New ways and different paths for the M² Generation of university students

CLAIRE WOODS
University of South Australia, Magill Campus
School of Communication, Information and New Media

ABSTRACT: *The paper focuses on how a university program enables students not only to make the transition from school to university but also to develop skills, which will support them as they progress through the complexities of university studies in a non-traditional English Studies program within the New Humanities. The program draws on diverse influences and theoretical perspectives to create a transdisciplinary text studies within a writing and communication program. In particular, the paper considers how the program recognises that students are part of the "net generation" and have, perhaps, exceeded its grasp to emerge as a dynamic multimedia/multimodal generation – what might be called the M² generation. Students develop skills and expectations about how texts, technologies, writing and reading practices operate in the context of the dynamics of global and local communication.*

KEYWORDS: *Writing and reading practices, English studies, text studies, university education, school to university transition.*

INTRODUCTION

In contemplating the pathways students take as they enter University, I am drawn to the words of Muchiri, Mulamba, Myers and Ndoloi who write of the transition and impact of study on university students in Zaire, Tanzania, Kenya, particularly as they learn to write for academic purposes:

> It is helpful to remind ourselves that one of the things a university does is alter one's sense of geography. This journey is part of what defines the relation between the university and the rest of society (1995, p. 178).

The focus of my paper here is the journey taken by students in a university Arts program; a program with the title BA (Professional and Creative Communication), in which the focus is on writing, reading, and text studies and where the first emphasis is on the production of texts – the writing or making of text, rather than a traditional "literature" based curriculum. How do their studies in this program alter their "sense of geography"? How does their journey define how they move from school to university and relate to the workforce and the community? To help answer these questions I will focus on the work and response of one student as she completes the first course in a three year Arts degree and on her continued reflection on the impact of her studies as she enters the workforce.

This paper describes the theoretical frames for a program in Professional and Creative Communication and its allied submajors and minors. Through an exploration of Ynys' work I show how students make the journey from school to university and thence to the workplace. Ynys, typically of most students entering university today, is a member of what I have termed the M² Generation. Much of what we ask of our students as writers, readers, makers and consumers of texts acknowledges this fact. The M² is a short hand for indicating that students are very much a "net generation" as Tapscott has referred to them (Tapscott, 1998).

The M[2] takes this idea further to indicate that these are individuals who use media, multimedia and multiple ways of engaging with technologies to make texts, to express and present themselves and to perform and demonstrate their knowledge and participation in the world. They are the dynamic, multimedia/ multimodal generation of students. Writing and reading take on new dimensions in relation to the rapidly evolving technologies of text production. As Roger Chartier has pointed out:

> The electronic text revolution is at once a revolution in the technology of the production and reproduction of texts, a revolution in the medium of writing, and a revolution in reading practices (2001, ¶13).

A curriculum with a focus on texts, textual production and reception, reading and writing and increasingly more accurately, on the "making" of texts, with whatever technologies and media are available, therefore needs to take such changes into account. However, while the range of technologies influences the resources available to students, and certainly the possibilities for the kinds of assessment tasks and products they might be called on to prepare, the acknowledgement of their situation as learners on a journey in the context of a new academic and social environment (a new geographical space both physically and metaphorically) means that the key elements of a pedagogy to support their journey need to be soundly considered and implemented within the curriculum. It is with this that I will concern myself in this paper.

WRITING AND "ESSAYING": SOLVING A PROBLEM

Let me start, however, with Ynys and a conversation with her earlier this year when we met at a local coffee shop to discuss the possibility of her undertaking further study. She had completed the BA with Honours a year ago and had since then been working as a writer/ researcher for an agricultural organization. As we talked, she handed me a piece she had written as she considered her approach to writing a report for the organization. What is immediately interesting is that she automatically used writing as a way of reflecting on the task and as a means of problem-solving. It is an unedited and unrevised text because she is writing for herself alone. It is revealing of the way in which her university studies have enabled her to think about her present task and situation. She applies her learning, not just in using writing as a means of reflection, but as a means of *analysing* and *interpreting*. The title itself indicates the exploration in which she is engaged.

> Essaying the report
>
> Recently I have found myself in the midst of a huge battle between my writerly will and my work responsibilities. Part of my duty for the South Australian Farmers' Federation is to produce quarterly reports for a project called Managing Farm Safety Course Coordination. The project is funded by a small grant from WorkCover, and a part of their conditions for providing this money is that I provide detailed accounts of how the project is progressing. This may sound straight forward, but the huge array of contextual, linguistic and stylistic challenges it presents has found me, at last, rendered semi- literate as soon as I open the document file.
>
> To begin with, the language of the report is one I am still in the process of learning, and I have to admit very grudgingly learning, given that it seems formulaic and provides such specific terminology that I am utterly limited in how I can present what information I have. This world of objectives and performance measures seems so artificial and removed from the

work being carried out that I keep arriving at cul-de-sac sentences, in which I have written myself into a semi circle of words that sound efficient but in fact have very little "meat" or meaning. They are less information or analysis than indications of information or analysis.

Thus she describes the dilemma she faces as a writer in a workplace context. Now she alludes to the learning she had encountered at university.

My pedagogic upbringing taught me the falseness of the belief that knowledge exists "out there", floating in intellectual space, to be captured and presented with the pure netting of objective words. There is no such thing as an objective word – each and every one is imbued with a myriad of meanings that vary infinitely according to who is using them and for what. The word "report" seems to indicate a sort of vacuum-sealed account of the activities that have taken place during the course of the project. I am inclined towards using Lannon's more accurate description of "analytical report" – at least this allows the, to me obvious component of writer/ reader parameter to be stated.

She suggests here the way in which she has understood the discursive construction of knowledge, the linguistic exigencies of any writing task, as well as the rhetorical considerations of writer and reader/ audience.

Further on in the piece, having outlined the specifics of the situation, she continues her analysis in rhetorical terms.

I can understand that it should be discounted on these grounds. But what of my own writing? What about style as argument? Is a well written report that which satisfies particular outline criteria really worth $30 000? As a writer I think so, but as an employee of SAF I find it disheartening that such weight lies with data presented in a particular style to demonstrate a particular pre-conceived point.

Essentially, the conundrum for me lies with the assumed intention of the report – to present objective data in a way that satisfies specific criteria. I have to neuter my authorial "I" and pretend that the report is going to be read with the same objectivity with which the report is supposed to be written. But I know exactly who is going to read the report, and they know exactly who wrote it. And all writing is rhetorical, this report no less in its attempts to sway the readers into believing the project's worth. If I chose to use the traditional tools of rhetoric, that is ethos, pathos and logos, the report will be unconvincing to them because I will have stepped over the perceived boundary between "technical" and "personal" writing.

Next, she writes with explicit reference to rhetorical concepts she learned in the first semester at university. She tackles the issue of the writer's voice and position in relation to the text and the audience.

Ethos, the presentation of myself throughout the writing, is limited to constructing an authoritative and "removed" voice, using tactics such as using third person prose (even the word "prose" seems ill-fitting in this context) and the specific jargon that is accepted within the industry as indicative of the correct tone and knowledge base. To an extent, I can use the presentation of the coordinator for rhetorical effect, but to a very subtle degree. I am trying to convince that the coordinator is adept at her job and therefore worthwhile funding, and I can do this very carefully in the way in which I present the activities she has carried out. Any recommendations of her personal ability to carry out the project's tasks can only be made through the auspices of some other accepted authoritative voice, for example her steering committee. Even then, it will be evident to the reader that such a committee will have a vested interest in keeping the project going and therefore bias in their statements is

unavoidable. I almost have to create another personless voice which speaks in the calm, level and doubtlessly authoritative tone of technicality and objectivity. This is the voice which can be trusted by those who must value in strictly rationalistic terms – ironically this voice is completely constructed and has no real grounding in "truth". But it serves as a rhetorical tool by which a certain ethos can be effected.

Nor is this the end of her consideration of her role as writer as she takes into account the way a text might address the reader's emotions and motivations – *pathos* in rhetorical terms.

Pathos must be right out of the picture for this particular genre. Any attempts to use "emotional" language will be seen as worthless attempts to gain sympathy … That the project resides in the highly emotive area of farm safety presents a problem. As a writer, it is very tempting to appeal to the moral conscience of the reader – "farmers are dying at a disproportionate rate, by doing this course there is less chance they will do so" – but as it is money at stake, the reasons for the project must be much more specific. It needs to be shown how exactly the project, and therefore the money contributed to run it, is achieving outcomes of benefit to the individual, the community, the State and of course WorkCover itself. There is no doubt that moralistic and philanthropic reward are taken into account – however, the idea that less accidents means less WorkCover claims means money saved, surely has greater appeal.[1]

I have included much of her text here in order to illustrate the way in which so much of her education within the BA program continues to be a ready tool for her in her working life. She makes explicit reference to concepts learned and applied during her studies.

There is however something more in this piece, not stated explicitly but clearly on show, particularly in the sections of the text not included here, in which she describes very specific details of people and interactions relevant to the content of the report. She is particularly conscious of being a researcher of the context in which she finds herself. In the terms in which she experienced her undergraduate studies, she continues to be "an ethnographer of her own situation". She is a close observer – a participant observer (the key tool for the ethnographer as researcher) – in her work context. In her conversation with me, she refers directly to the way in which she is able to be such a qualitative researcher in any situation in which she finds herself. She could do this because of the program she had undertaken; a program which helped alter her "sense of geography" as she moved from school through university to the workplace.

A BA PROGRAM CLAIMS NEW TERRITORY

Students like Ynys at the University of South Australia do not sign on for a traditional Arts degree. Instead they can enrol in one of several linked named BA programs in Professional and Creative Communication; Multimedia; Communication, Media and Culture; or Communication and Media Management. They will choose to major in one of these areas and take submajors or minors in the others or choose a major and minor from several other disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields. Students taking the BA (Professional and Creative Communication) will often take a submajor in Literary Practice, particularly if they also intend to go on to gain teacher education qualifications with the intention of teaching English.

---

[1] Ynys Onsman's writing is quoted with permission

The BA programs are taught in a school or department which claims its territory as the transdisciplinary new humanities, built on cultural studies, communication and media studies and the theoretical dispositions of the wide range of philosophical and intellectual frames drawn from many disciplines. The teaching team in Professional and Creative Communication is responsible for the named major and for submajors and minors in Literary Practice, Technical Writing, Public Relations, Writing and Language, and Editing and Publishing. Important to all these sequences is the theoretical framing, which provides a coherent pedagogy throughout the students' time at university.

The teaching team has disciplinary backgrounds including Literature, Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, Creative and Professional Writing, Communication and Cultural Studies, Rhetoric and Composition, Ethnography of Communication, and English Education. Their commitment to reflexive pedagogy has been forged through their teaching experience at high school and university levels, and previous work in teacher education.[2] The combination of such interdisciplinary knowledge and the understandings about pedagogy is important to the way in which the program has evolved over the past ten years.

Ynys was a student in the program for four years. Her written comments in her workplace reflect a journey which began with a first assignment in which she was asked to go out into the community and, as a researcher, write as a participant observer. This was the beginning of a process of becoming an ethnographer and of understanding the rhetorical tasks of researcher as writer, and writer as researcher. It was the first of many writing and reading tasks in the first course in the program. It is in that course that the frames for the journey students take are established and it is to the frames for the program I now turn, for these are reflected in what Ynys has written.

When the new BA program was created in 1993, the informing theoretical perspectives for the program and its sequence of courses were:

- an ethnographic perspective
- a rhetorical perspective
- a perspective on understanding literacies in context
- a perspective on the discursive construction of knowledge
- a perspective on language in use in social and cultural contexts.[3]

The teaching team has taken a consistently creative-critical approach to student learning and curriculum practice and to our own practices as teachers and researchers**.** When working with texts we have engaged students not only in reading texts rhetorically, being particularly aware of new rhetorical frames, but in writing creatively and critically out of and within texts, often engaging in "textual intervention" as a way of "reading" the text differently (Pope, 1994).

---

[2] As part of our own reflective practice, members of the teaching team have presented and published widely on aspects of our program and its curriculum and pedagogy.
[3] The theoretical frames can be described as follows: an ethnographic perspective - whereby students are actively engaged as ethnographers/ writers/ researchers of their situations; a rhetorical perspective – whereby they are asked to relate as readers, writers, producers, and consumers of texts in many contexts; a perspective on understanding literacies in context – where they explore and understand the plurality of reading and writing practices; a perspective on the discursive construction of knowledge, giving weight to issues of discourse and disciplinary knowledge making; a perspective on language in use in social and cultural contexts, foregrounding a socially critical framework for reading and writing the world

These perspectives still hold for the BA (Professional and Creative Communication). However, the descriptors have been revised so that they more neatly represent the understandings students will achieve as they move through and complete the program. We ask, "What will students have achieved at the end of the three year program?"

Students in the program will understand that they inhabit a world in which they are engaged:

- in rhetorical practice/enterprise (drawing on rhetorical theory, writing theory and research, cultural critique and communication studies) where students come to understand something of the rhetorics of public culture and the "rhetorics of being" (Barthes, 1957)
- in being ethnographers of their own situation (drawing on the ethnography of communication and critical ethnography)
- with text (s) as a methodological field realised in production – thus as textual power – with intertextuality and with connected literacies (Mackey, 2003) and multiliteracies (drawing on linguistics, sociolinguistics, critical literacy theory and research)
- in tekhne (the art and craft of making) and with literary practice, with a focus on the creative and critical power of reader/ receiver and writer/ producer of text working in multimodal and multigenre ways leading to production/ performance (drawing on literary and text theories, design theory and ICT)

A simple diagram illustrates how these key concepts frame the program and its pedagogy.
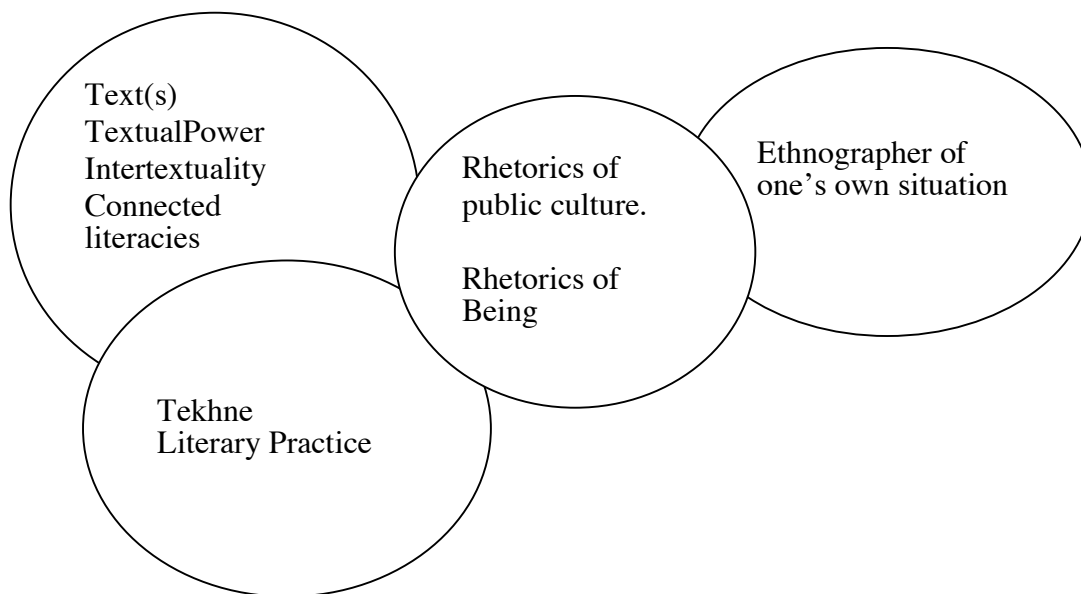

Figure 1. A conceptual frame for the program

AN UNDERGRADUATE JOURNEY IN TEXT STUDIES: WRITING, READING AND MAKING

From the day they enter their first class, our students begin a journey, which will allow them to experience the world of texts in relation to these framing concepts or perspectives. The activities and discussions in class, the assignments they undertake and the assessment criteria reflect this complex of disciplinary influences – influences and perspectives that we have

drawn from others and used to create what we think of as an integrated program for learning in an arts and humanities education for the 21st century.

The issues of texts, text study and the need to engage students in the way texts operate in powerful ways in society have been explored by many authors (notably Scholes, 1985) and need no introduction here. The issue of redefining English as text study has been canvassed most recently by Bill Green in a paper prepared for a special issue of *Literacy Learning in the Middle Years* (2003). Green acknowledges the historical discussions about "literature" and "texts" and cites Moffett (1968) to indicate that the domain for English Studies is "the universe of discourse – the larger field of textuality" (in Green, 2003) For the teaching team, acknowledging the issues of "textual power" (Scholes, 1985) and intertextuality within the program is a given. Drawing students into an active and critical engagement with texts of all kinds as readers and writers, and increasingly not only as writers but as makers of texts, is the focus of their work. However, the main focus of our work is deliberately rhetorical.

When we engage the students in thinking about the issues of rhetoric, we focus on what Andrews calls "the arts of discourse" in context (1992, p. 18), where we allow for rhetoric to "provide a meta-disciplinary unit for the arts of discourse" and to stand as "a programmatic, modest art concerned with both the production of appropriately framed, clearly expressed messages and the reception of such messages" (Andrews, p. 18). But more than this, Andrews makes a case for:

> breaching of the wall between rhetoric (the common language of the world used to get things done, the language of persuasion) and poetics (aesthetic, contemplative, self-referring language) [enabling] us to see the aesthetic dimension of everyday language and the persuasive, enactive dimension of artworks (p. 13).

Through their reading of a diverse range of texts and their writing across a diversity of genres, fiction, non-fiction, creative and professional textual forms, as well their interactions in class with other students and their work, students are drawn increasingly to understand the notion of "rhetorics of being" (Barthes, cited in Trainor, 2002, p. 637) whereby they come to understand the way in which discourse and literacy practices construct themselves and others.

By the same token, the notion of the "rhetorics of public culture" or "the rhetorics of everyday life" enters their world as we encourage them to look closely at the texts that are used to persuade and inform within the public domain (Cintron, 1997, pp. x – xi). But more significantly, students are encouraged to look at discourse as well as behaviours, attributes, activities and events as part of those "rhetorical gestures" that say something about who we are and who others are. These terms are adopted from Cintron who reveals the way in which the disciplinary forces of rhetorical study and sociocultural anthropology and specifically the ethnography of communication might work together in researching "public culture". Students learn to operate as ethnographers – close participant observers of people, of language, discourse, texts and events – and more importantly as critical ethnographers – aware of the social and ideological dimensions of words and their meanings in context.

RESPONDING AS TEXT MAKERS: CRAFTING, RESEARCHING AND THE ARTS OF DISCOURSE

To respond to the world, they work as writers and as makers of texts. We link the notion of rhetorical work as the "arts" of discourse to the idea that there is a craft to researching and writing texts "tekhne", as Cintron has noted (p. xi). Thus students like Ynys are involved in the design and making of texts – perhaps multigenre and multimodal as befits the task. Such literary practice, then, is involved with a multiplicity of texts and of ways of responding to them and of making them. The way into the text is to think of it as made and crafted rather than as an object for reception only. The way into a text, fiction, non-fiction, professional report, or research article is to intervene in it as a writer who is also a reader. Many of the assignments Ynys and her colleagues undertake ask for such interventions, and for a deliberate crafting approach to their response to a text or to their construction of a new text. Thus, they deal with texts of many kinds, including the ways of reading and responding to what Mackey has recently described as "connected literacies".

Mackey extends the New London group's notion of multiliteracies (New London Group, 2000) to include the complex interrelationships between many texts – a TV show, related websites, chatrooms, e-mail, graphics, scripts magazines, videos, newspapers and so on (Mackey, 2003, p.402). As Mackey says:

> The days of stand- alone print are certainly not over, but stand-alone print is no longer the only literary show in town. Meanwhile the role of print as support for stories in other media is also becoming more complex (p. 408).

A university program must take this into account, acknowledging the impact of digital technologies and other modes of communication on the processes of reading and writing.

Chartier, following his comments on the impact of electronic technologies on reading and writing practices, suggests that there are three significant traits "which profoundly transform our relationship to written culture":

> First, the electronic representation of writing radically modifies the notion of context and, as a result, the very process of the construction of meaning. The physical contiguity of different texts gathered in one book or in the same periodical here gives way to their mobile distribution, programmed into the architecture of databases and digitized collections. Second, the electronic representation of writing redefines the material characteristics of works because it dissolves the visible link between the text and the object which contains the text, and because it gives the reader, and no longer the author or the publisher, control over the composition, the arrangement and appearance of the textual units that are to be read. It is thus the whole system of perception and handling of texts which is utterly changed. Finally, when reading on screen, the contemporary reader returns somewhat to the posture of the reader of Antiquity. The difference is that he reads a scroll which generally runs vertically and which is endowed with the characteristics inherent to the form of the book since the first centuries of the Christian era: pagination, index, tables, etc. The combination of these two systems which governed previous writing media (the volumen, then the codex) results in an entirely original relation to texts (Chartier, 2001, ¶13).

Knowing this, and seeking to work with students who are engaged in new relation to texts, poses challenges for any teacher. We (as teachers) and our students are now engaged in what Helmers has described recently (with reference to Barthes) as living, teaching and learning in "an intertext" (Helmers, 2003, p. 3). In the BA (Professional and Creative Communication)

we do not pretend that we have the answers or that we are fully on top of the issues that now confront those of us teaching in English studies or new versions of the same. However, we have considered deeply the overall curriculum sequence and the accompanying pedagogy of the program according to the frames described briefly here.

STEPPING STONES: SEMESTER 1

In this paper, I cannot describe the entire progress of Ynys' studies, that would be too complex and worthy of a longer dissertation. I discuss briefly the writing assignments she completed in her first course as indicative of the first steps in a program framed by the concepts briefly outlined above. From these tentative beginnings she became engaged in a complex of text-related activities, in which she read, wrote, made, performed, presented and explored the "intertexts" of the world she inhabits. Her Honours thesis in her fourth year led her to an exploration of creative non-fiction, and resulted in the publication of a personal essay in an on-line journal devoted to creative non-fiction. The starting point for this work and for her reflective comments on her workplace writing was four years earlier in the first Writing Workshop course titled Writing and Reading across the Disciplines.

When Ynys completed her Folio and Final major assignment for the first course in the major, she had experienced in some way much of what she was then to extend and expand on throughout the next three-and-a-half years of her undergraduate, including Honours program. The list when set out seems deceptively simple. Yet the workshop experience in her first semester was intense and demanding of her as a writer and reader and participant observer/ researcher.

First Course: Writing and Reading across the Disciplines/ Professional and Creative Communication 1

Assignments

Folio (approximately 2500 words polished, excluding drafts)
Participant Observer Piece – preliminary to ethnographic perspective + reflective comment
The Burning Question – persuasive/ personal essay
Paraphrase + creative response
Multiple voices analytic essay
Free choice piece – creative non-fiction

Final Project – mini ethnographic study and reflective comment on process and practice as writer/ researcher
(Eg. *Local gods: A study of skateboarders in the Southern Area,* Ynys Onsman, 2000).

She, along with her classmates, had been engaged in a collaborative workshop process in which she had to write across a range of genres, read a diversity of texts, discuss rhetorical and discursive issues, present her work in different genres and forms, draft, revise, produce and publish. For every assignment, Ynys would have prepared a draft for discussion in class and for preliminary reading and comment by the teacher. At the end of the semester, she chose five pieces from the many she had prepared for final revision and submission in her Folio. This was presented for final assessment. In addition she prepared a major assignment of 1500-2000 words, an ethnographic study of a particular cultural scene.

Assignments in the Folio and the Final Project can be seen as relating to the four key areas specified above. The first Participant Observation piece with reflective comment throws students out into the community as a writer/ researcher where we ask them to think of

themselves as ethnographers of contexts, discourse, behaviours, activities, events and as reflective practitioners of their job as writers and as researchers in the "rhetorics of public culture".   When they undertake the Burning Question, they are immediately thrust into reading and writing as rhetoricians of their own situation and of others – the "rhetorics of being" as well as the rhetorical act of arguing to persuade is the thrust of their work.

As they read a text (perhaps one of Shakespeare's sonnets, or a political essay, or an editorial, or an explanation of a particular disciplinary concept) for the paraphrase exercise, they explore disciplinary discourses and then intervene with the text using it as a catalyst for creative work. The Multiple Voices essay (drawn from an exercise suggested by Charles Bazerman, 1995, pp.162-188) pushes them into the rhetorical and stylistic specifics of a text and demands of them a particular kind of academic writing.

The Final Project demands more of them as writers/researchers/ethnographers. Here they must engage with a cultural scene for a period of time and attempt to show the reader that they "were there" by offering a detailed account and interpretation of that situation and the participants within. Ynys chose to explore the discourse and activities of a group of skateboarders. Extracts from her report give the flavour of her explorations of their performance – their everyday gestures and actions.

> Bang! Thud! Mother @ # K !!! The stock standard sounds of the skate club assault the ears straight away. I'm not even through the doorway yet (there isn't a door, just a frame) and already the presence of skaters is undeniable. I have yet to come across anything else like it; the constant banging and scraping of both the riders and their boards as they hit the floor.
> …
>
> Not everyone is here to skate. The younger and less experienced skaters tend to stay on the sidelines. The total beginners just stand at the side and watch while attempting to look at ease. The good skaters are fairly intimidating, all speed and nonchalance. The younger skaters who do brave jumps are generally regarded as pains-in-the-neck, because they haven't yet learnt the skate etiquette and so tend to get in the way of everyone else.
> …
>
> The skate club is a great place to observe skaters in their natural habitat. Beyond the deafening noise of wheels and bodies landing with a thud, beyond the carefully displayed carelessness, beyond the cool hair and trendy shoes is something I believe to be very important; a place where boys can be united in expending energy in a constructive, fun and cool-looking way. No one is forcing them to try so hard. They push themselves. And it pays off; these boys who fly through the air on their boards look like nothing so much as local gods (Onsman, 1997, unpublished report).

INTEGRATED WAYS OF DOING

The courses in the BA (Professional and Creative Communication) over the next three years give students like Ynys the opportunity to build on these initial introductory activities and assignments. Students are expected to produce their work in publishable form, word processed, often illustrated and increasingly in the form of multigenre, multi- modal presentation, using visuals, graphics, artefacts and so on. They will have developed their capacity to respond in creative and critical ways to the demands of the world, its discourses and media. They will have explored and undertaken projects of the everyday and projects of

the imagination, acknowledging the creativity of the everyday as well as the need for a critical stance as participants in local and global communities.

The activities in class and the assignments aim to allow for the above perspectives and following ways of doing to be explored and understood.
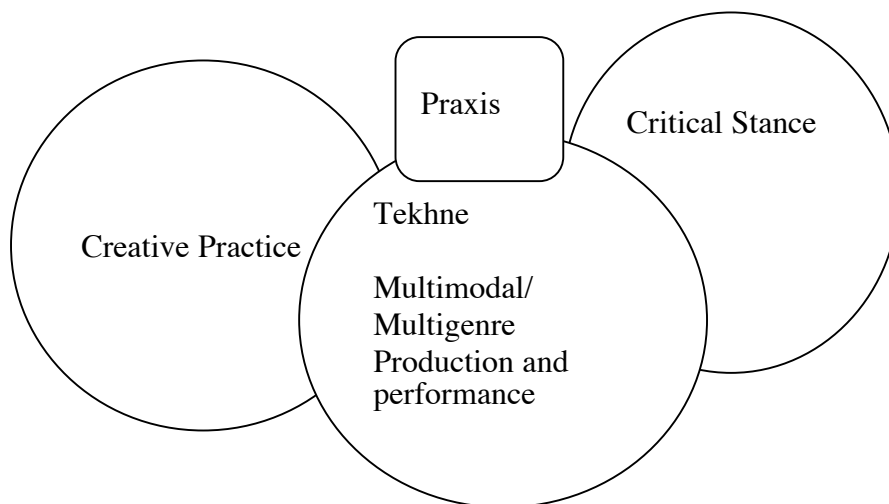
Figure 2. "Integrated ways of doing"

They will have been involved in what can be thought of as "integrated ways of doing", which involve them in:

- Praxis – linking theory and practice in critical ways;
- Tekhne – the reasoned habit of mind of making something – craft, design, making;
- Integrated media/textual practice – engaging with texts and media in multimodal/multgenred ways; and
- Links to community and workplace as researchers, writers and participants.

A GENERATIVE PRODUCTIVE ENGLISH

Ynys' experience throughout her journey from school to workplace, via the geographical space of the University BA has been with texts – texts of all kinds, first as a writer but significantly as a writer who reads and makes something of the texts and the world she "reads" as a researcher of her own situation.

Bill Green has expressed some doubts about the way in which English is increasingly seen as a "text-based" subject rather than as a "literature-based" subject, raising questions about the significance of the textual turn, and fearing perhaps that some of the sorts of reading and writing which English teachers have valued might not find a place in the new order (Green, 2003, pp. 13-14). He is not alone in posing sceptical questions about English, cultural studies and exploring the place of these in Humanities education (see for example, Readings, 1996; Scholes, 1998; and essays in Downing, Hurlbert & Mathieu {Eds.}, 2002).   Green ends his paper with a renewed call for "a new form of rhetoric, a new (postmodernised) rhetorical education" as a way forward for a "generative, productive" English.

Contrary to his assertion that the text-based focus will lead to a diminution of attention to "literature", poetry and the aesthetic, I would contend that an approach that regards texts within the framework of rhetoric as the "arts of discourse" and acknowledges that the "tekhne" of researching and writing, the making of texts with all manner of technologies in multimodal, multigenre ways, can encompass the full range of the words and works of the everyday as well as of the poetic. This is certainly the aim of the BA (Professional and Creative Communication) and the allied submajor studies in Literary Practice and so on.

When Ynys (now backpacking through Europe) writes e-mails to her friends and family at home in Australia in entertaining travelogue style, being the breezy ethnographer and social commentator, she reveals her engagement with the world and the culture of people as a text or "an ensemble of texts" as anthropologist, Clifford Geertz suggested in one of his most famous ethnographic essays (1973). Certainly, she is not now writing as a formal research exercise. But her attention to language, to artefacts, to events, to behaviours, suggests to me that the journey she began as a young woman just out of high school in 1997, when she entered University, has been one that has given her a confidence to explore the world as a performance – as a complex of rhetorical gestures as Cintron suggests (p. x).

Taking this perspective into consideration and acknowledging what M² students bring to their studies is our task as teachers. Mackey comments fittingly here:

> Many adolescents now bring an extensive skill set into the classroom. We will be more usefully equipped to stretch and deepen their awareness (and more alert to how we can expand our own) if we first acknowledge and respect the vast textual world that many of them inhabit in their own time and for fun (Mackey 2002, p. 408).

The point is quite simply that we cannot ignore that vast textual world. We inhabit as they do, the world of the "intertext", and it is for us as teachers to provide a curriculum of possibilities for exploring that world. The BA (Professional and Creative Communication) is *a* response to that challenge. It has evolved and changed over the past ten years. As the texts of the world change and as the technologies of communication demand changed reading and writing practices, there is no doubt that the program will continue to evolve; and the teaching team's reflective practice, we intend, will ensure that it does.

REFERENCES

Andrews, R. (Ed.). (1992). *Rebirth of rhetoric: Essays in language, culture and education.* London: Routledge.

Barthes, R. (1957). *Mythologies.* New York: Noonday Press.

Barthes, R. (1981). Theory of the text. In R. Young (Ed.), *Untying the text: A poststructuralist reader* (pp. 31-47). New York: Routledge.

Bazerman, C. (1995). *The informed writer.* Boston: Houghton- Mifflin.

Callahan, M. (2002). Intertextual composition: The power of the digital pen. *English Education*, 35 (1), 46-65.

Chartier, R. (2001). Readers and readings in the electronic age. In *Virtual symposium: Screens and networks: Towards a new relationship with text.* Retrieved September 29, 2003, from http://www.text-e.org/conf/index.cfm?ConfText_ID=5

Cintron, R. (1997). *Angel's town: Chero ways, gang life and rhetorics of the everyday.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Clifford, J. (1988). *The predicament of culture: Twentieth century ethnography, literature and ar*t. Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press.

Downing, D. Hurlbert, C. & Mathieu, P. (2002). *Beyond English Inc: Curricular reform in a global economy.* Portsmouth: N.H.:Boynton/Cook Heinemann

Geertz, C. (1973). Deep play: Notes on the Balinese cockfight', *The interpretation of culture: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books Inc.

Green, B (2003). No Difference? *Literacy Learning in the Middle Years: Secondary Thoughts*, *11* (2), 11-14.

Helmers, M. (Ed.). (2003). *Introduction: Representing reading, intertexts – Reading pedagogy in college writing classrooms.*   Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Mackey, M. (2003). Television and the teenage literate: Discourses of felicity. *College English*, *65* (4), 389-410.

Moffett, J. (1968). *Teaching the universe of discourse*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Ndoloi, G.D. (1995). Importing composition: Teaching and researching academic writing beyond North America. *College, Composition and Communication*, *46*, 175-97.

New London Group. (2000). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. In B. Cope and M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (pp. 9-37). New York: Routledge.

Pope, R. (1994). *Textual intervention: Critical and creative strategies for literary studies.* London: Routledge.

Scholes, R. (1985). *Textual power: Literary theory and the teaching of English*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Scholes, R. (1998). *The rise and fall of English.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Tapscott, D. (1998). *Growing up digital: The rise of the Net generation*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Trainor, J. (2002). Critical pedagogy's "other": Constructions of whiteness in education for social change. *College Composition and Communication, 53* (4), 631-650.