor and Andrews Pro-chancellor, ‘thus the two men who had been so much at loggerheads only three years before, found themselves in close partnership’ (Garratt 237).
between 1911 and 1953 ‘the dominant exemplars that dictated classroom practice were the demands of the external examinations, long-established text books and English teaching “folklore” irrespective of syllabus principles and rules’ (Brock 178). Similarly, Murdoch’s position as Professor of English and Chief Examiner of secondary English for over twenty-five years in Western Australia parallels the sphere of influence exerted by George Mackaness in New South Wales.

Mackaness was, it would seem, ideally placed to change the direction of English teaching in the state. He superintended the training in English method of all graduate teachers in the State for two decades; during the same period he was a member of the English Syllabus Committee. Certainly he was the most influential figure in English teaching outside the inspectorate. (Watson, ‘English’ 34)

Despite the significance of this potential for curricular control in New South Wales, Mackaness and his *Inspirational Teaching* (1928) could not transform English teaching, such was the force of ‘the system of external examinations [which] provided an effective brake on change’ (Watson, ‘English’ 34). That said, it was not all that simple in Victoria, and sweeping historical generalisations about ‘the dominance of exams’ are not always accurate. Beavis’s observation below highlights the fraught nature of attributing responsibility for curricular control to just one body or institution, particularly over an extended period of time:

The University public examinations effectively determined the content and organisation of English in secondary schools, but it would be misleading to regard the development of subject English in Victoria as simply a kind of overflow of tertiary fashions and influences from the universities, as is sometimes implied by historians of university English (Eagleton 1983; Docker 1984; Milner 1985). (19)

In Western Australia, the story of English in secondary schools was more complex than a tale of university courses being modified and handed down with narrowing effects. As in New South Wales where an influential figure lectured in English for over two decades, in Western Australia, long-serving professor Murdoch negotiated his own preferences within the confines of state building priorities of the time. These priorities included social cohesiveness and national identity. Murdoch improvised in response to these problems and doing so exposed apparent contradictions in his work - a system of public examinations seeming to oppose his progressive view on assessment and school curricula dominated by British writers despite his wide reading and knowledge of Australian literature. This situation unveils an apparent and significant tension in Murdoch’s work: while the study of Australian literature at the University of Western Australia was limited during Murdoch’s tenure, and Murdoch was labelled ‘anti-nationalist’ by some critics, his essays and columns suggest a much stronger loyalty to Australia than most other professors in Australian universities exhibited during the early twentieth century. In this respect any criticism of Murdoch’s imperialism should not be
without due recognition of his contribution to raising the profile of Australian literature at a
time of rampant social change for the Australian nation. In this way he was a pioneer of the
intellectual and cultural life of the nation, improvising to build the state, aided by his
appointment as one of the foundation professors at the University of Western Australia.

Murdoch was appointed one of the original eight professors at the University of Western
Australia and he first taught there in ‘Tin Pan Alley’ when classes began in 1913.\textsuperscript{22} The
foundation of the University was historically significant in the context of the development of
Western Australia as Murdoch recognised in an interview with his daughter, Catherine King:

I don’t think the coming of the University was important in the sense which the
coming of William the Conqueror to England was important, not quite. All the
same I do think this event of 1913 did have a lasting effect on the whole tenor of
life in this country. (1)\textsuperscript{23}

The original university professors came to be important figures in education in Western
Australia, and most retained their positions until well into the 1920s (M. White, ‘Extending’ 91).
To some extent, the story of the university’s foundations is a significant feature of the story of
the state’s growth in the early twentieth century. Philip Mead argues that

[t]he origins of this institution is a conjunction of the literary and the
metallurgical, […] in the persons of Murdoch and Whitfield, a conjunction created
by Winthrop Hackett who appointed both of them, and representing an
acknowledgement of the intricate skeins of dependency and evolution between
the sources of wealth and the institutions of education and culture. (‘Remembering’ 9)

These ‘intricate skeins’ contribute a unique story to Western Australia in the way that history
determined the status and authority of the university and its professors, and in turn, the way
they influenced the cultural life of the state. It highlights the inter-connectedness of Perth in its
growing years in terms of the relationships among leaders and public figures, and the close
relationship between the prominence of a state’s cultural and educational lives when state
leaders and benefactors value and support them.

\textsuperscript{22} ‘Tin Pan Alley’ or ‘Tin Pot Alley’ was the name affectionately given to the galvanised iron buildings that
housed the university on its original site in Irwin Street, Perth before moving to the Crawley campus in
1932. Historian Fred Alexander describes the conditions as making for ‘camaraderie if not always for
dignity, and never for comfort or efficiency’ (\textit{Campus} 63). Significantly, it was Murdoch who ‘stressed
the need for an attractive environment as a vital prerequisite for a quickened public interest in the
University. This was the central theme of three articles he wrote for the \textit{West Australian} in October
1920’ (\textit{Campus} 106). These three articles were published on consecutive days commencing Wednesday
18 August, 1920: ‘The University. Its present posit ion I’, ‘The University. Its present shortcomings II’ and
‘The University. What is to be done? III’.

\textsuperscript{23} The daughter of Walter Murdoch was broadcaster and community worker Catherine King.
When Murdoch applied to the University of Western Australia, his local qualifications would have been a disadvantage in applying for a professorship in Australia. The Murdoch-Wallace situation at Melbourne can be read as clear evidence of this (Dale, *English Men* 88). This apparent deficiency in Murdoch’s application to the University of Western Australia was circumvented by a letter of recommendation by then Prime Minister Alfred Deakin (56): ‘Put simply, Australian-born would-be academics needed a mentor of sufficient status and will to ensure that their appointment was made’ (87). Deakin, a leader of the Federation movement, befriended Murdoch and they shared views on civics education. Mead argues the importance of this connection to the foundations of the state and to the nation, arguing that Murdoch’s ‘biographical sketch of Deakin is another sign of his deep, personal commitment to witnessing the political origins of the nation’ (‘Remembering’ 7). Murdoch’s commitment to education emerges from his democratic ideals ‘to provide the conditions for people to develop their full potential as social individuals to contribute to the common good of society and humanity and fulfil their functions as citizens of a democracy’ (Gare, ‘Educating’ 425). This is an ideology common to Deakin and Murdoch, evident in their actions, orations and writings.

Murdoch’s popular civics textbook, *The Struggle for Freedom*, explains that in a representative democracy, because the people vote on matters to do with the welfare of the state, they ought to be educated (234). Murdoch argues that it is the state’s responsibility to increase the common good and help all members of society realise their potential. This, he believed, improved the well-being of a community (Loose Leaves 66). It was made possible through education, so he stressed the duty of the state to provide that education to all. Murdoch promulgated his social liberal ideas on education with vigour (Gare, ‘Neo-Liberal’ 28). This was in keeping with the global context of the time that was marked by increasing awareness of

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24 Dale explains: ‘In defiance of popular opinion, senior members of the universities made decisions about recruitment, promotion and curricula that reflected Angliphile sentiments. These decisions were in accordance with their vision of the nature and purpose of education as inculcating ‘culture’, and the manners and mannerisms of cultured men were indelibly English’ (*English Men* 88).

25 In a letter to Hackett in 1912, Cyril Jackson describes Murdoch’s application for the Professor of English as superior among ‘a poor lot’ of applicants (UWA Archives, cons 970). The local press, however, reported on the large number of applicants - that there were nineteen local and twelve English applicants for the professorship in English (‘Further Particulars’).

26 A.A. Staley and J.R. Nethercote highlight the relationships which sustained an ideological line of liberal values, such as representative and responsible government, the rights and freedoms of individuals and democracy, for which the Liberal Party of Australia originally stood. Referring to Deakin, Staley and Nethercote explain: ‘Through his *Morning Post* accounts he placed his stamp on subsequent as well as contemporary interpretations of Australian nation-building. Thereafter, his disciple, Walter Murdoch, and his disciple’s disciple, J. A. La Nauze, both authors of major biographies, perpetuated the Deakinite conception’ (8). W.K. (Keith) Hancock was also a supporter of Deakinite liberal ideals as much as Murdoch (Trenorden 4). Hancock has much in common with Murdoch. He studied Classics before History at the University of Melbourne, then came to Western Australia to lecture at the university alongside Murdoch’s friend and colleague Edward Shann (Davidson). Hancock left for Oxford in 1922 (Alexander, *Campus* 510).
equality and social opportunity. From this emerged the University of Western Australia, which was established as the first free university in the British Empire (*History*). The availability of free, state secondary and tertiary education prevented a monopoly by private colleges, a view endorsed by Murdoch who saw that free education was a means of inclusivity and source of improvement in all aspects of society. This is much like Cyril Jackson’s perspective, that removing the barrier of fees increases educational access for people bringing about private and public benefits alike. When Murdoch arrived in Perth as one of the foundation professors, he expressed his belief in the university as a democratic body that should emerge from the community, ‘not from a coterie of rich men’ (‘A Revolutionary Don’). He claimed that many of the universities in Australia were ‘too academic and reclusive, which is rather extraordinary considering the democratic community we live in’ (‘A Revolutionary Don’). Murdoch also pledged to provide public lectures to improve the accessibility of education to a growing Perth population. His democratic approach to education was both unpopular and unusual at a time when universities and elitism were intimately fused. So whatever may be claimed about Murdoch’s application and its apparent strengths and weaknesses, Murdoch became a key designer and decision-maker in the teaching of English in Western Australia at both the tertiary and secondary levels, particularly in curriculum and assessment, which included the state’s public examinations.

The Public Examinations Board (PEB) was a centralised authority of the University of Western Australia which conducted the state’s public examinations including those for the Junior and Leaving Certificates. The Board was formed in 1913 and was made up of representatives from various educational sectors: the university, the Education Department of Western Australia and independent secondary schools for girls and for boys. The majority of members was from the university, reflecting the power of the university and also the value placed on the experience of university staff by contrast to the inexperience of teachers in the secondary schools: ‘Indeed, the knowledge of subject disciplines and academic standards elsewhere possessed by the University’s teaching staff was indispensable in the early years simply because teachers in the secondary schools were very inexperienced’ (M. White, ‘Public’ 49). The PEB also possessed authority by nature of its role in mediating between the demands and expectations of government and independent schools. Sub-committees were established for each subject and any proposed changes to a course syllabus and examination went before the Board following previous discussion and consensus at a sub-committee level. Schools were bound by PEB regulations and the respective professors maintained responsibility for their subjects’ examinations and therefore held ‘direct responsibility for the maintenance and development of their several disciplines within the secondary schools of the State’ (Alexander,
This vindicated the authority of the professor in curriculum design for their respective subjects, as ‘intellectual gatekeepers and guardians of academic standards’ (Tully, ‘State’ 60). One of the consequences of this authority was that Murdoch was in a position of great status and influence because English was a compulsory subject for matriculation and therefore had the greatest number of examination candidates each year. The first examinations conducted by the local university were held in 1914. From that time onwards the Board became a vital influence on the secondary curriculum (Garratt 243). It made decisions regarding prize-giving, textbook selection, the appointment of examiners, and the accreditation of schools (Dettman 34). As secondary education in Western Australia was dominated by the requirements of the external examinations, the PEB, through its syllabus choices, privileged aspects of the curriculum since teachers focused on the examinable components of the curriculum, in some cases ‘to the exclusion of everything else’ (1). This did not sit well with Walter Murdoch who was not particularly fond of examinations; in this regard it seems anomalous in ideological terms that he sat on the PEB and was an examiner of English for twenty-five years.

A Chief Examiner not fond of Examinations

In 1932, Murdoch created controversy in education circles when he spoke out against the examination system in Western Australia. His views were criticised by prominent headmasters and headmistresses of the time, particularly those in independent schools who tended to be more vocal on issues related to conventional measures of academic success such as examination results. This suggests a degree of power in existence in the hands of the schools, or at least, the vocal, independent ones who spoke out against, or in favour of, the external examinations. In March 1932, the West Australian reported Murdoch’s criticisms of examinations - that they stifle independent thinking. Murdoch claimed the ‘injurious effect’ of the examination system, describing the examination process as a ‘massacre of innocents’ (‘Examination System. Massacre’). This followed his earlier criticism of examinations, published in the West Australian in 1929, where Murdoch responds to an article by ‘Dad’ on the syllabus in English for the Junior Examination:

The fact is that literature is not a subject that lends itself to examinations, and I suppose that my detestation of examinations is due in part to the fact that I am associated with a subject in which, perhaps more than in any other, they are apt to create such a distaste.

John La Nauze refers to the themes in Murdoch’s writing as ‘clearly more than quirks.’ Among others, he lists Murdoch’s, ‘denunciation of examinations, or at least, formal external examinations, his railings against prevalent methods of teaching English, [and] his remarks about unimaginative and stodgy headmasters’. La Nauze contends that some readers found these criticisms particularly ‘irritating because he seemed to be letting down his own side, the teachers’ (113).
The writer of the article apparently holds one person responsible for the syllabus, and I would like to point out that the Board of Public Examinations, in which school teachers are very well represented, is responsible. If the syllabus were left to me it would not be by any means the same syllabus as that of which the writer complains ... I would give the children not less to read, but a good deal more. I would however, give them a wide field to browse upon and would not tether them on such a very restricted piece of literary pasture as the book of essays and book of poems referred to in the article. I think it is very important that the children should be introduced to literature in a much more elastic way than at present, and that allowance should be made for the tastes in literature that correspond to the great variety of human minds. (‘Junior Examination’)
English (as a compulsory subject for graduation and matriculation) becomes a necessary evil for students motivated solely by achieving tertiary entrance. Murdoch believed that schools should set their own syllabus in any subject as both schools and pupils more specifically would benefit from the empowerment and flexibility to do so, thus allowing literature to be its own motivation. His comments in the *West Australian* warn teachers against losing sight of literary pleasure behind arbitrary assessment.

**Secondary English and Australian literature**

During Murdoch’s time as professor at the university (1913-1939) the English syllabus varied virtually every year to some degree though there remained strong emphasis on the canonical English male writers (Dale, *English Men* 88). This supports one of Dale’s conclusions about the text selections made by professors of English at the University level that, ‘in terms of nationality and gender, the texts are overwhelmingly weighted towards male English writers’ (*English Men* 88). In the early Western Australian secondary English syllabuses the literary study of texts such as Chaucer, Milton and Shakespeare dominated; changes to the prescribed list of texts were minor, usually only variations in the plays of Shakespeare or the novels of Stevenson or George Eliot. This pattern is perhaps expected given the kinds of university courses that were offered during the first half of the twentieth century: ‘Many courses relied upon various editions and volumes of the five-volume collection of *English Prose*, edited by William Peacock, and published by Oxford University Press in its “World’s Classics” series’ (Dale, *English Men* 88). Similarly, an observation of the minor substitutions of Shakespearean plays made at the University of Sydney also applies to the secondary English syllabuses in Western Australia during Murdoch’s time on the PEB:

> At Sydney in the inter-war period, his [Shakespeare’s] work seems to have been studied every year. Changes in senior staff almost invariably resulted in a wholesale reshuffling of the content of courses, but within the constraints set by genre and period – *King Lear* would replace *Hamlet* or a history play, a novel by Thackeray or Meredith one by Trollope, Macaulay’s essays, would be read, rather than Hazlitt’s or Lamb’s. (88)

The fact that this is true of the Junior and Leaving English syllabuses under Murdoch reflects the prominent role played by Shakespearean scholarship in Murdoch’s career, just as it did for academics across the country (100).

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28 Dale explains that ‘half of those who held Chairs in English in the first century of the discipline have at least one publication on Shakespeare’s work, while a quarter could fairly be regarded as Shakespeare specialists. This concentration in the research field of English on one author is paralleled by a concentration in the place and nature of training, specifically of postgraduate direction to Oxford University’ (*English Men* 100).
At the time of the establishment of the university, where nation-building was in place (or needed to be), the opportunity to promote local writers was perhaps lacking, and this represents great cost for the growth of the teaching and learning of Australian literature in Western Australia at both the tertiary and secondary levels. Murdoch was not one to encourage and proliferate contemporary literature, and certainly, none that was Australian.

Both temporally and for the most part in his general attitude he belongs to yesterday rather than today; this applies in particular to his literary attitude, which is exemplified in his love of the English classics and his intense dislike of the ultra-moderns, and in so far as the literature of his adopted country is concerned, in his anthologies, both prose and verse, which show small capacity to judge a writer of today. (H.M. Green 3)

By his own admission contemporary writing was not one of Murdoch’s areas of interest and expertise. In light of this, such criticism is unduly harsh. His position and authority necessitated a familiarity with modern literature, but it is rare that teachers of every kind do not have a specialty or natural bias in their subjects. As it follows, the privileging of certain text types and their associated values can be dangerous for those excluded, particularly during a time of nation-building.

The form of the narrow curriculum at UWA, both instituted and perpetuated by Murdoch, is relevant in the context of this research for the way in which it filtered down into senior secondary English. Murdoch played it safe in his teaching, which some years later Bennett argued, however, placed the study of English at both secondary and tertiary levels at risk of belletrism and provincialism, an indication of Bennett’s own position as much as Murdoch’s. It was consistent English teaching at the secondary level nationally:

As a Scot who had come to Perth via Melbourne (on the recommendation of Alfred Deakin among others), Murdoch might have been expected to offer an eccentric programme of study. However, an interest in the literature of Australia, awakened in Melbourne and discussed in some articles in the Argus did not translate to his teaching at the University of Western Australia, where British Victorian essays and novels and Shakespeare (with an emphasis on Lamb’s essays) were the staple diet of undergraduates. A belles lettres approach to literary study was dominant in the manner of Macauley, Carlyle, Newman and Quiller-Couch. (19)

This description of the University English curriculum as belletristic English is consistent with the global practice of privileging patriarchal values and Anglophilic ideals through literary education in the Anglophone world.

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29 Dale describes Australian literature, and the history of its teaching and criticism at universities as ‘a narrative of oppositionality to an Anglocentric core: Englishness dominated in curriculum, in appointments, in critical theory’ (‘New Directions’ 134). This suggests that the teaching of Australian literature emerged as a reactionary area of study, a binary ‘other’ resisting the control, tradition and Englishness of Australia’s colonial past which pervades studies of ‘English’ and ‘Literature’.
Murdoch did not introduce Australian literature into the curriculum at UWA during his tenure as Professor and Head of Department and it was excluded at the secondary level until 1926. The first evidence of Australian literature being taught, or at least prescribed, at the secondary level is Dorothea Mackellar’s ‘My Country’ which appears as one of the poems to be learned by heart in order to achieve the Junior Certificate (UWA, Manual 1926 22). Dale attributes the absence of Australian literature in the Western Australia curriculum under Murdoch as a likely consequence of Murdoch’s anxiety about his occupation of a senior academic position, and ‘apart from being locally trained he was the least qualified of the original professors by his own admission’ (La Nauze 64). There is no question that Murdoch’s teaching in Perth was influenced by his experiences in Melbourne; so one can understand why he may have been reluctant to stray from the classical works of literature including the canonical English male writers ‘although a number of academics who spent time in his Department went on to teach the subject at other universities’ (Dale, English Men 147). Dale acknowledges that this ‘lingering insecurity’ was exacerbated by the expectations of a conformist and elitist academy that had very specific ideas about what constituted ‘good’ literature and about what and whom was ‘worthy’ of membership in academia’s inner circle. Dale highlights the anxiety guiding the direction of the discipline: ‘This anxiety about being recognized as a member of the cultural and intellectual elite permeates the discipline of English for decades, shaping pedagogy, examinations and what is valued in personality and training when selecting staff’ (Enchantment 14). It is likely that Murdoch was marginalised by dominant circles of academia as a result of this elitism.

The Outer Circle

Murdoch focussed on Australian literature in his own writing, but not in his teaching. Non-fiction was a minor inclusion in the secondary English syllabuses presumably due to the popularity of the essay. While the radio and gramophone were popular media forms socially, they formed no part of the secondary English curriculum, nor was the analysis of visual texts such as cartoons or feature articles which the popularity of the Bulletin, for example, may have invited (Wotherspoon). This would represent, however, the inclusion of a text-source considered ‘very Australian’ by some but very ‘racist, isolationist, protectionist and “masculine”’ by others’ (McKenna 153). Murdoch was strongly criticised for his oversights in compiling The Oxford Book of Australasian Verse, particularly by Southerly and its allies, a sign of regional hostility from the University of Sydney who resented being omitted (Dale, ‘Walter’). Southerly editor, R.G. Howarth claims he refused ‘to be represented to the English-speaking world by this poorly-chosen, incomplete, and sometimes utterly unworthy selection’ (192). To
review the Oxford anthology, Howarth invited comment from ‘well-known poets and critics’, but he published all those from Sydney: ‘poets (and their friends) [who were] peeved at their exclusion from the collection’ (Dale, *English Men* 146). The attacks on Murdoch were savage with harsh reviews included in *Southerly* (1946) by Howarth, James Devaney, T. Inglis Moore and Kenneth Slessor. Inglis Moore claimed that ‘of all the feeble compilations inflicted upon Australia and her poets since the egregious Sladen this was the feeblest. It still is’ (Howarth 193). Inglis Moore argued that ‘it is all very Victorian and old-fogeyish, a little queer, and even a bit silly’ (Howarth 196) before concluding: ‘that Murdoch book would be a farce if it were not also a tragedy. By its misrepresentation and injustice it constitutes a betrayal of this country and of many of her best poets’ (Howarth 197). Slessor labelled it ‘an appalling menace to Australian poetry’ (Howarth 201). This is strong antipathy to Murdoch and scorn for his anthology, *Book of Australasian Verse*. These tensions between Murdoch and some of the prolific Australian writers at that time are geographical and also ideological, a rejection of Murdoch’s perceived imperialism and are testament to the fact that while some writers belong to both ‘English Literature’ and their national literature, doing so was not without controversy (Bergonzi 76).

Murdoch’s contradictions are evident in his reputation as an imperialist, juxtaposed to his numerous publications with Australian subjects. In light of this, Murdoch’s experience in Melbourne might be read as even more unjust for he was an Australian-educated academic who missed out on the position because of his Australian qualifications: he was rejected for being ‘too Australian’ for the Professorship at the University of Melbourne in 1911, but he is rejected by critics for not being ‘Australian enough’ in his essays (see Dutton; Hadgraft, *Australian*; Hadgraft ‘Murdoch’s Mask’). Dale sees that Murdoch’s pursuit of an academic career on the other side of the nation was ‘a fitting metaphor for his isolation from the dominant views in academia, and specifically in the discipline of English’ (*English Men* 55), for Murdoch emphasised literature over language studies, which resisted the national trend to focus on the latter. In the early years of tertiary education in Australia, ‘English courses included a large component of language studies, except at the University of Western Australia’, but the curriculum at the University of Western Australia included more essays and

30 See Leigh Dale’s *The Enchantment of English* (115-18) which also refers to relevant articles in *The Times* and the *Bulletin* (1938) that earned criticism for Murdoch, ‘irrevocably marked as an imperial and critical anachronism’ (115). The depth of the conflict between Murdoch and others in the academy is important and unsettling. Philip Mead describes the situation as ‘a strangely conflicted, mostly generational, and also geographic set of antagonisms about Australian literature, subset poetry, in the early days of its institutionalisation (anthologies)’ (Mead, Email).

31 *Australian Short Stories* selected by Walter Murdoch and H. Drake-Brockman (1951), *A Book of Australasian Verse* (1945) and *The Making of Australia: an introductory history* (1917) are three examples.
creative literature than studies elsewhere in Australian universities (Dale, ‘Walter’). In fact Murdoch changed ‘English Composition’ in the syllabus to ‘Essay writing’ in 1925 (UWA, Manual 1925), a narrowing of writing forms expected of students of English in Western Australia.

Poetry, Classics and the anthologies – Conservatism

In his memoir of Murdoch, La Nauze acknowledges that the absence of contemporary local literature was regretted by students who ‘would have welcomed some discussion of contemporary or near-contemporary writing’ (70). As Murdoch grew older he found himself even less inclined to engage with modern writers; ‘he found himself less in sympathy with new modes and themes in contemporary literature’ (La Nauze and Nurser, preface). The poetry anthologies listed on the secondary English syllabuses during Murdoch’s tenure did not depart from various combinations of Palgrave’s Golden Treasury, Wordsworth, Scott, Tennyson, Milton and Byron (UWA, Manuals). Murdoch was criticised for his poetry selections, mostly by parents, as the poems were predominantly canonical poets (consistent with text selections of other genres). Murdoch professed his belief in the virtues of poetry, in teaching it without ruining it, and in teachers and parents understanding that the syllabus dictates to considerably diverse groups of students:

I think the youngster gains more by being brought into contact with first-rate poetry, even though he may not at the time fully understand it, than from even the most easily understood of second-rate matter; but this apparently depends on the teaching... Any poem, good or bad, comprehended or uncomprehended will be spoilt for the pupil if it be treated as a sort of peg on which to hang a number of notes and explanations and elucidations...I think children should be encouraged to read with their wits awake and not forced to hunt up recondite allusions or to do anything which would make literature a barren task instead of what it ought to be – the jolliest of all studies. (‘Junior Examination’) Murdoch’s love of poetry and his wish to share it with others in a way that might facilitate their respect for it, is obvious here, though having to learn 250 lines of a prescribed poem ‘by heart’ may quell any feelings of joy in a poem. It reflects a pedagogical practice peculiar to literature study ‘– to teach and yet not to teach, which is so familiar today.’ This oddity surfaces when attempting to engage students with the text, enjoyably, while not appearing to focus on the text as a checklist or as Murdoch describes ‘as a sort of peg on which to hang a number of notes and explanations and elucidations’. The Public Examinations Board moved to abolish the recitation component of the Junior Certificate in 1933 but it was unsuccessful when put to the vote (UWA Archives, cons 394, 7 Apr. 1933). Murdoch’s attendance at PEB meetings was frequent and his name is mentioned regularly in the minutes for recommending changes to the English syllabuses. But if he was open to requests, such as that made by the
Headmistresses’ Association for the inclusion of a more modern poetry anthology, it did not show in the text lists. The set poetry texts remained largely classical, but schools were encouraged to negotiate their preferences as part of the design of their schools’ own syllabuses rather than one that Murdoch and the Board recommended (UWA Archives, cons 394, 27 Apr. 1928).

Again, there is an inherent contradiction and improvisation here: Murdoch is conservative in his text selections but progressive in his view of school-based curriculum. The prescribed lists produced consistency in the syllabuses that was rejected as conservatism in the late 1920s and early 1930s. For example, Mr Chandler, Headmaster of the Perth Boys’ School, complained through the press in 1932 that the upper school syllabuses overall which, having ‘come under the sway of the University – have been at a standstill during the last half century’ (Senex 20). This constancy is the source of condemnation of Murdoch in 1929, published in the Letters to the Editor of the West Australian.

The professor also states that school teachers as a class are conservative. I do not know whether this is a sneer or a compliment; but I assume that the professor is one of the progressives. To what extent he is a progressive may be judged by the syllabus prescribed, the questions set, and especially by the reports issued after the annual public examinations. (Castrabell 26)

Despite this reproach, professors in Perth at this time were largely well-respected, owing to their very small number. They were considered at the top of their respective fields and were public intellectuals who were prepared to speak out. Such criticism of Murdoch is unusual in the light of the ‘God Professor tradition’ referred to earlier. In his article on Western Australia’s first Professor of Economics, Edward Shann, Gregory Moore, notes the extent of the status afforded to both Shann and Murdoch, who lived in South Perth, and were recognisable figures in Perth during that time (17).32 To criticise a professor such as Murdoch was a bold step and perhaps this is why criticism was only distributed by educators at Perth’s elite schools or those not willing to disclose their identities. Dr M. A. Buntine, headmaster of Hale School (1931-1946), agreed with Murdoch’s position but was critical of the university’s influence:

Dr Buntine said that there was no doubt the University made a good deal of money out of examinations. The welfare of students however, should be placed before the acquisition of revenue for the University. From what he had been told, it seemed that the schools in Western Australia existed for the benefit of the

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32 Moore contrasts the status of the academic during the years shared by Shann and Murdoch at the university (1913-1934) with that of today: ‘Unlike today, where the status of the university man has gone the way of the status of the schoolmaster, the position of professor was still something of note and the good citizens of Perth would point him out. Future students of the university, such as John La Nauze, recalled that they knew these university identities by sight on the ferry jetties from their school-days’ (17).
University, instead of the University existing for the benefit of the students who came from the schools. (‘Examination System “Tip-Toeing”’)

Buntine refers to an instance where ‘the University’ (presumably the PEB) was inflexible about delaying the examination dates by two weeks for the schools’ convenience, and ‘did not bother about the schools’. It is consistent with the fact that during the 1960s expansion in ‘free, secular, and compulsory’ education, when it was no longer feasible for the university to conduct examinations, responsibility for them was relinquished and quickly assigned to the schools. But this criticism is inconsistent with the trend of decisions recorded in the PEB meeting minutes where members discussed and appeared to show due consideration to requests by the schools to accommodate their requests (even to the point of readily forming sub-committees to resolve agenda items and to make recommendations that would be best for all). This was also supported in the minutes and the press which reported changes to the Junior Certificate in 1933.

**Continuous Assessment - Progressivism**

In November 1932, Murdoch gave notice that at the next meeting of the Board he would move ‘that the Junior Examination be abolished’ (UWA Archives, cons 394, 25 Nov. 1932). This allowed students the option to submit a notebook or portfolio of work rather than sit an examination if (s)he chooses to do so. This was an extraordinarily progressive assessment option suggested by Murdoch because he believed it was a more complementary and less ‘distasteful’ mode of English assessment. It was also a bold recommendation from a professor who was most determined that the university remain fee-free. Any decision to abolish examinations would mean terminating a source of income for the university. In this way, the finances of examinations form part of the story of secondary curricular control in Western Australia. Along with Murdoch, Chief Examiner of English at that time H.S. Thompson argued that an examination was a powerful way of instantly eradicating any potential for literary enjoyment (‘Public Examinations’). The *West Australian* reported:

> The object of the new proposal, Mr Thompson said, was to give the teacher the opportunity of teaching literature in a way which he considered would be most likely to rouse in the children an appreciation of literature. There was a tendency to recognise that the examination system did not encourage children to appreciate the best in literature. This, it was felt, was apparent even when the pupils were allowed a choice of reading. (‘Public Examinations’)

Efforts to amend the syllabus reflect a certain ‘vision’ rather than the conservative or traditional thinking that Murdoch was accused of exhibiting by teachers, parents, reporters and even doctoral candidates. Murdoch viewed English Literature as a subject which did not
lend itself to examination and that in some cases, there was no harm done, but in others ‘the system gave pupils a permanent distaste for literature.’ He continued:

‘At the meeting of the Public Examinations Board,’ he said, ‘one schoolmaster mentioned during the discussion that this year pupils would read Stevenson’s ‘Master of Ballantrae’ eight times in the course of their work. I should imagine that nothing would be more likely to give the pupils a permanent dislike for Stevenson and all literature of that class than being compelled to read that book eight times in the year, thinking all the time of the examiner, and of the questions he would be likely to ask on the book.’

The gifted teacher, Professor Murdoch continued, who could inspire a love of literature was hampered by having to teach books in which he might not be interested and to teach those books always with the examination in view. ‘I think it immensely important,’ he said, ‘that the love of literature should be encouraged in children when it gives them a permanent resource which will last all their lives’. (‘Public Examinations’)

It is evident here that Murdoch was driven to promote literature and was prepared to stand up for this belief. Such a quality adheres to Baier’s definition of ‘intelligentsia’ as necessarily connected with independent thinking, therefore intellectuals were people who could ‘either say what they liked or have a say on the affairs of society. It was for the sake of “pure knowledge” and individualism that they chose to say “what they liked”’ (113). Murdoch reached out to wide audiences through his essays in the *West Australian* and the Melbourne *Argus*, among others, without shying away from controversy.

[M]ore often he was a champion of civil liberties, attacking political censorship and upholding the rights of unpopular minorities whose ideas were very different to his own, such as the Communist Party. It was good for Western Australia in those years that professors such as Murdoch, Fox, Beazley and Alexander were prepared to speak out. (Bolton, ‘Crossroads’ 3)

Walter Murdoch’s role at the University was a special one. He was a public intellectual and member of the academy who contributed to the cultural development of Perth and wider Australia, despite, like Shann, missing the cultural life of Melbourne (Moore 37). According to Philip Mead, Murdoch was part of a group of Melbourne literary intellectuals and cultural nationalists, including Alfred Deakin, Nettie Palmer (or Higgins) and Morris Miller, who contributed hugely to laying the slab on which the Australian nation and its culture were built: Deakin in the areas of constitutional design and statesmanship, Palmer in literary scholarship and criticism, Morris Miller in librarianship and the bibliographical infrastructure of Australian literature, and Murdoch in teaching, broadcasting, university administration and literary journalism. (‘Remembering’ 7)

The ‘questions of cultural development cannot easily be separated from questions about institutions’ (Bergonzi 72) and in this sense, national identity, canonicity and imperialism were influencing the university and the state’s cultural development.
One criticism of Walter Murdoch is in Fred Alexander’s record of the first fifty years of the University of Western Australia. He asserted that English teaching at the university ‘under Murdoch was less intellectually reputable than it might have been’ (Dale, *English Men* 58):

Professor Murdoch set himself to stimulate literary appreciation and simple but effective self-expression, among not only students majoring in his department but also in all others who attended his classes. Specialised concentration on the needs of the students in English who had the requisite background of philological and linguistic knowledge for intensive advanced work was a secondary objective only rarely realised. (Alexander, *Campus* 124 – 25)

In response to this, however, Dale reasons that ‘the impression of intellectual lightness created by that curriculum is not reflected in the level of postgraduate research conducted at the University’ (*English Men* 58). As an example, Dale refers to Brian Elliott who travelled interstate to Perth to complete his Master of Arts thesis under Murdoch’s supervision and when he returned to Adelaide in 1940, Elliott immediately included Australian literature in the curriculum. In fact, he filled the first specialist academic position in English as designated Lecturer in Australian Literature (‘Walter’). This suggests that Murdoch’s supervision and teaching cannot have been all ‘light’, not all about *English* literature.

**Conclusion**

Murdoch was a humble and wise professor and writer who repositioned Australian literature in the conversations of the many Australians who enjoyed his newspaper columns. He seemed adverse to make changes on a whim and showed great respect for the integrity of proven literature and methods of teaching. This may explain why the Junior and Leaving Certificates in English changed only slightly during his time as professor and examiner at the University of Western Australia.

He had a great contempt for what he called ‘silly fashions’ and put us on guard against imitating the most recent vogue. He also wrote: ‘It has been my life-long habit to try to link literature with life and to regard the history of any nation’s literature as the spiritual autobiography of that nation’. (Hasluck 4)

Murdoch’s relative isolation as Perth’s only Professor of English represented a strength in the individualism that allowed him to work within the boundaries of the university and wield power with the best interests of teachers and students at the forefront of his decision-making. As a member of the university Public’s Examination Board for twenty-five years, Murdoch was largely influential in the decision-making regarding public examinations, and secondary school syllabuses. This influence was most significant upon subject English where Murdoch was also chief examiner for twenty-five years. Murdoch’s view of the people’s university was consistent with Cyril Jackson’s views of reading, composition and the ‘New Education’ before him.
Jackson brought about the abolition of school fees, the establishment of a teachers’ training college, and improvements in the resourcing of schools. He promoted student-centred learning and de-emphasised rote-learning and repetition. In these terms, the early leaders in education in Western Australia established the foundations of English: strongly influenced by England but imbued with democratic ideals and vision for relevant and meaningful education that provided an experience of life. It is fitting that these ideals were shared by Western Australia’s second Professor of English, Allan Edwards, whose ‘Cambridge’ version of English was welcomed as a refreshing change after twenty-five years of Murdoch’s Oxford brand of English.
The causes and effects of wider social reform in Western Australia were significant factors in shaping the development of senior secondary English during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Some of the reforms were part of immense global change including the Great Depression and World War Two. In literary studies, the theories of F.R. Leavis, T.S. Eliot and I.A. Richards rose to prominence, and locally, there was a surge in nationalism which had implications for the funding and scholarship of Australian literature in universities. The University of Western Australia remained the state’s sole university and its influence upon secondary English varied with the emergence of different literary traditions, with a large and more diverse population, and with changing social needs. In the Western Australian context, these changes were negotiated by the Director of Education, Thomas Logan Robertson and the newly appointed Professor of English, Allan Edwards. Edwards joined Alec King and H.S. Thompson in the University's English Department in 1941 following Walter Murdoch’s departure in 1939. Edwards re-vitalised tertiary English. He instigated a new tutorial method of teaching, stemming from his Cambridge education and from his concern for the prevalence of students’ rote-learning and reproducing rehearsed, ‘respectable’ examination responses. During his tenure, Edwards was Chief Examiner and member of the Public Examinations Board (PEB) and the secondary English syllabus expanded. Edwards perpetuated the Cultural Heritage tradition established by Walter Murdoch and the two emphasised the study of literature suggesting they were not as opposing as previously represented. Edwards’s emphasis upon teaching ‘classical’ literature was not in the interests of belletrism, however, but to affirm ‘high culture’ and the study of literary ‘greats’. In addition to this philosophy, in the 1930s and 40s at the University of Western Australia, Edwards and King pursued their scholarly interests in the contemporary poets, such as the modernists who were gaining popularity in England and the United States. They also integrated Australian literature into the curriculum, which rose to greater prominence as a field of study in an era of increased nationalism nation-wide.

The 1930s, 40s and 50s were times of poverty, war and nation rebuilding. The financial difficulties of these decades had a dampening effect upon educational change state wide (M. White, 'Sixty’ 74). In the 1940s, increased nationalism accompanying Australia’s war efforts stirred greater awareness of egalitarianism and social democracy. These changing attitudes necessitated educational reform, despite its being a time of financial stringency for the nation. In Western Australia, 1941 was a significant year at the university, not just because Allan Edwards arrived as the new Professor of English, but because it was the year of the Royal
Commission into the administration and finances of the university. Chaired by the Honourable Justice Albert Asher Wolff, the inquiry emerged from university concerns about funding and from societal concerns about elitism (Gardiner and O'Donoghue 6). The report produced ‘trenchant criticisms’ of the financial state of the university and of the ‘University’s involvement in sub-graduate level teaching and community service work generally’ (M. White, ‘Sixty’ 69). Wolff’s report stressed that the university should insist upon a basic level of education before admitting students to any courses and it emphasised the purpose of learning for the love of it, not just for turning knowledge into a monetary account (Wolff 40). His recommendations highlighted a theoretical and research function of the university, de-emphasising its utilitarian role, and by 1946, in response to the criticism of poor entry standards, the PEB increased matriculation requirements to passes in five rather than four Leaving subjects (English and four others). This reflects wider societal changes of the post-war years which led to the expansion of technical education and the first major intrusion of the Commonwealth Government into tertiary education (Lake and Neal 251).

Professor Allan Edwards

The relationship between tertiary and secondary English at this time was such that the subject professor was held in high esteem, as he always had been in the history of curricular control in Western Australia. As Chief examiner and intellectual leader in the subject area, the professor guided the form and content of the subject by nature of his authority over the examinations and syllabuses. Given that the Professor of English was ‘in charge of a subject with wide ramifications in secondary schools where it was studied by all candidates for the public examinations, it was inevitable that educational activities made heavy demands on the energies of the Professor of English’ (F.A. and M.N.A 3). It was fortunate, then, that when Allan Edwards filled the Chair of English at the University of Western Australia he brought with him ‘tremendous energy’ (Alexander, Campus 203). A member of the English Department between 1948 and 1960, David Bradley reflects that ‘to the Oxford-oriented department that Edwards inherited from Murdoch, whose syllabuses had scarcely changed in general character for 30 years, Edwards brought a fresh Cambridge vision and some original solutions’ (15). This ‘vision’ refers to Edwards’ emphasis on the literary and the critical as at Cambridge, rather than the literary attributed to Oxford, and instituted by Walter Murdoch before him.1 While Edwards and Murdoch emphasised the study of canonical literature, Murdoch did so oriented towards literary history, scholarship and philology whereas Edwards’ Cambridge model was fresh in its a-historical criticism, otherwise known as the New Criticism, and part of Edwards’

1 even though Murdoch did not attend Oxford.
experiences learning under I.A. Richards and F.R. Leavis. While Edwards is repeatedly represented as a Leavisite, I question that particular characterisation here, given his broad involvement in cultural pursuits, his staffing appointments, and his approaches to teaching and pedagogy which also suggest a more democratic and carnivalesque approach to teaching and the arts.

Despite being loyal to the English canon, as Murdoch was, Edwards was considered a breath of fresh air by many at the university because he brought energy for change:

Professor Allan Edwards was a young Englishman in his thirty-second year who came direct to Western Australia from South Africa, where he had been Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Cape Town since 1935. A Cambridge man, whose defective eyesight had caused his rejection for military service, Professor Edwards brought with him a reputation for ‘tremendous energy’ which he was to expend partly on revolutionary changes in English teaching methods and, for a time, in vigorous campaigning for improved library facilities inside and outside the University. (Alexander, Campus 203)

Edwards’ support for the local libraries stemmed from his childhood experiences. He grew up an avid user of his local library in Bolton and was outspoken about their importance once he came to Perth.² Edwards was well aware of the need for students to be engaged with literature. Edwards emphasised reading in his response to the needs of Australian students which ‘was to throw out chronology and the historical canon and to entice students to read strenuously, with attention and intelligence: to confront their own lives with the experiences of books’ (15). Murdoch was also an advocate for public libraries, arguing that there ought to be ‘a free lending library in every town in the state’ (‘Our Wasted Resources’; ‘Mobilising’). It is fitting that public intellectuals such as he and Edwards were prepared to use their position for advocacy of the public library system, reflecting a democratic approach to the availability and accessibility of reading for all.³ This community-centred ethos permeates much of the work of the first professors because they were public figures who used their expertise and credibility to serve the society in which their vocation was fulfilled. In this capacity, Edwards adheres to Edward Said’s definition of the public intellectual as an individual with a specific public role in

² See ‘Correspondence: the public library’ (1950) where Edwards heads a conglomerate of university staff writing to the newspaper’s editor declaring that the library system needs greater financial support because the library system was suffering from ‘malnutrition’.

³ The Sunday Times reported that Edwards ‘adds to his Australian-wide reputation as an advocate of practical democracy with an article in the new ABC magazine “Talk” (“WA Professor”). In this article, Edwards urges women to remember their foremothers’ fight for suffrage, to encourage them to participate in local elections and bring about improvements in local services, including public libraries. Coincidently, another contributor to this edition who was ‘well known in WA’ was academic Brian Elliott. Elliott had completed his Master of Arts at the University of Western Australia (supervised by Walter Murdoch) and tutored there in the 1930s before accepting a lectureship at the University of Adelaide in 1940 (‘Brian Elliott’).
Edwards was a great supporter of the arts, and Bob White, a later professor at the University, highlights the many significant contributions Edwards made as professor, public intellectual and self-appointed patron of the arts. These contributions include expansion of the university’s Dramatic Society and art collection, development of the Dolphin, Octagon and Somerville theatres and the Sunken Garden, and planning of the New Fortune Theatre. Edwards promoted literature, theatre and the visual arts not only to students at the university, but to wider Perth society as well. In this regard, he was ‘an unusual man of independent vision’ (Jordan 76). Collin O’Brien, who worked with Edwards for more than two decades, is complimentary of the way that,

Edwards broadened the base of the English department by employing staff on the basis of their talents rather than their academic qualifications. As a result the department included actors, directors and music and theatre specialists who enlivened the place with their practical experience. (‘Death closes literary era’)

Some of these staff members employed by Edwards included drama specialists Jean Tweedie (Jeana Bradley), Neville Teede, Philip Parsons, and David Bradley. Foundation editor of Westerly Robert (Bob) Smith recognised that,

The inspirational teaching of David Bradley and Jean Tweedie [...] was based on the tacit understanding that plays (especially those of Shakespeare) were composed as performance scripts, not for publication as light fiction, and even less as pedagogic exercises for the torment of high-school students. (10)

This interactive approach to teaching was most likely cultivated by their studies in Elizabethan, Jacobean and Restoration theatre in the United Kingdom, which Edwards encouraged them to undertake during the late 1950s and early 1960s. It represents an example of liberal cultural engagement inconsistent with Leavisite tendencies but consistent with the Dale’s point that ‘[a]t UWA Leavis was never mentioned’ (Enchantment 193). It was taught to secondary students via the ABC Schools Broadcasts.

Edwards’ emphasis on the study of drama in English encouraged an increase in the number of student productions at the university. ‘He believed the best way to study a play was to see a good performance, or, better still, to take part in a production’ (‘Curtain Up’ 24). This engagement of student interest was made possible by the relatively small size of the university

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4 Edwards had the vision of transforming one of the university courtyards into the New Fortune Theatre, as a version of its 1599 London namesake (‘University Theatres’).
and the opportunities provided by its staff. ‘Edwards wanted literature to be a joyful hands-on experience, and there were lively readings of poetry, evenings of ballad singing and weekly play readings’ (Bradley 15). Writer Dorothy Hewett, who attended the University of Western Australia as a student in 1940 and 1941, recalls that, ‘every month the Professor of English holds play readings for us in his home’ (89). Hewett also acknowledges that the University was somewhat provincial between the wars, but it was the small size that enabled close relationships to form between teachers, students, and local artists. This opened up the study of English to a freer version, characterised by independent and liberal thinking about literature and the world. It was aided by Edwards’ pedagogical approach, which privileged ‘appreciation’ and the aesthetical appeal of English. For example, Edwards would ask his wife to sit in on his lectures to evaluate them: ‘I had a theory, which I still hold, that English ought to be fun and the lecturer ought to be a good performer, a good actor’ (Edwards, Interview 5). This perspective is distant from the more Leavisite view of pedagogy that where education is about moral and character formation as much as intellectual development.

Under Edwards’ guidance, English was developing with progressive, artistic and emancipatory roots, a contrast to the discipline’s more conservative foundations where English was central to the curriculum for the purpose of civil formation and social control.

Edwards’ approach to English is also explained, in part, by his strong interest in, and knowledge of, Australian art. He was willing to take risks and had ‘good contacts in the art world in Australia’ (Bird 11). For example, Edwards was responsible for the acquisition of the University’s first Sidney Nolan paintings, at the time considered ‘lunacy’. The purchases earned Edwards criticism for ‘wasting the University’s funds’ (‘From “lunacy”’). Edwards also invested in many impressive sculptures on the University’s behalf, and in this way, was a pioneer of the arts in Western Australia. Bob White summarises Edwards’ contribution, worth quoting at length:

He was a pioneer of theatre in the west of Australia, actively supporting professionals and amateurs alike, and holding readings of plays and poetry at his home. He was one of the team that initiated Westerly. He built up through shrewd recruitment and an indefatigable emphasis on energetic teaching, an impressive department of English, which turned out graduates who took

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5 Edwards also reminisces about the arrival of Len Burrows at UWA in 1949: ‘At first, not surprisingly, he was stunned by our circus cavortings, our ballad singing, our poetry readings, our play readings, our readiness to dash off lecture notes at a moment’s warning – all most unacademic’ (Interview 14).

6 In UWA News (Sept. 2011), Education Officer at The Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, Dr Stephanie Green describes Edwards as visionary: ‘He risked his reputation. He also bought paintings by Arthur Boyd and Inge King’s sculptures and made the University much more cutting edge culturally speaking.’ Edwards acknowledged that the decision to buy the Nolan paintings had been ‘a hard one to live with in 1951’ owing to the extensive public and private criticism, including ‘a “storm of abuse [that] filled the columns of the Daily News and the West Australian”’ (‘From “Lunacy”’ 11).
influential positions around Australia in the profession at a shaping time. This is no mean feat when the department’s fate could well have been aimless *belle-lettrisme* and provincialism. (R. White 61)

**Leavisism and Allan Edwards**

When Edwards arrived at the University of Western Australia he brought the number of staff to three, alongside Associate Professor Henry Sherman (H.S.) Thompson and lecturer Alec King. According to Edwards’ staff file, the professor’s role in secondary English was not stipulated at his appointment, except where it was a requirement of the University to sit on the Public Examinations Board. Edwards’ application for the professorship was supported by five letters of recommendation from across the globe, including one each from F.R. Leavis, then a Lecturer in English at Emmanuel College, and I.A. Richards, Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge (UWA Archives, staff file P202). In January 1941 following Edwards’ appointment to the Chair in Western Australia, Vice-Chancellor George Currie wrote to Edwards, describing secondary English in less than favourable terms: ‘English in this State, I think, is not taught to a frightfully high standard at school, so, just as I told you, there is plenty of room for teaching it.’ (UWA Archives, staff file P202).

Following this, Edwards’ tenure produced change in the secondary syllabus to some degree. In the study and teaching of English in Western Australia new theories and modes of instruction were practised within the university, but were not obviously injected into the senior secondary curriculum documents at the same rate of change, as tertiary educator Ken Willis attests:

> A study of curriculum documents, examination papers and classroom practices of the 1940s and early 1950s in Western Australia indicates that they were still significantly influenced by ideas and practices introduced in the 1912-15 period. Given this span of time, it is easy to see why such practices were accepted as ‘natural’ or ‘normal’ by many teachers and students. (116)

When Murdoch and the PEB were making decisions about the English syllabus and examinations, they affected approximately thirty schools and colleges. This number is significant, both because only six of these were state schools and because although the numbers of schools continued to grow, it was still the long-established secondary colleges, mostly independent ones of the Western suburbs, that continued to wield considerable influence in the decision-making committee of the Teachers and Examiners of English formed

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7 In his obituary for Edwards, Bob White also notes the relationship between Edwards and the wider Perth community. Edwards was a public figure in the same vein as Murdoch: ‘Edwards continued to demonstrate that one could be an academic and at the same time an involved and enthusiastic member of the wider community’ (R. White 63).

8 The letters of recommendation in Edwards’s staff file were dated 1932 suggesting Edwards had been trying to leave South Africa for some time.
in 1942. This body included representatives from the university and from school, usually of the aforementioned type. Attendance at the meetings was open and it gave all schools in the metropolitan area the opportunity to participate in decisions affecting candidates preparing for the Junior and Leaving Certificates. The meeting minutes of the Teachers and Examiners of English reveal a greater number of university staff members participating in the duties of chairing and decision-making than just one professor in the Chair. The Chairman was always the subject’s First Examiner so the University’s Professor of English and his departmental staff controlled the meetings, as was appropriate for chief examiners to do.

The English Canon

Both the tertiary and secondary curricula diluted, but in no way discarded, the study of the English canon. The University’s Arts Faculty Handbooks of the 1950s show the English curriculum was still ‘grounded in the British canon that Edwards knew from his studies at Cambridge in the 1930s with I.A. Richards and a young F.R. Leavis’ (D.Brown 34). This version of English, the Cultural Heritage model, which stresses appreciation of the great works of the language, has come under continuous attack since the late 1960s, for ‘institutionalising an exclusive teaching of the great works of English Literature’ (Cox, Cox 71). This exclusivity and cultural elitism are embedded in the Leavisite and Anglophilic tendencies to endorse the maintenance of cultural heritage through studying the (English) canon. Such a practice infiltrated Leaving syllabuses and public examinations in Western Australia and was perpetuated by the study of canonical texts that privileged British values, beliefs and traditions, and were quite removed from the experiences and interests of large sections of the population. It is a practice maintaining English as a vehicle of discrimination through which the teaching of canonical texts becomes the act of bestowing a ‘Bourdieuian gift’ upon students of English (McLean Davies, ‘Building’ 8). Under Edwards, the connections between literature and the world were highlighted but were filtered through the lens of Leavisism which sees literature as a means of acquiring social assets, later labelled ‘cultural capital’ by Bourdieu (1986). The teachers at the university facilitated this situation by continuing to teach the ‘classics’, thus continuing to authorise their value, but to characterise Edwards as a pure Leavisite because of the dominant inclusions of the canon during his tenure would overlook the carnivalesque ‘circus cavortings’ of the English Department— all most unacademic’ (Edwards, Interview 14).

9 Including university staff members Alec King, Len Burrows and George Seddon, for example.
10 In 1950 for example, the authors studied were Lovett and Hughes, Austen, Bronte, Dickens, Bennett, Hardy, Cowling ed. (Chaucer and English Verse), King and Ketley, and Passmore (UWA, Calendar 73).
Edwards was not, however, as solitary in curricular decision-making as Murdoch was. By nature of the growth of the University and state, the professor’s curricular control over secondary education was beginning to diffuse, though Edwards’ emphases remain conspicuous in the restructure of the university courses and secondary text lists:

His syllabuses were restructured on genre lines – poetry, drama, the novel. At the same time, he felt a study of powerful contemporary linguistic strategies – persuasive, scientific and poetic – might better be made to serve the interests of a postwar generation than traditional Old and Middle English. (Bradley 15)

This praise for Edwards’ relevant and modern approach is significant in the light of the criticism that Murdoch faced for privileging literature over language (Dale, *English Men* 36). That is, literature study was privileged by both Murdoch and Edwards but it was considered an unpopular approach during Murdoch’s tenure but a ‘fresh’ approach during Edwards’s. In spite of their ostensible differences Murdoch and Edwards had a lot more in common than commentators have identified previously. This includes their adoption to the ‘New Education’ Fellowship approach to child rearing and schooling. Alongside the ‘linguistic strategies’ that Bradley identifies, Edwards retained an emphasis on teaching literature (the ‘classics’), and on close reading. This was a move away from Murdoch’s emphasis on writing which re-surfaced in secondary English in Western Australia in later decades.\(^{11}\) The Murdochian ideology also advocated mass access to culture and education as a part of broader democratic ideals. In the 1930s at the University of Western Australia, these were superseded by Cambridge principles imported by Edwards. Edwards’ teaching bears witness to his exposure to Leavis and the characteristics of Leavisism including a commitment to the educational field very broadly.

‘A Fair Go’ – Edwards’ Tutorials

A university’s vice-chancellor inevitably shapes its vision and practices, and this is apparent in the decisions and appointments made by George Currie at the University of Western Australia between 1940 and 1952. In the late 1940s Currie and the University Senate were emphasising research in the new professorial appointments in Science and this was matched by ‘the Vice-Chancellor’s keen interest in new teaching methods in the humanities and in other attempts to quicken student interest, inside and outside the graduate body’ (Alexander, *Campus* 234). Currie, who appointed Allan Edwards, came to be his friend and exercise partner. He gave Edwards some valuable advice about Australian culture, reassuring him that he would be given ‘a fair go’.\(^{12}\) This gave Edwards the confidence to try new approaches in his teaching and

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\(^{11}\) See writing projects led by Jonathan Cook and Bruce Bennett for example.

\(^{12}\) Alexander describes how ‘Dr Currie shared with the young Professor of English a fondness for vigorous exercise by tramping round the countryside, out of which came encouragement for some enthusiastic experimentation in tutorial methods in the Department of English’ (*Campus* 234-35).
leadership at the University (Edwards, Interview 11). In a letter of recommendation to the University of Melbourne dated 8 November 1943, Currie praises Edwards’s efforts to remodel the course in English for in so doing, he gave it ‘new vigour and new interest’, to make the school ‘one of the most live [sic] in the Arts Department’ (UWA Archives, staff file P202). Significantly, the date of the letter is less than two years after Edwards’ arrival at the University, suggesting the immediacy and efficiency with which Edwards implemented curricular change.

One of Edwards’ most significant and direct influences upon teaching and learning at the university was instituting tutorials in the form we know them today. Held in the tutors’ own rooms (‘another Cambridge idea’), Leonard Burrows explained that the tutorials were ‘an essential part of the Edwards theory, that you had to discuss these things with a tutor; it’s not just a matter of giving lectures, that was the least of it according to Allan Edwards’ (Interview). Burrows also described the changes Edwards made to the course structure at the university. Instead of teaching English chronologically, ‘reign by reign, century by century’, Edwards and Alec King worked out courses that began with the study of how to read, and how to read literature in particular (L.Burrows, Interview). They were ‘unusual’ for Australia, and for England too. The course structure was,

[in]ot historical at all. First year unit was in three parts: poetry, novel, drama. Second year was more historical: more drama and 17th century poetry. Third year – anything, the Victorian novel, that sort of thing. Edwards had picked up this idea in Cambridge, intended it to be quite different from the usual programme in English studies, in England, or anywhere. (L.Burrows, Interview)

Edwards saw attending lectures as being ‘too easy’ for students to sit and absorb content without engaging with the discussion or thinking independently:  

My basic idea, you see, was that what we should be trying to do was to get people to learn how to read for themselves and arrive at their own impressions and their own verdicts. To know why they’d arrived at these verdicts and be prepared to talk about them and discuss with other students how they’d arrived at the conclusions. (Edwards, Interview 7)

The intensive tutorial system which Edwards introduced doubled and trebled the number of class hours that were common in other Australian universities, where tutorials existed at all.

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13 In his interview with Ann Reid, Edwards says that Currie advised him: ‘Well you give it a go. You know here in Australia you’re always given a go. In fact, if you make a mess of it you’re given a second go. But be very careful don’t make a third mess.’ Edwards reflected upon this: ‘I was tremendously impressed by this because in Cambridge, like most English universities it takes about 40 years to make a major change of the kind I was suggesting’ (referring to changes in syllabus and tutorial methods) (11).
14 Edwards made tutorials spontaneous and varied. He often mounted play readings followed by lively tutorials (‘Curtain Up’), and Dorothy Hewett recalls the time that the novelist Vance Palmer ‘turns up’ in an Edwards’s tutorial (89).
Discussion was fed by elaborate lecture notes, produced by Edwards and other senior staff, twice weekly, which were constantly revised: ‘These were the forerunners of the sort of course books that are now imitated in almost all universities’ (Bradley 15). Edwards’ motivation for introducing tutorials was to generate genuine group discussion among people rather than ‘turn people into more or less learned parrots’ (Edwards, Interview 8). It was also a format that facilitated very close readings in the Richards’ and Leavis’ traditions, a preferred pedagogical strategy of Edwards, and a pertinent point in the way this pedagogy influences the direction of secondary English.  

**Critical Standards and Close Reading**

The study of English was flourishing globally, with shifts in literary theory aiding the discipline’s status and credibility. In the United Kingdom during the 1930s and 40s, F.R. Leavis and T.S. Eliot were emerging as leading cultural and literary influences. Leavis was an author and literary critic who taught at Cambridge and founded *Scrutiny* magazine, through which he perpetuated ideals of critical standards. He was a great influence on Edwards especially through ‘Scrutiny’. Leavis viewed literature as representing life, and as a source of aesthetic and moral values. Accordingly, the criteria for evaluating texts were their content and the moral position of the author which could be sufficiently determined through ‘close reading’.

The term ‘close reading’ refers not only to an activity with regard to texts but also to a type of text itself: a technically informed, fine-grained analysis of some piece of writing, usually in connection with some broader question of interest. The practice has multiple ancestors, including classical rhetorical description, theological exegesis and legal interpretation, and also some cousins, such as iconology and psychoanalysis. All of these would have been familiar to the small group of accomplished British dons and poets whose efforts to reform literary study in the 1920s and 30s came to be called ‘the New Criticism’ and whose critical essays served as models for the practices that came to be called ‘close reading.’ (Herrnstein Smith 2)

This ‘close study’ of texts applies a clear process to purposeful reading. It aims to improve techniques in analysis and equip students with the ability to read any text. In an article published in *Meanjin* in 1952, Edwards outlines his department’s teaching aims:

> In the English department of the University of Western Australia we believe that we can best help our students to a more critical understanding and to a livelier understanding of literature through work in small tutorial groups rather than

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15 Edwards believed that ‘the test of a good student was what he did with a poem that was quite new to him (Interview 8).

16 Edwards recalls the influence of *Scrutiny* on department staff at the university: ‘Well I was one of the original contributors and certainly our copies of ‘Scrutiny’ were worn out very rapidly in Western Australia. We have a set now [1984] which looks as though it’s been battered to death. He [Leavis] is certainly very important to me, [...]’ (Interview 4).
through lectures, and through the close study of a limited number of texts rather
than through broad survey courses. (‘Australian’ 174)

Richards and Edwards were advocates of this reading strategy which recognises the intrinsic
value of the text because its own characteristics are the sole components of meaning rather
than contextual factors. Leigh Dale cites former UWA English student Jim Wieland who went
on to become Professor and Head of the Department of English at the University of
Wollongong.17 Jim Wieland’s criticism of this approach was that it was ‘naïve, text-centred, and
a-historical. Any text we read had an autonomous, autotelic existence in which we were to find
thing was that they had not been primed up with the right answers, they had to find the
answers themselves and they were judged on their ability to find and present intelligibly
reasonably persuasive answers’ (Interview 8). A product of Edwards’ endorsing such an
approach meant that frequently during his tenure, examination papers at both the university
and Leaving Certificate levels began with an unseen passage, a practice which continues
today.18 Where Richards is synonymous with the ‘prac crit’, the close and intricate analysis of a
section of text, Leavis was ‘deeply imperialist’, and ‘believed that the universities – both of
them – had a central role to play in preserving and maintaining culture’ (Dale, English Men
111). This belief, of course, highlights the elitism embedded in Leavis’s view of literary study
and culture, but not Edwards’s entirely.

F.R. Leavis and the New Criticism in Western Australia

Edwards acknowledges that Leavis and Richards led him in Cambridge ‘to pay a good deal of
attention to Practical Criticism’ (UWA Archives, staff file P202). In fact, Edwards was ‘probably
one of the very first academic people to put Richards’ and Leavis’ ideas into practice’ (Edwards,
Interview 11). Edwards was the only Chair of English at an Australian university ‘who had
countered the younger and then institutionally marginalised Leavis’ (Dale, English Men 114),
while Melbourne academic and literary critic Terry Collits extends this claim by crediting
Edwards with the importation and dissemination of Leavisism in Australia:

Naturally enough, migrating Leavisism first touched these shores at Perth, with
the professional appointment of a veritable ‘Scrutineer’, Allan Edwards. The word

17 James (Jim) Wieland was awarded a Bachelor of Arts with First Class Honours in English from the
University of Western Australia in May 1974
18 In the 1952 second Leaving paper students are asked to compare and contrast unseen two poems:
‘Song of the Galley Slaves’ and ‘Thief’. In the Reading Section of the 2012 WACE English Stage 3 paper,
candidates could choose between two texts: a 2011 Anzac Day speech by Chaplain Mark Willis and an
extract from a short story by Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie, published in 2009. There are two
compulsory questions in this section. Question 1 is, ‘Discuss how either Text 1 or Text 2 constructs ideas
about identity’ and Question 2 is ‘With reference to at least one written text you have studied, explain
how an understanding of context influenced your response to the text’s ideas’ (SCSA 3).
was brought across to Melbourne by Jock Tomlinson in the early 1950s, and Leavis was more or less the sign under which the brilliant younger brigade of the department (Goldberg himself, Maggie Tomlinson, David Moody and Vincent Buckley) set about revamping its pedagogy. (Collits 25)

In the way that Collits describes, and as Dale argues, ‘Perth became a conduit of Leavisism’ (Enchantment 193):

Allan Edwards brought with him first hand involvement in the Scrutiny movement and related debates, and might have transformed the discipline had he not remained isolated at Western Australia. There, he built a department that reflected his views but did not transmit them beyond Perth until a movement of academic staff from UWA to Melbourne began in the 1960s. (Enchantment 287)

In Australian universities during the 1950s and 1960s, literary criticism was polarised, with radical nationalism on the one hand, and ‘New Criticism and Leavisism’ on the other (Milner 123). The fact that Allan Edwards was open to both extremes highlights the extent of the range of ideologies working within the teaching and learning of English at this time. These extremes co-habited the subject frame sometimes comfortably, but often uncomfortably. Dale says that, ‘In practice, things do tend to get mixed up’ and refers to teaching methods at UWA being ‘suspiciously similar in practice’ despite the visible differences and contradictions aired in Westerly and in lectures, ‘with a useful lack of consistency’ (Enchantment 192-93). When Daniel Brown analysed the influences upon the writing of Randolph Stow, who studied at the University of Western Australia between 1953 and 1955, he determined that the curriculum, publications and aesthetic interests of Edwards, particularly art, had a significant impact upon Stow. Brown argues that the hybrid nature of Stow’s early poetry resisted that which ‘sustained the old literary factional categories of Australian nationalists and modernist internationalists’ (34). Furthermore, Brown claimed that Stow’s refusal to align with either faction ‘is consistent with the prevailing attitudes to literary culture he encountered as an undergraduate at the University of Western Australia’ (34). In addition to the diverse curriculum, Brown suggests that the UWA Arts Union publication the Winthrop Review, in which Stow’s early poems were published, was founded on ‘editorial principles of openness and catholicity’ and likewise was reflective of ‘this happy confluence’ (35) between nationalism and internationalism.

Beginning with its founders Geoffrey Bolton and Harry Heseltine, the editors of the Review eschewed the factionalism of nationalists and internationalists as an Eastern states affliction, from which Perth had been happily quarantined by its

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19 ‘Scrutineer’ makes reference to the Leavisite publication, Scrutiny, first published in May 1932, and founded by F.R. Leavis and his wife, Queenie. It sought to promulgate moral ideas about literature, to champion elite culture and to counter ‘the deadening effects of industrial society and a vulgar mass media’ (Ryan and Ryan). Allan Edwards had reviews published in Scrutiny in Dec 1932, June 1933 and June 1934.
geographical isolation: ‘We suspect that, here in Perth, the enrichment of the arts in Australia will occur from a synthesis of these two elements’, and ‘hope that our pages will contain both reflections of the local environment, and cultural studies of a more cosmopolitan nature’ (Bolton, Rogers and Owen 1). (D.Brown 35)

This publication emerged from a context of seemingly balanced tension which may explain, in part, the Department’s accommodation of the studies of canonical literature, contemporary, modernist writers and Australian literature, which appear contradictory and potentially fragmentary, but which produced a diverse and alloyed programme of study.

Leavisite philosophies appear at odds with Australian literature, particularly in the era of A.A. Phillips’ concept of the ‘cultural cringe’ where deep-rooted suspicion claimed that Australian literature was not worthy of study. Because Leavis holds that through literature the best of culture can be defined and defended, it upholds a particular mode of cultural expression as dominant, superior and exclusive. This accompanies a particular discourse of ‘critical standards’ produced by a teacher’s view of ‘classic literature’ as a champion of elite culture and ‘moral competence’ (Hunter, ‘Culture’). Leavis termed it ‘the great tradition’, the title of his book published in 1948. Leigh Dale sees it as compatible with nationalism: ‘It meshed perfectly with patriotic sentiment, but not, ultimately, with the classicism that it replaced’ (English Men 113). Leavisite criticism is intended to sharpen readers’ abilities to discern literary greatness and to ‘see things as they are’, presuming there to be one, true reading of a text and a transcendental meaning. Leavisism assumes ‘that there is a transcendent meaning in the text as the achieved realisation of a divinely-inspired highly sensitive author’ (Thomson 194). Put into perspective in a Western Australian context, Edwards, ‘was not a Leavisite as that word came to be understood in Australia, except in so far as he would have agreed that, in the master’s words, “literary criticism is an appeal for agreement”’ (Bradley 15). In this way, he has been wrongly characterised by Dale (English Men; Enchantment). Edwards was in favour of radio broadcasts and plays, a respect for media texts which is contrary to Leavis who viewed mass media as inferior and product of a ‘culture crisis’ (Leavis 5).

**Literature and ‘Respectability’**

The ideological underpinnings of the study of English in Western Australia hold literature as a source of insight into humanity and the world. Both Edwards and Murdoch held this view, which Edwards articulated in a radio broadcast in February 1951:

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20 In the 1950 summer edition of Meanjin, A.A. Phillips highlighted the inferiority felt by many Australian writers when compared to their British counterparts (an ‘intimidating mass of Anglo-Saxon culture’), Phillips argues that Australian readers ask, ‘Yes, but what would a cultivated Englishman think of this?’ (355).
At any rate, through undergoing the experiences offered in literature, we may grow wider in our sympathies, we may see more deeply into the meaning of things, we may grow wiser and more human – more civilised if you like. (UWA Archives, staff file P202)\(^{21}\)

As a student at the university during Murdoch’s tenure, writer and teacher Peter Cowan claims that the connection between literature and the world was neither established nor emphasised by Murdoch, but was so more explicitly by Edwards. Educators Cyril Jackson and Walter Murdoch, like Edwards, believed in the virtue of independent thinking and the civilising function of English. These views are present in many of Murdoch’s essays including ‘On Dull People’ in which he expresses his hope that ‘education will train children for the real duty of life, which is to think for oneself and to act for oneself, and not to be one of the lifeless automata which make up the serried ranks of respectability’ (537). It is significant that both Murdoch and Edwards use the term ‘respectable’. For Murdoch it is as an undesirable quality that connotes ‘accepting ready-made the beliefs of others’ (537); for Edwards it incarnates as practised, unquestioned views (UWA Archives, cons 268, 1 Apr. 1944). Both professors argue for strengthening links between literature and the world, just as they argue against the non-thinking required to reproduce prepared examination responses.

_Circumventing the memorised essay response_

In an attempt to safeguard against rote learning, Edwards submitted a report to the meeting of teachers and examiners in English in April 1944, after Thompson asked him to comment on both the Junior and Leaving English papers for the purpose of changing their general nature. Among other recommendations, Edwards advocated the substitution of a formal essay with an editing task. This task would involve rewriting and improving a passage of prose that is ‘obviously very poor in spelling, grammar, punctuation and general style,’ or as an alternative, translating a passage written for a very formal occasion into a ‘much freer, more colloquial language such as one might use in putting over the material to a smaller and more friendly group, or translating a short formal essay into, say, a broadcast talk’ (UWA Archives, cons 268, 20 Apr. 1944).\(^{22}\) These suggestions disclose Edwards’ emphases inherited by secondary subject English, how Edwards sought to test students’ mechanics of writing, and at the same time, to assess their ‘sensitivity’ to that which makes writing effective. In this assessment, Edwards seeks to vary the writing’s audience and form. He is promoting opportunities for students to develop their writing skills in situations they are more likely to encounter everyday rather than

\(^{21}\) For the text of this broadcast given Thursday 1\(^{st}\) February 1951 see Edwards’ staff file (UWA Archives, P202).

\(^{22}\) This report dated 19 April 1944 was presented for discussion at the meeting of teachers and examiners of English held on 20 Apr. 1944.
produce formal essays that had been set in previous examinations (UWA Archives, cons 268, 20 Apr. 1944). Such a task, which varies the context, purpose and audience, encourages spontaneous engagement with the text and ‘un-manufactured’ responses as a result. This is where Edwards is critical of safe, ‘respectable’ responses. In the example below it is difficult not to be swayed by his recommendations, particularly when in a spirit of collaboration he invites the advice and support of teachers ‘who are accustomed to working with boys and girls at the Leaving standard’. Edwards’s criticism of ‘respectability’ is also demonstrated when he concludes his recommendations with a list of assumptions underlying our aims in teaching English, which are:

(i) To help boys and girls to a greater mastery of English as writers, and (ii) to help them to a fuller, more sensitive appreciation of literature. Merely learning by rote safe and respectable opinions about poets and dramatists and novelists and unloading these safe and respectable opinions at high speed and in very poor English is not what we should be aiming at and should not qualify a candidate to pass in Leaving English, and, as papers are framed at the moment, a great many of the candidates who pass in the ‘P’ class do nothing better than this. (UWA Archives, cons 268, 20 Apr. 1944)

This vision for teachers of English is not that dissimilar from the goals of contemporary subject English. It reflects value placed upon student engagement, relevance and independent thinking in the tasks set for students of subject English. Edwards explains that in the university examinations, ‘Sometimes we might ask them to express an opinion, whether it was a good poems or not and why, whether they liked it or not‘ (Interview 8). This foregrounds reading practices that recognise the relationship between the text and the individual, a change from the cultural heritage model which focuses mainly on the cultural transmission and the study of classical literature and had dominated up until that time.

H.S. Thompson

Between the tenures of Murdoch and Edwards, H.S. (‘Harry’) Thompson guided senior secondary English in Western Australia. Thompson and Alec King worked together as the English Department, and Thompson’s impact upon secondary English in Western Australia is largely as First Examiner in the 1930s and then again between 1942 and 1947. He died suddenly in 1948. Thompson commenced at the university in 1921 and was the first graduate of the university to become both a lecturer and a senator (‘Professor’s Death’). He received the title of Associate Professor in 1937 and specialised in Old English (Alexander, Campus

23 The italics are mine, used to emphasise the inclusive language used by Edwards to represent himself as a speaker on behalf of the team of teachers he is influencing in making such recommendations.
Thompson showed due consideration for Leaving candidates experiencing difficulty with critical questions when, in 1942, his First Examiners’ Report contributed to the addition of some specific questions to the examination the year after, to guide students in their analysis (UWA Archives, cons 268, 27 Apr. 1942). The rationale for including these types of ‘guiding’ questions similarly influenced the Western Australian Certificate of Education Stage 2 English examination paper in 2009 where questions were broken down into separate dot point questions to scaffold student responses. In this way, Thompson was initiating models of support for those students needing extra direction without straying from the existing syllabus.

Also led by Thompson, but this time in 1947, the Teachers and Examiners of English Committee recommended the adoption of a new type of examination paper for the second paper in Leaving English. Thompson declared that the object of the changes was to encourage independent critical analysis and to provide candidates with the opportunity to practise handling the language with greater competence and insight:

> The type of question which the Committee has in mind which is being freely used in the teaching of English in England and America, will seek to test the candidate's sensitiveness (as reader and writer) to appropriate diction, clarity, order, logical thought, and the aptness of language for a particular purpose. (UWA Archives, cons 394, 1 May 1947)

The wider education context of developing and implementing syllabuses is significant here. Thompson’s reference to the English and American systems reflects well upon the efforts of the University of Western Australia staff members to be familiar with global trends in English, and adopt them accordingly.

Alec King

Another university staff member who came to influence the secondary English curriculum was Alec King. An Englishman, King met Catherine Murdoch, daughter of Walter Murdoch, at the London Day Training College in 1928 and he returned with her to Western Australia where they married in 1929. King was ‘an Oxford man’ but significantly, had trained as a teacher at the London Institute where he ‘had come under the influence of Mr. Gurrey, an enthusiastic

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24 Leonard Burrows was Thompson’s replacement at the university. When Burrows arrived in 1949 he did not (and ‘couldn’t’) teach Old English, and he was not required to. There had been an obvious and significant ‘changing of the guard’. Instead, Burrows began by teaching Browning (L.Burrows, Interview).

25 WACE Stage 2 Year 12 course was designed for students wishing to receive an examination result and therefore a tertiary entrance rank but not at the highest level of English that could be studied in Year 12. It is no longer possible for Stage 2 English students to sit an examination for the purpose of tertiary entrance. Question 1 of the Reading section of the 2009 WACE paper asks: ‘Explain how the text you have chosen represents a particular issue.’ This sort of question is also common in a Stage 3 English examination however, the Stage 2 paper adds in dot points: ‘Your response should: identify the text’s view on the issue’ and, ‘explain the written conventions used’ (Curriculum Council, WACE 2009 3)
admirer of Leavis’ (Edwards, Interview, Additional notes 1).26 King was appointed part-time assistant lecturer to the department of English at the University of Western Australia in 1933.27 King’s principal professional interest was poetry, particularly the modernist poets. King was of the group of contemporaries who appealed to university students between the wars. Western Australian journalist and author Norman Bartlett writes that during the 1930s, ‘Alec King kept us right up to the minute on the latest "movements" in England and Europe although nobody told us anything about America’ (61). In 1935, however, local writer and university student John Ewers invited King to radio broadcast a segment on modernism in Australian poetry:

King replied that he preferred to give readings, as his knowledge of Australian literature was limited. He said that he had found very little modernism in the Australian poetry he had read, and what he had found had failed to impress him. (qtd. in Kotai-Ewers 40)28

King’s opinion of his own ability to lecture on Australian literature is contrary to Edwards’ opinion expressed ten years later in December 1945 when, in a letter to Vice-Chancellor G.A. Currie, Edwards maintained that King would be most capable of presenting a series of lectures on the Australian poets.29

During Alec King’s time at Oxford University he was a member of a poetry group that included Cecil Day Lewis, Rex Warner and W.H. Auden (‘Chair of English’ 2).30 This explains why the Alec King Collection, acquired by the University of Western Australia library in 2009, contains ‘a number of valuable first editions of Auden, Eliot, Joyce and C. Day Lewis, including some signed copies’ (UWA, ‘Donations’ 6). The fact that King’s collection also contains ‘about 450 volumes of twentieth-century English literature, primarily poetry’ (p.6) is unsurprising given his areas of expertise.

26 King is the first of many notable teachers of English in Western Australia who was trained at the University of London’s Institute of Education.
27 He was then made lecturer (1941), senior lecturer (1946) and reader (1952) (Hay ‘King’).
28 Kotai-Ewers cites A. King to J.K. Ewers, 1 August 1935. Ewers papers BL 1870/549A/393 (40).
29 In the letter, Edwards indicated his plans for a series of lectures on Australian literature, specifically the Australian poets for the following year: ‘King could do the job very well, better than any of our local writers and a good deal better, I hope than T. Inglis Moore at Canberra who recently published a book, Six Australian Poets’ (UWA Archives, staff file P202). Edwards was critical of Inglis Moore and his attitude to Australian Literature. Leigh Dale cites another example of this animosity where Edwards alleges that Inglis Moore consistently overlooked the practical difficulties about the teaching of Australian literature: ‘a) where can large numbers of students find enough copies of the texts, and if they can’t, do we really approve survey courses full of second-hand judgements and dominated by cultural sociology, history of ideas, and so on’ (English Men 159). Edwards also suggests that postgraduate study of Australian literature is ‘dangerous work and might be best carried out’ where it is ‘easier to keep a level head than in a provincial corner like Perth’ (Dale, English Men 159).
30 The group was called the Poetry Writing Club. Day Lewis became King’s brother-in-law (briefly) when Day Lewis married King’s sister, Mary (La Nauze 82). His anthology, Poetry for You was included on the Leaving English syllabus as either a Teacher Reference book or suggestions for ‘Poetry in Schools’ from 1948 until 1965. Significantly, Alec King took up the Chair at Monash University in 1966.
The influence of Wordsworth and the English Romantics were equally discernible in his teaching of literature, for which he was celebrated and best remembered. His was a quiet and wise voice, dedicated to nourishing and affirming the essentially interpretative function of reading and criticism. In an English department which moved from the belletristic approach of his father-in-law to the Leavisite practices of Professor W.A. Edwards, King’s voice provided a subtly different and alternative discourse. (Hay, ‘King’)

King’s interest in T.S. Eliot and in contemporary literature is evident in his choice of productions for St George’s College and the University Dramatic Society, which he co-directed with Paul Hasluck in 1936 - T.S. Eliot’s Murder in the Cathedral - ‘just a year after the play’s premiere in Canterbury’ (Dunstone and Pope 292). King’s preference for Wordsworth is also remembered by Dorothy Hewett, a student of King, who recalls that she was the only student to follow his suggestion when he told them that to understand Wordsworth’s relationship to nature they should ‘go out of the lecture theatre,’ remove their shoes, ‘and feel the grass springing under the soles’ of their bare feet (Hewett 87-88). This says as much about the joy of poetry for King as for Hewett.

**Ideological complements and contests**

There was a clear difference in the philosophies of Edwards and King, though they worked together for twenty-five years.

Edwards’s enthusiasms for Freud were matched by King’s more Jungian notions; the Leavisite’s idea of the self-sufficiency of the literary text was counterpointed by King’s reluctance to embrace ideology or theory. He preferred to deal with seamless linkings of poetry, the visual arts and music. (Hay, ‘King’)

There is no reason why disputing ideologies, such as those between Edwards and King, should limit the success of teaching in an institution or necessarily create disharmonious work relations for staff members at the university. Dale notes that although the co-existence of King’s ‘alternative discourse’ seems incompatible with Edwards’ view, it is evidence of how two apparently different approaches to literature could operate with one another ‘at the level of pedagogical practice’ (English Men 116). Harry Heseltine also remembers King and Edwards as ‘an unlikely duo [that] complemented rather than contradicted each other’ (19). It is a poignant acknowledgement in his interview with Anne Reid, when Edwards says about King:

From the start he was an enthusiastic collaborator. Without his talented support I should have got nowhere. I was extremely lucky and I’m very grateful to him for his unfailing support and for his friendship. I missed him sadly when he left us for the Chair of Education in Melbourne University. (Interview, Additional notes 2)

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31 Hay also notes the Kings’ contribution to Perth’s cultural life where Catherine and Alec turned their home into a vital and crowded meeting place for visiting and local artists, performers and community leaders, ‘a fusion of literature, life and creative imagination which informed his teaching’ (‘King’).
It is a comment reflecting deep truths about collegial relations in institutions - that particular agenda, projects and practices rely upon more than one person to be planned, enacted and evaluated, but the authority and control of the leader determines the direction of those plans.

The Professors’ Choices of Literature

An undergraduate at the university during the late 1930s Peter Cowan testifies to the limited range of texts available for study in the 1930s under Murdoch’s direction. Cowan critiques the conservative bias:

One of the things I think you could discover very soon was you could go through the University doing an Arts Degree and majoring in English without ever coming across probably any American writers, for instance, and you need not even come across the more experimental writers of the ‘20s in England, like Eliot and Joyce. Well, you didn’t come across them at all except that [sic.] at the University at that time. (Cowan 10)

Murdoch was a foundation member of the Western Australian branch of the Fellowship of Australian Writers, established in 1938. Despite this involvement, and in spite of his own contribution to Australian literature as an essayist, ‘Murdoch’s own literary preferences remained rooted in the English classics’ (Kotai-Ewers 40). Murdoch wanted Australian literature to go beyond gum trees and the bush. He resisted narrow Australian nationalism and grew irritated with those who defined Australian literature as only that which was concerned with ‘Australiana, rural or urban’:

He was, however, ahead of his time, and of at least some of his artistic contemporaries, in insisting that Australian writers, like Australian painters, should be interested with international standards and seek subjects of worldwide interest instead of being preoccupied exclusively with gumtrees and kangaroos, diggers and Ned Kelly, with the bush or the backyards of Sydney and Melbourne slums. (Alexander, ‘John La Nauze’ 82)

In this sense, Murdoch calls on the early Australian poets for originality, a criticism that earned Murdoch the label ‘anti-nationalist’ (Dale, English Men 144-45). Murdoch was also accused of retarding the growth of Australian literature through his Anglocentric texts and traditional pedagogies, the former of which could be claimed of Allan Edwards, though rarely, if ever, it was. Edwards had overseen considerable and significant post-war developments to the university, and Murdoch helped bridge the gap between the old university of its foundation

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32 Peter Cowan argues that ‘the notable essayist’ had not only not read American authors, but had no intention of doing so (Hergenhan 130).
33 The Fellowship of Australian Writers (WA) first met in October 1938, with the aim of supporting Western Australian writers and promoting Australian literature and its creators (History, FAWWA).
34 Philip Mead claims that ‘from the 1930s to the 1950s, Murdoch was perhaps Australia’s most popular writer’ (7).
professors and the new university with its much younger leaders and Australian-born cadre (Alexander, ‘John La Nauze’ 84).

Edwards and King expanded the range of texts taught at the tertiary and secondary levels in Western Australia, but only included Australian literature as it gained popularity nationally. Aside from ten Commonwealth Literary Fund lectures on Australian short stories, which are problematic for their segregation of the local literature, Edwards’ publication of Vance Palmer’s short stories, and his appointments in the 1970s of Australian literature specialists, Veronica Brady and Bruce Bennett, are his most significant contributions to the teaching of Australia literature. Edwards introduced Vance Palmer’s *The Rainbow Bird* (1957) as a short story option in the Leaving English syllabus in 1958, which was his own selection. This was included on the syllabus in Western Australia (and no other Australian senior secondary syllabus) for fifteen years.\(^\text{35}\) Cowan also remarks that under Edwards’ leadership, King was the person who ‘opened up that world of poetry to a whole couple of generations of students before it became widely taught’ (Cowan 10). With this comment, Cowan acknowledges the roles of both King and Edwards in expanding the previously limited range of texts for study at the university. Their own textbooks contributed to this expansion of the Leaving syllabuses.

*The Professors’ Textbooks*

King influenced secondary and tertiary English teaching through his textbooks, particularly *The Control of Language*, published in 1939, which he co-authored with Martin Ketley. Around this time, the conditions of war made text books difficult to source and first-year English students at the University relied upon I.A. Richards’ *Practical Criticism* and King and Ketley’s *The Control of Language* to learn fundamental reading and writing skills. King and Ketley’s book was also recommended as a reference book for use by teachers of Leaving English in the 1949 syllabus (UWA Archives, cons 394, 11 June 1948). It remained on the Leaving English syllabus until 1964 (Dolin and Yiannakis). Despite criticism, significantly from C.S. Lewis, it was notable for its chapter on poetry which was mostly non-academic, non-chronological and reflected the authors’ great love of the form. At the University, it was Edwards who lectured on *The Control of Language*. His 1942 lecture notes, held in the UWA library’s Special Collections, are as detailed and specific as noted by Bradley previously.\(^\text{36}\) Edwards describes King’s book as

\(^{35}\) *The Rainbow Bird and Other Stories* by Vance Palmer, selected by Allan Edwards, was included on the Western Australian Leaving syllabus 1958-59, 1964-65, and 1969-75 (Dolin and Yiannakis).

\(^{36}\) Edwards’ lecture notes for *The Control of Language* cover the Short Story, Idiom and Slang, Argument and Propaganda, Propaganda – Advertising, and Referential Writing. During the same year (1942), King lectured on ‘Milton, Dryden to Wordsworth’ including lectures on Milton, Tennyson, Yeats, Auden, and T.S. Eliot for which King recommends Leavis’s *New Bearings*, stating it ‘is worth reading, and contains annotations on the “Waste Land” (King, ‘Lecture notes’). Continuing on from these, King lectures on
‘wholly admirable’ (Edwards, Interview, Additional notes 2), and Dale argues that it is ‘an indication of a congruity in approach that King and Martin Kettle’s The Control of Language was favourably reviewed in Scrutiny prior to Edwards taking up his appointment in Perth (Enchantment 190f).

Alec King’s textbook Writing (1955) was included on the Western Australian Leaving syllabus as a reference book between 1956 and 1964. In Writing King identifies four main uses of language and argues that there is a close relationship between writing and living (preface vii).³⁷ King then discusses language and writing, including analyses of expressive language, creative writing, fable writing and occasional writing. He recognises the utilitarian purposes of writing and argues that a clear mind creates clear writing, as Edwards argued that ‘good thinking is an expression of good writing’ (UWA Archives, cons 268, 16 Mar. 1957). Edwards also argued that English expression should be taught in the History and Geography class, etc. and in the Science laboratory, an argument about literacy that foreshadowed debates in Western Australian education policy in the 1980s. Although King’s Writing was a reference book, that is, one recommended for teachers to use as support, it may or may not have been readily used by teachers, but it does position the book as an authority on writing. This is reiterated by King’s broadcasts and chairing of meetings which establish his authority. King was also realistic about what students should be expected to demonstrate in an examination setting. As Chief examiner in 1949 he pointed out to a meeting of Teachers and Examiners in English that the present syllabus was suitable for the student undertaking a study of literature as a cultural subject, but was less so for the non-literary, the scientific or engineering student. King shows here his awareness of the importance of the teaching of English in schools in relation to the fact that a pass in English is essential for gaining a Leaving Certificate and for matriculation to the university (UWA Archives, cons 268, 12 Mar. 1949).

**Australian literature**

One aspect of university teaching of which local writers were critical was the slowness with which it began teaching Australian literature. In 1952, King represented the university’s department of English on the Public Examinations Board when the alteration to the syllabus

Hardy’s poetry, Hopkins, The Faber Book of Modern Verse, Hemingway’s ‘The Killers’, Donne and the Metaphysical Poets, and Tchekhov short stories. They confirm ‘a perspective that was generally humanistic rather than specifically’ Leavisite as Leigh Dale deduces from King’s other work (English Men 116).

³⁷ These four main uses are: to express ourselves; to give, receive, and ask for directions and instructions; to think out and record knowledge; to bring home to ourselves the meaning and value of experience’ (1-2). These disclose a range of functions of English for King, from utilitarian and fundamental communication purposes to more aesthetic and moral purposes such as character formation and ‘the humanising effect of literature’ (Peel, ‘English’ 53).
was made: ‘that at the meeting of Teachers and Examiners (of English), a resolution was passed “that as a matter of course some Australian prose and poetry be included in the Junior and Leaving syllabus as a whole each year”’ (UWA Archives, cons 394, 4 April 1952). This is the first explicit directive for the inclusion of Australian writers on the secondary English syllabus, and it followed a public debate in the newspaper’s ‘letters to the editors’ one month prior.\footnote{By contrast in other states, Rolf Boldrewood’s \textit{Robbery Under Arms} was studied at Leaving level in English Literature in South Australia in 1946; Mackaness and Mackaness’ \textit{The Wide Brown Land} poetry anthology was included in 1949 in New South Wales. In Tasmania Katharine Susannah Prichard’s \textit{Haxby’s Circus} was set in 1948, in Victoria \textit{Five Radio Plays} was included in 1949 and in Western Australia Ion Idriess’ \textit{Flynn of the Inland} and the Mackanesses’ \textit{The Wide Brown Land} were set in 1945 (Dolin and Yiannakis).} In 1951, Melbourne historian and scholar Geoffrey Serle submitted to \textit{Meanjin} an outline of the Australian literary content taught in Australian universities. In response to Serle’s article and published in the winter 1952 edition of \textit{Meanjin}, Edwards wrote an article in favour of the growing interest in the study of Australian literature, and he details the range of Australian literature in the curriculum at the University of Western Australia. Edwards extends it to secondary schools: ‘Furthermore, we have some influence on the choice of texts for the Junior and Leaving examinations and have seen to it that Australian poetry and fiction are normally included in the secondary school curriculum’ (‘Australian’ 175). According to Ewers however, the reluctance of the University’s English department to increase the study of Australian literature was to the students’ detriment. In a public conflict in March 1952, letters to the editor of the \textit{West Australian} newspaper were exchanged between Ewers and members of the English Department. Ewers condemns ‘the comparative indifference of the English department of the University to the significance of Australian literature’ and argues that at the meeting of Teachers and Examiners of English, ‘a majority of teachers and examiners present disapproved of the attitude of the English department’ (‘Exam’). These claims ignite an equally curt response from Chief Examiner, Alec King, who rejects Ewers’ accusations as an ‘amusing fantasy’ (‘Exam’). King claims that English department staff members ‘were among those who unanimously carried the motion that some aspects of Australian poetry and prose should be included in the Junior and Leaving syllabuses’ (‘Exam’). Further to this, King expresses his criticism of the inclusion of literature for its own sake, rather than because it ‘makes known the best that has been thought and said in the world’, and asserts that, ‘the English department does not discourage an interest in Australian literature: it tries, however, to serve the universality which a university stands for’ (‘Exam’). Ewers argues in yet another letter, that the best literature in the world is not ‘exclusively thought and said by English writers’ and that ‘a judicious combination of the best in English and Australian writing in University study courses might enrich us all’ (‘Study Courses’). It is evidence of ‘the way in which essays,
examinations and the secondary school curricula could be positively influenced by proponents of Australian literature’ (Dale, *English Men* 155) and a public expression of the tension in teaching English and Australian literatures within institutions and communities that value them to such various extents. Teaching the national literature remained outside traditional scholarly practices for personnel upholding a model of cultural heritage. It moved towards the centre in Western Australia with Edwards and King’s involvement in the Commonwealth Literary Fund Lectures.39

*Peter Cowan*

As a student at the university in the late 1930s, and a tutor in the mid- to late 1940s, Peter Cowan helped establish a new direction for the teaching of English in Western Australia. He was familiar with contemporary literatures and was known for having ‘read the early American modernist writers long before they were well-known in Australia’ (Bird and Haskell, ‘Editorial’ 7). Cowan noted that after the war English education at the tertiary and secondary levels received a much-needed injection of life and the text lists began to diversify:

I think the whole English syllabus at the University in those years if I speak only of the late ’30s, it wouldn’t have been different if you went back any other distance, and it was being enlivened in the end of the ’30s by people like Alec King. Really it almost didn’t acknowledge modern writing to any degree at all, and I think if I say Alec King hadn’t been there you wouldn’t have come across any of the modern English poets of the period; and one wouldn’t have known all this was going on. But it’s not very different to the [other] universities in Australia. (11)

Cowan claims that the University of Adelaide was the only University with any ‘life’ at that time. Literary groups were formed and ‘brilliant people’ such as Rex Ingamells and Max Harris invigorated students’ learning experiences, but ‘you wouldn’t have got that from Perth because there just was no feeling for those things at all. They were not taught’ (11). This seems at odds with Leigh Dale’s conclusion that, ‘the classical tradition remained strong at Adelaide into the fifties’ (*English Men* 45) but may be explained, in part, by the fact that Cowan was progressive and associated with Max Harris’s radical ‘Angry Penguins’ movement of the 1940s.40 When Cowan relocated to Melbourne to serve in the war he became ‘artistic soul mates’ with avant-garde painters Sidney Nolan and Albert Tucker (Moran). Cowan had felt

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39 The Commonwealth Literary Fund lectures began in 1940 (UWA, *Calendar* 53), an initiative of the Commonwealth Government to establish a course of lectures on Australian literature as an integral part of university English courses. In Western Australian the first lecturers were Norman Bartlett, John.K. Ewers, Paul Hasluck and William Hatfield, all members of the Western Australian branch of the Fellowship of Australian Writers. University staff members participated when King lectured on Australian poetry in 1947 and Edwards lectured on Australian short stories in 1952 (Edwards, ‘Australian’ 175).

40 This movement produced the Sidney Nolan modernist paintings acquired by Edwards for the University.
restricted by the relative conservatism of the University of Western Australia under Murdoch, and it follows that when he returned to the University as a tutor and temporary lecturer ten years later, he encountered an English Department that Edwards had completely ‘revitalised’ and ‘reorganised’ (Cowan 40).

The comparison between Adelaide and Perth is a significant one for highlighting the impact that an individual can have on the literary and pedagogical traditions of state tertiary and secondary education. In Adelaide Brian Elliott, a pioneer of the teaching of Australian literature, advanced the University of Adelaide in this area with much greater conviction than Edwards in Western Australia. Elliott was appointed lecturer in Australian literature and in 1940, ‘thus had the first specialist academic position in the subject’ (Dale, Enchantment 231). Elliot had ‘taken a leading role in Australian literary studies: he made it influential as the origin and centre of such studies, well before they were taken up elsewhere’ (Horne 10). Elliott poses an alternative route for Australian literary studies in Western Australia, had Edwards advocated and valued it in the same way. According to Leigh Dale, Edwards’ claim that postgraduate work in Australian literature ‘was “dangerous work” seems pure hyperbole, but fairly represents the views of many at the time.’ This is because it involved ‘risking one’s authority as a critic and teacher’ (Enchantment 269).

A proponent of Australian literature through his creative writing, but by no means in his reading preferences, Cowan was impressed with the range of courses now offered at the University of Western Australia, a product of Edwards’ innovation and the increased student numbers following the end of the war: ‘there were all the kinds of courses in language, expression, criticism of language, which seems to me could be much more done now [1992], and all that was extraordinarily valuable’ (Cowan 40). The students were mature age men and women, mostly men, who experienced ‘rehab’ classes having learned what the world was like. Edwards also valued the contribution of returned soldiers: ‘After the war we were deluged with CRTS men and this was the most marvellous period, the next four or five years’ (Interview 13). He claims that the increase in student numbers and experiences ‘made for much livelier tutorials’ and there was an increase in temporary staffing to cope with the influx of students (Edwards, Interview 13). This was a product of the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme, designed to provide free training for ex-servicemen and women to help them re-establish themselves and make them more employable (Lake and Neal 258). According to

41 Temporary staff members for 1949 include: Maxine Edmondson, Kitty Robertson, Peter Cowan (part-time tutor), Harry Heseltine, Bob Rogers, Phillip Parsons, Father Bourke, and Len Burrows. Existing staff members Helen Watson-Williams and Jeana Tweedie were given permanency (UWA, Faculty Handbook).
Cowan, because people returned from the war wanting to create something and to make something, they had their own strong views and were enthusiastic about learning because they had had to wait to get to university. Cowan describes how the energy of this student intake and of Edwards had transformed the English department ‘completely’ but despite it being ‘a very good place to teach in’ he was looking for something more (Gregory, Interview 1).

Cowan satisfied his need for change through his appointment as a teacher to Scotch College, Perth. Cowan chose Scotch for its ‘modern attitude and modern curriculum’, which allowed him to express his own originality (Gregory, Building 249). During his time there (1948-1962) Cowan taught a range of subjects and introduced his students to modern writers and poets from Australia, the United States of America, as well as England.

At that time, at the end of the 40s, as a result of pressure from the Universities and committees, the curriculum in a lot of subjects, particularly in English, was changing altogether and it was becoming modernised and it no longer involved, well, virtually nothing, which was about what it used to be, and there was a big change here and hence there was an opportunity for some teachers, I think, who had some sort of knowledge of the curriculum. (Gregory, Interview 2)

Cowan was looking forward to experimenting with a new course and a new approach, well supported by Scotch College’s new headmaster, G. E. Maxwell Keys. The pair was instrumental in establishing the College’s library and it is pertinent that H.S. Thompson was the person on the College Council who gave them the (financial) freedom to purchase books as they thought appropriate (Gregory, Interview 4).

Cowan’s position at Scotch College is significant because it brought him into contact with the secondary English syllabus and the students engaging with it. For this reason, it gives him some authority in critiquing the static nature of the Leaving curriculum which, by 1950, still gave evidence of a pre-war education. His comments echo those of Ken Willis included previously:

But the public exam systems and the pressure from the university and the people who were setting the courses and the examinations of public exams, were all pushing the schools out of the kind of shell they’d been in virtually since God knows – I think about 1900 really. But that’s perhaps a bit of a biased view and will be contested by a lot of people, but certainly the need to move forward was obvious. (Cowan 42)

Cowan is a crucial figure in the link between the teaching of English at the tertiary and secondary levels in Western Australia during this time. For most of his fifteen years at Scotch

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42 Cowan comments that the Scotch College Council, at that stage, was very, very supportive of establishing the library. ‘Henry, I think it was, I can remember him saying, you know, “Get what you want” knowing that we would act within reason, but they wanted to build this up’ (Gregory, Interview 4).
College he was also teaching at the university, usually part-time, at night, and his extended comment suggests the significance of the university’s control over the secondary English curriculum.

Some years not, but mostly I was and doing examining and things like that. So I kept in contact with the University which I think was essential. It was very helpful for teaching the Leaving English. I knew what was happening. Then I used to be one of the examiners as well with that. The school in those years seemed to be moving into a sort of, what would you say, contemporary approach. The trouble with teaching English as they had been taught in the old days, of course, and not to go into a dissertation on it, was that it had no relevance to anything outside and you didn’t understand what you were told to learn, and all this rubbish. All those subjects tended to fit together in an approach. You had to understand the world and at last they were being told that literature was about the world and this kind of thing. (Gregory, Interview 4)

Cowan makes two important revelations in this interview. One relates to the advantage afforded by insight gained through working at the university and as an examiner, and the benefits for teaching English in a secondary context. The second one is the philosophical shift from the idea of English and textual analysis as being independent of reader context, to one where they are influenced by that context in legitimate and meaningful ways. The meaning is not given to readers, encoded by the author as the sole authority creating a dominant or single meaning, but is a result of the process of decoding the text. Edwards, for example, explained in a broadcast on 1 February 1951 that, ‘Reading is one very obvious way of extending our own limited range of experience and if our authors are sensitive and intelligent, they may also intensify our experience and clarify them for us’ (UWA Archives, staff file P202).

Cowan valued the relative freedom in selecting texts for study in the classroom. One cannot help but see how this might influence his teaching at both the secondary and tertiary levels. He relished the lack of censorship and appreciated that, ‘It was left to your own good sense and to the good sense of other masters as to what you used. Very wide reading became possible […] The whole thing was invigorating’ (Cowan 45). He motivated the boys at Scotch College by using shock tactics to expose them to ‘worldly’ ideas, such as essays on suicide and on mass extermination. He exposed them to a broader range of literature and encouraged them to

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43 Cowan specifies Hemingway as one example of the ‘modern stuff’ he could bring into the classroom: ‘In the sense that you could integrate contemporary work into the, say the Leaving English classes, that was good, and I did do that by bringing people like Hemingway’s work into the classes. Of course, you immediately realised what a response was there if you were able to do this kind of thing. But some schools wouldn’t have considered Hemingway should be brought anywhere near a school, and this sort of thing was still something that was being thrashed out. Nowadays it’s obviously different’ (45).
write about what they knew (Gregory, *Building* 252). While a separate literary society allowed Cowan to expose students to a range of writers such as T.S. Eliot, Arthur Miller and even Patrick White, Australian writers were not Cowan’s preference (254). Among his literary influences were Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, Thomas Hardy, Anton Chekhov and Samuel Beckett (Moran). Significantly, they are all male, and given his choice to teach at Scotch College it can be assumed that Cowan’s teaching was gendered despite being forward thinking in other ways. Many of these writers were included on the secondary English and English syllabuses during Cowan’s tenure as a Senior Lecturer at the university (1964-79). His teaching and choices of texts suggest an interest in the modern so the university’s control of the secondary English syllabus was not achieved through examiner and committee member, Cowan, who was forward-thinking and open to change. Cowan resigned from Scotch College in 1962 having become more involved in his writing and having received a prestigious Commonwealth Literary Fellowship. It was to the University’s benefit that he stayed on there until 1979 writing stories, producing several practical textbooks and high-quality editions of *Westerly* journal. Along with Randolph Stow, Dorothy Hewett (1966-73) and later Fay Zwicky (1972-87), Cowan represents the addition of creative writers to the department staff as another example of the expansion of the department, and of the studies of English, under Allan Edwards (L.Burrows).

The development of the study of Australian literature was a sign of its changing status as an area of scholarship. From the beginning of Edwards’ tenure it grew from a fairly minor occupation of the syllabus to a position of great prominence by the time of Edwards’ resignation in the early 1970s. The increased profile of the study of Australian literature in Western Australia, consistent with its greater national proliferation, was achieved through the influences of the local Fellowship of Australian Writers, the Commonwealth Literary Fund

44 The essays mentioned include C.J. Brackenridge’s ‘The White Carnation’ on suicide, Shelley Barker’s ‘The Ordeal’ about mass extermination and ‘The Mongrel Dog’ by F. Owen about the death of a stockman (Gregory, *Building* 252).
45 Cowan once observed that Hemingway ‘was a man looking at life around him and seeing it with some clarity, and without the hopeless evasions of so much Australian writing’ (qtd. in Moran).
47 Through several of these texts, Cowan made direct contributions to the senior secondary syllabuses, with *Perspectives Two*, *Spectrum One*, *Spectrum Two* and *Short Story Landscapes* appearing on at least one Western Australian syllabus between 1971 and 2005 (Dolin and Yiannakis). *Perspectives Two*, *Spectrum One* and *Spectrum Two* are short story anthologies edited by Bruce Bennett, Peter Cowan and John Hay. *Short Story Landscapes* is Cowan’s edited collection of short stories which was also on the Western Australian English syllabus 1965-67 (Dolin and Yiannakis).
48 Significantly, poet Zwicky’s appointment was to a lectureship in American and Comparative Literature (Fay Zwicky). Edwards’ encouragement of American literature is also evident in him joining the newly-formed American Studies Association, speaking at its conference in 1964 (UWA Archives, staff file P202).
lectures and eventually the recruitment of Australian literature specialists such as Veronica Brady, Bruce Bennett and John Hay. These local factors shaped the development of English, both discipline and subject. This finding supports Leigh Dale’s assertion that, ‘the institutionalisation of Australian literature is a complex and ongoing process, one that is responsive to local institutional conditions’ (English Men 180). Dale also argues that while the Commonwealth Literary Fund lectures, established in 1940, raised the profile of Australian literature, they also made the study of Australian literature peripheral. It was ‘outside of the regular curriculum of English Departments – work that was usually neither compulsory not assessed’ (italics in original, English Men 182).

The first lectures in Australian literature at the University of Western Australia were held in 1940 and presented by Norman Bartlett, John K. Ewers, Paul Hasluck and William Hatfield (‘News and Notes’). These men were emerging writers who had studied at the university in the 1930s and were concerned about the lack of interest in teaching Australian literature. ‘Journalist and author Norman Bartlett recalled there being no Australian literature discussed at the University at that time’ (Kotai-Ewers 40). In the later context of the 1950s, when nationalism gave rise to A.A. Phillips coining the term, ‘cultural cringe’, a phrase describing the local experience of inferiority next to English cultural authority, Australian literature was being taken more seriously as an area of scholarship. Australian literature obtained more of a presence on the secondary syllabus in Western Australia during the 1950s mainly due to the influx of Australian texts as a result of the local publishing boom and post-war nationalism. But it was not all Australian literature that was gaining prominence during these decades, since Indigenous literature was not accepted in university English syllabuses until the 1970s (Hay, ‘Literature’ 634). This situation was replicated in Western Australian secondary English where the only texts exploring Indigenous issues or with Aboriginal characters were Katharine Susannah Prichard’s Coonardoo (1929) and Judith Wright’s poetry, authored by white Australians, and not included until the 1960s. Prichard’s novel Coonardoo positioned Aborigines centrally in fiction, a repositioning from the marginal appearance of Aboriginal characters and issues, particularly the ambivalent or ‘noble savage’ representations common to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Australian literature. Since the 1930s, ‘perspectives on the thematic use of Aborigines expanded dramatically’ (Watego). When represented by non-Indigenous authors, however, Aboriginal people and issues come to exist peripherally as

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49 Founded in 1908 by then Prime Minister Alfred Deakin, the Commonwealth Literary Fund (CLF) formed to provide financial assistance to struggling Australian authors. From 1939 the CLF’s role extended to offering annual fellowships and publication subsidies (Jordens 1).

50 Prichard’s Coonardoo was taught earlier at the secondary level in Tasmania (1958-59) and Victoria (1957, 1959).
literary ‘subject matter’. This representation highlights the distinction between ‘Aborigines in Literature’ and the ‘Aboriginal Literature’ that expanded and became more central in the decades that followed.

One reflection of the increasing nationalism and higher status of Australian literature was the origins of literary journals, festivals and key cultural publications. In 1939 Southerly was first published, closely followed by Meanjin in 1940 as Australia’s first modern literary journals.51 The 1950s produced the first Perth Festival of Arts Festival (in 1953) and three new literary journals: Overland in 1954, and Quadrant and Westerly (both in 1956). Foundation editor Robert Smith edited Westerly for the first two years of its publication. He reflects upon the large number of academic staff that supported the journal which was ‘gratifying’, as was the response of the cultural and intellectual community generally (Smith 11). What could easily have been a provincial and insular publication, began remarkably global in outlook. It aimed to encourage and promote local writers, while also representing a connected, inclusive perspective: ‘Far from the parochialism one might expect from such a publication, the first issue of Westerly included two articles about Asia’ (Bird and Haskell, ‘Fifty Years’ 10). Two years later, Russel Ward’s The Australian Legend and A.A. Phillips’ The Australian Tradition were released (Kotai-Ewers 17). These significant cultural publications suggest the significance of the impact of literature in cultural movements of the times, which also affected education. In turn, developments in secondary education were changing the study of secondary English; the subject’s status was upheld, entrenched even, by the decisions made by the new Director of Education in Western Australia, Dr T.L. Robertson.

The Department of Education

The 1950s was a period of growth by contrast with the previous two decades. Outside the university, the 1950s post-war population boom resulted in expansion of the Education Department in Western Australia, hence increased bureaucratisation in Western Australia generally, and of the Department in particular. This development accompanied the state’s improved economic prosperity and the appointment of T.L. Robertson as Director of Education. Robertson occupied this position between 1950 and 1966. During this time he reorganised secondary education and increased public awareness of its importance (Helm 225). Secondary education was normalised, and ‘secondary English’ became a substantive term because more students were retained at high school in the senior years: ‘secondary schooling became more systematically part of public education’ (Green, Cormack and Reid 7).

51 Southerly’s first editors were R.G.Howarth and A.G.Mitchell. Meanjin was first edited by Clem Christesen.
It was widely accepted that the state was responsible for providing secondary as well as primary education.

‘Comprehensive’ Schooling

T.L. Robertson was responsible for the development of the co-educational, comprehensive community high school which became the established model for public secondary education (Helm 224). This model of schooling provided uniformity to secondary students across the state, placing all state secondary schools on the same level and offering universal schooling to at least Year Ten. Every state school offered the same subject choices, so while educational opportunity was more democratic it was also less flexible and varied. Its introduction was an attempt to provide quality education for a growing number of students, arising from dramatic increases in the birth rate and immigration. These increases accompanied public pressure both to retain students at school for longer while also reducing class sizes (Lake and Neal 266). A resulting shortage of schools and teachers diverted government funding to secondary education, away from tertiary, although the university did receive a boost from the Commonwealth Government following the Murray Report of 1957. This report concluded that the Commonwealth Government must accept greater responsibility for the states’ universities (120-26). It followed the 1954 internal departmental inquiry chaired by Deputy Superintendent of Secondary Education Victor Box into the state of secondary education. The Box Report recommended that a Board of Secondary School Studies be established to control courses and final examinations in high schools (Tully, ‘State’ 88): ‘The accrediting authority that he envisaged was a representative 'Board of Secondary Studies' with legislative authority to approve syllabuses and use students' school records to make its awards’ (Tully, ‘Assessment’). It was motivated by concerns raised by the university over financing public examinations.

The university was becoming increasingly concerned about the continuing expansion of the public examination system which was placing a proportionate drain upon its resources. At a meeting of the PEB in 1955, Vice Chancellor S.L. Prescott wrote to the Board’s Chairman, Colsell Sanders, to probe the university’s involvement ‘in details of organisation’ of the public examinations. Prescott argued that the university facilities were ‘very heavily used by the public examinations at the present time, involving the moving of desks and table and the use of various rooms.’ He proposed that schools might take on responsibility for supervising the examinations themselves (UWA Archives, cons 394, 28 Apr. 1955). More than just an issue

Prescott was Vice-Chancellor at the University between 1953 and 1970. He ‘presided over a period of unprecedented growth in students, staff, budgets and building’ including commencement of the Reid Library. ‘He cultivated amicable relations with the university senate and an able, but combative,
about furniture removal, Prescott’s concern highlights how the mass nature of secondary education required sizeable resources which the university was no longer willing to invest.

This situation was common to several Australian states at that time, with the public examination systems proving to be grossly inadequate as the states struggled to accommodate the increased number of examination candidates. By 1950, the numbers had increased considerably as a result of the post-war baby boom, increased immigration, and higher retention rates, including those students of lower ability as a result of the relaxed entry requirements introduced in the Depression years. In New South Wales for example, Harold Wyndham was appointed as Director General of Education in 1952, at which time he reviewed the education system and made recommendations for improvement (Curtis 170). There are noteworthy similarities between the ways in which Robertson and Wyndham managed change in their respective secondary education systems.

The changes initiated by the Robertson and Wyndham Committees marked the beginning of an effort in Australia to provide an organisation and curriculum suitable for the rapidly increasing numbers of secondary school students. The tentative Wyndham program and the bolder Robertson one were reaching towards the same goal. Both agreed that the future lay with the wider development of comprehensive secondary schools and with the design of a compulsory common course of general studies. (Connell, Australian 91)

In both Western Australia and New South Wales there emerged a common ‘core’ secondary curriculum, a formal transition into secondary school and a ‘comprehensive’ system that catered for a range of student abilities. Robertson and Wyndham were friends, and shared a close professional relationship and given the similarities in their reforms, the likelihood of their discussing New Zealand’s Thomas Report (1944) was high, the report upon which the ‘comprehensive school’ was based (Hughes 112). Within this model, English retained its central curricular position and its compulsory status, thus continuing as the Leaving subject with the greatest number of candidates, and existing as the apex of anxiety for the economically-sensitive University of Western Australia. The Wyndham reforms led up to the abolition of the PEB.

When the Chairman of the Public Examinations Board, Colsell Sanders, wrote to Vice-Chancellor Prescott on 22 November 1957 asking for funds to support the recent growth in the number of examination candidates he claimed that the structure of the examinations remained financed and organised ‘on the lines of the past’ (UWA Archives, cons 1380). Sanders argued that the examination structure needed to be altered ‘to meet a changing emphasis in professorial board’. Prescott was also appointed to Sir Lawrence Jackson’s (1967) committee on tertiary education in Western Australia (Bolton, ‘Prescott’).
secondary education chiefly in non-academic directions’ (UWA Archives, cons 1380). He also recommended the establishment of a new board to oversee secondary education and school examinations, one ‘assured of autonomy’. This Board was to be named the ‘Board of Secondary Education’, reflecting the change in focus and destination as inevitably being examinations (UWA Archives, cons 1380). This change in the Board, though, did not happen until 1969.

Conclusion
During the 1940s and 1950s, subject English in Western Australia retained much of its emphasis on British canonical writers but was broadening to include Australian literature and contemporary texts. There was a move away from Chaucer and philology, a direct result of Allan Edwards’ contribution to the University. Edwards imported a version of ‘Cambridge English’ marked by literary study, practical criticism and to some extent, Leavisism, which was to influence English across Australia in the 1960s. But what appeared to be a Leavisite fraternity from the outside had carnivalesque approaches to teaching and celebrating the arts on the inside. Edwards emphasised literature and drama in English courses and changed the format of tutorials to facilitate engagement and genuine discussion. He also introduced practical criticism to nurture students’ independent thinking ahead of rote-learned ‘respectable’ opinions. In this way, Edwards continued Walter Murdoch’s legacy of critiquing ‘safe’ and ‘comfortable’ beliefs held without question. Both professors also promoted local libraries and the virtues of reading. The secondary English curriculum was strongly influenced by the staff of an expanded Department of English involved at various times in the Teachers and Examiners of English Committees, including Edwards, King, Thompson, David Bradley, Jeana Bradley, Burrows, and Cowan. The Director of Education at the time, T.L. Robertson implemented the comprehensive schooling model. The number of government secondary schools rose considerably during the 1950s and early 1960s, which saw the responsibility for decision-making drift away from the monopoly of the professor. Edwards helped the arts to a golden age in the way that drama, literature, music poetry readings, sculpture and paintings offered contemporary experiences and growth. Upon Edwards’ death in 1995, the West Australian reported that ‘from 1941 until his retirement in 1974, [was] a period regarded as a golden age of university development, marked by steady post-war growth’ (‘Death closes literary era’). Curricular control dispersed as the bureaucratisation of secondary education increased to accommodate a larger number of students retained at senior secondary school. This situation created concern for the difficulty of Leaving English among educators who foregrounded its utilitarian purpose and asked, ‘Do engineers or scientists really need to study literature?’ The times were about to change even more.
Chapter Three - The Times They Are a-Changin: Advancing Secondary Subject English in Western Australia in the 1960s & 1970s

When Bob Dylan sang about changing times in the early 1960s he might have been referring to the enormity of the social upheaval affecting Western Australia’s secondary education system during that era, particularly by contrast with previous decades. It came to be an era in which experimental education, progressivism and Teacher Union power burgeoned. During this period the relationship between the teaching of English at the secondary and tertiary levels continued to be an intimate one, however secondary education was controlled by many more factors than the University of Western Australia’s Public Examinations Board alone. While English had been a ‘core’ curriculum area in all sectors of education for more than a century, in the 1960s and 1970s it experienced such dramatic effects of change that it evoked marked series of government reports that introduced chronological promotion, comprehensive schooling and therefore made English classrooms more heterogeneous than ever before. It was also the era in which the ‘London School’ and its ‘Growth’ model of English infiltrated secondary English syllabuses across Australia. In this chapter I argue the centrality of contextual conditions in assessing English curriculum change during these decades. This means taking account of major demographic developments and social pressures operating at once globally, nationally, and at the State level. Western Australia was arguably quite distinctive in this regard, for English in this state is far from an autonomous subject area driven by English theory and discourse, but is simultaneously dependent upon reform agenda by curriculum departments and bureaucratic agencies.

Post-war Democracy, Equity and Student Retention

In the 1960s subject English became further entangled in the pursuit of personal advancement and societal improvement amidst egalitarian themes of access and equity. Increasingly the discourse surrounding the push for secondary schooling stressed the notions of democracy, social harmony and equality of opportunity (Down, ‘State Secondary’ 63). In this context, the state Government reserved land for the state’s second university, though planning did not commence until 1970. The University of Western Australia lost its monopoly on higher education when the Western Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT) was established in 1967. In addition, Murdoch University opened in 1975 as the first university in Australia to provide alternative entry pathways other than solely through matriculation exams. Thus the

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53 Chronological promotion or social promotion is the practice of advancing school students to the next grade at the end of the school year independent of students’ academic achievement and education attainment.
name ‘Murdoch’ continued to be associated with a democratic ideal. Prior to the establishment of these institutions, however, the public examination system, controlled by the University of Western Australia’s Public Examinations Board, was one of the most significant barriers preventing a more equitable state secondary school system (Down, ‘State Secondary’ 67). The examination system was also a major obstacle to the expansion of mass secondary schooling (69) with the public examinations standing as ‘formidable barriers at the end of the school course’ (Kramer 12).

In 1956 the Department of Education had accelerated its building program for secondary school students, for like the other Australian states, Western Australia was experiencing the post-war baby boom (Bosworth 6). Soon these babies became secondary students more likely to complete their Leaving Certificates than any cohort previously.\(^{54}\) In this climate of growth and potential renewal, developing education was not just about supplying more buildings and more teachers but about developing a better system of education for secondary students. This would strengthen an economy newly recovering from the war and would aid society in broader terms for ‘the functioning of a democratic society depends on a well-educated citizenry’ (Dettman 2). By the mid-1960s, retention rates, and therefore the number of examination candidates, had increased dramatically, which created an ‘apparent mismatch between the new population and existing assessment practices made reform an administrative priority’ for the state (Tully, ‘Assessment’).

The state Director-General of Education, T.L. Robertson, introduced universal, comprehensive secondary education and chronological promotion, which produced a more heterogeneous group of high school students in Western Australia. From the safe distance of the university, academics Bennett and Hay highlight some of the extra demands placed upon teachers and schools as a consequence of the secondary education system retaining greater numbers of students:

Secondary school English courses are susceptible to pressures other than those exerted by external public examinations. Whereas a certain limited homogeneity could have been anticipated in the ability of students proceeding to senior level public examinations a decade ago, the increase in the number and proportion of students remaining longer at school increases the heterogeneity of the student population studying any given course. Consequently, the obvious need to cater for an increasing disparity of interests and abilities has, or should have, a profound

\(^{54}\) The influence of the external examinations over the secondary school system was ‘disproportionate’; however, the vast number of students entering the secondary school system post-war challenged the elitist assumptions of the public examination system (Down, ‘State Secondary’ 70). Secondary schools were viewed as ‘wedded to the external examination syllabuses and excessively conscious of examination successes’ (M.White, ‘Public’ 50).
effect upon course construction and teaching methods. (Bennett and Hay, Directions 3)

In Western Australian secondary schools, catering for students both intended and unintended for tertiary study, created a pedagogical challenge requiring urgent management.

There was an obvious tension between the teaching of English at the tertiary and secondary levels as a result of both the University exerting ‘a heavy downward pressure on the schools’ historically, and because the teaching of English in the schools tended to be ‘diagnostic rather than disciplinary’ in approach (Sureties 46-47). The English curriculum was controlled by the final examinations for which training consisted of rote-learning. Teachers were motivated to help as many students as possible to pass the public examinations and this implicated teachers in the system of external curriculum control by virtue of their role in preparing students for those examinations: ‘Despite appearances to the contrary in many classrooms, so heavily and for so many years have the functions of the educator been overlaid, or at least partly obscured, by those of the crammer or coach’ (Sureties 46-47). It was a role that produced teacher-centred pedagogies which educational change of the 1960s and 70s sought to remedy. By ‘teacher-centred pedagogies’ I am referring to a style of learning where the teacher is the knowledgeable ‘active’ instructor with mastery of the content, determined by that teacher, who transmits that content to ‘passive’ or receptive students. It emphasises the role of the teacher over the learner. The 1960s saw a movement towards ‘student-centred’ learning where the student is an active participant in constructing learning and therefore accepts greater responsibility for their own learning. In schools, student-centred education emerged from the work of Froebel and the notion that the teacher should not interfere with the process of maturation or child development, but act as a facilitator or guide (Simon). This pedagogical model seemed far removed from the examination-oriented syllabus which was narrow, inflexible, and hampering innovation and effective teaching. It represented the climax of elitism and restriction which could only be overcome by a drastic revision of public examination policies (M. White, ‘Sixty’ 75). This was the situation leading to the commissioning of the Petch Report which aimed to alleviate the fiscal and administrative burden placed upon a secondary system of education that was incapable of accommodating a large number of students with diverse needs and of different backgrounds. It was an opportunity to improve the system of public examinations but was a backward step for subject English which was studied by every student seeking secondary certification.

Subject Status: re-defining and recognising subject English
Also hindering the development and innovation in secondary English teaching was the subject’s inferior status. The arrival of the ‘English Room’ in schools was somewhat of a novelty, highlighted by its inclusion in the ‘Notes and News’ of the October 1969 national journal, *English in Australia*. At the July meeting of the Western Australian chapter of the English Teachers’ Association, members discussed ‘new trends in architecture as they relate to the teaching of English’ (Phillips 3). These trends included the ‘library materials and resource’ concept and the use of the specialist ‘English Room’ with carpets, luxurious furniture and audio-aids that attempted to establish ‘a desirable climate for the encounter between literature and pupil and for the discussion of literature’ (3). The addition of these furnishings was state-of-the-art at a time when there was little incentive for innovation in English teaching because the quantity rather than the quality of teachers was a state priority. In eagerness to produce teachers to fill the burgeoning number of English classes, teaching graduates emerged with the tendency to teach as they had been taught, which in subject English meant teacher-centred pedagogies and a reliance on the English canon, despite the emerging educational and literary theories challenging these practices which were emerging globally.

*Leaving English Examinations in the 1960s*

In the 1960s, examination papers for English existed as they had done so for many years. The syllabus took the form of the University’s English courses, structured by genre and organised around practical reading exercises. This arrangement reflected English teaching at the tertiary level, where Allan Edwards’ preference for practical criticism and genre-based textual study infiltrated English teaching in Western Australia throughout decades past and present. For the purpose of critique here, and to highlight Edwards’ emphases, I use the term ‘genre-based’ as a term denoting the way in which courses were arranged and studied primarily by reference to their genre – the textual categories of Poetry, Prose, Drama, for instance, and their specific forms and the conventions that accompany those forms. For example, Section Two (Drama) of the 1963 first paper required one response chosen from two questions: one was a more traditional textual analysis (about character and comic relief) and the other was a more creative option (as opposed to a critical or analytical task) requiring candidates to give instructions to the (imagined) team responsible for preparing the sets, lighting, curtains and

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55 Writer and educator Glen Phillips was president of the Western Australian Branch of the Fellowship of Australian Writers, and lecturer at Graylands Teachers’ College which became the Mount Lawley campus of the Western Australian College of Advanced Education before Edith Cowan University in 1991. Phillips was heavily involved in the English Teachers’ Association of Western Australia and the promotion of creative writing through his participation in the Fellowship and tertiary education (Kotai-Ewers 246). Chapter Five of this thesis refers to Phillips’ role further.
props in a play that the candidate is pretending to produce at his or her school. This second question attempts to circumvent the rote-learned, text-based essay response which Edwards resisted in his pedagogy at the tertiary level, and examining at the secondary level. By ‘text-based’ I am noting the differences in examination questions that are asked specifically related to named texts and often also naming authors and characters, as opposed to more generic questions that are open for students to apply their own choice of text to their discussion of the concepts raised in the question.56

Section Three of this same paper is a novel study requiring candidates to answer one compulsory question with reference to The Passage, Return of the Native, Great Expectations or Lord of the Flies.

5. What does the setting of the novel you have studied contribute to the theme, characterization and atmosphere?

Clearly a text-specific question, this example adheres closely to the style of assessment in the University of Western Australia which was structured into genre-based sections and (canonical) text-based or text-specific questions.57 Section Four of the first paper is a comprehension test, stated on the examination paper as intending to test what candidates have learnt from studying a particular poet or anthology. ‘There is no question on the texts themselves’ (3). Candidates are then required to read a poem (Siegfried Sassoon’s ‘Concert Party’ [Egyptian Base Camp]) and answer eight questions of increasing difficulty (and marks). This practical criticism of unseen passages of text was introduced by Edwards at the University of Western Australia and as Chief Examiner of secondary English during the 1940s. It is relevant that as a student of F.R. Leavis and I.A. Richards, Edwards emphasised the importance of close reading texts and this perspective shaped the writing of examinations in the years that he was professor and beyond.

56 Text-based approaches apply a degree of objective, pre-determined meaning in the text, aligned with the New Criticism of I.A. Richards.

57 The questions at the tertiary level guarded against traditional learned responses. For example, the question on Dickens in the November 1959 examination paper for English I asks: ‘Of the two endings written by Dickens for Great Expectations, which seems to you more appropriate to the novel as a whole? OR Discuss the importance to Great Expectations of Joe Gargery, Uncle Pumblechook, and Abel Magwitch.’ Also, one of the questions for the 1960 (first year undergraduate) English 1 course asks: ‘“The thriller is moral; the morality is thrilling.” Is this an apt comment on Great Expectations?’ Both are text-specific questions and invite personal interpretation of the text in relation to that question. This attempt at encouraging students to actively engage in making meaning from the text (by constructing a ‘personal interpretation’ rather than passively consuming them) taps into the Reader Response theory emerging during the 1960s and which attempted to circumvent rehearsed, rote-learned analysis of a text. Dickens’s Great Expectations is a consistent inclusion on the secondary curriculum for English (1948, 1961-62, 1967-68) and English Literature (1969-71, 1975-98) (Dolin and Yiannakis). See Larissa McLean Davies (‘Magwitch’), and Kylie Mirmohamadi and Susan K. Martin.
It is also significant that tertiary English examinations of this era include very few references to Australian literature, aside from one question in the 1958 third paper of English IIIIB (first year undergraduates). This asks candidates to, ‘Write an essay of critical appreciation of the work of any one contemporary poet, English, American, Australian, whose writing has given you particular pleasure.’ The next (optional) question making explicit reference to Australian literature is in November 1962 in the second paper for first year tertiary students enrolled in English 31: ‘The Development of the Novel’. This is the year that the Commonwealth Games were held in Perth, evident in the topic: ‘Write a critical appreciation for an overseas visitor to the Commonwealth Games of any recent (since 1950) Australian novel.’ The study of Australian literature is much more evident in 1970s English courses at UWA, product of national trends in Australian literary scholarship as well as the appointment of Australian literature specialist Veronica Brady. Interestingly, the Games impacted upon decision-making at the secondary level also, with then Chairman of the Public Examinations Board writing to the secretary of the Public Examinations Board in December 1960, to stipulate that the 1962 Public Examinations should avoid clashing with the Empire Games, ‘otherwise candidates will be distracted’ (UWA Archives, cons 1380, series 767).

Subject English and the objective test

The second of the English papers was an objective test. These tests were introduced into Western Australian Leaving English Examinations in 1954. The objective tests assessed English comprehension and were devised by the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) in consultation with the chief examiners (Bennett and Hay, Directions 37). John Hay and Bruce Bennett were members of the English Department of the University of Western Australia and represent the inter-connectedness of secondary and tertiary English. Both came to the University in the late 1960s and had a significant influence upon Leaving English in the 1960s and 1970s (UWA Archives, staff files P2258 and P2697). At various times they were individually chief examiners of secondary English, members of the Public Examinations Board, wildlife conservationists and friends of Bennett’s, Dennis Haskell, says that: ‘With his friend and colleague John Hay, Bruce saw the study of English with an Australian flavour instilled in the WA secondary school curriculum, and he helped prepare texts for that curriculum. Bruce championed the study of Australian literature at the University of Western Australia […]’. The co-editor of WA’s major literary magazine Westerly from 1975-1992, he also published more than 20 books, a number of significant government reports, and approximately 100 literary essays’ (‘Gentle Professor’ 46).
and presidents of the English Teachers’ Association of Western Australia during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Bennett and Hay were proponents of objective tests, endorsing them as ‘valid, reliable and interesting parts of English examinations’ (‘On Being’ 19). They participated in professional development on the topic as well as leading it for others in Australia and in England.

While the objective tests were innovative within the framework of English examinations, not all teachers believed them to be effective and worthwhile. The tests required candidates to identify arbitrary or trivial details in passages of writing, or respond to true/false answers that were contrived. They were a cheap and easily administered test, requiring no teaching, and producing a results which was reliable but by no means valid. Very few teachers or critics challenge the test, except for Rod Quin in the 1990s, and before him, Melbourne Leavisite academic T.B. (Jock) Tomlinson. Tomlinson critiqued the assumption that objectivity is possible and even desirable in the teaching and examining of English (100). He argued convincingly against multiple choice competency tests on the grounds that ‘no questions asked about literature and art that are meaningful can be objective’ (Tomlinson 101). Bennett and Hay acknowledge that some of Tomlinson’s criticism of objective tests ‘carry some weight: too often at present such tests are a straitjacket restricting a full understanding and appreciation of pieces of writing’ (‘On Being’ 21). Further to this, at the 1969 ETAWA conference (held in conjunction with the AATE) Bennett conducted a session on ‘Constructing Objective Tests in English’ during which he explained that the tests were 'objective' only in the way they could be marked with a marking key.

They were comprehension tests with declared ‘right’ answers. Whatever they were called, they were supposed to be valid and reliable: valid in that they did what was required of them; reliable in that there was an accurate correlation between the tests and students’ ability in English comprehension. (Corby)

This assessment method was problematic for a brief ‘right’ answer might be refuted or challenged by a capable student given the opportunity to discuss or argue that point in a written response. That is, it ignores the fact that ‘open-ended questions give freer rein to the “divergent” thinker and writer’ (Bennett and Hay, ‘On Being’ 21). In this way the tests

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60 Rod Quin argued against the use of Multiple Choice testing in English in the Journal of the English Teachers’ Association of Western Australia, *Interpretations*.

61 An adapted version of this paper was published as Bennett, Bruce. ‘Constructing Objective Tests in English.’ *Journal of the English Teachers’ Association (WA)* 2.4 Oct. (1969): 14-20. Print.

62 Tomlinson evaluates the Western Australian 1969 Leaving English Comprehension Test which includes the first three paragraphs of Dickens’s *Bleak House*. He critiques the terms and layout of the examination paper on the grounds that they force answers ‘that attempt to summarize and encapsulate his prose in a way that no prose or poetry, however good or bad, can be summarized’ (103). Despite this, the tests were retained in Leaving English examinations until 1998.
disadvantaged students capable of distinguishing between the slightest nuances of meaning –
qualities that teachers of English attempt to nurture. It was an argument overruled by
examiners until 1998 when the objective test was removed from the Tertiary Entrance English
Examination for the following year.

The Petch Intervention

The University was also implicated in Leaving English reform with the instigation of the Petch
Report. In 1964, secretary of the Joint Matriculation Board of England’s ‘Northern Universities’
(the Universities of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield and Birmingham) Dr James A. Petch
was commissioned by the University of Western Australia to review the state’s public
examination system. The then Chairman of the Public Examinations Board Colsell Sanders,
went a letter to Dr W.C. Radford, Director of the Australian Council for Educational Research
(ACER) justifying Petch’s role in evaluating Western Australia’s system of examinations:

Petch was invited out here at my suggestion in an endeavour to resolve a number
of urgent problems relating to the public examinations and to give us a new line
on some matriculation problems both present and future... I sold the idea to the
Public Examinations Board which backed it. The Board had been considering a
number of issues and had been making very little progress with them. (UWA
Archives, cons 1380)

In this respect, Petch was recruited as a saviour – an outsider performing a paternalistic
gesture – who was wooed to provide the answers that the local educational authorities could
not. The Petch intervention also perpetuates the colonialist assumptions upon which
education in English was founded in Western Australia.

There was a clear difference between the Petch appointment and the outcome of the visit.
Petch was guided by educational developments in England including the emphasis on the
range of language uses and ‘democratic tone’ of English in England in the 1960s (Medway 24).
The effect however, was to perpetuate the elitism of an examination system which remained
in place until the Dettman report and the establishment of the (independent) Board of
Secondary Authority (1969-70). In Petch’s book Fifty Years of Examining he explains that
historically, the written public examination was adopted ‘as a cure for privilege, patronage,
and place-mongering’ (14). Ironically perhaps, and an apparent contradiction, the Public
Examinations Board in Western Australia existed as an elitist site through which various
pressure groups pursued their own objectives, and was a barrier to equitable education. It

63 Petch explains that while the Board is commonly referred to as the “Northern Universities’” Joint
Matriculation Board this was never an official title: ‘it never has been geographically correct’ (Petch,
Fifty 5).
engaged Petch to guide reform of the Public examination system for the purpose of removing those barriers.

**The Petch Report (completed May 1964)**

Petch’s visit to Western Australia was viewed critically by many secondary teachers who saw it as a political exercise and were suspicious of its instigation by the Public Examinations Board. Rod Corby recounts that one past president of the English Teachers’ Association described the Petch report ‘as spurious and not at all well regarded’. He believed that Petch took what evidence was necessary to give the Public Examinations Board the answers it wanted to hear. Petch, however, conceded that he looked at the Western Australia examination system ‘with a view to possible modification only, never with a view to its abolition (Petch Report ii). In his report, Petch recognised the dominance of the examination system in Western Australia, but refuted any problem with such dominance: ‘I heard little criticism of this domination of the teaching by the Public Examination Board syllabuses, though there was general agreement that the domination was pronounced’ (1). This observation, and the subsequent recommendation that the examination system be amended rather than abolished, is consistent with Petch’s ‘profound personal conviction’ that public examinations bodies are ‘the only reliable bulwark against privilege and patronage’ (Petch ii). It is a case of the outcome opposing the appointment since the Western Australian examination system had become that which Petch had been appointed to eradicate. Petch’s ideas about examination reform in Western Australia are evidence of ‘piecemeal manipulation of examination or certificate requirements’ where it could have been effective ‘fundamental revision of the examination process itself’ (M.White, ‘Sixty’ 74). In this regard, the potential to bring about meaningful change and greater social equity at an earlier time in Western Australia’s educational history was lost. Instead, the Petch Report brought about controversy and disappointment and extended by at least another five years the curricular control exerted by the PEB.

**The Dettman Report (1969)**

June 1967 marked the beginning of a State Government inquiry into the organisation of secondary education (Curriculum Policies Project, ‘Dettman’). The Dettman Report (1969) was the culmination of this enquiry and it acknowledged the limitations of a teacher-centred and

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64 Petch’s itinerary, as expected, included transport and social arrangements by members of the Public Examinations Board including Mr P.M. Moyes of Christ Church Grammar School, Mr Shepherd, Head of Methodist Ladies’ College, Dr. Maxwell Keys, Headmaster of Scotch College, Father Casey at St. Louis School, Professor Sanders and Mr. Willcock at St Thomas More College (UWA) for a Sherry Party February 19, 1964 (UWA Archives, cons 1380).
examination-focused curriculum. It contributed to the transformation of secondary education in Western Australia in the way that it recommended that schools show primary concern for teaching students how to learn, and that course content be taught in such a way as to facilitate understanding and foster creativity (2-3). It also articulated the purpose of education as being to equip students for future decision-making with a view to the improvement of society not merely to transmit culture (Curriculum Policies Project, ‘Dettman’ 9). In this way it prioritised students’ needs in an attempt to neutralize the negative effects of external examinations upon pedagogy.

In accordance with recommendations of the Dettman Report, secondary subjects were categorised as ‘core’ or ‘elective’ thus effecting a hierarchy of subjects (3). With English being one of the ‘core’ subjects, its status and value were certified to students, parents and potential employers. In this respect, the story of subject English in Western Australian is shaped by its compulsory nature, for its centrality in the curriculum made it ‘a convenient instrument of control’ (Goodson and Medway ix). As Ivor Goodson and Peter Medway claim, ‘[a]ttempts to control and define the subject move beyond the subject community because changing English [...] is changing schooling’ (vii). Underlying this assertion is a critique of state intervention in a subject area for formative and authoritative purposes, rather than empowering English teachers to act ‘on their best judgments about what and how children need to learn’ (Goodson and Medway vii). Subsequently permitting teachers greater agency, the Dettman Report redefined the role of the teacher as ‘less a dispenser of information and more a person who structures learning situations and guides learning activities’ (14). It recommends the de-emphasis of memorisation as a method of learning, placing priority instead on teaching students how to learn. In this way it valued student learning over and above teacher’s teaching (Dettman 14). These conditions are significant because they provided fertile ground for the ‘Growth’ Model of English to flourish. I will extend discussion of this model later in the chapter; suffice to say here that the movements in education and sociology that emerged during this era were student-centred and explicitly ideologically-focused on encouraging creativity and self-improvement, which had important consequences for the form and content of subject English in the near future.

The Dettman committee recommended the discontinuation of external examinations and the replacement of the PEB with a representative Board of Secondary Education (1). The new Board was intended as an ‘autonomous body’ (Dettman 107) established with a parliamentary bill in November 1969. It was instituted to maintain standards among all secondary schools in Western Australia including the responsibility ‘to exercise a general overview of the secondary
curriculum and to be responsible for the award of certificate of secondary education based on internal school assessments’ (Dettman 1). The abolition of the PEB diminished the power of the University of Western Australia to examine secondary examination candidates thereby reducing its level of control over the curriculum. Up until this time the University had been a ‘guardian of traditional knowledge in schools’, however it was keen to relinquish control of the public examinations because with the numbers of candidates ballooning each year, it was becoming simply too expensive and too time-consuming for the university to administrate.

The Petch report also recommended the modification of English at both the Junior and Leaving levels, a division of English into two separate subjects, Expression and Literature. English Expression, a compulsory subject, would include an emphasis on teaching writing skills and an appreciation of prose. Literature, an optional specialist study, would focus on the study of texts in a more detailed way than before the split. Petch suggested the division because:

Though it may be generally agreed that it would be a disaster if the heritage of English literature were closed to many school children, the emotional content of this appeal should not be allowed to obscure the fact that English Literature as an academic discipline has come to be a specialism no less narrow than the specialist study of History or Economics or foreign literature or the different sciences. While it can be disputed that all educated men [sic.] should be students of English Literature, it cannot be disputed that participation in an Anglo-Saxon culture involves of necessity some degree of competence in the writing and understanding of English as the means of communication within that culture.
(Petch, Report 10)

Petch was arguing, in other words, that no one should expect all secondary students to ‘grapple successfully with the specialising methodology and jargon of English Literature as a subject of academic, or near academic standard’ (14-15). He recommended that the English Expression paper be set more in line with that in England where there was considerable experimentation in testing the communication skills of intending university students:

Another and somewhat different method of testing this [the intending university student’s mastery of English] is to require the candidate to reach a satisfactory standard on a General Paper in which he is required to write what are in effect short essays, though not of the belles lettres kind, on a stated number of topics.
(23)

This reflects an historical outline and interpretation of English, because before the early part of the twentieth century, literacy was about social utility:

Before 1880 most teaching of languages and literature was ‘either associated with women, or allied to the utilitarian pursuit of functional literacy’ and therefore occupied a dramatically lower cultural status than the upper-class masculine studies of Classics and Mathematics. (Doyle 2)
The split instated English (‘Expression’) as subordinate, and following Doyle’s reasoning, it became a ‘softer’ option, and a more working class one at that, because it provided social access to the citizenry whereas ‘English Literature’ was promoted to a subject of social privilege with superior status.

Specialisation

In 1968 the separation of English into Expression and Literature confirmed the authority of the University over the examination system in Western Australia and foregrounded Petch’s notion of ‘specialisation’ which was coming to be the framework through which educationalists came to view English. English was no longer a subject that ‘anyone’ could teach; it was recognised as fulfilling various functions in society that were so important that a specialist teacher was required. The split meant that English was compulsory for matriculation. English Literature was grouped with Economics, Geography, History, and Music as an optional subject (Bennett and Hay, Directions 38). It created the situation where the literature that was previously mandatory for all matriculating students became ‘optional’: ‘English was to be a wide-ranging course of predominantly contemporary fiction and non-fiction, with a choice of texts recommended rather than prescribed’; the emphasis in English evolved into ‘an engagement with real world issues and a focus on social and cultural contexts, while Literature remained an “old school” literary subject’ (Yiannakis 106). Accordingly, the separation of English into Expression and Literature affirmed the latter subject’s status as ‘specialist’. The Literature syllabus retained the shape of the previous English course with the genre-based divisions of literary texts from Chaucer to the twentieth century. It was structured into three sections: Section I was Poetry, Section II Drama and Section III Fiction (later called Prose), and while the text lists were extended, the course still closely reflected the English courses taught at University of Western Australia.

Western Australia was the last state to divide English into more than one examinable secondary school course and it was publicly examined on this basis for the first time in 1969. Other states implemented the split of English into ‘Expression’ and ‘Literature’ before Western Australia despite making the decision to do so afterwards, and it was not a popular decision among teachers of English who rejected the notion that ‘“expression” could be taught in a non-literary context’ (Bennett and Hay, Directions 36). Since 1961 the Public Examinations Board debated the possibility of dividing English into two subjects but decided against the

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65 In SA this division occurred in 1966; in NSW the new HSC courses were formulated in 1965, and examined in 1967; Victoria, initially in 1957 and then again in 1968, and in Tasmania in 1969” (Yiannakis 106). See Yiannakis for a table showing the various publicly examined Year 12 English courses offered in five Australian states, 1945-2005.
move on the grounds that it was subject self-aggrandisement (UWA Archives, cons 268, 7 July 1961). But by 1969 all states had split English into a literature and language or expression course, a consequence most likely, of following trends emerging in universities and a view of English as solely defined by its communicative function. It may also have been due to Petch’s 1964 visit, since, after visiting Western Australia to report on its examination system, Petch was hosted by the Australian National University as well as the Universities of Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney (‘Airport Welcome’). John Yiannakis describes this nearly synchronous nationwide partition of ‘Leaving’ English into distinct language and literature subjects as ‘a momentous change to secondary English curricula’ (106). Locally it created a new syllabus structure for Leaving English. In 1968 for example, the syllabus was organised into three sections based upon genre: Poetry, Drama and Fiction, but after the split, it was arranged into two text lists – non-fiction and fiction – three texts from each were required to be studied. It represents a broader generic classification of texts which paralleled a more general study in English.

The re-categorisation of the Western Australian Leaving English examination also indicates the ‘sectionality’ of English – that is, that its many malleable fragments, approaches and segments lend themselves to re-arrangement and re-management in a way that makes it susceptible to intrusion and vulnerable to misinterpretation by parties outside the subject.

Such division extends, often, well beyond the separation of literature and expression and demonstrates the inadequacy of such a dichotomy. To the traditional genre division of poetry, prose (or novel) and drama have been added Australian literature, modern literature, language study, wider reading, mass media, clear thinking, written English, comprehension and comment. Despite the obvious interrelatedness of many of the segments, and the often repeated complaints concerning the impracticability of teaching English as a series of self-contained segments, syllabus committees Polonius-like, have continued the proliferation of such sub-courses, and apparently despaired of achieving a manageable definition of English as a subject. (Bennett and Hay, Directions 2)

The idea that the definition of English requires ‘management’ implies that it inherently lacks order and containment, that the subject needs to be controlled and given clearly identifiable parameters so that parties, mostly external to English teaching, would accept it as a coherent and recognisable subject. This is not to suggest that English in Western Australia would ever be permitted to continue without significant intervention by its many interest groups. In 1971, Bennett and Hay concluded that when comparing Australian syllabuses in the states where there is a ‘literature/expression’ dichotomy, ‘such a division is more arbitrary than real’ (Directions 2). It does, however, highlight concerns of the time about the identity of English, and the difficulty in defining the content and purpose of English. The fact that these divisions
were occurring nation-wide, indeed world-wide, suggests that the problems faced by English, regarding its cohesion, image and nomenclature were not unique to Western Australia.

*Strengthening subject English via the English Teachers’ Association*

In the 1960s and thereafter, changes to secondary English were facilitated by the state English Teachers’ Associations. The English Teachers’ Association of Western Australian was established in 1964 to strengthen the identity of the subject, to support its teachers, to advance English as a subject in the face of external pressure groups and to provide professional development for teachers. Prior to its formation ‘there were no professional ties giving English teachers corporate strength and unity of purpose, and little effective interchange of ideas among them about their work’ (Biggins, ‘Response’ 2). The Association provided a network of collegial support and exchange that was particularly timely in an era of subject change caused, in part, by emergent educational theory, including that of ‘the London School’:

> The Association came into being, too, at a time when a new philosophy about the place of language in education, and new, important ideas in the teaching of language and literature were being worked out in Britain, America and Australia. The Association had provided an effective forum for the dissemination of these ideas. (Biggins, ‘Response’ 2)

The first president of Western Australia’s English Teachers’ Association was (R.J.) John Barnes, a lecturer in English at the University of Western Australia between 1958 and 1970. Barnes recounts that it was Brother B.C (Cas) Manion of Trinity College who was ‘the mover and shaker’ in getting the English Teachers’ Association started. It was inaugurated at a meeting held at the University of Western Australia on the 25th of September 1964, with Manion as Chair. The meeting was sponsored by the Western Australian Chapter of the Australian College of Education which had arranged a two-day seminar on English teaching earlier that year, 27-28 August 1964. ‘That in itself was a historic landmark in in-service education for English teachers’ (Forrestal 1). Such was the seminar’s success that Manion raised the idea of forming an Association at the meeting, and it was supported, a motion carried and the Association launched thereafter.

Barnes was surprised when asked at the Annual General Meeting to take on the presidency, but he did so because he thought that the backing of the University’s English Department would help to get the Association started. This says something about the relationship between the Association and the University: the genesis of the English Teachers’ Association’s depended upon the involvement of University personnel, and the fact that the first presidents
were members of the English Department at the University or the Teachers’ College reflects deeper connections between tertiary and secondary English during the 1960s and 1970s than there are today. This is true at a national level too, where the first four Presidents of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE) were also Professors. With only one university in Western Australia in the 1960s virtually all the English teachers had been students in its English Department. The University of Western Australia was therefore positioned to influence teachers both in this capacity and through its involvement in the English Teachers’ Association. Barnes encouraged teachers to think of English as a discipline area as had been his experience reading for the English Tripos at Cambridge, after which he returned to Perth in 1963 and was surprised to be asked to take on responsibility for Leaving English (Barnes, Email). Because Barnes had trained in Melbourne and at Cambridge his contacts with educators in other states helped ETAWA form good relationships with other states' English Teachers’ Association. But Barnes was also the Chief Examiner in English so he stepped down from the ETAWA presidency after one year, concerned about a conflict of interest. In addition to John Barnes as president, Hay was president of the English Teachers’ Association in the late 1960s before Bennett took on the role in the early 1970s. Both were members of the University’s English Department. Other university staff members were involved in the ETA, particularly as conference speakers.

The English Teachers’ Association and the University’s English Department generally were against the split of Leaving English into two subjects. There was consensus that employers and other faculties wanted a model of English that would produce secondary graduates who were sufficiently ‘literate’ to gain employment or undertake study. Some teachers were concerned, however, that the division of would strategically down-grade English (‘Expression’) and make Literature a peripheral specialist subject. This questions the function of English - What is it for? Whose interests does it serve? Barnes concedes that ‘there were problems with the existing arrangement’ and he acknowledges that, ‘although we tried, I don’t think that there was any real prospect of our defeating the move to split Expression and Literature. Petch, of course, recommended what he was familiar with’ (Barnes, Email).

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66 Three of the professors were Professors of English (A.D. Hope, 1965-67; Leonie Kramer, 1968-70; James McAuley, 1970-75) and one was a Professor of Language (R.D. Eagleton, 1976-80).
67 Barnes completed his Bachelor of Arts (Hons) at the University of Melbourne from where he graduated in 1951 in the combined schools of English and Political Science (UWA Archives, staff file P38). He went on to receive a Master of Arts from Cambridge University (‘John Barnes’).
In May 1969 Perth hosted the English Teachers’ Association conference in conjunction with the Australian Association of the Teachers of English. The theme was ‘Teaching them to Live’ (English Teachers’ Association). The conference was opened by Allan Edwards, an influential figure in the English Department at the University of Western Australia because of his role as Chief Examiner of Leaving English, and because many of his university students became teachers in Western Australia. Jeanna Bradley spoke at the (May 9-10) 1969 conference after Edwards. In her presentation, ‘The Challenge of Values’, she questioned the value placed on English studies in Australia and indicated that attitudes towards the teaching of English suggested ‘that this area of education was merely a necessary evil removed from the practical realities of life’ (8). Bradley posed three questions for the audience: Should English teachers willingly submit to the pressure of modern society that was making society illiterate? Could the English syllabus absorb an increment of Asian literature without reducing the British origins of Australia's historical and literary roots? and, ‘Is it not a concession to material values to have allowed the English syllabus to be divided into English (useful) and English literature, and therefore a denial of our professed intentions of English teaching?’ (9). Bradley’s address conjoins the significant developments in English during this period, also evident in the inclusion of presenters David Mossenson, Director of Secondary Education in Western Australia, and Robert (Bob) Biggins, Superintendent of English, who discussed reasons for curriculum changes in the secondary school (English Teachers’ Association). The Department of Education grew in size with the proliferation of secondary education but in subject English, personal relationships were extremely relevant because student numbers were still relatively small. Thus, people teaching English at the tertiary and secondary levels knew one another. Barnes recalls working closely with Biggins and later-appointed superintendent, Nancy Richards. These networks were fostered by their involvement in the ABC Schools Broadcasts and professional development conducted by the English Teachers’ Association.

At the ETA’s 1969 conference Biggins spoke on the main areas of change in education in recent years including the policy encouraging students to read widely. Like Barnes, Biggins sought to

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68 The Department of Education recognised that subject specialisation was necessary because of the rapid increase in students in secondary schools. As a result, Biggins became the first person appointed as Superintendent of English in Western Australian in 1964 (Forrestal 2).

69 The weekly Schools Broadcasts covered topics that were relevant to the Leaving English syllabus. John Barnes recalls: ‘The Education Section of the ABC arranged broadcasts for schools, and many staff were involved. I always gave a talk once a year before the examinations. I did a couple of unscripted discussions with students—the first one was excellent in rehearsal and not so good in the broadcast because the students tightened up; so for the second we secretly taped the rehearsal, and used that! One year we did a TV series on drama, which I presented, with Neville Teede (actor and tutor in English) and Jeanna Bradley (nee Tweedie) taking part’ (Barnes, Email).
retain literary texts in the English syllabus arguing that literature was central to any study of expression (‘Some Developments’). He argued that the separation of English and Literature would undermine the Department’s push for wider reading, and he challenged the timing of the split because a similar move was being abandoned in England, such was its inefficacy. Biggins promoted the policy of wide reading because it aligned itself with research that showed that the teaching of grammar has no effect on writing skills, and because such reading increased students' exposure to a variety of thoughts, concepts, and situations (Biggins, ‘Some Developments’). This research included Gurrey and the ‘London School’s’ focus on ‘meaning in context’, which valued wholeness in the learning process and the positive effects of unifying a student’s experience of language and literature (Hardcastle 163). The 1969 English syllabus advises that ‘teachers should keep in mind that the new English course is not a modified literature course of the conventional kind, but a new course, designed to promote the complementary skills of reading and writing in English’ (UWA, Manual 1969 116). Fundamental to the syllabus is the assumption that good readers make good writers:

Teachers should at all times stress the relationship between reading and writing, and plan an integrated course, no one aspect being treated in isolation. It is especially important that routine and purely mechanical exercises should be avoided as far as possible. For instance, points of grammar and usage should, wherever possible, be discussed in context and not treated in isolation from questions of meaning and style. (116-17)

This approach to English acknowledges that its many components are tightly and intricately interwoven, and suggests the dangers of segmenting English skills without showing due consideration of contextual understandings and the complementary nature of learning reading and writing. The implementation of these ideas, to some extent, was hindered by the system of public examinations. Bennett and Hay argue that there was reluctance in schools to read beyond the minimum reading specified in the syllabus (Directions 37). ‘Wide reading’ was not assessed in public examinations, thus schools and students were not accountable for developing specific and diverse textual knowledge. It is fair to say then, that this reform represented a significant contraction in students’ exposure to canonical texts and the reading praxis that characterised subject English up until that time. There was a reduction in the reading of print texts that was accompanied by a re-emphasis on the teaching of writing, including grammar.

**Grammar teaching**

The new 1969 Leaving English syllabus in Western Australia returned to an emphasis on ‘Writing’. This revised syllabus affirmed the status of ‘Elements of Expression’ by including it as the first of its four sections: ‘Candidates are required to show understanding of the basic rules
of grammar, punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling, and should give particular attention to points of syntax and common usage’ (UWA, Manual 1969 121). One of the main aims of the course was to ‘develop in students the ability to write effective English’ (120). This focus aligns with the goals of industry and many faculties in tertiary institutions seeking functionally literate staff and students, and also came to reflect an increased focus on creativity and creative writing. An element of flexibility in the syllabus, harnessed by the new emphasis on writing praxis, made repetitious grammatical exercises unpopular, as argued by examiners of English for that year, Bennett and Hay:

The rise in prestige of experience and creativity have been accompanied by the decline in favour of what were once the mainstays of many English courses – the ‘exercises’ and ‘drills’ which were supposed to reinforce the learning of spelling, syntax and the like, to increase vocabulary and to eradicate ‘common errors’. Leaving aside for the moment the whole question of ‘correctness’ and formal grammar, it is now generally accepted that these drills and exercises consisting as they so often do of filling in blanks in meaningless sentences, pairing off or otherwise manipulating synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms, searching out errors and so on have almost no effect on the learners’ practical command of language, spoken or written. (Directions 50)

During the 1960s and 70s some English teachers supported the abandonment of traditional grammar teaching, believing that decontextualised grammar teaching was futile. This view had been upheld by many influential educators, including Ken Willis and Walter Murdoch, who advocated the contextualisation of grammar teaching as discussed in Chapter One.

In December 1968 the journal of the English Teachers’ Association of Western Australia reprinted an article by K.D. Watson from the July 1968 issue of the New South Wales ETA Newsletter. Here Watson raised some of the concerns of the time surrounding the teaching of grammar in the secondary English classroom and showed that grammar teaching was still widely used in practice in a relatively ‘progressive’ pre-1971 NSW syllabus. While Watson applied his concerns to New South Wales for the most part, his article pointed to the debate happening at the national level, in turn affecting the development of subject English in Western Australia. The tradition of curricular control in New South Wales was highly centralised and the public examination system ‘virtually cemented’ the dominant paradigm dictating classroom practice: ‘the demands of the external examinations, long-established text books and English teaching “folklore” irrespective of syllabus principles and rule’ (Brock 178). This is a significant story of curricular control sitting alongside Watson’s claim that the New South Wales Syllabus Committee had ignored substantial research about grammar teaching. Watson argues that high level grammar instruction with traditional grammatical terminology is ineffective in improving students’ language skills and quotes no fewer than eight studies, some
of them meta-analyses, establishing a low correlation between grammatical knowledge and writing abilities.\(^{70}\)

This ‘new direction’ for English was likely to have been steered, in part, by Bruce Bennett. Having completed his Master of Education at the London Institute Bennett was influenced by the London School (Haskell, ‘News’ 7). There he encountered the ‘New English’ (‘Growth’) movement and its London School proponents such as educators James Britton, Nancy Martin and Harold Rosen. English teacher-scholar Robin Peel recognises the curricular control of the institution, the University of London’s Institute of Education and the work of its individuals:

> Harold Rosen, Nancy Martin, James Britton and John Dixon made a parallel leap away from the reading of canonical texts by celebrating and encouraging student writing and tapping into what was seen as the authentic voice of working-class children. Instead of reading an imposed body of someone else’s ‘great literature’, it was argued, children should create their own. (‘English’ 96)

While Bennett showed concern with the assessment of reading through objective tests, his interest in writing was confirmed by his direction of a project on writing in the 1980s which was very much influenced by the work of the London School.\(^{71}\)

Teacher and life member of the English Teachers’ Association Eric Carlin was also a significant figure in the development of subject English in Western Australia through his engagement with global educational theory and his attempts to integrate it with local practices. Carlin taught education at the Churchlands Teachers’ Training College and in 1970 was awarded a Fellowship to the Institute of Education in London. Here he was also influenced by the new theories and methodology of Britton and Martin who were writing influential books about the nature of teaching.\(^{72}\)

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\(^{70}\) These studies include: a 1903 study by Rice, a 1923 study by Asker, 1926 research by Segal and Barr, research from Scotland in 1947 suggesting that formal grammar should not be taught to students under fourteen years of age, a 1960 study by Robinson, 1962 research by W.G. Heath at Birmingham University and R.J. Harris’s 1965 study (Watson, ‘Grammar’ 5-6).

\(^{71}\) The University of Western Australia’s Department of English’s writing research project was a three-year investigation of the process of writing and the development of writing abilities of fifteen to seventeen year olds at four Western Australian high schools (1977-79). See B. Bennett, D. Bowes, C. Jeffery, S. McPhail, A. Sooby and A. Walker, ‘An investigation of the process of writing and the development of writing abilities, 15 to 17’, \textit{Report to the Education Research and Development Committee}, Canberra, 1980. The findings are described in Bennett’s chapter, ‘The Necessity of Metaphor’ in \textit{Timely Voices} edited by Roslyn Arnold, including those concerning figurative language (23). Among other conclusions it suggests that an attitude of ‘don’t rock the boat’ inhibited risk-taking in the writing and thinking done at school (26) Following this project, local educators Jonathan Cook, William Green, Jo-Anne Reid and Christopher Jeffery (who was also involved in the UWA research) prepared a paper for the AATE entitled \textit{Writing: an Educational Perspective} (1982).

\(^{72}\) Martin and Britton wrote several books on teaching, language and learning. Nancy Martin attended the National English Teachers’ Conference held in WA in 1974 and she returned to Perth in 1977 and 1980 to complete \textit{The Martin Report: What Goes on in English Lessons: Case Studies from Government}
Britton reintegrated language and child within the context of world and society. His emphasis on learning as a prime characteristic of humankind and language as its main instrument gave a new focus to the learning process. By his model of modes and roles he created a unified framework for examining and understanding language development and use ... [and] he confirmed the need for an interdisciplinary approach in language studies in education. (Chorny 273)

So this situation further suggests that English in Australia was product of, and a participant in, contestation imported and authorised by individuals with access to institutional and cultural authority. It also highlights the influence of the Institute of Education at the University of London (or the ‘London School’), while confirming that there was a shift in emphasis from reading to writing, significant because it returns to Murdoch’s emphasis, in contrast to Edwards’s, who was a student of Leavis and always emphasised the importance of ‘close reading’ (Bill Green, Email).

Of course, what was happening at the secondary level cannot be understood without reference to what was going on at the tertiary level. The split in the English Department at the University of Sydney during the mid-1960s provides background into the spread of Leavisism across Australia that manifested itself in English Departments and brought with it deep-seated division. John Docker argues that the split into Leavisite scholarship on the one hand (Cambridge), and textual and historical scholarship on the other hand (Oxford), resulted from an incompatibility between the intellectual traditions of Sydney and those transplanted from Melbourne (130). It was a predicament that reinforced the extent of the control of institutional and social forces during this decade nation-wide, and enabled ‘Australian Leavisism’ to claim a hegemonic position in Australian literary history. Leigh Dale argues that Leavisite criticism seemed to offer social mobility by providing a rationale for the study of English Leavisite criticism that could be easily fitted to flourishing pronouncements on policy – the rhetoric of standards, the valorisation of the text, and of the teacher as arbiter of taste. (Dale, English Men 113)

It is yet another story of an Imperial import adapting to local educational contexts in literary history and invigorating the study of English, albeit via contestation and conflict.

The ‘Growth’ Model of English in Western Australia

The development of subject English in Western Australia was also influenced by the events at the Dartmouth Conference held in 1966. Held over a four week period, the conference was attended by English teachers from the United Kingdom and the United States who gathered to re-examine the identity and direction of subject English. According to John Dixon, ‘the area

High Schools in Western Australia (1980). I discuss this document in chapter four of this thesis, owing to its importance as a distinctive direction and intervention in English in Western Australia.
given new clarity was creativity in the English classroom’ (xii). In England in 1967 the
conference was followed up with John Dixon’s *Growth through English* which interweaves
English studies with students’ personal growth. Under this model, literature became an
experience and a way to empathise and share others’ lives.

The developmental view presented in *Growth through English* forced attention to
the processes of interaction through which children acquire competence or
expressiveness in language and strengthened conceptions of the teacher’s
obligation to guide and foster this development. (J. Dixon, *Growth Perspective of
the Seventies* xv)

Educational trends coming out of the UK and US were certainly influential, but subject English
in Australia is not merely a case of overseas adoption. Diana Davis and Ken Watson argue that
there have been many contextual factors shaping the English curriculum in Australia and
indeed Western Australia, including economic pressures, population growth, social change
(such as multiculturalism and the search for a national identity) and the establishment of
separate state-based education systems (152). The Growth Model was imported to Australia
and then adapted to local contexts.

The Growth Model represents a shift from ‘literature’ to ‘language’ as a general organising
principle for English curriculum. This is a disputed statement, however, since critics of the
Growth model have argued its failure on the grounds that it ‘rendered language itself
“invisible”’ (Christie, ‘Received’ 102). Christie, for example, has argued that the view of English
as a context for personal and moral growth was what the ‘Growth’ and ‘Cultural Heritage’
models had in common (Christie, ‘Changing’; ‘Received’). Christie contends that the ‘Growth’
model focused on literature in the received ‘Leavisite’ tradition - in its belief in the individual
forging great truths and with ‘a vision of literature as culture’ (Christie, ‘Received’ 102). Peter
Medway too argues that the ‘Growth’ model is rightly characterised ‘as a fusion of Cambridge’
with ‘Romantic-progressive’ tendencies (Medway 22). While the co-existence of creativity and
the ‘Cultural Heritage’ approach to literature are compatible certainly, through there are
obvious limitations in viewing emphases on language and literature as ‘a simple binary
opposition’ (B. Green, ‘After’ 227). Language and the learner are central to the ‘Growth’
ideology, and this re-orientation becomes important for highlighting the influence of the
London School in Western Australia.

The Growth Model aspired to engage students’ imaginations and emphasised grammar usage
over grammatical accuracy, thus centring the learner as an active participant in using language.
In this way it was an unpopular model with traditionalists because it moved away from
teaching de-contextualised grammar drills, and veered from the imperial framework and
canonical texts emphasised in the Cultural Heritage model. It suited the liberal and progressive social attitudes of the era which was fertile ground for the model to flourish. Some critics disputed the approach’s lack of disciplinary tradition and sought to hinder the ‘growth’:

In more conservative circles of education criticism, the 1960s and 1970s are held responsible for ‘declining literacy standards’ and grasp of the ‘basics’ in English and therefore in education, with English at its core. While this change needs to be placed within the context of wider socio-cultural change and changes in schooling, irrespective of this, the Growth Model certainly de-emphasised repetitive skills exercises in English. (Bennett and Hay, Directions 50)

John Dixon’s view of grammar teaching is echoed through Bennett and Hay’s explanation. He argues that while skills are a means to achieving literacy in the first instance they ‘too easily become an end in themselves. Students perceive and master skills as isolated tasks which don’t readily transfer into their lives’ (Durbin 70). Here Dixon articulated a contextual approach to the teaching of grammar which certain factions of the public found concerning. The Growth model also downplayed the significance of assessment ‘as traditionally understood’ (B.Green, ‘After’ 300), and in this regard it was vulnerable to criticisms from the right-wing offensive in education with a preference for regulation, ‘standards’ and control. The educational politics of the New Right generated caution and resistance to the Growth Model of English in schools, in part because it was unfamiliar:

The aspect of ‘strangeness’, for instance, which the subject presents to those who are not inside the subculture, is a recent phenomenon. Before the 1960s English was more intelligible to the lay public, and some of the puzzling elements which now form part of normal practice were sixties innovations. (Medway 3)

**Australian literature**

Leigh Dale also explains that Leavisite principles are compatible with national literary scholarship, and both of these areas of study flourished throughout university English Departments during the 1960s and 70s. In 1976 Bennett argued that ‘there is a rich and varied field of interest for the student in Australian literature, and that most of this literature was published well before the first university courses in Australian literature were even contemplated’ (‘Australian’ 110). Certainly the Fellowship of Australian Writers of Western Australia was well aware of the plethora of talented writers and Australian literature, and had been lobbying the university to include it since 1969 (Kotai-Ewers 285).

Bennett identifies the period 1960-75 as a third phase of the introduction of Australian literature courses into Australian universities, ‘a period during which undergraduate and graduate studies in Australian literature have increased and diversified, but with little public
discussion of aims or intentions’ (‘Australian’ 114). During this later ‘phase’, members of the English department at the University of Western Australia planned a new course in Australian Literature, which was ‘then a controversial move’ (Haskell, ‘News’ 7). The course was ‘blocked for a time’ (Bennett, ‘Australian’ 106). For despite the establishment of new Australian literary journals in the 50s and 60s legitimating Australian literature and contributing to its acceptance as a serious area of scholarship, the University’s Professorial Board was reluctant to introduce it as a course of study. In 1969 John Barnes sought the Board’s permission to establish a course in Australian literature which was approved but subject to delay as a result of the Board’s fiscal stringency (UWA Archives, Minutes – Professorial Board). As it happens, Barnes was also a committee member of the Fellowship of Australian Writers of Western Australia (FAWWA), as was writer and fellow lecturer at the University (1966-73), Dorothy Hewett. When fellow FAWWA committee member Bert Vickers learned that the Board was reconsidering its decision, he proposed ‘that an appeal from the FAWWA might help convince the academics’ (Kotai-Ewers 286). Alongside these events, Allan Edwards spent his study leave in 1971 giving lectures on Australian literature at several Indian universities. The lecture topics included the writing of Judith Wright, A.D. Hope, and Henry Handel Richardson (UWA Archives, staff file P202). Furthermore, upon Edwards’s return from this leave he reported to Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor C.J.B. Clewes that he has ‘brought back from Townsville detailed syllabuses of Australian Literature courses (undergraduate and post-graduate) which could prove useful to us in our own forward planning’ (UWA Archives, staff file P202). The University’s first course in Australian literature was introduced in 1973, an optional third year unit (English 35) outlined in Appendix III.

At the secondary level of English, the study of Australian literature also benefitted from the foundation of new tertiary institutions which offered a greater range of courses and transmitted the value of Australian literature down through the secondary English syllabus examination committees. Universities were expanding and booming – ‘both in funding and in ideas’ (Jordan 77). The move from the University of Western Australia as the sole university to a situation where there was also Murdoch and then Curtin University (originally WAIT) is pertinent to the Western Australian story of curricular control. With the arrival of Murdoch

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73 Bennett identifies the first phase as ‘1940-9, the decade during which Commonwealth Literary Fund lectures commenced; the second 1950-9, the years of public debate about the role and value of Australian literary studies in universities’ (‘Australian’ 114).
74 Dorothy Hewett joined the FAWWA committee when she was lecturing in the English department at UWA. Hewett edited the anthology Sandgropers which was prepared by the Fellowship and published by UWA Press (Kotai-Ewers 323). It is evidence of an obvious network of relations and exchanges in literary circles in Western Australia. Hewett’s play The Man from Mukinupin was studied in the Year 12 English course, 1990-93 (Dolin and Yiannakis).
75 Kotai-Ewers references FAWWA Minutes, 11 August 1969. FAWWA papers BL 214/3021A/81.
University in the mid-1970s came a new perspective and set of emphases in literary education. It also saw a promotion of Australian literature which had grown exponentially in the 1960s, largely as a result of local personnel such as Bennett, Hay, Barnes and Veronica Brady.

When John Barnes came to the University of Western Australia in 1958 he had already spent several years researching various aspects of Australian literature (UWA Archives, staff file P38). His main area of research was the life and writing of Joseph Furphy, and he was working on a full length critical study which was published in 1967. In 1962, well before Australian literature courses were taught at the university, Barnes was invited to the United States to present lectures on Australian literature at the Pennsylvania State University and to visit the University of Texas, where Australian literature was being taught (UWA Archives, staff file P38). This supports Bennett’s 1976 observation that ‘in some respects Australian literature is better served overseas, where universities in England, Europe, Asia, North America and Africa offer courses’ (‘Australian’ 107). Barnes was First Examiner of English for the years 1963-1968 inclusive (UWA Archives, Cons 394). His influence presents most obviously when the 1965 English syllabus includes a much wider range of Australia authors – The Rainbow Bird (Vance Palmer), Short Story Landscapes (Peter Cowan), The Getting of Wisdom (Henry Handel Richardson), Australian Poets: Judith Wright, Plays for Radio and Television (Nigel Samuel), Six Voices (Chris Wallace-Crabbe) (UWA, Manual 1965 103-07). In the second half of the 1960s, Barnes was responsible for giving five lectures each year from the period marked by Banjo Paterson to Christina Stead (Jordan 81). They were optional for all but third-year English students, but this practice ceased when Barnes left the University of Western Australia in 1970 to teach at La Trobe University in Melbourne. There he established La Trobe’s first courses in Australian literature.

I have already referred to the significant involvement of John Barnes, John Hay and Bruce Bennett in secondary English. They were also responsible for advancing the study of Australian literature in their writing and editing as well as their teaching. Hay conducted noteworthy research resulting in numerous publications on the life and work of Katharine Susannah Prichard. In conjunction with Bennett and Cowan, he also edited several anthologies that were included on the secondary text lists. In particular, their short story collection, Spectrum Two, was set on a staggering thirty-five secondary English syllabuses, 1971-2005.\(^{76}\) Bennett’s

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\(^{76}\) In addition to Spectrum Two, Hay, Bennett and Cowan co-edited Perspectives Two and Spectrum One which were included in the Leaving English syllabuses, 1990-2005, and 1977 then 1981-85 respectively. Spectrum One is a short story anthology that was designed for fourth year (Year 11) English students; Spectrum Two was intended for fifth year/Leaving/Year 12 English students. Hay and Bennett’s
contributions to the teaching and learning of Australian literature are substantial enough to warrant their own study. Most remarkably however, Bennett introduced ‘literary regionalism’ into studies of Australian literature and he also played a significant role in developing curriculum materials on Australian studies in schools for the Australian Bicentennial Authority. The rest I will leave to Bennett’s colleague and friend to summarise:

The study of Australian literature as a key element in understanding the culture and the nation has a few heroes in Western Australia, but none greater than Bruce Bennett. He taught, encouraged and promoted Australian literature and its serious study in Western Australia, Australia, Asia, Europe and North America for forty years. With his friend and colleague John Hay, Bruce saw the study of English with an Australian flavour instilled in the WA secondary school curriculum, and he helped prepare texts for that curriculum. (Haskell, ‘News’ 7)

Another friend and colleague of Bennett’s was Australian literature specialist Veronica Brady who joined the University’s English Department in 1972.

Veronica was exploring the new critical approaches to literature that were at that time replacing the ‘New Criticism’ and Leavis schools, which had reigned for many years in English departments throughout Australia. She was also forging new approaches to Australian literature and probing the ways in which Australians saw themselves as newcomers and conquerors of an ancient and important Aboriginal culture. (Jordan 80)

With Bennett, Brady taught the first Australian literature course at the university in 1973.77 Brady lectured on A.D. Hope, Joseph Furphy’s Such is Life and Patrick White (Brady’s main area of research and the subject of her own PhD thesis in 1968). I quote Brady at length here to capture her voice and the sense of excitement surrounding the teaching of Australian literature at the University of Western Australia in the 1970s:

Oh, and we also had great adventures in trying to establish teaching of Australian literature because many of our colleagues did not think that was a good idea at all. They were fairly traditional in their views and when we’d say, ‘Let’s have some Australian literature’, they would say, ‘Oh, is there any?’ But, well people like Dorothy Hewett who was on the staff at that time, and Bruce Bennett and Peter Cowan and myself, we all carried on a treat, and we established the course, and my goodness me, it became extraordinarily popular. (V.Brady 52)

Brady also influenced the secondary English curriculum through her involvement in the English Teachers’ Association such as when she presented a talk on ‘Patrick White and the Australian Tradition’ in June 1972. She regularly attended meetings of the Teachers and Examiners of English (UWA Archives, cons 268).

Directions: Secondary School English in Australia was a teacher reference on the Western Australian Leaving English syllabus, 1971-1980 (Dolin and Yiannakis).

77 See Appendix III for the Unit outline for this unit, English 35 (Australian Literature) – March 1973. Also see Chapter Six of Larrikin Angel, ‘An apostle of Australian Literature 1970s’ (76-95) in which Brady’s biographer Kath Jordan details the course’s contents.
It was still to be some time before any Indigenous literature was recommended for study in the Leaving English syllabuses. Up until the 1980s, since the formation of the two Leaving ‘English’ subjects, the syllabuses regularly included several Australian writers such as the short story anthology *The Rainbow Bird* by Vance Palmer (1969-75), George Johnston’s *My Brother Jack* (1974-80), John Stephens’ edited essay collection *Ten Articulate Men* (1969-80), *Plays of the Sixties* (1971-85) and Alan Moorehead’s *The Fatal impact* (1970-80). Local writer and graduate of the University of Western Australia Randolph Stow was first included on the syllabus in 1974 with *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea*. Nineteen seventy-four was also a significant year in local literature for it was the year that FAWWA President Stuart Clarke received a draft copy of a course in Creative Writing to be taught by the American poet and linguist, and new Head of Department at WAIT, Brian Dibble (Kotai-Ewers 283). In the 1970s Dibble also initiated an innovative Australian studies course which Michael White describes as being ‘modelled on “black studies” course in the United States’ (*WAIT* 134). It was an era in which inequalities in race, gender and class were put on the social policy and research agenda.

In nineteen seventy-seven there was a significant increase in the number of texts included on the Leaving English syllabus. The length of the list almost doubled in size and there was a sudden inclusion of more traditional, ‘classical’ literary texts such as Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Charles Dickens’ *Hard Times* and William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and *Henry IV Part 1*. This proliferation of texts on the syllabus from this year onwards is a result in part of the Bullock Report which originated in England and exerted a persuasive influence on the understanding of English teaching in the schools internationally. It became a powerful determinant of educational change in Australian curriculum development in the 1970s. In fact, *A Language for Life* was included as a teacher reference book on the Western Australian English syllabus, 1977-86, but on no other (Dolin and Yiannakis). Chaired by Sir Alan Bullock, the Committee of Inquiry into Reading and the Use of English in Great Britain produced *A Language for Life* which encouraged reading throughout the curriculum, an expansion of reading and increasing students’ exposure to ‘good’ fiction. It recommended that teachers ‘engineer’ opportunities ‘to bring the right book to the right child at the right time’ (128) and that schools should have the books both to create and meet the demand for a general increase in reading needs (129). In teaching literature, ‘the main emphasis should be on extending the range of the pupil’s reading. True discernment can only come from a breadth of experience’ (132). One of the Bullock committee members was James Britton of the London School whose influence in Western Australian was distinctive. His books, *English Teaching: An International Exchange, Handbook for English Teachers No 2*, and *Language and Learning*, and those of
Nancy Martin, also of the London School, *The Martin Report: What Goes on in English Lessons, Understanding Children Talking, and Writing and Learning Across the Curriculum* were included as Teacher References on the Western Australian Leaving English syllabus during the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. Significantly, these books were not included on any other Australian syllabus, suggesting a deeper connection between the ‘London School’ of English and Western Australian English curricula. When Bennett took his sabbatical leave in 1973-74 he was attached to the English department of the London University Institute of Education. The insights he gained there were to shape the teaching of English in Western Australia:

In a context there of reading and discussion about language and literature in education, an intuitive belief was strengthened, that the missing link in our chain of English studies was a proper sense of the educational process. It seemed to me then (and it seems to me now) that universities in Australia too often neglect the *educational* implications of the courses they provide. [...] Other factors such as the demands of the market or the requirements of the research industry or coverage of the subject field often take precedence over education goals, which would consider the value of particular activities for particular groups of students. (Bennett, ‘Australian’ 106)

I will discuss the interrelationship with the London School in more detail in Chapter Four, particularly the influence of *The Martin Report* which was published in 1980 but, according to Bill Green, is very much a document of the 1970s (‘Testing’ 20). These philosophies contributed to an emphasis on wide reading and diversity in texts, adopted more fully with the inclusion of more media texts, and the teaching of media in English.

*The English Teacher*

An improvement to subject English that came out of the Petch report emerged from Petch’s criticism of the excessively prescriptive nature of the subject syllabuses authorised by the Public Examinations Board. Petch assessed that they were presented in such specific detail that there was, ‘little or no scope to the individual teacher with ideas of his own’ (*Report* 1). So in shaping the revised syllabus, the Syllabus Committee aimed to give teachers freedom to teach as they saw fit. The 1969 Syllabus endorsed broad principles to be followed, but encouraged experimentation in their application, because ‘[t]eachers now see themselves not only as arrangers of learning activity but as providers of experience (of literature and life, of discussion and drama)’ (Bennett and Hay, *Directions* 49). The 1969 syllabus also encouraged the discussion of films and plays in production as a means of contributing to the development

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of students’ critical attitudes in a range of expressive forms (UWA, Manual 1969 120), a sign of the increasing use of the media form in society as well as the English classroom. Encouraging a critical approach to a range of text types engendered flexibility and diversity in the curriculum and provided the impetus for the introduction of a group of new secondary subjects in the 1970s. This influenced the teaching of Media in tertiary and secondary education. The syllabus also advocated that the ‘discussion of poems and passages of prose should begin with the individual response of the student, and be developed into an evaluation of the handling of language’ (117). These priorities are evidence of the beginnings of the ‘Growth’ model of English, and the emphasis on Language, both emerging as popular approaches to English in England at that time via the London School. I should mention here too that the fact the many teachers were against the division of English into two subjects, and the extent of the impact upon the ‘split’ upon the subject and its content, makes a strong case for the ability of teachers to adapt to new challenges and emerge in a position of strength in an increasingly student-centred school environment. I would also argue that in addition to the resilience of teachers of English, the subject was well placed through its pedagogy – Hunter’s ‘pastoral guidance’ (Rethinking) - to negotiate the challenges presented by the new social demographic, challenges that were increasingly being met through the creation of student-centred classrooms and, as I proceed to argue now, the creation of new subjects such as Media.

The Study of Media in English

In presenting the development of Media Education in Western Australia, educators and media specialists Robyn Quin and Rod Quin identify the Whitlam Government’s Karmel Report of 1973 as one that ‘sought to devolve control for curriculum development and innovation to the local level’ (117). This means that while Media Studies courses did not establish themselves firmly in Western Australian secondary schools until the 1980s, the late seventies saw their popularity grow as a result of increased interest in technologies of communication and of decreased interest in curriculum viewed as irrelevant by many students now staying at school longer. Quin and Quin offer this criticism: ‘[t]he dissatisfaction was with both the context of the curriculum and the individualistic, deskbound, pen and paper approach to learning which the public examination fostered’ (112).

The Western Australian Leaving English examination papers included media texts relatively early, with media-based questions in the examinations during the 1970s. This was one sign of the boom in higher education during these years which aided the acceptance of media texts as part of the study of English. Murdoch University began in the mid-70s and this history connects with the story of media in subject English in Western Australia because its establishment
advanced a growing awareness of media and cultural studies, semiotics, and critical theory in English teaching.

WAIT offered courses in film-making and media studies which went beyond technical training and thus providing acknowledgement of the subject’s validity as an area of educational value. Murdoch organised many of its courses around principles other than those provided by the traditional academic disciplines of the time and its humanities area gave greater recognition to the study of contemporary culture and communications. (Quin and Quin 114)

Cal Durrant extends this idea to explain:

With the swing away from teacher-directed classrooms to more democratic learning contexts, one would think that the study of media would have been one of the more overtly liberalising agencies of English teaching in the 70s. But it seems that English teachers were torn between accepting the new syllabus directions and remaining true to their own literary tastes and training. (‘Media’ 142-43)

Since 1969, the first year of separating English and English Literature, the English syllabus urged teachers to discuss newspaper and magazine articles, radio and television programmes, films and plays, and to encourage students to read book reviews and current creative writing in journals such as *Westerly* (UWA, *Manual 1969* 122). This emphasis is also evident in the 1969 examination which includes media-based questions. For example, the ‘mass media context’ is evident in Part B of the Composition section of the English examination which shows an image of an army tank driven in a parade. The accompanying question reads: ‘Look carefully at the photograph on page 8. Describe briefly what is happening in the photograph and then discuss your reactions to it’ (UWA, *Manual 1969* 7). Similarly, the 1973 English TAE paper included questions relating to journalism, advertising, and film and radio scripts. The 1975 TAE English paper included an advertising question on cigarettes no less: ‘What follows is the synopsis of a 30 second television advertising film for a particular brand of cigarettes. Comment briefly on the techniques used and your reactions to the advertisement’. The emphasis on reader response in this question suggests the state’s ‘Growth’ orientation is discernible in the state’s English syllabus as the Growth model and reader response theory were compatible and both emerged in the mid- to late-1960s. The question overall reflects how student demand for media and technology courses was increasing, and it filtered through to secondary syllabuses via the newly-formed tertiary institutions and their representation on committees, a break with the established tradition of deference to the University of Western Australia. Paul Nay-Brock explains that,

This is basically a curriculum in the study of language in the context of literature and the mass media. There is not much emphasis upon the role of language in learning, in exploring one’s own identity and pursuing meaning. Language is perceived to be more a tool of communication and less a mode of learning. The
The syllabus also specifies that the ‘discussion of poems and passages of prose should begin with the individual response of the student, and be developed into an evaluation of the handling of language’ (117). These priorities are evidence of the Growth model of English emerging from England at that time and its genesis was Dartmouth.

**Conclusion**

As in preceding decades, in the 1960s, the Public Examinations Board set the Junior and Leaving English examinations, chaired by a staff member from the University of Western Australia’s Department of English. This dictated the English curriculum, for the examinations were registers of the content that mattered, and in effect, became the curriculum. The 1960s and 70s sought to remedy this dominance because an examination-oriented syllabus was narrow, inflexible and hampered innovative and effective teaching. This period produced a more student-centred and flexible pedagogy. The University of Western Australia, the institution with the greatest influence because of ‘its privileged position both as the state’s most prestigious educational institution as well as the examining authority acceptable to both the private and state school systems’, had this position challenged by the establishment of additional tertiary institutions and from the more centralised governance of state education by the Department of Education of Western Australia (M.White, ‘Sixty’ 75). Social change, including economic pressures and higher school retention rates, was instrumental in shaping the English curriculum in Western Australia, as were the educational trends coming out of the United Kingdom and the United States. The Growth model emerged strongly before the media, conscious of a public concern with ‘declining standards’ of secondary and tertiary graduates, bemoaned the de-emphasis on utilitarian or functional skills and engaged in the rhetoric of ‘crisis’.
Chapter Four – Inhibiting the ‘Growth’: The ‘Right’ Measure of Skills in an Era of Diversity

The ‘Growth’ model of English which had infiltrated English teaching in Western Australia in the 1970s brought with it a shift in thinking about language. Reader response theory and a focus on student experience through writing became more popular components of English. By stark contrast to this era of rapid social change, the 1980s and 1990s were decades of economic rationalism and educational change as the federal government increased its intervention in education. In an era of increasing technological advancement and specialisation, employers required adequately trained staff with the vocational skills to increase profits and economic growth. This government priority influenced education policy at the federal and state levels, for gaining control of education was gaining control of the economy. It followed the remodelling of two large economies, the United Kingdom under Thatcher and the United States under Reagan, that impacted upon curriculum development in all English-speaking countries including Australia. Tony Burgess and Nancy Martin explain the history of such a strategy: ‘attention to curriculum, to examinations and to vocational training have been used as a means of increasing control and direction from central government while at the same time bringing education into line with a market economic strategy’ (27). Corporatising education in this way has made it susceptible to media attacks and undermining public confidence in the education system. This situation was exacerbated by the changing language of education which became a discourse of efficiency, management and commercialisation. Language, and in particular writing, was positioned more prominently in education in Western Australia as the government defined a successful system of secondary education according to its indicators of strong literacy skills. Rhetoric of ‘performance management’, ‘strategic planning’ and ‘educational outcomes’ became the norm. The effects of this were compounded by the environment of globalisation and the government-led insistence upon accountability and transparency in business which corporatised education and pushed for measurement of educational ‘standards’. These changes dramatically affected the identity, strength and content of subject English, still the one secondary subject compulsory for all secondary students in Western Australia.

Subject English expanded in the 1980s and 1990s to include the studies of media and popular culture, and there was an injection of literary theory and information technologies which influenced curriculum and pedagogy worldwide. The expansion and questioning of the 1960s and early 1970s had created an interest in re-defining the purposes of education and in raising fresh educational issues which needed to be probed (Connell, *Reshaping* 93). The 1980s was a decade of such probing. Locally, while 1970s education was characterised by egalitarian
themes such as access and equity, curriculum control in the 1980s was re-centralised, a response to respective governments’ determining educational priorities according to market principles. The power of teachers to make decisions dissipated under conservative direction. Reduced public confidence in education became a catalyst for greater surveillance and accountability of schooling. The committees responsible for handing down the findings of the Beazley and McGaw Reports prioritised utilitarian aims in response to a growing concern for vocational and technical education, and a perceived ‘crisis’ in education. Fuelled by a tenacious media campaign this imposition caused further fragmentation and greater bureaucracy for Western Australian schools and for subject English.

**The ‘Growth’ Model of English in Western Australia**

The Post-Dartmouth ‘Growth’ Model of English became prevalent across Australia in the 1970s. Also known as ‘Progressive English’ and the ‘New English’, it emerged from the Dartmouth conference in 1966 and spread throughout English classrooms in the United Kingdom, the United States and eventually Australia. The Dartmouth Conference was attended by approximately fifty scholars of English from the United Kingdom and the United States who gathered to re-examine the identity and direction of subject English. At the invitation and funding of the Carnegie Foundation, the delegates spent one month debating what models of English teaching would be most suitable for the future. English educator and ‘father’ of the ‘personal growth’ model, John Dixon, explains that the delegates were asking ‘What is English?’ in the context of the post-Sputnik era: ‘America had suddenly decided that a good portion of Russia’s technological success was due to its educational system. People were being asked to take a hard look at the math, science, and English curriculums’ (Durbin 70). From this conference the ‘Growth’ Model’ of English emerged, promulgated in Australia through Dixon’s *Growth through English*. 

Consistent with the British perspective, Marnie O’Neill identifies the Growth model as the ‘across-the-curriculum project of the London Institute of Education’ led by James Britton (‘A Conceptual’ 32). According to Britton, the Dartmouth Seminar (1966) was ‘followed by years of

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79 Marnie O’Neill argues that these are more like orientations than models but as ‘models’ is more widely used in educational discourse I will use this term. I acknowledge, however, its limitations. O’Neill explains: ‘Proponents of Progressive English may be reluctant to see it described as a model, rather than an orientation, because they would argue that eclecticism and freedom to attend to individual and local needs produce variance which defies the constraints of ‘modelness’ (‘A Conceptual’ 31). Similarly, Brenton Doecke (‘Time Travel’) critiques ‘models’ on the grounds that they are ‘schematic’ and ‘programmatic’ (97). See Appendix IV for some of the ‘schools’, ‘models’ or orientations in English which help to discuss its purpose and constitution. The Scottish, Oxford, Cambridge and Northern English orientations also provide a framework for thinking about influences upon the development of English studies in Australia. These terms distinguish nuances of influence that transcend the impact of ‘England’ as just one region of influence upon English in Australia, and indeed, in Western Australia.
international co-operation and growth of voluntary English teachers’ associations around the world’ (2). Innovation and enthusiasm abounded. Such buoyancy opposes the anti-utopianism of utilitarian English which has since emerged, constrained by notions of functionality - ‘functional for industry, for the economy’ (Ball, *Micro-politics* 39). But during the 1970s, post-Dartmouth, ‘a collaborative spirit was evolving’ as James Britton and Nancy Martin were conducting their research and writing ‘in and around London’ (Durbin 70). Their work was critical in the development of the Growth model of English, and their influence was, and still is, felt by teachers across many parts of the world today including Western Australia. This includes teachers and pre-service teachers who were learning more from an increased understanding of how students learn through talk (Hargreaves and McLean 152). Seminal in this new knowledge was Douglas Barnes’s language theory about how ‘learning floats on a sea of talk’ (Barnes, Rosen and Britton). This re-orientation of teaching about language is just one example of the influence of the University of London’s Institute of Education (the London school) upon the development of English in Western Australia.

Language and the learner are central to this ideology. Rather than present students with prescribed content through traditional teaching methods such as direct instruction and rote-learning, teachers would encourage creativity and whole-language learning through enquiry-based and student-centred pedagogies: ‘Language as a means of ordering experience, and therefore, of learning, became a key-stone of this orientation’ (O’Neill, ‘A Conceptual’ 32). In these terms, the process of ‘making meaning’ became an active one for the learner, and Dartmouth marked ‘a kind of Copernican shift from a view of English as something one learns about to a sense of it as something one does’ (Harris 631). In New South Wales, Graham Little argued that this shift in English (across Australia and the United Kingdom) was a radical one because it represented a change in the fundamental notion of what English is, ‘a change from English as information to English as activity’:

> Once, English syllabuses and programmes were highly explicit about subject-matter content, and left implicit much about the acts these would enable the learner to carry out. Now the emphasis is upon the action, with subject-matter or content left implicit; sometimes, indeed, with traditional subject-matter repudiated and nothing put in its place. (2)

The Growth model foregrounds the interests of students and bases learning on their worlds. This left some critics lamenting the absence of ‘content’ and ‘formal teaching’ (Donnelly, ‘New Orthodoxy’; ‘Ideology’). It contributed to a relentless media campaign which engaged in a

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80 Among other criticisms, Kevin Donnelly argues that the ‘personal growth’ model ‘offers an impoverished and superficial basis on which to build an education.’ He asserts that ‘to be effective and worthwhile the English classroom must properly accommodate the ‘cultural heritage’ and the ‘skills
military rhetoric and the discourse of ‘crisis’ in education, lowering teacher morale in the process and exposing the English curriculum to destabilisation.

**Criticisms of the ‘Growth’ Model of English**

Criticisms of the ‘Growth’ model also shaped the development of secondary English because they scrutinised the role of the teacher and exposed the model’s internal ideological fractures. ‘Its essential principle is egalitarian, [...] idealistic’ (Goodwyn 17). Andrew Goodwyn argues that it is inevitably therefore in danger of being unsustainable and naïve. That is why other models in a sense contest for dominance’ (17). Critics of the model, such as Bronwyn Mellor and Annette Patterson reject the ‘amalgam’ of Growth pedagogy and Reader Response theory on the grounds that it contradicts itself by lauding personal interpretations but assessing ‘right readings: ‘Such practices, far from being inclusive, we argued, disenfranchised those students whose experiences and values were not the ‘dominant’ ones’ (84). Similarly, ‘Genre’ theorists such as Frances Christie and Macken-Horarik contend that children from working class families were disadvantaged by the Growth model allowing students to find his or own path to enlightenment. The Growth model’s lack of directive teaching meant these students were left behind.

Those students well equipped by life experience and opportunity to intuit the desired skills are thus rewarded, while those unable to intuit these are denied an opportunity to learn. Neither the content to be mastered nor the criteria that apply for evaluation of students’ efforts are made clear. (162).

Kevin Piper’s 1983 study of the practices in teaching secondary English also critiques the Growth model for its ideological tensions and vague definition of the teacher’s role in nurturing language development. Teachers felt vulnerable to attack. They acknowledged that at the secondary level there were problems with reading and ‘basic’ language skills but did not know how to improve those skills (12). Without the curriculum content and structures of previous decades teachers were without the necessary guidance to help them translate new ideas into practice (14). Bill Louden argues that in the influential book *Language and Learning* (1970) author James Britton focuses ‘on what schools should be doing: teachers must look elsewhere for guidance on how they should do it’ (Louden, ‘What’ 5, emphasis in the original). While this is over ten years before Piper’s study, it suggests that teachers improvised the ‘how’ for some time, presumably using methods they knew best or thought worked best for the model’ as well (‘New Orthodoxy’ 67). In 2010, in the campaigning for a national curriculum, Donnelly argued that ‘since the arrival of the personal growth approach to English in the late 1960s [...] essential content is secondary to students’ immediate interests’ (‘The Ideology’ 30). This is to ignore its integrated approach to language and literature, and the importance of relevance to classroom learning: ‘The best language teaching must concern itself with the life of the pupil’ (Gurrey 2).
particular group of students. But this is a difficulty imposed by a significant shift in pedagogy – from ‘passive’ to ‘active’ students, from teacher- to student-centred approaches. These can be overcome with professional development, support and supplementary resources and textbooks which was the case in the 1970s. In Western Australia, for example, Education Department representative Jonathan Cook offered teachers a method of selecting and sequencing activities which had been lacking: ‘Cook provided a means of planning for a sequence of integrated language activities; in 1978 Peter Forrestal provided a rationale sequencing them’ (Louden, ‘What’ 6). Their model suggested a five-stage lesson sequence: input, exploration, re-shaping, presentation, and reflection (6).

It is assumed that language learning should begin with the child’s experience, offer opportunities for exploration of experience in the child’s own language, and work towards some polished performance or publication for a particular audience and purpose. Finally, the process should turn back on itself, asking the child to reflect on the experience, and perhaps use his or her conclusions as the starting point of the next sequence of activities. This model drew together many of the assumptions and practices which had developed with the growth model. For the first time, teachers were offered a method of planning which surfaced the assumptions which had been recommended to English teachers since 1970. (6)

This example highlights the importance of local educators’ providing practical teaching resources and classroom strategies particularly when they reinforce, as Bill Green argues, the importance of process (‘Literature’).

The ‘New English’ and Classroom Practice

In 1988 the most popular selling junior secondary textbooks were Peter Forrestal and Jo-Anne Reid’s English Workshop series as a healthy sign of English teaching re-focusing upon sound language-learning theory as well as applying and proliferating the principles of language growth (Davis and Watson 163). Teachers sought and found ‘sequence and continuity’ through these books, challenging Piper’s argument that while a non-prescriptive curriculum facilitates the experiential aspect of learning, it does so without specific guidance and structure (and therefore cohesion and consistency). That is, the methods and beliefs to be adopted for teaching English are withheld (Piper 13). This might be interpreted as the ‘Growth’ model’s ‘pedagogical weakness’:

The discourse of the New English characteristically had little to say on these matters, in terms that counted in classroom and institutional life, because of its

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82 Bill Green explains that the ‘Growth’ Model of English teaching moved towards, ‘on the one hand, “reading”, and on the other, “writing”: a shift from “product”, “teaching” and the “cultural” to “process”, “learning” and “the personal.” This was part of a great upsurge in “process” pedagogies generally, particularly in the English areas, for instance, the rise into prominence of the psycholinguistic paradigm in reading education’ (‘Literature’ 54-55).
concern to redress what it perceived as a precious imbalance in the social relations of teaching and learning, coupled with what has been presented previously as its ‘utopian’ emphases in curriculum reconceptualization. The problem was, however, this left teachers without a clear mandate for teaching, and consequently with some confusion often as to how matters such as assessment and discipline were to be integrated into a coherent sense of classroom practice. (B. Green, ‘After’ 301)

It is ironic and disappointing perhaps that one of the prime motivations for the Dartmouth Seminar was to define, improve and unite classroom English teaching, whereas in fact, some critics argued that it came to produce a curriculum that was fiercely and easily infiltrated by agencies, external to education, under the guise of ‘re-gaining control’, ‘improving quality’ and ‘increasing standards’.

Evidence of the de-emphasis on literature, perceived by the aforementioned critics, manifests in the conceptualisation of English in terms of themes, a change from the text-centred approach of the Cultural Heritage model upheld since the beginning of secondary English in Western Australia. Teacher and Superintendent of English in Western Australia Peter Gunning argued the problematic place of literature in thematic teaching practices oriented to the ‘Growth’ model of English:

> Literature has often been made to serve only the purposes of the theme and the full work and the full and rich experience is often simplified in a way which detracts from the full potential of the work. (23)

This critique was published in the journal of the English Teachers’ Association of Western Australia in the late 1970s when the dominant planning approach to secondary English classes tended to be thematic organisation, ‘an attempt to relate reading to the experience of the child’ (Louden, ‘What’ 5). Literature, however, did not have to serve the purposes of the theme as Gunning contends and the sustained popularity of the thematic textbooks such as those by Peter Forrestal and Jo-Anne Reid, and Elaine Robins and Peter Robins, suggests how thematic learning in English lends itself to exploration and engagement with a range of literatures. The thematic approach oriented a topic or text as the focal point for a range of speaking and listening, reading, writing and viewing activities. For example, Forrestal and Reid’s *The Brighter Side of School* includes short stories that can be used for pleasure and study in lower school English classes. It specifies that the authors hope to provide more opportunity for students ‘to

83 Books by Peter Forrestal and Jo-Anne Reid include: *Room to Move* (1983), *Space to Dream* (1984) and *Time to Tell* (1985). Books by Elaine Robins & Peter Robins include: *Taking Off!* (1983) and *On Course in English* (1988). These were written for lower secondary English programmes but are relevant here as examples of influence of the ‘Growth’ Model and the direction of English in Western Australia. Significantly, Elaine and Peter Robins also wrote *Watch your Language* in 1992, a title that indicates a broader shift in English from the ‘Growth’ Model to the skills models and ‘functional’ English.
enjoy a range of literary voices from different cultural backgrounds’ (Forrestal and Reid v). The book then recommends drama, writing, and a range of reflection activities for whole classes, small groups and individual students. The units centre on theme, point of view and conflict. Louden critiques source books such as these, because they publish excerpts rather than complete texts and he argues that in doing so, they devalue the artistic importance of the full text which is sacrificed for the sake of relevance: ‘The relevance of a literary work to the student’s experience had always been crucial to an informed use of the “growth model”, but increasingly the need to use whole works of literature had been realized’ (‘What’ 7). These sorts of textbooks, however, were immensely popular in Western Australia, owing to their clarity, ease of use, and the relevance of their activities which were accessible to students with a range of abilities and the concern for ‘incomplete texts’ strikes me as one easily addressed with supplementary full-length texts. It is common practice for teachers in many subject areas to draw on a range of additional resources to complement the study of a textbook. These textbooks exclude grammar and the canon, and suggest that ‘students should share the experience of a story read just for pleasure’ (Forrestal and Reid v, italics added). Such a focus may explain, in part, why the ‘Growth’ model was so unpopular among traditionalists, poststructuralists and genre theorists - because it moved away from teaching de-contextualised grammar drills upheld throughout the previous half century: it appeared to be without content.

*The Bullock Report (UK) and the Martin Report (WA)*

Two government publications, the Bullock Report and the Martin Report, also shaped subject English in Western Australia. The Bullock Report was published in the United Kingdom in 1975 and it significantly influenced the approach of English teachers in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Formally known as *A Language for Life* the report recommended that every secondary school develops a cohesive policy on language across the curriculum. Bill Green argues that it is an important document for the way it motivated a ‘back-to-basics’ drive in English teaching more generally (Email). The impact of this report in Western Australia is further evidence of the influence of the London School, with James Britton being a member of the Bullock Committee. Similarly, Nancy Martin produced a report for the State Government in 1980. Martin’s report critiqued the version of English practised in Government High Schools in Western Australia, claiming it to be without ‘consensus’ (53). Martin added: ‘We found little

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84 Some of the themes suggested include: the dangers of nuclear weapons, friendship, and the cost of progress.
sense of the need to clear up the lack of consensus about what English is. A kind of anarchy is taken for granted’ (257).

The Martin Report was commissioned by then Director-General of Education in Western Australia, David Mossenson. It aimed to ‘explore and describe the teaching and learning of English in state secondary schools, to identify the most influential factors in that process, and to make recommendations about future directions’ (Martin iii). Bill Green observes that within the report, “literacy” is presented as framed by “language” and “literature”, and as subordinated to language usage and development, on the one hand, and literary culture and practice, on the other’ (‘Re“Right”ing’ 391). Marnie O’Neill describes the report as ‘a highly personalist conceptualisation, attempting to meld language, literature and personal development into the theory and practice of English’ (‘A Conceptual’ 38). The issues identified in Martin’s report -the debate about standards and literacy in the secondary schools, the quality of teaching and teacher development, and the place of literature in integrated studies - all reflect a broader concern with functional literacy and teaching practice which is embedded within the Beazley Report of 1984.86

Public demand for accountability increased in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia during the 1980s, a time of economic uncertainty when the reins on public expenditure tightened. In this context the ‘Growth’ model of English became vulnerable, particularly when the Martin Report concluded that it was failing to fulfil the expectations of core English curriculum in Western Australia. Bill Green contends that the Martin Report is a fractured text which in retrospect may be read as an indicator of the changes to come with the Beazley Report in 1984 (‘Changing’ 7). That is, the ‘fractured’ nature of the report reflected the fractured nature of English itself at that time, with ‘signs of conflict and dissension within the profession, between the profession and the community, including the wider educational community, and among ‘theory’, ‘policy’ and ‘practice’ (7). Green argues that from education circles there had been calls for curriculum reform prior to the Beazley Report (1984), but ‘increasingly, the initiative for English curriculum reform was taken by those outside the profession’ (10). If English is to retain its status as a core subject and continue to provide students with opportunities to engage in a full range of learning experiences then English

Martin responsibility for the research ‘indicated the perceived pre-eminence of the discourse of the New English in English curriculum discussion at the time, particularly at the level of research and policy’ (B.Green, ‘After’ 292).

86 The Beazley Report was formally known as Education in Western Australia and chaired by Kim E. Beazley (1984). Beazley (Snr) was Member for Fremantle (1945-1977) and Minister for Education during the Whitlam Government (1972-75) (Beazley, Father 7).
specialists need to have a greater say in how the curriculum is developed and taught. This perspective, which highlights the sizeable external interest shown in English, is consistent with the expectations of a subject that is central to the education system, and ‘attempts to control and define the subject move beyond the subject community because changing English is changing schooling’ (Goodson and Medway vii). This ‘external interest’ includes the media which have played a significant role in bringing about curriculum change in Western Australia, having created an image of ‘crisis’ surrounding the teaching of secondary English, evident in headlines in the West Australian such as ‘Show us how, say teachers’, ‘MLA warns of crisis in schools’, ‘Confusion in schools’ and ‘Teachers baffled, says expert’. From his experience in South Australia which is common to Western Australia, Garth Boomer claimed that skewed press coverage encouraged a misinformed hysteria. He argued that negative media reports on literacy lower teacher morale, increase uninformed community pressure to ‘get back to basics’ and create a climate of panic, driving teachers away from their own common sense (595).

This was the context of the Beazley Report, soon instituted after the Martin Report. Both it and the McGaw Report prompted widespread curriculum change at every level of schooling in Western Australia (Patterson, ‘Occasions’ 1).

The Beazley Report: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Education in Western Australia
The Beazley Report was commissioned in the 1980s in response to State government concern about the nature and relevance of the secondary education curriculum, including ‘certification and tertiary selection procedures; issues regarding attracting and retaining teaching staff; community participation in schooling; and the extent to which schools cater for various ‘special groups’ of students’ (Beazley, Education 1). Alan Barcan describes the report as ‘an unwieldy and wide-ranging document, lacking a central philosophy and focus’ (‘Public’ 25). The report was an effective way, however, for the State Government to align educational and economic strategies in Western Australia, since the predominant concern or ‘crisis’ centred upon the local economy and how it might be strengthened. It ‘recommended increasing retention rates, improving basic skills, developing stronger links between Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and secondary schools (p.3), emphasizing computer education (p.29), developing an appropriate credentialing system (p.24) and making teachers more accountable (p.184)’ (Down, ‘State and Educational’ 2). With an obvious emphasis upon utilitarian aims and accountability, these findings predicted a model of ‘functional English’ that accommodated

87 Boomer asserts that teacher power is working for literacy in Australia and that similarly, teacher powerlessness works against literacy (597).
and even defined itself as skills, standardised tests, and in due course, outcomes-based education.88

The Beazley Report singled out English for special attention (Patterson, ‘Occasions’ 2). While time restrictions prevented the committee from investigating the syllabuses of existing ‘core’ subjects, it found the time for English because the committee believed that ‘the relative generality of the English syllabus also provided justification for some closer examination of this subject’ (2.139, 144).89 In this situation, engaging in a ‘closer’ examination of English assumes a degree of expertise, yet the members of the Beazley Committee were non-English specialists by their own admission: ‘the committee recognized that it was not a group that was expert in the syllabus for English, or in the teaching of it’ (2.143, 146). Despite this concession, from its position of ‘outsider’, the committee identified serious flaws in the teaching of English in Western Australian high schools. Strongly influenced by Professor of Education Michael Scriven from the University of Western Australia and his functional English agenda, the committee decided that there was excessive duplication between subjects English and English Literature. As part of its deliberations one of Scriven’s discussion papers was circulated to fellow Beazley Committee members.90 Among other criticism, the paper suggested that the English syllabus ‘fails to list many of the skills said by the public to be needed – that is, the syllabuses lack prescription’. It states:

- Skills such as reading, writing, speaking and listening and reasoning might not be taught in the context in which they are used – that is, the approach at present does not seem to be “functional”.
- While existing syllabuses might allow for the teaching of “functional” English skills, there does not appear to be a requirement that they be taught.
- The teaching of English is too closely tied to the teaching of literature. […]
- There is insufficient relevance in the upper school curriculum to practical situations and contemporary life.
- Too much emphasis is being placed on literary and creative objectives. (qtd. in Beazley, Education 144-45)

The Beazley Report’s concern with raising ‘the general standards of literacy and numeracy’ prioritised ‘the basics’ and ‘the changing demands of the workforce’ (371). These emphases represent a significant shift in the purpose of English within the schooling system and wider society, and according to Green the movement from the Martin Report to the Beazley Report

88 Functional literacy is ‘the level of skill in reading and writing that any individual needs in order to cope with adult life’ (Lawton and Gordon 108). Though a term that is limited in scope and intention I use it here to refer to the basic literacy skills required for employment.
89 This is the same ‘generality’ highlighted and critiqued in the Martin Report (1980).
was striking; where one version of English teaching was challenged and eventually supplanted comprehensively by another:

The shift from Martin to Beazley and beyond involved a significant shift from the literacy project of the New English in its classical liberal-progressivist phase – ‘the literacy of personal discovery’ and self-esteem, of ‘exploration and infinite differentiation’ (Ball et al, 1990, p. 80) – to ‘the literacy of skills’ and a very differently-configured English teaching. (B.Green, ‘Re“Right”ing’ 399-400)

The consequences of the shift appeared even more striking because they are such contrasting versions of English. As such, the impact of the Beazley report was dramatic. The entire English syllabus from Kindergarten to Year Twelve was rewritten following its release. This was in the same year as the McGaw Report and the implementation of its many recommendations (Patterson, ‘Occasions’ 2), thus the rate of curriculum change during this period was rapid to say the least. 91

Changes in English are often contentious both inside and outside education. It is significant that the Beazley Report uses militaristic language, a response to the rhetoric of ‘crisis’ employed by the West Australian that reported ‘stress on 3Rs’ and ‘classroom chaos’. From the mid-1970s onwards, been on the war path against teachers have been ‘under constant attack in the mass media as responsible for an alleged decline’ in literacy standards and an increase in youth unemployment (Watson, ‘The Need’ 1). For example, the report recommends that: ‘a comprehensive attack must be made on all the problems associated with the teaching of reading, writing and mathematical skills’ (Beazley, Education 29). The Report mandates an ‘attack’ in response to the ‘disorder’ created by the ‘Growth’ model of English, thus a discourse of combat conveys the fracture and discontent surrounding English. This use of military rhetoric also suggests there are two conflicting ‘sides’, with schools cast as the perpetrators or attackers. Teacher morale was low, a result of ongoing criticism and powerlessness. The way in which journalists, bureaucrats and academics influenced subject English so greatly during these decades implies a deeper problem with external forces determining ‘the basics’ of English, thus shaping the content of English and acquiring the power to control a secondary learning area. This threat continues today.

91 The McGaw Report is formally known as Assessment in the Upper Secondary School in Western Australia: Report of the Ministerial Working Party on School Certification and Tertiary Admissions Procedures, chaired by Barry McGaw (1984). Barry McGaw from Murdoch University and Michael Scriven from the University of Western Australia were two of the four Working Party members who also sat on the Beazley Committee (McGaw vii).

The McGaw Report arose out of concern for the system of tertiary admissions of the day. It was responsible for reporting upon the procedures for the admission of students into tertiary institutions and the influence that those procedures had on the educational programmes offered in secondary schools in Western Australia (McGaw ix). The report aimed to loosen the grip of high-status tertiary entrance examinations on the upper secondary curriculum. Bill Green identifies that one aspect of the McGaw Report, like the Bullock Report, ‘stressed the need for a whole-school perspective on literacy pedagogy, as a significant dimension in all forms of school and subject-area learning’ (‘Re“Right”ing’ 395). This absolved English of its responsibility as the sole parent of literacy thereby lowering its status because literacy had become ‘the central organizing principle for English curriculum discourse, both professionally and in the public forum more generally’ (396).

The McGaw Report also recommended changes to tertiary admissions that meant students could gain a tertiary entrance score without including the score from an English subject. Compulsory up until that point, English was nominated for removal from the group of upper school subjects required for tertiary entrance ‘to ensure that overlapping courses do not contribute together to an average’ (McGaw 53). At this time for achieve a tertiary entrance score, students were required to complete at least four subjects with at least from each ‘Group’ (Humanities and Sciences). Removing English from the Group One list was effectively downgrading the subject, a move that was met with much resistance. This removal allowed all students, even those university bound, to study one or two non-tertiary entrance subjects, ‘thus potentially blurring subject status distinctions and increasing the viability of the broader range of courses’ (Collins, ‘Upper’ 250). It was a short-lived change, though, for the State government succumbed to the immediate conservative resistance against this mixed mode Year Twelve, setting up the Andrich Inquiry in 1988 to assess the effectiveness of the changes resulting from the McGaw Report. This inquiry argued that a more flexible upper-secondary schooling system was required (251). Since then, despite English having undergone significant modification and having been ‘gradually reinstated as a “counting” subject in the tertiary entrance stakes it still does not occupy its pre-Beazley/McGaw status’ (Patterson, ‘Occasions’ 1).

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92 The report written by Professor David Andrich is called Upper Secondary Certification and Tertiary Entrance: Review of Upper Secondary Certification and Tertiary Entrance Procedures. It was commissioned by the Minister for Education in Western Australia in 1989 and examined the degree to which procedures for tertiary entrance were achieving their aims. Andrich also became an influential figure in 2005 in Western Australian when he reported on outcomes-based education.
With English no longer a pre-requisite for tertiary entrance it was effectively made redundant because students could no longer count their examination score in English towards their tertiary entrance aggregate. Students could, however, count their scores for the ‘optional’ tertiary entrance subject, English Literature (Patterson, ‘Occasions’ 1). Bill Green argues that English Literature retained its position in the Group One List (for inclusion in the tertiary entrance aggregate) because of its status:

The Literature course had a recognizable, familiar, and long-established disciplinary and institutional base, and also had a clearly defined examination structure. In addition, it is likely that the Literature course, as then constituted, represented a traditional culturalist agenda, in the elitist literary-ideological sense, drawing as it did significantly on the private school sector for its constituency. (‘Changing’ 19)

As evident in the impact of the tertiary sector on secondary English, Bill Green critiques the ‘close relationship’ between ‘the literary-culturalist perspectives and agendas of the then influential English Department of the University of Western Australia and those of the private school sector’ (19). Green claims that this relationship – which privileged a cultural heritage model of English Literature - perpetuated a dichotomous system of English in the upper school, with a culturally-elite study of canonical literature on the one hand and a utilitarian or vocational skills-based English on the other. One was clearly of greater status than the other, so while the reputation of English Literature sustained it as a tertiary entrance subject, English was to be re-written with a focus on ‘functional’ skills. This was in accordance with the Beazley Committee’s recommendations, driven by Scriven, the University of Western Australia’s Professor of Education, who argued that with significant duplication in the two subjects there was less emphasis than there needed to be on ‘functional English’ (B. Green, ‘Re“Right”ing’ 395). In an attempt to ‘restore order’ to secondary education, the Beazley Report addressed key concerns of the time including functional literacy, technological innovation and social inclusivity, the latter of which was specified in the identification of concerns about the extent to which schools ‘cater for various “special groups” of students’ (Beazley, Education 1).

The Beazley Report specified the importance of integrating students with special needs into the usual school setting as far as possible (35). This was consistent with the key points of the Dettman Report (1969) which recommended the discontinuation of streaming (3), special provisions for gifted students as well as for the handicapped (4; 91), and a multi-level approach for the core subjects (English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies) (4). The Beazley Report also recommended the extension of provisions for gifted and talented children (35) and the establishment of a policy statement on Aboriginal education ‘based on the principles of
generosity, diversity, dignity and self-determination’ (36).\(^93\) This recognition instigated ‘substantial changes’ in the education of ‘special groups’ in which migrant, female, isolated and disruptive students were lumped collectively (37). Subject English was implicated in this; it needed to be accessible to students with a wider range of interests and abilities.

In 1978 Marnie O’Neill and Jonathan Cook then of the Western Australian Education Department compiled a report, *The Heterogeneous Class in Secondary English* which highlighted some of the difficulties with teaching English to a heterogeneous class. It identified three main challenges: (1) teaching poetry because of its level of difficulty and tendency to evoke strong personal responses, (2) text selection, and (3) teachers being unable to cater for the full range of abilities, needs and interests of students in the one class (27). O’Neill and Cook attribute this third difficulty in part to teachers’ perceptions of the teaching role ‘as instructor rather than facilitator’ (27). They recommend that teachers revise their understanding of their role which is no longer ‘as an instructor in a teacher-centred classroom’ (44). This notion is put forward, however, without reference to contextual factors such as class size or the extent of the range in student abilities within that class. From today’s perspective, the number and range of student disabilities and demands are increasing, but resources are not. Adopting the model of a teacher as ‘facilitator’ alone is unlikely to maximise learning opportunities for all students given that children do not all learn in the same way. Similarly, this aspect of the Beazley Report reflects the ways in which wider social change impacts considerably upon English teaching because it places a social justice agenda alongside education’s budgetary constraints. In the late 1980s the state’s economic imperatives, external to education, prevented inclusivity from becoming a genuine priority. Another way in which inclusivity policy influenced senior secondary English was with regard to gender. Gender studies and the educational theory which acknowledged differences in pedagogical preferences for boys and girls become significant fields in their own right, as well as in the developments of cultural literacy, reading practices and new pedagogy (see Kenworthy, et al.; Wayne Martino; Pam Gilbert; Kenway and Willis; Lyn Yates; Cherry Collins, *Gender*; Cherry et al.).

*Gender*

Having reflected upon the changes to subject English during the 1960s and 70s it seems remiss not to have discussed the influence of feminism and the emergence of gender studies. Gender

\(^{93}\) This is consistent with the philosophy of Kim E. Beazley whose emphasis on social-democratic principles was evident in his ‘eventful three years as education minister, which resulted in free university, the expansion of technical education, distance learning, assistance to “at-risk” students, and bilingual education for Aboriginal students’ (Beazley, *Father* 31).
criticism, however, did not present itself in the English curriculum in Western Australia at either the tertiary or secondary level until the 1980s. When Murdoch University began in the mid-1970s it offered a different outlook upon society and the wider world, one less ‘ivory-towered’ perhaps, but certainly one less conservative. It also made tertiary entrance more accessible owing to its flexible admissions policy. Tertiary education was made accessible to a greater number of applicants, including those from more diverse backgrounds as well as more female students, entering the previously masculine domain of Australian higher education (Long 104). This liberal perspective contributed significantly to the growing awareness of media, Cultural Studies, semiotics, and critical theory within English. According to feminist academic Delys Bird the first complete Women’s Studies programme in Western Australia was introduced at the Western Australian Institute of Technology in 1980 (10), although in 1979 Murdoch University had ‘a very interesting course called ‘Women in Society’, one of the first women’s studies courses in Australia’ (UWA Archives, con 720). At the Western Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT), now Curtin University, senior lecturer Pat Jalland initiated and co-ordinated the first Women’s Studies course. Jalland was an historian who proposed Women’s Studies when WAIT’s School of Social Sciences was establishing a range of Graduate Diplomas in 1979 (Bird 12). Women’s Studies found its greatest opposition from scholars claiming them to be elitist if they remain confined to the tertiary domain: ‘If their potential for enlightenment is to be fully realized, the results of research into women must be disseminated to the schools’ (Frost 42). Challenging Women’s Studies in this way exposed the discipline to the scrutiny that a new area of study needed to survive and grow.

Historian Ann Curthoys argues that feminist scholarship in Australia ‘took some time to develop its own theoretical approaches, tools for analysis, and relevant data’ (20). This is reflected in the belated genesis of feminist scholarship at the University of Western Australia in the 1970s and 1980s:

In response to curriculum trends and student interest, study options were broadened to embrace socially contextualised, sometimes interdisciplinary perspectives, which reflected the interests and preoccupations of contemporary society. Asian languages, Japanese studies, industrial relations and women’s studies, for example, represented this more progressive turn. (Long 104)

Between 1975 and 1983 the University of Western Australia published its first feminist magazine, Sybil, which was produced by female students and graduates who were members of

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94 In 1982, Associate Professor Cora Baldock of Murdoch University was the sole female professor in academia in Western Australia (the Sunday Time Magazine September 12, 1982). In 1978, Baldock was reported as then leaving the Australian National University to take up a position at Murdoch University as Senior Lecturer in Social and Political Theory and Co-ordinator of Women's Studies (see ‘A Feminist’s Story for Ann & Susan’ published in Woroni, the ANU student newspaper [est. 1950]).
the Guild’s women’s collective. The magazine was intended as a forum for women to exchange thoughts and ideas, and in this way, it contributed to the development of the discipline (‘Women’s Groups 2013’). This sort of engagement with social issues was evident in the development of Women’s Studies at the University of Western Australia which had become ‘firmly established within the Faculty of Arts in 1985 ten years after the idea of a women’s studies course had first been mooted’ (Thompson and Gregory 276). This was eventually followed by the establishment of its journal Outskirts in 1996. These courses and publications were products of the interdisciplinarity in tertiary institutions which was a typical phenomenon of late-twentieth-century Australian academia and necessitated collaboration across departments such as English and History (266). The point here is that it was not until the early 1980s that Women’s Studies became established in tertiary institutions as a field of study. This was to have implications for the secondary English curriculum in Western Australia because feminist theory developed very close links with cultural theory, ‘or more broadly Cultural Studies’ (Curthoys 32).

**English literature and literary theory**

In Western Australia gender criticism was assimilated into the syllabus for English Literature more quickly than for English. These upper school courses were not designed with literacy as a priority (SEA, Tertiary 8). While English Literature is marked as a more specialist literary subject than English, and student literacy is assumed, the climate of negotiation surrounding the history of English Literature parallels that of subject English. Gender analysis was introduced into the English Literature course in 1989 when the syllabus was ‘reborn as a genre based document, with post-modernist additions’ (Cullen 76). The ‘post-modernist additions’ were incarnated as a tripartite ‘Issues in Context’ section and teacher-advocates of the existing genre-based forms of English study resisted the inclusion of new critical approaches to Women’s Studies, Australian Studies and ‘Self and Society’. These three sub-sections of ‘Issues in Context’ became the responsibilities of Curtin University, Murdoch University and the University of Western Australia respectively, and the specific institutional allocations reveal not only the lack of collaboration across the sector but also the ‘patchwork’ nature of the literary theories represented in the English Literature syllabus (186). The competing interests and agendas of the universities which contorted the negotiations ultimately wrenched the syllabus in all sorts of directions, with teachers held firmly in their place throughout negotiations: ‘Teachers outnumbered academics on the syllabus committee, yet they have less

95 Thompson and Gregory add that Women’s Studies at the University of Western Australia was supported by staff from other disciplines such as Patricia Crawford (History), Dorothy Parker (Anthropology) and later Delys Bird (English) (276).
power in negotiations. They found themselves unable to speak rigorously in defence of their former practices’ (71). The syllabuses and teaching methods were commandeered by the university representatives because they were also heavily involved in examining secondary English Literature at this time. Because marking practices privileged ‘right responses’ rather than culturally critical readings, this is what students were prepared for – the reproduction of ‘right responses’ - and so the examiner, and to a lesser extent the Literature teacher, performed the role of the ‘gatekeeper’.

For particular individuals and their institutions, reproducing the ‘right response’ was more important than providing alternative readings or critiquing the attitudes and values privileged by particular readings. This hierarchy was perpetuated by a strong allegiance to the cultural heritage model which prevented ‘unauthorised’ access to Literature by excluding certain groups of people, determined ‘by class or ethnicity, for example – who were unable to reproduce the authorised discourses and readings’ (O’Neill, ‘A Conceptual’ 28). Gaining access to ‘the Great Tradition’ in this way educated and enriched the individual and provided a form of social agency or Bourdieuan ‘cultural capital’. In turn, this praxis preserved the ‘well-established piety’ of TAE English Literature candidates, manifested in ‘evaluating texts as products or instruments of moral purpose’ (Lucy and Coroneous 50). A residue of the teachings of Allan Edwards at the University of Western Australia, this Leavisite orientation endorsed ‘the maintenance of the Britishness of English Literature’ (Dale, English Men 116). But with the expansion of tertiary education in Western Australia and the need to engage a more diverse student cohort thereafter, the demise of Leavisism, even in part, was necessary.

Critical Literacy
Following this ideological shift, which was a source of great tension for many educators, questions of power became important, including questions about the relationships between discourse and power, and between educational policy and power. In some regards, this was fertile ground for the inception of critical literary theory because it challenged the systems of power shaping English teaching so directly. English in Australia was becoming less about skills and cultural heritage, and more about identity and social critique. The introduction of critical

96 Cullen also explains that ‘[T]he result of frequent changes of teacher representatives on the committee was that academics had continuity of involvement whereas teachers did not; therefore, academics’ knowledge of the context of committee proceedings enabled them to dominate the discussion’ (72).
98 By way of comparison, NSW teacher-scholar in English Paul Nay-Brock notes that ‘the 1986 draft Literature syllabus reflects some of the spirit of recent Reader-Response literary and educational theory in a way that its earlier draft and the equivalent documents in New South Wales do not’ (107).
literacy into the secondary English Literature curriculum in Western Australia in 1989 reflects how tertiary entrance examinations and the agenda of power groups legitimate syllabus contents. Competing discourses and ideologies, related to access and social democracy on the one hand, and exclusion and elitism on the other, produced a syllabus presenting as a strategic medley which various interest groups sought to dominate:

The [syllabus] document is a synthesis of opposing and conflicting positions that had to be placed in compromise with one another to make the document acceptable to all parties involved in the development of the syllabus. (Cullen 79)

While the word ‘compromise’ has connotations of ‘missing out’ or ‘settling’, in this case, the English Literature course was enhanced by the input and fusion of new ideas, the essence of which was further attention to the studies of social and political context. In her Master of Education thesis, Cullen acknowledged that the new post-modernist discourse ‘competes for space and recognition against Leavisite-New Criticism in all sections of the document’ (77).

These traces of post-modernism are evidence of Literature’s engagement with contemporary literary theory and bear witness to the political nature of the syllabus. By contrast, critical literary theory did not intrude upon the secondary English curriculum with quite the same force or immediacy as it did upon English Literature. Since the Petch split of 1969 English has been guided predominantly by utilitarianism, a backward step in many ways. According to Bill Green, subject English in Western Australia did not take the critical literacy ‘road’, though it could well have done (‘Re”Right”ing’ 400). There was a close relationship between Media and Cultural Studies as presented in school curricula in Western Australia and this was not exploited as much as it might have done: ‘Given the explicit introduction of media texts into the English domain, in both the Lower Secondary English Syllabus and the Upper School English course, and [the] growing signs of a cultural studies orientation in English teaching’ it could have done so easily, but it represents a lost opportunity to develop the project of critical-democratic schooling (402). To some extent, and as poststructuralist and ‘Genre’ theorists would claim, the introduction of media into English slowed the impact of the ‘Growth’ model since it required a focus on teaching explicit skills in relation to ‘reading’ media texts. Media studies also fitted well with the emerging ‘critical’ or ‘cultural studies’ approaches that dominated English throughout the 1990s.

Subject English, however, began to drift towards a different emphasis under the international influence of developments in linguistics, anthropology, sociology and in cultural and linguistic theory’ (Burgess and Martin 29). The critical theory of the 1980s shaped pedagogy and the teaching of reading in particular because these developments saw English branch out and the
cultural heritage orientation weaken even further. Critical literacy, both in its theory and pedagogy, represents a paradigm shift in English, a movement from a focus on traditional literacy skills and ‘growth’ to social and cultural critiques (Stewart and O’Neill 73). Along these lines, a more recent reading of English has been constructed from a growing concern with politics, and the ways in which language, race, gender, class or religion for example, provide access to cultural power (O’Neill, ‘A Conceptual’ 23). Making meaning in this way highlights the reading practices being identified and adopted in the English classroom in Western Australia during the 1990s, but it was not a popular orientation. Certain sections of the media described it as ‘out-of-control relativism’ (Slattery and Maher 2005). Annette Patterson registers the relativism critique as just one of the central concerns of English which emerged in the examination papers and the commentary that accompanied them: “‘good’ literature versus popular texts, critical theory versus functional literacy, and relativism (particularly in relation to ‘postmodernism’) versus reasoned debate’ (‘Teaching Literature’ 314).

Evaluating curriculum reform in English in the light of critical democratic theory opens up the possibility of English as a paradigm in which teachers encourage students to understand and question the attitudes, values, and beliefs of texts and of language. Developing critical literacy skills in this way enables students to become reflective citizens who venture beyond predictable and rehearsed readings of texts. This learning process is aided by giving students ‘an understanding of the dialectic in which social relations shape linguistic forms and linguistic forms shape social relations’ (Janks, ‘Critical’ 192). That is, students engage with a way of understanding language through the lens of Halliday’s theory of systemic functional linguistics which was gaining prominence at this time. This theory connects language study to critical literacy by focusing on the uses of language and is applied to the analysis and teaching of pedagogic texts for (as originally intended) social justice purposes. The lexical and grammatical operations form one component of the critique of systemic functional linguistics - that the ‘Growth’ model failed to provide disadvantaged students ‘with explicit knowledge of how particular genres of intellectual and political power work’ (A. Luke 5).

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99 As discussed the English Literature course did not adopt the same view. English Literature retained a text list that was chiefly canonical and its examination continued to be structured according to genre. It was only during the 1989 syllabus developments, when the ‘Issues in Context’ section was introduced, that English Literature added postmodernism and other critical theories. These were ‘competing for space’ against the existing Leavisite and New Critical (practical criticism) in all sections of the syllabus (Cullen 77). See Susan Cullen’s thesis, *A retrospective account of syllabus change in Tertiary Entrance Examination English Literature in Western Australia* (1991) for her exploration of the contention involved in designing the new Literature course in Western Australia.
Halliday views language as a semiotic system of making meaning which has influenced English education since the late 1980s. For example, with secondary teacher Pippa Tandy, Marnie O’Neill wrote *More Than Just Talk Books 1 & 2* (1988) which are based on Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics. Along with Mellor and Patterson, O’Neill also contributed to cross-cultural studies and to the application and extension of reading pedagogy. O’Neill’s doctoral thesis (1995) questions the assumption that ‘there are correct responses to, or “right readings” of texts (iii), a proposition supported by Jack Thomson who argues that ‘there are no neutral, objective, or ultimately ‘true’ readings of a text because all readings are produced by readers from different personal, social, cultural and ideological situations and discourses’ (192). Thomson argues that under those circumstances, ‘what we want our students to be is questioning, critical and agnostic’ (192-93). Aiding the development of these qualities in students – questioning, critical and agnostic – are reading resource books such as those of the Chalkface Press series, popular with teachers in Western Australia since the late 1980s. In these texts, authors such as O’Neill, Patterson and Mellor, and Brian Moon, legitimise reading as a process of active production of meaning rather than passive reception. Their contributions are evidence of how professors of English can influence the teaching of English in a very positive way; in this case it is by proliferating new ideas supported by practical and accessible resources for ready application in the secondary English context.

In Western Australia Chalkface Press represents the positive and widespread impact that local teachers can have upon secondary school subjects such as English and English Literature. Chalkface Press was co-founded in 1987 by Bronwyn Mellor and Peter Forrestal. Its books are popular inclusions in the secondary classroom. The Chalkface Press web site describes the purpose and contents of *Reading Fictions*, for example, as intended for senior secondary students of English and English Literature. It takes the form of an anthology of twelve short stories with accompanying activities: ‘it applies insights derived from contemporary literary theory to classroom practice in accessible ways. Although the concepts addressed are frequently complex, the approaches taken are activity-based and encourage active involvement from students’. According to reviewer Andrew Stibbs, the book’s chapters help scaffold activities that are directly applicable to key learning points of the English and Literature curriculum such as reading positions, multiple readings, intertextuality, and gaps.

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100 In these publications *More Than Just Talk Books 1 & 2*, Tandy and O’Neill apply the Hallidayan emphases on categories of language functions and the connection between educational linguistics and literacy pedagogy. See Halliday (*Explorations; Learning; Language*). Both of the *More Than Just Talk* texts apply small group collaborative learning principles and were included as teachers’ references on the Western Australian English syllabuses, 1998-2005 (Dolin and Yiannakis).

101 See *Reading Stories* (1987) and *Reading Fictions* (1991), for example.
and silences (‘Reading Fictions’). Though I acknowledge that this extract was published on the Chalkface website as promotional material, I included it here to highlight the relevance of the book’s contents to the English and Literature syllabuses, and to explain why the books were used so extensively.\(^{102}\) The influence of educators such as Forrestal, Patterson, Mellor and O’Neill is apparent today through the ongoing consumption of the Chalkface textbooks, and in Patterson’s research into curriculum changes across Australia.

In Western Australia subject English adopted elements of cultural studies, a change that was Australia wide. Patterson explains that this was a symptom of the relevance of the subject becoming a priority for staff and students:

> In Australia, pupils’ ethical selves were once drawn out through a relatively formal study of literary texts; however, in recent years the emphasis has shifted to an engagement with ‘real-world’ social issues and a focus on social and cultural ‘contexts’ (‘Teaching Literature’ 314).

Patterson suggests that Western Australian English teachers are distinct in their approach to literary texts ‘through the lens of “contexts”, particularly social and historical contexts’ (‘Teaching Literature’ 318). This focus on meaning in context is possibly inherited from the influence of Percival Gurrey’s work, through J.R. Firth who established the London School of Linguistics at University College London and was a frequent contributor to LATE meetings and seminars (Hardcastle 153). In Western Australia, while the ‘recent years’ Annette Patterson refers to were those immediately prior to 2008, the groundwork for these social-critical shifts was begun during the 1980s. It was a decade of generating broader social questions about globalisation and the environment, and about the world in terms of race, class, and gender relations. Patterson’s observation about the emphasis on ‘context’ in Western Australia’s English syllabus is common to the English Literature course, for Paul Nay-Brock distinguishes that ‘consistently throughout the syllabus there is an insistence upon acknowledging a network of relationships between reader, writer, text and context that is unique among comparable senior secondary English Literature syllabuses in Australia’ (108). Similarly, subject English engaged with the socio-cultural issues of the time, to various degrees, such as the context of feminism which was the subject of an examination question in the 1983 English paper. Question three of the Composition section invited candidates to write their wedding speech with ‘(contributions from feminists also invited)’ (SEA, 1983 Tertiary 7). The use of parentheses in this questions included work to evoke a gendered response. Also, in the 1985 English examination paper, two of the Composition questions focus on gender: one invites

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\(^{102}\) Chalkface Press’s *Gendered Fictions* by Wayne Martino and Bronwyn Mellor was included on the Western Australian English syllabus between 1998 and 2005, and *Reading Stories* by Mellor, O’Neill and Patterson between 1990-2005 (Dolin and Yiannakis).
candidates to write a response to an image of a girl holding a bird next to a Simone de Beauvoir quotation about freedom from *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, and the second asks: 103

‘Even today nice girls are seen but not heard. The result is that all but the most determined girls choose to remain silent in the classroom unwilling to risk disapproval for exhibiting an active intelligence.’ Write the text of an educational radio talk-back dialogue in which this assertion is made by an equal-opportunities spokesperson. (SEA, 1985 Tertiary 14)

While this is the first evidence of gender analysis in English examinations, by 1988 there was a growing awareness within the discipline that gender was ‘not just a feminist issue’ (Bicentennial 11). So while Gender criticism is not a subset of critical literacy, equally it is not segregated or in any way intradisciplinary: ‘Courses that are now developing in many schools under the rubric of Women’s Studies have a special commitment to inquire into issues of gender, but these issues are fundamental in any literary study’ (10). This could also be said for issues of race and cultural diversity. The teaching of critical literary theory benefitted the multicultural classroom because it called into question the stereotypes and cultural assumptions embedded in texts. In addition it highlighted language as a means through which particular, often ethnocentric, points of view are privileged (Hargreaves and McLean 151).

*The heterogeneous English class – multi-abled and multicultural*

This reshaping of ‘literature’ is one of the benefits of a multi-abled cohort. In the 1960s and 70s, despite Leavisite insurgence nationally, canonical texts and Leavisite pedagogy became less relevant and less practical in the heterogeneous English classroom. These texts and pedagogies became less relevant to students who were reluctant or unable to engage with language, places and stories of the past, and less practical in that it is difficult to negotiate the same text to vastly difference abilities, motivations and interests. Subject English remained central to the inclusive and multicultural classroom ideal because it increased exposure to new worlds through texts and fostered experiences of empathy. This idea of empathy is enhanced through ‘writing-as-process’ activities encouraged by a ‘Growth’ approach which had the potential to value students’ individuality within a heterogeneous classroom structure (O’Neill and Cook 38).

By the late 1980s the cultural and ethnic membership of secondary schools in Western Australia had broadened significantly through increased retention rates, immigration, refugeeism and an influx of overseas students. English diversified as the needs, interests,
abilities and backgrounds of this membership diverged, thus re-emphasising the importance of English in the curriculum. It underwent a ‘profound intellectual shift’ during the 1970s ‘towards an explicit recognition of linguistic and cultural diversity as at the heart of English teaching, not just an additional consideration or a modification required in areas with high concentrations of minority populations’ (Burgess and Martin 32). By the mid-1970s specialist teachers in English as a Second Language (ESL) were less rare but mainstreaming students was still a popular practice. While ESL teaching has been traditionally quite narrow in pedagogy, Davis and Watson argue that ‘one of the most dramatic developments of the last decade has been the rapidity with which ESL teaching has shifted, both in theory and in pedagogy, to a position which is very close to that of the ‘New English’ (164). This position is likely to be language-centred, and while it is a change that produced a closer alignment between the two Englishes, a senior secondary ESL/ESD subject was introduced in Western Australia in 1990 to accommodate the increasing range of language-teaching needs. The Year Twelve English as a Second Language course (E026) aims ‘to develop skills and understandings which can increase their [students’] successful participation in a society whose principal medium of communication is Australian English’ (Curriculum Council, Syllabus 61). This course is distinct from the multicultural classroom.

Sandra Hargreaves and Barbara McLean argue that a multicultural classroom nurtures ‘understanding [of] the language of manipulation, persuasion, prejudice and racism, and the use of literature that opens windows to other worlds and other ways of thinking’ (150). These values are especially pertinent in a climate of increasing population mobility:

Multicultural classrooms can be most appropriately thought of as all classrooms which are aware of the need to broaden the horizons of every student, to help them experience vicariously through literature, media and personal writing different world views. (150)

Teaching in the multicultural classroom was aided by the simultaneous flourishing of educational theory, particularly oracy theory, such as research emerging from the London School, and the Vygotskian view that students develop cognitively when they engage in ‘talk’ - with adults, other children and the wider culture. The multicultural classroom highlights the importance of oracy in the English classroom and relies upon building its relationships with reading and writing. It is the integration of these skills, encouraged through group work, that increases the opportunities to engage in more diverse functions of language.

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104 See Robin Alexander’s Towards Dialogic Teaching, for instance.
Australian literature, Australo-centricism and Australia’s ‘Bicentennial’

The increased popularity of Australian Studies reflected the nationalism of the era as it influenced subject English during the 1980s and 1990s (West 96). Australia’s Bicentennial commemorated the anniversary of two hundred years since white settlement in 1788. Disregarding the political implications of marking such a fraught occasion, the Government commissioned an education series, the *Bicentennial Australian Studies Schools Project*, which helped shape English in Western Australia as it sought ‘ways of encouraging innovative approaches to teaching on Australian society’ (96). The Project endorsed the inclusion of Australian literature at the secondary level which was supported by the increased profile of Australian literary studies at the tertiary level, nurtured by the establishment of Murdoch University (1975) and the expansion of the Western Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT) to Curtin University (1987). Annette Patterson describes the freedom of ‘campaigning for more Oz Lit in the curriculum’ as a student in the early 1970s (‘Occasions’ 3). The increased prominence of Australian Studies at the tertiary level validated the inclusion of Australian literature at the secondary level. It also encouraged the production of a greater range of educational resources for secondary school students and their teachers.

At a time when most Australian states were undergoing curriculum change, the discussion papers produced as part of the Australian Studies Schools Project acted as a reference point for schools and professional associations. ‘Bulletin 5’, for example, recommends an approach to literary studies that employs a wide range of texts and a broad range of writing tasks including experimental and expressive writing (I. Reid, ‘Literature’ 322). This recommendation challenged the conservative text lists of the past but was consistent with the ‘Australianness’ of the textual inclusions in then-recent English Tertiary Entrance Examinations. Interestingly, because of its relevance to the Bicentennial context, the 1988 TEE English Examination paper included an extract from Tim Winton’s short story ‘Neighbours’, a decision highlighting nationalistic intentions and regional identity perhaps. Local writer Tim Winton presents a positive vision of a harmonious multicultural Australia. It excludes the story of Indigenous Australians as does the Bicentennial celebration itself. As a whole, the examination paper of that year focuses on immigration and multiculturalism with the other two reading passages from the *West Australian* newspaper (‘WA: “English” base for a global mix’) and Craig McGregor’s *The Australian People* respectively. These examples of characteristically Australian writing in the 1988 paper were preceded by the inclusion of extracts from Kenneth Dempsey’s ‘Mateship in Country Towns’ in 1987 and Manning Clark’s *History of Australia* in 1986 in the Comprehension section. Indigenous stories are not represented. Ian Reid critiques the omissions in the syllabus text lists, particularly contemporary writing and Indigenous writing,
arguing that ‘The fallacy that literature is just a luxurious aesthetic diversion for leisured groups prevents some students from seeing the range of what Australian writing has to offer them’ (*Bicentennial* 9) and that, ‘In the past, Aboriginal culture has too seldom been recognised as having voices of its own that can contribute substantially to Australian literature’ (11). This is true of the English syllabus which shows few references to Indigenous literatures or cultures except for the text-list inclusions of two novels addressing Indigenous issues, both of which are written by non-Indigenous writers. *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* by Thomas Keneally (on the list 1976-1985) and *Coonardoo* by Katharine Susannah Prichard (on the list 1960, 1979-1984) are rare among predominantly Anglophonic texts (Dolin and Yiannakis).

Intertextual study emerged during this period as an effective way of integrating the study of a wider range of text types. Intertextual analysis and acknowledgement of the ‘intertext’ – that texts exist as a site of intersection of numerous other texts and exist only through relations to other texts – emerges from critical (post-modernist) theory. Carmen Luke explains that ‘since all meaning is situated relationally -- that is, connected and cross-referenced to other media and genres, and to related meanings in other cultural contexts -- a critical literacy relies on broad-based notions of intertextuality’ (19). Intertextuality was originally made popular by post-structuralist Julia Kristeva in the Mid-1960s. Kristeva used the term “intertextuality” to refer to the multiple ways in which the literary text comprises other texts and interacts with them ‘by means of its open or covert citations and allusions, its repetitions and transformations of the formal and substantive features of earlier texts’ (Abrams 364). Applied to the Western Australian context of the study of secondary English, Ian Reid suggested that analytical tasks can be made more challenging ‘by a comparison of two or more texts’ (*Bicentennial* 11). In the TEE papers, intertextual questions were scattered throughout the years up to and including 1990. For example, in Section B of the 1989 first paper one question asks:

Some texts recommended for study in Year 12 English deal with either youth or the bush. Choose texts from different media, and compare the ways in which the selected texts present ONE of these themes.

This question also invites thematic comparison, a local application of ‘intertextuality’ that is a likely symptom of the ‘Growth’ model’s hold on English teaching in Western Australia. While the syllabus of this time specifies that ‘Meanings arise out of the relationship between and among the writer, reader, text and context’ it also reminds teachers that ‘students should not be limited by the notion that intertextuality is a simple matter of comparing one text and another’ (*Curriculum Council, 1999 TEE English Syllabus*).
From 1991 onwards there was a specific section for intertextual analysis with the first paper divided into three sections: Comprehension, Intertextual Comment, and Composition and Comment. Intertextual Comment is worth twenty marks (twenty per cent of the total examination marks) and the recommended time allowance is forty minutes. Candidates are required to attempt one question out of the four options; a non-print text (feature film or documentary) is to be analysed in combination with *either* literature (novel, short story, stage play) *or* print non-fiction (feature article or expository text). This affirms the place of intertextuality as a valued component of literary analysis and the English curriculum in Western Australia because it is included in the examination legitimising its sustained presence in the syllabus.

*Information Technologies in English*

The rapid innovation and increased accessibility of information technologies impacted dramatically upon subject English in the 1980s as the roles of schools broadened to accommodate greater emphasis on vocational priorities, and technology began to feature more prominently. Scriven referred to these as ‘the invaders from new disciplines which nevertheless must be treated now as indispensable parts of the New English’. These ‘invaders’ include ‘information structures (database theory) and word processing, the new language tools that every student and professional must acquire’ (Scriven 34). In the same year, the Beazley Report recommended that ‘the importance of computer education must be recognized fully’ and that early in their school careers, students need to learn how to use computers and maintain familiarity with them (30-31). This reference was one of the first policy mandates related to Information Technology in Western Australian schooling and it changed English significantly.

Technological advancement and the Beazley Report re-positioned English to examine ways of teaching with a variety of digital resources. With the expansion of information technologies, English needed to facilitate students’ engagement with the world around them in a new way, to create learning environments and experiences with real-world connections that transcended the simple expansion of student knowledge bases (Durrant, 3D 76). While initially some teachers were reluctant to engage with Information Technology - they thought it undermined traditional writing and reading skills - they soon embraced it as a tool to aid rather than hinder the development of literacy skills. The new technologies challenged and reframed

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105 As an example, in the 1991 paper, one of the four questions in the Intertextual section asks: ‘4. Many texts depend for their popularity on the fact that they reflect their audience’s values and attitudes. Discuss with reference to ONE non-print and ONE print text’ (Curriculum Council, 1991 English Exam 9).
traditional notions of literacy, and in this context, English was implicated in the process of developing new literacies to meet the challenges of, and presented by, the new technologies:

Language learning is at the core of all English teaching, and should be integral to students’ growth and development, for it is the means by which they come to understand the world. It should also be student centred, as it is through actual use of language that most learning takes place. Computers are vital tools in such language learning and can assist in the development of language proficiency. (Durrant and Hargreaves 131)

The English curricula needed to be revised adequately to prepare its students for a future digital world (Beavis and Durrant 2). In this way, the introduction and rapid growth of information technologies had a widening effect on English as it provided more options for the dissemination and range of activities centred on (even canonical) texts.

Prior versions of English were made redundant in a classroom and society in which the fields of ICT and Media education converged. This convergence presented as unfamiliar territory for many English teachers. ‘[Andrew] Goodwyn argues that English teaching is not only carried along by such convergences but that it is actually part of the process itself, and hence such convergence is central to the content of subject English’ (Beavis and Durrant 5). Media and English involve common skills and understandings in the reading, production and interpretation of texts. The prominent position of English in the curriculum ensures that more secondary students are exposed to the important practical skills and critical analysis acquired through the study of media. For media, retaining its place in subject English is advantageous given that ‘English teachers generally occupy a comparatively privileged position in school timetables and have an undisputed power base within the curriculum’ (Durrant, ‘Media’ 144). Andrew Hart suggests that many teachers approached technologies nervously because they feared it would undermine teaching of ‘the basics’ or compromise the ‘Great Tradition’ since it poses a threat to the remnants of the Leavisite tradition (Masterman 254). Durrant extends this idea to suggest that ‘despite an eagerness to capitalise on student interest, the nagging fear that the media are subversive opponents of true culture appears to have hindered any widespread adoption of experimental work in media’ (‘Media’ 142-43). This ‘nagging fear’, though, appears to have been set aside for the purposes of student enjoyment and adherence to the syllabus, since another reason for the rapid inclusion of media education in the English curriculum in Western Australia is the increased importance placed on technologies as they became more prominent in young people’s lives. This prominence juxtaposes the awareness of the centrality of the media in westernised culture with the desire to assert the value of the canon in westernised schooling (thus decentralising media). Chris Davies expands this point by arguing that the Leavisite philosophy is incompatible with that of the modern world:
Media education aims to create more active and critical media users who will demand, and could contribute to, a greater range and diversity of media products. This is very far removed indeed from the Leavisite intention of transforming young people's tastes, away from the products of popular culture and towards a predominantly literary culture. (410)

**Media Studies**

The fairly rapid assimilation of media education in Western Australian schools parallels the infiltration of technical change into Western Australian society. Quin and Quin explain that in the 1970s there was no trace of media in the classroom but by 1988 media studies had become a normal part of the curriculum for all secondary students. It was one of the few new subjects to have been introduced during the 1980s and survive (110). As retention rates increased and the hold of the examinations remained, teachers sought new ways to engage students who chose alternative pathways to those examinations, and media was one curriculum area that offered practical application of modern communication technologies. It lent itself to vocational and training programmes such as journalism or film and television; in pragmatic terms, because this could lead to employment, the future of the subject was assured (Turner, ‘Cultural Studies’ 178-79). Media teacher Barrie McMahon was an innovator in media education having pursued professional development all over the world before developing the media curriculum in Western Australia (Quin and Quin 111).  

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106 McMahon’s influence was widespread, as was his Media curriculum:

Western Australia was the first of the Australian states to introduce the subject and provided much of the example which other States were to follow. The implementation model first used in Western Australia influenced development in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. Further away, the Scottish Education Department’s media syllabus modules are drawn directly from the Western Australian Lower Secondary Studies media studies courses. (Quin and Quin 110)

The boom in higher education in the 1970s was another factor that aided the acceptance and proliferation of media education both in subject English and as its own subject entity. With a variety of tertiary institutions now in Western Australia, there were forms of knowledge offered as alternatives to those traditional forms guarded by the University of Western Australia.  

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106 Quin and Quin describe McMahon as a teacher and occasional Senior Master during the second half of the 1960s and later to become a key figure in the development of media studies in Western Australia (111).

107 Robin Peel explains that ‘in England, as in Australia, virtually no English departments shed their old identities and renamed themselves ‘Cultural Studies’. Things may have looked radical, but they were not that radical. In the universities and polytechnics the position was different, and Cultural Studies mushroomed’ (‘Cultural Studies’ 75). The rapid ignition of Cultural Studies at Murdoch University (1975) and Curtin University (1985) are clear examples of this ‘mushrooming’.

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generally receptive to the inclusion of media (113), testament to the range of tertiary qualifications now available for students wishing to train as English teachers. In the 1970s ‘both WAIT and Murdoch were committed to providing an alternative to the University of Western Australia in terms of course offerings and pedagogical style’ (Quin and Quin 114). Consequently the secondary English curriculum was opening itself up to media studies via the syllabus committees as academics from these universities who were working in Cultural and Media Studies were appointed to them and participated in professional development for teachers (Quin 109).

**Cultural Studies**

Other significant developments that impacted upon subject English in Western Australia include semiotics – ‘the concepts of sign, signifier and signified, connotation and myth’ (Quin 117) - which came to influence the teaching of English, particularly Viewing, and textual analysis. Cultural Studies is known as the semiotics of culture (Abrams 326). In 2009 Graeme Turner explained that secondary English and Media Studies curricula included semiotics ‘years ago’ and that ‘these days, most Australian high school students will encounter some version of semiotics before they even get into their senior years’ (‘Cultural Studies’ 182-83). Turner sees this as an undesirable pattern across tertiary and secondary English, when ‘all kinds of cultural, critical and literary theory’ is passed down the grades at the expense of pleasurable, imaginative, and creative engagement with texts. But I would argue that these are not mutually exclusive. For Turner, this ‘theory versus pleasure’ binary is an undesirable situation redeemed by the appeal of studying popular texts, since in most versions of cultural studies ‘there is no hierarchy of values distinguishing “high” from “low” culture’ (Peel, ‘Cultural Studies’ 77). Turner asserts that students want to understand more about popular culture, thus its relevance ensures its success:

> Cultural studies provided a welcome corrective to the critical methods provided through English because it was not elitist, it was not mystificatory, and it taught concepts rather than a canon. As a result, students quickly acquired confidence in their capacity to understand its modes of knowledge and to apply them directly to material forms and practices. (‘Cultural Studies’ 180)

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108 The establishment of Cultural Studies in Australia again highlights the dichotomous ideologies prevalent in English and evident in its works (including the study of media texts). The well-entrenched cultural heritage model of English halted the growth of cultural studies in sandstone universities such as the University of Sydney but institutions of more liberal curriculum such as Murdoch University embraced it and helped it spread and evolve (Turner, Cultural Studies’ 178).
Its relevance aided its success and according to Turner the success of Cultural Studies programmes helped universities secure the futures of Arts and Humanities faculties because its popularity among students made it equally so with university administrators (‘Cultural Studies’ 179). Like Media Studies, the appeal of Cultural Studies can be attributed to its status as being more democratic than literary studies and having a direct vocational purpose (178). It causes concern, however, among critics who fear that secondary syllabuses will be politicised with theories seen to be ‘radicalising’ universities and allegedly causing an ‘indifference to, and even a hostility towards, literature’ (Slattery and Maher 3). The potential for ‘hostility’ is evident in the declining rigour of reading requirements in senior secondary English and simultaneous decrease in student numbers studying Literature in Western Australia.

The ongoing debate about the legitimacy of Cultural and Media Studies in the secondary curriculum focuses on concerns about it devaluing literature and is thus contestable. ‘[T]he implausible dominance of the literary text’ was one of the main targets in re-writing Western Australia’s English curriculum in the 1980s, a task in which Turner was directly involved (Turner, ‘Cultural Literacies’ 113). This involvement suggests the subject opened up to a new vocational priority, and marked a shift into new technologies and new ways of thinking about texts.

The attack on the centrality of the literary text to the English syllabus was assisted by the subject’s alignment with contemporary, instrumentalist and vocational imperatives. By including other kinds of socially and culturally relevant skills – multiliteracies – we were updating the English curriculum. However, an unforeseen effect was the creation of the impression that English no longer had a distinctive content: it became a vocational skills-based curriculum rather than one that developed the student’s cultural literacy. The effect of this, in my view, was that it exposed subject English to a takeover by the educationists (rather than the subject specialists) and a model of education that was more suited to the social sciences than the humanities. (Turner, ‘Cultural Literacies’ 110)

The educational politics of the new Right that had generated caution and resistance to the ‘Growth’ Model of English in schools did the same to critical and Cultural Studies. According to the new Right at that time ‘the market matters above all else and is made increasingly to matter, as a governing curriculum principle’ (B.Green, ‘After’ 82). This ensured that English was subjected to a ‘back to basics’ skills drive and to a literacy measure that was standardised and accountable. For Western Australia, this meant an English ‘learning area’ that was outcomes-based.
Conclusion

Conservatism and accountability in the 1980s contrast starkly with the progressivism and experimental education of the 1960s and 70s. Throughout the 1970s the ‘Growth’ model of English became entrenched in the teaching of senior secondary English throughout Western Australia. Characterised by a focus on language and an active reader in pursuit of personal growth, this orientation came to occupy some of the territory traditionally held by the Cultural Heritage model of English and, to some extent, Leavisism. In addition, the ‘Growth’ model was challenged by the abundance of educational and literary theory which helped cultural studies rise to prominence in the 1990s. Annette Patterson suggests that ‘secondary English has undergone a significant shift over the past four decades, from a ‘study of Culture’ in the Arnoldian-Leavisite tradition to ‘cultural studies’ in the Williams-Eagleton tradition’ (‘Teaching Literature’ 311). This sequence is perhaps not surprising given the occurrence of globalisation and the dramatic explosion of information and media technologies which have influenced education, specifically English, over the past few decades.

Since the 1970s, education has sought to cater for more diverse groups of students in the light of rapid population growth and increased retention rates in secondary schools. Prevailing social reform aimed to promote inclusivity, multiculturalism and the uses of modern technologies, but in competing against a conservative economic agenda, subject English faced a public perception of ‘crisis’. The Beazley Report sought improvement for the Western Australian economy by promoting more vocationally relevant courses, an attempt to ‘inhibit the “Growth”’. This shift was driven by economic stringency which pursued accountability, employability and productivity above all else, and English was the subject most affected by the curriculum, pedagogical and ideological changes of the 1970s, 80s and 90s owing to its centrality in the education system. As such, the history of English is marked by a series of conflicts and contestations disclosing varying emphases and trends that are strongly influenced by public policy and key personnel at both the secondary and tertiary levels of education in Western Australia. Subject English is often challenged to fulfil the sole objective of ‘functionality’ and utilitarianism, but ‘functional’ English, a term created in the 1980s, implies that an English guided by non-utilitarian purposes is perhaps ‘dysfunctional’ or un-functional, and there lies fertile ground for the establishment of outcomes-based education which sought to hinder the ‘Growth’ model and fundamentally change subject English in Western Australia permanently.
Abolished at the senior secondary level of education in 2007, outcomes-based education (OBE) represents a dramatic and controversial climax in the story of curricular control in Western Australia. Marked by its national beginnings in the mid-1990s to the end of the local courses of study in 2007, the OBE period is one that re-opens raw wounds even today. In fact, many Western Australian teachers are still shaking their heads and trying to forget about it such was the anxiety and anger it caused. The implementation of outcomes-based courses at the senior secondary years of schooling led to the formation of lobby groups such as People Lobbying against Teaching Outcomes (PLATO). Together with the media, the members of PLATO were leading players in resisting, then bringing down, OBE in Years 11 and 12. OBE was destined to fail not least because the very quality that made English seem so suited to OBE methodology was the very quality that brought about its downfall - its lack of content. Subject English bore the brunt of the trialling and public criticism having become fully embroiled in the first phase of courses of study implementation and having the greatest number of candidates enrolled. English underwent massive change in a short period of time and the widespread resistance to OBE at senior secondary levels led to resentment and the premature retirements of some English teachers. Teaching morale and subject English itself were also negatively influenced by the ideological shift towards economics and a corporate, ‘top-down’ style of management during this period.

People lobbying against outcomes-based education

In 2006, the strong reaction to the first phase of implementation of the outcomes-based courses in Year 11 verifies the claim that out of the entire field of education, it is the senior years of schooling that are increasingly ‘the area of greatest challenge’ (Marsh and Parker 3). These years became ‘increasingly the target of criticism and the subject of debate in the media as well as the focus for consideration and discussion in committees of enquiry’ (3, emphasis added). In the case of OBE, being subjected to close public scrutiny helped expose its flaws to the public of Western Australia. It was part of a campaign aided by PLATO, a group that formed in June 2005 to provide a voice for people to speak out against OBE. Its members were predominantly dissatisfied teachers who felt unsupported and unheard by the Education Minister, the Curriculum Council, subject associations and tertiary institutions that were forging ahead with OBE (PLATO WA). The group expressed its resistance to OBE at the upper school level through the *West Australian* newspaper as well as via its web site, established in

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109 PLATO is the group, Parents Lobbying against Teaching Outcomes. It was formed as a pro-active ‘voice’ that used the media as one method of highlighting the inadequacies of OBE.
2006. The teacher-led campaign suggests that curricular control of English had come a long way from the years when the Public Examinations Board ruled the curriculum. The anti-OBE web site can be read as a manifestation of ‘disaffection’ in ‘disgruntled teachers’ (1). This ‘manifestation’ enabled PLATO to increase media attention on education to further its cause, although the West Australian had begun its objection to OBE before PLATO had been established (see fig. 5.1). The PLATO web site lists more than ten thousand newspaper articles published across Australia between 2006 and 2009, a record of public bombardment of education articles by the press. This reinforces the contentious nature of curriculum policy as a site of contestation and bureaucratisation, and the potent place of the media in shaping it.

Figure 5.1. The anti-OBE campaign in the West Australian

Full credit to The West Australian

They started the anti-OBE campaign even before PLATO was formed.

Coverage started on 10 November 2004, with a quote from Marko Vojkovich. (Plato web site)


The accusations posted to the PLATO web site were at times quite vicious, symptomatic of the severity of anti-OBE teachers’ resentment, their sense of powerlessness and the depth of emotion fuelled by the top-down management approach to the changes. The department’s attempt to impose top-down curriculum policy was eventually to be in trouble, however, largely due to the initiative and action of English teachers. This reinforces the importance of English specialists having a say in how English is developed and taught. The PLATO web site claims that successive Chief Executive Officers of the Curriculum Council drove the OBE campaign: ‘There was no real consultation. Professor Lesley Parker, and her successors Mr Paul Albert and Ms Norma Jeffrey, had a vision, and no amount of contradictory research could

110 The PLATO web site claims that the group was ‘greatly assisted by the West Australian newspaper which, contrary to stereotype, backed the teachers against the education machine.’

111 Jane Figgis claims that the hysteria over Years 11 and 12 ‘may not be entirely disconnected’ from the fact that the two WA newspapers were ‘vying for the credit of having “discovered” these great problems in the changes to post-compulsory curriculum’ (20).
convince them it was flawed’ (‘A Short History’). Such strong criticism emerged following the Curriculum Council’s decision to proceed with OBE in the face of then recent research which showed OBE to be an ineffective system of education in practice at the secondary level.

In 2000, the Curriculum Council released, The Post-Compulsory Education Review Position Paper which claimed to be ‘informed by [...] extensive research into educational systems in Australia and overseas’ (11). Three years previously, however, Professor of Education Patrick Griffin had presented a research paper at the University of Melbourne entitled ‘OBE: Interpreting Evidence of Learning’ in which he unfavourably reviewed OBE in various contexts:

Persistence with the assessment of intact teaching subjects or modules, for which a student gains credit for an overall assessment for a ‘package’ of outcomes, translated into a single rating or score, cannot effectively deliver an outcomes-based education. Likewise, fixed amounts of time to acquire a fixed set of outcomes denies that different learners take varying amounts of time to achieve the same outcomes. (9)

This evidence must have been outside the Curriculum Council’s sphere of consultation and in hindsight was an unfortunate oversight or a poor choice of research to ignore because changes to what was then post-compulsory education proceeded. Griffin’s findings about the undesirable consequences of OBE were sidelined, including concerns with the increased pressures of accountability, teachers’ workloads, the validity of assessment measures, and the need to re-educate parents and other ‘stakeholders’ about assessment and reporting (Outcomes). Apparently these inadequacies, contradictions and unanswered questions were to be resolved after the new system had been adopted, but this was not the case. The compulsory Professional Development Days for teachers of the new courses of study generated conflict and suspicion following revelations that the facilitators of English Professional Development were required to adhere to a script. They were instructed not to answer questions that deviated from that script. More drama ensued.

Show us the evidence!

One impediment to the implementation of the OBE system in Western Australia was the lack of precedent for its success. Put simply, it had not worked overseas. On 25 April 2009, respected retired secondary Maths teacher Patrick F. Whalen claimed on the PLATO Forum that Curriculum Council’s ‘Norma Jeffrey and her followers ignored both the demand for evidence and, even worse, ignored empirical evidence to the contrary’ (‘Interesting Quotes’).112 This argument emerged from the failure of the Curriculum Council to respond to

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112 In this same forum entry, Whalen reinforces the danger of forging ahead in policy matters without giving due attention to evidence. He quotes from that day’s West Australian Weekend Magazine where
requests for evidence. Letter, petitions, case studies of overseas failure of OBE as well as expert evidence from educational researchers such as Patrick Griffin were presented to the Council without answer. In addition to the lack of evidence of large scale success internationally there was no ‘strong, clearly articulated educational justification for the introduction of OBE’ (Donnelly, ‘Australia’s’ 188). This made some educators resistant to the system from the outset because several countries before Australia had tried and rejected OBE, including New Zealand, Scotland, England, Canada and the USA. Teachers in England had dismissed OBE on the grounds that it was ‘unwieldy and cumbersome’ and ‘impossible to implement in a balanced and effective way’ (189). In Ontario, Canada, teachers grew increasingly frustrated with the confusion and complexity of OBE but were more positive about its ‘focus on results’ (Miller and Drake). South Africa’s post-apartheid government also adopted OBE in the late 1990s in an attempt to re-shape the content-based curriculum of the past but it was abandoned in 2010. Roy Killen attributes the failure of OBE in South Africa to ‘two main reasons - a fear of change, and the unwillingness of many educators to try to understand Spady’s vision’ (‘Paradigm’ 3), but it is more commonly accepted in schools that OBE failed because the system was confusing and inadequate.

Richard Berlach and Michael O’Neill argue that in terms of epistemology, OBE was unlikely to be successful because local schools are part of a broader education system: ‘unless there exists a system-wide “core” understanding of how OBE is being conceptualised, those responsible for transmission at classroom level would most likely end up in a state of abject confusion’ (50). The repercussions of OBE were immense in Western Australia. In addition to abject confusion, some teachers, parents and students experienced alienation, resentment and exhaustion during the implementation of OBE at the secondary levels, despite some positive signs initially. Kathryn Shine assesses that ‘overall, The West Australian’s coverage of Outcomes-Based Education between 2005 and 2007 portrayed teachers as heroes who were courageously taking a stand against the State Government to protect educational standards’ (181). This is shown in a June 2006 West Australian editorial which refers to the State government’s ‘contemptible bureaucratic effort to gag teachers who have misgivings about OBE’ (‘Power Politics’ 18). It continues: ‘The people concerned are not impetuous rebels or thoughtless opponents of change; they are responsible professionals who should be respected for their credentials and experience in education, not ignored’ (18). The speed at which OBE was implemented was extreme by curriculum reform standards and reflects how top-down control

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comedian Tim Minchin was interviewed about what he finds ugly: ‘Intellectual laziness; People who place ideology above evidence at the cost of others […] I’m happy for people to have non-evidence belief systems but please keep them out of my government, hospitals and my children’s schools” (‘Interesting Quotes’).
of education can effect change autocratically and rapidly. Roy Killen explained that increasingly in Western society at this time there were calls for educational accountability ‘so that the return on investments in education (particularly public education) could be evaluated’ (‘Outcomes-Based’ 1). This was one impetus for the introduction of OBE in Australia. It enabled education to be more easily scrutinized against outcomes-based funding and performance indicators (Seddon, ‘National’ 320) while instituting ‘a pattern of governance that endorsed traditional power relationships’ (318). In this way, the introduction of OBE was a contentious undertaking. The *West Australian* ran headlines such as ‘Teachers threaten walkout over OBE’, ‘English teachers join growing OBE uproar’, and in the *Sunday Times*, ‘OBE teachers turn to drugs.’ Teachers were divided on the issue. While some teachers viewed it as an opportunity for greater inclusivity and professional renewal, others saw it as an unproven educational and assessment method that was altogether flawed.

*The way of the future?*

OBE was adopted by bureaucrats who entered into the rhetoric of futurism. This rhetoric began with North American educational theorist William Spady who is widely recognised in Australia as the founder of OBE. Spady claimed that ‘the outcomes of traditional school curricula were self-limiting and not preparing learners for the complex and dynamic future they faced’ (Killen, ‘Paradigm’ 4). Similarly, during the implementation of outcomes-based education in secondary schools in Western Australia, the Minister for Education Ljiljanna Ravlich suggested that the future, without accommodating drastic change, would present an insurmountable challenge. Ravlich promoted OBE as the solution to the changing world: ‘We have seen major changes to telecommunications, major changes to industry, new industries develop and the challenge for us is to prepare our students for the twenty-first century’ (‘Great OBE Debate’). This philosophy of futurism helped stage OBE as an Orwellian drama with monologues of ‘propaganda’ and ‘spin’ disseminated by the Minister for Education. This critique is represented in figure 5.2: ‘Wanted’ and shows a clear list of complaints aimed at OBE that was published on the front page of the *West Australian*.

Ljiljanna Ravlich is ‘Wanted’ and the front cover placement is testament to the drama surrounding OBE, the media involvement in education and the lack of consultation that marked Ravlich’s time in office as Minister for Education and Training. The image of Ravlich ‘training’ as Darth Ravlich, OBE Sith Master (fig.5.3) describes OBE as ‘combining a no-syllabus
style curriculum, with a focus on preparing students for the 21st Century, through complete jargon’ and satirically associates both the Minister and OBE with the ‘dark side’ (PLATO WA).\footnote{Darth Vadar was not the only fictional character critics saw in Ravlich. In his opinion piece in the \textit{Sunday Times}, journalist Liam Bartlett compared Ravlich to Shrek: ‘Under the pretence of the "brave knight" routine, she continues to ride headlong through a fireball of discontent in order to supposedly rescue a hapless princess, which turns out to be an unpopular school system that nobody in control of their faculties wants to see saved. By the time she is unmasked as a mercenary ogre, it is too late. Her kingdom is full of history students who don’t know what happened at Gallipoli, English students who know more about Eminem than Shakespeare, and music students who can’t play a tune on a tin whistle. How can she possibly fix this fantasy gone wrong?’ (15).}
The futurism that was a defining feature of William Spady’s ‘future-focused’ and transformational OBE was marketed as a ‘complex life-performance approach’ in a milieu of authentic, ‘real life’ training (Killen, ‘Paradigm’ 2). Spady’s theory was motivated by concern for children’s future success in the Information Age (1). An example of educational progressivism, this approach was immediately contentious, for the sub-text of ‘progressivism’ implies that educators who are unwilling to embrace the change are ‘conservative’, reluctant to change and preferring a dinosaur paradigm ‘defined by what the system is and (always) has been rather than by what it should and could be’ (Killen, ‘Outcomes-Based’ 20). Another inherent difficulty with this approach is that privileging the Information Age agenda presumes that the purpose of education is preparing students for their lives beyond school, a vocational view familiar to Western Australian policy makers who encountered Professor Michael Scriven and the effects of the Beazley Report in 1984.\footnote{The Chair, Kim E. Beazley, was a student of Walter Murdoch and remembered Murdoch for his opposition to pretentiousness: ‘The great aim in English, he stressed, was simplicity’ (‘Father’ 31). Beazley was known for his engagement with Aboriginal issues (8). It follows that the eponymous report of 1984 reflected an ethos of inclusivity.} As a member of the Beazley Committee, Scriven pursued a ‘functional literacy’ agenda and despite not being an authority in English, he led the report’s recommendations through his campaign of critique against the English syllabus because he believed it failed to list ‘many of the skills said by the public to be needed’ and because there was ‘insufficient relevance in the upper school curriculum to practical situations and contemporary life’ (Beazley, \textit{Education} 144-45). Similarly, Spady’s views on education identified as its primary purpose the preparation of learners ‘for the “life roles” that they will face after their formal education is complete’ (Killen, ‘Paradigm’ 1). This approach reduced ...
education to a pursuit of vocational ends over and above moral (Hunter, ‘After English’) or civic formation (Hegel; Murdoch, Struggle; Murdoch, Australian Citizen; et al.), purposes tightly bound in the function of English historically (see Patterson, ‘English’; Hunter, ‘Four Anxieties’).

Preparing the foundations of OBE

In Western Australia during the 1980s ‘functional literacy’ rose to prominence as a tool for employability. Margaret McIntyre questions this direction of English that emerged strongly in a decade of rising corporate managerial fervour and associated reorganization in state bureaucracies: ‘it is easier and much less trouble to reduce education to the delivery of vocational skills, but would it be better for education, students and society?’ (42). This question reflects the doubts of many from within the teaching profession who protested against the speed and magnitude of curriculum change decades later as well as its employment-focused foundations. In this context, with a discourse of ‘crisis’ surrounding English, provoked by media campaigns about ‘declining standards’, the Western Australian government promoted outcomes-based education as a system of inclusive and transparent education. Bill Green argues that as governments are losing control, or equally, when the public perceives the government to be losing control, it responds by exerting stronger authority over education: ‘shifts in curriculum focus, on the one hand, and the locus of curriculum control, on the other, are symptomatic of the contemporary nexus between English teaching and educational politics in changing socio-cultural conditions’ (‘Re“Right”ing’ 382, emphasis in original).

In the mid-2000s the OBE situation in Western Australia was replicating England’s experiences during the 1990s. In Australia, the 1980s and 90s were decades of increased Federal Government intervention in education, evident in the early collaboration on national goals, a local reprise of Thatcherism. Brian Cox explains that in the UK’s experience ‘this longing for traditional methods is common among Conservatives, [...] for them the connectives of grammar, rhyme and rhythm are seen as a form of resistance to the disorders and confusions of modern living’ (‘National’ 29). At a State level, Western Australia’s Labor government created perceptions about the ‘disorders and confusions of modern living’ including the ‘strangeness’ of a syllabus laden with unfamiliar edu-speak. English, and the curriculum generally, appeared to be without content and rigour. Such an approach was ‘opposed vigorously by many in the Howard Government as diminishing academic standards, weakening Western traditions and politicizing the curriculum’ (Cobbold 31). As a result, OBE was fast losing any credibility it had.
In Western Australia the Curriculum Council was established in 1997 to replace the Secondary Education Authority and its chief responsibility was to oversee student learning in the state. Within this description fell the task of preparing schools for the development and implementation of the *Curriculum Framework* (1998). This document was a K-12 policy for schools comprising thirteen overarching learning outcomes that determined the knowledge, understandings and skills that students were expected to demonstrate.\(^\text{115}\) Mandated for both the public and private school sectors in Western Australia the Curriculum Framework was introduced into primary schools in 1998. Its predecessor, the Unit Curriculum, was a legacy of the Beazley Report (1984) and was a prescriptive content-based system of education which contrasted starkly with the philosophy of outcomes-based education. Although a K-10 curriculum, the Unit Curriculum is pertinent to my discussion here because it was the curriculum used to prepare for the initial stages of OBE (K-10). It also demonstrates the extent of the shift - a near complete reversal - in popular ways of conceiving curriculum design and conceptualising school subjects. English, for example, was transformed from a genre-based, textually dense subject area to an investigative student-centred subject. Under the Unit Curriculum, English covered media, drama, prose, poetry and transactional texts in very specific weightings which provided the organising structure for the term units. By contrast, the Curriculum Framework was organised around its Reading, Writing, Viewing, and Speaking and Listening outcomes. Texts (replacing ‘Literature’) became the means, not the end, of learning. The Curriculum Framework also engaged with global educational rhetoric in an era that endorsed innovation, individualism and creativity within an incompatible scope of accountability, transparency and standardisation. As a subject of both catharsis and utility, English was particularly susceptible to these paradoxes which wore it down and increased its vulnerability to fracture.

The *Curriculum Framework (K-10)*

The foreword to the Curriculum Framework document boasts of the degree of external intervention in planning the new curriculum. In 1998 the Minister for Education Colin Barnett declared the public involvement in curriculum development to be ‘one of the most pleasing aspects of the Curriculum Framework’, thus highlighting the importance placed on ‘the collaborative and consultative processes’ by the Curriculum Council during this phase of

\(^{115}\) In addition to the thirteen overarching learning outcomes and the eight learning area statements, the Curriculum Framework document was underpinned by five clusters of core values and seven key principles: an encompassing view of curriculum; an explicit acknowledgement of core values; inclusivity; flexibility; integration, breadth and balance; a developmental approach; and collaboration and partnership (Curriculum Council, *Curriculum Framework* 16-17).
reform. One motivation for this consultation was to appease critics upon its implementation. That is, to consult widely initially is the best defence ultimately when under attack (‘Well,... we asked’). Barnett’s declaration also acknowledged the complex relationships and networks surrounding education that meet at an intersection of public and private education provision, and that was heightened by the effects of globalisation. This, in turn, prompts the forging of a stronger nexus between education and the ‘national interest’, therefore between industry and political power. The dynamics of this relationship are shaped by accompanying trends in the corporatisation of education, evident in national measurement and assessment practices, and in the implementation of outcomes-based education, in this case, the Curriculum Framework.

*Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE)*

At the level of senior secondary school the new curriculum was organised into courses of study to be phased in between 2005 and 2009. English was in the first phase of course implementation in 2006.\(^{116}\) The Curriculum Council was charged with the responsibility of developing, accrediting and implementing the new courses of study as well as the assessment and certification of student achievement for what was then post-compulsory schooling. This era produced the *Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE)* which replaced the Certificate of Secondary Education and the Tertiary Entrance Examinations (TEE) in 2010.\(^{117}\) English was retained as a compulsory subject, delivered at different stages based upon levels of difficulty: 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 3A, 3B. Students studied four of these semester units over Years 11 and 12, and those students seeking a tertiary entrance ranking would complete at least two English units, though most would complete four, one per semester in both Years 11 and 12. Those students wishing to enter university would usually select 2A/2B in Year 11 and 3A/3B in Year 12. The arrangement of courses into ‘stages’ was intended to accommodate divergent student needs and abilities, and the entire system was put forward because students were not precluded from undertaking a course based upon their vocational aspirations. In theory, students were no longer forced into ‘TEE’ or ‘Non-TEE’ pathways at the end of Year Ten, a gesture towards more democratic schooling. In reality, the unification created the same problems of the 1960s heterogeneous classroom. The potential for such a wide range of students’ abilities and interests to exist within one class gave rise to classroom management issues that compromised the quality of teaching and learning. This situation emerged as an unintended consequence of attempting, ironically, to provide expanded

\(^{116}\) As of 2006, Year 11 English (D004), Year 11 Senior English (D007) and Year 11 Vocational English (D002) were disbanded. Other courses of study implemented in the first round were Media Studies, Engineering and Aviation.

\(^{117}\) ‘TEE’ denotes the university pathway followed for Years 11 and 12 in Western Australia. ‘Non-TEE’ therefore refers to the choice to pursue non-academic pathways usually in the VET sector.
educational opportunities for all learners, one of the basic OBE principles of educational theorist William Spady.

The background of OBE
Outcomes-based education has its roots in the 1950s and 60s ‘objectives’ movement, beginning with Ralph Tyler’s Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction. Tyler identified precise objectives as the starting point for curriculum design (L.Brady 58). These formed the foundations of an outcomes-based approach to education which was followed by that of Mager, B.Bloom, Krathwohl et al., and Popham, who promoted learning organised by instructional outcomes. In particular, and more well-known, the taxonomy of Bloom and affective domain of Krathwohl specify stages or levels which form a framework to devise a series of objectives. Despite being popular in the 1960s, these approaches did not influence educational practice immediately. Since the work of these early theorists several precursors to outcome-based education materialised including ‘competency-based education, criterion-referenced learning and mastery learning, which focussed on competencies or attainment targets to be achieved through carefully sequenced learning experiences’ (L.Brady 59).

Federal politics and key competencies
In Australia, the outcomes-based approach to education was the child of Federal politics, specifically, of the Minister for Employment, Education and Training in 1988, John Dawkins. Dawkins pushed for the states and territories to articulate generic competencies that school leavers should be able to demonstrate.¹¹⁸ These competencies were driven by ‘an economic and political imperative to produce outcomes serving the national interest; that is, to produce a more productive, literate, intelligent and technologically sophisticated workforce’ (Berlach and O’Neill 51). One version of this form of learning was the eight national learning areas and profiles which were identified by the Australian Education Council (AEC) in 1991. With Prime Minister Paul Keating’s ‘big picture’ about Australia needing to feature more prominently in the global economy Dawkins was committed to economic reform and reducing the unemployment rate. This was to be achieved through educational improvement, reflected in 1992 when the Mayer Committee developed employment-related key competencies which were structured into strands and performance levels (L.Brady 58). These competencies were devised to enable post-compulsory students to demonstrate their capabilities in nationally consistent terms of assessment and reporting. They satisfied policymakers seeking outcomes-

¹¹⁸ John Dawkins was the member for Fremantle, 1977-94. During his term of office he was responsible for the transformation of Colleges of Advanced Education into universities and for other even less popular changes to tertiary education including the re-introduction of university fees under the HECS scheme.
driven education ‘systems’ that would redefine traditional forms of accountability by making schools accountable for students mastering outcomes or ‘outputs’, relative to so-called ‘inputs’ (O’Neil 7). The process established a link between sectors because this structure of education trickled down into secondary education. While competency-based education did not eventuate in Western Australian secondary schools in the immediate decade, they left the legacy of an OBE framework in every state and territory education system.119

OBE: No syllabus, no success

The specification of outcomes proved contentious for teachers because it involved a fundamental shift in planning, away from a system that had traditionally been content-driven (L.Brady 58). Where ‘product defines process’ the outcomes-based approach to education de-emphasises input and content, in deference to the product. The importance of such a shift was espoused by American sociologist William Spady. Prior to his influence, teachers were used to ‘covering the curriculum’ in a set period of time such as in units or multi-week blocks. In content-based programming time was the dictator (Killen, ‘Outcomes-Based’ 7). This is also contentious for teachers because time-tableing and scheduling are a reality and because some classroom activities are worth doing for reasons other than the achievement of an imposed, predetermined outcome. An outcomes-based system of education precludes the opportunities to demonstrate abilities and learn beyond its parameters. As educational theorist James (Jim) McKernan argues:

Some activities or educational encounters are worth doing for reasons other than serving some instrumental purpose as a means to a pre-determined outcome, aim or objective. They may be either intrinsically rewarding, as in the case of understanding concepts like tragedy from a reading of Macbeth, or extrinsically

119 The Mayer report was formally known as Key Competencies: Report of the Committee to advise the Australian Education Council and Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training on Employment-related Key Competencies for Post-compulsory Education and Training. This report defines key competencies as competencies that are ‘essential for effective participation in the emerging patterns of work and organisation. They focus on the capacity to apply knowledge and skills in an integrated way in work situations’ (Mayer 7). Melbourne Education Professor Patrick Griffin argues that ‘Pitching the curriculum in terms of “traditional content” versus “generic skills” creates a false choice’ because they are not mutually exclusive (Griffin, ‘Old School’). While this argument was in the context of debates about the Australian Curriculum, it is pertinent here, as an earlier example of the ‘content versus skills’ dichotomy that was exacerbated during OBE implementation in Western Australia. The Key Competencies were re-named ‘Employability Skills’ in the training packages changes in late 2011 and were associated with Registered Training Organisations such as TAFE, and with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) which required demonstrative outcomes in further education. In these programmes students were assessed ‘competent’ or ‘not yet competent’, often without an accompanying marks/numbers as is also the case for OBE. The Mayer Key Competencies are evidence of early outcomes in action in Australia; they ‘informed the work of the National Profiles, which were early attempts to generate a nationally consistent curriculum’ (Berlach and O’Neill 51). Thus the creation of the National Profiles can be read as an emergent push for a national curriculum which was temporarily thwarted by the change of Federal Government in 1996.
worthwhile, as in the case of being able to create or solve problems as a result of inductive reasoning. [...] If our aim is to get pupils to use knowledge creatively, then it is nonsensical to try to define specific behaviours that will result from education. (345)

Because OBE curriculum begins with what students are expected to do and be able to demonstrate, it differs fundamentally from a traditional system of handing down a body of knowledge to students. During the implementation of outcomes-based education in Western Australia, of paramount concern for teachers and critics was an apparent lack of syllabus, an inevitable absence in a model that uses the end result as the starting point.

OBE challenged traditional ways of thinking about learning because the outcomes that students were to aspire to, and demonstrate by the end of the course, were pre-determined. This model appealed to a ‘results-focused’ society because the planning, delivering and evaluating requires teachers and students ‘to focus their attention and efforts on the desired results of education - results that are expressed in terms of individual student learning’ (Killen, ‘Outcomes-Based’ 2). Learning is measured in terms of demonstrable capabilities rather than marks or grades: ‘this means starting with a clear picture of what is important for students to be able to do, then organising the curriculum, instruction and assessment to make sure this learning ultimately happens’ (Berlach and O’Neill 50). One advantage of such a system is that it focuses on what students can do, on learning achieved; a disadvantage is that in defining the level of achievement it sets limits to it. Brenton Doecke notes how a once ‘richly varied’ curriculum was rigidified by pre-conceived ‘outcomes’ and benchmarks (‘Editorial’ 2). Because learning is a process of exploration and undefinable potential, specifying a final picture is limiting and unrealistic. It privileges learning that is work-oriented and finite. This is supported by McKernan who argues that outcomes also simplify what is taking place in any learning environment: ‘the relationship between the many things that teachers try to achieve is far more complex than what the outcomes model purports’ to deliver (344). This limitation makes redundant the experiences of the majority of teachers who extend their students and know what they need to do to help their students improve without a list of outcomes to prescribe the path. It is these teachers who rely upon the enacted curriculum to overcome the deficiencies of the mandated curriculum where the latter fails to reassure teachers and students of its credibility, as was the case for OBE and the courses of study:

That the teachers who have been obliged to implement ‘outcomes’ are largely products of earlier thinking about English curriculum and pedagogy means that they continue to conceive of their work in terms of values and understandings of the past. Many of them still pin their hopes on the difference between the intended (or mandated) curriculum and the enacted one, arguing that no matter what governments say, good teachers remain committed to exploring possibilities
for language and learning that take their students beyond preconceived ‘outcomes’ [...] (Doecke, ‘Editorial’ 1)

Doecke expresses his faith in the enacted curriculum and the abilities of teachers to negotiate student language learning with outcomes. He also draws attention to the dehumanising project of literacy performance benchmarks and standardised testing that predetermine a continuum of student progression, as a ‘one size fits all’ curriculum.

For thirty years or more, modes of education in Australia upheld post-war trends which have largely been towards developing school based curriculum in response to the needs of students (Doecke, ‘Editorial’). Doecke recognises that OBE ‘constituted a significant break’ with these trends. Interpreting OBE in this light recognises it as a form of increased centralisation and government control of education, in opposition to school-based curriculum designed to accommodate students’ needs. In response, Doecke urged critical evaluation of OBE and the power of ‘attempting to imagine a future when we can once again speak of human potentiality and growth rather than economic productivity and performance indicators’ (‘Editorial’ 1). These ideals of human potential and growth are both immeasurable and intangible but nurtured by integrated language learning programmes. They carry on the aesthetic and ethical traditions emphasised in the ‘Growth’ model, for example, and explain in part, why English appeared to be without content. It was, therefore, was one of the first courses of study trialled in Western Australia, because it easily lent itself to language competencies and ‘outcomes’ design.

Beyond Western Australia, senior editor of Education Leadership John O’Neil explains that OBE experts ‘find it extraordinarily difficult to weave the academic content into the broad outcomes’ (9). He quotes Grant Wiggins, Director of Programs for the Centre of Learning, Assessment, and School Structure (CLASS), a non-profit educational research and consulting organization in Pennington, New Jersey:

“If you say that the purpose of school is not control over the disciplines, but control over these more generic capacities,” then there is a danger that traditional rigor will be diminished, says Wiggins. “Because if you now say that the purpose of a literature program, for example, is to teach people to communicate effectively, you are now saying, implicitly to some people, that it doesn’t matter if you read Judy Blume or Shakespeare to accomplish that end.” (O’Neil 9)

While clearly referring to OBE in a North American context, it is clear that focusing on the outcome, at the expense of content, produces a curriculum vulnerable to superficiality and relativism. Wiggins’ comments about the uses of texts highlight important concerns about OBE – that it relied upon sound teacher choices to enact a meaningful curriculum, rather than the
curriculum itself. This seems reasonable - to trust teachers to carry out the duties of their profession quite freely - but it created the potential for disadvantage in a project aspiring to better quality education, higher ‘standards’ and a more equitable system of democratic schooling. It was creating disunity, inequity and frustration across the state, and dissatisfaction was conveyed publicly in cartoons such as figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4: Christmas dinner


**OBE: The education to have when you’re not having an education**

The perceived lack of content and rigour in English, the status of the outcomes, and assessment provisions for English were just some of the concerns surrounding the early phasing-in of the English course of study in Western Australia. The notion that English was without core content, or at least, covered arbitrary concepts, was firmly embedded in the story of OBE English at the senior secondary stages in Western Australia. In 2006, in preparation for the national curriculum, the Federal Government funded an ACER study of Year 12 courses entitled Year 12 Curriculum Content and Achievement standards (CCAS). It compared the English examinations in different states and territories, concluding that ‘the essential content of English in the sense of particular tests or themes is negotiable or arbitrary for English courses’ as opposed to the ‘essential content’ of Mathematics or Science subjects (McCurry 63). Students can apply their understandings of any texts to show their abilities to read ‘with purpose, understanding and critical awareness’, a product of assessment tasks as outcomes-based, rather than text-based. After the 2007 English Course of Study examination one candidate reported that she had ‘used last night’s news’ to answer a question in the Viewing section rather than make use of the classwork she had invested in over the past year. This is a consequence perhaps of developing a course that is general enough for students to demonstrate skills without needing to have completed it. Some critics believe this skills-focus
to be superior – that English should be about functional literacy and assess skills and processes ‘objectively’. This version was foregrounded in the ‘checklist’ mentality of assessing demonstrable skills against a pre-determined set of criteria. With its new top-down economic priorities of utilitarian or ‘functional’ English, English was infiltrated by narrow forms of accountability authorising a ‘deficient’ English, devoid of ‘the values of a richly varied English curriculum and pedagogy to be displaced by the language of “outcomes” and benchmarks’ (Doecke, ‘Editorial’ 2). The gap between desirable models of English is represented satirically in figure 5.5.

Figure 5.5: English Exam

Examination success still shapes schooling; as one teacher explains, ‘it is all about the WACE’. This is supported by the findings of Berlach and O’Neill who also acknowledge the authority of the examinations in senior secondary years of schooling. In doing so, they condemn the nature of courses of study in which students could sit the examinations (and do well), without having studied the course, such were their process and skills focus rather than examinable content:

The examination, a powerful symbol, sends important messages to the students, teachers and the community about what is valued and important. The English course of study paper signifies that preparation, effort, hard work and thorough, diligent teaching are not important when two-thirds of the paper can be answered with very little specific preparation. (Berlach and O’Neill 60)
This is criticism of an English Course of Study paper that permits student success without due undertaking of the course. It led Berlach and O'Neill to ask: ‘What is the reasoning behind examination questions that are in essence devoid of content, where students can simply respond off the cuff, from within a highly personalised context?’ (57). It follows Graeme Turner’s concerns that in the 1980s English became a subject without content (‘Cultural Literacies’ 110). Issuing the same critique but from a different context of concern, Turner argued that the attack on the centrality of the literary text to the English syllabus and the emergence of new multiliteracies created the impression that English no longer had a distinctive content. In this, Turner was lamenting English-identity that is easily recognisable as a specialty subject in the tradition that incorporated, but extended beyond Reading, Writing, Viewing, and Speaking and Listening outcomes. This may be its appearance to commentators outside the secondary classroom, but teachers were capable of improvising and accommodating new literacies across the aforementioned outcomes.

_The English course of study – ‘the only good cos is a lettuce’_

The unsophisticated pun in the above sub-heading registers the widespread dissatisfaction with the course of study documents. The English course of study was arranged by the four outcomes to be developed by its students across specified learning contexts: Listening and Speaking, Viewing, Reading and Writing (Curriculum Council, *English: Accreditation* 7).\(^{120}\) The content area knowledge and skills were categorised into three: Conventions, Contextual Understanding and Processes and Strategies. The essential content, ‘Conventions’ covers language and textual/generic conventions; ‘Contextual Understanding’ includes purpose, audience and context, and ‘Processes and Strategies’ include accessing and generating ideas and information, processing and organising ideas and information, and reflection and evaluation. The text list is recommended (not prescribed), and it includes a broad range of text types – poetry, prose, drama, as well as various media texts.

The theoretical compartmentalisation of ‘Listening and Speaking’, ‘Viewing’, ‘Reading’ and ‘Writing’ produced a curricular rigidity that denied the fact that in practice these outcomes are generic and overlap. These outcomes were also given equal status in the courses of study which was difficult for some teachers and critics to accept, particularly conservatives such as Kevin Donnelly. Donnelly argued that ‘all students have the right to experience these four activities in a balanced and systematic way’ but he challenges ‘the way in which these four

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\(^{120}\) There were six Learning Contexts such as ‘Language and Society’ and ‘Language and the World’ and each semester unit addressed one learning context. Other learning contexts of the English Course of Study include Language and Self, Language and Action, Language and Subjectivity and Language and Knowledge (Curriculum Council, *English: Accreditation*).
skills are considered of equal value’ (‘New Orthodoxy’ 76). While Donnelly is a commentator outside this debate, his position, and the promotion of that position though national newspapers, the Quadrant and respectable journals, shows us the intricate relationship between the media and education policy. The power of elements of the conservative press to question and determine what is ‘worthwhile knowledge’ is strong enough to shape views of the public and enact or annul curriculum reform. Prior to the implementation of the Curriculum Framework, reading and writing were the dominant skills of English, both prescribed and enacted, a practice legitimated by the authority of the senior secondary English examination which privileged these modes. Therefore, a curriculum that equalised the outcomes represented a significant change from English curricula of the past. It was also marked a shift from students having to accept and reproduce received knowledge about texts (‘right readings’) in the singular form of an essay. Renewed emphasis on creative writing diversified assessment tasks. Speaking and Listening was not examined. In the course of study documentation and ever since, the sections of the WACE English examination were re-named (Reading, Viewing, Writing) and internal assessments types for Speaking and Listening were broadened, but the emphasis on Speaking and Listening was largely symbolic and viewed widely by teachers as merely lip-service.

When OBE shifted into the senior secondary school in 2006 via the course of study, an assessment system of levelling replaced traditional marks and grades. This created a tension and an untenable system of tertiary entrance because levelling (outcome-based assessment model) and ranking were incompatible. Teachers’ concerns about this change are evident in one teacher of English’s testimony about how difficult it was for students to demonstrate the highest level of Viewing. It was a discrepancy causing students to remain at the same level of achievement for (often several) consecutive years without being able to show the critical engagement and sophisticated interpretation of media analysis necessary for a Level 8. Students achieve a Level 8 for Viewing when they:

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121 This was an ongoing critique of English examinations. Marnie O’Neill reflects: ‘I remember being present at the Committee meeting when John Hay and Bob Hodge argued about the inclusion of oral language in the syllabus and the examination, and the decision was that there would be no change to the exam – which as John Hay subsequently said meant that there would be minimal change to the operational syllabus. Indeed, successive examiner panels attempted to include transcripts of oral language in the reading comprehension section, but with little success, as the marking practice still sought “right responses” rather than culturally critical readings’ (O’Neill, 20 May 2014). And later, ‘I think despite my previous comment about the 1985 (or 6) stoush over the inclusion of Oral language and later, non-print media, Bob Hodge and Michael O’Toole were influential in shifting the view of language in English beyond print’ (O’Neill, 27 May 2014).

122 It was the era of the panel discussion, just one example of how teachers were encouraged to try new speaking and listening tasks other than ‘the speech’.

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• comprehend and interpret highly complex and unusual conventions and/or allusions and demonstrate sensitivity to cultural nuances; discern subtle or complex generic patterns;

• speculate on the deeper social, political or cultural purposes texts may serve; explain how texts and viewers may use contextual and/or inter-textual knowledge and speculate on how this affects meanings and responses; discuss how texts depart from, blend, subvert or disrupt generic and/or ideological conventions, suggesting reasons for and possible effects of this; and

• synthesise ideas and information from a number of texts, identifying and taking account of differences in purpose, audience and context; identify contradictions, inconsistencies and/or silences within and between texts; critique and evaluate texts in a variety of ways using different critical frameworks or criteria. (Curriculum Council, English: Accreditation 40)

Viewing, like Reading, is assessed through Writing or Speaking and Listening, so it was difficult to assess where the production of a text fitted into the Writing rubric much better that it did Viewing. Assessment tasks needed to be sufficiently open-ended to allow students to demonstrate a range of levels. Joanne Jones argues that in addition to this challenge, ‘the different content and structure of the syllabus and examination may in effect have been detrimental to students’ analytical, rhetorical and literary competencies’ (335). It was certainly detrimental for teachers as programming and assessment design became more time-consuming.

Assessment and tertiary entrance - ranking

The courses of study specified learning outcomes as broad statements of achievement that were used for purposes of assessment, but they were not sufficient to rank students for tertiary entrance. This is because norm-referenced assessment is antithetical to outcomes-based teaching and learning. The problems arising from ‘OBE’s ideological framework and implementation deficits’, had a divisive and destabilising effect on education in Western Australia for well over a decade (Berlach and McNaught 11). In this way, OBE represented a ‘high flowering’ of curriculum and progressivism in Western Australia in that it sanctioned an educational environment of experiential learning from which students could witness how their work contributed to their society and the wider world. It was a remnant of John Dewey’s pragmatism. For Dewey, progressivism in education had its roots firmly planted in democracy: there was no room for authoritarian models of education in a democratic society. Dewey asserted that relying on an unchanging canon of knowledge compromises a student’s ability to thrive in an ever-changing, modern world (‘John Dewey’). Under this sort of progressivist influence, the Curriculum Framework and course of study documents were not syllabuses; they lent themselves to formative, criterion-based assessment, rather than summative, high-
stakes examinations tests (Donnelly, ‘Australia’s’ 185-86). Norm-referenced assessments are inadequate for describing student performance in functional or outcome terms, and give no information about how much a student has improved or not: ‘However, a normative score may be used to compare an individual’s performance with that of a group at a particular point in time’ (Griffin, Outcomes). As a means of ranking students against others in the cohort, it is the only suitable assessment method. Accepting the limitations of criterion-based assessment saw OBE halted in Western Australia but had produced a destabilising effect on education and subject English that was to last for another decade.

The literacy wars

Alongside the OBE debates the ‘literacy wars’ was motivated by the same concerns for educational standards and functional literacy. Delaying the assimilation of critical literacy into the secondary English curriculum during the 1980s and 1990s had the effect of privileging functional literacy and a vocational agenda over a democratic ideology. This priority is consistent with the national focus on improving prosperity through competitive, economic-driven policies of the time where ‘greed is good’. By contrast, critical literacy is an orientation disputed by critics who view it as ‘a progressive, cultural-left approach to English as a subject’ (Donnelly, ‘Class’ 12). Opening English up to critical theory through OBE was not a popular decision among critics of critical theory, since OBE was intended as a better system of training students for future employment. As such, the inclusion of critical literacy was occupying the limited curriculum space which could be used for further development of functional literacy. Launched against the inclusion of postmodernism and other critical literacies in the secondary English curriculum, a solid media campaign in the Australian newspaper sensationalised the ‘declining’ state of English and made it even more contentious among the growing number of critics, mostly educators. It sought to discredit a curriculum imbued with perceived relativism and socially constructed concepts.

In the late 1990s and 2000s Australia’s national media repeatedly denounced critical literacy in a campaign which Ilana Snyder termed ‘the literacy wars’. Snyder described the attack as a ‘manufactured crisis’ in English teaching (Donnelly, ‘Class’ 12). It was a situation that further

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123 Critics such as Kevin Donnelly and Luke Slattery were particularly vocal.
124 Snyder argued that public confidence in literacy teachers had been undermined by the ferocity of the often bitter debates between traditionalists wanting to revisit old ways of teaching literacy ‘and the educators who emphasise the possibilities for creative change’ (‘The Literacy Wars.’). While this may not be surprising in the light of the centrality of literacy to education, there are dire consequences for the schools, including low morale for the teaching profession, and its teachers and students. Snyder explains: ‘Hard-working and underpaid, without the social regard they deserve, literacy teachers have been bewildered, but also angered by their characterisation as postmodern radicals. Moreover, the
highlighted the vested interest of agencies external to education and is evidence of the climate of ‘moral panic’ created in education (Cohen). As a city with only one daily newspaper, Perth is particularly vulnerable to the ‘panic’ and ‘crisis’ that were depicted in the media and supported by traditionalists and those critics of critical theory. The role of media coverage, however, is more complex than simply perpetrating moral panic. Rather, the situation with OBE and the way in which the media questioned its value, highlight its multifaceted influence of the media upon policy change. It was the media that helped bring about the end of OBE and has the power to work ‘for’ or ‘against’ government policy.

One criticism made of critical theory was that it was jargon-riddled and John Howard used this platform to promote a national curriculum: ‘There is too much modernist junk in Australian education systems and a national education standard would be a good idea, the Prime Minister said today’ (‘OBE Debate’). Alan Barcan was also critical of post-modernism and other theories of the ‘New Sociology’ that emerged in the 1970s because he argued that they are ‘plagued by a proliferation of technical jargon, often concealing rather simple and obvious ideas’. He laments the demise of standard English used clearly and precisely, replaced instead by a ‘turgid, obscurantist literary style’ (‘New Sociology’ 68). Many traditionalists saw this approach entering the senior secondary English curriculum and rejected it. Barcan also laments the way the study of postmodernist theories betrays working class children by depriving them of important ‘traditional knowledge’ and the long established humanist-realist curriculum (68). This is an argument that presents knowledge as a stable and coherent entity which the learner consumes passively and without question, a view that sat uncomfortably with the emerging theoretical perspectives (of Marx, Foucault, Freud, and Feminism, for example). The view questioned how texts work in contexts, how ideologies are represented, how texts act as constructs, and how meaning is made and reproduced. Ilana Snyder argued that the enormous changes to the world of ideas, as a result of science, feminism, multiculturalism and social justice could not be ignored, and ‘giving attention to them in the literacy classroom did not mean that there was no place for the enduring values and traditions of the classics and Australia’s cultural heritage’ (‘Literacy’ 6).

In Western Australia the Curriculum Framework’s definition and rationale for English explains that ‘students develop functional and critical literacy skills’ (82) and that ‘critical literacy and collateral damage for the students in the classroom of these battle-weary teachers and their confused parents cannot be underestimated’ (Literacy Wars 9).

More than a decade later, Graeme Turner agrees, describing official pronouncements of critical literacy as ‘embarrassingly garbled’ and ‘just plain ham-fisted renditions of cultural, critical and media theory’ (‘Cultural Literacies’ 108).
functional literacy are interdependent’ (83). It also states that the development of functional and critical literacies in the English learning area ‘helps students to become competent, reflective, adaptable and critical users of language’ (83). This inclusion challenges the traditional values and beliefs of staunch advocates of the cultural heritage model of English and of cultural literacy in the Hirsch tradition.  

Donnelly is one such advocate. He argued that critical literacy represents ‘a fundamental and radical shift in the way literature is taught, or not taught, and the way children are expected to read’ (‘Schools’). As his word ‘radical’ connotes, for Donnelly the shift is in no way positive. English in this form is not only unfamiliar, but irresponsible and extreme. In addition, Donnelly critiques critical theory for the way in which it embraces ‘a left-wing, politically correct view on social and political issues, especially those related to sex, ethnicity and class’ (‘Schools’). Clearly, such a view is in reaction to the increasing priority given to inclusivity and progressivism in the curriculum, and is a reaction against the way critical theory was seen to be dominating English pedagogy.

This follows an earlier reluctance for subject English in Western Australia, at least on paper, to adopt a critical literacy orientation. Bill Green explains that the critical literacy orientation ‘represents a road definitely not taken, as regards English curriculum change in Western Australia’, but he argues:

> It could well have been, especially given the explicit introduction of media texts into the English domain, in both the Lower Secondary English Syllabus and the Upper School English course, and growing signs of a cultural studies orientation in English teaching. (‘Re“Right”ing’ 400)  

By contrast the English Literature course did take that road in the 1980s, but not without resistance.  

In English, in the 1997 Good Answers publication for example, based on the 1996 TEE English Examination, students are encouraged to examine ‘how values and beliefs are overtly and covertly presented in texts’ including ‘the unstated attitudes that we read in the gaps and silences within each text’ (Newman and Philp 23). This topic leans towards reader positioning (how ‘readers are positioned by texts and by what we bring to our reading of the text’, my emphasis) and ‘how the context in which a text is composed is reflected in its

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126 E.D. Hirsch argued that early education should focus on content and that all students, not just an elite few, could achieve cultural literacy (Kates).

127 Bill Green continues to explain that had critical literacy been adopted in the Western Australian English curriculum it ‘might have produced a radically different version of the “English-as-Literacy” paradigm, one defined very clearly in terms of critical pedagogy and cultural criticism, and consciously linked therefore to the project of critical-democratic schooling’ (‘Re“Right”ing’ 400).

128 Chapter Four of this thesis explains that there were various interest groups vying for power in the negotiations to introduce critical theory into the English Literature course, which created a new Year 12 Literature syllabus ‘reborn as a genre based document with post-modernist additions’ (Cullen 76). The addition of the ‘Issues in Context’ section to the genre-based syllabus meant that post-modernist discourse competed for ‘space and recognition against Leavisite - New Criticism in all sections of the document’ (Cullen 77).
shaping’ (23). These emphases are evidence of the probing rewarded in the examination which sought analytical responses that take into account a text’s multiple meanings.

Conservative critics also dismissed the focus on stereotypes, marginalisation and power structures as futile knowledge. In response to this aspect of the Framework, Donnelly (‘Schools’) cites S.L. Goldberg who suggested that ‘abstract theories and ideologies’ are passing phases and it is classical writings that best help students realise

what the world is and what people are, to persist in distinguishing between those ideas, utterances, fictions and texts that they believe enlighten or deepen or enrich their minds and those that do not; and also persist in thinking that this is still a good ground for preferring some books to others. (Goldberg 1)

In the Leavis tradition this approach to English accepts ‘true’ and ‘common’ readings of texts and the higher value of literary over media texts. Furthermore, texts are not equal ‘vehicles’ of learning because literary texts are superior to non-literary texts as ‘a distinctive and irreplaceable form of moral thinking’ (63). This critique is supported by Donnelly who also rejects the Eagletonian notion of textual equality:

The belief is that all texts are cultural artefacts of equal value and there is nothing significant or unique about those works associated with the Western canon that have stood the test of time and say something enduring and profound about human experience. (‘Ideology’ 29)

Donnelly argues for the inclusion of canonical literature in the curriculum, without contemporary approaches to teaching it.

Language is inevitably about power, democracy and social justice as much as it is about communication. Resisting the application of critical theory, and challenging its relevance and usefulness denies the possibility that social action can change existing discourses (Janks, ‘Domination’). Critical theory can empower students to learn to use language to reframe practices of social privilege and justice (Comber). Joseph Kretovics argues that teachers must be agents of social change providing students with the necessary tools to question societal injustices (51). In this model, the teacher becomes a ‘social warrior’ who is responsible for taking social action and promoting social justice, thus extending the role of moral formation of the English teacher. Jones highlights a similar difficulty in attempting to fosters students’

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129 Joseph Kretovics explains that ‘critical literacy [...] points to providing students not merely with functional skills, but with the conceptual tools necessary to critique and engage society along with its inequalities and injustices. Furthermore, critical literacy can stress the need for students to develop a collective vision of what it might be like to live in the best of all societies and how such a vision might be made practical’ (51).
ethical development and encourage social and political participation via the 2007 WACE English syllabus, expressed in its goals:

The goals themselves are deeply entrenched in the ideals and rhetoric of Western democracy, such as the achievement of a functioning, just society through widespread democratic participation, equal social empowerment for diverse social/cultural/racial groups, and the balanced liberal subject capable of ongoing personal reflection and self-governance. (335)

These are grand expectations and articulating them in the new curriculum contributed to low morale among teachers of English who were unable to meet such utopian expectations. Many teachers are uneasy about presiding over the process of moral training (Hunter, ‘Four Anxieties’ 8). Ian Hunter’s work is significant here for the way he theorises the English teacher’s influence upon a student’s maturation and self-development through a pastoral rather than coercive relationship that is ‘drawn from the pupil’ (10-11).

The usefulness and relevance of critical theory was increased by the infiltration of Cultural Studies in Western Australia’s English curriculum. This also de-emphasised the teaching of literature during this period. Margaret McIntyre explains the potency of critical theory and highlights the way it connects with life:

Ironically, English teachers are often accused of doing too much theory, as if theories were unconnected to how we live in the world, and in spite of the fact that learning something as supposedly abstract as gender theory arouses the most intense and personal reactions. (42)

These sorts of understandings about how students make meaning and how they respond to texts are integral in the development of sound, creative pedagogy. The intended curriculum is only one part of the story of learning, and through pedagogy, the unwritten classroom transcript is enacted. McIntyre’s perspective, unifying critical literacy and social awareness, is reinforced Jack Thomson who argues that engaging with literary and cultural theory grants students ‘control over their own reading through the knowledge of different reading practices’ (194). In other words, critical literacy empowers students to question relationships in texts and in the wider world, and to make sense of social issues impacting upon their world.

Aboriginal literature

While OBE and the literacy wars immersed education in drama from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, Indigenous literature and its teaching grew in popularity as the range of text types expanded rapidly and government initiatives drew attention to Indigenous issues. In Western Australia Aboriginal writer Colin Johnson was appointed writer-in-residence at Murdoch University in 1982 before he taught the first university-level course there in Aboriginal
literature in 1983 (Shoemaker 268). Studies of Aboriginal literature began slowly until socio-political changes of the 1990s encouraged new audiences for Aboriginal writing. These changes included Paul Keating’s Redfern Speech (1992), the Mabo Case (1992), the Wik Case (1996), and the Bringing Them Home report (1997). In addition, Reconciliation - John Howard’s refusal to apologise and Kevin Rudd’s subsequent apology in February 2008 - established social parameters through which the teaching of Indigenous literatures became more popular. Adam Shoemaker contends that ‘a fundamental relationship exists between the socio-political milieu and Aboriginal creative writing in English. It is a complex relationship’ (6). This milieu accounts for this growth, more so than the advent of critical theory. Alice Healy-Ingram explains that while postcolonial theory attempted to give a voice to those subjectified under colonial rule ‘Anita Heiss suggests that it is inappropriate to apply this perspective to the position of Indigenous writers in Australia because colonial acts by government, the media and society continue to impose on their daily lives’ (87). This disempowerment fuels experimentation in Aboriginal literature and came to influence education in Western Australia in the teaching of English during the 1990s and 2000s as Indigenous literature was integrated into school curriculum following the surge in popularity and acceptance of creative writing.

**The growth of creative writing**

Creative writing was not always a welcome inclusion in the English and Literature courses as it competes with literary theory, and the essay form, for space in the curriculum. 1996 was important in the story of English for it was the year the Australian Association of Writing Programs was established, which marked the beginning of the professionalization of creative writing as an academic discipline in Australian universities (Dawson). Waning faith in the educational authority of English enabled creative writing to develop in Australian universities, albeit in a way that was ‘piece-meal, without any homogeneous purpose, and without any one institution or individual being of seminal importance’ (Dawson). The divergent statuses of creative writing and literary studies in tertiary education are evident in the Gallery-Workshop model devised by Ian Reid in the mid-1980s. This model firmly challenged the practice of admiring literary works as artefacts from a respectful distance rather than becoming involved with literature in its production. Similarly, this notion of literature as production emerged from the 1983 ETAWA conference entitled, ‘Life in Literature/Literature in Life’ which encouraged ‘a reassessment of literature not as “object” so much, or “monument”, but as “process” in “context” – “literature” as “reading-writing”, in classrooms and community’ (B.Green, ‘Lifelines’ 2). It took more than a decade however, for creative writing to be accepted in the examination for subject English, and even longer for English Literature.
Up until this point Secondary English assessments tended to be dominated by the essay form but the English course of study foregrounded creative writing tasks by emphasising the importance of purpose, audience and context when devising written production tasks. Creative tasks were optional in the Writing section of the external English examination in Western Australia, but as they became more widely accepted by students and teachers, they highlighted deficiencies in teacher training. This was part of a bigger, global pattern where students were expected to learn creative writing at school so teachers needed to be able to teach it. Thus, creative writing entered tertiary institutions through the teacher training colleges. This was the situation in Western Australian education as told by teacher-writer Glen Phillips. He testifies to the introduction of creative writing as an optional study as part of a Literature Major Option in 1949 when optional studies were part of teacher education programmes (Phillips 18). As a minor option it was first offered at the Claremont and Graylands Teachers’ Colleges in 1957 (18). When Federal Treasurer John Dawkins pushed for the amalgamation of universities and Colleges of Advanced Education in the late 1980s and 1990s, following the introduction of his Unified National System in 1988, Creative writing entered the universities:

Creative Writing evolved out of a series of institutional and curricular responses to the perennial crisis in English Studies, in the form of new pedagogical approaches to the study of literature in both CAEs and universities. (Dawson, italics in the original)

The Western Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT, now Curtin University) was the first tertiary institution in Western Australia to offer a creative writing programme. It began in 1973, led by American poet and linguist Brian Dibble (M.White, WAIT 134). Dibble’s belief was that ‘the Creative Writing major was defined as complementary to our Literature major, the opposite side of the coin, so to speak’ (4). As Patrick Buckridge suggests, historically, these dual scholar-author capabilities offer a Man of Letters as a model for the good teaching of literature. Referring to the career of George Mackaness, Buckridge reflects:

His lifelong devotion to the cause of Australian literature seems never to have lessened his enthusiasm for teaching Australian trainee teachers how best to appreciate, and to enable their own students to appreciate, the aesthetic qualities of classic English literature. The balanced commitment that Mackaness, and in a somewhat different way his occasional collaborator Walter Murdoch, achieved in the early years of last century might be taken as a distant signpost to how literature might (just possibly) be nurtured, taught and read in Australia in the twenty-first century. (355)

Mackaness and Murdoch were teachers and writers who promoted Australian literature at their respective institutions: Mackaness at Sydney Teachers’ College (1924-46) and Walter Murdoch at the University of Western Australia (1912-1939). Murdoch was also a champion of
authorship through his advocacy of the University of Western Australia Press (Mead, ‘Remembering’ 9). Paul Dawson argues that a creative writing programme would only be realised in Australian universities if there was a strong tradition of Australian writing, so with the proliferation of Australian literature and the development of a local publishing industry, a cultural form was accepted by, and established within, the academy (Dawson). New Australian writing emerged, Australian authors were recognized through the Commonwealth writer-in-residence scheme, and creative writing began to challenge literary studies because there were now teachers to teach it.

Conclusion
The story of English under the outcomes-based courses of study serves to question the appropriateness of corporate economics as a model for education (Sawyer, Outcomes 6). It is a case where increased bureaucratisation of schooling and the application of business management principles to state education increased teacher workloads and stress, and produced a watered-down version of English that tried to accommodate so many differences and achieve so many purposes that it eventually died - a nebulous, mis-managed curriculum. OBE was a significant step in fracturing the morale and confidence of teachers, students and parents, and in destabilising subject English in the short term. In this climate, the possibility of an Australian curriculum presented as likely and imminent, and represented paternalistic intervention by the Federal Government centralising control away from the states. While OBE was designed to improve student learning by leading students along the most appropriate learning pathway to achieve designated, transparent outcomes, teaching was encumbered ‘by the ideology of ‘outcomes’, benchmarks, and other narrow forms of accountability’ (Doecke 1). The experience is a reminder that curriculum is only one aspect of teaching:

Such work has reminded us that, as it is enacted in classrooms, a curriculum is much more than a set of bureaucratic or adult intentions: it is a complex and highly fluid, often fraught, form of communication arising from an endless series of negotiations between people. A national curriculum must duly acknowledge and respect this reality. (AATE 14)
Chapter Six: Nationalising English: Locating the Common Wealth

The new English courses of study were intended as a more flexible education system which privileged ‘opportunity’ by better catering for a wider range of student abilities. Enacting the curriculum, however, was fraught with difficulties and even with the best of intentions, the English courses of study were not theoretically or practically sound when implemented in 2006 and 2007. As a result of public pressure and overwhelming dissatisfaction with the courses at the senior secondary level, outcomes-based education in Western Australia was made subject to review. On 11 March 2009 the State Minister of Education Elizabeth Constable appointed international assessment expert and University of Western Australia’s Professor of Education David Andrich to review the Curriculum Framework. Andrich’s report *Review of the Curriculum Framework for curriculum, assessment and reporting purposes in Western Australian schools* (2009) identified that the Curriculum Framework’s general outcomes ‘emphasise processes at the expense of content learning’ (Andrich, *Review* 13). This report was prepared during the transitional period between the development of the Interim National Curriculum Board and introduction of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

In this context recommendations from Andrich’s review were guiding the direction of the Australian Curriculum in Western Australia. Sensitive to the damaging effects of the major reform in the Curriculum Framework, Andrich highlights in his report the need to use the experiences gained from implementing the Curriculum Framework in Western Australia to apply to the implementation of the national curriculum (Andrich, *Review* 6). The absence of course content was a significant part of this, and one of the subsidiary themes of his review, such was the concern for the superficial approach to learning in the Curriculum Framework. These were the same concerns felt about the upper school courses – that subject English had been translated into vague descriptors with an excessive number of curriculum outcomes that provided little content and minimal guidance for teaching to be consistent and accountable – two of the aims of introducing OBE in the first instance. Around the time that Andrich was compiling his 2005 report, the Education and Health Standing Committee (EHSC) launched an inquiry into *Changes to the Post Compulsory Curriculum in Western Australia*. In 2007 following a series of delays and modifications, this Committee overturned the OBE courses of study implementation process by halting the second round of courses before they were rolled out. This left subject English as a hybrid course with both syllabus and outcomes structures. While in this state of flux, the planning for a national curriculum continued, thus highlighting the adverse effects of inconsistent State and Federal policy objectives and the vulnerability of Education within a broader system of political manoeuvres. Consequently, ‘while the WACE
English syllabus was devised from a position of liberal social justice and equitable individual empowerment, the end ‘product’ of Western Australian secondary English was very different from what was initially planned’ (Jones 337).

The Curriculum Framework and its senior school version, the courses of study, moved away from content-based or input-compelled schooling in recognition of the limitations of the previous process that encouraged rote-learning. In years prior, overly prescriptive content of the syllabus was thought to prepare students for examinations but not for the ‘real’ world. According to teacher and PLATO instigator Greg Williams, teachers struggled with not knowing what to teach because a sequentially-based syllabus was no longer the ‘heart and soul’ of education (20). This was also one of the products of the ‘New English’ which had been so heavily critiqued in the 1980s as watered-down, ill-defined and arbitrary. From this deficiency, teachers, bureaucrats and members of the public called for greater structure and sequencing so that students were learning developmentally and in common with students in the same year-group across the state. David Andrich drew similar conclusions and his third recommendation for the imminent national curriculum was ‘that explicit syllabuses, including context, be developed for the learning area components of the national curriculum before they are implemented in Western Australia’ (Review 9). In some ways, English was quite suited to the outcomes course structure because its ‘essential content’ was more arbitrary than in traditional Mathematics and Science subjects (McCurry 63). But no course of study was going to be suited to ‘levelling’ assessment practices, at least, not with sufficient assurance of the validity and reliability necessary for ranking students’ tertiary entrance scores.

Concerns with assessment
Using OBE in the forms of the Curriculum Framework (K-10) and the courses of study (11-12) necessitated a change in the role of assessment. The TEE had been a syllabus-based norm-referenced system which was positioned ‘at the opposite end of curriculum systems to OBE (Williams 20). Under OBE, in each learning area the outcomes were divided into eight levels of increasing achievement and students' proficiency was assessed against the levels and reported in these terms (‘levelling’). The Andrich Report of 2005 (Report 10) uses an example of the complexities of levelling which is pertinent to this argument for it highlights the difficulty in devising levels across all outcomes and of the same standard. For example, a level four in Writing for English should be ‘of the same standard’ as a level 4 in say, Reading.

Although reasonable to propose at the level of course design and teaching, it is extremely unlikely to be able to define equal standards a priori in the assessment stage from very generic descriptors at the level of precision required for tertiary selection. (Andrich, Report 9)
Andrich also argues the difficulty in meeting ‘an even more demanding expectation’ that levels across courses are to be of the same standard (Report 9). That is, for example, a level four in English is of the same standard as a level four in Mathematics. Furthermore, Andrich highlights the arbitrary nature of choosing eight levels and (mostly) four outcomes per course, because these restraints (of eight and four) ‘are organisational and administrative structures at a very general and abstract level, they cannot determine every form of assessment for every purpose’ (Report 11). In actual fact Andrich was quite supportive of the concept of OBE, arguing that ‘it provides a much more coherent organisational structure and articulates what kids should be doing at a particular year on the way through’ and that ‘the levels provide somewhat cruder but somewhat more important signposts of achievement of what it means to know more of English’ (Stephens, Inquiry 9). In his 2009 report, however, Andrich concludes that assessment ‘referenced and reported in terms of the eight levels created a conflict with assessments referenced and reported in terms of Year levels’ (Review 10). Because the latter option ‘was more accessible to parents’ he thus recommended ‘that reporting to students and parents be referenced to progress in years of schooling’ (Andrich, Review 10). Both David Andrich (2005) and Melbourne Professor of Education Patrick Griffin (1996) espoused confidence in teacher judgement, reporting that teachers make considerably finer distinctions between students’ performances than is possible using broad level classifications of outcome statements, and that teacher judgements are holistic approaches based on multiple observations.

Expressed in levels, the new system plotted student progress along predetermined continua of learning. As expected with this magnitude of educational reform, the assessment workload for teachers increased considerably. This was exacerbated by the fact that assessment took place against outcomes that were ill-conceived and vague. While this was not as OBE advocate William Spady intended, it was a necessary consequence of incorporating such a wide range of abilities, K-12. Applying this system across the entire curriculum presupposes that ‘objectives are appropriate for all subjects, at all levels of education’ (McKernan 345). In other words, levels (like the outcomes) needed to be abstract and general enough to encompass all abilities, given that they cover eight learning areas and twelve years of schooling. The generality of the outcomes and the level statements is central to Andrich’s critiques and recommendations (A Report; Review).

130 Andrich reports: ‘The context of the requirement that the same standard holds across the same levels of different outcomes within a course and across different courses, needs to be appreciated. The context is, it will be recalled, that there is a similar number of outcomes in all of the courses, all of which are divided into exactly the same number of levels of achievement. This degree of similarity in the number of outcomes and the identity of the number of levels confirms that they must be at a
To achieve a Level 5 in Outcome 3: Reading, for example, students were expected to ‘interpret the conventions of written texts with increasing understanding and critical awareness.’ The difference between a student demonstrating at a level 5 and level 6 is indicated below and the obfuscatory language of the descriptors exposes the complexity of interpreting and distinguishing the reading capabilities in action.

Figure 6.1. Outcomes Progressions. Outcome 3: Reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 5</th>
<th>Level 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students interpret more complex grammatical structures and vocabulary; and distinguish between shades of meaning, identifying uses of connotation and/or symbolism.</td>
<td>Students understand and interpret extended and complex uses of narrative, poetic, dramatic or expository conventions; and describe the possible impact of a range of aspects of textual construction on meanings and responses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Moreover, pairing the outcomes into ‘Speaking and Listening’ is also problematic, for as Wayne Constable highlights ‘students whose receptive language skills are well in advance of their productive ones can be disadvantaged in achieving outcomes which require parallel achievement in both modes’ (129). Constable raises this as a particular concern for students outside the grouping of a ‘certain kind of learner’ and is therefore inequitable. That is, it is more difficult to provide accurate monitoring of the progress of ESL students, or other identifiable groups of students. Constable refers to this as ‘the x+y disadvantage’ where the question is no longer, *Can the student do x?* but *Does the student do x+y?* The student may comprehend well but write poorly thus the judgement about one outcome is confused with the judgement of another (Constable 130). Again, a course designed to meet the developing needs of a heterogeneous cohort produced by nature of its structure discriminatory assessment practices for students who are not achieving at the same level for all outcomes.

Level descriptors and outcomes were wordy and not easily understood by the general public. Griffin contends that assessment procedures and results should be understandable: ‘Assessment information should be in a form that is useful to those who need it – students, teachers, parents, employers, post-secondary institutions, the government and the general substantially general and abstract level that do not arise out of the content and processes of any of the courses’ (Report 10)

131 This was even more likely in the earlier stages of developing the courses of study when four courses were to become one (English, English Literature, Senior English and ESL/EAD). Separate Literature and ESL courses were eventually devised.
public’ (*Outcomes*). He argues that assessment should be reported in a way that is intelligible and convincing: ‘The internal validity of the classroom process must be matched by its credibility to external audiences. The assessment and the reporting process must have external validity’ (*Literacy* 6). OBE created conflict that undermined the confidence of external stakeholders and the credibility of the system. This raises an interesting point about the professional discourse of teaching and the respect for the profession shown from the wider community: should the general public be able to understand curriculum documents? Should curriculum writers be writing for a general audience? Griffin would argue yes, declaring:

> [I]t is important that the assessment information and its interpretation should be able to be generalised to audiences, other than, but including the student, teacher, and parent. The communication reeds to be in a form that makes it understandable, accurate and acceptable. (*Literacy* 6)

It is a discussion that enters into debates about accountability, transparency, accessibility and how education is placed, then controlled, in the public domain. This also presented as an issue when Andrich critiqued the professional language of the Curriculum Framework and the Outcomes and Standards Framework as ‘too opaque for general communication’ (*Review* 10). Even then-Prime Minister John Howard participated in the condemnation by referring to outcomes-based education as ‘gobbledegook’ (Lewis and Salusinszky). Andrich also recommended that the Curriculum Council ‘encourage schools to report information to parents and students that complements the grades ‘A’ to ‘E’ in a way that minimises the demand for specialised knowledge of the language of the education profession (*Review* 22).

This was in response to the Federal versus State Government territorial battle in education which saw the Western Australian Government mandate an outcomes-based (or levelling) reporting system, while the Australian Government tie funding to reporting in grades. Therefore teachers were required to report using grades and levels, two contradictory methods and ideologies, which understandably provoked confusion and resentment of the political warfare that compromised teacher satisfaction and student learning.

Assessment and reporting using outcomes presented the biggest difficulty with implementing the courses of study and was subsequently the chief reason for its demise. In Western Australia, the external examination still drives the senior secondary courses and the English course of study was no different. Subject decisions made by students, and curriculum decisions made by policy-makers, centred on WACE performance and how to achieve an optimum Tertiary Entrance Rank (Score). In a tertiary entrance system like Western Australia’s, where secondary examinations determine tertiary placements, the ‘clumping’ effect created by marking in levels was insufficient to rank students and determine eligibility for tertiary
entrance. That is, assessment using outcomes was not fine-grained enough to allocate, and justify, tertiary placements. ‘For the very high level of precision for tertiary entry, we need the fine-level data’ (Stephens, Inquiry 10). OBE was not sufficient in senior secondary schooling in Western Australia because it was not capable of supporting fine increments in assessment. In Andrich’s 2005 Report, for example, one of its major findings was that the assessment of writing against outcomes and levels divides many thousands of students into just three or four levels (Case Study 1). He concluded that assessment using outcomes and levels does not achieve comparability across schools and courses, that it lacks credibility as a method, and unnecessarily drains resources (Report 50). In some ways there was a greater chance of OBE succeeding in the United States because the senior school examinations are not tied to university entrance; colleges and placements are determined prior to the end of year examinations. OBE was dismantled in the United States for other reasons and in Western Australia, where examination results directly affect university placements and require public justification, particularly for high stakes limited entrance courses such as Medical or Dental Science, OBE levels were simply insufficient. In short, Western Australian universities require a finer grading system for course selection with a specific and set number of places available, for which OBE was inadequate (Louden, Personal interview). OBE was intended as a system that emphasized what students could do, and could measure “what the students are capable of doing”—something which the traditional education system often fails to do’ (Acharya). It was designed to overcome ‘meaningless’ percentages and grades and to equip students for life beyond school by giving them a transformative experience of education.

The fact that OBE was abandoned at the point where it was implemented at the senior secondary levels indicates that the authority of the external examination still reigns in matters of educational and curriculum policy. It also tells ‘a story rich already in lessons about the fraught nature of changing post-compulsory education and training’ (Figgis 21).

In Western Australia where tertiary entrance is determined by external examinations, assessment takes priority over curriculum. In the case of OBE where curriculum was privileged over assessment, the system failed. By this I mean that generic outcomes became the basis for programming and curriculum development before assessment was fully conceived in terms of its implications for fine-grained (tertiary entrance) ranking. An effective education system needed to have balanced both curriculum and assessment priorities. The bifurcated structure of the Education Department of Western Australia can be interpreted as a metaphor for power relations during the implementation of OBE. The Department’s Curriculum and Assessment branches were separated during this time which represented a clear division between them. Similarly, in the system of outcomes-based education, Curriculum was prioritised over
assessment, and the imbalance that resulted, evident in the way the OBE curriculum was foregrounded initially, came at the expense of effective and efficient assessment policy. Consequently, OBE failed. It had not failed, however, to push the ‘humanities dimension’ to the background of a more empirically based model of education that was dictated by assessment (Turner, ‘Another Way’). It made English particularly vulnerable because it presented itself as a ‘bit-of-everything’ that aimed to study such a broad range of texts, to cater for all students, and so appeared to lack the depth and rigour that enabled genuine experiences of literature and language.

**Under Scrutiny: the Western Australian English Course of Study**

The Education and Health Standing Committee’s *Inquiry into Changes to the Post-Compulsory Curriculum in Western Australia* first called for submissions in May 2005. The hearings with selected individuals and representatives began in June 2005.132 The Committee tabled an interim report in December 2005 before its final report was presented in June 2006 (Stephens, *Changes* vii). By this time, the English course of study had been taught to all Year 11 English students across the state. The Committee concluded that:

> [t]here was a lack of refinement in the original proposal which hindered its capacity to accommodate consistency and comparability of student results [...] seen as integral to assessing students’ capacity to successfully take on more academic pathways. (Stephens, *Changes* xiv)

While the Council had amended the original assessment proposal in May 2006 to enable teachers to assess using numbers rather than levels, and using the external examination to moderate the school score of tertiary entrance, the Committee deemed these adjustments ‘insufficient’ (Stephens, *Changes* xiv). The report also acknowledged that while there had been a need for change, motivated by the desire for a single system of post-compulsory education that caters for the needs of a diverse group of students and allows flexibility for students, ‘the

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132 Groups and individuals were those ‘identified as being of importance to the inquiry over the year from June 2005’ (Stephens, *Changes* vii). It included: PLATO co-creator Greg Williams, individual teachers and principals from across all sectors – Catholic, independent and government schools, representatives from the Catholic Education Office and Association of Independent School of Western Australia, Therese Temby, Norma Jeffrey and other Curriculum Councillors including four acting chief executive officers, Paul Albert, Director General of the Department of Education and Training and other Department representatives, representatives from the English and Science Teachers’ Associations of Western Australia, Mike Keeley, President of the State School Teachers Union of Western Australia. Only three university staff members spoke suggesting the inquiry was seeking to hear from practising teachers. The three academics were Professor of Education at Murdoch University David Andrich, Associate Professor of Education at the University of Western Australia Marnie O’Neill and Professor of Education at Edith Cowan University Max Angus (Stephens, *Changes* 91-93). A point worth noting here is that there were ‘differences in autonomy between the education sectors [which] meant that those policy actors within the non-government sector were more empowered to navigate the competing and conflicting forms of accountabilities that emerged from the changes to WA curriculum policy’ (Turner, ‘Another Way’).
original proposal was significantly flawed’ (Stephens, Changes xvii). The Committee also argued that it was possible, and indeed beneficial, to operate with the best features of the previous syllabus-based system and OBE – an amalgamation labelled ‘Outcomes and Standards Education’ which was quite removed from Spady’s version.

Before other subjects could commence, much of the outcomes curriculum was scrapped and English was left in the difficult situation of having a hybrid course, with a syllabus intended for outcomes focused, wholly school-based assessment combined with high stakes, government-administered testing - a measure stipulated by the former state Labor Government. (Jones 338)

The English Teachers’ Association

It is important to acknowledge that this period of educational reform involved extensive and intensive input from English teachers in Western Australia, many of whom were disappointed to see the undoing of the OBE structure of their courses. It was a period that produced hostility and division among teachers and a certain volatility from within the profession. For a group that believed the role of the English Teachers’ Association (ETA) was to support teachers of English, rather than support the Curriculum Council, it was left fragmented and disillusioned. The ETA was in a tenuous situation because according to whether it advocated the continuation or the abandoning of the courses of study some teachers would be disgruntled either way. At a time when teachers needed more support ETA membership declined, historically consistent with periods of educational reform. Teachers who questioned the efficacy of the system at the senior secondary level felt that the ETA betrayed them at a time when the professional body needed a voice of reason and resistance. This is because the ETA was supportive of the changes, and at the EHSC Inquiry, then ETA president Kelly Klymiuk reported the advantages of ‘a seamless K-12 outcomes-focused curriculum and its attendant student-focused pedagogy’ (Stephens, Inquiry 3).

During the inquiry Klymiuk argued the value of creating a post-compulsory pathway that did not require students to choose either TEE or non-TEE. This opportunity for students appeared to be a desirable option, but the problems of 1960s education emerged again: the classroom became extremely heterogeneous and the needs so divergent that very few of them could be met. Ultimately, students wanting to attend university wanted to prepare for that alone, and students wanting to ‘keep their options open’ or definitely not attend university became a management challenge for any teacher of all three groups combined. Klymiuk also highlighted the value of students’ taking greater ownership of their learning through an outcomes-focused system of education. She praised OBE on the grounds that it ‘provides explicit criteria for learning, teaching and assessment; provides transparent assessment procedures; and provides
the ability to tailor the learning, teaching and assessment to the needs of the individual student’ (3). Klymiuk recommended the continuation of the then current time line for the courses of study implementation (4), arguing that ‘too much time and too many resources’ had been invested in the reform for it not to proceed, and that not ‘enough would be gained by delaying the implementation to offset what would be lost if we did do it’ (10). This presents some of the benefits of the courses of study. However, the system did not proceed, in the face of what was, at times, a vicious campaign to end OBE.

The establishment of a parliamentary review and the intervention of Premier Alan Carpenter in the matter was an attempt to pacify critics of the system, including the ‘strident and vocal media campaign, in part, led by the West Australian and the Australian newspapers’ (Donnelly, ‘Australia’s’ 183). In July 2006, after anti-OBE teachers threatened to boycott thirteen courses of study due for implementation in 2007, the State Government delayed them (Hiatt 1). In December 2006, Carpenter replaced Education Minister Ljiljana Ravlich with Mark McGowan. Likewise, there were significant staff movements in the Curriculum Council and the Department of Education and Training as a result of stress, disillusionment and disappointment by the process, which often made ‘sacrificial lambs’ of some of its policy executives. ‘A process of decision-and-reversal was adopted in an attempt to stem the discontent’:

For evaluation, achievement levels were lauded, then discarded. Syllabuses were anathema, then they were the saviour. Outcomes were to be weighted equally, then they were to be weighted differentially. Examination protocols were established, then withdrawn. (Berlach and O'Neill 52)

Overall OBE had a destabilising effect on education, particularly English as one of the ‘flagship’ courses of study. OBE was significantly modified to the point of no longer being legitimately ‘outcomes-based’. Responding to pressure from the public, the Curriculum Council established ‘juries’ of teachers for each course to scrutinise the proposed courses and make recommendations for improvement.

The juries consisted of experienced subject teachers who embarked on the task of vetting and then providing guidance on the readiness for implementation of the planned courses of study. Early in May 2007, the juries recommended that over half of the proposed courses be delayed, subject to further investigation. (Berlach and O’Neill 60)

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133 Ljiljana Ravlich and Mark McGowan were Ministers for Education and Training. The West Australian newspaper reported that ‘Mr McGowan was briefed by Premier Alan Carpenter when he was handed the Education portfolio from Ljiljana Ravlich late last year to do whatever it took to neutralise the OBE controversy’ (Hiatt 1). This language deploys military rhetoric to suggest the extent of the conflict and hostilities in circles of education in Western Australia at that time.
A new set of instructions was issued about the courses and teachers, both for and against the courses of study, grew increasingly frustrated by the amount of time and money that had been wasted in the reformation. Even teachers in favour of the abolition of OBE were incensed at the mismanagement of the implementation and phasing-out of the courses of study. Specific content, scaling, and grades based upon marks were reinstated and most of the OBE system was scrapped by the end of 2007, as was the Curriculum Council.

Two Western Australian academics who strongly critiqued the reforms were Richard Berlach and Michael O’Neill. They argued that the English course of study had ‘epistemic shortcomings’ as a consequence of an ‘inadequate conceptualisation of curriculum’ in which there was so little common understanding of the curriculum that there was no reference point for developing a suitable examination (59). Berlach and O’Neill argue that this absence permitted a fundamentalist push in the direction of beliefs such as [...] emphasising writing per se rather than what is written about; [and] reducing rigour as teachers are removed as the gatekeepers of core curriculum knowledge, becoming instead ‘guides on the side’ (59).

Berlach and O’Neill also criticised the way the English course of study de-emphasised ‘spelling, grammar, punctuation and other previously indispensable building-blocks of functional literacy’ (59). This follows the lines of popular criticism of OBE ‘dumbing down’ education and ‘declining standards’ where subject English was held accountable to the public and labelled primarily responsible for ignoring the importance of the mechanics of writing in favour of left-wing ideology:

Many of those responsible for training English teachers and writing syllabuses are committed to a progressive, cultural-left approach to English as a subject, represented by functional grammar and critical literacy. As a consequence, not only do most Australian syllabuses fail to include a systematic treatment of formal grammar but many teachers lack the knowledge to deal with the subject. (Donnelly, ‘Class’)

In times of education reform, public criticism of teachers is unhelpful, and often untrue. In critiquing the absence of formal grammar teaching in the English curriculum, Donnelly highlights deficiencies interpreted by the cultural Right as indicators of anarchy and social disorder. He fails to acknowledge the professionalism of teachers. By contrast, Graeme Turner called for the return of English into the hands of English teachers, removing it from ‘the hands of politicians and members of the commentariat’ (‘Another way’). Turner refers to the regular critiques of English in the media. An example from Western Australia involved examination candidates being ‘asked to analyse two movie posters (but no books), and where markers were told not to penalise mistakes in spelling and grammar’ (‘Another way’). Turner identifies
examples like this as provocative and destructive influences on public perceptions about what is going on in schools.

In a Western Australian context public perception of English was shaped by Kevin Donnelly’s views, supported by fellow journalists from the *Australian* who claimed that the ‘introduction of a Year 12 English exam that fails to penalise students for poor spelling and grammar and asks students to compare two film posters but not read a book has also been blasted by Canberra’ (Lewis and Salusinszky). It is a sensational article which suggests the increasing connectedness of education across the nation. This appeal to nationalism was supported by the inclusion of comments by then Federal Education Minister Julie Bishop who was reported as being keen to push for ‘greater national consistency’ across English curricula. This was testament to her belief that students of subject English ‘are not being sufficiently challenged on traditional texts’ (Lewis and Salusinszky). Bishop also expressed concerns over Western Australia’s OBE system, ‘claiming it is “inevitable” that standards will fall’ (Lewis and Salusinszky), a popular critique of the outcomes-based system already pushed and pulled by conflicting power and pressure groups. The article also raises the same concern highlighted by Jones, that a course aspiring to foster students’ ethical development, as well as the functional and critical aspects of literacy, should present ‘vast ambitions’ that are unachievable in contemporary education settings (334).

Approaches to English that encourage an intensification of ethical inwardness, however, have led to expressions of concern that English is not providing challenging, intellectual training for senior high school students, with one former Prime Minister claiming that the states and territories were ‘dumbing down’ the curriculum in the interests of political correctness. (Lewis and Salusinszky)

In the same article, a university literature academic was quoted as claiming (in relation to the Western Australian syllabus) that ‘teachers are disappointed they are not teaching literature any more. They feel the subject has been hijacked by those who want to teach about race, gender and Marxism, rather than about literature’ (Lewis and Salusinszky). The media’s sensationalist discourse of ‘crisis’ had a negative effect on teacher morale, particularly upon teachers already feeling overwhelmed by curriculum changes imposed by the outcomes-based system. These criticisms reflect the contentious nature of curriculum design where subjects are sites of political contestation, and where different interest groups struggle for power (Goodson, *The Making*; Durrant, ‘English teaching’). According to Graeme Turner such a perception of ‘crisis’ or ‘chaos’ ‘has so far generated a national inquiry into the content of

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134 Bishop’s vision for a ‘consistent’ education system was promoted at her National Press Club address on 7 February 2007. In her discussion of standards and funding for schools Bishop quoted Margaret Thatcher. See for the text of the address, ‘Education Minister calls for higher standards in schools’ on the *Australian Politics* web site.
secondary English and other core disciplines as a precursor to the establishment of a national curriculum’ ('Another way').

The end of OBE and the beginnings of the Australian Curriculum

So far I have discussed how a top-down style of government worked to create a system of education that was opposed by many groups in Western Australia. The introduction of the English course of study highlights how bureaucratic and political contestations recruited education in the cause of gaining and exerting control over the population for this recruitment was an inevitable part of ensuring accountability for public expenditure. This chapter now turns to an investigation of the ongoing issues in the identity and practise of subject English that have arisen through the process of developing an Australian Curriculum. In another period of curriculum change, yesterday and today’s subject English in Western Australia seeks to align with the rest of the nation. In Western Australia the experience of using outcomes, then not, in senior secondary English caused much frustration, friction and fatigued disbelief for many teachers of English who had invested much time and effort in transitioning to new courses. It was largely the issue of curricular control that was central to the reform’s lack of success because educationists and bureaucrats took hold of the curriculum that in both ideals and implementation ‘seem manifestly utopian’ (Jones 350). Soon after, with the OBE controversy still raw, teachers were suspicious of the imminent likelihood of an Australian curriculum, the motives behind its introduction, and the potential for re-visiting ‘recycled’ versions of English courses. The opportunity for a national curriculum reinvigorated debates about canonicity, the teaching and learning of Australian literature in Australian schools and universities, and the ‘content’ of subject English. Seemingly ‘old’ debates, these discussions provided opportunities for renewal and re-thinking of the identity and shape of English, and enabled teachers to reclaim some of the subject territory claimed by educationists in the previous increment of reform in Western Australia. So in a culture of performance management and accountability, curriculum negotiations had the potential to empower educators and encourage their vision of a curriculum far more ‘holistic, integrated and attuned to the diversity of the students in their classrooms’ (Hayes 99).

Background to the National Curriculum

Much of the history of the Australian Curriculum takes place with, and even precedes, the history of outcomes-based education in Western Australia. Ever since the Hobart Declaration in 1989, a national curriculum was becoming a real possibility for Australia, particularly as a political lever first pulled by the Labor Government in the 1980s. While schooling in Australia has always been managed by the states and territories, the ministers of the six states, two
territories and Commonwealth Government, collectively known as the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) meet each year. In 1989 the group met in Hobart and agreed upon ten national goals for improving the educational outcomes for all young Australians. This became known as the Hobart Declaration on schooling, released by the Australian Education Council (AEC). It was superseded by the Adelaide Declaration in 1999 and the Melbourne Declaration in 2008. The Hobart Declaration announced the establishment of a national agency, a national curriculum and a national report on schooling. The first report was published in 1990, and by 1991, the Australian Education Council (AEC) proposed eight learning areas for a national curriculum. These were finalised in 1993 but were then rejected by all states for compulsory adoption in July that year (Curriculum Policies Project, ‘Chronologies’). The states and territories wanted to retain control of local schooling thereby retaining responsibility for the curriculum apparatus, a position reiterated in the Australian Curriculum negotiations of 2008. At the AEC meeting in Perth in July 1993, Director of Curriculum for the Northern Territory Education Department observed that nationwide acceptance of the Statements and Profiles ‘was probably never likely anyway’ and being without it left the states and territories with ‘more freedom to adapt them’ to suit their own needs (Foley 14). Despite this apparent veto, the National Profiles were early signs that agreement across states and territories in relation to a common curriculum was possible. It was a way of unifying the different schooling systems across Australia, each with separate syllabuses and different systems of examination and reporting.

Further policy changes affecting English included the 1994 documents A Statement on English for Australian Schools and its companion English – A Curriculum Profile for Australian Schools, intended to promote consistency in English throughout Australia (1). Annette Patterson suggests that the objectives listed in the documents are inclusive of all models of English, a necessary product of there being such a broad range of beliefs about the subject (‘Beliefs’ 265). This inclusivity foregrounds the need to take into account the diversity of teaching backgrounds and approaches in developing English curriculum and is a necessary part of negotiating the Australian Curriculum: English. Also a particular priority for Western Australia, fresh from fruitless attempts to implement the new courses of study – ‘a compromised jumble of incompatible systems’ (Jones 338) - was the need to harmonise political and educational goals with student learning. While is appears unacceptable to devise a system driven by political and economic objectives at the expense of student learning, it is a product of the

135 The Australian Education Council organised the proposed national curriculum into eight Learning Areas (English, Mathematics, Science, Studies of Society and the Environment, LOTE, the Arts, Technology, Health) and work commenced on describing these in terms of Statements and Profiles (Curriculum Policies Project, ‘Chronologies’).
realities of the time. That is, political and economic priorities intrude undesirably into curriculum planning and implementation, but they nevertheless are the necessary and difficult work of government.

National testing

The ideas about a national curriculum that had arisen during the early 1990s were becoming a reality ten years later. At the July 2003 MCEETYA meeting the ministers agreed to create Statements of Learning for common curriculum areas: English, Mathematics, Science, Civics and Citizenship, and Information and Communication Technologies. The statements built upon an earlier ‘curriculum mapping exercise’ which identified areas of overlap and difference in the official curricula of the States. MCEETYA published the research report *Curriculum Provision in the Australian States and Territories* which reviewed the consistency of curriculum provision across the country (Curriculum Policies Project, ‘Chronologies’). Then in 2005 *Statements of Learning for English* were endorsed by MCEETYA (Curriculum Policies Project, ‘Chronologies’). Published by the Curriculum Corporation, the statements were designed as a framework to support the states’ own curriculum development and were prompted by concerns about the impact that nation-wide inconsistency in curriculum was having on an increasingly mobile student population (Curriculum Corporation ii). Around this time, Federal Minister for Education, Dr Brendan Nelson diagnosed a ‘rail gauge’ problem in Australian schooling and declared that ‘By the end of the decade we should have common starting ages and school structure, consistent curriculum standards, common testing and a national tertiary entrance system’ (Nelson). While these features have not all come to fruition, the Statements of Learning did pave the way for the 2008 introduction of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), the standardised national assessments for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (Lyle 20).

Standardised tests have been used in Australia since the late 1980s. Several states issued them in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but it is only since the introduction of NAPLAN that many negative effects of testing have presented. In Western Australia, Western Australian Literacy and Numeracy Assessment testing (WALNA) was carried out in Years 3, 5 and 7, 1998-2007, and MSE9 testing (Monitoring Standards in Education) for Year 9 students, was conducted between 2004 and 2008. Neither created the same narrowing of the curriculum, ‘teaching-to-the-test’ (A.Reid), or student and teacher stress (Thompson and Harbaugh), that have appeared since the introduction of national testing and accompanying *My School* and school league tables. Particular to subject English, these tests are a fraught curricula inclusion because they represent a product of economic rationalism that is ideologically at odds with ‘personal
development’ theory. For example, Patterson argues that ‘English is rather ambiguously placed in terms of measurement and accountability. [...] The mix of aesthetics, ethics and to a lesser extent, linguistics, which typifies most English syllabi in Australia, does not readily lend itself to ‘testing’ (‘English’ 238). Joanne Jones also identifies the complications and paradoxes of education systems and subject English, in the context of the WACE English course. Jones claims that the history of English teaching ‘is characterised by an antagonistic relationship to political and bureaucratic systems’, and that in response to this, teachers need to confront and, to an extent, reconcile the role they play in governmentality – the orderly functioning of the state’ (339). This re-visits the theory Ivor Goodson and Peter Medway about curriculum, schooling and power, and the places occupied by English within these frames (vii). If ‘changing English is changing schooling’ then renegotiating the composition of new English curriculum, as in the case of the Australian Curriculum, is a form of empowerment of teachers, of re-gaining control of their own subject and improving student learning.

An international experience of National Curriculum

As it has done historically, Australia looked to curriculum experiences internationally when developing a national curriculum. It is significant that the United Kingdom adopted a universal curriculum in 1988. With this experience, Brian Cox explains that the ideal conditions for an effective national curriculum are that it ‘must not be dominated by one political party, and must reflect the views of the best professional teachers’ (‘National’ 27). This experience recognised the need for consultation and information-gathering at all stages of curriculum reform. The National Curriculum came to receive bipartisan political support in Australia. A consequence of this consultation, of course, is that the range of stakeholders’ views is so extensive that the possibility of a truly national curriculum is impracticable (Louden, ‘Personal Interview’). But returning control of the curriculum to teachers is the most effective way of realising educational reform. In 2003, following Nelson’s call for a national curriculum, Chris Bantick questioned whether the proposed curriculum, to be assessed against national benchmarks, would be ‘content-driven, skills-based or process-oriented.’ He claims:

This matters. In England, the introduction of the national curriculum in the later 1980s was driven by a premise similar to that of the Nelson idea – the belief that standards were uneven across London and county education authorities, and that a national curriculum was the best way to improve the situation. Skills were seen as being easily assessable and teachers were asked to assess students against government targets. It has failed spectacularly. (‘Dangers’)

In Western Australia, where OBE had removed content-based syllabuses, this was also seen to be true.
It is important to learn from the educational experiences of other systems, particularly in a global world where information is exchanged more readily than in the past. Western Australia did not show due recognition of England’s difficulties with OBE, but it is hoped that Australia has done so with England’s experience of the National Curriculum and with national testing. Bantick also questions how test results will be used and whether they treat students as individuals: ‘testing is the critical issue facing any national curriculum. If you don’t have extensive testing of students and release results in state and national league tables, then what is the point of a national curriculum?’ He argues that holding schools and teachers directly accountable for any decline in standards, or for students’ below benchmark performances, risks creative and innovative teaching by punishing those teachers for whom the factors affecting test results are out of their control: ‘Teachers and schools, as has been the case in Britain, will be called to account for any perceived school-based decline in standards or failure to meet arbitrary targets’ (Bantick). Failing to learn from England’s experiences in this way twists a significant colonialist legacy of Australian education.

A feature of public debate surrounding the implementation of the Australian Curriculum is the rhetoric of nationalism – of building national identity, of nation-making and increasing the national value. In 2001 Terri Seddon argued against a national curriculum on the grounds that a unified national curriculum was not possible, just as the construction of a unified national identity is not possible (‘National’ 308). The role of the curriculum today means that it can no longer be as rigid as it once was when used to educate an homogenous elite before the post-war masses. Then,

[C]urriculum served as a means of regulation, an instrument of control and construction, wrapped up in nation-building rhetoric, which welded and organised ‘the people’ into a collective productive force to advance the nation, consolidate national identity and realise national destiny. However, the idea of a ‘national curriculum’ is increasingly unconvincing in popular commonsense – in the same way that the simple idea of a national space or national identity seems questionable. (‘National’ 308)

In contemporary Australian society, the increasing diversity of the population’s needs, abilities, cultural backgrounds, languages and beliefs ensures that a monotypic ‘national’ curriculum fails to be as inclusive and equitable as curriculum could. Brendan Nelson’s push for a national curriculum is evidence of a market driven discourse replacing a discourse of diversity, for Nelson’s view of the population as a ‘mono-standardised entity’ produces a narrow range of curriculum possibilities (Yorke 9). Reinforcing this notion, Seddon argues that there are no longer the ‘old certainties of the nation-state’ and that a national curriculum alone does not guarantee consistency - there will still be differences in what and how students are taught and
therefore great variation in the curriculum’s delivery (‘National’ 307). This is, in fact, what is unfolding in the development of a national curriculum, but in a way more constructive practically than theoretically. It means that state curriculum histories are as important as ever. In a conversation sharing the nature of this research, I encountered one of the more disheartening responses I have had over the duration of the study: ‘It’s a bit late for that, isn’t it?’ one cynic replied, as though a national curriculum rendered state histories redundant or negated their value. I would argue, however, that state curriculum histories are becoming more important for the way they explain differences in the enacted curriculum, and help re-negotiate any pedagogical ‘gaps’ that are highlighted through comparative analyses of state curriculum histories and current practice.

*Developing the Australian Curriculum: English*

At the 2011 symposium of the Academy of the Humanities, ‘Educating the Nation: The Humanities in the New Australian Curriculum’ Robert Dixon presented an overview of how the English curriculum was developed. I include an outline of it here as a way of highlighting the more consultative nature of the process by stark contrast to earlier eras of highly centralised curricular control in Western Australian. In 2008 an interim National Curriculum Board (NCB) appointed a lead writer for each subject area and for English this person was Sydney Professor of Education Peter Freebody. Freebody led an advisory group of eighteen academics and teachers, a group with a striking degree of diversity: ‘I felt that the advisory group would be challenged to get across the full scope of the subject and negotiate their differences’ (R.Dixon 19). The group worked to produce an advice paper which was presented at a national forum in Melbourne and was used to gain feedback from key stakeholders such as the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE), the Australian Literacy Educators’ Association (ALEA), Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and the Australian Academy of the Humanities (AHA) (R.Dixon 20). The feedback and re-drafting led the NCB to publish the *National English Curriculum: Framing Paper* which was posted online for public comment. Following this consultation, a revised form of the framing paper was produced, entitled *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English* which ‘subsequently guided the writing of the curriculum during 2010 and 2011’ (R.Dixon 20). It is important to acknowledge here, that teachers of English in Western Australia were relatively slow to embrace a new round of curriculum change having only just recovered from the mismanaged transition to the Courses of study. As a result, the way the national curriculum took hold in Western Australia was strongly influenced by its recent curriculum history, including the experiences and disappointments of the OBE reforms. Andrich’s second report *Review of the curriculum framework for curriculum, assessment and reporting purposes in Western Australian schools*,
with particular reference to years Kindergarten to Year 10 had as its primary recommendation ‘that the national curriculum in any learning area [should] be implemented only when it is complete’ (8). This is reasonable and understandable given teachers’ concerns about the rushed nature of OBE implementation in Western Australia. In this this instance, teachers were able to voice their concerns.

Course content and a body of knowledge: what is taught in subject English in Western Australia
The nature of the ‘content’ of subject English has been a contentious issue in Western Australia since the experience of OBE at the senior secondary level, and even earlier during the 1970s when the ‘Growth’ model was at its most popular. When the national curriculum was in its early stages of development, the Federal Government funded an ACER study of Year 12 English courses to investigate the English examinations for comparability across different states and territories (Matters and Masters). Many of the debates surrounding the Australian Curriculum: English arose from difficulties in articulating the subject’s ‘essential content’, a problem not common to subjects such as Mathematics or Science (McCurry 63). As evidence of this, the 2007 Western Australian Year 12 English examination stated that ‘Candidates will be required to demonstrate their understanding of language, style, genre, content, ideas, attitudes, values and reading practices’, which identifies content common to most senior secondary English courses in Australia. The ACER study Year 12 Curriculum Content and Achievement Standards (CCAS) determined that while there was general agreement about English’s underpinning skills and assessment criteria, examination candidates are asked ‘to do very different things’ in different states (McCurry 63). For example, ‘The Western Australian examination is conceptual and generally thematic, with a skills-based writing section’ (McCurry 62). Given the states’ histories of the dominance of the external examination in the story of curricular control, it follows ‘that national consistency or uniformity in examination questions (rather than aims/objectives/outcomes, content, skills or achievement standards) could have the greatest impact in what happens in senior English courses in the future’ (McCurry 65). It raises the possibility of perpetuating the domination of assessment in English, of particular concern because WACE manuals recommend criterion-referenced, analytical marking keys in Western Australian secondary schools (2011). This is akin to assessment practices that proved to be unworkable in the courses of study developed under the OBE system.

WACE 2007 Examination Paper
The study identifies conceptual questions in Western Australia’s Viewing section, defined as focusing ‘on conceptual issues such as language, style, genre, cultural context and reading practices’ (McCurry 59). The questions are:
Answer ONE of the following questions. In your response refer to visual text/s you have viewed. You must also include reference to ONE of the two sets of images given below:

1. Discuss ways in which visual texts may serve to shape cultural values.
2. Consider ways that visual texts may serve social purposes or power relationships.
3. Explain how the generic features of visual texts are used to construct representations of our world.
4. Explain how your context and your knowledge of genre influence your response to visual texts.

(Curriculum Council, 2007 WACE 10).

In addition to being ‘conceptual’ questions these provide insight into the range of theories underpinning textual analysis as taught in WACE English: critical theories, reader response theory and studies of form and genre. The thematic questions in the 2007 English examination are focused on relating texts to general ideas and topics and are contained in the Writing section. ‘They may be specifically set themes or themes for impromptu writing’ (McCurry 59). The Skills questions in the examination’s Writing section focus on the demonstration of skills, ‘often using unfamiliar themes or in unseen rather than set texts’ (59). The Reading section, I would argue, is also skills-oriented because it examines an unseen passage, requiring comprehension and the application of different reading practices. Significantly the study recommends that an ‘optimal English examination […] would require candidates for a substantial part (say half) of the examination to think about and respond to previously unseen material’ (65). This is to demonstrate skills rather than reproduce rehearsed answers, a criticism pertinent to Western Australian curriculum history as the close reading of unseen text featured so strongly in the philosophy and practices of Allan Edwards as Chief Examiner for Leaving English in the 1940s.

Interrelated strands: Language, Literature and Literacy

Despite differences in English under the Australian Curriculum, one commonality assures its predominant status and that it is mandatory for school graduation and a tertiary entrance rank in Western Australia. Students choose from the options to study English, Literature, English as an Additional Language (EAL), and Essential English which aligns with Western Australia’s previous ‘Vocational English’. Each course has four sequential semester units. These four English subjects have common elements, including the continuing development of students’ knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, speaking, reading, viewing and creating (ACARA). The emphasis on ‘creating’ through sub-headings such as ‘creating texts’ and ‘creating literature’ encourages creative writing experiences in English (Morris 20).136

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136 For example, the Senior Secondary English Australian Curriculum invites students to demonstrate their understandings of specific concepts ‘through the creation of imaginative, interpretive and
Australian Curriculum: English retains an emphasis on the Williams-Eagleton model of English which emphasises egalitarian access to and status of texts, the inclusion of a broader range of text types, and emphases on reading practices and the role of the reader in making meaning. None of these aspects are peculiar to subject English in Western Australia.

The overarching and interrelated strands for the Australian Curriculum: English are literacy, language and literature. All three elements have had ‘an unproblematic place in the history of the subject’ (Sawyer, ‘Timely’ 27) and Bill Green sees these as three historical ‘categories’ around which the ‘ideological formation’ of ‘English’ has been organised (‘Dividing’). Following the 1983 State ETA conference, which was held in conjunction with the Library Association of Australian School Libraries Section (WA Group) and the Reading Association of Western Australia, Green edited and introduced ‘Life in Literature/Literature in Life’, a conference report and collection of papers presented at the conference. In the report, Green explains the choice of conference theme beginning with a statement on literature: ‘Literature has always occupied an important and even central, if controversial and ambiguous, place in English teaching’ (‘Lifelines’ 1). I cite this argument here because Green then gives evidence of an education policy document that saw language, literacy and literature as a natural and formidable trio in defending literature and literary study in an increasingly technologized society:

In Western Australia, for instance, official departmental policy asserts literature to be at the heart of English teaching in this State. The 1979 Policy Statement from the Director-General’s Office ‘Language, Literacy and Literature’ asserts that the English teacher has “the particular responsibility of encouraging the development of the imaginative, the creative, the fantastic and the poetic aspects of a child’s experience through the study of literature” (emphasis added); further, that the “enjoyment of literature is central to the course in English offered in Western Australian schools.” (1, emphasis in original)

So debates about the issue of literature in English teaching have been ongoing in Western Australia, and the linking of ‘language, literacy and literature’ in this way shows English to be ‘multi-disciplinary’ because these elements are not discrete: ‘each strand has its own distinctive goals, body of knowledge, history of ideas and interests, and pedagogical traditions’ (5.1.2). (qtd. in R.Dixon 21). This does not mean that today, these terms are used without controversy. ‘Literature’ for example carries connotations of ‘classical’ or canonical printed books and its associated cultural heritage model of English. Consequently the AATE recommended that ‘Literature’ be re-named ‘Texts’ to avoid debates over what constitutes a literary text, and what is valued as literary, by whom (AATE 3). This ensures that ‘Literature’ analytical responses’ and ‘Create imaginative texts that make relevant thematic and intertextual connections with other texts’ (ACARA).
includes multimodal texts and that literacy be multi-faceted and include digital and critical literacies, or using the holistic 3D model: operational, cultural and critical (B. Green, ‘Subject-specific’ 5). In response to such a suggestion, however, and with the assistance of a strong media campaign, critics such as Kevin Donnelly, later appointed to review the Australian curriculum, argued the case for literature by criticising the equal value of texts:

The national curriculum, by describing literary works as cultural artefacts, exploding the definition of literature to include “multi-modal texts”, and suggesting that students should spend time studying “tween mags, avatars, social networking and manga”, further undermines the place of literature in the classroom. (Ideology’ 29).

Likewise, journalist from the Sydney Morning Herald Anna Patty reported the criticisms of the Association of Heads of Independent Schools which viewed the Curriculum as favouring ‘breadth, rather than depth’, as requiring ‘lower rather than higher-order skills’ and ‘diminishes the status of the teaching of literature’ (Patty, ‘Independent’). However, these sorts of negotiations highlight the ongoing literary cause and the authority of a list of canonical texts. That is, exaggerated or not, the place of literature within English is no longer assumed to be a dominant one, and the concerns raised in the negotiations for a national curriculum are important for a subject area which is vulnerable to educationists and critics questioning its content and effectiveness as a learning area (Donnelly; Lewis and Salusinszky).

As demonstration of this emphasis on literature, the AATE highlighted that the national curriculum should take into account ‘the significant historic models of English that inform current frameworks and syllabuses’ (AATE 4). This is one of the AATE Council’s recommendations in response to the tensions it identifies in the Literature strand. The ‘Response to the National English Curriculum: Framing Paper’ calls for an extension of the paper’s definition of literature, arguing that the study of literature is a political action as much as ‘a form of arts-related and arts-enriched learning experience:

Studying literature involves the study of past and present works that aim primarily to make the most of the imaginative potential of the language, including as that potential relates to cinema, television, and digital and multimedia. Engaging with literary texts is worthwhile in its own right, but, importantly, it is also valuable in developing the imaginative application of ideas, flexibility of thought, ethical reflection, and motivation to learn. (National Curriculum Board 11)

Annette Patterson argued that studying literature has an ethical function, where a student undergoes some sort of moral formation, and also an aesthetic, as well as a rhetorical purpose (‘English’). In this capacity, the formation of the ‘self’ goes beyond civics and economics (Peel, ‘Introduction’ 7). Patterson argues that certain ‘techniques’ have been pursued historically in place of a body of knowledge. That is, English has emphasised ‘the attainment of techniques
related to ‘person formation’ or ‘development’ – expressed in terms such as ‘sensitivity’, ‘appreciation’, ‘personal growth’ and ‘critical consciousness’ – implying a high degree of personal autonomy and freedom for the learner’ (Patterson, ‘English’ 238). Hunter supports this assertion because he challenges the assumption that ethical formation ‘is pre-eminentely literary or linguistic’ and a product of ‘the aesthetically organized personal growth curriculum’ (‘After’ 332). For Hunter, literary studies cannot have such a powerful effect upon the personal development of students as to extend to the formation of their ethical selves, thus he rejects the effectiveness of English as an agent of personal transformation. Instead, Hunter argues that far from being unrestrained expressions of reading experiences, reading practices - even in the aesthetic form - are more genuinely products of the ‘bureaucratic and pragmatic operations of the pedagogical machinery of which they are a part’ than desires for democracy, freedom or moral development (Patterson, ‘English’ 251).

In a similar vein, the AATE argued that the definition of literature in the Australian Curriculum: English needed to incorporate those aspects of historical English which have shaped the subject’s identity. It should extend teaching praxis beyond the limited range of pedagogical practices supported and validated by a national curriculum that fails to communicate the broader range of purposes of studying literature (4). In the past Western Australian English courses have been limited in purpose by the process of tertiary entrance. That is, ethical, aesthetic and other transformative effects have assumed a lower status than examination preparation as a purpose of English. This is not to say that they are entirely incompatible in practice, but it appears contradictory to study English for the pursuit of self-improvement, personal growth and ethical formation, when ultimately, a tertiary admissions ranking is the most tangible mark of achievement for parents, politicians, teachers and students (‘stakeholders’). My focus here on the problematic nature of assessing English in an ‘audit culture’ (Dale and Bushnell 247) is that this was fresh in the experiences of Western Australian schools in the stages of preparing a national curriculum. William (Bill) Louden notes two effects of curriculum history impacting upon curriculum in Western Australia. The first was in 2007 when ‘the curriculum and assessment authority moved away from an outcomes-based approach in the senior secondary years and adopted approaches much more like those of New South Wales’ (‘Australia’s’ 5). The second is evident in Western Australia’s strong support for the curriculum shaping process, a direct result Louden suggests, of the state’s greater scepticism about the national curriculum project (8) and I suggest, of yet another ‘rushed’ curriculum that might be thrown out with the result of the next election.
Interrelated networks: education and the Nation

Subject English faces the same conflicts and contestations in England under a national curriculum as Western Australia did in the planning stages. AATE President Karen Moni claims that Australia’s ever-changing population raises questions of identity, and presents teachers with opportunities to ‘plan, teach and select texts that help students understand diversity in ways that contribute both to nation-building and internationalisation’ (17). While these opportunities existed before the Australian Curriculum was devised, it is relevant for Western Australian teachers to consider that they are part of a bigger network upon which nation-building relies and through which dissemination of a ‘national’ culture occurs (AATE 4). With respect to English being taught as part of a national curriculum, Brian Cox identifies concerns with text selection and the place of grammar, perpetually contentious aspects of English:

But even if these reforms are instituted, the curriculum will still create problems because the teaching of English language and literature raises crucial questions about our values systems and our concepts of national identity. This is particularly so in the teaching of grammar and in the choice of texts for study in the classroom. (‘National’ 28)

This observation identifies some of the difficulties arising in planning a national curriculum, not least because it also involves power struggles and contesting belief systems about what constitutes English across the states. As Terri Seddon explains, this often exacerbates and reproduces a power differential creating barriers to economic, social and cultural advantage (‘National’ 327). The negotiations required to transact a national curriculum are evident in the different emphases of each state. New South Wales prefers a highly specific curriculum. By contrast, South Australia is much less prescriptive and shows lower correlation between its previous curricula and the Australian curriculum. Western Australia is contested. A state Liberal government did not want to be seen to be endorsing a federal Labor initiative. Furthermore, in the early stages of curriculum planning, Western Australia argued for media outcomes to be retained but were over-ridden nationally. It pushed to retain the Viewing section in English, an understandable emphasis given its progressive history of media studies in English. Consistently, critics saw the greater prominence of media in the curriculum as ‘dumbing [it] down’ (Donnelly ‘Dumbing Down) and ‘watering down the content’ (Patty, ‘National’). These critics, mostly external to English teaching, sought the adoption of a recognisable list of ‘suitable’ or ‘worthy’ canonical texts to be studied as reassurance against an unintelligible version of English, no longer that which it used to be – a model of cultural heritage and the great literary tradition. A far more reasonable approach is modelled by English curriculum scholar Larissa McLean Davies, who moves away from the idea that curriculum is a stable body of content, and rejects literature as merely ‘a list of culturally elite texts enacted on a homogenous cohort of students’ (‘Telling’ 47).
Australian literature

The past two years have seen unprecedented governmental, media and public attention on the definition and purpose of Australian literature in education. As this recent attention to the teaching of Australian literature forms an important context for those involved in developing an English curriculum under the auspices of the National Curriculum Board. (McLean Davies, ‘Telling’ 46)

The opportunity for an Australian curriculum brought forth the opportunity to examine the inclusion of Australian literature within that curriculum. In its submission to ACARA on Year 11-12 English Curricula in 2010, the Australian Society of Authors suggested that ‘all selections of curricular material should be guided by relevance to Australian culture’ and that ‘Australian literature (including fiction, non-fiction, plays, poetry, film and other multimodal and digital text) must be at the centre of curricular material’ (2). This raises important questions about what defines Australian culture, about whose Australian culture might be centralized (and therefore marginalized), and about the relevance of the curriculum to different versions of Australian culture. It is where critical theories can be used to examine power relationships in the context of Australian curriculum development, to identify how politics shapes the ways we operate within, and with, institutions of knowledge (Mead, ‘Politics’ 6). The Framing Paper for English specifies that ‘[T]he presence of Australian literary works and an increasingly informed appreciation of the place of Australian literature among other literary traditions should be features of the national English curriculum’ (National Curriculum Board 7). This was supported by the establishment of a second Chair in Australian Literature in 2009. Australian literature was given greater prominence in the Australian education setting during secondary curriculum negotiations when the University of Western Australia was awarded host rights to the second Chair in Australian Literature with the appointment of Professor Philip Mead. In conjunction with the University’s Westerly, Australian literature had developed a comfortable place in the English Department at the University of Western Australia and it was appropriate that the second Chair be located on Australia’s western shores.137 This position recognises the great value assigned to the national literature in the secondary curriculum and highlights how educational institutions and the discipline of English more specifically, participate in conversations about Australian national identity and about literature in the public realm. That is, aside from promoting Australian literature the position promotes the teaching of literature

137 The first Chair in Australian Literature is held at the University of Sydney. It was established in 1962 ‘at a time of intense public commitment to the idea of fostering university study of the national literature’. The foundation Professor of Australian literature was G.A. Wilkes, followed by Professor (later Dame) Leonie Kramer in 1968, Professor Elizabeth Webby in 1990, and Professor Robert Dixon 2007 to the present (University of Sydney).
in both the secondary and tertiary sectors and provides a voice for negotiations that uphold the status of literature, particularly Australian literature.

Conclusion

In 2006 the new courses of study were introduced into Year 11 in Western Australia. Subject English underwent controversial change in a short period of time resulting in early retirements among English teachers and resistance to OBE at senior secondary levels’ (Berlach and O’Neill 52). One of the most controversial aspects of the new courses was the outcomes-based assessment scheme, over which controversy was so great that the Minister instigated a parliamentary ‘Inquiry into changes to the post-compulsory curriculum in Western Australia’ by the Education and Health Standing Committee, chaired by MLA T.G. Stephens. Adopting a criterion-based, continuous and diagnostic approach to assessment did not sit comfortably with the need to rank many thousands of students for tertiary entrance at the end of Year 12, so in this capacity, outcomes were insufficiently competitive, though this is innate in its design as a non-competitive system of education and achievement. Alongside the parliamentary Inquiry David Andrich, then Dean of Education at Murdoch University, was commissioned by the Curriculum Council to prepare A Report of Western Australia regarding Assessment for Tertiary Selection (2005). Andrich was well aware of the impact of his review upon teachers who knew a national curriculum was on its way. The Australian curriculum has been trialled in schools since 2012 and in many respects, it is too soon to write about its implications in much detail. In Western Australia, its planning was justifiably careful, a response to David Andrich’s recommendation to enter into this educational reform more gently following the poorly supported OBE. While many teachers fear that the Australian Curriculum marks ‘the end of English as we know it’, in fact, it is likely that there will be difficulties with attempting to maintain a national perspective given that historically, states’ rights and identities have produced long curriculum, assessment and pedagogical traditions. In Sawyer’s terms, there still exists ‘the need to keep the subject contemporary without turning from its history’ (‘National’ 65). How the curriculum is enacted is another story, outside the parameters of this study. However, it is expected that teachers in separate jurisdictions will bring with them what they know about English, English teaching and their students, to engage with a student-centred curriculum that is national in its structure and documentation, and revitalised by the wide range of backgrounds, cultures, pedagogies, creativities and other practises that teachers and students bring to English. This is a product of curricular control measures that are ‘enacting change’ rather than ‘mandating reform’ (Moni 15). The hope is that the Australian Curriculum respects the subject histories of the states - their common wealth - while looking forward with a twenty-first century perspective.
Conclusion

The significance of this study lies in the story of subject English’s unique identity-formation in Western Australia and how it has been shaped by its location within broader social, economic and cultural contexts. Blended in an intricate matrix of utilitarian, aesthetic and ethical functions, the story of English highlights the widespread external interest in the subject which makes it vulnerable to interventionists seeking the power to control schooling and social order through English. The development of secondary school English in Western Australia since 1912 therefore, has been influenced by various systems and individuals seeking to exercise control over the curriculum within the constraints of their own priorities and institutional resources.

Since the 1960s, influences upon the subject’s development were as numerous as they were diverse, a symptom of the dissemination of curricular control after at least six decades of autocracy by the University of Western Australian and the sole Professor of English. From the individual control of one ‘English’ man adverse to ‘safe’ and ‘respectable’ learning, literary education began in Western Australia under the control of teacher-writer Walter Murdoch who privileged Writing and an Oxford-oriented English. As education became increasingly bureaucratised in response to the state’s expanding population, student heterogeneity and retention rates, English evolved into a more democratic subject area. It shifted away from the cultural heritage and elitist foundations accessed by the few. Determinants of the shape and form of subject English in Western Australia were no longer just the curricular and pedagogical emphases of local Professors of English, they also included the local applications of national and international trends in educational and literary theory, functionalist and conservative ideologies at the State and Federal levels of Government, as well as technological advancements which flooded the classroom with a flourish of new text types, pedagogies and literacies.

The most exciting part of undertaking this research has lain in what distinguishes the Western Australian story of curricular control from that of the rest of Australian secondary English. This includes, but is not limited to:

- the influence of the ‘London School’: Percival Gurrey, James Britton, Nancy Martin and later Harold Rosen are just four theorists belonging to the Institute of Education, University of London who contributed to Western Australia’s particular ‘English’. This ‘School’ produced ‘Writing across the curriculum’, which is a project and philosophy focused on learning through language. This approach and emphasis on Writing shaped the development of subject English because Western Australian curriculum specialists, such as Alec King, Colsell Sanders, Eric Carlin and Bruce Bennett studied at the Institute and
applied the ideas in their institutional contexts in Western Australia. How this happened suggests the powerful nature of networks and exchanges in education, for having prominent educators in the state exposed to new teaching methods, innovative ideas and sound theory, invites the proliferation of those theories and practices which is what happened in the development of subject English in Western Australia. It was reinforced when Nancy Martin visited Western Australia in 1980 to report on ‘what goes on in English lessons’. Similarly, James Britton and Harold Rosen were speakers at the conference of the International Federation for the Teaching of English in Sydney in 1980 where they disseminated conceptualisations of the language learning process, challenging existing approaches to language diversity in English to a national audience.

- Colsell Sanders and the Petch Report (1965): this connection between the Chairman of the Public Examinations Board in Western Australia (Sanders), and the secretary of the Joint Matriculation Board in Manchester, England (Petch), led to the bifurcation of English into language-based ‘English’ or ‘English Expression’ and literature-based ‘English Literature’. It was a backward step for the subject in many ways and highlighted the intricacy of global networks with the enormous capacity to influence curriculum change.

- the teacher-writer figure who emphasised Writing: this figure was an integral part of English, and a counterbalance to Reading and literary criticism. Throughout the history of English teaching at the University of Western Australia, and passed on to secondary English, Walter Murdoch, Randolph Stow, Dorothy Hewett, Peter Cowan, Fay Zwicky, as well as Brian Dibble from WAIT (now Curtin University) are models of the teacher-author who has occupied a specific role in the teaching of literature, practising as creative writers and literary critics.

- the release of the Beazley and McGaw Reports (1984): these reports had implications on a national level. These reports indicate a shift to a vocational and training focus with a policy rhetoric of benchmarking and accountability. As Annette Patterson describes, ‘In many respects they provided a guide to change in other states and territories and were revisited when the states and territories finally sat down at the same table to discuss the possibility of nationally coordinated curricula’ (‘Beliefs’ 273).

The story of curricular control in English in Western Australia began with an interstate Matriculation authority, the University of Adelaide, before it was re-directed locally. The state’s first Professor of English, Walter Murdoch was also the state’s first Chief Examiner, enstated following the genesis of the University of Western Australia (1911) and its examining body, the Public Examinations Board (1914). Born in Scotland and educated in Melbourne, Murdoch brought to Perth a version of the university as part of the community. This democratic perspective, plus his liberal-humanist ideals of social justice and free education were exemplified in his essay writing for Australian newspapers and his role as a broadcaster, journalist and public intellectual. As Chief Examiner of Junior and Leaving English, Murdoch was in an influential position that he reluctantly assumed. He did not support the idea of examinations but knew no way of avoiding them. This approach stems from his belief that real
education is about thinking for oneself, not passively rote-learning another’s ideas. In this way, Murdoch was ahead of his time, but in other ways he was very much of his time. During Murdoch’s tenure, the Leaving English syllabus appeared as a list of canonical texts, mostly British, accompanied by grammatical skills and a range of writing tasks. These inclusions bear witness to Murdoch’s emphases on cultural heritage and Writing which were transmitted into the Leaving English domain.

By contrast, Murdoch’s replacement, Allan Edwards emphasised Reading, having been influenced by I.A. Richards and F.R. Leavis during his studies at Cambridge. Edwards perpetuated the study of canonical texts, as was consistent with secondary English on a national level, but he introduced the study of modern and American literature, also interests of his colleague, Alec King. The Leaving English syllabus reflected these emphases, continuing to look like a text list but with a greater range of texts categorised by genre. Edwards emphasised Drama and introduced practical criticism that re-directed literary studies in Western Australia. But the more significant changes arose with the arrival of the 1960s when population growth produced a surge in student and staff numbers at the university. With this growth came greater State Government intervention in education and dispersal of curricular control, with more teachers and university staff members participating in decision-making via the Teachers and Examiners of English Committee. Government reports such as the Dettman Report (1969) restructured secondary education by authorising English as a ‘core’ subject and critiquing the power of the external examinations in driving the secondary curriculum. This concern for the dominance of the examinations had been questioned for some time, and when the Public Examinations Board arranged for a Report into this dominance, it recruited Dr James. A. Petch of the Joint Matriculations Board in England. Not only did Petch recommend that the system of public examinations be modified rather than abolished, he argued for a split in English, dividing it into ‘Expression’ (retained as ‘English’) and ‘Literature’ (‘English Literature’). This was a preference of Chairman of the Board and Professor of Education, Colsell Sanders, who knew Petch from his work overseas, including research into University entrance and intelligence tests. Sanders had been involved in the introduction of objective tests into the Leaving English examination in 1954. These comprehension tests were retained as part of senior secondary English until 1998, and became special research interests of university teachers in the English Department, Bruce Bennett and John Hay, who were also heavily involved in senior secondary English through their participation in the English Teachers’ Association of Western Australia. This was formed in 1963 with the help of Brother Cas Manion and University staff member, John Barnes.
Together with John Barnes, Veronica Brady, and John Hay, Bruce Bennett helped nurture the study of Australian literature at the tertiary level, which in turn increased its acceptance as a serious area of scholarship at the secondary level. Alongside this interest Bennett saw language and literature best taught as enmeshed in experiential ways of learning, a commitment developed during his studies at the Institute of Education, University of London. This influence of the ‘London School’ shaped his work in promoting Australian literature and improving senior secondary English. It was supported by the inclusion of England’s, *A Language for Life* (Bullock Report) and the textbooks of London School educators, Percy Gurrey, James Britton, and Nancy Martin. In particular, Nancy Martin influenced Western Australian English teaching because she was responsible for *What goes on in English lessons: case studies from government high schools* (the Martin Report) which questioned the cohesion and consistency in English classrooms. This was published in 1980 but reflects the state of English in the 1970s, shadowed by the impact of the ‘Growth’ model.

As its name suggests the ‘Growth’ model aspired to enhance personal growth through an emphasis on language. The process of ‘making meaning’ became an active one for the learner and Dartmouth, the location of the 1966 conference from which this model of English emerged, marked ‘a kind of Copernican shift from a view of English as something one learns about to a sense of it as something one does’ (Harris 631). Rather than presenting students with prescribed content through traditional didactic, instructional teaching methods relying on rote-learning and memorisation, teachers would encourage creativity and whole-language learning through enquiry-based and student-centred pedagogies: ‘Language as a means of ordering experience, and therefore, of learning, became a key-stone of this orientation’ (O’Neill 32). Teacher-scholars at the London School were instrumental in developing and evangelising this version of English teaching. Their research on language, and on how students learn to use language was important for the way in which it relocated language and literature teaching. This was a contentious movement theoretically, however, for there were critics who believed that this approach side-lined literature and ‘content’, thus paving the way for external intervention in English.

At the same time as the ‘Growth’ model of English prospered, English classrooms in Western Australia were becoming more heterogeneous than they had been traditionally, as population numbers and student retention rates rose. Media emerged as an area of study as a way of engaging heterogeneous groups of students, particularly those students without tertiary
entrance aspirations. Tertiary entrance was made more accessible however, with the establishment of the state’s second university. Murdoch University was instituted with a liberal-humanist perspective as reflected in its eponym. It generated progressive methodologies for literary theory and cultural studies, and its democratic ethos was consistent with those of the Whitlam Government of the time. The pursuit of the Australian Labor Party's social welfare objectives drew attention to the plight of marginalised groups through its inclusive social policies. In this context the concept of mixed-ability English classes became more common, and new pedagogies emerged to cater for them. It was the era in which technology and communications advanced rapidly, as did more socially inclusive attitudes towards gender, race and culture. In the national context, these social changes gave rise to a proliferation of critical theory including post-modernism, Marxism, and structuralism, adopted by the English Literature curriculum ahead of English.

Applying these theories to the reading of texts appeared quite a foreign version of English, which was retarded in Western Australia relative to English teaching in the other states. Nevertheless, English appeared ‘strange’ to traditionalists and those outside the profession during the post-1960s period. Such a perception (of ‘strangeness’) further alienated a public already distanced by unfamiliar schooling methods; it caused suspicion and dissatisfaction with English which translated into the discourse of educational ‘crisis’. This perception lowered teacher morale throughout the state, and is just one of the many examples of how ongoing curriculum change and public criticism rendered teachers powerless against the bureaucracy of external agencies that imposed change and issued criticism so readily upon the profession.

In these conditions, of which corporatised education was a feature, government intervention increased. The state and federal governments pursued educational reform, with English at its core, so that a more functionally literate population would provide the answer to the economic ‘hard times’ of the 1980s. Progressing even into the late 1990s, standardised testing, competency-based training and outcomes-based education featured strongly in Australian education policy. In Western Australia these priorities were cemented by the release of the Beazley and McGaw Reports (1984) that gave Government agencies direct control of English. In many ways these State reports also directed curriculum change for other states and territories because they represented a shift in thinking about literacy education that was accompanied by greater government regulation of English in Western Australia.
In contemporary Australian society, the increasing diversity of the population’s needs, abilities, cultural backgrounds, languages and beliefs ensures that a monotypical ‘national’ curriculum fails to be as inclusive and equitable as a curriculum should. This has to be where teacher professionalism and specialisation is realised and transacted in the current climate of corporatised education. The process of designing, endorsing and enacting the Australian Curriculum relies upon greater use by teachers of English of professional discussions about the place of Australian literature, contextualised grammar and ‘canonical’ texts to ensure a cohesive application of curriculum in classroom praxis. Opportunities for further research arise from the apparent distance between tertiary and secondary literary educators at present, in the interests of subject specialists reclaiming curricular control of English. In addition greater autonomy needs to be given to secondary curriculum designers and teachers in conjunction with widespread consultation with interest groups so that the best possible English curriculum is enacted in the best possible way. Whose ‘best’? Teachers’ best practice informed by the subject’s rich literary tradition.

When I began this project, I was most curious and eager to learn about English in Western Australia. Upon completion of this task, that interest has extended into the desire to better understand the development of English in other states, and even other nations such as England, Canada and the United States, to put the pieces of history together and gain a more complete picture of subject English. An extension of this study would examine how the London School has influenced the study of English in Australia, and how the emphases of ‘Reading’ or ‘Writing’ come through in the Australian Curriculum, including text lists, and discourse analyses of syllabuses, examination papers and examiners’ reports. It would also be valuable to research the place of literature in the Australian Curriculum and to what extent the pursuit of a vocationalist agenda undermines or supports literary studies in the context of Australian secondary English education. Debates about textual ‘value’ are ongoing and the multiplicity of ‘models’ within English generate continuous re-vitalisation of the subject. It is not the existence of conflict and contestation within English that is problematic, it is, rather, the control of the debates and how power is wielded to enact change within the frames of education and literary studies.
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---. ‘Re: Presentation.’ Message to the author. 27 May 2014. E-mail.


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APPENDIX I

1.1 Leaving and Secondary Certification and Examination Boards in Western Australia

University of Adelaide 1895-1914
Public Examinations Board (PEB) 1915-1969
Board of Secondary Education (BSE) 1970-1984
Secondary Education Authority (SEA) 1985-1996
Curriculum Council of Western Australia (CCWA) 1997-2010
School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) 2012-present

Nationally:
The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2009-present

1.2 Public Examinations in Western Australia

The public examinations for example have been known at various times as the Leaving examinations, the Tertiary Admissions Examinations, Tertiary Entrance Examinations and the Western Australian Certificate of Education examinations.

Leaving Examination 1895 - 1974
Tertiary Admissions Examination (TAE) 1975 - 1985
Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) 1986 - 2009
Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) 2010 - present

The Board of Secondary Education replaced the Public Examinations Board in 1970. The Leaving Certificate discontinued with the introduction of the Certificate of Secondary Education in 1975. Accompanying this change, the external ‘Leaving’ examinations became known as the Tertiary Admission Examinations (TAE). The TAE was conducted by a joint committee of representatives from all tertiary institutions in Western Australia.

The Tertiary Admissions Exams became the Tertiary Entrance Exams (TEE) in 1986 following the abandonment of the Board of Secondary Education and the institution of the Secondary Education Authority (SEA) which was superseded by the Curriculum Council of Western Australia in 1997.

Since 2010 the tertiary entrance examinations have been named the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) examination, and at present, the WACE examinations are conducted by the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA).
## APPENDIX II

### List of Government Inquiries and Reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Chair</th>
<th>Date Appointed</th>
<th>Date Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Royal commission on the establishment of a University</td>
<td>John Winthrop Hackett</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Commission on the Administration of the University of Western Australia (The Wolff Report)</td>
<td>Albert Asher Wolff</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report of the Committee on Australian Universities</td>
<td>Keith Murray</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A report on the public examination system in Western Australia</td>
<td>James A. Petch</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary education in Western Australia: report of the committee appointed by the Premier of Western Australia</td>
<td>Lawrence Jackson</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Education in Western Australia (The Dettman Report)</td>
<td>H. W. Dettman</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Language for Life (The Bullock Report)</td>
<td>Allan Bullock</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What goes on in English lessons: case studies from government high schools, Western Australia (The Martin Report)</td>
<td>Nancy Martin</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Education in Western Australia (The Beazley Report)</td>
<td>Kim E. Beazley</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Youth, Our Future: Post-Compulsory Education Review (Courses of Study)</td>
<td>Lesley Parker</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX III

The University of Western Australia

ENGLISH 35 (Australian Literature)

1973 Timetable

The first meeting of students who have enrolled for English 35 (Australian Literature) will be held in Professor G.M. Jones’s study at 4.15pm on Monday, 5th March. Succeeding meetings will be held in the rooms of the tutors in charge, on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays at 4.15pm, as follows:-

**TERM I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Tutor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>March 5</td>
<td>Introduction Colonial Prose Traditions</td>
<td>Prof. G.M.Jones Mr. P. Cowan</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>March 12</td>
<td>Colonial Verse Traditions Brennan’s Poetry and Prose</td>
<td>Mrs. D. Lilley Prof. G.M.Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>March 19</td>
<td>Brennan’s Poetry and Prose</td>
<td>Prof. G.M.Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>March 26</td>
<td>A.D. Hope</td>
<td>Sr. V. Brady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>A.D. Hope</td>
<td>Sr. V. Brady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>April 9</td>
<td>Judith Wright</td>
<td>Mr. B. Bennett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>April 16</td>
<td>12 Poets 1950 – 1970</td>
<td>Mrs. D. Lilley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>April 23</td>
<td>12 Poets 1950 – 1970</td>
<td>Mrs. D. Lilley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>12 Poets 1950 – 1970</td>
<td>Mrs. D. Lilley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>May 7</td>
<td>Such is Life</td>
<td>Sr. V. Brady</td>
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**TERM II**

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>May 28</td>
<td>The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney</td>
<td>Mr. P. Cowan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>June 4</td>
<td>The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney</td>
<td>Mr. P. Cowan</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>June 11</td>
<td>Seven Poor Men of Sydney</td>
<td>Mr. B. Bennett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>June 18</td>
<td>Kenneth (Seaforth) MacKenzie</td>
<td>Mr. P. Cowan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>June 25</td>
<td>Patrick White</td>
<td>Sr. V. Brady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>July 2</td>
<td>Patrick White</td>
<td>Sr. V. Brady</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>July 9</td>
<td>Patrick White</td>
<td>Sr. V. Brady</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>July 16</td>
<td>Randolph Stow</td>
<td>Mr. B. Bennett</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>July 23</td>
<td>Australian Short Stories</td>
<td>Mr. P. Cowan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>July 30</td>
<td>Australian Short Stories</td>
<td>Mr. B. Bennett (2) Mrs. D. Lilley</td>
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## TERM III

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>August 27</td>
<td>Douglas Stewart : Fire on the Snow and Ned Kelly</td>
<td>Mrs. D. Lilley &amp;/or Mr. N.H. Teede</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>September 3</td>
<td>Summer of the Seventeenth Doll</td>
<td>Mrs. D. Lilley &amp;/or Mr. N.H. Teede</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Patrick White’s Plays</td>
<td>Mrs. D. Lilley &amp;/or Mr. N.H. Teede</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>September 10</td>
<td>Patrick White’s Plays</td>
<td>Mrs. D. Lilley &amp;/or Mr. N.H. Teede</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>September 17</td>
<td>Patrick White’s Plays</td>
<td>Mrs. D. Lilley &amp;/or Mr. N.H. Teede</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>September 24</td>
<td>Recent Drama, including Buzo, Hibberd, Romeril, etc.</td>
<td>Mrs. D. Lilley &amp;/or Mr. N.H. Teede</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>October 1</td>
<td>Buzo, Hibberd, Romeril, etc.</td>
<td>Mrs. D. Lilley &amp;/or Mr. N.H. Teede</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>October 8</td>
<td>Symposium</td>
<td>Prof. G.M. Jones</td>
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APPENDIX IV: Schools of Influence and Forms of Literacy in English

Figure IV.1  The New English: schools of influence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cambridge</th>
<th>London</th>
<th>Birmingham</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>Mass</td>
<td>Negotiation</td>
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<td>Literacy</td>
<td>Orality</td>
<td>Secondary orality</td>
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<tr>
<td>('Writing')</td>
<td>('Speech')</td>
<td>('Image')</td>
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</table>


Figure IV.2  English and Forms of Literacy