

Scoundrel Days

Exegesis: *Notes on a Scoundrel*

Creative work: *Scoundrel Days: a memoir* (under separate cover)

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Abstract

Scoundrel Days: a memoir reads as a first person bildungsroman adventure story set between the years 1972 and 1998. It narrates from the perspective of an Australian boy growing up in an obscure Christian cult in outback Queensland. To the casual reader the text presents as a novel which requires no special introduction, instruction or foreword. Written as creative nonfiction, *Scoundrel Days* has attained publication (UQP 2017) and is marketed in the genre of memoir.

To the astute or critical reader *Scoundrel Days* presents a multi-linear challenge. Written in first person present perfect, in a conscious effort to step outside the genre definition while still retaining the central tenet of nonfiction, the text occupies several distinct modal perspectives on the liminal field. This effect is achieved via the employment of a juxtaposition of literary techniques, methodologies and constraints. Several of these, used by many writers, require little effort to adopt (minimalism, dramatica theory, et al.), but one of them, English Prime (E-Prime) creates semantic memory interference and interlopes on subconscious language processing systems. E-Prime used as a literary constraint “offers access to dynamics of language ordinarily subliminal” (Zimmerman 2001). Experiments with this constraint reveal a proliferation of transliminal detail, the space between the supraliminal and subliminal spectrum of the narrative usually occupied with presumptions made with the *is* of identity and the *is* of predication. Communication theory tells us the quality of a message depends on the ratio of signal to noise. A conscious manipulation of dynamic signals inherent in English utilising E-Prime as a literary constraint requires a complete overhaul of not only personal writing stylistics, but individual ways of seeing and thinking about our semiotic environment; i.e. “Writing/speaking in the English language without the copula; excluding tenses of the verb to be (are, am, is, was, were, be, been and being) and/or their contractions” (Bourland 1989: 203). If, as Bourland suggests, misuse of the copula results in *Deity mode of speech* (Bourland Jr & Kellogg III, 1990) then not using the copula results in *Human mode of speech*. I composed the creative work using this constraint.

Typically a literary work composed using a constraint requires some form of explicit instruction for the reader. *Scoundrel Days* does not require any reading instructions. Research reveals that since the invention of the constraint in 1933 until the present no one has written a creative work in 100% E-Prime (Bourland Jr & Kellogg III, 1990). Therefore, I present *Scoundrel Days* as the first creative work in history written in 100% English Prime. The result? The problem of show don't tell fades to insignificance as the narrative moves from the showing to *the doing*. The process of authoring this work proved an interesting and creative endeavor, recorded in following exegesis.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where cited and referenced in the thesis itself.

(Signed)

Brentley Frazer

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Publications arising from the dissertation

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Frazer, B. (2014) 'Aftermath: an extract from *Scoundrel Days, a memoir*', *Antithesis* Vol. 24, 2014, pp. 5-12

Amid thunder, the golden house of *is*
Collapses, and the word *becoming* ascends. (Miłosz 1956)

Sin, guilt, neurosis; they are one and the same, the fruit of the tree of
knowledge. (Miller 1941, p. 11)

There is actually no Oulipian book I can think of, no book written by an Oulipian
author, that does not include some explicit reading instructions, sometimes more
direct and sometimes less so, but always including some form or another
of self exegesis. (Ruiz 2014, p. 286)

At present, to our knowledge no one (let alone an artistic genius)
has ever tried to write a novel, or epic poem, in 100% E-Prime.
(Bourland, Jr & Kellogg III 1990, pp. 384-85)

Notes on a Scoundrel: An Exegesis

1. Origins

The decision to write memoir originated with my endeavour to create an authentic voice in a work of literature. As a reader, the voice makes me love a book. I believe a true story is the place to begin. *Scoundrel Days* results from a conscious experimentation with ‘reality’, both in the real world ‘out there’ and in the way that these experiences are recorded as a work of literary art. This experimentation appears subtextually in my narrative: a real boy who is a character in a story, and the boy in the story is a writer who instigates adventures to see what will happen, so he can write down the outcome in his own story. The plot is character driven and I map the protagonist’s psychosocial evolution metaphorically and by using deictic shifts. I originally intended to present the manuscript of *Scoundrel Days* in eight parts. I intended to plot each part following Erikson’s Psychosocial Crises model.

While there are many human developmental stage theories, e.g., Beck and Cowan's *Spiral Dynamics*, Clare W. Graves's *Emergent Cyclic Levels of Existence Theory*, Jean Piaget's *Theory of Cognitive Development*, and, of course, Freud's *Psychosexual Stages*, I found that Erikson’s model, which describes life stages dovetailed with the plight of my protagonist. These eight stages are abbreviated as follows:

1. Trust v Mistrust (I am what I am given)
2. Autonomy v Shame & Doubt (I am what I can do)
3. Initiative v Guilt (I am what I imagine)
4. Industry v Inferiority (I am what I can achieve)
5. Identity v Role Confusion (who am I)
6. Intimacy v Isolation (I am who I love)
7. Generativity v Stagnation (I am the impact that I make)
8. Integrity v Despair (I am what I have done).

(Chapman 2006-13)

Erikson’s psychosocial theory maps eight ‘psychosocial crisis stages’ which influence individual development and personality. “Each stage involves a crisis of two opposing emotional forces[...] You might also describe this sort of crisis as an internal struggle or challenge which a person must negotiate and deal with in order to grow and develop” (Chapman 2006-13). The psychological tension between ‘syntonic’ or ‘positive’ disposition in each crisis (e.g., Trust) and ‘dystonic’ or ‘negative’ disposition (e.g., Mistrust) as an individual passes between each life crisis determines

whether one achieves psychosocial balance, or, a 'healthy' outcome. Erikson referred to these successful balanced outcomes as 'Basic Virtues'. Following this model a maladaptation results from too much of a good thing and a malignancy arises from not enough.

A healthy balance at crisis stage one (Trust v Mistrust) might be described as experiencing and growing through the crisis 'Trust' (of people, life and one's future development) and also experiencing and growing a suitable capacity for 'Mistrust' where appropriate, so as not to be hopelessly unrealistic or gullible, nor to be mistrustful of everything. (Chapman 2006-13)

Erikson proposed a lifespan model of development, taking in five stages up to the age of 18 years and three further stages beyond, well into adulthood. Considering this, emulating Erikson's table exactly will not work for my memoir which encompasses the years from memories of birth through to my late twenties. Erikson suggests growth and development continue throughout one's life and I interpret this to mean that I can embed tendrils of these stages, including the later life stages of seven and eight, into the macrotext. Erikson puts a great deal of emphasis on the adolescent period, feeling it was a crucial stage for developing a person's identity. It is convenient in this circumstance that the majority of my textual timeline encompasses this important developmental period of adolescence. It is not unusual for writers, poets and other artists to grapple with philosophical and ontological problems; by doing so with this table as a sort of reference gave me clarity in my writing. Concentrating on stages one through seven with number eight flagged as a trope, the reader will be aware of its influence pervading the narrative. The corresponding ages are:

1. Trust v Mistrust (0 – 18months)
2. Autonomy v Shame & Doubt (18 months – 3yrs)
3. Initiative v Guilt (3 – 7yrs)
4. Industry v Inferiority (7yrs – puberty)
5. Identity v Role Confusion (12 – 20yrs)
6. Intimacy v Isolation (20 – 24yrs)
7. Generativity v Stagnation (25+ yrs)
8. Integrity v Despair (I am what I have done).

Erikson maintained that personality develops in a predetermined order, and builds upon each previous stage. This is called the epigenic principle (McLeod 2016). The evolution of my protagonist cannot be considered a natural epigenic arc as it is the result of induced phenomena, implied by a malignancy (in stage one of Erikson's scale) arising from the protagonist/narrator's memory (see Character maps, Appendix D below). Whether or not the memory in question is a result of implanted memory, autosuggestion or transliminal leak comes as a moot point as real world physical (bodily) evidence corroborates the protagonist's memory (Frazer 2017, p. 6).

Erikson's model appealed to me because I really like the idea of juxtaposing virtues and malignancies and using 'real world' psychological development maps to model my characters. For example: my grammatical teenager was preyed upon sexually by a 'priest' who had come to stay in the family home. After relaying the story to my parents they did not believe me, defending the man as a 'servant of the Lord'. I remember feeling intensely betrayed and as a result making a point of letting my parents know that *never again* would I obey them. This established a state of personal identity resulting in life long critical thinking about the nature of authority. On Erikson's scale this is reflected between the ages of 12-20, Identity v Role Confusion. In the real world timeline of my experience this occurred at the age of fourteen and therefor signifies a normal epigenic arc. Yet, what interests me is the dissonance in the observation that while my character sees this antiauthoritarianism as a personal virtue, society at large views it as a social malignancy. This dichotomy and the liminal spaces between is something I wish to explicitly play with.

| Erikson's psychosocial crisis stages (syntonic v dystonic) | Freudian psycho-sexual stages | life stage / relationships / issues | basic virtue and second named strength (potential positive outcomes from each crisis) | maladaptation / malignancy (potential negative outcome - one or the other - from unhelpful experience during each crisis) |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| 1. Trust v Mistrust | Oral | infant / mother / feeding and being comforted, teething, sleeping | Hope and Drive | Sensory Distortion / Withdrawal |
| 2. Autonomy v Shame & Doubt | Anal | toddler / parents / bodily functions, toilet training, muscular control, walking | Willpower and Self-Control | Impulsivity / Compulsion |
| 3. Initiative v Guilt | Phallic | preschool / family / exploration and discovery, adventure and play | Purpose and Direction | Ruthlessness / Inhibition |
| 4. Industry v Inferiority | Latency | schoolchild / school, teachers, friends, neighbourhood / achievement and | Competence and Method | Narrow Virtuosity / Inertia |

| | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| | | accomplishment | | |
| 5. Identity v Role Confusion | Puberty and Genitality | adolescent / peers, groups, influences / resolving identity and direction, becoming a grown-up | Fidelity and Devotion | Fanaticism / Repudiation |
| 6. Intimacy v Isolation | (Genitality) | young adult / lovers, friends, work connections / intimate relationships, work and social life | Love and Affiliation | Promiscuity / Exclusivity |
| 7. Generativity v Stagnation | n/a | mid-adult / children, community / 'giving back', helping, contributing | Care and Production | Overextension / Rejection |
| 8. Integrity v Despair | n/a | late adult / society, the world, life / meaning and purpose, life achievements | Wisdom and Renunciation | Presumption / Disdain |

Table 1. This chart attempts to capture and present concisely the major elements of Erikson's theory, drawn from various Erikson books, diagrams and other references, including *Childhood and Society* (1950); *Identity and the Life Cycle* (1959); *The Life Cycle Completed: A Review* (1982, revised 1996 by Joan Erikson); and *Vital Involvement in Old Age* (1989). Erikson later suggested psychosexual stages 7 and 8, but they are not typically part of Freud's scheme which extended only to Puberty/Genitality. (Krishamstroschine 2016)

At an early point in my writing I printed out Table 1 which maps Erikson's theory in a sort of jig-sawed tabular. I referred to this constantly while writing the internal struggles of my characters as they experience conflicting emotional and psychological challenges and crises. I am not a psychologist, this is literary character research, but this chart helped me understand a personal childhood malignancy around memories of circumcision and subsequent parental explanations about the authority of God. It helped me also realize the Virtue of a strong family bond. During the process and indeed right up to finding a publisher for the creative work, one question from readers resounded: 'How did you survive?'. The day I first met with the publisher of *Scoundrel Days: a memoir* (UQP 2017) the same question arose. Examining the excess of my life and during the writing of the creative work using Erikson's theories prepared me with an answer. As frilly-hanky as it sounds, the Beatles were right. Love. In the creative work I state this explicitly, in a scene where the Main Character is visiting his protagonist/antagonist road trip buddy Reuben after a suicide attempt. The 'boys' return from an adventure gone wrong, starving, hysterical, nerves naked with the flight from a group of murderous carnies and my parents are waiting to take me to safety. Reuben's never come.

After Candy leaves for work, I go and see Reuben at the hospital. They've kept him there for a month now. The first two weeks he drifted in and out. I sit there

reading Kerouac's *On the Road* to his unconscious ears. When he wakes up, he sometimes asks for me.

—Has Brentley visited? he says in a half-dead murmur.

I cry when he does that. I don't see a single member of his family come to visit. This makes me feel like crying also. It makes me think about my family. I *know* they'd come for me. This envelops me in a dark place. When I go there, I cannot withhold my imagination from the abyss. The images come, vivid and sonorous, films on my inner horror channel. Remember, Brentley, harden your armour against Love.

Soon as they let Reuben up, I push him around the hospital grounds in a wheelchair. I bring him things: weed, smokes, books. (Frazer 2017, p. 179)

I believe utilising these psychosocial theories and insights to strengthen the psychology of my main characters results in more effective creative immersion and this in turn enables me to defend my grammatical people's motivations and actions in the narrative. In essence . . . these theories as a literary technique ground my characters and makes them more believable . . . they keep it 'real'.

I then examined the motivations of other characters slated for the narrative and began to construct a character map (pp. 116ff below). As a result all of my characters fit on Table 1 which references both Erikson's and Freud's hypotheses. If malignant ideas or actions are exhibited by my characters, such actions can be explained by an examination of the characters' circumstances. This gives me not only direction in the writing but prompts writing in the form the necessity of a backstory. An example from the manuscript:

Sitting there at a bus stop, sharing his last Gitane with me, Reuben says:

—Have you ever wanted to kill someone?

—Not really . . . A few people I'd like to scar for life.

—You should never say you want to kill someone unless you mean it . . . and even then, you shouldn't say it. You should just do it.

I glance up to see if he has a smile on his face. He doesn't. The Saturday-morning traffic rumbles around us.

—I wanna kill one of my stepfathers. Blow his head off with a shotgun. He flicks his cigarette lighter like a trigger.

—What'd ya stepfather do, the fucker, to make you wanna kill him? . . . Or shouldn't I ask?

—He raped me.

I don't know what to say, so I don't say anything.

—He crushed my balls, destroyed my left.

I audibly choke. Still can't find any words. A bus hisses to a stop and the doors open. The driver looks at us sitting on the bus-stop bench in the side mirror. We don't get up, though I'd sure like to get on the bus and away from Reuben's story. He sort of curls up, like an apostlebird dying in a gutter.

—He then held me over a stove and dipped my feet into a pot of boiling potatoes ... He lives in Cairns now. I found out recently.

The bus doors slam shut and it roars off. Reuben looks at me, sitting here, feeling sick. (Frazer 2017, p. 149)

I also took great care to preserve vernacular idiosyncrasies (new words are learned and absorbed into the narrative) and I have preserved the popular use of slang/figures of speech during the three decades the story spans (e.g., 'yadda yadda' only became popular when Seinfeld aired; and 'yo' enter the schoolyard vernacular in Australia in a particular year). I have emulated this vernacular curve in the narrative, taking care only to use slang in popular use in the real world timeline.

Hurdles

Attempting to write a memoir in first person present perfect presented several immediate problems which became my first priority to solve.

1. Reflective Voice – I found myself unsure whether authors of memoir use this device out of necessity or convention and after much research have concluded it is mainly a convention arising from the oral tradition of storytelling, e.g., *Once Upon a Time there was* . . .
2. Hidden Observer – with the reflective voice comes the disembodied voice of the author/narrator, from outside the text. This also arises from oral traditions where the 'storyteller' had the agency of presence during the relaying of the tale.
3. Tense wobbles – attempting to iron out the reflection by bringing the voice into first person present perfect causes confusion, especially during the shift between direct to reader narration as events occur in the 'real-time' of the story world and reflection during these events, i.e., 'the woman enters the room and this reminds me of the time when . . .'

To overcome these major hurdles, I instituted a set of processes...

Processes

After several writing experiments trying to capture the right syntax and grammatical tone (see e.g., “Writing Experiments” below) I recalled an obscure prescriptive English language discipline known as *English Prime*. In the early 1990s at a book sale I found a copy of *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* which contained a fascinating article by D. David Bourland titled ‘To Be or Not To Be: E-Prime as a Tool for Critical Thinking E-Prime! — The Fundamentals’ (1989). I had experimented with the device for several years while writing imagist poetry and found it very rewarding, but had not considered it as a tool for long form prose. I embarked on some textual experiments using the constraint and felt initially overwhelmed. Realising I needed a thorough working knowledge of English Prime I exhaustively researched everything I could find about the constraint (see Frazer 2016b, p. 52). I then embarked on some short writing experiments using it. To my delight E-Prime seemed to counter at least the first two hurdles in the list above. The third, tense wobbles, I discovered lay solely in my (until now!) lifelong misuse of the copula. I then set about writing longer works. First a nonfiction text that makes explicit reference to the constraint (see “Nothing & Beingness” below) followed by a fictional short piece trying to find a young boy’s voice (see “Clovers in Her Hair” below). Following this I incorporated my own memories and wrote a nonfiction short story about seeing a U2 concert in 1989, titled “Aftermath”. I considered my experiment with “Aftermath” successful when it attained publication in the University of Melbourne peer reviewed creative writing journal *Antithesis* (Frazer 2014) and I ultimately adapted this text as a chapter of the larger complete manuscript of *Scoundrel Days*. To write in E-Prime I learned to think using the constraint and did not utilise word processing capabilities to translate or edit as I wrote. Using word processing utilities to ‘find all’ and rewrite is perilous and does not work – it fragments sentence subjects beyond repair (Frazer 2016a). After ‘breaking through’ and finding myself able to think in E-prime, the resulting immersion and proliferation of eureka moments in my creative process proved deleterious to the discipline of recording not only the process but the inspiration. While writing the memoir, I attempted to exercise the constraint in the exegetical

work as well, but this proved impractical. My original intention of producing creative work and exegesis simultaneously became untenable. I found myself disenchanted with the stylistic limitations of memoir which seems to *require* the reflective voice. As these problems came to the fore and the creative work ground to a halt, I turned to the issue at hand, keeping a record of all my notes, references, thoughts and observations in an exegetical context. I came to see these involuntary breaks from the creative work as a metaphorical jumping off place, a place for reflection.

Traditionally the use of a literary constraint proves itself literal and requires some form of instruction or key while embarking on the text. Pablo Ruiz in *Four Cold Chapters Leading to Borges and Oulipo* (2014) makes explicit reference to this when he states there is “no book written by an Oulipian author, that does not include some explicit reading instructions” (2014, p. 286). *Scoundrel Days* requires no reading instructions. The text presents as an easy to read (Flesch Kincaid Grade level: 7) *Bildungsroman* adventure story in the style of a *Künstlerroman* or Artist’s novel. The narrative follows the poet’s formation to maturity while documenting the conflicts of a sensitive youth in the semiotic environment of his time. Therefore, the creative work itself contains a form of self-exegesis. My research reveals that no writer has authored (or at least published) a creative work entirely in English Prime (dynamic ratio 1:1, see Appendix C – Mrs Crisp) in the history of the constraint (1965 – present). The magnitude of the challenge made itself evident.

I then examined the art of memoir; specifically, what constitutes a memoir and what is its relationship to confessional writing? Where does memoir sit in the spectrum of the genre of literary nonfiction or ‘creative nonfiction’? I came to view answering these questions as taking the first steps toward the door of my exegesis. I then undertook an examination of the process of one creating – or having created – experiences in the real world to write about, and the praxis of authoring the memoir itself. From a critical perspective this section of the exegesis examines the role of ‘reality’ and the veracity of memory as a foundation to create a literary narrative. My lens then zoomed in on the amalgam of literary techniques used to write *Scoundrel Days*, including the use of English Prime and the reasons for employing a prescriptive English to create a more immediate and active prose. My focus then narrowed on the

problem of veracity in a world of subjective truth, ‘truth’ itself and what happens to identity and predication when we write literature without use of the copula.

Traversing the translimen

While standing in a doorway or walking down a hall the traveller exists in a transliminal state. Give agency to this journey person and we have the *Transliminalist*, one crossing (trans) the threshold (limen):

FL Usher and FP Burt (1909) theorised that information from the supraliminal consciousness (above the threshold) experiences ‘transliminal leak’ (across the threshold) to the subliminal consciousness (below the threshold), and from there it is (somehow) transferred to the subliminal consciousness of another person. By a similar process of leakage this information appears in that other person’s supraliminal consciousness. (Thalbourne 2009, p. 119)

I have discovered that utilising E-prime in a way emulates this effect. In all honesty, after four years of experimenting with this constraint I still struggle to explain how it works. I believe it has something to do with the default mode network of human consciousness. The default mode network activates during wakeful rest, when not focused on the outside world, when daydreaming or during mind-wandering and inner reflection, i.e., thinking about others, thinking about yourself, remembering the past or planning for the future (Buckner et al 2008). I think this is what happens when we are presented with a high ratio of visual stimulation, like when watching television. Employing English Prime while writing creatively forces one’s hand to produce a text that contains a high ratio of visual stimulation coupled with dynamic action. The result is a reading experience that is easily visualized and ‘cinematic’. As quoted above: E-Prime “...offers access to dynamics of language ordinarily subliminal” (Zimmerman 2001). This can be coupled with Chandler’s insight: “Exploiting the natural discourse of intertextuality by employing a constraint allows a new potentiality, some form of liberation from language as ‘a system which pre-exists the individual speaker...’” (Chandler 2002, p. 195). The proliferation of detail that arises while thinking and writing in E-Prime creates semantic memory interference and interlopes on subconscious language processing systems. This is further exploitable by using the literary devices of juxtaposition and paradox. The effect is this: while

reading *Scoundrel Days* the reader becomes the narrator and therefore, the author. You can never experience the inner voice of another out here in the real world – the voice which cajoles and argues and tempts the self; this only happens in books, while you silently recite the words of another in your head, or in the movies when you’ve been convinced to suspend your disbelief and go along for the ride. This discounts those who suffer psychiatric disease and resultant sociopathic symptoms such as the classic ‘hearing voices’, but that is an aberration. By utilising these techniques in my creative work, the narrative voice manifests very effectively as the reader’s inner own. This happens with most good books, so my experiment ventures further (in an effort to really hook the reader), by exploiting an inbuilt dissatisfaction function of evolutionary origin. Humans have an appetite for seeking esoteric and metaphysical justification for things they already want to do. Morality conflicts with biological pressures, this is why few religions or cults lack a sexual teaching. Much of our art, culture, politics and technology arises precisely out of our sexual yearnings, fears, desires and dissatisfactions (Carroll 1992, pp. 135-137). Along with several other neuro-linguistic programming techniques, I consider this exploit fair game to secure the attention of the ever distracted reader of literary works. In other words, my scoundrel says what everyone really thinks but is not courageous enough to say, and does the things everyone wishes they could do without remorse or consequence. Of course, in the real world while doing these stupid things, I did suffer many consequences, but that doesn’t matter, the reader already knows I lived to tell the tale; though they have no idea how. These I believe are some essential components for a thrilling story.

Reliving memory

Writing a memoir in first person present perfect (and thereby stepping outside of the genre definition) I employed literary devices to avoid using a ‘dear diary’ narrative while still retaining a confessional voice. Using a confessional tone in turn creates its own problem: the binary counterpart, Judgement. If my own morality taints the voice the reader will identify the *I* as an *other* and the spell will break . . . or to extend my use of cinema and theatre metaphors, suspension of disbelief breaks, and the fourth wall comes crashing down, when I don’t want it to. With some effort, writing without judgement comes as a result of utilising the minimalist technique Recording Angel

(Palahniuk 2002) where the writer practices the intellectual discipline of writing without involving personal or societal aspersions or judgments (eg., Frazer 2017, p. 15 – the Scoundrel encounters a Somnambulist in a phone box). However I soon discovered that coupling Recording Angel with the dynamic voice developed using E-Prime, stresses the reader (*literally* nothing *is* bad or good). In the transliminal state of reading, a dynamic (zero passive) narrative voice that does not pass judgement and does not say *anything is anything else* again gives rise to the spectre of *the other*, and breaks the spell. Already in my early E-Prime experiments I noticed a tendency to dramatise, that I leant toward adapting the present, or incidents, as written scenes. In *Scoundrel Days* all of the dialogue and action is either observed by or involves the narrator. This further again enhances this work's theatrical atmosphere. On discovering this I decided to (occasionally) allow my narrator to 'break the fourth wall' by either exposing the author in the act of writing or addressing the reader directly. I then discovered that this meta-fiction technique served to counter the two problems (*no judgment* is unnatural) by allowing the reader to >temporarily< escape the onslaught of action, to get off the ride, so to speak. I liken this to the effects of some psychedelic drugs which give an occasional window of clarity, like the eye of a cyclone. But don't think that this allows the reader to leave the conceptual space. I don't let the reader venture out in the eye. In the maelstrom they remain.

I counter the spectre of 'the other' (the unnatural one who does not pass judgment) arising by exploiting the trope of the Unreliable Narrator (Booth 1961). Example: Salinger's *Holden Caulfield* likes to pretend at misanthropy yet he never acts needlessly cruel. He alternates between hate and pity and turns all his loathing inwards. As a result Salinger identified a psychic buffer against resultant resentment that arises in the reader when their own inner voice is hijacked. How can you resent a boy who speaks with and in confidence about distressing incidents? By using this device Salinger reveals an egalitarian distaste for the cruelties humans inflict upon one another, an inbuilt and universal morality shared by all, except sociopaths, who are always the outliers as noted above.

An unreliable narrator [. . .] is not simply a narrator who 'does not tell the truth' – what fictional narrator ever tells the literal truth? . . . an unreliable narrator is one who tells lies, conceals information, misjudges with respect to

the narrative audience – that is, one whose statements are untrue not by the standards of the real world or of the authorial audience but by the standards of his own narrative audience. [...] all fictional narrators are false in that they are imitations. But some are imitations who tell the truth, some of people who lie. (Frey 1931, p. 107)

Peter Rabinowitz suggests in an essay titled “Truth in Fiction: A Re-examination of Audiences”: “In the proper reading of a novel [...] events which are portrayed must be treated as both ‘true’ and ‘untrue’ at the same time” (Rabinowitz 1977, p. 121). To accomplish this duality my unreliable narrator utilises hyperbole, paradox, ambiguity and juxtaposition and makes it obvious when doing so, e.g.: “we drank fifty coffees and smoked three hundred cigarettes while we waited”. My unreliable narrator invites trust, he tells the ‘authorial truth’ and proves his honesty, but is he trustworthy? The lovable rogue.

Here, after getting at least a leg over the hurdles encountered so far, I felt confident that I had established a blueprint for my protagonist/narrator/main character. The reflective voice arises predominately from the hidden observer. By stepping my narrator out of the shadows of the authorial voice and into the shoes of a character embedded in the story, as a sort-of self-aware hi-definition cinematic camera, my observer is no longer hidden, rather, he is now both observer *and* participant. If my narrator muses on an incident that has not occurred in the timeline on the narrative (now the memory of the reader) then this is forgiven, for it is the first time he has thought of it himself. Tense wobbles experienced while writing this way soon faded to insignificance as a result of abandoning the copula. I started to write in earnest, adjusting focus, zooming in on the proliferation of detail found in that transliminal space usually occupied by ‘to be’. I now regard ‘to be’ as a static conceptual state crowded with assumptions and godlike assertions such as ‘is’ and ‘was’ and ‘were’ and lordly affirmations about abstract hypotheses on the nature of the intangible, on what ‘being’ means. In short, Deity Mode of Speech.

Here, however, as I headlong boogied into writing memoir, I hit the guardrails of genre with tremendous force. While in the act of writing down my memories using creative writing techniques I encountered an inclination to ‘dress-up’ the story, because treating what you are presenting as a boring old fact with creative devices

leads one, naturally, down a creative path. I stopped the creative writing here and turned my attention on learning the rules of the memoir genre or, in my metaphor, I needed to learn how to hold the camera, what to point it at and when, and how far a writer can manipulate a scene for dramatic purposes before ‘reality’ becomes ‘hyper-real’ or outright fiction attempting to pass itself off as ‘truth’.

2. Memoir: Literature’s changeling

The literary genre of ‘memoir’ has always been tainted. To the average reader (a reader who does not approach a text critically, i.e., does not think about the writing *and* the story) a memoir represents a stuffy tome written by a retired politician, or at best, a rock star recounting the depths of her depravity. For me, ‘memoir’ brings to mind an image of a decrepit statesman stroking a regal Persian cat by a fireplace as he proselytizes past triumphs into a brandy snifter. My research into the genre of memoir reveals that, at best, ‘memoir’ is marketing terminology. Several recently published works that fall into this genre avoid using the term, such as Cheryl Strayed’s best-seller *Wild* (2013). While touted as either a creative nonfiction by Oprah Winfrey or a memoir by the *New York Times*, the book has ‘biography’ stamped on the back. Technically a biography is not written by the subject themselves. A sample of dictionary definitions of ‘biography’, from the medieval Greek *bios* (life) and *graphia* (writing), do not reveal the provenance of the accepted idea that biography must be *about* a subject and not *by* the subject. Most readers as a result are confused by the distinctions between biography, autobiography and memoir (I don’t blame them).

The following sample of definitions from several dictionaries demonstrates that biography or ‘life writing’ applies equally to three distinct genres. In each case below, the first dot-point entry is from *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*; the second is from the *Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged*; and the third from the *Random House Kernerman Webster’s College Dictionary*:

Biography:

- An account of a person’s life written, composed, or produced by another.
- An account of a person’s life by another.

- A written account of another person's life.

Autobiography:

- The biography of a person written by that person.
- An account of a person's life written or otherwise recorded by that person.
- A history of a person's life written or told by that person.

Memoir:

- An account of the personal experiences of an author.
- A biography or historical account, esp. one based on personal knowledge.
- A record of events based on the writer's personal observation.

But wait... let's confuse things further:

Memoir:

1. An account of the personal experiences of an author.
2. An autobiography. Often used in the plural.
3. A biography or biographical sketch.

(The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language)

Technically, according to these definitions, I could write the 'memoir' of another author who is not me and still claim it as an autobiography and a biographical sketch simultaneously. As an experimental creative writer I felt very tempted to play with this genre ambiguity. However, my research and an early experience with a publisher alerted me to the fact that producing a *memoir* is very serious business. While it may at face value present as a simple marketing category, publishers tread warily when dealing with the genre. I submitted the manuscript of *Scoundrel Days* to a major publisher and after it landed on the desk of the director of publishing it was then forwarded to the head of the nonfiction imprint. She wrote to me with an encouraging review of the work, but inferred that an anonymous human with no prior public fame or infamy cannot expect anyone to buy their *memoir* and 'we are not in the game on our costing models here I am sorry'. I saw this same publishing editor on television that same week proudly announcing a half million dollar advance for the 'memoirs' of a recently ousted Prime Minister. Again, brandy and Persian cats.

I wondered, will that ousted prime minister reveal the truth in her memoir or the redacted state-sanctioned version of events? The problem of veracity is ever present in these contemporary times and not only because of state secrets. cursory research

reveals the names of many publishers and authors ruined for defamation and misrepresentation of facts. One infamous case of falsified memoir is James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* (2003). Chosen by Oprah Winfrey for her book club, "she raved about his former life as a drug addict" (Barton 2006). As a result, Frey's memoir received a massive readership until it was revealed that he had taken liberties with the truth. Winfrey again featured Frey and berated him live on air:

I have to say it is difficult for me to talk to you because I feel duped, she told him. But more importantly, I feel that you betrayed millions of readers.
(Barton 2006)

Soon after, a legal settlement "required Frey and his American publisher, Doubleday, to provide refunds to readers who felt they were defrauded in buying a book classified as memoir" (Barton 2006). *A Million Little Pieces* is now published with "a note to the reader" included, an extract from this states:

I worked primarily from memory. I also used supporting documents, such as medical records, therapists' notes, and personal journals, when I had them [...] I altered events and details all the way through the book [...] I made other alterations in my portrayal of myself, most of which portrayed me in ways that made me tougher and more daring and more aggressive than in reality I was, or I am [...] My mistake, and it is one I deeply regret, is writing about the person I created in my mind to help me cope, and not the person who went through the experience. ("Frey Adds Disclaimer To 'Million Little Pieces'", 2017)

I take Frey's public berating and his disclaimer as a valuable lesson . . . to tread carefully with my own textual hyperbole. It is at this point that I decided to portray my grammatical self with spare heroics and make it obvious that hyperbole is employed for dramatic effect. In fact, I decided to go a step further and not portray myself as admirable in any way, and further again, to portray myself as quite the opposite of tough . . . at least, not physically. I do not want to include a disclaimer beyond a simple sentence declaring that I changed names for the privacy of the people I wrote about.

Further research into the Frey case reveals Melissa Stoecker writing: "It is common now for authors [of memoir] to include a statement . . . acknowledging that the events

are true to the best of his or her knowledge” (Stoeger 2013, p. 4). Stoeger also quotes Rosalind Reisner who said: “Life stories are literature and that may be the only truth” (p. 4). I think this frames my earlier argument perfectly, that with writing down facts creatively, no matter the intentions of the author, the art of story telling itself induces distortion. Certainly in my view an analytic or interpretive literary composition exists somewhere in the middle between autobiography and essay. If the author’s intentions are critical, not only from a perspective of historical accuracy, but also as an examination of their own motivations, the praxis of writing a memoir is in itself a form of exegesis. It is interesting to note that Frey had written what could be a subtextual admission in *A Million Little Pieces*: “Lying became part of my life. I lied if I needed to lie to get something or get out of something” (Frey 2003, p. 349).

Taking my own advice and thinking critically about my own motivations to write a memoir I realised that this limitation, one of subjective truth, is not my real concern; I have no desire to mislead my readers, only to entrance and thrill. Hyperbole used carefully in this context adds fuel to the fire of a dynamic narrative. Still, a thorough examination of the territory is necessary.

So, let’s consider:

The art of memoir

American memoirist Patricia Hampl called *memoir*: “literature’s changeling, the bad apple, ever suspect, slightly illegitimate, a brassy parvenu talking too much about itself” (Hampl 2008, p. 141). In *The New Yorker* magazine, author Nancy Franklin made the observation that:

in the last few years, as the best-seller lists have seen a steady march of memoirs and biographies that tell all—or purport to tell all—an observer of our culture could reasonably conclude that we believe that a life isn’t worth living unless everyone examines it. (Franklin 1998, p. 1)

The history of memoir is a path littered with what Freud referred to as ‘indiscretion and mendacity’ (Mendelsohn 2010). It could be argued that indiscretion is itself a motivation for writing a memoir in the first place (as noted with my quip about the excesses of rock stars above). Contemporary fascination with glossy gossip

magazines and the exorbitant sums of money paid to celebrities to ‘reveal their reality’ support this argument. Celebrity paparazzi photographs and ‘leaked’ sex tapes are big business. Popular culture has developed a taste for the dirty truth. Indiscretion has become an industry. Readers of memoir perhaps have voyeuristic tendencies. As Mendelsohn says in an essay examining the history of memoir:

Unseemly self-exposures, unpalatable betrayals, unavoidable mendacity, a soupçon of meretriciousness: memoir, for much of its modern history, has been the black sheep of the literary family. Like a drunken guest at a wedding, it is constantly mortifying its soberer relatives (philosophy, history, literary fiction)—spilling family secrets, embarrassing old friends—motivated, it would seem, by an overpowering need to be the centre of attention. (Mendelsohn 2010)

‘Unavoidable mendacity’ . . . unavoidable untruthfulness? Mendelsohn infers that a writer of memoir *cannot* resist deceiving the reader. I think he refers here to the already discussed penchant for self-aggrandizement that arises when writing of self, but what exactly *is* Truth? The question of capital t Truth here requires an examination of *what defines truth in a literary work of memoir*. Memory itself is a greased piglet. Both from an anatomical and an existential perspective. Research by neuroscientist Donna Bridge suggests that memory reframes and edits events to create a story to fit your current world. In a press release from Northwestern University announcing recent results Bridge writes: “A memory is not simply an image produced by time traveling back to the original event – it can be an image that is somewhat distorted because of the prior times you remembered it . . .” (Bridge 2012). This early research by Bridge culminated in the publication of her study in 2016 which received broad media interest due to implications raised for witness testimony in courts of law. Like the ‘whispered message’ game, the ‘facts’ of the original memory corrupt very early in the chain of messengers. As Matthew Mientka writes of Bridge’s research in *Medical Daily* journal:

One child’s memory begins with a snapshot and then another. Black and white moves to color. Video begins to roll. These moments are verified by Kodachrome and memorialized in hardcover photo albums. Later, they move to the cloud – an emerging repository of collective human memory. But even memory backed by photographic evidence is subject to revision. In recalling

past events, the mind often inserts new information into the memory, which then conforms with a continuously changing life narrative. (Mientka 2014)

Bridge herself explains that essentially she has tracked down the place in the physical brain where the act of memory storage occurs and that these places are like the cloud (to borrow Mientka's simile). Bridge says:

When someone tells me they are sure they remember exactly the way something happened, I just laugh... The reason for the distortion ... is the fact that human memories are always adapting. Memories aren't static... If you remember something in the context of a new environment and time, or if you are even in a different mood, your memories might integrate the new information. (Bridge 2012)

Another journalist uses aphorism and simile to describe Bridge's research:

According to a recent study, just as you can't step in the same river twice, your memories are changed by the act of recalling them, meaning that every memory we have is coloured by the times we've recollected it before. The research, conducted by *Northwestern Medicine* and published this week in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, shows that recalling a memory more often makes that memory less accurate, and that every time you take a memory off the shelf in your brain, you put it back just a tiny bit different. (Chant 2016)

So now I have convinced myself that memory itself should be approached with suspicion, I feel I have established some parameters in that liminal space between real and believable. Readers don't seem particularly concerned with the 'truth', but I must resist overdressing the narrative self with grammatical heroics. Outright lie, and risk falling down a Frey hole! Using real lived experience to author a written work of art can be likened here to seeing myself as simply one photographer in a huge room full of shooters interpreting what they subjectively see as a result of the sum of their personal creative praxis and perception of the 'world' out there. Understanding a little about the machinations of memory definitely gives focus to my question: *what defines truth in a literary work of memoir?*

Gore Vidal writes in his memoir, *Palimpsest*:

A memoir is how one remembers one's own life, while an autobiography is history, requiring research, dates, facts double-checked. I've taken the memoir route on the ground that even an idling memory is apt to get right what matters most. I used to say proudly, that I would never write a memoir, since I am not my own subject. (Vidal 1995, pp. 5-6)

Here Vidal demonstrates the flexibility of the genre I have come to appreciate. Vidal implies that memoir doesn't require verification of fact, that memoir should not be considered historical. He also exposes memoir's now familiar contradiction, the problem of truth, the subjective motivations of the author. A discipline I have established in my personal creative practice is to look out for gems of wisdom from wherever they may come. American comedian and social commentator Will Rogers put his finger on this sore spot in Memoir's liver when he wrote:

"When you put down the good things you ought to have done, and leave out the bad ones you did do - well, that's Memoirs."
(Rogers 1949, p. 264)

This inspires me to include in my memoir at least some of the bad things I have done. This edict will, perhaps, in turn, work to convince the reader of the text's veracity, to purposely include, or confess, to things that appear stranger than fiction yet credible. Novelist Daniel Defoe was one of the first authors who traversed this liminal space, he

shook everything up. While some readers realized Crusoe was fiction, others believed it to be true [...] but Defoe wasn't trying to deceive anyone. He merely recognized, and was one of the first authors to exploit, the fact that human beings respond powerfully to narratives that are (or make credible claims to be) true. (Yagoda 2009, pp. 47-48)

Obvious debts to Daniel Defoe aside, a passage from the introduction to *Moll Flanders* (1722) provides me with the entire blueprint of my creative work. This sums up my aim to attain a balanced juxtaposition of Beauty/Ugly:

To give the History of a wicked Life repented of, necessarily requires that the wick'd Part should be made as wicked, as the real History of it will bear; to illustrate and give a Beauty to the Penitent part, which is certainly the best and brightest, if related with equal Spirit and Life. (Defoe 1722, p. 5)

The author of a personal memoir will invariably be presenting their own view of themselves, whether or not they make an authentic effort to be factually accurate. Others would say that “the truth, such as it is, is created in the writing ... how they tell their stories offers a kind of truth in itself, whether or not this coincides with such facts as can be discovered” (Clack 2011). We know the parameters of memoir, memory itself, cannot be trusted. Herein also lies the opportunity to explicitly play with this cognitive dissonance that arises in the reader, that desire to suspend disbelief and enjoy the ride. I aimed to incrementally encourage comfort with holding two contradictory thoughts in mind, to wrap them up in the moment, to boil them alive. When the narrator admits lies and distortion, or ‘dressing up’ this invites trust. If the narrator says he is unsure what is real and what is imagined how can anyone suspect otherwise? Confabulation, therefore, within the text of *Scoundrel Days* is a trope: “*Confabulation* is a memory disturbance in which a person confuses imagined scenarios with actual memories with no intent to deceive” (Pedersen 2016). An example of this in my creative work is where the narrator is exposed writing everything down as the scene unfolds. This plants the idea that the ‘read’ is trustworthy, already the reader knows that the narrator is prone to hyperbole and flights of imagination. Keep in mind however, that for a lot of the lived experience in my memoir, I was more often than not under the influence of alcohol, cannabis and hallucinogenic drugs. As I have already worked to eradicate the hidden narrator or invisible observer (and along with it any foreshadowing of past or future), when a scene happens in the narrative, no-one, including the author/narrator and characters within have been any further in the timeline, but in the real world out here, we know this not true. A book is an artefact.

I feel a lot more room to move now in the enclave of memoir. All of this research and experimentation however made me begin to really think about why I want to write this kind of book. My fascination with literary memoir and semi-autobiographical fiction began with Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and its sequel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). That story, vivid and alive for me as a child, became even more so when as an older boy I discovered the stories’ historical origins. A defining moment in my personal self awareness came about when I realised that not only did Twain invent Tom Sawyer to represent himself, but also the author Samuel

L. Clemens used the name Mark Twain to represent the writer he saw himself to be. Of this Clemens said: “Truth is the most valuable thing we have. Let us economise it” (Twain 1897). This cognitive dissonance in Twain’s writing is what makes him king of my favourite authors. Does he mean that he seeks to protect the truth in his writing or to not overuse it, or both! Twain’s reality bending – the creation of fictional characters as a tool to portray a personally experienced reality – has influenced my entire body of work to date. I remember making the resolution in my journal in my formative years (on Erikson’s scale, in the years of epigenic Identity v Role Confusion) to live a life as interesting and adventuresome as possible, so that I could write about it. Later, around the age of eleven I ventured beyond the classic Twain canon of Sawyer and Finn and read *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916) and the following quote, I believe, is what cemented my aspiration to live a literary life, to emulate the characters in my favourite books and to instigate real but unusual experiences.

There is no God, no universe, no human race, no earthly life, no heaven, no hell. It is all a Dream, a grotesque and foolish dream. Nothing exists but you. And You are but a Thought — a vagrant Thought, a useless Thought, a homeless Thought, wandering forlorn among the empty eternities. (Twain 1916, p. 48)

This aspiration for a literary life I view as a type of *protagonist*; rather than a leading character there is a central theme, or *horse* of *Scoundrel Days*. I borrow the term ‘horse’ from the minimalism school of thought championed by author Chuck Palahniuk.

The metaphor is – if you drive a wagon from Utah to California, you use the same horses the whole way. Substitute the word ‘themes’ or ‘choruses’ and you get the idea. (2002)

Writing *Scoundrel Days* in first person present perfect made maintaining the authentic voice quite formulaic. I gradually increased conceptual complexity in the narrative, rather than doing something obvious, like decreasing the quality of the writing. To do this I created a vernacular style sheet (p. 117). How deep my literary child is immersed in psychosocial circumstances follows Erikson’s model, so I map the development of my protagonist’s vernacular by placing emphasis on the way speech patterns shift in the timeline according to the particular author or book he was most

influenced by chronologically. As the narrator learns new words, they are absorbed into his vernacular. It is a natural progression that the sophistication of speech increases as time advances. I had had the privilege of witnessing this first hand in my four year old son. If someone uses an expletive in his presence he absorbs the word very effectively. At first he will use it out of context, not understanding the grammatical implications or social taboos involved in its employment. Soon, he learns its implications and much to my chagrin uses it contextually. A recent example: We live on a street with terrible parking and the added annoyance of a gym on the same block. Often when returning home from picking up the children from day care there will be no parks on our street. On one occasion as we arrived home a person alighted from a car parked right in front of our house wearing gym gear. My wife said: ‘Damn gym bunnies taking all the parks’. Now my son sits on the veranda and calls out to anyone who parks on our street: ‘Hey, you damn gym bunny, don’t take all the parks’.

Taking care to emulate this arc using vernacular idiosyncrasies is an intellectual constraint I term Immersion Complexity. I borrow the term *Immersion* from *The Field Guide for Immersion Writing: Memoir, Journalism, and Travel* (Hemley 2012). Right away this book asks the big question: “[...] aren’t all memoirs immersions?” (p. 11). Hemley believes that “the immersion memoirist takes on some outward task or journey in order to put his/her life in perspective”. She writes:

the difference between immersion journalism and immersion memoir is that *an immersion journalist is primarily interested in reporting on the world outside herself while using the self as a vehicle for that information [...]* the immersion memoirist is interested in self-revelation or evaluation while using the outside work as her vehicle. (Hemley 2012, p. 11, italics mine)

I am more interested in what Hemley believes the *immersion journalist* does. My characters exist in a time and place and that is a semiotic space, a symbolic environment. If a word or phrase did not exist outside the narrative (in the ‘real’ world) then it cannot exist in the text. All the characters must stay in character and for this I built a Character Map (p. 116 below) following this guideline:

- Each major character fits the Erikson model
- Has literary device(s) assigned
- These grammatical persons are assigned personal deixis.

- Each character has a grammatical mood arising from individual set of pronouns

For clarity I offer this definition:

Immersion Complexity – The intellectual and vernacular capacity of a grammatical person dependent on psychosocial virtue, maladaptation and/or malignancy and the constraints of the narrative timeline.

The early years of my memoir unashamedly borrows some of the affectations of Twain’s Mississippi roustabouts, because, in real life, I also emulated some (a lot) of Tom Sawyer’s speech patterns and idiosyncratic mannerisms. I was so obsessed with Twain’s characters I role played Tom’s adventures with my (often reluctant) childhood friends. In *Scoundrel Days* my early Main Character often swaggers about and adopts Twain’s poetic transitions for time *presently* and place *by* (the river, etc.). The intertextuality of the influences are not disguised nor is how they play out in the narrative. I explicitly borrow and textually cite from techniques developed by my influences. As the protagonist develops, the story is littered with various references, use of language, literary allusions and ways of being.

To recap: I decided to live my life embracing Oscar Wilde’s tenet that “Life imitates art far more than art imitates life” (1999, p. 62). I did this primarily so that my life would be interesting enough to write about, making myself, in the process, a very black sheep indeed. To counter the problem of ‘truth’ I followed a regimented discipline of ‘honesty’. With Vidal’s definition in mind – “memoir is how one remembers one’s own life” (1995) I resolved to resist stretching or dressing up the memories. I consider this, writing without embellishment, itself, a constraint.

I did my best, however, to describe everything as poetically as I am able.

Reality hacking

The subtext of the story, deliberately seeking out or instigating experiences in real life that most people would naturally never have, I call ‘Reality Hacking’. I borrow the term from the online ‘hacktivist’ movement which aims to disrupt mass media communication with altered more socially aware messages or memes. I use reality

hacking to differentiate my concept from the more culturally prominent ‘Life Hacking’ which is about increasing productivity in the workplace. Tired of waiting around for adventures to happen, I created them. Consider that it is only possible to examine the process of creating experiences in the real world to write about after the fact, during the authoring of the memoir itself. Here I expose my only ‘lie’. Because I am writing in first person present and because I have chosen to use the device of breaking the fourth wall by exposing the author in the act of writing, it is necessary for me to fabricate this happening when it is not conceivable that someone is sitting writing after a horrible car crash or while watching a stabbing in the schoolyard. Keeping in mind Clack’s statement “the truth, such as it is, is created in the writing” (Clack 2011), finding the right way to write down these stories proved the greatest challenge of all.

At this point I thought again of how to avoid an explicit ‘dear diary’ voice, so I wrote a synopsis of my memoir (just a mess of a timeline really) and considering the work’s already theatrical leanings I embraced this tendency and looked at Phillips and Huntley’s Dramatica theory of story “which functions to present all the ways a mind can look at an issue” (Phillips & Huntley 2001, p. 16). I found this theory useful to counter some of my concerns about having one peacock narrator and many pigeons. Dramatica theory makes provisions for distinctions between the Main Character, the Protagonist and the Hero in a story:

A Main Character is the player through whom the audience experiences the story first hand, a Protagonist is the prime mover of the plot and a Hero is a combination of both Main Character and Protagonist. (Phillips & Huntley 2001, p. 27)

Considering Mendelsohn’s statement that authors of memoir are “motivated, it would seem, by an overpowering need to be the centre of attention” (Mendelsohn 2010, p. 1), for *Scoundrel Days* this is *not* my intention, i.e., to focus on myself. I have determined the following distinction:

- The Main Character is the Author who serves as the reader’s position in the story – the *I*.
- The Protagonist is the idea that life imitates art.
- The Heroes are all of the other characters.

To further water down my concerns about the ever present raging ‘I’ that would inevitably present itself in the telling of my story, I adopted both Rimbaud’s observation that “I is another” (1871) and Jean Genet’s defence of his own *I* when he stated: “*I*, is just a slightly magnified character” (1991).

Several academics have argued about what Rimbaud meant by his famous statement. Richard Stuart Dixon (whose biography simply states ‘is a person’) has argued on a website:

‘I’ is a constructed identity, so it cannot be the agent who constructs it and uses it. (Dixon 2015)

This is quite a bewildering sentence, but after thinking about it I interpret it to mean, using Dixon’s bio statement as a clue: the *I is never what it claims to be, rather, I is what it does*.

I think the most useful deconstruction comes from Richard Hell in the *New York Times* Sunday Book Review:

[C]omplacent assertions [made by Edmund White in his 2008 biography of Rimbaud], such as that Rimbaud’s famous declaration (in a letter written at age 16), ‘Je est un autre’ (‘I is someone else’), ‘meant that in the act of introspection we objectify the self, we experience our self as if it belongs to another person’ [...] take banality to the point of distortion. It’s self-evident that examining oneself predicates a pair. But ‘I is another’ is exhilarating, a revelation, which, at the very least, acknowledges one’s undifferentiated human substance or collectivity, as for a child ... who is present at his own invention as an actor in life [...] and, as Rimbaud adds, ‘I am present at the explosion of my thought. I watch and I listen to it. I wave the baton; the symphony murmurs from its depths or comes leaping onto the stage’. One witnesses one’s invention by life, while one plays oneself like a symphonic conductor, in the meantime dreaming a million dreams. (Hell 2008)

I like this, a lot: “for a child ... who is present at his own invention as an actor in life” and “One witnesses one’s invention by life, while one plays oneself like a symphonic conductor”. I absorbed these into script for *Scoundrel Days*.

For this exercise it was important that I remember that *I* exist only as a grammatical person within the confines of a narrative world that does not exist beyond the pages it is written on. It is also an important distinction to make that within this textual world nothing exists outside of it either.

With this pursuit in mind – of attaining an authentic voice and an immersive reading experience – I have adopted, modified and invented myriad literary tools and techniques.

I have also mastered the fine art of indiscretion.

The age-old adage ‘write about what you know’ I interpret to mean that one should experience all the things you wish to write about. Hunter S Thompson who championed participatory or, ‘gonzo’ journalism, “would instigate events himself, often in a prankish or belligerent manner, and then document both his actions and those of others” (Corey 2007). In an interview in a *Rolling Stone* anthology Thompson stated that he based his style on William Faulkner’s tenet that “fiction is often the best fact” (Dahl, George-Warren & Kahn 1998, p. 67). The deliberate decision to artificially induce experiences as material to tell an interesting true story not only blurs, but erases the line between fiction and reality.

French Philosopher Jean Baudrillard maintained that humans have lost the capacity to comprehend reality as it actually exists. He wrote:

The very definition of the real has become: that of which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction... The real is not only what can be reproduced, but that which is always already reproduced: that is the hyperreal... which is entirely in simulation. (Baudrillard 1983, p. 338)

Try to imagine it: a copy of something which has no original ... really, it’s not so hard if you consider 3D modelling software and the advent of 3D printers. My aim, to reproduce a lived experience in the present tense doesn’t seem so unattainable with that in mind, that the real is: “that of which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction”. Baudrillard also said:

And so art is everywhere, since artifice is at the very heart of reality. And so art is dead, not only because its critical transcendence is gone, but because reality itself, entirely impregnated by an aesthetic which is inseparable from its own structure, has been confused with its own image. Reality no longer has the time to take on the appearance of reality. It no longer even surpasses fiction: it captures every dream even before it takes on the appearance of a dream. (1983, p. 340)

I resolve here to allow elements of Magical Realism to seep through into the otherwise quotidian observations of my narrator. This lends favourably to the narrator's real world experiences as liberal dosages of hallucinogenic drugs were consumed in the living of the written. It is therefor accepted, no, even *expected*, that if someone is writing on drugs, or writing about experiences that included drugs, that allegory, fable and myth colour the story. These drugs were consumed from a perspective of trying to see the underlying mechanisms of the observed and the observer. This is the very definition of Magical Realism: "The first of the terms 'Magischer Realismus' or magic realism, was coined in Germany in the 1920's in relation to the painting of the Weimar Republic that tried to capture the mystery of life behind the surface of reality" (Bowers 2004, p. 2). Essentially, this is also a definition of poetry.

Here a few things really came together for me. I started to think of the words on the page as the surface, even above the surface, more like the varnish above the real painting below. The varnish however purposefully applied alters the original hue of the painting. But it's to protect the painting! We all know what the road to hell is paved with. I've established that my narrator will never seek to truly shock to the point of revulsion in the reader, rather only to titillate and induce a bit of *schadenfreude*, a good evil snigger. But Why? I ask myself, and here I examined my intentions, good, or otherwise.

Richard Dettering, in his seminal essay *The Language of Moral Responsibility*, stated:

We do not just experience other people—we read them or listen to them. More so, we read or listen into their behaviour the private experiences of our own life. (Dettering 1967, p. 421)

From the personal experience of being a boy attempting to emulate the adventures of Tom Sawyer, Detering's insight, to me, makes perfect sense. It also reveals why confessional literature and the authors of such, have a reputation as a moral contagion. Two of the authors who influence me most in the art of prose, Jean Genet and Henry Miller, faced obscenity trials for their literature. How do I balance obscenity and innocence? Perhaps the key is manipulation of context. Chandler's insight comes up again: "Exploiting the natural discourse of intertextuality by employing a constraint allows a new potentiality, some form of liberation from language as 'a system which pre-exists the individual speaker...'" (Chandler 2002, p. 195).

Here I made a nonlinear leap...

Considering that my characters are plotted on Erikson's psychosocial map, if I exploited the natural discourse of the 'average' reader's psychological development and did not transgress (far) beyond what is considered normal, then the reader will not become stressed (too shocked) and a balance might be attained. In other words, the twelve year old boy who is initiated into sexual intercourse by a girl of similar age must use language to describe this encounter which conforms to the psychosocial development of an average twelve year old (stage 4. in Erikson's model: Industry v Inferiority or the *Latency* stage in Freud's model). This in essence is a form of psychological intertextuality. The reader draws on their own experiences, and this is obligatory. To understand certain words or phrases in a sentence the listener, or reader, requires contextual information. This indicates a limit to language, purer forms of expression such as music or birdcalls don't require context, they create context. This is observable in anyone who has a memory triggered by a particular song, human or animal. Recently, while visiting a bird sanctuary a large peacock broke into song. I found myself immediately transported back to childhood among the cool rainforest trees in far north Queensland, where I last heard a real peacock singing while visiting a property that had hundreds of the birds running free. The context of a situation dictates its impact on the observer/reader/viewer; consider the difference between finding and reading a handwritten diary detailing personal sexual adventures and a collection of fictional erotic tales; or a sex scene in a Hollywood movie as opposed to an x-rated pornographic film made by your flatmate and her girlfriend and

left in the video machine. This shift of context, of authenticity, the belief that something is real or private, not staged and packaged as entertainment, is the key. (Remember though, simply believing something doesn't make it real.) The contents of the explicit diary may well be only fantasies, but because they are obviously not written for an audience the reader has no way to determine fact from fiction. The context of the situation dictates the experience. I considered this the first great challenge with finding the right voice for my protagonist.

Way point

- My goal: produce a text that the reader feels they should not be reading; a voice in the reader's head that they believe they are overhearing, or (ultimately) turn my reader into a voyeur and make sure they can't stop watching.
- From the French, *memoire*, meaning "memory"
- Narrow focus: not the author's entire life like an autobiography
- Features same narrative structure as a novel
- Writer's contemplation: therapeutic exercise
- Fictional devices even though story is true
- Higher emotional level
- Creative license

The challenge was to do this in a voice that is intimate and confessional, written like I never intended anyone to read it. If I were able to maintain this state of mind while authoring this work, I believed my resolution of honesty would be successful. Of course, attempting to do this, to write like I never intended it for a reader, gives rise to the imagined audience. As the saying goes: A god ignored is a demon born. I *expected* the vengeful spectres of my own fantasies of a wide readership to come to the fore (they already are, right here, in this first draft of the exegesis, before I've written a word of my manuscript).

Jean Genet (1910-1986) is a great influence on my literary endeavours. A master of the inversion of ideals, of finding beauty in gutters and starshine in mudpuddles, his most famous work, *The Thief's Journal* (1964) exemplified one of his central tenets:

Crimes of which a people is ashamed constitute its real history. The same is true of man. (Sguigna 2009, p. 60)

This again strengthens my determination to include events in my narrative which are literally a confession, things of which I am ashamed. *The Thief's Journal* is a part fictional, part factual, autobiographical novel which, due to Genet applying this tenet, reads as an explicit portrayal of smut and crime, and resulted in a ban on all of his works in early 1950's America which seemed to regard his works as some form of moral contagion.

Henry Miller (1891-1980) is known for departing from existing literary forms and developing a new sort of genre-breaking novel that is a mixture of autobiography, character study, social criticism, philosophical reflection, surrealist free association, explicit language, sex and mysticism, one that is distinctly always about and expressive of the real-life Henry Miller and yet is also fictional (Dearborn 1991, p 12). Writers owe a lot to Miller. While his work suffered the same fate as Genet with an obscenity trial in 1961 after the publication of *Tropic of Cancer*, it resulted in Miller being credited in the canon with such salutations as:

Somewhere between art and ideology, Henry Miller's contributions to 20th-century culture are undeniable, chief among them the free speech that we now take for granted in literature. Even before the first publication of *Tropic of Cancer* in France in 1934 (its notorious obscenity kept it illegal in the United States until 1961), Miller had also perfected one tradition of bohemian mythology that made poverty and exile guarantees of professional integrity. (Meisel 1991)

Whether or not these authors deliberately sought out 'unnatural' experience or embraced poverty and exile as inspiration for their literature is debatable, but their actions, meticulously observed and preserved, still delight and shock readers today.

Considering the fate of authors who write truthfully about their experiences and the fact that I have chosen to portray my own sexual development from childhood as explicitly as my description of place, I took great care with these parts of the writing. My intention was to not be obscene. Obscene is deliberately shocking. A personal diary has no reader to titillate, no one to shock . . . it is confession, not to an imagined reader, but to a feared god. This really helped iron out any surges of grandeur in my character, any dressing up or heroics written made me turn back inward to try and

understand my motivation to step outside of my self-imposed constraint. In the Age of the Sexual Predator honest depictions of childhood sexual development may be viewed as intentionally sensationalist, or worse.

The thing that concerned me the most: due to some of the excessive (instigated) scenes and behaviour which exist outside the realms of normal experience I worried that my story would not be believable despite my efforts. As discussed, to obtain the atmosphere of authenticity, the most important element is the voice of my grammatical narrator. If it is possible to preserve some of the naivety one would find in the diary of a teenager, and if the language projects the honesty and self reflection of a developing mind, then perhaps the problem of believability could be surmounted. There were other problems with believability, also. For example, in a scene in the first chapters of *Scoundrel Days*, the main character encounters a mythical Australian creature, a Yowie. This really happened. I was with an Aboriginal friend who saw it first. I saw it too. I do not know whether it was some form of auto-suggestion resulting from his unadulterated fear at the encounter, or whether it was truly there. The act of writing down these memories revealed a more likely scenario and in the creative work this is evident in the metatext. I remembered that the night before my encounter with the Yowie, 'Trossy' an indigenous boy and I, smoked the stems of a plant named Noogoora Burr. Trossy claimed that he was shown how to smoke this plant by 'Uncle Parky' an elderly man who was chosen by his tribe as Kuradji – or clever man, which at the time I misunderstood to be a type of witchdoctor or shaman. At first I thought this psychedelic plant responsible and most likely the explanation for my encounter with the mythical creature. I have since researched Noogoora Burr (*Xanthium occidentale*) and found it listed as a pest weed by the government Department of Land Resource Management. Noogoora Burr was introduced into Australia by accident with cotton seed. It is poison if ingested by cattle or other livestock:

Symptoms of stock poisoning include intense pain, salivation, muscular spasms, tremors, vomiting and scouring. Death can occur within two hours or up to two days after ingestion.

(<http://www.lrm.nt.gov.au/weeds/find/noogoora#.VE7GbZOUflM>)

It seems unlikely that this weed, introduced late in the twentieth century, holds any part in sacred Kuradji ceremonies. Despite the apparently indigenous semiotic inference of the word *noogoora*, a search its etymology reveals a late 19th-century English origin (Everist 1974. pp. 192-194).

From this and all of the above I gained two realisations:

1. Some of the things I really have done, or seen, and write about, people will not believe, and;
2. It is irrelevant whether or not the reader *believes* it is a true story, I just have to tell it convincingly.

So far I had two ingredients for my Authentic Voice:

1. Kill the Authorial Audience (imagined readers) by tricking myself into believing no one will ever read it.
2. If written convincingly the audience will not consider annoying things like facts.

So, how must my unreliable narrator/protagonist ‘sound’? What did I need to do to immerse my reader further?

Chantelle Warner, in her analysis of Verana Stefan’s feminist confession *Shedding* writes:

...deictic shifts may encourage readers to pay more attention to certain narrative parameters over others within the framework of familiar narrative schemas, thereby creating a greater sense of immersivity in the text and consequently the effect of a narrative that is being experienced even as it is being told. (Warner 2009, p. 7)

In the same essay, Warner examines narrative schemas, cognitive poetics and deixis in literature and the spoken word. She argues that the

readerly concept of authentic voice has been under-examined in contemporary and postmodern narrative theories, which have tended to emphasise the abstractness, the disembodiedness of voice. (2009, p. 8)

My intention, as discussed above, to immerse the reader completely in the text by attaining the elusive ‘authentic voice’ is to avoid this disembodied outside-the-text overlord. Deictic shifts seem to offer a key, a way to entrance the reader. Deixis:

is the grounding of the narrator and audience in the story-world. They become fixed by the dimension of the narrative universe and they perceive that universe to be their reality. To understand deixis, one must first understand that language has subjective features; when language is analyzed against these features, there is a quality of speech which emerges which differentiates the here and now from the then and there. (‘Deictic Field and Narration’ 2016)

This led me to embark upon an intense period of experimentation with dramatic monologues and research into confessional and testimonial literature. I re-read Twain, Salinger, Genet, Miller, Kerouac, de Sade, Bataille, Nin and some more contemporary favourites such as Easton Ellis and McCarthy with a keen eye on voice and personal deixis. The grammatical persons involved in a story or the participants in the event being shown define a text’s set of personal pronouns. Considering the parameters I had resolved to follow, I had to write in the first person singular. A memoir written in first person present perfect – two contradictory ideas observed as one, a paradox, or at the very least, it induces cognitive dissonance.

Here I began to again think about how my narrator will read, or ‘sound’ as the reader embarks upon the text. Particularly, how will my narrator sound without the copula, in E-Prime. The phenomenologist Serge Doubrovsky states: “Whenever something is said, someone must be saying it” (Duchan et al 1995, p. 19). Like zero in mathematics and the dark space in the theatre, deixis orients us within a situation without calling attention to itself (Duchan p. 22). I see E-prime like this; the fact that the text is not noticeably missing anything to the casual reader can be seen as a conceptual space, it does not call attention to itself, nothing lurks there full of potentials. Deixis governs epistemological and grammatical categories including orientational mapping, topicalization and unique reference (Duchan p. 23).

These signs do not connote a class of objects but designate the present occurrence of discourse; they do not name but indicate the *I*, the *here*, the *now*, the *this*, in short, the relation of a speaking subject to an audience and a situation. What is admirable is that language is organized in such a way that it

allows each speaker to appropriate the entire language by designating himself as the 'I'.

(Benveniste 1971, p. 226, internal quote in Ricoeur, 1974, p. 255)

I began writing, and over the period of several months almost abandoned the project altogether. Writing in the first person presented the problem of telling rather than showing (not that I consider this a golden rule, as I discovered in my E-prime research and experiments, chapter 4, p. 52). I again found myself experiencing massive tense wobbles and the voice became reflective. The first attempt painted a vivid picture of a writer recollecting from the present. I aimed to immerse the reader so they became, or at least accompanied, the protagonist as he matures from childhood. I aimed here for a cinematic literature. I didn't want them to read the written, I wanted them to participate in the writing, up against the windscreen on the road-trip with the narrator.

But then, in the middle of all this, the specter arose, the dread God ignored. My single-minded approach to the outright seduction of the reader birthed my *fictional reader*, my imagined audience. I saw my imagined audience, a half-hipster half-homeless redditor everywhere I went; a ghost in the crowd, a shifting shadow of a face at the back of a bus, an extra in a television commercial not quite in focus. This worked against my ethos of abandoning the audience, completely ruined my plans of a confessional narrative... Who was I trying to seduce into participation? Who was I confessing to? What should I name this hideous audience of malformed masks that gets between me, the pen and the page, the keyboard and the screen.

3. The bondage and discipline of audience and language

The majority of authors of memoir approach from the perspective of a pre-existing audience. Traditionally memoir recounts the lives of the in/famous or of an individual who has experienced something tragic or spectacular. The memoirist writes with the pretext of an audience out there interested in reading their story. For me, as an anonymous human in this world, the pretext is moot. I did not choose memoir in hope anyone might care about my life. I do not have a particular drive to tell my story. In fact, I encountered much hesitation while doing so, and this is exactly why I chose memoir. In place of an audience who already knows my name rises the authorial audience. I aimed to reject this fictional audience.

The practice of writing and publishing poetry initiated me into a paradoxical space. In this space, however, there sits a sage with invaluable advice. He may shake his alms cup, but you can't buy his lesson. In the sales-driven world of mass market publishing the audience for poetry occupies a niche, at best. Yet, in the process of authoring a poem the audience leaps out of the pit onto the stage. They sit on the edge of your desk as you prance around sounding out sentences during composition. From where do these specters arise? They exist, along with a virtual multiverse of obstacles, in the space between the writer and the written. How then, do we effectively kill this audience and navigate the longest short distance known to man? Should I even suggest such a thing? A cursory google will show that writers pay good money to learn from influential authors how to engage 'the audience'. If for the purposes of authoring *Scoundrel Days* I had taken the advice – and in the early stages I did – the dreaded reflective voice would have crept right back in. I say 'dreaded' especially in the contexts of recounting youthful sexual adventures and gender bias attitudes inherent in our semiotic environment. My wide reading of contemporary 'memoir' revealed a few examples of what I definitely aimed to avoid. From Rick Springfield's *Magnificent Vibration* (2014):

So I am standing there, perched up on my toes over the bathroom sink, jammies around my ankles, vertical Woody in hand, when the bathroom door [...] bursts open. Jesus save me, it's the Reverend's wife! [...] "Who's watching my sister?" I ask feebly. It's all I can come up with, dick in hand. Her colorless face is suddenly flushed and her eyes are pinpricks of

blue fire. She moves aggressively toward me and I flinch and hunker down, ready for the righteous blow I am sure is coming, already conjuring up explanations for the rather compromising position in which she has stumbled upon me. But the wallop does not come. Instead, my eyes still squeezed shut against impending doom and/or severe embarrassment, I feel, for the first time in my life, a hand other than my own wrap itself around poor, shunned Woody and start stroking the little guy for all he is worth. Her hot and labored breath is on my neck as she works her unexpected magic, and although he hardly produces the emission of stallions, Woody makes me proud by shooting his meager load into the sink and I shiver with pleasure, confusion and, yes horror [...] ME: a kid/jerk that no girl seems interested in and whose only sexual release has been self-stimulation of the old beanpole + SHE: Adult woman, churchgoing, pious, a mature member of the real world = HER HAND on my little Woodland Hills whitesnake, stroking it into ecstasy. (Springfield 2015, p. 86)

There are a lot of things I don't like about this sort of writing. I'll mention only those relevant to this exegesis. The voice is tainted by a glaring reflectivity and adult sensibilities. I could read it as a humorous slapstick recounting of the awakening sexuality of a young boy but his choice of crass words such as 'Woody', 'Woodland Hills whitesnake' and 'member' ruin it for me. The disembodied feeling that I get as the author refers to parts of his own body as some external thing that experiences its own ecstasy independent of him, I also aimed to avoid. I think this author is a victim of that fictional audience . . . he expected that his readers wanted details of his debauched rock-n-roll lifestyle. He should've hired a ghost writer. Because, like ghost writers, the imagined reader he wrote for is also a ghost.

In the essay "The Writer's Audience Is Always A Fiction" Walter J. Ong writes:

Whereas the spoken word is part of present actuality, the written word normally is not. The writer, in isolation, constructs a role for his 'audience' to play, and readers fictionalize themselves to correspond to the author's projection. The way readers fictionalize themselves shifts throughout literary history: Chaucer, Lyly, Nashe, Hemingway, and others furnish cases in point. All writing, from scientific monograph to history, epistolary correspondence, and diary writing, fictionalizes its readers. In oral performance, too, some fictionalizing of audience occurs, but in the live interaction between narrator and audience there is an existential relationship as well: the oral narrator modifies his story in accord with the real – not imagined – fatigue, enthusiasm, or other reactions of his listeners. Fictionalizing of audiences

correlates with the use of masks or personae marking human communication generally, even with oneself. (Ong 1975, pp. 9-21)

As Jean Genet famously said: “Would Hamlet have felt the delicious fascination of suicide if he hadn’t had an audience, and lines to speak?” (Genet 2003, p. 63). I need an innocent yet irreverent language to portray the early sexual escapades of my protagonist. I have never spoken to an audience about personal sexual development so I don’t have that existential relationship either.

Here I revisit some sex scenes from Miller, Genet and Nin. Miller laid down the groundwork for a gutter-language revolution in serious English language writing. From the blurb of the Penguin 2015 edition of *Tropic of Cancer* (1961):

Shocking, banned and the subject of obscenity trials, Henry Miller’s first novel *Tropic of Cancer* is one of the most scandalous and influential books of the twentieth century

Tropic of Cancer redefined the novel. Set in Paris in the 1930s, it features a starving American writer who lives a bohemian life among prostitutes, pimps, and artists. Banned in the US and the UK for more than thirty years because it was considered pornographic, *Tropic of Cancer* continued to be distributed in France and smuggled into other countries. When it was first published in the US in 1961, it led to more than 60 obscenity trials until a historic ruling by the Supreme Court defined it as a work of literature. Long hailed as a truly liberating book, daring and uncompromising, *Tropic of Cancer* is a cornerstone of modern literature that asks us to reconsider everything we know about art, freedom, and morality. ‘At last an unprintable book that is fit to read’ – Ezra Pound. ‘A momentous event in the history of modern writing’ – Samuel Beckett. ‘The book that forever changed the way American literature would be written’ – Erica Jong. (Miller 2015, back cover)

That’s some pretty heavy praise artillery . . . let’s have a look at a typical passage from *Tropic of Cancer*:

At night when I look at Boris’ goatee lying on the pillow I get hysterical. O Tania, where now is that warm cunt of yours, those fat, heavy garters, those soft, bulging thighs? There is a bone in my prick six inches long. I will ream out every wrinkle in your cunt, Tania, big with seed. [...] I know how to inflame a cunt. I shoot hot bolts into you, Tania, I make your ovaries incandescent. [...] I am fucking you, Tania, so that you’ll stay fucked. And if you are afraid of being fucked publicly I will fuck you privately. I will tear off

a few hairs from your cunt and paste them on Boris' chin. I will bite into your clitoris and spit out two franc pieces ... (Miller 1988, p. 5-6)

I certainly know that I am not interested in the sexual violence inherent in this extract, but it would be remiss to not pay homage to the vulgarity of Miller.

Genet's writing, at least in my English language translation of *The Thief's Journal*, transcends the omnipresent corporeality of Miller and wanders into more of a juxtaposition of pulchritude and soul:

When I slept with this handsome twenty-two-year-old athlete for the first time, he pretended to be sleeping. With his face crushed against the white pillow, he let me slip it in, but when he was stuck, he could not keep from groaning, delicately, the way one sighs. Deeply threaded by my prick, he becomes something other than himself, something other than my lover. He is a strange part of me which still preserves a little of its own life. We form one body, but it has two heads and each of them is involved in its own pleasure. At the moment of coming, this excrescence of my body which was my lover loses all tenderness, clouds over. In the darkness, I sense his hardness and can feel that a veil of shadow is spreading over his face which is contracted with pain and pleasure. [...] Though we are bound by my prick, all our friendly relationships are cut off. [...] He wants only to be more deeply impaled. I cannot see him for he has murmured, "put out the light," but I feel that he has become someone else, someone strange and remote. It is when I have made him come that I feel him hating me. (Genet 1965, p. 86)

There is still violence in Genet's omni-carnal romantic writing but his juxtapositions take my breath every time I read him. Even when essentially describing a rape, the poetry lightens the scene: "he could not keep from groaning, delicately, the way one sighs". I decided to use this ugly/beauty juxtaposition liberally in my sex scenes but again, avoid the sexual violence.

Anais Nin also attains an interesting symbiosis (again in English translation) with the introduction of the sense of smell which both Miller and Genet lack entirely. Like them, Nin steps into a physical/metaphysical place with bodies becoming one, but for her this one body becomes animal, rather than the more mystical hydra type image that Genet invokes. Nin uses real terms for genitalia, however, and reads as more restrained in the throes of passion (so to speak). It is interesting to note here the

passage below, from the back cover blurb of the Harvest edition of *Delta of Venus* (1986) states that the work was composed for a private ‘client’ for personal consumption and the private reader who commissioned this work dictated to Nin, a constraint, that of avoiding ‘poetic language’:

Despite being told to leave poetic language aside and concentrate on graphic, sexually explicit scenarios, Nin was able to give these stories a literary flourish and a layer of images and ideas beyond the pornographic. In her Diary (Oct. 1941), she jokingly referred to herself as ‘the madam of this snobbish literary house of prostitution, from which vulgarity was excluded’. (Nin 1986, back cover)

Nin also manages to manifest a type of violence in her sex scenes with images of teeth and biting and torture. I believe this was intentional, as a form of rebuke to the client, including the clinical sex terminology.

They fell on this, the three bodies in accord, moving against each other to feel breast against breast and belly against belly. They ceased to be three bodies. They became all mouths and fingers and tongues and senses. Their mouths sought another mouth, a nipple, a clitoris. They lay entangled, moving very slowly. They kissed until the kissing became a torture and the body grew restless. Their hands always found yielding flesh, an opening. The fur they lay on gave off an animal odor, which mingled with the odors of sex... They tried to come in unison, but Elena came first, falling in a heap, detached from Leila’s hand, struck down by the violence of her orgasm, Leila fell beside her, offering her sex to Elena’s mouth. As Elena’s pleasure grew fainter, rolling away, dying off, she gave Leila her tongue, flicking in the sex’s mouth until Leila contracted and moaned. She bit into Leila’s tender flesh. In the paroxysm of her pleasure, Leila did not feel the teeth buried there. (Nin 1986, p. 28)

It seems to me that when writing about sex grammatical perversion is inevitable. The majority of words to describe sex in literature are either clinical or (up until Miller at least) considered obscene. Looking for an answer to this question: is all sex language inherently perverse by its very nature, I stumbled across a book by Jonathan Dollimore, titled *Sexual Dissidence*. Dollimore begins a chapter with the Genet quote which haunted me a little at this point – “Would Hamlet have felt the delicious fascination of suicide if he hadn’t had an audience, and lines to speak?” (Genet 2003, p. 63) – and summarily gave me insight. Dollimore writes:

The Cartesian cogito—*cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am)—conventionally if somewhat simplistically marks a major point in the emergence of Western individualism [...] it is seen to mark a point in a process of transition from the idea of self as metaphysically constituted to the idea of self as an individuated, autonomous essence; self-consciousness rather than divine or natural law becomes constitutive of subjective identity. [...] Augustine gives a memorable earlier version of the Cartesian cogito: ‘*Si enim fallor sum*’—if I am deceived, then I exist. [...] Augustine would have also understood Lacan’s invocation of Rimbaud: ‘*Je c’est un autre*’ (I is (an)other). [...] Lacan observes that ‘the latest developments in modern thought on language’ are only a rediscovery of what was already known to Augustine, who ‘orients his entire dialectic around these three poles, error, mistake, ambiguity of speech’. This is especially significant given that according to Lacan, ‘Every emission of speech is always, up to a certain point, under an inner necessity to err’. Or, as Augustine might have put it, *language is, of its (fallen) nature, always potentially perverse*. (Dollimore 1991, pp. 281-82, italics mine)

This suggests that the act of writing about sex is going to be perverse (even when ambiguity is employed) and as I suspected, unavoidable. Perhaps Miller understood this, I think Genet definitely did, and as for Nin . . . well: “Leila fell beside her, offering her sex to Elena’s mouth” – despite the image it invokes, doesn’t do much for me as a reader at all.

I tried it out:

I fingered Candy’s cunt and she came all over my hand.

A homage to an echo of Miller. I tried to convey the same message using the techniques adopted from Genet and Nin, avoiding the vulgarity of Miller’s gendered nouns, which, note, used here are a form of tautology anyway:

I fingered Candy awhile. I love how a girl’s scent cloyes like a fragrant mist.

This is more graphic and visceral but, without crass objectification and gendered nouns, it adopts Nin’s sense of smell and has the omni-carnal romanticism I admire from Genet.

But I get ahead of myself. Before I started the creative work, beginning with my character map and timeline . . . I needed to know how English Prime will work for my experiment in the macro.

Let's look at this constraint. I am heavily influenced by the OuLiPo (Ouvroir de littérature potentielle), a literary movement founded by Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais in France in 1960. This group of writers and mathematicians and writer-mathematicians assembled intent on achieving the paradoxical freedom that comes from setting near-impossible rules and limitations and then writing their way out of them ('Oulipian exercises' 2012). Although claimed as an OuLiPo device by Ron Hale-Evans in his book *Mind Performance Hacks* (2006), I can find no official listing of E-Prime by the OuLiPo themselves. I assume it is claimed by English speaking practitioners as it is obviously a constraint directly involving only the English Language.

This idea of constraint, to attain liberation from all the assumptions of English (especially my own) is what interests me primarily. Essentially E-Prime it is a double constraint. As Hale-Evans writes:

there are two schools of thought in the Oulipo, one of which says a work's constraints should be made utterly explicit, the other that they should be hidden. E-Prime is used as a hidden constraint [...]. Explicitness of constraint, or lack thereof, can itself be a constraint on a work [...]. (Hale-Evans 2006, pp. 94, 95)

I wanted to see what happens to assumed narratives, not only while writing in E-Prime but while reading it as a finished work. The way one thinks is the way one speaks until it becomes a formal act, that of writing down thoughts and experiences. Consider this quote from an article titled "English is Surprisingly Devoid of Emotionally Positive Words":

There's an ongoing debate among scientists about language and its connection to conscious experience. Philosopher and cognitive scientist Daniel Dennett has said that language 'infects and inflects our thought at every level,' arguing that a significant portion of our perception of the world is influenced by the words at our disposal. Many psychologists, on the other hand, have a hard time believing that humans aren't capable of grasping a concept or feeling an emotion just because there's no word for it. But as University of East London

psychologist Tim Lomas points out in his new study, expanded vocabularies have the potential to ‘enrich [our] experiences of well-being.’ (George 2016)

Utilising English Prime will certainly expand my vocabulary and I find myself here very curious about the effects on my own well-being and that of readers of the text.

In essence, E-Prime consists of a more descriptive and extensionally oriented derivative of English that automatically tends to bring the user back to the level of first-person experience. (Kellogg 1989, p. 89)

This quote summed up my aim: First person experience with the added value of a more descriptive prose. And I included Chandler’s position: “Exploiting the natural discourse of intertextuality by employing a constraint allows a new potentiality, some form of liberation from language as *a system which pre-exists the individual speaker*.” (Chandler 2002, p. 195, italics mine). E-Prime seemed to offer many of the things I sought for my literary narrative.

4. Beyond *IS*...Creative writing with English Prime

The little word ‘is’ has its tragedies; it marries and identifies different things with the greatest innocence; and yet no two are ever identical, and if therein lies the charm of wedding them and calling them one, therein too lies the danger. (Santayana 1955, p. 71)

English Prime (E-Prime): Writing/speaking in the English language without the copula, i.e. excluding tenses of the verb to be (are, am, is, was, were, be, been and being) and/or their contractions. (Bourland 1989, p. 203)

Since my first poetry publication credit in 1992 and despite scores of publications in the years preceding I had never written a long-form work. After almost two decades considering what ‘genre’ of novel I would like to write, my interest in experimental literature, poetry and rapsallion autobiography culminated in the decision to write an experimental memoir.

Considering Gore Vidal’s definition “A memoir is how one remembers one’s own life...” (1995), it seems logical for authors of memoir to adopt a reflective voice, utilising techniques of diegetic storytelling. All of the memoirs I read in preparation

for this experiment read like the television show *The Wonder Years*. The invisible narrator, or The Hidden Observer, with an adult voice reflecting back on childhood, telling the viewer what the characters are thinking and feeling.

I set out to write a memoir in first person present perfect, just to see what would happen when writing a personal history without the reflective voice. Right away I found myself perplexed by tensions that arise between mimetic and diegetic methods of storytelling. Aiming to write directly represented action (mimesis), where my protagonist exists in the eternal now or continuous present, where he lives rather than remembers (shows rather than tells) a personal history proved very difficult. The static hum of reflection drowned the dynamic action I desired to capture. Looking back to childhood, not tainting these reflections with adult sensibilities ... not reflecting!

After multiple false starts, efforts to capture a first person present perfect voice as opposed to a reflective voice proved fruitless. Looking back through my academic reading list I unearthed an obscure constraint known as English Prime. I first learned of the discipline of E-Prime when I happened upon a collection of *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* at a book sale in the early 90s. This quarterly journal first appeared in print in 1943 and continues today as the flagship publication for the Institute of General Semantics.

I threw caution into the blender with hopelessness and began to try writing in E-Prime. At first I thought it possible to simply rewrite from an abandoned draft and translate. This failed; the process felt restrictive and laborious, the majority of my sentences contained at least one forbidden word. The shift in syntax and the lateral segue required while writing in E-Prime made it clear that I faced an entire overhaul of my writing process. You cannot say something is anything else. I started from the beginning.

A brief history

Alfred Korzybski (1879-1950), a pioneer of the theory of General Semantics, hypothesised in many of his seminal writings and lectures that language has a flaw:

when one attempts to describe being they ultimately end up describing a series of processes, things doing things (describe a dancer without saying she is a dancer). He surmised that this flaw results in misleading abstractions and therefore linguistic errors. Humans do not have the ability to directly experience reality, we can only approach phenomena through our senses. We then describe 'reality' to each other using faulty semiotic systems. He identified this flaw in language as the "is of identity" and "the is of predication". Korzybski famously summed up his hypothesis in 1931 in a speech to the American Mathematical Society when he said:

'The map is not the territory'. A language is like a map; it is not the territory represented ... it may be a good map, or a bad map. If the map shows a different structure from the territory represented [...] then the map is worse than useless ... it misinforms and leads astray. The use of el [elementalistic] language to represent events which operate as-a-whole is, at least, equally misguiding and semantically dangerous. (Korzybski 1933, p.498)

After the reprint of this lecture appeared in his book *Science and Sanity*, on the lecture circuit Korzybski would demonstrate his tenet by beginning with vigorous thumping on his desk, shouting, "Whatever this is, it's not a table!" (Rae 2009).

In 1965, D David Bourland, a former student of Korzybski's, published an essay titled "A Linguistic Note: Writing in E-Prime" and thereby coined the term (Bourland 1965-6). Bourland proposed the discipline as an addition to, and a remedy for, the problem identified by Korzybski. Many years later Bourland admitted that he himself had not conceived the idea, that a

person, whose name I can no longer retrieve, wrote to the Institute suggesting that, in view of the problems Korzybski had discussed ... perhaps we should just abandon all uses of the verb 'to be' ... it struck me as having considerable merit, provided one could really do it. (Bourland 1989, p. 101)

Stating that he had spent many years since the late 1940's experimenting with E-Prime, he added that he "did not discuss this matter lest I become regarded as some kind of nut" (Bourland 1989: 102).

Korzybski's theories attracted some notable writers and thinkers, including William S Burroughs, who attended thirty five hours of seminars in 1939 and notes Korzybski's

teachings as seminal to his writing practice (Rae 2009). After the publication of Bourland's 1965 paper, E-Prime gained popularity among proponents of the new-age movement including Isaac Asimov, Frank Herbert, L Ron Hubbard and the Quantum Psychologist Robert Anton Wilson. Wilson experimented with E-Prime as a tool for achieving changes in 'reality'. In *Quantum Psychology* he wrote:

The case for E-Prime rests on the simple proposition that 'isness' sets the brain into a medieval Aristotelian framework that makes it impossible to understand modern problems and opportunities. Consider the human brain as a computer. As the Prime Law of Computers tells us, GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT... The wrong software guarantees wrong answers. It seems likely that the principal software used in the human brain consists of words, metaphors, disguised metaphors, and linguistic structures in general. A revision of language structure, in particular, can alter the brain as dramatically as a psychedelic [drug]. In our metaphor, if we change the software, the computer operates in a new way. (Wilson 1990, p. 98)

Despite this brief surge of interest among counter-culture types, E-Prime has languished. As stated, only the scientific community has shown more than a passing interest. Wilson notes that "oddly, most physicists write in E-Prime" and that E-Prime "has not caught on in learned circles or popular speech" (Wilson 1990, p. 97). My research shows that in the history of E-Prime only one author, David Gerrold, has attempted to write a creative work using this constraint: a science fiction space opera titled *Under The Eye Of God* (1993). Gerrold gained fame as one of the original writers for the television series *Star Trek* but his 'space opera' has been out of print since 1995. I spent considerable time trying to trace a copy of this novel armed only with the blurb, written in E-Prime:

On a small planet called Thoska-Roole, a loosely allied band of humans, androids, and bioforms make one last stand against the dominance of Phaestor, a race of genetically engineered killing machines. (Gerrold nd)

I discovered a title *Worlds of Wonder – How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy* (2001) by the same author, which contains a chapter about his experiment with E-Prime. Of this he states:

Despite my practically giving it away ... that I had abandoned the use of the verb to be ... nobody noticed. And when I did point it out to others, nobody

seemed to care. Or perhaps they didn't understand the size of the challenge. Nevertheless ... I remain proud of the effort. (Gerrold 2001, p. 205)

In January 2014 Gerrold released a self-published ebook edition of *Under The Eye Of God*, and, although I respect his efforts, such sentences as quoted below have something to do with its critical reception:

Finn went swiftly up the hard ceramic steps, treading as lightly as he could. Still, his footsteps caused the boards to creak... Sawyer looked over at him, one eyebrow raised questioningly. His rifle swung meaningfully. The bartender stopped, he shrugged apologetically. (Gerrold 2014, p. 3)

I myself noticed a tendency for those annoying 'ly' adverbs and intensifiers to rise to the surface when writing in E-Prime (not to mention the hard ceramic steps that creak); the fact that Gerrold struggled with the discipline is not a surprise. Gerrold also stated in *Worlds of Wonder* that he used a word processing program to "find all" after he had written the text and then "translated" this into E-Prime. This is a method I do not recommend. The writer must persist and learn to think using the constraint.

Since the death of William Burroughs in 1997 and that of Robert Anton Wilson in 2007 only one living writer has written extensively about this subject: the "modern occultist, author, cofounder of the Illuminates of Thanateros, and practitioner of chaos magic theory", Peter J Carroll (*Encyclopedia Thelemica* 2015). Carroll's 1995 book *Psybermagick* is written in E-Prime and contains a chapter titled "Anontology" covering his views on the subject. It begins with a warning:

NOTHING HAS BEING – adjust your mind, you have a serious fault in the linguistic programs which structure your thought, which can halve your effective intelligence. (Carroll 1995, p. 94)

In a commentary on the chapter he writes:

The word virus of 'being' does not submit easily to defeat. Yet on paper, after some struggle, one may start to roll back the enemy. As it retreats you notice the enormity of the territory it once occupied. Vast areas of assumption dissolve into fresh and fluid thought. Every careless use of the words 'am, are, is, was, and be' reveals, upon correction, a wealth of ingrained assumption and lost information content. (Carroll 1995, p. 99)

I contacted Mr Carroll, who for all intents and purposes is the world's foremost authority on the subject, and requested an interview. As revealed, he was very happy to speak about the subject as no one has ever asked him about it.

For brevity I have included only several of the key quotes from Mr Carroll's answers to my questions below. (For the full interview see Appendix A.)

When did you first learn of Korzybski's theories about the 'is' of identity and the 'is' of predication and his views about this semantic 'virus' in our language?

I came across this idea in Robert Anton Wilson's writings and decided to attempt my third book *Psybermagick* [1995] using the E-Prime idea... Abandoning the idea of 'being' struck me as a supremely important method of thinking clearly about anything and everything and I wrote explicitly about this in *Psybermagick*. The scientific, metaphysical, and psychological tie-ins of the E-Prime idea attracted me immediately. Basically, from a scientific point of view we cannot observe anything in a state of 'being', we can only observe what it does. Nothing remains stationary, atoms and the particles within them execute an endless high speed dance, continually spinning and vibrating and quantum jumping from wavelike to particle-like behavior. Quantum physics looks weird and incomprehensible if you insist on trying to say that a quantum event like a photon of light or an electron of matter 'is' a particle or 'is' a wave, or 'is' anything at all...

Inspired by Korzybski and Bourland I like to draw a delineation between the 'earth' and the 'world'. The earth is what Korzybski would call the natural environment and the world is what he would refer to as our semiotic reality (we live on the earth and in the world). These views have echoed down to us through Baudrillard and his ideas about the death of 'reality'. What strange effects did you notice occur in our semiotic environment when you experimented with English Prime?

I strongly suspect that an objective reality does go on outside our heads even though we can only perceive a degraded and filtered version of it inside of our heads. Moreover, not only does our sensory apparatus give us only a rather rough version of the outside reality but our internal processing mucks about with the incoming information adding all sorts of interpretations including the idea that phenomena have 'being' and essence in addition to the doing we actually observe. As some people in the modern world find themselves giving

ever more of their attention to convoluted interpretations of reality and less and less to the more basic experiences of hunger, fear, physical exertion, real friendships, and real hardships; then they will indeed become detached from reality. Descartes infamously asserted I think therefore I ‘am’. One wit quipped that Descartes had probably yet to experience a serious toothache.

My research has revealed that only one author, David Gerrold (of *Star Trek* fame) has attempted to write a wholly creative work using English Prime. (I say ‘attempt’ because having just read it, I won’t read it again). Am I correct or are you aware of other published creative works written in E-Prime?

Yes you CAN correctly assume this :)

I have read many of your interviews over the years and no one appears to have asked you about English Prime?

No, they haven’t. *Psybermagick*, where I explained the theory and tried it out, remains a small circulation book from a small publisher. I like to think that in my subsequent three books I had mastered the technique to a degree that nobody really noticed the subtle absence of all tenses of the cursed verb ‘to-be’, but I hope that it has a subliminal effect on the thought processes of the readership. We have two millennia of muddle headed Platonic idealism to undo.¹

Most people outside of scientific and science fiction communities, writers and readers alike, on hearing of the concept, dismiss it as a complex and crazy notion. And I agree. No other creative work outside of these genres has been attempted, or at least published. Challenging the very concept of Being cannot go unpunished. Platonic and Aristotelian methods of enquiry are at the very bedrock of western civilisation. Both of these didactics presume ‘is-ness’ which in turn makes it necessary to view our semiotic environment in terms of ‘other’ or binary oppositions. This is not a philosophical paper/exegesis, but in practice it raises some ontological questions. Perhaps the aversion to E-Prime results from entrenched ideas of binary opposition? I struggled, not once in my memoir could I write: ‘I am a poet not a shelf picker in a factory’.

¹ Original interview with Peter J Carroll by Brentley Frazer, 2014. Full permission was granted by Mr Carroll to reproduce the transcript for this paper.

Criticism of E-Prime

Critics of E-Prime, including fans of Wilson, argue that using E-Prime does not improve readability and that sentence structures become maximalist. One critic wrote:

A jury will be much more impressed with the statement: ‘This is the gun that fired the bullet that killed Mr Jones’ than its E-based (equivalent): ‘This weapon which has the characteristics of a gun has produced the same markings that seem to mark this bullet that allegedly made Mr Jones appear dead’. (Walker 2001)

This critic approached the problem of E-Prime too literally. By trying to avoid the ‘is’ of identity and predication his sentence became maximalist and dull. I’d already decided to use minimalist literary techniques while authoring my experimental memoir. How these techniques would enhance or hinder the use of E-Prime I had yet to determine. In my first experiments, I noticed the instinct to maximalise, rely on adverbs as Mr Gerrold fell victim to, or over-explain as in the example above. I set about dismantling and then rewriting the sentence, using E-Prime with minimalist literary devices.

“This is the gun that fired the bullet that killed Mr Jones” seems like a proper sentence. It conveys a message, it conforms to grammatical rules, but both the definitive use of the word “is” and the disembodied voice don’t work for my planned textual experiment. Recasting this sentence in E-Prime requires me to step well beyond simplistic literary advice like ‘showing not telling’. The act of imagining who said that sentence gives me a character, and a scene, a scene that needs to be populated. Writing this scene in E-Prime hints at some new form of narrative rhetoric. Exposing the agent of that sentence helps me to build the story, to make it interesting; the story starts to show itself. The invisible observer, that disembodied voice, is the problem with the sentence in question. Who said the sentence? My rewrite:

‘The forensic evidence shows unequivocally that this gun fired the bullet which killed Mr Jones!’ said the sweaty lawyer, tossing the weapon onto the evidence table.

No ‘forbidden words’ ... no invisible observer; also, the sentence no longer contains an unquantified opinion.

Too maximalist? Compare our sample sentence:

‘This is the gun that fired the bullet that killed Mr Jones.’

Twelve words, and my rewrite: twenty-six words. More than double, but let’s exclude the non narrative section – the original contains no agent.

‘The forensic evidence shows unequivocally that this gun fired the bullet which killed Mr Jones!’

Fifteen words ... let’s trim it.

‘The forensic evidence proves this gun killed Mr Jones.’

Eight words. Less than the original!

So the real problem with both the sentences in question: “This is the gun that fired the bullet that killed Mr Jones” – and – “This weapon which has the characteristics of a gun etc. etc.” reveals itself. It is not just bad story telling ... after all the simple sentence does provide an image to the reader. In both instances the utterance comes from a disembodied voice. The American literary critic Wayne C Booth covered both of these problems in his book *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961). Booth argues that showing vs telling is not “a reliable clue to the miraculous superiority of modern fiction” (Booth 1961, p. 26). He wrote that making an argument in favour of one method or the other is too simplistic, that Mimesis vs Diegesis (show vs tell) is no golden rule of writing at all. What about this disembodied voice? To answer this, Booth turns to Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre is an interesting choice, considering our challenge here, to write without the copula, to challenge the assumption of ‘being’. Sartre believed that “existence precedes essence” (Sartre 1946a, p. 3), that since one cannot explain one’s own actions and behaviour by referencing any specific human nature, they are necessarily fully responsible for those actions. “We are left alone, without excuse” (Sartre 1946b). Booth believed that Sartre is of the opinion that the author should “avoid omniscient commentary altogether” for the simple reason that if

“we suspect for a moment that he is behind the scenes, controlling the lives of his characters, they will not seem to be free: (Booth 1961, p. 50).

Occasionally my narrator will tell the reader how he “feels” what he “believes” and so forth. But, if I avoid the copula, and thereby expose the agent of every sentence, the voice can at no time become disembodied, it can never come from outside of the text. Given the ease of the courtroom scene manifesting as it did and my earlier realisation that that I could exploit this tendency in the writing sessions on the creative work as the writing of ‘routines’ or ‘scenes’, or textual storyboarding, I paused here to experiment. It’s a little like writing a film script in first person. Scene directions become actions perceived from an anchored viewpoint (the narrator) within the script instead of the imagined audience outside the script ... this also enables the incorporation of the ‘soundtrack’ of the scene into the text. This in turn gives rise to the writerly opportunity for embellishment of detail, often with unexpected proliferation. E.g., instead of writing a scene in a script like this:

The boy asks a question.
Boy: Dad what does circumcision mean?
The mother drops her fork (clatters) and glares at boy. Father reaches for [prop] wine bottle.

I write:

At dinner I ask:
—Dad, what does circumcision mean?
Mum drops her fork. It clatters on the table. She glares at me. Dad clears his throat, reaches for the wine bottle.
—Circumcision demonstrates to Jesus that us fellers follow the path...

I really like these short imagist sentences which describe an image and then a sound and then a visual: “Mum drops her fork. It clatters on the table. She glares at me.”

Inspired by this I researched deeper into English Prime and unearthed an article by John C. Herbert titled “English Prime as an Instructional Tool in Writing Classes” (Herbert 2006). Herbert summarises E-Prime by quoting Bourland and Kellogg:

Advocates of E-Prime claim that Aristotelian logic, which induces English speakers and writers to report beliefs as true or false, or ‘black-or-white,’ through the use of the verb to be, creates false absolutes. (Bourland & Kellogg 1990)

Herbert also offers a set of criteria for writing in E-Prime:

- Do not tell a story about a special place with narration, but show the place through description.
- Do not use first person (I, we) or second person (you).
- Do not use any forms of the verb to be, including its auxiliary forms with progressive tenses and passive sentences.
- Describe one place at a single point in time, using as many active simple present tense verbs as possible.
- Focus on what you experience through the five senses and not on your actions in the place. (Herbert 2006)

These rules work for my experiment. Except rule two, which I counter as described above. I will show the reader the town of my childhood and the way the unchartered outback encroaches its boundaries. I will avoid all eight forbidden words and their contractions. I will describe one place at a single point in time using dynamic action words and I will relay these memories as feelings, sounds, smells and sights in my text, not intellectual musings.

To these rules I add – no invisible observer.

Experiments and results

At first, writing without any tenses of the verb to be induces migraine (for a list of E-Prime rules – see Appendix B). The discipline requires one to labour over every word in every sentence. But this reveals the frequency of the use of these abstractions in our vernacular. For instance, the statement “Suzy is beautiful” assumes that we all agree on an objective beauty. As soon as you write the sentence *Suzy is beautiful* you have committed the writerly sin of surmising a subjective abstraction, by not describing Suzy and letting the reader decide. Describe Suzy’s beauty, distinguish opinion from fact ... even if we don’t agree on what constitutes beauty, make the reader see her

anyway. Then, if the reader doesn't agree, at least we have an understanding of the Main Character's aesthetic principles.

As an added bonus writing in E-Prime removes the passive voice from your prose, often too well. Characters become responsible for their actions. This can present some problems. An example: early on in my memoir I recall: "My father ran over my mother with a tractor" (Frazer 2013). Present tense, passive voice eradicated ... Dad sounds like a villain. After sourcing every available piece of literature about E-Prime I found that Bourland himself had encountered this when he noted:

While statistically E-Prime only makes trivial changes relative to the English lexicon, it does affect the syntax. Even this effect, however, does not seem as severe as it might appear. This unexpected lack of severity proceeds from the well-known 'richness' of the English language, which provides a wealth of linking verbs (become, seem, appear, verbs related to the senses), apposition, etc., that can take over most of our habitual applications of to be. On the other hand, E-Prime does admittedly entail the necessity of expressing the progressive aspect by using '...continues to...' and it makes use of the passive voice difficult or even impossible. (Bourland 1989, p. 103)

There are 1,025,109 words in the English Language (Global Language Monitor, 2014) and we only remove eight in this experiment (plus contractions). The proliferation of assumed or glossed over detail is certainly rewarding to write and read. But the total absence of a passive voice presents a very unique stumbling block. Unfortunately Bourland does not offer a solution to this problem. It took me six months to produce 18,000 words written exclusively in E-Prime. I labored with the experiment and the research and found an article written by Bourland titled "E-Prime: Speaking Crispily" (Bourland 1996). Bourland developed a definitional semantic equation, what he called the "Crispness Index" ($C.I. = \text{Number of E-Prime Sentences} / \text{Total Number of Sentences}$). Using this index he analyzed dozens of texts ranging from books sourced in bookstores after asking the manager to tell him "what single book in his store he considered most poorly written" to the works of Hemingway, Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* and the writings of Korzybski himself. Bourland concluded "...one can say that professional writers of fiction, whose work has received the attention of professional editors, tend to use a form of the verb to be in about half of their sentences" (Bourland 1996, p. 203). After

analyzing my text and removing a few slip-ups involving the word “ain’t”, which, although a non-standard dialect, simply replaces am or isn’t, my first 20,000 words obtained a C.I. score of one to one.

Excited by the way my text read, here two things happened. I employed a retired academic and widely published author who now offers professional editing and manuscript assessment services. While I waited for her appraisal I thought it interesting to test the veracity of Bourland’s Crispness Index by automating the process and enlisting a code writer to build me an app. This experiment is recorded in “Appendix C – Mrs Crisp: A dynamic text indicer based on a definitional semantic equation developed by D. David Bourland” (see Appendices below).

The editor didn’t notice what I’d done, but commented on the richness of the prose and restored the copula in a few shaky passages in the narrative where I had difficulty with E-Prime. She also noted that the sentence: “My father ran over my mother with a tractor” implies that my father has psychopathic tendencies.

Despite numerous hours of research I could not find a remedy for this problem. I did find people who claim the opposite, that E-Prime removes blame-based thinking. American psychologist Albert Ellis advocated the use of E-Prime “especially in writing, as a way to avoid muddled and blame-based thinking that makes psychotherapy patients distressed” (Ellis 2001). Elaine C Johnson in her essay ‘Discovering E-Prime’ recounts a discussion with the semanticist Ruth McCubbrey about what to tell students when encouraging the use of E-Prime:

Tell them it ties their language closer to experience, that using other verbs forces them to take responsibility for their statements. (Johnson 1998)

While an extreme example, my sentence in question demonstrates a problem not too often encountered in the discipline of creative writing, a lack of the passive voice. I didn’t want to rewrite the sentence by adding a lame adverb like ‘accidentally’ (see Gerrold) or lose the foreshadowing effect of its placement in the narrative by elaborating further. I spent the next six months pondering the problem and experimenting with E-Prime. I discovered that many minimalist literary techniques

lend themselves favourably to writing in E-Prime. Avoiding clichés, or what minimalists called “received text”, comes as a natural consequence. Recording Angel, or writing without passing judgment, can apply a “patch” to the break in narrative experienced when the active voice becomes too stressed. As the minimalist author Chuck Palahniuk puts it, “nothing is fed to the reader as fat or happy” (Palahniuk 2002) and “you get a slow drip of single-sentence paragraphs, each one evoking its own emotional reaction” (Palahniuk 2004, p. 144-5). Palahniuk learned this from Tom Spanbauer, who teaches what he calls “Dangerous Writing”. On this minimalist form of literary expression Spanbauer says:

Writing dangerously is going to that place inside each of us that is hidden and secret. There is something sad or sore there. It’s going to that place, investigating it and writing from that place. (Spanbauer, qtd in Gabbettas 2011)

Other techniques developed by Spanbauer to facilitate this personal writing, including Recording Angel, work very well with E-Prime. Burnt Tongue, “a way of saying something, but saying it wrong, twisting it to slow down the reader” (Palahniuk 2004, p. 144) is of particular interest to me. I have noticed from my readings of Cormac McCarthy’s writing that McCarthy does something similar to ‘burnt tongue’ but rather than ‘say it wrong’ as such, he uses noun-verb juxtaposition to describe actions. He forgoes the usual placement in the text of ‘like’ and by doing so creates new metaphor from what would normally be a simile. For example, in a fight scene in Blood Meridian, his use of ‘crabwise’ because of its familiar image but unusual grammatical formation, slows down the action. In a sense McCarthy does this sort of thing frequently through his writing, using unusual contractions and changing the spelling of words with vowel tweaks to soften their impact. In the example below which includes ‘crabwise’ you will also note the contraction of ‘that ones’ and the misspelling of the Gaelic word for a cudgel ‘shillelagh’ to ‘shellelegh’ which softens the tone of the word to suit his sentence:

He swung with the bottle and the kid ducked and he swung again and the kid stepped back. When the kid hit him the man shattered the bottle against the side of his head. He went off the boards into the mud and the man lunged after him with the jagged bottleneck and tried to stick it in his eye. The kid

was fending with his hands and they were slick with blood. He kept trying to reach into his boot for his knife.

Kill your ass, the man said. They slogged about in the dark of the lot, coming out of their boots. The kid has his knife now and they circled crabwise and when the man lurched at him he cut the man's shirt open. The man threw down the bottleneck and unsheathed an immense bowieknife from behind his neck. His hat had come off and his black and ropy locks swung about his head and he codified his threats to the one word kill like a crazed chant.

That's cut, said one of several men standing along the walk-way watching.

Kill kill slobbered the man wading forward.

But someone else was coming down the lot, great steady sucking sounds like a cow. He was carrying a huge shellalegh. He reached the kid first and when he swung with the club the kid went face down in the mud. He'd have died if someone hadn't turned him over. (McCarthy 1985, p. 9)

I adopted this technique, considering it a form of burnt tongue. For example, in a schoolyard fight scene in *Scoundrel Days* I place the word 'pales' in an usual sentence construction to give a moments pause in the action:

With all the grace of Nureyev, Reuben sidesteps the punch and produces his butterfly knife, demonstrating some impressive handling skills.

—He has a knife! about two hundred kids yell in unison.

—Welllll, faggot cunt ... Fucken tough cunt ... Gonna fucken stab me, cunt. Go on then, ya cunt. DO IT!

He throws a straight left arm into Reuben's face, but, as he does, Reuben pulls his chin down and the fist connects with his forehead. Muddy's knuckles crack and he screams. Then, in that instant, Reuben drops to one knee and drives the knife into Muddy's ribs. A dull THUNK cuts through the stunned silence of the crowd. Everyone gasps. Muddy steps back and looks down at his Sweathog t-shirt. A tiny drop of blood appears. Then, like when you drip ink onto blotting paper, the blood spot swells to the size of a dinner plate. He lifts his shirt, pales. A spray of blood arcs from below his left nipple and disappears into the dust left by five hundred kids running away as fast as possible.

From the opposite direction come the teachers, sprinting with ashen concern. The principal arrives first. Muddy rolls in the dirt, screaming he doesn't want to die. Reuben sits cross-legged, watching. I stand there, not sure what to do. I don't know why I didn't run. (Frazer 2017, p. 73)

These techniques prove useful to do the very thing they claim and slow down the speed of the narrative that results as a consequence of using dynamic E-Prime language.

The method of Going On The Body, which

involves the reader on a gut level, involves avoiding cliches, and requires unpacking physical sensations into discreet units of experience and then [to] describe these experiences in direct and novel ways. (Vanderpool 2007)

This comes as a natural consequence of E-Prime when one avoids saying something is anything else (consider the scene in the *Scoundrel Days* where the two boys wreck their canoe and wander lost in the Australian outback: Frazer 2017, pp, 114-118). The minimalist technique Horses – “recurring themes which provide the backbone of a story, formulated and reiterated in various disguises in the course of a narrative” (Sári 2012), allowed me to avoid modifying my “psychopathic dad” sentence by unpacking it and influencing its context in the broader body of text.

These methods work particularly well in first person present perfect as stated by Spanbauer himself in an interview with the San Diego Writers Collective:

First person to me is like riding a surfboard. The wave is right under me and when I get it right there’s no feeling like it. Third person feels like I’ve stepped aside from the ‘sweet spot’ and I’m writing about someone else on the surfboard riding the wave. (Spanbauer 2011)

I think his student Palahniuk may have also caught on with a reference to E-Prime in a recent essay titled “Nuts and Bolts: ‘Thought’ Verbs”. He says to his students:

From this point forward – at least for the next half year – you may not use ‘thought’ verbs. These include: Thinks, Knows, Understands, Realizes, Believes, Wants, Remembers, Imagines, Desires, and a hundred others you love to use. The list should also include: Loves and Hates. And it should include: Is and Has, but we’ll get to those, later. (Palahniuk 2013)

To remedy the problems encountered so far, that is: 1. Maximalist sentences; 2. The problem of blame (the dynamic voice points the finger at the doer); and 3. Third person omniscient (hidden observer), I formulated these three simple rules:

- No hiding in the text
- No living outside the sentences
- No invisible observer

While one can endeavour to write without casting aspersions, convincing the reader to abandon their own blame-based thinking patterns requires some serious work. To do this you must not let your reader leave the text, and to accomplish that you must not let your narrator or your characters live outside of the sentences. I spent 2012 experimenting with narrative sketches and monologues in E-Prime, and researching qualities of “authentic voices” in literature and the methodology used to obtain those authentic voices. I started my PhD creative work in January 2013. After several false starts and many hiccups due to the tyranny of memory and mistakes in my timeline, by December 2013 I had produced 148,000 words written exclusively in English Prime. This figure includes a complete rewrite of the initial 20,000 words as a result of the process that unfolds when you get into the E-Prime ‘territory’. The seemingly outlandish claim by Korzybski that we do not directly experience reality, and Wilson’s crazy notion that simply altering language structure can have psychedelic effects, now don’t seem so outlandish or crazy. When you ‘plug in’ to E-Prime the semiotic environment becomes more vivid and active. An extract from a reflective journal written during my early experiments demonstrates the excitement felt:

So I begin, and immediately I feel overwhelmed by the discipline it takes to avoid using tenses of the verb to be. At times I swear that I can feel my brain squirming in my skull. But I persist and after a while I find myself faltering less and less. I also feel binocular in a land of the blind. Something almost miraculous happens, descriptions of places, events and people become vivid in the mind’s eye as the words flow. The old familiar shortcuts cannot be used. I cannot whitewash over anything, I cannot tell the reader anything. I must show, demonstrate, describe. (Frazer 2011)

Once you start to map a story using E-Prime the quality of immersion in the story improves exponentially. Even during the laborious process of editing you find yourself dragged through the text. What started out as an experiment to write more descriptively has become a whole new way of not only writing, but seeing. My desire to create an authentic voice required me to somehow ‘marry’ these two vastly different methods of story telling. The definition of memoir as “a record of events

based on the writer's personal observation" (*Collins English Dictionary* 2014) lends itself to a diegetic 'recollection' style prose where the narrator reports or recounts the story. My 'narrator' had to become a character, to serve as the reader's position, as a means to show or enact directly represented action. Using E-Prime as a device to expose the orator, the narrator steps out of the shadows and into the story.

After I completed the first draft of my creative work I enlisted a group of beta readers with the aim to gauge reactions toward not only the story itself, but the way I have 'told' or written the story. My beta readers included a native German speaker, a dyslexic chef, a native French speaker who translates to English for a living, an emotionally disturbed artist, a paranoid schizophrenic musician and a retired literary agent who has published twelve books. I elected to only inform my test group of the technique of E-Prime after their initial reactions. The response received proved very positive. The German speaker said, "for the first time I read English while thinking in English, not needing to translate to German and back". The dyslexic chef spoke with great excitement about how she "powered ahead with the story, not tripping over words like I always do, what sorcery is this?" The French translator commented on "the beat of the story, you swing from image to feeling ... it's like jazz poetry, in turn the story evokes feelings of elation and dread, like you can't quite articulate how you personally feel ... you're in the head of the protagonist and you can't get out". The retired literary agent said: "Started reading from when you sent it – slept for maybe six hours and just finished now. Could. Not. Stop. Very compelling reading ... the utterly active voice keeps the reader right up against the windscreen." Later, after she had finished reading she offered to come out of retirement and pitch it to her publishing contacts for me².

E-Prime offers a world of promise for students and teachers of writing across all disciplines. It is a constraint which offers access to dynamics of language ordinarily subliminal. If you aim to pursue truth and authenticity in your writing, or simply clarify your ideas in text, consider English Prime a whole new Operating System, a new pallet of shades to paint the world, a discipline that warrants rigorous

² Presented as anecdotal. Ethics approved. Permission from all involved sought and granted. Individual names omitted to retain privacy of those concerned. Further excerpts from this section elaborated upon in my exegesis.

investigation and experimentation.

I feel now ready to embark on my creative writing experiment.

5. Text experiments

‘Brilliant Future’

For my creative work I needed to produce an authentic sounding (reading) Australian vernacular. I realized I needed to free up my authorial idiosyncrasies and the personal evasion I experience when it comes to writing about Australia and Australian characters. The best way to do this, I decided, would entail enlisting a willing co-conspirator. I approached a contemporary of mine, Fakie Wilde and we embarked on an experiment. The rules:

1. Just write, be crass, funny, whatever, just write
2. When it dries up send on
3. The next author is free to add to, modify, rewrite, chop into, decontextualize, or recontextualize, subvert etc., etc.
4. Must be Australian

The result is the short story ‘Brilliant Future’ which was published in the international journal *Vlak: Contemporary Poetics and the Arts* in November 2013 (Frazer & Wilde 2013). It was accompanied by the abstract ‘A creative work (co-authored) written as an experiment to examine the production of an authentic Australian vernacular’. The full paper was 6071 words long. For brevity I have not included this co-authored paper in this exegesis. Biographical details for this publication are as follows:

Frazer, B & Wilde, F. (2013). Brilliant Future. *Vlak: Contemporary Poetics and the Arts* Number 4: pp.124-127 *Litteraria Pragensia: studies in literature and culture*, Prague

‘Clovers in Her Hair’

Next I tried writing from a more innocent childhood perspective. For this experiment I wrote in E-Prime but abandoned the extra pressure of writing nonfiction. This piece is semi-fictional. The place is real, the memories of visiting the place are authentic and there was a young love interest pined for during childhood but she did not die in an accident. The short story of 2800 words remains unpublished.

Clovers in Her Hair

Early on the first morning of the school holidays I find Dad on the driveway hooking up our caravan.

There goes the secret! he says. I want to get there a few days early and beat everyone to the good spots.

He looks excited. Lucy won't arrive until the weekend. I don't want to get there two days before her, so I fake a smile.

Out on the highway slightly west, away from the ocean and up into the ranges. Dad turns off the air-conditioner and we wind down our windows to inhale the rainforest. The radio starts to hiss and fuzz as we get behind the mountain. We amuse ourselves trying to identify birdcalls and complimenting Mum on her singing. The five hour trip takes forever. My boredom gets on the verge of terminal as the familiar *Camping Ground – This Way* sign appears.

Here *finally*, Mum says turning to look at us.

The first summer only a few caravans of families staked a claim along the banks of the river, but every year more come. We feel like pioneers. Originals, regulars every year. As we turn the bend off the dirt road to where the grass rolls down to the river Dad exclaims: What the! I look up from my book. Dozens of caravans and tents line the water's edge. A brood of men in singlets play a game of cricket and the shouts of a hundred kids swimming. Camp-fires and kites flying, dogs barking and sausages frying.

I doubt we'll get a place, children!' Mum says.

Don't talk like that! mumbles Dad.

They start on each other as parents do. I tune out, busy looking for Lucy's caravan, hopelessly I bet; but you couldn't miss it if they have arrived. A large silver and blue Jayco with a pop-up top and an awning coloured like a circus tent. You could hold a circus in there, too. Mum and Dad and Lucy's parents sat around in there the whole time last year, drinking and laughing in the shade.

Dad aims the car down the make-shift street of vans and tents and kids riding bikes but I can't see Lucy's caravan anywhere. I start to really worry about Mum's prophecy of parking-space-doom when ... Lucy! Standing by the side of the track with her mother, their huge awning half up, her dad sweating with a sledgehammer and a can of beer. I see them first. Those three bitter sleeps dissolve like aspirin in honey.

Hey look, Mim and Lucy! Mum says.

Next to Lucy's caravan we see a vacant spot. They've parked their car there, to reserve it for us! Dad and Lucy's father shake hands through the window.

I take my time getting out of the car. My sister walks off through the tents with Lucy before I even get to say hi. She's grown taller. Last year she

stood the same height as my sister, and now she has half a head above, and she hasn't cut her crazy red curly hair. Lucy looks back over her shoulder at me and smiles. My heart bursts.

Come back here and get your hat! Mum shouts after my sister. Lucy doesn't wear a hat; she has a parasol...like one she carried the day we met. As I said, we come here every year and have done so most of my life. In the beginning only a few caravans came ... a dirt track back then with no picnic tables or amenities block. Some things never change, though...old Bertha Jones in her ancient plywood *Ravan* caravan, all rotted and rusted-out like the skeleton of a ship on a beach that nomads live in. She owns this camping ground. I heard Dad reckon she probably owns about half the properties around here as well, and half the nearby town. She sits out front under a tattered awning all day watching people, drinking from a two-litre flagon of sherry. Late in the day she starts to abuse passers-by. By dusk, when the campers all get out cooking under the stars, you can hear her snoring and cursing in her sleep. A couple of years ago I met Lucy. Now our families hang out together. I believe that means destiny, or something. I have this secret spot way up the river. A huge canopy of ghost gums and eucalyptus trees that shadow a backwash by some rapids. A pool forms on the bend and you can see schools of bream taking a break from the current, flashing in the sun like mica on topaz. On the bank, in the shadows, huge patches of four leaf clovers grow in a natural circle of rocks. Above the rocks an ancient tree has fallen and forms a bridge. Moss grows on the bough and birds nest in the forks of the branches. I've collected hundreds of four-leafed clovers and preserved them between the pages of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

The first time I saw Lucy she sat on my tree bridge, dangling her legs over my pool of clovers, and she had a yellow umbrella. I watched in silence, admiring her long tan legs and the way the light dappled down through the trees behind her, lighting up her brolly like a halo. As I thought how she looked like a saint in a painting, a lone Rosella parrot, strayed from its pandemonium, swooped like a combination of a rainbow and a lightning strike down through the foliage and alighted, gracefully, on her head. She didn't squeal. I fell instantly in love. I hid, breathless, trying to figure out what the hell I would say to an angel, how not to scare her by suddenly stepping out from the bushes, when she spoke.

Hi there! a little laugh in her voice: Did you see that! Wow! What a beautiful bird ... come out from there.

I stepped out from the bushes, blushing. I like your umbrella I said, swallowing hard: It looks like a halo glowing in the sun.

Parasol . . . made of paper. Would fall apart in the rain, she said, jumping down from the log into the patch of clovers.

Hey! Careful! I shouted, and this time she shrieked, leaping into the air, looking around, terrified. I fell down laughing, which made her angry, and as I rolled around on the ground she kicked me firmly in the ribs.

Why did you scare me like that! Why? she demanded.

I didn't mean to scare you! Look ... a whole patch of four-leafed clovers, I said, rubbing my ribs.

Oh wow ... I didn't see those ... wow, an eternity of luck! She runs her fingers through the clovers.

That year a drought changed the river. The water didn't make it right up to the grassy bank. A stretch of sand arced down to the stream and a bunch of families built a huge bonfire. Everyone sat around a cowboy playing a guitar and a cool breeze blew up from the water, fanning the flames, they roared, everything glowed, beautiful, perfect. We sang On Top of Old Smokey and drank hot milo. I stretched out on a blanket feeling sleepy and content and Lucy slid in beside me. She wore a blue dress with no sleeves over a pink tee shirt. Her clothes reminded me of the parrot, how it floated down because it belonged there. By and by she took my hand in hers and stroked my palm and put her head on my shoulder. She had clovers in her hair.

While helping Dad set up our camp and peg out the awning I find myself looking up the street of caravans, hoping to see Lucy coming back and I think Dad's noticed. He has this dumb grin, chuckling to himself and I feel really annoyed. When she finally returns, my sister has a smirk on her face. A wave of terror. For sure my sister had spent the last thousand hours telling Lucy that I desperately love her and that I write poems about her in my journal. But Lucy looks right at me, not smirking ... she has a little smile, as though pleased to see me ... and my heart explodes.

The afternoon stretches out long and slender and the cricket game between the tents ends. Someone in one of the big caravans further up the river starts a generator. A couple more car loads of people roll along the dusty track, hopeful faces pressed up against windows, searching in vain for a spot to park their vans or pitch their tents. Old couples stroll down by the water with dogs on leads. As day reclines and the shadows rise the call of birds gives way to screeching clouds of flying foxes. Curious possums venture up to the tents.

I can see Lucy in the window of her caravan, helping her mother. How I dreamed of seeing her again! Every desk I sit at in school has her name carved into the laminate. I spray-painted 'I love Lucy' in huge letters in a storm drain by the supermarket, the heart in red, dripping, with an arrow pierced through. She comes out of the caravan wearing a pink dress, peeling a banana. I feel so impatient that I walk right up to her.

Hi, I say. Have an alright year?

I saw you watching me through the window. She takes a bite of her banana...stops my heart with her eyes.

Really nice to see you again! I blurt, embarrassed.

Her face lights up and she moves to embrace me ... and I try to kiss her, right then, all caution tossed overboard like a ship's crew ditching cargo in a panic. She recoils and jams the banana into my ear. It goes right in there and squishes deep into the canal. She runs back into her caravan and slams the screen door.

I sit over by the barbecues cleaning out the banana with a bent paper clip and a tissue when I hear the screen door slam again. Lucy comes across the park toward me. My heart takes another beating.

'Sorry' she says, her green eyes downcast, full of remorse.

I damn near poke the paper clip through my eardrum.

'No problem' I say, voice breaking. 'Sorry I tried to kiss you ... I ...'

Cutting me off, she says, a pale blush colouring her chest: 'I really didn't mind...that you tried to kiss me—I liked it, but I got—I guess I got a shock—the whole—banana thing.' She makes a martial arts type movement she obviously learned in school.

A few minutes later my heart starts again and with a rush of bold courage...only a year in the preparation ... I say 'You know—I really like you Lucy. I wish we lived in the same town.'

'I know,' she says, wiping a bit of banana out of my hair. 'Your sister told me that you haven't even talked to another girl, all year.'

I swear under my breath, flushing hot above the collar...my sister will meet with pain.

'I like that—I thought about you, too...' and she runs her fingers down my cheek.

Then she kissed me...you get the picture... no point trying to describe how that made me feel.

We sit up in the fork of a tree out over the river, holding each other for balance. An owl hoots high above us. Shadows in tents move about, guitars strum and bottles clink.

'Do you want a boyfriend' I ask, stroking her hair. She sits facing the bank, a campfire flickering in the green of her eyes. She kisses me again. Her tongue tastes like grape bubble-gum. Her lips ridiculously soft, like rubbing satin on your wrist. Her hair smells like sun and smoke and coconut oil.

'Yes,' she whispers, resting her head on my shoulder, then, more firmly, 'Yes—consider me your girlfriend.' She then slips a note into my pocket. 'Promise not to read it until later tonight—in bed.' She says, and kisses me again.

By the light of a pen torch, under the cover of my sleeping bag I unfold the note. It says, 'Falling, in love with you ... will you catch me?'

The next morning, as I help Dad make a pot of porridge over a fire, Lucy comes out of her caravan carrying a towel, wearing swimmers.

'Good morning' she says politely to my father, and turning to me 'Want to come swimming? My brother, our cousins and some of their friends want to go up to the lagoon—go on the swinging rope!'

I look hopefully at Dad who laughs and says 'Sure, don't forget your hat.' I run and change, heart singing for this glorious day.

The group of us walk up through the trees, following the river around the bend. Rapids roar over the rocks and, circling back around on itself, the river empties out over a cliff about fifteen feet high into a spectacular waterfall. Beyond a deep cool lagoon shimmers, carved out in the limestone from the water pounding there for a thousand years. At the very end looms an ancient paper-bark tree, about fifty metres high, and someone had climbed way up into the foliage and tied a rope over the bough that hangs above the water. A piece of broomstick as a handle, wedged through the weave of the rope. You can get up a fantastic speed running down the slope, launching out over the water, high up in the air until, practically horizontal, you let go and free fall into the lagoon. Dad came and checked it out years ago, swam around the lagoon with goggles, checking for rocks and submerged logs. 'Seems perfectly safe,' he told my concerned mother. 'About 10 foot deep there, a perfect diving spot.'

Lucy and I sit on the bank awhile, watching her older cousins doing somersaults and tandem swings and generally acting crazy. We eat some biscuits and potato chips and drink a bottle of ginger ale. We talk about next year, how we should write letters and muse that maybe, eventually, we could visit each other without having to wait for the yearly camping trip.

Her cousin suddenly towers above us, flicking water, acting the idiot. 'Have a go Lucy, come on, you'll love it—bet you can't get as high as me!'

She glances at me, reluctantly.

'Go on,' I say, 'or I'll go first!'

'I'll go first—then let's swim out to those rocks—get away from him!' she gestures at her cousin, letting go of my hand. Lucy takes a last sip of ginger ale, kicks off her sandals and unbuttons her shorts. A couple of her cousins and their friends rudely stare. I stand so she can put her hand on my shoulder...so she doesn't have to bend over. Ignoring their leers, she skips to the rope and grabs the handle of the swing from her brother. 'Pull me back' she demands. 'Grab my legs and pull me right back so I get a good speed up...too short to run down the bank.' She demonstrates while saying this, walking backwards up the slope holding the swing she can't get more than two

paces before she has to let go of the handle. Her brother and two of her cousins grab her legs, roughly, and pull her up the slope until, horizontal to the ground, she screams at them to let her go. I leap to my feet. 'Let her go!' I shout at them. All three let her go and she swings past me with a squeal. She goes out over the water and, when she should have let go, she doesn't, and all of us shout, 'LET GO!' in unison. She swings by me again and up, above horizontal, upside down, then she lets go. Flipping backwards in the air, in a perfect swan arc, she lands on her head, hitting the exposed roots of the tree.

A sickening liquid crunch and a deep gurgling scream tear apart the silence. I pick her up and her head lolls sideways like a flower too heavy for its stem. Another cracking sound, like popping bubble-wrap, echoes across the water, blood pours from her ear. She vomits and her green eyes focus, unfocus and pale ... then she sighs, the corners of her beautiful mouth quivering.

My heart burst, audibly, and everything goes quiet. I look up at the crowd of boys around us, all in shock. I scream for them to go and get help. They all run off into the trees, leaving me there, cradling Lucy. Her face slowly shades blue; some of the bones in her neck pierce through the skin. I try to lift her but she has frozen, her head on my shoulder ... her slender, noble neck, smashed in the wilderness. She has clovers in her hair.

'Nothing and Beingness'

My first E-Prime creative nonfiction experiment. Authored in E-Prime, no cheating with word processing capabilities. This experimental text plays with some of the themes and ideas employed in the production of my thesis. I reconstructed from memory a chance meeting with a strange man at a party. I produced this piece explicitly to experiment with narrative reconstruction. I sought to explore the fact that, unless an author has 100% recall of all conversations, a single discussion selected at random from the past will not be possible to reproduce. This piece also demonstrates my initial intention to discard conventional punctuation. Adopting the stylistics of Joyce in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (in turn borrowed by Joyce from the French tradition) I abandoned quotations and employed em-dashes to indicate the beginning of dialogue. I ultimately used this Joycean device in the final manuscript and the publisher carried it through to the paperback publication.

Nothing and Beingness

High-heels clatter on the slate disturbing birds as the girls run ahead, hand in hand, swallowed by the darkness of the path down through the trees. I adjust the weight of a carton of beer and watch the tail-lights of our cab twinkle up the street. Take two steps. A looming figure appears from behind the fence. Though stooped he towers above me. In the crook of his right elbow he holds a large watermelon, his left clutches a walking-stick. Through my yellow Hunter S. Thompson shooting glasses and because the LSD has taken hold, he looks like an extremely tall three-legged pregnant hunchback.

—A little help with this melon, son? he rasps from a mist of thrift shop, damp cardboard and shaving cream.

Struggling to focus I look at my carton of beer, then back at him and shaking my head make my way down the path.

—You've come for the sex party? he calls after me.

At last year's annual 'Live Sex' party we found a dead adolescent slumped in the garden, a pretty gay boy with blonde spiked hair and glitter on his cheeks. Someone revived him, or so I hear. The year before a hairdresser got so wasted on drugs she started to get friendly with the household dog...sexually friendly...and the whole room looked on in disbelief. The year before that, I dropped a *Red Mitsubishi* – a notoriously bad batch of ecstasy tablets. Several people died days later, overheated, cooked inside.

The girls stand at the front door arguing with a man in a police uniform, except in his utility belt he has a pink water pistol. He waves a large blue double ended rubber cock in their faces.

—No invites, no entry, bitches, he drawls in a mock authoritarian voice. I push past avoiding collision with the fairy-wings one of the girls wears. Struggling with the beer I hand the fake cop our invitations and he steps aside, opens the door.

—Keep illegal drugs on your person at all times and in the eventuality of a raid immediately consume everything, he mouths at our backs.

—Did you see that old guy with the watermelon? I say to the girls as we push down the hallway. Tripped me out...like a cross between Dirty Dancing and Naked Lunch! The girls look at me blankly, not getting the references; You know, Baby arrives to the party with a watermelon, and the guy looked like Burroughs in a dirty but dapper suit, all noble and crumbling, hobbling with a cane and shit.

My moment of insight gets swallowed up by the party. Inside the crowded toy closet a guy dressed as Zorro holds court, entertaining the room with a story about an incident at medical school. My companions wisp away in a haze of chiffon, glowsticks and sparkles.

—SO . . . Zorro says, one hand on his plastic sword. SO I say, can someone hand me the fucking drill...*I'm going in!* The whole room falls about

laughing. I didn't hear the whole story but I laugh anyway. Zorro holds his head high, too high, and he clenches his jaw, drawing air hard through his nostrils, the telltale sign of amphetamines. The first time I saw someone use a crack pipe at one of these parties it seemed extreme. I'd never seen a crack pipe before and the chick produced it so *casually*... now the high-pitched, dull chemical stench of crystal burning above butane adds to the ambiance at most parties, nightclubs, in toilet cubicles everywhere. The crowd begins to dissipate and I make it to the bar. Somehow I've belted six shots of tequila, contemplating my seventh. Faces ooze in and out on the peripheries, encourage me to the edge. I manage to bite down on my lip instead of a piece of lemon and somehow get a pinch of salt in my eye. As I bring the seventh shot to my mouth the tequila turns red and I feel faint. The bar undulates, the tender looks like a demon cockroach. I need to piss. Stumble down the hallway, bile rising in my esophagus. Someone wears too much perfume. I make it to the kitchen and vomit, violently and silently, into the sink.

—Very impressive, says a guy dressed as Dracula, complete with drawn-on hairline.

—The quietest spew I've ever witnessed...so...clean! He chuckles to himself, busy with a small bag of white powder. I mumble something to the vampire. "Keep the brain tethered...hold it down...any slippage now could be a landslide..." said Hunter S. Thompson. Somewhere else in that book he couldn't find his nose. I can still locate my nose. I feel fine.

Back out in the hallway a guy dressed as Cartman from South Park paints a tuxedo jacket on a half naked girl I've seen in a Coke commercial. As I pass he sketches a red rose around her left nipple. She giggles stupidly, making a point of not acknowledging that I exist. I trip, on purpose, over Cartman's distended leg and the red paint splashes over the girl's white shorts.

—Thanks ass-hat, he says, glaring at me. The girl fusses with the paint on her shorts, still ignoring me.

Out on the balcony, hours later, I see the old man again, emerging from the sliding door, silhouetted by a clamour of voices. In place of the watermelon he now carries a badly made *paper-mâché* space helmet with *NASA* painted upside down. He points at my packet of tobacco on the table. I nod.

—Do you know of *any* purpose to life? he asks, rolling a cigarette. He puts down the tobacco, looks at me over his bifocals. His face, earlier obscured by acid and shadows fades in. The party lights on the balcony reveal his demolished splendour. His eyes have a peculiar flat gleam, like a store mannequin. He looks about 90 with a prosthetic leg, peeling skin, and a face full of blasted capillaries. He looms over me in a stinking tweed jacket, old ghost grey. As he turns his head a spectacular bristle of ear hair sparkles above enormous lobes. He sits, creaking. I shouldn't have played that drinking game, not on top of the LSD. I struggle to lift my head, regretting already that I

intend to speak, but I do anyway – civility a small compensation for my inability to help him earlier.

—Depends what you mean by purpose? I hand him a box of matches, soak up his Worzel Gummidge head.

The party rages on. A girl at a table next to us says —Bring on the live sex! It says on here ‘*live sex – late show – adults only*’ and look, past 3am, doesn’t get much fucking later than that! The girl taps her invitation impatiently on her hooker nails. I chuckle to myself. The old man strikes a match, the head flies off, smoke trail like an exploded space shuttle, lands on the table, bubbles the varnish. We both watch a moment before he brings down a gnarled old finger and extinguishes it. A playful scream from the house, much laughter, a small distraction.

—I guess by purpose I mean fate, he pauses. —But I don’t like the world ‘fate’ so much...I find it too...fatalist. He fades out, minds tongue wrestling for an alternative twist of phrase.

A beautiful girl sashays past dressed like a Jane Austen character. I watch the old man aim his gaze at her arse with microscopic precision.

—You know, the people who host this party work in advertising...the live sex show doesn’t happen! Most years they make fake announcements...gets your hopes up. I say, laughing.

The people we overheard now overhear me and they fall silent, looking dismayed. I laugh at them. They glare back. The girl with the hooker nails motions to make an obscene gesture at me but I look away. The old man sighs, slumps his shoulders, heaves his prosthetic up on a vacant chair, removes it and starts to massage the stump. I try not to look but I do. I get that kick inside, like when you walk in on your grandmother in the bathtub and witness firsthand the tragedy of age. The throb of the music stops. The whole party falls silent in unison. I notice Cartman and Dracula together in a corner. Dracula shows Cartman something on his mobile phone. I worry momentarily that he filmed me telling the half naked girl she has ugly tits, screaming profanities as she looked past me and said “huh?” in response to my insult.

Into the momentary silence, feigning indifference to the amputation, I say—Ever heard of the Butterfly Effect? You know, a Butterfly flapping its wings in a coconut tree on some far flung island can ultimately result in a tornado on the other side of the globe. Move a grain of sand on the beach and change the history of the world. Cause and effect...but as to whether the butterfly has any actual ‘purpose’ for flapping...care to answer that question?

Disturbingly, with practiced care he unwinds the bandage. A glass breaks somewhere.

—I’ve heard that term, the Butterfly Effect, but I never really knew what it meant. He draws heavily on his cigarette, punctuates his words with puffs of smoke. —The Butterfly’s purpose? To fly, eat, fuck, propagate the species, continue on...what better purpose...*purpose* and reason...perhaps

Butterflies exist to cause tornadoes? He taps his cigarette into the space helmet. Exhales, aims those faded eyes at me again.

—You’ve opened a whole different can of sandwiches, I say, mildly irritated. The over indulgence in tequila bubbles up my throat, persistent waves of nausea, perspiration beading, my saliva tastes acidic. The whole day flashes back, the ecstasy tablet for breakfast, weed for lunch, half a bottle of Royal Muscat for dinner to wash down the acid tab. The smell of hairspray and perfume as the girls got ready for the party, the cab headlights twinkling out like dying stars. Momentarily I see my future. Either I overdose and die in a garden like that glittery boy or I end up a hundred years old, peeling like an old fence, lucky if I’ve still got all my palings. Here the LSD throws up a clear vivid flashback of the boy, stretched out in a Jesus pose among the roses, thorns biting his satin pants, silver glitter on his cheeks and in his hair...a fairy tale for the post-postmodern world. He looks peaceful, floating before my eyes.

—Why? says the old man, leaning forward, breaking into my hallucination, reaching for the matches. The vision of the boy morphs into the old man. From behind his paper-bark face a two-legged child, smart pressed jacket and trousers, skips with a mischievous grin, beams at me, a mirror of my own larrikin youth.

I resign myself to the conversation, even though his face slips away like a winter tide.

—Semantics, I say, rolling a ball of stray tobacco between my fingers. —For example, if you say something has purpose you’ve assumed it exists. The word ‘being’ causes problems...describe being...you can’t, try...you end up describing ‘doing’.

—How does the dictionary define ‘Being’? he quizzes. —I can’t say I’ve looked it up.

—From memory: *‘Something, an object, an idea, or a symbol, that exists’*.

—And how does the dictionary define ‘Exist’? he says, a hint of challenge in his voice.

—*To have actual being! See, we have here a classic feedback loop...nothing but assumptions.* I laugh. —But fuck it, you know, Jim Morrison got it right. I heard a recording of a live concert...Jim says ‘Anyone here believe in astrology? I’m an Aquarius.’ And the crowd goes nuts, women screaming, ‘Yes Jim, oh yeah Jim, woo-hoo have my panties’, and Jim says, ‘Well, personally, I think it’s a bunch of bullshit...I just wanna get my kicks before the whole shit-house goes up in flames—yeah, alright.’

The old man laughs. I don’t. Thinking of Jim this wasted gives me a clear visual of my dead Brother-in-law. I miss him terribly. Dead at 21...heroin. ‘Tryin’ the hard shit, just once brother’, he said, from far away, like he really meant he’d been using for months. I’ve met a few boys like him,

half conscious, beautiful, doomed, headed for oblivion. How did this old man make it through...he's had six beers since our conversation started.

A famous artist dressed as a Nazi SS General trips out onto the balcony. Momentarily he measures us up, then with eyes narrowed he staggers to the handrail, groans and vomits over the edge.

—Shit fucked me up! he gurgles at us, wiping his chin with a swastika handkerchief, disappears back into the crowd.

The old man's face remains still, like leaves in a collage. His eyes corner anger, probably about the Gestapo costume. He scratches his chin with a sound like a beetle in a matchbox, a fine powder of dried skin floats down into a discarded glass of red wine. He looks at me looking and sits back dismissively. I want to display sympathy, to explain that the guy dressed as a Nazi makes it his business to provoke people, but he cuts me off.

—Do you believe in God? A Creator? the old man demands.

The moment has gone. Doing my best to remain indifferent to the sudden shift in tone, I retort —Believing in something doesn't make it true...the concept of the Christian god interests me because, and only because, I like paradoxes. Like a benevolent, all forgiving god that creates a predatory food chain. What a perfect paradox! But even then, when someone stumbles upon a truth, beyond a belief, they don't always choose to believe...

—Sooo, an Atheist? he bites back, matching my tone. —You believe that nothing magically exploded and became everything? He looks at me directly, those dead mannequin eyes now sharp as an arctic dog. I notice then the fervour in his voice, an evangelical conviction that results from having embraced a belief for a lifetime. I grew up hearing people speak like him, in tent churches and school halls after dark. Crowds of outcasts desperate for better life in death. The LSD at this point offers up a swirl of visuals. The old guy might in fact have just wandered in, a bum from the street. The fake cop with the pink water pistol and the dildo truncheon didn't offer much insurance against unwanted guests. Trying to cage my voice, to shift the conversation, I say —Well, I guess science has come full circle, suggesting some sort of intelligent design...nature routinely offers up perfect things, like eggs and roses, like the Golden Ratio. Phi.

—Pie? The Golden Ratio? Like the Bermuda Triangle? He leans forward now, genuinely curious, curls back his lips. For the first time I notice his teeth, a row of mouldy broken tombstones.

—The Golden Ratio...scientists call it an 'irrational mathematical constant'. Observable in nature, all beautiful things, things that please the eye, conform to this ratio. Some claim that our circadian rhythm and natural biological brainwaves also conform to it.

—So a fucking scientist then?! he coughs. Loud. Exaggerated.

I feign offence, crossing my arms. —Far from it, I know fuck-all about science. If you think about what I just said, that scientists have come full

circle, have begun to consider the possibility of a ‘god’...they euphemistically refer to this god as an ‘intelligent designer’.

At this point I feel a dull liquid click in my brain, like an animal parting its lips in the darkness. A scene from the film *Pi* directed by Darren Aronofsky plays in the space between the old man and I. The scene where the protagonist, a mathematical genius driven mad by his search for the elusive equation which underlies all things, drills a hole in his skull with a Black & Decker. A film about obsession and paranoia. A chill crawls under my skin. The old man’s life looks almost over and here he sits, ancient, wasted, hoping to see a couple of art students having sex in public. All around me...Humans trying to escape the human condition like ballet dancers destroying their feet. I look at photographs of Hunter S. Thompson and I see pain in his eyes, the subtext of his literature steeped in the agony of the class clown, the court jester. The classical Fool...awakens to the folly of mankind, goes mad, makes jokes to disguise his pain. I knew a philosopher once, a long time ago, a genius, a student of Baudrillard. We used to get drunk together and he would speak about the perversion of reality. One night while sitting around smoking joints he experienced a psychotic break. He suddenly screamed ‘I don’t want to die!’ leapt up from the couch and, not noticing his shins whacking into the coffee table, ran from the house. Some cops found him in a supermarket carpark, sitting in a trolley punching himself in the face. After that, for years, he acted like a copy with no original. Thinking about God brings danger, arguing about God leads to bloodshed, war, genocide...or worse.

I snap back, someone elbowed me as they squeezed past. The old man fidgets with the space helmet. —What did I say? Oh yeah...have you heard of Korzybski, I mentioned him earlier...his theory of being.?

—No. Who-ski? Another rockstar?

I laugh. He doesn’t.

—No...Korzybski the Semanticist. Basically he said the greatest mistake in history happened when scribes mistook God for a character...a verb, for a noun. He identified what he called ‘a virus in language’...now days we call it a ‘thinko’.

—You’ve lost me there, son, Tzatziki, a singer...brain virus...a ‘thinko’?

—A Thinko, like a Typo...a mistake in thinking or speaking...*Korzybski*...and not a brain virus, a language virus...a virulent sickness in thinking or speaking.

—Lost me there again, mate. Do you smoke?

—You just watched me, and bummed one yourself!

—I mean weed, he says pulling out an old Log Cabin tobacco tin from somewhere deep within his smelly jacket. Unscrewing the lid he pushes the tin across the table, grins like a guilty school boy. —Roll us up one will ya, son.

I do not, under any circumstances, want to share a joint with this old man. Beyond the fruity scent of the buds in the tin, I can smell the moss on his teeth. Hands shaking, I vomit a little in my mouth.

—Hell, he says, roll one for yourself.

As I fumble, trying to crumble up the weed in the breeze on the balcony he launches into a rant.

—The whole world has gone to Jim Morrison’s shit-house you know. The end of an empire unfolds as we watch. Just look at history, all the great civilisations had the same symptoms before the end...moral decay, perversion everywhere, child abuse spreading like a bloody virus...mark my words son...the last generation in this world dances around us now.

Contemplating his tirade, I hand him a clumsy looking joint. As he lights it I steal a bud for later. A telephone rings inside the house, warbled, struggling to be heard above the music and cacophony of inebriated voices. The old man, disturbed by the ringing, reaches under the table, brings his prosthetic limb back into view, picks at a chip on the artificial pink shin. A blush of unusual guilt flowers in my heart for a moment. I screw the lid back on the tin of buds and slide it across the table. About a dozen people suddenly push out onto the balcony, a guy dressed as Merlin pretends to slam his beard in the sliding door, laughter all around.

—Mate, he says, strapping up his stump, fussing with the Velcro. —I tell you what, heading for my first century I’ve worked some shit out. What would you say...I mean, you seem like you have an open mind. What would you say if I told you that I know the secret of life?

—I’d get up and leave, I say, rising.

Evolution of opening paragraphs of *Scoundrel Days*

Below is the evolution of the opening paragraph of *Scoundrel Days*, from my very first draft written in plain English before I embraced the English Prime constraint, through the process of grappling with the discipline, to the very final published version. Below each draft excerpt are my notes.

Draft: 01 January 2013 (Plain English)

I was born in January 1972 and I remember it. I first remembered the year I was five, the year we moved to Greenvale. I remember my mum was combing her hair in the mirror and I said in my boy’s voice:

“Mum, I remember being born. There was a hole in the roof and soldiers were stringing up a blue sheet.”

Mum didn't look away from the mirror where she was combing her hair but she said it was impossible for me to remember. She was grumpy that day because we had been swimming and she accidentally went under. Going under gives her migraines because when I was a baby dad ran her over with a tractor.

Here I know what the story will be, I know how it starts, the evolution and finale, I have my timeline but I am unhappy with the reflective voice. When is this story told, and it is being *told* here, I don't seem to be doing much showing: I was, there was, she was etc., etc. The voice comes down through time and my dialogue contains tense wobbles due to my efforts to 'immediate' the voice. When the dialogue stops it switches back to past tense: 'Mum didn't look away ... where she was'. And then the top wobbles right off the page... 'She was grumpy that day' contains a memory within a memory as the sentence carries through to 'we had been swimming'. NO, I thought at this stage, I will not follow the easy path and simply try to modify my reflective voice ... reflection is reflection.

Draft: 02 March 2013 – Adopted E-Prime after practice with two short stories (see Appendix C)

Confiding to my Mother:

"I have a memory, of flapping sheets? Blue, heavy flapping sheets, and men, soldiers, I think."

"The hospital had no roof, the cyclone blew it off...the army slung up tarps across the beams, blue tarps...but a new-born, remembering birth...impossible!" she laughed, fussing with my lunch box.

Watching her reflection, combing her long brunette hair. Lately she wore it out, a lot. Back in the city she wore it wound up tight, in a bun, on the back of her head. You never saw it out, unless she went swimming, and she didn't go swimming a lot because, she said, going under the water gave her migraines. She spent hours smoothing down the strays with hair lacquer. In the mirror, frowning at herself, way back, before I could talk. Look at her droopy face from when dad ran her over with a tractor.

Now I have managed to make the voice active, but it is still reflective. Past tense is everywhere which counteracts my attempts to be active, past tense is passive story telling, there is no agent doing anything but 'reflecting'. 'Watching her reflection' ... 'she didn't go swimming.'

Draft: 03 April 2014 – Full work completed, 1st edit

I have a memory, of flapping sheets. Blue, heavy flapping sheets, and men—Soldiers, I think. Mum, gently mocking: ‘The hospital had no roof, the cyclone blew it off—the army slung up tarps across the rafters, blue tarps—but a new-born, remembering birth, impossible!’ she fusses with my lunch box. I watch her reflection comb her long brown hair. Lately, she wears it out. Back in the city it was wound up tight in a bun on the back of her head. I couldn’t count the hours she would spend smoothing down strays with hair lacquer. You never see it free, unless she goes swimming, and she doesn’t go swimming often. Going under water gives her migraines. .

Other memories, I don’t remember, but I can feel them, imagine what went down. when my father ran over my mother with a tractor.

Here, and despite my best efforts to move into present tense and an active voice by providing agency for everything that occurs within the liminal field, still reflection persists! ‘I have a memory’. Dismayed, I also notice now that I have lost the date, the sign post, from draft one. This occurred unconsciously because the rules of writing present continuous tense state: ‘The Present Perfect Continuous Tense is made up of the present perfect tense of the verb to be (have/has been), and the present participle of the main verb (verb + ing)’ (‘Tense’ 2016a).

Draft 04: September 2014

January, 1972. I have a memory, of flapping sheets. Blue, heavy flapping sheets, and men—soldiers, I think. Mum, gently mocking ‘The hospital had no roof, the cyclone blew it off—the army slung up tarps across the rafters, blue tarps—but a new-born, remembering birth, impossible!’ she fusses with my lunch box. I watch her reflection comb her long auburn hair. She wears it out now. Back in the city mum wound it up tight in a bun. I couldn’t count the hours she spent smoothing down strays with hair lacquer. You never see it free, unless she goes swimming, and she doesn’t go swimming often. Going under water gives her migraines because dad ran her over with a tractor.

I’ve switched to the present perfect tense which connects the present to the past. ‘It describes an action that happened in the past and goes right to the present moment. The time of occurrence of the action is not mentioned. Usually, the time is not important or is not necessary to know. It is the result of the action that matters. It tells us the outcome to date of the action’ (‘Tense’ 2016b). I put the sign post back in, as direct narration, rather than include it as dialogue. Now the ‘words on the page’

themselves begin to bother me. It reads cluttered and almost ‘bumbling’ and while I like that naïve childlike quality in the voice it looks like a wall of text.

Draft 05: May 2015

January, 1972. A memory of flapping sheets. Blue, heavy sheets, and soldiers, I think.

—The hospital lost the roof. The cyclone blew it off. The army slung up tarps across the rafters, blue tarps, but a new-born, remembering birth, impossible! Mum fusses with my lunch box. I watch her reflection comb her long auburn hair.

—Cyclone Althea destroyed the town, says her mouth in the mirror. She wears her hair out often now. Back in the city she wound it up tight in a bun, spent hours smoothing down strays with lacquer. When Mum goes swimming she wears it loose. She doesn’t go swimming much. Going underwater gives her migraines, because Dad ran her over with a tractor.

Here I adopted from Joyce the stylistics he lifted from the French tradition and employed em-dashes to begin dialogue and abandoned quotations all together. But, for some reason, despite feeling quite happy with this draft the agency of the characters reads a little dulled, e.g., Mum fusses with my lunch box. I watch her reflection comb her long auburn hair. Also, ‘think’ and ‘memory’ read reflective.

Draft: Final – May 2016

—January 1972. Soldiers. Blue heavy sheets flapping in the wind.

Mum ignores me awhile, fussing with a brush, and then says:

—The hospital had no roof. The cyclone blew it away. The army slung blue tarps across the rafters... But a newborn remembering birth? Impossible! I watch her reflection comb her long auburn hair.

—Cyclone Althea destroyed Townsville, says her mouth in the mirror. She wears her hair out now. Back in the city she wound it in a bun, spent hours smoothing down strays with lacquer. When Mum swims, she wears it loose. She doesn’t swim often. Diving gives her migraines, since Dad ran her over with a tractor.

Now everything has agency. I moved the signpost date back into the dialogue and showed the mother character distracted in an action (fussing with hair brush) and this distraction in turns creates space-time within the text, especially when a few beats later we learn, or it is at least inferred, that the action witnessed occurs in a mirror,

which again re-enforces the perspective of the viewer, or in the metaphor I have carried throughout, the position of the camera. I have also signposted the reflective elements that still haunt the narrative, both on the liminal field and the subliminal. The text contains a) a mirror and b) the actual word *reflection* is written. The reader is in the story, with the boy (perhaps sitting on a bed) experiencing the formation of a memory while describing an earlier memory in real time.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview with Peter J Carroll

14 October 2014

Subject – English Prime

1. When did you first learn of Korzybski's theories about the 'is' of identity and the 'is' of predication and his views about this semantic 'virus' in our language?

I came across this idea in Robert Anton Wilson's writings and decided to attempt my third book 'Psybermagick' using the E-Prime or V-Prime idea, I must confess that I didn't stumble across Korzybski's ideas on the subject till much later, nor can I remember which of Wilson's books I encountered the idea in. I don't collect books, having read a book I usually pass it on to any visiting friend who hasn't read it. Abandoning the idea of 'being' struck me as a supremely important method of thinking clearly about anything and everything and I wrote explicitly about this in Psybermagick.

The scientific, metaphysical, and psychological tie-ins of the V-Prime idea attracted me immediately. Basically, from a scientific point of view we cannot observe anything in a state of 'being', we can only observe what it does. Nothing remains stationary, atoms and the particles within them execute an endless high speed dance, continually spinning and vibrating and quantum jumping from wavelike to particle like behavior. Quantum physics looks weird and incomprehensible if you insist on trying to say that a quantum event like a photon of light or an electron of matter 'is' a particle or 'is' a wave, or 'is' anything at all. For us an electron just consists of what it does, no theory of what it really 'is' can ever make much sense although we can usefully liken its doings to the doings of other events, for example it does some things that the events we call protons also do.

In the realm of thought, the attribution of 'being' to anything acts as a lazy mental shortcut that easily degrades our thinking. If I say 'John 'is' stupid', I have merely established a fairly useless prejudice. Better for me to have said or thought 'John has just done something that I consider stupid', for that allows me to consider why I consider it stupid, why he might have done it, how best I could react to it, and the probability of more or less of the same in future. This might seem a relatively innocuous example but such thinking lies at the root of racial stereotyping and indeed

at the root of most of our relatively useless unexamined opinions about everything. Saying that the Romans ‘were’ a violent, bloody, and militaristic people adds nothing to our understanding. They DID some violent, bloody, and militaristic things for sure, but they also did quite the opposite at various times and in various situations, as do most peoples.

From an esoteric and psychological point of view it seems safer and more productive to assume that people (including oneself) consist entirely of what they do and think, and to abandon the peculiar idea that they have some form of ‘being’ underlying that. The idea of underlying ‘being’ comes of course from Platonism and Neo-Platonism, and effective thinkers have tried to eliminate this notion during the last two thousand years because it doesn’t work very well and it doesn’t give good results. The alchemists wasted centuries trying to distill the underlying essence of gold to no effect because it doesn’t have one. The chemists simply asked what do metals and chemicals actually do.

Effective psychologists examine the thoughts and behavior of people and help them to change those if they need to. Theories of underlying ‘being’ or ‘is-ness’ do not really help at all.

When someone asserts I ‘am’ something or other, a good psychologist thinks well we could change that if necessary. Good magicians have always appreciated this, within physical limits (and sometimes beyond them) anyone can DO anything, and in doing it change the ‘being’ that they didn’t have in the first place.

2. You have experimented and written extensively with and about the constraint of English Prime in your incredible book *Psybermagick*; what effects have you noted on your writing style?

I found it a bit of a struggle at first, to overcome the lazy habits of thought that the existence of the false verb ‘to be’ had ingrained in me. The very act of writing in E-prime made it easier to start thinking in it when not writing. We tend to believe what we do rather than to do what we believe. (Just look at the effects of living in various cultures). Thus by making myself do otherwise in writing I changed my belief and thinking. I must confess that if I speak hurriedly I still sometimes fall into the trap of uttering an occasional ‘is or a ‘was’ or a ‘be’ or an ‘am’, but I always catch myself and afterwards I’ll straighten that thought out into what I really meant.

I run an online esoteric college called Arcanorium, I always try to use E-prime on it and I encourage others to follow suit. I believe it enhances the quality of the debate and increases civility.

3. Inspired by Korzybksi and Bourland I like to draw a delineation between the

‘earth’ and the ‘world’. The earth is what Korzybski would call the natural environment and the world is what he would refer to as our semiotic reality (we live on the earth and in the world). These views have echoed down to us through Baudrillard and his ideas about the death of ‘reality’. What strange effects did you notice occur in our semiotic environment when you experimented with English Prime?

I strongly suspect that an objective reality does go on outside our heads even though we can only perceive a degraded and filtered version of it inside of our heads. Moreover, not only does our sensory apparatus give us only a rather rough version of the outside reality but our internal processing mucks about with the incoming information adding all sorts of interpretations including the idea that phenomena have ‘being’ and essence in addition to the doing we actually observe. As some people in the modern world find themselves giving ever more of their attention to convoluted interpretations of reality and less and less to the more basic experiences of hunger, fear, physical exertion, real friendships, and real hardships; then they will indeed become detached from reality. Descartes infamously asserted I think therefore I ‘am’. One wit quipped that Descartes had probably yet to experience a serious toothache.

I have noticed that whenever I hear or read of someone repeatedly asserting the ‘is-ness’ or the ‘was-ness’ or the ‘will-be-ness’ of anything that it comes over as hollow and questionable to me, whether it comes from a scientist, a politician, a priest, or anyone else attempting to persuade themselves or me of something. I feel like demanding that they explain themselves properly.

4. My research has revealed that only one author, David Gerrold (of Star Trek fame) has attempted to write a wholly creative work using English Prime. (I say ‘attempt’ because having just read it, I won’t read it again) Am I correct or are you aware of other published creative works written in E-Prime?

Yes you CAN correctly assume this :) I have so little time for novels what with businesses, writing, and Arcanorium College to attend to.

5. Since William Burroughs and Robert Anton Wilson left us you are my favourite living writer. Of all the authors I have read, including the before mentioned deceased masters, since first reading Liber Null and Psychonaut in 1992 I have yet to find a more invigorating, witty, acerbic, insightful and outright life changing writer than yourself. How much of your mastery of the English language do you attribute to your experiments with English Prime?

From an early age I realized that power over words confers a power beyond words. I came from an upper working class family and went to a grammar school full of lower middle class kids and then on to a university with upper middle class kids in it. Only

articulate speech stood between me and them, so I paid attention to it. More articulate people tend to explicate their thoughts further and more convincingly, they don't just rely on asserting that 'this 'is' so'.

I did not use the discipline of E-Prime in my first two books. They remain popular but I hope that my later works in E-prime may have a longer lasting impact.

6. I have read many of your interviews over the years and no one appears to have asked you about English Prime before. Now that I am asking what are your thoughts about the constraint and why do you think that such a revolutionary system of thinking has remained largely unexplored? Do you think that because this semiotic/simulated world we live in has itself so institutionalised by Aristotelian methods of enquiry that 'the powers that be' hope it will just go away?

No, they haven't. Psybermagick where I explained the theory and tried it out, remains a small circulation book from a small publisher. I like to think that in my subsequent three books I had mastered the technique to a degree that nobody really noticed the subtle absence of all tenses of the cursed verb 'to-be', but I hope that it has a subliminal effect on the thought processes of the readership. We have 2 millennia of muddle headed Platonic idealism to undo.

7. You say 'you hope that (e-prime/v-prime) has a subliminal effect on the thought processes of your readership' And that we 'have two millennia of muddle headed Platonic idealism to undo.' Considering that you are whom I consider the leading authority on E-Prime alive today I'd like to focus back on the second part of my last question. Why do you think that such a powerful system of thinking has remained largely unexplored since first hypothesised in the 1930's. Do you think that because this system of thinking has such a subliminal effect on the reader that it has been suppressed, or do you think that, as Bourland said, people, when hearing of it, dismiss it as a 'crazy' idea and don't pursue it?

Robert Anton Wilson wrote:

The case for E-Prime rests on the simple proposition that "isness" sets the brain into a medieval Aristotelian framework that makes it impossible to understand modern problems and opportunities... [C]onsider the human brain as a computer. As the Prime Law of Computers tells us, GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT... The wrong software guarantees wrong answers. It seems likely that the principal software used in the human brain consists of words, metaphors, disguised metaphors, and linguistic structures in general. A revision of language structure, in

particular, can alter the brain as dramatically as a psychedelic. In our metaphor, if we change the software, the computer operates in a new way. (Wilson 1990: 98)

My experiments with E-Prime involved selecting a wide range of beta-readers, from all walks of life, educational backgrounds etc. ranging from chefs to university professors, drug dealers to doctors. Over two years, not one single reader in a group of 100 noticed the e-prime. Every single reader commented on the clarity of the text and its quality of involuntary speed reading. However, two of my test group suffer from psychological problems and both of these readers were a) the only ones to dislike the book, and b) have since refused any further contact with me...one of these people I have known for 20 years.

In light of this, do you think that E-Prime might indeed ‘be’ a dangerous idea, as it can, as Wilson states, alter the brain like a psychedelic?

Well people generally prefer pseudo-certainty to uncertainty. People don’t generally like to fill their mental architectures with a lot of structures based on ‘perhaps’ or ‘maybe’ (incidentally I remain unsure about the use of ‘maybe’; perhaps ‘perhaps’ or ‘possibly’ serves us better) Few people would appreciate a novel full of ambiguity about what the characters ‘probably’ did and thought. (although real life works like this) Religions appeal because even silly explanations seem more attractive than admitting we haven’t got a clue about many major matters. Many people with mental problems search desperately for definite yes and no assertions they can believe in. Okay people can cope with some uncertainties but only the most robust can cope with the ideas that our brains model reality rather poorly and that everything we know and everything we think ‘is so’ may prove wrong or inaccurate or useless.. Psychedelics show some people that they construct reality as much as they perceive it. I think that using E-Prime can show people the extent to which language also imposes and creates versions of reality.

Philosophers should act as the guardians of useful sarcasms and always look for the conditions under which any idea would seem false or useless. Of course they can get their heads chopped off for this, or drive their patrons to distraction, but hopefully towards more useful ideas in the end.

and my final question:

8. Earlier you said that “The scientific, metaphysical, and psychological tie-ins” attracted you to E-Prime. Do you think now, as we stand at the peak of history on this timeline, as the old gods rub the dust out of their eyes and science has come full circle to proclaiming a ‘creator’ of some kind; do you think that E-Prime needs a wider audience, that whatever we ‘are’ (a bio-mystical force-field

from outer-space...I LOVE that) needs a new system of thinking, an OS upgrade that does this very thing, reconnects us (allows us to reimagine ourselves) as scientific, metaphysical and psychological entities?

So what part(s) of science proclaim a creator? I hope that you do not mean the big bang idea, I have some serious issues with this seemingly phlogiston filled creaky hypothesis see <http://www.specularium.org/hypersphere-cosmology/item/149-hypersphere-cosmology-academy>

But yes, some as yet barely suspected relationship between consciousness and the existence of the universe may exist. We should not say that the universe 'is' conscious, but perhaps that the universe does consciousness, or perhaps that consciousness does the universe. But either way I suspect that doing does not arise from not-doing, and that neither requires a creator.

Appendix B

E-Prime Rules

Disallowed words:

be
being
been
am
is; isn't
are; aren't
was; wasn't
were; weren't

Contractions formed from a pronoun and a form of to be:

I'm
you're; we're; they're
he's; she's; it's
there's; here's
where's; how's; what's; who's
that's

Naturally contractions of 'has' are allowed: she's, he's.

E-Prime likewise prohibits contractions of to be found in nonstandard dialects of English, such as the following:

ain't
hain't (when derived from *ain't* rather than haven't)
whatcha (derived from what *are* you)
yer (when derived from *you are* rather than your)

Allowed words:

E-prime does not prohibit the following words, because they do not derive from forms of to be. Some of these serve similar grammatical functions (see auxiliary verbs).

become;
has; have; having; had (I've; you've)
do; does; doing; did
can; could
will; would (they'd)

shall; should
ought
may; might; must
remain
equal

Appendix C

As an aside to the manual method of determining the ‘crispness’ of a text encountered while researching Bourland (p. 63 of this paper) I decided to automate the process by creating a computer application based on Bourland’s definitional semantic equation. I enlisted the help of a friend proficient in all things ‘app’ (thanked in the acknowledgements section of this paper) and he designed for me what I now refer to as *Mrs Crisp* named after Bourland’s ‘crispness index’ moniker and by pure coincidence, the name of my very first teacher, Mrs Crisp, written about in part one of the creative work *Scoundrel Days*.

The app (linked below) at this stage is for entertainment purposes only as it can only offer a ‘rough’ estimate of a given text’s crispness, or, as I like to call it, ‘dynamism’. The reason for this is currently it is not possible to ‘tell’ the algorithm how to differentiate between ‘she’s (she is)’ and ‘she’s (she has)’. To counter this in my own text I un-contracted all ‘she has, he has’.

Mrs. Crisp

A computational dynamic text indicer based on a definitional semantic equation developed by D. David Bourland.

ABSTRACT: Dynamic Text Indicer – reveals the dynamics of a piece of writing. (Ironically), taking care to avoid the static conjugated tenses of the verb ‘to be’ (while composing a piece of writing) results in a more active and ‘alive’ experience for the reader. I can show that published texts containing a higher ratio of dynamic sentences become popular, whether they achieve critical acclaim, or not.

Evolution

1933: Korzybski identifies a semantic error in the English language, the ‘is’ of identity, and the ‘is’ of predication. He observes that one cannot describe the state of ‘being’, only a series of processes, things doing things.

1965: A student of Korzybski’s, D. David Bourland, inspired by a letter received from a member of the Society of General Semantics, invents English Prime, a method of speaking or writing without use of the copula (tenses of the verb ‘to be’).

Bourland develops the following Definitional Semantic Equation for English Prime:

$$E'=E-e$$

$E'=E$ Prime, E =Standard English with verb ‘to be’, e =conjugated forms of the verb ‘to be’ (are,

am, is, was, were, be, been, being + contractions: I'm, etc.) (Bourland: 1965)

Several years later Bourland published a paper outlining the development of a 'Crispness Index', a method by which to measure the dynamism of a text based on the employment of English Prime in composition.

$$(C.I = \text{Number of E-Prime Sentences} / \text{Total Number of Sentences})$$

Bourland hand counted the sentences of a great number of books ranging from the classics to genre-pulp. He concluded that the master writers, the ones who have had the benefit of professional editorial attention and at least a generation of scholarly study, use the copula in about half of their sentences.

1997. D. T. Bourland, the son of D. David writes a rudimentary c+ computer program in pity of his father's laborious efforts. He names this program Crisp-E.

D. T Bourland writes about the production of this program in *ETC Journal of General Semantics* and states his intention to sell Crisp-E to developers of word processing programs; and then . . . Crisp-E disappears. My research has turned up no trace of the original program.

2015. As an extension of my doctoral research into reviving and enhancing the use of English Prime as a new rhetorical tool for writers I commissioned a computer programmer to write an updated crispness indexer utilizing contemporary computer programming language (Ruby).

I present *Mrs. Crisp* - A computational Dynamic Text Indicer based on the definitional semantic equation developed by D. David Bourland. [Ruby code at end of paper]

I have updated the DSE for English Prime as follows:

$$E^p = E - (e)$$

E^p = English Prime

E = Standard English

(e) = conjugated forms of the verb 'to be' (are, am, is, was, were, be, been, being + contractions: I'm, etc.)

and for The Crispness Index, formulated by Bourland as $C.I = \text{Number of E-Prime Sentences} / \text{Total Number of Sentences}$, I abbreviate:

$$E^p \S / \sum \S$$

\S = Sentences, Σ = total number

Mrs. Crisp counts the sentences of a given text (stack) that do not contain static (non-crispy) string: [be, being, been, am, is; isn't, are; aren't, was; wasn't, were; weren't, I'm, you're; we're; they're, he's; she's; it's, there's; here's, where's; how's; what's; who's, that's] and divides that by the total number of sentences.

To confirm the veracity of Bourland's observation of accomplished writers utilizing static conjugated tenses of the verb 'to be' in about half of their sentences I collected texts from a wide range of classic and contemporary authors. For my first test of Mrs Crisp I analysed *Ulysses* by James Joyce. I selected this text due to its academic standing as one of, if not the, finest example of a novel in the English Language.

The first version of our algorithm gave inverted results, counting total number of non crispy sentences and dividing that by total number of sentences.

Mrs. Crisp Beta

$$E\S/\Sigma\S$$

Ulysses by James Joyce

Total number of non crispy sentences: 10728

Total number of sentences: 28009

Crispiness index: 0.3830197436538256

This rudimentary inverted crispness indicer still reveals that Joyce exceeds Bourland's calculation of great writers achieving 0.5

Mrs. Crisp 1.0

We then inverted the process to produce results in line with Bourland's original equation. We retained the counter for Non Crispy Sentences to give a ratio for reference.

$$E^p\S/\Sigma\S$$

Ulysses by James Joyce

Total number of e-prime sentences: 17281

Total number of sentences: 28009

Total number of non crispy sentences: 10728

Crispness Index: 0.616980

Joyce uses the copula in less than half of his sentences; we find 61% of his sentences composed in English Prime, confirming the dynamic quality of his text.

This quality of ‘crispness’ [from here ‘dynamism’] has a correlation with a book’s ease of read. To defend this argument I analysed *Ulysses* with all existing text readability scoring software, to examine if a correlation exists between dynamic score and established rating systems.

| Readability Formula | Grade |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| <u>Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease</u> | 82.8 |
| <u>Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level</u> | 3.9 |
| <u>Gunning-Fog Score</u> | 5.6 |
| <u>Coleman-Liau Index</u> | 9.7 |
| <u>SMOG Index</u> | 4.8 |
| <u>Automated Readability Index</u> | 3.4 |
| Average Grade Level | 5.5 |

The average grade level, which signifies the number of years of education needed to comprehend *Ulysses*, results at 5.5, a student around 9-10 years of age. The Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease scale, perhaps the most established and widely utilised system, registers that a person with barely four years of education can comprehend *Ulysses*. I’ve never seen an eight year old reading Joyce! The FKRE scale uses an algorithm based on syllables per word, words per sentence, etc., interpreted as:

| | |
|------------|---|
| 90.0–100.0 | easily understood by an average 11-year-old student |
| 60.0–70.0 | easily understood by 13- to 15-year-old students |
| 0.0–30.0 | best understood by university graduates |

Compare the selection of sampled Authors below, which display only a Flesch-Kincaid rating.

Ernest Hemingway – 4.2
 Cormac McCarthy – 5.2
 James Joyce – 5.5
 Jane Austen – 5.7
 J. K. Rowling – 5.8
 Hunter S. Thompson – 5.9
 Stephanie Mayer – 6.1

Stephen King – 6.1
 J. R. R Tolkein – 6.6
 Ayn Rand – 6.7
 Dan Brown – 6.8
 Thomas Pynchon – 7.2
 Tom Clancy – 7.8
 John Grisham – 7.8
 F. Scott Fitzgerald – 7.9
 Leo Tolstoy – 8.2

If we analyse a complex academic writing we can see that the reader requires at least 17 years of education for full comprehension.

The Rhetoric of Fiction by Wayne C. Booth

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| Readability Formula | Score |
| Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease | 37.2 |
| Grade Levels | |
| Readability Formula | Grade |
| Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level | 17.2 |
| Gunning-Fog Score | 20.6 |
| Coleman-Liau Index | 11.9 |
| SMOG Index | 13.8 |
| Automated Readability Index | 19.2 |
| Average Grade Level | 16.5 |

Crispy Details for booth.txt
 Number of sentences: 107
 Number of non crispy sentences: 48
 Number of crispy sentences: 59
 Crispy Index: 0.5514018691588785

Mrs. Crisp 1.1

Ulysses by James Joyce
 Total number of Dynamic sentences: 17281
 Total number of sentences: 28009
 Total number of Static sentences: 10728
 Dynamism Index: 0.616980

For clarity, I adopt the term ‘Static’ in place of ‘non crispy’ and ‘Dynamic’ for Crispy. Do we need to argue for dynamism in literature? Surely not. I can show that writing that does not rely on the copula and attains a high Dynamic rating in turn scores a high rating on the FK Reading ease scale. A high score on this scale increases

reader age group reach and therefore potential popularity in the mass market. Note that attaining a high (closer to one) crisp and a high FRE might increase reader statistics but does not guarantee favourable criticism.

Examine the scores for EL James' *Fifty Shades of Grey*:

Crispy Details for Fifty_Shades.txt
Number of sentences: 18104
Number of non crispy sentences: 2963
Number of crispy sentences: 15141
Crispy Index: **0.8363345117101193**
Flesch-Kincaid Reading Level: 2.43
Flesch Reading Ease Score: 88.78

James does not use 'to be' in 83% of her sentences (!) but the FRE scale reveals you only need 2.43 years of education to understand the story. This means that although *50 Shades* has a reading comprehension rating for six year olds, the sentences it contains have a super high quality of dynamism. Everyone on earth has heard of this book, we don't need to convince you of its popularity, or remind you of its critical reception.

Static verbs express changes in states and, supposedly, existence, however their very nature gives rise to ambiguity and therefor the quality I refer to as 'static'.

Consider: I am feeling exhilarated vs I feel exhilarated; or the following definition:

States of 'being'

- are conditions or situations that exist
- are inactive states; no action is performed
- are typically complemented by adjectives
- are not progressive (with a few exceptions).

(<http://www.grammar-quizzes.com/presten5.html>)

Ironically this definition contains the static verb 'are' multiple times. Why? It works just as well without it.

States of 'being'

- ~~are~~ conditions or situations that exist
- ~~are~~ inactive states; no action ~~is~~ performed
- ~~are~~ typically complemented by adjectives
- ~~are~~ not progressive (with a few exceptions).

Conclusions:

After four years of a forensic examination of the dynamics of the English language and the semantic errors intrinsic to the problem of describing states of 'being', after teaching myself to think in English Prime and after authoring a 148, 000 word creative work written using the constraint, I am ready to go further down the path. In the art of writing I believe that after stepping away from the 'telling' and learning how to 'show' (or finding a working symbiosis of both) the accomplished writer must then learn how to convey 'doing'. The way to do this is to employ what I know refer to as the dialectics of anontology, or the philosophy of not being. *Being* itself I liken to a protocol, an accepted and ubiquitous method of doing something, e.g., http on the www. The protocol of being will never be superseded out here in the 'real' world, it is a conceptual space in which humankind has firmly taken root. A writer can do away with it however, once they understand that the very words designated to portray consciousness, and therefor life, in fact have zero life about them at all. Korzybski, the first to notice the error of the copula, referred to it as a 'virus' and his student Bourland said that misuse of the copula leads to 'deity mode of speech'. Ditch the copula in your writing, stop talking like a god and write like a human.



Dynamic Text Indicer

Please upload a book

Name of the text to examine

File to upload

Choose file No file chosen

Crunch

© Brentley and Nim 2015

<https://vast-journey-7356.herokuapp.com/>

MRS CRISP - RUBY APP CODE

```
require 'sinatra'
require 'byebug'

get "/" do
  erb :index, layout: :layout
end

post '/fresh' do
  File.open('/uploads/' + params['book'][:filename], 'w') do |f|
    f.write(params['book'][:filename].read)
  end

  crispy_hash = evaluate_crispiness(File.open('/uploads/' + params['book'][:filename], 'rb'))

  erb :so_fresh, layout: :layout, locals: crispy_hash
end

def evaluate_crispiness(f)
  if(ARGV[0])
    file_name = ARGV[0]
    f = File.open(file_name, 'rb')
    sentence_count = 0
    curr_sent = ""
    non_crispy_words = %w(be being been am is isn't are aren't was wasn't were weren't I'm you're we're they're
    he's she's it's there's here's where's how's what's who's that's)
    non_crispy_sentence_count = 0
    f.each_char do |c|
      if c =~ (/[.?!:;|/])
        sentence_count += 1
        non_crispy_words.each do |w|
          if curr_sent =~ /(^\s){w}\s/i
            non_crispy_sentence_count += 1
            break
          end
        end
        curr_sent = ""
      else
        curr_sent << c
      end
    end
    f.close
    crispy_sentences_count = sentence_count - non_crispy_sentence_count
    crispiness_index = crispy_sentences_count.fdiv(sentence_count)

    puts "Crispy Details for #{ARGV[0]}"

    puts "Number of sentences: #{sentence_count}"
    puts "Number of non crispy sentences: #{non_crispy_sentence_count}"
    puts "Number of crispy sentences: #{crispy_sentences_count}"
    puts "Crispy Index: #{crispiness_index}"
  else
    puts "Please provide a text file as an argument"
  end
  return {crispiness_index: crispiness_index, sentence_count: sentence_count, non_crispy_sentence_count:
  non_crispy_sentence_count}
end
```

Appendix D

The Setup/Preparation (getting ready to write the memoir)

- Devices list
- Example character maps
- Stylesheet

In this appendix I reproduce the set of guidelines – devices/maxims, character maps and stylesheet – that accumulated and provided my strategic rules (a sort of checklist) for writing the memoir. I also produced a timeline, which is not included here.

I find that the material included here now provides an interesting alternative reading of the work – rather like seeing it laid out on a bench in vivisection.

Devices list [Constraints employed/Techniques emulated/Methodology stolen and invented]

- “Intertextuality refers to far more than the ‘influences’ of writers on each other. For structuralists, language has powers which not only exceed individual control but also determine subjectivity. Structuralists sought to counter what they saw as a deep-rooted bias in literary and aesthetic thought which emphasized the uniqueness of both texts and authors” (Sturrock 1986, p. 87).
- Prose Poetry – Does not conform to any particular formal structures other than simple grammar while retaining the aesthetic richness of poetry.
- Transgressive Fiction – focuses on characters who feel confined by the norms and expectations of society and who break free of those confines in unusual or illicit ways. Because they are rebelling against the basic norms of society, protagonists of transgressive fiction may seem mentally ill, anti-social, or nihilistic (“Transgressive fiction” 2016). Rene Chun, a journalist for *The New York Times*, described Transgressive Fiction as: “A literary genre that graphically explores such topics as incest and other aberrant sexual practices, mutilation [...] urban violence and violence against women, drug use, and highly dysfunctional family relationships, and that is based on the premise that knowledge is to be found at the edge of experience and that the body is the site for gaining knowledge.” (Chun 1995, pp. 49, 52)

- Hypertextual Phonetics – using the sounds (Cadence - 1. rhythmic flow of a sequence of sounds or words, 2. (in free verse) a rhythmic pattern that is nonmetrically structured) of words to link them together/cross reference and influence their context in a wider body of text.

Hypertext – in semiotics, is a text which alludes, derives from, or relates to an earlier work or hypotext (Martin 2006) and, Textual – of or pertaining to a text

Phonetics – primarily the acoustics of speech, properties of the sounds/frequency/harmonics and their inter-relationship.

An example from the creative work, note the cadence of the word choice which gives it a poetic free verse rhythm:

Walking with a studied limp out through the screen door, down the
steps, I stick up a middle finger to my little sisters, Jaz and Fliss, on the
trampoline and cross the yard to the police station. I find Dad sitting at
his desk, typing with two fingers, his police hat on a pile of papers.
The air-conditioning circulates the smell of ink stamps, typewriter
ribbons, boot polish and copy paper. My head swims.

(Frazer 2017, p. 6)

- E-Prime (Korzybski et al 1933) – no tenses of the verb ‘to be’ or their contractions (are, am, is, was, were, be, been, ‘m’ ‘s’ ‘re’. [Eradicate the ‘is’ of identity and the ‘is’ of predication. Identification truncates knowledge ... often dangerously. With passive statements overruled we must include a participant-observer].
- Parataxis – the placing together of sentences, clauses, or phrases without a conjunctive word or words, such as *Hurry up, it is getting late!* or *I came—I saw—I conquered.*
- Ekphrasis, created by the Greeks. The goal of this literary form is to make the reader envision the thing described as if it were physically present. In many cases, however, the subject never actually existed, making the ekphrastic description a demonstration of both the creative imagination and the skill of the writer.

- Metafiction – The Author writing about what you are reading is a character – the veneer of the text is stripped back to reveal its theoretical workings/methodology practiced in its composition.
- Recording Angel – “writing without passing any judgments. Nothing gets fed to the reader as fat or happy. You can only describe actions and appearances in a way that makes a judgment occur in the reader’s mind. Whatever the scene, you unpack it into the details that will re-assemble themselves within the reader” (Palahniuk 2002).
- Burnt Tongue – “A way of saying something, but saying it wrong, twisting it to slow down the reader. Forcing the reader to read close, maybe read twice, not just skim along a surface of abstract images, short-cut adverbs, and clichés. In minimalism, clichés are called ‘received text’” (Palahniuk 2002).
- Horses – “In minimalism, a story is a symphony, building and building, but never losing the original melody line. All characters and scenes, things that seem dissimilar, they all illustrate some aspect of the story’s theme – you use the same ‘horses’, ‘themes’ or ‘choruses’ the whole journey” (Palahniuk 2002).
- “No abstracts. No adverbs like sleepily, irritably, sadly etc. No measurements, no feet, yards, degrees or years-old. The phrase ‘an 18-year-old girl’ — what does that mean?” (Palahniuk 2002).
- “Writing ‘on the body’” – a story doesn’t have to be some constant stream of blah-blah-blah to bully the reader into paying attention. You don’t have to hold readers by both ears and ram every moment down their throats. Instead, a story can be a succession of tasty, smelly, touchable details. ‘Going on the body,’ to give the reader a sympathetic physical reaction, to involve the reader on a gut level” (Palahniuk 2002).
- “Unreliable Narrator: An unreliable narrator [. . .] is not simply a narrator who ‘does not tell the truth’ – what fictional narrator ever tells the literal truth? . . . an unreliable narrator is one who tells lies, conceals information, misjudges with respect to the narrative audience – that is, one whose statements are untrue not by the standards of the real world or of the authorial audience but by the standards of his own narrative audience. [...] all fictional narrators are false in that they are imitations. But some are imitations who tell the truth, some of people who lie” (Frey 1931, p. 107).

Other devices which don’t exist beyond what they imply:

- Jacques Derrida likens writing fiction to a software code that operates in the hardware of your mind. Stringing together separate macros that, combined, will create a reaction.
- No hiding in the text
- No living outside the sentences
- No invisible observer
- Verbal Typography
- Vernacular Acrobatics
- Grammatical and syntactical mischief

Example character maps

- Each major character fits on the Erikson scale (Es)
- Has literary device assigned
- These grammatical persons are assigned personal deixis.
- Each character has a grammatical mood arising from individual set of pronouns

Mother, Father, Friends, Tramp Preachers, Authority figures (teachers, etc.) represent Antagonists

Mother:

An Antagonist

(Es):- Identity v Role Confusion

Basic virtue: - Fidelity and Devotion

Maladaptation/malignancy: - Fanaticism/Repudiation

Literary traits: – Abstraction, Ambiguity, Assertion, Cliché, Connotation, Flat character, Generalisation, Hyperbole, Static character

Personal pronouns:– We, They, **Them**

Mood: - Repressed, guilty, religious

Father:

An Antagonist

(Es):- Industry v Inferiority + Identity v Role Confusion

Basic Virtues: - Competence + Method + Fidelity + Devotion

Maladaptation/malignancy: - Narrow

Virtuosity/Inertia/Fanaticism/Repudiation

Literary traits: – Allegory, Didactic, Denotation, Dynamic Character, Concrete, Generalization, Irony, Humour, Hyperbole, Rounded Character, Sarcasm, Understatement

Personal pronouns: - **You, They**, We, Us

Mood: - Distracted, Literal, Distant, Forceful

The Protagonist:

A Protagonist

(Es):- Trust v Mistrust + Autonomy v Shame & Doubt + Initiative v Guilt + Intimacy v Isolation

Basic Virtues: - Hope + Drive + Willpower and Self control + Purpose + Direction + Love + Affiliation

Maladaptation/malignancy: - Sensory distortion/Withdrawal/ Impulsivity / Compulsion/Ruthlessness/Inhibition/Promiscuity/Exclusivity

Literary traits: – Abstraction, Allegory, Alliteration, Allusion, Ambiguity, Analogy, Antithesis, Apostrophe, Aside, Assertion, Assonance, Comparison, Conflict, Connotation, Contrast, Denotation, Dynamic character, Explicit, Figurative language, Flashback, Foils, Foreshadowing, Generalisation, Humour, Hyperbole, Imagery, Implicit, Inference, Irony, Juxtaposition, Metaphor, Meter, Metonymy, Motif, Objective, Onomatopoeia, Oxymoron, Paradox, Parallel Construction, Personification, Persuasion, Rhythm, Recording Angel, Round Character, Similie, Understatement, Unreliable narrator, Verisimilitude

Personal pronouns:- I, me, my, mine, they, them . . . rarely ‘us’.

Mood: - Cheeky, Depressed, Disillusioned, Iconoclastic, Misanthropic, Rebellious, Recalcitrant, Revolutionary, Poetic

Stylesheet

Commas: Used sparingly – so no commas to demarcate non-essential phrases at the start of a sentence or between two adjectives before a noun

Dates: Wednesday 4 September 2013

Display quotes: Quotations of over 40 words from written sources set out in their own paragraph(s), indented, with no outer quote marks

Endings: Spelt ‘ed’ rather than ‘t’, in burnt/burned, dreamt/dreamed, dwelt/dwelled, learnt/learned, leant/leaned, leapt/leaped, smelt/smelled, spelt/spelled, spilt/spilled, spoilt/spoiled

-ize endings changed to -ise endings where applicable.

English prime constraint: No forms of ‘to be’ allowed: are/aren’t, am, is/isn’t, was/wasn’t, were/weren’t, be, been, being, ain’t, I’m, you’re, they’re, he’s (meaning ‘he is’), she’s (meaning ‘she is’), it’s, we’re, there’s (meaning ‘there is’), here’s, where’s, how’s, what’s, who’s, that’s (meaning ‘that is’)

Numbers: All spelt out, except for calendar dates, with abbreviated units of measurement and wherever not sensible

Punctuation of direct speech: Em dashes are used at the start of a new instance of direct speech, and colons are used either with a paragraph break to introduce an utterance with a dialogue or action tag, or on the same line to indicate the

continuation of an instance of speaking.

Two examples:

—Now, children, Mrs Crisp says, arranging some papers: Get up off the carpet and pick a desk.

As she dabs at the cut between my toes, I ask:

—Mum, what happened to my penis?

Where the speech is followed by a dialogue tag and doesn't continue, it is concluded with a comma, as per standard English:

—Slow down . . . Let me get a look at you, Dad soothes.

Times: 9 am, 9.30 pm

Which/that: 'which', rather than 'that', used to introduce defining relative clauses

Spelling, capitalisation, italicisation and hyphenation

Aboriginal

Adam's apple

adrenalin

A-ha (band)

air-conditioning

airstrip

all right (not 'alright')

among (not 'amongst')

anarchist

angle-grinder

ant lion

anymore (meaning 'any longer')

anyplace

apostlebird

art form

baby-boomers

back seat

backstreet

backward

backyard

badass

ball bearing

The Bank Nightclub

bartender

bathtub

Beat Magazine

The Beat nightclub

belly dance/belly dancer

belly button

Bénédictine

Besser brick

betel nut

bike racks

bindii-eye

birdclaw

black cockatoo

blowflies

blowjob
blowtorch
bodyguard
boltcutter
bolt-gun
bone yard
bowie knife
box jellyfish
box office
breakdance/breakdancer/breakdancing
broom closet
Brylcreem/Brylcreemed
Bundaberg Rum
bunk bed
bush fire
bush tucker
by and by
cab driver
cafe
candlelight
car park
carnie
carport
cattle station
chain mail fence
chain-smoke (v.)
chartreuse
chess set
church tent
Cinzano
classroom
clever man
clippie bag
clothes line
cop-desk
corncob
courtroom
coz (because)
crap-box
crap-tonne
crescendos
cringey
crossroads
cul-de-sac
dance floor
day bed
D-day
dead weight
Devil, the
dickhead

dingoes
Discipline Stick
Doberman
Doc Martens
dogleg
doorframe
doorknob
double bed
Double Dragon
down-and-outs
downtrodden
draft (preliminary version of a text)
draught (current of air)
dreadlocked
duffel
Dungeons & Dragons
duty-free
Earl Grey
earshot
enquiries
Eskimo
expat
face mask
fairy floss
farmhouse
fistfight/fist-fighter
flophouse
flying fuck
forward
four by four
Four X
freefall
Friend/Friendlies (as in cult member(s))
frogmarch
fuck outta here
fucked up
fuckhead
fuck-load
fuckstained
full-on
full-time
fundraiser
funnel-web
fur ball
Galaga
game theory
gasmask
gaylord
gearshift
ghost gum

Gilligan's Bar
gingernut
Gitanes
goat's-head thorns
glove box
goosestep
goth-punk
granddad
green chartreuse
guardrail
Guns N' Roses
gunshot
gybing
hair ball
haircut
hairspray
half-nelson
halfway house
hand in hand
handcuff
handmade
handrail
hang-up
hardcore
Head Workers
hideout
high-rise
hightail
hitchhiking
holy-fuck-yes
hoofs
hot dog
house-warming
hung-over
Irukandji jellyfish
Jack Daniel's
jellyfish
jewfish
junkie
kerb (as in the edge of a pavement)
kneecap
lamp post
land legs
Land Rover
lawnmower
lawsuit
lay-by
life-support machine
light bulb
light switch

lights show
lily pad
living dead
living room
long play
look-alike
louvers
low-life
lunch box
lunch break
ma'am
Mack truck
make-up
Mercedes-Benz
mic
mid-air
Mohawk haircut
mosquitoes
Mötley Crüe
newborn
nightclub
nightsweats
Nikko pens
no one
noogora burr
north-east
notebook
old-timer
outhouse
outplay
Overseer (a man or woman on the verge of sainthood but who is wealthy or married,
unlike the tramp preachers)
panty-liner
paperbark
paperwork
pawnshop
pay cheque
payout
perp-walk
pethidine
phone booth
phone box
phoney
piece of shit
piggyback
ping-pong
piss-bolted
plot line
plughole
Pom

postbox
postman
preschool
prize-fighter
propeller
Prophet (as in cult leader)
publicly
pushbike
rainforest
Ray-Bans
Rhee Tae Kwon Do
ribcage
Ric's Bar
road sign
rock melon
rock star
roller-coaster
roller door
roommate
safe house
Saint Moritz (cigarettes)
salt tablet
Salvos, the
sandbar
sawmill
sayonara
school mate
schoolbag
science fiction
scumbag
seasick
share house
Sheela-na-gig
shipshape
shirtsleeve
shitbox
shithouse
shit-load
showroom
sickbay
sickroom
side by side
sidestep
The Sisters of Mercy
sketchbook
skull bong
sleeping shed
slippery slide
small talk
smart-arse

someplace
South Sea islander
south-west
Space Invaders
spider web
spiky
spray can
spray-paint
stepdad
stilettos
stopover
storey/storeys
sugar cane
sump oil
sundress
sunroom
Swarovski
tag-name
tarot cards
telltale
temazepam
Terra nullius
The Terrace nightclub
thumbtack
to and fro
toadfish
tough guy
towards
tow bar
town-folk
townhouse
tramp preacher
tree house
t-shirt
unmistakable
upside down
veranda
walkabout
waterskin
wheelchair
whipper-snipper
whisky (Scotch)
whiteboard
white-boy
whiz
windowsill
witch doctor
witch mark
wolf-whistle
Worker (another name for a Prophet, tramp preacher or cult leader)

wrack
wristband
yack
Year Eight
yesteryear
yowie
Yves Saint Laurent
zeros
zippo

Places
Airlie Beach
Albion
Armidale
Boggo Road
Boondall
Bowen Hills
Brisbane
Brisbane River
the Bronx
Burdekin River
Byron Bay
Cairns
Cardwell
Charters Towers
Chicago
Christchurch
Cleveland Bay
Coral Sea
Dandenongs
Fitzroy
Fortitude Valley
Fremantle
Gordonvale
Green River
Greenvale
Greenvale Station
Gumlu
Hervey Bay
Kalgoorlie-Boulder
Lismore
Lucky Downs
Mackay
Magnetic Island
Maralinga
Maryvale Reserve
Mount Dora
Mount Esk
Mount Hagen
Mount Louisa

Mulgrave River
New Farm
New Zealand
Newcastle
Nikenbah
Nundah
Old Ormeau Town
Ormeau Town
Palm Island
Papua New Guinea
Parkville
Peppermint Grove
Perth
Picnic Bay
Platypus Channel
Port Moresby
Princes Park Stadium
Railway Estate
Rasmussen
Red Bank Creek
Red Bank Creek Bridge
Rochedale
Rocky Bay
Scarborough Beach
Serbia
Singapore
South Brisbane
Spencer Street Station
Story Bridge
Thuringowa
Townsville
Undara Volcanic National Park
Woolloongabba

Names by surname
Helene Abacair
Ian Astbury
Baudelaire
Enid Blyton
Humphrey Bogart
Alan Bond
Charles Bukowski
William Burroughs
Lord Byron
Al Capone
Derek Carter
Neal Cassady
Nick Cave
Louis-Ferdinand Céline
Mrs Crisp

Luke Davies
Princess Diana
Fyodor Dostoyevsky
Bruce the Elder
Bruce the Younger
Raymond Chandler
Captain Cook
Hart Crane
Davidson
Davson
Marquis de Sade
James Dean
Nick Earls
Douglas Fairbanks
Bob Frazer (Brentley's dad)
Brentley Frazer
Felicity (Fliss) Frazer
Jaz Frazer
Ben Frost
Jean Genet
Mr Hargreave/Hargreaves
Morten Harket
Ernest Hemingway
Audrey Hepburn
Bill Hicks
Benny Hill
Terence Hill
Billie Holiday
Long John Holmes
Mrs Hudson
Michael Hutchence
William Irvine
Michael Jackson
Indiana Jones
Don Juan
Jack Kerouac
B.B. King
Stephen King
Freddy Krueger
Lautréamont
Bruce Lee
Norman Lindsay
H.P. Lovecraft
Bela Lugosi
Imelda Marcos
McLeod
Henry Miller
Tony Montana
Jim Morrison
Willard Motley

Nietzsche
Rudolf Nureyev
Sinéad O'Connor
Cesare Pavese
Sylvia Plath
Iggy Pop
Alexander Pope
Dorothy Porter
Chopper Read
Anne Rice
Rimbaud
Arnold Schwarzenegger
Oswald Sencuriac
Victor Serge
Shelley
Bud Spencer
Starsky
Chuck Taylor
Becky Thatcher
J.R.R. Tolkien
Leon Trotsky
Mark Twain
Paul Verlaine
Sid Vicious
Virginia Woolf

First names only
Albatross (Trossy)
Alexandra
Angel
Baz
Ben
Billie-Jean
Billy
Blyth
Bodhi
Bolton
Bonnie
Brian
Cali
Candy
Charlie
Clint
Cthulhu
Crispin
Cupid
Damo
Daryl
David
Demeter

Eliot
Francis
Fulton
Gary
Gerhard
Gigolo
Graham
Harlan (Harley)
Hayley
Henry
Jacques
James
Jaws
Jo
Joan of Arc
Joe (Feral)
John
Johnny
Josef
Lestat
Lothario
Maggie
Mandy
Maria
Marie
Margot
Mary
Masha
Maz
Uncle Mike
Miki
Muddy
Natalia
Niko
Ophelia
Uncle Parky
Pasiphaë
Patti
Phil
Phoebe
Rebecca
Ren
Reuben
Rey
Robbo
Rose
Sam
Sando
Scott
Sean

Sebastian (Sibby)
Shane
Simon
Sloth
Soph
Stella
Svengali
Tana
Tiffany
Timothy
Tone Lõc
Trina
Vesna
Vincent
Yuri