

ACCESS and Me

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One of my favourite films on long flights is *Marley and Me* starring Jennifer Aniston and Owen Wilson. Marley is a loveable and quite uncontrollable yellow labrador named after Bob Marley, incorrigible, always there in the face of his owners, but nevertheless an indispensable part of the family. As I watch the film I can't help thinking of ACCESS and me.

Over these past ten years ACCESS has been a constant presence in my life. I'm not sure it is as loveable as a labrador puppy, but is possibly as incorrigible and certainly tries to make its presence felt in every possible way. Since those days at AUT when I became the editor, and then throughout the RMIT years, digital files for ACCESS have travelled with me to and from Melbourne and NZ, to Japan, Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, England and Europe, with articles always needing editing, checking and sorting, introductions to write, contributors and reviewers to contact, future issues and calls for papers to devise: ACCESS is never far away. It has been my trusty companion when travelling on my own and has been overly loyal, never leaving my side, when I am hoping for some peace and quiet or even perchance a holiday with a good novel.

I think back to my introduction to publishing in ACCESS: it was in 1999 when I was a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Brighton on England's South Coast. From our small seaside apartment with its heavy blue door in Atlingworth Street I would walk along St James's Street with its original Georgian architecture to the School of Historical and Critical Studies opposite the domes and minarets of Brighton's Royal Palace Pavilion. In my small office with its view across red rooftops towards the sea I would be reading poststructuralist theories and making sense of the politics of knowledge in visual arts education, my chosen PhD subject, and attending a Master of Philosophy programme at the University or training to London to avail myself of resources at the Tate or British Museum, and writing for ACCESS. Back in New Zealand Tina Engels-Schwarzpaul and Lucy Holmes were collating articles from a doctorate seminar at University of Auckland for a special issue of ACCESS, "Divergences: Aesthetics, art, education and culture" (Vol. 18, no 1, 1999), and there I was on the other side of the world writing "Spaces of Indeterminacy: Towards a theory of praxis in visual arts pedagogy" for inclusion in this issue (Grierson, 1999a). It was an exacting process if I recall, and I was surprised how long the article took me to write to a publishable standard. Other articles in this issue were from Janet Mansfield, Ho-chia Chueh, Betsan Martin, Tina Engels-Schwarzpaul and Lucy Holmes, all doctorate candidates supervised by Michael Peters or Jim Marshall from Cultural and Policy Studies in education at the University of Auckland.

One of my strategies as a Research Fellow at the University of Brighton where I had the luxury of undertaking research fulltime was to present papers at conferences then to develop these for inclusion into my PhD thesis, or as journal articles or book chapters. For example the paper I gave at the *Globalization and Identities* conference at the Research Unit for Global Studies, Manchester Metropolitan University, "Navigations: Visual identities and the Pacific cultural subject" (Grierson, 1999b) was later published by Routledge as a chapter in *Communities across Borders: New immigrants and transnational cultures* (Grierson, 2002). It was a productive time.

Publishing in ACCESS and presenting conference papers gave me the confidence to tackle larger projects. When I returned to New Zealand and completed the PhD, I worked with Janet Mansfield and Tina Engels-Schwarzpaul to edit a series of papers for an ACCESS special issue (Engels-Schwarzpaul, Grierson & Mansfield, 2001) from the *ARTS FORUM: The draft arts curriculum and teacher education in the postmodern condition*, held at University of Auckland in 2000, which Janet and I had organised on the eve of the new national arts curriculum for New Zealand schools. Michael Peters and Colin Lankshear set out the issues around the politics of curriculum; followed by papers from Ted Bracey, well-known art educator from Christchurch who has since passed away; Christopher Naughtan who undertook a PhD under Janet Mansfield's mentoring supervision on music education; and David Lines who also did his PhD on music education; Janet, Tina and I also contributed papers and an introductory paper that engaged critically with the political framing of the arts in education. It was a strong issue, and as it turned out quite contentious, as the politics of standardisation in the arts through the national curriculum soon exposed antagonisms among arts educators, curriculum writers, government advisors and critical commentators. Such antagonism I have experienced again as a writer of the Shape Paper, and then a contracted Advisor, for the new national curriculum in the arts in Australia: with alarming levels of personal and public assault coming from purported "leaders" of the national association for art educators. It is a process fraught with political difficulties; and one quickly learns that if you stick your head above the parapet it is soon cut off. Janet had done her PhD on the draft arts curriculum, interrogating it via the "aesthetics of difference" (Mansfield, 2000), and my PhD had unearthed and exposed the political dynamics of knowledge in the philosophy, politics and pedagogy of visual arts (Grierson, 2000). Since then I have continued to investigate the subject "art" as a set of discourses, ideologically, historically and politically conditioned; and have continued to argue for a radical scrutiny of the arts in education.

From that particular issue of ACCESS Janet Mansfield and I continued with our work to critique and critically investigate the way the arts were configured and positioned to produce *The Arts in Education: Critical perspectives from Aotearoa New Zealand* (Grierson & Mansfield, 2003). It was a cutting-edge book engaging critically with the arts in policy and practice as it sought to position their transformative potential; and its launch by Helen Clark, the New Zealand Prime Minister, at the University of Auckland, in October 2003, was a fine event attended by a huge crowd. Jim Marshall subsequently endorsed the book in a review published in ACCESS (Marshall, 2003: 108-111).

In 2001 the offer from Jim Marshall and Michael Peters of appointment into the editorial role for ACCESS came at a critical time in my life. My son Hugh had died in January 2001, my son Campbell had been killed in a climbing accident on Mt Cook a mere five years before, and in the midst of these personal tragedies the endorsement of my academic colleagues and mentors, Jim and Michael, meant a great deal to me. I willingly accepted the creative challenge the editorship presented. It wasn't as though I had nothing to do; after all I was employed as a fulltime academic at AUT, but I felt the role of editor would not only give me the constant companionship of a Marley, but would extend my world. I was not disappointed. Now ten years later, I can say that the internationalisation of ACCESS is one of the aspects of which I am most proud: while retaining relevant local scholarship I extended ACCESS beyond the shores of New Zealand to Australia with a noticeable increase in scholarly contributions from Australia, and then to farther shores in Asia, Europe, Britain and USA. My appointment to RMIT helped with this internationalisation as it is a highly global university and much of my work there has involved overseas travel to partner organisations in Hong Kong, Singapore, Europe and Britain. As well I was commuting to and from New Zealand where my home has remained.

Through ACCESS I gained immeasurable skills in writing and editing, and have edited and written many books, book chapters and journal articles since those early days. It has been a rewarding journey, and it continues with devising themed issues to respond to current policy changes or special issues from symposia or conferences. In a process similar to that for *The Arts in Education*, previously discussed, in 2010 I invited an RMIT colleague, Kristen Sharp to work with me as guest editor on the issue, "Aesthetics in Action", and I soon saw how we could extend the material

for a book. The outcome is *Re-Imagining the City: Art, globalization and urban spaces* (Grierson & Sharp, in press), which includes chapters from all those contributors to the 2010 issue as well as other researchers on art in the public sphere, from Australia, Canada and UK. This process shows how ACCESS serves a vital role of growing scholarship by bringing in new PhD graduates to work with more experienced scholars, publishing research from symposia and seminars, and seeding the publication of books with international publishers.

My work has been published in many refereed journals: *Educational Philosophy and Theory (EPAT)*; *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*; *Australian Art Education*; *Journal of Applied Arts & Health*; *Medical Journal of Australia (MJA)*; *International Journal of Learning*; *International Journal of the Humanities*; *International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities, and Nations*; *Australian New Zealand Dance Research Society Journal*; as well as *ACCESS: Critical perspectives on communication, cultural & policy studies*; and articles in *Art New Zealand*; *Journal of Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Art Educators (ANZAAE)* (of which I was editor for many years); *Art News Auckland* (of which I was founding editor). I like journals for the way they expose the work of such a diverse range of scholars, whether peer reviewed or not.

Since 1980 when I won a New Zealand public speaking contest and represented New Zealand in public speaking in St Louis, Missouri USA, I have presented so many keynotes, conference papers, and speeches at exhibition openings and other events I have lost count. They have taken me all over the world from New Zealand to Estonia, Australia to Glasgow and Korea, and many places between. Public speaking and writing are both a great pleasure for me. I used to explore the environment and issues of identity through painting and drawing, but after my sons died I lost the will to make art and eventually sold my studio; and I found when I could no longer paint I could write with greater depth and insight. Through writing exhibition catalogue essays, book chapters and books I continue to explore my subjects: art and identity, aesthetics and art history, the arts in education, the politics of knowledge, globalisation and communications, poetics and research, academic writing, creativity and methodology, supervising and undertaking doctorates, discourses of innovation, curating and urban space, designing sound for wellbeing in medical settings, and justice and education. The voices of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard and Cixous continue to inspire me; and my life-long love of poetry has been rekindled by working on two books of poetry by my partner, Nicholas Gresson (Grierson, 2011; Gresson, 2012).

Through the years I continue to seek rigorous scrutiny on the politics of knowledge, as I investigate subjects of interest, or things that disturb me in education or the social sphere; or sometimes I write for the absolute creative joy of writing, developing an old paper into something new or seeking a poetic voice amidst the sorrows of life. Latterly I have found a new passion, or should I say a way of strengthening an old passion— that of law and justice. I ended my PhD with the words: “the appraisal of difference is an appraisal of justice”. It may sound surprising at this stage of my career, but I am studying law at RMIT (a Juris Doctor), fulfilling a lifelong dream to extend and deepen my knowledge and understanding of legal issues and the workings of (in)justice in society, and to try to make sense (order?) of some of the senseless atrocities of academia that I have experienced these last few years in senior management: most particularly being harassed, cyberstalked and cyberbullied as a result of an organisational change project. I have researched the law and spoken of this at an international education and law conference (Grierson, 2012); and now I am working on a book proposal to bring together aesthetics and justice—and as Marley is reminding me, perhaps there is an issue for ACCESS in this.

ACCESS fills a role with its long-standing mission for critical perspectives providing the key criteria against which to select articles for publication. Whether the articles are on philosophy of education, communications theory or practice, cultural or policy studies, art education, pedagogy or the politics of knowledge, if they do not engage critically with the discourses in which their subject is situated then they are not for ACCESS. I value greatly that the journal can publish work of

doctorate candidates alongside that of professors and that it maintains the respect of a broad-based academic community.

Change produces change and never insignificant in a market economy. In Australia, Informit online system ensured a wider distribution of ACCESS content, while AUT from 2002, then RMIT from 2009 retained the publishing rights. Over these years as contributions increased in quantity and the range of scholarly fields increased, the market showed a preference for online subscriptions over hard copy. The subscription cost has remained fairly constant and much of the work for producing ACCESS was done pro bono.

I could not be more pleased with the new arrangement starting in 2014. Not only will the ACCESS brand continue, but it will do so with strength in an international field with the highest quality international publisher, Routledge. It will have the long overdue online publication management system for submissions and reviewing, which not only takes away the hands-on organisational work and streamlines the whole process, but also ensures the journal reaches a wider audience of scholars. To join EPAT under the umbrella of the scholarly association, PESA is a dream outcome for ACCESS. I look forward to continuing my role as editor, continuing the creative enterprise of overseeing content, working with scholars and mentoring new contributors.

The world of academic writing and publishing offers many rewards, and as I dare to dream in a world of over-rationalised demands, I will be devising more articles, writing more books, and continuing with ACCESS wherever I may go in the world—and no doubt still running around after a Marley.

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