Resurrecting the Aesthetic:
Re-Imagining Pedagogy and Curricula in
Contemporary English Teaching

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Abstract

This study follows a trajectory that explores the ideological changes in policy and praxis in the English curriculum. Education policies increasingly reproduce contemporary epistemic ideology focused on the marketisation of education. This has led to the practice of a hermeneutics where students are constructed within the educational simulacrum of the market economy and emerge as 'student warriors' — students who stand at the forefront of an economic battlefield, serving the nation's global standing in the complex wars, rivalries and aspirations that traverse the entire space connected with the Programme for International Student Assessment. This investigation questions the policy structures and inherent neoliberal tenets that have shaped, and are shaping, educational praxis, especially regarding the teaching of English. Previous studies have examined how neoliberalism generally affects educational policies and education, but they have not provided much gravitas when considering how this has specifically affected the subjectification of students. The production of democratic citizens is a fundamental task of education, yet this thesis argues that it is a process undermined by the contemporary praxis which subverts students' subjectification offered by aesthetic literary critique. When core curriculum represses social, cultural, and ongoing self-reflexive critique and retreats from a critical and vigilant form of ethical self, then, democracy is imperilled. Crucial pedagogical elements in teaching remain a cornerstone of effective democracies. Critiquing the narrow order of knowledge acquisition in the arena of standardised testing and the negative market impact on students' subjectification, this thesis calls for a reimagining of an aesthetic education. This is a site that privileges a more vigorous and healthier pedagogical arena where self-reflexive intelligibility and technologies of the student-self can re-emerge together with a deeper foundation and investment in literature at all levels of schooling. In this regard, the thesis adumbrates the socially necessary steps for an ethical democratisation of society.
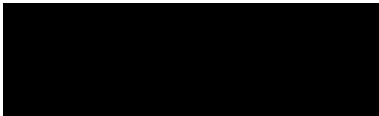
Declaration

I, Peter Warren Shay, declare that the PhD thesis entitled

Resurrecting the Aesthetic: Re-Imagining Pedagogy and Curricula in Contemporary English Teaching

is no more than 90,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signature: Date:

28 September 2021

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Tracy. It is also dedicated to my family—my parents Margery and Reg Shay, and my siblings Robert and Annette. Each, in their own way, has given me the vision, the fortitude and the inspiration to become who I am.

Acknowledgements

Contents

List of Abbreviations

AC:E	Australian Curriculum: English
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACARA	The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
AEU	The Australian Education Union
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ANAR	A Nation at Risk
EBP	Evidence-based practice
GERM	Global Education Reform Movement
HITS	High-Impact Teaching Strategies
NAPLAN	Australia's National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy
NLS	National Literacy Strategy
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RTTT	The Race to the Top
SAC	School Assessed Coursework
STEM	The fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education

Introduction

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.
—Nelson Mandela

Education and schooling: The quest for autonomy

When Foucault spoke of the 'care of the self', he reintroduced an earlier Greek concept of thinking about the self, society and the progression towards a full and ethical citizenship. When Christian theology later changed the concept of ethics from an internal and individual reflection to an externally produced code of conduct, the soul became distanced, and individuals could not become ethical without relying on penitentiary and accusatory relationships with their inner selves (Infinito, 2003). Failing became a reflection of moral deficiency rather than of errors that could be corrected through self-reflection and social dialogue. As Foucault explained, the difference is that 'self-examination is taking stock. Faults are simply good intentions left undone. The rule is a means of doing something correctly, not judging what has happened in the past. Later, Christian confession will look for bad intentions' (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997, p. 237). Although bad intentions are not the focus of this thesis, the concept of an autonomising self-reflexivity is one that is thoroughly considered. It denotes the differences between seeking faults to correct, using data points and algorithms, and an aesthetic, self-reflexive education[1]. The divisive practices of seeking faults to correct rely on achieving standards through completing assessments, creating a sense of deficiency in students who fail to reach the mark and thereby subjugating them. Aesthetic and self-reflexive education focuses more on developing students into ethical citizens through their understanding of self and others[2].

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[1] Self reflexivity is a term used here when individuals critically explore their own private emotions and moments, focusing on their latter ty and shaping their own identities. Individuals use their critical ability to reflect on and understand the effect that networks of power knowledge have on their self formation by turning inwards to contemplate their own actions and modes of conduct a reflexive propensity. Reflexivity is used here to denote the propensity of the individual to contemplate critically about a subject or self. Identity, a nebulous concept, and used in large part to externally categorise and subjectivate people, grounds individuals through the governmentality of an 'individual s ng and aggregating mode of identification and classification' (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 15). These external influences attempt to shape individuals' subjectification, reifying them in particular discourses. However, as Brubaker and Cooper suggest, 'self identification takes place in dialectical interplay with external identification, and the two need not converge' (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 15). It is through a critical self reflexivity analysing the external power discourses that individuals can shape their own identity through an understanding of these 'relational and categorical modes of identification' (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 15). Self identity is then a conception of self arrived at through a critical analysis during self reflexivity where forces of governmentality have been understood and accepted or rejected.

[2] This thesis argues that there is a need for a space for aesthetic education. Bai suggested there are three main types of space in the classroom: 'an ethical space, a political space and a concrete space of freedom' (Bai, 2019, p. 136). Greene argued for 'the need to constitute spaces where [aesthetic education] may be made to happen. They should be spaces in which particular atmospheres are created: atmospheres that foster active exploring rather than passivity, that allow for the unpredictable and the unforeseen' (Greene, 1986, p. 57). Aesthetic education from this perspective 'involves [a] deliberate initiation into the modes of perception, apprehension, and awareness on which aesthetic experience depends' (Greene, 1976, p. 61). Greene explained that 'an aesthetic situation exists for a reader (or a beholder, or a listener) only when he or she is not concerned with the actual existence of what he or she is encountering. An aesthetic situation exists, similarly, only when the individual avoids asking what use he or she can make of the experience' (Greene, 1976, pp. 63 64). It is through these iterations of spaces and aesthetic experiences that students can create their identities.

Although current educational practice—especially in Australia but also in the United Kingdom (UK) and United States' (US) educational systems—seemingly relies on the credo that students should become teachers and vice versa, and that students should become self-reflective. This is a misrepresentation of Foucauldian ethics[3]. In an educational environment of *Visible Learning* (Hattie, 2009), students seek knowledge within themselves—an autochthonous[4] approach to understanding and learning, but one based on a Christian penitentiary conception of development. Subjugating power, far from creating positive power-knowledge relationships, instead uses a form of biopolitics that is 'effected through an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls'* (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 139, original italics). This constitutes a space where students accede to a normalising reproduction of reiterative performativity.

Visible Learning uses the image of an all-seeing eye—a panoptic rather than a visionary one. In this image, mistakes are sought to be corrected, which enhances students' perception that they themselves require correction and schooling from an all-powerful source of knowledge. This knowledge, using a convoluted dissimulation of self-reflection, is considered immanent, or something to be extracted from students through introspection. However, this self-reflection does not increase the students' ability to transform; rather, it reinforces the notion that they are inferior and require correction. This is a penitent ideology in which students become powerless to transform themselves and instead become heteronomous subjects. Concurrently, with a focus on improvement towards an external ideal, students neglect to focus on internalising technologies, activities and reflections—an education through which they can gain self-knowledge and self-improvement. Knowledge becomes an external standard to be met instead of an edifying self-practice.

It follows, ipso facto, that a distinction exists between education and schooling, whereby education is socially transformative, and schooling is socially reproductive. Education has moved from being descriptive of possibilities to becoming a catachresis, an incomplete development of ethical humanity composed of narrowly prescriptive targets and achievement standards. A pervasive neoliberal assumption in current educational policy and curriculum development restricts the meaning of education; in this case, individual worth is compromised by questionable determinants and an intensified antinomy that pervades the notions of values and economic outcomes. This amounts to an ethical orientation that blindly reels towards the

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[3] For Foucau t, eth cs s the form that freedom takes when t s nformed by se f ref ect on through nformed ascet c pract ces of se f (Foucau t & Rab now, 1997, p. 284). Foucau t's concept of eth cs s exp ored throughout the thes s.
[4] Autochthonous n th s thes s has two s m ar def n t ons w th mportant d st nct ons: 1) that know edge s mmanent and nherent n students and that they are requ red to f nd th s know edge through nvest gat on and se f d scovery us ng a Socrat c method; and 2) t re ates to an nd v dua 's ndependent thoughts and deas nstead of ref ect ng those of an externa agency that echoes the concept of subject f cat on.

market[5] as a structurally adequate foundation for delivering and perpetuating the ontological priorities that govern educational expectations. For Butler (1993, p. xxiv), a resistance to or failure in fulfilling normalising societal expectations expresses a failure to be viewed as fully human. If students fail to achieve normalised and arbitrary standards, then they are also failing, in neoliberal terms, to become fully human. Neoliberal education thus fails students in two important areas: it curtails their education through a restriction to performative standards, and it denies them the tools to become autonomous and viable humans.

Thesis rationale

Ball noted that 'Foucault's genealogies always begin from his perception that something is terribly wrong in the present' (Ball, 2017, p. 46). This assertion forms the focus of this thesis. Although the *Australian Curriculum: English* (AC:E) highlights the importance and value of literature in the English curriculum, policy documents nevertheless deflect and distance themselves from this focus. Instead, they direct attention towards pedagogical algorithms and easily classifiable results. Experience thus leans towards self-dissolution, as individuals are limited by a universal pedagogical formalisation that restricts 'individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, *so* as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality' (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997, p. 225). What is 'terribly wrong' is the institutional dislocation—the antinomy existing between literature as a meaningful form of representation and the deeply problematic algorithms that govern market-oriented educational practice. Economic ideology has colonised education, and the individual has become fragmented and enmeshed in what Foucault has termed an 'analytic of finitude'. Here, the concepts of labour, language and life, in their own historicity, merge into an almost impenetrable ontological grid that reduces physical existence and economic discourse to a limited form of freedom and agentic selfhood.

The significance of this research lies in its appraising the current notions of effective education, the effect current neoliberal practice has on the development of student subjectification and offering the opportunity to critically re-read policy related to English curricula. This will allow institutions, policymakers and practitioners to reflect in more complex and nuanced ways on

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[5] There are various aspects to the marketisation of education. Briefly, these are: the use of marketing terminology (e.g. performativity, quality standards, performance management, swot analyses, outcomes, accountability, stakeholders, efficiency, mission statements); the introduction of parental choice in English government schools (parental choice matters to schools because the funding of schools is driven by pupil numbers); School Performance Tables (in the UK these report, annually on the performance of school pupils as measured by national examinations and other criteria, akin to the Australian NAPLAN results on the MySchool website). There is also a marketisation of education through external private companies which sell their expertise (e.g., identifying a student's specific areas of strength and weakness, determining any difficulties that a student may have in learning to read, etc., and removing teacher agency and professionalism with datafied evidence) and thus predetermine curricula.

the role that aesthetic readings of literature play in the school curriculum and their effect on student subjectification.

Given these considerations, the questions that this thesis addresses are:

1. What specific conditions, tensions and conflicts in the history of education have enabled the emergence of an education that has been colonised by economic ideology?
2. What new and critical understandings of education are enabled through the application of a Foucauldian approach?
3. How does this approach create spaces in which new and critical understandings of the ethical autonomous, and democratic student might emerge?

Two elements appear to be related to the discourse of education in the English classroom: the arrival of continuous assessment (Dreher, 2012; Luke, 1998, 2012) and the emphasis on literacy as a set of standards (Alexander, 2007 (a); Au, 2008, 2011). Gunther Kress recognised that in England 'there is now every likelihood that literacy will displace or become English' (in Green, 2006, p. 15); this posits that literature has become an efferent means of teaching literacy that extrudes the aesthetic experience in classrooms (Alexander, 2007 (a), p. 110; Rosenblatt, 1995).

A climate of high-stakes assessment and appraisal in schools—such as Australia's National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), the Common Core Standards in the US and the General Certificate of Secondary Education in the UK—imposes a biopolitical 'segregation and social hierarchisation' on students and teachers that guarantees 'relations of domination and effects of hegemony' (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 141). In turn, Masters highlighted that the UK, US and Australia have 'introduce[d] reform and improvement policies in response to change in their country's relative performance on the OECD's[6] PISA[7] tests. The explicit aim is to raise their ranking relative to other countries' (Masters, 2013, p. iii). This is a divisive practice that assigns an ontological continuum; it configures a standardised classification in a field of identity where students are assigned a place within an ordering of hierarchic tables and the nature of ability.

This thesis argues that as schools produce more data that align with high-stakes testing, students are subjected to a testing regime focused on the easily assessable aspects of English—literacy—rather than on aspects in literature that focus on the liberating technologies of the self. In this climate, learning to appreciate the aesthetic, explore personal emotions and

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[6] The Organ sat on for Econom c Co operat on and Deve opment.
[7] The Programme for Internat ona Student Assessment.

delve into the private becomes more challenging while being continuously watched and assessed. The technologies of the self are isolated, and they coalesce with neoliberal discourses of accountability and economics. A kind of fusion between education and the economy exists in which NAPLAN and PISA results conflate students with the market, requiring them to provide a 'return on investment, growth and achievement' (Birmingham, 2018). Subsequently, literacy standards and data collection have become the generic focus of education (see for example Ball (2003); Holloway and Brass (2018)). Ravitch has also noted the effect of the emergence and colonisation of high-stakes testing:

> *No Child Left Behind* has produced teaching to the test, cheating, gaming the system, and has turned schooling into a numbers game. It churned children into data points. It has narrowed the curriculum and discourages creativity and innovation. All of these, in combination, have undermined the meaning and the purpose of good education—which encompasses not just basic skills but knowledge, citizenship, character, and personal development (Ravitch, 2011).

This problematic resonates with Noddings' observation who, when commenting on standardisation and testing, argued that 'the grim enactment of lessons designed to elicit answers to test questions impedes genuine education' (Noddings, 2013, p. 213). This focus on 'standards' creates an environment in which literature is read 'efferently', to use Rosenblatt's terminology, creating a dualistic milieu where literacy and the aesthetic are disconnected. In this binary, efferent reading is set apart in the pursuit of finding the factual answer. This kind of reading concerns mainly public aspects of meaning: the workings and machinations of the text, the facts in the text or the 'codes and conventions, logical self-contradictions, or ideological assumptions' (Rosenblatt, 1995, pp. 294-295). As Rosenblatt explained, efferent reading embodies a reader's attention that remains primarily focused 'on what will remain as the *residue* after the reading', the instrumental and factual aspects of the text (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 23). Alternatively, aesthetic reading is more transactional; it focuses on both the private and public aspects of meaning, and it involves reflecting on experiences in reading and making links as it 'speaks *about us*, about our lives and choices and emotions, about our social existence and the totality of our connections' (Nussbaum, 1992, p. 183). As Maxine Greene elucidated, aesthetic education is:

> An intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, participatory engagements with the arts by enabling learners to notice what is there to be noticed, and to lend works of art their lives in such a way that they can achieve them as variously meaningful (Greene, 2014).

Aesthetic reading is rich in Foucault's striking portrayal of an aesthetics of self—a technology of self that enables an identity to be formed through an explicit critique of self and the discovery and challenging of the discursive practices that shape the soul. Autodidactic efficacy or forms of heutagogy[8] remain in play in these aesthetics of self.

This thesis argues that reading literature aesthetically is an essential aspect of the English curriculum, one that encourages and supports students to be more flexible, creative and discerning. However, as shown in Rosenblatt's claim above, an aesthetic reading of literature should give students the opportunity to have more than just a 'residue'. The self-reflexivity performed when contemplating private and emotive moments—and the subsequent invitations to explore alterity, otherness and experiences outside normative domains—remains an important practice when building technologies of the self.[9] Gormley argued that 'universal versions of creativity, such as those that align the concept with problem-solving or design endeavour, are a product of market logic' (Gormley, 2018, p. 1), which is a neoliberal discourse that prioritises the assessable over the aesthetic to feed the ever-growing voracity of the market economy. The constant focus on employability, on *homo economicus*, centres on identifying 'select and partial discourses of the concept, such as creativity … while there is a silence around alternative conceptualisations' (Gormley, 2018, p. 1). A fixation on the assessable, employable and efferent redacts the aesthetic and human possibilities for self-identity and determination. Further, as Rosenblatt forebodingly discerned, 'If short-term financial considerations prevail over concern for long-term human consequences, the foundations for a fully democratic way of life will be destroyed' (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 297). If students are to develop and 'become ethical, informed, perceptive, innovative and active members of society … [who] are committed to national values of democracy' (ACARA, 2021a), as the Australian Curriculum claims they will, then English curricula must focus on the democratising abilities of an aesthetically critical exploration of literature.

This thesis problematises the discourse surrounding the concepts of literature and literacy in policy documents, the media and political discourses. By subtly altering the discourse, policies have shifted the focus from academic achievement to performativity. As Ball explained, 'It is not that performativity gets in the way of "real" academic work or "proper" learning, it is a vehicle for changing what academic work and learning are' (Ball, 2000, p. 16; 2003, p. 226). Creating this different ontology of education and, by implication, demonstrating what counts as education, policies and policymakers have appropriated educationalists' perception of the

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[8] 'The key pr nc p es of heutagogy   earner agency, se f eff cacy and capab ty, ref ect on and metacogn t on, and non near earn ng   prov de a foundat on for des gn ng and deve op ng earn ng eco og es' (B aschke & Hase, 2019, p. 1).
[9] There s more to d scuss about the aesthet c, and the concepts under y ng the aesthet c w   be exp ored n much more deta , nc ud ng Kant, Eag eton and Foucau t. Areas that w   be addressed w   nc ude cons der ng   terature as a 'work of art', fo ow ng the Romant cs, and us ng the aesthet c as an nv tat on to exp ore a ter ty, otherness and exper ences outs de normat ve doma ns.

function of education. More specifically, education in a Foucauldian sense implies an interaction that allows the students 'to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality' (Foucault in L. H. Martin, Gutman, & Hutton, 1988, p. 18). This interaction is lacking in a weaponised education in which students become warriors for the state to improve national pride and esteem through PISA rankings.

Enervated education policies

It is by usurping the humanistic values of education, replacing them with economic values, as well as by undermining teachers and imposing performativity measures, which curtails creativity. Through a 'policy epidemic' (Levin, 1998), governments in Australia, the UK and US have been 'reforming' education in terms of what Sahlberg, called the 'global education reform movement' (GERM). Herein:

> Curricula are standardised to fit to international students tests and students around the world study learning materials from global providers … It is like an epidemic that spreads and infect educational systems through a virus … As a consequence, schools get ill, teachers don't feel well, and kids learn less (Sahlberg, 2012b).

Following this standardising approach, schools are being moulded into neoliberal factories that provide a suitable market for educational 'learning companies' (Pearson, n.d.) to design products and services—undermining the professional abilities of teachers through the provision of standardised lessons. As Pearson, one of the 'learning companies' explained, 'For us it's not enough just to make products and provide services. We need to know that they're working to deliver their intended learner outcomes' (Pearson, n.d.). Further, the notion of 'outcomes' defines modern education to the extent that 'it does not simply change what people, as educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes who they are' (Ball, 2003, p. 215). Artistic subjects are superseded and become increasingly more displaced as schools emerge as sites that produce the next generation of *homo economicus*.

It has also become more difficult for students to access aesthetically enriched discursive constellations due to the pervasive 'technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination' (Foucault in L. H. Martin et al., 1988, p. 18). School texts emerge as plaintive justifications for achieving supposed meaningful pedagogical outcomes; subsequently, students 'are created as docile bodies by others against their own will through subjection' (Walshaw, 2007, p. 102). In Foucauldian terms, subjection is generally perceived as negative, and it is juxtaposed with 'subjectification', which is 'a

positive process that involves the willing development and transformation of selves' (Walshaw, 2007, p. 102).[10]

The neoliberalist creativity discourse in policy documents is at the forefront of an aesthetic deficit that has usurped students' 'capacity to develop their emotional and ethical imaginations and so imagine themselves more powerfully as human beings' (Misson & Morgan, 2007, p. 87). In turn, Nussbaum argued that 'literature, and the literary imagination, are subversive' (Nussbaum, 1991, p. 879); suggesting that literature provides a vehicle through which students can engage in transformative experience and interrogate and critique themselves and their society. This is meaningful heutagogy. Given this context, the aesthetic study of literature has arguably been usurped by neoliberal discourse, which, *a priori*, endorses 'neoliberal discourses of readiness for employment and rapid change' (Gormley, 2018, p. 2). Underpinning this argument is a consideration of 'governmentality' (the range of power and knowledge capillaries that seek to influence how people understand and conduct themselves) and the extent of neoliberalism's influence on education, specifically regarding changes in policy and curricula discourse[11].

This thesis builds on recent research contributions that consider neoliberalism's previous and current influence on the teaching of literature and creativity (see for example Green, 2006, 2017; Misson & Morgan, 2007; Moss, 2009, 2012; Noddings, 2013; Sahlberg, 2012a, 2012b). A critical exegesis of neoliberal policy and agendas can reveal the cracks and spaces in English teaching, as well as the open spaces for reclaiming a literary aesthetic. Recasting English as a subject allows it to overcome a deficit, in which appraising and exploring life as a work of art—as well as exploring the delicate nuances of feeling and emotion represented in culture—can be reinvested through inquisitive and subversive cultural analysis. Students and teachers must acquire the critical acumen to question social conformity, cultural standards and their own role in education and society. Although literacy attempts to assume the numerous significations that inform cultural meanings (Albright, 2006), it is argued that the 'new management panopticism' (Ball, 2003, p. 219) that is aggregated with literacy assessment tends to exclude the literary aesthetic and conceptual knowledge and understanding necessary for an aesthetical critical analysis. English is reduced to a science of language competency, in which mechanical technique (as a strict order of functional

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[10] This thesis will argue that as schools create student subjects and the students attempt to create and transform their own selves through technologies of the self, the students should be able to access appropriate discourses, especially in the form of literary studies. Although poststructuralists tend to focus on subjects, in this thesis, 'student' and 'subject' are interconnected and interchangeable; generally, just the term 'student' will be used.

[11] Governmentality, as previously defined, is a conscious and subconscious reading of discursive frames and discursive constellations that are imposed on students from a range of agencies that universalise and homogenise a particular way of thinking, subjecting them to a particular mode of being and perceiving in the world. Underlying this form of governance is an understanding that there is the possibility of resistance it's not pervasive in the sense that it is top down.

measurement and a grid of practical assessment) eclipses literature as a form of art and life experience.

Because language allows us to perceive only what we can (re)present in words or images, it thus constructs the world we perceive, making us what we are and making the world in our image. Policies and research, as language, influence society through biopolitics and the resulting governmentality, both from the state and from how citizens govern themselves. It is the teachers' responsibility to enlighten students about the power and knowledge networks that shape them and their worlds, as well as to encourage students' critical self-reflexivity to become autonomous and ethical citizens[12]. The underlying focus of this thesis is to consider how an increasing emphasis on standardised testing and data collection curates students' empowerment, as well as the number of narrowing factors disempowering student agency. The demands for higher standards and more accountability, the quantification of education through statistics and statistical analysis, the persistence of medicalising, weaponising and marketising education, and the devaluation of teachers and teaching has created a paradox for educational policy. It is the paradox of how to encourage a democratisation of ethical students through an etiolated vision of education; an education that has restricted its practice to received and contentious notions of economic values, economic outcomes, individual worth, and competitive PISA rankings. This thesis argues that as policymakers have become overly 'preoccupied with creating the conditions necessary to promote economic competitiveness in the new international economic order, rather than attending to problems of social integration or nation building' (Ball, 1999), the gap between positive outcomes for education have become mired in statistical algorithms, potentially leaving students in a state of inanition.

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[12] Educat on s, accord ng to G roux (2019), 'about the product on of agency' and here he s referr ng to student agency. Th s not on of teacher respons b ty resonates w th Rosenb att's concerns regard ng the teach ng of terature (1995).

Literature Review

The proliferation of philosophical tracts on education signifies its importance in human development and social conscience. In education, and education policy, conflicts regarding value and values dominate the field, as nation-states have tried incorporating diverse ideas and new social dilemmas and understandings such that 'school became in many respects an expression of humanity and a demarcation of the limits to humanity' (Ball, 2013a, p. 48). Western education tends to incorporate the values of democracy in its curricula; yet, arguably, students are systematically impoverished in their access to the tools they need to become critical social citizens. Biesta raised the issue of democracy when he questioned the domesticising concept of democracy as 'a "pinning down" of citizens to a particular civic identity' (Biesta, 2011, p. 142), whereby students are subjugated in the contemporary educational and political imaginary so that they are socialised through surveillance and assessment to conform with society. The norms embedded in society subjugate students through biopolitical agency, in which students discipline themselves to accept those norms. Biesta succinctly argued for a more disruptive form of democracy, in which 'new political identities and subjectivities … form a significant departure from the conventional way in which education, citizenship and democracy are connected' (p. 151). Inherent in this argument is 'Rancière's … suggestion that democracy *is* a process of *subjectification*, a process in which new political identities and subjectivities come into existence' (p. 151); that is, when following a curriculum that espouses democracy, students should be encouraged to sculpt their own subjectification and quest for autonomy[13] without imprisoning themselves in an imposed form of representation framed by neoliberalism.

However, the neoliberal ontology of continual assessment and performance increasingly undermines the conception of the autonomous individual; it assigns a standard reality that focuses students' attention on constrictive assessable tasks rather than on self-understanding. Characterised by competition and accountability, current educational praxis has culminated in a *visible* education of data points that constrains the contemplative introspection and self-reflexivity required for subjectification, self-critique and the visibly positive marks of alternative inner experience that point towards the frontier of alternative modes of being. Instead, it has resulted in the question of whether we 'measur[e] what we value, or whether we are just measuring what we can easily measure and thus end up valuing what we (can) measure'

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[13] Autonomy — hav ng the too s to be ab e to th nk cr t ca y about one's s tuat on, deas and ph osoph es. It s not so much concerned w th nd v dua freedoms or r ghts. For Foucau t, the nd v dua w th r ghts and freedoms s created through a po t ca techno ogy of nd v dua s. One may be bound by governmenta ty, those d sc p nary pract ces that form the ep steme that shapes one (d v s ve pract ces, d fferent at on, rank ng, etc.), but the power know edge network s a so pos t ve n that t can encourage the format on of res stance to such networks that are deemed no onger v ab e, e ther by the nd v dua or the commun ty. For Kr steva, dent ty s constant y redef ned and a tered, and th s v ew wou d a gn w th a Foucau d an format on of subject f cat on that s under cont nua se f ref ex ve cr t que. For an nterest ng debate on autonomy see Murer, 2010.

(Biesta, 2009a, p. 35). Given the specific ideological lens through which it is viewed, the neoliberal agenda negates aesthetic values; the foundation of education has shifted from one of cultural, ethical and societal values to one focused on economic investment—albeit within a cloud of justifying rhetoric, in which token reference is given to democratic values. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) acknowledged this, arguing that in 'education policy discourses, this has involved a reorientation of values from a focus on democracy and equality to the values of efficiency and accountability, with a greater emphasis on human capital formation' (p. 72). This domestication of students configures them through a specific framework of democracy; it uses a hermeneutic and autopoietic educational imaginary that resonates with the interpretative and adaptive style of education espoused through constructivist educational approaches.

Further to Biesta's argument of education as domesticising democracy, Rizvi and Lingard argued that '[t]he term "education" has normative implications: it suggests that something worthwhile is being intentionally transmitted, and that something valuable is being attempted' (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 71). However, what is considered 'something worthwhile'—namely, cultural values like autonomy and equality—has been transformed into economic goals, competition and divisive achievement standards (see for example Biesta, 2009a). Democratic values have been appropriated and re-articulated to incorporate an encroaching and limiting globalisation, which influences the aesthetic values of education. As economically influenced values are normalised for students, students are entrenched in a 'power of truth [and] … the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural, within which it operates' (Foucault, in Foucault, 1991, p. 75). Believing that education is intrinsically worthwhile and an economic investment in themselves, students are not given the tools to critique those tenets to which they are being subjected. Several studies (for example, (Ball, 2000, 2003; Brass, 2010; Giroux, 2004b; McKnight & Whitburn, 2018) consider the societal effects of contemporary neoliberal policies, as well as the effects of policies, educational discourses, and praxis. However, their effect on students remains understudied and underdeveloped. This is especially true regarding the discourses, narratives and knowledge played by the role of literature in students' education and subjectification.

Carr and Kemmis characterised this underdevelopment in terms of praxis and the freedom for people to act for themselves. They explained that praxis:

> Is not simply action based on reflection. It is action which embodies … commitment to human wellbeing and the search for truth, and respect for others. … Moreover, praxis is always risky. It requires that a person makes a

> wise and prudent practical judgement about how to act in *this* situation (Carr
> & Kemmis, 1986, p. 190).

Commitment to the search for truth has been re-articulated and weakened to the extent that the 'truth' appears as a cultural monument and dedication to static, singularly verifiable fixed answers—the kind of hollow performative verification that leaves students diminished in their ability to make 'wise and prudent judgement[s]' about their existential encounters and educational aspirations. Instead, students are educated within precariously conflicting discourses: those of societal requirements and those of being an individual. Doctrinal and fixed in contemporary space and time, education aligns its self-preservation and determinate form with society's economic exigencies, and largely ignores the individualising education that is involved in meaningful and enriched subjectification. As students' identities are continually interlinked with the criteria of success and failure, their subjectification becomes jeopardised by the obligation to play the truth-creating games of competition; in Keddie's words, they emerge as performative 'children of the market' (Keddie, 2016).

Education policy has been subjected to many critiques[14] that tend to focus on the changes in policies made in the past few decades. For example, Rizvi and Lingard have argued that educational policy has been subjected to the effects of globalisation—although the term 'globalisation' is acknowledged to be somewhat problematic (Fairclough, 2000, pp. 23-29; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). In an illuminating article, Ball appraises what he considers to be the demise and chaotic nature of education in England (Ball, 2018), underpinning a burgeoning view that education finds itself inundated with conflicting policy considerations compounded by superficially differing ideologies yet all veering to the same conclusion. As mentioned previously, Sahlberg (2011) termed this as GERM: an existential malaise infecting the education domain. In Foucauldian terms, this is due to the 'multiple effects of social, cultural, and material practices within relations of power-knowledge [which] illustrates how educational subjects are in a continual process of constructing and transforming their selves and their worlds through their interactions with others' (Jackson, 2013, p. 839). An understanding of the power/knowledge continuum is essential when considering the discursive effects of policies, including their implementation on students. The continual reform is creating an anomie caused by a lack of continuity due to disruptive educational practices and the peripeteia of literature as it becomes denigrated and reduced in stature and influence. The democratic ideal is sublated into shallower constellations of economics and panoptic learning as educational

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[14] (Au, 2008, 2011; Ba , 1998, 1999, 2018, 2019, 2021; B esta, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2015, 2016; Brass, 2015; Nodd ngs, 2012, 2013; R zv , 2015; R zv & L ngard, 2010; Sah berg, 2011).

goals remain unrealised aspirations, leaving education bereft of long-standing humanist values and goals.

These policy analyses reflect a growing concern regarding the emphasis placed on the marketisation of students and educational principles. This marketisation is evidenced by schools' increasing reliance on educational material providers (including lessons, teaching materials and structured reading books with computerised data analyses of reading results); on teaching structures like *Visible Learning*; and on academy sponsors (e.g., in England) (Ball, 2018). The *reform* of education in economic terms—which incorporates marketing terms such as 'key performance indicators', 'efficacy', 'efficiency' and 'accountability'—has led to an education that is based on and branded with the enduring mark of competition and PISA and NAPLAN results. These high-stakes tests add little to the education of students, as they are performance measures used to calculate the rankings of schools and countries. Nevertheless, students and education systems are held accountable for their lack of supremacy. Other economic contingencies placed on education include privatisation and choice. However, these are also dividing practices, with little equality found in the choices available for most students (Ball, 2018). Instead, students are subjugated into classifications that suppress their identities, reinforce stereotypes and negate commensurate opportunities for self-reflexiveness and self-creation.

In clear opposition to the encroaching neoliberal iterations of performative education, Ball (2019) has proposed an outline for a Foucauldian education—one 'that places critique at its centre and which rests on the contingency of power and truth and subjectivity, and thus opens up opportunities of refusal and self-formation' (p. 131). Ball discussed the importance of an education that is ethical and that adds to the self-formation or subjectification of students. The unsettling type of education he proposed creates a school in which students constantly 'think deeply and critically about the illusory world of all the ideas, notions, and beliefs that hem, jostle, whirl, confuse and oppress them' (Chokr, in Ball, 2019, p. 137). Students would become more than mere aggregated bodies, or subjects of calculated market manipulation; rather, it is a proposal that is at odds with contemporary education—an education that relies on an autodidactic interpretation of learning and teaching while also highlighting deficiencies in terms of a heutagogical approach.

A distinction exists between heutagogical and autodidactic education. Autodidactic education resonates with the autochthonic practice of *Visible Learning* (Hattie, 2009), which not only 'carr[ies] the weight of datafied and medicalised mystique' (McKnight, 2019, p. 12) but 'where it is ultimately for learners to construct their own understandings and build their own skills' (Biesta, 2016, p. 378). It is an education without substantive cultural teaching but full of

learning, which is an important distinction made by Biesta (2009a). He emphasised the current attention being paid to learning, calling it the 'learnification' of education (p. 38) at the expense of an education that 'always implies a relationship' (p. 39). As he explained, learning is 'basically an individualistic concept' (p. 38).

In contrast to autodidacticism, heutagogy highlights the importance of self-learning with enriched cultural teaching practice, whereby 'students are encouraged to take responsibility for the learning design and pathway, while instructors facilitate learning and encourage learner action and experience in a supportive, non-threatening environment' (Blaschke & Hase, 2019, p. 2). This form of education resonates to some extent with Foucauldian technologies of self, in which students are reflexively critical and have the need to be autonomous individuals; they actively recognise their condition and 'emancipat[e] [themselves] from the social matrix into which [they] were born' (Flight, 2017). This kind of autonomy places the individual as being within the social matrix and being adept and skilled enough to critique the parameters of control from within, contesting its power. However, teachers are relegated to the position of mere 'facilitators' rather than educators. Heutagogy also relies on *learner agency*, as it emphasises self-directed and self-regulated learning. In Foucault's terms, an education based on the 'notion of ethical self-formation [which] is foundational to issues of individual freedom and identity' (Infinito, 2003, p. 155) would rely more on teacher agency, and it would encourage students to examine and critique accepted dispositions while they experiment in a classroom that is 'an ethical space, a political space and a concrete space of freedom' (Ball, 2019, p. 136).

A further important consideration regarding autodidactic education is its basis on constructivist theory. If students are to seek and find their own autochthonic knowledge, then how is that knowledge to be authenticated? Is it constrained by preconceived criteria? If not, then the validity of the new-found knowledge is questionable. Autochthonic knowledge implies an undermining of creativity, as knowledge is not imagined but curated. This has implications not only for the imagination, which is usurped by utilitarian constraints on knowledge production, but also for the formation of identity as identity, in this interpretation, is to be curated, not formed. Similarly, if the knowledge is new, then the ability to think that thought about new knowledge requires a certain amount of imagination. As Butler attested:

> Constructivism needs to take account of the domain of constraints without which a certain living and desiring being cannot make its way … every such being is constrained by not only what is difficult to imagine, but what remains radically unthinkable (Butler, 1993b, p. 59).

A constructivist approach denies students the possibilities of radical thought, especially since it heavily depends on learning that can be seen and that is assessable, and that knowledge is constructed. This equates with Butler's view that the constructivist approach relies heavily on 'the forced reiteration of norms', and that 'this repetition is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject' (Butler, 1993b, p. 59 & 60).

The iteration and performativity involved in a constructivist approach potentially subjugates students through reifications of the norms endorsed by the pervading neoliberalist discourse—and these norms produce and maintain power structures that exist due to their limiting of possibilities. It is this 'repetition [that] is at once a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation' (Butler, 2006, pp. 191-192). Students are thrust into reiterations of neoliberal values and autodidactic teaching that reinforces, rather than critiques, the encompassing discourse. This involves a governmentality that covers 'the whole range of practices that constitute, define, organise, and instrumentalise the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other' (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997, p. 300). It constrains the freedom of critical interaction by using a repressive and surveillant regime. This governmentality is ever present for evolving students—it is a temporal shaping of identity. Although Butler argued that 'gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts' (Butler, 2006, p. 191), this can also be extended to identity per se. Gender is a facet of identity, and identity, overall, is shaped through a reiteration of discourses—it is 'a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and [which] is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation' (Butler, 2006, p. 191). This thesis explores the effect of these governmentalities, especially regarding student identity formation and student democratisation.

The ostensible aim of education is to offer society democratic and ethical individuals who can contribute in a productive way. If this aim is taken at face value, then enabling students to shape themselves in an ethical framework would, in Foucauldian terms, contribute to these individuals' democratic efficacy. As Infinito argued, this ethical formulation is 'foundational to issues of individual freedom and identity, to issues of the proper response to "the other", and to the maintenance of pluralistic and creative spaces in our society, all of which are rightly educational concerns' (Infinito, 2003, p. 155). However, a contradiction can be noted here: how do students develop a sense of autonomy and democracy in an education system that actively stunts their ability to do so? For example, Rosenblatt argued that 'literary experiences might be made the very core of the kind of educational process needed in a democracy' (Rosenblatt, 1995, pp. 260-261). Indeed, the aesthetic is an important element in the formation

of a democratic subject. Foucault argued that to become ethical, it is essential to take care of the self.

Infinito also noted that Foucault articulated the following ideas: 'the ethical is always political and vice versa; both the ethical and political are achieved through the aesthetic; and when ethically informed, the aesthetic leads to human freedom' (Infinito, 2003, p. 155). There are two important facets that are emphasised: the ethical and the aesthetic. Foucault's conception of the aesthetic is articulated as a discursive practice of self-formation. It is a Baudelairian shaping of the self by the self—a deliberate act of self-transformation. Foucault's complex arguments regarding ethics, aesthetics and freedom are enmeshed with the concept of democracy. Foucauldian ethics concentrate on the development of the self, but not a selfish, introspective self. He argued that the self must first contemplate its own being, but, following this, it is essential that the ethical self also consider others. This conception of the ethical self is integrated into the *relations of power* that exist in the discourses that enmesh and shape our perceptions.

As individuals our own identities are curated and shaped within these discourses; yet, as we are shaped by those around us and change, we also change those around us. These relational interactive networks of power, discursively formed, affect both us and those around us in a reactionary synchronicity. Maxine Greene's work asserted that social imagination is stunted without the arts, as interactive conversations and discussions enable students to become 'more aware of the diversity of horizons in the discourse, and of the danger of reducing what is known to a single consciousness, rather than a multiplicity of voices in any gathering of persons' (Greene, 2000, pp. 268 - 269). Greene extended her argument further, attesting that:

> The spaces of education generally must remain open. We can no more institute an aesthetic experience in another person than we can 'learn' another human being. We have to appeal to people's capacities for 'choice and valuation,' to their imaginative capacities, to their ability to take initiatives and attend actively (Greene, 1986, p. 60).

It is for the individual 'to acquire the rules of law, the management techniques, and also the morality, the ethos, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible' (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997, p. 298). This notion resonates with Rosenblatt's argument that through a critical and transactional relationship with literature, 'the reader seeks to participate in another's vision—to reap knowledge of the world, to fathom the resources of the human spirit, to gain insights that will make his own life more comprehensible' (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 7). This participatory imaginary is necessary for

initiating the inspiration and creativity that underpin democracy. Dewey encapsulated the issue of unimaginative education by noting:

> Our lack of imagination in generating leading ideas. Because we are afraid of speculative ideas, we do, and do over and over again, an immense amount of specialized work in the region of 'facts'. We forget such facts are only data; that is, are only fragmentary, uncompleted meanings, and unless they are rounded out into complete ideas—a work which can only be done by hypotheses, by a free imagination of intellectual possibilities—they are as helpless as are all maimed things and as repellent as needlessly thwarted ones (Dewey, 1931, p. 11).

It is this continuing assault by a data-driven pedagogy that undermines the aesthetic and the imaginative. As Giroux makes clear, when 'public pedagogy … functions primarily to undermine the ability of individuals to think critically, imagine the unimaginable, and engage in thoughtful and critical dialogue: put simply to become critically informed citizens of the world' (Giroux, 2013), then our ethical and democratic principles are at stake. Instead, there is a 'need to constitute spaces where this may be made to happen. They should be spaces in which particular atmospheres are created: atmospheres that foster active exploring rather than passivity, that allow for the unpredictable and the unforeseen' (Greene, 1986, p. 57). The role of the aesthetic provides the means through which the ethical can be established. After offering a persuasive argument on this topic, Rosenblatt concluded that 'literary experiences will … be a potent force in the growth of critically minded, emotionally liberated individuals who possess the energy and the world to create a happier way of life for themselves and for others' (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 262). Not only does this conclusion resonate with Infinito's claim that '[e]ducation, if it is to be a liberal (as in liberating) experience, must recognise its role in the ethical self-creation of individuals' (Infinito, p. 155), it also highlights how students can develop their ethical capabilities through self-inspection, reflexivity and the many aesthetic and cathartic experiences found in challenging literature. 'Informed encounters with works of art', Greene suggested, 'are always new beginnings. New perspectives open in experience; new possibilities of seeing, hearing, feeling are revealed' (Greene, 1986, p. 57). In this explanation of the roles of literature and aesthetics, Foucault's conclusion that 'ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection' (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997, p. 284) has ramifications for the democratic citizen and democracy itself. Bernard Barber underscored the link between the aesthetic and democracy by stating that '[d]emocracy is not a natural form of association; it is as extraordinary and rare contrivance of cultivated imagination. Democracy needs the arts' (in Greene, 2000, p. 277). In their search for ethical formation and thus democratisation, the individual also needs the arts.

Far from helping students in their quest for ethical self-formation, the contemporary surge of autodidactic methodology in teaching instead leaves students unprepared for a critical examination of their society. Their lack of instruction in the fundamentals of critique—either of themselves or their surrounding discourses—creates a dilemma for democracy, as students are fed a diet of fragmented literature in a world that is being formed through undiscriminating soundbites and uncontested reactionary disinformation. Reliance on a panoptic surveillance in education and on the 'tired and constraining imaginary architecture of schooling' (Ball, 2019, p. 134) similarly restrict education's potential as a means of ethical self-transformation.

Additionally, a focus on the 'back to basics' formula and the constant expectation of improved performance in globalised economic competitions emphasises an immediate gratification of improved results, which negates the methodical mastery of competencies. However, this fixation on 'educational attainment is not synonymous with skills requirement in the workplace, and [high-stakes assessments] cannot serve as an adequate proxy for the variety of working capacities required by an industrialised society' (Burgess, 1994, in Kamler & Thomson, 2006, p. 107). Consequently, as students are increasingly marketised and, correspondingly, educational outcomes metamorphose into performance outcomes, the absence of methodical purchase for acquiring critical skills becomes problematic, affecting students, schools, and the conservation of democratic society.

Acknowledging this point, and suggesting that it is an intentional development, Giroux argued that:

> Schools are under attack precisely because they have the potential to become democratic public spheres instilling in students the skills, knowledge, and values necessary for them to be critical citizens capable of making power accountable and knowledge an intense object of dialogue and engagement (Giroux, 2004b, p. 14).

Critical learning and thinking are agential in social critique and for keeping democracies safe. They make 'visible those social practices and mechanisms that represent … the opposite of self-formation and autonomous thinking, so as to resist … [the forces of social deformations] and prevent them from exercising such power and influence' (Giroux, 2004b, p. 14). However, the potential for self-reflexivity is no longer being fulfilled—and this is an underexplored problem in current research. As a technology of self, and its importance to Foucault for the creation of true and effective democracies, the lack of critical self-reflexivity resonates increasingly as democracies decline (Repucci & Slipowitz, 2021). As Tony Blinken, US Secretary of State, explained, democracies 'can show the world that we can deliver not only

for our people, but also for each other' (Blinken, 2021). However, the divisive competitive practices that abound in education undermine this position.

Although this thesis analyses various policies and their formation, its purview does not include all attitudinal aspects of policymaking. Policies, in this thesis, are not a primary element but serve as an important platform from which a number of further issues are examined. There is an awareness that although policy might be an overarching framework, its practical implementation might be different to what was intended. The policies serve as a framework and provide a background to formulate an understanding of their efficacy and their impact on students. The only way to examine the difference between policy and implementation is to empirically research these two possible binaries. The theoretical framework employed here cannot and does not consider actual examples of the hypothesis. Instead, further research on the long-term effects could strengthen these observations (e.g., examining the different societal attitudes over a set period, the rise of nationalism and the current authoritarianism in countries as exemplified by nations' COVID responses). Giroux has begun this conversation, claiming that:

> Political, economic, and social consequences have done more than destroy any viable vision of a good society. They undermine the modern public's capacity to think critically, celebrate a narcissistic hyperindividualism that borders on the pathological, destroy social protections and promote a massive shift towards a punitive state (Giroux, 2013).

The profusion of concerns regarding the direction that education and society has taken is deeply disquieting.

Seeking to contribute to the educational discourse surrounding contemporary pedagogy, this thesis uses a genealogical approach to explore a space for the self-formation of students and their democratisation in an increasingly constraining world. A new educational imaginary is required. Although Ball's (2019) thought-provoking proposal for the development of self-formation in schools is extended in this thesis, recognising and analysing the impediments to this self-formation in contemporary educational spaces is also acknowledged and explored. By resisting the boundaries of identity, students can be taught and encouraged to challenge and disrupt their perceptions of identity, thereby 'no longer being, doing or thinking what [they] are, do, or think' (Foucault, 1991, p. 47). As policymakers struggle to create an education for the 21st century, a new direction away from competitive autodidactic pedagogy is required—one that focuses on developing students' ethical identities. Presently, the impediments to this self-formation in contemporary educational spaces are found in market ideology, a mode of political rationality that is seemingly inscribed in the contours of educational practices. The

task is to rethink the political rationality that makes such veridical and economic conceptions necessary. The quest is to problematise the rationality that constitutes competitive economic marketisation as a fundamental component of education and replace it with an aesthetic programme that enhances students' autonomy.

Methodology

The concept of education is not fixed; it is a discursive concept that emerges through, in a Foucauldian sense, the intersections and interconnections of knowledge and power. Current educational praxis is based on statistical extrapolations that concern the efficiency of teaching practices and student learning. It is this thesis's contention that this educational model considers education only through a mathematical model that denies students and teachers the aesthetics and critiquing skills required to create autonomous and democratic individuals. The intersection of knowledge and power—which are socially constructed and dependent on the social, cultural and historical contexts that make their emergence more likely—has discovered and supplied an educational model that is colonising educational praxis. As a corollary to the way that Butler and Foucault address issues of student subjectification, this thesis will consider, by analysing policies, and the role of the aesthetic, how policy directions and their resultant praxis potentially affects student subjectification. This is a theoretical approach which anticipates further empirical study in this area.

The genealogical approach used, which has previously been used in education studies,[15] will offer an insight into the directions that education has taken. It is limited in scope, as genealogy 'requires patience and a knowledge of details and it depends on a vast accumulation of source material' (Foucault, 1991, p. 82). This study will consider a selection of the many policies and curricula available in a genealogical analysis. Subsequently, it will try to structure an understanding through a view of education that is revealed by 'going behind the institution and trying to discover in a wider and more overall perspective what we can broadly call a technology of power' (Foucault, Burchell, Senellart, Ewald, & Fontana, 2009, p. 117). This is done to offer a more coherent picture of the avenues of power that have shaped educational discourse. As Foucault explained:

> We can proceed from the outside, that is to say, show how the [school] can only be understood as an institution on the basis of something external and general … precisely insofar as the latter is connected up with an absolutely global project, which we can broadly call [education], which is directed towards society as a whole (Foucault et al., 2009, p. 117).

The use of a Foucauldian genealogical approach underpins the research in this thesis. Genealogy provides a structure through which to reveal and clarify the 'history of the present'—that is, the present educational practices. Tamboukou explained genealogy as being 'concerned with the processes, procedures and apparatuses by which truth and

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[15] See, for examp e, (A en, 2018; Ba , 1990a, 2000, 2003, 2012, 2013b, 2015b, 2017; Brass, 2014b, 2015; Dev ne E er, 2004; Hardy, 2004; O ssen, 1999; St ckney, 2012; Wa shaw, 2007).

knowledge are produced, in what Foucault calls the discursive regime of the modern era' (Tamboukou, 1999, p. 202). Foucauldian genealogy offers a lens through which current practices can be explored while acknowledging that they will always rely on the present dispositif[16]. By 'disturb[ing] what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself' (Foucault, 1991, p. 82). While social norms become embedded to appear natural and inevitable, a genealogical approach denaturalises these norms, beliefs, practices and actions through a consideration of contingent historical processes. It is a form of critique that unsettles the prevailing discourse and 'expos[es] the particularity of perspectives that appear to be universal or timeless truths' (Bevir, 2010, p. 429), thereby revealing the contingency and contestability of prevalent educational ideas and practices.

Foucault's dynamic genealogical approach is generative and enabling; it places power relationships in evolving and contingent iterations that can be both subversive and productive. It seeks to analyse the diverse elements in the formation of rules; the forms and uses of knowledge; and the ethics of a pedagogical conduct that does not lead to normative ethics but that questions the authority of the truth speakers and gives voice to the silenced. A genealogy of this type problematises the practices and knowledge found in a circulation of power and introduces discontinuity—a return to memory of an aesthetic pedagogical approach that dramatizes a self-detaching endeavour and creates an existential anxiety in pedagogy. This is a discontinuity that is unsettling because it highlights a new grid of intelligence in current praxis, and it initiates a desire to extend beyond this grid's limits and transform it. This genealogical approach is a form of escape from disciplinary power and the government of individuation—especially regarding contemporary English education, which has marginalised students and delimited their power through nefarious market forces, alienated embodiment and infinitely manipulable procedures that are attached to pseudoscience. Students' right to speech is being annulled through forms of pedagogical subjugation; they emerge as dossiers in systems, in which a truth's authority reinforces the power of the scientific voice. This is invasive, and it threatens the autonomous individual with pervasive surveillance and government techniques through which the politics of identity—in terms of humanistic and enculturing kinds of education—are repressed and mostly discarded. For example, performance assessment is entrenched in current educational praxis, instilling the belief that it encourages student achievement and personal growth. A reliance on PISA tests, and the

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[16] A dispositif is a term that refers to the system of knowledge structures and network of power relations, institutional, physical and administrative mechanisms that enhance and maintain the exercise of power within the society (e.g., parents, government, schools and peers). 'It is through the *dispositif* that the human being is transformed into both a subject, and an object, of power relations. Agamben also focuses upon the *dispositif*, and specifically how it operates as an apparatus to control humanity' (Frost, 2019, p. 152).

presumption that they provide an adequate assessment of education, is immersed in the economic ideology of the OECD—an organisation founded in the discourse of global economic development and cooperation. However, these tests and outcomes focus on the instrumental skills deemed necessary for *productive* and marketable citizens. The OECD claimed that 'PISA focuses on the assessment of student performance in reading, mathematics and science because they are foundational to a student's ongoing education' (OECD, n.d.-b) without elucidating reasons why these aspects are considered foundational, or what type of education is being endorsed. Instead, the popular uptake of PISA ranking and scientific, data-driven education under the watch of *Visible Learning* has become characteristic. This is a populist type of education—one that contains easily trackable results, but also one with the subversive effect of diminishing the formation of autonomous thinkers. It is this kind of heteronomous thinking and blind acceptance of sacred truths and authoritarian procedures that Adorno's negative dialectical approach attacked. As Flight explained:

> An autonomous thinker is one who has the ability to think against the envelopment of populism. The autonomous thinker does not merely conform to a received thesis; an autonomous thinker is one who resists the herd mentality instead of being taken in by the latest affirmations of culture, merely conforming to what is popular, traditional or historical. An autonomous thinker is one who challenges the authoritarian precepts of culture (Flight, 2017).

Undermining aesthetic and humanist types of educational practice, the contemporary educational policies and trends (including *Visible Learning*) incorporate market mentalities that foster natural progressions and incontestable truths.

As these beliefs, actions and practices become normalised, they subsequently create disciplinary technologies that might produce new forms of identity; individuals are thus subjected to controlling discourses through the authority of power that creates a governmentality that, in turn, shapes their consciousness. As Sawicki described it:

> Disciplinary technologies produced new objects and subjects of knowledge, by inciting and channelling desires, generating and focusing individual and group energies, and establishing bodily norms and techniques for observing, monitoring and controlling bodily movements, processes and capacities. Disciplinary technologies control a body through techniques that simultaneously render it more useful, more powerful and more docile (Sawicki, 1999, p. 64).

Contemporary disciplinary technologies shape students for the market through biopolitical discourses of economics and performance, which involves making them more docile. The crux

of this genealogical approach is thus recognising that relations of power and the accompanying discourses embrace nominalism, contingency and contestability. Because genealogies operate as denaturalising and disrupting critiques of ideas and practices that hide the contingency of human life behind formal ahistorical or developmental perspectives, the hegemony of these technologies can be exposed and actively resisted.

Additionally, in educational environments, students are in a discontinuity of shifting forms, interrogating their identities, and contesting the authoritative power that attempts to bind them. If this power is iterative—for example, if it has constant surveillant assessment—then it can become self-producing through those strategic relationships. Through their invoiceable position of subjugation in schools and through the iterations of performance expectations, students are restrained from disrupting and subverting those relationships. However, by shifting those relationships and creating a space for the excluded voices to be heard, new 'objects and subjects of knowledge' that are not compelled to recognise themselves in normative culture can be considered. This eventuates in the resistance to taking the NAPLAN tests through voluntary non-attendance or, as a VATE NAPLAN survey (2017) found, 'many students refused to participate in testing by not responding / writing during the test'. When different and usurping discourses are introduced, the emergence of aesthetic agency can be extended—especially when students find their voices by interrogating power structures and disengage themselves from the iterative chains of surveillant education. Resisting and escaping documentary systems in which containment in spatialised relationships of power is reinforced and then becomes an indispensable form of power is what ties individuals to their identities.

Alternatively, Allen argued that a 'genealogy of this sort does not approach the problem of education as if this thing we call education were reducible to some intrinsic educational ideal or truth that could be exposed, challenged and undermined' (Allen, 2018, p. 54). However, the basis of a genealogical study is characterised by an understanding and subsequent disconcerting of the discourses that have created the contemporary hegemony. This understanding clarifies the miasma of hegemonic norms, and it enables a critical analysis that could result in either challenging or accepting the powers of authority—thereby creating different interrogations through which the powers operate. A (dis)continuity of identity is produced within these power relations, which creates new fields of relational possibilities. It 'requires a rethinking of the various power relations that at a certain historical moment decisively [influence] the way things [are] socially and historically established' (Tamboukou, 1999, p. 207). Indeed, genealogies 'expose the particularity of perspectives that appear to be universal or timeless truths' (Bevir, 2010, p. 429). As Foucault explained, the perpetuated conflict in power remains 'constantly in tension, in activity', and the power relations,

constructed through and by various points of instability, produce multiple sites and modes of resistance (Foucault, 1979, p. 26). Questioning and using this instability offers students opportunities to question their identities within educational power relationships. Without an exploration of the power structures, students are, from a Foucauldian perspective, less likely to form an ethical understanding of self, as the technologies of self are themselves constrained. This thesis questions the ethical being of the individual, or the 'exercise of self' that is colonised by the normalising educational apparatus; it also seeks to expose the genealogy of current educational praxis. It aims to understand the relationship between thought and modes of being in terms of alternative scenarios by questioning modes of pedagogical practice that are never essential or necessary but that are always historical and transformable. A more aesthetic education that concentrates on the codes that regulate conduct—and one that subjectivises students—is posited as a critically alternative ethical and educational endeavour.

These studies reveal a neoliberal ideology of the divisive practices that underlie competition. Additionally, globalisation's effect on education policies also indicates a marked shift towards 'efficiency, calculability, predictability and control through technology', following Ritzer's four operating principles (Ritzer, in Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 27). It is by examining the effect of these four principles—as well as the effect of the colonisation of education through such concepts as *Visible Learning* (Hattie, 2009) that promote the marketisation of education and students—that the effects of such education policies on students can be explored.

Reliance on statistics and mathematical data to shape educational policy has become prioritised to the exclusion of not only other forms of assessment but also other understandings of the purpose of education. This singular surveillant technique relies on standardising tests and partitioning education into easily visible segments, which undermines the democratising and critiquing purposes of a self-reflective education. The compression of time through technology and by accelerating the curriculum has had far-reaching consequences on students, as well as an accompanying effect on the democratisation of Western societies. For example, Ray has indicated that globalisation has reconstituted the concept of the *social* (in Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 23), which further supports the argument that its effect on education, and especially on students, is far reaching. In his farewell address, former US president Eisenhower warned of an over-emphasis on science and technology in creating policy; he suggested that 'in holding scientific research and discovery in respect, as we should, we must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite' (Eisenhower, 1961). Ioannidis also problematised research and policy that has been founded on certain forms of statistical enquiry:

Research is not most appropriately represented and summarized by p-values, but, unfortunately, there is a widespread notion that medical research articles should be interpreted based only on p-values. Research findings are defined here as any relationship reaching formal statistical significance, e.g., effective interventions, informative predictors, risk factors, or associations (Ioannidis, 2008, p. 21).

Although referencing medical research, major educational research that has significantly affected educational policy has also relied heavily on p-values (see Hattie, 2009). This educational research has been the subject of much criticism (see for example Bergeron, 2017; Eacott, 2017; Rømer, 2019; Terhart, 2011); however, any objections have been overridden due to the perception that following the research's conclusions will improve and enhance teaching and learning outcomes. In fact, one resulting effect of this scientific intrusion into education has been aggrandising the importance of STEM subjects, in which the arts are occasionally incorporated as an adjunct in the new acronym STEAM; this is considered another term for curriculum, but with the emphasis shifted to the sciences. Additionally, the slower and more thought-provoking subjects such as literature are discarded in an excess of statistical evidence and surveillant techniques. This usurpation is an effect of the exercise of power and governmentality—that is, an effect of how the conduct of individuals is directed within a framework of policies, as well as an effect of globalisation's external international pressures.

The globalisation of economies, and its subsequent colonisation of education policies, has a disrupting effect on the social milieu, the dispositif in which students' identities are created. For example, Harvey (1989) has argued that the global economy, which 'emphasises the fleeting, the ephemeral, the fugitive and the contingent [has a] disorientating and disruptive impact on … cultural and social life' (in Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 26). The notion of 'the ephemeral' resonates with the accelerating curriculum that discards a deeper evaluation and critique of ideas in favour of a series of assessment tasks that touch on achievement standards.

This thesis, in a circumscribed way, also uses Fairclough's critical discourse analysis which aims 'to shed light on the linguistic-discursive dimension of social and cultural phenomena and processes of change' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 61), in combination with Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, which attempts to promote an 'understanding of the social as a discursive construction' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 24). These analytical tools are especially useful in a Foucauldian study because they work from the premise that not only are discourses social practices that constitute the social world, but that discourses are also

constituted within and by social practices. Fairclough's analytical tools—which emphasise both the linguistic features of the text and a Foucauldian discursive approach to texts in context—focus on texts with discursive practice 'viewed as one dimension or *moment* of every social practice in a dialectical relationship with the other moments of a social practice' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 19, original italics). The use of these tools allows for a critical analysis that contributes to unearthing the misrepresentations or inequalities found in policy texts and government announcements. This analysis is a form of critique that considers that 'what is true should not be determined by a scientific elite … [and that] scientific knowledge … is treated as a contribution to the public debate rather than the final arbiter of truth' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 181). Given the issue of statistical analysis that pervades current educational discourse, disrupting that discourse with this type of analysis can be revealing by investigating 'distorted representations of reality' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 181).

Similarly, Laclau and Mouffe's analytical tools, which are derived from a poststructuralist understanding of discourse, attempt to explore how current perceptions of reality have become hegemonic, and how they appear natural and normalised. Laclau and Mouffe's theory analyses the construction of the reality—of those regimes of truth that are intrinsic to our understanding of our dispositif and that impose limits on what gives meaning. With the understanding that various discourses compete to create knowledge and meaning, Laclau and Mouffe's tools uncover the discourses of power that create the social world. Used together, the two approaches provide a framework through which the consequences of social practices can be revealed by identifying those advantaged and disadvantaged by the policies. These two approaches also tend to demonstrate the development of policies over time by unearthing both policy continuities and discontinuities.

Framed in a genealogical study the thesis uses an intentionally eclectic, heteronomous approach applying different theorists to contextualise the current situation in education. Fairclough is used as an adjunct to the main study, to demonstrate how education has been manipulated through the language and wording of various policies. As such, the thesis does not explore the gamut of Fairclough's nor Laclau and Mouffe's approaches, but carefully curates them as contextual tools to analyse targeted discourses. They are used to variously demonstrate how discourse shapes thought through selective interpretation in the use of language. This thesis uses these theoreticians in a discursive analysis wherein empirical data is not given a priori status not addressed with primary significance.

Analysing the policies that structure the processes of education promotes a better understanding of the agendas that underpin the policies' formation. This is important, especially regarding the creation of students' identity in relation to competing societal

requirements. Durkheim has observed that educational systems are a reflection of society that attempts to reproduce its cultural beliefs and norms through its institutions (Rizvi & Lingard, p. 74). Consequently, current educational praxis reflects the tenets of neoliberalism. This analysis and the attending contestation in terms of diverse policy agendas reveals an understanding of the social practices that underpins students' education and identity formation. An understanding of the discourses thus creates a more democratic framework through which hegemonic practices and the sets of values that are embodied in policies can be disrupted and critically analysed. Therefore, an analysis of educational policy is intended to demonstrate the values that underpin society.

Rizvi and Lingard also illustrated several different approaches to policy analysis. As this thesis is based on but not confined to policy analysis—and because it focuses on uncovering the policies' effects on students in a theoretical way—these approaches are briefly regarded but not developed. The analysis of policies has been limited to considering their effects on student identity as they are used to create solutions to various problems. An exhaustive policy analysis would stray from this objective, and it would culminate in a discourse analysis of the policies as complete works. However, policies are not only situated in dispositifs; they also help strengthen ideologies, or a move towards new ideologies. For example, it can be thus observed that *A Nation at Risk* (ANAR) is mainly concerned with re-placing the US on the educational world stage, as it regarded the dominance of eastern countries as a threat to the US's sovereignty, ideology and world leadership. As this debate over educational standards increases, the rhetoric from politicians becomes more intense, such as with the *Race to the Top* (RTTT)[17] and other policies. The *Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2015b) continues this tradition with its focus on the 'basics' of education (nominalised as literacy and numeracy), in which it thereby excludes values and individual, student-centred education or the humanistic education of previous generations and curriculum iterations. In this sense, this thesis considers the policy outcomes and their effects on students, and it uses the policies as a basis for understanding the accumulative effects of policy implementation on teaching and students.

The implications of policy, and the nescient governmentality embedded within the policies, are profound considering the consequences of students' subjectification within their identity formation. Through performativity, the assumption of a hierarchical power structure reinforces social norms, including those in the social imaginary of policies and those transferred through the actions of schools when they deliver their interpretation of those policies. Foucault's methodology provides a fluid space for change through power relationships; it creates spaces for disruptions and discontinuities. Instead of identity being fixed, its construction is always

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[17] *The Race to the Top* (RTTT, 2009).

under development and in a state of flux. The hierarchical approach to power assumes that power is absolute, unbending and unidirectional. Foucault's approach to power, in which power is non-linear and positive—in that it is multidirectional and unbounded, and thus capable of being usurped, changed or improved—means that identities are not static, as they are permeated with agency and subject to the multifaceted, dynamic movements of power. Similarly, in a Foucauldian sense, identity is not autochthonic or inherent; instead, it is constructed through the power and knowledge discourses that weave themselves through every aspect of life. It is these tendrils of governmentality and biopower that create the conditions in which students try to comprehend their identities. Foucault's model of the spatial networks of relational practices provides areas for disrupting discourses through which individuals can question their own relationships to the current discourses; thus, individuals can actively critique themselves and their society and, in doing so, recreate themselves as autonomous. Foucault claimed that power is positive—and individuals using power to create and recreate their identities through knowledge to alter power relationships exemplifies this aspect of Foucault's theory.

Foucault alluded to the power of expert and institutionalised discourse, regimes of truth and the delineation of standards that create a formation of disciplinary power that arrogates for itself the means to determine identity and delimit and normalise individuals in a power-knowledge network of truth games. Foucault claimed that:

> Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of
> constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime
> of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it
> accepts and makes function as true (Foucault, 1980, p. 131).

The body is weighed down by these encompassing inscriptions and discourses, which subsequently creates a specific and institutionally normalised identity through a subjugation to power and knowledge. However, as power-knowledge assemblages continuously evolve (subject to discontinuity and newly instituted procedures), identity becomes more than a cultural artefact; it can appear nebulous and formless, creating the possibility for the grip of strict powers to be overturned and transcended. This possibility emerges as a positive conception of the evolution of identity—one in which identity abandons the imperious and pressing investments that prohibit and constrain individuals, and it escapes the policy of coercions that act upon the body. By critically examining the power-knowledge discourses that are a part of the dispositif, individuals can establish a different economy of morals and ideational beliefs that constitute bodies. However, Butler warned that:

> If that very subject produces its coherence at the cost of its own complexity, the crossings of identifications of which it is itself composed, then that subject forecloses the kind of contestatory connexions that might democratise the field of its own operation (Butler, 1993b, p. 77).

The dense field of operative technologies intended for the manipulation of being and the limitations inscribed in the performative iterations of social norms confine the scope for imaginative reconceptions. These significations and anthropocentric constants can be challenged and recast by the critical and transactional study of literature, and this would help support the imperative of experiences that promote a 'culture of the self'; this kind of study could place the individual on the threshold of other forms of consciousness, ones that do not adhere to culturally defined conditions or normalisation standards. This transactional study of literature would also help individuals accept a cultivation of complexity in defiance of restrictive, normalising and performative iterations.

Butler highlighted the performativity involved in identity formation, whereby identities are formed through continual iterations of embedded social and discursive practices. As perceptions of the self are shaped through the lenses of performative and reiterated practices, individuals are thus subjugated to accept a specific view of the self. In this formulation, subjectivity becomes the outcome of social discourses that recognise certain viable positions while disavowing others. However, the discourses are fluid, and there is always more than one discourse network in which individuals find themselves. By discovering and understanding these possibilities, individuals can usurp the subjugation of their identity and begin creating an ever-evolving autonomous identity. Foucault's power-knowledge relationships and networks in which individuals are enmeshed are not necessarily coherent; instead, they are continuously fluctuating. Subsequently, the individual's identity is framed within a disjointed and shifting relationship to these networks. It is these positions of precarity that allow for the individual's own interpretative subjectification. An essential element of this process is self-reflexivity, in which individuals are encouraged to critically analyse their position through an understanding of the power networks and discourses that subjugate them. The effect on student subjectification and subjugation requires analysis through an examination of this critical aspect of subjectification in relation to the acceleration of curricula.

As recent policy strategies have aimed to enhance the position of various states on the OECD's leaderboard of PISA results, it has been noted that curricula have been accelerated, especially regarding reading and literacy skills (Buddeberg & Hornberg, 2017; Gallagher, 2009; Healy, 1990; Wolf, 2008). This aim should be critiqued in the context of the general aim

of most curricula or educational policies. For example, the Melbourne Declaration[18] stated that '[a]s well as knowledge and skills, a school's legacy to young people should include national values of democracy, equity and justice, and personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience and respect for others' (MCEETYA, 2008a, p. 5).

Although these are commonly expected elements in the English course ('democracy' is only mentioned in the Humanities and Civics part of the Australian Curriculum), a critical examination of how these important elements are conducted and of the fragmenting and obstructionist educational operations in pedagogical practice currently remains understudied and underexplored. The grandstanding claims of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) needs attention because a conspicuous refusal to engage in critical reflexivity yet remains. ACARA expects that:

> Students develop ethical understanding as they study the social, moral and ethical positions and dilemmas presented in a range of texts. They explore how ethical principles affect the behaviour and judgement of imagined characters in texts and the real-life experiences of those involved in similar issues and events. Students apply the skills of reasoning, empathy and imagination to consider and make judgements about actions and motives, and speculate on how life experiences affect and influence people's decision-making and whether various positions held are reasonable (ACARA, 2015c).

Rosenblatt and Adorno provided useful literary lenses through which the consideration of these curricula aspects can be critiqued. Rosenblatt's transactional methodology and Adorno's dialectical theory of culture—'emphasising the artwork's critical relationship to society on the one hand, and the theory of aesthetic experience undergone by the artwork's recipient on the other' (Pickford, 2020, p. 1)—provide a basis for examining and challenging the kinds of discursive positions found in policies that encourage the formation of students' 'identity thinking'. These methodological lenses have been chosen because they help encapsulate the central contentions that the Australian Curriculum uses as their proselytising strategy, as well as the instrumental capabilities that students should acquire in their education. Alternatively, Rosenblatt argued that 'literary experiences might be made the very core of the kind of educational process needed in a democracy' (Rosenblatt, 1995, pp. 260-261). Clearly, Rosenblatt considers the development of the aesthetic response critical not only to the individual's development but also to the continuation of a democratic society's ideals. Adorno similarly contended that disarray and fragmentation occurs when:

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[18] Me bourne Dec arat on   Me bourne Dec arat on on Educat ona Goa s for Young Austra ans.

> Enlightenment … the progressive technical domination of nature, becomes mass deception and is turned into a means for fettering consciousness. It impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves. These, however, would be the precondition for a democratic society which needs adults who have come of age in order to sustain itself and develop (Adorno in Pickford, 2020).

Both Rosenblatt and Adorno consider the critiquing of society fundamental in a democratic society. As Adorno argued, 'It is the act of critique, it is the act of negative argumentation, it is the act of dealing negatively with what is asserted to be absolute. The unquestioned must become the questioned, what is unidentified must become identified' (Flight, 2017). Yet, as education becomes dominated by technology, data and accelerated curricula, these positions become reified, and they remain unquestioned. Discerning the effects of this domination requires understanding the Foucauldian power-knowledge continuum and balancing that understanding within the theories of Rosenblatt and Adorno.

However, Rosenblatt presciently acknowledged the problems that have become inherent in English teaching: 'When one thinks of all that great literary works can yield, one is horrified to see them so often reduced to the level of language exercise books for the young' (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 207). Rosenblatt clearly problematises the use of literature as a ponderous form of literacy recursion, as a pedagogical technique characterised by a suffocating efferent approach that is now standard practice in English classes. Rather, her method of treating each text as both exploration and 'experience' (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 267) encourages students to read in a 'transactionary way', which subsequently helps them develop a self-reflexivity and emotional and imaginative sensibilities that 'are part of the indispensable equipment of the citizens of a democracy' (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 261). In turn, Ryan and Dagostino (2017) contended that '[i]n this age of testing and standards, many participants [of their study] found that Rosenblatt's theories added the welcome, important, and often-neglected focus on personal, aesthetic response to the reading instruction espoused by many school systems' (p. 40).

The lack of a critical approach to literature may have repugnant negative outcomes in students' subjectification, and Rosenblatt's research highlights these outcomes. The broad gamut of instrumental discriminations at play in contemporary education (especially the exclusion of aesthetic pedagogy) impinges on students' ability to become democratic and autonomous members of society. As Rosenblatt had earlier contended, the revival of aesthetic education is needed: 'Literary experiences will then be a potent force in the growth of critically minded, emotionally liberated individuals who possess the energy and the world to create a happier

way of life for themselves and for others' (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 262). The equation must be changed radically; otherwise, the essential component of understanding will remain trammelled by a reliance on data, standardised testing and measured learning—educational features that immanently impede opportunities to teach students how to become critically self-aware and autonomous. If students are to become autonomous, then using Adorno's negative dialectic approach—that is, questioning all that appears to be culturally self-evident and true—will encourage them to break the power relations that attempt to control their thoughts, and to assault the pretence of reality that subjugates them.

Intersecting Foucault's theories of governmentality and Rosenblatt's theory of transactional reading in literature is the current episteme[19] that governs educational praxis. To understand how these conditions affect students, the underlying and pervasive norms that construct societies (especially education) require examination; this would establish a foundation on which the theoretical research could be underpinned. This holistic approach considers the regime of truth created by a scientific and data-driven education system—a complex organisation that is more than the sum of its parts. The focus is on complex interdependencies and system dynamics that cannot be reduced in any meaningful way to linear singularity or inherently bounded and neutral relationships. For Adorno, it is the power of authority that specialised knowledge claims for itself that validates concern. Excluding the legitimacy of other approaches, he argued that the scientific method that education has embraced constitutes a surveillant authority that excludes all unsanctioned methodological activities. This subsequently moulds students in an education regime that sanctions and rewards parochial thinking. Aligning this with Foucault's conception of the power-knowledge paradigm as not static but constantly re/configured through discursive practices, it is argued that students require more than just an enervated experience. Education must reintroduce a gamut of measures that provides an enriched and clear form of aesthetic education, allocating Literature the capacity to create a culturally rich investment in pedagogical practice and fostering a critically aware generation of students and citizens.

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[19] Th s term s used to refer to the 'unconsc ous' structures that under e the product on of know edge n a spec f c t me and p ace. It s the 'ep stemo og ca f e d' form ng the cond t ons of poss b ty for know edge n a g ven t me and p ace.

1. Methodologically Sanctioned Education — Creating the School Prison

Hamlet: 'Tis none to you; for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me it is a prison.
Rosencrantz: Why then your ambition makes it one. 'Tis too narrow for your mind.
—*Hamlet*, Act 2, Scene 2

Introduction

Education, as a critical practice, develops self-reflexive thinking and understanding, which subsequently creates a disconnect from uncritical schooling and narrow and pervasive heteronomy. In its humanistic forms, it is a liberating praxis that enables autonomous action (Adorno, 1966; Flight, 2017). For teachers and students, education provides a *technology of self*—a means allowing them to create their identity through subjectification.[20] Students require the tools of education to transcend the normalisations that are imposed on them through the inherent power relationships in current discourse. In the current episteme[21] of neoliberalism, certain areas of education that are easily assessable have become privileged (e.g., utilitarian literacy). Others, like literature and the arts, have had their usefulness questioned—if not directly then certainly by implication of achievement standards, pedagogical governmentality and economic performativity. Literature in English curricula has been colonised by an efferent form of literacy, in which it is submitted to fragmentation and performativity. However, by critiquing the source of technologies that serve contemporary neoliberal governance in educational policy and administration, it is possible to resist the colonisation of literature by forcibly opening some of the gaps and offering new directions. Subsequently, as current educational practices are problematised, the deployment of specific games of truth—with their rigid patterns of thought and practice—can be disrupted and questioned.

This chapter analyses selective elements in contemporary educational discourse, from the threshold of emergence, to how, over time, these pedagogical models have impacted students. It considers evolving views and ideas about education, it investigates various notions of what education is expected to achieve, and it explores these notions within the context of Foucauldian concepts of governmentality and technologies of the self. By clarifying specific

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[20] Following Biesta, the notion of 'subjectness' will often be used instead of 'subjectivity', as 'the latter has echoes of subjectivity as the opposite of objectivity', whereas what is often being interrogated is 'the "condition" of being a subject rather than an object' (Biesta, 2016, p. 389). The term 'subjectivation' suggests the notion of being made a subject. In turn, 'subjectification' refers to the autochthonous individual who can act autonomously. As used here, 'autochthonous' relates to an individual's independent thoughts and ideas instead of reflecting those of an external agency that echoes the concept of subjectivation. Therefore, subjectification is the overall internalised effect of subjectivation and autonomy that results in identity.

[21] 'Episteme' can be described as the totality of unconscious rules that authenticate, orchestrate and subliminally systematise a separated fields of knowledge. According to Foucault, it is power and knowledge capillaries that shape our perceptions and limit our actions; they are also the areas in which people search for identity and coherency. Although the term 'neoliberal episteme' is used throughout this thesis, neoliberalism is only a small part of the whole episteme; it is an ideology that has and is yet shaping our perceptions.

regions of education, this thesis intends to promote a discussion involving pedagogical relationships, education's infrastructures and inevitabilities, the governmentalities and biopolitics that encircle education, and the neoliberal economies that have colonised education—which will then provide a clear basis for critiquing current policies.

School education is constantly problematised and critiqued, which indicates its importance in the enculturation of young individuals. As Ball suggested, the 'school became in many respects an expression of humanity and a demarcation of the limits to humanity' (Ball, 2013a, p. 48), with one of its tenets being 'to create a clear distinction between light and shadow, civilisation and barbarity, infancy and adulthood' (Ball & Collet-Sabé, 2021, p. 6). Education, and its role in schools, is also the arena for students' identity formation. Structured by many theories and economic strictures, education has broadly shifted from mass schooling for the working classes—through what Dewey termed the 'feudal dogma of social predestination' (Dewey in Hyslop-Margison, 2012, p. 315)—to liberal humanist systems, and then to a system that Brown called a 'parentocracy' (Brown, 1990, p. 66). Currently, education is based on statistically based efficacy, utilitarian values, achievement standards and panoptic assessment, and it focuses on marketable skills for economic benefit. 'Grounded in logics of globalization, marketization, and individualization' (Hager, Peyrefitte, & Davis, 2018, p. 200 2018), neoliberal ideology creates a discourse in which students are conflicted by being a part of the global network and apart from it. Furthermore, concentration is based on individualisation while students are exposed and subjected to the skewed utility and freewheeling principles of a market economy. Although it could be argued that current educational policy seemingly echoes and resonates with the utilitarianism that Dickens satirised in *Hard Times*—evoking the 'back to basics' formulation that politicians advance as the best way forward—it is actually subtended by an underlying change in episteme that constructs a new regime of truth. Following Foucault, this chapter intends to 'analyse the process of "problematisation"—which means how and why certain things (behaviour, phenomena, processes) became a problem' (Foucault, 1983b), as well as to delve into how contemporary discourse in education has emerged and the subsequent underlying effects on students.

If the notion of education is comprehended in Foucauldian terms (especially in terms of subject creation), it should be noted that Foucault's concept of creating the subject contradicts many current curricula, including the AC:E. For Foucault, 'the truth about oneself is not something given, not something in our nature, and not something we will have to discover for ourselves. It is something we need to create for ourselves' (Walshaw, 2007, p. 18). Curricula, and thus education, must provide the tools that encourage this self-

reflection.[22] However, instead of focusing on the students' development of self, the Australian Curriculum focuses on 'learning continua [which] have been developed for each capability to describe the relevant knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions at particular points of schooling' (ACARA, 2015a). In this type of formulaic configuration, students are constructed in disembodied and universalised concepts such that they are no longer individuals but points along a constructivist continuum. The curriculum appears to be an ontological scheme that echoes feudal dogma. In this sense, student subjectification is both compelled and constricted by 'learning intentions' and 'success criteria'.[23] These learning intentions and success criteria, echoing marketplace terminology, can have the effect of constricting and punishing free and imaginative thought, particularly that which 'tolerates nothing of mental activity other than what has been methodologically sanctioned' (Flight, 2017). Zhao argued that this 'employment-oriented paradigm is about reducing human diversity into a few desirable skills' (Y. Zhao, 2013, p. 14), and that schools produce people with similar skills; this subsequently forces a conformity and standardisation onto students who, because of this governmentality, have little choice in substantially questioning this subjectivation.

Several questions are prompted by these points: What is the underlying reason for a society to enforce a restrictive education on its children? How far are students enabled to create themselves? To what extent is the government enabled to create a viable workforce or to facilitate the emergence of a neoliberal agenda within the population? Giroux (2013) warned that 'this is a time of deep foreboding, one that haunts any discourse about justice, democracy and the future'. Resonating with this concern and with the current control of the content and delivery of education, Hager et al. argued that '[e]ducation thus is not a citizen right anymore but has been converted into a commodity' (Hager et al., 2018, p. 201). Education is always political, and according to Giroux (2010b), it can never be neutral. Heterogeneity must either be absorbed into that standard, or it is expelled and condemned. However, contemporary praxis further constrains individual students through pervasive and delimiting surveillance and techniques of government. In this sense, humanistic and enculturing kinds of education are repressed and mostly discarded. As a political agency, education is always directive, and it is often prescriptive in its attempts to teach students how to inhabit certain modes of agency. Education is performative, and it builds technologies of self that enable students to understand

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[22] A question yet remains regarding to what extent students must meet the school's agenda, and whether schools should meet the students' agenda. The school agenda follows, perhaps loosely, the government agenda outlined in various curricula documents, as well as in the overarching prevailing episteme. It is this agenda that is questioned. Education is multifaceted, but it is obligated to provide students with the requisite tools to critique their conditioning, culture and the current episteme. However, as Biesta highlighted, 'when we are engaged in decision making about the direction of education we are always and necessarily engaged in value judgements – judgements about what is educationally desirable' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 2).
[23] 'Learning intentions are descriptions of what learners should know, understand and be able to do ... [They] are the basis for tracking student progress, providing feedback and assessing achievement ... Success criteria are the measures used to determine whether, and how well, learners have met the learning intentions' (AITSL).

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the greater world and their role in it by defining relationships and measures of social responsibility. Pedagogues presuppose that what is taught and experienced in the classroom serves as some sort of understanding of a more just, imaginative and democratic life (Giroux, 2010a, p. 194). However, performative education effectively creates prohibitions and sanctions that compel a specific goal. Students act within the confines of an authority of power that constrains freedom of action and thought, in which identity is channelled towards a specific, and currently neoliberal, goal. With its emphasis on achievement standards, the AC:E promotes individual success in terms of 'the depth of understanding, extent of knowledge and sophistication of skill' (ACARA, 2015a), creating a 'pedagogical hierarchy [that] divide[s] students up into more and more finely-differentiated units' (Devine-Eller, 2004, p. 6). The divisive practice of separating students by age and then by ability through this 'disciplinary time that was gradually imposed on pedagogical practice' (Foucault, 1979, p. 159) became a further subjugation of students.

Negotiating how students learn, how teachers teach, what counts as education and how this restricted education should be delivered remains a contested domain with a long history of claims and counterclaims. The nature of education in terms of what teaching is, what counts as effective pedagogy and what measure of autonomy or heteronomy students should experience in the classroom is continuously problematised. For example, Biesta questioned the new nominalisation of the student as a 'learner'. He suggested that the 'new language of learning has redefined teaching as the facilitation of learning', with the 'erosion of the welfare state … shift[ing] the responsibility for (lifelong) learning from "provider" to "consumer", turning education from a right into a duty' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 5). Giroux echoed this point when he suggested that 'students have to learn the skills and knowledge to narrate their own stories, resist the fragmentation and seductions of market ideologies, and create shared pedagogical sites that extend the range of democratic politics' (Giroux, 2004b, p. 18). Neoliberal education is also accused of dehumanising teachers and reducing them to mere facilitators (Allard & Doecke, 2014; Biesta, 2016). As a constant topic of discussion in government and the media, the education of children has been considered an essential area in the development and enculturation of modern Western society—and as Adorno would argue, in creating an ethical society that 'know[s] how to be critical of itself [and] the culture in which it exists' (Flight, 2017). What can be currently observed is a dislocation of student, learner and education, as students are redefined from being empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge to dutiful and lifelong learners working for society and the economy. Through various power relationships (e.g., pedagogical, parental and societal), the conception of the student has been deconstructed, reshaped and reconstituted into an autochthonic being that draws out

knowledge from within for life. Perceived as a drain on the economy, students are expected to work performatively in school before working equally as performatively for the economy.

The purpose of education remains a contentious issue. If there is a direction towards individualism[24] in education, it is part of the neoliberal agenda. Individualism dismisses the social elements that should be integral to education and identity formation. The web-like matrix of society pervades every aspect of identity formation – students are caught in the language, culture, and institutions which help define and shape their individuality. Autonomous thinkers learn to practise diversity and sociality and community and not just become the atomised individuals through individualism that neoliberalism wants them to be. Instead, education needs to encourage membership in a society, to have empathy and sympathy with others to create an ethical democracy.

In current neoliberal discourse, education serves to create an entrepreneurial, self-responsible and enterprising workforce. The emerging heteronomous subject is functional in a utilitarian sense, and it can be productively used in the economy. As Hager et al. highlighted, educators are 'delivering … quantifiable and measurable services and skills for readying the students-consumers to the capitalist and corporate job market' (Hager et al., 2018, p. 201). Employability remains immanent in the Australian Curriculum framework. As ACARA explained:

> The study of English plays a key role in the development of reading and literacy skills which help young people develop the knowledge and skills needed for education, training and the workplace. It helps them become ethical, thoughtful, informed and active members of society (ACARA, 2015a).

The curriculum privileges functional skills—especially utilitarian literacy and numeracy skills, as they are considered essential for the workplace. However, literacy is then combined with ethical development, even though no explanation is provided regarding how this would occur. In turn, literature is mostly ignored and considered a substantive ethical resource.

A further concern that Strhan noted is that:

> [I]n privileging private individual success and fulfilment, modern Western culture has shifted questions about what it means to live a good life out of public debate, so that within education, policy discussions are mostly framed

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[24] Zuboff discriminated between 'individualism' (atomising and isolating), 'individualisation' ('the locus of moral agency and choice') and 'individuation' ('the lifelong exploration of self development') (Zuboff, 2019, p. 33). An autonomous individual is a freethinker within a social framework and can work socially with dialogue to critique the environment. An individuated individual is one aligned with the neoliberal agenda: atomised, responsible for every action and choice, given little time to critique these options, and solely responsible for all outcomes. This individualism/atomisation negates the opportunity for meaningful critical dialogue.

around neoliberal logics of the marketplace, utility, competitiveness and efficiency (Strhan, 2016, p. 333).

Reflecting on both Durkheim and Levinas's concepts of education, which are 'rooted in a sense of social life as beginning with ethics', Strhan suggested that their view:

> Demonstrates the narrowness of totalizing educational discourses in which, for example, education is treated as a service that can be delivered to consumers in an educational marketplace, a domain of increasingly conceived in terms of privatized choice rather than public good (Strhan, 2016, p. 342).

This notion of self-serving individualism driving out communal sharing and community values echoes those of many researchers, including Ball (2003, 2015b), Brass (2014a) and Biesta (2009a). Further, Biesta has suggested that:

> [T]he prime example of a commonsense view about the purpose of education is the idea that what matters most is academic achievement in select curricular domains—particularly language, science and mathematics—and it is this commonsense view which has given so much credibility to studies such as TIMMS, PIRLS and PISA (Biesta, 2009a, p. 4).

Even further, as then president of the UK Board of Trade, Margaret Beckett, perspicaciously claimed, '[a] sound education system is essential to provide business with the well-educated, adaptable workforce it needs' (Beckett, 1997). Ignoring noetic aesthetics in literature and the density of enculturation that can be acquired from engaging with it, the notion of effective education has been replaced by '[functional] skills [that] lie at the heart of productivity, of innovation and of quality' (Beckett, 1997). This unambiguous promotion of market utility promotes *homo economicus* as an educational objective. In this conception, privatization and the hermeneutics of the self serves an ideational regime which valorises competitiveness and exclusivity in the neoliberal domain, where individual competitiveness 'guides our educational consciousness and sensibilities' (Slee, in Ball, 2013b, p. 121).

If education is expected to serve the needs of wealth creation, then student subjectification is severely curtailed by these functional market agendas, they delimit and constrain the students' experiences. As the discourse surrounding students tends towards competition (both in education and in society), it separates students who succeed from those who do not fit into this discourse, through what Foucault called 'dividing practices' (Foucault, 1982a, p. 777). Competition and self-serving interest manifest in these dividing practices that privilege some individuals over others. When discussing the 'radical democratic equality of standing'—which involves 'the revitalisation of those public goods [including education] essential to the fulfilment

of each individual's human potential'—Schwartz argued that 'regardless of the outcomes one achieves in the labour market, all members of society… should have access to those basic human needs that enable individuals to lead a decent material existence and participate in civil life' (Schwartz, 2019, pp. 80 – 81). However, this idealistic but pragmatic perspective is expunged from contemporary practice. Instead, with the constant pressure of data collection, algorithmic parameters and panoptic surveillance, students are denied, through the inanition of this 'modern play of coercion over bodies' (Foucault, 1979, p. 191), democratic access to the basic human needs integral in achieving an ethical subjectification. They can no longer define themselves through a fulfilling, imaginative and unrestricted education based on the formation of individuals; rather, they are constrained in an unyielding neoliberal embrace, resulting in 'dehumanisation through the apparatus of ideology' (Flight, 2017).

This neoliberal embrace purports to be democratic and based on principles of equality, but Schwartz astutely exposed this fictional signifying practice when he questioned 'how many liberals erroneously equate marketplace conceptions of equality of opportunity with a democratic conception of equality of standing' (Schwartz, 2019, p. 81). With the continuously increasing focus on STEM subjects and its inevitably negative effect on the arts, students are denied legitimate opportunities for self-reflection. For instance, in the US, this approach persists, even though 'only 5 percent of current jobs demand high-level STEM degrees' (Schwartz, 2019, p. 71). This constriction of the curriculum demonstrates the single-minded focus of neoliberal ideology: the primacy of the marketplace over and above the legacy of the individual. This notion has an intractable kinship with Krce-Ivančić's argument:

> The neoliberal imperative is underscored by the assumption that the neoliberal subject is not just the self-made man but is, more precisely, the man made purely out of rational choices, which does not leave any place for irrationality in one's life (Krce-Ivančić, 2018, p. 3).

Given a small amount of acknowledgement in the AC:E, literature and imagination in neoliberal education resonate with an underlying assumption that they are irrational, and by implication, largely irrelevant. When students are presented with imaginative narratives, the focus displaces deeper cultural and character connections; targeting, instead, efferent literacy, with the goal of pursuing functional assessment and proselytising the curriculum's conventional social norms. In Foucauldian terms, the educational system fosters an active, self-entrepreneurial subject, wherein, neoliberalism primarily produces ontological change and creates a discourse of economical rationality for students (see Krce-Ivančić, 2018, p. 5). It also:

> [de-]emphasise[s] the role of autonomous individuals and the force of self-determination, which [Adorno] saw as the outcome of a moral and political project that rescue[s] education from the narrow language of skills, unproblematized authority, and the seduction of common sense (Giroux, 2004b, p. 13).

It has thus been argued—for example, by Adorno (1966), Ball (2017), Biesta (2016), Butler in Giuliano (2015) and Giroux (2004b)—that education is 'a field that is ultimately concerned with the transformation and alteration of human beings' (G. Zhao, 2016, p. 324). This perspective highlights the effects of education, although how the student is transformed and how this materialises is different in Foucauldian and maieutic thought. Modern education privileges the notion that it creates the individual—unlike the Foucauldian genealogical account, in which discourse and diagrams are a hermeneutic key to comprehending how student subjectness is shaped. The students' school is a part of the shaping discourse, and remains a technology used in their subjectification (the school environment) plays an extensive role in the students' 'transformation and alteration'. As Ball asserted, in the C19th:

> The very idea of the school, its materiality, its imaginary, its articulation within policy and practice came to be centred on and enacted in terms of the machinery of differentiation and classification, and concomitantly of exclusion. Power was literally made visible and visceral as architecture and space, and as practices of division and exclusion (Ball, 2017, p. 4).

In the 21st century, the school is still encompassing this kind of space, this discourse, that is also a technology of self, employed by students. Further, the modern school exemplifies even now 'the practices of division and exclusion' through ability streaming, age differentiation and gender perceptions. It is axiomatic that the student population discover a taxonomy that constitutes hierarchy and an identity assigned to nomenclatures.

Educational concepts: Maieutic and humanistic

The Socratic system of education operated on the theory that the knowledge students require is immanent, and that it only needs to be drawn out by the teacher. Constructivist theory also operates along these lines, in that through collaboration, students will be able to disinter the knowledge from their selves and create an understanding through discovery. These two theories specifically view knowledge as being immanent in the student—unlike Foucault, who posited that knowledge is created through discourse and history in a power-knowledge relationship. According to Foucault, knowledge is far from immanent, and that it partly requires the subject to create the knowledge. However, by concentrating on the student, a different perspective emerges. Students are not empty vessels into which knowledge can be poured.

Additionally, if teaching is solely about knowledge transmission, then it should be questioned what and whose knowledge is being transmitted. Even further, it should also be questioned whether the teacher is a mimesis of a Google search engine—someone who merely facilitates their students' knowledge acquisition.

It has been argued (e.g., see Robinson, 2009) that the Enlightenment first asserted the importance of logic and critical thinking, and that evidential support of scientific ideas consequently became the new episteme—one that has since continued in education. This concentration on a scientific approach to education (most noticeably in its recent incarnation of visible learning[25] and STEM subjects) has shifted focus from the arts and humanities— areas that were the central focus of the mid–20th century. Patterson emphasises this aspect, explaining that English in Australia, until 1997:

> represented a curriculum territory that [was] not solely, or even importantly, linked to a knowledge of content. Instead, it … emphasised the attainment of techniques related to 'person formation' or 'development' expressed in such terms as 'sensitivity', 'appreciation', 'personal growth', and 'critical consciousness'—implying a high degree of personal autonomy and freedom for the learner (Peel, Patterson, & Gerlach, 2000, p. 238).

Brass (2014a) outlined the changes that have occurred over the last century, suggesting that education has been dominated by the 'psy' disciplines (after Popkewitz, 1991). As education provision was slowly changed to something given by professionals, the pedagogical methods used were consequently dominated by psychology, especially by behavioural, developmental and psychometric theories. Smagorinsky's study (1999) pointed out that although the educational research field in the 1990s was 'influenced by developmental psychologies, constructivism, student-centred instruction, instructional scaffolding, cognitive reading and writing processes, whole language and transactional theories of reader response', these factors were 'at odds with the highly predictable, structured, content-driven, form-orientated values that predominate[d] in most schools' (Smagorinsky, in Brass, 2014a, p. 115). The subsequent effect on students has been a trigger to channel their vision into preconceived suppositions that destabilise their self-reflexivity.

In turn, pedagogical theory focuses on the development of students and on preparing them for modern life. It concentrates on developing students' human nature in an ontology that is shaped by certain liberal tenets of Western humanism. For example, the focus of Goal 2 in

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[25] 'V s b e earn ng' s a phrase Hatt e (2009) used to cod fy the encroachment of a data dr ven concept on of educat on. He def nes v s b e earn ng as: 'When students become the r own teachers they exh b t the se f regu atory attr butes that seem most des rab e for earners (se f mon tor ng, se f eva uat on, se f assessment, se f teach ng) (Hatt e, 2009 p. 43).

the Melbourne Declaration is that 'all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens' (MCEETYA, 2008a, p. 7)—and these qualities are expected from the education of students. When Walshaw commented on humanism and liberalism, she explained that:

> Humanism is characterised by a belief in an essential human nature and in the power of reason to bring about human progress. Liberalism is characterised by the belief in the inalienable right of the individual to realise herself to the full (Walshaw, 2007, p. 17).

She continued by suggesting that 'liberal humanism is a theory in which the subject's experience is neither sought nor even valued' (pp. 17–18). It is neither sought nor valued because liberal humanist thinking relies on a view of the world that echoes that of Chomsky, in which subjectness is the source rather than the effect of language. A division exists between the individual and the external world. Contrary to Walshaw, Foucault would suggest that the subject relies on the external discourse as a means of subjectification, and that they are intricately linked in a power-knowledge continuum. Even Dewey, a transactional pragmatist, defined education as 'that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases [one's] ability to direct the course of subsequent experience' (Dewey, 1916/2011, p. 45). Dewey problematised the education of his time, in which he focused on solving a problem in society through optimal successful outcomes, and on the imposition of meaning despite societal constraints. Students in this scenario are constrained within their societal environment. Foucault, however, would regard individuals as constructing themselves and being constructed by discourses that have been constituted through those constraints. This is a much more dynamic approach as individuals construct themselves through a resistance or acceptance of the power-knowledge continuum.

As different learning theories become apparent, one fundamental aspect becomes clear: the student is considered an object upon which the teacher works. This occurs through using the various learning theories that are currently fashionable, or through the control and agency of the teacher. Foucault understood agency as an active engagement with an assembly of power-knowledge structures or mechanisms—an intricate mesh of possibilities that creates identity through subjectivation and subjectification. Contemporary pedagogy tends to largely displace students as active subjects who can create their own subjectification. More inextricably, accountability, monitoring of ongoing assessment and surveillance delimit independence and autonomy.

In support of the above argument, Biesta contended, that education has become a teleological practice, in that it involves intentions, purposes, aims and objectives:

If teaching is going to have any impact on learning, it is because of the fact that students interpret and try to make sense of what they are being taught; not because teaching simply flows into their minds and bodies (Biesta, 2009b, p. 354).

The constructivist way of thinking about education relies on the immanence of learning—on the belief that 'learning is characterized as occurring inside the learner, interior to the subject's mind' (Joldersma, 2016, p. 394). However, if learning is immanent, then individuals no longer construct themselves; instead, they find a Platonic mimesis in an already constructed self, but, nevertheless, one needing pedagogical attention.

The limitation of this immanent position is its functional effect on the student. Operating as a means to an end, knowledge is considered utilitarian and learning formulas are rapidly forgotten because the standardised test primarily requires an assessment task serving the purpose of passing the class. Education comes to be regarded in the same light—as a means to an end: achieving employment, wealth and material goods. Impersonally commodified, the student emerges without a critical ontology of the self and channels a functional and docile efficacy within a market economy, a political anatomy that aligns with the wider social spectrum found in a neoliberal agenda.

The neoliberal education that is being proffered by the likes of the ACE:E limits students' self-forming activity and potential such that the students become part of the culture; their subjectness functions like a compass, in which they are directed towards an axiological compliance that is constituted through contemporary discourses—and they do this instead of exploring and critically interrogating different technologies and alterity through an engagement with creative and diverse literature. Despite literature appearing as one of the three strands in the AC:E, the value of the imagination is eroded because the paramount priority placed on literacy and testing, as well as a new utilitarian view of education and the self, constructs a functional and utilitarian identity. Surrounded by the testing behemoth, students construct a hermeneutics that comply with neoliberal subjectness. This then encourages a consideration of not only how we learn but also of what we learn, and how what we learn constructs or enables us to construct our being. It can be asked: how do these technologies of self aid subjectification, and how do we create ourselves in a hermeneutical world?

The commodification of education

Education could be regarded as a continuum or timeline of progress (as in the AC:E); however, it is more realistically a staccato journey through ideas, abilities and achievements. Strands of education and learning theories have followed a circulatory pathway—from a maieutic stance through various psychological approaches to the current episteme of experiential discovery

learning through collaboration, with the assumption that collaboration is the most efficacious learning method. Although collaboration can be considered extremely beneficial in an educational setting, the type of collaboration advocated is unspecified. Instead, the focus is seemingly on students 'collaborating' in an inward way to find a result rather than on an outward-looking collaboration in which ideas are shared and examined. The commodification of education leads students to believe that ideas are commodities, and so they are unwilling to collaborate in an idea-sharing environment.

This neoliberal restructuring refocuses education on the performative student, the result of which Ball referred to as 'the mundane force, brute logic and stunning triviality of performative individualism' (Ball, 2015a, p. 258). Students are reduced to data points in schematic algorithms measured as degrees of effectiveness that signal progress from the neoliberal economic standpoint. Here, the individual counts for little, and authorities who create policy are not held accountable. Data becomes the driving force behind government policy, and the students—caught in this collection of quantifiable knowledge—are convinced that the data they produce are more important than the assimilated knowledge and subsequent construction of self that they have achieved.

Data provide a panoptic surveillance that ensnares the student in a web of data collection, and they attempt to structure the students' perception of self; this augments the Foucauldian argument concerning biopower, in that '[p]opulation comes to appear above all else to be the ultimate end of government' (Foucault, 1978/2001, pp. 216-217). The role of education is re-transfigured into an efficient method of producing literate and pliable workers who are relegated to products of neoliberal dogma. Dewey argued that we should '[c]ease conceiving of education as mere preparation for later life, and make it the full meaning of the present life, [in that] it is the effect of the education on the student that is the main concern' (Dewey, 1893, p. 660). However, this is not always apparent in the modern educational environment.

As students develop their own conscience and consciousness, their acquired knowledge helps them shape themselves further. Ball is correct when he stated, following Foucault, that 'what we call education is a complex of power relations concerned with the manufacture and management of individuals and the population—a key space of regulation and bio-power' (Ball, 2017, p. 2). It is also a key space for disruption and resilience. Even further, by critiquing these relations, students will have the chance to disrupt validity and meaning by exposing the conditions for the formation of truth.

This is a development of Kantian liberalism, as Biesta explained:

> With Kant, the rationale for education became founded on the idea 'of a certain kind of subject who has the inherent potential to become self-motivated and

self-directing,' while the task of education became one of bringing about or releasing this potential 'so that subjects become fully autonomous and capable of exercising their individual and intentional agency' (Biesta, 2009b, p. 356).

Kant's legacy engendered a discontinuity in which liberation from stratified feudal dogma and ritualised and hierarchical educational articulations begin to emerge. Students are no longer controlled and circumscribed by entrenched dividing practices; instead, they enact a quest for relatively autonomous subjectification. It can be argued that education is a starting point for the self-exploration of subjectification. Foucault suggested that these moments of reflective selfhood appear as foundations for establishing the ethics of the self. Walshaw alluded to Foucault's conception of 'the self as a "work of art", continually in progress', and further warned that the 'harsh reality is that if we shun the responsibility of self-creation we come to be entirely fabricated by others' (Walshaw, 2007, p. 16). This notion aligns with Kant, who believed that maturity is autonomy rather than a dependence on others. The 'others' mentioned here are the teachers, who are constrained by the policy environment of English as assessable literacy, discarding the holistic value of education that falls outside this delimited view (Goodwyn, 2003).

Biesta problematised this restrictive notion in education, in which enculturation and democracy 'becomes a process of socialisation through which "newcomers" become part and are inserted into the existing social and political order' (Biesta, 2011, p. 149). He suggested that there are three main functions of education: qualification, socialisation and subjectification (Biesta, 2009b, pp. 355-356). These functional divisions resonate with Foucault's three modes through which power operates: 'dividing practices' (Foucault, 1982a, p. 777), 'scientific classification' and 'subjectification' (Foucault, 1991, pp. 8, 11). These practices are composed through discourse and the apparatus of power—the episteme in which individuals are located. Educational practices, being a major discourse in which students construct themselves through what can be thought, have a responsibility due to the assembly of power relations that impact individuals. Biesta argued that qualification is about the 'the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that qualify us for doing something' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 43). This concept highlights a functional value of education, and it forms Foucauldian dividing practices through qualifications that are constructed 'in a matrix of authority and process of diagnosis' (Krisjansen & Lapins, 2001, p. 51). According to the AC:E, the 'study of English helps young people develop the knowledge and skills needed for education, *training and the workplace*' (ACARA, 2015b, pp. 2, emphasis added)—which is to be accomplished through the 'achievement standards' and 'learning continua' mentioned above.

However, classification tables and taxonomic criteria divide students according to ability in a mathesis of truth. They are classified as 'learners' and 'gifted and talented'. Although '[g]ifted and talented students are entitled to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning opportunities drawn from the Australian Curriculum and aligned with their individual learning needs, strengths, interests and goals' (ACARA, 2015b), other learners are not similarly entitled. These pedagogical dividing practices shape students' perceptions, their personal sense of potential and their sense of social standing. As Krisjansen and Lapins (2001) observed, the 'gifted' students become 'the emerging student aristocracy'. This classification also expands the concept of the commodification of students, in which success involves 'achieving on the measures of success that "count"', and in which students increasingly become 'children of the market' (Keddie, 2016, p. 109)—further resulting in realising the neoliberal doctrine.

Ball echoed this understanding:

> Education may well be, as of right, the instrument whereby every individual, in a society like our own, can gain access to any kind of discourse … Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse (Ball, 2017, p. 1).

The discourse is shaped by a configuration of organisational power, a dispositif, that is subject to various manoeuvrings in the educational field—such as politics, teachers, teacher unions, education boards, parents and students. Its contours are moved persistently, which creates a sense of uncertainty and equivocality, and the technologies of reform create new kinds of teachers. As Ball argued, these changes in discourse also demonstrate that:

> The policy technologies of education reform are not simply vehicles for the technical and structural change of organizations but are also mechanisms for reforming teachers (scholars and researchers) and for changing what it means to be a teacher, the technologies of reform produce new kinds of teacher subjects (Ball, 2003, p. 217).

Teachers are being reterritorialised, re/forming themselves to conform with the changed dispositif. As trenchantly argued by Goodwyn (2003), when teachers of English become teachers of literacy—purveyors of neoliberal literacy—then the values that they have brought to the subject become warped in a grotesque commodification of creativity. In this kind of pedagogy, it is students who ultimately become casualties of neoliberal educational governance.

One pivotal reason for this has been the rise of neoliberal ideology. Brass stated that due to 'this shift to advanced liberal governmentality, recent educational reforms have largely

redefined the aims and purposes of education in *economic* terms' (Brass, 2015, p. 12). Instead of academic knowledge and researched theory shaping curricula, it is 'entrepreneurs, philanthropists, neoliberal economists, state governors, neoconservative think tanks, corporate foundations, test-makers and business leaders who have named themselves "education experts"'—that is, harbingers of technical and educational functionalism—who are the driving forces behind the changes; they are the so-called 'reformers' (Brass, 2014a, p. 119). Overall, the dispositif is the driving force behind the changes of these 'reformers'. This corporate ensemble emerges as the mimesis of substantive curricula that is informed by academic research and established pedagogy.

A concerning trend in transformative reform is the repositioning of language to negate its transgressional effects. Karp has highlighted that 'corporate school reformers like to call themselves just "reformers"', and that they position themselves as a counterpoint to the 'status quo'. The corporate and foundation crowd has successfully captured the media's attention, and it has appropriated the moniker of 'education reformers'. As Karp argued:

> If you support testing, charters, merit pay, the elimination of tenure and seniority, and control of school policy by corporate managers, you're a 'reformer'. If you support increased school funding, collective bargaining, less standardised testing, and control of school policy by educators, you're a 'defender of the status quo' (Karp, 2011).

This kind of appropriation of a descriptor (reformer) usurps transformative resistance of a critical issue through a shifting of the frames of reference, thereby creating a negativity through deflection.

The shift towards the conflation of testing and positive educational reform moves the emphasis of teaching English away from the symbolic and the aesthetic—that is, the art of literature—as many of the teachers in Goodwyn's article expressed (Goodwyn, 2003). Creativity, in this mathesis, becomes possible only within the constraints of assessment criteria. Assessment has become widespread—by teachers, national testing and internationally. However, assessment is a divisive practice predicated on categorising students rather than supporting them. This appropriation of assessment also demeans teachers by devaluing their formative assessment abilities. By creating an atmosphere of control and surveillance (e.g., through data collection technologies like 'Learning Management Systems'), students become increasingly pressured to conform. They are subsequently delimited in their identity formation due to conforming to predefined and hegemonic structures.

Therefore, the main issue with the reformers' approach to education is that it seemingly excludes any type of education that cannot be tested against standards (i.e., taxonomic correlations)—such as imaginative writing, creativity and freedom of expression—even though these types are included in the Australian Curriculum. The approach also appears to exclude multi-literacy and multimodal forms of English. Cumming et al. alluded to these limitations when they asserted that:

> Considerable gaps exist among conceptualisations of literacy and English literacy, literacy policies, the national statements of learning and the enacted focus of literacy—English literacy in the NAPLAN tests. Gaps also exist between NAPLAN literacy test content and valued outcomes identified in early consultations for the national literacy benchmarks … Clearly missing from NAPLAN are opportunities for students to demonstrate their literate capabilities in viewing, shaping, designing, listening, speaking, critical thinking (apart from inferential reading comprehension items), technology, digital and multimodality, with the exception of text with printed images as stimulus material (Cumming, Kimber, & Wyatt-Smith, 2011, p. 46).

Biesta remarked that there is 'something intuitively appealing about the idea that evidence should play a role in professional work', and 'that professional practices such as education should be based upon or at least be informed by evidence continues to capture the imagination of many politicians, policy makers, practitioners and researchers' (Biesta, 2010, pp. 492, 491). The main focus of education is thus no longer on deep learning, critical thinking and self-reflection. Instead, students emerge in a statistical distribution and order—in a hierarchy of data points that links identity to measurement and calculation. The foundation of this exhaustive ordering of students and their 'nature' has become a language of mathematics; the focus is on taxonomic data points in the grand scheme of neoliberal accountability and effectiveness. In the neoliberal economy, success or failure—especially regarding the function of accountability in relation to testing regimes—is immanently linked to a science of order. However, those who create and constitute the policy are exempt and are not held accountable. The individual will not disappear from the machinations found in biopower politics, but measurement and surveillance are ongoing practices that ensure compliance with the broader aims. A fundamental disparity can be observed when regarding education as a means for creating the self, as Foucault would suggest, and regarding the governmental perception of education as a means for creating *homo economicus*.

Education as a return on investment

Arguing that 'when we are engaged in decision making about the direction of education we are always and necessarily engaged in value judgements—judgements about what is educationally desirable' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 2), Biesta contended that these value judgements are impeded by 'the abundance of information about educational outcomes [which] has given the impression that decisions about the direction of educational policy and the shape and form of educational practice can be based solely upon factual information' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 2). Not only does this impression reveal a tendency to privilege empiricism, under neoliberal ideology, but it also indicates how the government can become the shaper of educational policy, guided by the independent educational 'experts' in the profitable education industry who create the tests. Schools and teachers then act on the educational policies (e.g., AC:E) through the curriculum. Consider Butler's concept regarding how the law is constituted as a site of iteration: 'The judge is thus installed in the midst of a signifying chain, receiving and reciting the law and, in the reciting, echoing forth the authority of the law' (Butler, 1993b, p. 70). If this concept is followed into the realm of education, then a similar idea can be used for teachers. As Butler stated, the judge is 'not the authority himself who invests the law with its power to bind; on the contrary he seeks recourse to an authoritative legal convention that precedes him' (Butler, 1993b, p. 70). Teachers, too, are caught in a signifying chain, as they enact policies and defer to an external authority, whether regarding educational policy or a predominant premise of effective teaching. In the classroom, teachers create a site of subjectness for the student, in which they have absolved themselves of accountability for that subjectness. As this discourse is reiterated, the student is interweaved into that discursive condition or episteme, which creates a subject that reflects the neoliberal discourse. In this form of subjectivation, educators 'create' literacy as a 'normalising' medium 'through which individuals are constituted and constitute themselves. Teachers are themselves constituted through this paradigm as they, and their students, are responsible as they freely participate and become complicit in the process [of education]' (Hancock, 2018).

Since at least the early 1980s, one common refrain that has been heard in education is that of 'getting back to basics'. However, as Luke suggested, 'the public construction of a golden economic age of full employment in a protected, pre-multinational, pre-globalised economy' has led to 'the "new racism" that … lit up public debate in 1996 and 1997 [and that was] indicative of a coming apart of the social and educational contract of the past two decades' (Luke, 1997, p. 8). In turn, Butler has argued that 'it is precisely through the infinite deferral of authority to an irrecoverable past that authority is itself constituted' (Butler, 1993b, pp. 70-71). In this way, governments continue to define themselves using rhetoric to conjure these utopian visions of the idealised and irrecoverable past to create the future. However, the past is also

transformed into a glorious age that the present is required to emulate. For Foucault, this would be a misunderstanding; the past demarcates the present and the future in an irrevocable discontinuity.

The rhetoric has shifted slightly, though educational basics are still considered a core constituent of educational progress. However, now, an economic slant has been incorporated into this theme—that of economic investment. Simon Birmingham, former Federal Education Minister, stated in an interview that 'we [the Australian Government] absolutely acknowledge that performance has not been satisfactory in terms of getting the return on investment, the growth and achievement that people would expect in Australian schools' (Birmingham, 2018). When he mentioned a return on investment in education, it must be questioned what he meant by 'a return'. Did he mean an economic return? A return for the community? A return for the whole society? Or a return for the individual? If the latter, then should the value(s) that students have gained through education be examined instead of their economic value when they leave their teaching institutions? Creating a society with citizens who have fulfilling lives is probably the greatest return on any investment in education. As Giroux highlighted, the neoliberal stance on education:

> Places an emphasis on winning at all costs, a ruthless competitiveness, hedonism, the cult of individualism, and a subject largely constructed within a market-driven rationality that abstracts economics and markets from ethical considerations. Within this pedagogy, compassion is a weakness, and moral responsibility is scorned because it places human needs over market considerations (Giroux, 2010a, p. 185).

In a neoliberal definition, educational values are based on employability and productivity (in an economic sense), and they are controlled by societal economic value—that is, in terms of owning certain objects of modern living, such as a car, house and laptop. It is this kind of emphasis that devalues the aesthetic over the material.

Although students find themselves in this governmentality discourse, Foucault highlighted that they are locked in identity struggles that:

> Question the status of the individual: on the one hand, they assert the right to be different, and they underline everything which makes individuals truly individual. On the other hand, they attack everything which separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself, and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way (Foucault, 1982a, p. 781).

In this sense, students are subject to several discourses that 'do not merely *reflect* or represent social entities and relations; they actively construct or *constitute* them' (Walshaw, 2007, p. 19)—and, concurrently, these discourses aid the construction and constitution of the students themselves, both externally and internally. Education becomes a critical responsibility, as it involves the individual's creation of self; further, those involved in education (e.g., government, teachers, profit and not-for-profit organisations) bear this responsibility for those in their care, as the students themselves bear responsibility for understanding the reality of their self-identity:

> Responsibility … thus appears as 'the first reality of the self'. It is the moment where the self finds itself, so to speak. Or to be even more precise, it is the moment where self-identity matters, because in its responsibility the self is [as Levinas suggests] 'non interchangeable' (Biesta, 2016, p. 374).

The onus is on the students to interpret the discourses in which they find themselves, as well as on those in education to provide the students with the necessary tools to do so.

Creating the tools for identity formation

One evident way that these tools to be created is by assigning a more hermeneutical role for literature in the curriculum. Currently, literature is one of three strands in the new Australian Curriculum; however, a more prominent role is warranted if literature is to fulfil its stated educational potential—that is, to 'create confident communicators, imaginative thinkers and informed citizens' (ACARA, 2015a). There has been a serious shift away from an earlier view of literature as 'fundamental' (*A Statement on English for Australian Schools*, 1994, p. 6) to its present diminished position. The AC:E positions literature as holding equal status to both 'language' and 'literacy'. However, relegating literature to this role is epistemologically and ontologically flawed. By reducing literature's significance in the teaching of English, education fails its students' exploration of the 'ethics of the soul' (Ball, 2017, p. 75). It is through the study of literature that students encounter the *technologies of self* that enable them to become the 'ethical, thoughtful, informed and active members of society'; further, literature also 'enrich[es] the lives of students, expanding the scope of their experience', as promoted in the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2015b, pp. 2,6). As Robinson highlighted, 'through imagination, we not only bring to mind things that we have experienced but things that we have never experienced' (Robinson, 2009, p. 58). He prefaced this with his insight that 'were mathematical and verbal intelligence the only kinds that existed, ballet never would have been created. Nor would abstract painting, hip-hop, design, architecture, or self-service checkouts at supermarkets' (Robinson, 2009, pp. 48-49).

However, the neoliberal ideology seemingly encourages teachers to become little more than facilitators in the classroom—and in this sense, the subjectness of students privileges a process of orchestrated self-monitoring and testing. Following his extensive metadata analyses, Hattie suggested that 'when students become their own teachers they exhibit the self-regulatory attributes that seem most desirable for learners (self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-assessment, self-teaching). Thus, it is visible teaching and learning by teachers and students that makes the difference' (Hattie, 2009, p. 22).

In this suggestion, Hattie is creating an autochthonous subject that involves students teaching themselves to be subjects that are self-controlled through 'the machinery of a furtive power' (Foucault, 1979, p. 203)—which is a disciplinary practice enforced by the school. Although it can be agreed that Hattie is suggesting a functional subject, it can be argued that this subject is effective only in terms of acquiring functional knowledge. Hattie starkly contrasts Dewey, who in Simpson's view 'did not intend that students be held primarily responsible for their achievements or shortcomings. Instead, he considered adults responsible for creating learning conditions to promote educative experiences for children' (Simpson, 2001, p. 183).

There are important consequences to what Hattie has suggested, one being a reconstitution of knowledge. Foucault warned that 'what we must grasp and reconstitute are the modifications that affected knowledge itself'. In this case, only knowledge and understanding of significance are visible and assessable, so 'comparison be[comes] a function of order' (Foucault, 2002, p. 60). It can also be strenuously argued that this immanent method of learning not only relegates the teacher to the periphery, but that it also locks the student in a never-ending panoptic surveillance of school and self-based monitoring of standards; in this sense, school and testing create a panoptic-like prison for students. Hattie inflated the 'self' as a sovereign cogito/ego that sculpts its own self-image, one constituted as desired by the government. He has been made into a self-testing, self-disciplining subject that will be placed in the workforce. Biesta rejected this regime of classroom practice in which the self imperiously provides the outline and articulates the significations that are most apposite to learning. He pertinently noted that:

> The suggestion that we can overcome this problem by focusing on students and their learning—understood as acts of interpretation and comprehension—fails, because such acts of interpretation and comprehension have an egological structure that emanates from the self and returns to the self, even if this occurs 'via' the world. For this reason, I suggest that in acts of interpretation and comprehension, the self can still not appear as subject, but remains an object in relation to its environment. I suggest, in more

philosophical terms, that our subjectness is not constituted through acts of signification (Biesta, 2016, pp. 376-377).

Following Levinas's analytic method, Biesta 'approach[ed] the question of human subjectness through ethics rather than through knowledge' and suggested that 'our subjectness is rather called for from the "outside"' (Biesta, 2016, p. 377). In this view, the immanent theory of education (i.e., students are self-taught) would limit students' opportunity to explore their subjectification, and they would thus be deprived of the essential aspect of education—their self-development using technologies of self. Hattie's view of education seemingly limits *valuable* education to only that which can be assessed; it thus purely considers the value (or economic benefit) rather than the values (or principles) that underpin the ethical subject. If learning is understood as a process of only interpreting and comprehending knowledge, then it ultimately does not allow students to create themselves; it means that 'education is failing the students' exploration of the "ethics of the soul"', as Ball suggested (Ball, 2017, p. 75).

An interpretation and comprehension of knowledge is the basis for, but removed from, the hermeneutical study of literature, as discussed above, which aims to discuss and interpret ideas. Biesta claimed that 'whether someone will be taught by what the teacher teaches lies beyond the control and power of the teacher' (Biesta, 2013, p. 457), suggesting that it is students' responsibility to critically interrogate that knowledge in the formation of their 'soul' or identity.

Coda

Education, in all its different aspects and guises, is still concerned with the development of the student—or, as Dewey (1893) described, 'it is the effect of the education on the student that is the main concern'. Although education might be regarded as something imposed by the teacher or government, it can also be considered a liberation of the student's inner self, as well as a time for the student to develop through self-forming activities (i.e., technologies of self) that avail their own subjectness (Adorno, 1966; Foucault & Rabinow, 1997).

Hattie seemingly conceives education in purely assessable terms—as 'visible' education rather than invisible, which subsequently turns the student into a measurable quantity or commodity. The ethics behind an educational policy or practice that favours a limited concept of education (e.g., developing a workforce or STEM) might also need to be questioned; this type of policy or practice would subject students to a limited, quantifiable type of education rather than a qualitative one, subsequently turning students into measurable quantities and commodities. Although neoliberalism privileging employability as a normative pursuit is not unethical, it is unethical from the perspective that this form of governmentality loses student autonomy. It loses student autonomy in terms of self-creating subjectness and the imaginative

and creative teaching of literature just because it does not correspond to the commodity fetishism and instrumentalism that inform neoliberal education.

Levinas posited that '[teaching] designates an interior being that is capable of a relation with the exterior, and does not take its own interiority for the totality of being' (cited in G. Zhao, 2016, p. 324). In this, it is evident that a relationship between the internal and the external is essential for the formation of identity, whether for teachers or students. Teaching and learning are about encountering the new and strange, about being interrupted and called into responsibility to the Other' (G. Zhao, 2016, p. 324). When students are allowed to freely encounter and interact with literature—without the panoptic surveillance of neoliberal testing and the confines of narrow, analytical interpretation and comprehension—then they free themselves to explore their own subjectness, which is educationally desirable and a key element of liberal educational practice. The hope that educational practices will enable student subjectness is what educationalists like Giroux (2004a) posit as 'a form of utopian longing'. It is only through a diverse education that students can 'learn about their potential as moral and civic agents'. As Giroux explained, this is because:

> Educated hope opens up horizons of comparison by evoking not just different histories but different futures. Educated hope is a subversive force when it pluralizes politics by opening up a space for dissent, making authority accountable, and becoming an activating presence in promoting social transformation (Giroux, 2004a, p. 62).

Students should be encouraged to explore their ambitions so that they do not, as Rosencrantz suggested, become imprisoned in their minds or in the prevailing discourse. They should be autonomous individuals who actively recognise their condition and 'emancipat[e] [themselves] from the social matrix into which [they] were born' (Flight, 2017).

Neoliberalism is subsuming education into an invasive market force ideology. It is essential to consider what is lost in this process. Imagination, individualisation, critical opposition and the democratic rethinking of, and resistance to, accepted norms are seemingly just some of those losses along the path of economic forces. Literature, Art and Music are relegated as non-essential subjects that have little utilitarian value because they do not add productivity to the data stream of neoliberal consumerism. Foucault suggested that 'all moral action involves a relationship with reality' (Foucault, 1978/2001, p. 28); however, the reality is that 'the market knows best' mentality deprives students of their democratic right to become fulfilled human beings through subjectification, as the discourse that surrounds students is contaminated by consumer politics. Instead, what is being created is a nationalistic world—a world of former

president Trump, Brexit and the Australian refugee policy in which the economy and instrumental individualism triumph over ethical humanitarianism.

As the curriculum withdraws into neoliberal competitiveness, education retreats into a panopticon of scientifically approved surveillance that 'obtain[s] the exercise of power at the lowest possible cost' (Foucault, 1979, p. 218). The ostensible cost is economic; for the student, the latent cost of an etiolated education leads to the loss of critical and ethical opportunities. The moral assumptions of such curricula require disrupting, as this invasive market-based education imperils the autonomous individual with pervasive surveillance and techniques of government in which the politics of identity—in terms of humanistic and enculturing kinds of education—are repressed and mostly discarded. Students are given little opportunity 'to become ethical, thoughtful, informed and active members of society' (ACARA, 2015a). Instead, they are made subjects in a neoliberal episteme. When Adorno railed against heteronomy—against the confining and unquestioning conformity—he was highlighting education's decay into an uncritical acceptance of societal norms that ultimately leads to barbarism. According to Adorno, without critique, without disrupting the thinking and actions that underpin our values in society, then we return to Auschwitz. As society accepts the sterilisation of education through its total acceptance of the surveillant authority of science and data-driven education—or its acceptance of 'dehumanization through the apparatus of ideology' (Flight, 2017)—then students become less autonomous and less questioning of the frameworks and discourses that subjugate them.

Students learn to be self-critical, to critique their society and to become ethical citizens through a robust curriculum that offers 'a whole field of new realities' (Foucault in Ball, 2013b, p. 104) instead of one tainted by the disciplinary and divisive practices of assessment and internal or international competition in which '[s]chooling as a process is rendered into an input–output calculation' (Ball, 2013b, p. 104). This type of *askesis* that encourages students to rethink their relationships with themselves and others offers them the opportunity 'to fully confront the world in an ethical and rational manner' (Foucault, 1983a), thereby adhering to Adorno's call in his lecture, *Education after Auschwitz*: 'Auschwitz—never again!' (Adorno, 1966).

2. A Genealogy of English Education — The Episteme That Binds English Pedagogy

The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together.
—All's Well That Ends Well

Introduction

Functional and utilitarian literacy have increasingly become the dominant focus of English education and curricula over the past few decades. While 'education has always been the substance of politics, … it is rarely understood as a site of struggle over agency, identities, values and the future itself (Giroux, 2021). Since the mid-1990s, governments and policy institutions have 'emphasise[d] the fundamental importance of education considered as an investment both in human capital and in the production of research or new knowledge' (Peters, 2002, p. 91). Because students are now regarded as 'human capital' who have been primed for their role in the economy, their education has become more marketised. Further, as neoliberalism increased its influence in education, a new governmentality took precedence— one in which teachers' professionalism was questioned and countries used the science of data algorithms to shape and distort their authority and change curricula. The surveillant use of standardised testing in schools and globally in PISA tests has slowly constricted literature, to the extent that it is now just a transient shadow in the classroom. Sociological and instrumental approaches to education have also facilitated a functional view of education (see Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 57) that has subsequently relegated the study of literature to the sidelines of educational practice.

This transformation of English usurps the dynamics of educational reform to render the complexities of English education ineffective. As Bill Green suggested, in English curricula, there is 'a new semiotic and cultural landscape … forming around us … a new paradigm [which] is emerging, which … can appropriately be labelled as "English-as-Literacy"'; he further suggested that this new paradigm has become 'increasingly evident … from the 70s onwards' (Green, 2006, p. 10). The change in emphasis from English as a place where students are encouraged to enjoy aesthetic enrichment to English becoming a testing ground for functional literacy ability can be grounded in the introduction of the PISA tests in 2000, although the underlying conditions for this were already present. Further, the shift in education from an emphasis on society to one on economy has been evident since the late 1950s (Peters, 2002, p. 92). Drawing on the Homeric and Socratic Greek qualities of narration and discussion, Green has advocated a return to the golden time of 'English as Rhetoric' (2006, 2017). In the same way, a humanist would advocate a salubrious return to moralistic teaching. However, each position fails to recognise that the conditions for such movements are no longer present.

Instead, a creative critique of the present is required—one offering new modes of resistance that lead to a kind of Foucauldian 'transgression' (Foucault, 1980, p. 140).

When Gatsby discovers that even he cannot turn back the clock to a more 'golden time' he is ultimately destroyed; so too will campaigns which seek an immanent direction in history; a return to a 'golden age' in the teaching of English. The English curriculum evolves, always emerging from surrounding and historical contingencies and conditions, those complex moments, immersed in interrelations, challenging the power relations that shape understanding. This evolution cannot be subsumed or incorporated in previous historical conditions. There has been a radical re-contextualization and transfiguration in the ensemble of disparate elements that inform the teaching of English. Restructuring the historical field in relation to English education can only reference monuments of an ideal type in its pedagogy but must now recognise the new mobility and new displacements that have irrevocably changed the pedagogical landscape. Foucault explains this, arguing that the 'present undergoes change … historical descriptions are necessarily ordered by the present state of knowledge, they increase with every transformation *and never cease, in turn, to break with themselves*' (Foucault, 1972, p. 8, added italics); that is, there is no return to the golden past. Instead, Foucault's genealogical analyses of relations of power, and forms of knowledge reveal that forms of pedagogical cohesion and patterns of historical possibility have a precarious and complex history in human practice.

The transformation of education

Foucault remarked that '[e]stablishing continuities is not an easy task, even for history in general', and that '[w]e may wish to draw a dividing-line; but any limit we set may perhaps be no more than an arbitrary division made in a constantly mobile whole' (Foucault, 2002, p. 55). Regarding these tendentious conditions of possibility, establishing a dividing line for the beginnings of neoliberalism might provide 'an appearance of continuity and unity' (Foucault, 2002, p. 56); however, the discontinuity that promotes a different episteme—that is, the way that 'within the space of a few years a culture sometimes ceases to think as it had been thinking up till then and begins to think other things in a new way' (Foucault, 2002, p. 56)—is notoriously difficult to pinpoint. Foucault himself suggested that it may not be possible, at least until 'the particular systems and internal connections' have been more clearly defined. Instead, he recommended that 'we accept these discontinuities in the simultaneously manifest and obscure empirical order wherever they posit themselves' (Foucault, 2002, p. 56).

Evident today is the massive shift away from the welfare policies in the US and UK. Forged in the first half of the twentieth century these policies focused on societal values, but the transition to neoliberal individualism has now become apparent in educational policy shifts,

including Australia. There might not be a pivotal moment or a decisive point when this change occurred, but the Western world's reliance on the US and its influence can be observed through the attraction of diverse media sources (e.g., Hollywood, television shows and comic books) and an interest in US elections. When JF Kennedy was inaugurated, the world became immersed in the depths of the Cold War and in the throes of the 'Red Scare' of 1947–1957. Kennedy's famous 'ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country' utterance from his inaugural speech might have set the tone for future neoliberalism. His challenge to every American to contribute in some way to the public good prompted a shift in doctrine from the state as provider to the individual as responsible for the state. The fear of communism placed the responsibility on the shoulders of individuals, and despite Johnson's subsequent welfare policies, these were then rescinded by former president Nixon. Although Keddie suggested that 'these [neoliberal] imperatives have been hegemonic in shaping social relations in contexts such as England for approximately 30 years' (Keddie, 2016, p. 109), the underlying capillaries of change were evident long before then. Economic theory has shifted from the Keynesian ideology of the welfare state, through former president Nixon abandoning the Bretton Woods agreement in the 1970s, to Friedman-based Thatcherism and Reaganomics in the 1980s, to the Schumpeterian entrepreneurial model that was prevalent in the 1990s, and to the current ideology of globalisation and neoliberalism. This changing face of economics has been instrumental to correspondingly changing the face of education, as governments have become progressively more involved in transforming educational outcomes to support their own ideologies.

What has transformed contemporary society is a neoliberal discourse which has pervaded into everyday life. As Read succinctly remarked:

> We have to take seriously the manner in which the fundamental understanding of individuals as governed by interest and competition is not just an ideology that can be refused and debunked, but is an intimate part of how our lives and subjectivity are structured (Read, 2009, pp. 34-35).

Instead of a welfare state, the rhetoric changed to individualisation; instead of the right of individuals, it became the responsibility of individuals. Correspondingly, the student became responsible—and thus accountable—for the failing economy, especially according to people in the corporate world who wish to sell their remedies (Ravitch, 2011). In this sense, economic success became contingent on student performance.

Economic performativity is so inculcated in society that it has become difficult to consider education without also considering the boundaries of economics. New economic performativity has been especially influential regarding its effect on the teaching of English.

As emerging neoliberal economic ideologies become hegemonic, they dislocate educational praxis, transforming how education is perceived and practised. When the 'knowledge economy' became the accepted idiom (an increasingly popular term since the 1990s), knowledge became progressively commodified. Business, the economy and jobs subsequently become the aims of education instead of democratisation, social enculturation and individual identity and growth. Schwartz referred to this discontinuity as relocation, contending that 'many liberals erroneously equate marketplace conceptions of equality of opportunity with a democratic conception of equality of standing'; the resulting disparity was further emphasised when he asked: 'should only winners in this meritocratic marketplace race of life lead fulfilling lives?' (Schwartz, 2019, p. 81).

Wrought from this change in emphasis, proficiency in literacy and its perceived influence on employability have emerged as central factors of the English curriculum. Although literature had its place, it became more useful in the classroom for efferent purposes. Its own inherent value in terms of creativity and aesthetic enrichment (the kind that humanises and questions ideational and cultural meanings that constitute human identity) became torpefied (Pantaleo, 2013; Rosenblatt, 1986a). Doecke warned that 'any attempt to impose a sense of "nationhood" inevitably shapes a nation's efforts to provide a school curriculum' (Doecke, 2017, p. 232). This kind of commodification of knowledge, with its increased emphasis on efficiency and accountability, has resulted in 'an increasingly controlled, more rational and economic process of adjustment [which] has been sought between productive activities, communications networks, and the play of power relations.' (Foucault, 1982a, p. 788).

Although literature had traditionally been the main focus in the English classroom (Hunter, 1994; Patterson, 2002; Reid, 2004), the new focus on accountability under President Nixon in the 1970s prompted literature's gradual slide away from its status as an important cultural aspect in the classroom. Schools became the 'disposition of space for economico-political ends' (Ball, 2017, p. 3), and students were subjectivated as employable commodities. Goodwyn (2003), Green (2006), Brass (2014a) and Reid (2016) have also critically reflected on the changes that have occurred in the English curriculum. Goodwyn suggested that '[s]ince 1989 the definition of the subject English has been increasingly centrally prescribed [in the UK], with various revisions to the statutory curriculum' (Goodwyn, 2003, p. 126). It is an intrusion into education, whereby 'education policy becomes mired in compromises and consequences driven by other issues' (Ball, 2018, p. 209). In the consideration of similar changes in the US, Brass demonstrated that 'the 1990s … gave rise to increased state, federal

and private sector involvement in education' (Brass, 2014a, p. 113); Brass equated this involvement to similar incursions in the UK and Australia.[26]

The incursion of neoliberal politics into education is reflected in former UK Education Minister David Blunkett's forward to the Green Paper *The learning age: a Renaissance for a new Britain.* It incorporates a variety of discourses about learning: 'encouraging the acquisition of knowledge and skills and emphasising creativity and imagination'; 'the love of learning'; 'an enquiring mind'; 'civilised society' and 'helps us fulfil our potential and opens doors to a love of music, art and literature' (Blunkett, 1998, p. 7). However, the underpinning language of this discourse relates to a political representation of education's value to the economy. Fairclough (2000) argued that 'language has become significantly more important over the past few decades because of social changes which have transformed politics and government (p. 3). However, it can be similarly argued that the language and discourse of government has changed society, and education in particular. For example, the dominant feature of Blunkett's foreword is an integration of market-based phrasing: 'learning is the key to prosperity'; 'investment in human capital'; 'build human capital'; 'essential to our future success' (p. 7). Resonating with this language nine years later, the Executive Summary of *The Australian economy needs an education revolution*, an Australian Labor Party document, incorporates such phrases as: 'a human capital revolution will drive productivity growth'; 'human capital investment is at the heart of a third wave of economic reform'; 'a revolution in the quantity of our investment in human capital'; 'investment in human capital'; 'quality of human capital investment' (Rudd, 2007a). The language used reflects the encroaching changes in social discourse where students become 'human capital', a disenfranchising term delimiting agency, reifying students in the discourse of economics. Students become an investment for competitive economic advantage while education is restructured as developing human capital rather than the humanistic development of individual identity. This use of language governs social perception in a biopolitics that recreates students as economic pawns, creating a governmentality that subjugates students through neoliberal practices.

According to Laclau (in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 42), identity is equivalent to identification with a subject position, a 'nodal point of identity'. The construction of the student identity in the signifying educational discourses establishes students in a framework of representational signifiers: human capital, prosperity and skill acquisition, for example. Placing the student in the social milieu of economic discourse, a nodal point of identity, subjectivates them as they

[26] In her Foucauldian article, 'Installing English at the "hub" of early twentieth century school curricula in Australia' (2002), Patterson mapped out some of the leading influences and changes that have occurred in Australian education, including the formation of a national identity through the use of Australian literature in the 1940s.

construct their identities in the social power capillaries and normalising practices of a neoliberal education until they become a mimesis of neoliberal dogma.

Education in the UK subsequently became more homogenised along economic and standardising lines, following the incorporation of the *National Literacy Strategy* (1998), the *Framework for Teaching English* (2001) and the introduction of *The National Curriculum in England* (2014). Correspondingly, and resonating with this kind of state intervention, Australia attempted to federalise education policy following the Melbourne Declaration in 2008; it approved an Australian Curriculum in 2009. Educational policy had been within the remit of various states, yet this conglomeration of power delimited the states' ability to promulgate their own theories of pedagogy, and thus homogenised educational practice. Subsequently, this facilitated the invasion of a socially efficient and economically productive ideology into pedagogical practice.

Consequently, the focus has been on literacy, with its emergence leading to the new paradigm of 'English as literacy' (Green, 2006). Invested with unprecedented heuristic value, literacy has emerged as a steppingstone that provides access and understanding in terms of what is considered significant in English and, of increasing concern, in literature. Even though the literary canon proved to be a contested domain, literacy became a gateway to the more prestigious environment of the literary canon (Eagleton, 1996; Hunter, 1994; Patterson, 2014).

The *EFA Global Monitoring Report* (UNESCO, 2005, p. 148) commented that 'only since the late nineteenth century has [literacy] also come to refer to the abilities to read and write text, while maintaining its broader meaning of being "knowledgeable or educated in a particular field or fields"'. Literacy and literature have been intimately intertwined, with proficiency in language (literacy) being the means to access literature. Even today, this intertwining is essential; however, instead of literacy being regarded as a step towards the practice of aesthetic enrichment, creative critique and a more thoughtful and philosophical world, it is regarded as the pinnacle of achievement and the predominant way to assess success in English. Literacy's *a priori* mandate subverts the aesthetic and transformative capabilities of literature through critical reflexivity and deep cultural reflection.

However, this may constitute an oversimplification of what has truly changed in the English curriculum and classroom regarding both literacy and literature. According to John Dixon, the pivotal Dartmouth Seminar of 1966 concluded with the notion of how literacy skills become an end in themselves. There was 'a conviction that English teaching should engage primarily with a student's own world of personal experience, superseding earlier models of English that had a more limited focus on literacy skills or on cultural heritage' (Reid, 2016, p. 12). The limiting focus on literacy skills (which currently dominates contemporary educational conversations in

the form of 'back to basics' approaches) tends to provide only a narrow focus on cultural literature; it ignores 'culture as the pupil knows it, a network of attitudes to experience and personal evaluations that … develops in a living response to [the students'] family and neighbourhood' (Dixon, in Reid, 2016, p. 12). These complex relationships and disciplinary forms of power form a reflection of society that subjects can use to form and transform their own identities. Foucault argued that the:

> Network of institutions and practices [in which] the madman was both enmeshed and defined … appears very coherent and well adapted to its purpose when one looks at its functioning and the justifications it was given at the time: a whole exact and articulated knowledge was involved in it (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997, p. 5).

The concept of a network of power-knowledge relationships resonates well with the current neoliberal dogma that shapes English education in schools—that is, those disciplinary institutions in which knowledge is developed through the exercise of power, and concomitantly legitimating further exercises of power. The power-knowledge capillaries that support literacy can be observed in the same context spreading and becoming enmeshed in modern educational reforms.

Although it is tempting to identify specific events that appear to be the beginning of a new episteme, Foucault only 'identifies spaces in which possibilities were created and whereby certain events were "outcomes". But these were not causal outcomes', as Marshall explained (Marshall, 1990, p. 17). Neoliberal ideology has had an increasingly dramatic impact on education for decades (Au, 2008, 2011; Ball, 1993, 2015a; Moss, 2009; Noddings, 2013); however, it has done so in such a pervasive way that it is sometimes unclear how education came to change so dramatically. Understanding how education came to be structured in its current form can assist in interrogating practices, questioning and disrupting rather than accepting the current network of ideology and the plethora of capillaries of power-knowledge that have constructed it. By examining 'a history of the present', educators can robustly resist current practices and problematise the prescriptiveness of policy, whereby literacy and assessment became 'a source of ethical standards' (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997, p. 6). Key to this understanding is the identification of how language has been usurped and colonised to conform to neoliberal dogma.

The concept of language shaping discourse is echoed by Fairclough (2000), who alluded to how language has forged policy and ideology, as well as the role that the media has had to play. Language has also transformed our understanding of English in the classroom. It is by continuously examining the language and politics surrounding education (specifically,

literature and literacy) that practitioners can contest the claims made by politicians regarding their skills and professionalism. Even the basis of politicians' foundational claims can be contested—such as that we live in a 'global economy' (Burbules & Torres, 1999; Lingard, 1999). As Fairclough (2000, pp. 23-29) clearly suggested, many analysts indicate that economies are far from an even and fully functional form of globalisation, as borders, tariffs and regions experience ongoing contestation. However, the global economy—comparable to the 'knowledge economy'—is a presupposed given; many politicians argue that education has a duty to prepare students for this 'globalisation', even though the concept remains tendentious and unexamined in terms of its efficacy in pedagogical use.

Following policymaking

There is a sequence of events in the US that was prompted by the ANAR report (ANAR, 1983). The US Government became increasingly involved in education after this report was published, with its alarming prognosis of the state of American education. From the policy of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, 2001), through to the RTTT (RTTT, 2009) and *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA, 2015), US administrations have intervened in education and extolled the virtues of literacy education. In the UK, there were education acts that sought to curb the powers of the local education authorities, which controlled the education and training of teachers and changing of the curriculum. The literacy reform in education began during the Thatcher years of the 1980s, with the 1989 Cox Report (English for Ages 5 – 16) outlining attainment targets and statements of attainment defining up to ten levels of attainment specifying what pupils should know, understand and be able to do. This trend continued through the Major years when Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education) was introduced. *The National Literacy Strategy* (NLS) was introduced by the Blair Government in 1998, which ushered in a new era that prioritised literacy even further above all else in English, followed by the *Framework for Teaching English* in 2001. Indeed, Chitty claimed that New Labour was 'clearly basing its education policy on the principles of competition, choice and diversity', which had been the popular themes of all Conservative White Papers' (Chitty, in Gillard, 2011, ch 17).

Australia has had a more fragmented education system, as each state and territory has had the independence to pursue its own ideas. However, the Australian Curriculum (recently reviewed) has attempted to unify and homogenise the various systems throughout the country.

Foucault's use of the term 'bio-power' (Foucault, 1991, p. 262) when explaining the relationship of power and life develops two forms, or 'poles', of development: one 'centred on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimisation of its capabilities … its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls'; the second 'focused on the species body, the

body imbued with the mechanics of life' (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 139). His insight resonates with current educational practice, especially when he stated that:

> This bio-power was, without question, an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes (Foucault, 1991, p. 263).

The 'carceral city' of the school is where the students are subjectivated, not only by 'a network of forces, but [also] a multiple network of diverse elements'; this creates 'a strategic distribution of elements of different natures and levels' (Foucault, 1979, p. 307), and it constructs an axiomatic environment in which everything has an economic value, including the students. From a Foucauldian perspective, the current state of education—which is based on schools providing a continuous supply of workers or university students who will subsequently become workers—would begin to explain how functional literacy has become so important in education while literature has taken a subsidiary position. This can be more clearly observed when Foucault's 'history of the present' is used, which eventualises the complex processes of emergence that shape the present.

Foucault's 'genealogy' and nominalist analysis of power 'highlights the battles that take place over knowledge' (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 46). Genealogical analysis can reveal the trajectory of several techniques and relations of power that objectify those who do not have the tools of resistance. Garland explained that genealogy is 'a method of writing critical history: a way of using historical materials to bring about a "revaluing of values" in the present day' (Garland, 2014, p. 372). To be more precise, '[g]enealogical analysis traces how contemporary practices and institutions emerged out of specific struggles, conflicts, alliances, and exercises of power, many of which are nowadays forgotten' (Garland, 2014, p. 372). It is precisely this idea of exposing the 'cultural unconscious' that is pivotal when analysing the neoliberal episteme. As Foucault explained, '[t]he search for descent is not the erecting of foundations: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously thought immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself' (Foucault, 1991, p. 82).

In these terms, Foucault makes a link between truth and power, arguing that 'truth' is embedded in, and produced by, systems of power. Because truth is unattainable, it is futile to ask whether something is true or false. Instead, the focus should be on how the effects of truth games are created in discourses. What should be analysed are the truth games of discursive processes through which discourses construct impressions and forms of verisimilitude that

represent a matrix of authority and custom in which true or false understandings of reality emerge (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 14). As policy becomes 'truth' and it is embedded, the earlier discourses that led to the current episteme are forgotten; the heterogenous is perceived as homogenous. For example, utilitarian literacy becomes the dominant discourse, and literature is subsequently considered viable only in terms of functional literacy. In a marvel of unobtrusive efficiency, English education has come to absorb the new economy of power, as well as embrace the new conventions. This conventional way of thinking embeds itself as a governmentality: as 'a particular mentality, a particular manner of governing, that is actualized in habits, perceptions, and subjectivity [and this form of] [g]overnmentality situates actions and conceptions on the same plane of immanence' (Read, 2009, p. 21). This governmentality has presaged a change in teacher and student identity, whereby English teachers will be literacy teachers, diminished in their role as educators, and students will become pawns in the global literacy rankings war.

The truth effect that is propagated in this power-knowledge continuum (in which neoliberal dogma represents education and the economy as concomitant) becomes habitual and fixed in the mindset of educators and in the population over an extended period. When revealing the power-knowledge capillaries that surround this homogeneity, as well as when clarifying the battlefield of education, there is a need to '[analyse] their arguments, strategies and tactics in their own terms' (Rose, in Brass, 2015, p. 10). This is done by seeking out 'the identities and identifications which they themselves construct, objectives they set themselves, the enemies they identified, the alliances they sought, the languages and categories they used to describe themselves, the forms of collectivisation and division that they enacted' (Rose, in Brass, 2015, p. 10). This approach is mirrored by Giroux, who indicated that:

> What this suggests for a critical theory of literacy and pedagogy is that curriculum must be seen in the most fundamental sense as a battleground over whose forms of knowledge, history, visions, language, culture, and authority will prevail as a legitimate object of learning and analysis (Giroux, 1987, p. 178).

He extended the claim further, forcefully arguing that recent intervention by the US Republican Party on critical race theory demonstrates 'the cult of manufactured ignorance now work[ing] through schools and other disimagination machines engaged in a politics of falsehoods and erasure' (Giroux, 2021). As the curriculum is constrained through this kind of ideology, the role of a critical and self-reflexive approach to literature becomes even more imperative, in terms of resisting attempts to confine consciousness and impeding the development of the autonomous student and teacher. For Foucault, 'subjects are created in discourse' (Jørgensen

& Phillips, 2002, p. 14), suggesting there should be a wariness of not critiquing the discourse that is allowed to dominate and subjectivate students.

Disruption and resistance

What is useful in a Foucauldian analysis is the notion that both 'subjects' and 'objects' can be disrupted through the consideration that, despite there being 'no intention here of tracing a direct path of "influence"', there are 'other path[s] that *could have* been followed' (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 46, italics in original). This fluid concept of paths not taken, as adapted from Robert Frost, interrupts a discourse's apparent constancy; this subsequently encourages possibilities for change. As Jørgensen and Phillips suggested, 'social phenomena are never finished or total. Meaning can never be ultimately fixed and this opens up the way for constant social struggles about definitions of society and identity, with resulting social effects' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 24). Pathways are opened for students to resist the dominating discourse; they can create new paths by critiquing the present. Further, discourse can be challenged and resisted by questioning and struggling in a field of discursivity.

Laclau and Mouffe argued that a discourse 'is formed by the partial fixation of meaning around certain *nodal points'* (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 26) from which other signs acquire meaning. However, this fixation of meaning allows elements (signs whose meanings have yet to be fixed) to remain in the *field of discursivity*, thereby creating an environment that tolerates room for a struggle within the discourse. This echoes the Foucauldian fluidity—offering a field of possible outcomes before closing on one discourse that, as he explained, is 'the strategic apparatus which permits of separating out from among all the statements which are possible those that will be acceptable within … a field of scientificity, and which it is possible to say are true or false' (Foucault, 1980, p. 197). Using the concept of nodal points to signify those 'privileged sign[s] around which the other signs are ordered' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 26), Laclau and Mouffe argued that a shift in understanding and perception can be observed following the establishment of a nodal point, in which the possibilities in that particular discourse to create a unity of meaning are reduced. With the establishment of the neoliberal nodal point, other discourses become excluded (e.g., regarding alternative ideas about education). When there is a shift in discourse—and when the shift occurs due to an examination of the field of available possibilities—the current discourse's development can be realised. Employing the discourse theory as practised by Laclau and Mouffe, Patrick de Vos has highlighted how 'ideological (trans)formations' have shaped our current discourse. He refers to '[p]olitical conflicts [which] are understood as struggles between conflicting discourses that strive to impose their own system of meaning' (de Vos, 2003, p. 163), and it is the outcome of these conflicts, created by a consensus, that dislocates previous

hegemonies. However, they will also 'eventually fail to provide a convincing and legitimate model for the world as perceived' (de Vos, 2003, p. 168). It is on this political battleground that the education system has been used as a hegemonising weapon, one intended to underpin and express a neoliberal ideology and the immanent economic framework that surrounds it. This kind of hegemonisation, through the suppression of critical alternative theories, results in what Giroux (2021) termed 'a form of ideological surveillance parading as educational reform'. The articulation of literacy—by modifying its identity and reframing it outside an English discourse into the 'economic good' discourse—has recreated the study of English into not an education in the aesthetic terms of a public, private or social benefit, nor into a cultural achievement; instead, the study of English has been recreated as a means of competition that pedagogically reproduces the 'neoliberal discourses of performativity and individual responsibilisation' (Keddie, 2016, p. 108). Students and schools are prompted to regard education in functional terms at the expense of the aesthetic.

However, a resistance to neoliberal policies can also be observed. For example, Kay Fuller (2019) explored some of the many resistances to the invasion of neoliberal policies in education in detail. She explained how head teachers operate either covertly or overtly to resist those reforms that demand compliance. Resistance comes in many forms, such as counternarratives, disengagement and critique. Headlines such as 'Queensland teachers told to withdraw own children from NAPLAN tests as union pushes for reform' (The Guardian, 2021), 'National teacher survey gives thumbs down to NAPLAN' (AEU) and 'Teachers and principals give NAPLAN a fail in education union survey' (Carey, 2020) partly indicate the resistance to standardised tests in Australia. The Australian Education Union (AEU) reported that:

> [Eighty-five per cent] of teachers feel that NAPLAN is ineffective as a method for teachers to use as a way of assessing students. 76% of teachers say publication of NAPLAN data has led to an increase in the pressure on teachers to improve NAPLAN results ... 58% of teachers feel they spend too much time preparing for standardised tests (AEU, nd).

Although the discipline of English is increasingly constituted and identified discursively in terms of the tenets of literacy—and it is shaped by the discourses of the regnant government (discourses that then become doxic)—researchers have disrupted and critiqued the implementation of policies, as well as examined their effects on teachers and teaching English (Alexander, 2007; Ball, 1982; Brass, 2018; Goodwyn, 2003; Green, 2017; Misson & Morgan, 2007). Such resistance, overt or covert, positions subjects as discursive formations, and

'social agents thus are identified and/or identify themselves within a discursive structure' (de Vos, 2003, p. 166). In this sense, they can resist the normalising effects of those formations.

Education and neoliberalism

In the 1970s, under Nixon's presidency, the US faced an economic crisis: the Vietnam War was having an extremely negative socio-economic impact, and the OPEC oil embargo was introduced. The economy had originally been 'predicated on uninterrupted economic growth and unlimited expansion of markets and capital on a national scale' (Luke, 1997, p. 6), but this had been disrupted. Due to social antagonism and economic dislocation, in 1971, former president Nixon tried to reduce public spending by changing how economics and social life were envisaged. Keynes had warned against 'decadent international but individualistic capitalism', inveighing that it 'is not a success. It is not intelligent. It is not beautiful. It is not just' (Keynes, 1933, p. 183). Although the term *homo economicus* had been used previously (e.g., by Pareto in 1906), this economic–rationalist state of being was once more appearing, and it established a new type of utilitarian individual. People looked to the private sphere and its potential to solve economic and societal problems, which subsequently became a key theme of the later 1980s.

In a special message to Congress in March 1970 regarding education reform, Nixon began his speech by saying, 'American education is in serious need of reform'; he initiated a governmental review of US educational practices and subsequently placed them under surveillance. When conservative Republicans use the word 'reform', it is considered loaded. Reform usually refers to tax cuts for the rich and cost-cutting measures in social welfare and the public sector, including education. However, it also has suppressive qualities, as Giroux trenchantly noted in terms of the recent controversy regarding the teaching of critical race theory in the US. He contended that:

> Right-wing politicians use education and the repressive power of the law as weapons to discredit any critical approach to grappling with the history of racial injustice and white supremacy. In doing so, they attempt to undermine and discredit the critical faculties necessary for students and others.(Giroux, 2021)

Concurrently, efficiency advocates were claiming that public education costs were also spiralling, and when the Coleman report of 1966 concluded that 'school quality had little effect on student achievement independent of the social background of students' (StateUniversity.com), the statement was used to partly re-articulate government expenditure and reduce costs. Finally, the oil crisis of 1971–1973 added to an increasingly destabilising anxiety felt about the economy, which subsequently further pressured the education sector.

There was also legal research conducted by Wise and Coons et al., who 'formulated the principle of fiscal neutrality, that is, the principle that the quality of a child's schooling should not be a function of wealth, other than the wealth of the state as a whole' (StateUniversity.com). Although based on the US, the research was conducted at a time when the UK had been moving towards comprehensive education for all (and away from grammar schools). Therefore, this was a change in dynamics towards a Keynesian welfare state—a form of egalitarianism in which education was not just the prerogative of the few but an essential requirement for all children. Both the UK and US seemed to move towards a more inclusive education and away from the competition (similar to UK grammar schools).

From the late 1970s onward, de Vos outlined how 'the national Keynesian welfare state and the post-war consensus became subject to severe criticism' (de Vos, 2003, p. 169), to the extent that the neoliberal economic policies of Thatcherism and Reaganomics were disarticulating the premise of social welfare and entitled public support, and instead endorsing a new corporatist order that possessed immanent unitary qualities. This was a key change in direction. The Keynesian nodal point was being disarmed and dislocated, which prompted the creation of new regulatory economic criteria and agendas. From the 1970s oil embargo by the OPEC to the industrial unrest and nationalisation of the 1970s and 1980s in the UK, the concept of state intervention was regarded as redundant and requiring a 'new truth of politics' (Foucault, 1980, p. 133). The new political and economic exigency required a 'topological and geological survey of the battlefield' (Foucault, 1980, p. 62). As George contended, they:

> Made neoliberalism seem as if it were the natural and normal condition of humankind. No matter how many disasters of all kinds the neoliberal system has visibly created, no matter what financial crises it may engender, no matter how many losers and outcasts it may create, it is still made to seem inevitable, like an act of God, the only possible economic and social order available to us' (George, 1999).

Indeed, the neoliberal state became an ideological Potemkin village.

De Vos claimed that there was 'a severe attack on the post-war consensus by a neoliberal offensive, initiated by Thatcherism and Reagonomics' (de Vos, 2003, p. 169). Although this attack saw the state tending to withdraw from intervening in the economy, it did not mean that the state withdrew from influencing education. Susan George outlined the neoliberal dislocation and its effects when she highlighted that '[t]he central value of Thatcher's doctrine and of neoliberalism itself is the notion of competition—competition between nations, regions, firms and of course between individuals' (George, 1999), Evidently, this is the basic tenet underlying the current epidemic of standardised tests and robotised marking. As Nussbaum

neatly elucidated, neoliberalism 'reduces qualitative differences to quantitative differences' (Nussbaum, 1991, p. 881).

One of the most influential policies that emerged during the early years of Reagan's presidency was the ANAR (ANAR, 1983)—which was based a report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. This report claimed that 'the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people' (ANAR, 1983). The report implied that 'the United States was about to succumb to a deluge of foreign dominance, unless its schools were rapidly rendered more rigorous' (StateUniversity.com). This alarmist rhetoric was continued in ANAR, in which it was suggested that 'we have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament'; this notion seemingly matched the fear bombast of the Cold War. It was the beginning of the surveillance of education, which itself became 'a site of struggle over agency, identities, values and the future itself' (Giroux, 2021).

It was perhaps at this time that the foundations and *raison d'être* for neoliberal intervention in education were established. However, ANAR was found to be incorrect in its assumptions:

> Twenty years later, it became plain to see that the economic slump in which the United States found itself at the report's 1983 issuance was far more a consequence of inefficient management practices than it was the nation's ineffective education system (StateUniversity.com).

Other contested points that were ignored included poverty, gender, disability, isolation and a non–English speaking background. However, the die had been cast with the resulting discourses for interventions in education. Accountability became a byword for efficiency, and, in accordance with neoliberal ideology, competition and privatisation became the means to effect desired and required changes. Further, business and marketplace rhetoric were increasingly being used. As Oakes et al. argued, although strategic planning might make events more manageable and predictable, this kind of 'business planning is powerful precisely because the symbolic violence involved remains unidentified, unacknowledged, and, to a large extent, outside of the control of managers within the field' (Oakes et al., 1998, p. 281). Due to a strong focus on student performance (and covertly on teacher efficacy), agency was removed from students and teachers by an administrative restructuring—one that was oriented towards a data-driven schooling system that was focused on tangible and calculable results.

In this way, the neoliberal mindset, 'bent on calculation, … determined to aggregate the data gained about and from individual lives, arriving at a picture of total or average utility that effaces personal separateness as well as qualitative difference' (Nussbaum, 1991, p. 884). Instead of

observing students and helping them develop in their qualitative subjectness, the education systems began '[s]eeing human beings as counters in a mathematical game, and refusing to see their mysterious inner world … [Instead, they] adopt[ed] a theory of human motivation that is elegant and simple, well suited for the game of calculation' (Nussbaum, 1991, p. 886). This has had the depersonalising effect of shifting educational governance away from the education professionals (Brass, 2014a, p. 126).

The neoliberal mantra was beginning to be heard; it echoed throughout society, and its tendrils permeated every aspect of thought. In the UK, Chen and Derewianka revealed that stricter rules were being established in teaching, which curtailed the 'more extreme progressivist practices [which] were called into question' (Chen & Derewianka, 2009, p. 230). Christie acknowledged this point when he recorded former Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Baker, 'request[ing] the English Working Party (1988) to include more grammar to placate conservative forces which saw traditional grammar as a palliative to alleged tendencies towards self-indulgence' (Christie, cited in Chen & Derewianka, 2009, p. 231). Once again, the qualitative aspects of education were being stifled, and a new relevance for literacy (as a catholicon) began to be articulated.

Margaret Thatcher furthered the neoliberal mantra, as she attempted to limit other possible discourses. Read argued that it is 'perhaps no accident that one of the most famous political implementers of neoliberal reforms, Margaret Thatcher, used the slogan, "there is no alternative"', which had the effect of legitimating and sedimenting neoliberalism 'based on the stark absence of possibilities' (Read, 2009, p. 35). Neoliberalism was congealing into a Laclau and Mouffe nodal point; it based itself on the notion that society was a defined entity, and it shaped students to fit into this new conception of citizenship. However, Thatcher's attempt to fix the discourse regarding neoliberalism allowed other areas (e.g., citizenship) to remain fluid in a field of discursivity. Also in this field were the various conceptions of the purpose of education, although this was also being constrained when schools, like other organisations, began to be run more like businesses (Oakes et al., 1998, p. 279). Ball expounded on how neoliberalist policies affected UK education and students, suggesting that 'school became in many respects an expression of humanity and a demarcation of the limits to humanity' in the 1990s, when '[s]chooling was built … on the contradictory bases of uniformity and individuality'. He added that this was 'a collectivist vision mediated within the methodologies of difference and differentiation' (Ball, 2013b, p. 47). These dividing practices articulated the dilemma of education: uniformity across schools that were assessed individually, and uniformity in expected outcomes for students who were creating their individuality.

The systems of measurement that were introduced contributed to a form of governance that consequently created a contemporary reality of education—one in which students were re-articulated in new regimes of truth and enclosed within assessable psychological categories so that their abilities could be further developed; this was a type of differentiation intended to create 'an erasure of difference' (Ball, 2013b, p. 51). In the liberal imagination, a new marketable commodity of students as *homo economicus* was required to fulfil the requirements of a neoliberal truth. As Rizvi and Lingard explained, the effect has been that 'education policy discourses, [have] involved a reorientation of values from a focus on democracy and equality to the values of efficiency and accountability, with a greater emphasis on human capital formation' (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 72). It can thus be argued that the democratisation and social enculturation of students is no longer a central aim of education.

During the 1990s, the use of the literacy panacea become even more noticeable with the introduction of the NLS in the UK. It was established in 1997 by the incoming government 'to rais[e] standards of literacy which could be sustained over a long period of time and be made a central priority for the education service as a whole' (Beard, 2000, p. 421). Assessing this pedagogical strategy, Beard contended that its appearance underlined the perception that literacy standards in the UK had not risen against an arbitrary metric; consequently, an effective solution 'seemed to call for the kinds of direct interactive teaching approaches which had been successful with "at risk" pupils in the USA and Australia' (Beard, 2000, p. 421). The whole student body was now colonised and encapsulated within the 'at risk' discourse.

The change of focus from a humanist education to a neoliberal one is similarly expressed by former UK Secretary of State, David Blunkett, in *The Learning Age* green paper where learning is defined as 'the key to prosperity' with a focus on 'the acquisition of knowledge and skills', and pertinently, on 'human capital' (Blunkett, 1998, p. 7). Here students are redefined as 'human capital', and an investment in education as the 'foundation of success in the knowledge based global economy' in order to 'secur[e] our economic future'. Imagination and creativity are acknowledged as being important only 'to our future success' (p. 7).

A further area of concern arose in 2003 with the UK Government's report, *Every Child Matters* (2003). The report appeared to link child abuse with illiteracy, thus congealing a concern for welfare with a trope about the nation's falling educational standards. Not only were literacy standards questioned, but the state of education and society's moral welfare balanced on raising those standards; this consequently gave literacy a new pre-eminence in the education debate, and it offered standardised tests greater authority in decision-making. However, there appeared to be little basis for the claim that a more literate society reduces child abuse and enhances the moral fibre of society. Such reports seemingly exhaust themselves with useless

gestures and the stylised expectation and secret wish that educational standards and markets somehow conformed with moral conduct. Free markets were identified 'as ideal mechanisms for coordinating human thought and conduct' (Brass, 2015, p. 11). The economics of education were incorporated into an economic rationalism (neoliberalism), which, according to Luke, became 'the dominant form of state framing of educational issues, policies and practices … across the schooling and university sectors' (Luke, 1997, p. 3). A new disciplinary apparatus was slowly being built, one that effectively subjugated teachers and students as they internalised these new norms. These norms established and internalised new modes of conduct, which subsequently imposed the formal linkages that embrace an almost imperceptible passage of attitudes and postures that normalise algorithmic teaching practices.

As Oakes explained, not only is thought and conduct coordinated through this governmentality, but 'cultural capital remains valued to the extent that it can be transformed into economic capital' (Oakes et al., 1998, p. 271). This creates a dilemma for Australian schools, which according to the Melbourne Declaration 'play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation's ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion' (MCEETYA, 2008a). Although the 'intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians' has been acknowledged as important, it is the latter part of the statement that reiterates the economic rationalist agenda—namely, that students will be responsible for 'ensuring the nation's ongoing economic prosperity'. In short, education has come to be considered an economic benefit that is valued in economic terms instead of as a personal or social good. Similarly, the Blair Government's attempt to raise alarm over literacy standards in the UK through the child abuse and literacy binary, as well as through the emotions that follow a child's death,[27] partly but subtly shifted focus from social services to education and economics. This occurred even though no such correlation was found between child abuse and literacy in the Lamming Report (upon which the *Every Child Matters* report was based). When social good has been deflected and restricted in practice to the perception of an economic good, we are subjectivated through the prism of economic determinations.

Subsequently, as Brass posited in 2014, 'educational policy is now being developed and implemented by networks of policy entrepreneurs, state governors, philanthropists, foundations, for-profit and non-profit vendors, and edu-businesses that operate independently of states and on behalf of states' (Brass, 2014a, p. 126). The marketisation of education

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[27] V ctor a Adjo C mb é (2 November 1991   25 February 2000) was tortured and murdered by her great aunt and her boyfr end after mov ng to the UK from the Côte d'Ivo re v a France. Her death ed to a pub c nqu ry and prompted major changes n ch d protect on po c es n the UK.

through curricula and the external development of materials and resources can affect students; it can result in the marketisation of students who value themselves based on their educational achievements and prompt them to move to 'better' schools.

Although this applies mainly to the US, a similar case can be made for both the UK, due to its rise of 'academy' schools, and Victoria's schools in Australia, due to the persistence of external publishers like Pearson creating the content, assessment and remediation tools (which subsequently influences how education is perceived in quantitative terms). Initially established as an independent research institute, the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) now fully concentrates on testing. When managing the PISA tests in 2006 and 2009, ACER created an income of A$1.2 million in 2005, rising to A$8.4 million in 2007, mainly due to the shift in values from general academic research to specific research for standardised tests.

Returning to the 1990s, de Vos highlighted a study[28] that suggested a reason for the change in perspective regarding students. Expatiating the decline of social democrats in the late 1990s, the study proposed that one pivotal reason for this decline was that 'large sections of the working class were incorporated in a broad middle class, leaving behind non-social-climbers, the social–democratic electorate continuously changed and split up into various societal groups with particular interests and expectations towards social democracy' (de Vos, 2003, p. 170). It is not speculative to claim that as the working class began assimilating middle class values, it also began adopting the reassuring voices of hegemonic ideology. Progressively taking over the political milieu, the emerging new middle class assumed that education did not provide children with the 'correct' education for ascending the taxonomy of class ranks. In the UK and US, education was and is still a privileged commodity, despite the tepid efforts dedicated to equality.[29] The path was set for a new wave of accountability.

Both in the UK and US, a new style of politics was emerging—the so-called 'Third Way' espoused by Tony Blair and Bill Clinton. Thatcher and Reagan began shifting the national focus onto the individual by reducing the number of welfare programs and tax reductions, the effect of which was an increased atomising and isolating individualism. For Thatcher, 'parental choice' became important in education; this involved framing the parent as a customer and the student as the product. Following the ideas of a Hayekian methodical individualism—which systematically begins from the concepts that guide individuals in their actions rather than from the macro-economic effects of those actions—individuals are shaped by policies designed to increase their atomisation and accountability. As Joseph Heath highlighted, '[i]t has never escaped anyone's attention that the discipline that most clearly satisfies the strictures of

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[28] *Transformation in Progress: European Social Democracy* (Cuperus & Kande , 1998).
[29] A though th s c a m s h gh y contestab e, a change n vot ng has been noted by other researchers (e.g., Abou Chad and Wagner (2019); Ing ehart et a . (1984).

methodological individualism is microeconomics (in the tradition of neoclassical marginalism), and that *homo economicus* is the most clearly articulated model of rational action' (J. Heath, 2015). Blair's Third Way economics followed these strictures, with a heightened focus on the importance of the individual as not so much an individual as an economic factor to be considered in the macro-economic scheme. In this way, instead of society being built on both individual and collective responsibility, micro-economics focus only on the individual's economic importance as *homo economicus*.

Although these ideas evolved many decades before Blair's Government, the ideology of his and subsequent governments was clearly influenced by the disciplinary moderations and bourgeois values of progress and individualism discussed above. Modern education thrives on 'performativity' and an ontological insecurity that abandons the social in favour of individualism. The shift to advanced liberal governmentality was realised in the educational reforms that 'largely redefined the aims and purposes of education in economic terms' (Brass, 2015, p. 12). The movement redefined students as an economic entity—one that would help the economy grow. This starkly contrasts the 'notions of education as a public good, liberal notions of education for rational self-government, or social-democratic and critical aims for a more free and just society' (Brass, 2015, p. 12). For example, although the Melbourne Declaration refers to developing 'responsible global and local citizens' who are 'active and informed' (MCEETYA, 2008a), the performativity of the classroom tends to preclude this development. Instead, people have come to understand themselves as individuals who are endowed with rights, and who pursue their own desires and advantages in a merciless, globalised competition with other individuals. As Brass explained, 'today's education policies typically emphasise narrower concerns about improving a nation's "human capital" and helping individuals, corporations and nations to compete in the global economy' (Brass, 2015, p. 12). This constriction of the curriculum to assessable modules limits the school's 'potential to become democratic public spheres instilling in students the skills, knowledge, and values necessary for them to be critical citizens capable of making power accountable and knowledge an intense object of dialogue and engagement' (Giroux, 2004b, p. 14). Instead, the autonomous individual is lost in an overpowering environment—a miasma of data, algorithms and economic concerns. With this emasculation of education, students are curtailed and delimited in their ability to become independent and democratic. Instead, they become useful and docile citizens, as social power moves from subject formation to subject fragmentation and exercises control using an array of surveillance performativity.

As Ball explained, the unremitting accountability found in assessment 'invites and incites us to make ourselves more effective, to work on ourselves, to improve ourselves and to feel guilty or inadequate when we do not' (Ball, 2012, p. 31). Not only are students now expected to take

responsibility for their own learning, but teachers (however much their autonomy has been restricted) are also responsible for the outcomes of student progress. Echoing Oakes's argument, Brass goes so far as to suggest that:

> English teachers have been constructed as 'managers' of learning and behaviour who structure environments, demonstrations and linear sequences of instruction to transmit 'content' and reinforce the overt behaviours and terminal performances that constitute the knowledge and skills that external agencies have named learning, achievement and excellence (Brass, 2014a, p. 122).

This educational techno-apparatus has a desired level of efficiency redolent of industrial management. This is further echoed by Ball, who argued that '[w]ithin such a discourse the curriculum becomes a delivery system and teachers become its technicians or operatives' (Ball, 1990, p. 154). This leaves students bereft of a professional and collegiate school, and they find themselves embedded in an essentially extractive industry—a kind of 'machine … in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power as well as those who are subjected to it' (Foucault in Ball, 1990, p. 156). One key deficit in this form of management is the loss of loyalty. Sennett questioned the social capital of industrial-style management, suggesting that '[l]oyalty is a participatory relationship' (Sennett, 2006, p. 64); if the school staff lose their loyalty while business policies (disguised as educational strategies) are imposed on them, then it will be reflected in their relationships with students. Students can perceive discord, and as vulnerable and assimilating individuals, they will tend to shape their relationships in a similar fashion. Disciplinary moderations affect loyalty, and creating obstacles inimical to communitarian values becomes an ethical issue that students will critically explore in their development.

It is the interplay between government agencies and professional teachers that has caused so much conflict and friction in education. English teachers have been expected to subvert the aesthetic qualities of literature to ensure that their students have achieved the instrumentally correct standard of literacy imposed by the government—a standard that used to be a perfunctory median. A distinct perception that estimates and represents unity between the 'accurate measure' of educational value left a gap between classification and the irreducibility of functional standard results. The results of an algorithmic mathesis and the perception of educational value have remained multivalent. For example, Smithers highlighted that in the UK:

> Level 4 was set as the average level of performance, so that about 50 per cent could have been expected to have reached or exceeded it. But New Labour

interpreted level 4 as something that could be expected of *all* 11-year-olds and declared targets of 80 per cent for English (Smithers, 2001, p. 411).

Similarly, Alexander related an anecdote from 1997 regarding then UK Minister of State, Estelle Morris, and the literacy and numeracy strategies. An aide told Morris that 'literacy and numeracy aren't curriculum, they're *standards*' (Alexander, 2007, p. 104). As 'standards', they become accountable and add weight to the standardised tests that measure students' performance. This kind of hyper-instrumentalism (or robotic calculation and pervasive mathematical determinations) resides in the structural tenets that inform neoliberal performativity; it becomes a benchmark for calculating standards of efficiency, productivity and individual rankings. Aesthetic enrichment in the teaching of English literature is lost in a human science that valorises the clinical mathematics of accountability. It is a form of ostracism from diverse social voices and the ideals and customs of wide-ranging forms of art, thought and life.

Blair's Third Way politics ushered in a new era of state educational management in the UK. Instead of allowing the local education authorities to set the agenda, 'the government itself has sought to manage the education system by setting targets, assessing performance and offering money on "a something for something basis"' (Smithers, 2001, p. 3). Education changed drastically because the government wanted uniformity in schools, under the pretext that parents desired the option to move their children between counties and still have the same education; however, the effect of this is eradicated local cultural differences and individuality. Smithers encapsulated the new paradigm of neoliberal education when he stated that 'schools are now treated as producers of qualification output' (Smithers, 2001, p. 5). This was an economic policy that was designed to free the economy for a freer market; the underlying question was if it worked in the marketplace, then why not in education?

The early 2000s marked another emphasis shift; from reading texts that were not entirely impeded by uniform literacy standards, a more mechanical and functional emphasis was placed on phonics and grammar. The year 2000 witnessed the introduction of the PISA tests, operated by the OECD and designed as 'a triennial international survey which aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students' (OECD). Following the PISA league tables of the 'most successful' countries based on standardised testing, the Bush administration enacted the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, 2001). Outwardly concerned with improving basic skills, it was based on the premise that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals could improve individual outcomes in education. However, it soon became apparent that the federal government was beginning to significantly influence education. As Ravitch explained, the act was also based on the *Texas*

Miracle[30] myth. Ravitch argued that the act required 'states to fire teachers and close schools based on a myth. *No Child Left Behind* has produced teaching to the test, cheating, gaming the system, and has turned schooling into a numbers game' (Ravitch, 2011).

The US could not risk another ANAR scenario, in which their world status was deemed to be in decline. In the age of increasing globalisation, the US wanted to impose its superiority. As de Vos highlighted, '[t]he key issue here is how to create sustainable conditions of economic improvement in global markets without sacrificing the basic solidarity or cohesion of our society. "Getting competitive" seems to be the answer' (de Vos, 2003, p. 176). Competition not just in or between schools but between countries became the chief objective. In this way, accountability become a byword in education. Keddie suggested that students, teachers and schools became '"auditable commodities", so that they could be efficiently held to account and assessed against quantifiable standards of "success"' (Keddie, 2016, p. 109). In a rather chilling statement, she called the students 'children of the market' (Keddie, 2016, p. 109)—a moniker that dehumanises both them and their education. Children were becoming increasingly overdetermined by a hyper-instrumentalism that constituted them as targets of scientific classification and labelling. NCLB, 'like early twentieth-century practices of scientific management, was predicated on "conserving the existing order . . . not imagining a better system"' (Brass, 2014b, p. 229). This leads to children's habit of mind lacking critique and culminates in a Kantian 'culture of indifference to thinking' that shapes students (MacKenzie, 2021). Not equipping students with the tools of critique used to study literature has the disconcerting effect of producing a sort of educational cleavage that dislocates creative critique and, instead, promulgates and normalises negative and uncreative criticism. Critique is more than a perspective that slides into a celebration or a condemnation of good and ill, it is also a dense analysis and problematisation of social-cultural configurations and ethical interventions.

In turn, Au argued that standardised testing became 'a central tool used for educational reform' due to the NCLB (Au, 2011, p. 29). Because each country looks to others for ways to improve, the tests became the paradigm for evaluating and outwardly improving educational systems. According to Ravitch, the NCLB:

> Churned children into data points. It has narrowed the curriculum and discourages creativity and innovation. All of these, in combination, have undermined the meaning and the purpose of good education—which encompasses not just basic skills but knowledge, citizenship, character, and personal development (Ravitch, 2011).

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[30] See, for examp e, *The Myth of the Texas Miracle in Education* (Haney, 2000)

As the neoliberal episteme began to impute its own value system and infiltrate social thinking, it deliberately directed education towards a web of conventions and regulatory practices that conformed to prevailing neoliberal norms. It became the dominant discourse in society and, more concerningly, in education. Neoliberalism was not a sudden shift in ideas but a slow permeation of different discourses, during which the power discourse had shifted from the Cold War superpowers to a more globalised world. The NCLB appeared to exemplify 'the transformation in the dominant discourses on education and society, as societal institutions [were] recast as markets rather than deliberatively democratic systems' (Hursch, 2007, p. 494). The market's encroachment on the democratic ideal was effected through 'a shift from a focus on issues of value and ideology to issues of institutional, systemic and economic performativity' (Luke, 1997, p. 3); this shift of focus involved reorientating the governmentality of state legitimation systems towards economic discourses. In cynical portrayal of events, Chen and Derewianka claimed that the media deliberately exacerbated the consternation over literacy:

> In a mutually beneficial relationship, journalists and policy-makers joined forces to create a climate of failure in literacy standards. Snyder, in *The Literacy Wars* (2008), documents the collusion between the ORF and the media in Australia, the USA and the UK in promoting crisis and mistrust—with the collateral damage of a public loss of confidence in literacy educators (Chen & Derewianka, 2009, pp. 231-232).

Luke further argued that the neoliberal paradigm heralded 'an explicit shift from a focus on education as moral training and cultural conservation to a focus on the production of technical expertise—skilled human capital—for scientific, geopolitical and economic competitiveness' (Luke, 1997, p. 5). This synthesis of economic rationalism and education was predicated on the conception that education was quantifiable and calculable, as were its effects on the population. Through testing and assessment, education could be tailored to meet the needs of the new conception of 'globalisation'; this had the effect of changing McLuhan's earlier conception of a 'global village' to that of a global marketplace.

The emergence of the globalisation discourse creates an issue in education. This is especially true regarding the type of workforce that is needed in this globalised world:

> The kind of workforce required in a globalised and knowledge-driven economy is very different from that of the Fordist production pattern. For the OECD economies, Giddens says, there is a good deal of evidence that points to a fall in demand for unskilled and a rise in demand for skilled labour. In particular, the importance of human attributes, such as intelligence, communication skills,

creative talents and imagination, has increased substantially (De Vos, 2003, p. 176).

However, according to de Vos, Blair and his successors may have had a limited view of globalisation—as well as of how to implement an educational policy that aligns with both the economic values required for prosperity and the standardised testing that is used to produce marketised children. De Vos reiterated Stuart Hall's view of Blair's conception of globalisation as being 'a single, uncontradictory, uni-directional phenomenon, exhibiting the same features and producing the same inevitable outcomes everywhere' (Hall in de Vos, 2003, p. 177). However, as Giddens highlighted above, the workforce must be as diverse in thinking and imagination as possible. In the new 'globalised' society this is a functional prerequisite; it is imperative that the workforce is not standardised and restricted by 'narrowly [defined] values and successes in order to render them measurable' (see Davies & Bansel, 2010, p. 7). This kind of mechanistic approach is at odds with the requirements of a global economy that relies on a skillset that includes 'attributes such as adaptive capacity, relational awareness, different ways of knowing, and navigating through multiple lenses and perspectives that help individuals understand, recognise and integrate across complex global dynamics' (Minocha, Hristov, & Leahy-Harland, 2018, p. 247); the kind of skillsets found in a humanistic education.

Of concern is the evident shift away from a humanistic version of education to an economic, individualistic and competitive one, in which only a few individuals will succeed while others will be marginalised. As Giroux carefully highlighted, profit making does not constitute democracy; instead, it 'celebrates a ruthless competitive individualism … plac[ing] the commanding political, cultural, and economic institutions of society in the hands of powerful corporate interests, the privileged, and unrepentant religious bigots' (Giroux, 2004b, p. 17). This re-imagining of the educational ethic has 'increasingly [been] steered by narrow concerns about human capital and global economic competition' (Brass, 2015, p. 13), resulting in the commodification of students. The potential for democratic autonomy is eroded due to the narrowing of educational values down to measurable outcomes; in this case, students are rendered incapacitated in their independence and identity formation, and they depend instead on egregious market-controlled performance targets.

Pasi Sahlberg (2012a) argued robustly about what he termed 'GERM'—the viral epidemic of the global education reform movement, in which he explained five common features of educational policy changes since the 1980s. As argued above, what these reforms achieved in a protean and historical manner was a mimesis of neoliberal ideology in which a dense field of operative technologies and educational practices became homogenised, resulting in standardisation and a curriculum colonised by assessments and achievement criteria. Ball has

reflected similar concerns, suggesting that 'education reform is spreading across the globe, as in Levin's (1998) terms, like "a policy epidemic"'. Ball warned that the 'novelty of this epidemic of reform is that it does not simply change what people, as educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes who they are' (Ball, 2003, p. 215). Of specific concern is how these reforms affect students. Ball's contention resonates with Foucault's assertion that 'people know what they do; frequently they know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what they do does' (Foucault in M. G. E. Kelly, 2008, p. 70). The effects of policy and educational focus shifts how teachers and students regard themselves as they are changed subconsciously: accepting marketisation as an incontestable norm. However, as the tenets of neoliberalism have congealed, new mechanisms of resistance have become more discernible.

The policy epidemic resulted in substantial changes to curricula; however, these changes were surreptitiously introduced as essential for educational improvement. Initially, the GERM epidemic required standardisation, which necessitated 'centrally prescribed curricula, with detailed and often ambitious performance targets, frequent testing of students and teachers, and test-based accountability' (Sahlberg, 2012a). Sahlberg suggested that this has occurred since the 1980s, in the era of the NLS in the UK and the ANAR report in the US. Au concurred with this assessment, further suggesting that the use of standardised testing has increased in dominance in education such that 'within modern day systems of educational accountability, high-stakes, standardized testing is now the central tool used for educational reform' (Au, 2011, p. 29). In turn, Sahlberg, outlines how the result of this standardisation has 'characterised a homogenization of education policies worldwide, promising standardized solutions at increasingly lower cost for those desiring to improve school quality and effectiveness' (Sahlberg, 2012a).

The second feature of GERM according to Sahlberg is the 'focus on core subjects'—such as literacy, in which 'basic student knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics are elevated as prime targets and indices of education reforms' (Sahlberg, 2012a). Sahlberg emphasised the effects of international student assessment surveys (e.g., those from PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS), suggesting that as they are accepted as the 'criteria of good educational performance, reading, mathematical and scientific literacy have now become the main determinants of perceived success or failure of pupils, teachers, schools, and entire education systems'. Curricula are constrained and effected through an adherence to, and concern for, an arbitrary metric of performance, as well as the country's global standing (which uses these metrics). In this sense, the concern is no longer about the values in education but about a country's ranking and the economic value that ranking is believed to produce.

This concern for national failure was reflected by the British prime minister in 2010:

So much of the education debate in this country is backward looking: have standards fallen? Have exams got easier? These debates will continue, *but what really matters is how we're doing compared with our international competitors*. That is what will define our economic growth and our country's future. The truth is, at the moment *we are standing still while others race past*. In the most recent OECD PISA survey in 2006 we fell from 4th in the world in the 2000 survey to 14th in science, 7th to 17th in literacy, and 8th to 24th in mathematics. The only way we can catch up, and have the world-class schools our children deserve, is by learning the lessons of other countries' success (Preface to Department for Education, 2010).

As described above, students are once again relegated to the sidelines in the education stakes; they are no longer the subject or focus of education but an algorithmic data point in international high-stakes testing. The panic felt that other nations are overtaking them negates the students' experience of education. 'Results' are problematised and students are subjected to the gaze of the state that 'imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility … it is the fact of being constantly seen, of being always able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined subject in his subjections' (Foucault, 1979, p. 187). For political expediency the student is subjectivated through the surveillant mechanisms that are inherent in standardised tests.

Zhao argued that this emphasis on high-stakes testing is entrenched in Industrial Revolution thinking, in which 'the mass production economy needed a large workforce with similar skills and knowledge, but at very basic levels' (Y. Zhao, 2013, p. 13). Not only is high-stakes testing failing students because it concentrates on basic formulations of education, but it also neglects the arts and diminishes literature as key elements in the formation of ethical individuals. This is reflected in a recent survey reported in *The Guardian* newspaper, which revealed that a:

Second major survey of 27,000 children and young people, carried out by the National Literacy Trust ahead of World Book Day … found that the number of eight to 18-year-olds reading for pleasure has now dropped to 52.5%, from 58.8% in 2016, with only a quarter (25.7%) reading daily, compared with 43% in 2015 (Flood, 2019).

Based on an educational publisher's report, Flood's analysis attempted to imply that the fault in education lies with parents not reading to their children. However, this thesis argues that it is the correlation between constant assessment and literature used efferently for literacy that entails major consequences for children's declining desire to read. A report by Christina Clark and Anne Teravainen-Goff revealed that '[o]verall, the more positive children and young

people feel about reading and, in particular, writing, and the more they enjoy reading and writing, the higher their scores on our mental wellbeing index' (Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2018, p. 10). This resonates with Flood's later analysis (also based on research by an educational publisher) and conclusion that children read more challenging and difficult books during the 2020 Australian lockdowns (Flood, 2021). If the three reports are accurate in their findings, then it can be observed that the education that students receive negatively affects their wellbeing; it also thwarts them and their ability to 'transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality' (Foucault, 1980, p. 18).

The third method of global education reform is to 'search for low-risk ways to reach learning goals', which Sahlberg argued 'minimizes experimentation, reduces use of alternative pedagogical approaches, and limits risk-taking in schools and classrooms' (Sahlberg, 2012a). This is echoed by Yong Zhao, who claimed that 'standards and accountability measures can certainly cause the decline of creativity and entrepreneurial thinking [as] … [w]hen individuals are taught to conform, it will be difficult for them to be creative' (Y. Zhao, 2013, p. 19). Although Zhao argued for a change in curriculum to ensure the creation of entrepreneurial students, the effect on students' subjectification is evident; as Sahlberg indicated, students will be diminished by the curriculum's restricted focus. However, it should be noted that the notion of an 'entrepreneurial student' accords with the marketisation of students in Schumpeterian terms.

Sahlberg continued his analysis of GERM, affirming that the 'fourth globally observable trend in educational reform is use of corporate management models as a main driver of improvement' (Sahlberg, 2012a). As discussed previously, the close connection between education policy and business has already been ascertained. Sahlberg further extrapolated a similar vision, indicating that the 'business world is often motivated by national hegemony and economic profit, rather than by moral goals of human development' (Sahlberg, 2012a). Indeed, this claim resonates with Brass, who argued that:

> In contrast to notions of education as a public good, liberal notions of education for rational self-government, or social-democratic and critical aims for a more free and just society, today's education policies typically emphasise narrower concerns about improving a nation's 'human capital' and helping individuals, corporations and nations to compete in the global economy (Brass, 2015, p. 12).

Along with Sahlberg's fifth trend (that of test-based accountability policies), the effect on education has been observed as a shift to advanced neoliberal governmentality; this has subsequently involved redefining education by using economic and business lexicons, guiding

and controlling the conduct of teachers and students and repositioning them within constituted discourses of entrepreneurial control. If Guoping Zhao is correct in his estimation that educational marketization 'makes thinking about human emancipation futile' (G. Zhao, 2016, p. 324), then the possibilities of resistance arising from the formation of ethical student subjects will be sublimated under the tiers of testing and accountability. This biopolitical project to normalise educational practices in economic terminology is being articulated so that new and effective student subjects can be produced.

Although claiming to produce ethical and democratic subjects, neoliberal education confines students to the extent that they become egocentric and enclosed within the service of marketplace logic and determinations. However, they are not educated to perform the kind of self-reflexive techniques that Foucault espoused. For Foucault, ethics is the form that freedom takes when it is informed by self-reflection through informed ascetic practices of self (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997, p. 284). By subjectivating students within economic competitive parameters, students will also subjectify themselves within these discursive limits. Despite claims of collaboration, students remain isolated within the established discourse of 'human capital', and they are inclined to merge with the prevailing regime of commodification. As Foucault claimed, these modes of subjectification entail:

> Struggles which question the status of the individual: on the one hand, they assert the right to be different, and they underline everything which makes individuals truly individual. On the other hand, they attack everything which separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself, and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way. These struggles are not exactly for or against the 'individual' but rather they are struggles against the 'government of individualization' (Foucault, 1982a, p. 781).

Education is thus mired in a neoliberal episteme that controls, through various discourses and 'modifications that affected knowledge itself' (Foucault, 2002, p. 60). The body of the student has been subjected to a discourse of assessment and education. The paradox of liquid powers and irreducible results are problematised when having fallen short of the expected standards, the standards of proficiency, productivity and individual rankings. In this sense, the neoliberal agenda seeks to account for and insert new algorithmic distributions so as to rationalise and overcome perceived shortcomings. In the elision, students are left in a quandary, trying to comprehend an internal reference that is informed by a signifying process which constitutes the individual in terms of individualism, competitiveness and collaboration; a paradox of self-fashioning which creates an ethical citizen caring for others while ruthlessly competing with them at every turn. This is a politics of the subject that divides and regulates populations

according to concrete procedures of normalisation, as well as develops the individual in preparation for competition in a world of social ranking, labour and consumption.

Coda

Examining a number of the power-knowledge capillaries that have contributed to producing the current neoliberal episteme and mapping the neoliberal trajectory demonstrates how this power/knowledge network has contributed to destabilising the rights of students, and shaped them into fully ethical individuals. As has been previously argued,[31] it is literature that encourages the self-analysis and interrogation of values that students require in their subjectification. When students and individuals 'are viewed as privatised consumers rather than public citizens' (Giroux, 2004a, p. 17), education creates a discourse that sacrifices solidarity and cohesion in society, as well as subverts the student's subjectification so that marketplace and commodified workers can be constructed. Giroux (2021) similarly argues that education 'has become an element of organized irresponsibility, modelled on a flight from critical thinking, self-reflection and meaningful forms of solidarity.' In this discourse, literature no longer 'compensates for … the signifying function of language'; it is instead 'that which confirms it' (Foucault, 2002, p. 48). English literary education has been denigrated to the level of signifying language and literacy—a systemic functionalism that subverts aesthetic enrichment and accounts for a lower threshold of human experience.

Foucault warned that literature 'can never, in any circumstance, be thought in accordance with a theory of signification'; however, with the infiltration of the market economy and the emerging legacy of business governmentality in the field of education, it can be observed that this is, in truth, what is occurring. The desolate plains of functional literacy have stranded literature in a drought of signification, in which texts are read to pinpoint the right answer for an inconsequential and meaningless test. There has been an ontological disconnect between education for the person and education as an economic prerequisite for 'success'. Yet, the criteria underlying success are a part of the marketising discourse of neoliberalism. In 'compliance with a given rule' the effect on students has been to commodify and standardise their experiences as they 'attempt to transform [themselves] into the ethical subject of [their] behaviour' (Foucault, 1985/1990, p. 27). As students engage in codes of conduct to create themselves as ethical subjects, it becomes evident that the tools of critique they require to do so are essential. The teaching of literary criticism needs to find a new way for investigating and configuring culture—it needs to be re-located, re-thought and re-tooled, in order to counter

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[31] See Chapter 3.

what Davies and Bansell trenchantly noted, the neoliberal predilection for 'systematically [dismantling] the will to critique' (2010, p. 5).

3. Functional Metrics — Warrior Students and the Tyranny of Standardised Testing

To vouch this is no proof,
Without more wider and more overt test ...
—*Othello,* Act 1, Scene 3

Introduction

Current educational practices are appropriating pedagogy in a stale and unproductive congealing of neoliberal practices that further ensnares thinking in homologous formations, subsequently creating an ontological reification of ideas. As the practicalities of governmental expectations tend to constrict innovative thought, education becomes enmeshed in the reifying practices of assessment and targets. Reflecting this contemporary pedagogical setting, the vision for an 'effective' education attaches itself to, and is encircled by, the term 'visible learning' (Hattie, 2009). This central tenet of recent pedagogical practice is a mimesis of Hattie's pedagogical proposition that positions the teacher's best perspective as naturally corresponding to the formation of learning through the student's lens; correlatively, students find themselves adopting the posture of being their own teacher. Moreover, only learning that can be observed and quantified is accepted. Providing an immanent and somewhat limited conception of education that is subject to numerous criticisms (Eacott, 2017; McKnight & Morgan, 2019a; McKnight & Whitburn, 2018; Rømer, 2019; Snook, O'Neill, Clark, O'Neill, & Openshaw, 2009), Hattie's vision for an 'effective' education revolves around a taxonomic and tensile area of panoptic visibility. When applying this guideline, the only worthwhile education is one that can be tested and then stratified in algorithms, as pedagogy is increasingly becoming quantifiable and a simulacrum of market accountability. Students are no longer considered 'independent ethical beings capable of reflection and decision-making and of taking responsibility for their identity and their social relations and at the same time accepting the necessity of failure, dissonance and conflict' (Ball & Collet-Sabé, 2021, p. 11). Instead, quantifiable education precludes most of the domains of education adumbrated and analysed in Chapter One.

Education is more than just test results and key performance indicators. However, when providing a 'scientific' explanation and statistical analysis of 'what works', Hattie's model of education seeks to attain perfect certainty based on formulaic transparency. The distribution of order specifies a 'data gaze' that is characteristic of positivism. This is an iconoclastic system of measurement and calculation that emerges as a quality of aesthetic education. This contested space of assessment, linked with student development, has resulted in 'methods of power and knowledge [that have] assumed responsibility for the life processes and [have]

undertaken to control and modify them' (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 142). It has created new 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 2008) that are becoming normalised through current pedagogic practice. These new truths exclude diverse formulations and relegate them to designations of difference to be incorporated into normalised parameters. Students are separated and individualised by the dividing practices of meritocracy (Krisjansen & Lapins, 2001). Further, schools negate the democratic and socially cohesive factors of inclusion, as inclusion is divisive due to its use of individual education plans. The identity formation of education is sidelined and subverted into shallow forms of assessment targets.

This formulation of education is not unique to Hattie, but the diachronic effects of standardised testing on students and teachers has been well documented (Allard & Doecke, 2014; Au, 2011; Ball, 1982, 2000, 2003; Biesta, 2009a, 2010, 2013, 2015; Keddie, 2016; McKnight & Whitburn, 2018; Ragusa & Bousfield, 2017). Education now employs a plethora of business terms, and it moulds perceptions about its value using neoliberal marketplace terminology—such as key performance indicators, value added, effectiveness, stakeholders, return on investment and clients. Ball (2003) noted how this kind of performativity regime detrimentally affects education, and Keddie, referencing negative critiques, subsequently concluded that the metathesis of visibility establishes a market-oriented student identity: 'Students in today's classrooms are *children of the market*, that is to say, they are crafting their identities and making sense of their educational and employment experiences and choices within the context of neoliberal imperatives' (Keddie, 2016, p. 109, italics added).

Dominating educational discourse, testing creates regimes of truth that render alternative pedagogical approaches and concepts almost invisible. These approaches have been submerged under the behemoth of data collection, statistical evidence and surveillance learning. Similarly, the critical and exigent question, 'What is the purpose of education?', is often submerged within a proliferation of tests. Instead, focus is placed on efficacy, as statistical measurement problematises the definition of 'effectiveness'—which is itself a highly contested concept (Biesta, 2009a; Rømer, 2019). Understanding the purpose of education is especially significant for understanding how such pedagogical dogmas affect students and their journeys to become autonomous.

Visible learning and subverted education

'Visible learning' positions surveillant disciplinary techniques as a strict order of governing student progress, and the consequent classification precepts and forms of systematised control have pervaded Australian schools; they determine teachers' actions and atomise and enfold them in ratiocinated scientific discourses. Education has long been a site of struggle over agency, identities and values, with control over students' bodies and the delimitation and

domination of divisive practices pervading the struggle's resulting outcomes. Hattie's internal principle establishes a threshold of homogeneity—a vertical plane from which a pattern of progressively enclosing smaller pedagogical areas emerges, which are then fitted into visible spaces[32]. This threshold hides more than it reveals because it delimits and categorises the details of student progress using systematic and pragmatic statistical measurement. Through this calculated deployment of techniques and artefacts, a vast grid of aesthetic education is dismantled; consequently, organised human dynamics and capabilities can only function through taxonomic structures. The kind of limited knowledge gained from functional positivism and meta-analyses creates an aura of infallibility and a distinctly surveillant educational discourse. This kind of normalising closure expels pedagogical approaches that subvert empirical measurement and calculation. As empirical values and algorithms achieve the commanding heights of authority and assert their scientific validity, this privileged power-knowledge web and order of visibility increasingly entraps teachers in a degree of compliance.

This surreptitious discourse disingenuously avers its aim to know everything about the students, but it conceals the fact that the data collected are connected to a 'system of policy goals that are not related to pedagogy and learning theory' (Rømer, 2014, p. 111). The data have been robustly demonstrated to be inaccurate. Bergeron and Rivard (2017), for example, have questioned the statistical methodology and validity of Hattie's approach, even arguing that Hattie's concept of feedback has a centralizing trend which ultimately has the potential to transform the country's educational activities into a big hierarchical and data-driven organism — a potential that is becoming a reality. Nielsen and Klitmøller (2021) similarly argue that his focus on single causal factors causes him to disregard important dimensions in educational practice. Similarly, Rømer argues that the theory is 'a theory of evaluation that denies education … [and] that there are problems with the dependent variable, learning, i.e., the effect of a given intervention' (Rømer, 2019, p. 587).

However, because the gravitational centre of neoliberal testing and performance indicators has been so prevalent, the concepts of visible learning and standardised testing have predominated and colonised educational discourse. The outcomes of the data analysis confirmed that which the producer of the data wished to privilege: the exclusions, the glosses and the omissions creating a subtle picture of invincibility about the data, challenging any resistance. Instead, such data—and the pedagogical culture that accompanies them—'not only teach[es] the staff new skills, but also reorientate[s] their outlooks as dictated by the needs of the database' (Deen, 1997, in Beer, 2019, p. 99). They re/form their identities,

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[32] Hattie pointedly asks, 'Would it not be wonderful if we could create a single continuum of achievement effects, and locate a possible influences of achievement on this continuum?' (Hattie, 2009 p. 26) a consideration that smoothly and unproblematically aligns students, their achievements, teachers, and their practices.

developing an acquiescent 'data-gaze' as the continual application of such data mining normalises the procedure, obscuring the negative effects even further.

The use and misuse of data to control students through double panoptic surveillance—in which teachers perversely regard themselves as students and students regard themselves as teachers (Hattie, 2009)—de-professionalises teachers to the extent that they are no longer bona fide educators but mere facilitators in a data-driven economy. Their professionalism is conceivably diminished, and this affects students' identity formation. The panoptic inscription on the body and invasive conception of education insidiously undermines the teacher–student relationship. They create hybrid kinds of students—ones who are both teacher and student— unearthing immanent knowledge and impelling students to instruct themselves due to the apparent inadequacies of the undermined professional teacher. Students are compelled through discourse 'to constitute and recognise themselves as autochthonous individuals in need of self-actualisation' (Krisjansen & Lapins, 2001, p. 57), as well as to shape their subjectivity through an impoverished and etiolating conception of education.

This inanition has the potential to undermine and radically deprive students of the possibility to express individual autonomy as aesthetic self-creation or achieve their full potential. As Butler asserted, 'to be a subject at all requires first finding one's way with certain norms that govern recognition, norms [they] never chose, and that found their way to [them] and enveloped [them] with their structuring and animating power' (Butler, 2015, p. 40). Surrounded by the behemoth of neoliberal ideology, pervasive assessment and the perception that students become their own teachers, students are left bereft of an education that encourages a flourishing of subjectifying potential. Instead, students recede and become atomised in the grip of an individualism that 'shifts all responsibility for success or failure to a mythical, atomised, isolated individual, doomed to a life of perpetual competition and disconnected from relationships, community and society' (Zuboff, 2019, p. 33).

Additionally, the technical control of the high-stakes tester removes agency from teachers, which renders them incapable of encouraging the subjectification of ethical students. Instead:

> It allows parts of the labour process (in this case, teaching) to be broken up into atomistic elements where teachers, as labourers, not only lose significant amounts of control of the teaching process as a whole, but also lose control over aspects of their very own labour (Apple and Jungck in Au, 2011, p. 35).

Teachers and students lose important agential aspects of the educational process due to a debilitating and divisive process of testing and assessment—one that attempts to make resistance futile through its capillary actions within the educational system, although students, teachers and unions consistently attempt to initiate forms of resistance. Making education

'visible' creates the power-knowledge capillaries forming the conditions that thrust students into the panoptic surveillance of visible education. Here, a desired set of bodily practices is inculcated to produce a desired quantifiable result instead of being used as an educational discourse for student development. Subsequently, this educational 'power now appears not to limit but to provoke, purify, and disseminate force for the purposes of management and control, ramified throughout all areas of life, the expansion of which is now its raison d'etre' (Cisney & Morar, 2015, p. 3); this subsequently detracts from the formative purposes of education.

The 'transparency' inherent in this ideology is directly connected to the notions of panopticism and docility, as well as the gaze and power creation. As Foucault argued, just as the invention of the rifle turned every soldier into a target (Foucault, 1979, p. 164), so too does visible learning turn every student into a commodity—into a pliable and docile body that can be recreated in the marketised form required by the state. The data mining and analyses of visible learning act as 'a functional reduction of the body', and the standards that are exacted are 'an insertion of this body-segment in a whole ensemble of which it is articulated' (Foucault, 1979, p. 164). As a data point, the student is fragmented; students become 'body-segments' that are used as an economic constituent 'in such a way that the maximum quantity of forces may be extracted from each and combined with the optimum result' (Foucault, 1979, p. 165). In the style of a *deux ex machina*, each student is an important cog and primary character who does not just represent *homo economicus* but also *humanitas economicus*. Using Foucault's military terminology, students emerge as 'warriors' who are valiantly impelled to become the measure of socio-economic progress, and who legitimise the overarching aims of the neoliberal policy agenda and its accompanying economic machine.

Foucault outlined how 'the school became a machine for learning, in which each pupil, each level and each moment, if correctly combined, were permanently utilised in the general process of teaching' (Foucault, 1979, p. 165); he also defined education in terms of a formative governmentality. Similarly, with visible learning, students experience a 'robotised' process; if they are not seen to be learning, then a deficiency in praxis is assumed and they require disciplining before returning to the learning machine. Although 'this means of coercion make[s] those on whom they are applied clearly visible' (Foucault, 1979, p. 171), the control itself is made invisible: it is 'the machinery of a furtive power' (Foucault, 1979, p. 203). The capillaries that create the power—the network of panoptic data mining, assessments and tests—become endemic in education, and they form teachers' and students' behaviour by normalising this praxis. The praxis itself blurs the purpose of education to the point at which it becomes just another source of data to feed the governmental surveillance machine.

Although the purpose of education, according to the Australian Curriculum, is to shape the lives of young Australians so that they can contribute to a democratic, equitable and just society (ACARA, 2015a), using panoptic disciplinary measures prevents the formation of democratic and autonomous students. 'The chief function of the disciplinary power is to "train"' (Foucault, 1979, p. 170), which involves objectifying students instrumentally; designed to train students to 'learn' autochthonously, tangible learning objectifies students as neat data points in algorithmically constructed graphs. Despite the rhetoric, knowledge is considered a substitute for an education that is becoming enveloped by a discourse that focuses more on invasive dividing practices that segment and separate students through an atomising individualism than on promoting individualisation.

Test results articulate the essence of datafied learning, and they become the sole measure of success in education. All individuals and groups will have their proper place on a table of classification, in which the structure and criteria are allegedly transparent and observable. In Victoria, after 13 years of education, the VCE[33] becomes the benchmark of success, and international test scores and the NAPLAN become the focus of educational policies. However, the limited and vague focus of such studies gloss over the inherent discrimination in them. As large groups of students are meshed as a whole, their individuality becomes adumbrated; it recedes into an almost invisible vibration within an extrapolated mass data collection that seeks to combine all individuals into an amorphous mass while outwardly treating them as single individuals. In this way, the visible learning strategy uses the concept of evaluation 'with a crushing effect, transforming education into an individualistic, technological, and quantitatively based system of indicators and structures of monitoring which the principal, the teacher, and "the learner" must all commit themselves to' (Rømer, 2019, p. 590). This is a form of social reification whereby students are atomised, and they become targets for correction, based on perceiving them as a data source that informs market accountability. This form of social reification is a hermeneutic key for comprehending a rational economy of protection, and it provides a social space in which authority can extrapolate a rationalisation for the conduct of life and, correspondingly, build regulatory criteria. This space of social practice mirrors Foucault's concept of discipline:

> Instead of bending all its subjects into a single uniform mass, it separates,
> analyses, differentiates, carries its procedures of decomposition to the point of
> necessary and sufficient single units … it is the specific technique of a power
> that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise
> (Foucault, 1979, p. 170).

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[33] VCE the Victorian Certificate of Education (Australia).

The administration of learning that is constituted only if it is visible entails that students are manipulated and moulded into becoming the subject required by the state. This notion is similar to Biesta's term of 'learnification' (Biesta, 2009a), which reduces learning to the point that:

> Education is never that children or students learn, but that they learn *something*, that they learn this for particular *purposes*, and that they learn this from *someone*. The problem with the language of learning and with the wider 'learnification' of educational discourse is that it makes it far more difficult, if not impossible, to ask the crucial educational questions about *content*, *purpose* and *relationships* (Biesta, 2012, p. 36, original italics).

The power of data creates regimes of truth that reorder our world and the world of education—and, as Zuboff warned, '[w]ith this reorientation from knowledge to power … the goal is now to *automate* us' (Zuboff, 2019, p. 8, original italics).

The power of data analytics and the automation agenda is thus to 'emphasise a particular vision of the social world so as to present data analytics as the only real solution' (Beer, 2019, p. 15). When data are used specifically to mould student behaviour (with a focus on 'outcomes' rather than on the individual), the empowering strength of education is lost in 'the optic horizons of the data gaze' (Beer, 2019, p. 15). This constant analysis of data to enhance performance divides and categorises students through the biopower of 'guaranteeing relations of domination and [the] effects of hegemony' (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 141); the escalating interest in data enhances students' reputation for being used to discover new types of emergent knowledge, and it recognises them as a source of truth. Additionally, data analysis results are immediate—they are in the moment, a diagnostic eye to locate value and failure, and they encapsulate the pursuit of improvement. This effect emerges as a kind machinic automation implying that education and learning belong to a 'data gaze [that] is both diagnostic and prescriptive' (Beer, 2019, p. 98). The effect is transitory, but it offers immediate gratification and specifically targeted, data-driven and analytic agendas.

The form of biopower discussed above is not just externally shaped. Students experience different modes of knowledge of being when they assume the mantle of teacher, and the theme of self-constitution increasingly emerges in forms of self-scrutiny. Hancock highlighted that 'as we become self-diagnosing, self-scrutinising and self-analysing subjects' (Hancock, 2018, p. 444), there are no clear underlying structures on which these analyses can be based. This technology of self is a manifestation of an inward focus—it is a self-analysing education predicated on the immanent conception of knowledge rather than on the discursive creation of knowledge. Students ostensibly shape their own subjectivity without relying on the

discourse that will extend that subjectification. Nevertheless, 'the disciplinary institutions secrete […] a machinery of control that function […] like a microscope of conduct' (Foucault, 1979, p. 171), and the neoliberal mantra expresses that individuals should discipline themselves through the governmentality of the *conduire des conduites* ('conduct of conduct') (Foucault, 1982b). Students not only become the subject of continuously increasing surveillant scrutiny, but they are also expected to self-evaluate in a binary spiral of observation and self-examination. In this sense, students must conduct themselves, analyse their own weaknesses, perform diagnoses and simultaneously ensure their own increased performance through self-teaching and self-enhancement. Taking Biesta's example of 'learnification' (Biesta, 2012) to a new level, visible learning not only incorporates the 'learnification' techniques Biesta described, but it also involves students recreating themselves as model citizens through a determinate form of askesis. However, students are not given the necessary tools for their transformation. Instead, teachers, assessors and experts are there to observe, check and test. Foucault suggested that 'the success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalising judgement and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination' (Foucault, 1979, p. 170). These 'simple instruments' play their part in subjectivating the student by creating a dystopian education that is disturbing in its paucity and by perpetuating a continuously increasing panoptic surveillance.

Visible learning has been extended to even greater extremes in China and the US. Chinese students in many schools are the targets of 'facial recognition [that is used] to monitor students' in-class behaviour [and] accurately assess attention levels and help [students] learn more efficiently' (Xue, 2019). In the US, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation 'is pushing to develop an "engagement pedometer" [in which] biometric devices wrapped around the wrists of students would identify which classroom moments excite and interest them—and which fall flat' (Simon, 2012). This drive to continuously increase surveillance is based on the enervating assumption that students and teachers are somehow continuously failing. It also exploits the perception that education is 'the key to winning a global economic race [that] has made rankings on international league tables an obsession in Australian politics' (Gorur, 2016). This 'surveillance thus becomes a decisive economic operator both as an internal part of the production machinery and as a specific mechanism in the disciplinary power' (Foucault, 1979, p. 175). Reaching through the full extent of students' manisfestation of self, as well as through national economic production, is a biopower that shapes students as a key element of Australia's economic welfare and future success. Disciplinary power, through surveillance and monitoring, is expected to result in an economically efficient subject; the student thus

unwittingly becomes a mechanistic part of the neoliberal machine, whereby '[being] inherent to it … increases its efficiency' (Foucault, 1979, p. 176).

Although 'continuous and functional surveillance may not be one of the great technical "inventions" of the eighteenth century, … its insidious extension owed its importance to the mechanisms of power that it brought with it' (Foucault, 1979, p. 176). This 'insidious extension' has been brought back into schools as the Holy Grail of education—as the final solution to all educational deficits and as the universal panacea that will enable all who follow its doctrines to curtail the failings and deficits that impede progress. In this view, shortcomings and deficits are pervasive in Western educational systems. Hattie has promoted improved outcomes as a means to overcome these deficits—specifically when students and teachers have achieved learning intentions, success criteria and reflection. Nevertheless, he mis-recognises the immanent banality in some of these proposed reforms, and they delimit professional teachers in their teaching practice. He reiterated the term 'evidence' but did not explain what form this evidence should take in the classroom, or how it would be derived; further, 'there are no references to teaching content or to cultural and scientific matters, only to "achievements" that are always conceptualized as cognitive processes in evaluational systems' (Rømer, 2019, p. 596). The reductive binary of success and failure, cognitive evaluations and the certainty of never being good enough establish a system of ever-present failure in which students always have another goal to achieve and they are locked in an uninterrupted chain of competition. The visible learning technique ensures the deployment of warrior students seamlessly combined and circumscribed with patterns of self-surveillance and relentless panoptic surveillance. As Foucault indicated, 'discipline makes possible the operation of a relational power that sustains itself by its own mechanism and which … substitutes the subject of uninterrupted play of calculated gazes' (Foucault, 1979, p. 177)—the contemporary 'data gaze'. Subjected to this relentless gaze, students' learning experiences are reduced to evaluation techniques, prescriptive learning intentions and repressive success criteria. In fact, Hattie's meta-analysis confines education to expeditious evaluation, largely to the exclusion of a subjective and thoughtful aesthetic education.

There is little room for Popper's philosophical theories of culture and learning (in terms of deep and surface learning) in Hattie's analyses, despite his reference to them. Instead, students are subjectified into becoming data-driven, self-taught and self-impelled automata that only aim for self-improvement in a delimited and performative discourse of superficial learning. Students emerge as simulacra that mirror the tenets of naked neoliberalism—as *homo economicus* personified. They present as self-motivating workers who are intent on self-improvement in the continuously changing capitalist and economic, as well as combative and competitive, power network in which they find themselves. Foucault (1979, p. 200) contended

that 'visibility is a trap', and visible learning entraps students in a meta-analysis of data. In this sense, there is no prodigious cultural repertoire. Rather, the visible learning paradigm excludes thanks to its very methodology and confined nature; it opens experience to unprecedented pedagogical delimitations. The continual focus on evaluation negates important elements of the curriculum, and 'when the determining and legal judgment loses its relation to the imagination (passivity), the result becomes evaluation: that is, understanding without imagination' (Rømer, 2019, p. 594). To animadvert the repository of standardised benchmarks and the proprietary hauteur of visible learning may be the beginnings of restoring a cultural memory where education serves as an aesthetic enterprise of learning, enjoyment, and development.

A measurement culture: Testing, assessment and the question of truth

Ball suggested that 'in many respects education is quintessentially an endeavour focused on the question of truth. Truth is at stake in the meaning and practice of education, and what it means to be educated' (Ball, 2017, p. 63). Regimes of truth underpin the structure of education and society. This is a new regime of truth based on assessments and the outwardly verifiable scientific 'evidence' that they produce. However, Foucault's philosophy of truth resists the notion of self-evident demonstrative truth that can be found in any place or any time regardless of circumstances. Subsequently, this evidence is contestable because it focuses only on certain aspects of education. The governmentality that is enacted in the visible learning 'truth' provides a basic form of individual conduct corralling learning towards predefined outcomes. The truth that is revealed from such a procedure is strengthened by students' reflection on their learning. This is not askesis, that 'exercise of oneself in the activity of thought' (Foucault, 1985/1990, p. 9), but a petty reinforcement of surface learning.

The locus of attention on measuring students' abilities has shifted since the 1980s, consequently creating a measurement culture in education that shapes curricula. Biesta noted this, arguing that the 'rise of the measurement culture in education has had a profound impact on educational practice, from the highest levels of educational policy at national and supranational level down to the practices of local schools and teachers' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 2). This measurement culture has also profoundly affected students who are subjectified by their educational experiences.

Measurement culture is not a new phenomenon. Although it has reached epidemic proportions (e.g., in the modern Victorian classroom, endorsed by the Victorian Department of Education and Training[34] in at least two publications), scientists, psychologists and sociologists have

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[34] DET (*Practice Principles For Excellence In Teaching And Learning*, 2018). See a so DET (2017).

been involved in measuring people's mental abilities for centuries. After the paradigm shift of the Enlightenment, which foregrounded reason, logic and critical thinking, Western civilisation was presented with a discontinuity—namely, a new concept of knowledge: the essentialism of evidence in a scientific approach. Foucault claimed that with the rise of the Classical period, people's perception of the universe and their place in it altered (Foucault, 2002); the indispensable border of knowledge now centred on observation and on codifying and tabulating knowledge. As Foucault described it, 'what makes the totality of the classical *episteme* is primarily the relation to a knowledge of order' (Foucault, 2002, p. 79). The perception of knowledge changed dramatically from the beginning of the 17th century, in which it subordinated imagination as scientific knowledge that was 'developed according to the forms of identity, of difference, and of order' (Foucault, 2002, p. 79). Of increasing importance in this new episteme and regime of truth was the understanding that 'measurement enables us to analyse things according to the calculable form of identity and difference' (Foucault, 2002, p. 59). This revolution assigned a taxonomy to evidence and fostered social regeneration in a sui generis application of scientific thought and practice. Newton's formulation of the laws of gravity—governing what Halley described in his introduction to Newton's *Philosphiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687) as 'the immovable order of the world'—was 'a triumph for a whole way of knowing the world' (Levenson, 2015, p. 42). The significance of this mathematical feat of genius cemented the new episteme, especially when Le Verrier used Newton's formulas and his own mathematical brilliance to specify the probable location of Neptune (which Galle and D'Arrest verified in 1846 within an hour of using Le Verrier's prediction). This scientific approach distinctly affected thought and perception; it validated the concept that humanity 'could by pure force of intellect impose order on the natural world' (Levenson, 2015). The conscious desire to impose a constricting order on the world—in which 'comparison became a function of order' (Foucault, 2002, p. 60) and 'resemblance as the fundamental experience and primary form of knowledge [was denounced]' (Foucault, 2002, p. 58)—led to a change of understanding regarding imagination and creativity and their importance to human development.

The rising hegemony of the scientific approach extended its authority beyond the 'hard sciences', resulting in a pullulating host of human sciences and disciplines—including medicine, psychology and sociology, 'whose task is to calculate, interpret, and predict the overall health of the society writ large' (Cisney & Morar, 2015). One effect of this proliferation of comparative techniques to create order occurred during the Industrial Revolution in education, in which the desire to use selection techniques to meet the demands of mass education was observed. This desired outcome required an ability or technique to measure intelligence (which had been increasingly defined in terms of literacy and numeracy). As Ken

Robinson explained, 'intelligence was defined in terms of verbal and mathematical reasoning', and it led to the rise of the IQ test (Robinson, 2009, p. 38). Indeed, Robinson posited that:

> We came to think of real intelligence in terms of logical analysis: believing that rationalist forms of thinking were superior to feeling and emotion, and that the ideas that really count can be conveyed in words or through mathematical expressions (Robinson, 2009, p. 38).

The clear mathetic pathway observed from the emergence of IQ tests to NAPLAN and PISA testing constructs an autochthonic student who is subjectivated within 'psychophysical judgements' and the structured measurements of language skills (Boake, 2002, p. 385). By advancing the original psychometric tests through a combination of year scales and assigning the age levels at which most children performed them successfully, Spinet and Simon laid the foundations for epistemic thought regarding the expected educational attainments of children. The labelling and identification of children using these divisive test practices still resonates in the 'Standards' and 'Progression Points' in the Australian Curriculum, despite the 'intelligence scale that is relied upon to make medical, educational, and legal decisions … not reflect[ing] advances in understanding of cognitive functioning during the past 60 years and contain[ing] tests from the 1800s' (Boake, 2002, p. 401). Brass challenged this defining initiative, stating that:

> From the beginning, IQ tests [have been] an exercise in circular logic: using the properties of a content area test to test achievement in that content area, but then labelling the outcome as some kind of transcendent "IQ" or "innate ability"' (Brass, 2014b, p. 234).

Brass was equally dismissive regarding the use of such tests to determine students' cognitive abilities (Brass, 2014b, p. 234). Additionally, he highlighted that the 'scientific' approach that was used to determine 'ability' did not mean that the tests were a valid signifier in constructing 'ADHD and other "disabilities" [which] were not necessarily given in nature but were historically constituted terms that had been fabricated and normalized through practices of psychological tests, scales, bell curves, and questionnaires' (Brass, 2014b, p. 234). By using medicalised tests such as the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, educationalists created an ability scale that could be used as a metric to determine 'giftedness' and 'intellectual capacity' (or the lack thereof), as well as students' taxonomic educational progression.

The early IQ tests, through a 'new surface of emergence made it possible to explore a concealed mental capacity that was now available to knowledge and discourse' (Krisjansen & Lapins, 2001, p. 50); this has since been replicated in standardised testing and progression points. When considering IQ tests in their most extreme cases, the apparent mental capacity

of groups of people led to the rise of the eugenics movement, racist supremacists and the sterilisation of people with dubious parentage and proscribed cultural heritage. Further, these traits were imbued with social antipathy. For example, with the belief that certain traits were hereditary (e.g., pauperism, drunkenness), Lewis Terman argued in favour of segregation and sterilisation (Robinson, 2009, p. 40). When discussing sterilisation laws in 30 US states for those with low IQ in the early 1900s, Robinson concluded: 'That the laws existed in the first place is a frightening indication of *how dangerously limited any standardised test is* in calculating intelligence and the capacity to contribute to society' (Robinson, 2009, p. 40). However, a standardised test (PISA) is still being used as a performance metric, and the increase of standardised testing in schools continues to be a dividing practice that measures students' worth.

Using standardised tests to define students' abilities renders the untestable qualities of those students invisible. Labelling students pathologically (e.g., as having ADHD or learning difficulties, or being gifted) outlines the field of action and reduces students to neat categorisations of ab/normality, through which corrective interventions can be activated. This nomothetic conception of order and classification is prevalent today, congealed with the divisive practices of NAPLAN results, school tables and PISA hierarchies, which classify, separate, differentiate and label students, schools and nations. This has not only created a new 'function of order' (Foucault, 2002, p. 60), but it has also reconstituted the conception of education by creating new 'games of truth' (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997, p. 282). This process of change is 'superimposing … different criteria onto the ordering of complex natures' (Krisjansen & Lapins, 2001, p. 53). General standards, previously rationalising acceptable moral and social behaviour, have now been subverted and misappropriated into educational performance 'standards' (Ravitch, 2011). This appropriation of moral standards corresponds with marketplace performance standards, and it changes the focus of education from a liberal vision of creating responsible citizens to a neoliberal vision of an instrumental and economically viable industrial factory producing *homo economicus*. As this vision, and its accompanying testing, becomes more prevalent, the 'disciplines will define not a code of law, but a code of normalization' (Foucault, 2003, p. 38); testing subsequently becomes 'a *norm,* legitimated by the sciences' (Cisney & Morar, 2015, p. 4).

The mathesis instigated by the Binet-Simon and similar diagnostic tests has resulted in a scientific discourse that surrounds student achievement. This form of biopower is now ingrained in school praxis, whereby 'identity and the series of its differences have been discovered by means measurement with a common unit'—that is, standardised progression points (Foucault, 2002, p. 61). This is a scientific and medicalised gaze that systematically classifies students into categorical orders of dis/ability through a medicalised and scientific

lens. However, 'medicalization does not simply redefine human problems; rather, [it] redefines human beings themselves as problematic' (Hancock, 2018, p. 442)—and, therefore, it requires intervention practices. Schools use the metrics of definable categories to safely compartmentalise students, a nomothetic approach to an idiographic profession that conveys the appearance of certainty through a numeration of the curriculum. It is an approach that elevates the efferent and deprecates the aesthetic. Neglecting the aesthetic and the imaginary in the quest for evidential truth creates the illusion that a good education should be based on the narrow lines of ability in mathematics, science and words—that is, on logical and empirical thinking at the expense of other senses and abilities. This is a despairing image in which calculus and taxonomy govern the entire arrangement of pedagogical practice.

The concentration of testing using narrow metrics contradicts the many psychological studies that focus on diverse types of intelligence. By considering just a narrow range of abilities (e.g., analysing texts or identifying grammatical errors), many other types of intelligences are discounted or rendered invisible. Using an idiographic approach, Howard Gardner proposed eight different intelligences that should be used to represent a broader range of human potential in children and adults; in turn, Sternberg listed three, and Goleman and Cooper further segregated different modalities of intelligence (Cooper, 2015; Gardner, 2006; Goleman, 1996; Sternberg, 1985). With this variety and contesting of intelligence types, a narrow focus on easily assessable procedures creates an education system that obviates a diverse range of student intelligence, and it masks the potential multiplicity that is inherent in student development and outcomes.

This scientification of education attempts to impose an order onto what is an essentially unruly process of learning and teaching—a process that can be defined according to some set rules. Not only is there 'the human urge to map the unknown onto the already known' (Levenson, 2015, p. 59), but this urge leads to the notion of conflating different aspects of humanity and mapping them onto something more manageable; it leads to a system of education which is controllable and measurable through explicit formulas enumerated in the synthesis of critical data.

However, just like Einstein's understanding of Brownian motion, this becomes subject to:

> The recognition that the fundamental nature of reality in many of its facets is determined by the behaviour of crowds that can only be understood in statistical terms, and not by direct links in a chain of cause and effect (Levenson, 2015, p. 130).

Conceiving the student population as a statistical whole undermines the individuation of students, and it subjectivates them to a discourse of apparent scientific probity that shapes

the educational discourse in which they are immersed. The power-knowledge aspect of the scientific approach to education 'functions under a different type of rule, one located in the natural realm, a *norm,* legitimated by the sciences' (Cisney & Morar, 2015, p. 4), and it obviates the aesthetic as unscientific. However, as Levenson reiterated, science also has its moments of aesthetic emotion. For example, when one witnesses an eclipse, 'one feels an eclipse as much as one views it' (Levenson, 2015, p. 101); other examples include when Newton's *Principia* was first published, or when the inflationary theory of the universe was validated through observation. There is 'a kind of breathlessness, sheer wonder that human minds could penetrate such incredibly deep mysteries' (Levenson, 2015, p. 116). Penetrating the deep mystery of effective education has been the task of educationalists; however, they do not work with the general stability of the universe but with defined patterns of progress that intersect along artificially systematised grids of specification and the volatility of the evolving human mind.

The scientific endeavour to legitimate teaching practices through testing and observation continues to transform education by using apparent statistical evidence; however, this obscures the insidious corporate colonisation of educational practice that occurs through market practices and through a neoliberal ideology that authorises the hype of observable learning. This surveillant and educative form of biopower intervenes with its intense registrations, and it is characterised by Foucault in terms of 'its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, [and] its integration into systems of efficient and economic control' (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 139). Schools self-scrutinise and self-regulate to the extent that they become 'a new taxonomy that is both divisional and homogeneous' (Krisjansen & Lapins, 2001, p. 53). This homogenisation of education through explicit standardised testing creates a mathematical truth; it creates ordered taxonomies that are delineated in horizontal lines and vertical columns that convey an aura of empirical intelligibility regarding the statistical evidence that is produced. However, this 'evidence' is fiercely contested, both in terms of its validity and its diagnostic pretensions when it tries to explain what works in education and when it seeks to dominate the educational debate. These contestations will be revisited in this chapter. However, with students being disciplined through external agencies and the science of order, the system of representational evidence, driven by the logic of neoliberal economics, reveals that biopower and the ontological continuum overburdens the student body. The continuity of being means that students are designated and classified into measurable forms of order— specifically, an order regarding the nature of ability and a taxonomy that establishes normalisation.

The question of 'evidence'

A key notion in the process of collecting evidence is that the evidence will create a scientifically acknowledged platform—a power-knowledge discourse—from which policies are shaped and a schematic educational ontology is reinforced. This science-based biopower is difficult to negate because it is often employed with popular prejudice, especially when Western society places such exalted value science, technology, engineering and mathematics.[35] However, the evidential approach to education is varied, and it contains contesting interpretations and connotations—such as, at the least, the '*who*, *why* and *what* constitutes evidence' and 'the question of what evidence is' (Kvernbekk, 2011, p. 517). Kvernbekk suggested that despite the term 'evidence-based learning', the concept of evidence is little understood in the debate. As she highlighted, '[t]o be able to appeal to the existence of [empirical] evidence might give an aura of scientific support to views or policies that is misleading, perhaps even unfounded, depending on the quality of the evidence' (Kvernbekk, 2011, p. 517). As society becomes more attached to the essential motifs of taxonomy (and as it increasingly accepts algorithmic and statistical evidence as 'truth'), the hypothetical claims made for such evidence are also more strongly validated, and they are more often considered a part of the 'what works' agenda (Biesta, 2007, 2010; Hammersley, 2001; Hattie, 2009; Simons, 2003). However, a problematisation occurs when such evidence is prioritised above others—such as with Hattie's supernumerary metadata analysis, which has permeated education in Australia to the detriment of teacher-observed evidence (Albrechtsen & Qvortrup, 2014; McKnight & Morgan, 2019a; Rømer, 2014, 2019). Contestations regarding the veracity or benefit of the scientific 'truth' are disparaged in the battle to provide the perfect educational system.

Given the avid interest in quality performance and evidence-based management, using evidence in education has been subjected to considerable criticism (Albrechtsen & Qvortrup, 2014; Bergeron, 2017; Davies, 2003; Rømer, 2014, 2019). Kvernbekk (2011) has vigorously challenged the use of evidence in education, observing that the concept and understanding of evidence in this field are seemingly missing, or that they have been misconstrued. The different understandings and uses of evidence create new games of truth, and they mesh perceptions about educational praxis with perceptions about the effectiveness of certain practices relative to others. Due to these perceptions, some practices are deemed more efficacious, especially if they appear legitimated scientifically. Congruously, Kvernbekk concluded that 'evidence is something that has a bearing on the truth-value of a hypothesis (theory, belief); in other words, it is something that supports or confirms the hypothesis,

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[35] Art s somet mes nc uded n the STEM acronym, but usua y as an mpover shed afterthought.

justifies our belief in it' (Kvernbekk, 2011, p. 520). It is interesting to note that Kvernbekk suggested that evidence should support a hypothesis instead of being based on and supporting the evidence, as is the case in the evidence from *Visible Learning* (Hattie, 2009). Further, there is also the issue that:

> There are those who think that research will be able to give us 'the truth,' that 'the truth' can be translated into rules for action, and that the only thing practitioners need to do is to follow these rules without any further reflection on or consideration of the concrete situation they are in (Biesta, 2007, p. 16).

Kvernbekk challenged this truth consideration by suggesting that it is 'important to note that confirmation and justification do not entail truth' (Kvernbekk, 2011, p. 520). In contrast, from Foucault's perspective, truth is embedded in power–discourse games in which the subject is constituted and objectified. Pedagogical practice is enmeshed in these games of truth regarding efficacy and claims of credence that are reconstituted and objectified in an almost inescapable logic: that of a scientific discourse posing as indisputable truth.

The unquestioning acceptance of visible and tangible learning as being a veritable truth is pernicious. The epidemic of visible learning and 'high-impact teaching strategies' affirms the need for contesting and resistance. Biesta argued that 'the case for evidence-based practices relies on a representational epistemology in which true knowledge is seen as an accurate representation of how "things" are in "the world"' (Biesta, 2010, p. 494). The effect of this are normalised representations with new regimes of truth that are manufactured based on problematic evidence-based practices (EBP). These truths achieve the immediacy of inevitability, and they attain an unquestionable form of veracity, even though they occlude other aspects of creative education that, in different truth regimes, are of equal value.

Although teaching is ipso facto about student advancement, the relevance of introducing medicalised and impersonal evidence to instruct teaching creates contestations. The use of 'evidence-based methodology is basically a political and cultural concept' (Rømer, 2014, p. 106), one that has shaped policy and educational discourse. Questioning the validity of modern evidence-based practice, McKnight and Morgan (2019a) suggested that it has moved from a more human approach 'to a positivist focus on rational inquiry that involves the separation of knower and knowledge and the creation of truths external to human relationships, whether in the consulting room or the classroom' (p. 2). The implications here are clear: the student becomes a detached entity, a data point, on which the teacher will subject various interventionist techniques, thus 'raising standards'. This is not evidence based on individual accomplishments; for example, it is based on Hattie's metadata analysis that 'proves' what works in education. However, Albrechtsen and Qvortrup have concluded that 'in

the field of teaching, there is rarely (or perhaps never) conclusive evidence of "*what works*" in the classroom' (Albrechtsen & Qvortrup, 2014, p. 70). NAPLAN and PISA results are also used to indicate both a school's and a nation's progress, yet the results are based on varying populations of school students who may not have been in the earlier rounds of testing—or, as Fachinetti suggested, they do not 'take into account the natural variance in cohorts from one year to the next' (Fachinetti, 2015, p. 20). Further, the information from NAPLAN tests tends to not be aimed at specific students. Instead, students are atomised as data points and are thus rendered invisible, including in terms of their own specific issues and circumstances. By separating the hermeneutical student–teacher relationship from the test, the student's identity becomes void, and teaching becomes alienated and detached.

Proponents of large-scale testing in education highlight the economic success of systematic testing in areas such as medicine and technology, and they extol the virtues of the randomised controlled field trial (Biesta, 2009a, p. 33). It has been argued that such tests include a 'separation of knower and knowledge' (McKnight & Morgan, 2019a, p. 2), and that a marked division belies the teleological practice of education involving 'intentions, purposes, aims, and objectives' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 33). This includes hermeneutical students who are involved in agential struggles for identity and subjectivity. A test is a snapshot of a situation; not inherently indicative of the progress made or the mental processes being applied to various situations. The student is not a disease to be studied in a detached laboratory experiment, but a functioning, evolving and dynamic learner. Tests are designed to reflect certain aspects of the students' abilities, as well as the level that they have attained. However, they are performed on students rather than with them. Students lack agency regarding what is tested, how it is tested or what aspects of their own complex thoughts are allowed to be visible. Strikingly, external agents govern students who are subjected to this type of evaluation, yet the students have no power to create their own values or impose their own ethics. The resulting evidential data 'not only separates method and content; it also has a built-in tendency to push away cultural purposes, the goals and aims of education' (Rømer, 2014, p. 112). The ethical subjectification of students is detached from this objective testing, which instead creates a space to form a neoliberal and marketised child. This results from detaching 'evidence' from 'the situated structure of educational knowledge and [connecting it] instead to a new system of policy goals that are not related to pedagogy and learning theory …[which] excludes education itself' (Rømer, 2014, p. 112). This kind of testing ultimately results in objectifying students and denying them their agential rights to ethical subjectification.

It is through the tester's power relations with the student and the perception of an idealised formulation—a perfect test engendering perfect competition—that informs community acceptance about the use of scientific evidence in high-stakes testing. Although this epistemic

kind of logical positivism (i.e., verifiable science) is an unjustified reification, it is generally accepted by the students and the educational community. Nevertheless, there is an inherent incommensurability between this kind of realist science as it is applied in schools and the idiographic nominalism that informs and engenders teaching practice in the classroom. The power of evidential tactics (i.e., positivism) is 'quite explicit at the restricted level where they are inscribed … forming comprehensive systems…'; however, this type of power is also open to resistance regarding the roles of 'adversary, target, support or handle in power relations' (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 95). The cultural purposes, goals and aims of education may be excluded, as Rømer claimed, but through the resistance of teachers, students and academics, the hegemony of logical positivism and high-stakes testing is being interrogated and problematised. However, the neoliberal infiltration of education has also further impeded the ability to resist seeing the student 'body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities … the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls' (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 139). Educational learning companies seductively extend their practices through 'talent and clinical assessments, brain training, soft skill training and other specialist training'; in doing so, they create an industry based on educational practices and resources, and they establish themselves as the purveyors of educational truths who shape 'the future of education' (Pearson, 2019). The consequences of this neoliberal infiltration are that the 'concept of evidence becomes a part of an international hegemony in which rankings are supposed to provide information to the global marketplace, helping big business to decide how to move in its strategic operations' (Rømer, 2014, p. 114). The power of the corporate world to provide educational outcomes negates students' individualising education and instead envelops and objectivises students in corporate discourses of biopower. The advent of corporations who extend into the educational market—and who thereby reinforce the scientific and EBP approach to education—'has given the impression that decisions about the direction of educational policy and the shape and form of educational practice can be based solely upon factual information' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 34). Logical positivism apes the putative neutrality that informs commercial observations, but the attempt to market a brand of post-empiricism increasingly lacks standing. Once again, aesthetic self-realisation and aesthetic values are undermined and diminished in significance, bending under the intense pressure of the sanctified science that binds standardised test results.

Effective education and 'what works'

As mentioned previously, engendering the desired learning and skills acquisition from students is the Holy Grail of education, as it enables them to become useful adults and to positively contribute to society. Reflecting this, the Melbourne Declaration asserted that:

Education equips young people with the knowledge, understanding, skills and values to take advantage of opportunity and to face the challenges of this era with confidence [and promotes] the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008a, p. 4).

However, Ball drew attention to the techniques and artefacts that organise educational biopolitics by claiming that 'what we call education is a complex of power relations concerned with the manufacture and management of individuals and the population—a key space of regulation and bio-power' (Ball, 2017, p. 2). This enculturation of students results in the engenderment of effective biopower— notwithstanding that the prodigious cultural repertoire, expectations of policy and desire for visible results on a slim spectrum of outcomes often leads to moderated and simple-minded remedies that accentuate the easily assessable over the less accessible. There is a sense of immediacy regarding results, but the accelerated nexus of persistent testing and outcomes results in a kind of 'unlearning' in a diminutive mode. If 'effectiveness is an instrumental value, a value which says something about the quality of processes and, more specifically, about their ability to bring about certain outcomes in a secure way' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 35), then it is not entirely the fault of the tests for undermining the efficacy of education. Rather, it is the unclear goals that define the inevitable outcomes. Biesta (2007) has argued that the term 'evidence-based practice' ignores the issues regarding the appropriateness of goals. If there is evidence of a particular outcome, then it could be argued that the evidence is being used to demonstrate the achievement of certain, but unspecified, goals. This point is echoed by Kvernbekk, who argued that 'effectiveness concerns the attainment of goals, nowadays often evaluated by how measured outcomes compare to prespecified goals' (Kvernbekk, 2011, p. 522). Hammersley reiterated this point and suggested that there is an assumption that professional teaching practice:

Should take the form of specifying goals explicitly, selecting strategies for achieving them on the basis of objective evidence about their effectiveness, and then measuring outcomes in order to assess their degree of success (thereby providing the knowledge required for improving future performance) (Hammersley, 2001).

In this format, education becomes nothing more than a reiteration of predetermined outcomes, which ultimately limits students' capacity to explore the social imaginary. Preaching the triumph of datafied education, there is, rather, a vertiginous chasm between aesthetic pedagogy and the contemporary and enervating educational landscape—one that is replete with specified boundaries and dictated outcomes that overwhelm students with inanition.

When discussing the effect of new managerialism (or neoliberalism) in education, Davies suggested that:

> Through an understanding of how new managerialism works, we can guess that the objectives will come first and that the 'experimental research evidence' will be generated to justify them. As long as the objectives have been met (according to the auditors), then questions about the appropriateness of the evidence for good teaching or the capacity of the teachers to act on it can be left unasked and unanswered (Davies, 2003, p. 100).

'Good teaching', then, is overshadowed by an evidence-based positivism that seeks validity in repeated performativity and predictability. The student must repeatedly demonstrate an instrumental performance capability that is predictable in terms of norms that are common to audited accountability criteria. This kind of market education takes the form of pedagogical insurance. It must be noted that the method of setting actuarial-like goals before collecting the evidence (and before establishing the hypothesis) is contrary to how scientific theories work (i.e., evidence is used to support and reinforce hypotheses). However, in EBP, the evidence is used *a priori* to proclaim new truths about the effectiveness of certain types of educational practices. Reinforcing this point, Kvernbekk argued that '[t]heories transcend the evidence that is available' (Kvernbekk, 2011, p. 524), which highlights Hattie's inversion of this accepted practice. Hattie's theory is instead built on the analysis of data—on a specific and defined evidence—rather than being supported by data. This theory is constricted and constrained by limits that result from an analysis that has not been independently subjected to a conceptually isolated verification process (similar to using placebos to test the efficacy of medication). Only quantifiable data have been used as evidence of good practice, and this evidence subsequently defines, rather than informs, praxis. However, evidence is itself a concept rather than a fact, and it is shaped by organising discursive techniques. The human conception of taxonomy creating an epistemology has been normalised as a regime of truth, such that '[d]epending on the formulation of a hypothesis, facts *become* evidence. In other words, evidence is made, not found' (Kvernbekk, 2011, p. 531). The practice of visible learning is putatively based on evidence, whereby it is implied that the 'evidence [is] a foundation, as knowledge in itself or as a more or less well-circumscribed collection of facts from which teaching methods or rules of action can be inferred' (Kvernbekk, 2011, p. 523).

A focus on the more easily assessable factors of education submerges its esoteric elements—the aesthetic values that constitute society's cultural values. The focus of education negates the inherent values of the Melbourne Agreement; education, in a process of inclusion, ultimately justifies exclusion in a supernumerary exercise of creating valueless statistics. The

Melbourne Declaration suggests that 'good quality data supports … effective *diagnosis* of student progress and the design of high-quality learning programs' (MCEETYA, 2008a, p. 16, added italics). This language once again employs a medicalised lens through which to ascertain symptoms of a weakened education system and to provide diagnoses and intervention programs that improve easily perceptible outcomes. The 'policies attempt to represent the world in factual terms so that certain kinds of practices flow "naturally from them"' (Knight, Smith, & Sachs, 1990, p. 133); this attempt involves repositioning education through a data-driven lens that normalises society's neoliberal perspective. Additionally, the policymakers and quantophrenic educationalists 'appropriate scientific methodologies and social science theory in order to create a reality that is rational, objective, seamless, and which taps into the sensibilities of national popular consciousness' (Knight et al., 1990, p. 133). An epidemic of diagnosis is evident, one that leads to the constant pursuit of detecting abnormalities that have no educational consequence. This underscores the constantly increasing diagnostic apparatus used to justify intervention programs that deflect attention away from the problems created by the testing and results of problematising 'failure' (with the onus of failure falling squarely on teachers' shoulders). Professional teachers understand the value of useful cognitive and developmental data regarding their students, and they use this information to shape the learning material and their approach to furthering their students' progress. However, such shaping is not readily accessible from instrumental test scores; instead, it must incorporate numerous conceptions regarding levels of understanding, engagement, comprehension, appreciation and interpretation.

The fracture between state, teacher and student is evidenced in expected or desired outcomes. Although the state attempts 'to coordinate the movements and behaviour of each individual for the sake of ensuring the survival and development of the whole population' (Rafael, 2019, p. 142), the teacher is focused on developing students while the students are focused on developing themselves. These different levels of governance result in power–knowledge structures that both strengthen and undermine the education system. The state attempts to produce its own desired outcomes by employing revolutionising statements and the excesses that power–biopower impose on students through the surveillant use of increased testing (e.g., NAPLAN, the Australian Council for Educational Research [ACER] Progressive Achievement Tests, PISA tests). As former Australian prime minister, Kevin Rudd, claimed, the main desired outcome is that 'education must lie at the core of our long-term strategy for our national security, our national prosperity—even our national survival' (Rudd, 2007b). This redefines students as warriors who confront a plethora of fears, adversaries and danger; it represents a kind of imbrication attached to terrorism, economic decline and even the downfall of the state. Rudd believed that 'education is *the engine room*

of the economy' and that a 'wave of economic reform—a human capital *revolution*, an education *revolution*, a skills *revolution*' was required (Rudd, 2007b, added italics). However, usurping the professional teacher through the neoliberal privatisation of educational experience results in a biopower struggle in which procuring the collaboration of every citizen in the quest for dominance in a transitory global economic marketplace is sought. There is a precarious fault line between the state's conception of its citizens and its students, as both are independent in their own right and an economic resource. What emerges, dividing and connecting these two forms of modern subjectivity, is an economic subject that is ruled by marketplace forces and the educational ideologies that the state has selectively enforced; however, this economic subject is subjected to the rights of universal humanity (Rafael, 2019, p. 142). This neoliberal discourse 'relies on a complex combination of the two forms of morality that Foucault observed, the first requiring compliance and the second driven by individuals' desires to shape their own directions' (Davies, 2003, p. 93). This nuanced duality manipulates and structures students' self-forming compliance, which is obedient to the tenets of neoliberal discourse. In one sense, this works to gain compliance, as it relies on the form of morality driven by 'obedience to a heteronomous code which we must accept, and to which we are bound by fear and guilt' (Rose, 1999, p. 97). Conversely, it partially disguises the coercion by placing increased emphasis on 'personal responsibility' within the new system (Davies, 2003, p. 93).

Rudd's call to arms, reiterated through his call to 'revolution', reinforces the determinative and inferred 'warrior student' status, and it demands an increased level of surveillance and accountability to mitigate social decline. According to a 2016 ABC headline, international testing resulted in 'Australia crashing down the international [the] leaderboard for education, falling behind Kazakhstan' (Conifer, 2016). In this case, education was partly situated in the arena of international competition, and the results of literacy policies were problematised. When results do not follow rhetoric, the onus of effective education falls squarely on the shoulders of the de-professionalised teachers. One reason for this may be that 'the main question in evidence-based research is, "What works?" rather than the classic scientific question, "What is going on?" In this way educational sciences are marginalised' (Rømer, 2014, p. 112). With this reason, the professionalism that teachers bring to education is also devalued and marginalised. Instead:

> Political economy sees only pains and satisfactions and their general location: it does not see persons as distinctly bounded centres of satisfaction, far less as agents whose active planning is essential to the humanness of whatever satisfaction they will achieve (Nussbaum, 1991, p. 885).

This vague prodding at generalisations is notably different from Hattie's and other US, UK and Australian policymakers' analyses of data and interventions that would provide a clinical panacea to the disease that pervaded the English classroom. By emphasising the importance of data in educational outcomes, 'the impression [is given] that decisions about the direction of educational policy and the shape and form of educational practice can be based solely upon factual information' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 34), which thus negates self-forming aesthetics and the enriched aesthetical templates linked to education.

One concern with the attempt to implement 'effective education' is that 'effectiveness is an *instrumental* value, a value which says something about the quality of *processes* and, more specifically, about their ability to bring about certain outcomes in a secure way' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 35). Effectiveness—a contested and problematic concept—is based on different outcomes or focuses on what should be tested, which affects the value attributed to the effectiveness of every educational initiative. Focusing on outcomes that can be statistically and mathematically verified is also immanently concerned with specific values—that is, the values that the tests intend to measure. Instead, 'we need value-based judgements that are not informed by instrumental values but by what we might best call *ultimate* values: values about the aims and purposes of education' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 35). These judgements are needed more than following the 'banalities of the discourse on excellence' (Daddario, 2011, pp. 5-6). Focusing on effectiveness that is meaningful only within the boundaries of the regimes of truth that delimit the geography of the imaginary results in an instrumental education that reifies cultural norms and leads to an automated authoritarianism. The plenitude of social consciousness is subverted in a perfidious and congealed quantifiable neoliberal mathesis.

Coda

Evidence-based teaching—teaching that relies on a Foucauldian mathesis—aims to provide medicalised interventionist behaviours, and this subsequently shapes students into a reconfigured identity. This identity might require assistance, it might be failing or underachieving or overachieving, or it might require stretching to accommodate the students. Evidential teaching diagnoses students with the aim to intervene, but it does so with the presumption of a data-driven intervention that suppresses a professional understanding of the teacher. The biopolitical struggle to control educational understanding is clearly displayed by announcing PISA, TIMMS, PIRLS and NAPLAN results—results that confirm that increased intervention is required. However, a brief consideration of the NAPLAN results during the period 2008–2018 reveals that little significant change had occurred regarding the performance of secondary school students when using the 'Key Performance Measures for Schooling in Australia' (ACARA). This is also despite the widespread use of data-driven

education and a focus on literacy. Therefore, it can be argued that the interventions have had little success in procuring the required outcomes; instead, they have had an adverse, but unseen, effect on students.

Evidential education is interested in just one aspect of value; however, choosing a value implies that value judgements have been made, and these judgements reflect what is considered desirable in education by those with the power to make such value judgements. By making judgements that expose students to disciplining forces that intend to optimise their capabilities and integrate them into the 'parallel increase of [their] usefulness and … [their] integration into systems of efficient and economic controls' (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 139), the increased number of surveillance techniques has created docile bodies upon which visible learning votaries can cast their own interventions using the scientific process of 'what works'. Directing education towards the 'performances of the body' (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 139) is validated by the visible learning that Hattie (2009) promoted. Education is supplanted by the 'calculated management of life' (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 140), whereby a system of visibility and data-controlled education is normalised through the expedient omission of education's aesthetic qualities. This has resulted in the conundrum of 'whether we are indeed measuring what we value, or whether we are just measuring what we can easily measure and thus end[ing] up valuing what we (can) measure' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 2). Utilitarian literacy that can be tested becomes the value—it becomes a crude and hollow assessment that is valued above all else.

Resonating with this claim of value versus values is the notion that literacy automatically delivers economic rewards to the individual and the country—thus validating successive governments' implementation of biopolitical policies to mould the individual, as Kevin Rudd claimed while in opposition. He declared that:

> OECD research shows that if the average education level of the working-age population was increased by one year, the growth rate of the economy would be up to 1 per cent higher. Another recent study found that countries able to achieve literacy scores 1 per cent higher than the international average will increase their living standards by a factor of 1.5 per cent of GDP per capita (Rudd, 2007a, p. 10).

Despite this galvanising call to students to increase the nation's wealth, the conflation of literacy and higher-level cognitive abilities that assure economic success has been contested. For example, Gee highlighted that the 'almost common-sense assumption … that literacy gives rise to higher-order cognitive abilities, such as more analytic and logical thought than is typical of oral cultures… was disputed by Scribner and Cole's work' (Gee, p. 23). Instead,

'literacy in and of itself led to no grandiose cognitive abilities. And formal schooling ultimately led to quite specific abilities that are rather useless without institutions which reward "expository talk in contrived situations" (such as schools, courts, bureaucracies)' (Gee, p. 23). This undermines the credibility of the focus placed on literacy to develop the economy, as well as on the research completed by the OECD.

Equally, it also creates a marginalised section of the population—those who struggle with literacy but who have the aesthetic ability to creatively engage in social life. The focus on literacy as a divisive practice for managing life creates a societal hierarchy that delimits individuals to an understanding of self-worth informed solely by metrics. Only those who reach the requisite standards are valued; the 'others' are problematised through a medicalised lens, and their participation in society is radically devalued. By assigning subjects to a hierarchy, those less in favour become subjugated and disparaged, and those who do not fit the mould become isolated; they become lost in a governmentality that disaffects them through the stigma of failure and underachievement in validated literacy competitions. In accordance with Butler, Arendt argued that 'individual life makes no sense, has no reality, outside of the social and political framework in which all lives are equally valued' (Butler, 2015, p. 112), and this could be ethically extended to promote a similar case for those who have been marginalised through the machinery of the medicalised and scientific lens. It is why efficacious and defined education can be limiting, proceeding towards pre-specified ends and discarding opportunities for innovative thinking.

Valuing tests that concentrate only on certain aptitudes seemingly undermines the value of an extensive education; instead, it initiates a narrowed focus within the curriculum. As education becomes more visibly inclined (by focusing on easily assessable aspects), the less visible is obscured and eclipsed by data-driven economical neoliberalism. In a solipsistic logical positivism, the data point supersedes the individual (Rømer 2014). The effectiveness approach to education underpins the ideology that 'certain teaching methods … are more effective than others … [where] politicians are eager to identify promising methods of teaching, which are based on convincing evidence that they might lead to learning progress' (Rasmussen, in Rømer, 2014, p. 112). This 'effective education' approach posits the notion that only one type of evidence informs educational practice—and that only one outcome is desirable. However, as Biesta highlighted, evidence is 'only one of the sources that informs educational judgement, but can never replace that judgement, [or it] seriously distorts the nature of education' (Biesta, 2014, p. 25). Of major concern is that 'there is rarely (or perhaps never) conclusive evidence of "*what works*" in the classroom' (Albrechtsen & Qvortrup, 2014, p. 70), which underscores the singular inability of one methodology to effect improvement. When the policymaker and the external 'expert' gather all possible data about the educational

process and develop the best methods for teachers to ensure that students meet standards, the professional teacher is removed from the equation and the teacher–student relationship is abandoned. Moving towards an efficient, means-to-an-end and rationalised curriculum affects the relationships of teachers and students in education by dehumanising their relationship; as Kliebard suggested, it alienates them from their own creativity and intellectual curiosity, while also creating a matrix of power to which the student is left subordinated (Kliebard, 1975).

Similarly, Hammersley is equally dismissive of the 'what works' movement and has suggested:

> That the very phrase 'what works', which the evidence-based practice movement sees as the proper focus for research, implies a view of practice as technical … any such judgement cannot be separated from value judgements about desirable ends and appropriate means; not without missing a great deal that is important (Hammersley, 2001).

The increasing abundance of metadata tends to focus more on technical rather than practical issues, and values tend to be missing from such cold, hard facts. Hammersley acknowledged this point, suggesting that 'professional practice often cannot be governed by research findings—because it necessarily relies on multiple values, tacit judgement, local knowledge, and skill' (Hammersley, 2001). In turn, Biesta outlined his arguments against using objective assessments in education, stating that, in accordance with Hammersley, 'evidence-based practice entails a technological model of professional action' (Biesta, 2007, p. 8). He also suggested that these actions entail interventions so that desired outcomes can be created—an aspect of education that constructs the contingent other.

However, to deny the importance and relevance of any research into practice is to deny the professionalism of teaching. The main issue is that the research must be balanced, and it must support a hypothesis rather than educational policy being based on a theory of education that is created by the available data, which often excludes other metrics.

4. The Aesthetic and the Efferent — Contestations in English

'Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought?'
—George Orwell, *1984*

Introduction

> The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself. A 'soul' inhabits him and brings him to existence ... the soul is the effect and instrument of political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body (Foucault, 1979, p. 30).

The effect that the contemporary neoliberal episteme in education has on English, and especially on literature in the curriculum, is problematised in the ramifications it has for students' identity formation. As they search for and construct their identity (using the available techniques of self), they are subjected to the discourses and power relationships in which they find themselves. They are curated by these discursive constellations, but, nevertheless, elements of resistance reside in forms of agency, opposition particles that have the potential to challenge the constricted and market-oriented educational field. Due to the preponderance and dominance of functional literacy, and to literature becoming subservient to its ascendancy, students are being denied the fullness of opportunity of ethical subjectivity to create a site of resistance against externally imposed subjugating subject identities. The preponderance and dominance of functional literacy, subverts literature and students are increasingly denied the fullness of opportunity wherein ethical subjectivity can create a site of resistance against externally imposed forms of subjugation.

Students find themselves in a series of heterotopias—in the school, classrooms and literature that they read—that all affect their liminal adolescent experiences. Literature allows students to enter new and challenging worlds that express, among other factors, bathetic sentiment, animadversion, liminality and vituperated worlds in a safe environment. For example, sadness can launch an individual into a liminal state and force them to regroup and turn inside themselves. As their liminal experiences might be disrupting and disconcerting, the security of the 'safe' classroom acts as a cushion that allows the encountered ideas to be explored and discussed more candidly and within a broader cultural repertoire. However, students instead encounter this liminality—the shifting boundaries and negotiating spaces—in the antagonistic rhetoric and catalogues of instrumental assessments rather than in the receptive social spaces of imagination and creativity (i.e., the home environment of aesthetic literature experience). When creativity is assessed, and when success parameters are starkly established, the student 'stops producing and starts reproducing' (Serres, 1980/2007, p. 165); consequently,

literature ceases to be a heterotopia that should be explored and becomes a text to be analysed, and creativity is curtailed.

The value of literature should not be underestimated in terms of student subjectification. For example, Foucault described literature as 'the living being of language' (Foucault, 2002, p. 48). Literature as an aesthetic art form is as slippery to elucidate as an emotion one feels— although the general idea can be given, defining the specifics is nearly impossible. It is this indeterminateness that paradoxically gives it shape, identity, definition and makes it so compelling. Eagleton's lucid discussion about the various definitions and theories of literature hints at the subject's elusiveness (Eagleton, 1996). The two elements that Eagleton targets are critique and cultural awareness, and he advocates that literature is a means for critically analysing normative values and that it expands our intelligibility as we explore numerous cultural practices and norms. Eagleton also claimed that due to value judgements (and thus to the readers' interpretation of what is read and the writer's ideology surfacing in what is written), no objective definition of literature can be found. Literature is written from value-laden perspectives—from ideologies that require exploration and possibly refutation. It is open to critique, questioning and endless deconstruction. The value of literature thus lies in readers' ability to interact with texts that offer 'genuine forms of life, engaging behaviours, methods, constructive powers, and existential values' (Macé, 2013, p. 214).

A definition of Literature, then, is difficult to ascertain, as is a consensus on the best way to criticise and to teach the genre (Rosenblatt, 1995, for example offers many ideas). Literature here will be defined, briefly, in the following terms: it is considered of superior or lasting artistic merit; it includes texts that reflect cultures and societies; it encourages people to think about themselves, society and their place in that society; it allows people to appreciate the beauty of language while reflecting on the human condition; it can reflect ideology and change it; it contributes to people's ways of thinking, reading and writing; it can have social and political effects; and it is the creation of another imaginative world. Further, literature can also be 'subversive' (Nussbaum, 1991) and 'dangerous' (Moni, Haertling Thein, & Brindley, 2014, p. 2). Literature is subversive in that when critiquing it, the expected norms that are encountered in real life can be critiqued through different lenses, which exposes anomalies and discontinuities. It is through these discontinuities that the episteme can be disrupted. The AC:E regards literary texts 'as having personal, social, cultural and aesthetic value and potential for enriching students' lives and scope of experience' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p. 5); this contrasts Nussbaum's subversive intentions, which imply an anti-establishment stance and forge a kind of dissent that refuses to remain enclosed within contemporary attitudes.

Boomer argued that 'literature's role is both social and critical—not to "find culture", but to help us "forge a new culture"'; indeed, he continued this notion by suggesting that education promotes 'cultural literacy ... through the reading and making of Literature ... knowing oneself and the world' (Boomer, in Sawyer, 2013). The concepts of cultural literature and education are formative, and they can be used to shape individuals. This point is echoed by Patterson, who argued that 'the important work of English literary study lies in the direction of shaping behaviour and beliefs through textual study' (Patterson, 2011, p. 11). This is largely congruent with Foucault's notion of 'governmentalities', and with the notion that self-development is formed and schematised by the power-knowledge continuum. Foucault is attracted to liberty because it avails the individual unlimited possibilities while abandoning and rejecting limitations. Because literature can depict bonds being shed, it can destroy the desire for objects and possession, as well as restore a kind of sensual exuberance that has been screened from everyday reality. Literature is subversive because it is symbolic and capricious, and it can adumbrate the inexpressible and question absolute values. Further, literature can also be indifferent to common rules and engender a feeling of the impossible, interposing when reason and utility attempt to screen the exuberance of the body and the blasphemy of its many predilections. For Foucault, literature has subversive potential, and it allows a space to move beyond the confines of established social roles. As Foucault noted, 'the main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning' (Foucault, 1982/1988). Literature can forge links with the adversary culture of the oppressed—and, in this sense, it can evoke a sense of transgression and provide a glimpse of collective freedom. In contrast, in the AC:E, literature and pedagogical practice tend to largely exclude a transgressive and subversive function in favour of inculcating the curriculum's social and ideological values.

When describing the literary experience, Peter Barry referenced a poem by Kavanagh with the final line of, 'The mist where Genesis begins'. He explained that 'ideas begin in a mist, in a place where we cannot be sure what we are getting into' (Barry, 2017, p. xiv). Literature encourages students to enter that mist, where diffuse ensembles crystallise to generate a space for exploring ideas and using imagination and critical acumen. Einstein once remarked in an interview reported in the 26 October 1929 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post* that 'imagination encircles the world'. Literature not only adds to imagination, but it also offers an insight into, and the possibility to explore, different cultural ideas. A critical study of literature is one technology of self that students do not use to discover themselves but rather to produce themselves (Foucault, 1991, p. 42). Foucault further suggested that the 'subject is responsible for and *actively* partakes in her own ethical becoming' (Hofmeyr, 2006, p. 119, italics in original). However, as the curriculum is interpreted in terms of achievement targets, the time

spent on self-reflexive aspects of literature critique is attenuated to the extent that students are not given adequate tools to explore the discourses used to shape them. Through the power-knowledge apparatus, students are made and make themselves, and the web of power-knowledge relationships weave the many measures, sanguine expectations and nuanced discriminating measures that give rise to formative governmentality. In short, it is not the literary text that is emancipatory but the discourse and portrayal of actions (specifically, the multiplicity of social events) that are examined through that literature that enable students to perceive new directions. In this way, students achieve a sense of autonomy, and, as Walsh indicated, 'autonomy becomes necessary to freedom, where freedom is a state in which the individual exercises critical judgement of dominant beliefs' (Walshaw, 2007, p. 15).

There have been many emancipatory claims for literature (Misson & Morgan, 2007; Nussbaum, 1991; Patterson, 2011; Rosenblatt, 2005; Sawyer, 2013), and they are well founded. Bullock pointed to historical precedent for these views:

> Writing in 1917, Nowell Smith saw its [literature's] purpose as 'the formation of a personality fitted for civilised life'. The Newsom Report, some 50 years later, said that 'all pupils, including those of very limited attainments, need the civilising experience of contact with great literature, and can respond to its universality' (Bullock, 1975, p. 125).

Students' ability to be critical is essential in emancipatory education, and literature offers key technologies for self-actualisation; hereby, students can transform themselves into ethical subjects. However, students find themselves enmeshed in a cultural power that grips them in webs of conventions and grids of established ethical intelligibility. Giddens argues that 'in conditions of high modernity, the body is actually far less 'docile' than ever before in relation to the self, since the two become intimately coordinated within the reflexive project of self-identity' (Giddens, 1991, p. 218). However, as a method of action upon the action of others, the neoliberal exercise of biopower creates an arena of symbolic violence—a battleground between students and the social establishment in which the freedom to act and react becomes implicit within normalising power relations. The struggle against the unchanging educational environments results in students becoming increasingly docile and uncritical of the structural apparatus and symbolic violence that surrounds them; it also results in a situation in which students find themselves prescribed by a pedagogical subjacent density that articulates a mode of being that is not their own. However, as Hofmeyr (2006) noted, resistance to power amid the relations of power and the freedom to act and react are implicit in this relationship between an agential student and prescriptive pedagogy. In this way, students achieve a sense of autonomy and, as Walshaw indicated, 'autonomy becomes

necessary to freedom, where freedom is a state in which the individual exercises critical judgement of dominant beliefs' (Walshaw, 2007, p. 15). Self-emancipation is a refusal to submit to the network of power relationships that determine these kinds of social conditions, and literature is a pivotal discourse in this kind of emancipation. As Foucault argued, '[r]eading a book or talking about a book was an exercise one surrendered to as it were for oneself in order to benefit from it, in order to transform oneself' (in Huijer, 1999, p. 78).

However, the focus has shifted away from literature as a means of understanding ourselves and our societies towards it being an efferent tool to teach literacy, along the lines of Louise Rosenblatt's contention that 'reading the text has precedence over knowing about the text' (in Alexander, 2007, p. 111). She claimed that there are '[t]wo primary ways of looking at the world: we may experience it or we may analyse it' (Rosenblatt, 1991, p. 445). Rosenblatt's important differentiation between the different kinds of reading must be noted. She differentiates between two disparate ways of reading, explaining her definitions as: 'a reading event during which attention is given primarily to the public aspect … I call *efferent* reading. If the reader focuses attention primarily on the private elements, I term it *aesthetic'* (Rosenblatt, 1991, p. 446). Rosenblatt's distinction is useful for understanding how literature has been subverted and subsumed into the literacy rhetoric.

Analysis of the efferent tends to focus on the word as a signifier, with an understanding of its place in the rhetoric of naming and its use as a functional representation rather than a 'living being' with whom one can interact (Foucault, 2002, p. 48). As Wyse (2001) noted, there has been a conspicuous change in emphasis in the required standards in the UK. He highlighted that '[t]he emphasis on purpose and organisation is abruptly transformed to an emphasis first and foremost on the mechanics of writing including phonics and grammar' (Wyse, 2001, p. 414). Highlighting the philological extraction of grammar in this language-based form of literary criticism, Barry astutely claimed that 'it is more a protracted form of aversion therapy to Literature than a way of interesting [students] in reading and enjoying major authors' (Barry, 2017, p. 16). Literature, as an experiential subject, needs to resist and be dislocated from the literacy standards which it is being used to support. This can be achieved through an exploration of how literature is used to train students to read efferently for literacy purposes and questioning schools' subservience to the governmentality of educational policies.

The ability to read critically is essential, as literacy both mutes and abandons critical thinking. Literacy refuses to unmask the structures of power and subjugation that a critical study of literature can accomplish. Critical thinking requires time for sustained reading[36], an issue Semler highlighted when asking: '[a]t what point does the decline of capacity to read deeply

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[36] Th s ssue s further exp ored n Chapter 6.

in complex and extended literary texts become a genuine problem, bearing in mind the irresistible cultural shift towards digital and visual literacies?' (Semler, 2017b, p. 6). In doing so, he highlighted an issue that literature teachers face—that modern digital media and the desire for immediate gratification tend to reduce the complexity of thought and the depth of reading required to do literature justice. Literature teachers understand the need to explore the text in depth. For example, Milosz believed that the work of writers can reveal truths, and that literature brings 'luminosity, trust, faith, the beauty of the earth'; without the truth revealing the imagination of writers, there is 'darkness, doubt, unbelief, the cruelty of earth, the capacity for people to do evil' (in Riggan & Clark, 1999, p. 618). The notion that exploring literature leads to a better world may be contested. Nazi leaders were considered well read, but whether they read critically is questionable. They probably read with an immanent confirmation bias: whatever did not meet their ideological stance was dismissed or deliberately misconstrued so that it aligned with their current political agenda, in which they substituted and misconstrued aesthetics for ethics.

Eagleton remarked that '[t]he aesthetic … is socially useless', echoing Oscar Wilde who famously, and outrageously, exclaimed that 'all art is quite useless' (Wilde, 1891/1994, p. 4). Nevertheless, Eagleton preserved the aesthetic by arguing that 'it is nothing less than the boundless infinity of our total humanity' (Eagleton, 1990, p. 110). He added that the aesthetic 'is the language of human solidarity, setting its face against all socially divisive elitism and privilege'. Following Nietzsche, Foucault related the 'aesthetics of existence' (Huijer, 1999) to an emphasis on active self-formation and on turning one's life into a work of art. It is consequent to the aesthetics of existence and through self-creation that the individual becomes ethical and revaluates the '*self's* relation to itself' (Hofmeyr, 2006, p. 115, italics in original).

A main feature of the arguments encompassing the value of teaching literature lies in the maze of discursive positions that expose unrevealed potentialities and emancipatory or subversive capacities. For Foucault, progress is made by critiquing the self, and thus forming a *critical* ontology of the self. If this is the way that we are to understand how students 'produce' themselves, then students should have the tools to achieve this outcome. Intrinsically entwined with discursive educational practices are factors impacting the constitution of the self, student identity, and what accounts for the school's social/teaching practices. Literature questions the security of any prevailing comprehension of human nature. Pedagogical practice must inculcate critical thinking and generate a reaction, even if just a visceral feeling (e.g., fury, disgust, rejection, amazement or uncertainty) or insight into the odd notion of a pathological life. The school is just one area in which students will be subjected to ideologies and enculturation, but it is one of the most important sites where they can authentically self-

create by challenging boundaries within a group of peers and under the thought-provoking direction of adults. Bullock argued that:

> The child gets most enjoyment from those stories which say something to his condition and help him to resolve these inner conflicts. Books compensate for the difficulties of growing up. They present the child with a vicarious satisfaction that takes him outside his own world and lets him identify for a time with someone else. They present him with controlled experience, which he can observe from the outside at the same time as being involved within it (Bullock, 1975, p. 125).

In Foucauldian terms, students are engaged in a governmentality—a 'conduct of conduct'—in which educational authority and selfhood intersect in iterative self-forming activities that recursively reflect school curricula and pedagogical directives. The latter are privileged instruments of representation that establish nomenclatures and meanings that ultimately guide shifting cultural interests. Allowing these power relations to remain unchallenged increases the probability of creating heteronomous rather than autonomous students. Like Adorno, Foucault argued for the autonomous self and the ability to use critique to question what appears immanent and inevitable about one's identity. Without this critique, students might be subsumed into the hegemonic political, ethical, social and philosophical episteme. Walshaw sharply argued that '[t]he harsh reality is that if we shun the responsibility of authentic self-creation we come to be entirely fabricated by others' (Walshaw, 2007, p. 16). The educational practices in which students become enveloped, and through which they attempt to self-create, must be as wide and as flexible as possible, breaching heteronomy and resisting 'externally imposed subjugating subject identities' (Hofmeyr, 2006, p. 113).

Literature plays a vital role in providing students with a rich plethora of ideas, imaginaries, critical reflections, contestations and practices that encourage a deeper and more thoughtful construction of self and identity. It is when the discursive practices of teaching literature are examined that the modus operandi of the power-knowledge relationships and their defining arrangements become critical in terms of identifying their construction. Students are embroiled and imbricated in the normalising power relations and discourses that constitute their understanding of the world. These power capillaries operate around the students while blinding them to their subjugating techniques. If students unquestioningly identify education purely in the absolutist terms of scientific data tests, competitive achievement and the market values of education, then this epistemic model becomes an instrument of representation that is intrinsic to the shaping of self-identity. Students renounce their autonomy by acknowledging that their performance is managed externally, that judgements are made without question and

that they are defined by this performance that will forever shape their identity. If students are taught in a neoliberal context (using neoliberal ideology), that education is purely a means to employment, that it is a business and that they are the product of that business, then by failing to critically examine and question this culture, they will be constructed and subjugated by it.

Literature can provide alternative positions and imaginings, but those who use it purely for efferent reading to teach literacy must be refuted and contested. The competing relations of power, knowledge, dependency, commitment and negotiation in schools institutionalise fiats for conformity; this empowers specific frames of reference that validate certain ways of doing, being and learning in schools. Rosenblatt argued against forcing English into the binary of efferent and aesthetic reading, highlighting that '[i]nstead of thinking of the *text* as either literary or informational, efferent or aesthetic, we should think of it as written for a particular *predominant* attitude or stance, efferent or aesthetic, on the part of the reader' (Rosenblatt, 1991, p. 445). Resonating with this is Hunter's argument that 'the challenge is to avoid being forced into binary choices and rigid oppositions. The opposition between an aesthetic literacy dedicated to critical emancipation and a sociolinguistic pedagogy dedicated to vocational programming is a theoretical caricature of a messier reality' (Hunter, 1996, p. 15). Nevertheless, the delimiting view of a literature–literacy binary shapes the school curriculum.

Contestations of literature

The Australian Curriculum divides English into three strands (language, literature and literacy) that 'focus on developing students' knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating' (ACARA, 2015a, p. 2). It is by analysing these divisive practices that a critical focus on the established curriculum can be realised. English is neither articulated nor constituted in a holistic fashion; instead, it is segmented and compartmentalised so that each strand can be measured, tested and developed in accordance with achievement standards and success criteria. These designations identify taxonomic dispositions that represent a form of aesthetic violence because they create a kind of 'apartheid pedagogy' (see Giroux, 2021) that tries to impose a single vision of reality and interpretation, as well as a set of standards that are fundamentally opposed to diversity in the form of art, thought and life.

This diversity is superficially accorded a role in the AC:E. For example, the AC:E highlights the issue that students learn at different rates, that literature has identity formation opportunities and that the strands overlap to some extent (ACARA, 2015a, p. 17). However, to accommodate the many sources (e.g., short stories, novels, poetry, prose, plays, film and multimodal texts in spoken, print and digital/online forms) and perform the various operations (e.g., interpret, appreciate, evaluate and create) in the literature section (ACARA, 2015a, p.

6), it can be assumed that (in conjunction with the other two strands of language and literacy) students will be rushed to complete all required tasks in depth. Instead, a superficial curiosity about knowledge is implicitly prescribed: 'the curiosity that seeks to assimilate what is proper for one to know, [not] that which enables one to get free of oneself' (Foucault, 1985/1990, p. 8). Superficially touching on knowledge through a fugacious glance at literary extracts does not provide students the tools to become autonomous thinkers. Using an example from Adorno, Flight argued that:

> It is not the amount of literature we read that makes us proficient but the attention we give to reading. Focused concentration upon a solitary text often yields more rewards than a casual concentration upon several texts. It is better to read intensely than it is to read broadly (Flight, 2017).

A deeper and more thoughtful reading of literature creates a passion for thinking differently instead of a habit of accepting the embedded cultural norms that both Foucault and Adorno questioned. It is in this disruption of thinking that a stale absolutism can be interrogated instead of 'legitimating what is already known' (Foucault, 1985/1990, p. 9). Literature should be an excursion into oneself, an 'askesis' that Foucault explained is:

> An exercise of oneself in the activity of thought … [t]he object of which is] to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently (Foucault, 1985/1990, p. 9).

If literature is regarded as a way in which students are given the opportunity to think differently about themselves; to consider what has not been thought possible; to grasp their lives and conceive them in different ways; to look to their futures and imagine differently; to think ethically; to consider others and not just themselves; to perform acts of introspection so that they can gauge themselves as individuals in a society that is theirs to shape; and to not accept the society in which they find themselves—that is an educational outcome worthy of the name. To categorise thought, potential, ideas and imaginations on a metric that is designed to categorise students on an algorithm is anathema to the askesis that is essential for self-identity formation, or subjectification.

Initially, the AC:E stated that '[t]he study of English is central to the learning and development of all young Australians', and this centrality is explained throughout the three strands by stating the overarching concern that 'English plays an important part in developing the understanding, attitudes and capabilities of those who will take responsibility for Australia's future' (ACARA). This narrows the focus of English to one of biopolitics and subjectivation, in which subjects

are created with a homogenous social vision of reality and interpretation. The literature strand's four main areas of focus include:

1. understanding where ideas come from
2. identifying personal ideas by 'develop[ing] and refin[ing] their interpretations through discussion and argument'
3. explaining and analysing the influence of literary techniques and language
4. 'develop[ing] skills that allow them to convey meaning, address significant issues and heighten engagement and impact' (ACARA).

As commendable as the claim for acquiring these skills appears, there is little scope for the development of self in these areas of pedagogical practice. The self remains a static image, like an unchanging cultural monument, because literature is considered something external to be analysed and dissected scientifically. The key student responses that are required separate learners from critical self-reflection, as regard is mainly directed towards opinions and interpretations of the text rather than towards how the ideas affect the self. From a pedagogical perspective, extended encounters with credulous dominant and normalised beliefs leave little room for students to exercise their critical judgement; this subsequently leaves an enduring mark of an immutable cultural image, in which the determinants of literature and representation are constrained by a conservative and narrow mathesis—that is, by a scientific pedagogical perspective.

In this sense, English is perceived as a vertical learning structure: 'learning in English builds on concepts, skills and processes developed in earlier years, and teachers will revisit and strengthen these as needed' (ACARA, 2015a, p. 19). With this conceptualisation of English, skills and experiences, imagination and understanding are sequentially organised. This is a systematically mathematical approach that builds each new concept upon previous knowledge. There is no arbitrary exploration of concepts, nor any imaginary outside the structure; this represents a formulation that contradicts the often haphazard approach taken in the study of literature.

Chen and Derewianka's exploration of Bernstein's two forms of knowledge production (hierarchical and horizontal knowledge structures) can be used to explore the learning structure discussed above. As they explained, '[h]ierarchical knowledge structures, typified by the sciences, are characterised by "a coherent, explicit and systematically principled structure"' (Chen & Derewianka, 2009, p. 225). This form of knowledge production comprises the higher abstract principles that rest on, but that also contribute to, the lower level of knowledge. The higher levels are the goal, and they are reached by practising and interacting with the lower levels. The second form of knowledge production, the horizontal structure, does

not rely on lower levels to expand; instead, it expands by constantly adding new perspectives. Although it is difficult to comprehend all knowledge production in these binaries, from the AC:E's perspective, literacy is a vertical structure of knowledge production. Literature, which tends to rely on perspectives, should be a horizontal structure; however, due to the AC:E's reliance on building upon concepts, skills and processes (and to basing these factors on achievement standards), the AC:E corrals literature to a hierarchical framework. More explicitly, the dominance of phonics in the early years of the curriculum, and of literacy in the later years, tended to limit the definition of literacy to utilitarian values. Further, various reports on literacy standards have 'had the effect of reducing literacy to the single macroskill of reading—and within reading, to the subskill of phonics' (Chen & Derewianka, 2009, p. 236).

As Chen and Derewianka suggested, English is anything but sequential; rather, it is horizontal. They highlighted that '[w]hile the Framing Paper acknowledges the traditional "horizontal" nature of subject English in terms of valuing creativity and originality, it somewhat controversially proposes a more hierarchical knowledge structure' (Chen & Derewianka, 2009, p. 241). Vertical structures are coherent, explicit and systematically principled. Participants work towards the pursuit of universals, in which a universal truth can be found. If literature is emancipatory and useful in the construction of the ethical self, then comprehending literature as aiming for a universal truth implies that there is a specific outcome to achieve—a teleological ethic, or a systematised universal moral code.

However, according to Bauman, this immutable 'universal and "objectively founded" moral code is a practical impossibility, perhaps also an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms' (Hofmeyr, 2006, p. 114). Foucault argued that the transformation into an ethical subject does not have a precise, known or determinable form that is previously acknowledged. Instead, it is through self-constructed morals that individuals achieve their own ethicality. As Hofmeyer explained, '[i]nstead of the *telos* determining the production, it is the production process itself that determines the end product' (Hofmeyr, 2006, p. 116). Foucault's argument regarding the formation of the ethical individual resonates with a horizontal structure in which rather than building vertically towards a common goal, horizontal fields expand by constantly adding new perspectives. Novelty is valued, and unforeseen contingency has contextual relevance when the individual self-creates a personal ethical identity. A universal morality is contradictory in terms of a Foucauldian *poesis*, and, similarly, the immutable characteristics of a prescriptive moral code that results from a vertical structure is nothing less than a kind of immured pedagogical repression. What is lost when the vertical plane usurps the horizontal is flexibility and expansion, as well as the constant addition of new perspectives and the opportunity to create and self-create beyond the episteme. With this usurping vertical plane, criticism and diverse views are muzzled and straightjacketed. A vertical structure defines a neoliberal

ideology in which self-interest is the goal and market values are the benchmarks of success that herald a society 'where life has ossified and degenerated in a culture whose norms and moral precepts necessitate conformity to the ideals of uniformity, production, efficacy and utility' (Krisjansen, 2018, p. 20).

The AC:E further added that '[the study of English] helps create confident communicators, imaginative thinkers and informed citizens', but there is little in the 'content descriptors' or the 'level descriptors' that explain how this is expected to occur. Instead, the NAPLAN tests in English focus mainly on literacy and inferential comprehension, and they neglect the importance of creating imaginative and critical thinkers. Although the AC:E asserts that the 'study of English plays a key role in the development of reading and literacy skills which help young people develop the knowledge and skills needed for education, training and the workplace', the values placed on learning English are evidently utilitarian and systematised to fit a neoliberal optic that is uninterruptedly oriented towards the economy. The strand focuses on developing students' knowledge. This might seem commendable in the 'knowledge revolution' of the early part of this century, but such unspecified knowledge is indiscriminate and conceals the hidden neoliberal agenda which 'treat[s] knowledge and skills as discrete and separable substances, stored up and possessed by individuals, alongside and akin to their material wealth' (Hodgson, 2005, p. 558). 'Skills' are a vital part of the curriculum, and the importance of acquiring them is closely linked to a built-in, catch-all rubric in which skills are represented in terms of use and functional 'education, training and the workplace'. The English curriculum has an intensely neoliberal focus, and it only offers a feeble attempt to address the soft focus of English. In this way, reading for pleasure or for the social aspects that are important to build a critical acumen are neglected, as the curriculum essentials are mainly extraneous to these pedagogical foundations. English education is designed to move the population into training or the workplace. This is neither a self-development nor a construction of the autonomous 'self'. Instead, it appears as a form of aesthetic violence, as the designated instrumental self-development prioritises economic efficacy and employability. Marketability is prioritised over a more culturally sensitive aesthetic in which the horizontal plane is given room to express complex relations of representation, identities, orders, words, natural beings, desires and interests. In this sense, students are subjectivised as functional bodies. Foucault rationalised that 'the main objective of these struggles is to attack not so much "such or such" an institution of power, or group, or elite, or class but rather a technique, a form of power' (Foucault, 1982a, p. 781)—and this, too, is the reasoning in this thesis. The AC:E's authority creates power-knowledge relationships in which the teachers and students become complicit in extending the governmentality that subjectifies them. As Foucault explained:

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects (Foucault, 1982a, p. 781).

The game of truth found here is a neoliberal one—the truth indicates that the most important element of society is the workplace, and the citizen is required to function with efficacy within that space. In the AC:E, students are both subjected to and by the formation of the curriculum in which they are educated. Although the AC:E suggests that the study of English 'helps [students] become ethical, thoughtful, informed and active members of society', this occurs in a neoliberal arena; it is thus not concerned with the formation of an independent self but with the formation of a specific type of instrumental self.

The AC:E does pay tribute to other aspects of English, noting: 'In this light, it is clear that the *Australian Curriculum: English* plays an important part in developing the understanding, attitudes and capabilities of those who will take responsibility for Australia's future' (ACARA, 2015a, p. 2). This aspect of the AC:E seemingly indicates an interest in the formation of the self, but the focus on 'capabilities' in the context of the whole tends to suggest an underlying focus on marketisation. The educated student will 'take responsibility'; regarding this point, a key focus of Foucault's ethical statements is that care for the self leads to a responsibility for others. However, this responsibility is directed more towards individualism 'that shifts all responsibility for success or failure to a mythical, atomised, isolated individual, doomed to a life of perpetual competition and disconnected from relationships, community and society' (Zuboff, 2019, p. 33). This type of amorphous outcome hides the subversive restructuring of individuals that is latent in the terminology.

Similarly, an uneasy alliance exists between the statement advocating an individualistic 'responsibility for Australia's future' and the functional approach that is advocated in the assessment standards. While the standards mark a shift from a liberal humanist approach to English, they do, in some ways, hark back to this approach. Walshaw explained liberal humanism by separating the concepts:

Humanism is characterised by a belief in an essential human nature and in the power of reason to bring about human progress. Liberalism is characterised by the belief in the inalienable right of the individual to realise herself to the full (Walshaw, 2007, p. 17).

The AC:E seemingly accepts that the study of English will somehow contribute to Australia's progress, and that students will simultaneously develop their own capabilities. However, as

Walshaw further explained, 'the subject's experience is neither sought nor even valued' (Walshaw, 2007, pp. 17-18). Even so, this does not prevent a 'self' from being formed. The neoliberal individualised self unfolds in a regulated order of calculation and testing—which is a mode of being imposed upon students to efficaciously fit the delimited aesthetic practices found in the established social system.

Given this, a pertinent question might be asked: what, then, is the purpose of literature? Even the question has a neoliberal nuance to it, as if anticipating a utilitarian response. A more pertinent question to ask is, what are the values of literature? Many would argue that the value of literary study lies in identity formation. For example, Patterson suggested that 'literary study provides a mechanism by which to teach students to value diversity, promote tolerance, expand language and reflect on identity formation and its consequences' (Patterson, 2011, p. 11). These determinants of representation optimistically suggest literature's transformative capacity, especially when the author explains that 'the important work of English literature study lies in the direction of shaping behaviour and beliefs through textual study' (Patterson, 2011, p.11). However, this transformative power turns students into subjects rather than provides them with the tools and techniques that Foucault has argued would give them the opportunity for subjectification, especially in terms of how Patterson represented humanist values. The moral values seem to be externally imposed, or to come from the teacher's authority. However, 'Foucault's notion of ethical subjectivity constitutes a site of resistance against externally imposed subjugating subject identities' (Hofmeyr, 2006, p. 113), which is an argument against the concept of 'shaping behaviour' as endorsed by Patterson. For Foucault, individuals' concentration on the practices of self within the power relations—those 'strategies by which individuals try to direct and control the conduct of others'—allows students to play these games of power with as little domination as possible', and thus create a more democratic and ethical individual (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997, p. 298).

Patterson argued against Eagleton, who saw little worth in a vague humanistic value of literature and instead preferred transformative cultural aspects. However, as she noted, 'English teachers responded strongly to Terry Eagleton's challenge to make literature teaching mean something in political, ideological, historical and cultural terms' (Patterson, 2011, p. 10), which suggests that this is still a contentious issue. Boomer, in 1974, rejected any argument regarding literature's ability to provide moral improvement, claiming that it 'smacks of the handing down of "truth" and assumes a passive reader' (Boomer, in Sawyer, 2013, p. 31). Like Nussbaum, Boomer considered that literature should be subversive, and he relied on the value of literature as ideas. Literature should not be regarded merely as a means of teaching morals. The 1975 Bullock report, *A Language for Life*, argued that:

> Literature brings the child into an encounter with language in its most complex and varied forms. Through these complexities are presented the thoughts, experiences, and feelings of people who exist outside and beyond the reader's daily awareness. This process of bringing them within that circle of consciousness is where the greatest value of literature lies (Bullock, 1975, p. 175).

As explained above, Foucault comprehended the individual's role as exploring the technologies of self that will lead to an understanding of self and others without domination. Societal ethics become more difficult to impose when the society is culturally diverse. However, a transactional reading of literature (in which diversity is explored and critiqued) resonates with a Foucauldian perspective, in that students employ the ideas as a technology of self. Far from being a passive recipient of moral values, students use the diversity of ideas and cultures discursively to create themselves (perhaps subversively) in novel ways.

Adorno and Giroux both noted the 'disastrous determinism' of education, as well as the use of literature as moral and cultural forming and a 'tool of social reproduction' (Giroux, 2004b, p. 13). Adorno further noted, 'this disastrous state of conscious and unconscious thought includes the erroneous idea that one's own particular way of being—that one is just so and not otherwise—is nature, an unalterable given, and not a historical evolution' (Adorno, in Giroux, 2004b, p. 13).

It is this philosophy that frames education as transforming—and Adorno emphasises the use of critical reasoning here—it is possible to observe how literature is not only 'subversive' but how it is also a technique of self that is important in Foucauldian subjectification. Oakes, Townley and Cooper (1998, p. 268) suggested that the symbolic cultural capital with which museums (and, for this argument, literature) are treated legitimises teachers and positions their identity. As part of the discourse surrounding students, this symbolic cultural capital embeds students into the discourse and offers them further tools that provide an organising direction in relation to subjectification.

The purpose of studying literature is immersed in complexities. It has been regarded as a means of political transformation; as a way of positioning oneself in the symbolic cultural capital that surrounds it (Oakes et al, 1998); as subversive (Nussbaum, 1991; Sawyer, 2013); as giving students 'the capacity to develop their emotional and ethical imaginations and so imagine themselves more powerfully as human beings' (Misson & Morgan, 2007, p. 87); as 'crucial to humanity' (Boomer in Sawyer, 2013, p. 32); and as a tool of subjectification. The student is unlikely to consider all these positions. However, by connecting literature with fantasy, imagination, morality and humanity—and by comprehending it as an 'ineliminable part

of personal deliberation' (Nussbaum, 1991, p. 880), as an emancipatory power (Hunter, 1996), and as a means of giving pleasure (Nussbaum, 1991)—literature might not be constricted to being just an efferent means of teaching literacy. As Nussbaum asserted, 'not everything in human life has a use. It is learning a mode of engagement with the world that does not focus exclusively on the idea of use, but is capable, too, of cherishing things for their own sake' (Nussbaum, 1991, p. 900).

What is clear is that literature is a medium through which students can critically analyse scenarios and situations to create, recreate, problematise and examine their world. Through the creations of new realities and new situations, and by examining gaps and silences, students consider how characters are constructed, how they are positioned by the text and society, and how the language reflects and constructs reality—all of which provide them the opportunity to challenge present culture and social boundaries. The imagination is dynamic, and 'intellectual growth and creativity come through embracing the dynamic nature of intelligence. Growth comes through analogy, through seeing how things connect' (Robinson, 2009, p. 50). As Maxine Greene suggested, 'the role of imagination is not to resolve, not to point the way, not to improve. It is to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected' (in Arnold & Ryan, 2003, p. 13). Without these imaginaries, society will stagnate or retreat to barbarism—and we are warned that 'barbarism continues as long as the fundamental conditions that favoured that relapse continue largely unchanged' (Flight, 2017) and as long as those conditions remain unchallenged through different imaginaries.

Exploring the imagination 'requires a sense of possibility in lived moments and a belief that experience can be multifaceted, complex, idiosyncratic and intensely personal, even in apparently mundane, unpromising moments' (Arnold & Ryan, 2003, pp. 13-14). Through this multifaceted experience, students can explore their own sensibilities and not be constrained by just one doxa of present values. As Misson and Morgan explained:

> The main purpose for working with aesthetic texts is that they allow us to experience a whole range of events, ideas emotions that we would not normally have the chance to engage with … [thereby] open[ing] up to us perspectives on how we relate to other people, both in a psychological and a sociological perspective (Misson & Morgan, 2007, p. 85).

Further, Jacobsen's reference to literature as being 'organised violence committed on ordinary speech' (Jacobsen, in Eagleton, 1996, p. 2) and Barthes' observation that literature is 'the only form of communication in which "the language deliberately invites attention to itself"' (in Sawyer, 2013, p. 31) reveal that investigating literacy's role in literary studies has become critical.

Contestations of literacy

An essential aspect of theorising about literary experience is understanding the role that literacy plays. Reading, writing and speaking are mandatory conditions of knowledge for a literate person. Yet, literacy itself has become highly contested; it is problematised into different conceptions—such as from individual literacy to social literacy, and from basic cognitive and autonomous skills to applied, practised and situated approaches. Dominic Wyse noted that, in part:

> The definition of 'literacy' entails a focus mainly on the important technical capacity to read and write words, but the contributors remind us that literacy (or literacies) is a socially embedded semantic system, and part of a multimodal framework that considers writing, reading, talk and listening alongside other modes of communication (Wyse, 2009, p. 287).

Collins et al. have emphasised the importance of literacy, further arguing that '[o]ur very concept of civilisation has taken writing as essential' (Collins, Blot, Irvine, & Schieffelin, 2003, p. 10).

Although literacy was once concerned with just the contextually independent and tangible set of skills for reading and writing (Miller & Schulz, 2014, p. 85), it has now become a highly contested area; researchers have developed concepts regarding multi-literacies that range from technological to visual (including computer literacy, media literacy, health literacy and others). This frontline arena regarding critical theories of literacy and pedagogy suggests 'that curriculum must be seen in the most fundamental sense as a battleground over whose forms of knowledge, history, visions, language, culture, and authority will prevail as a legitimate object of learning and analysis' (Giroux, 1987, p. 178). It is evident that the battle over literacies deflects attention from the role that literature plays in the curriculum.

It can be argued that the most pervasive form of literacy is functional or utilitarian literacy—literacy that is easy to test and that is considered fundamental for the workplace. However, focusing on the functional uses of literacy limits its effectiveness for critical thinking and exploring the imagination through texts and ideas; instead, functional literacy becomes a means of homogenising and constraining consciousness. Black and Yasukawa (2014) referred to Graf's term, 'the Literacy Myth', when they discussed the hegemonic power of literacy in policy. Graf explained the myth as follows:

> The Literacy Myth refers to the belief, articulated in educational, civic, religious, and other settings, contemporary and historical, that the acquisition of literacy is a necessary precursor to and invariably results in economic development,

democratic practice, cognitive enhancement, and upward social mobility (Graf in Black & Yasukawa, 2014, p. 215).

This kind of mythology resonates with the AC:E, which regards literacy as the means to employment; in this, the AC:E acquires utilitarian skill sets and constricts the value of critical literacy to a means of testing and regulating individuals. Green (2006) observed that 'the field is becoming increasingly governmentalized—rationalised, regulated' (Green, 2006, p. 10), which corresponds with Black and Yasukawa's ominous assertion that 'literacy education was valued not so much for its cognitive effects but for its moral and social control effects' (Black & Yasukawa, 2014, p. 215). Black and Yasukawa, as well as Graf, argued that an educated worker was 'more moral, loyal, cheerful, and contented as well as more punctual and reliable' (Graf in Black & Yasukawa, 2014, p. 215). From this historical perspective, conceiving education as a means of morally and socially controlling workers for a more effective workforce underpins the continuing reliance on literacy to create a more productive society. This is despite Graf's analysis, which contended that 'literacy proved of remarkably limited value in the pursuit of higher status or greater rewards' (Graf, in Black & Yasukawa, 2014, p. 215). Further, the AC:E still contends that '[t]he study of English plays a key role in the development of reading and literacy skills which help young people develop the knowledge and skills needed for education, training and the workplace' (ACARA).

However, the attempt to control education to create an effective workforce contradicts the Freireian view of emancipatory (or empowering) literacy, as well as the notion that 'literacy is crucial to the acquisition, by every child, youth and adult, of essential life skills that enable them to address the challenges they can face in life' (United Nations Resolution 56/116 in UNESCO, 2005, p. 155). Freire thought that literacy was the way to join a productive workforce, but he also regarded it as a way out of a poverty trap. In that way, literacy was emancipatory rather than controlling, which suggests that 'the more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can transform it' (Freire, 1970/1993, p. 21). However, in terms of governmentality, it accords with Foucauldian power-knowledge relationships, in that as the literacy 'crisis' becomes a dominant discourse, the teachers become embroiled in utilitarian testing; they try to ensure that their school is high on the literacy scores, thus serving the needs of a competitive market rather than the needs of the student learner. The endemic testing becomes natural to the students who incorporate it into their lives; they consider it normal and thus promulgating and embody it. In 2005, Sawyer highlighted the emerging paradigm of 'English as literacy' when he wrote, 'these days, it is difficult to find a definition of subject "English" that is not couched almost entirely in terms of "literacy"' (Sawyer, 2005, p. 11). In this, he signposted a colonisation of the English curriculum by a rationalised market-oriented agenda.

However, as Bernstein has noted:

> Conflict involving power and ideology operates throughout the pedagogic device—both internally to each field and between fields. The seeds of change are sown in the contradictions, ambiguities, cleavages and dilemmas created in the process of the distribution of power and social relations (Chen & Derewianka, 2009, p. 225).

Indeed, these power struggles inherent in pedagogy are also discernible in the literacy wars. As new developments of literacy occur, they generate 'potential sites of challenge, contestation, negotiation and struggle between different groups who seek to appropriate the pedagogic device' (Chen & Derewianka, 2009, p. 225)—and the field consequently becomes littered with the debris of literacy battles.

The purpose(s) of literacy

Although originating from many different spheres of influence and research, concepts of literacy tend to reflect the homogenising effects of marketisation. The AC:E expects the literacy strand to 'develop students' ability to interpret and create texts with appropriateness, accuracy, confidence, fluency and efficacy for learning in and out of school, and for participating in Australian life more generally' (ACARA, 2015a). Literacy is subsequently constrained by specific criteria through ACARA's directions regarding text choice: 'Texts chosen include media texts, everyday texts and workplace texts from increasingly complex and unfamiliar settings, ranging from the everyday language of personal experience to more abstract, specialised and technical language, including the language of schooling and academic study' (ACARA, 2015a, p. 8). Although this elaboration seems more flexible in its construction, the addendum of 'the language of schooling' makes the elaboration seem like it depends on the type of schooling that is being offered—one of functionality at best.

When the literacy strand is placed against the 'content descriptors' for literature, the elaboration seems somewhat meaningless. For example, the AC:E Year 10 descriptors for literature include:

> Compare and evaluate a range of representations of individuals; Reflect on, extend, endorse or refute *others'* interpretations; Analyse and explain how text structures … may influence *audience response*; Evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts; Identify, explain and discuss how narrative viewpoint, structure, characterisation and devices … *shape different interpretations* and responses to a text; Compare and evaluate how … literary device[s] can be used … *to evoke particular emotional responses*; Analyse

and evaluate text structures and language features of literary texts and make relevant thematic and intertextual connections with other texts (ACARA, 2015a, italics added).

The students' own responses to literature are excoriated before being replaced by anodyne comments on other people's interpretations. Literature becomes a formulaic response through efferent reading. In this sense, Literature here is positioned more as functional literacy, one aligned with the general government policy of raising standards (especially those of literacy). However, as Sawyer concluded, 'government "literacy strategies" almost always involve a fascination with the most reductive aspects of literacy, whatever research suggests' (Sawyer, 2005, p. 15).

Literacy theory seemingly falls into two main categories: literacy that benefits the individual and literacies that benefit society. Street (1984) distinguished these two categories as the autonomous and ideological models. The autonomous model tends to consider individuals and their individual literacy levels. In this model, illiteracy is regarded as a deficit, and individuals are expected to be responsible for their own inadequacy. Disturbingly, in this model, the 'underlying purpose of literacy is to imbue into individuals an acceptance of the dominant ideologies and its explicit purpose is to enhance the economic productivity of the nation' (Lonsdale & McCurry, 2004, p. 7). The immediate benefit of becoming literate, then, is a chimera, apparently benefitting the individual; in fact, it is immersed in a disturbing discourse that informs and constitutes a form of biopower. In a similar controlling technique, '[i]mplicit in the current approach to national literacy testing is an assumption that those on the lower levels of attainment have failed to meet the national standard and are thus at fault in some way for their "poor" performance' (Lonsdale & McCurry, 2004, p. 15). This type of 'blame the individual' strategy needs attention because it omits and ignores many social impediments to learning; further, as a dividing practice, it criticises those who 'fail' in the process, thereby objectivising them (Foucault, 1982a, p. 778). Additionally, this kind of individualism is further exacerbated in the UK, where policy focuses on 'the "problem" of student performance and performance "gaps"' (Ball, 2018, p. 232). Effectively construing individuals and schools as being accountable, policy then focuses on performance statistics, subsequently controlling and constricting curricula. The effect of these tactics is to deliver:

> An impoverished curriculum, to children who are increasingly stressed by the demands of performance, many of whom experience low levels of individual wellbeing, without any clear sense of purpose and value, other than that which can be calculated from test scores and examination grades (Ball, 2018, p. 233).

The functional and utilitarian neoliberal concept of literacy is apparent in many policies and curricula, in which literacy is regarded as a set of tangible skills—especially for reading and writing. Oracy is also included, but it does not have the authority that Ong (1980, 2002) and others would suggest. Ong observed the power of the spoken word in oral traditions, including Homeric Greek, and has suggested that this orality has a nuanced depth that is excluded in the purely utilitarian terms of 'speaking' and 'listening' (Ong, 2002). Following Ong, Green subsequently called for an increase rhetoric within English. He advocated 'doing things with texts' (Green, 2017, p. 75), or focusing on 'the study of discourse and its effects' (p. 76). Green exemplified the functional aspects of literacy, focusing on 'the effects of power and persuasion [and] also the effects of pleasure and the effects of learning' (p. 76); however, he missed important aspects of the vicarious and cathartic experiences of literature through which students can contemplate different aspects of their own characters in a non-threatening environment.

In this functional model, literacy (which should be applied, practised and situated) tends to be based on socio-economic development and performance, and it does not consider the ethnographic positioning of literacy. Drawing on the work of Freebody et al. (1995), the research of Bloome (1987), S. B. Heath (1983) and Moss (2012) considered that '[t]he use of ethnography in education has often highlighted such inequalities by investigating contrasts between pupils' home literacies and the school literacy practices they encounter in the classroom' (Moss, 2012, p. 110). This focus on and apotheosising of specific types of literacy is patronising and divisive; it denigrates the wider oracy practices of specifically oral cultures and other social oral cultural practices. It also does not consider the student's development outside the market paradigm. This functional model has been interpreted as 'mechanistic' and 'rather narrow' (Myhill, 2009, p. 129), and literacy policy has shifted from an informed approach to one based more on skills (Chen & Derewianka, 2009). However, this is not to disparage the value of literacy in modern Western culture. Ong emphasised this point and contended that 'writing, and to a degree print, are absolutely essential, not just for distributing knowledge but for performing the central noetic operations which a high-technology culture takes for granted' (Ong, 1980, p. 200). However, by limiting literacy to standardisation and achievement levels, the noetic possibilities of literacy are lost in a confusion of progression criteria and data algorithms. In this model, literacy is regarded as being neutral in, and independent of, social context—a consideration that is strongly contested by researchers, including Freire (1970/1993), Rosenblatt (1991, 1995), Mills (2006) and Green (2002).

Literacy is also modelled as a learning process rather than an educational intervention. A UNESCO (2005) report drew on the work of Rogoff, Lave and Wenger to illustrate this model. It suggested that 'social psychologists and anthropologists have used terms such as

"collaborative learning", "distributed learning" and "communities of practice" to shift the focus away from the individual mind and towards more social practices building on newer understandings of literacy' (UNESCO, 2005, p. 152). Collaborative learning is, of course, the new catchphrase that underpins many educational practices in schools, and this resonates with marketisation terminology. As good collaborative marketing practice dictates, the notion of working together in a collaborative workspace conceals the contradiction that students are treated and assessed as individuals. In this way, functional literacy assumes the mantle of an essentially unitary frame of reference, through which student needs are equalled to the needs of the market forces that govern and constitute English education.

By regarding literacy as a social practice, this ideological model positions students within a framework of accountability and social responsibility; however, these pedagogical elements contradict the basic literacy venerated by governments. Paulo Freire emphasised the use of literacy to challenge the sociocultural processes through critical literacy. Bataille furthered this notion of emancipatory literacy by suggesting that:

> Literacy creates the conditions for the acquisition of a critical consciousness of the contradictions of society in which man lives and of its aims; it also stimulates initiative and his participation in the creation of projects capable of acting upon the world, of transforming it, and of defining the aims of an authentic human development. It should open the way to a mastery of techniques and human relations. *Literacy is not an end in itself* (Bataille in UNESCO, 2005, p. 154, italics added).

Literacy is given an emancipatory role, in which freedom is derived through a critique of society. However, this kind of emancipatory role for literacy is delimited in English curricula, which tend to emphasise the role of literacy to help students acquire workplace skills. However, Bataille's argument that 'literacy is not an end in itself' contradicts recent political dogma that emphasises a 'back to basics' mantra; it argues that literacy is key to performance in the workplace. Instead of students becoming emancipated through a study of literacy, they are placed under increased surveillance—under a governmentality that aims to control student outcomes and performance. This political dogma can be comprehended as a biopolitical arrogation of student autonomy, as individuals become actors in the social arena and perform for a market agenda rather than for any autonomous growth.

The issue that Freire confronted involved social inequity and oppression. The literacy that contemporary students encounter is intended to subjugate them into sociopolitical practices that construct, legitimise and reproduce existing neoliberal power structures. It is within these iterative discourses that students produce themselves and are subjectivated. According to

Ball, 'learners are fixed by measurement but also subject to continual interventions which aim to change and move them in relation to markers of "development"' (2013b, p. 50). The focus on utilitarian literacy, which is dominated by surveillant and hierarchical techniques, ensures that '[t]he learner is made visible, but power is rendered invisible, and the learner sees only the tasks and the tests which they must undertake' (p. 48). Although invisible, this power continues to affect students by making this type of rationalisation seem normal, and by framing non-compliant students as resisters and failures.

This categorised measurement of success reflects the Bernsteinian structures of knowledge that were mentioned previously, and they are stipulated in curricula year level descriptors. In this 'stage-wise progression of knowing' (Walshaw, 2007, p. 59), students are subjected to the divisive practices of age-based criteria. Although these divisive practices are justified by developmental psychologists, Walkerdine has argued that they 'would be better read as the *effect* of policies and regulations, rather than a *justification* and a *validation* for them' (in Walshaw, 2007, p. 59). An issue with this developmental and age-based teaching of literacy standards assumes that students acquire understanding at equivalent rates; however, this is notably inaccurate. Instead, these regimes of truth—the 'techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth' (Foucault, in Rabinow 1991), in which students find themselves creating and moulding meaning as forms of knowledge—constitute the social reality that students describe and analyse; this social reality is then duly established and accepted by students as the norm. Due to these discursive relations, students are subjected by a discourse that produces them as specific kinds of subject. This subjectification is devoid of self-reflexive critique; it relies instead on accepting the codified development experience that is imposed, which is primarily tied to a market-oriented basis of instrumental knowledge.

Arnold and Ryan argued that 'unless "knowledge" encompasses experience as part of the knowing, learners will lack the motivation to continue experiencing life in the fullest sense' (Arnold & Ryan, 2003, pp. 13-14). Through the developmental techniques used in curricula and their descriptors, students become 'subjects'; further, 'the learner's development is merely a *production*', and 'any cognitive development that a learner experiences will take on a meaning only when it is related to the categories that the text has highlighted' (Walshaw, 2007, pp. 59-60). Teachers similarly experience functional literacy as a kind of migration of their identity, agency and pedagogical direction, and their affirmation of these literacy practices is re-perpetrated on the students like an ouroboros.

As students' experiences are negated, they are reconstituted within the parameters of assessments, surveillance and regulation that the age-restricted curriculum constructs. In this

way, students learn how to be learners[37]—through the normalising and categorising effects of literacy and literature policy. As Walshaw (2007) noted, '[i]n Foucault's terms, the learner is a *fiction* generated by the structural rules that govern discursive formation, regulating all thought and speech' (p. 60); in this sense, students do not recognise the fiction that has shaped them into subjects. To escape the subjection of power-knowledge relationships, students must become aware, through critical and self-reflexive insight, of how they are being constituted and of how this affects their subjectification. Schirato et al. exemplified this discursive formation, suggesting that '[b]ecause most people don't want to become delinquents, they accept the normative values that are supposed to make them "good" citizens' (Schirato, Danaher, & Webb, 2012, p. 85). Although being a 'good citizen' is a normative societal expectation, the market's key performance indicators (transformed into achievement standards) produce citizens who are acculturated in the neoliberal episteme.

The transformative nature of education—of creating a literate and ethical society—is an educational goal that becomes lost in debates about educational processes and efficacy. Alsup et al. have pointedly argued that:

> Literacy education … has particular value and potential in a culture increasingly unable to distinguish fact from fiction, truth from lies. Moreover, literacy education cannot be conceptualized, understood, or improved without reference to the broader project of imagining and seeking a better world (in Brass, 2014b, p. 219).

In this framing, English teachers are responsible for teaching their students how to critique both themselves and their world. As Adorno implored, 'the premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again' (Adorno, 1966). 'Auschwitz' here is a metaphor for all barbarism, oppression and dehumanisation that occurs through a manipulation of truth and the proliferation of propaganda that contorts our world. It is essential that students are given the tools of subjectification with which to create an ethical self that will prevent a devolution and regression into barbarism. Teachers are also responsible for referring to 'the broader project of imagining and seeking a better world'—an aspect that Moni et al. exemplified by stating that '[i]n teaching the skills of critique, in developing awareness of interpretation and meaning, in dealing with values and beliefs, English is dangerous' (Moni et al., 2014, p. 2). This claim, constitutes English as dangerous, especially to those who subvert freedom and equality. Foucault reinforced this view when he argued that 'not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous,

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[37] Biesta argued that education and everything there is to say about education (including educational vocabulary) is being transformed into a language of learning and learners; this is a process that he problematises as 'learnification' (Biesta, 2009a).

then we always have something to do' (Foucault, 1983a, pp. 231-232). Acceptance without critique obstructs autonomous freedom, and it is a built-in impediment to democratic outcomes—an aspect of pedagogy leading to and resonating with Giroux's notion of heterogeneity regarding radical democracy and radical education.

Thinking critically is an act of democratic freedom, and it heralds emancipated autonomy and free expression. Moni et al. indicate that English (by virtue of the critical thinking aspects that it inculcates) has the power to usurp and disrupt the prevailing political climate. This follows Foucault's thinking that considering something dangerous requires vigilance and, if necessary, action vis-à-vis English pedagogy; this 'action' is about critically using the imagination and remaining alert to patterns of thought and practice that can disqualify democracy and freedom. Therefore, we must not teach according to the test. It restricts critical thinking, as well as imaginative ideas and thoughts. In short, students need creativity and critical acumen. They need to explore the rich landscape of literature, not be cowed or overawed by it; they should enjoy it, feel it, taste it and let it spark their imagination, desires and hopes. When addressing curricula, students' subjectification must be considered rather than their subjectness. Both literature and literacy have a role to play here. The tools developed in critical literacy can be used to question, imagine and envision, and breaking free from the regulation that constricts education is essential. Niall Ferguson offered a warning about the consequences of over-regulation in the finance sector, and it should be heeded in education as well. He claimed that too much regulation leads to degeneration, that the system is failing because of the tight controls issued through panoptic surveillance, and that 'excessively complex regulation is the disease of which it pretends to be the cure' (Ferguson, 2013, p. 59). For example, the AC:E's prescriptive terminology concerning literature and literacy inhibits students' creative ability to fully use the tools that are hidden from them and that have been kept behind the bars of assessment criteria.

Coda

Much of what has been argued in this chapter revolves around Foucault's technologies of self and how students are subjectified. Student's identities and '[t]he ways in which we define ourselves further impact how we engage in and construct reality' (Yoo, 2019, p. 90). Literature and literacy are significant discourses in which students are immersed and they profoundly affect identity formation, as 'identity frames our experiences and affects our dealings with others' (Yoo, 2019, p. 90). Educational policy must include this creative aspect in the curriculum, and teachers should respond in creative ways to encourage students' investigation and questioning of self. It is in using those 'technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their

own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (Foucault, 1982b).

The power relations that occur in schools are 'like a shifting and changing network of social relations among and between individuals, groups, institutions and structures that are political, economic and personal' (Ball, 2013b, p. 30). Under the neoliberal framework of education— in which economics and marketplace language and practices pervade education—students need an external discourse that allows such invasive techniques of power to be interrogated and, if required, usurped. Although Biesta claimed that '[w]hether someone will be taught by what the teacher teaches lies beyond the control and power of the teacher' (Biesta, 2013, p. 457), the teacher does have the ability, authority and moral obligation to provide students with sufficient tools to comprehensively care of their 'self'. It is for the policymakers to ensure that teachers are not constrained by discussions about effective teaching processes, utilitarian outcomes or standardised test results. The academic achievement of students in focused areas of the curriculum undermines the critical self-reflexivity that is fundamental for autonomous and ethical students, as well as essential for democratic citizens. It is a fundamental aspect of teaching that students are not left without the tools required for self-reflexivity and critique, and that the focus on a delimiting conception of literacy does not narrow the range of their thought.

5. The Contingent Other

The open secret of the clock, naked for all to see, was that we were only going in circles.
—Viet Thanh Nguyen

So what do you want? Does what happens inside show on the outside? There is such a great fire in one's soul, and yet nobody ever comes to warm themselves there, and passers-by see nothing but a little smoke coming from the top of the chimney and go on their way.
—Vincent van Gogh

Introduction

Chapter Two argued that high-stakes testing casts a detrimental and subversive shadow on education, and subsequent chapters contended that the stultification of the curriculum (especially regarding literature) has affected students' subjectification. This chapter will outline some of the effects of high-stakes testing in terms of making students 'the principle of [their] own subjection' (Foucault, 1979, p. 203). Students are constantly subjected to surveillance and testing in school, and they not only become aware of how important this testing is, but they are also 'subjected to a field of visibility … assum[ing] responsibility for the constraints of power' (Foucault, 1979, p. 202). Indeed, they begin to assimilate in a form of subjectification whereby they feel imperilled by the acknowledgement that a part of them must succeed in the tests, or they will perceive themselves, and be perceived by others, as failures. Packaged in a confirmative taxonomy that allocates a win or lose totality, this perception is a form of artifice that houses in-built fear and anxiety. Students are constantly exposed to contestation—to an internal social and cultural totality in which the divisive practices of testing create students whose whole *raison d'être* is to pass tests and examinations. They seek to achieve confirmative evidence of their functional competence in basic skills, as well as verification that they can access desired tertiary institutions.

These educational practices have the effect of creating the 'other': a group of successful students who have displaced a part of themselves to become successful. Students who inevitably do not reach the required standards are displaced in the context of success; their structural position necessarily places them at the base of the bell-shaped curve. Subsequently, some teachers realise that they are participating in an exclusionary practice, in which they help legitimate and allocate a hierarchy of positions; as such, the primary sign of the 'other' specifically targets students who failed to reach the required metrics forced on them. Metrics are used to exteriorise and exclude lower-ability students who feel the condemnation of never being mentioned, nor sharing in the definitions of success linked to the school. Given that 'teacher performance is (re)conceptualized as that which can be quantified and measured,

relying on a system of performance benchmarks and assessments' (Holloway & Brass, 2018, p. 361), teachers themselves are instrumentalised. The creation of otherness through outcomes leaves students and teachers displaced; they are made to be 'other' so that an expert can replace the professional—thereby establishing a 'civil war that stresses the relational, contingent nature of power relations' (Rafael, 2019, p. 151).

The political creation of the other

In Australia, factional rifts have arisen between public and private schools and rich and poor students. These have been wrought by the pressures of standardised testing yet creating them as apparent allies against other nations in the PISA stakes of international competition. Ball described a similar school situation: 'England [which] has never had a universal system of state education worthy of that description [has] rather a set of competing subsystems that jostle, grate, and overlap'; it has an 'educational apparatus [which] continues to be decisively marked by very clear relations between performance and social class, and poverty and access, and social class and poverty' (Ball, 2018, pp. 209, 228). In other words, 'allyship' is more fictional than real. In Australia, a relatively coherent set of assertions assumes that those with the lowest outcomes are criticised for devaluing the nation's status in the global arena. Students 'find themselves burdened daily by the pressures and humiliations brought about by the demand for discipline and conformity in the neoliberal state' (Rafael, 2019, p. 156). The reactionary effect of this is to create policies that 'coordinate the movements and behaviour of each individual for the sake of ensuring the survival and development of the whole population' (Rafael, 2019, p. 142). However, this is a false strategy, as the population's survival does not depend on the results of standardised tests; however, the rhetoric surrounding the publication of the results tends to suggest that this is the perception of a neoliberal government, who reconceptualise citizens as economic subjects and rights-bearing individuals. Those embroiled in this educational dilemma find themselves 'burdened daily by the pressures and humiliations brought about by the demand for discipline and conformity in the neoliberal state' (Rafael, 2019, p. 216). In this taken-for-granted process, teachers and students are subject to extraneous forces over which they have limited control, with the external experts 'guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony' (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 141).

The 'other' emerges on the precarious fault line that divides and connects two forms of modern subjectivity: the economic subject ruled by the forces of the market and the subject of human rights whose universal humanity is nevertheless juridically circumscribed and selectively enforced by the state through the biopolitics of state curricula and standardised testing (Rafael, 2019, p. 142). This Foucauldian interpretation (Foucault, 1978/1990, 2009) underpins the discursive state of education, enveloped as it is in a discourse that encourages divisive

practices and panoptic surveillance to ensure adherence to the neoliberal dogma. The government wields 'a power whose task is to take charge of life needs continuous regulatory and corrective mechanisms. It is … a matter … of distributing the living in the domain of value and utility' (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 144).

Introducing the market mentality in schools violates educational principles, as it assigns value for money and use over creative and aesthetic values. Further, the contestation between humanistic and utilitarian values obscures the important facets of education. For example, Biesta highlighted this issue: 'When we are engaged in decision making about the direction of education we are always and necessarily engaged in value judgements—judgments about what is educationally desirable' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 34). Yet the unanswered question is, desirable for whom? With different competing agendas (both hidden and overt) in the educational forum, it is the students and teachers who are accountable for the country's performance. Through the rendition of its students as subjects of power, education concomitantly constitutes them as powerful subjects, both positively and negatively. The warrior students can both fight for an ethical education and fight within the standardised testing regime as defenders of the country's prestige and global learning status. Although 'ethical questions are invariably implicated in social and economic ones' (Butler, 2015, p. 23), ethical students rely on their education to understand and critically question both their society and the norms that they are expected to reflect. However, standardised testing creates an invisible student—one who bears the signs of being placed in a taxonomy and who and is subsumed by a standardised norm. Students become the data points in an algorithm that is designed to perpetrate a kind of symbolic violence on them, taking the form of medicalised interrogation and the use of 'evidence'.[38] Making education 'visible' creates power-knowledge capillaries, and students are thrust into the panoptic surveillance of visible testing through which a desired set of bodily practices is inculcated (more for programmatic neoliberal social behaviour and organisation than as an educational discourse for student development). The use of accessible 'evidence' disguises and discards the invisible in favour of the visible. For example, it renders literary aesthetics and aesthetic self-realisation even more invisible—to the extent that their effect on students is mostly disavowed and considered unimportant. Butler argued that 'to be radically deprived of recognition threatens the very possibility of existing and persisting' (2015, p. 40), and when literature is deprived of oxygen and purged of aesthetic value—when it is instead used efferently for literacy purposes—then as a transactional and subjectifying resource, it is close to extinction. Attached to the emaciated curriculum, students

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[38] See Chapter Three.

subjectify themselves in an over-regimented and radically deprived educational environment, deriving what they can from an attenuated assessable syllabus.

With educational standards becoming normalised through the marketised dispositifs of government, education itself becomes more visibly performative; students discard a self-reflexive and critical stance as their '[i]ntellectual curiosity is stifled and [their] deeper cultural, moral, sporting, social and spiritual faculties are marginalised by a system in which all must come second to delivering improving test and exam numbers' (attributed to Anthony Seldon, Master of Wellington College, in House of Commons, 2008, p. 51).[39] In this constricted formulation, it is 'as though only the visible actually exists, a solipsism that, unsurprisingly, also accompanies both rather loose philosophical roots of "evidence", that is, logical positivism' (Rømer, 2014, p. 117). Consequently, students are shaped—both bodily, through the actual sitting of tests, and in terms of their performance and conduct through their results, which are to be distributed 'in space and time to be effective producers' (Schirato et al., 2012, p. 50).

Adherence to the standardisation of tests and ability levels, such that they become a part of the educational discourse, activates power relations, and subsequently helps generate new forms of knowledge about the roles of education and students. The visible education paradigm becomes a regime of truth enabling students to be assessed through performative criteria that define the student as performing at, below or above those arbitrary criteria (in a circulatory process). Similarly, in terms of the performative exclamation regarding raising the education standards, policymakers use language that acts powerfully (Butler, 2015, p. 28) to create a divisive and restrictive regime of truth—one asserting that education is purely about evidentiary justified standards. This 'power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualises by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another' (Foucault, 1979, p. 184). The proponents of visible learning acclaim the benefits of assessment that homogenises education and students while purportedly individualising them. The 'norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as [because] of measurement, all the shading of individual differences' (Foucault, 1979, p. 184); however, it conceals the possibilities for the individuation of identity formation.

It is not only students who are subjected to this surveillant scrutiny. The expectations of a transformative education system become based on 'an active and ongoing commitment to marginalising certain forms of knowledge in favour of others', in which the primary function of

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[39] C ted by M ck Brookes, Genera Secretary of the Nat ona Assoc at on of Head Teachers (NAHT) (UK). Anthony Se don was Master of We ngton Co ege, one of Br ta n's co educat ona ndependent board ng schoo s, from 2006 2015.

the curriculum becomes the selection of knowledge (Schirato et al., 2012, p. 65). Knowledge selection is normalised, with some areas like literature being marginalised or reinvented in an efferent mode. These forms of knowledge 'act on the consciousness of the [students so that] their opinion is modified … and along with their opinion their way of doing things, their way of acting, [and] their behaviour [conforms with being] … economic subjects' (Foucault, 2009, p. 275). In turn, the power-knowledge relationships, with the concurrent use of surveillance, produces complex interactions of visibility and invisibility. Certain types of knowledge, behaviour and understanding recede and become invisible, while knowledge—processed in edifying, bite-sized and assessable fragments—becomes the norm and renders the more nuanced, aesthetic and critically demanding subject matter obsolete. Subjects lying outside or requiring thought beyond the prescribed norms are marginalised; this delimits the thinkable from the unthinkable (P. Kelly, Andreasen, Kousholt, McNess, & Ydesen, 2017, p. 5). Kelly et al. contended that this marginalisation 'defin[es] what counts as legitimate school knowledge', and this view resonates with the obscuring of critical literary study through the use of reductionist literacy practices. Although:

> Today critical thinking is everywhere explicitly named as an aim of education … the subject matter in which it could be encouraged is so narrowly and specifically defined that there is simply no active space for critical thinking to take place (Noddings, 2012, p. 29).

It is within this social order, this educational wasteland, that the student is fabricated—a political anatomy produced 'according to a whole technique of forces and bodies' (Foucault, 1979, p. 217).

Accountability and cultural imagination

The current obsession with data—be it personalised data from Fitbits, or educational data from standardised testing—has the effect of inuring students to the more insidious effects of constant monitoring. For example, 'the Quantified Self'[40] encourages people to seek 'self-knowledge through numbers' (Quantified Self, 2019). Such relentless scrutiny creates an instrumentalised self with an openness to tracking data. This is surveillance education being wrought in a similar way to surveillance capitalism (see Zuboff, 2019). As education veers closer to a pervasive data streaming of students, students emerge as pliable partners; they are intensified and self-absorbed with success and failure in a continuous cycle of testing, as well as with the averse mechanical application linked to the proliferation of data collection.

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[40] The quantfed self refers both to the cultural phenomenon of self tracking with technology and to a community of users and makers of self tracking technology who share an nterest n self cogn sance through numbers. It empowers people to become their own 'expert' through self mon tor ng and through shar ng the data w th know edgeab e and nterested peers to ref ne th nk ng and e c t ostens y cruc a adv ce to the nd v dua 's progress on.

Students are absorbed into a surveillant normality, which then forms their identities through the occluding vision of a data minefield. This 'social entrainment' that is 'implicated in the formation of shared *dispositions*' changes how individuals 'formulate judgments about the … personhood of the moving presences that populate our world' (Berson, 2015, p. xiv). Students are thus subjectivated to an 'algorithmic identity', categorised through a biopower that constructs and 'govern[s] subjects at a distance, guarding their apparent autonomy' (Cheney-Lippold, 2011, p. 173). This biopower shapes them through a system of atomisation (as data points) while they are ostensibly a part of the same educational group. Their individual identities are shaped through group dynamics and perceptions—perceptions based in the power-knowledge relationships that curate a kind of datafied educational ontology. This kind of ontology classifies students: they are divided into a taxonomic table and are 'seen by algorithm and surveillance networks as members of categories' (Cheney-Lippold, 2011, p. 176). In the density of this configuration, their autonomy is delimited by classifications and rankings; the nomenclature deployed horizontally and vertically creates a locus of constrained possibilities in which students subjectivate themselves.

The preoccupation with numbers has an insidious effect—that of 'narrowing experience to performance, imparting an instrumentality to action' (Berson, 2015, p. 125). The effect of constant data collection obscures the instrumentation of education; it creates assessable students who work only towards the test[41] and who challenge themselves against the data for improvement. This is a warrior intelligibility, as data and excellence become the whole purpose of education: students shape their bodies around combat and the performative goal. A direct consequence of instrumentation is that the aesthetic is subsumed into superficial data collection, instilling in students the notion that aesthetic attributes have little value to the construction of the subject. It is this constriction of values in education—against the economic or perceptible and assessable 'value-added' conception—that grounds education in an unimaginative reality. It is this preoccupation with statistics, 'our ongoing exploration of the world *in cerebro* that lends the experience of reality its palpable quality' (Berson, 2015, p. 11); however, it also obscures the imaginative and aesthetic non-realities that enrich the cultural milieu.

Panoptic 'learning management systems', displaying performance data on demand, have the power to shape students through pervasive visibility; they also increase the scrutiny of inequalities through divisive practices. The power to reveal the results—to lay bare the inadequacies and exalt the able—endorses the view that a focus on certain testable features is more important than a comprehensive education. However, 'the technologies of

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[41] See House of Commons (2008, p. 41ff).

instrumentation that have so changed our environment, and our bodies, and how we construct our somatic niche, have also made our world more precarious' (Berson, 2015, p. 135). The veneration of instrumentation has created a precarity for the noetic niche—that is, the aesthetic noesis that withers with the dearth of literary experience. Media coverage that focuses on test results emerges as a deictic force on the body; it accelerates a precarity for inchoate students who struggle to create their identity in a continuously changing and data-driven world. The result is a moulding of habits of mind, our dispositions and orientations towards standardised tests, and a subsequent withering imbalance of the somatic and noetic.

The neoliberal fascination with data, combined with the individualisation or atomisation of self, separate understanding, and the imagination (Rømer, 2019, p. 594). This deployment of data connects with Adorno's description of 'an individual who exists purely for himself … an empty abstraction' (Adorno, in Butler, 2015, p. 195). To become an ethical subject, students are confronted by 'the most individual question of morality—how do I live this life that is mine?' (Butler, 2015, p. 196). However, this existential question becomes enmeshed in debates surrounding students' education, which prompts further questions: How can students be educated to fit into society? How are students created as *homo economicus*? The dyadic construction of the student—the economic entrepreneur of self and the aesthetic 'embodied character of social action and expression' (Butler, 2015, p. 22)—is intrinsically linked to the biopolitical struggle. Lives are 'differentially disposed' and precariousness is part of a biopolitical agenda wherein management 'through governmental and nongovernmental means … [and this establishes] a set of measures for the differential valuation of life itself' (Butler, 2015, p. 196). The Butlerian precarity constitutes an ethical dilemma that education must face—an education that is outwardly based on an inclusive, non-divisive, non-judgemental and fair educational system. Nevertheless:

> Within this regime of symbolic and material capital, the other—figured as a social drain on the individual and corporate accumulation of wealth—is either feared, exploited, reified, or considered disposable; only rarely is the relationship between the self and the other mediated by compassion and empathy (Giroux, 2004a, p. 17).

The instrumentalised students are predicated in the belief that individuals, armed with sufficient data, can take control of their lives, which follows along the lines of Hattie's proposed visible learning. Resonating with a medicalised view of education, the concept of health self-tracking is becoming endemic, reverberating with the visible learning phenomena, the approach creates a data-centred landscape in which students perceive and shape themselves:

> Self-trackers are pushing the limits of personal health. By using a scientific approach, they are *shedding light into a dark unknown*. As they discover hidden insights, it is the entrepreneurs who are bringing their findings—and their tools—to the masses (Technori, n.d., italics added).

As education follows a similar course into self-quantification, students are thus reduced to the functionality of marketised algorithmic data points.

Purposeful education

It has been argued that education is more than just visible data. Robinson rationalised this by explaining that 'were mathematical and verbal intelligence the only kinds that existed, ballet never would have been created. Nor would abstract painting, hip-hop, design, architecture, or self-service checkouts at supermarkets' (Robinson, 2009, pp. 48-49). Students are more than just data points in an algorithm. However, they are subjectivated and subjectified by a constant panoptic attention being paid to results that they repeatedly encounter: the 'surveilling gaze of society [which] is internalised into individuals and constitutes them through power relations' (Hancock, 2018, p. 447). A data-driven curriculum encapsulates a common-sense view of education that belittles any aspect of education that cannot be measured in terms of an exchange value that is tied to an external metric. Defined by neoliberal politics and scrutinised through the panoptic view of external tests, education has been colonised and dominated by the emergence of educational service markets and by new innovative educational technologies. This includes the professionalisation of inexperienced educational experts and the intertwining of education development with political and economic considerations. This array of biopolitical forms enables performativity, and targets 'the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment … of population to economic processes' (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 141). Education, then, becomes ensnared and submerged within countless narrowly defining tests, assessments, and political expediency. This form of neoliberal and economic endoxa comes to recapitulate the expectations and understandings of what constitutes valued education. Such a constricted lens distorts the values that are inherent in broader academic achievement. Instead, 'what matters most is academic achievement in a small number of curricular domains, particularly language, science and mathematics—and it this common-sense view which has given so much credibility to studies such as TIMMS, PIRLS and PISA' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 36).

The purpose of education remains a contentious issue that depends on subjective values or 'a dichotomous depiction of views about the aims of education in terms of conservatism versus progressivism or traditional versus liberal' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 36). However, the problematisation of language and literacy achievement promulgates a deeply concerning

perception of the state of education, resulting in a plethora of reforms and intervention programs designed to address the key assumptions and rework the extant institutions and processes that inform pedagogical practice. This problematisation remains a limited view, in which the goal of standards-based learning is to ensure that students acquire the knowledge and skills deemed essential for success in school. For example, the UK Government stated that it makes 'no apology for the focus on the core subjects of English, maths and science" as mastery of these disciplines is the key to future success' (House of Commons, 2008, p. 50). However, like a gospel-like ex cathedra, the problematisation of language and literacy achievement aligns education solely with the metrics of instrumental knowledge and skills; it largely eschews and discards aesthetic values and ethics.

The focus on numerical academic achievement positions education in a field of science, mathematics, and statistics. It negates aesthetic considerations and constrains education in obsequious consensus and conciliation with the neoliberal tenets of competition and self-evaluation. It is in this sense that Biesta questioned 'whether we are indeed measuring what we value, or whether we are just measuring what we can easily measure and thus end up valuing what we (can) measure' (Biesta, 2009a, p. 34). The measurement itself thus becomes problematic and self-serving; it emerges as incontestable—especially if the measurements only reflect the easily assessable components that themselves only offer a limited insight into the full perception of education. In brief, measurement becomes a kind of 'penal accountancy, constantly brought up to date, mak[ing] it possible to obtain the punitive balance-sheet of each individual' (Foucault, 1979, p. 180).

As mentioned previously, the ends-oriented approach to education—with its focus on individual, national and international competition—undermines a comprehensive education; it narrows the objectives of education to a few slim metrics. Pederson was especially scathing of the narrow focus exhibited by results-based education and this change of emphasis, suggesting that the school 'must now primarily promote a notion of individual competition, and is only secondarily based on the ideals of a more democratic society' (Pederson in Rømer, 2014, p. 115). Biesta also questioned this constricted and slight focus of modern education, suggesting that the 'definition of what matters in education is far too narrow', and that it is more than just 'the transmission and acquisition of knowledge, skills and dispositions' because it 'plays an important role in the domain of socialisation' (Biesta, 2014, p. 24). These latter elements are difficult to locate as visible points on a hierarchic metric scale, or to assess on a typical standardised test; however, they play an invaluable role in the 'hermeneutics of the subject' (Foucault, 2005)—which will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

The Australian Curriculum acknowledges the importance of socialisation, declaring that 'education plays a critical role in shaping the lives of young Australians and contributing to a democratic, equitable and just society that is prosperous, cohesive and culturally diverse' (ACARA, 2015b). However, the policy's focus on standards abrogates the potential of the curriculum to achieve this outcome. The A:CE's focus on 'Achievement Standards' (standards based on mental formulations rather than social processes) and then on specific mental processes tends to negate many of its aspirations. For example, one critic highlighted that 'reading [is] a mental process, not a social one' (Gee, 2014, p. 23). Yet, the NAPLAN tests concentrate on reading and understanding textual information as a main test element that provides important information about the students' progress—and the tests obviate the cultural and social aspects of education. Commenting on racial disparity regarding 'achievement' between white and black students, Gee indicated an inherent problem in standardised tests: students are not standardised, and neither are their understandings of the world. A brief review of the standards in AusVELS (VCAA, 2017) for Level 7 confirms the text-oriented curriculum, in which students are required to examine 'text structures' and 'choice of language', to 'analyse … vocabulary choices', identify 'language devices' and use 'comprehension strategies' while 'analysing and evaluating' the texts that they read. Students are also expected to conform to these models when writing their own stories, by considering 'text cohesion', 'text structures' and 'language features'. Although these literary elements are commendable aspects of an English curriculum, the functional mechanisation of literature has nevertheless marginalised its aesthetic value in education. Rather than a range of measures that would expand students' learning experiences, education remains committed to standardised 'progression points' and the metrics of 'standards'; it positions students in the economic functionality and performativity of key performance indicators that 'encourages, indeed to a large extent forces, individual practitioners to adopt an instrumental orientation in which scoring highly on the indicators becomes more important than doing a good job in terms of their own judgement' (Hargreaves, 1997).

The concentration on expected standards and progression points has redefined the focus of education, such that:

> For the first time in more than 160 years of school history, the school does not
> have as its primary task the formation of the individual as a citizen or a member
> of a democracy, but instead, the instruction of the pupil as a 'soldier' in the
> competition among nations (Pederson in Rømer, 2014, p. 115).

The effect of this 'warrior' redefinition is to separate students—to individualise them while congealing them in terms of the workforce. Caught in an antinomy, students become torn

between existing as individual competitors, who are besieged in a realm of contested performativity, and functioning as part of a cohesive society—and this dichotomy is not easily resolved. The 'warrior student' emerges as an agent in biopolitical reconstruction, as well as the bearer of arms in the struggle for national intellectual superiority, and they claim the standardised high ground for the glory of the nation. Individuality and individuation are deprived and generally denied; instead, students become just more cannon fodder in the continuous battle for supremacy in the PISA stakes.

In this way, the 'warrior student' is caught in a disciplinary power game that focuses on students' shortcomings through a fusillade of assessment outcomes that are not entirely aimed at the individual students but more at the global results used to subjugate an entire cohort. However, as Foucault argued, '[instead] of bending all its subjects into a single uniform mass, [disciplinary power] separates, analyses, differentiates, carries its procedures of decomposition to the point of necessary and sufficient single units' (Foucault, 1979, p. 170). Consequently, national and international testing have the double effect of aggregating the students and separating them, in which they use panoptic visible test results to reward or fail the students. This 'machinery of control' (Foucault, 1979, p. 173) exercises its power through a governmentality that is both imposed and self-imposed on the individual: it is imposed from beyond the student's control, and yet the student accepts it as part of the educational process. This biopower mechanism aims to discipline and train individual minds in the binary logic of a dichotomous discourse that is both homogenising and divisive. Although students are grouped in an arbitrarily designed, age-segregated cohort, they are also individualised by a result that becomes divisive through the expectation of interventionist processes. The student's body is also schooled in a way that it reproduces the specific divisions that the testing was intended to eradicate through the interventionist program. By making visible the differences that had previously remained invisible, the testing program accentuates the range of abilities that are now apparent in the classroom.

A further effect of this education model is that standardisation and assessment become normalised through the 'perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions [and] compares, differentiates, hierarchises, homogenises, excludes' (Foucault, 1979, p. 183). Through the capillary effects of power–knowledge, education engulfs students in a web of assessment and standards; it creates differing definitions of the purpose of education; and it not only creates a 'constraint of conformity', but it curtails what is possible to say or question. In this expurgated environment, standardised assessment 'does not simply redefine human problems; it redefines human beings themselves as problematic' (Hancock, 2018, p. 442). Functional agency is mediated

by, and derived from, being able or unable to conform to the values of the tests that have been produced by external experts.

This notion is extended by the suggestion that 'these forms of power are also internalised in the process of the constitution of the self, as well as circulating through the social landscape' (Hancock, 2018, p. 442). Through this register of reality and web of normalisation, the subjectivated student becomes a determined 'self-fashioner' who exists in the practice of panoptic surveillance, in which the space of possibility for personhood is amputated, repressed and altered by neoliberal governmentality: 'The individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies' (Foucault, 1979, p. 217). This new subjectivity—the hierarchised and differentiated student—augments the inherent competition in a neoliberal economy. However, this normalisation has rendered aesthetic socialisation invisible, leaving only the detritus—material and quantifiable elements—as visible and meaningful for shaping the purpose of education. The demarcation of education into the narrow focus of what is assessable and thus 'useful' destroys the qualities of autonomy, morality, compassion, democracy and, most importantly, critical thinking. The emaciated 'warrior student', deprived of everything that is not quantifiable, becomes yet another data point in the wider world, categorised as functional–employed or dysfunctional–unemployed. The concepts of innovation and imagination (i.e., the aesthetic qualities that are inherently human) have been coerced into an economic pulse that demarcates the entrepreneurial man; this represents a business model that continues to perpetuate the myth of data collection and functional algorithms as the means of understanding the self. On this point, Yong Zhao contended that 'the standards and accountability measures can certainly cause the decline of creativity and entrepreneurial thinking' (Y. Zhao, 2013, p. 19). It is through these normalised assessment and divisive practices that 'the school [becomes] a machinery for learning' (Foucault, 1979, p. 165), rather than a place of hermeneutics.

The most valued English educational outcomes have increasingly become those provided by the literacy curriculum. When ACARA suggested that one purpose of education is for 'young people [to] make a successful transition from school to work and further study' (ACARA), the very functionalising and economisation of education became a focal point. Recent newspaper reports add to the educational discourse. For example, Berdan wrote in the online *Huffington Post* that:

> As for global education being a luxury that cannot be afforded, the exact opposite is true. It is a necessity which we cannot afford to be without. *This country's long-term economic strength depends on our collectively meeting American businesses' employment needs* (Berdan, 2014, italics added).

The emphasis is not on education to improve citizenship, culture or society, but rather on economics, which resonates with Graff's (2010) 'Literacy Myth' mentioned in Chapter Two.

If one pillar of the argument is that we need to compete in a global economy (MCEETYA, 2008a, p. 4), then it is a contested domain in which a different type of education is exposed. Perelman recently criticised the NAPLAN tests, telling the *ABC* that 'there is too much emphasis on spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, and grammar at the expense of higher-order writing issues. While mastery of these skills is important, the essential function of writing is the communication of information and ideas' (Perelman, 2018b, p. 37). He goes further, suggesting that 'the evidence also suggests that 'teaching to the test', by means of repetitious grammar and punctuation exercises, may not be the best way to improve students' attainment in writing (Perelman, 2018a). McGaw, et al, have similar reservations as they outlined concerns that the writing test 'leads to narrowing of students' literacy learning… [and has] a negative impact on children's and young people's enjoyment of writing, their creativity, and opportunities to express imagination… [and] has the effect of suppressing the quality of the writing students could demonstrate at the high-end of performance in favour of attempts to deliver writing to fit 'the formula' (McGaw, Louden, & Wyatt-Smith, 2020, p. 86). However, Hattie's (2008) meta-analysis has been influential in promoting direct instruction as the most effective pedagogy to raise achievement. Purging aesthetics from literature becomes an irreconcilable source of tension, and it leaves students without the critical tools required to form the ethical self. It mirrors the massive dystopian horizon of our collective pedagogical practice.

The repression of creativity and aesthetic education through subjecting the English classroom to a regime and understanding of 'worthwhile' visible education (i.e., only what can be seen and tested), while extolling the virtues of 'entrepreneurial', innovative, and creative education disempowers both students and teachers, as they cannot integrate the contending policies and strictures. This antinomy ultimately results in moribund and deleterious pedagogical outcomes.

Coda

It could be asked: if the focus of education is solely on assessable criteria, then what is lost? A focus on criteria in education has been demonstrated to diminish and narrow students' educational experiences (Au, 2011, p. 31)—and this 'lead[s] to shallow learning and short-term retention of knowledge' (House of Commons, 2008, p. 45). Concomitantly, this focuses on taxonomic criteria and subjectivates students in a competitive and combative social field. Herewith, packaged algorithmic results matter more than the aesthetic essence of education. It has been argued that standardised testing removes the professionalism from teachers; that

it disregards teachers' intimate knowledge of their students and their needs; and that it instead substitutes 'pre-packaged material [where] planning is separated from execution. The planning is done at the level of the production of both the rules for use of the material and the material itself. The execution is carried out by the teacher' (Apple, in Au, 2011, p. 34). Instructive and individualised professional attention to students is abrogated in favour of mass-produced and standardised teaching materials that promote the neoliberal metrics for success. Challenging this kind of standardised education, Kvernbekk argued that effective educational practice 'needs to be justified by *moral, social, and educational reasons*, among others' (Kvernbekk, 2011, p. 522, added emphasis). Based not on educational theory but on an analysis of quantified educational approaches, marketised education uses the artifice of biased diachronic evidence to support its actions. As Kvernbekk sharply noted, a 'hypothesis, or a teaching strategy, is not based on evidence; instead, it is supported by it' (Kvernbekk, 2011, p. 523). In short, limited evidence of practice efficacy should not be the initial determinant of teaching strategies, as there are many other determinants that affect outcomes (e.g., social environments, student background). Similarly, when referring to recent modifications in Danish education, Kelly et al. contended that due to an educational refocusing towards improving standardised test results, 'there has been a shift from the traditional emphasis on *Bildung*, the process of personal formation that brings about the inner development, to a more utilitarian focus on competencies' (P. Kelly et al., 2017, p. 3). Instead of a traditional focus on the interplay between the self and the world (as found in the overall tradition of arts and humanities), Danish education has partly moved from a humanist and socially oriented discourse towards a skills-based competence and individualist discourse (though it still highly emphasises group dynamics rather than the individual).

Through the disembodiment of individual educational practice and its binary of standardised testing, education becomes empty—to the extent that Kvernbekk contended that 'if education were focused exclusively on the goal of effectiveness, practice would be instrumentalised to an alarming degree' (Kvernbekk, 2011, p. 532). The concentration on nugatory testable elements:

> Kills the best part of culture … [including the] evocation of curiosity, of judgment, of the power of mastering a complicated tangle of circumstances, the use of theory in giving foresight in special cases [as] all these powers are not imparted by a set rule embodied in one schedule of examination subjects (Whitehead, in Noddings, 2013, pp. 213 - 214).

The narrowing curriculum—made possible by the neoliberalisation of education and its numerous associations with the marketplace—is a contested area in which teachers struggle

to maintain their professionalism and, disquietingly, students are deprived of aesthetic practices and self-realisation. A direct result of this stultification due to testing is exemplified in the UK, where students and teachers have become obsessed with visible outcomes such that there has been 'substantial evidence that teaching to the test, to an extent which narrows the curriculum and puts sustained learning at risk, is widespread' (House of Commons, 2008, p. 49). Steve Smith consequently observed that the:

> problem we have with A-levels is that students come very assessment-oriented: they mark-hunt; they are reluctant to take risks; they tend not to take a critical stance; and they tend not to take responsibility for their own learning. But the crucial point is the [lack of] independent thinking (House of Commons, 2008, p. 49).

The vacuity of contemporary education is changing student behaviour—to the extent that the shallow focus on grades becomes all important, and the critique of self is disregarded to the detriment of the individual and to society.

Davies has subsequently argued that neoliberalism is:

> The most significant shift in the discursive construction of professional practice and professional responsibility… [which] is characterised by the removal of the locus of power from the knowledge of practising professionals to auditors, policy-makers and statisticians, none of whom need know anything about the profession in question (Davies, 2003, p. 91).

The biopolitics of educational policy shape students by categorising the data concerning the outcomes of standardised tests (in which those who do not achieve the standard are considered somehow deficient); by frequently reporting the poor results as an epidemic; by highlighting how the results disastrously affect the economy (thus shaming individuals and schools); and by then instituting rules and regulations that will supposedly manage the problem. This damaging and coercive surveillant technique works subreptively on individuals, which resonates with Foucault's view that:

> There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its own weight will end by interiorising it to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against himself (Foucault, 1980, p. 155).

Within this surveillant discourse, the conception of 'psychic identity' or 'soul' confronts students as they realise their identities. This is not to say that their identities are constructed, but that they are shaped within the discursive practices around them. As Butler observed:

> For Foucault, … if I take on the name, the category, that I am given by someone, someone who speaks and enforces a discourse of power, I bind myself to that name, and to that identitarian truth of who I am (Butler, 2016).

Using this concept, Butler continued by exploring the idea of truth—specifically, 'identitarian truth'. As students become immersed in the 'truth' that surrounds them in the educational environment, they begin to regard themselves in certain ways (e.g., as cooperative, exceptional, a difficult student). They thus 'bind [themselves] to that truth', and the 'heterogeneity [that] characterizes experience for [them] is consolidated, and [their] experience becomes [their] experience as *this* identity that [they are]' (Butler, 2016). As they look around themselves, they observe that others are also assuming this identity, and they consolidate their identities as a norm together. The power capillaries of neoliberal competitive education weave a framework within which the basis of identity formation operates. However, this narrow framework leads to a stultification of imagination and critical thinking in which students can legitimately form their identities. This stultification is created through the lack of a 'tactical polyvalence of discourse'—which, as Foucault explained, is 'a multiplicity of discursive elements' (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 100). By attempting to restrict this polyvalence through the dominant neoliberal discourse and by excluding other discourses (e.g., a deep and critical study of literature), students become impoverished; the concealed and diverse discourses are pretermitted, and no allowance is made for the 'complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power'—and whereby it can subsequently be used to undermine and expose the dominant discourse through critical imaginings of the self (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 101). Butler astutely identified that discourse (in this case, created by the hebetating neoliberalist discourse) 'not only produces the boundaries of a subject but pervades the interiority of that subject' (Butler, 1997, p. 89). Any opposition or resistance would be realised by encouraging students to reassess the effectiveness of neoliberalism, as well as the cost to their self and self-esteem should they 'fail' in this environment.

Despite being clearly perceptible, the tendrils of an inconspicuous yet all-pervasive surveillance wraps around the consciousness and shapes the uncritical mind to accept it as normal. The surveilled, tested and standardised students—stripped of the possibilities for an aesthetic and broadening education—are individualised to be accountable for the success of the state; they are warrior students in the vanguard, who support neoliberal ideology. However, this vacuous education (stripped to nugatory metrics on a standardised algorithm) expects students to either accelerate their own learning through ever-divisive progression points or be left behind in an uncaring 'globalised' world. Corresponding with Adorno's argument, the student's education, bereft of aesthetics, is left with a '*halbbildung* … [a] mind

that is seized by the fetish character of merchandised goods' (Adorno, cited in Thompson, 2005, p. 522). For students in an English class, literature becomes less an engagement with the text's thoughts and ideas and more a philological concentration on textual structure. Through a constructivist and accountable ideology, students become responsible for their own education and development (Wilson, in Rowe, 2006, p. 3); however, they are not given the means to meet this responsibility, so they are left searching their barren contingent other for relevance of their own lives. As they are required to reflect on their own identities and practices, students, teachers and schools conform to the new norm and, through this normalising gaze, create a new 'warrior student'.

6.   Shadows, Identity and Subjectification — Unexplored Ramifications

For 'tis the mind that makes the body rich.
—The Taming of the Shrew, Act 4, Scene 3

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, the rise of the warrior student is redolent of the rise of neoliberal practices in education. Individualisation, as a discrete discourse, atomises the student population into individuated components while simultaneously homogenising and flattening it. The student population is treated as an aggregate body—as a kind of homogenisation that supports the imperatives informing the school's contestation in winning superiority in the high-stakes testing arena of PISA. Concomitantly, an individualisation through datafication expects each student to be individually responsible for attaining a high standard of literacy competence. This order of governmentality adheres to a standard of normalisation that segregates and carves out a space that works through isolation and inscribes a culture of an ego-centric self. A conduct of self-interest is perpetuated, and extreme competitiveness produces a truth where the image of the student population as a cohesive whole is largely an illusion; instead, the student population comprises 'collective individuals' (Negri in Read, 2009, p. 34). A dense field of operative and instrumental technologies fashions students, who are made to feel solely responsible for the conditions under which they live and perform. This is a deployment of individuality whereby an entrepreneurial self designates that the 'subjectivities of the [students] are built on differentiation rather than commonalities' (Schwiter, 2013, p. 155). This accedes with Ball's claim that 'what we call education is a complex of power relations concerned with the manufacture and management of individuals and the population—a key space of regulation and bio-power' (Ball, 2017, p. 2). In these terms, neoliberal regulation privileges a discourse of individualisation and a configuration of order that atomises the individual; it does so by exemplifying the standards of competition and negating commonalities, in which 'the whole social system is a question of self-interest' (Bitzer, in Dickens, 1854).

Cheney-Lippold argues that 'surveillance practices have increasingly moved from a set of inflexible disciplinary practices that operate at the level of the individual to the statistical regulation of categorical groupings (Cheney-Lippold, 2011, p. 177). By segregating and atomising students through statistical regulation, education abrogates its responsibility to treat students as groups of individuals in search of their own individual identities. However, through the formation of a "critical ontology of the self", students can formulate an alternative ethical standpoint from which to resist the normalising force of this governmental individualisation

(Ball, 2013b, p. 17). It will be argued, a recension of school literature and a reintroduction of sustained reading in the English curriculum, is an essential component of this re/formation.

Education, as previously argued in chapter 5, has become a panacea for the economic health of the country, where the piecemeal approach to an efferent reading, as opposed to a critique of Literature, leads to both a limited conception of literacy and a belief that going 'back to basics' will cure the problem of illiteracy—with literacy being seen as key to performance in the workplace. Linear representations and diagrammatic images chart the course of students' progress as they search for the cure to their illiteracy; this results in a 'truth': that the scientific approach will lead to the cure. Such a belief, constantly reiterated, further reduces the prospect of a clear vision that can ameliorate the problematised issue. Instead, it reinforces a limited assessable literacy that effectively undermines the prospect of critical thinking. It does this through a repetition that 'enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject' (Butler, 1993a, p. 60), with the pursuance of a phonics policy that fragments literature into soundbites and a literacy policy that reduces literature into paragraphs suited to efferent reading. This medicalised view of literacy has resulted in the creation of unique spaces for students' subjectivation. As experiences in the study of literature have been undermined and curtailed in the quest for higher algorithmic standards in literacy, a corollary effect on the student has been the irruption of an essential void that inhibits subjectification and creates a form of dissolution in which these medicalised social technologies shape, subjugate and ultimately become 'the principle of [the student's] own subjection' (Foucault, 1979, p. 203).

Due to the fragmentation of literature into picayune pieces for literacy purposes, there is a lack of the liminal experiences of precarity in safe literary environments required to lead the student without. Literature provides the students with vicarious experiences, leading them to the boundaries of their own experiences in the safety of her imagination; however, from a 'phenomenological point of view, there is no specific difference between real experiences and imaginary one' (Vendler, 1979, p. 167) except that vicarious experiences are safer. The fragmentation of literature into comprehension reading exercises reduces the effect and exploration of these liminal vicarious experiences. This privation shapes new positions on an axis of power–knowledge–self (O'Leary, 2008a), which subsequently shifts individualised student conceptions of the self in society and normalises students' way of thinking and conceiving. It affects their means of evaluating social reference points, and it transforms how they view themselves as individuals and citizens. This deficit experience expresses itself as a liminal practice akin to that form of power in the modern state that is concerned with the control over life and is exercised either individually (through a surveilling discipline) or at a societal level (expressed as a need for increasingly stringent forms of standardisation and calculated progression points). With the force of an ontological truth, students are sculpted and

subjectivated as interpellated subjects that subscribe to a normative ideal. In this form of interpellation, something important is lost in the drive for superiority, and it is the effect of this approach on the individual that will be examined in this chapter. The aim of education is to develop the individual—and yet, paradoxically, it is this development that is being prevented in the current form of English teaching. The ethical and identitarian truth that underlies a platform for 'critical education' is being cut short through a contraction and acceleration in the educational process.

Shadows dispersed behind the scenes

There are 'shadows lurking behind the case itself' (Foucault, 1979, p. 17)—shadows of a biopolitical neoliberalism in which education is cast in a medicalised and scientific framework of 'abilities'. These abilities are socially predicated on an epistemic norm of acceptable achievement. Education itself 'has [been] profoundly altered' because 'the quality, the nature, in a sense the substance of which the [attainment] element is made, rather than its formal definition' has also radically altered (Foucault, 1979, p. 17). The student's identity—intimately entwined within the system's biopolitics—is consolidated within the framework of this rubric. This concept aligns with Butler's claim that just as 'everyone avows who he is as an individual, individuality is an emphatically social form, which means that the logic of identity is invoked and reproduced through every such avowal' (Butler, 2016).

It is this touchstone—this creation of radical alterity—that ensures that education can never be neutral. Education is bound within the confines of policy, and it is 'always directive in its attempt to teach students to inhabit a particular mode of agency' (Giroux, 2010b, p. 194), which is accomplished through a governmentality of goal setting and 'learning' that is both visible and, in terms of developing individuals, exiguous. Students are subjectivated as individually responsible for all implications of their choices (e.g., whether to do the homework, work in class or be 'good' students). These 'narratives constitute a subject that separates itself from others, designs its own solutions and assumes full individual responsibility for all the decisions taken' (Schwiter, 2013, p. 156). This is individualisation, not an individual's development. The onus in current educational practices is on autochthonic, self-motivated students; practices that are predicated on the ideology of economic value. Understandably, students will 'catch the nearest way' (Macbeth 1.5), however fragmentary and limited, to fulfil the requirements of the English curriculum. It is through this socially distanced and isolated self that the student is expected to become democratic—an antithesis to Adorno's position regarding providing social conditions for a democratic sphere in education rather than social practices. There is a difference between the individualisation of neoliberalism and the

autonomous, self-determined and independent individual of an education that is cultured in critical thinking.

Although the Australian Curriculum maintains that the 'appreciation of literature … provides students with access to mediated experiences and truths that support and challenge the development of individual identity'—and, moreover, that 'through engagement with literature, students learn about themselves, each other and the world' (ACARA, 2015a, pp. 6-7)—the reality is that literature is comminuted to narrow performance points, which then colonise pedagogical goals when students study the text. This approach largely effaces rich contextual elements and fragments the text into instrumental literacy teaching exercises. The conception that students 'learn about themselves' is given scant focus; instead, emphasis is placed on providing and producing 'an analytical interpretation of a selected text' (VCAA, 2017) within the parameters of literary theory; this is a derivative approach to literature that is based more on understanding the theories and less on developing a personal and critical awareness of the texts. This aberrant approach from an aesthetics and a recension of literature corresponds to the form of biopower expressed in the modern state. In this case, governmentality is exercised individually through forms of discipline, or at a societal level through forms of regulation such as the regulated outcomes for VCE[42] English (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997).

Critiquing literature as an aesthetics of existence is a means for students to be equipped to develop their own judgement and ability to decide consciously for themselves. The current diminished, fragmentary approach to literature only provides a veneer of knowing and understanding; it is a facade that becomes the basis of students' subjectification. Ball (2017, p. 65) reiterated Foucault's concerns as 'not with defining truth, but with defining its stakes and effects'—and, as Adorno warned, the effects of an uncritical education is a step into barbarism. Similarly, Kierkegaard cautioned that when reason is distanced and divorced from emotion and empathy, civilization begins heading for destruction. What is important in this sense is that without this critical ability, students will submit to Adorno's 'identity thinking'—to a vacuity of accepted truths and assimilated ideas on which they can base their identity and autonomy. When Adorno argued that the 'pressure exerted by the prevailing universal upon everything particular, upon the individual people and the individual institutions, [it] has a tendency to destroy the particular and the individual together with their power of resistance' (Adorno, 1966, p. 2). The axiological intention is to emphasise the importance of pedagogical values and critical thinking—those that are necessary for students to become self-reflexive and capable of self-referencing. Discourses are critically examined and considered, not blunted and passed over in an assessable haze. Individuals should be given the opportunity

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to deepen their subjectification so that they are not regimented and standardised, but so that they become complex and moral individuals. However, the flattening of individuals into a homogenised cohort that is expected to attain specific achievement standards by passing through a strict order of progression points tends to destroy individuals' specific and personal interaction with texts, as the students' focus is more on immediate attainment than on contemplative thought. Students become subjectivated within a certain mode of composition that articulates structure and the ordering of children within a universal set of classifiers and categories. These categories seek to attain perfect certainty using enumeration linked to measurement and calculation, and the students' individualised responsibility—a key component of neoliberalism—becomes dependent on gaining the designated tabulated signs and the required results to be assigned the status of a fully functional individual. This will enable students to become part of the market economy and, according to the Australian Curriculum, engaged, responsible and democratic citizens. However, as they are individuated through their own choices, students become standardised, but they remain fragmented from society. Far from becoming self-mediated and critical individuals through their involvement with literature, students emerge as *homines economici*; they are assigned to a distortion that is enmeshed and predicated on disparate snatches of disconnected text taken from an indefinable selection of literary texts. In this sense, the heuristic value loses significance and fades away in a pattern of thought and practice that mainly disqualifies the register of an in-depth and analytical textual study.

It is through reading literature that students are educated

> To understand the larger world and one's role in it in a specific way; defining their relationship, if not responsibility, to diverse others, and to presuppose through what is taught and experienced in the classroom, some sort of understanding of a more just, imaginative, and democratic life (Giroux, 2010b, p. 194).

This is an important signifying practice that enhances students' development. Sustained reading delivers an important physical dimension; develops the students' neuronal pathways; and, significantly, reinforces democratised and ethical membership in society. Of course, this notion presupposes that the purpose of education is to democratise the student by adding a discursive framework that contributes to students' critical ideational and cultural subjectivation.

It is this democratising of the individual, this creation of the ethical citizen, that is accounted for and remains prevalent in education policies (ACARA, 2015a; Department for Education, 2014). Nevertheless, this theme of constitution remains problematic, as Nussbaum's claimed:

> If political economy does not include the complexities of the inner moral life of each human being, its strivings and perplexities, complicated emotions, its perplexity and terror, if it does not distinguish in its descriptions between a human life and a machine then we should regard with suspicion its claim to govern a nation of human beings (Nussbaum, 1991, p. 886).

Without defining a policy calling for a clear and substantial element of Literature, to be read for enjoyment, and providing the crucial mandated time for sustained reading in the curriculum, then the policy makers are limiting, and perhaps excluding, the possibilities for students to examine their own 'complexities of the inner moral life'. For example, the UK's education policy for developing countries is less focused on creating ethical citizens and more on investing to 'boost[…] earnings and underpin[…] growth: Education offers a great return for individuals—each additional year of schooling typically results in a 10% boost in earnings, with larger increases for women' (2018). This is a more pragmatic and economic than aesthetic motivation. The goal of education should be to critique society (see Adorno), and for Giroux, the 'goal of educated hope is not to liberate the individual from the social—a central tenet of neoliberalism—but to take seriously the notion that the individual can only be liberated through the social' (Giroux, 2004a, p. 39). However, without critically reading literature in a sustained way (which negates subreptive fragmentation) and engaging with in-depth themes of self-constitution and the constitutive importance of being in a social context, the student will not transition from an evanescent and fragmented consciousness to an enriched mode of knowledge and experience that informs subjectification. As they read literary work, students are, in a moment, waiting for its lexicon, various determinants, aesthetic practices and spaces of possibility; they are waiting for its topography to provide a map and pathway to enrichment. Adorno highlighted pedagogy's potential in terms of an urgent political agenda, '[insisting] that the desire for freedom and liberation was a function of pedagogy and could not be assumed *a priori'* (Giroux, 2004b, p. 14); a true path for students' ethical freedom exists in an enriched environment that allows them to constitute themselves.

Education redefined in economic terms

Considering today's education outside the purview of economics is problematic. The economic role has previously been discussed in Chapter One; however, a brief review can refocus attention on the issue before the effects on the individual are considered.

The market economy and jobs have become the objective of Australian education; this is underscored in *The Review of the Australian Curriculum,* which contends that 'within the Australian Curriculum, the purpose of education is to make the Australian economy more efficient and productive by teaching work-related skills and competencies' (Donnelly &

Wiltshire, 2014, p. 28). This utilitarian view resonates with Hedges who refers to 'what Lewis Mumford called the mega machine—the convergence of science economy technology and political power united into an integrated bureaucratic structure whose sole goal is to perpetuate itself. This structure, Mumford noted, is antithetical to life enhancing values' (Hedges, 2021). The review further suggests that the curriculum 'fails to deal with the reality that what is often most rewarding and beneficial in education—especially related to the emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development of students' (Donnelly & Wiltshire, 2014, p. 28). The curriculum is pivotal in education, as it organises life (in a Foucauldian sense) based on forms of governmentality where . This is especially regarding the power-knowledge dynamic, in which conduct is exercised through those capillaries to work through the social fabric.

The precepts of *homo economicus* have been the driving force of recent education policy, and this, in turn, has been intersected by a biopolitics centred on the 'emergence of "population" as an economic and political problem: population as wealth, population as manpower or labour capacity, population balanced between its own growth and the resources it commanded' (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 25). As education is becoming more entangled in the ideas of competition—which is 'so enmeshed in the basic fabric of life that, to a large extent, it is beyond question' (Gane, 2019, commenting on Knight, p. 52)— the ethical qualities of collaborative education are extirpated.

Problematising competition

Observed in various forms, competition is prevalent in most areas of education, and it is often an important focus of lessons and units of work that are designed to encourage and extend students' thinking (e.g., competitions between students in classes, or naming a dux of the school following external examinations). However, the conceptual tools of competition have been decontextualised in education to reflect the acceleration of economic objectives, resulting not only in the further individualisation of students but also in a discontinuity between educational values and educational targets. Values in education tend to reflect the ideals of education: 'Play[ing] a critical role in shaping the lives of young Australians and contributing to a democratic, equitable and just society that is prosperous, cohesive and culturally diverse' (ACARA). However, targets reflect the sociopolitical aims of education—such as the 2012 expectation for Australia to be ranked as a top-five country in reading, mathematics and science in PISA results by 2025 (Ferrar, 2012). By creating education targets, learning becomes commodified to have exchange value: an exchange for grades and scores. This commodification rarely leads to a value outside economic worth, with grades being based on key performance indicators and other economic terms. Differentiating between education's aims and the outcomes—demonstrating a disparity between shaping student identity for

individual values and for national prosperity—creates a tension for the student, which is allayed by gaining the immediate gratification from adhering to hegemonic doxa and 'identity thinking' rather than from critically assessing and evaluating the frontier of experience and what governs the parameters of its relationships.

Additionally, the concepts of competition and achievement exact instrumental changes in education, which subsequently establishes a considered empirical science of order—a classification system that disciplines, represses and delimits the space of possibility for personhood. For example, whereas final examinations are purportedly based on criteria being attained, many examinations (including the VCE) work on a bell-shaped curve of competition, in which each academic subject places students within a normal distribution curve. Bell curves (normal distributions) are mathematical distributions commonly used in statistics, especially for analysing economic and financial data. However, normal distributions are based on probabilities rather than on actual scores—they are guidelines. This probability-based marketplace distribution curve colonises pedagogical practice, and it is used to assess the functional literary abilities of students rather than the fulfilment of criteria or reached achievement standards.[43] The majority of students are placed in the average band (in which 68% of the values [data] fall within one standard deviation of the mean in either direction). As study scores[44] are determined by performance in school assessed coursework (SAC) and examinations, ranking students against their classroom peers according to their coursework is more critical to the outcomes than the actual SAC score attained by fulfilling criteria. Intrinsically, then, the concept of competition in education has changed 'from a positional to a performative rivalry' (Buddeberg & Hornberg, 2017, p. 51); students are required to constantly perform better than others to ensure a higher ranking in their subject instead of reaching the expected or required standard. These performative acts have 'the power to produce or materialise [...] subjectivating effects' (Butler, 2011, p. 70); they shape students through competition and contradict research suggesting that 'students perform better academically, report more positive relationships with classmates and [have] a stronger attachment to school in co-operative academic settings than in competitive ones' (OECD, 2021).[45] For example, Röpke suggested that competition 'remains morally and socially dangerous' (in Gane, 2019, p. 50), which resonates with the concept that performative, rather than positional, competition

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[43] The criteria are generally based on the analysis of the literature using various theoretical lenses without approaching the aesthetic experiences that are offered through a thoughtful, critical and personal response.
[44] For example, those calculated in VCE, which are then used for university placements.
[45] See also Johnson et al., who concluded that:
- Cooperation is superior to competition in promoting achievement and productivity.
- Cooperation is superior to individualistic efforts in promoting achievement and productivity
- Cooperation without intergroup competition promotes higher achievement and productivity than cooperation with intergroup competition

There is no significant difference between interpersonal competitive and individualistic goal structures for achievement and productivity (Johnson & et al., 1981, pp. 57-58).

in education is a form of symbolic violence perpetrated on the students. This is a form of symbolic violence in which 'the dignity and mystery of humanness' (Nussbaum, 1991, p. 893)—which can be examined through the sensibilities of literature—is neglected and elided in a quasi-violent competition for the best grades and prestige of a highly ranked country, as defined by PISA.

Education's competitive nature becomes endemic and sedimented, relegating the experience of literature to indifference. The legitimation of selective algorithms and over-regimented testing becomes entrenched, as 'our actions are not governed by a logic of consequence but rather by a logic of appropriateness which is embedded in discursive frameworks of meaning and knowledge as well as in sedimented forms of rules, norms and procedures' (Torfing, in de Vos, 2003, p. 177). These 'sedimented forms of rules' of competitive business and marketplace redefine education in economic terms. Consequently, Brass warned that:

> In contrast to notions of education as a public good, liberal notions of education
> for rational self-government, or social-democratic and critical aims for a more
> free and just society, today's education policies typically emphasise narrower
> concerns about improving a nation's 'human capital' and helping individuals,
> corporations and nations to compete in the global economy (Brass, 2015, p.
> 12).

Students, then, are a resource waiting to be turned into capital and exchanged value, and education engages in acts of competitive marketplace interests rather than in nascency and development. The aesthetics of literature are subsumed in the lassitude of a fractured literacy that is in a perpetual 'race to the top'. These kinds of business machinations have significant ramifications for achieving individual potential, especially regarding the effects connected to the acceleration embedded in the concept of racing (which will be discussed later in this chapter).

Nussbaum has argued that the 'habit of reducing everything to calculation, combined with the need for an extremely simple theory of human action, produces a tendency to see calculation everywhere, rather than commitment and sympathy' (Nussbaum, 1991, p. 887). With education's main focus centred on STEM subjects and a statistical evaluation of literature and aesthetics, the inherent values of a liberal conception of education are ensnared in a mechanistic wilderness of numbers and algorithms. In this sense, morality and ethics are sedated and consigned to the void. As students 'act upon what is constructed as facts in and through discourse', they observe this illusionary world as factual rather than as a construct (de Vos, 2003). Through the illusionary constructs of imaginative literature, students may come to understand that they have the power to question and usurp the conception of their world. The

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power of the imaginary echoes Nussbaum's observation—namely, if you 'dehumanise the worker in thought, … it is far easier to deny him or her the respect that human life calls forth' (Nussbaum, 1991, p. 894). Effectively, for students, the world is presented as a place where life is only about work. This conceptualisation is inextricably linked to Abbot's reflection about what constitutes the human condition:

> If we give children the idea that they need high-level skills only for work, we have got it all wrong. They are going to need even higher-level skills to perform in a democratic society … the issue is not technology, but what it means to be human, what kind of future we want for the human race (in Arnold & Ryan, 2003, p. 9).

The competitive matrix of neoliberal education renders the potential of aesthetic agency invisible; creating, instead, new identities forged in the stultifying authority of science and bereft of the critical tools and skills required to critique reigning assumptions.

Finding an identity

It has been argued throughout this thesis that the current neoliberal governmentality[46] impacts students' subjectification. Both British and Australian curricula emphasise the need to create 'educated citizens' (Department for Education, 2014), and that they 'play a critical role in shaping the lives of the nation's citizens and therefore [shape] the social and economic well-being of the nation' (ACARA, 2020). The implication here is that the government plays a key role in shaping individuals' identities, but this subjectivation is only a part of identity formation; it excludes the subjectification performed by students to understand their own identity formation. Students are not empty vessels to be filled and shaped by teachers, educational practices or society—which amounts to a structuralist rather than Foucauldian position. Students are individuals in the modern sense, but what this means and how the identities are shaped and formed is contestable. The argument provided here claims that neoliberalism has established discursive practices through which, and in which, individuals are defined and define themselves (and this point is reiterated in the quotations expressed above). Students encounter *assujettissement* through what is constructed as facts in and through external discourse. Subsequently, actions are not governed by a logic of consequence; rather, they are governed by a logic of appropriateness that is embedded in discursive frameworks of meaning and knowledge, as well as in sedimented forms of rules, norms and procedures

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[46] Governmentality, as previously defined, is a conscious and subconscious reading of discursive frames and discursive constellations that are imposed on students from a range of agencies that universalise and homogenise a particular way of thinking, subjecting them to a particular way of thinking, perceiving and being in the world. There is an understanding that there is always the possibility of resistance it's not pervasive in the sense that it is top down.

(Torfing, in de Vos, 2003, p. 177). As the perception of what it means to be educated shifts from the democratic to the sanitised and mechanistic instrument of representation, students conceive themselves in what Butler called a 'psychic identity' (Butler, 1997, p. 85) and what Foucault called the 'soul'.

This conception of 'psychic identity' or 'soul' confronts students when realising their identities. This is not to say that their identity is constructed, but that it is shaped within the discursive practices around them.[47] The dominant discourse that pervades education subjects students to performative reiterations. As Butler explained:

> Performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularised and constrained repetition of the norms. And this repetition is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject (Butler, 1993/2011, p. 60).

Restricting the polyvalent discourses inhibits students in their quest for individuation through their inchoate subjectification. This is a biopolitical governmentality that amounts to the 'strategic creation of social conditions that encourage and necessitate the production of homo economicus, a historically specific form of subjectivity constituted as a free and autonomous "atom" of self-interest' (Hamann, 2009, p. 37). This governmentality attempts to continually propagate itself through new generations of students. In this way, students are trapped in a 'spatial captivity' (Butler, 1997, p. 85) of Friedman economics. Neoliberalism is predicated on these premises, and it promises individual freedom—'a project that elevated atomised citizens above any collective enterprise and liberated them to express their absolute free will through their consumer choices' (Klein, 2007, p. 52). Students are liberated to express self-seeking motives that are synthesised through images of consumer choice; this is an individuality that emerges as a kind of window dressing for acquisition, competition and a profusion of consumption. However, in schools, students are restricted by discriminating and dividing practices as they negotiate a hierarchy of progression points and criteria, as well as a truncated and limited conception of modern literacy through the efferent reading of literature.

However, the sedimented regime of individualisation—normalised through the discursive practices of a neoliberal education policy—outlines boundaries for the student, as well as 'relations of power [which] are, above all, productive' (Foucault in Butler, 1993/2011, p. 72). These boundaries productively enmesh students' focus on subjectification and help create identity as a constricted mimesis of neoliberal culture. Stating that the neoliberal identity is perverse is not meant to condemn this production of identity, but rather to acknowledge that

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[47] See Chapter F ve for a d scuss on on dent ty format on.

the power-knowledge capillaries working to productively forge individuals' identities are delimited.

Weir argued that Foucault:

> Demonstrates quite clearly in his genealogies, that when we modern subjects ask 'Who am I?' and engage in the process of self-interrogation that this question demands, the self we discover is necessarily the sedimentation of normalizing and coercive regimes of power (Weir, 2009, p. 536).

This suggests the notion that the forms of power that envelop students are overtly coercive, and that this realisation should give students the opportunity to react against and refuse the power structures that delimit them. However, the power relations are so subtly invasive that students do not appreciate their influence; instead, students work within that structure. As Ball (2003) suggested, neoliberal performativity does not just shape education work practices; it shapes teachers as educators. Subsequently, the educators provide the capillaceous network in which the students are shaped and shape themselves. Following Butler (1993/2011), teachers are installed amid a signifying chain, in which they receive and recite the law, as well as, in this recitation, echo forth 'the authority of the law'. Framed within reiterations of the school structure, the eviscerated education processes, the performativity of teaching practices and the example of the teacher, students find themselves aligning with the prepollent neoliberal ideology.

The self that is to be shaped or formed (in later Foucauldian terms) is not a malleable ethical substance; it is constrained by the tendrils of the prevailing dispositifs. However, it is still subjected to what Foucault called a pastoral dispositif of 'individuation', in which the forms of educational governmentality apply categories, thresholds and standards. It is this governmentality—these 'subjugated knowledges'—that creates the dividing practices that separate students into individuals to be studied, categorised and turned into data points. Students perceive their achievements not in terms of understanding, competence or abilities but in the efficacious exaction of numbers and rankings. Amid these performative constraints, Foucault's narrative of the 'care of the self' and 'practices of self' become a significant facet in student self-identification. Following Adorno (Giroux, 2004b; Pickford, 2020), students, to avoid a reified consciousness of 'identity thinking', must understand the importance of critical awareness—that is, the importance of not being subjugated by the dominant ideology but of being able to critically question the dominant sedimented conceptions of an education that is based on standardisation. It is within education (and through a critical and self-reflective understanding of literature) that students can free themselves from the institutional forces and relations of power that attempt to subjectify them (in a sedimented conception of education)

as purely economic value created through performance standards. This impoverished conception of education destroys the totality of reason linked to emotion; and the student, purportedly as an agent of freedom, emerges instead as an economic pawn, a coin of the realm. For Adorno, critical education is the key to creating a democratic society and an education free from the standardisations, narrow focus on skills alone, and unproblematised authority (Pickford, 2020). As he described it: 'Education must transform itself into sociology, that is, it must teach about the societal play of forces that operates beneath the surface of political forms' (in Giroux, 2004b, p. 13). Without critiquing societies, including those found in literature, students are ill-equipped to understand the underlying societal forces that shape them and their society.

Students, then, are encompassed by competing discourses that constitute self and identity—that is, Foucauldian power-knowledge capillaries and the biopolitics that shape identity. These elements are performative within the various subgroups in which students find themselves; further, with the tendrils of power undermining and entwining the fecund plasticity of young minds, the gateway to a critical, thoughtful and democratic student is closed, leading to fettered consciousness and impeded development (Pickford, 2020, p. 4). Adorno cautioned against this reification of the mind, which was a consequence of the critical faculties not being stretched or used. The new myth of standardisation through achievement standards—of a brave new world of designated social stations according to a strict criteria sheet based on performative metrics—resonates in Adorno's 'identity thinking', as the student acquiesces to the norm for self-preservation and intersects with Adorno's claim that this kind of instrumentalism is a stigma that becomes discernable when 'barbarism itself is inscribed within the principle of civilisation' (Adorno in Pickford, 2020, p. 366).

When 'culture has long become his own contradiction, the congealed contents of a privileged education' (Pickford, 2020, p. 367), the cultivating concept of *Bildung*—'a process of experience making by which the individual gains new perspectives on the world and on herself' (Stojanov in Siljander, Kivelä, & Sutinen, 2012, p. 128)—is negated in an education hypostasised in economic value.

The possibilities for subjectification are bound within the biopolitical framework of the students' society. Students cannot make their own identity completely free from the discourses that surround them, as 'every such being is constrained by not only what is difficult to imagine, but what remains radically unthinkable' (Butler, 1993/2011, p. 59). It might be possible to construct an identity outside the norms, but without the performative iterability of acceptance, this form of identity is difficult to maintain. Students are enclosed in the nuances of self-preservation, adherence to social norms, not being the odd one out, fitting in, adapting to appropriate

conventions and succumbing to what Adorno called 'identity thinking'. However, as students attempt to question these norms, they constantly face iterations of educational standardisations. Literature offers a way to counteract this identity formation by enabling students to not only think critically about themselves but also about the norms and the Foucauldian 'dividing practices' in which they find themselves embroiled. In Adorno's sense, student transformation into a state of Bildung—'a conception of education aiming towards maturity of social judgement, political consciousness, reflexivity and competence of action'— remains far from being realised. It is by critically thinking through alienation and reification as concealed in contemporary educational practice, as well as the immanent organised market constraints to 'freedom' that transformation becomes possible (see Michel-Schertges, 2016). Students would need to go beyond the constraints that 'impel […] and sustain […] performativity' (Butler, 1993/2011, p. 60) by breaking the regimented iterations of governmentality and introducing new configurations and forms that launch new possibilities and iterations for self-agency.

Sustained reading, brain formation and students' subjectification

Education is in a rush. The Obama Government instituted the RTTT legislation in 2009. The Gillard Government of 2012 wanted Australia to rush to get into the top five nations who were 'competing' in PISA. Students are rushed to get as much done as possible in the shortest time. Education is regarded so highly because full consciousness is a creation of value, but it takes time; yet it is being hastened as if speed were an essential, unquestioned prerequisite for success. Irrespective of this rush, 'no advancement takes place, despite the increase in contingency' (Buddeberg & Hornberg, 2017, p. 50). What is left unseen is the *halbbildung*—a half education. Foucault's epigram is pithy in this context: 'People know what they do; frequently they know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does' (Foucault, 1971). This almost doxic notion creates a sense of reality regarding educational policies and practices, while also being 'ignorant of the ever-present dialectical reconstitution of internal and objective structures' (Throop & Murphy, 2002, p. 189)—and without the concomitant questioning of the practices involved. When considering current educational policies and practices, generally tacit questions are raised: As education is accelerated, what are the consequent effects on students? Does the speed in which students are expected to grasp new concepts (before they are ready for them) impede their learning? Does the acceleration of education, causing the fragmentation of literature, lead to a *halbbilding* and a stunted formation of self? The acceleration of education, in which students are required to learn more in the same period (or a similar amount in less time), has the consequent effect of reducing the time for students' own self-reflection. This important principle is neglected due to the continuously increasing pressure being placed on students to

complete work and move on to the next stage of development. However, self-reflection is essential to self-formation. Considering that children are taught to read at increasingly younger ages, that Head Start programs prevent the end of one academic year to begin the next, and that holiday homework is provided to ensure that no ground is lost between academic years, it can be stated that students are given little time to relax and reflect. Instead, they react to a continuously changing world— a world in which time denotes scarcity and signifies maximum productive efficacy.

The world appears to be moving faster—with subsequently more assignments to complete, higher levels to be achieved, more knowledge to be known, more pressure and stress to handle and less time to decelerate. As the curriculum is rushed to achieve the ever-distant goals of achievement standards, anxiety increases in teachers and is transmitted to students if too much time is spent focusing on sustained reading instead of on grammatical and lexical knowledge. Students also feel this increasing pressure to finish tasks and to prepare for the next lesson through 'flipped classrooms' and extended workdays. Parents are concerned that their child is 'falling behind', so they employ tutors, even for children in grade 1. No longer do students have the time to relax; they must spend their time on homework, watching instructive videos and preparing for tests and assessments. Further, in this rush for 'excellence', the pause time required to self-reflect is eroded in a race to the top. However, the chances of success also recede as the apparent goals keep shifting. For example, for Australia to reach its target of being in the top five nations in the PISA results, the rest of the world would need to stand still—or Australian students would need to accelerate their progress almost exponentially. The 'slippery slope'[48] of capitalism ensures that all nations compete for the same objective, with the proviso that the nature of competition itself has changed. Rosa (2009) argued that competition itself has changed 'from a positional to a performative rivalry' (in Buddeberg & Hornberg, p. 51)—which subsequently promises through an important (if not central) driving force, a social acceleration to create a concomitantly enhanced achievement.

Buddeberg and Hornberg exemplified this acceleration by referencing German education, in which students completed their final examinations a year earlier than previously but were 'expected to achieve the same or preferably an even better performance than before within the reduced time space' (Buddeberg & Hornberg, 2017, p. 55). Due to the global focus on performance, in combination with the market logic of increase powered by competition, students are under significantly more pressure to perform and gain more competencies in compacted time periods, while receiving less time to learn about themselves. This fracturing

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[48] The 's ppery s ope' phenomenon: 'the cap ta st cannot pause and rest, stop the race and secure h s pos t on, s nce he e ther goes up or goes down; there s no po nt of equ br um s nce *standing still* s equ va ent to *falling behind'* (Rosa 2003 p 20 *original italics)*

of time creates a precarity, in which critical thinking is displaced and appropriated by a form of pedagogical authoritarianism—one that relies on an evidential and factual measurement culture that focuses on the 'learner', but one that also ignores all other functions of education, including socialisation and subjectification (see Biesta, 2009a).

The race to superiority in international high-stakes tests—which creates an educational inanition in which students are constantly under pressure to perform and are exhausted by constant change—accelerates the belief that an expeditious learning can be achieved. However:

> The individual's reaction to social acceleration in late modernity seems to result in a new, situational form of identity, in which the dynamism of 'classical' modernity, characterized by a strong sense of direction (perceived as *progress*), is replaced by a sense of directionless, frantic motion that is in fact a form of inertia (Rosa, 2003, p. 20).

As alluded to earlier, the gravitational centre of the digital economy is immanently linked to acceleration and together with this pure function of speed is a purported modality of competent performativity. The fast pace creates a chimera that students are making progress, but aggregate scores only superficially appear to indicate progress. More realistically, students are 'not waving but drowning' (Smith, 1972) in a sea of rapidly devised assessments, in which the care for the self is inscribed and degraded in a systemic function of digital manipulation and calculation.

As other countries' students are also in competition, the students race to stand still in a bleak environment that is littered with assessment data. Educational progress becomes performative achievement, and progress and acceleration become an inherent necessity (Rosa, 2003) instead of a development towards an improved or advanced condition. The acceleration is performed not for the students' advancement but for the nation's biopolitical agenda. Consequently, 'an increased control of the pupils' use of time and a stronger temporal pre-structuring of learning processes in school are introduced' (Buddeberg & Hornberg, 2017, p. 53). The students 'multitask' during their lessons—which is a superficial gloss of skill performance—and they consequently spend even less time on thinking deeply; instead, they skim through the essential knowledge and ideas and can only create superficial concepts of self. The body is inscribed, disciplined, and dominated by the accelerated biopolitical agenda and the algorithmic substrate imposes its prohibitions, standardised constraints and competitive obligations.

Grappling with the increasing competitiveness of assessable visible learning and standardised practices, students inevitably face less time for critical thinking. For example, this loss of critical

reflexivity has been noted in Healy (1990) and Gallagher (2009), who expressed that deep reading has receded into the shallows. As less deep and sustained thought is being applied in literary studies, and the focus on attainment in a functional education is promoted, the opportunities for a deeper, more considered and more critical approach to literary studies are abandoned in favour of immediate gratification. Exemplifying this is the fragmentation of literature and its efferent use in English. Prompted by the rush to ensure that students are literate (i.e., they can read the words), literature becomes a discontiguous framework through which a questioning about comprehension can be initiated. When literature is marginalised in the English curriculum, students begin to lose their capacity to questions that were taken for granted, assumptions and their own beliefs, judgements and practices. When considered a whole, the complex matrices of dispositifs[49] involved in shaping and forming the subjectified student are eroded and ruptured in a disjointed and inarticulate education. It is an education that focuses more on immediate rewards, on accomplishments that are reached through the 'success criteria' that shape lessons and on defining what is efficient and effective teaching practice, than on sustained and thoughtful growth (a key requirement in the various national curricula). With the focus placed solely on attainment, and due to accelerated learning and competition becoming endoxic, those complex matrices become more aligned with a marketplace mentality—with an economic impetus in which the unit of society becomes more important than the individual. In this scenario, the individual becomes no more than a cog in the machinations of the economy, from which it is difficult, if not impossible, to see an alternative.

Further, this fragmentation of literature, leading to a lack of sustained reading, affects the emerging brain (e.g., in psychoanalytical terms, creating a predicament for the adolescents' cognitive constructions of self). As adolescents in their disentanglement phase displace their earlier mimetic parental identification, they construct either cognitively or through their fantasies the hypothetical alternatives to that mimesis, subsequently opening themselves to models of different realities that can be found by reading literature (see Stojanov in Siljander et al., 2012, p. 130). Rosenblatt persuasively argued that 'the reader seeks to participate in another's vision—to reap knowledge of the world, to fathom the resources of the human spirit, to gain insights that will make his own life more comprehensible' (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 7). This echoes Adorno's concern with mass culture, in which the lack of a deep relationship with literature and a dependence on mass culture led to a superficiality in confronting the other—to a reliance on stereotypes that lead to a *halbbildung* and a lack of autonomous thought. The

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[49] A d spos t f s the system of know edge structures and network of power re at ons n nst tut ona , phys ca and adm n strat ve mechan sms that enhance and ma nta n the exerc se of power w th n the soc ety (e.g., parents, government, schoo s and peers). 'It s through the *dispositif* that the human be ng s transformed nto both a subject, and an object, of power re at ons. Agamben a so focuses upon the *dispositif*, and spec f ca y how t operates as an apparatus to contro human ty' (Frost, 2019, p. 152).

stereotypical representations offered by mass media reflect the immediate gratification of rapid and easy, segmented and somewhat vapid success without the need for sustained thought. Struggling with self-identity, adolescents grasp at and reflect the images and ideas that they observe flashing before them without critically examining their worth.

Substantiating the power of literary studies as a means of self-conception, Oatley referenced how cognitive psychological studies found that 'engagement in fiction has been found to improve empathy and social understanding, … literary fiction has been found especially good for improving understanding of other minds, and literary texts have also been found to invite changes in readers' personalities' (Oatley, 2016, p. 625). This resonates with students' *Bildung*—the process of making experiences through which individuals gain new perspectives of the world and of themselves.

Although it is clear that not all educational practices for students can be based on deep and meaningful insights, the erosion of sustained reading has damaging consequences for both students and society as a whole. It has been argued (see Cattinelli, Borghese, Gallucci, & Paulesu, 2013; Horowitz-Kraus & Hutton, 2018; Jacobs & Willems, 2018; A. Martin, Schurz, Kronbichler, & Richlan, 2015; Wolf, 2008) that students who do not constantly practice in reading are at a physiological disadvantage, as their brains do not create those important connections that are 'positively correlated with increased functional connectivity between the visual word form area and regions supporting higher-order visual processing, language, and executive functions and cognitive control' (Horowitz-Kraus & Hutton, 2018, p. 689). This has serious implications for the evolving student: with diminished higher-order functionality, decisions and subjectification or identity formation will be formed in an iteration of *halbbildung*, in which they will be 'constrained by not only what is difficult to imagine, but what [will remain] radically unthinkable' (Butler, 1993/2011, p. 59):

> When words are not heard, concepts are not learned. When syntactic forms are never encountered, there is less knowledge about the relationship of events in a story. When story forms are never known, there is less ability to infer and to predict. When cultural traditions and the feelings of others are never experienced, there is less understanding of what other people feel (Wolf, 2008, p. 102).

A Vygotskian perspective of this is that accelerating a student's learning beyond what is appropriate for that student creates physical deficits within the brain's structures, and it interferes with the student's concept building. Not only is the conceptualisation of students impaired, but the structure of the brain (which makes dendritic connections based on sensory input) is also being modified. Gallagher argued that the benefits of sustained reading 'are

twofold: they not only learn the standards but also develop the deepest regions of their brains. They stretch their brains to read longer, more challenging works' (Gallagher, 2009, p. 40). The neuronal basis required for the creation of new thoughts is impaired, as 'the new circuits and pathways [which] become the foundation for being able to think in different, innovative ways [are not made]' (Wolf, 2008, p. 217).

Wolf has further argued that rushing the brain to develop 'can actually cause a deterioration in brain functions, especially reading' (p. 95). If students cannot (or do not have the capacity to) read for extended periods of time, then any critical thought on extended reading is also curtailed. Self-reflexivity becomes difficult when attempting to place oneself in the milieu of society, in which one accepts instead the immediate gratification of 'identity thinking' and acceptance. The democratisation of the student is equally impeded by this form of educational emasculation. Even young children 'learn to experience new feelings through exposure to reading, which, in turn, prepares them to understand more complex emotions' (Wolf, 2008, p. 85). This view is reinforced by Oatley, who asserted the validity of this as 'the finding of a significant association of reading fiction with greater empathy and theory-of-mind has been replicated' (Oatley, 2016). If students are not given the opportunity to read thoughtful and thought-provoking fiction in a sustained fashion, then there will be a degradation of *Bildung*, of the 'cultivation of the human being's critical faculties in conjunction with liberal political institutions and autonomous artistic activities' (Adorno in Pickford, 2020, p. 366). Hakemulder proposed that 'the complexity of literary characters helps readers to have more sophisticated ideas about others' emotions and motives than stereotyped characters in popular fiction (in Oatley, 2016, p. 622). Empathising with others is a key result from reading fiction, even though 'the available evidence from neuroimaging for a link between engaging with fiction and changes in neural make-up is limited, especially as concerns developmental aspects' (Jacobs & Willems, 2018, p. 154). While this is an area for further exploration, Jacobs and Willems also indicated that there 'is a long-standing hypothesis that engaging with fiction can serve as a training mode for real life' (p. 154). This hypothesis clearly resonates with Adorno's arguments, which recognises:

> Education as a critical practice to emphasise the role of autonomous
> individuals and the force of self-determination, which he saw as the outcome
> of a moral and political project that rescued education from the narrow
> language of skills, unproblematized authority, and the seduction of common
> sense (Giroux, 2004a, p. 13).

Central to a democratic forming of students, and encouraging an empathetic subjectification, is an education that supports self-reflection during the brain's maturation. As students make

inferences (both implicit and explicit) and reflect on characters' intentions and beliefs, their level of empathic ability increases.

One result of accelerated learning and assessments, in which reading tasks are required to be completed in specific short periods of time, is that students are not given enough time to think carefully and clearly in their rush to locate the correct answer. The fast-paced, segmented approach to reading diminishes students' exposure to meaningful language; this not only decreases their ability to enhance their vocabulary in a meaningful way, but it inhibits their ability to converse deeply with others. Instead, students become 'passive and instrumental learners who are unwilling to extend their intellectual horizons' (Naidoo & Williams, 2015, p. 219) as student consumerism influences their behaviour and ways of learning. Wolf argued that 'children with a rich repertoire of words and their associations will experience any text or any conversation in ways that are substantively different from children who do not have the same stored words and concepts' (Wolf, 2008, p. 9). This has immediate ramifications for the subjectification of students. It is this lack of ability to be involved in both reading and discussion in any more than a superficial way that inhibits critical thinking. An engagement—that is, a meaningful, slow and deep engagement—with literature encourages students to learn new words in context, experience new ways of thinking and thus enrich their cognitive abilities and those technologies of self that were used to form their identities. Indeed, as Macken-Horarik explained, 'reading offers a journey into self-knowledge and experience' (Macken-Horarik, 2014, p. 10).

Purported ideas about teaching democracy and empathy in the Australian Curriculum is circumvented by the accelerated time in which these aspects of the curriculum are covered in the school year; without rushing and glossing over the ideas, this task remains largely unrealistic. Due to the pressures on schools to demonstrate that they are achieving goals and prerequisite outcomes, parameters are set very high—and they push students beyond their age abilities, thus resulting in stress and a lack of full and comprehensive understanding. Each state in Australia, and each school, has different criteria for each Achievement Standard, creating a dyssynchronous superficiality which resides in non-corresponding expectations. So, although the achievement criteria appear meaningful, their profusion—and the lack of time required to achieve them thoroughly and consciously—leads to a superficiality of deliverance and a zealous acceleration in learning, as teachers rush to ensure that all the criteria are met within the academic year. In the Australian Curriculum for years 7–10 English, there are 126 achievement targets, and each has up to six elaborations or further targets. Literature in Year 10 has 18 such elaborations on the 10 achievement standards. Schools and students rely on tablets and other screen-based media to locate information in the most expedient manner, and in-depth reading is neglected. Horowitz-Kraus and Hutton's research, which compared

screen-based media and reading books, 'suggest[s] that screen-based media use and exposure was negatively correlated with connectivity between the visual word form area[50] and these reading-supporting circuits, while reading time was positively correlated with such connectivity' (Horowitz-Kraus & Hutton, 2018, p. 691). When students are not taught the value of sustained reading, or to exercise those brain areas that are involved in abstract and complex thinking, they are also being denied the opportunity to build the neural connections required for deep and empathetic subjectification. This is a serious lacuna, hindering an effective means for expatiating the complexity intrinsically present in the cultural and social zeitgeist.

The lack of a sustained, silent reading of literature, then, has detrimental effects. Students are not exposed to the depth of the literary experience, which would help create empathy and strengthen the neural pathways in the brain that help instil deeper and more critical thinking. 'The benefits to the students [of sustained reading] are twofold: they not only learn the standards but also develop the deepest regions of their brains. They stretch their brains to read longer, more challenging works' (Gallagher, 2009, p. 40). Additionally, 'the acquisition of reading becomes the neuronal basis for new thoughts' (Wolf, 2008, p. 217), which has serious ramifications for students' subjectification. Neurologically, 'experience—what children do every day, the ways in which they think and respond to the world, what they learn, and the stimuli to which they decide to pay attention—shapes their brains' (Healy, 1990, pp. 50-51). If education is to encourage a further democratisation of society, then literature and its sustained reading are vital. A society based on democracy requires citizens who can think critically, and who can discern between fabrication and reality and step towards an enlightened 'soul'. Following Adorno:

> Self-reflection, the ability to call things into question, and the willingness to resist the material and symbolic forces of domination [are] all central to an education that refuse[s] to repeat the horrors of the past and engaged the possibilities of the future (Giroux, 2004a, p. 13).

It is the essence of self-reflection to consider negating the neutralisation of culture, rejecting identity thinking and creating a fulfilling subjectification. Instead of only using reading efferently and in a fragmented manner, literature's culture and range should be used to encourage students to sustain their reading and to think carefully, critically and empathetically. Using sustained reading of literature as a technology of self, students will reinforce their 'psychic identity' or 'soul'. Reading literature should be more than reading for comprehension, or for

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[50] 'The left fusiform gyrus Brodmann area 37 supports the recognition of letters and the groups of letters that make up words' (Horowitz Kraus & Hutton, 2018, p. 685). Additionally, 'BA37 is also significantly connected to the left prefrontal cortex (BA9 and BA46), which is involved in language control, verbal fluency, language generation, and verbal reasoning … BA37 projects to BA46 (prefrontal area involved in executive functions including abstraction and complex thinking) and BA9 and BA45 (involved in word generation, semantic categorization, and metaphor comprehension)' (Ardila, Bernal, & Rosselli, 2015, p. 10).

finding facts; it should be more focused on the aesthetic. As Freire noted, 'reading is not walking on the words … It's grasping the soul of them' (Freire, 1985, p. 19). Education policy must move away from the utilitarian and solely assessment-based schooling towards a more time-rich education that allows students to pause for thought, and which doesn't trample on the words that lead to an enriching *Bildung* for the students.

Coda

For students to achieve a modicum of autonomous thought, education policy must reflect the raison d'être of education: a purpose of socialisation, qualification and subjectification in equal measure, without a bias towards one at the expense of the others. A reliance on swift evaluations and assessments to immediately correct students' mistakes or variances negates the students' possibilities to navigate the often-difficult process of thinking through ideas and misconceptions; it negates a vital self-reflexivity for the construction of identity. Through the fragmentation of the meagre literature offerings that are used efferently, and with little regard for aesthetics, students are left without rich and vicarious experiences that a critical exploration of literature can offer. It is literature that 'makes comprehensible the myriad ways in which human beings meet the infinite possibilities that life offers' (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 6). It is through critically thinking about the ideas and concepts in literature using self-reflexivity that students can formulate their identities and escape the *halbbildung* provided by mass culture and accelerated learning. Habits of mind are compromised when offerings of literature in education are delimited. The generic educational approach undermines students' brain development, limiting the child's learning capacity and brain formation. Accelerated learning constrains reflexivity, and, by accepting the techno-educational regime as doxa, policymakers and educators, in a non-conscious, pre-reflective activity, conduct programmatic learning beneath the level of cognitive appreciation and understanding. With narrow accelerated educational programs and an economic focus in which teachers and students do not have a vote in the market, modern pedagogy is failing students. They are provided with a vapid *halbbildung* and few resources to accomplish the foremost goal of education: producing creative, innovative, and critical habits of mind and self-reflexive democratic citizens.

7. Conclusion

The components and vectors of power inherent in society, and how they are perpetuated, are key aspects for understanding the underlying network of power/knowledge—the cultural and ideological discourses that underpin societies. Within education, there is an ongoing reticulation of performativity, in which a distribution of power and relations exists in a network of governmentality, which are constantly reiterated until normalised and reified. Herewithin, students fashion a construction of identity, purportedly a sublimated acquisition of attitudes and a subjectification that generally consolidates and validates the ideal image of the community self. Personal identities are formed, constrained, and delimited while heterogenous elements alien to normative culture are largely excluded and constrained. Society offers a homologous order, a safe zone, and a predictable place in which the Zeitgeist is normalised. Despite the axes of subjectivation (the well-disciplined regulation and concrete procedures of normalisation), agency is neither entirely muted nor is it dispelled. As Butler explained:

> There is no subject who is 'free' to stand outside these norms or to negotiate them at a distance; on the contrary, the subject is retroactively produced by these norms in their repetition, precisely as their effect … Freedom, possibility, agency do not have an abstract or pre-social status, but are always negotiated within a matrix of power (Butler, 1993b, p. 22).

The educator's role is to question the tenuous world regarding what constitutes the politically correct; this concept is a dense field of operative technologies and a stylisation of conduct directed towards achieving self-discipline and self-normalising techniques. Generally unreflective, politically correct practices of self-conduct and the subject's politics tend to reinforce what is 'correct' and already taken for granted; these practices consequently confirm social membership and group fealty. When these tenets constitute an entrenched and authoritative administration of life—in which the distribution of power tolerates and maintains injustice, disparity, privilege of the few over the many and ongoing social malaise —then there is a need for these regulatory practices to be subverted, critiqued and reformed. Positive change is never guaranteed, but the allocation of power and its aftermath in terms of social outcomes require vigilance and constant critique. The act of critiquing oneself is a democratic action, a function of liberal autonomy and choice, as well as a means that ensures that society can strive to palliate the immutable effects of authoritarian governance.

In Foucauldian terms, this kind of critical reflexiveness engenders an understanding of 'what *they do* does' (Foucault, 1971, italics added); in brief, it produces an understanding of how the network's changing aspects can affect people (e.g., students). The introduction of marketable educational models such as *Visible Learning* and *Renaissance Reading* may appear to

improve teaching or students' reading abilities, but that is a superficial understanding of the program's prepatent outcome. They are predicated on deeper and deleterious principles, and these underlying degenerating elements have been difficult to grasp, especially when the governing pedagogical practice is touted as the most efficacious contemporary form of student education. The programs themselves undermine self-reflexivity and delimit the students' ability to critique society; instead, they reproduce the cultural penetration and delineation of a static, standardised and homologous order. Although attempting to negotiate their subjectification within these matrices of power, students find themselves left bereft of the tools to fully understand the norms that produce them as individuals.

The process of individuation, constituting self-effacement, complacency and conformity is dominated by specific cultures, specific ideologies, and moments in time that express and represent specific epistemological arrangements and interdiscursive configurations. For students, this kind of specificity shapes subjectification and is an immanent part of the educational environment. Education is a difficult and complex concept and is manipulated to suit an ensemble of relations and structures serving a privileged mode of power that embraces several key institutions. Politically, education is used as a form of bioweapon; it has been forged in the neoliberal cauldron of exchange, and it uses value economics, medical power, expert practitioners, and an economy of power relations to reinforce, stabilise and accentuate itself. Students are the economy's warriors—bioagents who are geared to a rationality imposed upon them, they battle for international domination, conforming to prevailing rankings that signify the nations educational status, pride, and self-esteem, on the global stage. On this basis, student's education should have an exchange value, that is, a functional and utilitarian recoupment for society. This is an ineluctable exchange value requirement where students are educated by the state, so they repay the state with 'gainful employment' and as participatory competitors serving the hegemonic determinations governing global PISA battles. This utilitarian objective for education should be questioned: the objective involves service in maintaining modes of competitive domination and a normalised pecuniary exchange based on educational achievement that is inequitably applied to performance. If any societal value becomes so entrenched that it is normalised, then according to Adorno's philosophy, it needs vigilant scrutiny and should never be venerated so much that it stands above negative criticism. The power-knowledge tendrils that create and nourish normalisation require exposition. Adorno insisted that education is a crucial and pivotal cornerstone in the formation of autonomy, but the structural edifice always requires the critical dimension drawn from negative dialectics. Negative criticism is more than gesturally critical; it questions and challenges the underlying cultural construction, the veneer and encrusted processes of legitimation that buttress the inspissated distribution of power and overarching structures of

inequality and discrimination. Students will understand that the widening cracks signify a complex economy of regulatory criteria, as well as a form of political exigency sustaining containment and a subtle but calculated technology of subjection. By standing outside the self and peering in through the dirty, almost opaque windows, at a critical distance from the homologous order that shapes society, one can begin to discern the cracks existing in the structural and discursive changes that occur in educational governance. The fissures can be observed, and when they widen, the underlying ideology is exposed, emerging as an ontological condition which informs *Visible Learning* and the logos of *halbbildung.* Hereby, the shifts towards market relevance and the logic of applicable competence building and productivity fosters systematic culpability, social engineering and a whole arsenal of pedagogical instruments that steadfastly negate and undermine aesthetic educational practice.

The students' journey is difficult, as they are trained and schooled in a philosophical milieu of acceleration and competition; they receive an education that has come to embody surveillance and performance, with limited time allocated for aesthetic exploration and contemplation. According to Biesta, education is about *values* not value. Resonating with Rosenblatt's postulation that the 'task of education is to supply [students] with the knowledge, the mental habits, and the emotional impetus that will enable [them] to independently solve his problems' (Rosenblatt, p. 125), this conception of education explores the notion that schools are obligated to provide an environment in which intrinsic and moral values are placed above economic worth. By being cognisant of the conditions that initiate programs of exclusion and sequestration, as well as by comprehending the specific forms of administrative rationality that prompt certain configurations of educational ideology, then revealing and critiquing the concealed and congealing effects of students' education becomes a viable proposition. Recognising articulations that have arisen from particular discourses in education focuses attention on 'the regular formation of objects that emerge only in discourse' (Foucault, 2010, p. 47). Moreover, revealing 'the conditions of emergence of statements,' and the nascent educational discourses pertaining to 'the law of their coexistence with others, the specific form of their mode of being, [and] the principles according to which they survive, become transformed, and disappear' (Foucault, 2010, p. 127), emerges as a principled task for analysing and researching power/ knowledge relations that exist in a complex battery of techniques and a network of pedagogical necessity - namely, the education of children. Subsequently, this monolith of force and the effect of these manifesting educational discourses on students can reveal patterns of representation and the determinate forms existing in an articulated system of pedagogical practice.

A review of the issues

Although described as transformative, contemporary education is narrowly based on marketable skill sets and generalised wellbeing. For example, the Australian *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* stated that education 'has the power to transform lives' before elaborating that this type of required transformation merely 'supports young people to realise their potential *by providing skills they need to participate in the economy* and in society, and contribut[es] to every aspect of their wellbeing' (Education Council, 2019, italics added). Accepting that this is a generalised statement with further elaborations made later, as attention is focused on economic outcomes in the preamble, the telos of the Declaration is the point that education's role is to support the economy. Subsequently, students are weaponised through educational marketisation to compete in a globalised competition. As education has become increasingly market oriented, medicalised, and militarised, the texture of ethical experience is eroded and power's vehicles, its instruments and means, leaving students ensconced and bewildered in a nexus of intertwining capillaries of power and discourses. These processes of discipline impact the cultivation of aesthetic experience and achieve, though mechanisms of subjectivation, the elision of aesthetic experience, interests, and self-awareness whilst enhancing the ascetic biopolitics of the student body. The 1983 ANAR report by the US National Commission on Excellence in Education claimed that 'the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people' (ANAR, 1983). This kind of discursive constellation situates education in a competitive battleground in which pedagogical practice and the student body are increasingly weaponised. ANAR declared that 'we have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament'. In critical discourse analysis, discursive power creates a social practice, sustaining an identity through language and practice (Fairclough, 2000, p. 144). Social behaviours are altered through changing the surrounding language. The rhetorical invective used in ANAR envelops military terminology, and it reproduces an image of education that exalts pedagogy and the student body as a weaponised part of society.

In a further reorganisation and new mode of educational construction, pedagogical practice becomes highly categorised and market oriented. It is result driven, competitive, narrowly skill based and primarily concerned with shoring up deficit social outcomes, market growth and productivity. This is an over-regimented educational platform that develops a whole arsenal of instrumental, business-like devices that are designed to inform and handle technical and strategic forms of administrative rationality that embody global, national, and local policy outcomes. For example, in the 2003 *Every Child Matters* report, the UK held education responsible for rising levels of child abuse, conflating the abuse levels with falling literacy

levels. The report had the effect of congealing concerns regarding welfare, as well as intersecting it with the trope regarding the growing social and economic deficits that are linked to a perception of the nation's falling educational standards. In turn, Australia's *Melbourne Declaration* tactically targeted schools in specifically pathological terms, signalling that educational institutions embodied regeneration, internal social order and efficacious mental states. Moreover, the Declaration signified that education affected market outcomes and social wellbeing, as it 'play[s] a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, *and in ensuring the nation's ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion*' (MCEETYA, 2008a). In 2012, then prime minister, Julia Gillard (spurred on by the summons to defend economic prosperity following the 2010 release of the draft Australian national curriculum) warned Australians that they were at risk of 'losing the education race'—a clarion call that echoed an RTTT report circulated by the US Department of Education and stressed about declining international educational rankings*.* In schematic terms, the report highlighted the benefits of competitive educational outcomes that are inexorably based on developing skilled and empowered bodies—namely, students, who are strategically positioned as the intended competitors. This anxiety emphasising concerns about winning a 'race' continued with Federal Education Minister, Alan Tudge, who in 2021, pledged that Australia would create a strong recovery trajectory and return to the top of the PISA rankings by 2030. Australia, in 2021, began consultations regarding a new national curriculum that has been partly designed to address this pledge. As corporations and billionaires (e.g., Pearson, Bill Gates) began to exercise authority in the educational debate, Giroux underlined the negative impact of this intrusion:

> Corporate school reform is not simply obsessed with measurements that degrade any viable understanding of the connection between schooling and educating critically engaged citizens. The reform movement is also determined to underfund and disinvest resources for public schooling so that public education can be completely divorced from any democratic notion of governance, teaching, and learning (Giroux, 2018, p. 503).

Through an examination of these issues, it can be seen that the effect of these changes in policy relegated literature and the exploration of self to the educational periphery. Instead of an 'enculturation' approach to education, which as Donelly explained, 'seeks to immerse students in the best aspects of Western civilisation' (in Urban, 2021, p. 15), a constrained and constraining form of literacy gained a new pre-eminence in educational discussions. 'Back to basics' became the new mantra for standardised tests being given greater authority in the decision-making process. The 'social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development'

of students became less important than international rankings and economic return on investment.

Foucault's epigram that people do not know the effect of what they do does to others is evident in the effect that modern schooling has on students. Resulting in the atomisation of the individual, educational objectives became increasingly monitored, accelerated and measured around the student's responsibility for their own education, for lifelong learning and for achieving 'more than a year's worth of learning during a school year' (Hattie, Fisher, & Frey, 2016, p. 16). As Rømer perspicuously highlighted, '[t]he educational object has disappeared, one might say: it is transformed into sheer evaluation' (Rømer, 2019, p. 589). As the perception of self-worth was grafted into individualisation, each person gained autonomy at a price. Ensnared in a web of accountability, and through the displacement of democratic liability, individuals were made responsible for their own self-development and that of the society they inhabited. Isolated individuals are easier targets for advertisers and mass consumption, and in pedagogical terms, progress was based on an ideology steeped in accelerated learning, immediate results and competition. The student body became ensnared by data analytics and performance management—which are terms usually associated with market forces and economic vision. Hattie's program embodied the neoliberal agenda of self-discipline, whereby students must be 'self-monitoring, self-evaluative, self-assessing and self-learning' (Hattie, 2009, pp. 22, 37). In their own developing conceptions and modelling of the world, students become responsible for their own progress, while schools use key performance indicators to assess only that progress which can be empirically verified through data, dismissing students' ethical and democratic subjectification. Moreover, in biopolitical terms, students are enlisted as responsible agents who serve the progress of their nation in what has become an international competition (i.e., PISA). Originally considered a comparative test in just three aspects of education, PISA became a competitive forum for coercing students to achieve in overtly visible outcomes. Data-qualified teaching became a virus spreading pandemically throughout educational systems. Foucault's philosophy of truth resists the notion of self-evident demonstrative truth that can be found in any place or any time regardless of circumstances; yet, under the uncompromising gaze of a stern form of scientific education (proclaimed as 'scientification' in Hattie's 2009 *Visible Learning* analysis), there was established a momentum of constant assessment that generally elided qualitative teaching subjects—the more esoteric subjects that were mostly abandoned and cast aside.

Consequently, education has become stultified in many areas—with some domains, especially the humanities and social sciences, being denigrated. This can be observed in Australia's recent move to increase the cost of humanities and arts degrees to ultimately support degrees in the sciences. As education secretary in 2020, Dan Tehan emphasised a

myopic and utilitarian view of education in the Australian Government when he stated that the Government wanted to steer people away from humanities into 'job-ready' STEM fields. He stated that '[u]niversities must teach Australians the skills needed to succeed in the jobs of the future' (Tehan, 2020b). For the Australian Government, education is focused purely on employment, and it negates the fundamental expectation of a student-centred education. 'The Job-ready Graduates package is focused on Australian students. It will create more places at university for more Australians and it will lower the cost of subjects for students who study in areas of expected job growth' (Tehan, 2020a). This stance negates the autonomy of students by 'incentivis[ing] students to make more job-relevant choices' (Tehan, 2020b), thereby inculcating a view that the humanities and social sciences have little value in today's society. This view of education as only being a means to employment, thus only focusing on and promoting its economic benefits, echoes Giroux's observation that 'Like the dead space of the American mall, the school systems promoted by the un-reformers offer the empty ideological seduction of consumerism as the ultimate form of citizenship and learning' (Giroux, 2018, p. 504).

Giroux's observation also resonates with the central argument that recent moves towards datafied education undermines ethical democracy. The policy approach which denigrates the humanities appears to be an attempt to stifle democracy. Chris Hedges argues, resonating with Nussbaum, 'that the humanities, when they're taught correctly, are subversive. They are meant to teach you how to think, not what to think; they are meant to give you the language to question reigning assumptions' (Hedges, 2021). This observation underlines an axis of subjectification, where the operative technologies serve the procedures of normalisation, and the excision of critical thinking seeks to curtail resistance by stifling the formation of a critiquing citizenship. The focus on basic literacy and numeracy skills and on STEM subjects—following the denigration of the humanities and social sciences—is designed to create a controllable underclass of workers, not a vibrant and critiquing democracy. Instead of the tools to critique, and in a masterly legerdemain, education ostensibly offers a customer or student apparent lifetime value as a return on the investment in their education; this is a predicted net profit associated with the future relationship between student and society. In this strategy the student is encumbered with both a moral and pecuniary debt. Australian Federal Education Minister, Alan Tudge, claimed that 'Australia's school achievement standards have fallen markedly during the past 20 years despite a 60% increase in real per-student funding' (Tudge, 2021). In economic terms, this clearly indicates a poor return on investment.

However, this marketisation of the student body undermines a concept of aesthetic enrichment that has enculturated societies for millennia. Within this paradigm, aesthetic culture has demonstrated the pinnacle of human thought; it has created a dialogue between literature,

philosophy, the arts, mathematics and science. The aesthetic experience, currently submerged in a deluge of assessment tests aimed at improving literacy standards, can be used agentially, constructing an autonomous individual. From a Foucauldian perspective, Seppä oriented student agency in terms of a self-formation, whereby 'modern man is not going off to discover himself, his truth, and his hidden inner secrets, but … rather he tries to *invent* himself through creating his personal aesthetics of the self' (Seppä, 2004). Aesthetics, when crystallised in terms of 'a study of the ethics or "practices of the self," has the potential to shape one as a substantive moral subject, rather than merely reflecting a truth found in prescriptive moral codes or norms to which one must conform' (Thacker, 1993, p. 14). As Thacker explicated in his thoughtful discussion of Foucault's conception of ethics and aesthetics, a posture of mere representation contrives to spacialise acquired moral knowledge in a limiting and conditional problematic[51].

In a Foucauldian world, in which the human body is available to vast technologies of correction, regulation, and development—and identity is realised through techniques of power—it is a kind of *de rigueur* for individuals to be actively seeking a stylisation of conduct directed towards agential independence in their search for freedom, ethics and autonomy. A strict form of critical vigilance is essential for escaping blind obedience to the officiating authority, as well as for resisting unconditional subordination to entrenched dogmas and prejudices. Resisting repressive interdictions is in part, achieved by resisting practices of containment and creating an 'aesthetics of self'—a means of designing oneself in a life that is, using Foucault's words, 'a work of art'. This differs from Kant's representation of aesthetic judgements, expressed in terms of 'pure disinterested delight' (in Thacker, 1993, p. 13). As an alternative, Foucault registers an 'aesthetics of self' as a continuous encounter with the limits of interdicting authority, in which aesthetic agency adopts subversive technologies of self that rebel against the political investments and micro-regulations of the body. The individual takes delight in evincing a different economy pleasure and conduct, akin to a Baudelairian work of art. As an act of freedom, and without being immobilised by prescriptive norms, individuals must remain agential in creating 'a work of art'. Subjects are more than the mark of a limited nature and an uninterrupted chain of reified and commodified affirmations; rather, individual subjects constantly engage in a process of questioning the limits of representation, production, language, and life, and they seek to move the historical surface towards an identity in possession of one's own inner coherence and re/formation. From this, the law that is fully dissimulated into the body faces an aesthetics of existence—a kind of refraction and form of aberrant conduct that sculpts its own identity.

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[51] Note the def n t on g ven on p. 26 of th s thes s.

For Stecker (2006), there are three main elements to consider when discussing the aesthetic: aesthetic appreciation, aesthetic value and aesthetic experience. In terms of education and literature, aesthetic appreciation can be regarded as more of a superficial encounter with the aesthetic; it involves noticing the aesthetic's specific nuances and commenting on those aspects. In brief, this is what Rosenblatt would consider an efferent understanding of the aesthetic. It is not agential, merely descriptive. According to Strecker, aesthetic value has two elements: intrinsic and instrumental. Intrinsic is valuable and, in turn, the instrumental delivers an aesthetic experience. It is the aesthetic experience itself that is of most interest here. Although defining the aesthetic is problematic, its effects can be adumbrated. When one is moved by literature, creating an emotional response, then the aesthetic experience can be agential; it can potentially eclipse mechanical anthropocentrism, subsequently shifting the compendium of the mind towards the rediscovery and revalorisation of diversity—an ensemble of identities that are not fixed but open to further change. For Foucault, the web of external discourses that subjugate the individual makes achieving autonomy outside these determining constraints difficult. The contemporary archive tends to be self-enclosing and hermetic. However, through practices of the self, individuals can explore their other; through the aesthetic, they can move beyond the somatic and mental analytic of finitude that is inflicted on people and their environmental constraints to examine the limits and the 'government of individualization' that constitute the self by interrogating the 'contemporary limits of the necessary' (Foucault, 1991, p. 43). It is the productive power of self-reflexivity in a socially discursive milieu that transforms the individual from the inside out; this involves a self-examination through reflexive thought—thought turned inwards to one's own actions and modes of conduct—which is the principle of technologies of the self (McCabe & Holmes, 2009). The technologies of the self are how individuals transform themselves into newly discovered ways of being by acting on their own psyches, thoughts, and conduct (Foucault, 1982/1988).

The economics-based symbolic violence encapsulated in education policies is leaving a paucity of aesthetic values in a sterile learning environment because it focuses on a utilitarian, skills-oriented and easily assessable pastiche of competitive individual outcomes. As political statements constantly refer to falling standards, the symbolic implication is that this is a covert form of soft violence, a thrall of discipline coded by constant observation, an 'emotional control' exercised over students and teachers at the interpersonal level. The subordinating effects of these hidden structures, reproduces and maintains social domination in covert ways, and is transmitted through an ensemble of dogmas and prejudice, such as the economic 'skills and jobs' rhetoric that pervades neoliberal ideology and ultimately undermines students' capacity for freedom of thought. This quasi-violent and ultimately suppressive social domination

involves the moral imposition of societal values and reified norms on students who are required to perform on the world stage, through their standardised tests, and on a state level, through their acquiescence to the Protestant-based work ethic and competitive values that are integral to the data-hungry algorithms controlling their education. For governments, the returns on education are founded on the contested principle that literate and numerate people are much more productive workers. However, it has been observed that focusing on only these two elements of the curriculum does not lead to a higher rate of literacy and numeracy. This realisation has caused considerable panic in Australia, the UK, and US. Despite the awkward evidence signalling the inverse, formative instruction and moral direction still inclines to establish an education seeking growth in the level of literacy by going 'back to basics'. The 'back to basics' mantra results in a recourse to violence perpetrated by an overtly concrete form of symbolic violence, as students, are subjected to externally forced priorities and the disciplinary partitioning from aesthetic learning and enrichment programmes. They are weaponised as soldiers in the fight for improved PISA rankings, recruited to conform to a battery of standardising tests. This type of disciplinary regulation and performative discourse creates a social reorganisation at the microsocial level. Following Durkheim's conception of social regulation through group cohesion, students are subjectivated by these power discourses that negate critical debate, resulting in a *halbbildung*. Here, students' conceptions of autonomy are actualised in a homologous domain, where the individual is subordinated to the group through subjective integration. For students to become dynamically agential in shaping their autonomous selves, achieving critical ability and acumen (formed in a milieu of enriched cultural engagement through literary critique) they need to escape the allure of subordination and uncover the covert discourses that actively repress diversity and challenge forms of self-reflexivity.

The symbolic violence perpetrated by this utilitarian view of education is echoed within English departments, in which a parochial view of literacy has replaced a meaningful critique of literature. The literary aesthetic has been substituted by a computerised algorithm used for reading acquisition that disgorges a 'comprehensive set of reports reveal[ing] how much a student has been reading, at what level of complexity, and how well they have understood what they have read' (Renaissance), while concurrently inhibiting the student's self-reflexivity. Inherent in this reading model is the expectation that students read novels at an increasing level of difficulty using a reading ease score; this effectively destroys the cultural and self-reflexive aspects of enculturation through an acceleration of vocabulary acquisition. A focus on comprehension is not a focus on critique, and although useful for some narrow aspects of literacy development, it cannot replace a thorough investigation of a literary text. At the expense of aesthetic understanding (the rich matrix of cultural and social enrichment), the

program emphasises the importance of accelerated reading as a means to achieve proficiency of efferent comprehension. Rosenblatt's (1991) lucid argument regarding the differences between aesthetic and efferent reading clearly demonstrates the need for a literacy based efferent style of interpretation, while tactically partitioning this from an equally important, yet contrasting, aesthetic reading. Accelerated reading programs narrowly focus on efferent reading while attempting to suggest that this will lead to an increased love of reading. However, there is little evidence for this. What is emphasised is the immediate gratification derived through a rewards system of reading quickly rather than slowly and thoughtfully, which is necessary for reading literature aesthetically and 'stirring up … associations, ideas, attitudes, sensations, or feelings' (Rosenblatt, 1991, p. 445). Referencing Schiavone's 2002 study, Yoon (2002) suggested 'that the accountability for reading did not play a crucial role on the reading comprehension and attitude of 7th grade children' (Yoon, 2002, p. 189),which effectively undermined the concept of reading for immediate reward. What speed reading fails to develop is a culture of reading in schools, a love of literature in students and time for them to explore their selves in the safe but dynamic worlds of fiction. Instead, speed reading creates a culture of reading as competition, which forges this capillary of neoliberal biopolitics to create Keddie's 'children of the market' (Keddie, 2016). Imaginative reflection and self-reflection, the discussion of values and feelings, the humanity of reading literature are discarded in favour of 'benchmarks of progress' (Hattie, 2009, p. 240) through an 'individualistic, technological, and quantitatively based system of indicators' (Rømer, 2019, p. 590). When education operates solely on statistics and technology, then the soul of education becomes pledged and chained to instrumentalised discipline and repressive interdictions.

Neither of the two common features of the modern English classroom (accelerated learning and visible learning) pause to reflect on the underlying effects of their productivity programs. Of most concern is the effect on students regarding what they do. Students may well be able to read faster and comprehend meanings (without reacting to ideas) and reach arbitrarily set targets through computerised systems (Hattie, 2009, p. 240) to gain 'more than a year's worth of learning during a school year' (Hattie et al., 2016, p. 16). However, it can be asked: at what cost? A significant element in education is the pedagogical guidance provided in the development of subjectification, especially concerning students in their formative years. This process of creation, both through subjectivation and subjectification, of student self-formation and sense of identity is an inevitable outcome of education. If education seeks to create democratic citizens, then it is an essential prerequisite and an immanent task of pedagogical practice to focus on the students' self-reflexivity. Rosenblatt and others have argued that the English classroom is the best setting in which to concentrate on this aspect of students' self-formation. The students' journey, layered with self-inspection, reflexivity, the many aesthetic

and cathartic experiences found in challenging novels and additional literary sources, potentially creates a deep and insightful person who is fully immersed in lifelong *Bildung*. As Terhart explained, '*Bildung* is the process and result of education as *cultivation*; its highest level is *Selbstbildung* (self-cultivation)' (Terhart, p. 430, original italics); however, this crucial element is largely suspended, omitted or marginalised in the discursive practices of accelerated and visible learning that contemporary education currently emphasises. Instead, through its intrinsic performative discourses of competition and surveillant testing, modern education is creating students who are unquestioning in their voluntary acceptance of reified subordination. The dominant discourse, reiterated through political statements and curricula, revolves around teaching to the test and for the marketplace. In this emasculated environment, students have few possibilities to achieve a rich self-cultivation.

Selbstbildung, the care for the self*,* is an aesthetical, political and ethical phenomenon, and it must be practised as a resistance to what threatens to control the formation of an independent, autonomous identity. If education aims to create autonomous citizens who can understand themselves and critique their social environment, then students require self-reflexive time in which to accomplish this developmental task. Students should be encouraged to move from being heteronomous to autonomous individuals. They must be capable of questioning and critiquing the homologous order, with its proclivity for standardisation, relentless assessments and pervasive surveillance. However, achieving *Selbstbildung* and a sense of autonomy is impeded and becoming increasingly difficult, as reflective time is largely abandoned and curtailed. In Flights' words, Adorno declared that:

> The power of philosophy [is] to emancipate the thinker from constructed reality, to recover him from the grip of social conditioning … If this is not the case, then how can the thinker proceed by means of an autonomy which he does not possess? (Flight, 2017).

This question has a reciprocal presupposition, especially regarding the delimited threshold through which students are expected to proceed with an impoverished education that does not provide the necessary tools to emancipate them. The reflexive element of subjectivity is almost subordinated to the point of invisibility by the dominating and definitive artifice of instrumental pedagogy, which undermines the students' developmental critique and resistance to what has been previously regarded, and what is currently performatively reiterated, as normal.

As animated subjects, students struggle against the enclosed forms of knowledge, power and subjectivations that, by acting upon them, delimits autonomy. As Flight explained, '[t]he individual who thinks must take a risk, not exchange or buy anything on faith. That is the

fundamental experience of the doctrine of autonomy' (Flight, 2017). This issue translates as a kind of peregrination whereby a redundant attribute stifles students' progress because they are not provided the tools for emancipatory investigation and exploration. Democratic students must be able to resist stereotypes and recognise and question corrupt and privileged power relations, especially regarding encrusted beliefs that had previously been taken for granted as normal. These vectors harm individuals when they are not democratically involved in their own subjectification. It can thus be argued that the constraints or normalising forces, used as biopolitical technologies of the self, are ethically subversive. They do not provide productive processes of self-creation and freedom; instead, they constrain students through normalisation. The curriculum has become a constraint to democratic freedom of thought—it is a form of imprisonment from which teachers and students struggle to escape and then rediscover a love of learning. Confined by the bureaucracy of definitions for what must be taught and the standards to be achieved, students and teachers are trapped in a web of policy imaginaries that delimit criteria and outcomes. Subjectification involves risk, but subjectivation is more damaging, as individuals are constantly battling an exhaustive ordering of warrior conduct and do not create themselves as 'other'.

This risk taking is being undermined to a large extent by current policies. Students vying for grades and rewards attempt to accelerate their learning. By following this mode of conduct, they are enshrouded in a normalising neoliberal discourse of economic marketability and individual accountability, whereby they constrain themselves in performative criteria. These criteria atomise students, consequently reducing and delimiting their interactive discussions. Through pursuing these tenets of an atomised self, students' performative range are predestined as being irreducibly linked to 'having' rather than to 'being'—that is, the focus is on instrumental skill sets and materialistic gain. Although having a literate society is a worthy goal, it is equally worthy to understand the imperceptible tendrils that such teleology creates. Literacy is a complex and nuanced area with many vectors crossing basic elements, and as Mills argued, the 'proliferation of powerful, multimodal literacies means that previous conceptions of literacy as "writing and speech" are collapsing' (Kathy A. Mills, 2009, p. 103).

However, the all-consuming efferent literacy in today's educational topography lives an enchanted existence, consequently constraining the maximum divergence and extreme limits that are encountered in the spectacle of aesthetic assemblages found in literature. Literacy refuses to exculpate intellectual curiosity, or the sensations of time and the gravity anchored in dangerous destinations and prodigious characters. Instead, instrumental literacy alone is regarded as the most efficacious element to be promoted in English classrooms. Literature has become merely a methodological appreciation. In this formulation of aesthetic vacuity, 'students appreciate, analyse, interpret and evaluate a range of literary texts' to 'learn how

characters, events and issues in literary texts are shaped by the historical, social and cultural contexts in which they were created' (ACARA, 2021b, pp. 3-4). As Nussbaum argued, 'it signals a further striking absence: the absence … of the organizing questions of moral philosophy, and of moral philosophy's sense of urgency about these questions [of ethics]' (Nussbaum, 1992, p. 182). The absence of the ethical—of the inquiry into individual clarification, self-understanding and formative shaping of the self through self-reflexivity—adds to the students' etiolation. By suppressing the difference between efferent literacy and aesthetic literature, the text becomes static and motionless; it blankly stares out at the reader with an expressionless and enigmatic desuetude because it is fundamentally deprived of cultural enrichment.

As education is atomised into aspects of teaching efficiency and individualised student programs, students themselves become atomised and segregated from their society of peers. As has been argued in Chapter 6, accelerating literacy programs undermines young students' brain formation, as well as reduces their ability to have deep conversations. This ability reduction might have serious consequences for students, especially concerning their autonomy. They are more likely to accept the views that they hear from those closest to them without critically questioning their worth.

The atomising segregation of students implies to the student that, being their own teachers with immanent knowledge, they are the source of understanding, and concepts and discourses are no longer challenged in a meaningful way. While Adorno warned of the envelopment of populism, which the autonomous thinker can think against, it is this populism, this immediate gratification, that underpins literacy education. It is sustained silent thinking, the time to reflect on the reading and the promotion of critiquing that enables students to undermine populist thinking.

Time is seemingly of the essence in Hattie's educational world. Learning must be accelerated, and classroom time must be managed efficiently—in that, students must be focused at all times on learning intentions; time must not be wasted. He has argued that researchers like Yoon (2002):

> Found that sustained silent reading [SSR] had little effect on reading attitude,
> and the effects drop to zero above grade 3—students who struggle or do not
> enjoy reading gain little reading instruction when silent reading; it is another
> opportunity to engage in an activity confirming that reading is not enjoyable
> (Hattie, 2009, p. 159).

This argument was posited to suggest that sustained silent reading negatively affects students. However, in the same article that Hattie quoted, Yoon concluded that:

> This result provides evidence to support the effectiveness of the SSR reading
> activity at enhancing students' reading attitude … [and that] the characteristics
> of SSR … function as external and internal motivators to play a crucial role in
> improving a reader's reading attitude (Yoon, 2002, p. 192).

In brief, not only are the readers' attitudes towards reading enhanced, but Yoon's study also indicated that '[s]econdary school students involved in a popular fiction course who allowed to choose paperback books significantly outperformed control group students who participated in a composition class' (Yoon, 2002, p. 187). If only a small section of an analysis is used to underscore a desired outcome, then other more pertinent effects are ignored. In this case, three essential effects of SSR are ascertained in Yoon's study: that the students enjoy reading books they choose; those students are more motivated to read with SSR; and that SSR has an extremely positive effect on students' imaginative abilities. The learning intentions may not have been focused on students' internalisations of what they were reading, ideas on which they were ruminating, or thoughts that they had about others or themselves in certain situations, but the students are developing other useful and more pertinent skills—such as an understanding of self and of their psychic spirit. It is essential to note that rushing from text to text in search of the light of comprehension affects students in ways that are not immediately apparent. As Adorno stated:

> It is not the amount of literature we read that makes us proficient but the
> attention we give reading. Focused concentration upon a solitary text often
> yields more rewards than a casual concentration upon several texts. It is better
> to read intensely than it is to read broadly (Adorno in Flight, 2017).

However, in the hurried search for efficacious learning and teaching, the rewards from intense and deep thinking and reading are often ignored, discounted and unrealised.

Current Australian governmental concerns with PISA results and immediate economic returns on educational investment are partly enshrined in the Melbourne Declaration of 2008. The Declaration states that 'assessment of student progress will be rigorous and comprehensive' (MCEETYA, 2008a) It also emphasises the literacy and numeracy skills that are assessed by NAPLAN tests. The outcomes of these assessments are 'used to inform future policy development, resource allocation, curriculum planning and, where necessary, intervention programs' (ACARA). The effect of these declarations has been to allow a delimited focus on easily assessable tests. Private industries have been able to utilise an exiguous interpretation of the Declaration to leverage lucrative positions in schools. In this sense, the spirit of the Declaration has been marginalised. Although the Declaration asserted that '[e]ducation equips young people with the knowledge, understanding, skills and values to take advantage of

opportunity and to face the challenges of this era with confidence' (MCEETYA, 2008a), the goal of NAPLAN, *Visible Learning* and *Renaissance Reading* is to minimise the values of education and enhance the assessment aspects, thereby creating an industry that is based on providing an armament of assessable materials. Curricula have been repositioned to acknowledge the aesthetic and identity-forming aspects of education, but the emphasis on assessment signifies that these aspects become like shrapnel within the parameters of a foreshortened teaching time.

When students use their imaginations, they effectively demonstrate their ability to think beyond the strictures of the norms that envelop them. They are on their way to becoming autonomous thinkers, as they imagine possibilities that are not represented in the data and information-driven world around them. It is for the student 'to create new conditions of existence', as Durkheim suggested (in Zuboff, 2019, p. 32), as well as to use their imaginations and creative spirits. Concomitantly, students must be trained in the art of critique so that they can further question the popular, traditional and historical, as well as challenge 'the authoritarian precepts of culture' (Flight, 2017). In fact, as Giroux incisively argued, 'students have to learn the skills and knowledge to narrate their own stories, resist the fragmentation and seductions of market ideologies, and create shared pedagogical sites that extend the range of democratic politics' (Giroux, 2004b, p. 18). Resonating with Young's chiasmatic binding of schooling as 'enabl[ing] all students to acquire knowledge that takes them beyond their experience', it is argued that students should be educated to use this experience and knowledge in democratic interrogation. As Young proposed, it is 'knowledge which many will not have access to at home, among their friends, or in the communities in which they live. As such, access to this knowledge is the "right" of all pupils as future citizens' (Young et al. in Doecke & Mead, p. 252). The disciplinary strictures of the modern curriculum instead cultivate a miasma of hebetude.

Therefore, the curriculum, with its focus no longer on deep learning and critical thinking, despite its claims, forsakes the ethical and aesthetical aspects of literature for nugatory data sets and graphic algorithms of achievement. Students emerge in a statistical distribution and order—in a hierarchy of data points that establishes identity as linked to measurement and calculation. The foundation for the exhaustive ordering of students and their 'nature' has become the language of statistics; it has become a taxonomy of data points in the neoliberal cathexis of accountability and effectiveness. In the neoliberal economy, success or failure—especially in terms of functional accountability in relation to regimes of testing—is immanently linked to a science of order. However, those who create and constitute policy are not held accountable. There is also no understanding regarding the uncertainty of science, which is

based on hypotheses and exploration, not just on specific data extrapolations. As Flight emphasised:

> For Adorno, there is a legitimate danger, not in specialised knowledge, but in the authority specialized knowledge tries to claim for itself. The invocation of science, says Adorno, of its ground rules, of the exclusive validity of the methods that science has now completely become, now constitute a surveillance authority punishing free, uncoddled and undisciplined thought in tolerating nothing of mental activity other than what has been methodologically sanctioned (Flight, 2017).

Visible learning, based as it is on some problematical statistical methods (see Bergeron & Rivard, 2017; Nielson & Klitmøller, 2021; Rømer, 2019; Terhart, 2011, for example), has been treated as the authoritative Holy Grail of pedagogy, according to a virtual thaumaturgical interpretation of meta-analyses. However, teaching is an art with scientific aspects, not a science with artistic aspects. Although data has its uses in education, converting teaching into a science based on a mega-analysis of thousands of disparate studies to formulate a conception of best practice ultimately has consequences for students—and they unseen by those who base teaching on this methodological outcome.

A traditional education not only sensitises students to the world, as Adorno suggested, but it also sensitises them as humans. However, he added that traditional education (or 'back to basics' education) also 'dulls [students'] intellect and character by subjecting them to drill and discipline' (Skirke, 2020, p. 579)—as a militarisation of the student corpus. This dehumanisation and desensitisation of students is reoccurring, as students are no longer given the time to exercise their self-reflexive abilities or to become critical thinkers, nor are they given the opportunity to explore literature. There is also little opportunity to explore the profusion of ideas, moral mazes and vicarious experiences that can be found in literature, which, through reflection and catharsis, can create an understanding of, and empathy for, others. A lack of empathy is reflected in the lack of understanding of the human condition, of discriminations due to gender, of race and of culture. Without deep learning and critical thinking—as well as the aesthetic response to, and critique of, culture—the indiscriminate acceptance of popular platitudes and behaviours that are accepted as norms could precipitate a descent into authoritarianism, which Adorno forewarned would terminate in a similitude as had 'the death of poetry after Auschwitz'. It is the purpose of education to ensure that students have the tools and ability to question the means of control or the biopolitics and governmentalities that attempt to shape their souls; they should have these so that they can

freely question the unquestionable and see any manipulations for what they are while striving to improve the human condition.

Emancipating or destabilising—The literacy–literary dialectic

Therefore, there is a pervasive neoliberal assumption in current educational policies and curricula that has restricted the meaning of education to received and contentious notions of value, values, economic outcomes and individual worth. The meaning has moved from a sense of describing possibilities to a narrow proscriptive litany of targets and achievement standards. Exemplifying this, in the proposed Australian Curriculum (under consultation in 2021), Year 10 literature students are to 'evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in literature'. This is further elaborated to 'identifying and analysing ethical positions on a current issue, including values and/or principles involved, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the position presented' (ACARA, 2021b). However, an evaluation is not an interrogation, nor a questioning of one's own values. Instead, it is merely represented as a dry assessment or judgement of its worth and merit regarding societal values. There is little exploration of the discursive performativity through which a coherent identity is established. Through this societal balancing act, students are judging their values against those that society has prescribed with little corresponding critique of the society.

As previously argued, for Butler, our failure to fulfil these societal expectations, the 'normative force of performativity—its power to establish what qualifies as "being"' (Butler, 1993/2011, p. 140), revealing our failure to achieve societal approbation[52]. Consequently, failure to realise expectation interferes with our perception of the value of literature, as the educational and societal views of literature are ones of unproductivity. This leads to conflict in students who enjoy literature, and who wish to explore the depths and reserves of cultural and formative wealth that are contained therein. This conflict, which is thrust into a binary exposition between literature and a shallow articulation of literacy, creates a dilemma for students; they observe their conceptions being devalued and debased, and so they choose to curtail their exploration to match the societal and 'educational' requirements.

The binary exists between this superficial conception of literacy, which has been valorised as a means to produce assembly-line functional and employable bodies, and literature, which reflectively explores a rich diversity of cultural beliefs and practices. This is a kind of dialectic double that expresses multiple tensions, which tend to be restricted by over-regimented algorithms and forms of agenda essentialism. In turn, a form of literature that seeks to emancipate students from instrumental and mechanical applications of pedagogical practice

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[52] See the Introduct on, p11

falls into fixed categories of constricted literary analysis that mostly tranquilises and abandons critique and reflexivity. Instead of being multimodal, literacy becomes entrenched in the restricted category of comprehension in reading and writing. As the teaching of English is confined and deconfined by this binary, literature becomes segregated from literacy and is treated as an inferior and adventitious other. The 'English' subject is cleaved in two, with the main emphasis being placed on literacy. Literacy is elevated to the group of 'general capabilities' in the Australian Curriculum: a regnant status from which literature is delimited. Students then define themselves within these two categories, which are constituted as if they were mutually exclusive. Due to this discursive delimitation (with literacy having the sole teleological target of producing wealth for the economy), students are restricted from accessing the 'peculiar power of the literary work of art … [to offer] a release from the provincialism of time and space' (Rosenblatt, 1995, pp. 180, 184). Further, the delimitation initiated by the games of truth that emphasise literacy destabilises the literary category and its 'peculiar power'. This 'peculiar power' is the aesthetical power which involves and engages students in their quest for ethical freedom —those counterpoints upon which, according to Foucault, citizenship rests.

Additionally, the Foucauldian 'care of the self' (which depends on a discussion with others) is a necessary practice to resist the regimes of truth that constrain identity formation and the formation of self. Developing students require explication of the networks of power so that they can question their own positions in discussion with others; they require it so that they are prepared and can recognise transgressions on their personal liberty. This does not imply that resistance does not take place. Students and teachers resist the neoliberal regime, and other educational imperatives, in many ways. They do, however, face a constant battle against the machine of policy and ideology, and the governmentality that is enmeshed in these systems. Social and cultural critique is discarded in favour of the more easily assessed accelerated performance of comprehension-based literacy, which restricts liberty and freedom—the ethical balance of subjectification and citizenship. The 'technologies of self' are similarly delimited—specifically, those activities that:

> Permit individuals to affect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, service to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997, p. 225).

It has been argued—for example, by Nussbaum (1992), Greene (1995) and Rosenblatt (1995)—that the study of literature offers an enlightening opportunity to students to identify

and examine agonisms to current thinking, to develop a critical awareness of normalisations and thereby achieve the freedom to construct themselves as ethical citizens.

The divisive practices that surround literacy and literature create the illusion that literature has little or no value and, by association, that those engaged in literature also have little or no value. Literature is presented as having little to add to the data-driven, statistically evaluated and technology-focused society. Literature becomes increasingly adventitious; it only sporadically finds room for expression in the mostly algorithmic-driven curriculum. This is not just the death knell of the study of literature; it is the last gasp of a society who are focused on the immediate, and who sacrifice themselves for narrow, market-driven agendas, populism and authoritarianism. In this simplistic conception, literacy becomes the apparatus by which the English subject is produced; it subsequently colonises the cultural interpretation of English and emerges as the discursive means through which a knowledge of English is interpreted and understood. It is thus established as the pre-discursive, neutral surface on which neoliberal enculturation acts and promulgates the algorithmic and assessable conception of English. The sequestration of the English subject, then, is captured in a colonising discourse that obviates and discards the rich cultural contributions that are made by critical literary study. If Mammon was a false god, then he was nevertheless highly regarded; in this sense, there are ominous parallels with the contemporary state of English literacy.

Within this hollow version of English, students are actively subjected to, and subjectified within, a performativity that constantly iterates a depleted vision of humanity. When literature is seen as adscititious to the formation of the model citizen, the students' etiolation is a direct result of this barren vista of meagre emotional nutrition. Emphasising the effects of this type of education, Ball paraphrased Bernstein and enquired: 'If the identity produced by [performativity] is socially "empty", how does the actor recognise him/herself and others?' (Ball, 1999). This recognition of self and others in a cultural dimension has been noted by Niglio, in a program advocated by UNESCO. Noting that 'the subject of culture itself [has] been isolated and in many cases [has] not been considered essential or relevant within the process of training and development of the individual and society' (Niglio, 2021, p. 2), she subsequently argues that there needs to be 'a "new centrality" to the role of Culture, in the sustainable development of humanity. Indeed, without Culture, it becomes incredibly difficult to develop forward-going perspectives capable of proposing and consolidating shared and participatory policies that are no longer guided by increasing individualization' (Niglio, 2021, p. 2). The program initiated in the *Tokyo Charter "Reconnecting With Your Culture"*, also endorsed by UNESCO, recommends 'encourag[ing] children and young people to joyfully and creatively appreciate their own cultures and heritages and those of others, and not just their material, physical, and technological manifestations (Schafer & Niglio, 2021, p. 3). The emerging

understanding is that a creative and critical exploration of culture is essential in 'strengthen[ing] personal responsibilities, values, and ideals, [and] requires a pedagogical commitment to enhancing and enriching cultural and heritage education in a conscious, deliberate, and systematic manner' (Schafer & Niglio, 2021, p. 3). A new performativity of critiquing through literature and culture would iterate a more positive and invigorated vision of humanity.

Differences exist between the understandings of 'performativity'. In current educational practice, performativity emphasises the performance, or how well students have achieved in terms of assessment using the metrics of achievement standards. However, it is through a constant performance, or reiteration, of technologies of self and normalising discourses that the subject is developed. In this sense, there is a quintessential deficit—and, consequently, the student's soul is immutably delimited via the effects of articulating achievement standards, learning intentions and success criteria. Foucault stated that:

> It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power (Foucault, 1979, p. 29).

The soul (identity formation) is in a state of inanition, as the student is bereft of the edifying nourishment provided by critical literary thinking and self-reflexivity. This etiolated state was foreseen by Broadfoot in as early as 1995, when she suggested that:

> As long as assessment data are used as the basis for league tables and the like, the potential for performance assessment to enhance learning is unlikely to be realised and *grave injustices may be done to many schools and children* (Broadfoot in Ball, 1999, italics added).

Instead of enhancing learning or students, the use of assessment data has created an education system that is without ethical considerations or critique; further, it has left literature in a barren wasteland, where students 'learn how to explain and analyse the ways in which stories, ideas, experiences, opinions and settings are reflected in texts' (ACARA, 2021b, p. 4) rather than how those texts affected them. However, what Broadfoot did not anticipate was that assessment data would be the sole criterion that shaped the curriculum for the individuation of students. To a fuller extent, the effect of the nature of 'what *we do'* to students remained unrecognised and undetected.

As Butler (1993b, 1993/2011) suggested, if there is no body that exists before culture and discourse, then we can only know ourselves through subjectivation—through those normalising discourses that are accepted without self-reflection. When there is enough qualifying knowledge that students can critically use, then they can begin the process towards

a more autonomous subjectification. This is the edifice of enlightenment sensibility. According to Foucault, students' understanding of the world and themselves is always constructed through discourse and institutional settings; it is constructed by the discourse of culture that arises through the functioning of a power creating discursive constellations through which and in which the discourse can take place. From a Foucauldian perspective, the 'soul is the effect and the instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body' (Foucault, 1979, p. 30). Popkewitz argued that 'the moral responsibility of schooling is to govern "the soul"— inner beliefs, feelings, and sensitivities that generate actions' (Popkewitz in Ball, 1999). Nevertheless, it is not only the soul of the student that experiences a kind of *'aufhebung'* but the self-governing capacity of students as well; in this sense, students are sublated into an instrumental culture while simultaneously being created as the new *homo economicus*. The time in which to contemplate and self-reflect is being purged and whittled down in an accretion of accelerated learning. Not only is the soul 'the prison of the body', but the prison is also a degenerative form of 'active culture', as it constricts agentic capacity and expediently accentuates the etiolation of the soul.

When John Curtin, former prime minister of Australia, commented that the country consists of 'human beings', he iterated the problem with a total focus on a lack of cultural education when he asked:

> How shall they express their individualities? Through the men of letters, the poets, thinkers, dreamers, artists, sculptors and musicians. Without the collaboration of these, this country would be but a material place, well fed, perhaps, but not happy or enduring (in Romei, 2021).

Resonating with this salutary warning is Oakeshott's postulation that:

> As civilized human beings, we are the inheritors, neither of an inquiry about ourselves and the world, nor of an accumulating body of information, but of a conversation … Education, properly speaking, is an initiation into the skill and partnership of this conversation in which we learn to recognize the voices, to distinguish the proper occasions of utterance, and in which we acquire the intellectual and moral habits appropriate to conversation (Oakeshott, 1959, p. 11).

However, education should also be an interrogation about ourselves, or a critical examination and self-reflection of our ethics. Educational policy tends to problematise the perception of falling standards, in turn subverting the focus from individual enculturation and subjectification. As Bacchi claimed, if 'the very nature of a "problem" is in dispute, [then] any suggestion that all that is required is evidence about how to solve it seems to be sadly inadequate' (Bacchi &

Goodwin, 2016, p. 39). Yet, this is how educational policies intend to 'solve' the issue of a lack of literacy competence in students. It is now time to recall Rosenblatt's stance on education: 'The task of education is to supply [students] with the knowledge, the mental habits, and the emotional impetus that will enable [them] to independently solve [their] problems' (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 125). In the fabricated dissonance between literature and literacy, an emaciated education has emerged.

As the reiterative processes that subjectivate students consolidate and congeal around them, the students' subjectification is equally sedimented in the statistical efficacy and discursive apparatus that embroils them; this depletes them of the plethora of aesthetic enrichment and cultural opportunities in which to produce their identities. As Adorno highlighted:

> The invocation of science, … its ground rules, [and] the exclusive validity of the methods that science has now completely become, now constitute[s] a surveillance authority punishing free, uncoddled and undisciplined thought … tolerating nothing of mental activity other than what has been methodologically sanctioned (see Flight, 2017).

With education strategically employing algorithms, and a statistical surveillance being cast on both teachers and students, independent thought enters a state of inanition, and the souls of the students' bodies become etiolated in the bleakness of an uninspired education.

The governance and mathematising nature of the curriculum reveals a scientific order that is linked to measurement, calculation and a biopolitics of constraint. It establishes a tabula of relationships in which critical interrogation and student agency is decoupled and delimited. Literature is diminished to a simplistic descriptive outcome—to a value that is encapsulated in the pronouncement that 'The appreciation of literature … provides students with access to mediated experiences and truths that support and challenge the development of individual identity. Through engagement with literature, students learn about themselves, each other and the world' (ACARA, 2015a). This definition is eclipsed by a form of simple 'appreciation'. As Adorno argues, appreciation dissociates complex relations of representation into simplistic identities, orders, words and natural arrangements, desires and interests. As such, it merely neutralises culture and contributes to the 'reification of society and mind' while hypostasising and emasculating culture as mere 'cultural goods' or 'eternal values' (Pickford, 2020, p. 6). Further students are expected to 'learn about themselves' through this vacuous landscape depleted of aesthetic sensibilities.

The study of differing discourses of educational value has revealed numerous technologies of governance. These are directed not at the 'body' of students but at its *soul*—or at 'the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain

type of knowledge' (Foucault, 1979, p. 29). If the student's soul, which is the 'effect and instrument of a political anatomy' (Foucault, 1979, p. 30) is to be anything other than a mere means of externally driven modifications of behaviour, then a critical engagement is needed with the emerging regimes of truth that concepts around education represent. Engagement with literature at all levels of schooling, not just VCE and A Level classes, offers the potential for students to dissociate such assumed unities and foster a more agentive engagement with the conditions of their own subjectification. The implied rejection of both acquiescence and obstinacy thus fulfils the promise of a creative resistance (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997), as well as a shift from *homo economicus* to *homo autonomous*. This kind of opposition promises a different economy of textual interpretation, as well as the hermenuetic desire for a renewed symmetry between aesthetic literature and the English subject. This promises to tilt the balance of power and privilege a new kind of critical knowledge—a truth that initiates people's freedom to act for themselves. The problem of the constitution of the self, caught in the aporias of a narrow pedagogical model, is the diminution of creativity and the practice of subordinating the text to analytic forms of heteronomy. In a world of increasing nationalism, where utilitarian value and data-driven efficacy are the habitual frame of reference, this kind of enervated literacy education remains the inevitable consequence of an introjected market heteronomy and a subtle and calculated technology which remains an ensemble of dogmas and prejudice. This enervated literacy education is a growing source of anxiety because it increasingly appears as a species of anachronistic activity, as well as an uneasy symbiosis between individuals and community. It is a dystopian image of officiating authority and a continuously proliferating network of disciplinary mechanisms that pedagogical practice can ill afford to ignore.

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