

Towards a Model of Poetry Writing Development as a Socially Contextualised Process

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Abstract: Theoretical explanations of learners' poetry writing development are relatively new and, compared to other genres, rare. Neither the cognitive models of writing development, nor the descriptions of poet-practitioners or inspired experts give a fully nuanced representation of the complexity at play in poetry composition. Also missing from these models is the social context of learning to write poetry. We link Vygotsky's work on the symbolic function of inner speech to documented accounts of poets 'answering' the social world to which they belong. We propose a theoretical model of development in poetry writing that takes into account learners' fluid social contexts, and which draws on Schultz and Fecho's survey of writing development. This fusion is a new contribution to theorisations of writing development.

Keywords: poetry, composition, writing development, social contexts, poetic writing

Even the poetic world is social (Bakhtin, 1981: 300)



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1. Introduction

Theoretical explanations of learners' poetry writing development are relatively new and, compared to other genres, rare (Dymoke, 2003; Wilson, 2009). In part this can be traced back to the secure but mixed status (Wilson, 2005) of poetry in the curriculum of Anglophone countries in the post-war period. Further, neither the cognitive models of writing development offered by Hayes and Flower (1980), Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), and Sharples (1999), nor the descriptions of poet-practitioners or inspired experts (Hughes, 1967; Brownjohn, 1994; Pirrie, 1994; Rosen, 1998; Yates, 1999; 2015) give a fully nuanced representation of the complexity and distinctive demands at play in poetry composition. In spite of the fact that poetry is probably one of the most ancient written genres (Roberts, 1986) we note that the concept of progression within poetry writing is a relatively new one within educational research literature (Dymoke, 2001, 2003; Wilson, 2005, 2009). Also missing from these models is the social context of learning to write poetry. Thus, while there is a substantial literature on poetry practice in classrooms, there remains a gap in the theoretical literature of writing development concerning poetry.

Our intention is to develop a theoretical framework towards a model of poetry writing development as a socially contextualised process. To this end we find much congruence in Schultz and Fecho's survey (2000) of writing theory and the questions they raise for teachers, writers and writing practitioners, namely, their six propositions (2000, p.55) that writing development is:

- reflective of social historical contexts;
- variable across local contexts;
- reflective of classroom curriculum and pedagogy;
- shaped by social interactions;
- tied to social identities;
- conceptualised as a nonlinear process.

These are presented as discrete categories, with an acknowledgement by the authors that there is overlap between them. We also acknowledge that while these categories were not created with poetry writing in mind, our original contribution to knowledge rests on our transformation of them for new purposes. These propositions are underpinned by a socially constructed view of learning and writing which recognises that knowledge is fluid, complex and open to a variety of interpretations (Scribner & Cole, 1981). This is informed by Vygotsky's suggestion (1978) that learning moves from the social world to the individual via the use of language, tools and more expert others. Thus we use these propositions as a framework on which to base our discussion of poetry writing development as a socially contextualised phenomenon.

Our theorisation has emerged from a review of key literature in the field. It points to new areas for potential investigation. Our discussion draws on our own multiple

perspectives as published poets, who have both written poetry since childhood; teacher educators, who support beginning English teachers' work in primary and secondary classrooms (ages 5 - 19), and researchers, who investigate poetry writing processes and the location of poetry within school curricula.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 The distinctiveness of poetry

Attempting to define poetry may be like “trying” to pin down vapour (Andrews 1991, p.13) but, in an exploration of poetry writing development, it is important to identify what makes this genre distinctive. A sense of difference from prose or dramatic texts is derived primarily from poets' use of language in their composition processes. This does not mean that certain language features are not utilised in other genres, including speech, but how they are used in poetry is what makes the genre so distinctive and, consequently, what places a unique set of demands on those who write it. Poetry exploits the mercurial nature of words, thus invigorating language as “memorable speech” (Auden & Garrett, 1935, p. v), and setting it apart from how it might be used elsewhere. An individual word, as Vygotsky suggests, can become “a concentrated clot of sense” (Vygotsky 1962, p.275). Barrs argues that part of poetry's power is concerned not with unpacking these Vygotskian clots wholly “but allowing them to enter the inner speech of others and to unfold in the mind of the reader” (Barrs, 2016: 244). For Seamus Heaney, perhaps echoing Vygotsky, poetry embodies the spiritual edge of language at the very point where thought becomes word: “the rim of the silence out of which consciousness arrives and into which it must descend” (Heaney,1989, p.11). Poet Kenneth Koch builds on Paul Valéry's idea of poetry as “a language within a language” in suggesting that it is a “separate” or “odd language” (1998, p. 19-20), one which is subject to change every time it is used well. Recognition of its peculiarity and difference from other texts is also evident in UK government reports where poets are seen as working “at the frontier of language” (DES, 1987, p.1) and poetry is viewed by the general public as “something rather odd...numinous” (DES, 1975, p.135).

The precise, compressed nature of poetic language is captured in a variety of mathematical/scientific images including as a “fuse” (Holub 1987, p.54), a 'microscope' (Andrews, 1991, p.42) and a “distillation of experience” (Lorde, 1977, p. 36). Learning to write (and read) such pared down language that leaves no space for extraneous words to hide thus presents a significant challenge for developing writers. It can also lead to the conclusion that poetry is a complex code (Steiner, 1978; Benton & Fox, 1985) requiring a “new effort of attention”(Auden, 1968, p. 292) from the reader or writer. Researchers have identified poetry as a “particularly distilled containment of metaphoric activity” (Harrison & Gordon, 1983, p.272). Indeed, metaphor is a key element in much poetry - or even “the height of poetry” (Frost, 1930, p. 723) - that, when coupled with other language choices including form, makes it distinctive.

The presentation of a poem on the page through lineation and use of white space makes poetry readily identifiable and distinguishable from other written forms. Lines of poetry can delineate sense. Alternatively, they can offer surprising new insights on a subject through judicious use of line breaks which interrupt the syntax (Yates, 2007) whereas prose text operates in more episodic or sequential ways. The sequence of rhythms developed by a poem's lineation in turn generates the poem's tone (Longenbach, 2017). Andrews (1991) argues that conscious employment of rhythm within individual lines and the relationship between the rhythmic identity of each line/unit of sense with other lines in the same poem involves a "correspondent paralleling of sense that is unlike anything we encounter in prose" (1991, p.58). Achieving a fine balance between individual lines is also an indicator of one of the unique demands that the genre places on its writers.

Historically poets have often been portrayed as solitary figures who write in isolation evoking their muse to descend and engage them in sensuous reverie (for example Dante, John Keats, (as described by Schmidt 1999), and Robert Graves). We argue that if young writers are to be encouraged to engage in the risky business of writing poetry then these images of poets are potentially discouraging. Furthermore, we believe they do not reflect the reality of how poetry is written and would like to propose a theoretical model that recognises a shift towards a view of poetry composition as a socially contextualised process in which poems can be woven as a result of a range of motivations and influences. For many, including poets themselves, poetry remains an enigma, a "wild animal" (Stafford, 1986, p.99) that can never be held in captivity, in spite of students' attempts to tie it down (Collins, 1988). Its enigmatic nature is not only what makes it special but also potentially elusive for those who are developing their craft as writers.

2.2 Inner speech

Since the rediscovery in the West of the work of Vygotsky (1962; 1978) a vocabulary has emerged that those interested in how students learn to use language, both oral and written, have used as a framework to shape and define their arguments. Readers will be familiar with Vygotsky's coining of terms we now take for granted: the notion of inner and external speech (1962). A recent addition to the literature exploring Vygotsky's ideas about inner speech (Barrs, 2016) makes a powerful case that the language of poetry, via the work of Mandelstam in particular, was a considerable influence on Vygotsky as he developed his theory of inner speech in the final chapter of *Thought and Language* (Barrs, 2016, p. 243). Here he identified three aspects of inner speech which we argue are congruent with poetry, namely: the density of a word's sense above its meaning; a potential for word combination to communicate complex ideas, which Vygotsky called "agglutination" (1962, p. 147); and the way language becomes saturated with sense (1962) in layers of meaning (Barrs, 2016, p. 243). As Barrs notes, these 'concentrates of sense' 'need considerable expansion in order to be expressed in oral speech' (2016, p. 243). We argue that each of these qualities is to be found in

poetry, to the point where the form, vocabulary and tone of a poem are all saturated with its meaning. The meaning of a poem cannot be extracted as though it were independent from them: they cannot be separated. The compacted nature of expression within poems, both in terms of language and form, is what makes it unique. Our model of poetry writing development (see Figure 2) argues that for inner speech to become visible in outer speech, in the form of a poem, it has first to enter into an 'inner dialogue with ourselves' (Barrs, 2016, p.246). We argue that this dialogic function of inner speech mirrors and mimics the dialogue inherent in the social contexts in our model of poetry composition (Figure 2, below).

There is much consistency between Vygotsky's notion of saturated inner speech and Bakhtin's conception of language as "populated –overpopulated–with the intentions of others" (1981: p. 294). As argued by Cazden (1996) and Schultz and Fecho (2000), in the Bakhtinian world, we only begin to own language when we appropriate it from others. In proposing our model, we argue with Schultz and Fecho (2000) that the discourse of the social setting of the writer "intermingles" (p. 53) or is in dialogue with the larger culture outside, with the result that the dialogue itself becomes part of the process of learning to compose. They name this exchange of discourse a "dialogic tide" (2000, p. 53), a metaphor which implies a complex and recursive process, not a mere product, that is in a "constant state of becoming" (p. 53), renewal and actualisation. This theorisation chimes with the argument of Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur and Prendergast (1997), that all discourse, including writing is "categorically dialogic" (p. 14). The implication of this, for beginner and experienced poets alike, is the need to recognise that language, like people, does not exist in a vacuum. As our remarks about Bloom (1997) indicate, below, the chance of writers exerting influence over each other is therefore built into the enterprise.

2.3 'The need to answer'

The dynamic movement that poetry enacts between the planes of inner and oral speech is mirrored in our view of poetry writing as social phenomenon. We apply the implications of this framework to poetry writing development. As we will argue, both from historical examples of poets working collaboratively together and from empirical data, we take the view that poetry writing is more social in nature than has previously been recognised in the research literature. Social constructivist perspectives about language echo poets' assertions and beliefs about the form and function of poetry: "even the poetic world is social" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 300). Poets, as described by US poet Robert Pinsky, (Pinsky, 1988, p. 84) exist in a wider social context, and need "not so much an audience as to feel a need to answer" (1988, p. 85). There is much historical evidence to suggest that poets see themselves working in a world that is social, specifically in terms of using the company, support and work of other poets from which to draw reference (Koch, 1996; Malamud Smith, 2012; O'Driscoll, 2008). Therefore, part of poets' motivation to make more poems is formed by their interactions with other poets and poems. As Brown and Schechter (2007) and Duffy (2001; 2007)

have revealed, these conversations are now being formalised into a kind of canon, the unofficial manifesto of which is Collins's statement: "Poems [...] cannot live alone any more than we can" (Brown & Schechter, 2007, p. 15). In Bakhtinian terms, therefore, we position poetry writing development as a fully social practice, which is as dependent on the contexts that individuals write in, including their networks of association and personal reading, as much as their changing motivations and identities (Andrews & Smith, 2011).

2.4 Models of writing development

We position our model of poetry writing development within broader conceptualisations of writing and literacy as social practice (Barton & Ivanič, 1991; Dyson, 2002, 2005; Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, Gee, et al., 1996; Kostouli, 2009). We would like to emphasise that, with the exception of Schultz (2007), Andrews and Smith (2011) and Compton-Lily (2014), few researchers have previously explored poetry writing development per se within these conceptualisations. To borrow from Kostouli (2009), we envisage poetry writing as engagement with "an intertextual universe of texts and writing activities" (p. 99). The work of Cazden et al. (1996) and Andrews and Smith (2011) show us that the modes of meaning making available to learners have not only multiplied but have become more integrated. Within these modes we also want to include poetry. We acknowledge that those writing poetry can be said to engage in dialogue with previously written texts (Kristeva, 1986; Bloom, 1997). Kristeva describes the poetic field in terms of "three dimensions of textual space: writing subject, addressee and exterior texts" (p. 66). In doing so she plays down the role of the author and reader. Bloom, however, asserts that "strong poets" deliberately misread their canonical forefathers "to clear imaginative space for themselves" (p. 5). A potential consequence of these misreadings can be an "anxiety of influence" (p. xxiii). This influence belies the notion of the solitary poet at work whilst retaining the sense of a poet's individual voice whose work is informed by and woven with that of other writers.

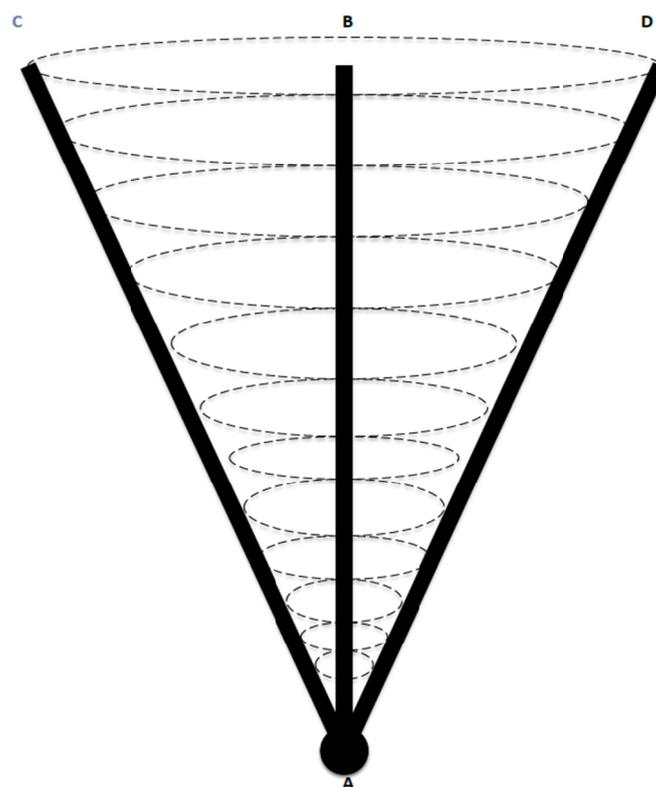
We have both previously argued that there is a gap in cognitive models of writing development where poetry writing is concerned (Dymoke 2003; Wilson, 2009; 2010). Our ideas are not inimical to cognitive conceptualisations of writing development (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Hayes & Flower, 1980; Kellogg, 1994, 2008), merely that we question how far the linearity of writing processes found within these and other models is appropriate for a theory of poetry writing development. Dymoke (2003) and Wilson (2010), drawing on Sharples (1999) and Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) have shown how "schemes for organizing a text" (1987, p. 302) can relate to discussions of poetry writing, as writers craft poems to suit their rhetorical goals (Wilson, 2010). Further, the model of knowledge transformation proposed by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), where the discourse of a text and its content influence each other is close to Pinsky's model (1988) of how poets respond to the work and/or context of another poet. However, counter to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), we argue, in agreement

with Schultz and Fecho (2000) that this positions poetry writing as an inherently dialogic process which is both “complex and recursive” (p.53).

We also position our ideas about poetry writing alongside those of Andrews and Smith (2011) within a wider view of writing development, suggesting that it is a transformational process; that is an effect of community, and that development can be seen over time, perhaps incorporating other facets of personal development, be they cognitive, social, emotional or intellectual. We find their redefinition of rhetorical space thinking helpful to our model of poetry writing as social practice. They conceive the rhetorical context entirely in terms of questions: “who is communicating with whom, why, what is the substance of the communication, when is it taking place, where and how” (p. 131-133). These questions prefigure the centrality of the social context, which is at the heart of their work on the difference between frames and framing (Andrews, 2011; Andrews & Smith, 2011). The use of frames is different from framing as the latter places agency into the author's hands. The author not only undertakes a social act, in making her own choice of established genre or new hybrid form in which her message will be conveyed, but also she has considerably more flexibility in how she will use her chosen framing. In framing her message the author establishes her own textual boundaries and “creates an 'inside' and 'outside' to the communicative act”. (Andrews & Smith, 2011, p. 133). Thus we see the power to shape the communicative act as remaining in the hands of individual writers but acknowledge that culture and context will be the predominant prompts in suggesting occasions for writing. In terms of poetry writing, poets enact framing by making choices of form (as well as content), for example composing a sonnet in a strict Petrarchan or Shakespearian mode or adapting it with rhymes falling not at the end of lines, and/or with looser metre (see examples in Paterson, 2012; 2015); or of other classical forms such as the Ghazal, reworking it for a contemporary audience (see examples in Ali, 2000).

Wallas's (1926) model identifies four stages of the creative process. The stages are usually represented by the following heuristic: preparation; incubation; illumination; and verification. Sansom (1994) has drawn on this model to analyse the processes of making a poem. While acknowledging the appeal of Wallas's abstract representation of process, Sansom (1994) argues that writers of poetry progress in and between the stages in anything but linear ways. Sometimes writers begin writing before they have prepared (or without realising that they are); sometimes the movement between stages is recursive, describing more of a spiral than an arrow; and sometimes the stages appear to occur simultaneously or “on fast-forward” (1994, p. 61). More recently, based on a small-scale study of three final year creative writing Masters students, Hanauer (2010) proposes a model of poetry composition that has synergy with that of Wallas. It too has four stages: activation, discovery, permutation and finalization. Although he identifies the “cyclical nature” (Hanauer, 2010, p.20) of the discovery and permutation stages where writers discover more about their texts' potential direction and shape, we find this model is too static and constraining for our purposes. The activation stage appears to serve only as a stimulus for what follows rather than a reference point to be revisited

at different stages. We argue that the writers' social context ("real world events"; "intertextual influences": Hanauer, 2010, p. 20) within the first stage remains present throughout the whole writing process, not just at its beginning. More helpful, we find, with reference to writing poems, is Arnold's model of writing development captured in the form of a spiral (see Figure 1).



- A = Core self
- B = Expressive self incorporating expressive discourse (spoken & written)
- C = Transactional discourse (spoken & written)
- D = Poetic discourse (spoken & written)

Figure 1: Spiral model of psychodynamic discourse development
 [from: Arnold, R. (1991) *Writing Development*. Buckingham, UK : Open University Press p. 20.]

The complete lack of linearity in Figure 1 suggests a dynamic interplay between different kinds of spoken and written discourse which is both recursive and progressive. However, we take issue with idea of writers possessing a "core self" (Arnold, 1991, p.

20), which is suggestive of something immutable, as though nothing from the outside world (texts, language, experience, context, etc.) is valid or permitted as a starting point or can activate change. It is as though the social world of the writer does not exist. We argue that more flexibility needs to be built in to any model to acknowledge the inner thought processes that the writer engages in and the complex layering of influences throughout an individual's poetry writing process in a variety of contexts. As a result, we find that Schultz and Fecho's social contextual perspective on writing development in general (2000) allies with our own perspectives as poets and teachers who have researched young people's development within the distinct genre of poetry. As stated above, Schultz and Fecho (2000) identify six "propositions" or categories (p. 55) pertaining to writing development. They examine each of these (social historical contexts, local contexts, curriculum and pedagogy, social interactions, social identities and nonlinear process) discretely but acknowledge that they overlap. We will now revisit their categories to explore them with specific reference to poetry writing development. In addition, we consider a seventh dimension, proposed by Andrews and Smith (2011) relating to the technological affordances, constraints and modes with and within which writing composition, representation and dissemination take place (Kress, 2003). We think that technological affordances have opened up new possibilities for poetry at many stages of the writing process including collaborative work, use of unconventional page formats, visual elements, experiments with embedded sound and access to a wider range of stimuli to inspire poetry writing. We take the view that technological considerations permeate all six categories and have chosen to integrate these considerations accordingly within our exploration below rather than to explore them separately.

Following our exploration of Schultz and Fecho's work, we have drawn on consideration of the writing development models and categories we have discussed above, to help us to articulate our draft model of poetry writing development as a socially contextualised process.

2.5 Exploration of Schultz and Fecho's six categories

Poetry writing development is reflective of social historical contexts

Schultz and Fecho (2000) focus on the power relations and issues of equity and access that ensue from these for those writing different kinds of texts in a variety of contexts. It is evident to us that poetry writing development cannot happen in isolation. It reflects, is imbued with and potentially contributes to the digital, cultural, historical, institutional, political and social contexts in which poetry writing takes place. This is not a twenty-first century phenomenon: in the fourteenth century Geoffrey Chaucer "started writing from books but the world took over his verse" (Schmidt, 1999, p. 80). Ivanič comments that power relationships both "enable and constrain" writers' "possibilities for self-hood" (1998, p. 32). Therefore, a significant consideration about young people's development as writers of poetry must relate to curriculum design and

the power exerted by publishers, government, state education departments or school boards. In high stakes contexts poetry writing occupies a “fragile space” (Dymoke, 2012a, p. 15). Despite the existence of high quality digital poetry sound archives and resources for writing and responding to poetry (Dymoke, 2016a; Dymoke & Hughes, 2009), poetry within the secondary curriculum (11- 18 years) in England is equated with completion of examination responses to poems that are written and chosen by others. The lack of support for creative risk taking and sustained writing (Cremin, 2006) and, particularly, for learning about poetry writing remain key, but seldom acknowledged, issues for teachers and students (Dymoke, 2012a).

Curriculum designs, pedagogic decisions and opportunities impact on young writers' perceptions of poetry. A young person will begin to determine what appears to be acceptable and unacceptable with regard to poetry from a school standpoint (Dymoke, 2016b). They may begin to establish positions and allegiances with regard to poetry writing and the different “fields of play” (Richardson, 1997) in which this creative process can be enacted. Key questions in this respect concern: who is allowed on/in to the field of poetry writing; how do they gain access and when will they feel confident enough to join in? Drawing on Bourdieu's theorisation of habitus (1971), Compton-Lilly presents the story of Peter via a ten-year longitudinal study, from first grade through high school (2014). Via her exploration of Peter's developing “habitus as a writer” (2014, p.374) Compton-Lilly begins to question the challenges faced by students from marginalised contexts as they endeavour to move from one social context to another. Ivanič (1998) also asserts that discourses and social practices encountered in new contexts will support different identities from those that the students bring with them. We argue that young and marginalised writers of poetry must mediate the different contexts in which they find themselves and learn to move between them by writing with an increasing fluency. This fluency could mask the sense of separation from the genre that they still might feel beneath the surface. Compton-Lilly's arguments (2014) are also pertinent to the concept of poetry writing development being variable across local contexts, which we develop below.

Poetry writing development is variable across local contexts

Shultz and Fecho (2000, p. 56) argue that texts produced by learners must be understood both in terms of individual writers' knowledge of the writing task “in concert with” conventional knowledge about writing, for example, of teachers. To illustrate this, and in addition to Compton-Lilly (2014), above, we add Andrews and Smith's (2011) case study of Sean, another adolescent writer, to support the thesis that the “contexts of writing are shaped by the group norms of differently situated communities” (Schultz & Fecho, 2000, p. 55). Both writers share more in common than ethnicity and social background. Both are actively engaged in friendship groups which operate in, out of, and across school boundaries. Both come to rely on belonging to a community for support and feedback on their writing. We find the analysis of the latter

especially interesting because it shows the impact of the social context (performing to an audience; attending a workshop) on Sean's practice as a writer. We see these shifts in Sean's writing, including his motivation to write, occurring as direct consequence of his participation in the different social contexts that framed them. In the Bakhtinian and Vygotskian terms we have used above, we interpret Sean's 'progress' in his poetry writing as a transference of inner to outer speech that is dependent upon and inseparable from the social context which both provokes and refines it. In social-constructivist terms (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1986) we infer that these two writers' development in poetry was forged by the intellectual life of those who taught them, both inside and outside of their classrooms.

Social settings are foregrounded in two further studies of poetry composition, by Macleroy (2015), and Hughes (2015). Macleroy's study is of an intervention in the South East of London, where students with English as an Additional Language (EAL) worked alongside spoken word poets to set up poetry cafés for sharing and performing students' poems. The transformation which took place was described in terms of students being enabled to "write into the silence" (2015, p. 187), sharing and honouring aspects of their lives that were previously invisible. This resulted most markedly in the increase of students' ability to listen empathetically to others' work, and in the "deeper analysis of their own poetry" (2015, p. 188). These changes stemmed from raising students' expectations both as readers and writers of poetry, fusing a commitment to texts from the school syllabus as well as those from outside school, which were often written in languages other than English. High levels of student participation were also to be found in Hughes's study (2015) of young immigrant Canadian adolescents' online and offline identities, which merged social media with poetry writing. Using Weber and Mitchell's (2008) theorisation of identity as "personal and social bricolage" (2015, p. 202), Hughes found students' poetic interactions in mediated spaces sharpened their ability to "think critically" (p. 202) about the different versions of themselves that they project. Again, we argue that transference of outer to inner speech is shaped by the various social settings in which the writing took place. However, while filled with great potential, Wilson has warned (2015) that these explicitly social interventions are not without risks because they challenge established relationships of power within the classroom. We may problematize poetry writing development as a binary opposition of "conventional" versus "cultural" knowledge. But the issue is deeper than this. In theorising poetry writing as a social activity we challenge how we position the young people whom we teach, "what we imagine is possible for students, and what opportunities we provide" for them (Andrews & Smith, 2014, p. 90).

Poetry writing development is reflective of classroom curriculum and pedagogy

Schultz and Fecho assert that writing development is shaped by teachers' decisions pertaining to pedagogy and curriculum (2000). With specific reference to poetry, we have long argued that the intellectual lives of teachers have a direct impact on the classroom conditions and specific approaches used to teach the genre (Dymoke, 2000; Wilson, 2010; 2013; Wilson & Myhill, 2012; Myhill & Wilson, 2013). This intellectual life encompasses subject content knowledge (knowledge of an academic field), pedagogical content knowledge (knowledge of how to teach that field) and pedagogical knowledge (knowledge of how to teach) (Shulman, 1987).

One key approach which explicitly puts these different kinds of knowledge to the test is the writing workshop, most usually associated in schools with the practice of Graves (1983). Graves's work influenced classroom writing practices in England across 5-16 years in a range of genres through the National Curriculum programmes of study for writing. It also informed the National Writing Project in England (1985-89) which framed reading and writing as "social practices rather than decontextualized skills" (Maybin, 1994, p. 188). Graves's work specifically influenced guidance on teaching poetry in the UK particularly with regard to young writers' development of their distinctive poetic voices (DES, 1987; Wilkinson, 1986; Dymoke, 2000). Lensmire however, critiqued the "romantic" (1994b, p. 389) project of Graves (1983), Murray (1984) and others. He asserted that such workshop processes focus on individual writers rather than the collective and do not acknowledge societal concerns/pressure for change beyond the classroom. Lensmire advocates a socially contextualised approach drawing on the "dialogic" nature of texts (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 273) and four features of carnival (Bakhtin, 1984) in which the lines between performer and spectator are blurred. This blurring is particularly evident when writers are working collaboratively in digital spaces, such as poetry wikis, where multimodal texts can be woven by many users, readers and makers (Dymoke, 2016a).

We argue with Hull (1988), Dymoke (2003) and Carpenter (2013) that writing workshops, including those that were run by Graves, are inherently social; and concur with Yates (1999) that their key elements (pace, different types of preparation, intense periods of writing, reading and feeding back) implicitly require a dialogic teaching approach. Influential British poet and writing tutor Peter Sansom has run highly acclaimed poetry writing workshops for over 30 years. He argues that the "energy" of writing in a group can often "force a poem into being" that would not have been written elsewhere (1994, p. 67). Further, in such a workshop environment, other poets may be compared "from the inside" (Carpenter, 2016, p. 77) as "fellow-practitioners" (Carpenter, 2013, p. 323), not critics.

Perhaps the greatest challenge of using workshops for instruction in poetry writing is the ideal that teachers should attempt to write alongside their students and draw on models of their own work-in-progress where appropriate (Dymoke, 2003; Yates 1999;

2014; Carpenter, 2013; 2016). This approach has implications for teacher professional development as it challenges those teachers who may feel: uncomfortable with live demonstration (Cremin, 2006; Cremin & Baker, 2014; Dymoke, 2012b); lacking in knowledge about their skills as writers (Smith & Wrigley, 2012), or, conversely, feel that their own writing practices are constrained by curriculum/assessment demands (Woodard, 2015). It would seem that teachers' concerns are particularly evident where writing poetry is concerned (Dymoke & Hughes, 2009). We therefore argue that teachers should experience the social model of composition afforded by workshops. In this way they can internalise the "struggle with words" (Nicholls, 1990, p. 27) of the poetry writing process for themselves by, for example, responding to given stimuli, sharing and critiquing drafts with other writers. This experience will serve to sustain their pedagogy and enable them to support their students' growth as writers of poetry from a more informed position.

Poetry writing development is shaped by social interactions

Based on the work of Schultz (1994, 1997) and drawing on Brodkey (1987), Schultz and Fecho (2000) propose that collaborative writing is writing for oneself as well as with others, and is a range of practices which promotes a reconceptualization of all relationships in the classroom, where knowledge can be co-constructed by all participants. As in the work of Andrews and Smith (2011), Schultz's case studies (1994, 1997) of individual and collaborative writing processes have profound implications for the way we may view the writing classroom. In her analysis of the writing behaviours of Roderick, an African American boy from a working class background, Schultz (1997, p. 269) shows how he refused to accept invitations to write with others, but nevertheless invited others into his own network, the language of which would later appear in his stories. The case of Roderick correlates with a Bakhtinian (1981) perspective of language, that his words were more populated with the intentions of others than he may have thought. Though the setting and context of the writing could not be more different, Roderick's story mirrors Dyson's case study of Tionna, a six-year old mid-Michigan child (Dyson, 2005). Dyson shows how Tionna, in collaboration with her school-friends, fused a variety of clapping games and skipping rhymes with snatches of songs and rap to become "unofficial performers for and with each other throughout the day" (2005, p. 159). This extended to performing chunks of favourite books in pairs during periods of free play. How far Tionna's culture is seen to be given credence by "those composing literacy policies" (Dyson, 2005, p. 162) remains open to question. With Dyson we argue that to overcome such deficit models of education requires teachers to consciously construct links between individuals, their composing and the wider community. As we note in the preceding section, to take such a stance runs counter to epistemologies of writing in the current high stakes context.

We close this section by arguing that the same processes we have seen in the writing practices of Roderick and Tionna, an intricate fusion of networking, friendship,

responding and influence, are at work in those of established poets of the late modern period. Numerous case studies, from 1970s Belfast (Heaney, 1980; O'Driscoll, 2008), to the friendship between Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell (Malamud Smith, 2012), to the New York school of poets (Koch, 1996) show how poets are motivated to write poems by engaging in a “cycle of risk and confirmation” (Malamud Smith, 2012, p. 142), support each other by commenting on fellow practitioners’ work (Malamud Smith, 2012, p. 141), and meet to read and discuss work in progress. Koch, a key member of the New York poets, likened this practice to belonging to a “team” (1996, p. 213). In more recent times, the 52 project exemplifies how affordances of social media can enable social interaction and challenge writers. The project was initiated by British poet Jo Bell who supplied an online poetry prompt each week during 2014 and established an online workshopping community (using a private Facebook group) through which writers shared and critiqued each other’s responses to the prompts. The results made “a small piece of poetry history” (Bell, 2015, p.10) in that many new poets developed their writing and many had publishing success. Bell also notes that “the real success is in the private conversation between poet and page” (Bell, 2015, p.10 -11) engineered by the project’s emphasis on social engagement. With Schultz and Fecho (2000, p. 57) we therefore ascribe a connection between individuals’ progress and the benefits of “teamwork”, drawing an explicit parallel between Vygotsky’s notion of inner and outer speech and individuals’ social engagement with others.

Poetry writing development is tied to social identities

We have argued that models of social interaction, such as those described above, form a significant element in poetry writing development. We will now take this one stage further to explore how this development is tied to social identities. School is but one place, albeit a very significant location, where a young person is developing their identity as a writer and learning to position themselves in relation to the dominant discourse in terms of reference, expressivity and addressivity (see the elaboration of Bakhtin, 1986 by Ongstad, 1999). As has been shown above (in sections 1, 3 and 4), in school young writers and their teachers are immersed in interpretation, reproduction and (to some extent) contestation of a web of social practices concerning what are deemed to be appropriate ways of using, creating and responding to texts. For example, in charting the development of three primary school teachers as creative writers, Cremin describes the risk-taking, uncertainty and disorientation that they experience along their way to reaching a writing “destination with significant stories to tell” (Cremin, 2006, p. 430). Such professional journeys towards establishing new social identities are mirrored by the experiences of young people who are writing in either physical or digital spaces (see Bluett, 2015; Macleroy, 2015; Hughes, 2015; Dymoke, 2016a). Both teachers and students require sustained professional support and regular engagement with poetry writing if they are to ever fully develop their “habitus as a writer” (Compton-Lily 2014, p.374) or to enter confidently into dialogues with others in

which they are able to perceive themselves as writers of poetry and contribute to the ever changing context in which they are writing.

Gee identifies “big 'D' Discourses” (2015, p. 3) as being not just about what is said (discourse) but about language within its social context. Consequently, the greater the distance that exists between one's primary Discourse and other secondary Discourses, the greater the challenge there will be to perform effectively. Seamus Heaney (1980) exemplifies how poets are able to merge the official and unofficial poetries or social practices in their lives to arrive at a distinctive way of using language. We argue that, in doing so, Heaney bridged the distance between his primary identity and gained entry to a secondary Discourse.

The lack of access to a world beyond their primary Discourse presents challenges for some young writers - especially those who are living and/or learning in difficult circumstances and whose opportunities to become fluent performers in a secondary Discourse appear to be scant. On a hopeful note, it has been shown (Dymoke, 2017) that Spoken Word poetry can give young people opportunities to engage with poetry as a secondary Discourse in ways that are less alien to their own contexts. This specific subgenre can be much more transparent or direct in its use of language than traditional page poetry and, therefore, potentially more appealing to young writers. It empowers them to draw on the language and experiences of their primary Discourse, namely their home life, personal history, social context and idiolect, as they are striving to make sense of themselves and carve out their identity. This process not only validates these aspects as legitimate subjects or stimuli for poetry but, in doing so, it also offers the young writers a route into membership of a community of writers and chance participate in this new secondary Discourse with greater confidence and sense of purpose (Dymoke, 2017). With Kostouli (2009) and Freedman and Delp (2007) we argue that poetry can play a significant role in redefining school communities as “dialogic places... where multiple voices coexist and contesting discourses of non-dominant groups are acknowledged and validated” (Kosotuli, 2009, p. 100).

Poetry writing development is conceptualised as a nonlinear process

Andrews and Smith have argued (2011, p. 94) that development in writing is too often “idealized as a linear trajectory”. Whether they are revising their own drafts, interacting socially with other writers online or visiting webpages for research purposes, all writers are constantly reminded of the recursive nature of their own and others' writing development in digital spaces where texts have no closure. We argue that even with careful and sustained scaffolding, for example via writing workshops tutored by expert others, progress within poetry writing is also nonlinear and not easy to quantify (Wilson, 2009, p. 396). In an eighteen-month study of primary-age writers' development in poetry Wilson also speculates (2009) that poetry writing places unique cognitive demands on students. In part this is because young or inexperienced writers find it difficult to “unlearn” the habits of writing prose. Writing poems therefore poses a

direct challenge to engage with what Strauss (1993, p.3) calls the “hedged-off area” of white space at the end of each line. Wilson (2009) argues that this may explain why younger writers will often lay out their poems as prose, and why rhyme remains for many the predominant feature of the poems they write, perhaps because young writers recognise it as poetry’s most distinctive feature (Elster & Hanauer, 2002) when it is read aloud to them. This accords with Schultz and Fecho’s insight (2000, p. 58) that young writers often appear to “go backwards” when learning the rigours of a new genre or attempt a demanding writing task. With them, we argue that such “backsliding” (Schultz & Fecho, 2000, p. 58) is not only normal, it is a “necessary” part of the process (2000, p. 58-9).

Thus, as in other forms of writing, development in poetry writing is marked by “moments of suspended or recursive growth” (Andrews & Smith, 2011, p. 83). We may explain this in cognitive terms by arguing with Sharples (1999) and Kellogg (1994; 2008) that unless students’ organizational schemas of the possibilities of a certain genre (or form, or model) keep up with the content they want to write about, the outcome may be limited. We therefore concur with Wilson (2009) that, in order for the transformational possibilities of poetry writing to be fully realised, attention needs to be paid to developing learners’ rhetorical space thinking (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Sharples, 1999) as much as it is to providing them with requisite scaffolding in other aspects of poetry composition, such as developing and sustaining of motivation to write, and learning to write for different audiences.

As we have elicited from the work of Andrews and Smith (2011), Compton-Lilly (2014), and Dyson (2005), above, progress also occurs in beginner writers’ poems when they are surrounded by texts produced by others, digitally as well as in hard copy, in both oral and written form. Rosen (1998) and Boroditskaya and Rosen (2015) have made this point specifically in relationship to young writers’ poems, noting that development takes place as writers develop their awareness of poetry’s capacity to enter into “conversation” (Boroditskaya & Rosen, 2015, p. 69) with other forms of discourse, including poems written by others, both living and dead. Conceived in these terms, poetry becomes a “ludic” and “scavenging” art-form (Boroditskaya & Rosen, 2015, p. 69; p. 73) which is both exciting and challenging for young writers. Thus, with Wilson (2009), we argue that signs of progress in poetry writing may occur slowly and even, at times, contain elements of nonsense. Drawing on the work of Whitehead (1995) via Chukovsky (1963), Wilson (2009) argues that is partly because poetry as a form calls for the writer to engage in different kinds of play, with syntax, words, and layout as well as meaning. Moreover, progress can appear uneven because to reach the point of “discovery” and surprise so valued by mature poets (Dunn, 2001, p. 140) requires the writer to possess a meta-awareness not only of the needs of a particular piece of writing, but of the process of making poems in general. Therefore, in Vygotskian terms, for beginner writers, poems that make sense as inner speech could be categorised as lacking fluency when externalised as outer speech, precisely because of the unique demands of poetry.

3. Conclusion: towards a new model of poetry writing development

We have endeavoured to develop a model that reflects the diverse ways young writers can encounter and make poetry texts in a variety of situations, including with the support of their teachers in school. Current curriculum structures in the UK take little account of the learner and their contexts (Yarker, 2014) but we wish to place their encounters with social worlds and texts outside the classroom on an equal footing with those that occur inside it. From the rural Northern Ireland of Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney (Heaney, 1980; O'Driscoll, 2008) to inner urban experiences of students Roderick (Schultz, 1997), Tionna (Dyson, 2005), Sean (Andrews & Smith, 2011), and Peter (Compton-Lilly, 2014), it has been shown that learners can possess and invent poetic texts using materials which matter to them and speak directly to their social contexts. These examples of poetry writing are in the minority within the research literature of writing development which continues to focus predominantly on prose writing.

Our model (Figure 2, below) has evolved through consideration of Arnold (1991), Hanauer (2010), Schultz and Fecho's six propositions (2000), Compton-Lily (2014), Andrews and Smith (2011) alongside theoretical positions regarding thought and language (Vygotsky, 1962; 1978; Barrs, 2016), intertextuality (Kristeva, 1986), influence (Bloom, 1997); and Discourses (Gee, 2015). It also reflects our experiences as writers of poetry from a young age when we were both introduced to secondary Discourses in which poetry reading and writing were recognised ways of behaving (see Wilson, 2015 and Dymoke, 2016a).

We argue that development as a writer of poetry involves a series of journeys of varying lengths that occur both separately and simultaneously. These journeys will not take a linear route. Writers will travel in and out of individual poems recursively during stages of the composition process. Their initial motivations to write could be stimulated by past, present and potential future contextual experiences and the needs and feelings aroused within their inner speech or thought processes. They will redraft and focus on both the minutiae of individual word choices and the poem as a whole. This recursive process could take hours, days, months or even years. It is an intense, compressed writing process which reflects the distinctive demands of poetry as outlined above. The writers will also journey back through and out of the poem into the exterior world of other texts including those written by others, texts which may be sources of influence that inform their own writing or that they need to answer (Bloom 1997; Pinsky 1988). This travelling back and forth might never reach an end point as poet Moniza Alvi comments "sometimes a poem never seems to quite get there" (Dymoke, 2003, p. 72). Such journeys also involve lengthy travel towards a series of substantial destinations (Cremin, 2006), including publication, performance or public recognition of a poem/body of work. The developing writer's poems might be stimulated by and/or begin in different contexts or develop within one specific context. The writer might move between different "secondary Discourses" (Gee 2015, p.168). These Discourses might overlap and inform each other as the young writer draws on both their previous

and new experiences in different contexts and seeks ways of using poetry's distinctive features to carve out their own voice. We have some evidence of these journeying processes from our previous research and poetry writing (Dymoke, 2003, Wilson, 2009, Dymoke, 2017). In the next stage of our work we intend to test out our theoretical model further with an investigation of young people's poetry writing processes in specific contextual settings.

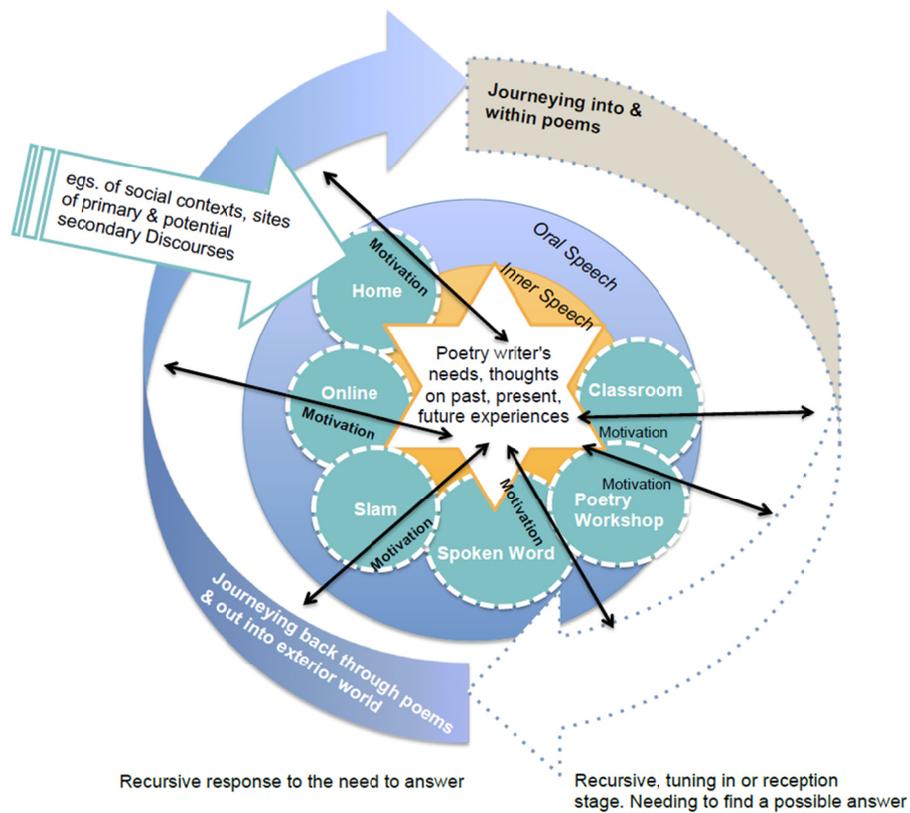


Figure 2: Poetry writing as a socially contextualised process.

Placing the social world of the writer at the centre of our model of poetry writing development, we argue that writing poetry is an act of answering different needs provoked by different contexts, some of which are listed above. We call this process an act of "journeying", to illustrate that as the writer learns more about the poem and its place in the world, the more she becomes attuned and responsive to outside influences. As it is being written, the poem therefore becomes a record of the dialogue between the poet's need to answer her world, and the world itself. We draw this model in a circular fashion to emphasise the recursiveness of the process. Development in poetry writing is

explicitly linked, therefore, to the social context in which it takes place. It is characterized by the gradual withdrawal of others in the role of influencing the goals for writing, simultaneous increase in self-regulation by writers and increased flexibility, negotiation and autonomy (Dymoke, 2003). In each case, these events bring into play a Bakhtinian (1981) dimension to the learning, as it were inviting writers to come into dialogue with and populate others' intentions (or frameworks) with their own. This is the paradox at the heart of our model, as it is with all conceptions of learning as social practice. We take these events to include interactions inside and outside of the classroom, which are shaped by wider social processes, including policy and curricula, and which schools silence at their peril.

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