Joined Up Writers:

How can the novel be a vehicle

for community participation?

Jane Moss

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University of the Arts London
Falmouth University
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ABSTRACT

The title of this thesis addresses the Arts and Humanities Research Council's (AHRC) call for research: "How can literature be thought to be a conversation with community?" (AHRC 2017).

As well as enquiring into the novel as a potential vehicle for community participation, there are two associated questions:

1. What is the role of the writer-facilitator?
2. What is the effect of introducing digital methods to a community writing practice that is traditionally non-digital?

The thesis defines the community novel in the context of the community arts movement in the UK (Owen Kelly 2023, François Matarasso 2021, for example). It argues for it as a culturally democratic form that uses multimodal, accessible and inclusive methods to engage with people who have little or no experience of creative writing.

The research uses participatory action research (PAR) to establish the process of making a community novel with volunteers in a rural parish in south Cornwall. Collaborating with local residents, the research has established a replicable model of participation through which people with diverse skills and interests can contribute.

The longest study produced a prototype community novel, *Trevow*, which is the work of its participants. It was achieved over a period of 18 months, including an extension during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown of 2020. The thesis includes insights drawn from participation methods that arose when facilitation was unexpectedly forced online. *Trevow* demonstrates the viability of the community novel as a participatory form, with remediations to the writer-facilitator role, and the blending of traditional and digital methods in production of the novel.

Research into facilitating the making of *Trevow* has resulted in a model of participation and material for a toolkit to inform remediated practice. This is provided as an indicative outline, to be further developed and disseminated post-doctorate.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents: Valerie Moss, teacher-trainer, and Raymond Moss, pioneer of theatre in education and community theatre in Cornwall.

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Special thanks go to the volunteers who participated in the practical studies at the heart of this research, to local organisations and groups, and to community venues who hosted the research activities. The volunteers include those who contributed to the community novel project in Mylor Parish, and my two short studies with writing groups in St Agnes and at Truro and Penwith College. Their willingness to try unfamiliar methods in the cause of my research was inspiring. The Mylor volunteers' keenness to continue online during the Covid-19 pandemic opened up avenues of enquiry that led to fresh insights. I hope they are as proud of what they achieved during that extraordinary time as I am.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following terms and names are given in full when they first occur. The abbreviation is used in subsequent mentions.

3D3	Creative Connected Communities
ACE	Arts Council England
AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
CIC	Community Interest Company
COR	Community Action Research
CPP	Creative People and Places
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DCMS	Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HE	Higher Education
NAWE	National Association for Writers in Education
NAWG	National Association of Writing Groups
NDP	Neighbourhood Development Plan
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PC	Personal Computer
PR	Practice as Research
SMS	Short Message Service
T&PC	Truro and Penwith College
U3A	University of the Third Age
UEA	University of East Anglia
WI	Women's Institute

ILLUSTRATIONS

CONTENTS

PART 1

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

My thesis presents insight into the novel as a collaborative form of community art. It draws on PAR and practice as research (PR) to provide evidence for long-form fiction as a vehicle through which to engage participants in a place-based community. The participants in what the thesis terms a 'community novel' bring their diverse interests, local knowledge and skills to a multimodal process of co-creation, some of them by writing, and others by contributing, for example, information, visual material, and ideas to inform plot points.

My hypothesis that a novel could result from community collaboration grew from my professional practice as a writing facilitator with almost 15 years' experience of running creative writing groups in community settings. It has been informed, as well, by my previous career in regional and national arts marketing, policy and funding in England, including a decade of employment with Arts Council England (ACE), from 1994-2004. That was followed by a period at the Home Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), 2004-2008, working on policy relating to community empowerment. These experiences provided me with insights into local, social and cultural capital (Putnam 2000; Sennett, 2012; Jeffers and Moriarty 2017), which have given rise to the questions which my research addresses. Against this background, I have conducted three participatory studies with volunteers between 2018 and 2021. These have achieved insights into multimodal methods of co-creation with community writing groups. The outcome is an evidenced and replicable process by which a culturally democratic 'community novel' can be made. This term is explained in Chapter 2.

Participation is among the culturally democratic aspirations of Arts Council England's (ACE's) current strategy, *Let's Create 2020-2030* (2020). This describes creativity as:

> the process through which people apply their knowledge, skill and intuition to imagine, conceive, express or make something that wasn't there before. While creativity is present in all areas of life, in this Strategy, we use it specifically to refer to the process of making, producing or participating in 'culture' (ACE 2020: 8).

With making and participating foregrounded by ACE, creative writing is included among the sought-for outcomes in the strategy's Delivery Plan:

> Everyone can be creative, and each of us has the potential to develop our creativity further. Taking part in creative acts such as singing, photography or writing delights and fulfils us, and helps us to think, experiment, and better understand the world (ACE 2021: 7).

This places creative writing, often perceived as an individual pursuit, within the practice of participatory community arts. It begs questions, however, about forms and methods to enable community writing to develop beyond individual writing goals in the type of writing group commonly to be found in local places. As a creative writing facilitator, this suggests to me a role for creative writing to bring communities together, not solely those who already write, but people interested to contribute to a shared work of long fiction. If a community writing group can be formed for that specific purpose, a further question is how can a novel emerge from the group working together? Further, can a community novel also be the product of its wider-community, involving other participants who are not writers? What methods of facilitation are effective and how might the practice of a self-employed writer-facilitator, such as myself, change as a result? With ACE and its funding strategy acknowledging the role of artists and art organisations as enablers of participation within communities, creative writing stands to gain by demonstrating its efficacy as a participatory and collaborative community arts activity. My thesis demonstrates how a community novel can fulfil that aspiration, and the remediations to practice which it entails. The resulting toolkit that supports the process is presented in indicative outline in Chapter 8.

Remediations in this context have features in common with the introduction of digital methods to collaborative music-making described by Akoumianakis et al. In that example, "remediation of practice… is as much about reconstructing as it is about improvising and defining new elements of practice" (Akoumianakis et al. 2013: 2). Research for the community novel has adapted established methods, introduced new ones, and appropriated certain tools in order for participants to be able to take part according to their skills and preferences. As Akoumianakis et al. have found, this enables "synchronous co-engagement of different roles across sites, through different representations, each user articulating and contributing to a shared agenda using the means and tools best suited to his/her own task" (2013: 7).

Related to the meaning of remediation for a culturally democratic community novel, the community artists collective known as 68 Million Artists have acknowledged the need to "change embedded working practices" (ACE 2018: 8). However, "the path towards it can

be incremental and iterative. Not everything needs to be done at once" (8). Change can be achieved through evolution, not revolution, a claim supported by the findings set out in Chapter 7. Remediations can be seen in the role of volunteer participants, the writer facilitator, and the forms taken by the community novel as a result of multimodal methods. Community artist James Bau Graves says: "Cultural democracy implies placing importance on amateurs and on creating conditions which will allow people to choose to be active participants rather than just passive receivers of culture" (2005: 31). This hints at an opportunity for people of diverse interests and skills to contribute to the making of a long fiction, if conditions are conducive. Community writing groups meeting in local places are already positioned among other community interest groups, placing them within the type of "third community" identified by social theorist, Ray Oldenburg (1999). This describes the venues and place-based contexts that support local, social and cultural capital, providing a locus in which people meet and form local networks, some of which, as my research will show, can go on to collaborate. The meanings of community will be discussed later, but for a novel, the community-based writer-facilitator has a role to play in bringing people together and encouraging diverse contributions. As the PR and PAR studies in Chapter 6 will illustrate, this requires skills of group and project management beyond the norms of practice and pedagogy in creative writing studies and community writing facilitation.

The PAR studies designed to address the research questions draw on some auto-ethnographic elements relating to my earlier career experience. In conducting research that is experiential, immersive and observational, it has been natural for me to reflect on the differences between customary practice and the remediations arising from new methods. Methods were chosen that heeded Bau Graves' advice to "know your community" (2005: 42). This goes beyond community at place, to the habits and cultural norms of participants; their skills and aptitudes and the important of not insisting on – for instance – digital methods with those who lacked equipment or confidence to use them. Instead, I sought to blend digital and traditional methods in an inclusive and accessible process.

As personal context for my approach to the studies, I was trained in the early 2000s to facilitate writing with community groups using the traditional writing technologies of pen, paper and laptop to generate draft writing in fiction, poetry, and life writing. In 2009 a Master of Arts degree in Writing in the Community from the University of Surrey (St Mary's University College), led me to enquire into writing for wellbeing in the context of

bereavement (Moss 2012). In that niche of creative writing, participants in a supportive group, or as individuals, are encouraged to write as an aid to expressing and processing difficult thoughts and feelings. Practitioner Gillie Bolton explains this type of writing is "for themselves and perhaps a very few significant others" (Bolton et al. 2006: 14). It can also be the starting point for a process of "crafting, redrafting and editing" (ibid) that can lead to publication. Bolton emphasises the importance of "trust and respect" (2006: 17) in the context of writing for wellbeing. As the Mylor Parish study recounted in Chapter 6 will show, trust is a valuable aspect of co-creation among a mixed group of volunteer writers and non-writers who contribute to a community novel.

I have alluded to the need to ensure inclusivity of methods chosen to engage with volunteers who are not trained as writers. In a non-professional or academic community context this supports the use of pen and paper as primary tools for writing. As Bolton says, "A pen/pencil and paper are almost free and can easily be carried and stored" (1999: 16). Anyone with basic literacy can put words on a page. If they are unable to write, others can scribe for them. The personal and social benefits of writing creatively, alone, or with others, are the goal, not the attainment of professional writing skills, for which creative writing pedagogy is largely designed.

A Creative Writing Masters degree trained me to facilitate writing in community contexts, for instance libraries, community centres and charities. It also equipped me to teach creative writing in adult education and higher education (HE). The differences between writing in the community and within formal education are discussed in Chapter 2, but I raise them now to pose the idea that those who do not consider themselves writers in the professional or traditional sense can, nonetheless, be encouraged and enabled to write. Barnard notes a "pedagogical gap" (2019: 120) in relation to digital fiction and multimodal writing. I see a similar gap in pedagogy to inform writing in communities. This is especially in relation to developments in digital humanities (for instance Clark et al. 2015), and methods to enable community participation in collaborative long-form fiction. In addition, funding policy for the literary arts, for instance by ACE, has historically foregrounded development for individual authors, those aspiring to publication, and small and independent publishers. The most current ACE literature policy is a response to the report 'Literature in the 21st Century', commissioned by ACE from the digital publisher Canelo (Bhaskar et al.: 2018).

The authors of the report, which is concerned with literary publishing and author development in the twenty-first century, conclude: "the old models of literary support are in trouble" (2018: 52), with fiction and publishing "still seen by many as a closed shop, an insider network" (52). The call to ACE is for "more support and new models of support for literary fiction" (52). ACE's response to the Canelo Report is limited to individual and professional authorship, despite the claim that "Our aim is to support and sustain every aspect of the literary ecology in this country" (ACE 2019: 2). By investing in "a national network of writer development agencies, a range of publishers (with a particular focus on poetry presses), literary festivals, story centres, spoken-word groups, manuscript assessment services and reading charities" (2), ACE claims diversity of support within the literary arts. There is no mention, however, of one of the key ways through which emerging and beginner writers engage with creative writing: the local community writing group.

Writing groups who meet to write, workshop and critique writing are part of the development path for individuals. They feature, too, in adult education courses whose curricula are based on creative writing pedagogy. This type of writing group has little reach beyond the scope of writers who define themselves individually as authors of fiction, life writing, or poetry. A different kind of community writing group exists within the community arts movement, however, and some examples are given in Chapter 2's consideration of the context in which community writing takes place. Such groups tend to be supported by small local grants or a fee paid by participants to cover the cost of a writer-facilitator and a venue. Some are run on a self-managed voluntary basis. Since 1994, the UK's National Lottery has injected funds into this type of community activity on a project-by-project basis.

My research places the community novel in the context of other local participatory art forms. Since the 1980s, definitions of collaborative and participatory community art have evolved to the point at which the quality of participation, rather than purely artistic output, is prioritised in the report commissioned by ACE from King's College London: *Towards Cultural Democracy: Promoting Cultural Capabilities for Everyone* (Wilson et al 2017). Of the report's 14 recommendations, nine relate to "cultural capability" (2017: 9). Initiatives such as 'Get Creative', 'Fun Palaces' and the '64 Million Artists' social enterprise, are noted as exemplars for taking "an approach to cultural policy that moves beyond the deficit model (taking great art to the people, 'the democratisation of culture') and instead seeks to achieve cultural democracy" (2017: 7). This is art by people, facilitated by professional community

artists for whom facilitation requires appropriate skills and capabilities, as well as the ability to impart skills to participants. A further report, *Cultural Democracy in Practice*, commissioned by ACE from 64 Million Artists (Hunter et al. 2018) illustrates the idea with place-based case studies that include Creative People and Places (CPP), an ACE-funded initiative in which 21 English communities participated. One of CPP's guiding principles for artists is "Giving up power and leading by facilitating discussion, conversation and creative action" (2018: 20). I have taken this culturally democratic approach when enacting the role of writer-facilitator of a community novel in the Mylor study.

The distinction between democratisation of cultural bodies, for example by diversifying audiences and employees, and the democratisation of culture through creative participation, is succinctly illustrated by community artist Francois Matarasso. In *A Restless Art* (Matarasso 2019), he defines community art itself. More recently, his choice of blog title in 'A Selfless Art' (Matarasso 2023), re-defines the role of the artist supporting communities to make the art. The acknowledged remediations to the role of the community artist are echoed in re-definitions by community artists Owen Kelly (2023) and Arlene Goldbard (2009), for example.

I referred earlier to my experience of working in a government policy unit relating to community engagement and the empowerment of local communities, which is relevant as background to this thesis. From 2004 to 2008, under the New Labour administration, I worked in the Home Office's Civil Renewal Policy Unit, later transferring to the Department for Communities and Local Government. The aim of policy was to enable local communities to be involved in tackling the problems affecting them, for example crime and the fear of crime, regeneration, and cohesion, rather than to be on the receiving end of decisions by service providers. In 'Civil Renewal, A New Agenda', the 2003 Edith Kahn Memorial Lecture, the then Home Secretary, Rt Hon David Blunkett MP, referred to national and local government, and public services, arguing that "The wider community of which we are a part helps to shape our thoughts and actions, and we depend on the support of the others to achieve our goals" (2003: 52). The policy aim was to promote local democracy as "a realm of active freedom in which citizens come together to shape the world around them. We contribute and we become entitled" (2003: 11). The Localism Act 2011, as one example of legislation arising from civil renewal policy, subsequently enshrined the principle of local

people's involvement in planning decisions through consultative mechanisms such as Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) (Her Majesty's Government, 2011).

My research applies the principle of community engagement and empowerment to the potential for community co-creation of a work of long-form literature. It proposes the novel as a vehicle through which a community has agency over its story, guided but not dictated to by a writer-facilitator. It follows, hypothetically, that skills can be acquired in the process, as team working develops, but are not essential from the start. Just as a community can build capacity to take part in public decisions, so a community of practice can develop its own capacity in creative writing craft. The knowledge held in common, of place-based history, themes and features, is the foundation upon which creative work can begin.

The practice of community writing, in which this research is situated, is intrinsically multimodal, a term I define in the context of methodology and related practice in Chapter 3. The facilitator of community writing makes use of diverse materials and forms to enable people to generate words on the page. The research provides insights into how to integrate digital methods, not to replace the normative pen, but to understand the affordances, or otherwise, of digital technologies as an aid to co-authorship in the community context. This has entailed engaging with volunteers with limited digital resources and skills of the sort that are not commonly used in community writing groups. As I have alluded to in the thesis abstract, my studies overlapped with a period in which this has begun to change. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, when public assembly was not possible in the UK, more community writing groups and facilitators meet online via video platforms, such as Zoom. Many have since continued to use digital platforms for sharing and critiquing content. This thesis captures the moment when that shift occurred, with accompanying benefits and drawbacks.

I designed the three practice-based studies described in Chapters 5 and 6 to achieve insight into engaging with a place-based community and specific participant groups to co-create a novel. The two short studies with writing groups in St Agnes and Truro and Penwith College (T&PC), discussed in Chapter 5, used smartphone apps and methods of co-authorship, one with an established writing group trying digital methods for the first time, and another with a group of sixth form students. The long study in Mylor Parish, between 2018 and 2020, employed diverse methods of facilitation and tools for co-creation of a community novel. That study is discussed in Chapter 6. The studies were typical of the contexts in which a

community writing facilitator works, my own experience having taken me to libraries, community centres, social clubs, cafes, pubs, hospices, carers' support organisations, the University of the Third Age (U3A), counselling teams, charities, people's homes, and outdoor locations including Kew Gardens. In such settings it is normal to work with minimal equipment. In terms of participation, writing in the community is low cost to run, using pen and paper, perhaps some printed handouts and materials such as visuals and objects as a stimulus for writing. These features were replicated in my studies but augmented with new methods including the use of smartphones and social media apps. Rather than technology that required specialist software, equipment and training that would be beyond the resources of a community writing group in village venues, I opted for the Lo-Fi approach advocated by Amy Spencer. This embraces the amateur culture of zine writing which "does not have to be equated with sloppiness, an unprofessional production or a lack of talent" (Spencer 2008: 21).

A community novel, I speculated, could follow the narratological logistics of a traditional novel, but without the limitations of a singular imagination. This led to methods chosen for their ability to engage multiple participants, either simultaneously or as part of a shared repository of mutually held ideas and decisions. Smartphone apps and sharing platforms used were available on my own iPhone SE, and my Dell Inspiron personal computer (PC) with Microsoft Office 365 and Windows 10. An exception was the use of Twine, described in Chapter 6, a piece of software for which I received training with doctoral funding. In the non-academic world this is unlikely to have been feasible, given the slender resources of a typical self-employed writer-facilitator, but it proved insightful in capturing the polyphony of multiple authors and the potential for branching narrative.

I coined the project name 'Joined Up Writers' to convey the sense of people joining forces to create a shared story, with the intentional pun on 'joined up writing'. As a brand for a replicable process, the name has potential to be attached to an evidence-based toolkit and associated guidance for facilitators. Chapter 8 expands on this.

1.2 The research questions and original contributions to knowledge

This thesis's contributions to knowledge reside in three principal areas: the viability of the novel as a vehicle for and a product of community participation; the skills and methods of facilitation, and the potential uses of digital methods. Remediations to practice are an over-

arching theme in relation to each question, and are of relevance to AHRC's 2017 call for research: "How can literature be thought to be a conversation with community?" (AHRC 2017).

The principal research question is: 'How can the novel be a vehicle for community participation?' The underlying assumption is that it can, with caveats to be discovered through research. The implied question of *how* is addressed through PAR with methods deployed to engage members of a community, a richly complex term explored in Chapter 2. In terms of the contribution to knowledge, the question seeks insights into a process whereby a novel can be produced, with further insights into its potential forms.

This leads to two related questions formed to seek further knowledge in relation to process: 'What is the role of the writer-facilitator in relation to a community novel?', and 'What is the effect of introducing digital methods to a community writing process that is traditionally non-digital?' In terms of the writer-facilitator's role, the research question considers the skills and tools of practice needed to plan and implement the making of novel by multiple participants. The introduction of digital methods is a further layer of knowledge to be gained from innovating with digital apps in ways that do not compromise the accessibility and inclusivity of the pen and other traditional habits of community writing.

My methods were designed to address this suite of questions in an integrated process that tests the community novel as the basis for participatory and multimodal community writing. Methods found to be effective have been organised into a replicable model which writer-facilitators, and potentially non-professional leaders of community writing groups, can follow. This is outlined in Chapter 8 in a schema that is indicative of a fuller toolkit with an accompanying programme of training to be developed as part of dissemination of the thesis.

In order to gain insight into a novel achieved through community participation, it was necessary to facilitate one as a live project. The outcome was a community novel entitled *Trevow* which can be viewed online at www.joinedupwriters.uk (Moss 2023). The novel itself is not the primary subject of discussion in this thesis, however, but is the co-created object from which processes of co-design and methods of co-creation are extrapolated. The thesis foregrounds the methods and model that emerged through PAR, intense observation of volunteers, and reflexive practice.

1.3 Thesis structure

The thesis comprises nine chapters. Chapter 2 identifies features of the novel that contribute to knowledge about its potential as a participatory and collaborative form of literature. It discusses the context for facilitation and remediations of practice, and the introduction of digital methods. Select examples of novels are noted for their inherent malleability and elasticity of genre, indicating the potential for collaborative treatment of long-form fiction. The examples are either co-authored or, in some instances, multimodal: for example, co-authorships by Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett (1990), and by the pen name Alice Campion (2015), and multimodal fictions by Kate Pullinger (2014), Jennifer Egan (2011), and Nick Cave (2009). Narratology provides a schema through which non-writers and wider community interest groups can contribute to story development.

The second part of Chapter 2 contextualises the community novel in relation to meanings of community itself, and the broader landscape of participatory community arts in the UK. Definitions of participatory and collaborative community arts since the 1970s are noted with reference to Clare Bishop (2006), Alison Jeffers and Gerry Moriarty (2017), Kelly (1984; 2023), John McGrath (1981), and Matarasso (1997; 2019). Some select examples of community art that exemplify participation are provided from sources that include, for example, the 'Cultural Democracy in Practice' report by 64 Million Artists (Hunter et al. 2018), and Matarasso (2019).

Thirdly, Chapter 2 defines writing in the community and its facilitation as a practice niche within creative writing studies. The limitations of creative writing pedagogy in the community context are identified as a deficit which the research goes on to address. Related to this, the impact of digital technologies on writing practice is reviewed, highlighting methods that may be transferable to writing in the community, or can be integrated alongside the familiar technologies of pens and laptops. The somatics of writing by hand and the accessibility of traditional writing methods are also considered (Baron 2009; Hensher 2012), referring as well to methods used in the community practice of writing for wellbeing, in which methods are designed to enable non-writers to write.

Chapter 3 provides the rationale for my use of PAR and PR methodologies to establish new knowledge, with elements of reflexive practice and auto-ethnography. A project plan, timescale, risk and contingency plan are set out and sources are identified for potentially

adaptable methods. The ethics of community practice are discussed in relation to volunteers' consent and safeguarding. Accessibility, inclusivity and innovation are established as values to inform methods with community volunteers. A model is provided for eliciting ground rules from volunteers, and data protection measures are explained, as well as data collection methods.

Chapter 4 provides background research in the form of extracts from five semi-structured interviews with community writing facilitators and authors working collaboratively. Discussion of these informs themes relating to new knowledge in relation to facilitation practice that are explored further in the PAR studies.

Chapter 5 describes two short PAR studies which I conducted in 2018 and 2019. The first was with members of an established community writing group in St Agnes, a village on the north coast of Cornwall. The second involved a group of A-Level English students at T&PC. The St Agnes study introduced some digital methods to a traditionally non-digital writing group, gaining insights into the barriers to digital participation for some, and unexpected affordances and risks of co-authorship. Conclusions were tested further with the T&PC students, including overturning my assumptions about preferences for writing technologies among a younger age group. The new knowledge relating to practice methods and remediations from both studies informed design of the long study in Mylor Parish.

Chapter 6 is a narrative account, interspersed with reflective discussion, of the 18-month long study in which I facilitated the co-creation of *Trevow* with volunteers in Mylor Parish. The study provides evidence of new knowledge in relation to the leading research question (the novel's potential as a participatory form), and related questions of facilitation and remediations to practice methods. It covers the period from September 2018 to April 2021, including the unanticipated Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns in the UK during 2020 and early 2021. The chapter is arranged in five sections that reflect a typology of participation which emerged through the study: activities I have named promotion, play, planning, production and publication.

Chapter 7 discusses the viability of the novel as a vehicle for community participation in the light of results from the studies. It draws on new knowledge from the studies to put forward insights into the writer-facilitator role, remediations to practice, and the impact on both

methods of co-creation and the novel's form. The typology that emerged in the Mylor study is cast as a model to inform further practice. This reveals some deficits in the pedagogy of creative writing studies when applied to the practice norms and resources of participatory writing in the community. On this basis, I argue for a bespoke community writing pedagogy that is grounded in Paulo Freire's theories of community education ([1970] 1993), Michael Holquist's methods of dialogism (2002), the playful making advocated by Bateson and Martin (2013) and Gauntlett (2018), Illich's convivial tools (2001), and the group conversation methods commonly used in community development which derive from Rachel Davis DuBois and Mew Soong Li (1963).

Chapter 8 presents new knowledge gained from the studies as indicative content for a toolkit and an outline for a related course of learning for writer-facilitators. Designed to equip writer-facilitators with knowledge and evidence-based methods to facilitate further community novels, the course is an intensive series of ten three-hour workshops, to be conducted on Zoom. Aimed at a group of up to six learners, the course embodies the collaborative approach. Learners are facilitated to try methods together and consider remediations to their own practice in order to enable co-creation of a community novel. The chapter provides a plan for dissemination of knowledge to targeted organisations and interest groups, potentially through a Joined Up Writers Community Interest Company (CIC), or with appropriate funding post-thesis.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by positioning the community novel in the wider context of community arts practice, with scope to engage people in diverse roles according to their skills and interests as volunteers. It reiterates the new knowledge gained into the community novel as a vehicle for participation and related knowledge about facilitation and methods. In addition, the concluding chapter identifies topics for further research. These include the potential for community novels to engage different types of community (both of place and interest), and the transference of learning to other community writing niches, for instance by introducing digital methods to writing for wellbeing.

Appendices to the chapters provide examples of information provided to participants when seeking their consent to be cited in this thesis, a schedule of interviews, and other supporting material referred to in the thesis.

1.4 Illustrations

The thesis is illustrated with visual material that shows examples of group work and playful, messy, collaborative processes using traditional, digital and multimodal methods. Unless otherwise credited, photographs were taken by me as researcher, and are included with volunteers' consent. Captions explain their relevance. Other types of visual material include paintings and illustrations made by members of the Mylor Art Group and by some of the writing volunteers. These appear in the online novel and the printed serialisation, either integrated into text or standing in place of text. SmartArt diagrams, word clouds, and screenshots taken from apps are used to illustrate some of the group discussions and creative exercises.

This concludes my introduction to the thesis. Chapter 2 follows, contextualising the community novel through sources of literature and practice.

CHAPTER 2: THE NOVEL'S POTENTIAL FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

2.1 Overview

This chapter is a consideration of literature and sources relevant to the hypothesis of a novel that is a vehicle for community participation. Rather than a comprehensive review of literature, it is structured in a way that focuses attention on the novel as an historic and still evolving form, the context of community arts in the UK and related deficits in relation to creative writing, and the methods community writing as an under-considered niche of creative writing studies. As such, the chapter is selective and deliberately limited to evidence and insights that establish the rationale for this research.

The chapter identifies characteristics of the novel as a long-form of fiction whose malleability offers potential for culturally democratic participation. The term 'community novel', introduced in Chapter 1, is justified in three ways: firstly by a discussion of the novel as an elastic form whose narratological parts offer practical routes into participation; second by contextualising the co-created community novel within current culturally democratic community arts practices in the UK, and third by raising potential remediations to practice for writer-facilitators of a community novel project. Methods of community writing facilitation, group management, dialogic discussion, and creative participation are drawn together, highlighting similarities and divergences from creative writing studies as practiced in classrooms. The affordances of digital methods for writing and facilitation are considered from the point of view of community practice with typically non-student participants, who are potentially novice writers and unfamiliar with digital tools for writing, for instance, smartphone apps and online sharing platforms. Conclusions to the chapter foreground the novel's potential for participation and the likely remediations to practice.

2.2 cites examples of the early modern novel that demonstrate elasticity and openness to innovations in composition and form. Some contemporary examples of co-authorship are cited, raising questions in relation to facilitation of collaborative writing both online and in-person. Novels by Cave (2009), Egan (2011), Pullinger and Joseph (2007), and Pullinger (2014) are noted for their multimodalism, blending analogue and networked material.

2.3 contextualises the community novel through definitions of community, drawing on the community theories of Oldenburg (1999), Putnam (2000), Sennett (2012), Wenger (1998), and Williams (1981). These provide the basis for an understanding of community as it informs this research and the PAR study in a place-based parish community, Mylor, described in Chapter 6. The potential for a community novel is discussed in relation to culturally democratic community art in the UK, with sources, for example Bishop (2006), and Moriarty and Jeffers (2017), that show evolving interpretations of culturally democratic art. Recent definitions by practitioner-researchers, for instance Matarasso (2019) and Kelly (2023), demonstrate a shift in understanding away from the democratisation of cultural bodies, to the active engagement of communities in making culture, supported by professional artists. Examples of community art are chosen to illustrate culturally democratic practices potentially applicable to the facilitation of a community novel. Some examples of online writing communities are considered, both for their methods and for the problems they pose in terms of collaboration and accessibility. Digital deficits encountered during the Covid-19 pandemic, and solutions that were found through PAR, are described in the Mylor study.

2.4 distinguishes the facilitation of writing in the community from the teaching of creative writing studies within educational settings. The social motivations of community writing group participants are noted, as well as the resources and working cultures of writing with communities in physical spaces. Facilitation methods are considered in the context of likely participants in a community novel, volunteers who can take part in diverse ways, not solely as writers. The relevance of creative writing studies' pedagogy to community practice is questioned in this light, citing deficits that are both theoretical and practical. The role of the professional writer as community facilitator is distinguished from that of teacher, and methods to involve non-writers are raised, drawing on niche practice from writing for wellbeing. The somatic and haptic effects of writing by hand, and the accessibility of the pen, are acknowledged (Hensher 2012; Baron 2009), while the use of smartphone apps and social media platforms are considered for the potential affordances, and barriers, they present for some participants.

2.5 concludes the chapter by defining the knowledge this research aims to achieve: insights into the novel as a participatory and culturally democratic form; the role of the writer-facilitator in enabling a work of long-form fiction to be co-produced, and potential for

multimodal methods that blend the traditional, analogue, and digital in a remediated practice to be further defined in the light of research results.

2.2 The novel's elasticity

A novel is commonly understood as the work of a single author and therefore not obviously adaptable to community participation. Author Jane Rogers pinpoints a problem inherent to the concept of a co-created novel, by asking:

> '*How do you begin to write a novel?*'… Ask a number of novelists where their novels begin and you will get some of the following replies: they begin with an idea, a feeling, an image, a mood, a face, a place, a plot, a dream … a mixture of several of these (Rogers 2007: 117).

An author working alone has unilateral creative choice. When decisions are the work of multiple and differing imaginations, tastes and opinions, a process of synergy is needed to establish common ground between diverse, and sometimes conflicting, ideas. As Sennett says, this is "the verbal play of opposites [which] should gradually build up to a synthesis" (Sennett 2012: 19). The process is at first dialectic and then dialogic as a community of practice forms around the tasks of co-authorship. For the process to become constructive and productive, group dynamics and the negotiations intrinsic to collaboration need to be carefully managed, given that, as Sennett acknowledges, dialogism may not always achieve full agreement between its parties (2012: 19). One of my research tasks is to identify a process whereby multiple participants can agree on, and then enact, a mutually agreed long fiction. Flexibility is key to this, and a starting place is to consider the inherent malleability of the novel.

In Guido Mazzoni's definition, the novel is typically "a narrative of a certain length, mainly fictional and mainly in prose" (2017: 13). 'Mainly' hints at the possibility of a departure from the norm. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the noun 'novel' as "a fictitious prose narrative of book length portraying characters and actions credibly representative of real life in continuous plot" (Sykes 1982: 693). As an adjective, however, 'novel' becomes "a new kind of nature, strange, hitherto unknown", deriving from the Latin *novellus* and the Italian *novella*, or "new" (693). The etymology of 'novel' hints, therefore, at the intrinsic potential for innovation. The community novel created through the Mylor PAR study aims to exploit that potential.

Despite modern perceptions of the novel as the work of an individual author, its roots can be traced to collaboration. Scott Rettburg notes that "a number of works within the Western cultural and literary canon, for example, the epics of Homer, the JudeoChristian Bible, and *Beowulf,* are believed to have been developed through collaborative storytelling and writing processes" (Rettburg 2014: 78). Terry Eagleton calls the novel "a genre which resists exact definition" (2005: 1). He notes Virginia Woolf's comment that the novel is "The most pliable of all forms" (1), which implies freedom to innovate and break rules. Lorri Nandrea adds "… the origins of the English novel were messy and heterogeneous: As a form, the novel emerged in fits and starts from a primordial soup of other textual kinds" (2015: 1). This malleability is discernible in 18th-century examples of the early modern novel, for instance the non-linear narratives of Laurence Sterne, the epistolary and diary forms of Tobias Smollett, the picaresque novels of Aphra Behn, Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding, and Samuel Richardson's social commentaries. Such novelists devised the rules of long narrative by which modern readers still understand long fiction, but did so playfully, for instance in Sterne's breaking of narrative rules that were scarcely formed, with the marble page in *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (Sterne 1759-67/1985: 234). Walter Allen acknowledges Fielding as "The first English theorist of the novel" (1954: 55) in the picaresque novel *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* (Fielding 1749/2005), while noting "he was doing something new in English prose fiction" (Allen 1954: 55). With solo agency, these novelists could make and break their own rules as pioneers of genre and forms that marry content and story type. When Allen describes Defoe as: "a man to whom art and literary theory meant nothing […] forging not works of art but transcripts of actual experience", the idea of a form that makes literature from lived experience resonates with the concept of a community novel made by non-professionals (Allen 1954: 37).

This raises a question about skills for authorship. Fielder calls Samuel Richardson, the author of epistolary novels, "that extraordinarily antielitist genius" (Fielder 1974: 189) for adapting a form, the letter, that is familiar and engaging to readers. This has resonance for a community novel whose participants are not familiar with narratology or the rules of novel-writing, but do experience writing as an everyday activity, for instance through writing lists, diaries, letters, and texting in Short Message Service (SMS): methods that can lend themselves to facilitation of a novel with non-professional writers and participants. Terms of 'making' and 'co-creating' are appropriate if the invitation to participate relates to a form of novel that is not just written but made through diverse multimodal activities. The

invitation to make, rather than only write, softens the expectation that people are expected to write to a perceived professional standard; an expectation that is daunting to some participants, as the Mylor study illustrates. A novel that can exist as more than text further opens the door to participation through diverse modes of creation and content. Allen supports this when he claims "like any other artist the novelist is a maker" (1954: 14). Like makers in craft, or improvisers in drama and music, novelists can be playful and messy, alone or in collaboration. Makers of a community novel need not be bound by convention but can treat their novel as alive to the newness inherent in the etymology and early modern examples of authorship. This is an open-invitation to the community novel to employ multiple modes and methods in the generation of content, material, and text.

The process model for the community novel proposed in this thesis takes pliability as one of its starting points for what Mazzoni calls "the genre in which one can tell absolutely any story in any way whatsoever" (2017: 16). Malleability offers diversity of input. Most solo authors would consider different ways to tell a story before deciding which to adopt, and as Eagleton points out, "every narrative implies that one could always have told the story differently" (2005: 18). For this reason, my research sees the community novel's early stages of creation as a playful process of generating ideas without decisions. This reflects Gauntlett's description of "a process which brings together at least one active mind, and the material and digital world, in the activity of making something which is novel in that context, and is a process which evokes a feeling of joy" (2018: 87). Gauntlett's reference to "at least one" (87), hints at co-creation whilst also acknowledging the difficulties of collaboration, pointing out "everyone knows that 'designed by committee' is not a compliment" (2018: 181). This leads me, both as researcher and facilitator, to enquire into mixed methods and dialogic discussion based on group conversation techniques in which "Members of a group can be helped to have a sense of being part of a unity greater than themselves" (DuBois and Soong Li 1963: 137). The aim is to engage with all participants' diverse skills and interests.

The earlier reference to Fielding's dawning awareness of narrative theory, raises the potential for narratology as a doorway to a managed process of participation. Mieke Bal identifies the way characteristics of texts "can serve as the point of departure for the next phase" (Bal 2017: 3). This suggests a processual movement in which the foundations of narrative can be built through diverse participation methods. Whether plotted teleologically or cumulatively, the components of a novel's narrative design provide a safety net. The

building blocks of narratology and writing craft typically included in guides for individual writers (for example Anderson 2007; Grenville 1990; Yorke, 2013), are a useful starting point for facilitation, but require remediation in the context of collaboration. The PAR studies in Chapters 5 and 6 expand upon and illustrate this, gaining insight into methods adapted for co-creation of three-dimensional characters, fictional worlds and narrative planning as platforms for participation and collaboration. In terms of writing craft, skills of writing dialogue, showing not telling, and making choices of story type and point of view can be learned as part of a collaborative process, but the lack of them at the start of a project with volunteers need not be a barrier to participation. The Mylor study demonstrates this with a staged approach to introducing craft skills within an ongoing participatory process. The challenges of collaboration lie in the dialogic approach to decisions, skills of group management by the facilitator, and the capacity to scope and manage delivery of a project likely, based on evidence in this thesis, to take more than a year. Trust lies at the root of this, in both process and within the dynamic of a group of individuals in a community of practice.

Chapter 6 will show that a community novel does not depend on commercial publication as a measure of success, although forms of publication are possible and provide motivation to participate. There is potential for serialisation with a community publishing partner, and for self-publishing as a complete novel online and in print. Most significantly, a community novel engages with a community of people who devise, write, produce and distribute it. The Mylor study establishes how the community, as co-creator, can decide upon a community novel's content and form. This places the community, not an individual author, in the position of co-creator and maker.

Authorship of novels is only rarely a partnership with others, but such partnerships as exist offer insights into their collaborative processes. Examples from commercial co-authorship tend to be limited to two people or a small number: for example, the fantasy genre novel *Good Omens* co-authored by Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett (1990), and two novels, *The Painted Sky* and *The Shifting Light*, published under the pen-name Alice Campion (2017a; 2017b). Campion's novels are a collaboration by five women members of a book club in Sydney, Australia. Their comment that "From publishers, to reviewers and readers, people have consistently been amazed that *The Painted Sky* was written by more than one person" (2017a: 353), indicates the rarity of their collaboration. Successful writing partnerships establish their own rhythm and routines, for example the pattern described by Neil Gaiman

of writing by night and Terry Pratchett by day (1990: 404). The tendency to work to each other's strengths and preferences is echoed by Sandra Platt, a UK-based co-author of Jane Austen fan fiction, whom I interviewed in 2019 (discussed in Chapter 4). Her partnership with a writer based in the USA mixes physical meetings for planning with online sharing of drafts. The methods recounted by Paul Brodrick, a member of the scriptwriting team for the BBC Radio 4 serial drama *The Archers* (discussed in Chapter 4), shows the value of shared systems, an archive of plot and character development, and editorial management, all of which anchor the collaborative writing process in a shared understanding of serial narrative.

In Gaiman and Pratchett's example, the authors are individually expert in their craft, and can easily construct a novel in relay. Some stylistic differences can be detected as one writer hands the narrative baton to the other, but the effect is mostly smooth. Alice Campion's novels achieve a similarly consistent authorial voice, having been drafted, revised and edited in relay by every member of the group: "we worked it over and over, until every chapter had been re-written by every writer, and hopefully that's resulted in a seamless text, where one voice has emerged" (2007a: 363). Their thorough and democratic process suggests a way for non-professional writers to achieve collective control of narrative, co-creating a story in which individual quirks of style and syntax are neutralised.

These examples reveal the potential for co-authorship, but in small numbers and often as the product of friendships and close social bonds. The few examples of collaborative novel-writing in community contexts are problematic, however. For example, *Life Chances, A Work of Sociological Fiction* (Poulter et al. 2016), is the work of artists and researchers working with a community of women asylum seekers in Bristol. The project has instrumental and social value, but the writing of the novel is the work of the professional artists, based on the women participants' input through conversations and interviews recorded while they carried out other craft activities. In another example, novels facilitated by White Water Writers (White Water Writers 2019) are co-written by secondary school pupils. Using bespoke software, and with the support of a team of student volunteers, they take part in a week-long boot camp, by the end of which they have produced a novel downloadable as print on demand from Amazon, for instance *Time Will Tell* (Cooks 2018). The novels produced by this quick and formulaic process are published despite typographical errors and naivete in the writing craft. Most are of novella length, rather than full novels. A community writing group and its lone facilitator does not have resources to deliver a finished novel to

such a timescale. The instrumental value of White Water Writers' methods is evident, however, with outcomes including increases in young participants' literacy, team working skills and confidence (Skipper et al. 2014).

So far, I have considered traditionally published novels in print, but the collaborative tools available online since Web 2.0 offer potential for production of a community novel. Writers were among the early adopters of interactive web technologies, through forums and chat rooms in which content could be shared and critiqued. Although this did not guarantee literary quality, it brought people together in what is otherwise an isolated creative activity. Readers, too, quickly formed online communities, becoming reviewers. When Richard Bradford complains that "the internet now enables readers with no professional connection with writing or publishing to become critics" (Bradford 2007: 244), his assumption is that critiquing is for experts. The potential for digital engagement by readers as consumers and – by extension – writers as online creators, was quick to emerge, however, with Web 2.0 as a route to participation for those with the requisite technology. For a community novel, the place-based context mitigates against a fully digital collaboration for reasons that will be discussed later, but the affordances of online collaboration enable writing communities to expand their reach beyond those who meet in person. Chapters 5 and 6 will illustrate some affordances and benefits of online facilitation as well as some barriers, and ways to overcome them.

A place-based community of practice is closely defined compared to an open-access web-based community. The *A Million Penguins* (Mason and Thomas 2008) attempt at an online writing collaboration without managed rules for participation, illustrates the risks. This online community novel in an open-access wiki quickly fell victim to anonymous contributors' online disruptions in which storylines were changed and characters killed off. Research into the project by Mason and Thomas (2008) evidences the importance of setting rules and devising an etiquette within an online community of practice: rules that can equally apply to in-person communities. Online, say Mason and Thomas, "such a venture may be treated more as an opportunity for play and riotous behaviour than as serious collaborative work" (2008: 20). They ruefully conclude "the wiki novel experiment was the wrong way to try to answer the question of whether a community could write a novel" (21). Nonetheless, their insights into the problems of free-form co-authorship and collective editing are useful. They suggest that a hybrid approach combining in-person and digital methods of playful co-

creation, within a social setting of a community of practice, could be more successful. Anchoring co-creation in specific collaborative tasks, and sustaining a group mindset, are potentially easier in-person. I address these questions in Chapters 5 and 6.

Some examples of hybrid novels show multimodalism in their published forms that suggests methods transferable to a community novel. Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (2011), for instance, incorporates mobile phone text and content linked to a website in which the reader uncovers further hidden texts. Cave's *The Death of Bunny Munro* (2009) is accompanied by a soundtrack that complements plot points. Both examples exemplify the novel's elastic potential, engaging readers through familiar tools for consumption: a website and playlist. Cave and Egan's departures from the page into online material, blend into the narrative, suggesting playful ways for a community novel to incorporate other types of expression alongside text. These are examples of the malleable form which Raymond Williams sees in the novel, able to absorb and reflect societal change. "Most novels", he says, "are in some sense knowable communities. It is part of a traditional method – an underlying stance and approach – that the novelist offers to show people and their relationships in essentially knowable ways" (1983: 14). Its ability to mediate lived experience makes the novel a popular form to which readers can relate as individuals but also, I argue, as members of a community. Applied to the notion of novel-making, this raises the possibility of further avenues through which to participate: for instance, a core group to write and a wider community to inform content. The fictional world reflected in a novel is a further element of community that can be reflective of collaborators' shared interests. This suggests that the community novel can be about whatever its participants decide, containing diverse and even clashing experiences and opinions, rendered through the conflict that is necessary to drive fiction.

In *Aspects of the Novel*, E. M. Forster takes a non-linear view of the novel's development. Rather than "consider fiction by periods (1927: 31), he offers the image of "all the novelists writing their novels at once" (31). For this research the notion of a novel as a compilation of methods and forms, not necessarily bound by genre, is liberating. Rather than second-guess the effectiveness of facilitation methods or the eventual form of the community novel, I have heeded Forster's advice: "If you try to nail anything down in the novel, either it kills the novel, or the novel gets up and walks away with the nail" (1927: 44-45). This is an invitation to be playful and open to opportunities for innovation in a participatory community novel, and to seek insight into wider participation through diverse and multimodal methods.

A writer-facilitator enabling participants to create a novel is likely to diverge from practice norms. Bateson and Martin's definition of creativity is appropriate, as "generating novel action or ideas, particularly by recombining existing actions, ideas or thoughts in new ways or applying them to new situations" (2013: 55). Before a community novel can be co-written or even planned as a coherent narrative, a period of messy play is necessary to create ideas and content on which agreement can be found. The process requires openness to possibilities, cooperation, and patience as suggestions are made before being sorted into the viable and unviable, according to consensus. Chapter 6 will show how this can be managed in a group, for example, by using methods of group conversation, referred to earlier, to achieve consensus. Not everyone finds collaboration easy, however, as Bateson and Martin acknowledge when they identify five traits of personality that can influence someone's motivation and ability to be creative. To paraphrase, these are "extraversion", "neuroticism", "conscientiousness", "agreeableness", and "openness" (2013: 62). In their argument, openness is seen as "creative, imaginative, eccentric vs. practical, analytical, conventional" (62), yet innovation is held to be "more strongly related to being organised and analytical" (62). I question this binary view and contend that innovation itself can be an outcome of creative approaches. The relationship is processual, as the Mylor study illustrates with moments in which the personality types came into play among volunteers, and innovations to practice and form arose from playful, creative methods, for instance improvisation and role play.

As Ivan Illich terms them, tools for "a convivial society" are needed (Illich 2001: 12) in order to enable co-authorship amongst a group of mixed resources and skills. Given the potentially varied levels of skill and resources among participants, traditional and digital methods of facilitation and tools for making a community novel should be familiar or adaptable, and multimodal: for example, pens, laptops for word processing, platforms for shared content, smartphone apps, social media, and SMS text. Without a singularly-held idea to spark the creative process, the community novel is reliant on an organic process that is unsure of its own shape at the beginning, but achieves coherence through negotiated inputs from multiple contributors. The introduction of digital methods carries a risk of replacing one type of perceived elite skill, that of a novelist, with another: the digitally confident author. As mentioned earlier, my practice studies have sought insight into the viability of using every day digital devices, for instance smartphones and apps. The assumed caveat was that volunteers' familiarity with them was likely to be limited to personal use, and that some

would not be familiar with them at all. The assumption was based on my experience of facilitating writing groups in community settings since the mid-2000s, and proved to be correct. Some volunteers in the studies described in Chapters 5 and 6 did not own laptops of smartphones. Some were familiar with Kindle e-books and social media apps, but no one had heard of Twine. Some were hesitant to use social media, perceiving its risks, and a few did not use email. A further challenge was the lack of Wi-Fi or a strong mobile phone signal in some of the community venues and outdoor places where writing sessions and meetings took place. This imposed some limitations on the choice of practice methods, but also led to innovations.

This first part of the review has raised the possibility of a co-created novel that is the product of co-creation. Conceptualising a novel as an act of collaborative making, not just writing, it envisages a process whose methods are flexible and diverse. With active participation by community volunteers, the novel becomes a playground for types of creative collaboration that go beyond traditional norms of literature, yet are achievable because of the novel's inherent elasticity and malleable nature. Against the background of the novel's tendency to evolve and shape-shift, I have sought insight into the way narratological and craft ingredients of character, setting, plot, dialogue, theme, and the formalities of narrative structure, can be combined into a work of fiction that uses text, images, sound and dialogue.

The next part of the chapter discusses meanings of community, cultural democracy within community arts practice, and the place of the participatory novel in that cultural context.

2.3 Writing in the community: place, practice and facilitation

This chapter proposes the community novel as a culturally democratic form of community art, capable of engaging with amateur writers, non-writers, and wider communities of interest in a given locality.

Community itself is a diverse, complex term. Raymond Williams calls it: "on the one hand the sense of direct common concern; on the other hand, the materialization of various forms of common organization" in Keywords (1981:66). He notes that the term "seems never to be used unfavourably" (66). A sense of positive belonging is implied, with shared customs and culture. Gerard Delanty traces the idea of community as a type of social contract to Aristotle: "associated with friendship", and "contractual ties in which the social character of people

reaches its highest level" (2010:1). He cites communitarian Philip Selznick's view that "What is particularly important… is not only participation, but also loyalty, solidarity and commitment" (56). John Silk considers "the relations between community, space and place", noting "There is an instrumental dimension to community" (1999:5-17). People live together in communities of place and share activities in communities of interest. In the digital age these can be global and communicative, the networked and 'well connected' community described by Alison Gilchrist (2009), which can be real or virtual.

Ray Oldenburg identifies a "third place" (1997) of cafes, shopping malls, pubs and community spaces. These are neither exclusively home or work but somewhere in which social exchanges take place. For the community novel, they can be the types of local place in which a community of practice (a type of interest group), meets, and part of the context from which it gathers its ideas. The Mylor study drew on a placed-based locality which became home to a community of interest contributing to and informing the process of co-authorship. The third places in which community novel participants met were physical, the café, village hall, pub and garden for example, and virtual, in the Zoom room and through digital apps used for co-creation. This combination of community types integrates a defined community of place (a rural and coastal parish in this instance), a community of interest (people with an interest in and knowledge of that place), and a community of practice (people who make a novel together in that place). The implication for research is that methods are required to recruit, manage and sustain such a community partnership. Within the crossover between place, interest and practice there is scope for multiple and diverse perspectives, and for differing ideas and priorities.

The practice and facilitation of writing in the community is discussed against this background, as a niche within creative writing studies. I shall describe the norms of practice in a community writing group, with some examples, and discuss writing technologies as a prelude to introducing digital methods to facilitation of a work of long-form fiction.

Writing in the community is an activity carried out within groups of individuals who are facilitated by a group leader. Some groups are self-managing, but a professional writer-facilitator or tutor is often paid to design and run writing sessions and workshops. A community writing group is a meeting place for people who share an interest in, and enjoyment of, writing for creativity. Unlike structured courses in adult education and HE,

such groups do not follow a curriculum, although learning can take place. Typically, the facilitator uses writing exercises and themed content to stimulate new writing and coach participants in aspects of writing craft. Methods include, for example, verbal prompts, writing in response to objects and visual images, and extracts from published prose and poetry to stimulate writing. There is no restriction to one form or genre, although some groups choose to focus on poetry or short fiction, for instance, according to group members' interests or a facilitator's specialism. The term 'workshop' can refer to a group writing session or to a meeting in which draft writing is shared and critiqued, or a mix.

My experience of facilitating community writing groups, and participating in those hosted by others, has led to a personal approach which is committed to enabling anyone who wants to write to do so, without fear of judgement. Some individuals progress to formal adult education or HE courses, and some groups develop critiquing skills and produce anthologies. The main purpose is to write. A facilitator is typically paid by contributions from group members, through a host organisation, or a funding scheme such as ACE's Grants for the Arts. Many community writing groups become a regular part of their community's cultural and social capital and meet in the long term. As such, they form part of a self-employed writer-facilitator's portfolio of paid work.

Community writing groups typically meet weekly or monthly in local venues that embody the overlap between communities of place and interest, and the third places used for social gathering in which "the persistent mood … is a playful one" (Oldenburg 1999: 37). These may be community centres, village halls, rooms that are part of libraries, cafes and pubs, or other types of public meeting place. Writing requires an accessible, well-lit, quiet room with a table and chairs, ideally private so the group can concentrate and not be interrupted. The familiarity of local venues encourages people to attend and bring friends, and the activity is low cost in terms of venue hire fees and other resources. Chapter 6 illustrates this with examples of local venues used for community novel meetings. In terms of technology, pen and paper are the norm and digital devices are mostly discouraged. This cultural norm is discussed below in the context of the somatics of writing by hand, methods used in writing for wellbeing, and their relevance to the community novel.

A writing group, like a sports team, choir, or drama group, has routines and behaviours: agreed times and places in which to meet, a shared purpose, and a way of behaving together under the guidance, respectively, of a team coach, a conductor or director. The term writer-facilitator is used in this thesis and is widely understood in the field of creative writing studies alongside terms of 'tutor' and 'group leader'. "Specifically", says Anne Ruggles Gere, "writing groups highlight the social dimension of writing. They provide tangible evidence that writing involves human interaction as well as solitary inscription" (1987: 3). The facilitator brings individuals together for what is otherwise a solitary activity, with a social element during breaks for refreshments. The community writing group represents a community of interest within the wider place-based community in which it meets. It is difficult, however, to identify the number of creative writing groups that exist in England or the UK, without quantitative research beyond the scope of this enquiry. The National Association of Writing Groups's (NAWG's) directory lists over 100 local writing groups, but those are subscribing members (NAWG 2023). The listing Writers Online calls its directory of 282 writing groups "comprehensive", although the map provided shows only those who have asked to be included (Writers Online 2023). The National Association for Writers in Education (NAWE) has some 1,300 members, of whom an unknown number are facilitators of community writing rather than writers who teach in further and HE, or both. Lapidus International's members specialise in writing for wellbeing and writing for therapeutic purposes. Its subscribing members meet in regional groups, currently twelve within the UK (Lapidus International 2023). The Google search engine brings up 327,000 links in response to the search term 'creative writing groups UK', but that includes adult education and HE courses, and professional training. Whilst community writing cannot be accurately quantified, my experience as a facilitator in London, the South East and Cornwall demonstrates that local groups are not hard to establish, and the demand for them is widespread. They are often to be found alongside creative activities such as community art groups, choirs and dance classes.

The in-person community writing group is typically not a digital space, although this is changing since the Covid-19 pandemic. During that period in 2020 and 2021, many groups migrated to video platforms, for instance Zoom, in order to continue when in-person contact was not possible under the conditions set by the UK government. Online meeting was an unexpected innovation at that time, counter-cultural to the norms of in-

person groups, yet it led to an increased reach and accessibility for participants unable, even in non-pandemic times, to travel or attend in person. It was quickly recognised that Zoom video and similar platforms enabled participation by a geographically wider, even global, group. When lockdown restrictions lifted, many groups, including some of my own, continued to operate both in-person and online. This thesis acknowledges the continuing debate among practitioners about the challenges and affordances of on and off-line facilitation, and the new and blended methods emerging in this context.

Community writing groups in the UK have their roots in the 1950s and 1960s. Host organisations included the Workers' Education Association, still a well-known presence in the field, and the Federation of Worker Writer and Community Publishers. The British Library's repository includes community publications produced over several decades. These show locally-based writing as part of the community arts movement, but as routes to publication for individual writers, not co-authorship. One example, *The Write Idea*, is an anthology by members of Mantle Writers Workshop published by The Coalville Publishing Co Ltd (1987). Funded by Mantle Community Arts and Leicestershire County Council, this was the product of fortnightly meetings between local people interested in writing for their community and for pleasure. Typical of its sort, the anthology includes individuals' poetry, short fiction and memoir.

Among others, *Write Up Your Street, An Anthology of Community Writing* (Women's Community Press, 1985), presents prose, poetry, autobiography and local history by writing groups in Ireland comprising Travellers, prisoners, and adult literacy groups. This illustrates the diverse appeal of creative writing to people who are not professional or trained writers. The introduction to *Write Up Your Street* notes the ways in which the "impact of community writing groups […] present a serious challenge to the accepted notion of 'literature' being the preserve of a privileged elite. These writers are you and me and the person next door!" (1985: 3). In terms of who takes part, insights from my own practice suggest that women in the over-fifty age range are typical members of community writing groups. Many are newly retired, or have time for leisure and creative activities, their children having left home. Some niches of community writing target specific participants: groups aimed at men or younger parents, for example, or carers, or those with a health condition. Linda Sargent lists older people, Travellers, people with disabilities and "others who hold common experiences" (Sargent 2007: 320-321),

including homelessness and health conditions, among those who take part in community writing groups.

In the UK the presence of writing groups in local places pre-dates creative writing as a topic of academic study. Until the late 1960s when Lancaster University introduced a creative writing component to undergraduate English studies, English literature was a critical field of study rather than a practical discipline. Mimi Thebo notes that creative writing, "a new comer to English studies", was developed "largely outside the academy" (in Donnelly and Harper 2013: 34) as a localised activity, publicly funded or linked to what Rebecca O'Rourke terms "enthusiasts and social movements" (2005: 56). It has taken hold in the academy now, with creative writing studies integrated as a practice element within the study of English literature as well as being studied as a discipline in its own right. The Quality Assurance Agency for HE established its Subject Benchmark Statement for creative writing at undergraduate and graduate levels as recently as 2016. The next update is due in 2024.

Harper (for instance in Harper and Kroll 2008) is a key example of pedagogical sources informing the adult learning element in community practice, although such sources tend to refer to students and the classroom, rather than participants and communities. Numerous handbooks are available, with an emphasis on individual writers' development: Grenville (1990), Schneider (2003), Earnshaw (2007), Anderson and Neale (2013), Bell and Magrs (2019), for instance, among many others. Such guides cover craft skills, narrative structure, career paths for writers, and are a source of material for writer-facilitators to adapt to the groups they facilitate, and incorporate into their own practice methods. An understanding of creative writing craft is undoubtedly essential for the production of a community novel, but I question whether academic teaching methods are wholly appropriate. In a community context, participants are not students and, in my practice experience, may have an aversion to methods that remind them of school. This is illustrated in a conversation with one of the participants in the Mylor study (Chapter 6) which I recorded in my field notes:

> I took the opportunity to ask if she feels more confident in the novel group now. She said 'not really' and I asked if there was anything I could do to help her feel more confident – she has certainly seemed to be more settled in recent weeks. She said not. 'No, it's me. I've always been like that, since school.'" (Mylor study field note, 23/5/2018).

Creative writing pedagogy and related academic study in HE is subject to examination and formal assessment. Writing in the community, by comparison, concerns writing as "a social, rather than individual, activity" (O'Rourke 2005: 57). In my experience, participants often voice their dislike of methods that remind them of the classroom. As in the comment cited above, a bad experience remembered from childhood can bruise confidence and make someone question whether they can call themselves a writer. To counter this, O'Rourke cites Ruth Finnegan's study of the value of music making and her "argument about the role of music in public ritual" (57). People who make music together in an amateur orchestra or band are not professional musicians, but the lack of a record deal does not alter their entitlement to call themselves musicians. Similarly, I take the view that people who are motivated to write in the company of others in a writing group, need not be published or even particularly skilled, in order to call themselves writers. O'Rourke concludes that "socialised creative writing" benefits diverse people "individually but it can also provide them with opportunities to meet each other, opportunities that are scarce in our culture" (243). Whenever such doubts are raised in a writing group my approach is to point out that everyone in the room is holding a pen. If they were outside kicking a ball, I tell them, they would be people who play football. This reassures them that they are in the right place, as people who write.

Within the local context I describe for community writing, the writer-facilitator can be defined further. In NAWE's guidance for community writing facilitators, Isabel Wolton states:

> Being a writer in the community may mean that you write in a peer group, write to commission, and offer one-to-one support to other writers, but it's almost certainly going to involve working with groups in the role of a facilitator/educator (Wolton 2012: 1).

The role is likely to be freelance, as Wolton describes it "juggling a variety of commitments and areas of work […] overlap[ping] with writing in health and social care, and writing in schools" (2). This implies that the role is flexible and bespoke, according to a project or group's aims. The need to manage the group dynamic is a core skill, additional to the skill-set of creative writing craft and experience of practice as a writer. Without training in group facilitation, a working writer cannot be assumed to possess the skills of planning and delivering writing sessions, publicising and recruiting participants for a group or project, running events, and managing a community of practice.

In addition to a set of skills, Wolton points out: “A key thing to consider is your motivation for doing the work” (2). Some facilitators specialise in specific communities of interest or place, for instance, writing in prisons or with particular age groups, while others work with more diverse publics. As facilitators, we are not hired to pursue our own writing, but to enable others to write. This distinction lends itself to a culturally democratic approach that centres on participants’ capabilities and interests. Applying this to a community novel, remediations of practice include adapting to the demands of a collaboration rather than individually produced writing. If the writer-facilitator is to guide participants through a process of novel-making that is lengthy and multi-tasked, new and bespoke methods are needed. Eliza Manzini says of the design expert, “We do it like this because we have always done so” (Manzini 2015: 31), but the community novel has complex design needs. Among those are the backbone of creative writing pedagogy, narratology, and craft skills. These provide the holding structure of a novel’s component parts, around which the extra tasks of group collaboration and wider community engagement can be enacted.

Variants of the writer-facilitator role include: professional writers running groups and workshops as part of freelance activities related to their own writing practice; writers qualified as teachers of creative writing, with degrees in English Literature and creative writing studies to Masters degree level and higher; writers with skills in group facilitation and management of projects; leading members of a group, selected by other members to chair or lead activities; members of professional bodies such as NAWE including teachers in schools, adult education, higher and further education, and community writing facilitators outside the resources associated with educational establishments. Public liability insurance is needed to work in public facilities. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checking is advisable, and necessary for working with vulnerable adults and young people. The ability to self-start, devise and run projects, work in partnership with co-hosts and organisations, and respond to commissions, is part of the freelance writer-facilitator’s skill-set.

In terms of ambiance and resources, a room in a village hall or community centre is not a classroom, and there is a further difference in the comparative lack of hierarchy between facilitator and writing group, compared to that of tutor and student. The facilitator does not mark or assess the writing in a formal sense, but takes approaches

that encourage writing that is free, imperfect and empowering in the way it enables the writer to develop their voice and find their own content. For example, Peter Elbow's use of free writing provides accessible cues: "think of a person, place, feeling, object, incident, or transaction that is important to you. Do one or two freewriting exercises while trying to hold it in mind. This procedure will suggest a subject and a direction" (1998: 9). The effect is liberating for participants, whatever their level of writing experience. Freire's theory of community education is a "humanising pedagogy" (2018: 42), in which dialogue between teacher and learner lies at the heart of a mutual relationship. By demolishing the perceived or actual hierarchy of the classroom (or the writing group), Freire's theory provides a basis for a community writing facilitation practice that invites "not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement" (43). This relates to the culturally democratic practices referred to earlier in which the professional artist serves the process of co-creation but does not dictate content.

A community novel raises other aspects of the facilitation role. Manzini points out the risk that: "… the design expert's role in co-design processes is very often reduced to a narrow, administrative activity […] their role simply as that of 'process facilitators'" (Manzini 2015: 65-67). This implies aspects of consultancy or project management, which Manzini dismisses as "big ego and post-it design" (2015: 67). Such skills are, however, valuable for the awareness of process they bring to a project. While participants become immersed in detail, the expert's awareness of the whole is a valuable skill set. For the community novel this would include knowledge of narratology and the craft skills of creative writing in long-form. The ability to facilitate dialogic exchanges ensures that all voices are heard as part of the creative process, with decisions and consensus emerging, rather than being imposed. The writer-facilitator must be able to manage dialogic and dialectical exchanges that are potentially highly charged. Manzini confirms this when she describes "design actions as a blend of creativity, design culture, and *dialogic collaboration*, where the first two must be paralleled by the third (and vice versa)" (67). Freire's technique of "reflective participation" (Freire 2007: 24), conducted in a group is a form of mutual participation also to be found in community engagement practice. The 'group conversation' techniques of social communication developed by DuBois and Soong Li (1963) and widely adopted in community development, is another practical aid that will be illustrated in Chapter 6.

The diverse roles found in theatrical production are a useful starting point for envisaging the tasks of facilitation and participation in a novel. A community play or opera can be performed by actors or singers but is also the work of costume and scene makers, those who work backstage, a writer or writers, director, sound and lighting technicians, musicians, front of house staff and publicists working together in service of the production. A known or performable script is not the starting point, but the product of a community process in which participants from the wider community engage in devising the finished work. The approach taken by Wildworks, a theatre company based in Cornwall, is to involve local communities in site-specific landscape theatre, as described by Associate Artist Mercedes Kemp: "The work is developed alongside the people who belong to a place. A community is essential to the building of a narrative of site – by telling their stories and memories, and by contributing their skills and passions" (Kemp 2015: 1). Without the community, the performance cannot exist.

To conclude this section of the chapter, the concept of the community novel and the practice context from which it arises, suggests remediations to pedagogy and facilitation. The studies conducted in Chapters 5 and 6 achieve insights into the appropriateness of creative writing pedagogy to the community novel's process and identifies alternative methods. A further consideration is the use of technologies for writing, which the final part of this chapter discusses.

2.4 Writing in communities: methods and technologies

It has been mentioned earlier that community writing groups habitually use pen and paper, the most inclusive and accessible instruments for writing. One of the aims of this research, however, is to investigate the efficacy of digital methods, for example the use of smartphone apps, in co-production of a novel. This poses a barrier for participants who lack the equipment or the confidence to take part online. Some may choose not to take part digitally or online for reasons that must be respected as part of an ethical approach to practice. There is an opportunity in this context for the facilitator, as researcher, to seek ways to integrate digital methods into practice without replacing methods that are traditionally accepted in the culture of community writing groups, and which do not exclude. The history of writing shows that new technologies do not automatically replace what has gone before but take their place among existing methods with some adaptation.

Josie Barnard notes, “Time and effort have to be invested in becoming adept at using a new device, feature or piece of software – but, software and hardware date. Smartphones, tablets and computers regularly become obsolete” (Barnard 2019: 5). This is as true for the writer-facilitator as it is for the participants. My own experience of digital technologies in the workplace since the 1980s provides evidence. As a copywriter in a travel company’s marketing department in 1987, an Amstrad word processor occupied most of my desk and weighed considerably more than the portable PC on which I have typed this thesis. In the decade that followed I learned a rapid succession of software including Quark Express and WordPerfect. I used ASCII and floppy discs among other quickly supplanted systems of file storage. My first experience of the internet, in the early 1990s, entailed crouching on the office floor to plug a yellow cable into a telephone socket. This enabled me to dial up, via the Pipex server, into a search engine with a cartoon spider crawling across the screen (the world wide web, apparently). It was another few years before I worked in a networked office equipped with Microsoft Word and an intranet that enabled communication within the company. An extranet followed and when email took hold towards the end of the 1990s, there was an immediate increase in speedy correspondence and the associated workload. Within another five years, those who had not known the pre-Web 2.0 workplace could not conceive of a time before instant access to information. In 2007 a colleague in his twenties asked me how I had accessed the internet before there were computers on every desk. My answer astonished him. This illustrates an assumption that online engagement and writing technologies are essential for effective collaboration and knowledge exchange. When a new technology arrives, however, it does not immediately replace another but coexists according to the needs of the user. As Baron puts it, a benefit of retaining traditional writing implements is that “when a pencil crashes, it doesn’t take the whole document with it” (Baron 2009: 105).

Writers choose different writing tools for different types of writing and for different stages in the writing process. An author embarking on a novel may, for example, start by handwriting in a notebook. Once an idea has formed, they may continue in longhand until they have enough to move onto a laptop. The author of an academic paper or business report may use the keyboard to structure material once they have a rough outline. Author and creative writing teacher Philip Hensher praises creative writing students who maintain a hand-written notebook: “notes on all sorts of things –

observations, passing fancies, plot ideas, scribbled asides" (Hensher 2012: 259). People write for many reasons, among them to remember, record, understand, explain, inform, narrate, and debate. Baron calls writing a recent technology, "a mere six thousand years old" (Baron 2009: 11), but acknowledges that "some people feared and rejected this new form of communication" (11). He cites Socrates' fear that "writing will only make human memory weaker" (3). The technologies we use for writing can indeed make a difference to what is remembered from experience, how it is processed in early written drafts, and how it lodges in our memory. This is relevant to methods for a community novel because the marathon task of making a long fiction requires a great amount of information to be gathered and retained. An individual author can use a physical filing system or a content management tool such as Scrivener, but a community novel requires a repository capable of containing group knowledge in diverse modes and formats, contributed by participants and facilitator. The consistent recording of detail is a labour-intensive task, necessary as a collective memory bank to aid group discussion.

The technologies used for writing can make a difference to what is remembered from experience, how it is processed, and how it lodges in the memory. A study conducted with students at the University of California (Diemand-Yauman et al. 2011), enquired into the differences in knowledge retention between notetaking by longhand and by keyboard. The study found that "students who took notes on laptops performed worse on conceptual questions than students who took notes longhand" (2011: 2). Those taking notes on laptops recorded more, including verbatim detail, but processed less. Students taking longhand notes were more reflective: "processing information and reframing it in their own words" (3). This would become relevant to the community novel as content grew and both facilitator and volunteers needed help to recall the detail. Volunteers were encourage to make their own hand written notes of discussions, as an aid to information retention.

A further study lends weight to the argument for pens as a tool for the community novel. Jane Vincent's comparative study (2016: 1) of writing with pens or digitally, asked students to reflect on the difference between writing by hand and on computer. Their responses reported the positive somatic and haptic effects of writing by hand: "the touch, feel and smell, as well as the emotions elicited by the encounter" (2016: 10). Vincent concluded: "Most students are not wholly paper or digital but combine paper and digital

to suit their particular needs" (10), which points towards the value of offering choice to participants.

Such studies support the blending of methods of writing, notetaking and information-gathering, especially in the context of a community writing group whose members are accustomed to the pen and may not have digital resources. Longhand can be onerous to those accustomed to typing, but in a community project such as a novel, the pen is available to everyone and enables participants to be playful and messy in the early stages of generating material for a story and making notes. Typing can, arguably, follow once there is a story to write and a narrative plan to serve as a guide. At that stage in the process, those who type may become scribes for those who do not. The Mylor study shows volunteers moving with ease between pen and laptop once a story is planned, but in the earlier stages of working creatively together, the pen is the most democratic tool. The attention to detail of grammar and punctuation that comes with the transfer of words onto a screen, is a distraction and a source of anxiety for those who fear getting it wrong.

The pen is the cultural norm within the practice of writing for wellbeing in which, as mentioned earlier, people who do not habitually write, are facilitated to put down words as a means of self-expression. Writing for wellbeing facilitators typically discourage digital devices: "I ban them", says Nichola Charalambou, the fellow creative writing facilitator with whom I spoke informally during my research, in conversations that became a mutual sounding board as we navigated the transition to online facilitation during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020. Nichola typically works in-person with communities in Greater London, including in care homes (Mylor study field note, 10/12/2018). In her view, the use of a keyboard takes the writer's attention away from others around the table, the upright screen operating as a barrier. Value is placed, as well, on the somatics of writing by hand, as Bolton explains: "the pen is encouraged for its slower, more reflexive affordances, and the personal nature of handwritten words on the page, expressive of something deeply felt" (1999: 9). Even people without literacy can take part, for example, as poet Fiona Sampson describes:

> a woman in her seventies who had never learned to read and write … A volunteer would sit with her and she would dictate her stories. She was a natural storyteller … The way she thrived in the group is a good example of how tolerance of difference and the promotion of equal opportunities had developed as part of the group's collective identity (Sampson 1998: 177-178).

Writing for wellbeing uses creative writing forms and genres: published prose and poems to stimulate writing; the structure of alphapoems, lists, haiku, and ten-word stories; guided writing in which the facilitator provides prompts to which the writer responds, and sprint writing in which the instruction is to write quickly to a deadline such as one minute. Over time, these forms build confidence and fluency as participants write for longer passages. Chapter 6 shows examples of such techniques being adapted in the early stages of the community novel process, to encourage participants to write.
Belona Greenwood, writer-facilitator of the Rural Writes project with Norfolk Women Writers, describes her efforts to encourage group members to use a blog she set up for the project: "they weren't confident enough. Getting them to track their own voices [by writing], and then on top of that to cope with learning blogging and digital stuff was a step too far" (Greenwood interview, 8/8/2018). Belona's insights are discussed in Chapter 4. Navigation of the digital divide became an aspect of the writer-facilitator's role in the course of this research.

Since the 1990s the widespread adoption of networked technologies in the workplace and at home, has led to an assumption that such technologies are easily accessible. The experience of home schooling during the pandemic revealed, however, that not all families could access the digital classroom. Participants in the community novel were, similarly, not all equipped to work or meet online. Sources of pedagogy in creative writing and the digital humanities beg a question for this research: what if the methods they advocate are not appropriate for participants? In contexts of work and formal learning, individuals – including a facilitator – can receive training, but those who are not part of a profession infrastructure may not. This reality informed my choice to adapt digital and multimodal writing methods from examples of practice by Farman (2012), Stephanie Vanderslice (2014), Clark, Hergenrader and Rein (2015), Shaun Moores (2018), and Barnard (2019), among others. This led to a blend of hand-written drafts and material developed in apps, for instance Pinterest, Facebook, Texting Story, EverNote, and Mindmeister. The use of these and others is recounted in Chapters 5 and 6.

My research quest was to find methods to enable participation. This would entail expanding my writer-facilitator's toolkit and, by extension, influence the form of the novel itself. Methods whether digital, traditional or blended, would represent the "new kind of creative flexibility" described by Barnard (2017: 6), allowing for emerging

multimodal practice in a participatory form of novel writing. The tools reach into creative methods beyond writing: playful improvisation, the amassing of ideas and material for a story, and methods from other forms of community art, comedy, and digital fiction.

The age range of volunteers in a community novel is uncertain, but two of the studies described in Chapters 5 and 6 engaged with mostly retired participants which, in my experience, is not unusual in a community writing group. This is relevant because of the age of volunteers taking part in the studies: members of an established writing group in St Agnes, North Cornwall, the majority of whom were retired (Chapter 5), and volunteers in the community novel study, some of whom were in their mid-70s. Their experiences of using the internet and smartphones were limited to social use, and it was not unusual for a participant to ask me "What's an app?" (St Agnes study field note, 12/6/2018). Some did not use the internet, have an email address, or use a mobile phone.

In 2019 the Office for National Statistics (ONS), reported the steady increase in online usage by older age groups since data was first gathered in 2011:

> In 2011, of all adults aged 75 years and over, 20% were recent internet users, rising to 47% in 2019. However, recent internet use in the 65 to 74 years age group increased from 52% in 2011 to 83% in 2019, closing the gap on younger age groups (2019: 3). (ONS 2020)

The Covid-19 pandemic sped up this adoption of online services as people sought ways to keep in touch with family members and friends isolated during the UK lockdowns. During the pandemic in 2020, ONS reported that more than seven in 10 people in the UK were making video calls at least weekly, an increase of 35% from pre-lockdown levels. The trend was noticeable among older internet users. The proportion of adults aged 65 years and over who made at least one video call each week had increased from 22% in February 2020 to 61% by May 2020, two months in to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in the UK.

When community artist Owen Kelly first considered digital creativity and publishing in the mid-1990s, he concluded that to design community publications using Macintosh or Windows, "often involves adopting the mantle of a teacher, trying to guide the user through an unfamiliar landscape ruled by unfamiliar laws" (1996: 96). This became an aspect of the writer-facilitator role that emerged during the studies in Chapters 5 and 6.

Writing before the advent of mobile and social media, Kelly also acknowledged: “the social issues involved in the acceptance of new technology, to ensure that as many people as possible gain access to the means of digital creativity”. Schleser and Berry (2018), Farman (2012), and Moores (2012) provide ample stimulus for the use of mobile devices in creative writing, some of use to the individual author, but also some offering ways to engage multiple authors. A multimodal approach incorporating the digital can best be developed by working within the limitations of typical skills and resources.

2.5 Conclusions: deficits and remediations to practice and pedagogy

This chapter has characterised the novel as a flexible and inventive genre, open to innovations of method and form. Whilst acknowledging that the novel is perceived as a form of literature most commonly created by individual authors, I have traced its potential as a form of culturally democratic co-authorship and participation. I have discussed the meaning of community, collaboration and participation referring to social theorists and the roots of public engagement in communitarian and community education theory, related also to co-design. I have explained the context of writing in the community and its methods, raising possibilities for remediated practice and a community’s novel’s form that will be tested through PAR studies.

In this context, the meaning of remediation has emerged as the search for remedies to practice and pedagogy that will enable facilitation of a community novel. That requires culturally democratic methods that fill gaps in knowledge in terms of how a community novel can be made. Bau Graves argues: “Realizing cultural democracy means instigating a revolution in ethical social conduct… but it is a revolution that cannot be imposed from above. It must come from individual citizens taking control of their own cultures in every community. (2005: 295). I interpret that as a need better to understand how my niche of practice can evolve, informed by participatory research. As a foundation, I have illustrated some traditional methods of community writing facilitation, justifying the common practice of avoiding digital methods in favour of those that are accessible to the majority of participants: the pen and paper and limited use of PCs and tablets. This is common practice in the fields of community writing and writing for wellbeing, but the prospect of research into a collaborative novel raises the possibility of a form of facilitation practice that is multimodal and elastic in itself.

Related to the potential for such agile practice, and as a prelude to my research studies, this chapter has raised questions relating to deficits in pedagogy. Specifically, I have noted the assumption of digital resources and skills, and the lack of guidance relating to participation and collaboration in creative writing practice in communities; also the related infrastructure of project management and group facilitation which a community novel implies. Taking remediation to mean the search for remedies to a problem, these deficits will be explored through research that blends digital and traditional methods in the making of a co-created long fiction. The question is not whether, but how a community novel can be facilitated, and how community writing practice can evolve to enable creative collaboration among untrained writers and other contributors. This is addressed in Chapters 5 and 6, but to pave the way for that, Chapter 3 will set out the methodology used to address my research questions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Overview

Before starting this doctoral research, I had in mind an idea for a novel that could be co-written with members of a local community. It would entail local research into a real event that took place in 1992. This was a flood from a local mine, Wheal Jane in south Cornwall, which polluted an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Restronguet Creek, a post-industrial area on the Fal Estuary (Exeter University 2023). As a basis for enquiry into collaborative writing, this event would lend itself to engagement with local people, many of whom would recall the flood. On reflection, however, I realised some drawbacks to this as a PAR project. The idea arose from my personal connection to the specific place. I could not be certain that others would relate to it, and I was not comfortable simply to hand it over to others. I wanted to write the story myself. Crucially, by making this event the basis for my study I would miss the opportunity to elicit participants' ideas from the start. I was interested in a dialectical and dialogical process, and the characteristics of a novel that would emerge by establishing common ground from contributing imaginations. Further, I wanted to gain insight into multimodal methods of creating material for a novel, and the potential for such methods to be reflected in a novel's final forms (a significant plural). This would be a richer research path to follow with volunteers than a story that was my own idea.

The research question and related studies therefore focus on adaptation and remediation: for the novel as form, for the writer-facilitator's role, and for multimodal methods including applying selected digital methods to community writing practice. Chapter 3 sets out the methodologies used to gain insight into the process of making a community novel. Two PR studies have tested the efficacies of introducing digital methods to writing groups: the first with an established group in St Agnes, a village on the north Cornwall coast, and the second with A level students at Truro and Penwith College (T&PC). These two short studies, of four research sessions each, enabled me to trial the use of smartphone apps, for instance Pinterest and Facebook, and SMS texting in co-authorship. The third study took place in a rural and coastal Parish area, Mylor, in south Cornwall. Over a period of 18 months, this used PAR methodology to devise a process of facilitating co-production of a community novel with volunteers. This long study took place between September 2018 and January 2021, by which time a novel, *Trevow*, had been completed by volunteers while I facilitated and observed the process. Chapter 6 describes the study through indicative examples of methods that blended traditional and digital facilitation, and engaged with a core writing group of up to 11 people,

and other from the wider community including members of an art group, the Women's Institute (WI), a local history archive, and a local choir. In all three studies I adapted methods from creative writing studies, writing for well-being, project management, and community engagement.

NAWE's Creative Writing Research Benchmark Statement states: "those engaging in Creative Writing research are active creative writers, producing creative works as key parts of their research explorations" (Greenberg et al. 2018: 2). My doctoral research, however, concerns a collaborative writing process that engages with volunteers, rather than an individual writer's development. It seeks insight into a participatory form of creative writing which is not acknowledged within the Statement. As noted in Chapter 2, participation is now among the culturally democratic aspirations of ACE's *Let's Create 2020-2030* strategy which calls for "Understanding of the role of culture in building and sustaining communities" (2018: 4). In my reading of it, ACE's strategy suggests a use for community writing as an instrument to engage non-professionals in writing, with methods of participation to achieve wider engagement. This positions my research as creative practice which: "can include a range of methods, approaches and styles, including those variously labelled as practice-led research, research-led practice, practice-based research and practice-as-research", "situated", "responsive, and "reflexive" (2018: 3). In terms of which comes first, practice-led research or research-led practice, Smith and Dean's solution is an "iterative cyclic web" (2009: 20) which embodies the iterations of a reflexive process of research to inform practice, and practice that informs research. As a practitioner I have used the intersection between academic enquiry and the demands of a live community arts project in order to learn and re-apply emerging knowledge through practice. This has meant that adjustments were made to practice as the studies continued, some methods proving effective and others less so. The consequent remediations are reported in Chapters 5 and 6, and synthesized as findings in Chapter 7. The remediated practice methods inform a replicable process of participation, supported by a toolkit which Chapter 8 presents in outline. This is to be developed with an associated training programme for facilitators, after completion of this doctorate. I intend to seek funding to support this.

Linda Candy's interpretation of the distinction between practice-led and practice-based research is helpful: "1. If a creative artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge, the research is practice-based. 2. If the research leads primarily to new understandings about

practice, it is practice-led" (Candy 2006: 1). The community novel is both artefact and process, with methods of facilitation and production the locus of new knowledge. According to Candy, practice-led research is "concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice" (2006: 1-19). In this research, the novel *Trevow* is the object through whose process of production the operational demands of a community novel have been investigated. It should be acknowledged that the manuscript of *Trevow* is not, itself, the subject of the thesis. Rather than offer up a work of fiction and an accompanying critical commentary, the thesis foregrounds the process devised through PAR to enable a writer-facilitator to support co-creation of a community novel. Findings from that process are detailed in Chapter 7.

Part 3.2 of the chapter establishes aims and objectives. 3.3 explains the choice of qualitative research methodologies through which the knowledge deficit is addressed. 3.4 shows the approach taken to research design and 3.5 establishes an ethical framework for research and practice. 3.6 explains methods of data collection, and 3.7 summarises the theoretical framework for the methods used and, in that context, considers the potential for remediated practice in the light of findings. Conclusions in 3.8 set the scene for interviews with a selection of writer-facilitators and collaborative authors in Chapter 4, and the practice studies that follow in the body of the thesis, in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.2 Research aims and objectives

Discussing invention and ambiguity in creative arts research, Paul Carter observes: "a double movement occurs, of decontextualization in which the found elements are rendered strange, and of recontextualization, in which new families of association and structures of meaning are established" (cited in Barratt and Bolt (eds.), 2020: 16) This, he argues, is the Socratic method in which practice-based research is the mediator of a process, "allowing the unpredictable and differential situation to influence what is found" (2020: 16). This illustrates the presence of risk when the practice researcher embarks from a position of known skills and methods to a less familiar arena in which there is potential for disruption and failure.

Mentioned in the Introduction, Chapter 1, my guiding purpose for research was to make a contribution to AHRC's enquiry, referred to in Chapter 1: "How can literature be thought to be a conversation with community?" (AHRC, 2017). To address this, the research aimed to:

1. Establish a co-authorship process to support participants in creating their own novel.
2. Gain insight into the potential of digital media as a resource in an inclusive and multimodal process.
3. Design a model of practice for the facilitation of collaborative creative writing in the community, using the novel as form.

A set of objectives relating to the aims gave rise to the following practical steps:

1. To facilitate a collaborative process with volunteers, creating a community novel over a period of 12 months.
2. To research the efficacy of introducing digital methods to community writing group facilitation, integrating them with traditional practice methods.
3. To gain insight into the remediated role of the writer-facilitator.

The next step was to design participatory activities using qualitative methodologies.

3.3 Qualitative research methodologies

Lyle Skains, author of digital fiction and a practice-based researcher, notes "writers have always been researchers" (Skains 2018: 84). A writer's skills, she observes, extend to background research, human observation, understanding of technique, and the ability to self-critique (ibid). My three PAR studies drew on such practice skills and observed volunteer participants as they used a mix of traditional and unfamiliar methods to make their novel. I was able to reflect on my experience of remediated practice, as I stepped in and out of the writer-facilitator role. This brought a performative aspect to the research of the type identified by practice-led researcher Carole Gray, in which: "the research strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to us as practitioners" (Gray, 1996: 3). Conscious of observing myself in the facilitation role, as well as observing the volunteers, I was alert to the new knowledge that would arise from methods that were new to me as well as participants. Further, my enquiry into the writer-facilitator role required pragmatism, given my previous experience of the realities of community practice.

My choice of PAR methodology was informed by its natural fit with participatory art in which iterative processes of collaboration between artists and communities enable creative work to be made. Marie Cieri and Robbie McCauley's description of a "process of dialogue

and interaction" (in Kindon et al. 2010: 141) fits a process to devise a community novel that could not be accomplished without the active participation of a community of interest. This places the researcher on an equal footing with participants, flattening the hierarchical structure of expert and volunteers. Its processes are cyclical, forming a loop in which researchers and participants identify a problem, try a solution and review the results. It lends itself to creative writing research in which collaborators try a method, review the outcome, make refinements, and reach shared conclusions.

Empowerment of participants is central to this methodology which is commonly used in, for example, social research, health, marketing, and community development. In such contexts, participation entails meaningful involvement in decision making: as Alison Gilchrist argues, "being actively involved or sharing in processes, and activities that have the potential for action and change" (in Packham, 2012: 150). Empowerment entails "tackling power differentials so as to increase the influence that people can have over decisions that affect their lives" (150). A sense of having power over change and a stake in decisions is fundamental to taking part. The PAR researcher is at the heart of participatory activity, both as observer and co-agent in a social process. As Kemmis and McTaggart put it, "teachers work together or with students to improve processes of teaching and learning in the classroom" (Kemmis and McTaggart 2005: 597).

Denzin and Lincoln call qualitative research: "A situated activity that locates the observer in the world" (2005: 3), but my position as immersed facilitator introduced elements of reflexive practice and autoethnography to the research process, as I experienced differences and similarities between the community novel and the normative practice of facilitating a group of individual writers. This enabled me fully to scrutinise the writer-facilitator role, moving from subjective to objective insights as I enacted the multiplicity of functions carried out by the writer-facilitator. Reflexive journalling (Bolton and Delderfield 2018; Etherington 2004) enabled me to reflect upon remediations of practice as I experienced them and reapply insights to further methods. Elements of teacher, director, producer, curator, manager, and showrunner surfaced as I enacted and reflected upon the facilitator role. I was able both to document the research activities in field notes, and reflect separately in a creative journal, both of which inform the account given in Chapter 6.

As well as developing a community of practice - a writing group - to co-author the community novel, my research aimed to engage with the wider community to inform content for the novel. Ozanne and Anderson's account of a branch of PAR, Community Action Research (COR), defines COR as "an alternative research method that uses the community as the unit of analysis. This approach forges alliances with relevant stakeholders […] to explore and develop solutions to local problems" (2010: 135). Applying this, potential partners for the community novel were identified early in the project, forming relationships with communities of interest within the Parish that could later be drawn upon for participation in the novel-making process: for example, volunteers with a local history archive, members of the WI, and volunteers at a community garden.

The prospect of working with community volunteers with little or no experience of novel-writing led me to consider ways to make their experience of participation as enjoyable and engaging as possible, and to sustain their involvement over months. As *bricoleur,* from the French verb *bricoler* which translates as DIY or tinkering, the qualitative researcher "uses the aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods, and empirical materials are at hand" (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 2). Webb and Brien's theory of the researcher as "bricoleur-bowerbird" is referred to by Barnard (2019: 3) in relation to the individual multimodal writer: a concept that informed my thinking in terms of its adaptability to collaborative writing. Volunteers unfamiliar with how to write a novel could, as a starting point, be guided through ways to gather material and ideas from which to co-design characters, settings and narrative. Examples from my studies will show how volunteers quickly became engaged in bricoleuring, feathering the nest from which their novel would be made as they shared working methods and a common understanding of their co-conceived story.

3.4 Research design

Skains, originally a physicist, distinguishes hard research, "protocol-based testing and observation, always with clearly stated methods and research goals", and soft research, as a writer using "parallel processes of experimentation across various forms of media, text, art, and performance" (Skains 2018: 82-9). This use of creative practice for experimentation informs a framework for practice as a form of soft research which provides a scheme of research design. Table 1, below, shows the path that was designed using this model.

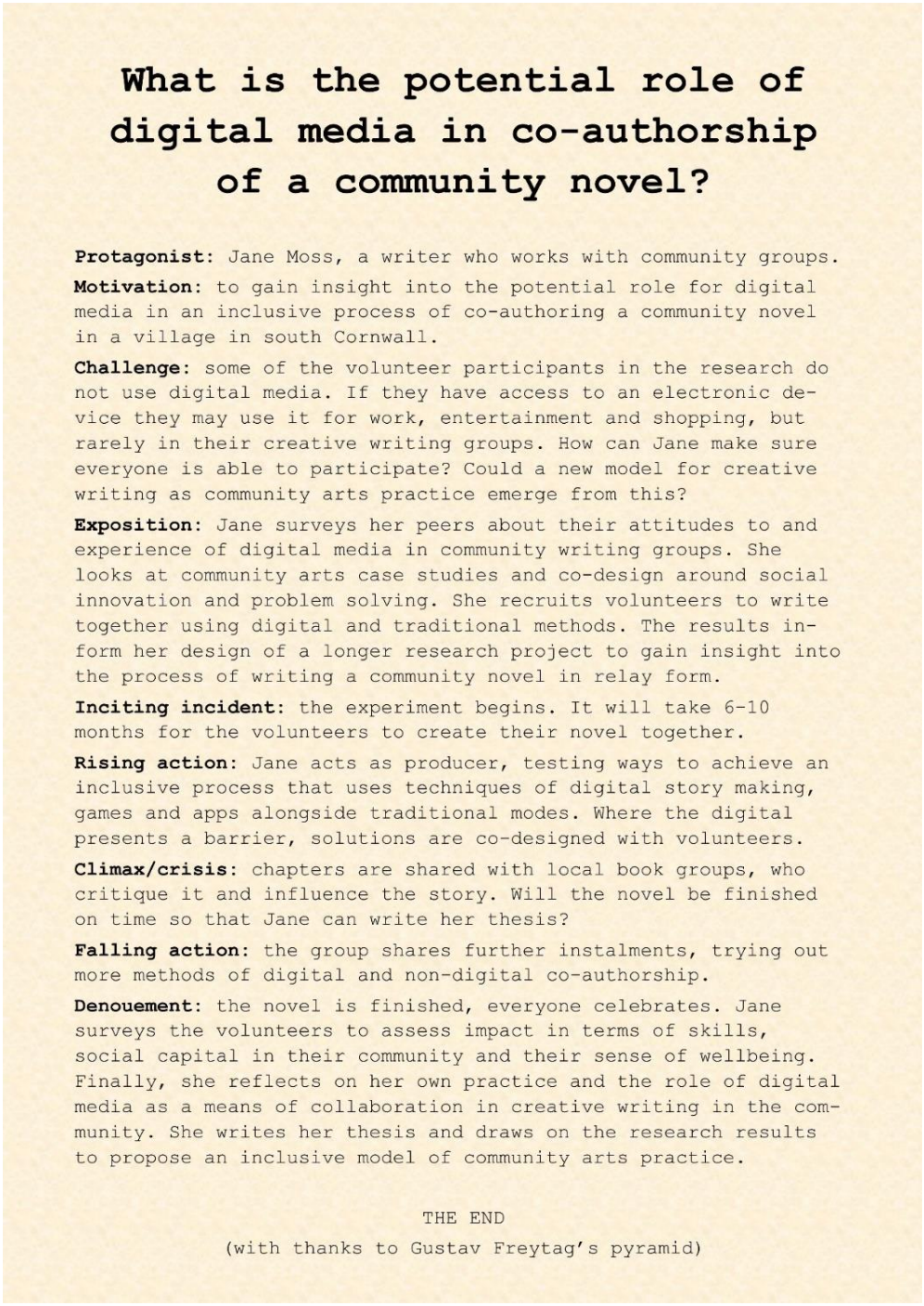
Table 1: Qualitative research design

Skains's model of qualitative practice-based research (2018)	**Design of this research**
Establish the research problem	Establish the research question and a related set of aims and objectives for: the novel as a vehicle for community participation; the role of the writer-facilitator; the efficacy of introducing digital methods to practice
Conduct background research	Consider context and sources: the novel as an elastic, malleable form, with elements of narratology and examples of co-authorship that show potential for participation; meanings of community and examples from participatory and community arts practice; writing in the community and the role of the writer-facilitator, multimodal methods, writing technologies and pedagogy, and semi-structured interviews with writer-facilitators and co-authors.
Revisit research problem	On the basis of the review, form a hypothesis for the community novel as a form of long fiction that is the work of a community of non-professional writers and volunteers in a defined locality, managed, guided and coached by a writer-facilitator and involving the wider community. Draw up plans for PAR and PR studies to gain insight into methods of facilitation, co-creation, engagement with volunteers and their community, and the introduction of digital methods to traditional practice
Conduct empirical research	Carry out two short studies to test the use of smartphone apps in creative writing community groups, and a long study to facilitate volunteers participating in co-creation of community novel.

	Methods in the two short studies inform methods used in the community novel, contributing to knowledge that informs a model of participation and a replicable process to inform remediated practice.
Conduct contextual research	As researcher and writer-facilitator, use reflexive practice to achieve insight into the community novel's potential as a form of culturally democratic community arts activity which embodies as conversation with its community in both its process and its published forms.
Revisit research problem	Identify insights and knowledge attained through PAR and PR using qualitative methods of data capture and analysis: field notes, documentation of creative work, and reflexive journalling contribute to evidence supporting a model of practice and defined roles to achieve a community novel
Form argument/discussion	Analyse outcomes of PR and PAR to identify remediations of practice, blended methods, and consequent effects on the novel as the object and output of participation
Write exegesis	Write the thesis including the emergent model of participation, and out-lined toolkit to inform further practice, topics for further research, and a plan for dissemination.

This lays out the iterative process in which researcher and participants formed a community of practice in a live act of cultural participation.

Previous career roles had introduced me to methods of strategic project design. Experience of tools such as Gantt charts to map stages of a planned process, the roles, and interdependencies of tasks, enabled me to break down the research into manageable parts. An early iteration of my research design adopted the narratological structure of Freytag's Pyramid (Yorke, 2013: 36), as a planning tool, shown in Figure 1 below.



What is the potential role of digital media in co-authorship of a community novel?

Protagonist: Jane Moss, a writer who works with community groups.

Motivation: to gain insight into the potential role for digital media in an inclusive process of co-authoring a community novel in a village in south Cornwall.

Challenge: some of the volunteer participants in the research do not use digital media. If they have access to an electronic device they may use it for work, entertainment and shopping, but rarely in their creative writing groups. How can Jane make sure everyone is able to participate? Could a new model for creative writing as community arts practice emerge from this?

Exposition: Jane surveys her peers about their attitudes to and experience of digital media in community writing groups. She looks at community arts case studies and co-design around social innovation and problem solving. She recruits volunteers to write together using digital and traditional methods. The results inform her design of a longer research project to gain insight into the process of writing a community novel in relay form.

Inciting incident: the experiment begins. It will take 6-10 months for the volunteers to create their novel together.

Rising action: Jane acts as producer, testing ways to achieve an inclusive process that uses techniques of digital story making, games and apps alongside traditional modes. Where the digital presents a barrier, solutions are co-designed with volunteers.

Climax/crisis: chapters are shared with local book groups, who critique it and influence the story. Will the novel be finished on time so that Jane can write her thesis?

Falling action: the group shares further instalments, trying out more methods of digital and non-digital co-authorship.

Denouement: the novel is finished, everyone celebrates. Jane surveys the volunteers to assess impact in terms of skills, social capital in their community and their sense of wellbeing. Finally, she reflects on her own practice and the role of digital media as a means of collaboration in creative writing in the community. She writes her thesis and draws on the research results to propose an inclusive model of community arts practice.

THE END

(with thanks to Gustav Freytag's pyramid)

Figure 1: My research expressed as Freytag's Pyramid, A1 poster

The timescale of just six months in this earliest outline proved optimistic, as the more detailed time line established through PAR and reflected on as part of exegesis in Chapter 7, will demonstrate. In total, the Mylor study took 22 months, with breaks and an extension during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown of 2020. By the end of that period the participants had completed their novel and my role as facilitator was greatly reduced. For continuous work planning, the app Trello provided a means of setting and tracking progress, maintaining

records, and managing interdependencies. Appendix A to Chapter 3 includes my General Risk Assessment Form which was completed in April 2018 as part of Falmouth University's Application for Registration. This was updated as part of project monitoring in Trello.

3.5 Ethics of practice and research

Qualitative research methodologies that include public participation require an ethical approach, accounting for safeguarding and consent. The University of the Arts (UAL) ethical code states as its principles: "respect for persons, justice, and beneficence; these constitute a systematic regard for the rights and interests of others in the full range of research relationships and activities (UAL 2020: 1). It follows that the researcher is required to seek consent from participants, to consider risk, and to carry out research with due regard for "the well-being of others" (2). Falmouth University similarly expects researchers "to consider the ethics implications of their research and, depending on its nature, the socio-cultural consequences of it for the participants involved" (Falmouth University 2021: 2).

I was able to address ethical concerns by following established practice in my field of work, in which I habitually follow a code of ethics established for facilitators of writing for wellbeing, explained further below. In many respects this mirrored the requirements of ethical research practice, and practice in the context of engaging with adult community volunteers.

Safeguarding and public liability

As a writer-facilitator I have public indemnity insurance cover of up to £10,000,000 through my professional membership of NAWE. I have access to legal and contractual advice through membership of the Society of Authors. These are necessary safeguards for the self-employed writer-facilitator who generally works alone in public spaces and is responsible for drawing participants' attention to information that enables them to use the venue without risk to themselves or others. The safeguarding applies to participants as well, and I maintain an up-to-date DBS check.

For the PR and PAR studies I drew on the ethical framework familiar to me in writing for wellbeing, (Flint et al, 2004). The framework supports an ethical approach to working with adults in community contexts of wellbeing, health and social care, in which participants are not professional writers. It acknowledges the responsibilities of managing group work and

the need for appropriate personal boundaries between practitioner and participants. Although I would not be conducting this research with vulnerable adults, I was aware from experience of practice that individuals in writing groups can become unsettled by certain material, and by sometimes difficult group dynamics. This was evidenced for me in the early stages of the Mylor study when a participant approached me at the end of a meeting to say that discussion of local history had brought up some difficult family memories for her (Mylor study field note, 15/10/2018). In that instance my ethical approach was to offer different material and encourage the participant to make their own choice about what to work with. I reassured all participants that they could step out of a writing exercise if they wished to and rejoin when they felt ready.

Ethical practice in writing for wellbeing is supported by the use of ground rules which are typically elicited from participants and periodically reviewed over the course of a project or a series of meetings. An example of such rules is modelled in Pat Schneider's "Five Essential Affirmations" (Schneider 2003: 186) in her "definition of writing as an art form available to all persons" (186). Schneider lists: "A non-hierarchical spirit; confidentiality; absolutely no criticism… towards first-draft, just-written work; to take craft seriously; and for the leader to write with the participants in order for there to be "equality of risk taking and mutuality of trust" (187).

The question of whether a writer-facilitator should write with the group is a personal choice. In writing for wellbeing practice the group facilitator does not write, but is there to "pay attention to timing, and ensure everyone is able to participate" (Moss 2012: 226). This is in order to focus on the group dynamic. If I see someone hesitating to write, I might intervene to clarify the exercise or offer a prompt. If someone dominates discussion or is disruptive, I manage the situation on behalf of the group. Exceptions may be made, however, and the facilitator who joins in with writing can help demonstrate a method and show their willingness to write messily which, in turn, encourages participants. Ground rules agreed together when a group first meets, aid the handling of problems, having been mutually agreed as the basis of a working culture. They typically describe how participants will work together, what they will do to support each other, and how they will manage difficulties. As the community novel project progressed, ground rules were devised and subsequently revised: for example, when critiquing got underway, to include guidance more typical of a creative writing workshop, in which constructive critiquing is given and received.

Participants in all three studies were informed that they could take part or leave at any time and could request that their material and name be removed from the project and associated publications, if they wished to withdraw. In the long Mylor study I gave verbal reminders of this from time to time. Volunteers could request anonymity and for their image to not appear in visual records or on social media. Signed consent forms provided a record of who agreed to public acknowledgement in the studies, this thesis and related publications. The studies recounted in Chapter 5 and 6 use pseudonyms to protect individual identities. To comply with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), personal data, names, email addresses, and phone numbers for those who could not be reached by email were stored on an external hard drive. I used an Outlook group email and blind copying for group communication among the Mylor study volunteers so that emails addresses were not visible. Volunteers who were not on email received printed versions of information shared between meetings, and were notified by phone, either by me or another volunteer, if arrangements for meetings changed. Further group communication and sharing of information took place, with consent, through apps including Trello and Slack.

Values in research

My ethical approach to research was augmented by a set of values devised to inform choices of method. My concern as a constructivist researcher and a pragmatic practitioner was to ensure that there were no practical or physical barriers to participation for those who wished to take part. If they arose, alternatives would be found, or I and the participants would work together to find a solution. This related to levels and types of skill, access to resources such as digital skills, and the ability to contribute regardless of writing experience. In order to connect "action to praxis" (Lincoln and Guba cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 158) in participatory research, it was important to ensure equal access to activities or, if that proved impossible, to engage the participants in devising solutions. This would ensure authenticity in mutual learning. A workshop for the Creative Connected Communities (3D3) cohort at the University of the West of England in June 2018 enabled me to identify a set of values to ground the research: inclusivity, accessibility and innovation. These informed choices of method as I embarked on the studies.

To illustrate the value of inclusiveness in practice, volunteers for the Mylor study were self-selecting, having mostly responded to publicity and information in Parish outlets and through local networks, before the study began. The open-invitation attracted some who had never

taken part in a creative community activity before. Some members of a group who met monthly to write together did take part, but they were a minority. None of those who came forward had ever considered writing a novel. To mitigate this potential barrier to participation I chose, as a principle, to use apps and platforms for co-authorship that are free via everyday digital equipment such as the smartphone, tablet and laptop. If, as happened during the Mylor study, a participant needed reassurance that "you haven't been doing things I don't know about online" (Mylor field notes 14/1/2019), the study found other ways to include them. Examples of inclusive practice using mixed digital and traditional methods are evidenced in Chapters 5 and 6.

Accessibility as a value referred to the visibility of the project within the community, and the use of familiar venues and locations. Mylor Parish, the geographical area in which the long study took place, is an active community with schools, pubs, shops and community centres. In 2020 the Mylor Neighbourhood Development Plan described the Parish as having "a supportive and lively community… There is a sense of togetherness here but also an awareness that change and renewal must come if the parish is to provide for the needs of future generations" (Mylor Parish Council 2022: 12).

The strength of the community is evidence in the level of local social and cultural activities. In an average month the two Parish villages, Mylor Bridge and Flushing, are host to film club screenings, yoga classes, an art group, choirs, concerts, table tennis, and a range of outdoor events including Nordic walking, sailing, bowling, tennis, and Cornish pilot gig rowing. Volunteers assist in a community garden, a climate change action group, a weekly lunch club, and a community taxi service. There are numerous local fundraising appeals. Rather than attempt to engage people in a place of low cultural capital, I took advantage of Mylor's potential for a new form of cultural participation among other communities of interest who could be drawn into it. Further research will be needed to apply the knowledge from this study to a less active community, but the model of participation established in Mylor provides foundations.

Innovation, as a value, related to the use of methods, especially digital methods, and methods of co-creation. Based on my experience of typical community writing groups it was reasonable to expect that the majority of participants would be women over fifty years of age and possibly into their seventies. Most but not all would be used to smartphones for

communication with family and friends. Some would have experience of software such as Office on Apple Mac or PC, if they had worked in contexts that used them. I could not assume, however, that they would all have smartphones or laptops, or the confidence to use them in ways I hoped to introduce as part of participatory methods. This is supported by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) Taking Part Survey which records that digital participation is "significantly lower for those aged 75+ (14.7%) than the younger age groups (range from 29.5% to 34.6%)" (DCMS 2016). The DCMS data does not provide insight into how many people use digital media to participate in creative activities (the figures refer to accessing art collections and ticket sites online), but does imply that digital methods should not be assumed as the medium of choice for older age groups who attend community arts activities. The digital inequalities that surfaced during the 2020-2021 Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns were a case in point: the move to online collaboration through a video platform such as Zoom was not automatic for everyone, either because of personal preference or resources.

Vanderslice cites Ann Herrington et al: "The cathedral, the book, and the film are all still alive and well. Technologies do not supercede one another but coexist" (Vanderslice 2002: 138-9). I took this as advice not to impose methods, but to seek ways to integrate the unfamiliar with the familiar. I would experiment with, but not replace, customary methods of facilitation with digital methods, unless there were clear benefits. I agreed with Vanderslice that "allowing the student to select the digital form that best suits the project gives them more choice" (2002: 141), and sought ways to offer choices to the participants. This enabled people with mixed capabilities and resources, for instance ownership or not of a smartphone, to take part. I would inevitably introduce new methods in order to achieve insights, but it was possible that they would not easily be embraced by participants. There was learning to be gained from rejection or failure in practice. Consequently, if a digital method was not embraced by the group, I would question its value to the process and consider ways to blend digital and traditional modes in order for the process to be inclusive.

Where digital methods created barriers (if, for example, someone did not have an email account), this could be an opportunity to innovate by introducing a digital method alongside or instead of a traditional method. For example, the Mylor study demonstrates the use of WhatsApp to improvise dialogue among a fictional family, and Pinterest for world building and character development. Not all participants were able or willing to use the apps, so I

devised ways for them to work with those who did. As a result, everyone became engaged in the tasks and were able to take part in decisions.

Examples of digital methods in the classroom such as those offered by the pedagogy of digital humanities and media studies, Moores (2012) for example, take for granted a level of skill and confidence in both tutor and students. They assume well-resourced facilities with IT equipment and support in academic settings. Practice in the community often takes place in venues that lack such resources beyond basic Wi-Fi, and the individual self-employed writer-facilitator does not enjoy IT support. This is illustrated in Chapter 5, where the absence of a mobile phone signal during a study with a community writing group in St Agnes led to quick thinking in order to conduct an exercise using SMS text. The short study with students at T&PC (also Chapter 5) further illustrates some unexpected difficulties, with safe guarding and limitations placed on the use of social media. These early trials enabled me to consider ways to circumvent some of these challenges in the Mylor study and provided insights that fed new knowledge.

3.6 Data gathering

Much of the literature associated with qualitative research methods is authored by social scientists and clinicians in health and social care. They speak of it with a certain hesitancy, unconvinced of its robustness. For example, Janet Morse: "The process of doing qualitative research presents a challenge because procedures for organizing images are ill-defined and rely on processes of inference, insight, logic, and luck, and eventually, with creativity and hard work" (Morse 1994: 1). As a creative practitioner I sit comfortably with uncertainty as an element of practice and the parts played by playful, intuitive, and inventive methods. The simultaneous processes of both creating a community novel and researching *how* to create a community novel show that the two can fruitfully co-exist. With participation at its heart, the qualitative methodology of PAR provides a process through which to gather robust data.

Documentation of field work

The principal method of data collection was the documentation of field work from the practice studies. This was accompanied by associated materials, for instance draft writing by volunteers, photographs and information created in apps. Field notes were maintained throughout the three practice studies. For consistency of data collection, I adopted a routine which entailed designing the weekly meetings with volunteers in advance. During the

sessions I took minimal notes by hand but asked a volunteer to make more detailed notes of discussion and decisions. This double note-taking served two purposes: it enabled me to focus on group facilitation, and gave volunteers responsibility for their own record keeping. Immediately after the session I would handwrite my field notes in rough form, including as much detail as possible. I took photographs, with consent, to record the working process, and some short audio recordings.

My hand-written field notes were typed up the next day, using the template to record key aspects of the sessions in a way that was consistent to read and extract data from later. As well as recording the research activities, these provided material for updates which I emailed to the participants as a weekly aide-memoir, and sometimes posted in Slack and Trello. I made printed copies for those who could not read them online or who had missed a meeting. I maintained files of hard copies of my writing session plans, scribbled on and often revised during sessions. These were attached to associated draft material, handouts and related articles, clippings and pictures which I and members of the group would sometimes bring to sessions: for example, a wallpaper sample for a fictional bedroom, and a photograph of a model whose style typified one of the leading characters. The Slack app was a repository for images, and we used this for discussion and exchanging notes.

Reflexive journaling

I used a different handwritten notebook for reflexive journaling. This aided deeper insights into the participatory process and the remediations emerging in the writer-facilitator role. The value of these reflexive notes lay in their subjectivity. They accumulated over time to create a record of the developing writer-facilitator role and my understanding of it; understanding reached in part through personal comparison between customary and new practice. Writing with a pen enabled me to reflect in a measured way, responding to open questions, for instance: ‘What is this like for me?’ The question enabled me further to consider the unfamiliar and at times distracting presence of my iPhone on the table in a group writing session, which I had mentioned in field notes. Writing reflexively in the journal I was able to describe my unease: “It feels as if a taboo is being broken. Normally my phone would be hidden from sight. It is tempting to glance at emails but I must stay focused on the task which is literally in my hand” (St Agnes study field note, 1/6/2018).

The journal enabled me to write in ways that were both free and contained. Writing in the first and third person, for instance, enabled me to move between personal insight and an objective perspective when analysing my own and others' actions. When I used rapid sprint writing and flow writing by hand it would be chaotic at first, writing messily in my hurry to express myself. I would review this writing and select key phrases to use as prompts for more considered reflexive writing. Reflexive practice became a means of critical self-evaluation within the research. Moving between the role of researcher and facilitator in my journal writing I could reach a deep understanding of aspects of the writer-facilitator's remediated practice that became apparent: for example, the workload, adaptation of methods, integration of new methods and, at times, skills deficits among me and the volunteers. This brought an autoethnographic element to the research as I reflected on the large scope of the community novel, and the differences I could discern, compared to traditional practice.

A further use for reflexive journaling was the analysis of occasional difficulties that arose among the volunteers. In one instance journaling enabled me to empathise with a volunteer whose behaviour was perceived by me and a number of the volunteers as difficult. An empathic technique borrowed from writing for wellbeing, in which the writer is invited to imagine standing in another's shoes (Moss 2012: 90-91), helped me understand the difficulties and adopt tactics to manage the group through the situation.

Through reflexivity I identified a need for peer support. The loneliness of the long-distance writer-facilitator was helped by regular Skype conversations, later on Zoom, with Nichola Charalambou, the writer-facilitator mentioned earlier. During the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns, a period of social and professional isolation, these ad hoc conversations helped us navigate new and unfamiliar online methods. Our joint reflections as we experienced the benefits and drawbacks of digital facilitation provided insights pertinent to my research which I write about in my field notes, with Nichola's consent.

Holliday's process of data consolidation (Holliday 2007: 62-63) enabled me to manage a complex and detailed process of data gathering in which I recorded the participants and actions. The analysis of fieldnotes, using coding to differentiate types of participation activity, and volunteer feedback, informed my decisions during the process, as a model of participation emerged through practice. The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic was a dramatic

intervention and caused certain activities to cease because of the limitations of lockdown, while others moved online, leading to unexpected further insights. Analysis of results forms the basis for Chapter 7's account of remediated practice arising from the research studies.

3.7 Theoretical framework

The consideration of literature, sources and context in Chapter 2 raised possibilities for a theoretical framework to inform practice research into the community novel. Literary theory has limited relevance because of its focus on the individual author, although narratology supports the practice of novel-writing, and is adaptable to co-authorship. The collaborative aspects of the community novel relate to structuralist theory of dialogism and dialectic (Holquist 2002). Freire's pedagogy of community education (1993) and Illich's tools for conviviality (2001) provide a theoretical base for multimodal practice that is participatory, playful and innovative. Putnam's social theories (2000) and Williams's recognition of the novel as a form of community expression (1983), inform the novel's potential as a communal form. Sennett's theoretical insights into cooperation, complete the suite (2012).

I began the research already informed by the pedagogy of creative writing studies and the related practice niche of writing for wellbeing. I knew how to teach and apply the craft skills of writing creatively in prose fiction, poetry and life writing. From previous career roles I held skills of commissioning, editing and producing publications. As a facilitator of writing for wellbeing in contexts of counselling and bereavement support, I was skilled in enabling non-writers to find forms of self-expression through the written word. I approached the studies with this multimodal practice in mind, prepared to adopt new tools ad methods in order to facilitate a form as complex and lengthy as a novel. Barnard's definition of multimodal writing practice offered: "a creative approach wherein the inter-relationships between and among a writer's decisions and different media and modes contribute to the production of meaning" (Barnard 2019: 6). The limitations of this definition to the individual writer, however, made me consider how to apply traditional and digital multimodal methods in a collaborative work of fiction. Multimodalism would potentially apply to every aspect of the participatory activities required to produce the novel, as well as to the published form, or forms, of the novel.

A starting point was to think about my training and experience as a writer-facilitator in communities, how I acquired skills of facilitation through academic and practice-based

study, referred to in Chapter 1, and how those skills were applied with diverse community writing groups over the past 15 years. McGoughlin (in Harper and Kroll 2008) reflects on the adaptive and somewhat unstructured methods by which a writing teacher's craft is learned:

> I used the same methodologies my teachers used with me, and I learned to adapt them to different situations through experience and experiment. I learned or invented new methodologies from reading around the subject or through what I was experiencing in my own writing practices as I evolved as a writer (2008: 90).

I recognised the experience of evolving and adapting methods through practice and, over time, becoming familiar with contexts for writing in the community. My methods of workshop facilitation, protocols for managing group work, and ethical practice with adults had evolved through practice and observation of peers through professional networks such as NAWE and Lapidus International. I have written earlier about some of the practice methods of writing for wellbeing, and sources for methods of creative writing pedagogy adapted for collaboration in the community novel. My openness to adopting and adapting diverse forms and methods, and my personal liking for working with inexperienced writers, meant I was not committed to a specific pathway for the community novel. My approach was to seek methods that the volunteers could work with, and build a suite of participatory methods supported by a narratological set of parts that would be required for a novel.

Diversifying pedagogy

To better understand the writer-facilitator role I expected to draw on creative writing pedagogy but also methods of project management, and management of people. The process of engaging with volunteers through a community writing group and inviting wider participation through communities of interest within a defined local area - Mylor Parish - was a remit beyond the norm of community writing group facilitation. I expected my facilitation methods to diversify, enabling a participatory approach to co-creation and mutual learning. By blending methods of facilitation based on the pedagogy of creative writing studies and the accessible process-driven methods of writing for wellbeing, with playful elements of drama and improvisation, a collaborative community writing practice emerged. This was rooted in a shared sense of place and interest, and the desire to reflect local identity. Informed by examples of community practice cited in Chapter 2, in which the professional artist engages participants as active makers of the work, this approach was in keeping with Attwood's view of PAR in which people "participate meaningfully in the process of analysing their own solution over which they have (or share, some would argue) power and

control" (Attwood 1997 cited in MacDonald 2012: 36). Insights into remediated practice and the need for a diversified pedagogy to support the community novel, are among the findings in Chapter 7. Some potential remediations are identified below, in preparation for that.

Digital remediation

Amy Letter, speculating on the challenges inherent in introducing new media into the creative classroom, acknowledges:

> Traditional creative writing is not simple. It too involves multiple steps, invention, drafting, revising, polishing, the refining of thematic ideas, crafting tone and style, employing imagery, and so on. Creative writing for new media involves all these steps and adds (1) selection from a sometimes dazzling panoply of media/mediums, and (2) the use of technology… (Letter 2015: 187).

The Mylor study made use of playful "NetProv" methods suggested by Rob Wittig and Mark C. Marino (cited in Clark et al 2015: 153-164), using smartphones and apps to generate material for the novel. Verbal improvisations based on techniques of Second City comedy improv (Libera 2004) were combined with NetProv in a blended exercise in volunteers role-played as fictional characters communicating through a family WhatsApp group. Trials such as these led me to favour Spencer's Lo-Fi approach (2008) and other accessible digital methods advocated by Barnard (2019). Software such as Twine was impractical for volunteers but I was able to use it to express multi-layered material in the novel, showing several volunteers' contributions simultaneously within a scene. Chapter 6 shows an example of this. I was further informed by therapist Shaun McNiff's methods of introducing select digital methods to art therapy, working with individuals and groups (McNiff 2018). McNiff's use of photography, sound and video suggested tools I could adapt to creative writing practice with a group.

Processing new multimodal practice

My approach to introducing and integrating new methods was processual in the way described by Robin Nelson: "emergent that is in the processes of generation, selection, shaping and editing material in practice" (Nelson 2006: 105-116). The introduction of new methods, both in facilitating co-authorship and introducing digital methods required the type of intuition described by Valerie Janesick (2001: 531-540). As I and the volunteers tried collaborative and generative methods we reflected together on the outcomes, moving gradually through trial and error in the "heuristic" process identified by Graham Mort

(2008). Barnard, in particular, acknowledges the hybrid nature of multimodal practice, that a writer does not stop using one method, for example the pen or laptop, in order to focus on another, such as the smartphone or software such as Twine. Instead, the multimodal writer, and the writer-facilitator, selects and blends methods and media to suit their purpose.

The community novel-making process was sometimes challenging. Not all volunteers were comfortable with the uncertainties of the early stages of fiction writing, and some chose to leave the project. The rumination that takes place in the solo author's mind could lead to disagreements and differences of interpretation when shared and compared. Bruce Tuckman's "storms, forms, norms and performs" stages of group performance were clearly observable in the early formation of what later became a cohesive community of practice. (Tuckman 1965). Jen Webb describes a lack of enthusiasm for co-writing among students when asked: "'Who likes to work collaboratively?' No one raises a hand. And then: 'Who thinks they'd work better in a team?' No hands" (Webb 2008: 117). Lack of enthusiasm was not my experience with the volunteers in the Mylor study, although there were questions and anxieties about how they would write together. Participants acknowledged that none of them would be likely to attempt a novel alone but all were intrigued by the possibility of writing one together. Bourdieu's claim that: "Every field is the site of a more or less openly declared struggle for the definition of the legitimate principles of division of the field" (in Webb 2013: 117) was a fair description of the early struggles between ideas for the novel, how to reach agreement, and how to write it. My facilitation acknowledged that and sought methods to ensure the volunteers' progress was not de-railed by disagreements. Examples in the Mylor study illustrate the methods that were most successful in this regard, and some that met with resistance. I was heartened by Webb's assertion that "whatever the discourses, or the stories we tell ourselves, creative practice is and always has been about the beehive of society" (Webb 2008: 119). If I could create that beehive, the hive mind would create a sense of shared purpose.

3.8 Conclusions

This chapter has provided an overview of the methodologies used, and the ethical approach taken to research and practice grounded in values of accessibility, inclusivity and innovation. I have established methods of data gathering and documentation, in keeping with the principle of foregrounding volunteers' experience alongside my own, as fully immersed participants in a collaborative creative process.

This concludes Part 1. In Part 2, Chapter 4 prepares the ground for the practice studies that follow in Chapter 5 and 6, by sharing insights into practice that arose in unstructured interviews with some community writing facilitators and co-authors.

Part 2

CHAPTER 4: INSIGHTS INTO COMMUNITY WRITING FACILITATION AND CO-AUTHORSHIP

4.1 Overview

This chapter summarises insights gained from interviews and some follow-up conversations before, and in some cases, during the PAR studies which are described in Chapters 5 and 6. The schedule of interviews is provided in Appendix A to Chapter 4, and examples of the information sheet and consent form given to each interview in Appendix B. I was granted consent to cite all the interviewees in my thesis. Written transcripts can be made available.

I interviewed five subjects across a spread of expertise which I selected to inform my design of the studies. I spoke first to Anne Taylor, Belona Greenwood, and Jen Alexander, facilitators of writing groups as part of their portfolio of writing-related professional work. I spoke to Sandra Platt, a co-author of romantic fiction under the pen name Cassandra Grafton, and to Paul Brodrick, a member of the scriptwriting team for the BBC radio serial *The Archers.*

Anne Taylor and Jen Alexander were known to me as colleagues and collaborators. I met Belona Greenwood, facilitator of Norfolk Women Writers when she presented a paper at AHRC's Writing Futures Conference in 2017. Sandra Platt had been a guest at retreats hosted by The Writing Retreat, a small business which I co-host in Cornwall. Paul Brodrick is a friend whose writing career I have followed with interest since our university days.

The interviews were semi-structured and conversational in order to capture personal insights to practice. I posed a set of deliberately open questions as a loose structure with each interviewee. This provided a framework for consistency of analysis, and enabled conversations to expand. For Anne, Belona and Jen the topics covered were:

1. Tell me about the types of writing groups you run:
    - What's their purpose?
    - Who participates?

- Where do you typically hold them? Are people together or do they work remotely?
- How do people write in your sessions or courses? Laptops or pens? What in your view is the difference. Which do you prefer and why?

2. How do you design a writing session?
   - What materials and resources do you use?
   - What equipment?
   - Do you work alone or with support?
3. Have you used digital media in your writing sessions?
   - What examples?
   - Would you consider using an app such as Pinterest or Instagram or a tool for co-writing or reading such as GoogleDocs or DropBox? How might they work in your group? If not, why not?
4. Is there anything else you would like to say in the light of our conversation?

The theme of my conversations with Sandra Platt and Paul Brodrick was co-authorship. Questions focused on the practicalities of collaboration, for example:

- Who decides what the story is?
- How important is planning?
- How do you divide up the writing?
- How does editing work between you?
- How does the finished product reflect the different writers' inputs?
- Have you experienced drawbacks in co-authoring?
- What do you enjoy about collaboration?

As a writer-facilitator speaking peer to peer with Anne, Belona and Jen, I was able to compare practice in relation to facilitation with non-professional writers. Sandra and Paul's contributions shone light on methods of co-authorship and some of the associated difficulties and compromises, as well as the benefits and ways of deploying writers' strengths in the collaboration.

In all cases, our discussions broadened as we considered the potential for community writing of the type I was envisaging. The concept of the novel as a community collaboration drove

the interviewees into two camps: those who embraced the idea and those who instinctively backed away. This dichotomy can be seen in the extracts quoted below.

As a data set, the interviews provided insights into working methods and concrete examples of group facilitation and co-authorship in practice. Section 4.2 of the chapter draws on the interviews with Anne Taylor, Belona Greenwood and Jen Alexander, in which the motivations of writing group members are explored. The affects and drawbacks of using digital technologies with writing groups is compared, with diverging views among the interviewees. In 4.3 Sandra Platt's comments on the sharing of skills and workload in novel co-authorship provide insights of practical value to the community novel. In 4.4 Paul Brodrick's account of writing to editorial briefs and drawing on a bank of shared knowledge about storylines and character development in a long-running serial, suggests methods transferable to the community novel's process. Part 4.5 draws conclusions about practice methods and communities of practice that are followed up in accounts of the PAR studies in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.2 Community writing facilitation in practice: Anne Taylor, Belona Greenwood and Jen Alexander

Anne Taylor is a health journalist, poet, teacher, coach and creative writing group facilitator. She runs courses and workshops through the Professional Writing Academy, both online and in person, combining writing with the Feldenkrais Method of mindful movement (Feldenkrais Guild UK 2023).

Belona Greenwood is an author, scriptwriter and creative writer facilitator in the East of England (www.belonagreenwood.com). Her work with communities includes the ACE-funded Words for Women Rural Writes project which ran writing groups with women in rural and coastal Norfolk in 2016 and produced an anthology of life writing by the women who took part.

Jen Alexander (www.jennyalexander.co.uk) is an author of non-fiction for children and adults, and a freelance writing group leader. She runs writing days and courses in person and, since 2022 following the Covid-19 pandemic, on the video platform Zoom. She is based in north Cornwall and Gloucestershire and her publications include guides for writers and self-help books for children and teenagers.

Anne Taylor

Of the three facilitators interviewed, Anne Taylor was the most familiar with online facilitation. She described her experience of running a co-designed online course:

> an introduction to therapeutic and reflective writing for people who might be writers thinking of venturing into the area of writing for wellbeing… it's designed to help people set up a writing group, basically. It takes you through all the stages and it's experiential so I would say we are actually running a group. So it's working on two levels, we're exploring the group dynamic and experiencing the group dynamic while they're learning about it (Taylor 2018).

We agreed that many facilitators of community writing follow informal routes into facilitation rather than follow a tailored course of training, so Anne's online course is providing training in an under-served niche of practice. Anne's advice was to: "attend as many groups as you can and watch how others facilitate and experience the process of being in a group and just keep doing it yourself and it's like any form of teaching really, you get better at it the more you do it" (Taylor 2018).

Anne made the point that participants in a community witing group might have differing expectations:

> […] people often aren't sure why they come but something draws them to it […] - it's quite hard to articulate and sell what we do and market it, and that's one of the problems. I try and get across always that this is open to everybody but still people if you talk about writing and invite them along to a writing group, they assume there'll be some sort of critique, and they'll learn where to put a full stop, a colon" (Taylor 2018).

She added that because of such assumptions, "they come feeling quite daunted" (ibid), an observation I could concur with from my own experience of facilitation. To counter this, Anne raised the importance of using playful methods to help people begin to generate material for writing. Mentioning people who aspire to write memoir, she reflected on the value of "that sort of writing we do when the focus isn't on craft, [which] just allows people to play and generate lots and lots of material which they can go on to craft" (Taylor 2018).

Anne and I agreed that the role of play in encouraging people to write, especially inexperienced or non-writers, helped put them at ease and encouraged them to express themselves. This was to become a tactic in the Mylor study, when I encouraged volunteers with no experience of writing fiction to create the raw material of world building and

characterisation using methods that combined rough draft writing, role play and verbal improvisation.

Responding to my question about venues in which community writing takes place, Anne commented that she was often "quite disappointed with the spaces. I like to run a group from home where it feels more cosy, somehow" (Tayor 2018). This would later be echoed by Jen Alexander and chimed with my own experience of seeking appropriate spaces in which to host writing groups. Anne recalled being expected to hold groups in an "austere" medical training centre, a WEA office, and a building which was freezing cold. We agreed that settings with some character and atmosphere, in which a group can be undisturbed, are desirable.

Discussing writing technologies, Anne stated her preference for the pen in group writing: "most people will come with a notebook or journal even if you don't ask them to." She reflected further on her personal choices:

> There's something about thinking through your hand. I find I've got two hats really. One is professional writing, journalism, and I wouldn't dream of doing my journalism using hand writing, and yet when I want to do anything creative, like craft a poem, I wouldn't. I would always start with hand writing because it allows a more direct path to my unconscious (Taylor 2018).

In terms of methods of design for community writing group sessions, the inherent multimodalism of practice was implicit in Anne's reflection:

> I am a magpie actually, I collect. I don't stick to one form, so I'll use poetry and I'll use journal writing exercises, I'll use things I've experienced myself at various conferences and workshops. How do I choose? I think first and foremost about who will be in the group and you can't always know that (Taylor 2018).

Anne commented on the difference between a course or series of group sessions with learning outcomes, for example for the WEA, and a looser arrangement for a group without specific learning objectives. Her experience of the WEA was that:

> they're very prescriptive about learning outcomes so I had to say at the beginning what the output would be at the end, so there was something to work through and towards, although having said that, I could change it. So, if something had gone down well with the group, the next time they meet, you think, well, they enjoyed that, or let's do more of that next time or follow that theme (Taylor 2018).

This suggested to me an iterative approach to take, working with participants' tastes and enjoyments, something I would consider further when designing the practice studies.

Anne compared her experience of methods to generate writing with a group present in the room, and when working online. Writing with pen and paper, she observed, "It's kind of magic. People are very surprised at what comes out of it". By comparison, she observed the pros and cons of online facilitation when working with a colleague:

> We didn't know how an online group would work. All the work we'd done up to that point had been face to face in groups, and we didn't know how it would translate online. So we've been really pleasantly surprised. I think it's because, there are drawbacks obviously, you don't get to see people and forge relationships face to face but people do forge really strong bonds and a dynamic that kind of works (Taylor 2018).

Anne described the environment of an online group with a blog to share draft writing as:

> a completely secure, safe place. People post within a small group, we've never had more than twelve. I think in some ways people have more time and they have more time to read one another's work so the bond between the group is even more than if they were just meeting once a week (Taylor 2018).

She added a point about people being able to remain anonymous online: "the other thing is that people, because it's online, can be anonymous and people tend to be open to much more." This struck me as a potential drawback to a collaborative process in which personal connections and trust in each other would play an important role, but for individual writing it did not present a problem, as Anne described it.

In the context of writing for wellbeing, which is generally not for publication, Anne spoke of the need to create "a safe space for those groups. We do that through the way the course is moderated, the way we make sure people feel 'heard' by other people, and the environment is all confidential." The community novel would be a public form of writing, but nonetheless, I would reflect on the part that a set of mutually agreed ground rules could play in helping participants bond with a sense of mutual respect and trust. As novice writers, their sensitivities to sharing writing and critiquing for wider circulation, would need to be managed until confidence grew.

Anne acknowledged the value of setting assignments and deadlines, giving people tasks to carry out in between online meetings, a feature for me to consider in relation to the community novel.

Belona Greenwood

Belona Greenwood's experience of facilitating the Norfolk Words for Women Rural Writes project produced insights into in-person facilitation of groups of women who, with one exception, were unpublished writers. Belona reflected that she "had the idea of writing about women's experience in rural areas because it's not written about" (Greenwood 2018). The choice to use life writing was made for its authenticity as a way to involve women who "might not be reached" in their rural communities and who would not normally attend an activity such as a writing group. The groups would meet in familiar local venues. Belona's use of traditional methods of recruitment with local printed publicity and call outs through local services and partners struck me as effective in the context of the community novel I was envisaging:

> We approached the library to be a partner so we had a place in the communities where we could be rooted but also it was a way of reaching people so we advertised through the library service but also the local newspapers […] we got some editorial and local community organisations so we approached them, talked to them and put out some really appalling posters but they seemed to work (Greenwood 2018).

By using Fenland community centres, the project achieved "absolutely what we were looking for which was an incredible cross-section of people who were genuine beginners" Greenwood 2018). She sounded a warning, however, based on one coastal town in which the project ran some writing sessions:

> it was on a first-come first-served basis and there, for some reason, we got people who didn't live in the area, who were already in writers' groups [and] who were middle class, frankly, because a lot of our writers were not middle class at all. There was a troop of them, so they didn't have a link with the environment (Greenwood 2018).

Mixed with people who were absolute beginners, the women who came from outside the town had a "sense of knowing better [and that] had an impact on those women, so that was not a successful group because they tried to show off and dominate" (Greenwood 2018). Belona's insight confirmed my instinct not to begin by approaching members of an established village writing group in the Mylor study, but to invite participation from a wider public including those who had not written before, from the wider Parish area.

Like Anne Taylor, Belona spoke of the importance of establishing trust among the women who took part: "the very first thing that was so important was building up their trust […] I had loads of ways of inviting people through warm up and icebreakers and ways of sharing"

(Greenwood 2018). She reflected, too, on the value of having "an end product – something that was being aimed for and because it was rooted in the place where they lived and loved" (Greenwood 2018). This encouraged me in my plan to elicit a story for the community novel from its participants, not suggest my own ideas. In the Norfolk project, the product would be an anthology of writing, the promise of which was a motivation for the women involved. In the Mylor study it would be the community novel.

We discussed some accessible ways into writing and Belona mentioned using exercises involving memories, such as the women's childhoods in the place in which they were now meeting. She reflected on the success of this, and on drawing on the women's "rootedness, which really gave something to the writing. There was passion" (Greenwood 2018). With participants in Mylor likely to be a mix of people who were native to the area, and those who had moved there for work or in retirement, I welcomed this insight into the importance of place as a potentially unifying factor in group cohesion.

Asked about the effect of not having a regular space or room in which to meet, in one of the locations, Belona commented:

> I don't think it worked so well. And when we did [have somewhere regular to meet] it was a big place with an electrical [unit]. We were lost in there. It wasn't as comfortable. And there was the uncertainty of where you should go to, or if we would be in another room. And I actually think if we'd just had one small space it would have helped with that particular group as well (Greenwood 2018).

Discussing writing tools and methods, Belona's experience was informative in terms of attempts to encourage her groups to write digitally. She described the difficulties of using online methods, but also the value of having library support for training and resources. She explained:

> We also had a number of people, older women who were extremely valuable to our project, who didn't even own a laptop. Resources that were available to us in the library were also important and it also provided tuition [in computer use] and support, so the fact we had that partner was also really important to the success of the project (Greenwood 2018).

The inclusion of some younger women in the project meant they were able to help the elder women, but Belona also found "a real lack of confidence," which was eventually overcome with training from the library, "so later they were able to type up their own work". The basic

level of digital skill and resources was similar to that which I expected to find within the community novel volunteers.

We discussed the digital deficit and how to enable involvement by those without resources such as laptops. As Belona observed, “You really don’t want to exclude”. The lack of digital confidence among participants was evident in the difficulties when her group members were asked to post their writing into a blog: “but that didn’t happen […] Because they weren’t ready, they weren’t confident enough. Getting them to track their own voices to understand… and all that, and then on top of that to cope with learning blogging and digital stuff was a step too far” (Greenwood 2018).

As a result, Belona opted not to use digital methods in her facilitation, but to encourage talking and sharing as a way to build confidence: “so they were much more hands on. In the early stages there was a lot of talking or they might do a bit of work outside and bring it in”. A further consideration in her style and methods was the all-female nature of the group: “they have to trust you and my biggest job was just getting them to believe in themselves” (Greenwood 2018). At the time of the interview, this remained to be seen in the context of the community novel, but Belona’s experience provided insight in terms of methods needed to build trust, and the inclusive use of digital and hybrid methods. Her insights into working with beginner writers suggested methods for me to adopt in my PAR studies, to ensure that no participants were excluded by the use of digital methods, and that those who were confident to use them could be encouraged to do so for appropriate tasks. This would be considered as part of the studies in Chapters 5 and 6.

Belona noted that the two-hour time scale of her sessions meant that shorter writing exercises using pen and paper made good use of the time. Typed writing could be done outside the sessions, but the use of pens when writing together meant that everyone had the same experience. We agreed that the use of sharing platforms, for example DropBox or GoogleDocs, was dependent upon enough people being able to use them.

A further insight from the Norfolk project was the social aspect of writing. Belona reflected on the friendships that had formed during the project, and the way it had helped combat loneliness for some of the women. A sense of pride was felt at having produced their

anthology. Launch events in their communities, with readings, further boosted the sense of achievement.

Asked what she might have done differently, Belona cited the added workload of editing. While a colleague in the project had applied professional editorial standards, Belona recognised the need to "soften the blow, because these weren't professional writers and, in a way, I hadn't anticipated that - so there was more work for me to do and that was very important because it could have crushed their confidence" (Greenwood 2018). She was clear that "they had such a sense of ownership because it wasn't dictated […] It wasn't our book, it was their book because it was their lives" (Greenwood 2018). That observation mirrored my intention to take steps to ensure the community novel was not perceived as mine, but that the participants should have full creative control over it.

Finally, reflecting on her own experience of a Writers Room, she added this insight: "if you take an idea into the writers room it doesn't belong to you anymore, it belongs to everyone. But I see sometimes that the person who had that idea, they've got to let go because otherwise they'll have trouble and conflict". This conflict was to emerge in the St Agnes study and again in the Mylor community novel, which I shall reflect upon in the context of the PAR studies.

Jen Alexander

In my conversation with Jen Alexander (August 2018) the question of how to arrive at a unified writing voice in co-authorship was considered. Thinking about her personal practice as a writer and her role as a facilitator of writing groups, Jen made a distinction when she reflected:

> It will always be, for me, finding my voice and helping you find your voice. Finding 'our voice' is something I think, in any area of my life, I have probably found challenging, whereas finding my voice, not a problem at all, and helping other people (Alexander 2018).

She acknowledged the difficulties of enabling individual writers to critique each other's work, citing an example from her own experience, and the falling out that could result even in a well-established writing group in which trust among individuals was well-established. The importance of building trust was implied again when we talked about group facilitation and the practice of hosting physical meetings with ground rules and a structured programme of writing. Jen explained her methods to establish a group from the start:

> I always like people to introduce themselves very briefly, so everyone has a sense of who is in the room. And then I like to lay down the ground rules very briefly again, two or three very simple rules because I think that also creates a sense of safety and that they know I'm in control of it. Then I'll introduce the theme of the session, what we're going to do, how we're going to go about it, the structure of the day […] and health and safety at some stage (Alexander 2018).

We compared our requirements for the ideal space in which to host a writing group: a private room with a large enough table for everyone to be seated together. In Jen's case this included her own kitchen table. She mentioned the importance of being able to see everyone: "Personally I always sit myself at the head of the table and it's not because I want to be bossy, it's because I want to see everyone" (Alexander 2018). We agreed that "if you're sitting in a circle people will chip in a lot more and it can be a little bit harder to hold the space". This led me to consider my usual practice of sitting at the head of the table in order to see everyone. The community novel might require me to adopt a less hierarchical seating arrangement, or perhaps to be more mobile during a writing session. This will be discussed and illustrated by the St Agnes and Mylor studies.

Asked about writing materials, Jen emphasised "Always pen and paper." She recounted the distraction on an occasion when one participant used a laptop: "you have […] that different kind of sound and energy coming from that one person when everyone else is just writing" (Alexander 2018). She described the effect of someone using a laptop, "fiddling about with it while other people are reading". We agreed on the importance of attentive listening during the sharing of writing, and of the need to physically observe the writing from the facilitator's seat. We agreed that screens can be barriers.

We exchanged experiences of practice relating to the pros and cons of writing with pens and digital devices, and the value of allowing people choice. I mentioned my interest in seeing participants' handwriting, "whether it's fast or messy, or very slow and hesitant, it tells you a lot. The keyboard doesn't quite do that." Jen added the observation:

> I think that our handwriting feels more cumbersome and slow than it used to. I am aware that if they write for 15 or 20 minutes people's hands get tired so I don't make those writing sessions very long. And one of the reasons is that we're writing by hand and we're not used to it now (Alexander 2018).

We talked about the potential to use closed groups online, in the way described by Anne Taylor. I mentioned using Pinterest for world building (described in Chapter 5, the St Agnes

study), and we speculated on the affordances of online collaboration. Jen raised a personal dilemma from her experience of collaborating in workshops or training sessions that included, "everybody making a group whatever it was, a group collage or a group story, group wishes thing or whatever it was. I hated that, every single time, because I don't want to do that. I want to create my own" (Alexander 2018).

I raised the example of writers room teams who write to an agreed brief, and Jen went on to illustrate a happier (for her) way of working with other authors to write a series of stories that were part of an educational reading scheme:

> there were three of us collaborating […] it was basically the same main characters we were working with and the same settings, but we took different strands of those characters. We didn't get in each other's way at all and I really enjoyed that (Alexander 2018).

For Jen, the effect was of writing her own story, then meeting with the others and their publisher to agree major developments in the characters' lives: "I really enjoyed meeting with other people to discuss the general direction we were taking. But I never had to collaborate in a story". The process she described was more akin to writing in relay, as characters were passed back and forth between the writers: a method that recalled the Alice Campion collaboration mentioned in Chapter 2, and which I would deploy in the PAR studies.

Jen was adamant that a collaboration as large and complex as a community novel was not something she would attempt. She saw this as a matter of personal preference and reflected, "I think the difference between you and me is a temperamental one" (Alexander 2018). Nonetheless, as a facilitator of writing, she was intrigued by the potential of some of the digital methods I intended to explore. We would return to this topic during the 2020 pandemic lockdown. Meeting on Zoom in August 2020, we reflected on the difference enforced online facilitation was making to our work: both enabling us to continue, and requiring us to adapt our methods to the online platform. Jen was "reconsidering my position. I can see that it's making it possible for me to carry on working now, but it needs to be managed differently" (Alexander 2018). We were both enthusiastic about the ability to include people from far afield, including other countries, but missed the spontaneity of facilitation in a physical group meeting. "And the cake," said Jen, relating to the social value of meeting in-person.

A further observation by Jen proved valuable, the challenge of getting inexperienced (or even experienced) writers to edit each other's writing. Jen recalled a group which she hosted being "happy and harmonious […] 'til they decided to publish some of their work, which meant they had to edit each other. And it hit the fan big time, and the group's gone" (Alexander 2018). She remarked, "that is not the first time I've heard that story. So I've always really fought shy of letting people kind of edit each other, because we're not editors" (Alexander 2018). Nonetheless, I reflected, the community novel would require editing, not a task for the writer-facilitator to take on, but potentially part of the facilitator role to coach the volunteers in a collaborative form of editing as they worked together on their shared novel, rather than their own individual pieces. This would be explored at the relevant stage in the Mylor study, when volunteers revised and edited their draft novel in preparation for serialised publication.

Finally, I reflected with Jen on the longevity of a community novel, and the diversity of roles that could be involved in its production. I spoke about wishing to involve a range of interests from the wider community, and the potential for people to contribute in ways other than writing. Jen reflected with me about how important it would be to achieve a novel of readable quality. My response was to acknowledge that completing the novel was less important to me, as researcher, than establishing a process, and gaining insight into the facilitation role and the place of digital methods. This would later be tested in the Mylor study whose volunteers proved highly motivated to finish their novel. Speculating with Jen about potential processes, I explained my notion of a productive overlap as participants devised material for the novel:

> in my mind there's a sort of Venn diagram […]. There's a bit in the middle where we all go 'that's the story! That's the bit we're interested in, that's the bit we'd like to follow up. Then we need a plan, and we can divvy up the work and start writing it (Alexander 2018).

In this context the 'we' is the volunteers as the generators of idea and story, and me as the facilitator, united in a shared endeavour but performing distinct roles. This, too, would be researched in the Mylor Study.

Like Anne Taylor, Jen appreciated the wisdom of starting by playing with ideas before pinning down a plan. The longitude of the project was daunting for her, however: "I don't generally engage with things that aren't my things on a long haul" (Alexander 2018). She saw working in collaboration as "taking time away from what I want to do". This raised a

question for me about a place in the project for my own creativity. If I was not writing, but facilitating others over a period of a year or more, where would that lie, if it did at all? I reach conclusions about the creativity to be found in the writer-facilitator role in Chapter 7.

Speaking about composition of a core writing group and how to sustain interest in the project, Jen wondered how many participants might be too many in order to manage the group dynamic effectively. My pragmatic response was to "work with what I've got. And I'm hoping if I can establish a crack team of at least six or seven, they will keep it going at times when other people are, let's say off sailing for the summer, or gone south for the winter, or the kinds of things that people do" (Alexander 2018). This would also be tested in practice during the Mylor study which took place over 18 months during which volunteer numbers and activities evolved.

4.3 Co-authorship in partnership and a team

Having gained some insight into peers' experience of group facilitation I spoke to two writers with experience of co-authorship. The first, Sandra Platt, gave her account of writing a writing partnership that began online and has progressed into a blend of in-person and online collaboration.

Sandra Platt

Sandra co-writes romantic fiction under the pen name Cassandra Grafton, with Ada Bright (also a pen name), an American author whom she met online in a Harry Potter fan fiction forum. Together they write novels inspired by the works of Jane Austen (www.cassandragrafton.com). The partnership is successful in terms of sales, with titles including, for example, *The Particular Charm of Miss Jane Austen* (2016). Platt attributes this in part to their complementary skills. Ada is: "brilliant at dialogue but I am strong at description. I can correct her English mannerisms and describe the English locations she has not visited". They meet physically to visit locations of relevance to the story and carry out research together. They collaborate to plan the story, then share writing which they draft and critique together in weekly meetings on FaceTime, each emailing drafts for the other to critique, having first agreed who will draft which parts. Sandra reported that their routine "works seamlessly and we have a lot of fun" (Platt 2019). This suggested an approach to take in moving from the early playful stage of compiling material for the community novel, into a more structured routine of planning, drafting and revising.

Sandra and Ada's writing partnership echoed those described in Chapter 2 between the Alice Campion authors and Pratchett and Gaiman, but Sandra reflected on another collaboration which had proved less smooth. She described taking part in an online writing group which encountered difficulties. Although she knew one of the other participating writers before she became involved, there was a lack of planning together and less of a bond between the group. Writing was drafted and posted on a blog for comment by readers, as Sandra explained:

> I had only met one of them in real life before participating. We each wrote chapters, posted them to the blog, and readers chose where they should appear in the story. I found it constricting and missed having the over-all sense of shape to the novel. It was well-received by readers but when it was picked up for publishing it needed to be edited, a role I took on but which was hard, with fallings out among the group who were individually protective of their parts. I would not do it again in that way (Platt 2019).

Sandra's insights into her contrasting experiences helped me consider the importance of social contact and connection for the community novel volunteers, and the value of identifying co-authors' respective strengths in order to deploy them to mutual benefit. My design of methods would take account of her advice to play to volunteers' strengths and interests, and to ensure the process was enjoyable, not onerous.

Paul Brodrick

Paul Brodrick's account of radio scriptwriting as part of the team writing for *The Archers* (BBC Radio 4) helped me understand a process of writing a fictional story to a brief. Paul described the role of the 'story-liner' who plans the serial in advance, breaking it down into six weekly episodes that are assigned to members of the writing team. When I first spoke to Paul in 2019 the Mylor study volunteers had created settings and characters and were starting to explore potential story lines. They were keen to understand how their individual ideas would come together, so my conversation with Paul was timely. It enabled me to understand how a writing team handles a shared resource of characters and plot points, and how the writing comes together seamlessly. The interview recorded on Skype was re-recorded in 2023 on Zoom, for brevity and ease of transcription.

Paul described the experience of attending monthly script meetings "where all the writers are brought in to discuss the storylines. And then four of the writers are sent away to write up a week's worth of episodes because each writer writes a week at a time" (Brodrick 2023). He explained the role of the story-liner who plans ahead: "Possibly a six month or even a

year's worth of material. Their task every month is to provide you with a document that ends up being about 70 or 80 pages long, divided into four weekly chunks", giving the writers a brief to work to. This top-down approach contrasted with the community novel in which, as facilitator, I was eliciting a story from the volunteers, not imposing one. Forward planning and my ability to see ahead in the process, was helping keep the process on track.

Paul observed that writing to an editorial brief was an efficient process, and that there were opportunities to bring his own experiences and insights to the writing, for example in a story line about coercive control in a marriage. Having worked in victim support for a charity supporting people who experienced domestic abuse, he reflected "it's lovely if you are working on something like that and can feel that you've actually made a genuine difference". This led to discussion of opportunities for the writers to bring their own ideas to the planning process, which requires an awareness of past plot events to ensure that new stories are consistent with previous episodes and events in the lives of characters. Paul explained that as a long-running serial, *The Archers* has a shared memory bank in the form of an archive going back 73 years to the earliest episodes. Paul described using the archive as a resource when researching current story lines. He commented "I know that programme about as well as anybody else now, but there are plenty of - what's the phrase? - eagle-eared listeners who will pull you up short if you get some something wrong" (Brodrick 2023).

This was useful insight in relation to the community volunteers' need to stay abreast of detail as their story grew. A repository of material, records of meetings and decisions was to become an essential tool in managing volunteers' tendency to hold onto their own ideas about the physical appearance of, for example, their protagonist. Once there was a record of agreement about the details of personality, tastes and preferences, it was easier to maintain consistency.

Paul mentioned too that listeners sometimes make their own suggestions for story-lines. "That way madness lies", he said, referring to the integrity of the long-running serial. Although the Mylor study was successfully engaging with the wider community in Mylor on some specific plot points, Paul's insight helped me understand the potential for disruption if readers of the novel's serialisation were to be invited to influence further plot. The volunteers would, in any case, be working too far ahead for a monthly serialisation to keep up with their pace.

4.5 Conclusions

As a body of data, the interviews and conversations provided insights into the multimodal role of the writing group facilitator, and into the affordances and drawbacks of co-authorship. The conversations with Anne Taylor, Belona Greenwood and Jen Alexander provided insights into practice by peers facilitating community writing groups. They confirmed that traditional methods in such groups are not necessarily designed to impart creative writing craft skill, but that playful drafting, sharing and discussion, facilitated with ground rules in a space that is perceived as safe and non-judging, help build trust and group cohesion. The point was made variously by all three, that there is social and personal value in membership of a writing group. The trust established through the writing process fuels that. Jen Alexander's personal concerns about collaboration, and the need to preserve her own writing voice, raised questions about management of a larger group, which would be examined during the community novel study: questions to do with individuals' attitudes to the negotiation of story, and their ability to join in with consensus.

The collaborative writing partnership described by Sandra Platt showed how complementary skills and aptitudes can be put to productive and mutually-supportive use, with a shared plan to follow. The example of *The Archers* demonstrated the value of editorial systems and shared information resources. Paul Brodrick's account of drawing on an archive of material pointed to the value of shared notes, time lines, plot points and background information for the community novel. Such a knowledge bank would first have to be created, then maintained: a potentially heavy work load for the lone writer-facilitator, unless it could be reframed as a form of empowerment, with volunteers taking responsibility for aspects of it. Chapter 6 recounts how this was resolved.

From my own career experience of professional writing as, for example, a copywriter in marketing, a report writer and speech writer, I reflected on the way in which collaboration in such activities is a cultural norm in the workplace. Individual writers, exemplified by Jen Alexander, are more protective of their autonomy. Reflecting further, I could see that my early professional experience as a copywriter and, later, a corporate report writer and a political speech writer, made me used to working to a brief and not necessarily having the final say on a piece of writing. In a professional context, that privilege belongs to the client or commissioner of the writing. The content benefits from multiple contributors in a team effort, although briefing and production processes must be carefully managed. For the

community novel, this suggested a need to establish methods and routines within a participatory process that would contain multiple interdependent tasks and the need for joint decisions.

Whichever camp a writer occupies, solo or collaborative, the community novel challenges the sole author's hegemony. Webb (2008: 117) notes that students asked to collaborate in the classroom will initially resist, not realising how much professional writing is collaborative. This was not an issue for the community novel volunteers because from the outset the clear invitation was to write a novel together. It was, however, an issue for some participants, as some of the examples in two short studies I shall next describe in Chapter 5, will illustrate.

CHAPTER 5: TWO SHORT PAR STUDIES

5.1 Overview

Two short PAR studies were conducted to introduce digital methods to community writing group practice, and to use methods of collaborative writing with a group who usually wrote as individuals. The first study, described in 5.2, took place in June 2018 with members of the St Agnes Writing Group, an established community writing group of village residents, mostly of retirement-age. The study made use of Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, and texting on smartphones. Four two-hour sessions were held.

5.3 gives an account of the second short study which took place during May and June 2019 with English A Level students at T&PC. This was an opportunity to conduct research with young adults who, I assumed, would be familiar with social media and smartphone apps. In actuality, the students' preferences for writing tools challenged my age-related assumptions.

5.4 summarises knowledge gained from both studies, which informed the design of the Mylor study in which I facilitated co-creation of a community novel.

5.2. St Agnes Writing Group: introducing digital methods and co-authorship to an established community writing group

The St Agnes study took place during June 2018. I designed it in order to:

1. Introduce methods using smartphones and apps with a community writing group whose customary practice is to write with pen and paper.
2. Gain insight into some methods of facilitating co-authorship.
3. Reflect with participants on the use of smartphones and apps.

The study's sessions took place with seven members of the writing group at the St Agnes Miners and Mechanics Institute (MMI). The venue is a village community centre with a café and meeting rooms, typical of venues in which community writing groups meet. I was already known to the group, so was able to reflect with them on the different methods being used. As a qualitative researcher I needed to ensure objectivity, so I took Holliday's advice to "approach their [my] own actions as strangers" (2007: 20), using the combination of field

notes to record events and a journal to reflect on their meaning and insights into my role as facilitator.

The group had previously produced a self-published anthology of individually written short stories, life writing and poetry. They wrote with pens during meetings, and some would type up their drafts at home in order to bring copies back to the group for workshopping. In a departure from the norm, I asked those who had them, to bring their laptops, iPads and smartphones to the sessions, as well as pen and paper. I gave reassurance that they would be helped to use unfamiliar apps and could choose whether to type or write.

Approaching this study, I was mindful of Bau Graves' advice, cited in Chapter 2, to "know your community" (2005: 42). Two members of the group did not type, two did not have smartphones, one did not use social media, and another used it only by sharing her husband's Facebook account. Any methods I designed would need to be inclusive, therefore, and not solely digital without giving thought to alternatives for the non-digital participants. I selected the social media apps Pinterest, Facebook and Instagram, and SMS texting, as potentially familiar tools for co-authorship, and to assess the degree of coaching that might be needed from me as facilitator, for individuals who were new to them. My own familiarity with Instagram was limited so this would be a further test of my capacity to facilitate with it. For me as well as members of the writing group, social media apps would be an innovation of the type described by Bateson and Martin: "a novel form of behaviour or a novel idea, regardless of its practical uptake and subsequent application" (2013: 3). In other words, it was of value to my research rather than something the group might be expected to adopt in its future meetings.

The participants signed their consent (Chapter 5 Appendix A) to being cited in this thesis. No one requested anonymity, so the account that follows uses their first names: Andy, Fiona, Jenny, Kate, Lin, Sandra, and Thurstan. The groups in three of the sessions were small, with just two or three participants, because of availability on the day. This proved a benefit, however, enabling me to observe the small number closely while also facilitating.

Data collection

The St Agnes study took place before the Mylor community novel study began, so I used the opportunity to design methods of data collection, mentioned earlier, which could be used

in that longer study. My sessions with participants were documented in field notes with accompanying examples of writing produced during the sessions, and material produced using the apps. I took handwritten notes discreetly during the sessions, and made further notes by hand immediately afterwards. After some time for further reflection these were typed up the next day using a template I designed in the light of advice from Holliday (2007: 62-63) and Miller and Dingwall's insight that "Treating methodological choices as standpoints also directs attention to how some of the most important interpretive possibilities of qualitative studies are established prior to data collection" (1997: 6). My research intentions needed to be captured, as well as observations of what was done, and reflections on the experience of facilitation. Participants' reflections on methods would form further data. Discussions at the end of three of the sessions were recorded using my smartphone voice memo app and subsequently transcribed. These conversations were unstructured, enabling spontaneous reflections on the research activities. The consent form included permission for me to cite them in my data.

Preparation

Planning for the sessions included a risk analysis. Two risks required mitigation planning: first, the failure or absence of Wi-Fi, for which my contingency was to work off-line, and second the risk that familiarity between the group and me, would mean they tried to please me, potentially leading to bias. To mitigate this, I made some practical changes to my usual ways of hosting their group. For example, I used a different room in the MMI and changed the room layout so I was not seated at the head of the table. Laptops and smartphones would normally be out of sight but instead I specified that they should be visible on the table, as we would be using them. When the participants arrived for the first session the new room layout was immediately commented upon: "'This looks different', said Fiona" (St Agnes study field note, 1/6/18). Despite the new seating arrangement, Lin was wary of my motives:

> When Lin arrived she said 'it's like walking into the head mistress's study,' although she explained this was more to do with the idea of a research session which sounded to her like school. It broke the ice and she quickly relaxed (St Agnes study field note, 1/6/2018).

The risk of bias if participants tried to please me when tackling tasks was further mitigated with a ground rule in which I emphasised that whatever they did during the sessions would be of value.

In preparation for the sessions I set up private accounts in Pinterest, Instagram and Facebook, in order to use them as part of writing exercises I designed to try new methods and adapt some of my own from traditional practice. As anticipated, the participants required some coaching in order to use them, and this was an opportunity to learn together, in the "*co-intentional* education" advocated by Freire (1993: 43). Being only slightly familiar with Instagram myself, this enabled us to reflect together in Freire's manner of "not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement" (ibid). We agreed at the outset that if someone was unsure how to use an app we would help each other. As an example of how this quickly became necessary, I emailed instructions to help the participants join the private groups, but my optimism that they could do this on their own was immediately tested. Lin emailed me the day before the first session to say she was having difficulty finding "the right Instagram" (St Agnes study field note, 1/6/18). I sent her a link but she was still uncertain, so Fiona and I helped her when we met for the session.

I chose to use private social media groups in order to engage the group in tasks without interruption. If our activities were visible to the wider social network, co-authorship among the group risked being diluted by unknown people joining in and commenting. This would be unsettling for participants who were first time users of social media, and I considered there to be an ethical dimension in terms of safeguarding and confidentiality, both in my facilitation role and as a researcher. Private groups ensured that only those who were part of the study could see what we produced.

I designed a written plan setting out the purpose, timings and methods to be used in each two-hour session. These used the model familiar to me from previous practice and typically included:

1. an introduction to the topic and digital methods we would be using
2. a warm up exercise, writing quickly using pens for familiarity
3. an exercise using an app
4. a break for tea and coffee, and to reflect together on the exercise
5. a longer practical exercise to develop what had already been produced, mixing methods of writing with pens and the app, or to introduce another method
6. Group discussion about the methods used.

Sources for digital methods included, for example, Barnard (2019), Kelly (1996) and Clark, Trent and Hergenrader (2015). These required adaptation for community writing group practice, and for collaboration, most being aimed at students and individual writers in the sources. As a practicing writer-facilitator I was able to bring tacit knowledge to the design of writing exercises that incorporated new methods.

On several occasions the field notes record a moment of quick thinking when a method was met with bafflement or frustration, such as when Instagram proved slow to use in the way intended (St Agnes study field note, 11/6/18). At this point I was yet to interview Belona Greenwood (Chapter 4) but had heard about her participants' unwillingness to use digital methods. Based on hers and my own practice experience, I was prepared for some stumbling blocks. Illich's comment about people becoming "dwarfed" by "new social tools" (2001: 29), implied a risk with methods that were unfamiliar and therefore could be overwhelming. I decided I would not insist on, but would encourage, use of the apps in a playful and novel way. I was open to subverting their original design purpose: to operate, according to Bateson and Martin, "between two styles of thought […] diverging and converging" (2013: 55).

Ground rules

Even with people used to writing together in a group, ground rules were important to ethical practice and research integrity. I was asking these volunteers to depart from their usual modes of writing, so with this in mind, I elicited ground rules at the start, based on their normal way of working, but with some new features:

- Everything is draft, you cannot do it 'wrong'
- Be respectful of your own writing and others', no critiquing and no self-judging
- Be supportive of each other and respect what we share in the room
- If something is difficult, ask for clarification
- It does not matter if something does not work, it is all useful for this research
- We will help each other.

I provided justification in Chapter 2 for a facilitator's decision about whether or not to join in with the writing in a group. I chose to join in with some of the group work in the first two St Agnes study sessions, to add to the small number of participants and also to experience Pinterest and Instagram for myself in co-design. This demonstrated my willingness to experiment and get it wrong, and encouraged the participants to join in without fear of

making mistakes. As Fiona observed, “It feels as if you’re doing this with us, not to us” (St Agnes study field note, 11/6/18).

The following account draws on field notes and related visual and written material produced during the sessions. The exercises in each of the four meetings are set out in a format that can be replicated by other facilitators. This will be discussed further in Chapter 8 which sets out guidance for writer-facilitators of community groups collaborating to make a novel. The term ‘facilitator’ refers to my role as writer-facilitator and researcher. Where ‘we’ is used, it refers to interactions between me and the volunteer participants.

St Agnes study 1, 1 June 2018

Three participants were due to take part but one became unavailable on the day. Fiona and Lin took part.

Exercise 1: 30 minutes. Create a setting using local scenes and features

Tools for writing: pen and paper, iPad

Facilitator’s prompts:

- Ask participants to make their own notes about local scenes based on their individual knowledge of St Agnes. 5 minutes
- Ask them to choose one scene to focus on in more detail and make rough notes in response to the following questions:
    - What can be seen, heard, smelt, tasted and felt in the place you are thinking about?
    - How do its features change at dawn, noon, twilight and midnight?

  10 minutes
- Invite participants to share what they have written, listening to each other and noting any words and features their descriptions have in common. This creates the beginning of a description to which they have all contributed.
- Set it aside for now, to return to later.

Fiona and Lin followed my prompts and shared their descriptions, which took 20 minutes. I posed some questions about their use of social media, for another 10 minutes.

Questions for discussion:

- Do you use social media?
- Which apps do you use, for example Facebook, Instagram or Twitter?
- How do you use it?

In discussion, both said they enjoyed using Facebook to communicate with friends and family. Fiona used Pinterest to collect ideas for decorating her camper van and found it relaxing, often becoming lost in the process. She had an Instagram account but rarely used it. Lin had not heard of Instagram or Pinterest before this exercise.

The note making and discussion established a basis for the next exercise, which I designed in order to try the use of a private Instagram group to make a visual story, working in relay. This method was suggested by a reference of Barnard's (2019:14), to visual poems on the Instagram hashtag #instapoets. Rather than repeat this, I adapted a method in which I had previously used paint sample cards, available for free from DIY stores. The colours and the names given in text on each card are suggestive of stories. I had used them in group poem exercises, and for nano-fictions, but now adapted them as prompts for a collaboration in Instagram. This was to prove ambitious.

Exercise 2: 20 minutes. Make a visual story in Instagram
Tools for writing: Instagram private group, smartphones, iPad, paint sample cards.
Facilitator's prompts:

- Spread a select of paint sample cards on the table and ask participants to choose three each which fit together as a three-line story
- Photograph each card on smartphones and caption them using the text on the colour card.

This was immediately problematic. Fiona and Lin had no difficulty choosing the cards, arranging them in order and writing their captions. Both found that they could only post publicly, however. Their posts did not show up in the private thread, despite them having joined the group set up for the purpose of the exercise. Fiona and I tried to find a solution and help Lin. It worked eventually, Lin and Fiona both having left and re-joined the private group. The images were posted, but the process had been slow and laborious. I sensed their frustration and noted the time lost in resolving the difficulty.

Instead of continuing with the app, I paused the exercise and moved to the contingency plan, continuing the story off-line with the following prompts:

- Shuffle the paint cards and give each participant (working in a pair), a deck each.
- Ask participants to choose a card from the top of their decks.
- Invite them to use the colour and the text on the card as prompts to carry on writing by hand for five minutes.
- Repeat this three times, with a new card each from the tops of their decks.
- Invite the participants to read out what they have written.
- Discuss potential connections between the emerging stories.

Fiona's cards were called Biscuit Crumbs, Silk Camisole, and Ginger Kitten. Lin's were Pocket Full of Promises, Thick as Thieves, and Cousin Claire. When they shared their writing, two distinct stories emerged: Lin's about a group of male friends in a pub, and Fiona's about a young woman getting dressed to go out. In discussion, they agreed that the young woman, Sophie, could be related to Vince, one of the men in the pub. Having arrived at this connection, I asked them to continue writing for five minutes. They shared again, finding further connections, then carried on writing for a further ten minutes.

Figure 2 shows a screenshot of part of the thread.

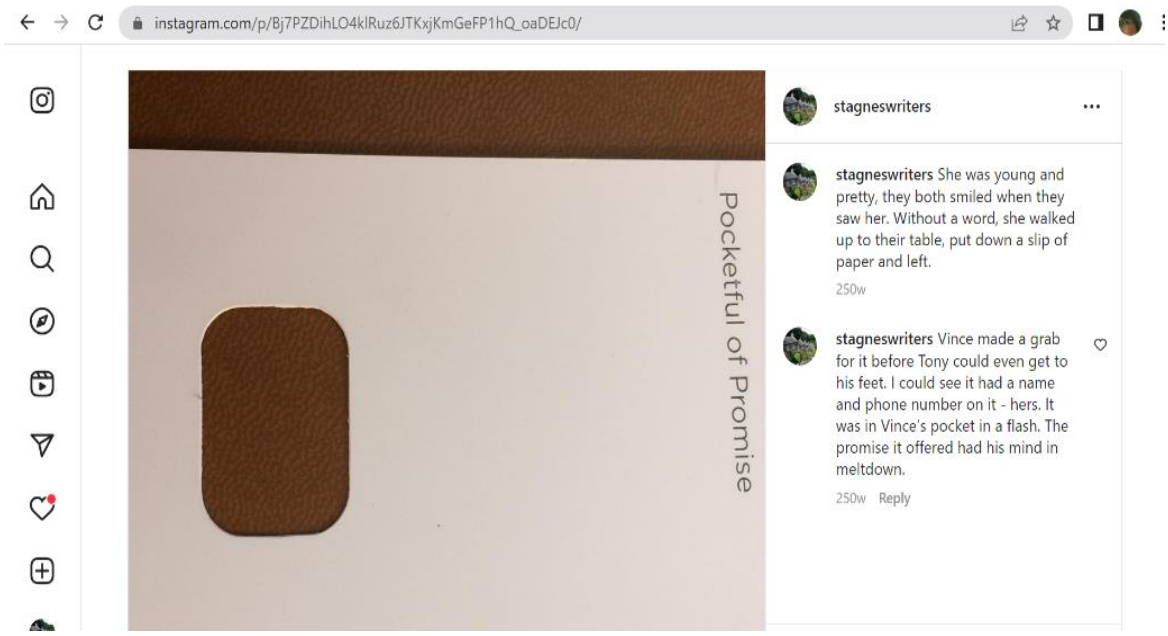


Figure 2: A paint colour sample used as a story prompt

The pattern of writing, sharing, discussing, finding connection and writing again, in an iterative cycle, produced synergy. Their stories began to overlap and they brought Sophie and Vince together in a phone call. In the process of drafting, Fiona had realised that Sophie was searching for her birth father, having been told by her cousin Claire (from the name on the paint card) that she was adopted. Lin had fleshed out her male characters in the pub as lifelong friends who had been Rockers or Mods in their youth. In the transcription from their handwritten drafts that follows, the words underlined signify the paint sample card texts used as prompts, which found their way into the story:

Lin's draft:

Tony and his best friend Vince are as thick as thieves. They've been regulars at the cafe I own for many years. They were Rockers back then, most of my customers were, and now, like the rest of us, they're ageing men trying to relive those days. They've always been the best of mates, inseparable you might say. Always messing about. On no particular day in May, they came in as usual for a coffee. I thought I'd try to trendy the place up a bit by putting some of those little biscuits on the saucers. Well, they were having none of that. They just scrunched up the biscuits and chucked the crumbs at each other. Tony who's always been the largest one finished up falling off the wine cask, one of the ones I've dotted about the cafe in place of chairs. Added a touch of class you see. Well, they laughed of course, especially when he tried to get up and restore his dignity as Sophie, the young and very pretty Sophie came in. Both men smiled when they saw her. Then without a word she just walked up to their table, put down a slip of paper and left. Vince made a grab for it before Tony could even get to his feet. I could see that the piece of paper had her name and telephone number on it. It was in Vince's pocket in a flash. The promises it offered must have sent his mind into meltdown. Clutching his mobile, Vince made a feeble excuse to leave the cafe and almost before I could say the words, he called Sophie or Ginger Kitten as she was known locally. She's a proper red head and purrs just like a kitten whenever she speaks to a man, any man.

"Hi kitten, Vince here. Did you mean for me to have your number?

"Are you the guy with dark hair?

"I'm blond."

"It's your friend I need to speak to. Is he there?"

"No, he's still in the caf. Sounds like my loss is his gain."

"Sorry... Look let's just forget it. It was a stupid idea."

"No, don't do that. He'll be gutted if I let you go. Go back to the cafe and speak to him."

"Ok I will."

"Great. Two ticks and I'll see you in there."

Fiona's draft:

> She dressed carefully that morning, loving the feel of the silk camisole as it slid over her head and onto her body. It was a beautiful colour, pale and soft, almost identical in tone to her skin. She loved dressing this way, knowing that she was focused only on the wrapping and not, even slightly on any subsequent unwrapping.
>
> She chose her clothes with care but for herself. Tender romance didn't feature in her life at present but she didn't care. She held all the tenderness she needed in her own heart.
>
> Today she would be meeting Cousin Claire, perfect, immaculate Cousin Claire who always managed to make her feel inadequate. Well, not today. Today she would be so much more than adequate.
>
> She stepped out of the door, suited, booted and ready for the day. At the end of the path she turned and looked back at the little weathered cottage she now called home - she still could not believe it was hers, had not got used to the novelty of having somewhere that belonged to her alone.
>
> As she walked, she waved goodbye to her old, bruised, broken self and determined to take control of her life. As she passed the cafe on the corner, she glanced in through the window and saw him, chatting with a friend. She backtracked to the door, disbelieving her own audacity as she handed him a piece of paper with her number on it and just one word. Sophie.
>
> She had barely walked a hundred yards when her phone rang - she answered, nervously, listened and despaired at her own stupidity - how could she have given it to the wrong person. The strong edifice of preparation began to crumble and her hand shook as she explained her error. Maybe she couldn't do this at all. Why did she say she could go back to the cafe? What did she think she could possibly say to him? And she was late for her meeting with Claire. She kept on walking, texting as she went "sorry - please ask your friend to call me. Sophie".
>
> (St Agnes study field note, 1/6/2018)

It was easy to weave the two together into something coherent, although in discussion after the exercise, Fiona and Lin questioned whether this would be difficult with more people. We noted their different writing styles, Lin's brisk tone and Fiona's more intimate voice, revealing Sophie's thoughts. This raised questions for the Mylor study in which multiple contributors could potentially create an unreadable babel, unless there was agreement about style and point of view choice. Questions of how to achieve a consistent voice in co-authorship are discussed as part of the Mylor study.

Reflecting further on our clumsy attempt to use Instagram, Fiona, Lin and I agreed that the app did not work in an intuitive way. We had all found it difficult and I concluded that it was not suitable for the activity I had planned, with my own limited experience of using the app. Neither Fiona nor Lin was keen to persist with it. They preferred off-line writing and said they enjoyed making decisions together about what to keep and what to jettison.

After a break in the session I opened the private Pinterest group and returned to the warm up exercise described earlier, in which Fiona and Lin had made notes about familiar features of St Agnes. My next step was to develop this and use Pinterest to enable them to co-create a fictional setting from which characters could be identified.

Exercise 3, Pinterest as world builder, 40 minutes
Tools for writing: Pinterest, smartphone, iPad, PC, pen and notebook.
Facilitator's prompts:

- Begin by familiarising participants with the app, so that images can be searched for and pinned in the private board.
- Once everyone is confident with the process of pinning, invite them to find and pin images that illustrate the features mentioned in their descriptions of St Agnes (made at the start of the session).
- Once the board is populated, ask them to consider who lives in the setting they are making.

This exercise quickly got underway, with Fiona and Lin on their iPads and me observing on my PC, refreshing the app to keep up with their pins. This turned into a playful and noisy activity, punctuated by their exclamations: a marked difference to the usual hushed silence of a group focused on a writing activity. There was little disagreement about their choices and when Fiona pinned an image of a heavily bearded man with a weathered face and striking blue eyes, this was immediately interesting to Lin as well.

Figure 3 below shows part of the board in progress.

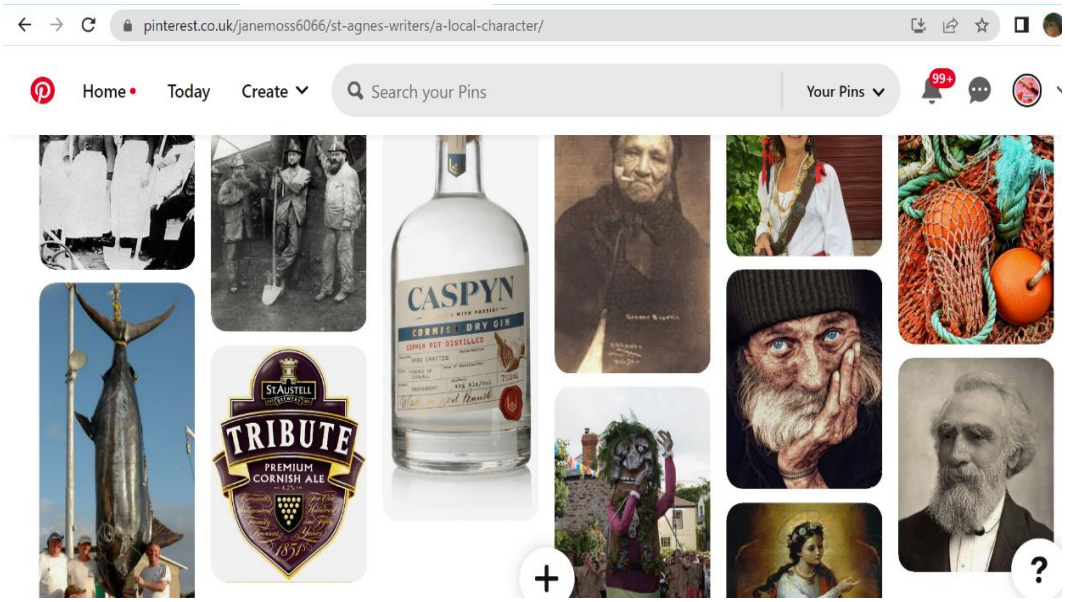


Figure 3: Characters emerging in Pinterest

I paused the exercise to pose questions to develop the character of the blue-eyed man. These were of a type familiar to them from group writing sessions in which I had previously taken them through character building, drawing on methods from, for example, Anderson (2006: 70-85). They wrote down their answers and, when shared, found some strikingly similar responses as well as differences that required discussion. For example, Lin decided the blue-eyed man was a fisherman, but Fiona at first made him a retired chef. After discussion, the points of agreement were:

- This is Amos Trembarth, a local fisherman of some 60 plus years.
- On a typical day, you will find him on the quay near the local lifeboat station, chatting to the crew who once saved his life.
- He is a widower who goes home at night to his cottage where he lives alone.
- The lighter with which he lights his pipe is precious to him, a gift from a sweetheart of many years ago.

We concluded the exercise and reflected on what had been done in the session as a whole. Lin had found Instagram “very confusing, it’s completely new to me so when it went the wrong way I didn’t know how to get out of that” (St Agnes study field note, 1/6/2018). More familiarisation with the app before the exercise would have been useful. She enjoyed Pinterest much more, finding it similar to the way the writing group used images and objects to stimulate writing in weekly meetings.

I asked what they thought about maintaining a Pinterest board in order to work on a shared piece over time. Fiona saw that as:

> a shared starting point and [sic] you've agreed things in the main characters, this is what they look like and this is the setting, and these are some of the things that go with each of these characters and form these characters; like having a walking stick, or the fact that they're a landlord or a fisherman. Yes, I can see that you can begin to build a story board without a story (St Agnes study field note, 1/6/2018).

Pinterest was enabling them to build a shared world that would evolve and give rise to a story. The sense of improvising together was likened by Lin to "a jazz riff" (St Agnes study field note, 1/6/2018).

There was potential for conflict, however. Reflecting on the experience of working with someone else, rather than with her own ideas, Fiona said: "It's […] not knowing what's next, I've just got to set that aside. That's just an interesting thing for me because I'm normally like 'right, where this is heading?' I can't do that" (St Agnes study field note, 1/6/2018). Unilateral control over the story was sacrificed to the collaborative task. We acknowledged this as a feature of writing together: that individuals' creative ideas were vulnerable to change by others in group work. I speculated with them that there could be a Venn diagram-type visual in which the overlapping centre shows where ideas coincide and potentially coalesce. They agreed this could be a helpful way to show consensus and provide a basis for further discussion and writing. This was a point to consider in the Mylor study, in which smart art and mind-mapping proved useful in making visual representations of agreements reached through dialogue.

Talking further about how groups work together, Fiona mentioned "risky shift", the phenomenon noticed by James Stoner (1968: 442-459), in which groups become bolder than individuals, the more they make decisions and act together. Fiona explained:

> In psychology where people work in groups, group think becomes when people stop challenging and end up in a very different place, and risky shift means that people in groups are deciding what to do and for some reason they make much riskier decisions than any of them would have done alone (St Agnes study field note, 1/6/2018).

She provided an example: "So if each of them were given money to invest, for example, they'd all invest it fairly safely. But if you gave them money and told them to invest it as a group, they'd do something like put it on the Grand National" (St Agnes study field note, 1/6/2018). Lin agreed and called this "collective courage". For me, the idea of risky shift

related to the stages of forming, storming and norming in group behaviour (Tuckman 1965). The cautious early stage represents the first steps towards a community of practice in which individuals take hesitant steps towards a working culture. As I reflected in field notes:

> There was an unforced synergy in their thinking in response to prompts. This may be because they know and trust each other and have respect for each other's writing. This plays a part in the ease of their collaboration. In a small cluster like this no one is trying to emerge as leader (St Agnes study field note, 1/6/2018).

Nonetheless, this first attempt at co-creation raised questions about the problems and affordances that would be examined in great depth and with more volunteer numbers in the longer Mylor study.

Concluding the session, I was aware of differences in my role compared to the non-digital norms of facilitation. Using the apps, I became both instructor and coach. I had to be fully in control of the new methods:

> The difference: more time spent preparing, with time to choose and rehearse the use of apps. More consideration given to timing of the session. There is uncertainty in this. I shall need to arrive earlier than I would normally. There is more equipment to carry: laptop, chargers for laptop and iPhone as well as the normal printouts of the programme and my notebook. I have no tech support so have to be ready and confident, with a backup plan if the IT fails, or if people find it hard to use (St Agnes study field note, 1/6/2018).

These observations provided context for remediations in the methods used in the second session, in which Pinterest was used again and a story in relay was begun in a private Facebook group.

St Agnes study 2, June 6 2018: Pinterest and Facebook

Exercise 1: Deepening character with Pinterest, 40 minutes

Tools for writing: Pinterest, Facebook, smartphone, iPad, PC, pen and notebook.

Facilitator's prompts:

- Return to the Pinterest boards created in the first session and choose a character to develop further.
- Ask participants to makes notes individually in response to the following questions:
    - Who is this?
    - What do they do during the day?
    - Where do they sleep at night?

    - Does he have a name?
    - What has been a significant event in their past?
- Share notes and find points on which there is agreement.
- Add more pins to the board to reflect the details that are emerging.

We returned to the blue eyed, weathered character created in the first session. Lin's idea that he should be called Amos Trembarth was readily accepted by Fiona, then I posed the questions above to deepen understanding of him. A back story emerged, involving travels in the Far East and a mysterious lost love. I observed as further pins were added to the board and listened with few interventions as Fiona and Lin discussed their ideas, negotiated, and reached agreement. Fiona's original idea, that he had once been a chef, was set aside, although this would be referred to again later.

My field notes record observations about my role and the growing confidence I saw in the participants' use of Pinterest during this session:

> My own role was that of a watcher as the pins grew, making small interventions to ask questions that were like hints, to stimulate their thinking; but mostly I could observe. The atmosphere was focused, both writing on iPads this time, with soft tapping sounds. It felt unrushed – working at a natural and productive pace (St Agnes field note, 6/6/2018).

After a break I opened the private Facebook group in order to begin some writing in relay.

Exercise 2: Writing in Facebook, 40 minutes

Tools for writing: Facebook, Pinterest, iPad, smartphone.

Facilitator's prompts:

- Amos is taking his boat out
- Describe the day
- What happens?

Fiona and Lin were both regular users of the app, familiar with how to post, and able to write fluently in relay following the prompt provided. Hushed concentration fell in the room, a contrast to the noisy sharing on Pinterest. The story thread moved down the screen as posts were added. I noticed both participants watching to see what the other had written before it was their turn to respond. They were patient with each other, which was a mark of the trust

between them, but I became aware of a difficulty. Sometimes they wrote quickly in response to the previous post, but at other times there was a prolonged pause while they thought about what to write next. Attention could wander in the gaps. There was also a need to refresh screens after posts. I had to remind them to do this. To aid the flow, they decided not to begin a new post each time, but to use the reply box and to number their replies. This helped to maintain the order of the story, as the example in Figure 4 shows.

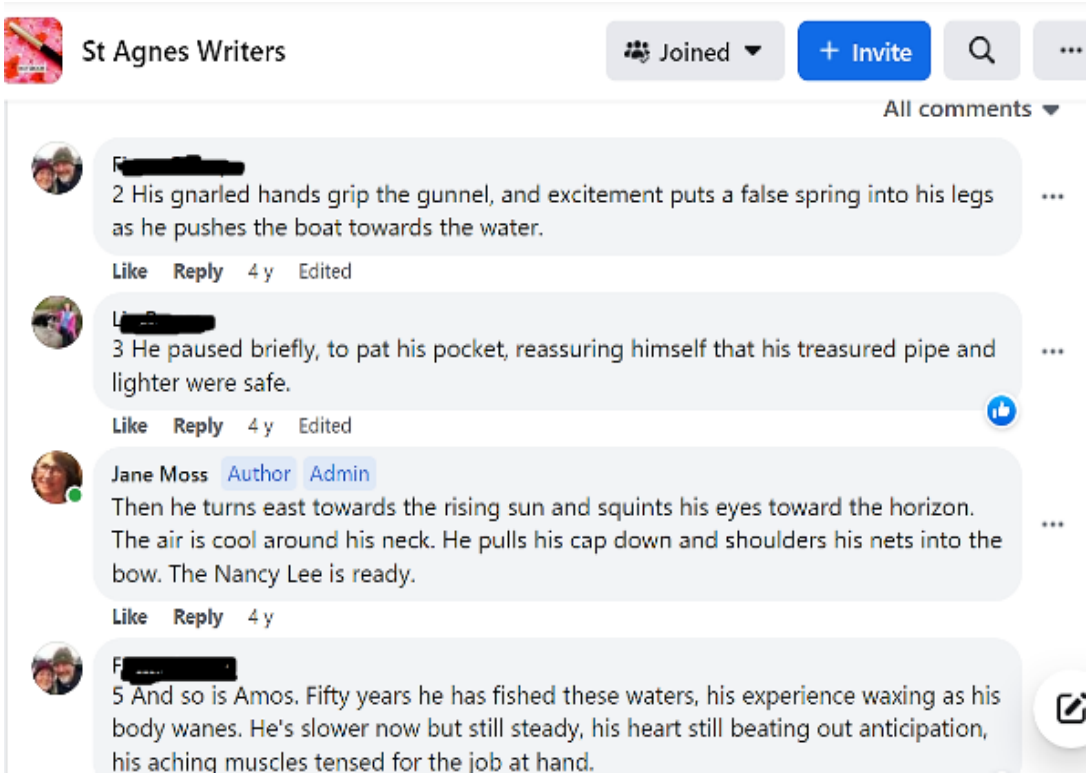


Figure 4: Relay writing in a private Facebook group

A further observation I made at the end of this session was about the time it took "for participants to become familiar with the apps. When they are, confidence grows and they can use their writing skills in this new way (St Agnes field note, 6/6/2018). This insight would prove useful in the design of further digital methods, for example those using Texting Story, a video app, for writing dialogue in the Mylor Study.

Following this second session with just two participants, I prepared for a larger group, with five of the St Agnes Writing Group: Andy, Fiona, Lin, Sandra and Thurstan. Two others, Kate and Jenny, were unable to attend on the day. I booked a larger room in the MMI, with the intention of using the venue's projector to show what Fiona and Lin had done so far. My plan was to explore another method of collaborative writing and to progress the story of

Amos Trembarth. I asked the group to use their laptops, pens or iPads, according to their preference and the resources available to them.

St Agnes Study 3, June 12 2018, co-authorship and 'the cautionary tale of Amos Trembarth'
I decided not to use Pinterest in this session, other than to familiarise Andy, Sandra and Thurstan with the boards already created. This was the basis for the story and their new contributions to it would give me insight into facilitation of co-authorship with the larger group. I had requested use of the venue's projector, but it was missing from its cupboard, so I showed the Pinterest boards on my laptop, passing it around the table while Lin and Fiona explained what they had done so far. This provided context for the rest of the group and showed that this was their story, not mine. We discussed the use of apps and Andy commented that he had recently taken himself off Facebook. He had no desire to rejoin. Thurstan, who did not have a smartphone or iPad, had not heard of the apps and was not sure what they were.

Exercise 1: What's in the box? 40 minutes
Tools for writing: pen and paper, Pinterest.
Facilitator's prompts:

- Ask the group to choose an image from the Pinterest board.
- Adapting an exercise from Peter Sansom's mystery object exercise (Sansom 1997: 74) ask the participants to begin by making notes for five minutes about the image:
    - Describe the box in minute detail from what they can see.
    - Write for five minutes, then share descriptions around the table.
- Ask them to imagine they are entering a room and make more notes, for ten minutes, responding to two further prompts:
    - They see the box and move towards it. What is the atmosphere in the room? What can they see, hear, and smell?
    - They touch the box. What does its surface feel like?
    - Share ideas about the room and the box.
- Ask them to imagine they open the box, responding the further prompts:
    - What do they find inside it?
    - Choose the most important item. Who does it belong to?
    - What is its significance to the owner?
    - Write for ten more minutes, then share.

One of the images pinned in Pinterest was of an old chest. I took this as the starting point. Figure 5 shows the mystery chest, circled below right.

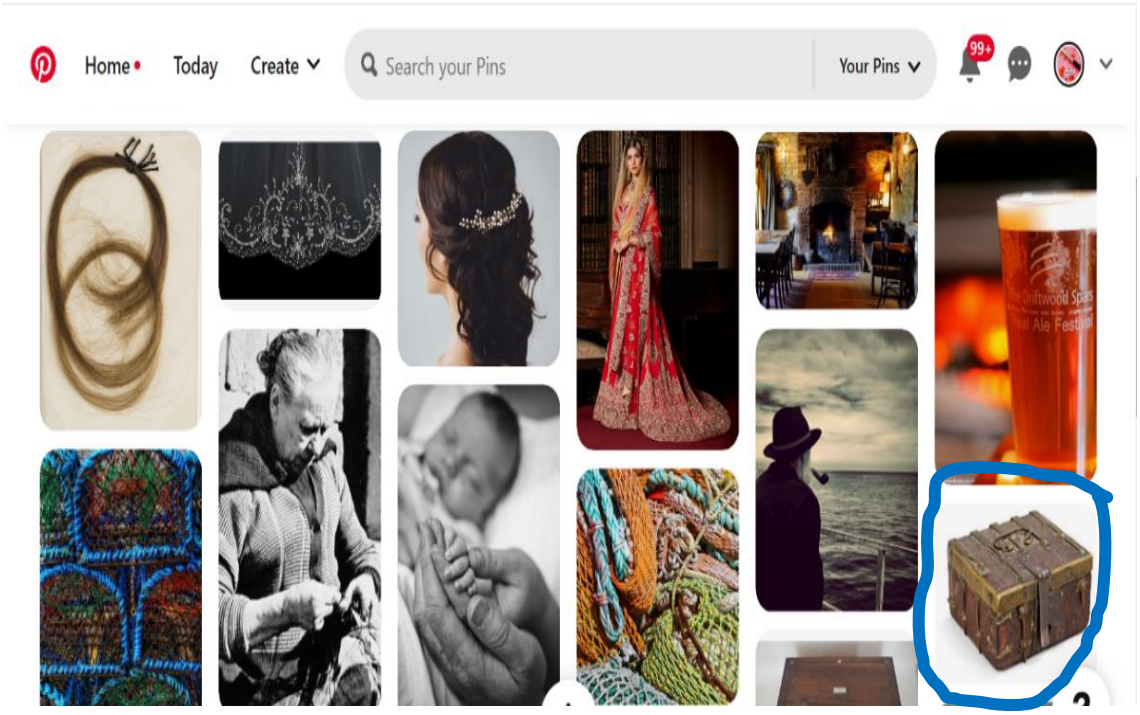


Figure 5: What's in the chest?

When the group shared their descriptions, some acknowledged that they adjusted their original impressions of the chest when they heard others they preferred. The box was described variously as silver, untarnished, and a small, crude replica of a larger box. Seizing on an idea put forward by Lin, they agreed that the box was small, not large as some of them had assumed.

Their ideas about the chest's contents produced a list: a single lock of chestnut hair, a lock of darkest hair, beads, a pearl, something coloured the blue of sadness, and a fragment of a deep dark red wedding gown. In further discussion the group concluded that the box and its contents suggested a lost love, a mystery, a dark-haired woman, and a wedding that may or may not have taken place. As they shared their ideas, I added more pins to the board, representing their suggestions of, for example, the lock of hair and a women dressed in a red sari. The discussion that arose from the shared writing was mostly dialogic (Sennett 2012), with only occasionally differing views from which agreement eventually arose. I attributed the group's congruence I attributed this to their familiarity with each other. The longer and more complex Mylor study would test this further.

The story of the fisherman Amos Trembarth was becoming a mysterious romance. Thurstan felt it risked cliché but others argued it was sufficiently intriguing to explore further. Fiona again commented that she was not sure how she felt about 'her' character, the chef, as she had originally conceived him, developing in ways "that I'm not sure I want to write about" (St Agnes study fieldnote, 12/6/2018). She admitted she found it hard to let go of her idea, but agreed to fall in with the majority.

After a short break I facilitated the co-writing of a night time scene, using an audio recording which I played on my PC from YouTube, as a prompt. The exercise was designed to achieve further insight into collaborative writing, in order to apply it to methods for the Mylor study.

Exercise 2: a co-authored night time scene, 30 minutes
Tools for writing: pens and notebooks, audio recording
Facilitator's prompts:

- Share details from the setting described in the first session (based on St Agnes)
- Play the audio of the opening of *Under Milk Wood* by Dylan Thomas (Thomas 1954) on PC or smartphone. Ask the participants to listen carefully and make a note of images and effects of language.
- When the extract ends, invite them to share what they have noted and discuss how to combine their contributions into a shared night time scene.
- Invite participants to write for 10 minutes from the prompt 'It is night…'.
- Ask them to choose their favourite line and write it on a piece of paper.
- Ask them to arrange these on the table into a group poem.

When the St Agnes writers shared their thoughts about how to write a combined piece, suggestions included taking extracts from each to create a patchwork, or passing a single sheet of paper round the group, so that each person could contribute. The group poem that emerged from their individually produced lines required little further editing by the participants:

A man smokes a cigarette.
This was once his house: the open hearts of the young,
the Atlantic-furied hill, the comfort of the churchyard.
Black velvet sky
Clocks tick, men snore, women sigh

Quenched green, put out like a bin,

heavy heaving deep dark night

The stars appear nervously

A baby cries

Kindness and familiarity

Not everyone sleeps, not everything stops,

in awe at its beauty.

(St Agnes study field note, 12/6/2018)

Following the session, I made a word cloud from the terms individuals contributed to the group poem:

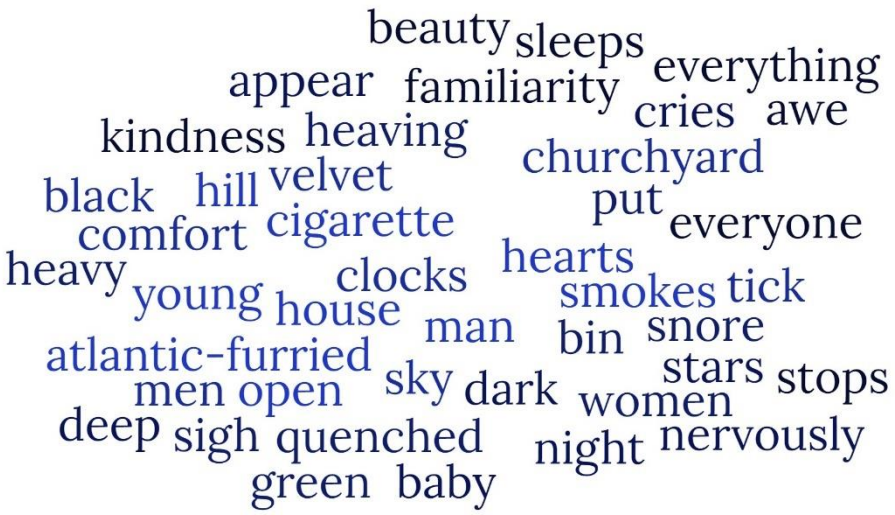


Figure 6: Night word cloud, St Agnes study, 12/6/2018

My purpose was to bring the individual writing together into a unified visual text. In this example, each word was used once, so has equal weight in the word cloud. This technique would be used again in the Mylor study, for a group poem and as a visual representation of consensus.

The session concluded with discussion about how co-authorship would work with larger numbers. Andy, Thurstan and Fiona felt there might be an optimum number to make it work,

and that too many would be difficult. We considered the possibility of breaking a story down into parts with clusters of participants working on them before bringing them together. Reference was made to *The Archers*, the BBC Radio 4 serial drama, and situation comedies written by pairs and teams. We speculated about taking responsibility for story lines and specific characters, and the challenges implicit in taking on aspects of plot developed by others in a team. At this point I had yet to speak to Paul Brodrick (Chapter 4), but the conversation with the St Agnes Writers helped me define topics for that interview.

This third session was informative in terms of how material and draft writing could be generated through collaboration. The atmosphere was playful and the use of Pinterest, the Sansom exercise, and audio to stimulate writing, worked well. Those without digital devices were fully engaged and the use of the app was a novelty to the established group. The only drawback was the unexpected lack of a projector, but passing round my laptop proved less formal than presentation to the large screen.

There was a postscript to the session, which became known among the participants as 'the cautionary tale of Amos Trembarth'. I had suggested that posting in the private Facebook group might continue after the session, being interested to see whether Fiona, Lin or others would carry on without me. I invited Sandra to the Facebook group, as she expressed an interest. Later that evening I noticed activity in Facebook. Sandra was continuing the story of Amos, out at sea in his boat, when a storm blew up. She was about to drown him in her writing, when Lin intervened to change the course of the scene and save him. Without Lin's intervention, Sandra would have unilaterally killed him off. I watched this drama unfold and reflected on the tension it revealed between individual and group control of a story. This unexpected episode showed the importance of narrative planning and synchronous co-creation, which would be explored further in the Mylor study.

Kate and Fiona took part in the final session, with Lin joining in for part of it. My plan was to facilitate the writing of dialogue using SMS texting. I wanted to see whether texting, with its own conventions, could produce effective dialogue through role playing the fictional characters. The brevity of texting could, I speculated, provide a form of containment for what might normally result in loose drafting that required heavy editing. Design of the exercise used the Netprov method in Chicago Soul Exchange's case study in which "A core

group of writers played the leading roles working from a plot outline" (in Clark et al, 2015: 156-157).

Session 4, texting dialogue, Friday 15 June 2018
Exercise 1: Developing Amos's family, 30 minutes
Tools for writing: smartphones, pens and notebooks.
Facilitator's prompts:

- Take a character from the story (for example Amos Trembarth), and recap details about how they have evolved so far.
- Ask the participants to write about the character for ten minutes, from the question: 'who are they close to?'
- Share what has been written, discuss and reach agreement about details to adopt.

Writing about Amos, Fiona and Kate came up with grandchildren: two little boys, aged five and six, named Tyler and Cameron. With my further questioning, Amos's daughter and son were given the names Bella and Jake. A strong bond existed between father and daughter. Amos had chosen her name because it was a link to his past, possibly to the mysterious woman who had emerged from the box exercise in the previous session.

Kate and Fiona speculated further, deciding Amos's wife had been homely in contrast to the woman in Amos's past. Since his wife's death Amos had been alone. Now he wanted to go in search of the other woman. It was possible that they had married when young. Kate suggested he had later committed bigamy, or perhaps they had been prevented from marrying. Perhaps he would now tell his daughter. The speculations continued with a fluidity that was possible because key features of Amos's life had been previously agreed, giving them foundations to build upon.

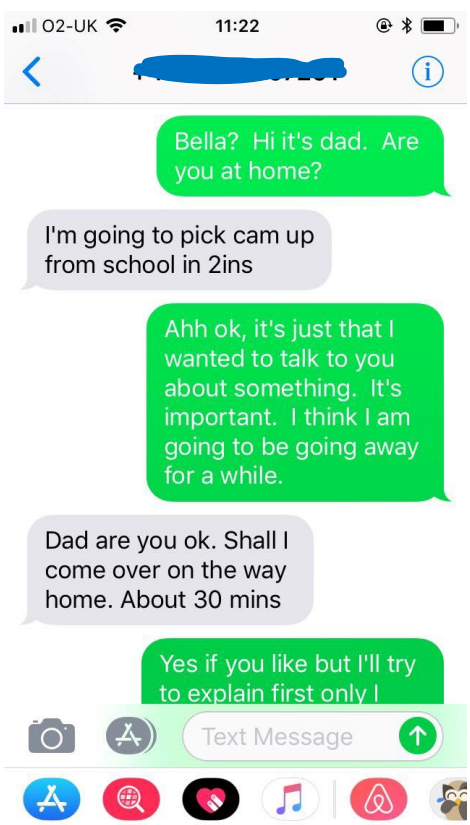
Exercise 2: Using text messages to write dialogue, 30 minutes
Tools for writing: smartphones.
Facilitator's prompts:

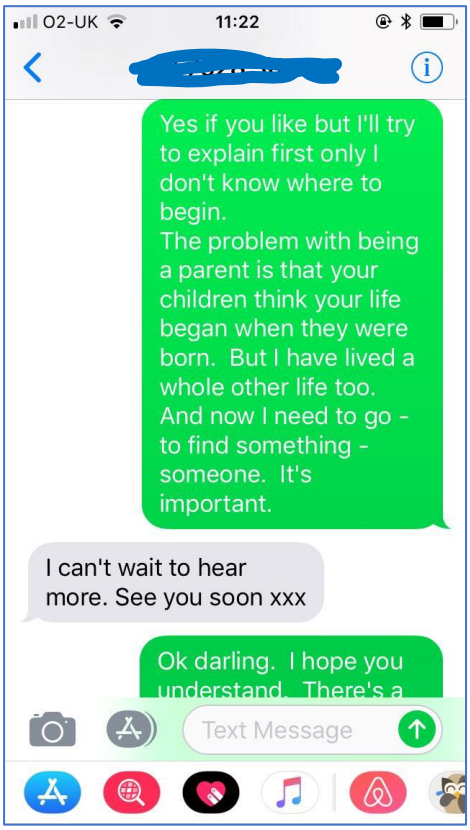
- After discussion about the characters, prepare to write a piece of dialogue between two people, to be conducted using SMS text.
- Agree who will start the conversation and what they want to talk about.

- Use text as normal, with emojis. If there are mistakes in typing or predictive texting, do not correct them.

Kate and Fiona agreed on a text conversation between Amos and his daughter Bella. Amos (Fiona) would start the conversation, eager to tell Bella (Kate) something important. They exchanged contacts on their smartphones but there was no mobile signal in the room, so I quickly suggested they go downstairs to find a signal. I decided not to accompany them but to see how they would fare without me. They returned after 20 minutes with a short piece of dialogue in their phones. One had texted from the MMI and the other from a bench outside the building. Both had used predictive text. It was clear from Fiona's brisk texting as Bella that she was in a hurry, using short words and abbreviations of the type common in texting. As Amos, Kate wrote in fuller sentences which, she felt, were appropriate for his age.

The examples in Figure 7 below show some extracts from the texts:





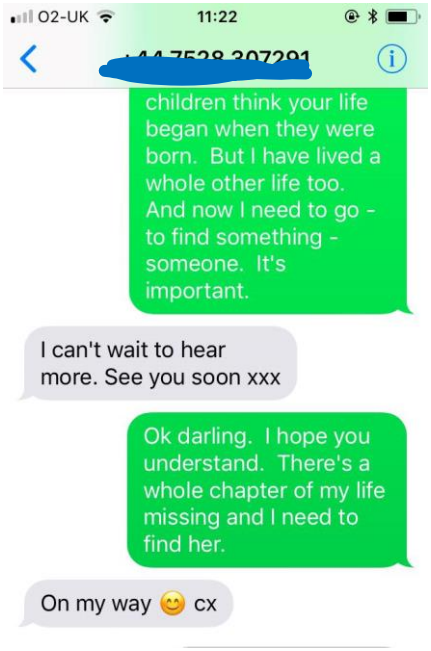


Figure 7: SMS texts between Amos and Bella

Exercise 3: Relay writing in Facebook, 20 minutes

When Lin arrived for the second half of the session, she, Kate and Fiona began a short scene in the private Facebook group, Bella arriving at Amos's cottage to find out what he wants to tell her. Kate was less familiar with the app and posted slowly on her laptop. She had some difficulty when Facebook did not save her posts and it became frustrating for her so I drew the exercise to a close.

In discussion we reviewed the four sessions, the challenges of writing together, individual and group investment in characters and other content, and the fun of improvising using Pinterest, the colour cards and the group writing in Session 3. They all expressed interest in further writing together. Fiona liked the way we had used Pinterest and intended to use it for her own writing. We talked about ways to plan a longer story, agreeing that plotting together was important, so that everyone could write with a shared understanding of the story. Fiona suggested a role of 'story-keeper' to maintain a watchful eye over developments and disruption. We noted the value of working in small clusters and pairs so that people had time to develop a shared written style, which they considered important to the readability of co-written text.

Conclusions to the St Agnes study

Although brief and with a small number of participants, the study proved timely and informative, with insights that influenced design of the Mylor study. There was a need to familiarise myself and the participants with the apps to be used, and to be ready to act as coach and modeller, taking a positivist and playful attitude to trying new methods. The study showed the importance of managing participants' expectations. Fiona, for example, commented that she would have liked to have known what they were going to produce, whether something complete or fragments. The fragments produced in the four sessions were, she said, "useful as potential parts of something bigger", but she was "not sure they would ever complete a larger piece" (St Agnes Study field note, 18/6/18). This suggested a need to scope the longer Mylor study with care and to be clear with participants about the scale of the novel-making process.

In terms of the writer-facilitator role, I was able to observe differences and similarities between working with and without apps and digital equipment. I was able to deploy some multimodal methods combining Pinterest and Facebook with traditional methods of pen and laptop, and with smartphones, and to discuss their efficacy with the volunteers. Instagram was less successful and I decided not to use it in the Mylor study.

I noted that it took longer than usual to plan and set up the sessions, and there were new elements for me to manage within them: for example, coaching in the apps to be used and consideration of how to include those who were not users of social media apps. I noted the extra reliance on equipment, such as the projector, which might not function or be available when needed. The unreliability of the mobile phone signal was a further factor to consider. Planning for contingencies was essential if digital methods were to be integrated into practice. Taking place early in my research, the study enabled me to take small steps, mixing digital and traditional methods in ways that were inclusive. I experienced for myself, and observed in the participants, some frustrations, but also the enjoyment of methods which were novel and entertaining. The use of Pinterest, Facebook and SMS texting expanded my toolkit as writer-facilitator. My own confidence and sense of play was boosted, and I was able to speculate further on ways to use these and other apps in the Mylor study. Having dipped my toes in the multimodal waters, I felt, like Barnard, "better equipped to not merely tackle but instead embrace the challenges and opportunities that come with new media technologies, and to begin to enjoy the possibilities" (2019: 5).

As well as its efficacy as a collaborative platform for fictional world building, Pinterest served as a repository for shared ideas. Features of the writing could be traced back to pins that provided initial inspiration, and from which consensus was built through improvisation and discussion. We achieved a simple but effective process: using apps, pens and the colour card prompts to begin rough writing; pausing to share, discuss and plan; agreeing a way forward, writing more to grow the story, and then repeating the cycle of sharing, discussing and agreeing. The flow of a session could be disrupted if someone struggled with an app, but there was a fruitful tension between using the apps as they were intended (for example Facebook as a social media platform), and finding ways to adapt them to my purpose (using Facebook for writing in a private group). The technology did not distract once the users became confident in collaborative methods. In customary practice laptops and phones would be put away or turned to silent mode. Now they had been adapted, and adopted, as convivial tools for the task at hand, alongside but not necessarily replacing pens.

The St Agnes study made me conjecture whether the age of the participant group had a bearing on the viability of introducing digital methods. I wanted further insight into whether preferences for writing with pens or laptops was age-related, and whether a combination, according to personal preference, could be workable. The opportunity to facilitate a group of young adults in a further short study was therefore timely.

5.3 Truro and Penwith College: a short study with apps and pens

Context and participants

Four one-hour sessions were held over Thursday lunchtimes in the English classroom, in April and May 2019. Six students took part and signed their consent for their data to be used in this thesis. An information sheet and consent form are in Appendix B to Chapter 5. The opportunity to conduct the study was provided by Dr Sian Gaston, Lecturer in English and Creative Writing at the College, and a resident of Mylor Parish. Dr Gaston had read about the community novel (the Mylor study, then underway) in the local Parish news, and was a member of a village book group to whom I had spoken about the community novel project. She invited me to run four sessions of one hour each with students who were studying A Level English with Creative Writing. Safeguarding required her to be present in the room while I ran the sessions, removing the need for me to undergo an advanced DBS check.

Aims

The timing of the study in April and May 2019 meant that knowledge could be transferred directly into the Mylor Parish study. I selected methods, some of which would provide comparison with the Mylor study, and others which would serve as rehearsals for methods I hoped to use, for example:

- World building using the Chicago Second City comedy improvisation technique
- The What3Words mapping app as a digital method to support worldbuilding
- Facebook as a repository for text and images
- Collaborative narrative planning using short structured scenes

Data collection

As before, data was collected in my handwritten notes during and immediately after the sessions, and typed up the following day. College safeguarding prohibited me from audio-recording.

Preparation

I followed my usual practice of preparing plans for the sessions with contingencies in case of problems with technology and other unanticipated events. I requested permission to use the College's social media accounts and for the students to join a private Facebook group.

Session 1, 25 April 2019, 12.35pm-1.35pm

At the start, time was spent establishing the group and attempting to set up the private Facebook group, before facilitating an exercise in world building. Five participants took part of whom one wished not to be named. For the purposes of this written account the names Jack, Jas, Freya, Lydia, and Alex (a pseudonym) are used. I met the group around a table on one side of the English study room. Dr Gaston worked with other students, not part of the study, on the other side of the room, an arrangement that worked well, despite my concern about noise distraction. The layout enabled Dr Gaston to observe my group in her safeguarding role and the students were used to being in a room with more than one activity taking place. The arrangement was new to me, but not to them.

When I arrived, I learned from Dr Gaston that safeguarding meant I could not have access to the College's social media after all. She was apologetic, having previously believed it would not be a problem. Instead, the students would need to set up accounts separate to their

personal social media in order to take part. We agreed that I could set up a private group on my own Facebook account, ask the students to set up their new accounts and then accept my invitation. Dr Gaston would join the group as well, to observe.

The College had provided laptops for the students to use, but these proved problematic, being unfamiliar and slow. There was no cable with which to connect my laptop to the digital white board in the classroom, so my plan to use that was abandoned. These practical difficulties required quick thinking and a move to contingencies in order to run a first session that would still be rich in content for the participants and fulfil the research aim. The need to trouble-shoot IT problems took up time and was a distraction for everyone.

With just an hour for the meeting I opted to work off-line rather than in Facebook. It was more important to get the study underway. Fortunately, the students were eager to engage with the process and quickly complied with my directions. I had designed the main exercise of this session in order to try an improvisation technique from comedy (Libera 2004: 23) in which each person must agree with the statement made before theirs, and say the words 'yes and' before giving their own contribution. The purpose is to build a scenario without rejecting any ideas and I wanted to see if this was effective before trying it with the Mylor study group, who tended to need reassurance before trying something unfamiliar. The students, by comparison, were used to team working and to following instructions in the classroom.

I shall describe the session in the format used for the St Agnes study, setting out exercises with a commentary on the process and discussion with the participants.

Exercise 1: the elements of a story, and 'yes and' improvisation for world building
Tools for writing: pens and notebooks, laptops.
Facilitator's prompt:

- What are the main elements of a story?

The students mentioned character, theme, scene, and plot or action, to which we added setting, dialogue and narrative structure, terms with which they were familiar from A Level studies.

- Use the 'yes and' technique to create a world in which a story can take place.

- Begin with the prompt ‘This is a place’ and ask the first person to complete the sentence.

They worked fluently around the table, each saying ‘yes and’ in response to the contribution before theirs. A dystopian setting quickly emerged. The following is a verbatim list of their responses:

> a place without vegetation [yes and], just one tree [yes and], a yellow sky and two suns [yes and], a single planet and a shrinking moon. [yes and] Children are riding on a steam train. [yes and] Everything is run by steam, no fossil fuels left, but wind and solar power. [yes and] They are looking for an astronaut who is the only person left over 16 years of age. [yes and] The children want to know what will happen to them when they become 16, and to find the astronaut who has something he took from the moon, which they think will help them. [yes and] There is one planet to which the adults have gone. [yes and] There are people including children on ladders trying to get through the clouds to the planet. [yes and] A shy red-haired girl, the protagonist, is the last to board the train. [yes and] The conductor will not let her friend on (T&PC study field note, 26/4/2029).

The students’ response to this was enthusiastic. They listened well and the exercise gathered momentum, without pauses between contributions. They quickly moved into narrative, going beyond description of place into potential character and theme. The was no questioning or blocking of each other’s ideas, but a synergy into which the group quickly fell: a promising result in terms of my need to find a cohesive method to use with the Mylor study volunteers.

After the session I wrote this up in the Facebook group with some ground rules which the group devised together.

1. Don’t kill off anyone else’s character
2. Do make constructive suggestions
3. Don’t criticise someone else’s writing
4. Don’t judge your own writing against others’
5. Everyone’s contribution counts
6. Please stick to these rules

I sent invitations to join the Facebook group for the next session.

Session 2: 2 May 2022, 12.35pm-1.35pm

Despite reminders, not all the students had signed up to the Facebook group by the second session so we spent time at the start completing that task. Jas was frustrated that her new

account had locked her out so I suggested she work alongside Jack on his, an opportunity for them to collaborate. I noted the time it took to get everyone online: 15 minutes out of the hour, with extra coaching by me to help them. I had assumed they would be familiar with Facebook, but they considered it a form of social media for an older generation.

We were joined by a new participant, Alex. We began by reviewing the world building from the previous session, and students made additions to the exposition and discussed a possible story. This was done around the table, discursively, with everyone sharing notes in the Facebook group. Additions included the idea of 'peacekeepers' in each train carriage to keep everyone silent, and a surveillance 'eye' travelling up and down the carriages, casting dim light on faces (Alex's idea). They agreed it would be dark because of black-out blinds at the windows. Someone had smuggled a baby onto the train, someone the girl protagonist recognises when the light illuminates their face. The baby makes a noise in a moment of suspense.

After this discursive period of about 20 minutes, in which the students riffed off each other and make their own notes, while I listened, I introduced a structured exercise to develop a scene in their emerging story.

Exercise: write a scene based on a joint plan
Tools for writing: Facebook group, laptops, smartphones, pen and paper.
Facilitator prompts:

- Ask the group to choose a character and a setting suggested in discussions so far
- Make notes individually, adding detail to it:
    - What does it look like? Use the senses to add to your description: sounds, scent, textures, taste.
    - Share notes and identify features in common.

The discussion was lively. The group focused on the train taking to the children to find the astronaut (from the previous session's 'yes and' improvisation). They agreed that the train was steam punk in appearance and on a journey to reach the astronaut in a lighthouse, before a tsunami hit the shore. The climate and environment had turned against their dystopian world. There were mutant creatures and monsters, but no animals. The only food was synthetic.

A scenario was developing in which the girl who was last to board the train was going to overpower the conductor. I suggested they deposit their ideas about this in the Facebook group, after the session. This would give me insight into remote working, and whether they could adhere to their ground rule of not killing off each other's characters (in the light of Sandra's action in St Agnes study).

We discussed further ways to file-share using DropBox and SharePoint. They were familiar with these for college work but we did not try it in the sessions because I could not have access to their college systems for reasons of safeguarding.

After the session I added a book jacket-style blurb to Facebook, summarising what they had devised so far. The additions in square brackets were made by Alex in Facebook later the same evening:

> Book jacket blurb
>
> In [name?]'s world the moon is shrinking and there are two suns. The tides are confused, there is only one tree left and no one lives beyond 16 unless they can climb the ladders through the clouds to the solitary planet that hangs high above them.
>
> When [name] boards a train heading to the coast she realises she has to make it go to the lighthouse where an astronaut is hiding something [he brought back from the moon; something] that can save them all.
>
> But first she has to [overcome the Conductor and help a baby] escape the Peacekeepers who prowl the silent carriages.

When this was posted into the Facebook group, Freya responded by added a manga-style illustration she had made of the girl on the train. It occurred to me that there was more than one way a participant could contribute, and that the Mylor study could explore the use of volunteer-generated visual material as part of the published forms of the community novel.

There was a snag when I realised Dr Gaston had used her own account to observe the group, and her personal posts were showing up. I hid these, alerted her, then used the 'turn off' function for 30 days to avoid further personal posts appearing. This inadvertent sharing of personal data illustrated an ethical component of my role as gatekeeper for the activities of participants, and the need to protect privacy within personal social media accounts. I made a note that a facilitator's preparation should include a reminder to everyone involved to protect their personal data, and to offer coaching in how to do that.

Session 3, 9 May 2022, 12.35pm 1.35pm

For the third session I designed an exercise to help structure short scenes which could become part of a larger story. I adapted this from Elaine Walker's collaborative exercise in which participants work in pairs or threes, developing characters together and exchanging drafts (Walker 2012: 39-42). This provided me with a timely rehearsal for detailed scene planning with the Mylor study group.

Exercise: collaborate to design a scene

Tools for writing: pens and A4 paper.

Facilitator's prompts:

- Hand a piece of A4 paper to each member of the group.
- Give the following verbal prompts and ask them to write their own answers:
    - I want to write a scene about…
    - It starts with…
    - The turning point is…
    - It ends with…
- Invite the group to share their scenes.

This proved an efficient way to structure short scenes which the students could then draft, following their plan structure. I would use it again the Mylor study, where it was helpful as an introduction to the design of longer chapters, and enabled drafting to be divided up into manageable parts among the writing volunteers. Among the students, the exercise led to discussion about their preferred tools for writing. Jas was frustrated by the slowness of the college laptop she was working on and reverted to pen and paper which, she said, was more natural for her. Freya and Jack preferred to type because of the pace of their thoughts and the ease of getting words down quickly. Lydia said it made little difference but she liked to make rough notes with a pen before moving onto the laptop for a more developed draft. There was agreement that they preferred being able to choose the best writing method.

Session 4 16 May 2022, 12.35pm-1.35pm

In the final session I used the What3Words app on my smartphone to provide verbal prompts for writing. The idea of using the mapping app was suggested by the playful use of mobile apps in story making proposed by Hjorth and Richardson (in Schleser and Berry eds. 2018:

75-85). Although we would not be using What3Words out of doors, I was interested to see whether the words attributed to the students' familiar campus surroundings by the app would stimulate new ideas in their draft writing. Alex, Jack, Jas, and Lydia took part, each choosing a location from their fictional scenario in which to set a scene: Alex chose the lighthouse, Jas the sea shore, Lydia the wasteland outside the train, and Jack a compartment on the train.

Exercise: What3Words as a story starter

Tools for writing: What3Words app on smartphone, pens and paper, laptops.

Facilitator's prompts:

- Choose a postcode, in this case the College campus's postcode, TR1 3XX, and find it in the app.
- Give the three words shown on the grid to one of the participants, then give three words from neighbouring squares in the map grid to others in the group. Everyone taking part should have their own three words.
- Invite participants to find a connection between their three words, or make a mind map, or use them as a prompt for writing scenes in their collaborative story.
- Write for 15 minutes, then share.

The students accepted their words without question. Their drafts, when shared, showed diverse responses and they commented on the fresh ideas that had arisen from the random words. I noted this as a way to involve everyone regardless of their writing preferences. By using the app myself and assigning words to each student, I avoided the difficulty of someone not having their own access to the technology. The exercise was fun and stimulating, and produced new material.

Jas's preference in this exercise was to make notes by hand, then start typing, then pause to make more notes. Writing by hand was slower and helped her think things through, she said. Lydia agreed that she enjoyed the feel of the pen in her hand. She made a mind map to capture her ideas, then wrote.

To conclude the final session I provided a work sheet with a choice of words to enable the students to comment on their experience of the sessions. This was designed with open questions to elicit individual responses, which I reproduce below verbatim, mindful of Holliday's warning that "because the researcher must present this type of data, like all others,

within her own commentary and argument, as much care must be taken about how it is interpreted and selected (2007: 171).

The responses are anonymised as follows:

1. *What you have enjoyed in these sessions:*

Collaboration and the time to write it.

Learning how others write and how their minds work in comparison to mine (also the writing games).

Simply having the time and space to share ideas and write anything and going off on a tangent!

I loved sharing ideas with others and having a focus.

2. *What you have not enjoyed:*

That there aren't more sessions and sometimes there are suggestions I don't agree with
but I go along with them anyway.

(Just the timing really) I believe I would be more immersed if it was not such a busy time.
It ending 😊.
The story felt a little too big for the logistics of the project.

3. *A suggestion for something else you could do if you were to write as a group in future:*

Keep meeting up and get the material down.

Having a group document [so] we could accumulate our writing rather than a FB group.

Maybe have another app specifically for writing and sharing so everyone can be involved in writing.

Make a timeline of basic story.

4. *A question about what we have done, for example something that has puzzled you or which you would like to know about.*

Are there more opportunities such as this.

What the specific research is on.

5. *Anything else you would like to say:*

I enjoyed it! I would like to join a creative writing group but not do joint writing!

Thank you very much for this opportunity, it has been so much fun to take part in!

Thank you for getting me back into creative writing.

In summary, I construed that there was value in the fun element of using apps and improvising a scenario together. The value of a narrative plan was clear as well, compounding the St Agnes study's finding in relation to the near-drowning of Amos Trembarth. The student who would prefer not to write jointly was the minority but this raised a question about personal preferences and whether all participants can be assumed to enjoy collaboration. This would be tested further in the Mylor study.

Conclusions to the T&PC study

The limitations of safeguarding in this study forced me into greater flexibility and intuitive working methods in order to adapt to circumstances. It was notable how often the activities differed from the plan, as I responded intuitively to the participants' reactions and enthusiasms. I noted the student group's easy compliance with tasks, and my agility as facilitator in a setting that threw up unexpected challenges. It was easy to move to contingencies and alternative modes of writing once we had established the group's working methods: an element of trust within a community of practice.

The study provided small but telling insights into the somatics of writing by hand and the importance of allowing for personal preference in the choice of writing tools. The perception of speed and efficiency in keyboard writing was not born out by the volume of draft writing produced. Jas's slower approach to writing with the pen produced drafts that were well thought out and detailed. Those who typed were more spontaneous but less thought through. The pen writing was slower but equally productive, sometimes more so.

Verbal discussions and improvisations with the group reflected the value of conversation which paralleled my findings in the St Agnes study. The What3Words app was successful as part of a multimodal exercise. I noted again the ease of combining traditional and digital methods.

Having observed the St Agnes group's hesitancy with some of the apps, especially Instagram, it was surprising to encounter a similar barrier with this younger age group. The T&PC study tested my assumptions about the digital generation's adeptness with social media and preference for the keyboard over the pen. This and further experiences later in the Mylor study raise questions about the associated unconscious bias towards digital methods

in HE and the creative writing classroom. This will be discussed further in the analysis and results in Chapter 7.

5.4 Conclusions to the short studies

Reviewed together, the two studies were small in scale but rich in new knowledge to inform the longer study in Mylor Parish. Both produced useful insights in terms of the value of obtaining consensus through playful methods. In terms of the facilitation role, intuition and sensitivity to the group dynamic was important, and the ability to move fluently between digital and analogue methods. By encouraging fun and modelling a positive attitude towards trying new methods, I enabled the participants in both studies to make something together. Proactive problem-solving came into play in the face of some challenges of co-authorship including blocking behaviours by some individuals, for example holding onto individual ideas, and the need to plan together in order to prevent disruption.

The use of field notes to record and reflect upon the success or otherwise of methods, enabled me to record what had happened, reflect on normative practice, and weigh my expectations against outcomes. This included expressions of frustration or disappointment, making for an honest and unbiased record.

I noticed a tendency for participants to blame themselves and quickly become frustrated when technology failed or did not behave as expected. This was a feature of both studies. With the St Agnes group, difficulties with apps were partly mitigated by working together. Learning with the participants, rather than solving every difficulty as the expert in the room, added to the sense of a shared endeavour in which learning was a mutual exchange. Nonetheless, if something did not work, I was inclined to cut it and move on to a different approach. These were short sessions and my priority was to keep the creative work moving and maintain the participants' focus. I reflected on this in my notes: was I sacrificing knowledge about the affordances of digital devices, by abandoning some too early? This was considered again the Mylor study.

My own basic familiarity with some of the apps used in the studies, for example Pinterest, had a positive effect. I was willing to experiment and use the apps for purposes other than those for which they had been designed. This led to some unexpected insights. In the case of Instagram I did not have the skill to rescue an exercise that did not work as I had

envisaged, but other apps, for example What3Words and Pinterest, adapted well to the purpose and introduced an element of playful improvisation that was further apparent in the Mylor study, which follows in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6 MYLOR PARISH COMMUNITY NOVEL STUDY

6.1 Overview

The novel is the long fiction marathon of creative writing. Volunteers invited to participate typically expressed disbelief that they would be able to write one. Like the 18th-century novelists referred to in Chapter 2, however, they enjoyed an advantage over contemporary professional authors: their disregard for, or unawareness of, literary theory and practice. Being enthusiasts who enjoyed reading novels, they were willing to try diverse methods with me as I conducted research into both the process of facilitating a community novel, and the consequent forms the novel could take. This chapter is a select narrative account of the PAR study that began with volunteer participants in autumn 2018 and was completed in research terms by summer 2020. Figure 8 shows the timescale in outline. Further analysis is provided in Chapter 7, in which I discuss the work flow within this period, and how it was adjusted in the light of the writer-facilitator's workload, the pace of collaboration between volunteers and the wider community, and the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. These unexpected events forced facilitation online and led to new insights.

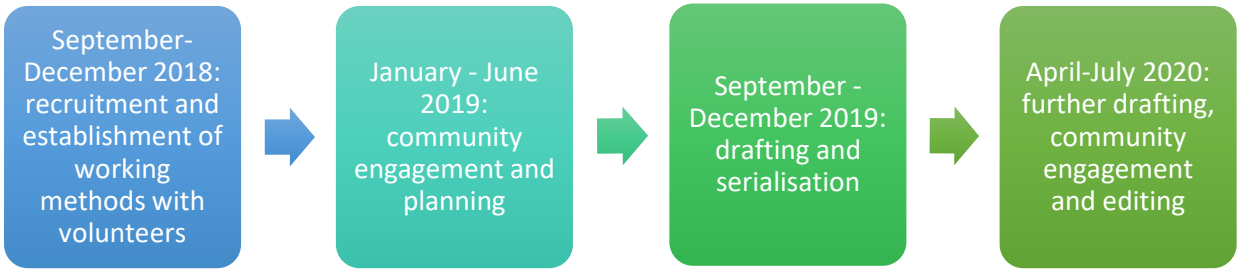


Figure 8: Mylor study timescale, outlined

Participants

This is not a quantitative study, but it can be noted that approximately one hundred and fifty local residents of Mylor Parish contributed in a variety of ways to the study, and to *Trevow*, the 70,000-word novel that was co-created. I shall describe the process of recruitment, the core group of volunteers who met to create content and plan the novel in meetings of up to 15 people, the wider community engagement that took place with other interest groups and at public events in the local calendar, and the core writing group of six participants who completed the novel during 2020 and early 2021.

Data collection

The study generated some 90,000 words of typed field notes; seven hand-written notebooks; handwritten reflexive journalling; records of meetings and work planning in the Trello app; examples of group activity and content sharing on the apps Slack, Pinterest, Texting Story, WhatsApp, Mindmeister and Evernote, and some branching narrative written in Twine. Selected examples drawn from each of these data sets are included as screenshots. The project amassed a body of visual and audio material including records of group working and contributions made by other local communities of practice, for example an amateur art group. This chapter provides indicative examples of practice methods organised into a typology of participation. The typology emerged through the practice research and forms the basis of guidance for writer-facilitators which is the topic of Chapter 8.

Insights from interviews and the two short studies informed my design and facilitation of the community novel both as research and as a live community arts project. Freire's application of dialogical theory to the roles of teacher (or facilitator), and students (or volunteers), informed the relationship between myself as researcher and the participants, in which we "become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (Freire 2017: 53). I referred to Illich when adapting methods and tools, both traditional and digital, for a participatory process, aiming to "give each person who uses them the greatest opportunity to enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision" (2001: 21), in other words to enjoy themselves and feel a valued part of the process. Wenger's theoretical insights into communities of learning and practice (1998), and the negotiations which collaboration entails, were the basis for my pragmatic management of the dialogical discussions that took place among participants. The application of these theories will be illustrated by practice examples throughout this chapter.

As the community novel project progressed, it became evident that the novel would not simply be written, but curated, produced, and ultimately compiled from diverse sources. The volunteers brought their local knowledge, interests and skills to this, contributing, for example, to on and offline discussions, and in-person improvisations. Some carried out local research to inform the story and others provided visual material. In group work, the volunteers tried out apps as part of character development, worldbuilding, dialogue drafting and decision-making. They wrote together and individually, in group sessions and at home. A core group of six, mentioned above, carried out the bulk of re-writing, critiquing and

finally editing the novel. This chapter gives examples of facilitation methods and their outcomes, including some that used traditional modes, some that used digital methods, and some that blended both.

The terms ‘writing’ and ‘making’ used in this account of the study reflect the diversity of the community novel as a process of participatory making and production. Gauntlett describes the value of craft in the context of “everyday creativity, taking in handmade physical objects and real-life experiences” (2018: 25). He makes a link between traditional methods of making and online creativity, seeking to “make connections from one sphere to another” (25), and argues that there is enjoyment in being “an active participant in dialogues and communities” (257), in which people share the tasks of collaborative making. This chapter will show how this became manifest in the community novel, supporting my argument for ‘making’ as the most relevant and inclusive descriptor for the process: a more appropriate fit than the language of literary authorship and creative writing studies.

Five types of participatory activity emerged through the project. These were: playful and improvisational activities to generate material for the novel; activities to aid negotiation, decision making and planning; tools of narratology for planning and production, and modes of publication. The fifth type, promotion, was the starting point, with activities to recruit volunteers, followed by ways to encourage engagement from the wider community as the novel developed. The participation types identified as ‘promote’, ‘play’, ‘plan’, ‘produce’, and ‘publish’ provide structure for this chapter.

In 6.2 I explain methods used to recruit volunteers, raise awareness of the community novel, and get participation underway. 6.3 describes playful collaborative methods used to generate material for the novel. 6.4 shows how tools of narratology enabled a narrative to be planned and, in 6.5, written in draft, with further examples of engagement with the wider community to inform plot points. 6.6 recounts modes of publication through serialisation in print and online. 6.7 gives conclusions about the five-point model that surfaced during the process, observations about the role of the writer-facilitator, and the efficacy of mixing digital and traditional modes of facilitation and writing. Further analysis of these, and conclusions about remediated practice, are provided in Chapter 7.

The community novel as evidential text

The novel produced by volunteers in the Mylor study is titled *Trevow*. The complete text and associated material can be viewed at www.joinedupwriters.uk. Serialisation in a monthly community publication, *The Magazine*, can be seen at www.mylorandflushing.org.uk as part of a flipbook. A summary of the novel and key characters is provided in Appendix B to Chapter 6, to inform understanding of the story and related methods of production.

Having given background to the study, the rest of the chapter describes the project with illustrations of methods used to facilitate participation in the community novel.

6.2 Promoting the novel: recruiting volunteers

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Mylor Parish has a healthy level of cultural and social capital. This made it fertile ground for a new type of creative collaboration: the community novel. Participation was invited from residents and those with close family connections or social ties to the area, through membership of community clubs and societies. A risk identified early in the process was that only members of an established local writing group, or others who had experience of creative writing, for example, would express interest. To mitigate this, I decided to seek people with no experience of writing, but willingness to try, as well as some who had experience of writing as individuals. None of those who engaged with the project were published or professional writers. Some had experience of professional writing as part of work, but very few had training in creative writing skills. All, however, were curious to know how a community novel would be created, and interested to take part.

A visual identity helped introduce the community novel project to the community. A logo (Figure 9, below) showed the name *Joined Up Writers* to convey people writing together. The colourful graphic was based on bunting, a familiar sight in local villages. The homemade style was designed to blend in with other local publicity produced by non-professionals.

Figure 9: Joined Up Writers logo

Posters and flyers were placed on community noticeboards, in village shops and pubs, and on local telegraph poles which typically display publicity for local events.

Mention of doctoral research was deliberately omitted, to avoid the impression that the project required academic skills. Once people responded, I explained that the project was part of my research. Their part in it would be to participate in a community project. Consent to use their contributions would be formally sought, and they could join in or leave, as they wished.

The logo and brand name were used in subsequent publicity, to maintain visibility among local community activities. Figure 10, for example, shows a display at the 2019 Mylor May Fair, an annual community event with fairground attractions and stalls.

Figure 10: Mylor May Fair 2019

Paper publicity was complemented by a Facebook page networked to other community groups. Figure 11 shows the banner with an illustration by Julia Jordan, a member of a local art group.

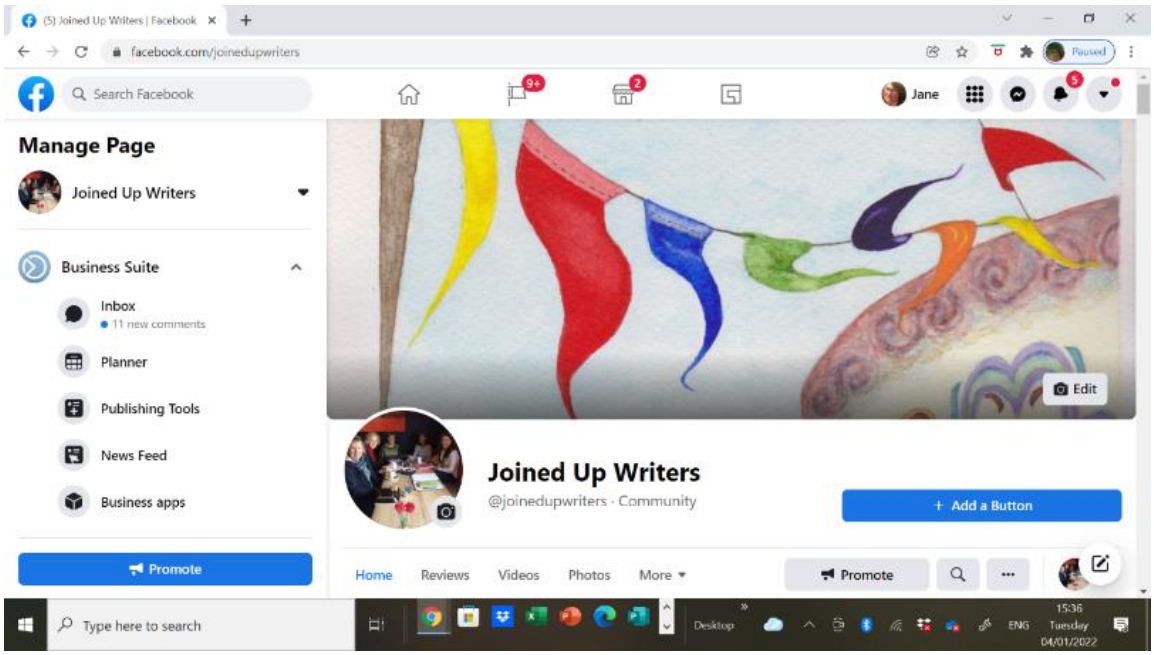


Figure 11: Social media banner by Julia Jordan

Word of mouth was a productive method of promotion at the start, with opportunities to explain the project face to face and motivate people to become involved through targeted networking. During summer 2018 I approached local community interest groups, for example the Mylor Local History Archive, the WI (known locally as the Mylor Mermaids), a local book group, and volunteers establishing a community garden on land beside one of the village churches. These offered potential to collaborate with some existing and emerging community networks, and to initiate partnerships. The personal approach proved fruitful. It enabled me to take advantage of local networks through which I could identify and encourage likely participants.

The majority of those to whom I spoke were enthusiastic and admired the project's ambition, but wanted more information about potential roles. Some were naturally sceptical and I acknowledged that this might not be an activity that everyone would enjoy. As Gauntlett says, in the context of receiving negative critique, "if they don't like it, it wasn't for them anyway" (2018: 273). Participation was an individual choice and no one should feel pressured to take part. A typical response, by a volunteer at the Mylor Local history Archive, was: "How on earth are you going to manage that?" (Mylor study field note, 28/7/2018). I welcomed such responses as an opportunity to open discussion about the challenges of creating a collaborative work of fiction. In such conversations I took the opportunity to echo

Mitchel Resnick's "4 Ps" (2014: 13), which I paraphrase here as the marriage of "projects" as meaningful work, "peers" with whom to work with and share ideas, "passion" to sustain collaboration, and "play" (13) as a means of experimentation. In other words, we would work together, support each other through the process, and have fun. A further frequent question was whether local people would recognise themselves in the story. For those unfamiliar with creative writing, the line between fact and fiction was hard to grasp. I shall discuss this further in the context of planning and production.

The project was announced in the September 2018 issue of *The Magazine* (2018), the monthly Parish publication, for which I wrote a short editorial explaining the project, some roles people could play, and the potential timescale. Some of this was speculation, but conveyed in an optimistic tone to encourage involvement.

HELP WRITE A COMMUNITY NOVEL!

You are invited to get involved in an experiment to write a community novel. The project is called *joinedupwriters* and it is part of research Jane Moss is carrying out at Falmouth University.

Community plays are a well-known way to create a story about a place and its people, but novels are usually written by one person alone. So how would it work if people joined up to write together? With your help, Jane hopes to find out. Would you like to take part.

The plan is to start working on ideas, after which the project will grow and carry on into 2019. It will start with creation of characters and settings, then a theme followed by research into possible stories. Once there is a plot outline it will be developed as a serial, rather in the way Charles Dickens published in monthly instalments.

To take part you need to be 18 years of age or over, with a connection to Mylor Parish; living, working or taking part in the life of the community. In return you can:

- Learn skills for your own creative writing
- Adopt a character and make them your own, research ideas, provide photos and illustrations
- Contribute to the story as it unfolds
- Have your say on what happens in the plot
- Meet people who share your enjoyment of writing and reading (often with cake)
- Help make something that will be enjoyed by the wider community

Find out more

To find out more, come to the Ord-Statter Pavilion on Saturday 22 September, 10.00am to 12.30pm. There will be coffee, tea and cake, information about the project and the chance to help kick start it with some fun creative writing activities. Bring your pen and a notebook or your mobile phone or a laptop.

For more details or to take part contact Jane.Moss@falmouth.ac.uk or 01326 377419.

Could you be a 'joined up writer'? It's your story, so get involved!

MYLOR PLAY READERS

After our summer break we shall be resuming our meetings this month and I look forward to seeing our regulars again and indeed to welcome anyone who would be interested in reading parts in the various plays that we enjoy. If you are interested please do get in touch. Men especially welcome!

We usually meet on the first Friday of the month at 7:15pm in the Pope Room. Our next two meetings are on Friday 7 September and Friday 5 October.

Gerry Shinn

Figure 12: *The Magazine*, September 2018

I was keen to establish a partnership with *The Magazine*, to promote and potentially publish the novel as a serial. With a print run of 2,500 and an estimated readership of approximately twice that, this monthly free publication reached readers via community venues and retail outlets, a mailing list, and the online flipbook. When I approached the Editor, Melanie Franks, she was enthusiastic, saying "This is exactly the sort of thing we should be publishing" (Mylor study field note, 11/12/2018). The community novel was offered a double page spread of approximately 850 words per issue once the early chapters were ready for serialisation.

The next step was to hold an event to recruit participants. This event will be described in some detail, as it laid the basis for much of what followed in the project. It took place on Saturday 22 September 2018 in the Ord-Statter Pavilion. This community hall lies midway between the Parish's two villages, so was significant in terms of the project being perceived as parish-wide. The Pavilion stands on the edge of a playing field accessible by road, footpath, and bus. It has free parking, a kitchen, tables and chairs, and a light airy hall, ideal conditions for a writing event. The hall lacked Wi-Fi and the mobile phone signal was weak, so I opted not to use digital methods for this first meeting with potential volunteers. Instead, the purpose was to introduce the project, generate some discussion about the concept of a community novel, and facilitate collaborative writing with pen and paper.

I designed a programme for the event which included elements that were a model for future sessions. I used methods from traditional community writing group facilitation and from writing for wellbeing practice. These were adapted for co-authorship and aimed to be appropriate for a mixed group of people, some of whom had not written creatively before. The programme included:

- A welcome and introduction, explaining the purpose of the meeting
- A verbal ice-breaker exercise to introduce participants to each other
- Discussion to inform further tasks
- A warm-up writing exercise
- A more extended writing exercise
- Sharing of draft writing and ideas
- Further discussion leading to conclusions
- Thanks and expressions of interest in the project.

Some participants had never attended anything like this before. I provided reassurance that any writing they did during the event would be rough, not critiqued, and that sharing was optional. Following poetry therapist Victoria Field's advice, I emphasised that the writing was "a 'process' where whatever is written is valid and not yet 'fixed'" (Bolton et al 2006: 22) In this context they could not do it 'wrong', a message that in my experience encourages non-writers to join in without fear of their writing being judged.

22 September 2018 brought heavy rain and high winds. 37 people had responded with intentions to attend, but the bad weather kept many at home. 17 took part on the day, a manageable number, and information was provided for the rest after the event.

The event plan provided in Appendix C to Chapter 6 is typical of a community writing event and indicative of the level of detail a self-employed community writing facilitator considers when entering a hired community space. It differs from a lesson plan, which would foreground learning objectives, but combines an aide memoir for practical items and a programme of activities planned around a theme or aspect of writing craft. It is designed to establish conditions in which people can feel comfortable to write and share writing, regardless of prior experience.

Activities and outcomes

Attendees were women, mostly retired or approaching early retirement. Of the four men who had enquired about the event, three were unable to attend on the day. It proved difficult to engage with them further, having missed this inaugural meeting. The one who did attend could only stay briefly.

The majority were willing to be quoted in written material including this thesis, and for their images to be used in my thesis. A few requested anonymity and did not want to appear in photographs or on social media. In keeping with the ethical approach set out in Chapter 3, and for simplicity, pseudonyms have been used throughout this chapter. A show of hands established that most were not used to using their smartphones for anything other texting and emailing family and friends. Twelve owned laptops and smartphones, and ten were occasional users of social media. Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest were mentioned.

The event achieved its objective of igniting interest in the project. I gained insight into participants' notions of what is meant by a novel and was able to start gauging their attitudes to trying new and innovative methods and forms. Canvassed verbally for novels they enjoyed reading, the following authors and titles were named: Richard Russo, *Nobody's Fool (*Russo 1993*)*; novels by Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Elizabeth Strout; Helen Dunmore's *Birdcage Walk* (2017) and her poetry; novels by Anne Patchett; Elizabeth Jane Howard, *The Cazalet Chronicles* (2017 box set); Winston Graham's *Poldark* (1945/2015); Miriam Toewes' *All My Puny Sorrows* (2015), about a Mennonite community; Stefan Zweig, and Nikki French (an example of co-authorship of which some were aware).

Tastes ranged from the classical to the contemporary with little genre fiction, a reflection of their age and general interests, said several. Crime fiction and biography were mentioned by some, also a liking for series, and novels by Elena Ferrante. One participant said she read for pleasure and to escape from difficulties: "I need the light stuff" (Mylor study field note, 22/9/2019). Another said "I hate the idea of writing under pressure". She expressed nervousness about being "made to write", but was an avid reader, interested in how a community novel might be put together, and keen to offer ideas.

The following exercises are set out in the format used in Chapter 5, for clarity and potential replication in the guidance and related toolkit which Chapter 8 outlines. Prompts are interspersed with examples of writing and discussion.

Exercise: collaborate to describe what a novel needs

The purpose of this exercise was to encourage participants to begin writing, to share what they had written, and to talk to each other about their ideas.

Tools for writing: pens and paper, cardboard bunting

Facilitator's prompts:

- Ask the participants to work in pairs with their neighbour.
- Hand out pieces of bunting for each pair to write on.
- Pose a question: 'what is needed to write a novel?'
- Ask the pairs to share their suggestions and write them on the bunting.
- Allow a maximum of ten minutes, then invite them to share.
- As they share, string the bunting together so everyone can see the list build.

The bunting provided a novel way to get the participants writing. Working in pairs encouraged those who were hesitant to contribute, and no one was pressured to write more than a few words. The string of suggestions written on the bunting became lengthy and stretched across one end of the hall. Everyone noted the similarities between their understanding of what matters in a novel. Figure 13 below shows an example.

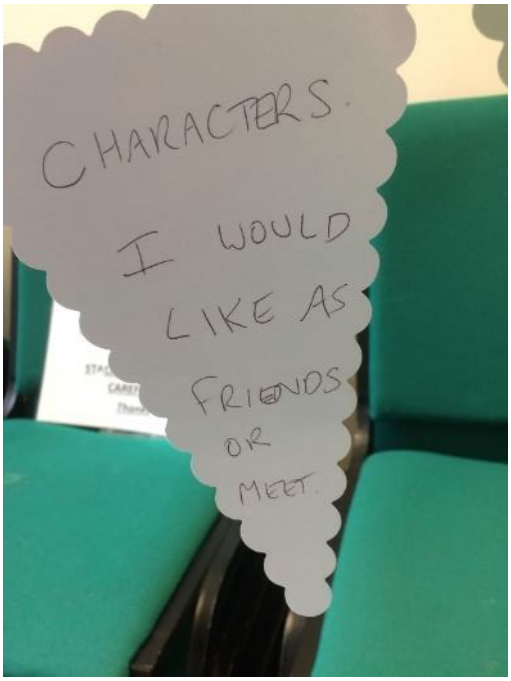


Figure 13: An example of the novel bunting

As a first step towards a shared understanding of a novel's process, the exercise was simple but effective.

The next exercise used a method of co-authorship, an alphapoem, to continue the discussion of novels and their narrative ingredients, but with a playful twist. The exercise was adapted from a journaling exercise by Kathryn Adams (2006: 46), in which a theme is explored through a list, structured alphabetically. Although intended by Adams for individual use, the exercise enables a simply structured piece of writing to be created by multiple contributors, as the instructions below show. I adapted it for group collaboration and joined in to demonstrate that I could be rough and silly with my ideas.

Exercise: a co-authored alphapoem, 'What a Novel's Not', 30 minutes

Tools for writing: pens and notebooks, squares of coloured paper with letters of the alphabet, handout for 'What a Poem's Not' (Hegley 2007), (Appendix D to Chapter 6).

Facilitator's prompts:

- Hand out copies of the poem and read it in relay, each participant reading a couplet in turn
- Invite participants to notice the alphabetical structure and say what they enjoy about the poem
- Hand out the paper squares so that each participant has several letters of the alphabet. This will depend on numbers in the group, nut everyone should have at least two
- Ask the participants to make notes about 'what a novel's not', using their alphabet letters to create couplets
- When everyone has finished, ask them to write their couplets on the relevant square
- Read them out around the room
- Afterwards, gather the paper squares, type them up as a full poem and give each participant a copy.

The simplicity of this co-authorship exercise achieved two aims: first, to encourage everyone to write, and second to create a piece of writing to which everyone had contributed. Some of the participants were hesitant to begin making their notes and requested clarification of my instructions: for example, whether they should write directly onto the paper squares, or make notes in their note books first. I repeated the prompts and encouraged them, and they warmed up to the task when they realised that their writing could be messy and imperfect. The poem was quick to assemble and provided evidence that it was possible for them to make a piece of writing together. The poem 'What a Novel is Not' is given in full as Figure 14.

WHAT A NOVEL'S NOT

A novel is not an ambulance driver
But it might still save your life

A novel is not a bear
But sometimes it can give you a hug

A novel is not a clue
But it might help you on its way

A novel is not a dam
But it can contain the deepest reservoir of human experience

A novel is not exhausting
But it can feel like it!

A novel is not a ferryboat
but it may take you across some turbulent waters

A novel is not always ground-breaking
It can simply give you a smile

A novel is not a haunting
But it may spook your mind

A novel is not an ironing board
But it can slowly unfold

A novel is not a judicial review
But it still might have a sense of fair play

A novel is not a knot
But it can get me all tangled up

A novel is not always about love
But love is always there

A novel is not a miracle
But finishing a novel might feel like one

A novel is not a negative experience
But can be sometimes

A novel is not an orange
but it can sometimes get juicy

A novel is not pretentious
It can draw you in like a fish

A novel is not a quiz
But it may question your beliefs

A novel is not a river
But it can flow in twists and turns

A novel is not a swing in the park
But it might still push you to and fro

A novel is not a triangle
But it can be about love

A novel is not an umbrella
But it could shade you from the sun and the rain

A novel is not a vandal
Though it can wreak havoc

A novel is not a waste of time
But an experience

A novel is not always Xanadu
But it can be for some people

A novel is not a yawn

It shouldn't send you to sleep

A novel is not a zoo
But it may contain some strange creatures.

Figure 14: What a Novel's Not alphapoem

After a break, I introduced an exercise for which the participants sat together around three tables. The aim was to try further methods of writing together, using a published poem as source material. The poem by the Cornish poet A. L. Rowse, *How Many Miles to Mylor?* (2007: 11), was familiar to some. In the second stanza the local place name, Carclew, resonated with those who knew of it as a once-wealthy estate destroyed by fire in 1934 (Historic England 2023). Having trialled a similar method with the St Agnes Writing Group (Chapter 5), I was hopeful that the exercise would produce examples of the difficulties and affordances of writing together, which I could then discuss with participants to gauge their response. The difference was that the St Agnes Writers were used to working together, and were confident writers. Conducting a similar exercise with people who were mostly strangers would provide insight into facilitating people who were less confident and experienced.

Exercise: introduction to writing prose individually and together
Tools for writing: pens, A4 paper, handout of poem, 'How Many Miles to Mylor?' (11).
Facilitator's prompts:

- Ask participants to sit at three tables. Provide A4 paper and copies of the hand out for everyone
- Read the poem, then ask someone from each table to read it again, so it can be heard in several voices
- Table 1: each individual, choose a line from the poem and write your own continuation. Write for ten minutes.
- Table 2: in pairs, agree a line between you and write your own continuation together swapping alternate lines on the same piece of paper. Write for ten minutes.
- Table 3: agree a starting line between you. Write it at the top of your piece of paper, then write the next line and pass the paper to your left. Repeat until everyone has contributed to each sheet of paper. Ten minutes

Not surprisingly, those who had never done anything like this before needed reassurance before they began. It took several repetitions of the instructions to each table, and a promise that 'you cannot do this wrong', before they settled. Everyone began to write and a hush fell in the room. During the ten minutes of writing I moved quietly from table to table. I observed that everyone was writing, some copiously, which meant the person next to them might have to wait before taking their turn in the relay. The participants on Table 3 raised this as an issue. My advice was to be mindful when writing, that the next person was waiting and, when waiting, to try not to think about their next line. I encouraged them to be spontaneous and to write what came into their heads when they saw what the previous person had written.

The exercise generated discussion about the challenges and affordances of writing together. The participants at Table 1 commented on how different their choices of prompt from the poem had been. Some had attempted their own poem and others had written in prose. They had enjoyed the freedom of writing as individuals. Figure 15 below shows an example of writing from Table 1.

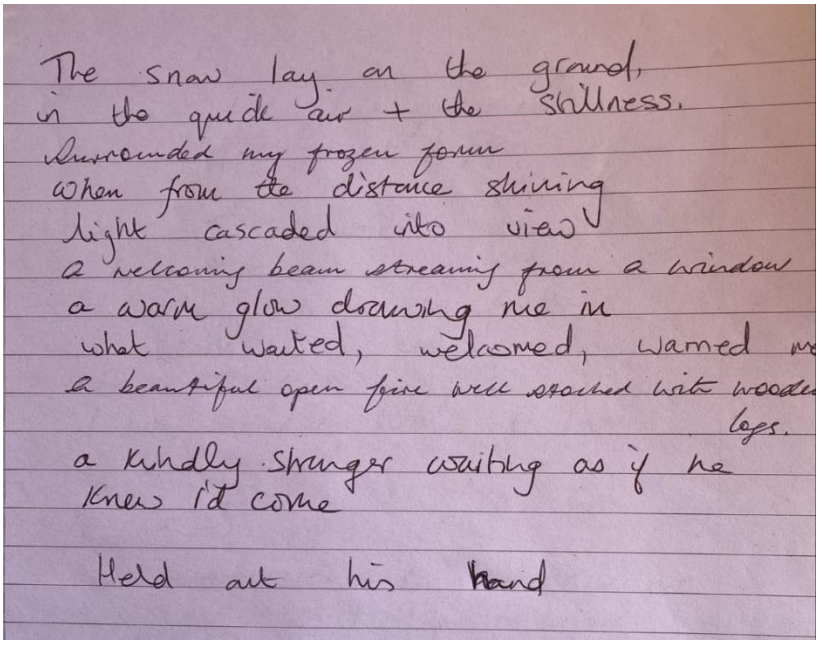


Figure 15: Table 1, individual writing

Participants on Table 2 had enjoyed working in pairs. It had given them some confidence, although there was a tendency to compare themselves with the other half of their pair and to say that their writing was "not as good" (Mylor Study field note 22/9/2018). I reminded them

that this was a very rough exercise in drafting. The purpose was not to produce polished writing, or to compare writing style or skills. Figure 16 shows two people writing as a pair.

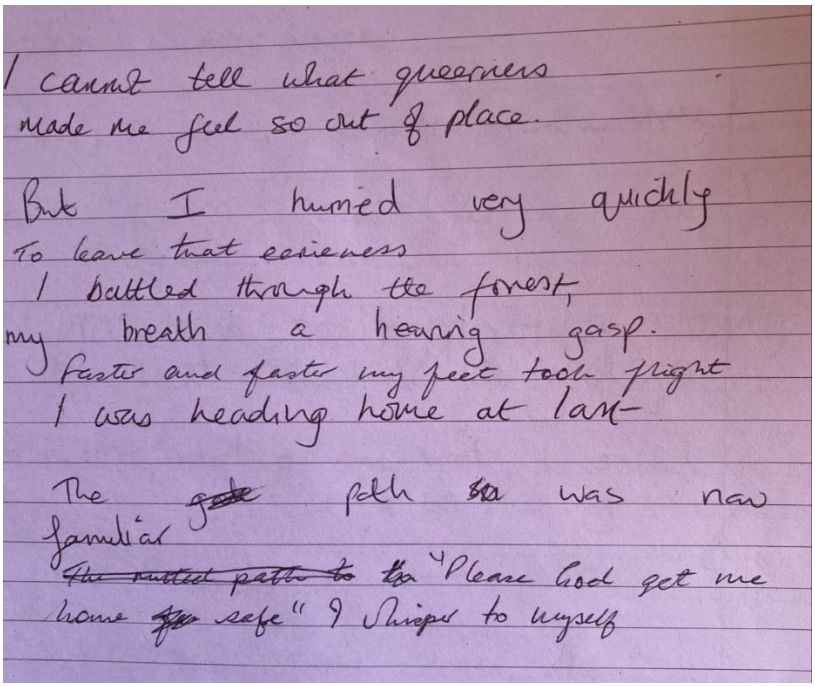


Figure 16: Table 2, writing as a pair

Table 3 enjoyed the relay once they got into a rhythm of passing the A4 sheet around the table. One participant commented that it gave her ideas she would not otherwise have had. Another said it was surprising to see how it hung together. They had fallen into step with each other after a bumpy start. One (alluded to earlier in Chapter 3) found the subject matter disturbing because it reminded her of her old family home which had negative associations for her. This illustrated Bolton's point about the risks of writing that can take an individual into difficult personal material, with "feelings and emotions [that] can be raw and exposed" (Bolton 1999: 128). I invited this participant to talk to me after the session if she still felt unsettled, and I reminded her that she was always in charge of her pen. It was alright to step out of an exercise if she felt uncomfortable. This was an instance in which awareness of ground rules and the ethical approach to facilitation described in Chapter 3 became relevant.

Figure 17 shows the writing in relay at Table 3.

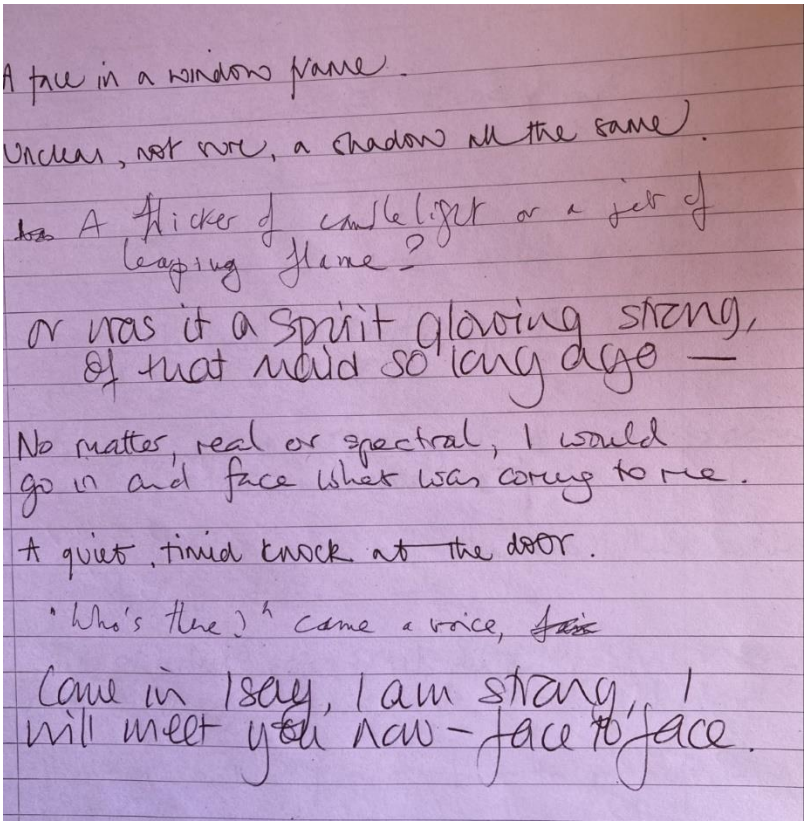


Figure 17: Table 3, writing in relay

Concluding the exercise, I noticed the spirit of collaborative enquiry that had been established. The participants had become more comfortable with writing and sharing as the morning progressed, and there was enthusiasm for the project of collaborating in a novel, as well as some questions about the uncertainties of the creative process. I was able to reassure them that we would learn together.

As a whole, the event fulfilled my aim of bringing a group of people together for the first time, and interest them in taking part in the community novel. All were keen to contribute further, subject to meeting times, and encouraged by my suggestion that they could take on different roles, not necessarily or exclusively writing. Participants were surprised to have had so much fun, which was motivating them to continue. The event helped me to gauge aptitudes within the group, and to consider when and how to introduce creative writing skills into the process. I could begin to envisage multimodal activities to generate material for the novel. It was notable at this early stage that no one expected or seemed to want a course of learning. Some mentioned their fear of feeling they were "back at school." (Mylor study field note 22/9/2018). Some were keen to know how to write a novel, but the motivation for

the majority was the opportunity to meet people, be creative, and get to know more about their local community.

The event represented the beginning of a new community of practice. Most participants had no pre-conceptions about how to write a novel, but were willing to trial methods towards the co-production of an innovative work of fiction. Everyone who attended had something to show for their morning: the group poem and their own pieces of draft writing from the tables. The written exercises had shown that everyone could contribute.

After the 22 September event, I invited participants to attend weekly two-hour meetings. These took place in familiar community venues including the Ord-Statter Pavilion and another, Tremayne Hall, a village community centre with meeting rooms. Asked how long it would take to write the novel, I explained that for the purposes of my research there was a timescale, but that the novel itself could take longer to complete. That would be up to the participants, and whether they wished to complete their novel once my study of the process was complete. This was accepted. I was careful to manage expectations about the likelihood of publication, but I did not rule it out. The potential for self-publishing was a useful element to consider. White Water Writers showed what could be done on Amazon.

The early publicity and launch event established the principle of participation in promoting the community novel. The second aspect of promotion, entailed activities to engage members of the wider community as the novel began to develop. Examples of this are integrated into the rest of this chapter, illustrating contributions to plot points and multimodal material to augment the main text, for example. Further types of participation - play, planning, production and publication - emerged in an iterative process that was not always linear, as the accounts that follow will illustrate.

6.3 Playful making: generating material for the novel

Most of the volunteers who attended weekly meetings from October 2018 (typically between eight to 14 participants) were new to creative writing. Some had met in social settings and at other community events, and a few had attended a writing group or adult education course, but by no means everyone had met before becoming involved in the novel. Some were new to the local area so knew no one. It was to be expected that they would go through a period of storming before norming and performing, as a community of practice. My facilitation

methods for the early meetings were therefore designed to encourage a culture of creative collaboration, and to foster mutual respect as the volunteers got to know each other.

Bateson and Martin define creativity as "generating novel actions or ideas, particularly by recombining existing actions, ideas or thoughts in new ways or applying them in new situations" (2013: 55). Innovation, they argue, is a separate concept, with creativity "simply about generating novelty" as the "precursor to innovation" (55). Approaching the community novel, I took the view that creativity and innovation could be mutually inclusive, with creative methods being innovative in themselves. The task of facilitating a work of long fiction with volunteers required a flexible approach to the narratological building blocks of a novel, with which the participants would not be familiar: terms such as world building, character creation, story type, theme, dialogue, exposition, narrative design, and point of view choice (Bal, 2017; Yorke, 2013; Storr, 2019). These building blocks would be developed using playful methods of co-design, incorporating digital methods alongside customary practice, where appropriate and practical.

My advance plans for weekly sessions followed the model used in the short studies and the launch event on 22 September 2018. Once a session was underway, I would often depart from the plan in the light of an idea or an enthusiasm voiced by the volunteers. This will be illustrated later, but I mention it now to introduce the often intuitive and spontaneous approaches required of me as facilitator. Beth Edge, in Bolton (1999: 135) describes the experience of facilitating writing workshops with people who "couldn't write yet but certainly knew how to put words together". Working in contexts such as social care organisations, community settings and prisons, Edge acknowledges the need to build confidence and "think about them, find out what they need, and give them a practical exercise to do, preferably where they can work together in a supportive, not competitive, way" (135). I used my plans to set some objectives or a task, but I recognised from previous practice with groups of non-writers, that the early stages of collaboration on the community novel would require a relaxed, organic approach. I would be learning what sparked participants' interest and enthusiasm, and enabling them to build confidence though activities they found enjoyable and inspiring.

Ground rules

Borrowing a method from writing for wellbeing practice and the ethical framework referred to in Chapter 3, I elicited a set of ground rules from participants in two meetings during October 2018. The devising of ground rules was an exercise in collaborative writing and used 'The Writing Well' acrostic by Nigel Gibbons (Gibbons 2018). The text is provided in Appendix A to Chapter 6. This provided a model method by which to co-devise a set of rules. The acrostic provides a structure through which participants contribute individual lines to a jointly written poem that contains their ideas about the name or phrase chosen as the acrostic's subject. The following prompts were used in the exercise I designed to elicit ground rules from volunteers:

Tools for writing: pen and notebooks, copies of 'The Writing Well' hand out.
Facilitator's prompts:

- Hand out the acrostic poem.
- Invite participants to read a line each in turn. Repeat this so that each voice reads a different line the second time.
- Invite discussion. What lines resonate? Are there some they like more than others? Is there anything that needs to be explained?
- Elicit suggestions for ground rules: each participant to write their own and share a line around the table.
- Note the lines shared and put them together as a whole.
- Share back to the group and keep them on file to refer to during the process.

There were notable differences in readers' tones and emphases during the first readings of the acrostic. One participant, Gail (a pseudonym), did not like the statement "**I**gnore grammar, spelling, punctuation, and doing it right" (Gibbons 2018: l.5) Correct spelling and punctuation were important to her. I acknowledged this but said that perfection was not the aim, or needed, in a rough first draft. I took the opportunity to say that a piece of writing is written several times before it is finished. Gail acknowledged this, but said she preferred to write in a way that was correct. Another participant, Paula, was relieved to hear that her spelling and handwriting would not be judged. She feared an experience like school. Heads nodded around the table. I assured Paula and others who felt anxious about sharing their writing, that the community novel would not entail them being assessed in the way that

school work is. They were encouraged simply to write, get words on the page and play with ideas for their story.

Figure 18 shows the acrostic produced by the group following their discussion.

Writing a novel takes a lot of detail
Right or wrong, we will have ideas and some will be dropped
It's part of the process
Try to be open to others' suggestions
It won't be perfect at first
Nothing is fixed in stone, yet
Great ideas

We won't worry if something has to be changed
Everything can be discussed
Let's get started and see what happens
Let's do it together

Figure 18: Community novel ground rules as a 'writing well' acrostic

The rules were added to or amended when the group felt it necessary. For example, a tendency that emerged among some in the group to say an immediate 'no' to someone else's idea, led to a new ground rule. Rather than say no, the idea would be 'put on the table' and left there for consideration.

Preparation

As preparation for beginning work on their novel, I explained that a novelist will typically go through a process of generating and exploring ideas, researching, and developing a premise for the story (Grenville 1990; Anderson 2006; Storr 2019, for instance). I explained the difference between what some authors informally refer to as 'planning or pantsing': planning a story before writing it, or drafting before pausing to plan. In discussion, most volunteers agreed that until they knew what the story was about there was little point in attempting to write it. Some were keen to write straight away, but they quickly

acknowledged that they did not know what to write about, so accepted the consensus. The volunteers understood that there were few, if any, precedents, for the type of community novel I was inviting them to produce. Without a story to work with as yet, my instinct was to start with playful methods to enable the volunteers to generate ideas and raw material, using aspects of narratology with "features that make it suitable to finding the best way forward in a world of conflicting demands" (Bateson and Martin, 2013: 31). This entailed writing games, verbal and written improvisations, and negotiation as the volunteers decided what to include and what to jettison.

I was used to encouraging non-writers to put pen to paper and was confident that I could encourage the novel volunteers with techniques such as timed sprint writing and lists (Adams 1990), sentence stems (Thompson 2011) and a variety of prompts. If I could build their confidence with such techniques, getting them to a point at which enough material had been generated to make a narrative plan, I could then introduce creative writing craft skills. I had considered beginning with an introductory series of skills-based workshops, to provide basic training in creative writing, but having now met the volunteers it was clear that for some this would be off-putting. I opted instead to work with them to develop raw material for the novel, using methods that would accustom them to work together. An initial focus on building characters and settings would provide foundations for a novel and would enable the volunteers to make decisions about theme and story type.

The lack of creative writing skills was no barrier to participation, in fact it was the opposite. Most of the volunteers had no preconceptions or expectations about how to write a novel and, as we worked together, trust in the process and in each other grew as characters and settings emerged. I noticed as well that those with more experience of writing were more inclined to struggle in playful collaboration. In one volunteer's case this was because of a preference for writing biography and memoir.

As facilitator, my intention was to avoid overly influencing the creative content. In keeping with the culturally democratic approach I was aiming for, this was not my novel. There should be no hierarchy of participation and my approach to facilitation was deliberately playful and inclusive, with a positive and motivating tone in my communication with the volunteers. This was designed to instil collective confidence in the group endeavour. I was echoing the demeanour of a manager leading a team through a process of change, modelling

a constructive attitude and behaviours. For example, I would introduce a method by letting the volunteers know that I was, myself, trying this for the first time and inviting them to experiment with me. This led to a relaxed and trusting attitude among the majority. Those who were less certain were carried along by the novelty.

Had I drawn attention to every problem encountered in the volunteers' deliberations, it is doubtful whether the group's confidence in its own agency would have grown to the extent that enabled a novel to be created. At an early stage it was important, I considered, to accustom the volunteers to a process in which ideas would come and go, changing rapidly until they pitched their ideas and sorted out what to keep and what to jettison. Storr's conviction that "Brains have to perceive the physical environment and the people that surround it in order to *control* them" (2019: 12) is held in the context of individual authorship. The solo writer makes unilateral choices from the ideas that spring from their own internal and external stimuli. With some 14 brains bringing their experiences, memories and opinions to the table, however, the community novel process would need everyone involved to appreciate the likelihood of change and compromise to ideas of setting, character and theme, before consensus could be found. This required negotiation and diplomacy, "constructive ambiguity" of the type used in mediation and peace negotiations (Pehar 2001: 163-200). As we embarked on creating material for the novel I made it a priority, as facilitator, to instil the idea of change as "our winding path to a more successful tomorrow" (Storr 2019: 13). If the volunteers could be comfortable with the uncertainties and opportunities of creative imagining, that would be a foundation from which the novel could include ideas from multiple contributors, and be formed into a narrative structure.

The following examples illustrate the playful methods used to generate the raw material of a fiction, and the ways in which traditional multimodal and digital methods became integrated. This is an indicative selection of activities carried out between autumn 2018 and early spring 2019.

Starting points: world building with Pinterest

With some eight to 14 people around the table and others sometimes contributing by email, the group agreed to start by creating some fictional settings before going on to conceive characters suggested by those settings. This process would continue over several sessions, establishing a method that could be returned to when necessary, at later stages. The Pinterest

app was successful in the earlier St Agnes study, so I used it again in in-person meetings and in some separate remote sessions for those who could not attend in person. These were an opportunity for me to establish the efficacy, or otherwise, of remote participation.

Volunteers who were familiar with Pinterest helped those who were not, or who did not have laptops or smartphones, which accounted for four of the regular participants. My field notes recorded, ruefully, "The time it takes to set up… the need for IT support" (Mylor study field note, 18/10/2018), having found the Hall's projector difficult to set up, and the Wi-Fi password apparently out of date. I managed to connect to Wi-Fi through a nearby open access account. As I demonstrated Pinterest, some voiced concerns about social media: "I don't want to get hacked," said one (Mylor study field note, 18.10.2018). I explained that the private board was not visible outside the group, which reassured them.

The exercise followed the steps used in the St Agnes study, with the difference that I projected Pinterest onto a white wall in the meeting, while some participants took part on iPads, PCs or smartphones. Others without their own worked with them in pairs, or watched.

Exercise

Tools for writing: pens, notebooks, facilitator's PC, participants' PCs, iPads, smartphones, projector.

Facilitator's prompts:

- Show the private Pinterest board with some images of doors and windows
- Ask those familiar with the app to join the private board
- Invite them to work in pairs so that those without the technology can join in
- Ask them to find images of local scenes to add to the board
- As pins are added, refresh the screen

As I projected the board from my laptop, the process became fluent. The room was noisy with laughter and affirmative noises as pins were placed on the board. Figure 19 shows the results of the pinning with a variety of local features.

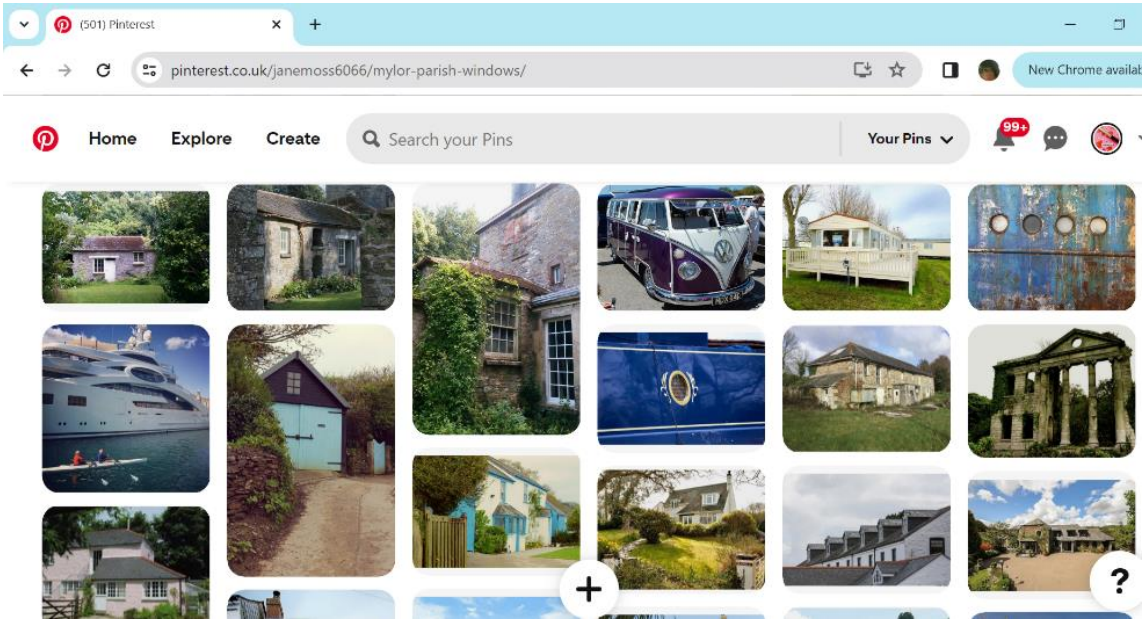


Figure 19: World building with windows in Pinterest

I gave a further prompt, asking the volunteers to imagine what was inside the windows or doors and to share their ideas in pairs. This was successful as a combination of using the app as a way to collaborate, and some writing to capture individual and group ideas about potential content.

A remote session held later in the week was partially successful, with one participant joining in from her holiday in Spain. Others, however, emailed to say they couldn't access the board, or, once in, did not know what to do other than look at what was already there. After an hour in which some participants managed to add further details to the board, while others watched or logged off, I concluded that the app was of more use in a physical meeting in which participants could help each other. Confidence and unfamiliarity with the technology were the barriers, but the app could be a useful tool to which we would return. We were able to agree on images that were suggestive of a story: a rusty boat, a dilapidated kitchen, a barn, and an elegant drawing room.

At the next physical meeting, the volunteers worked in threes to find connections between the images. They took ten minutes to share their ideas, with the rule that anything could be considered at this stage. Listening around the room, I could hear that most people were sharing well, not interrupting each other unless it was to affirm a suggestion and add another thought. A few of the volunteers were quieter but made suggestions when encouraged by the

others. There was general agreement that the images suggested a grand house in decline, with a nearby farm and a community of boat dwellers.

These basic beginnings of a fictional world provided a foundation. The next step was to find the characters inhabiting these places.

Starting points: character development

Further meetings during autumn and winter 2018 and 2019 established a cast of inter-connected characters. The following exercise typifies the approach taken to facilitation.

Tools for writing: pens and note books, PC, projector.

Facilitator's prompts:

- Refer to the buildings and rooms identified in Pinterest
- Ask participants to work in pairs or threes, appointing a notetaker each
- Give the following verbal prompts and invite them to discuss and write down the ideas in response:
    - Who would you find in this place on a typical day?
    - What are they doing there?
    - What is their relation to the place?
    - Share with the group.

Through sharing and discussion the idea emerged of a woman, Margaret Clemens, struggling to maintain a large country estate house. Figure 20 below shows pinned features that contributed to her development in the minds of the collaborating volunteers.

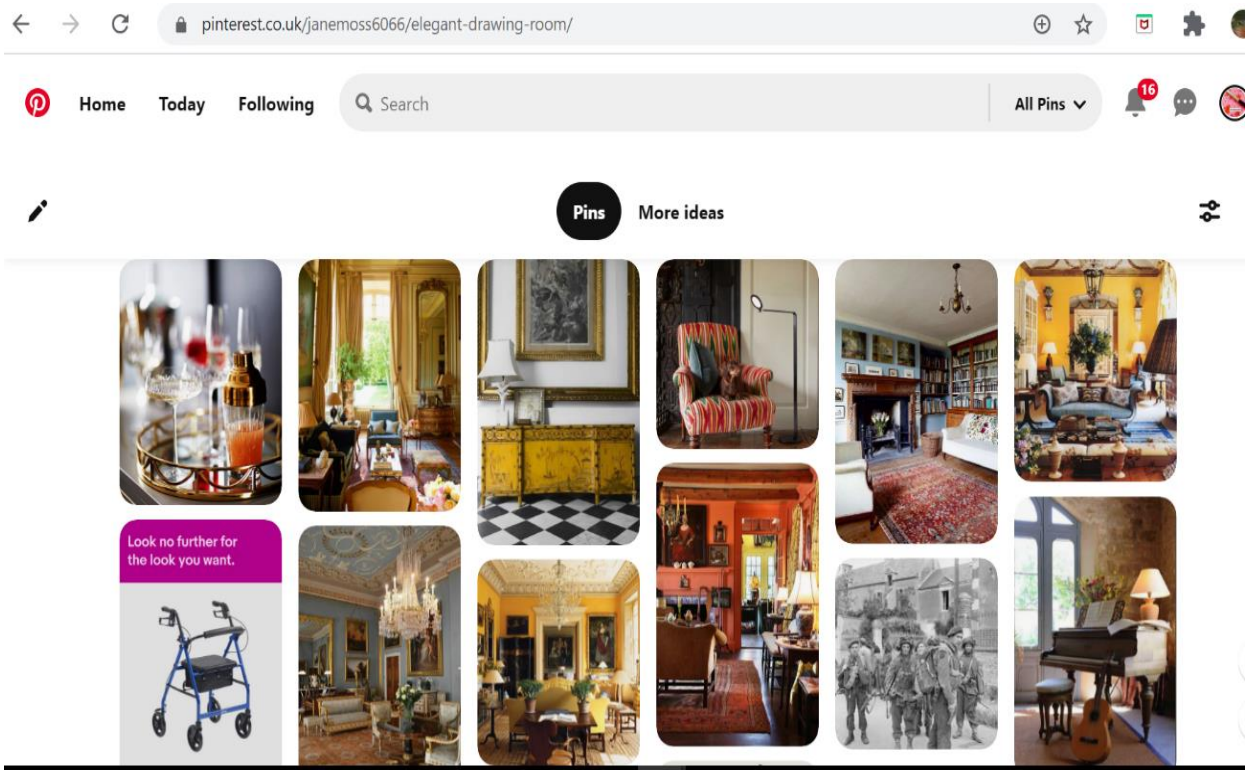


Figure 20: The pinned board that developed Margaret's character

Additions to the Pinterest board during discussions included a walking aid, so the group decided that Margaret needed a live-in companion and housekeeper. This became the protagonist, Anneke, a woman in her early forties who had moved from Europe to the UK for work. As the board grew it was clear that Margaret had exquisite taste in décor, but was beset by money worries since her husband's death. Other characters arose from other pinned boards: a young family living in a caravan, a boat dweller who worked on the estate, and a homeless man recently returned to the village. Field notes recorded the fluency with which the volunteers were able to use the app, and the value of having the visual reminders of setting and details that gave rise to ideas about character. Although I provided a written summary of discussion and decisions after each meeting, and circulated it by email, the visual record seemed to be the one everyone remembered with comparative ease.

Pinterest provided found material in the form of pictures. The immediate surroundings of Tremayne Hall, where weekly meetings were held, provided a further source. The Hall's foyer displayed a decorative quilt, mounted on the wall. Hand-stitched by a local sewing circle in 2013, this depicted local scenes such as dancing at the summer fair, a clock tower, a bowling club, a local thatched pub, and a Cornish Pilot Gig.

We had passed the quilt many times but had not paid it much attention. Seeing an opportunity for place-based bricolage using this found object, I asked participants to study the quilt closely and use their smartphones to photograph squares that interested them. These were texted to me and I combined them into a collage using the smartphone app PicCollage, which itself created a quilted effect on screen. Figure 21 shows some of the squares chosen, and some of the participants viewing the quilt.

Figure 21: The Mylor community quilt

Returning to the meeting room, the group chose quilt squares to focus on. My prompt was that they should work in pairs to share ideas about characters identified so far, place them in the scenes depicted in the quilt, and explore what they were doing there. Several scenarios

emerged, for example someone drinking in the village pub, and a character who rows in order to relax from work.

By now the group was reaching consensus that the novel would be set in a familiar place, drawing on aspects of contemporary community life. The ability to draw on their own surroundings gave participants a sense of control over the unfamiliar process of writing a novel. As one said (Mylor study field note 2018), “At least this way we know what we’re talking about”.

Evernote: a template to deepen character

Anderson (2006: 74) provides character-building guidance for individual authors using checklists of physical and psychological details, questions to do with family, friends and lifestyle, and finally personal insights such as memories and formative experiences. Instead of using this well-worn method, I selected the Evernote app which includes a template for fictional character building. This enabled me to share the app’s pro forma on screen during meetings, updating it on my PC as the group shared ideas. It could also be shared as printed handouts and, like Pinterest, became a useful method of sharing information and maintaining a record of the volunteers’ ideas as they developed. The Evernote template poses questions about appearance, speech, background, behaviour, and motivation. Figures 22 and 23 below are taken from the template in which volunteers described a character called Luke Davenport, an ambitious but inexperienced music festival producer.

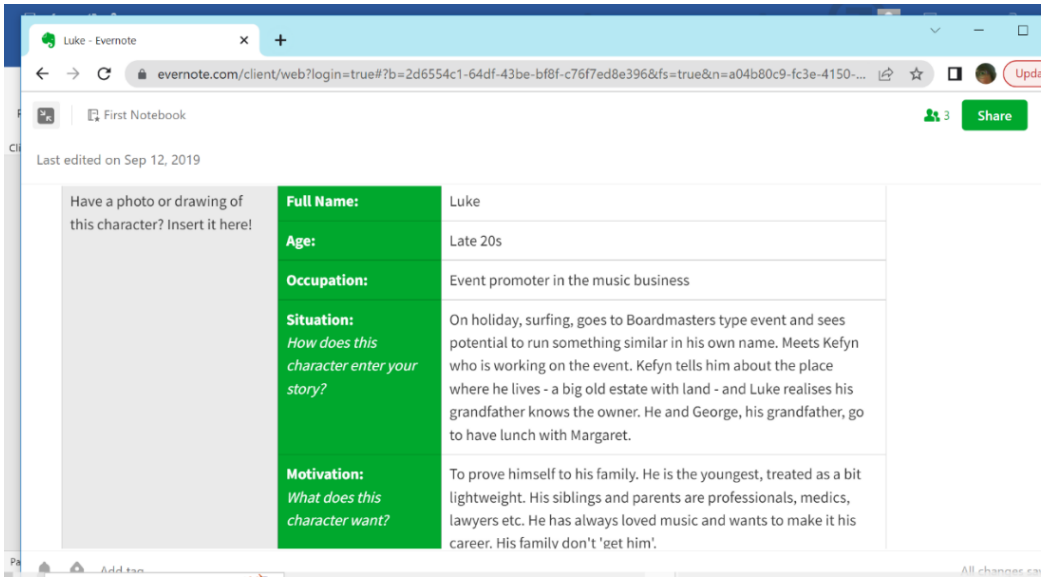


Figure 22: Luke Davenport Evernote template

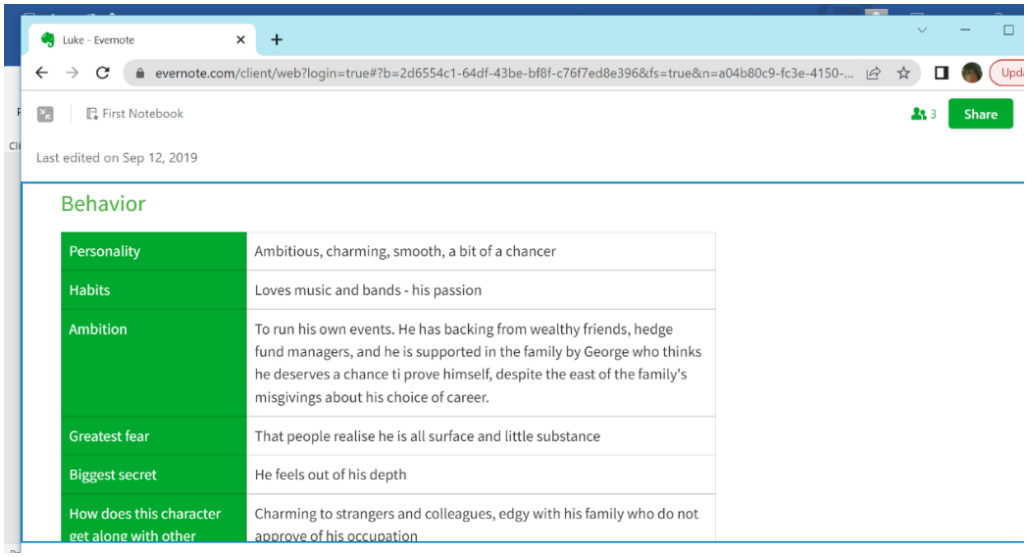


Figure 23: Luke Davenport Evernote template

We would return later to these character sketches, which were made for all the main characters, to identify the dramatic question that would drive plot (Storr 2019: 128-9).

The diversity of ideas that streamed from individual participants needed to be carefully managed and sometimes brokered into a unified version. With some voices inevitably louder than others, I used simple methods to manage the process of sharing ideas with the wider group, for example having the volunteers speak one at a time around the table so that every voice was heard while they listened and took their own notes. This could risk group think, as those who were less confident fell into line with others' suggestions, so I mitigated this by raising other ideas I had heard mentioned during the general discussion. When I asked whether these could still be useful, it encouraged quieter voices to speak up, diversifying the discussion. Another method was to invite pairs and threes to appoint a spokesperson but check back with those who had not spoken, to make sure they agreed. While volunteers were speaking, I often stood and scribed rapidly on a flip chart. This made contributions immediately visible to everyone and elicited further spontaneous ideas. I considered whether to type and project, but opted for the flipchart as this enabled me to be more engaged with the volunteers, and not have my eyes on the PC screen while attempting to type rapidly and accurately. Figure 24 shows my rapid handwriting on the flipchart.

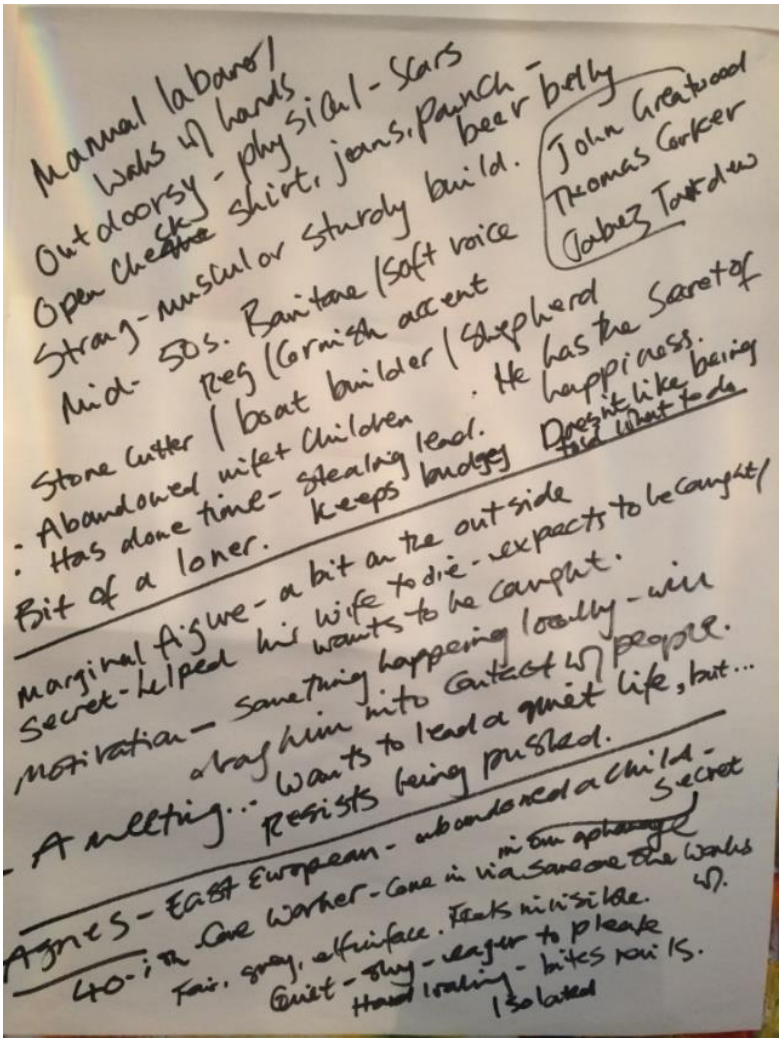


Figure 24: Facilitator's flipchart notes

Devising content for the novel in its loose form was the focus at this still early stage in the process, but it was important to ensure that no one diverged too far from an agreed path. In their enthusiasm, some volunteers would embrace an idea, then realise it was contra to something else already decided. Often, within the same group session, a previous decision and the route to it were forgotten, or it would become apparent that memories differed. When that happened, I paused the conversation, reminded the participants of their previous deliberations, and set out the options. This enabled them to consider solutions before carrying on. In this aspect of the writer-facilitator role, I played the memory-keeper, the keeper of the story in the way suggested in the St Agnes study (Chapter 5), and story-liner described by Paul Brodrick (interview, Chapter 4). My note taking was my own aide-memoire, attempting to capture the sort of improvisational detail a writer would keep in their own rough workings, as well as a record of the study. A solo author would maintain their

own overview, as well as the detail. I observed that group collaboration benefited from a facilitator who could objectively record the larger canvass of the story that was emerging.

As had happened in the St Agnes study, some volunteers wished to cling to their own notion of a character: for example, insisting that someone was tall, not short, or brown-eyed, not blue. In general, however, agreement was reached through the holding structure of the Evernote template. As the cast of characters grew, there was confusion about ages and relationships. It was proving hard for some participants to keep track. A timeline of characters' births and deaths was the solution, maintained and periodically updated by the facilitator. This was stored in the work-sharing app Trello, which I selected as a repository for the mushrooming amount of information accumulated in weekly meetings. To help everyone stay abreast of decisions, I prepared an email update which was sent to the majority of participants after meetings. Copies were printed for those who did not have email.

Mind-mapping connections

We used a mind mapping exercise to identify connections between characters. This was suggested by more than one volunteer, once they had a clear understanding of the leading characters, but the term 'mind map' was unfamiliar and off-putting to some, so I sought a way to demonstrate its value. An app called Mindmeister provided enough maps before its paywall, so I used it to show the interconnections, for example between Margaret and her immediate circle, and between the house itself (which was emerging as the antagonist), and the people associated with it. This provided a visual aid which helped participants make sense of the fictional relationships. I noted the value of having copies of these printed to share in meetings. No one, including me, could hold the detail in their heads without such visual aids.

Figure 25, below, shows the mind map created in Mindmeister, connecting Margaret to other characters.

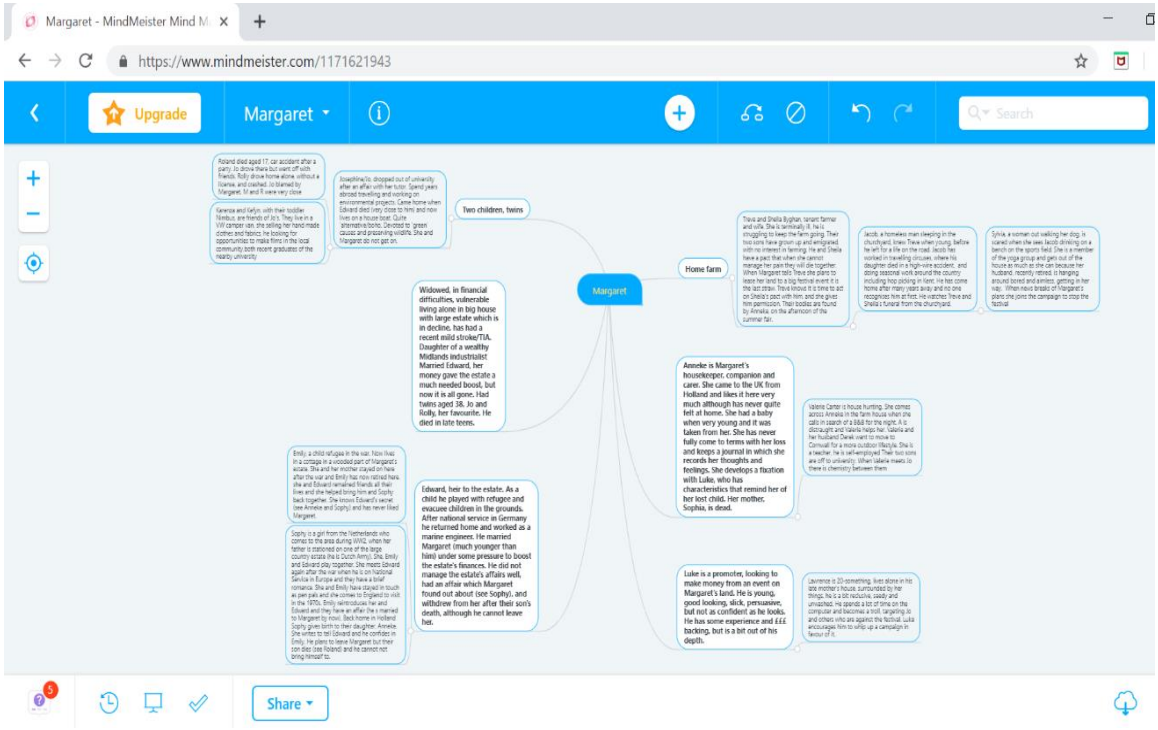


Figure 25: Margaret's connections, made in Mindmeister

There was repeated discussion about the protagonist, Anneke, who was proving hard to pin down. Part of the difficulty was her lack of obvious flaws. I urged the volunteers to make her more complex and vulnerable, perhaps by emphasising her precarious employment and her longing for a stable home. Paraphrasing Storr (2019: 163) I pointed out that if a hero starts out in such perfect selfless shape there is no tale to tell. The reader should sympathise with her plight but also empathise with her, as Bettelheim puts it, to identify "with the good hero not because of his goodness, but because the hero's condition makes a deep positive appeal to him" (Bettelheim 1976: 30). Anneke's development as protagonist became a lengthy process to which the group would return several times.

Pen and paper were commonly used in weekly writing sessions, but free apps on smartphones were becoming a regular part of my design for new exercises as the volunteers devised more material for their story. A drawback was apparent, however, and I was careful not to assume that everyone would, or could, adopt digital methods. My field notes record a volunteer's worry that she might be left behind because she did not own a laptop or smartphone: "as long as you haven't been doing things I don't know about online…" (Mylor Study field note, 14.1.2019). I reassured her and others who did not want to use apps or social media that they would not miss out on anything. I abandoned remote sessions online, such as the Pinterest one described earlier, not only because some participants struggled with

the technology, but because the cohesion of the physical weekly meetings was more conducive to creative spontaneity, and the building a relationship of trust as the participants got to know each other. My attempts at file sharing in DropBox and GoogleDocs were frustrated by a lack of engagement by the volunteers, many of whom had never used them before and found them difficult.

Slack became a repository for photographs gathered on participants' smartphones. For example, a number of canines entered the story: Jess, a farm dog, and Mouse, a rescued greyhound. The group set about finding images of the types of dog they envisaged. I encouraged them to be bowerbirds, taking photographs and making notes whilst out on walks in the local fields and along the coast. Shared onto Slack, these became a competition to find the most appropriate dog, with comments added with the images.

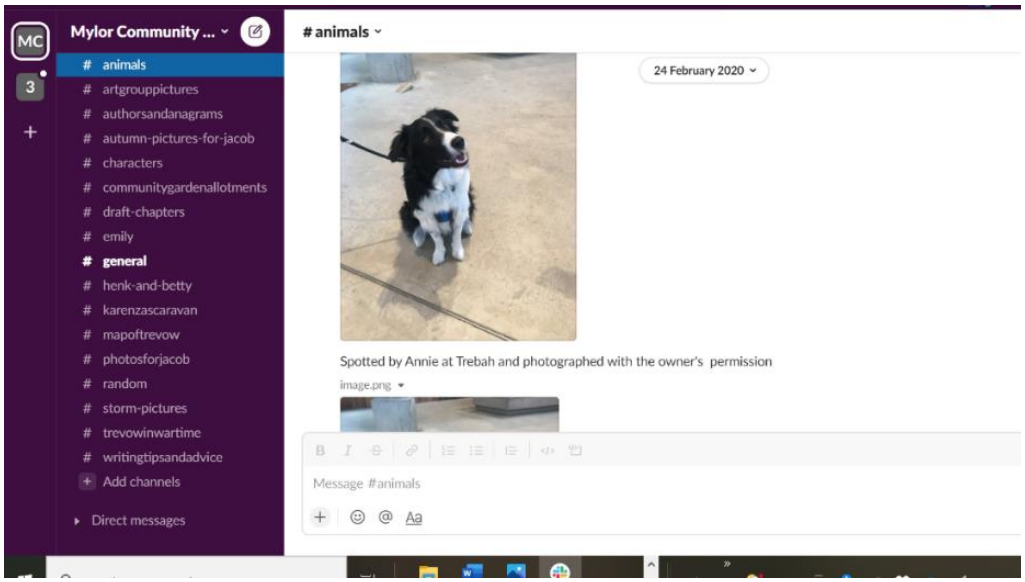


Figure 26: Dogs of Trevow in Slack

A small but enthusiastic sub-group of the volunteers began to add topics and images for other aspects of the story. An exercise to reach agreement on a model of sports car was successful, with members of the group raiding their own photo albums for examples.

Another thread developed for a storyline about Jacob the homeless man and Lawrence, a disaffected 17 year-old climate-change activist. The volunteers photographed evidence of changes to the landscape and the effects of unusual weather: plastic washed up on the local beach, litter in hedgerows, and unseasonal weather, for example. Some of these images provided stimulus for a scene in which Lawrence gathers plastic items from gardens at night

and makes a bonfire, witnessed by Jacob. The sharing of images in Slack took place in between meetings. This gave participants something to do and kept them thinking about the story. Sharing on the apps was playful and informed discussions when they met. Like the mind maps, the images served as visual reminders of consensus.

Story type and theme

With setting and character established, it was time to identify the theme and the type of story emerging from the quantity of material amassed. When one volunteer posed a question about the type of story and genre of the novel, suggesting a crime story, no one was enthusiastic. Discussion of genre quickly dismissed fantasy and dystopia. The majority's preference was to write a contemporary story with a back story to make use of material relating to previous generations in the fictional world of Trevow, as they now called the village in which the story was set. The volunteers were uncertain how to integrate past and present in the narrative, but I recommended they address that dilemma when they planned the story's narrative arc. This was an example of something I did frequently: defer a question until an appropriate stage in the process. I acknowledged the question or concern, and reassured the volunteers that it would be dealt with, but need not hold them up. With some volunteers showing a tendency overly to focus on details that would be ironed out in full drafting, this helped maintain momentum.

A discussion of story type was aided with references to Christopher Booker's *Seven Types of Story* (2004). I illustrated these with well-known examples: for instance, Cinderella as a rags to riches tale, Shakespeare's tragedies, and Tolkein's quests. To narrow down the choices I facilitated a discussion in which the volunteers considered which story type best fitted the raw material devised so far. With an emphasis on the protagonist, Anneke, a process of elimination identified the rags to riches story type as a good fit. Rebirth was also discussed in the context of the house and estate in which the story was largely set. As antagonist, the house threw up challenges to everyone in the story who tried to maintain and finance it. As the only character to love it, as her new home, Anneke was also dealing with the potential conflict of losing it. The house, its likely destruction, and a new version that would rise from its ashes, suggested a narrative arc that fitted the rebirth story type and provided focus for further deliberations. The next step was to develop the story's theme.

The Evernote exercises revealed a common concern with home as embodied by the house, its estate, and the surrounding community. Characters included: Anneke, the recent arrival; Margaret, the beleaguered custodian; estate workers dependant on the estate for their livelihood; a homeless man; a young couple unable to afford a proper home, and a woman from outside the area, house hunting. The volunteers' choice of name, 'Trevow', for the fictional village and the novel itself, is a Cornish word meaning 'home'. Discussions about local themes and concerns often turned to the housing crisis in Cornwall, the lack of affordable homes and the high price of property in coastal areas, driven up by demand for second homes. 'Home' resonated as a unifying theme. In a session with 9 volunteers, on 27 November 2019, I gave the following prompts for writing by hand:

- What does 'home' mean to you? It is where you live, or used to live, or where you were born, or somewhere else?
- Write without stopping for 5 minutes.
- Review your writing and underline the most important thing you have written about your idea of home.
- Share 'Quaker style' until everyone has spoken.

The Quaker style of sharing was familiar to me from writing for wellbeing practice, as a way to encourage good listening. Participants sit in silence, until someone speaks their line. Having heard it, there may be silence while others decide whether to speak their own, or someone may respond spontaneously, if their line follows on naturally from the previous one. As a technique of group sharing, this encourages focused listening and enables people to consider their contribution in relation to others. It removes the tendency for people's attention to drift as they wait for their turn to speak in order around the table. I noted the lines down as they were shared and, with some light editing, formed them into a free verse poem. This was published in *The Magazine* (2019), Figure 27 below.

HOME
Home means a safe haven
A loving dog to greet me when I return home
Home is a sense of belonging,
an identifying with a place that formed our beginnings
Not feeling walled in against the world

but an open door to the world
Living with beloved people,
a landscape you understand,
Objects with memories
Comfort, security, caring,
A place that I can call my own
Finding yourself on the outside
looking into other people's sitting rooms,
You on the pavement in the cold
Home sounds, home echoes, reverberates, cuts and hurts
Home is central heating and a comfortable bed,
Home is where one lays one's head,
A safe haven where you can be yourself.

Figure 27: Group poem, 'Home', written by nine volunteers

Participants who had never written before, or seen their own words in print, expressed pride in the result. As one participant said "It was wonderful to see it in *The Magazine*. I didn't recognise my own words at first but I was so proud to see them there among the rest" (Mylor study field note, 12/1/2019).

Accessible hybrid methods

Barnard says, optimistically, that "creative writers who are ready to experiment with technology can be at the vanguard of conceiving [ways of using] them" (2019: 103). My confidence to experiment with digital methods in ways that served the community novel grew at the process developed, but I remained mindful of not imposing methods that volunteers would find inaccessible. Rather than replicate methods designed by digital authors for digital authors, for example Farman (2012), Schleser and Berry (eds. 2018), and Clark et al (2015), I adapted those that were appropriate to the community novel participants, making adjustments according to their willingness and ability to use digital tools. In a group that included some without PCs, smartphone or email, it was rare to find a digital method with which everyone could engage. The solution was to offer a choice of writing tools, so that each participant could work with those they found most accessible. The St Agnes study had shown how dialogue could be produced in smartphone text. This was followed up in the

Mylor study with an exercise that combined improvised role play in a fictional WhatsApp family chat. The exercise, and others that followed later in the process, adapted Wittig and Marino's method using role play (in Clark et al 2015: 153-164). The following exercise illustrates this approach.

Dialogue with WhatsApp and Texting Story

I designed a dialogue writing exercise to include some volunteers who would use WhatsApp on their smartphones, and others who would take part in planning a fictional conversation in a family WhatsApp group.

Exercise: a role play with dialogue in WhatsApp

Tools for Writing: pen and paper, smartphones with WhatsApp

Facilitator prompts:

- Recruit two volunteers to play the characters in a fictional family WhatsApp group: a husband and wife, Derek and Valerie.
- In the full group, invite participants to share topics for conversation.
- Questions: how does the conversation start? How does it continue? How does it end?
- What is the tone of the conversation? For example, do they argue? What is gong on between them?
- Once a brief has been agreed, the two playing Derek and Valerie leave the room and have their WhatsApp conversation, in role.
- Share the dialogue with the rest of the group.

The volunteers quickly decided that the conversation would involve Valerie telling Derek about strange events at a Bed and Breakfast farmhouse where she had sought a bed for the night during her house hunting. Valerie would be trying to explain, but Derek would be able to make little sense of what she was hurriedly typing. The two writers left the room and went into other parts of the building, where they could not see each other. This was their spontaneous choice. At their first attempt, they both wrote too much, so I took the opportunity to discuss the difference between text, written dialogue, and normal conversation. We established that emojis would probably be used as shorthand, and that predictive texting might lead to confusion and comic effects. My usual advice to avoid over-using the exclamation mark was waived. Valerie was likely to be over-excited as she told her bizarre tale, and exclamatory punctuation would show this.

On the second attempt, the two volunteers used the app as they would in their own family communications. Figure 28, below, shows the conversation they produced in their roles, transcribed and edited following further comments from the other volunteers.

Valerie:	Hi Sorry no contact earlier no signal.
Derek:	Was wondering why I hadn't heard from you.
Valerie:	It's been awful I don't know where to start
Derek:	What's happened???
Derek:	Are you ok
Valerie:	I'm fine. Found B&B but owners are dead!!!!
Derek:	What?
Derek:	What d'you mean??
Valerie:	Dead as in not alive anymore!! The owners were dead in their bedroom when I arrived.!!
Derek:	why were you in their bedroom?
Valerie:	don't know how long but BOTH DEAD
Derek:	Christ!
Derek:	Have they been murdered? 😯
Valerie:	YYES THE BIDIES ARE HERE!?!!!!
Derek:	I can be with you in 3. Where are you?
Valerie:	don't come – nothing you can do – speak later!?!?x
Derek:	Ring me soon as!
Valerie:	👍👍👍

Figure 28: WhatsApp dialogue

This integrated creative writing skills of authentic dialogue into a live exercise in which volunteers absorbed the learning in practice. Later, in further dialogue exercises, the Texting Story app, which plays dialogue as video, would be used for further conversations between teenager Lawrence and Hare, an online groomer, conversations between Valerie, Derek and their daughters, and Valerie and Jo. These were devised by individual volunteers, again working to a co-designed brief. I demonstrated the app first and suggested the volunteers try it for themselves at home. Some drafted what they wanted to say in note form, then copied the dialogue into the app. Others wrote directly into it, editing as they went along. Figure 29 below shows part of a video made in the Texting Story app as a static screengrab. Dialogue expressed this way is imported as mp4s into the online version of *Trevow*.

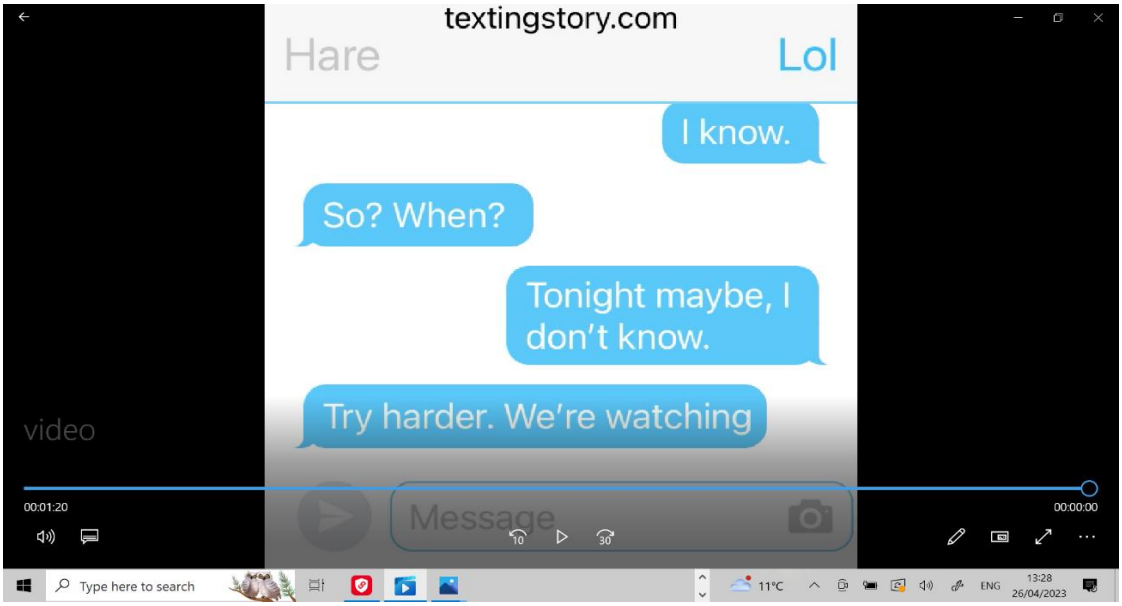


Figure 29: Dialogue using the Texting Story video app

The volunteers were increasingly accepting of my blending of traditional and digital methods. The hybrid approach could either aid the collaborative creative process, or potentially be a multimodal element within the published story; an idea to be explored later. One example of hybridity took us from our usual community meeting room to a nearby café where we made use of the ambient surroundings. I designed an exercise combining text messages with a technique of improvisation which had previously proved effective in ensuring everybody could contribute without ideas being immediately rejected. Based on Second City Impro (Libera 2005), and Wittig and Marino's use of Netprov (Clark et al, 2015: 163-164), someone begins with a prompt, then the next person says 'yes and', and adds their own line. This is followed by the next person, and the next, until everyone has spoken. The relay can go round the group as many times as necessary, only stopping when ideas are exhausted, or the set time is up. 'Yes and' exercises would be recorded or noted by a scribe who volunteered to write up the results. As in a game of consequences, a flow of ideas would evolve in synergy as the group embraced a line of thought. The technique was robust enough to withstand someone throwing in an incongruous idea; indeed, these could stimulate more adventurous contributions and help the group avoid cliché. based on the 'yes and' technique.

Six participants met at the café. The task was to generate material for a scene in which the protagonist would overhear gossip about her employer. I borrowed from Barnard's use of SMS text messages (2019: 94), to facilitate a collaborative plotting exercise for a scene set in the queue in the fictional Trevow Post Office.

Tools for writing: pens and note books, smartphones.

Facilitators prompts:

- Establish the setting for the scene: Anneke arrives at the Post Office with a package she is posting for Margaret. As she waits in the queue she hears people gossiping about her employer. She becomes upset and leaves.
- Round the table, improvise the scene using 'yes and'. Facilitator takes notes.

I acted as scribe, noting down the following as the volunteers spoke around the table:

- I reckon he killed her first
- Yes and she found them like that
- Yes and there was a pill bottle and two glasses
- Yes and there was a letter
- Yes and he took it away
- Yes and I saw the Police go up the hill
- Yes and there was a woman at the house
- Yes and I saw her earlier by the quay
- Yes and she's a cousin of Mrs Clemens
- Yes and he didn't say nothing to his sons about it
- Yes and he left the dog tied in the barn

(Mylor study field note, 4/2/2020)

The exercise continued:

- Ask participants to close or lower their eyes and listen discreetly to background conversations in the café.
- When they open their eyes, they should note what they have heard.

This produced snatches of anonymous conversation and led to discussion about which characters would gossip in the fictional Post Office queue.

The next prompt used the participants' smartphones:

- Choose the third from last message from a recent text conversation. Advise participants to only share what they were comfortable with, and nothing too personal. They could choose something else to share if the third from last text was inappropriate.

- Ask anyone without a phone to pair with another who is happy to share their texts.
- Share the messages around the table.

The exercise quickly descended into hilarity. I noted the messages down as they were read out and after the first round further texts were shared. Taken out of context, these created some comical juxtapositions:

- Ring me later I need know more xx
- Just hanging washing. Can leave soon
- Can't explain but please don't contact Jean
- Let's hope it was worth it
- How did he do it?
- In the fridge. Disguised as mushrooms
- There's a lot of denial going on
- We are locked out
- She stole my dinner. She's just an opportunist
- Ah, anything could be true then

(Mylor study field note 4/2/2020)

Traces of the improvisation can be detected in the published Post Office scene, which underwent further revisions. The use of ambient surroundings was used again in a session in which the volunteers went out from the café and explored a nearby churchyard. They were devising ideas for a scene in which a funeral takes place, watched by the homeless character, Jacob. I set the task of finding out what he might see, hear, feel and remember as he watches the mourners from a distance, and where he might settle down for the night. This yielded rich results. Without my suggesting it, the volunteers spread out to take photographs and make notes, while I remained at the café to guard our seats and bags. When they returned with their findings, there was quick agreement on the basics of a scene which they wrote individually before comparing and agreeing what to keep in a redraft that was carried out by one volunteer but with the others' input. This became a regular collaborative method: individual input followed by collective agreement once everyone had had their say. This is illustrated with more examples, later in the chapter.

Community engagement as bricolage

As more material was gathered for the novel, engagement took place with the wider community, to inform certain decisions about plot points. The idea was raised of a climactic scene in which a destructive storm would blow up with little warning, bringing catastrophe to the estate. Preliminary verbal improvisation took place in a group meeting and I used the Met Office's weather forecast app to stimulate ideas. Information about the threat of climate change was gleaned from Mylor Parish's at that time draft Neighbourhood Development Plan (Mylor Parish Council 2022), with which some of the volunteers were involved. This showed mapping of sea levels and likely inundations within a thirty-year timescale if climate change was not urgently addressed. Combined with the group's own reflections about unseasonable weather and coastal flooding in recent years, this provided rich material for discussion.

The volunteers decided it would be helpful to have input from the wider community. This was achieved on 12 May 2019, at the Mylor May Fair, an annual event that takes place on playing fields beside a tidal creek. It features fairground attractions, children's sports, traditional May pole dancing, plant sales and food stalls. The community novel volunteers decorated a stand for the fair, with bunting and pictures of some of them at work on the novel. Some examples of writing carried out so far were laminated as part of a display. The participants agreed some questions to ask fair-goers, to elicit ideas about a fictional storm. The scenario was that the storm would arrive with very little warning. People at the fair, who were local residents, were asked what they would do when the storm hit, where they would go, and what they would grab to take with them.

There were several hundred attendees and we estimated to have spoken to more than 60 people at the Joined Up Writers stall. Some wrote their answers on an A5 flyer and others spoke to the volunteers, who took notes. Figure 30 shows material used at the fair.

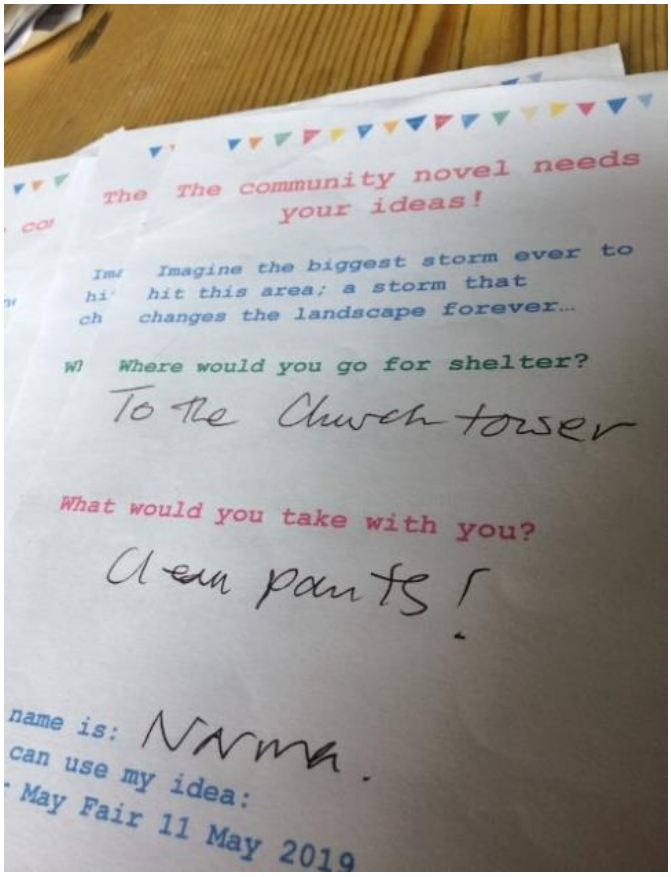


Figure 30: A5 flyer with questions, completed at Mylor May Fair

Two volunteers wrote up the answers and shared them at our next meeting, which took place at the Pandora Inn, a local waterside pub that was the inspiration for a fictional pub, The Clipper. By now the volunteers were used to jettisoning ideas as others took hold, and they welcomed the fresh ideas provided by the fair-goers. The fair stimulated them to revisit their ideas for a potential opening scene for the novel, as well, so time was spent sharing those ideas and recording those for which there was most enthusiasm. Field notes recorded:

> The May Fair provided a boost and new ideas which we will examine the week after next when we meet in the Pandora. The technique of setting a scene, asking open questions to stimulate the group's thinking, then drawing consensus is working. I find myself repeating back what I hear, to affirm it and facilitate agreement, in the way a counsellor uses active listening and verbal affirmation with a client
>
> (Mylor study field note, 20/5/2019).

I shall describe the meeting in the Pandora Inn in some detail, as the material it generated went far beyond its original intention, influencing other parts of the story. It showed the

value of an intuitive approach to facilitation, following the participants' lead rather than adhering to a pre-set plan.

First, we reviewed contributions from the May Fair which included ideas about how to escape the sudden storm by heading to higher ground, running to the big house, climbing the church tower, or taking refuge in a cellar. My field notes record: "The group felt that a cellar wouldn't be sensible so we focused on the higher ground ideas. I also shared a map of Flushing showing the likely impact of rising sea levels, and we talked about flooding" (Mylor study field note, 23/5/2019).

I set a task, as follows:

Exercise to explore characters' behaviour during the storm
Writing tools: pens and notebooks, smartphones
Facilitator's prompts:

- Ask the participants to choose a character each.
- Explore the pub and make note notes, keeping the character in mind
    - What details could you use from what you find around the pub?
    - Where would the character go during the storm?
    - How would they behave?

They returned after twenty-five minutes and shared their findings, which fleshed out some details. I took notes:

> Character, Emily, notes for general description: a model of a clipper ship, a poster about fundraising for a defibrillator, items from the menu including mussels, the image of the clipper on the menu, on the walls a ship's wheel, a brass propeller, maps, a collection of knots, outside 13 young swans on the water, children on the pontoon with shrimping nets, cooking smells from the kitchen, signs for the Sunday carvery.
>
> Character, John, notes for the storm: the brass bell being rung as a warning, silent dogs, also dogs barking anxiously, blankets being handed out, a paddle board, John having Real Ale and a pork pie, a speed boat, children catching crabs, weed floating in the sea, people playing euchre (a Cornish card game), the aroma of salt, clean clear water, the splash of oars, kayakers, a gathering of swans, John in shorts with hairy legs and strong arms, quiet, not chatty.
>
> Character, Valerie: imagined her there having lunch, loving The Clipper, a glass of Pinot, noticing the metal around the bar, the pirate-style lettering, her perfect idea of a pub. As the storm starts, rain is lashing outside, there is a loud crack and the sound

of screaming. The pontoon chain has broken. People and children are rushing to get on land or into inflatables.

Character, Arthur: the pub has solid walls, fireplaces and ovens, has stood the test of time. Arthur drinks Angostura bitters, which he has to explain to the barmaid. He has come there on the day of the festival. He is thinking about the wildlife and notices the change in air pressure. The birds pick it up too. As the weather breaks people come inside. Arthur's military training kicks in. He gets people to put chairs on the tables and take the children upstairs. The lights go out and rain comes down the chimneys putting the fires out. Candles are lit.

Character, Jo: Jo's dog Mouse is on the houseboat and Jo wants to leave the pub to go and rescue her. She fears her home will be swept away. The pub is full of people and they start to panic. Jo heads home, battling her way. The pub sign hangs on one hinge, furniture is swept along on the rising water, hanging on to anything it meets in the way outside.

Character, Jacob: Jacob heads up the hill where he has a good view of the cottages. Will they hold against the weather and the roiling waves? He feels the change of atmospheric pressure; the swans are fleeing the creek and the water birds are flying inland. From the church tower Jacob rings the bell as a warning.

One of the volunteers shared a story she remembered about a great storm in 1891, in which heavy snow fell, a little boy was blown off his feet, and his mother and the pub landlady barricaded themselves into the Pandora Inn, where we were sitting, pulling furniture up against the door. Guests were wrapped in blankets, trying to behave normally, and one of them declared it to be 'The wrath of God! Prepare to meet thy doom!' This account of an actual storm affecting the place where we were meeting, added further authentic detail to the group's discussions.

The participants wanted their storm to be plausible. After further discussion they agreed details that helped stimulate further plot points and scenes of climactic and falling action. The sky would grow dark, the pressure would fall and birds and wildlife would fall silent. The wind would pick up, followed by torrential rain, thunder, and tidal surge. The protagonist would show her bravery by diving into the sea to save a child, and her love interest, the estate worker John, would see what she was capable of. Someone suggested that the ancient cedar tree near the house would be split by lightning, causing a final calamity. The tree had featured earlier in the story and its fall now became symbolic of change and rebirth at the novel's denouement.

The material produced at the Pandora Inn, following community input at the May Fair, formed the basis of the novel's climax: for example in this short extract:

> People are hurrying through the torrential rain, trying to get to their cars. The wind hurls pieces of debris like random missiles, adding to the chaos. Another flash of lightning momentarily illuminates the scene. Lawrence looks over towards the camping area and sees more pandemonium. Some of the tents flap frenetically, others have completely collapsed. People are desperately trying to retrieve belongings and cram children and themselves into cars. Caravans have blown over and vehicles are stuck in the mud, blocking exit routes as people try to get round them. There is panic all around (*Trevow*, Chapter 41).

Other ideas generated in this session and from the community's input included a scene in The Clipper, with details such as mussels on the menu, Valerie (the house hunter) enjoying her surroundings, and a sudden downpour foreshadowing the later storm.

More bricolage using a community setting took place in a meeting of participants held at Flushing Sailing Club in March 2019. This gave rise to more creative ideas than had been envisaged when I planned the session, and showed that the volunteers were now confident, with a momentum to their work as they made connections between parts of the story, and saw how new material could be incorporated. The sailing club overlooks Falmouth Harbour with panoramic views. A visit to plan for the session had shown me that the club's walls were decorated with sailing-related pictures, plaques, charts and posters, illustrating the diverse local sailing culture which includes craft from working boats to racing yachts. Many of the novel participants had seafaring experience; one had served as a Wren and four had owned boats or crewed with others. There were some pilot gig rowers and kayakers as well. I encouraged them to use their knowledge and experience of life on the water, of navigation and weather to add authentic detail in their writing.

The purpose of the sailing club session was to develop the character of Edward Clemens, late husband of Margaret, and identify key events in his life. We started by sharing ideas verbally about his classic yacht, using details from boats we could see moored outside in the harbour. Next, I invited them individually to spend 20 minutes exploring the club room, looking at the pictures and charts on the walls, and seeking found objects and information to provide insight into Edward's passion for the sea. Those with smartphones took photographs. Everyone took notes either by pen, on tablets, or in the notes app on their phones. After 20 minutes I asked them to gather at the table and spend a further 5 minutes sorting through

their notes. I scribed as they shared their ideas about Edward and took photographs of a yacht in the harbour which had caught the attention of several of them. A list of Edward's attributes emerged, some ideas about formative events in his life, his family background, his less than happy marriage, and the weight of expectations he carried as heir to the house and its estate. Writing in pairs, the participants explored Edward's relationships with two women: his wife Margaret who was not fond of the sea, and his mistress Sophie, who was a confident sailor. This led to clarity about his relationships and an intriguing contrast between the two women: one glamorous and stylish in shoes not suitable for a deck, and the other more natural with her bare feet.

The session overran by half an hour, by agreement, because no one wanted to interrupt the flow. There was discussion, too, about a map which a volunteer had sketched to bring together the various settings and locations in the story: Figure 31.

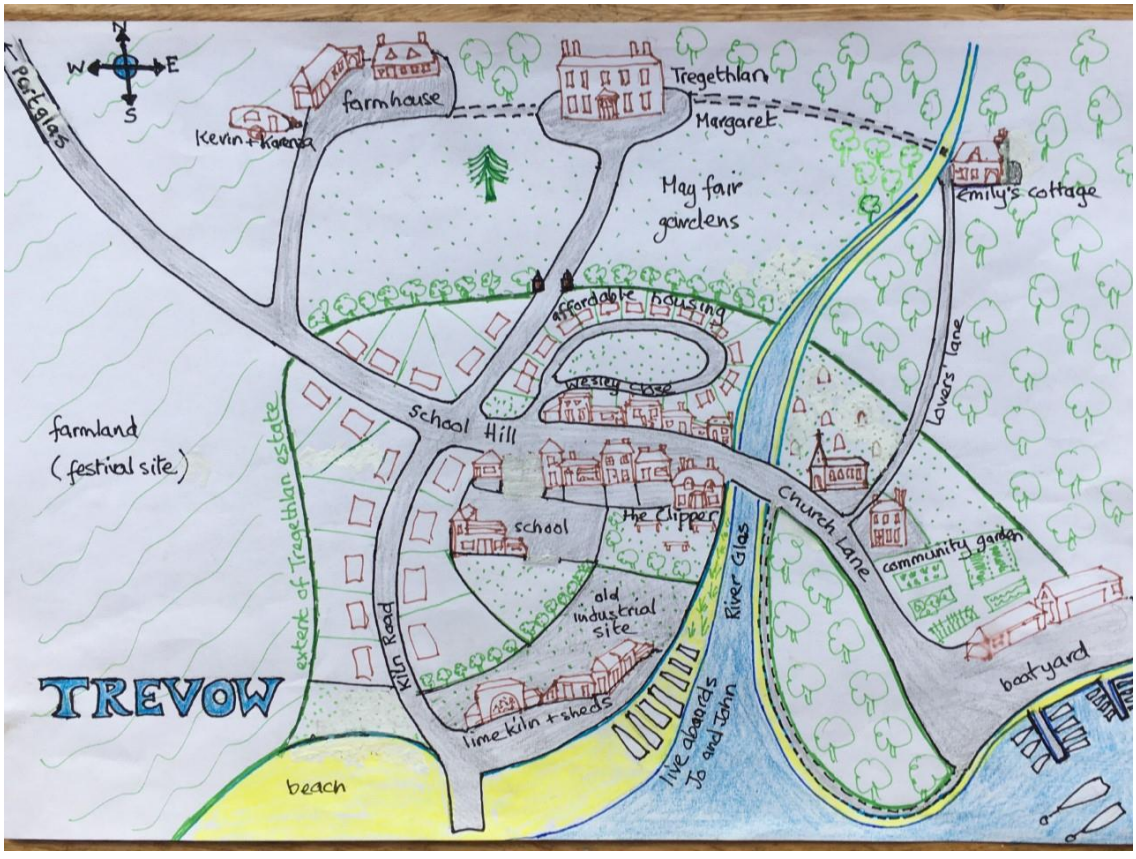


Figure 31: The map of Trevow

The drawer of the map stressed that this was her personal idea of how it fitted together. She would be happy to redo it if others disagreed. As a concrete visualisation, the map led to constructive debate rather than argument about the positioning of certain features, the routes

between them, and the time it would take to get from one location to another. Some features were not where others had imagined them, but I noted the ease with which they accepted the map as drawn. There was, by now, awareness that if new ideas were raised, they would need to consider others' views and the implications for other parts of the story before adopting them. This would become a feature of drafting when the novel was in full production, and will be illustrated later in this chapter. Increasingly, the volunteers were able to keep pace with each other in their iterative process, rather than pursue tangential ideas as individual.

As an aside, I noticed Paula, one of the volunteers studying a poster on the wall during the sailing club session. She photographed it, then sat beneath it, writing copiously in her notebook. When I asked her about the poster, she explained that it was for a circus that had come to a nearby town in 1969. This thrilled her because it lent credence to an idea she had previously voiced in the group, but which had been immediately dismissed as implausible by someone who had subsequently withdrawn from the project (this is recounted below). Paula was interested in the homeless character, Jacob, and wanted to explore why he had taken to the road as a young man. Her idea was that he had left home after a violent argument with his father and had joined a travelling circus. She was certain from her own memory that a circus had visited the local area in the past. The poster proved her right, and when she explained, the group was receptive to exploring it with her. I noted, as well, that Paula had previously hesitated to use her smartphone but was now confidently recording source material on it.

Figure 32: Taking notes about the circus poster on the wall above

The collaborative culture that had grown by spring and early summer in 2019 was cemented as the story took shape in outline. There was a shared understanding about characters, their motivations, scope for conflict and some emerging scenes which would form plot points. Some were keen to begin plotting but I could see the need for more development, particularly among some of the minor characters whose roles were yet to be defined. Just at that time, during spring and summer 2019, a small community garden was being established on a strip of land at the side of and behind one of two churches in the Parish. We were approached by one of the leading volunteers, Sian Gaston, who had previously invited me to work with the T&PC students.

Mylor Parish Council had declared a climate emergency in spring 2019, in line with Cornwall Council's environmental policy. The community garden was responding with an initiative to educate people in environmentally friendly growing. We were invited to use the garden for writing in plein air. I visited the garden on a warm afternoon in June 2019, made a plan, and returned the following week with the volunteers for a session in which a new scene was developed and drafted.

I set the task of creating a scene in which Margaret's daughter Jo takes Valerie to see the garden in between her house hunting appointments. Jo is a passionate environmental campaigner.

Figure 33: Writing in the Community Garden

While they wrote I sat apart from them, observing. They settled down to write quickly. One walked around taking photos on her phone, then joined them. After 45 minutes we returned to the community hall, our usual meeting place, to share the writing. The consensus that emerged was:

- Jo's passion and commitment to green causes
- Details of the plants and beds, with the vegetables, salads and willow arches sprouting in the ground
- Valerie's feeling that she would like to be part of this community
- Lawrence, whom they encounter, is shy and awkward around Jo.

From this session the character of Jo Clemens blossomed into a three-dimensional personality. Several elements came together in the group's discussion of her role: recent activity in nearby Falmouth harbour in which Extinction Rebellion campaigners had boarded boats at night, hoisting their distinctive pink flags on masts, and a demonstration in Truro which some in the group had attended. We also considered the role of Jacob, with his knowledge of the land, and Lawrence. In the earlier Evernote exercises he had been conceived as a fifty-year-old recluse but he now evolved into an angry teenager with a subplot of his own: an example of the participants' increasing agility as new ideas occurred and were integrated.

The garden writing led to questions about point of view. This was undecided, as yet, and there was confusion about the different options. I recommended we revisit it once the volunteers had planned the story, and that they consider different character perspectives as well as point of view choices. This would be followed up when the novel went into production.

Before moving on to further types of participation, I note at this point the insights I was gaining into methods of facilitating cohesion among the volunteers, especially when differences of opinion and approach were voiced. The following account of an episode that concluded with a volunteer deciding to leave the project was a rare case, but informative in terms of facilitation and the value of reflexivity as an aid to solving a problem.

Facilitating group cohesion

By spring 2019 the group had achieved the objective of creating raw material for the novel. Karen Burke LeFevre's distinction between collaborative types helped me confirm that the

most inclusive methods were those in which "the power of inventing and accepting or rejecting [was] distributed fairly equally among collaborating inventors" (LeFevre 1987: 67). A The routine of weekly two-hour meetings for improvisation and rough drafting was well-established and productive. The volunteers had largely arrived at the 'norming' stage of team working, although consensus was sometimes hard won. The majority embraced the playful and flexible spirit, but some found it difficult to work with the uncertainties of a fictional story that was still fluid. One example of an individual's struggle with the uncertainties of the creative process had potential to derail the project, and led to fresh insights about how to manage the group dynamic.

Gail, the pseudonym used earlier for the same volunteer, was one of the more experienced writers, but her experienced was mostly with non-fiction, particularly biography. When invited to speculate about a fictional character, she would become stuck and, like a cautious horse, refuse the imaginative jump. The following excerpt from field notes illustrates her difficulties, and my efforts to reassure her. The context was a character-building exercise:

> Gail intervened and said she found this sort of thing impossible because she did not yet know the story. I responded by suggesting that story could arise from the details of character, for example, a fear or a secret. I mentioned conflict as the driver of plot. Gail said she felt the questions [about character] were random. I said they were typical of those used by authors of fiction to create a three- dimensional character, and that they were an invitation to improvise. Randomness can give rise to specifics which, when put together, create character. She was struck by this, asked me to repeat it, then got down to the work (Mylor study field note 22/10/2018).

Later in the same meeting Gail said:

> she felt she had come up with a 'boring' character, an accountant who threw everything up and changed his life. I challenged her, gently, to ask more questions: why the change, why had he become an accountant to begin with? Could there be family pressure? What else was in his background? She looked surprised. I suggested she ask herself more questions and go deeper before rejecting a character as boring. I said I was immediately intrigued about his change of life style: what, why, how? There was scope to dig further and find the story. She accepted the point and others agreed (Mylor study field note 22/10/2018).

Between meetings Gail would often email me writing which she had done following the group session, explaining that she felt stimulated to sit down and write at home. I thanked her but explained that I could not give her an individual critique. Instead, I suggested she bring her ideas to the group and contribute them to the discussion. She accepted this, but I sensed it was a frustration. As facilitator, I considered ways to help her become more

comfortable with the playful and speculative tasks we were carrying out to create material for the novel.

In a meeting held in a village pub, I put her into a small group with two others, hoping they would model ways in which ideas could emerge through playful discussion and the use of 'what if' questioning. This had limited success and I noticed Gail listening while the others contributed, not venturing her own suggestions. In previous sessions I had experienced her tendency to wait while I introduced a task, then interrupt with a question just as the task started. Her questions were often revealing of a personal worry, for example her desire to know the novel's genre before writing. This became a regular and disruptive occurrence. I chose not to engage with her questions when they were interjected at a moment that interrupted the flow of work. Instead, I reinforced instructions for the task and reminded everyone that this was rough writing to explore ideas. Gail settled down when she saw others getting down to work, but was still hesitant to commit more than a few words to paper.

On another occasion, she again said "she found it difficult to be interested in 'these fictional people'" (Mylor study field note, 5/11/2018). She later apologised for having spoken out of turn, and reflected on how things were starting to shift for her. When other volunteers said they were comfortable with uncertainty, this seemed to settle her. Nonetheless, field notes record me considering whether to suggest she step back from the project at this time, or take a non-writing role, as she seemed to be struggling. I was keen to understand her uncertainty, but I was not willing for her to unsettle others or disrupt the process in which everyone was now collaborating constructively.

I decided to talk to her alone in order to gain insight into the process from her perspective, and explore how to help her be more comfortable with fiction. Writing in my reflexive journal enabled me to analyse what was happening and understand my own sense of frustration. In one example of expressive writing, I used Bolton and Delderfield's five-stage tool (2018: 159) to write an un-censored account of an incident in which Gail had been dismissive of another volunteer's idea. Writing in timed bursts of six minutes, I reached the insight that while I had felt protective of the volunteer, who lacked confidence, I could also appreciate that Gail's dismissal of the idea "must have come from a place of her own uncertainty" (Mylor study journal, 10/11/2018). I noticed that "when encouraged to contribute her own ideas she has little to say. Perhaps this makes her feel vulnerable and that

vulnerability leads her to knock down others' suggestions as a form of defence" (Mylor study journal, 10/11/2018).

To achieve greater empathy with Gail, I used an exercise from writing for wellbeing practice (Moss 2012: 90) The following is an extract from a longer piece of expressive writing in which I pictured her and wrote a description of an imaginary pair of shoes which she wore, noting their condition and where they were standing. Then I imagined standing in those shoes, and wrote about how it felt:

> I can see that these shoes are unsuitable for the terrain. The ground is rough and bumpy, and there are sections of sand that slip away beneath the wearer's feet. The shoes are being told to keep walking, but they feel unsteady. They would be better suited to a flat floor, and different weather. She knows she has worn the wrong shoes but is afraid to try on a different pair (Mylor study journal, 5/12/2018).

The Christmas break intervened and Gail made her own decision to leave the project. She declined to reflect with me further but sent an email in which she cited a New Year resolution to focus on her painting. This was a mutually satisfying solution. Gail had made her own decision and I was able to reflect on the difficulties of the collaborative process for someone unused to fiction writing.

Between autumn 2018 and early January 2019 I asked volunteers to complete a short pro forma at the end of meetings. There were two versions: the first, used from October to December 2018, was based on a verbal exercise at the end of the first event on 22 September. To design the form, I used words provided by the participants at that meeting to say how they viewed the process of making a novel: 'excited', 'puzzled', 'inspired', 'confused', 'amazed', 'stimulated', 'surprised', 'intrigued', 'baffled' and 'pleased'. For balance, I added 'frustrated', 'bored' and 'disappointed', and provided a free text box so that other terms could be added. Completed at the end of meetings, the pro forma provided insights into the participants' experience of the project. An example of a form completed by one of the volunteers is provided in Appendix E to Chapter 6.

From January 2019 until March 2019, I revised the form as a single A4 page with five questions designed to elicit volunteers' ideas about what to do next in the process, and to provide them with an opportunity to ask questions outside the group's discussions. In one example (14/9/2029) a volunteer, Joanna, asked plaintively "What is the point of the story?

When do we get to the point?" which gives insight into the role of facilitator in managing expectations about the longevity of the project.

By writing their comments, volunteers were able to say things they might not disclose in the group, and to add further thoughts. By April 2019 the data being gathered in this way had become repetitious and some volunteers were voicing their boredom with the form. As method by which I could gauge participants' experience of the project and the methods used, it had served its purpose.

The increasingly sociable atmosphere at the start of each meeting and the generally good-natured discussions in between writing exercises, motivated volunteers to return each week and carry out what they called 'homework' (their term, not mine), in between. This referred to tasks such as finding out information, finishing a piece of draft writing begun in a session, or taking photographs or otherwise gathering content. Some members of the group took to meeting together to work on a scene or discuss aspects of the story. The weekly meetings continued to be lively and dialogic, interspersed with quiet and focussed periods of writing in response to my prompts and structured exercises of the type described. I aimed to retain this sense of playful enquiry as we moved into a phase of co-designing the narrative.

6.3 Tools for planning

Narrative planning began in February 2019 and continued in tandem with further improvisations as scenes and plot points were identified. Two types of planning worked synchronously, one relating to the narrative design of the novel, and the other to managing and maintaining records of the process. The app Trello, mentioned earlier, was used for project management and as a repository for material. I shall discuss this before going on to explain methods used to plan *Trevow*'s narrative arc.

Tools for project management

Figure 34 below shows Trello in use as an aid to narrative planning, alongside a paper copy of the plan for a meeting of volunteers.

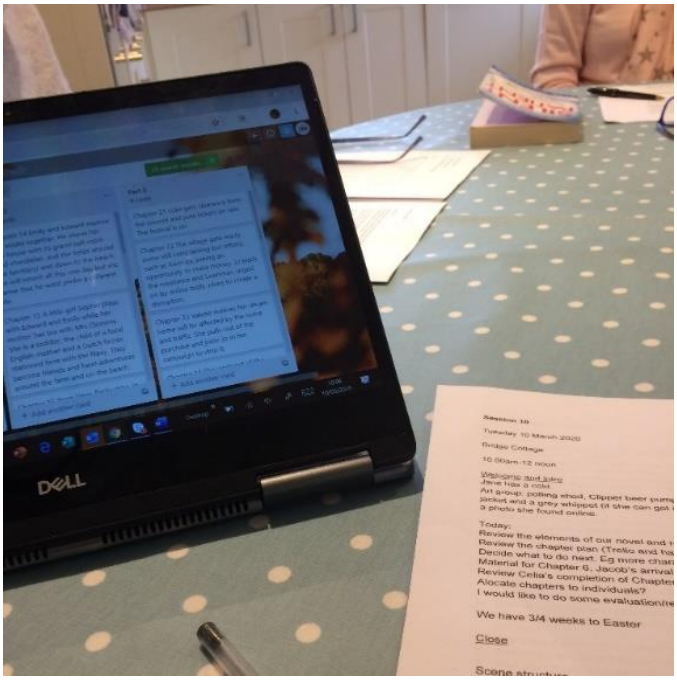


Figure 34: Trello in use during a meeting on 10 March 2020

Trello became the type of "digital scrapbook" referred to by Keep (2018: 43): a repository for weekly session plans, notes of meetings, draft written material, character outlines, and the evolving chapter plan. This enabled me to keep track of the work in progress and made the writer-facilitator role akin to a team leader in a management structure. The volunteers became, effectively, the team members, taking responsibility for specific roles and tasks, all contributing in a collaborative community of practice.

I mentioned earlier that attempts to use platforms such as DropBox for file sharing were abandoned, but weekly updates supported by Trello and paper records, became essential to the process. Time was spent recapping at the start of each meeting, and discussing questions arising from the previous week. Record keeping was sometimes time-consuming, but the facilitator's workload was lightened by delegating note-taking in meetings to the volunteers. This increased their agency in the process and enabled me to focus on actual facilitation. Other methods of project management were considered: for example, a Gantt chart, but the complexity of inter-dependencies, and the flexibility of the time scale, made it unwieldy. Scrivener did not lend itself to the collaborative process. Like DropBox and SharePoint, Googledocs proved unworkable with this set of participants, although further research with a more digitally confident group might make better use of such platforms.

Tools for narrative planning

The use of narratology within creative writing studies pedagogy and related textbooks mostly assumes individual authorship, with the author in unilateral control of events over a three or five act structure. The community novel volunteers were largely unaware of the narrative arc, so I shared Forster's illustration of the difference between story and plot, as a starting point: "The king died and then the queen died" as sequential, followed by "The king died and then the queen died of grief", as causal (1927/1980): 87). From this, the volunteers understood that they should decide how to organise the mass of story fragments they had created around characters, locations, and events. In their enthusiasm to explore every detail of the characters' backgrounds and history, they had created a potential back story that carried as much dramatic weight as the contemporary story. No one was willing to jettison this, so the question was how to integrate it. The volunteers were puzzled by how to begin in the present and move back and forth from the past. Using Yorke as my guide I introduced them to Freytag's Pyramid (Yorke 2013: 36-41) which served as a map to guide them.

Between February and April 2019, the traditional writers' methods of a long sheet of paper and post-it notes were used to map out the story, complemented by record-keeping in Trello. Typically, seven to 12 people took part in these sessions. The meeting room's long table and wide walls were perfect for displaying the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement. We began with a sorting exercise in which participants worked in pairs, writing their ideas for scenes and plot points onto post-it notes before placing them on the plan. I had considered using a Trello board projected from my laptop for this, but decided against it because the participants would have been less physically engaged, and I would have had to concentrate on the laptop. The sheet of paper enabled everyone to gather round, leaning over the table, writing and moving their notes around like chess pieces as they discussed the ordering of events. I was able to move around, picking up on people's suggestions and making sure everyone contributed. Once identified and agreed, plot points were transferred onto the wall, where they could be further moved around as the discussion continued. This made for lively and dynamic sessions over several weeks, with myself and others on our feet, moving notes on the plan while the volunteers called out suggestions. Inevitably, gaps were revealed in the story: for example, a need to explain a causal link between one character's actions and another's response. When a gap was identified, it was an opportunity to shift back into modes of improvisation and play. Gradually, pieces of the

story were put into place, like a jigsaw enabling everyone to see its shape. I wrote up the emerging structure in Trello and maintained it as a master plan.

Figure 35: Plot points mapped (with cake)

There was lengthy and lively debate about the starting point for the story and the dramatic question to be posed and answered by the end. It took several meetings to resolve this and we paused in the planning to tease out certain characters' motivations. For example, Anneke (the protagonist's) motivation was to keep the new home and job she loved. Related to Anneke's fortunes, would the house be saved by Margaret's efforts? It would not, but it would be transformed for the future, and Anneke's life with it.

In my field notes I reflected on the continuing need to adapt creative writing pedagogy to the tasks of collaboration, especially in relation to collective decision-making. With narratological tools to guide us, however, it became more straightforward. By focusing on stages of exposition, inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement in Freytag's model, the foundations were laid as follows:

Exposition: Anneke is a newcomer to Tregethlan, which she immediately loves, having never settled anywhere before. Her employer, Margaret Clemens, has a problem: the estate is in decline and can no longer be

sustained. This compounds Anneke's insecure position. She may not be able to stay here.

Inciting incident: Anneke finds Treve Byghan, the tenant farmer, and his wife, dead, a murder-suicide.

Rising action: Margaret's plans to revive the estate's fortunes, Luke Davenport's crazy scheme, Jo's campaign to stop it, Anneke's struggle to support her employer, and her tentative romantic interest in John.

Climax: A terrible argument between Margaret and Jo leads to a permanent rift between them.

Falling action: The festival gets underway. Anneke misunderstands a gesture she sees between John and Jo. She feels stupid for having had hopes of romance with him. The weather changes. A storm breaks and there is chaos. Anneke shows her bravery in rescuing a little boy who is swept into the sea. John admires her and Jo explains she was mistaken. They are just friends. In a final catastrophe, the house is damaged by the ancient cedar tree which falls in the storm. Margaret dies, Jo inherits.

Denouement: Jo and Anneke discover a connection between them. The house is reborn as a hotel. Anneke stays on to work there, happily settled with John. She is home.

With the contemporary story outlined, participants could see the gaps and some problems in the timescale. They returned to the question of how to treat the considerable amount of back story material that had emerged through engagement with the local history group, and through visits to the local historic estate of Carclew (an atmospheric ruin) and Enys House (gradually being restored and open to the public). A further planning exercise identified connections between the historic and contemporary stories. This was a revelation to many in the group, who could now see the importance of causality. They could understand, through the visual aid of the narrative arc, how events in the past would influence the contemporary situation, and how events foreshadowed in the exposition would bear fruit at the climax and in the denouement. This helped them accept that the entire narrative might not be chronological. Given the choice between weaving flash backs into the contemporary story, or arranging the novel into three parts, the middle of which would be an extended flash back

with its own pyramid structure, the group chose the latter. The theme of home and the decline of the house and, by extension, the local rural and coastal landscape, provided a thematic backbone.

As potential scenes and significant events in the story were discussed, I noted what I termed 'ghost stories'. These were ideas that ignited some participants' interest, and often my own, but were quickly abandoned because a further idea took precedence. Many of these could have been viable and potentially stronger than the story agreed on, but I took care not to advocate for my own preferences. It took conscious effort to maintain an instrumental rather than creative role, but I held to the view that if I became involved in creative choices, it would disempower the participants. I trod a tightrope between facilitation and a more directive role, intervening when asked for advice, and offering options rather than opinions. This was markedly different to, for example, a showrunner's power of veto over the story, or the type of story-liner described by Paul Brodrick (Chapter 4).

Once there was a plan, drafting could begin in earnest. I stressed that plot points might still change, and there would be more detail to add, but the plan provided a map to refer to during the lengthy drafting process. Narrative planning had helped the volunteers' sociable working culture evolve further, with customs including tea and cake which someone would bring each week. As the plan settled, I noticed less tendency for the participants to revisit previous decisions. The detail had become embedded, and although there was sometimes a need to be reminded of how a plot point related to others, and how a decision had been reached, the narrative became more fixed than previously. "Group think" in the sense first defined by Whyte (1952) could be a risk when the group tired of trying to win over the few dissenters, but as facilitator I took the stance of a critical friend, stepping in with questions to stimulate fresh thinking or steer the group away from a decision that would disrupt the interdependencies of plot points. Field notes record one example which took place during a discussion about the sort of car the character Emily would drive:

> Deborah had made it a Mercedes but Patsy argued that someone of her generation would not have bought a German car. The group was split by this so I interjected a compromise solution that it might be an MG. I shared a short anecdote from childhood memory about someone who had a yellow MG, the only one in Cornwall, so easy to spot. This diffused the argument. Sally mentioned the turquoise MG which her husband had had in the 1980s. This resolved the deadlock and Deborah became interested in the alternative, having previously been rigid in sticking with the Mercedes. Consensus was reached. Later, however, Jenny sent an email in which she

> said a Mercedes would be alright, but thoughtfully acknowledged that she and Deborah might have a tendency to cling to their own ideas rather than go with the group flow. While I was reading this, Sally sent through photos of her husband's MGs (apparently he has had a series), and Deborah added her own email about her life-long love of cars. A friendly and informative exchange followed in the group email and later in the evening some pictures were added to Slack. I watched this happening but did not take part (Mylor study field note 22/9/2020).

Without my intervention to suggest a different type of sportscar, the group had been heading for stalemate. By posing an alternative, but not dictating, I was able to step back while they worked out their solution.

Attention turned to the exposition. Seeking ideas about how to begin the novel we looked at the openings of a selection of novels with communities at their heart, to see how they established place, character and theme: *Cranford* (Gaskell, 1853/2011), and *A Casual Vacancy* (Rowling, 2012) were discussed at some length, and we listened to the opening of *Under Milk Wood* (Thomas, 1954). The group wanted to make an opening scene that would introduce the reader to the fictional world of *Trevow* as if moving in and out of close up. This was before character perspective and point of view choice had been discussed in earnest. Few in the group were familiar with terms such as 'first person' or 'third person omniscient point of view'. Nonetheless, the majority were in favour of using two characters' perspectives: protagonist Anneke and the house hunting woman, Valerie. This led to discussion of an inciting incident and ways to bring the two women together at the start of the story. The idea of an inappropriately large-scale music festival on Margaret's land – a scheme to make money - provided scope for conflict. It would, the participants felt, divide opinion between family members and competing local interests. They wanted to test the idea before deciding whether to adopt it, so this was an opportunity for community engagement beyond the novel's regular participants. The WI was suggested and, as I had already been in touch with them to talk about the project, this was a perfect moment to involve them. I was invited to speak at a meeting of the WI but I chose not to talk at length. Instead, I conducted a practical exercise with the audience of some 30 members. I explained the scenario, then invited the audience to debate the pros and cons of such an event. I prepared paper flyers inviting people to express their preference: was it something they would support or oppose, or were they neutral? The flyers also served as a consent form, granting participants' permission for their views to be quoted:

Mylor WI template for discussion

Margaret, the owner of a large house and its estate, has money troubles. She is a capable businesswoman but her late husband did not manage the finances well. Debts have come to light, and she is struggling to keep the estate going.
In desperation she is persuaded to lease some of her land to a music festival attracting many thousands to the area.
News of Margaret's plan gets out. Some local people are against it because of noise, traffic and volume of campers.
Others welcome it, seeing a potential boost to the local economy and the attraction of seeing big name bands.

Question: How would you react?

	Tick	
The festival should go ahead	Yes	No

My reasons are:

My name is (or be anonymous)

	Tick	
Quote me on this	Yes	No

Thank you.

I conducted the discussion like a public meeting, with questions and answers. The WI meeting was split. Half said they would be supportive and half against. Around a third were

non-committal but said they could be persuaded either way if they had more information. After more discussion, a further show of hands showed the split was still apparent, although a few had shifted their position and were more positive about the festival idea. When I reported back to the volunteers, they were satisfied that the issue would create conflict. They set about deciding which fictional characters would be in favour of the event, and which would oppose it.

This led to further plotting and agreement about the opening of the novel: a prologue followed by a chapter of exposition in which leading characters are introduced while villagers gather for an annual summer fete in the grounds of Margaret's house. Anneke's rootlessness and longing for a settled home would be established as the dramatic question.

Once the planning was complete, one of the volunteers chose to withdraw. She had enjoyed creating characters and helping to devise the story but lacked confidence in her writing ability. Field notes record her emailing me to say "she was not sure she would come today. She mentioned that she lacks confidence in her ability to write quickly and come up with ideas" (Mylor study field note, 19/11/2018). She felt she would have less to contribute to the next stage. We thanked her wholeheartedly for having made insightful suggestions for the opening scene, and for being a thoughtful, sensitive contributor to meetings, one who had made the experience enjoyable for others. Another volunteer decided to leave, having influenced the story by sharing her interest in the environment and ecology. Her experiences of campaigning for Extinction Rebellion had influenced the characters of Jo and Lawrence, and her input had helped develop the theme of home to include climate change and protection of the environment. When an individual decided to step away from the project, we continued to incorporate their written material and ideas, with their consent, so their contribution remained part of the whole.

As we approached the stage in which the full novel would be drafted, I devised a unifying exercise in which members of the group produced text for a potential book jacket. We borrowed a selection of novels from the community book exchange in the hallway of one of our regular meeting places, and used them as models. This helped the volunteers summarise what seemed to some a complex story. They wrote their own book jackets, then compared them before agreeing on one that was most representative of the story. This example was written by one volunteer and amended in group discussion:

Book jacket text

Trevow is a debut novel set in Cornwall.

A story of old families and hidden secrets; estranged relationships tested further by plans that threaten to split a village.

Who is the stranger who arrives at Tregethlan Manor? When the death of two much loved residents is discovered, it sets off a series of events that threaten the peace and tranquillity, and the very fabric of the village.

With a plan and an exposition in place, aided by digital records in Trello, online discussion in Slack, and digital mind mapping, the novel could be fully drafted.

Theme, character, setting, dramatic question and narrative plan had by now been settled among the volunteers. The next question, both for my research and for the practical project, was how to create unity from the babel of writing styles and levels of skill evident in draft writing so far. Having deferred volunteers' questions about writing style, it was time now to address them in full.

6.4 Skills for production

To write the novel fully the participants would need to acquire creative writing skills and practice with further tools of narratology: for example, showing and telling, control of tense, character perspective and point of view choice, and how to write effective dialogue in addition to what they had achieved in WhatsApp and Texting Story. I impressed on them that they should be prepared to write and rewrite, and that earlier drafts would fall by the wayside. They would make stylistic choices, for example about point of view and tense, and would self-critique. Following the example set by the Alice Campion writers mentioned in Chapter 2, they would revise each other's writing until it was hard to spot who had first drafted parts of the book. This had caused some anxiety when first discussed: "[name] was concerned about how to edit 'other people's words.' I reassured her that we would have a method and a process to follow" (Mylor study field note, 29/1/2019). I promised to work with them and coach them. We would create specific ground rules for editing, to help them

feel comfortable with the process. After initial resistance, they accepted that the story would go through multiple iterations before it was judged to be finished.

Rather than design a tutored course, I integrated learning into meetings in which the novel itself was being drafted. This saved time and motivated the volunteers who could see their novel growing before their eyes. The following exercises are examples of the way I adapted learning designed for individual writers to the collaborative context.

Exercise: a choice of tenses

Having decided to structure the novel in three parts, with the middle section comprising back story, the writers were puzzled about which tense to write in.

Tools for writing: pens and notebooks, PC and iPad if preferred.

Facilitator's prompts:

- Participants should choose a scene to work with from the plan.
- Share some published examples of writing in a variety of tenses. Clarify terms for anyone who is unfamiliar with 'present', 'perfect', and 'future'.
- Writing:
    - Draft the selected scene in the past tense.
    - Redraft it in the present tense.
    - Redraft it in the future tense.
- Read and compare.
    - Which do you prefer?
    - Which is more immediate?
    - How does the pace vary between the different tenses?

Some were not entirely certain about the differences, but further discussion helped clarify. In discussion, the majority preferred the present tense for its immediacy and pace. There was still some confusion about writing the back story in the present tense, despite it having happened in the past. Without prompting, however, the volunteers agreed that a change of tense for the middle section would be jarring for readers. That part of the story should come across as immediate and in the moment as the contemporary parts of the story. Those who were sceptical agreed to try it.

Choices of character perspective

The exercise carried out in the Pandora Inn, to develop characters' behaviours during the storm, had already helped the writers explore a scene through different characters' perspectives. Now they needed to narrow down the character perspectives through which to mediate the story. The choices were shortlisted in discussion: Anneke, Margaret, Jacob the homeless man, and Valerie the house hunting woman. Others, including Lawrence the teenager, would feature in specific subplot scenes, and Margaret's husband Edward and his childhood friend Emily would feature in the middle section of back story. The danger was that readers would be confused. Whose story was it? Further discussion made Anneke, as protagonist, the main pair of eyes in the contemporary story. In the middle section back story, Emily would be the first perspective, arriving at the grand house as a child evacuee during the Second World War. Her insight would help the reader make connections between present events and their foreshadowing in the past. This provided the foundation for the next decision, which was the choice of point of view from which to write.

An exercise to choose point of view

This was one of the hardest aspects of narrative craft for the participants to grasp. No one was familiar with the terms first person, second person, third person limited or third person omniscient, or how to control them. I provided a hand out with examples to show the four points of view, then guided an exercise to try out in the novel's first chapter. The scene at the start of *Trevow*, Chapter 1, entails Anneke helping Margaret to get dressed before going to open the fete which is taking place in her grounds. Working from an early draft, I asked the volunteers to rewrite the scene as a first person POV from Anneke's perspective, a third person limited POV from Anneke's perspective, and an omniscient third person POV.

When the writing was reviewed, the point was taken that first person POV would be limiting. Anneke's perspective worked best in third person limited POV, which could be adapted to a small number of other characters whose perspective would take over in scenes for which she was not present. Having condensed the explanation of POV to basics I was satisfied that the writers had sufficient grasp of the distinctions. I recommended they put third person limited POV into practice and review it in subsequent drafts. I reassured them that lapses in POV could be corrected in editing, which was a part of the process they were still unfamiliar with.

An exercise in showing and telling

The terms 'showing' and 'telling' were as baffling as POV to most of the volunteers. In earlier sessions I had introduced them to ways of writing through the senses, but to build on that now I chose to use physical enaction, continuing the type of playful improvisation the volunteers enjoyed. My aim was to embody the learning by showing rather than telling the difference, first physically and then in writing.

Sitting around the meeting room table, I invited the group to guess what I was feeling from my gestures:

- Rubbing hands together and blowing on them.
- Letting out a long sigh, casting my eyes downwards.
- Fidgeting and looking out of the window.

Verbally, they guessed cold hands, sadness, and impatience.

I gave further examples of 'telling' statements:

- She was angry with him.
- It was obvious that they loathed each other.
- He felt claustrophobic.

I gave the instruction to write in a way that showed these situations, without using the words I had given them. They should write in a way that conveyed the feelings.
Examples shared included:

- Her face flushed red. She could not look at him.
- They stood at either end of the room, backs turned, avoiding eye contact.
- He struggled to open the window, his pulse speeding.

To embed the message I quoted the phrase attributed to Anton Chekhov: 'Do not tell me the moon is shining. Show me the glint of light on broken glass', a mis-quotation from a letter to his brother (Yarmolinsky 1954: 14). Further verbal examples were elicited around the table, including 'do not tell me it is raining, show me how it feels to be wet', and 'do not say I am exhausted, show me struggling to stay awake' (Mylor study field note, 14/9/2019). This was followed by draft writing in which characters from the novel were chosen and short

scenes drafted to show them in different states of feeling, for example Jo's anger when someone kicks her dog.

The effect of showing and telling would be revisited in the course of editing the novel for publication, but this provided a foundation from which the writers could practice their skills.

An exercise in dialogue

WhatsApp and Texting Story had proved effective apps for fictional dialogue, forcing the writers to adopt the conventions of text and avoid overly long passages of conversation. The volunteers' written dialogue, however, tended to overuse adverbs and exclamation marks. Tongue in cheek, I explained that there is an international quota for the use of the exclamation mark. If the community novel were to use all of them, what would other writers do when there was a genuine emergency? This established the principle of 'less is more' and became a mantra among the writers. Another learning point was the difference between normal speech and written dialogue. To help embed this I produced a short checklist of dos and don'ts for writing dialogue. The development of resources such as this is expanded upon in Chapter 8 in the context of a proposed toolkit.

Full writing began in September 2019. There was nervousness among the writing volunteers, but I reminded them of the material they had created so far. They would now start to write full scenes and whole chapters, working to their mutually agreed plan. If there were inconsistencies in the writing they could be ironed out. I was reminded of the unpolished nature of the White Water Writers' novels. For school-age young people on a week-long novel writing bootcamp, inconsistencies of tone and style seemed less of a concern. The community novel's older adult participants wanted their novel to be polished and error-free. There was time pressure in that *The Magazine* was ready to begin monthly serialisation. I presented this as a positive opportunity and was confident that we would stay well ahead of the monthly publication schedule. One volunteer pointed out that "Once it's in *The Magazine* we can't change it" (Mylor study field note, 18/9/2019). We agreed this would be a discipline.

Gathering together all the material they had produced so far, I organised the novel's draft contents in three parts, according to the narrative plan. This was easy for me to manipulate in Trello, with its click and drag layout, but in order for the volunteers to see it in its full

physical form I printed it, laid it out on the floor at home, and took its photograph. It stretched twice around the room.

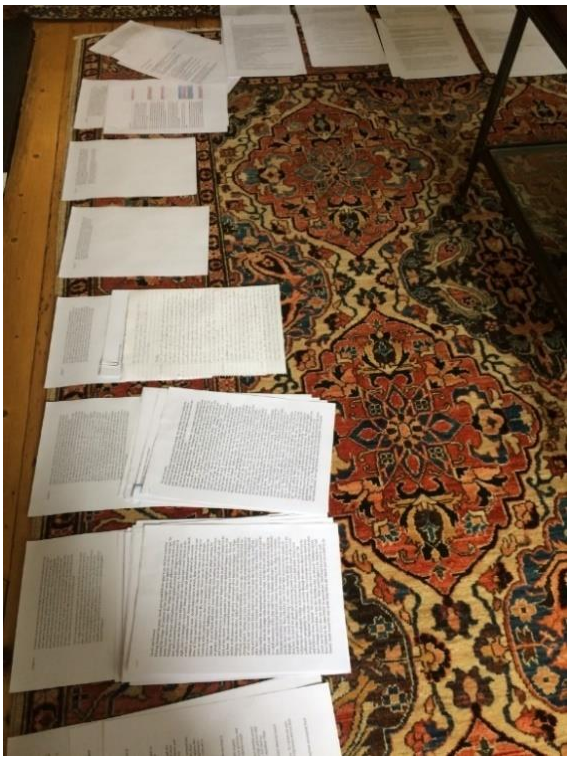


Figure 36: Draft material laid out into narrative structure

This was a revelation to those who had felt progress to be slow. They saw how much had been accomplished and where their contributions fitted into the whole. I produced an updated summary of the narrative plan, clustering the draft material around plot points. This created an outline for chapters and scenes which could now be fully structured and written.

During a meeting in September 2019, we read the summary it in its entirety, taking turns to read while everyone spoke and listened. I requested that they not interrupt or ask questions during the reading, but make a note of anything they wished to raise once the reading was complete. The reading took 30 minutes. At the end there was agreement that it held together. They understood the purpose of the dramatic question posed at the start. Everything hinged on the survival or reinvention of the house and its estate, and on the conflict between the house and the people trying to maintain it.

The following passage brings together the stages of co-creating the novel's opening chapter, an exercise that established POV and points of style. In a group of six, everyone wrote their

own version of the opening scene before reading it aloud. Passages were selected and at the end of the meeting I undertook to edit them together. Using different colours for each participant I was able to show how their contributions could fit together seamlessly, with some linking text shown in black. The passage below shows an extract in first draft. Colours show different writers' contributions pasted together. Text in black was added by me to provide links, and were further refined by the volunteers. At this stage in drafting, Anneke was known as Agnes.

Joan Mandy Sheila Rosemary Paula Sally

Margaret Clemens is in her dressing room. In an hour she will open the fair and the grounds of Tregethlan Manor will be awash with brightly coloured stalls. She can hear the sounds of the fair kicking into life outside; timeless music from the organ, children laughing and more distantly a baby crying, dogs barking and howling.

It is a fine day, just a few fluffy white clouds sail overhead and there is enough of a breeze to flutter the bunting. Margaret can hear the hammering in of metal pins, securing the pavilions as far as they can go.

She sighs into the mirror. Her eyes are dull. When did the shadows grow so dark? She grimaces as she pulls an ancient peachy lipstick across her mouth. The sun shines in through the bedroom drapes, hitting the faded carpet. Dust motes dance in the light.

She shrugs into her flowery dress, a good label in its time, and plants a blue straw hat to cover her limp hair. She puts her reading glasses into her large leather handbag, the Burgundy one, then stumbles as she makes her way towards the bedroom door. She grabs the bedpost to steady herself then reaches for the walking stick propped against the doorway; fine ebony with a silver handle, one of the few decent things Edward left her.

From downstairs she hears Agnes calling. 'Are you ready?'

She straightens herself and steps forward, ready to perform her duty.

Down on the field, Margaret's daughter Jo is arranging produce on her stall, covered in green coloured drapes. Jars of jam, bottles of sloe gin and chutneys make a display of jewel-like colours on one side, fresh herbs in bundles on the other. Bottles of elderflower wine and home-made ginger beer line the back of the stall and in the centre sits a clipboard with a petition for people to sign, together with leaflets about wildflower meadows, encouraging people to veto plans for building on green belt.

The petition describes the plight of the endangered bat colony in the ruined cottage which her Mother is proposing to pull down. *Of course*, reckons Jo, *she can't just do that. There'll have to be a new habitat, but why should the poor creatures need to be disturbed and uprooted at all?* The bats have been in the old estate cottage for as long as Jo can remember, harming no one.

This editorial exercise demonstrated that the community novel could be articulated in a unified voice that was achieved by converging individual drafts. On the basis of this, decisions about tense and point of view were cemented and the idea that they would be re-writing and editing before finalising text became embedded in the process.

The scene was later critiqued and revised collaboratively using the share screen function in Zoom, the video platform which was adopted for group work during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. This is discussed in more detail later, but the extract below is included here to show the development once POV had settled on the protagonist.

Up at Tregethlan, Anneke Lander is helping her employer Margaret Clemens get dressed, when she glimpses John's Land Rover rattling up the drive. She stares down from the window for a moment, distracted, until Margaret calls her to attention.

'Can you help me with this?' Margaret is fiddling with the lid of a powder compact.

Anneke has never seen so much makeup. As her employer, Margaret, applies the finishing touches the dressing table is strewn with creams, powders, eye shadows and mascaras. Margaret takes her time to choose just the right shade of lipstick, and Anneke can see that the effect is pleasing, although her English rose complexion surely does not need so much embellishment.

'You have lovely skin,' says Anneke, as Margaret inspects herself in the mirror.

'You should try a touch of this yourself.' Margaret adds a dab of lip gloss. 'It would make you less pale.'

'Oh no, I never wear makeup.'

'Well, you should. Didn't your mother teach you?'

Anneke is about to say that her mother was more natural, but she stops herself. It is her job to make sure Margaret copes with the day ahead and she must not put a foot wrong.

In an hour Margaret will open the annual Trevow village fair and her gardens will be awash with brightly coloured stalls. Already the fair is springing into life outside. Anneke can hear music grinding from the fairground organ and the final tent pins being knocked into the ground. The day promises fine weather with just a few clouds overhead and enough breeze to flutter the bunting.

She does look happy today, thinks Anneke, standing a respectful distance back from the dressing table. Margaret seems pleased with herself. The morning sun, dancing with dust motes, makes her glow. The drapes at the windows may be dusty and the Chinese carpet beneath their feet old and faded, but it seems to Anneke that nothing will spoil Margaret's mood today. That is what she hopes for.

'I think I'll wear this.' Margaret smooths her elegant summer dress, silk and chiffon with blue flowers, and adjusts the pearls at her neck. 'It's cool and summery, not too fussy.'

'You look lovely, so young.'

Margaret arches a carefully drawn eyebrow at her and Anneke blushes.

'The straw hat with the blue ribbon, please.'

Anneke fetches the hat from its box and holds it out to Margaret. Have you got your pills?'

Margaret is recovering from a hip injury, the result of a fall some months ago. For a woman in her early seventies she is fit and energetic, so has hated having to slow down. Anneke is keen for her not to overdo things.

'You should take your stick as well.' She holds the walking stick out to Margaret, ebony with a silver handle.

'Do I have to use that thing?'

Anneke waits. There is a moment's silence before Margaret gives way and takes it. She completes her preparations with a dab of *Joy* by Jean Patou behind each ear and on each wrist, then steps forward, fragrant and glamorous, ready to perform her duty.

Having established the foundations of style, I introduced a method of scene planning adapted from a guide provided by BBC Writers Room:

Scene structure

Set up	Where the scene is set, who is there, what they are doing
Conflict	Something happens to introduce a threat, or an argument, or a note of doubt or caution
Crisis	It gets worse
Turning point	Something else happens, which may help or change things
Resolution	The end of the scene

(BBC Writers Room 2023)

This simple formulaic layout enabled the writers to plan each chapter and scenes within it in detail. This would occupy them for the first half of a meeting, then either singly or in pairs, they would write the scene, following the model. This could be done in the second half of a meeting, or outside meetings. The method produced well-structured drafts that could then be revised following group critique.

At the planning stage, the hero's journey structure had been rejected as too closely associated with the type of fantasy fiction the volunteers did not want to write. I could see, however, that a hero's journey narrative had emerged, contained within a subplot. This concerned the friendship between young eco-warrior Lawrence and his mentor-figure Jacob. The Lawrence and Jacob subplot enabled me to test a method of branching narrative using Twine software. A night-time scene in which Lawrence gathers plastic from peoples' gardens and sets fire to it, witnessed by Jacob, had produced a wealth of ideas when the group improvised it, too much to include. Rather than jettison it, I saw a way to render some of the material in Twine, giving readers choices. The group were enthusiastic about this, liking the way it expressed their multiple ideas.

Writing would sometimes pause when the volunteers hit a gap in the narrative. The movement back into playful improvisation, reviewing where a new scene would sit and creating new content, became smooth as the group moved with agility between modes of participation.

Ground rules for critiquing

The group revisited its ground rules with a new set they called 'golden rules for discussing our writing' to help them critique each other's and their own writing. I elicited these through

a round table sharing of their worries and organised them into a handout in two parts: giving and receiving comments (Appendix F to Chapter 6). Applying them took some practise and I reminded them several times of the agreement to start with a positive comment before their agreed method became routine.

During autumn 2019 and into early 2020, group members were writing at home in between sessions. They would email their drafts to the group or bring copies to the next meeting for review, then agree their next steps together. It still proved onerous to share writing online and the majority of the group preferred physical meetings. The sociable atmosphere continued, and with each writer bringing copies of their drafts and taking turns to provide cake. Individual writing was quickly adopted and worked on by others in the group. As time went on, no one could remember who had made the first draft. Occasionally someone would recognise their own words, but ownership seemed not to matter unless, occasionally, someone put their foot down. Such occasions were rare.

The critiquing process was slow until the unexpected events of March 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic forced the UK into lockdown. The movement onto Zoom is described later, but in the context of critiquing it had a striking effect on the work rate. With screen sharing now possible, the pace of discussion and decision making became rapid. Everyone noticed it and attributed the speeding up to the digital platform that enabled them all to see editing at the same time. This created a new cohesion in the group and a faster work rate.

6.5 Modes of publication

As the novel grew, publication happened over a number of platforms. The writers were receptive to the idea that a community novel could exist in diverse formats. It had been produced in hand written form, in word documents, and on digital platforms including WhatsApp, Texting Story and Twine. Visual material included photographs taken on smartphones, scanned drawings and paintings by members of a local art group, audio recording of a song that featured in a plot point at the novel's denouement, and material produced in PowerPoint.

Partnership with *The Magazine* became long term. In November 2021 *The Magazine* received an award for Best Content in the National Parish Magazine Awards. When

interviewed in local media the Editor cited the community novel among the content that helped achieve this recognition.

Serialisation required some abridgement, a task which I took on while maintaining the master copy of the text. The systematic approach we had taken to scene design made it easy to split chapters into instalments that made narrative sense. Such a small monthly word count frustrated my intention to engage local readers in shaping further episodes, however. The volunteers were simply too far ahead in their writing and it would be onerous to go back on previous drafting in the light of input from readers who did not have the same detailed knowledge of the story. Efforts to engage local book groups were met with interest, but without a full book to show them, few readers became involved. Those who did, and others in the wider community, followed the story in *The Magazine*. A Facebook page announced the publication of each issue and these were shared in other local Facebook groups.

Facebook proved somewhat helpful in integrating the community novel into the wider social and cultural life of the community, although it was hard to build a following. Efforts to generate discussion online yielded minimal results, but the novel volunteers reported having conversations with friends and family networks when new instalments appeared. Before the Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020 it was common to find oneself talking about the novel with acquaintances in local places such as the village shop. I corresponded with one reader who wrote to *The Magazine*'s Editor about part of the storyline in which a death is discovered. I was able to address their concern that it might be upsetting for some readers, by describing the sensitive writing and editing process that had taken place. No other concerns were raised. The Editor offered to publish a helpline number for a relevant charity who could offer support, although this was not pursued. As an example of public engagement with the novel, this correspondence was indicative of sensitivities that could arise, and an object lesson in how to deal with them constructively.

Engagement with other community groups was reflected in the ongoing publication. Members of the Mylor Art Group contributing watercolour illustrations paintings to complement the text. I provided pieces of draft text and summaries of the story for them to interpret, and the writing group chose those that best aligned with their idea of appearance of, for example, the interior of The Clipper (the fictional pub), and some of the wildlife that

featured in the story. A gallery of the art group's images is provided with the full novel at www.joinedupwriters.uk.

Some of the art group's visualisations proved controversial with the writers, for example a summer hat (Figure 37 below) worn by Margaret in the opening chapter. The writers felt it was not glamorous enough for Margaret.

Figure 37: Margaret's hat by Andie Smith, Mylor Art Group

Other pictures provided stimulation for further writing and a cross-fertilisation of ideas between the writers and artists. An illustration of the potting shed, in which the homeless man Jacob's took shelter in the churchyard, was well received by the writing volunteers, who added to their description, having seen the preliminary sketch.

Figure 38: Jacob's shed by Val Edgington, Mylor Art Group

Some of the art group members were inspired to produce their own images, which in turn gave the writers new ideas. One artist painted a peacock – her first attempt - which led to the appearance of peacocks in Part 2, the back story. The group decided that the birds' absence from the contemporary story in Parts 1 and 3 signified the estate's decline.

Figure 39: Peacock by Julia Jordan, Mylor Art Group

The art group's contributions inspired one of the writers to design further visuals: a logo and menu for The Clipper. The writing volunteers shared ideas for the menu, adding their favourites and local produce.

By the close of 2019, the participatory process of making the novel had evolved. Insights into the writer-facilitator's role had coalesced around the five types of participation illustrated so far in this chapter, and the volunteers were more or less self-sufficient, keen to complete *Trevow*. I had been uncertain whether the novel would be completed within the timeframe of my research, but the volunteers were highly motivated to finish their novel. My involvement was reduced to hosting occasional meetings, posting chapters into WordPress, editing the monthly serialisation, and providing advice when needed. On 23 March 2020, however, that changed with the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in the UK. I shall illustrate the effects of that, including further insights achieved during the remainder of that year.

Research opportunities during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown

The lockdown made it impossible for the volunteers to meet physically. No one wished to give up, so the urgent question was how to continue. During the early weeks of lockdown, a new video platform, Zoom, entered the toolkit of participatory arts facilitators. I learned about it though peer networks, NAWE and Lapidus. After some trial and error, most of the core community novel group managed to gather online on 17 March 2020, a few days before the official lockdown, but at a time when some volunteers were already nervous of gathering in person for health reasons. We tried Skype first, as some of the volunteers were familiar with it, but it proved difficult for two participants on iPads who could not see or hear clearly. I quickly familiarised myself with Zoom and, the following week, sent a link with instructions for the volunteers to follow. After some coaching – in some cases involving family members who were at home with the volunteers – we managed the first meeting on Zoom video on 31 March 2020. This was more successful, once everyone became familiar with the functions of muting and unmuting, volume control and the choices of screen view. With five participants and myself as host, the screen contained us all, with space for others. This maintained the sense of being in a room together, everyone visible, and we agreed to keep videos on so we could see each other, unless there was a need for privacy. Nonetheless, we quickly became used to glimpsing family members and pets in the background.

News reports at the time were raising awareness of the difficulties encountered by families trying to home-school their children. Online lessons were impossible for those who lacked the digital tools, and difficult for those who had limited access to laptops or tablets. The assumption was that online learning was accessible for all. It was also apparent that meeting online was not an option for everyone in the novel writing group. One member had neither a smartphone nor a laptop, so withdrew until they could meet physically again. Others needed help to learn the new technology and were not sure if they would enjoy it. The space created by such absences was described as our 'elephant in the Zoom', which I made the title of a peer-reviewed article about the experience of facilitation during this period (Moss 2021). One volunteer managed to join us online after several weeks, on a laptop provided by her son, and with telephone coaching from me and a family member. Her first appearance in the Zoom room was greeted by cheers and waving, although it quickly became apparent that she could not hear us. In a further phone call, I helped her raise her microphone volume, then coached her in how to mute and unmute the sound. This brought her fully into the group. Another volunteer had similar difficulties but managed to join via her smartphone. Such anecdotes from lived experience during that period illustrate the determination to join in by people unfamiliar with video platforms. For me as facilitator, this was an example of accessibility and inclusiveness being achieved despite the conditions in which we found ourselves. We could no longer share cake, but the camaraderie held strong. Zoom was used for weekly meetings of two hours on Tuesday mornings until restrictions began to lift in June 2020.

On 26 May 2020, the group met with the task of creating new material for the midpoint in the contemporary story, a scene that had yet to be fully planned, although fragments existed. Luke, the inexperienced young festival promoter, presents his controversial plan for *Greenfest*, the inappropriately large-scale event to be held on Margaret's land. His plans have already divided the community (as predicted by the real WI) and he now has to convince sceptical residents at a public meeting. The scene takes place in a packed village hall on a cold January evening. The volunteers discussed which of the lead characters would be present, what their reactions would be, how they would express them, and a narrative outline for the scene. They used traditional methods of drafting with pens to sketch out details of the atmosphere in the hall, then assigned some roles. I was cast as Luke, someone else would play the role of Chair, and others would speak for or against the plans. The scene was developed in a Zoom session which included live role play, recorded with the group's

consent. I saw an opportunity to research the potential of Zoom as a platform for improvisation with multimodal methods and outputs. To prepare, I elicited the group's ideas for a set of PowerPoint slides for Luke. I would use Zoom's screenshare function to show this, as if giving a live presentation at the fictional meeting. The presentation would be slick but a meta text in the PowerPoint notes view would reveal Luke's lack of preparedness.

Figure 40 below shows an example of a PowerPoint slide in the notes view.

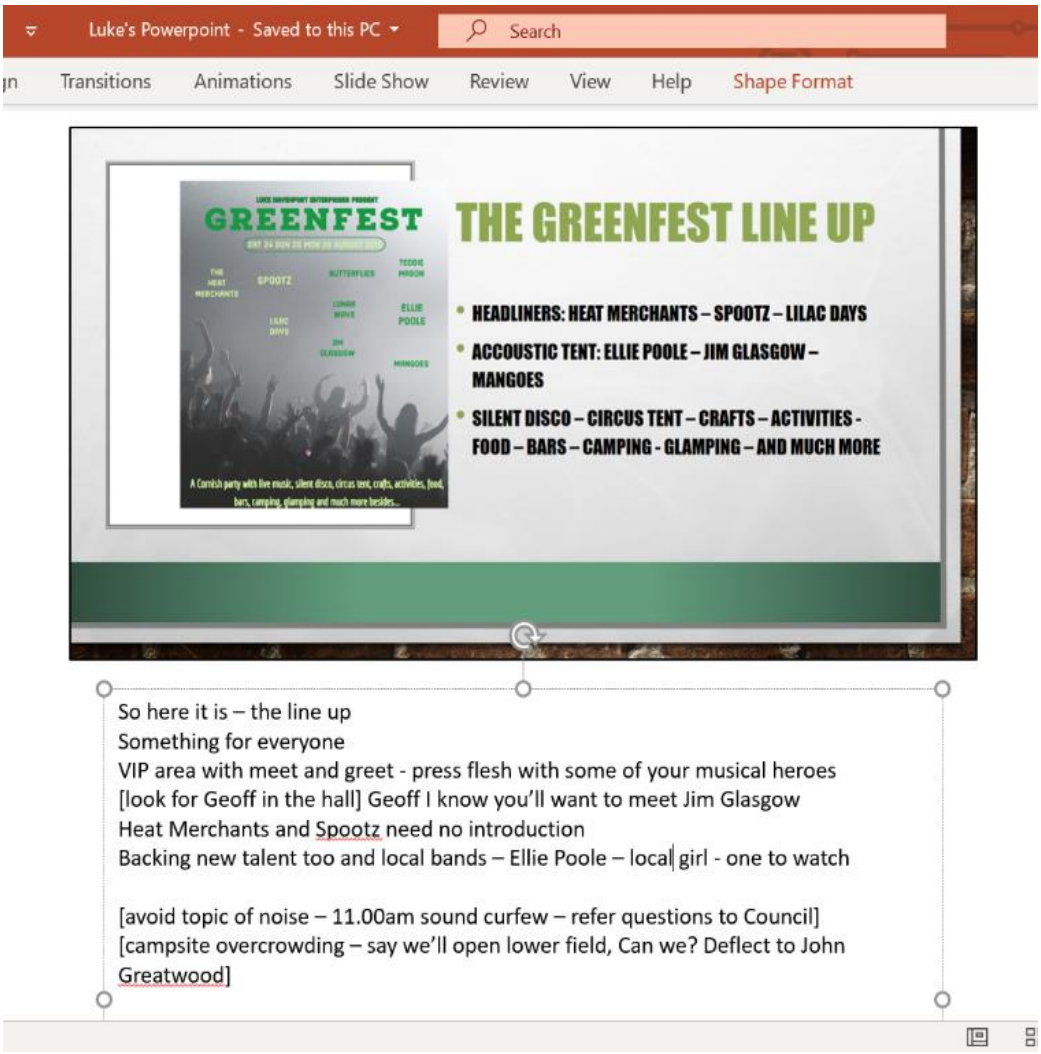


Figure 40: PowerPoint slide in notes view with meta text

One member of the group used Microsoft Publisher to make a poster of the type that might be seen on public noticeboards, announcing the time and place of the fictional meeting. The image was emailed to the group in advance of the session, with notes preparing them for the roles they would play.

I began the group improvisation by screen-sharing the fictional PowerPoint, narrating the slides in my role as Luke. Midway through the presentation, improvised heckling broke out, led by one of the participants who was playing Jo. This was spontaneous and unanticipated. A participant playing Chair called for order and the meeting was paused while the Chair appealed for calm. Still in role, a question and answer session followed in which points were made for and against the fictional festival. I responded in role, thinking on my feet, while the participants fired questions at me.

The role play ended after twenty-five minutes, and the group discussed how to use the material it had been generated. Two ideas attracted support: to write the scene as a set of formal minutes by a Parish Clerk, and a short news piece by a fictional local reporter. A volunteer with experience of Parish Councils drafted the minutes, which were critiqued and amended within the group. These can be read in Appendix G to Chapter 6. Another volunteer made a poster, Figure 41, for the fictional festival Greenfest. The names of bands were generated in www.bandnamemaker.com, by her own initiative.

Figure 41: Poster for Greenfest with fictional band names

The multimodal means of production led to a chapter that exists in hybrid form: the local news item, which advances plot, was used for serialisation in *The Magazine*, and the PowerPoint slides, clerk's minutes and the poster are given as pdf links in the online novel.

This exercise led to more creative activity related to production among the locked down participants. They all had time on their hands and, in some cases, family members looking for something to do. A set of protest banners was made by a volunteer in the days following the Zoom improvisation, with help from her family. They cut up a piece of old sail cloth from their boat, painted slogans onto it, photographed them and posted the images into Slack for us to see. Another member of the group then made a collage combining the posters with illustrations of protestors wearing animal masks, hand-drawn over figures cut from magazines and photographed on her smartphone.

Figure 42: Protestors collage

This episode in the study demonstrated the shift from volunteers' earlier caution about digital and other multimodal methods. Now they were engaging playfully with Zoom, and seeing its innovative potential for aspects of their novel.

With more time available during lockdown, some of the writers researched and wrote quantities of narrative that were difficult to integrate into the planned story arc. An individual

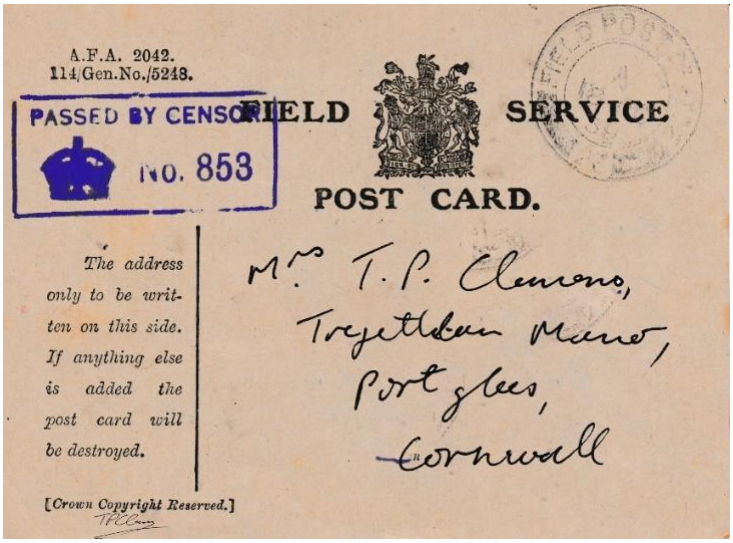
author might have simply ‘killed a darling’ but in the collaborative project other options presented themselves. For example, in Part 2 of the novel, two volunteers wished to explore the story of how a Dutch mother and her baby fled the Nazi invasion of The Netherlands, before finding safety as refugees in Trevow. This was based on real local events during the Second World War. Using information provided by a member of the local history group, the volunteers constructed a scenario which, when drafted, formed a self-contained story of some 5,000 words. Although it was admired, the wider group felt it was too tangential to be included as a sub plot. Rather than omit it, they decided to edit a shorter version as an online link from the chapter in which the refugee mother and her baby first appear.

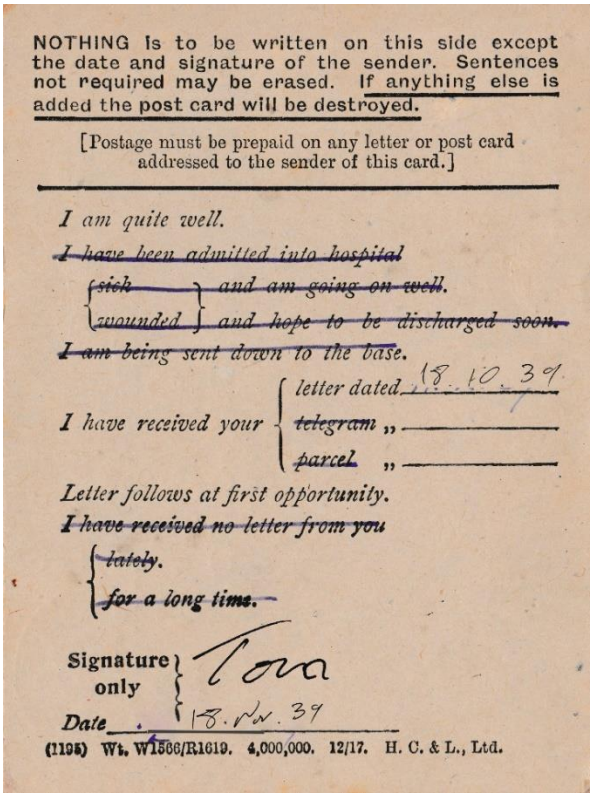
The volunteers made their own suggestions for multimodal content as the story developed. In an example that comprised an entire chapter, a series of postcards was made in Publisher (later reproduced in Canva), showing a character’s travels in Greece in the 1960s. The postcard images were provided by a volunteer who drafted the text based on her own memories. Further such texts were produced by individual volunteers: a school report revealing the risk that Lawrence will fail his exams, and a leaflet for Jo’s campaign to save a threatened bat colony, for example. These ‘side projects’, as they were termed, occupied the volunteers during lockdown and augmented the main narrative as meta texts. They were the products of collaboration but would have slowed the pace of the main narrative if incorporated purely as written text.

Some members of the art group also embraced digital methods during lockdown. Scans of watercolours arrived in my inbox and one artist used the painting app on her iPad, for the first time, to make a picture of Emily’s cottage (Figure 43 below). Others used more traditional methods to get their artwork to me, posting pictures through my letterbox.

Figure 43: Emily's cottage in PaintBox

A participant whose son-in-law had skills in Photoshop was helped remotely to devise some fictional wartime correspondence, based on examples from their family album.





NOTHING is to be written on this side except the date and signature of the sender. Sentences not required may be erased. If anything else is added the post card will be destroyed.

[Postage must be prepaid on any letter or post card addressed to the sender of this card.]

I am quite well.

~~*I have been admitted into hospital*~~

~~*sick*~~ } ~~*and am going on well.*~~

~~*wounded*~~ } ~~*and hope to be discharged soon.*~~

~~*I am being sent down to the base.*~~

I have received your { *letter dated* 18.10.39 / ~~*telegram*~~ „ ____ / ~~*parcel*~~ „ ____

Letter follows at first opportunity.

~~*I have received no letter from you*~~

{ ~~*lately.*~~ / ~~*for a long time.*~~

Signature only Tom

Date 18.Nov.39

(1195) Wt. W1586/R1619. 4,000,000. 12/17. H. C. & L., Ltd.

Figure 44: wartime correspondence photoshopped

The ability to continue online during lockdown further strengthened the sense of collective endeavour and trust within the group. The work rate speeded up markedly, partly through the use of screensharing for live editing of text, which was quicker than the previous practice of discussion around a table. The need to mute and unmute in Zoom, to avoid speaking at the same time, made for more stilted exchanges, but enabled the group to remain focused. The inability to be as spontaneous and to riff off each other's ideas, was a deficit, but the ease of collective editing on the shared screen was a revelation to all of us. A piece of editing that might have taken more than one session in-person, with someone noting amendments by hand, taking them away to write up and then show to the group in the following meeting, could be accomplished in one two-hour meeting. As a volunteer commented, reflecting on the work rate: "I think we've been more focussed, less chit chat" (Mylor study field note, 7/4/2020).

Boredom played a hand as well. One volunteer said of this period, "It has sustained me through lockdown" (Mylor study field note, 7/9/2020). Some enjoyed being able to work more independently, but the physical meetings were missed for their sociable atmosphere, eye contact, "a more human and bonding experience" with "higher quality of

communication", as another participant put it (Mylor study field note, 14/9/2020). These and similar statements were gathered in a group discussion that took place in a volunteer's garden with social distancing once up to six people were allowed to meet in public, under UK Government public health guidance. The participants addressed a short set of questions in which I asked them to compare the experience of Zoom to physical meetings. The consensus was that Zoom had been a boon but they were glad to meet again face to face. Some valid boundaries were also insisted upon as more and more time was spent on screen in everyone's lives. A suggestion that we create a fictional Facebook group or a Tik Tok account to use in an element of plot, was firmly rejected by members who wanted to cut down on screen time.

During the lockdown period I took part in debate with community writing peers and professional networks. An online seminar hosted on 4 June 2020 by François Matarasso and Arlene Goldbard was an opportunity for community arts practitioners and facilitators to share insights into the adaptation of practice onto online platforms, the attendant digital deficit for some, and the affordances of being able to engage more widely online, beyond the local. There was speculation about an eventual return to physical meeting, and discussion of the potential for a blended and hybrid way of working with participants. It was becoming apparent that no one wanted to lose the unexpected affordances of online facilitation. This was articulated further in a conference seminar which I hosted as part of the 2020 NAWE conference. Writer-facilitators were facing a dilemma, whether to continue purely online, or revert to physical meetings, or work in a hybrid way. I set out the pros and cons in an article informed by the discussion I facilitated using Zoom breakout rooms and a chat thread during the seminar (Moss 2020).

The prospect of resuming physical meetings raised questions of accessibility for those who were clinically vulnerable, and whether a mix of methods might be part of the 'new normal'. The community novel volunteers were able to experience this for themselves when restrictions lifted in the summer of 2020. Most of the writing group felt safe to meet again out of doors with social distancing and, as mentioned earlier, the rules allowed for six to meet together. Their chosen meeting places were an orchard on land owned by one of the participants, and another's garden with tables and chairs spread out, and a supply of hand sanitiser on each. With community venues still closed, these were pragmatic options that allowed us to enjoyed cake together again. The writers continued to meet out of doors until

the weather turned in September 2020, with weekly meetings and some pair work in between as they shared out work on revisions to the novel's denouement. I observed again the informality of discussion in a physical space, as participants interrupted and spoke over each other in their enthusiasm to share ideas. The stilted formality of Zoom disappeared and ideas were again bounced around the group. The work rate slowed again, but the camaraderie of meeting in person outweighed the distractions.

The further insights gained during the Covid-19 pandemic added considerably to the outcomes, in terms of digital methods and remediations to practice, and to multimodalism in methods and published forms for the novel. These are analysed in Chapter 7, after the following conclusions to this chapter.

6.6 Conclusions

I have given a selective narrative account of indicative methods used in the Mylor study, to gain insight into the viability of the novel as a vehicle for community participation. Between October 2018 and September 2020, a collaboratively written novel of approximately 70,000 words was produced using mixed traditional and digital methods. As a live community arts project, the community novel engaged with a core group of volunteers, wider interest groups and individuals from the local community, and Parish residents through local events. The novel was serialised in print and online, making use of multimodal formats in addition to the body of text.

The study established the resources needed, the roles of the facilitator and participants, and the potential timescale for such a project. A participatory process evolved using elements of play, planning, production, publication and promotion. These combined and overlapped to create an agile and innovative model of working methods that can inform future community writing practice.

Trevow is the unified expression of a multiplicity of authors. It exists as a traditional text because that is what the volunteers understood as a novel and wanted to produce. Integration of some methods of digital fiction led to a hybrid form, with methods of planning and production reflecting the diversity of sources from the community that produced it. The novel's diversities of form reflect its methods of production: pens, digital devices, drawings,

sound, photography and smartphone apps all contributed. This renders the novel inclusive and an elastic mode of long-form fiction that suggests further scope to innovate.

Sam Holdstock (2022: 36) comments on the way in which dialogism has the effect of "de-territorializing" a narrative. In the participatory process that led to the community novel, the aim was to achieve shared meaning, not individual ownership of parts. That said, the flexibility and multimodal nature of the form as it emerged, allowed for some individuality through the inclusion of projects carried out during lockdown, and some branching narrative. The finished novel blends into a multimodal work, not the "Frankentext" which Holdstock warns against (36).

In the way the community novel engaged with the community beyond its immediate makers, it embodied the ideas expressed by Williams, that: "whatever the discourses, or the stories we tell ourselves, creative practice is and always has been about the beehive of society" (1985). Chapter 7 will use findings from the Mylor study to support the role of the facilitator in sustaining the hive in which the community novel can be made, including the writer-facilitator, the efficacy of digital methods, and the need for bespoke guidance to support remediated practice, in order for the model established in this thesis to be replicated in other communities.

PART 3

CHAPTER 7: THE COMMUNITY NOVEL AND REMEDIATIONS TO PRACTICE

7.1 Overview

This chapter draws results from the studies, in particular the Mylor study. It foregrounds the writer-facilitator's role in the context of the community novel's viability as a form that supports culturally democratic participation. Remediations to practice are identified in the light of these findings.

Part 7.2 of the chapter reviews methods of data analysis: analysis of my fieldnotes and research records, insights gained through reflexive journalling, and information gathered from volunteers about their experience of participation in the community novel. Part 7.3 provides a timescale and model budget. Against this background, insights from the PAR studies identify the role and skills of the writer-facilitator and the community volunteers, and the effect of interest groups' input from the wider community. 7.4 reflects on the five types of participation that emerged during the Mylor study, and 7.5 discusses multimodalism as part of culturally democratic facilitation and in relation to the forms taken by the community novel itself. In part 7.6 I draw conclusions about remediations for future practice, proposing an enhanced pedagogy to support facilitation of further community novels. This provides the basis for Chapter 8 in which contents are outlined for a toolkit and related guidance for writer-facilitators. These will be developed as part of a training course that is part of my dissemination plan for the findings.

7.2 Data analysis: qualitative methods

My data collection methods followed Robyn Stewart's "many-faceted approach based in bricolage", in which "the bricoleur appropriates available methods, strategies and empirical materials or invents or pieces together new tools as necessary" (in Barrett and Bolt (eds) 2007: 127). Field notes and written or recorded discussions with participants are the main data sources, complemented by the materiality of the process and related documents, images, and audio. Auto-ethnographic elements captured in field notes and explored further in reflective journalling, informed insights into variances between traditional facilitation and

the use of digital methods. The unfamiliar experience of facilitating long-form fiction with volunteers mostly new to creative writing was a consistent theme.

Stewart's neo-narrative approach, "guided by narratology, the study of stories" (in Barrett and Bolt (eds) 2007: 130), informed the story of the community novel's invention through an iterative process. This chapter extrapolates knowledge from that narrative account. At first sight, there was ambiguity in my qualitative practice-based studies, particularly the Mylor study. Paul Carter acknowledges this ambiguity in which: "a double movement occurs, of decontextualization in which the found elements are rendered strange, and of recontextualization, in which new families of association and structures of meaning are established" (in Barrett and Bolt 2020: 16). The Mylor study took me from familiar methods of group facilitation, into a process of collaboration and wider participation. Field notes captured events as they happened, which enabled me to carry out further reflexive analysis which deepened my insights. Harry F. Wolcott acknowledges that qualitative analysis is "internally reflexive in terms of taking account of the researcher and the research strategy on the findings that have been produced" (cited in Denzin and Lincoln (eds) 2005: 872). This informed my adoption of reflexive journalling to deepen my understanding of problematic events described in field notes, and to arrive at solutions. The relationship between the workload of a live community arts project and the demands of conducting and documenting my research was sometimes tense. I sought to integrate the two, but there were periods when progress in the community arts project was foregrounded in my recording of data relating to the role of facilitator, and others when the researcher role took precedence.

Stewart's five-phase creative research process provided a system for data capture and analysis through "identification of the research method, the establishment of the collaborative process, the collection, transcript and review of data (biographical, theoretical, visual, case studies and or other forms), analysis of the data and synthesis into neonarratives" (in Barrett and Bolt (eds) 2007: 11) Analysis and synthesis took place in stages. For example, early in the PAR process, I noted an establishing phase in which volunteers were recruited for collaboration, with associated practice activities. These included, for instance, approaches I made to local groups and networks, local publicity, and the design of an event to introduce the project. This was naturally followed by a period in which participants gathered and generated material for the novel: the bowerbird bricolaging that built a fictional world, created characters, and identified a unifying theme from which the dramatic question

was posed, before planning the narrative. This gave way to a phase in which volunteers could move back and forth between playful making and narrative planning, increasingly secure in their group discussion and joint decisions. Secure foundations enabled them to write with confidence, and the writing became routine once the process of serialisation was underway. I was able to see the participatory element I termed promotion cutting across the stages of play and planning, and later production, as opportunities arose to engage with the wider community over plot points and other detail. This wider community participation became easier once the novel was being planned, with more people able to engage with it as concrete ideas rather than as an abstract proposal. The workflow is expressed below in 7.3.

I used different point of view choices and perspectives in journalling, to attain objectivity about the facilitation role in which I was immersed. In the following example I wrote in the style of a news report by a third party:

> There was a disturbance in a Cornish village today when a member of a writing group slammed an idea put forward by one of the other members. An onlooker, not named, said 'It was shocking. She didn't give her the time of day, just said "that would never happen" and put her pen down.' Others present took to email afterwards to voice their outrage. One said 'The tutor managed to carry on, suggesting we keep all ideas on the table for now. I felt sorry for the victim. She's a lovely lady and it was a good idea really. I don't think anyone should slap down someone else's idea like that'. The perpetrator has been asked for comment. (Mylor study journal, 10/12/2018)

The value of this approach, adapted from Bolton and Delderfield's five stage process (2018: 159) lay in synthesising a longer hand written account and isolating the issue arising from the negative response to an idea: that it had been unsettling for the group when one participant was critical of another's idea. It had required me, as facilitator, to make a quick response.

I wrote further about the same event, using a set of guided questions posed by Bolton and Delderfield (166). I began with "Why do you think you chose this incident?" as a topic to explore. The following is an extract from a longer string of questions, in italics, and my written answers:

> *Why do you think you chose this incident?* Because it felt like a moment of jeopardy for the research. It was a moment in which my loyalties felt divided. I had to think on my feet and behave in a way that would keep the space safe for everyone.
>
> *What made it unsafe?* [name]'s judgemental attitude towards [name], who is one of the shyest in the group. Everyone felt it. By extension it was a challenge to the

group's collective nature, and to my authority. I think [name] wanted power but also feared it. She was uncomfortable in collaborative working and in writing fiction. Perhaps her insecurity in this situation led her to try to exert control. It did not work for her because I quickly countered with my suggestion that no idea should be rejected at this stage.

Could there be a different interpretation? Yes, of course. [name] might say I was too sharp and quick to shut her down. In a sense I did to her what she had done to [name].

So is it puzzling? It is puzzling to me that someone like [name] was so unable to participate and to apply the ground rules we had devised together as a group. I saw in her a lack of empathy, and yet I also see in her a newcomer [to the local area] who has been keen to get involved and make contacts.

Is it different from what you expected? It stood out compared to others in the group.

What did you feel at different points? I felt exasperated, a bit 'knee-jerk', but also calm in the moment. I knew by intuition and experience that I needed to challenge her.

Why do you think you felt this way? Because I was responsible for the group. I felt in the moment like a guardian. It was less a time for balance, as I had exercised in other moments of disagreement, more a moment when I had to exert some authority and protect the group from the individual who had spoken so dismissively.

(Mylor study journal, 10/12/2018).

From this I understood the need to speak outside the group to the one who was struggling to work collaboratively. The importance of maintaining the group's equanimity was at the forefront, in this situation, and the writing followed Etherington's advice to use a journal "as a way of reflecting and processing our internal and external responses and behaviours" (Etherington 2004:125).

Volunteers' written work, illustrations, photographs and planning materials were another data source. Examples of co-authorship, records of group work and discussion, and online materials gathered and shared, embodied the outcomes of participation and illustrated the group's collaborations. The experience of participation was captured qualitatively in these records, for example during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in 2020, when the ease of working together in Zoom video meetings was discussed as part of the group's plans for the novel's denouement:

> Discussion turned to the process of writing Part 3, especially how much they have all enjoyed it and found it much easier and more fluent now they have the earlier parts of the story behind them. There was agreement that the earlier difficulties with agreeing over character and plot points have melted away. [name] said 'we all know everything about everyone', and this makes it easier to write. [name], the least 'team worker', agreed too. She suggested a party to end the project, in which everyone dresses up as their favourite character. This was greeted with huge enthusiasm (and could be something to combine with a public community event, when such things are possible again) (Mylor study field note, 24/11/2020).

This was followed by my reflection:

> Interesting to hear the unanimously positive comments today. They are proud to have got this far and to be able to see the end truly in sight (beyond my research, they have completed the actual novel). They all commented on the unexpected benefits of being forced online by Covid-19. The effects include focus, routine, collaboration and momentum. All have noticed the increased work rate (Mylor study field note, 24/11/2020).

As these examples indicate, the writer-facilitator's role became the focal point for research analysis, balanced with awareness of the roles and functions taken on by volunteers as the novel progressed. The next section extracts findings from field work to define roles and the associated skills and resources in making a community novel.

7.3 Research findings: workflow, budget, roles and skills

The Mylor study has shown the community novel to be a viable form of creative participation for communities, with certain caveats in terms of roles, skills and resources to support a lengthy participatory process. As has been demonstrated through extracts from *Trevow*, the community novel can be co-created using diverse materials: words, pictures, sound and video. In this section I shall set out the workflow as an indication of process of facilitation, and a model budget based on the experience of this research. These are presented as operational aids to further practice and would be part of the toolkit outlined in Chapter 8.

Workflow and timescale

Volunteers during the study in Mylor often asked how long it would take to finish the novel, a question to which there was no easy answer. The time it takes for any author of long fiction to complete a novel is a potential guide for estimating a timescale for community novel, and yet this is a matter of personal preference and working methods. There is no hard and fast rule. The question of timescale relates to a community novel's viability. Facilitation and production are not quick processes, as the study has shown. The following table illustrates

the variance from a project initially planned over a 12-month period, to the actual 18-month timescale for the Mylor study. This takes into account some breaks and the extension to the Mylor study during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in 2020.

Planned	**Actual**
22 September 2018: launch event	As planned
October-December 2018: establish group methods, create material for the novel	Achieved but at a slower place than expected due to some volunteers' resistance to methods
January-July 2019: weekly meetings and associated community activities to draft material for the novel	As planned but at a slower pace. More time was required for narrative planning
23 September: 1 year anniversary and completion	Writing a full draft had barely begun at this point but decisions were made that enabled it to get fully underway. Material drafted was integrated into the novel later in the production process
	Autumn-January 2020: creative writing craft skills were introduced to the core writing group of 6 volunteers. Full drafting was accomplished quickly, guided by the narrative plan. The group became self-supporting and I stood back having established a system of collaborative revisions and editing. Serialisation in *The Magazine* commenced in January 2020
	March 23 2020: Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. The group wanted to continue. There was potential for further research into online facilitation using Zoom, so the study resumed from April-to July 2020
	In-person meetings resumed from September 2020 with social distancing, out of doors

	Zoom meetings were held again from November 2020 and during the Covid-19 lockdown that followed into January 2021. Zoom continued to be the meeting place due to some participants' shielding at home for health reasons
	The novel was completed in May 2021

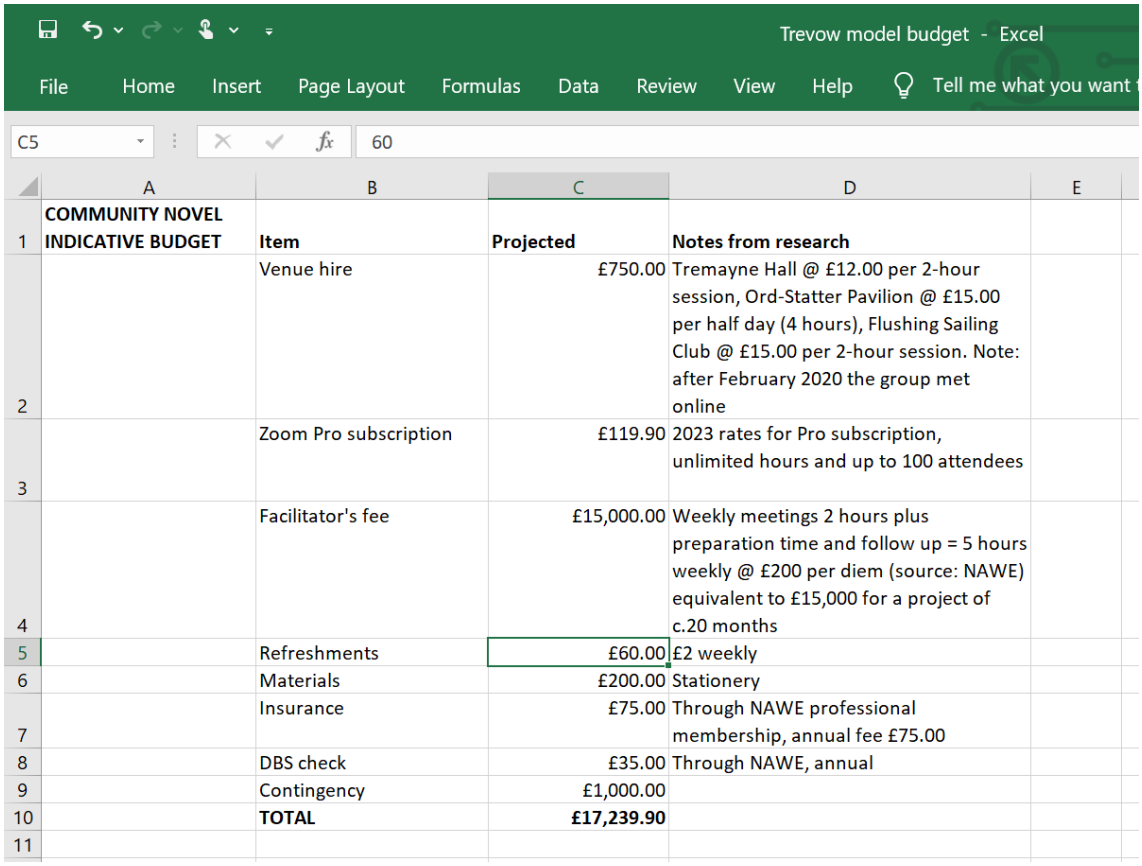
Trevow was achieved through a mix of two-hour weekly meetings and tasks which the volunteers carried out in their own time. Starting after the 22 September launch event in 2019, 35 meetings were held between October 2018 and July 2019. These generated material for the novel and got drafting underway. After a summer break, work resumed in September 2019. A further 25 weekly meetings took place, with a break for Christmas, before the Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020. After a brief hiatus, weekly meetings resumed on the Zoom video platform and continued until lockdown restrictions lifted in June 2020; a further 11 meetings. In-person meetings were possible again from September 2020, when the volunteers met out of doors. They reverting to Zoom in November when the weather became too cold. Seven meetings were held during that period, in gardens or public areas. Zoom meetings were again held during the Covid-19 lockdown in January 2021 and continued until May as a means of involving participants who were still shielding at home for health reasons. 14 meetings took place during those months. In total, the study was conducted with 71 meetings over a period of 18 months, spanning two years including some breaks. The research study was effectively completed by the end of 2020 and the volunteers then spent a further five months completing their novel. My role during that period was much reduced, simply hosting meetings on Zoom for the purpose of collaborative editing. Clearly, my initial estimate of the time it would take to generate material and begin writing proved optimistic. Further practice would establish whether some groups would achieve this faster, with a model of practice to guide them.

The timescale was challenging for some volunteers, either because they wanted to start writing sooner, or because they were uncertain about the process and how long it would take. My invitation to stay or leave, and to return if desired, ensured that volunteers could devote their preferred amount of time to the project, while those who decided it was not to their liking were able to withdraw. Routine provided temporal structure, and those that formed

the core writing group in the stages of production and publication were firm in their commitment to seeing the novel completed. In this the novel followed the pattern of other community cultural activities: for example, weekly choir or drama rehearsals that build to a performance. The time-limited nature of production schedules for devised community opera and drama suggest that the novel would benefit from a similar framework. Further practice research would establish this and clarify typical timescales which, in turn, would be helpful for funding applications that support time-limited community arts projects.

A model budget

Viability refers as well to project costs. The Mylor study has enabled me to outline an indicative budget that includes, for example, venue hire fees and an estimate of the facilitator's time. The budget shown below, Figure 45, reflects local rates and should be taken as a minimum.



	A	B	C	D	E
1	**COMMUNITY NOVEL INDICATIVE BUDGET**	**Item**	**Projected**	**Notes from research**	
2		Venue hire	£750.00	Tremayne Hall @ £12.00 per 2-hour session, Ord-Statter Pavilion @ £15.00 per half day (4 hours), Flushing Sailing Club @ £15.00 per 2-hour session. Note: after February 2020 the group met online	
3		Zoom Pro subscription	£119.90	2023 rates for Pro subscription, unlimited hours and up to 100 attendees	
4		Facilitator's fee	£15,000.00	Weekly meetings 2 hours plus preparation time and follow up = 5 hours weekly @ £200 per diem (source: NAWE) equivalent to £15,000 for a project of c.20 months	
5		Refreshments	£60.00	£2 weekly	
6		Materials	£200.00	Stationery	
7		Insurance	£75.00	Through NAWE professional membership, annual fee £75.00	
8		DBS check	£35.00	Through NAWE, annual	
9		Contingency	£1,000.00		
10		**TOTAL**	**£17,239.90**		
11					

Figure 45: Indicative budget for a community novel

The Mylor study made use of local community venues with modest hire fees, and public spaces for which there was no charge. Given the likely longevity of further novel projects, the associated costs of room hire on typical hourly rates, and an annual subscription to Zoom,

would be part of a project budget that also takes account of materials, the writer-facilitator's fee and associated expenses. These include, for example, public liability insurance and DBS checking. Travel costs have not been included in the model budget because the local venues used in the Mylor Study were mostly within walking distance. Transport costs should be included in further project budget planning, according to local circumstances, for instance a rate for mileage and an allowance for public transport. The essential costs evidenced by the Mylor study reflect budgets lines typically asked for by funders, for example the FEAST funding scheme for the arts in Cornwall. This can become part of guidance for facilitators.

The participation process has the benefit of inviting knowledge from volunteers, not paid experts. My three studies made use of social media apps and platforms for sharing that served the project adequately, without going beyond pay walls, hence my not including them in this illustration. The Mylor project assumed a writer-facilitator working on a self-employed basis, without an educational establishment or host business to provide equipment and facilities. Further research might take advantage of such resources, but should retain its community characteristics. Guidance on pay rates for freelance writing facilitators and tutors is available from NAWE and the Society of Authors, which I have consulted in drawing up this advice.

Having established the resources of time and budget, I next discuss insights into the roles entailed in facilitation of a community novel, and roles for volunteers and their wider community.

The writer-facilitator

A culturally democratic approach to facilitation requires the professional writer to take a creative back seat. In Goldbard's words, the role of the community artist is to "place their artistic and organizing skills at the service of the emancipation and development of an identified community" (2006: 140). In fulfilment of this, my research has revealed the multiple roles played by the writer-facilitator of a community novel, beyond the practice norms of a traditional community writing group. Some differences relate to tools and methods, especially digital methods using apps. As the timescale shown above illustrates, others are to do with the length and scope of the project, and the demands of group facilitation in the context of collaborative writing. The overseeing of wider community engagement is a further new element. Related to that, the amount of information

management and record keeping carried out during the facilitation of *Trevow* was an unexpectedly heavy workload. A mix of traditional and digital methods helped to manage, delegate and share this among volunteers. This is explained further below in my discussion of roles.

As well as my own observations and reflections on facilitation, I asked the volunteers to provide words to describe their perception of my role. A round-table verbal sharing of words elicited a list which was added to in discussion during a meeting in May 2019. The word cloud in Figure 46 shows results.

Figure 46: Roles of the writer-facilitator

The strong agreement among the group was that I provided the 'glue' that held them together. Without the structure and focus I brought to the process in weekly meetings, they doubted they would be able to make progress. I partly attribute this to what Bateson and Martin identify as the "link between certain types of positive mood and creativity" (2013: 60). In the earlier stages especially, my tone of constructive enthusiasm was a deliberately adopted motivational tactic. Designed to encourage the least experienced and confident among the volunteers, this performative aspect to my role engendered a sense of fun, good humour, and a democratic atmosphere. No single voice dominated and everyone's contribution was enthusiastically welcomed. This was sometimes tested, as the experiences with Gail in the Mylor study shows, but as the embodiment of the values of inclusivity and accessibility, my 'glue' maintained momentum and supported cohesion. In the later stages of completing the

novel, the glue became less essential. The core group of writing volunteers worked with autonomy, seldom needing my intervention beyond occasional advice and as a host of Zoom meetings.

Roles can be teased out further by analysing data from field notes. Figure 47 shows aspects of the roles performed by facilitator, volunteer participants, and the wider community through engagement activities and events.

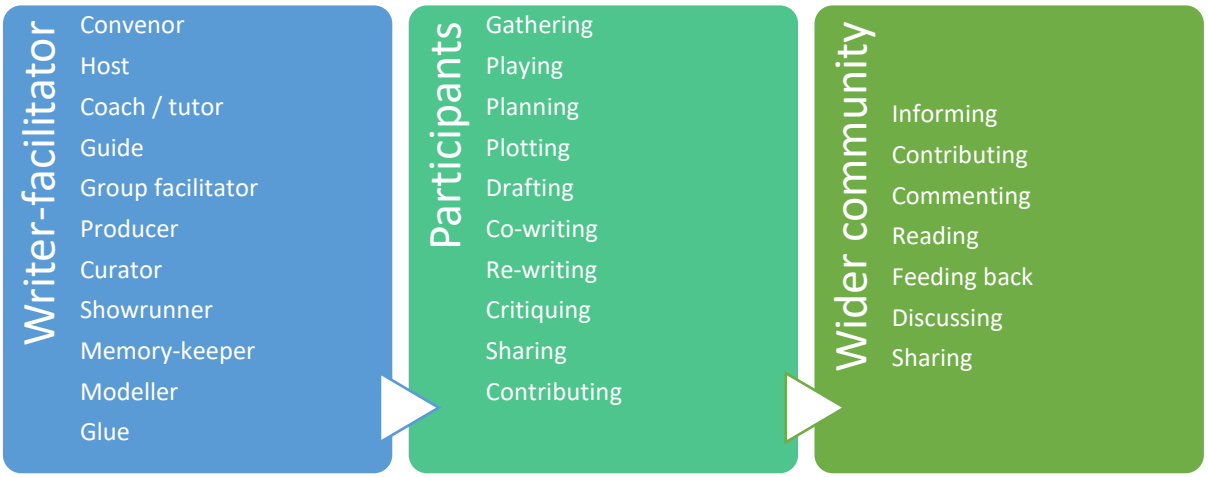


Figure 47: Writer-facilitator, participants and community roles

Figure 48 below lists the tasks performed in the writer-facilitator's role in relation to the five types of participation identified in the Mylor study.

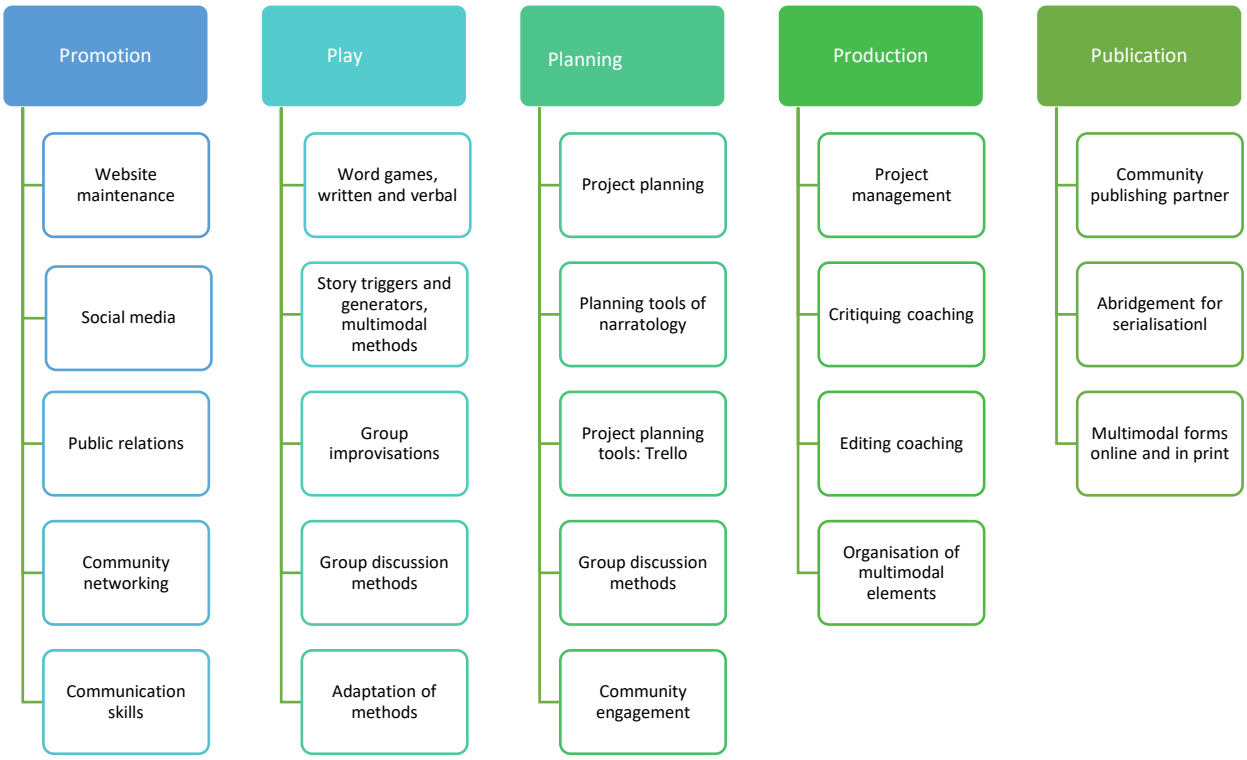


Figure 48: Writer-facilitator roles in relation to types of participation

The participation model is defined and discussed later in this chapter but the thematic breakdown shows the participatory process to require a combination of creative facilitation, operational management and strategic planning. Compared to the norms of practice already referred to, this is an augmented set of skills. For instance, the writer-facilitator maintains a project plan. They publicise and launch the project, communicating with other local interest groups. They keep records of activities and discussions, reference to which provides an aide memoir and helps reinforce group decisions. They manage group dynamics and maintain grounds rules in accordance with ethical practice. They provide coaching, tuition, advice and creative stimulation. Finally, they seek a publishing partner and prepare instalments of the novel for serialisation.

Project planning tools were vital to the operational parts of the process, reminding me of previous career experience as a project manager and manager of teams in public services. The responsibilities of a team to complete tasks within a defined time frame and working within resources, was familiar to me, although with a notable caveat. A group of volunteers inexperienced in novel writing could not be expected to work to the exacting standards of a professional team for whom performance management would be part of working culture. Instead, in a community volunteering context, the management of performance translated to

ensuring everyone's role enabled them to play to their strengths and contribute to the shared endeavour. The writer-facilitator monitored interdependencies in the project plan and provided guidance to keep the project on track. The timeliness of such guidance sometimes meant that I would defer a task or discussion to a point in which it would be most helpful to the volunteers. The decision to delay the introduction of creative writing skills tuition until a story was planned is an example of this.

The team-working app Trello enabled me to record work in progress, with a weekly click and drag update to ensure tasks stayed visible in its listing system. Trello became the repository for much of the material generated through collaboration: meeting plans and notes, records of decisions, character descriptions, photographs, and chapter drafts, for example. Apart from planning and conducting meetings and groups activities, the most time-consuming aspect of facilitation was this 'memory-keeping'. My field notes often acknowledge the workload of writing up the group's activities and planning next steps for the live project; also the need to maintain a balance and boundaries between work and life, as in this field note from February 2019 when I had been contacted by an enthusiastic volunteer who shared her thoughts about a fictional character, over a weekend:

> Further emails from [name] over the weekend raising valid questions about Agnes and Poland, and suggesting alternatives. These are helpful and we will refer to them on Monday, but I avoid replying over the weekend, however, keeping work/life balance boundaries. This is a pass-time for the group, but work for me and the workload must be managed. I must not be too available outside reasonable hours (Mylor study field note, 18/2/2019).

The maintenance of accurate and timely records was important to the project's smooth running. No one could keep fully abreast of all the detail, but the records kept in Trello ensured there was a reliable source to refer to. The facilitator's workload eased when volunteers took on the note-taking in meetings. Individual record-keeping also proved useful, enabling volunteers to refer to them outside meetings and off-line. This also had a positive effect on volunteers' recall of the rationale for their joint decisions.

The need to model behaviour in order to establish a working culture of constructive collaboration was another characteristic of facilitation familiar to me from earlier career experience in team management, especially during change processes in which team members needed encouragement to perform unfamiliar tasks and adopt new working methods. When I showed willingness to try new methods and potentially learn from their success or failure,

it encouraged volunteers to take risks with me. The short study with the St Agnes writing group demonstrated this in the failed use of Instagram, and the discovery of Pinterest's effectiveness as a tool for fictional world building. By the time the Mylor volunteers used Zoom to improvise a public meeting with role play, it was natural for me and them to harness the technology of a video platform with which we had become familiar, and use it playfully and creatively to generate content.

Field notes show, however, that some volunteers could be resistant to methods, even those they had suggested themselves. The following extract records my frustration during an exercise to mind map connections between characters:

> I was surprised and frustrated by how much effort this took. I had to repeat the prompts several times. I felt myself becoming irritated (I was tired), like an impatient teacher with a slow class. We got there in the end but it made me reflect on methods with this very mixed group with some strong characters and others that lack confidence. The frustration for me, on this occasion, was that despite the group having strong ideas about what they wanted to do, they seemed unwilling or slow to actually do it.
>
> The results, however, were pleasing, and several promising scenes emerged. I noted that some (K and G especially) were unwilling to accept the alternative ideas. G spoke of other people's ideas affecting hers in a negative way, I said perhaps the way to think about it could be that they 'add' or 'enrich', but she did not seem open to this.
>
> Towards the end several people commented on how much they had been talking and that it must be hard for me!
>
> (Mylor study field note, 26/11/2019).

At the start of the project, I had stated - and re-iterated periodically - that the novel would not be mine. This came as a surprise to the volunteers and there was repeated questioning about what they would write about. This was quickly resolved, however, when they began to improvise and devise material for their story, with my guidance. Facilitating and observing this process, I sometimes found it frustrating to suppress my own creative ideas, as the 'ghosts' of stories flew by in discussion: promising ideas voiced by volunteers that were quickly dropped when something else was suggested. In journalling, I asked "Where is my creativity in this?" (Mylor study journal, 5/10/2019). The answer lay in the innovations of method and form that arose by blending digital and traditional modes of facilitation. I found creative enjoyment in trying new methods for myself before introducing them to the group. Creativity extended to re-thinking methods of tuition and coaching to serve collaboration.

This led me to consider the remediations of practice as a feature of the community novel which other potential writer-facilitators could respond to from their own baseline of practice methods. By adapting to the collaborative context, and thinking of ways to blend the traditional and digital, I found my personal toolkit expanding in unanticipated ways. For example, the use of Zoom to create a scene in which a fictional public meeting was enacted through role play, led to a section of *Trevow* in which narrative is rendered through multimodal versions: a news report, a set of minutes, illustrated placards and PowerPoint presentation that express different perspectives on the same event. This is replicable and indicates potential for other facilitators to consider how their own remediated methods can result in similarly hybrid forms.

I referred earlier to the deficit in guidance for collaborative creative writing in pedagogical sources. Adapting guidance for individual writers to the group context was frequently an act of translation. Digital methods proved more open to collaboration, however and there was efficacy in the playful uses of apps: for example, finding a source of three-word writing prompts to generate ideas arising from place, using the What3Words mapping app, and deploying WhatsApp for a fictional family's chat. The tutoring and coaching aspects of facilitation entailed pedagogical approaches to imparting knowledge and guiding volunteers through an unfamiliar process in which they learned craft skills in order to write the novel. Group tuition required sensitivity to the nervousness of adults whose experience of school was distant and, in some case, not positive. The suite of practical skills-based guidance for aspects of narratology proved adequate for its purpose and was couched in terms that helped to build confidence among those who were resistant. My practitioner's hunch that methods from writing for wellbeing, and Elbow's Teacherless Classroom techniques of free writing and sprint writing (Elbow 1998: 3-10) would be useful for volunteers, proved correct.

My field notes ruminated on the suitability of adequate terms to sum up the writer-facilitator role. I considered 'producer', 'curator', and 'showrunner', among others. To an extent, the role mirrored that of a theatrical producer who commissions people and resources, including the script, in order to create a performance. Curation could be seen in the amassing and selecting of material from diverse sources, but was too directive a term for a process whose aims were democratic. The commissioning role of a showrunner, and the hosting of a creative space in which a writing team collaborates, echoed the writer-facilitator's steering of the project, but the showrunner's control of detail and final veto over the product, jarred

with facilitation's more enabling and co-operative approach. As a model for practice, the showrunner role was, in my view, more akin to an editor than a role supportive of creative collaboration. A more appropriate fit was the term 'animateur'. This did not arise from discussion with the volunteers, but struck me in hindsight, noting its use in community music, for example the music animateur and cultural activist James Bau Graves whose *Cultural Democracy: The Arts, Community, and the Public Purpose* (2018) is an informative text on the American community arts movement. As a dictionary definition, the animateur is "someone who leads and encourages participation in a particular activity and especially in a cultural or artistic activity" (Merryam Webster Dictionary, 2019). This conveys the sense of bringing something to life, animating it through enthusiasm, practical assistance, and an invitation to join in. In English 'animateur' is used in music and the performing arts, but is less familiar to creative writing. In the light of my studies, its etymology fits the role of writer-facilitator in a community context more fully than other terms considered here.

In summary, a bespoke pedagogy for the community novel would treat creative writing as a collaborative, dialogic and democratic form. Methods would draw on community education and creative practice with tools for project management of a long-form fiction project, and strategies for community engagement. The toolkit outlined in Chapter 8 is based on these components and examples of practice evidenced in the Mylor study.

Roles for participants

A major role for volunteers was to write the novel, but before that part of the process could start, they had to create content and make decisions about narrative. As the project progressed it became evident that lack of writing experience was not a barrier to participation. Having been unsure whether to begin with a programme of learning, as in the example of Norfolk Writers mentioned in Chapter 4, my decision was to delay and instead use playful methods with the volunteers to identify their story. Once that was in place my supposition proved correct: there was less uncertainty and argument over details among the volunteers once the narrative plan was designed. Those who had been nervous of formal learning were, furthermore, more receptive to skills tuition once they knew the story they were telling.

A key aspect of the volunteers' part in the community novel was willingness to be playful and to adapt to a sometimes fast-moving set of content and ideas. While some found this

difficult and sometimes bewildering, as evidenced in the Mylor study, others quickly grew accustomed the messy unpredictability of group collaboration and were comfortable in the early stages with the idea that nothing in their story was yet fixed. As facilitator, I was quick to acknowledge this and emphasise the value of keeping ideas on the table until decisions could be made with consensus or a dialogic acknowledgement that a majority decision could be accepted. Once full drafting was underway there were instances when a decision needed to be revisited, or a new plot point added, but the group was secure in its own judgment by then, and able to see the ripple effects on other aspects of plot, if they chose to change something.

The Mylor study reveals some unanticipated volunteer roles, for example the illustrated map and other pieces of artwork produced by members of the core writing group. Photographs taken on smartphones were shared as part of plot deliberations, and volunteers' local walks and interactions with family members during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns, were innovations to what had by that time become an established group. Participants were valuable in promoting the novel among local friends and networks, some encouraging others to become involved, and to read the serialisation once it was underway. Volunteers' local knowledge of place and history was a further resource. Some drew on life experiences such as sailing, pilot gig rowing, living in the Netherlands, and being involved with other local interest groups. My own local knowledge was significantly enhanced by the volunteers. I was careful not to impose my opinions about local issues, but was guided by their suggestions and made first approaches to other groups or individuals, if no one else was able to. The sharing of local insights gave rise to opportunities for wider community engagement, discussed next.

As bowerbirds, gathering the raw material of their story, the Mylor volunteers were encouraged to use the external stimuli of place and surroundings, as well as internal processes of imagination and improvisation that responded to multimodal prompts. Such activities often gave rise to noisy, chaotic but ultimately fruitful discussions as volunteers shared their written ideas and debated details of character and plot. A typical field note from late 2019 records:

> Another productive session with fun and laughter but also serious consideration of plot points and aspects of character development. The momentum has picked up immensely (Mylor study field note, 19/11/2019).

For those who embraced the use of apps, the playful ways in which these were introduced were acknowledged as helpful. Tools of narratology for planning and production were introduced at points in the iterative process when their purpose made sense to the non-writers among them, and when material for the novel could be worked on as part of learning. This enabled momentum to be sustained.

There was a tendency, nonetheless, for some volunteers to rush ahead to parts of the story that were yet to be planned, and whose planning was dependent on decisions to be made collectively. When this happened, my knowledge of the full process of novel construction enabled me to focus the work on aspects that needed to be decided before progress could be made. My tactic was to advise the volunteers to wait before committing to detail which might need to change in the light of later plot points. In my view this was:

> unlike an individual author who can move around different parts of the narrative if they want to. Why? Because they hold the whole story in their one head. They have sole agency over decisions. Seven people or more, or even just three or four, cannot do that without a struggle to achieve a singular vision (Mylor study field note, 22/6/2019)

As co-writers, compromise was achieved in most cases, although some volunteers struggled to accept the majority decision. The few who could not overcome their attachment to individual agency concluded for themselves that the project was not for them. Those who took part in the entire project, and others who joined in when time allowed, showed an aptitude for collaboration, commitment to volunteering, and a willingness to work alongside others in their shared endeavour. In a session early in the process, field notes record "Several times [name] said she was comfortable with uncertainty and enjoyed making up the characters (echoed by [name]). My observation was that this helped settle and encourage the others" (Mylor study field note, 19/11/2018).

Some were at ease with rapidly changing details and accepted the need for flexibility in the face of interdependencies of plot. Others, as recounted earlier, struggled with the fluidity of the collective hive mind.

In Chapter 2 I referred to participants' motivations in a typical community writing group, specifically the social aspects, the enjoyment of creativity, and the desire for self- expression. Routes to publication may be part of the experience of joining a community writing group, but are not always the prime aim. The community novel volunteers mirrored this tendency,

but there was also an expectation that their novel could be published when complete. This expectation was carefully managed by me, until a point when I judged that what was being produced was publishable in serialisation and potentially as self-published print or download versions. For those who found the process long and at time arduous, the prospect of seeing their book completed was motivating.

Wider community engagement

There were benefits to working in a place that was already home to clubs, societies and volunteering opportunities that range from creative activities to sports, local democracy and the environment. The ground was fertile for long-form fiction to become a collaborative activity and the community novel was able to identify local interest groups and community events to join in with. This was especially the case once the novel was underway. Until that point, there was polite interest from groups such as the local history archive volunteers, but until they knew what it would be about, they were hesitant to offer assistance. Mylor's community garden, by contrast, approached the novel volunteers having seen extracts in *The Magazine*. With the novel's underlying theme of protection to the environment becoming clear, garden and novel volunteers could see mutual relevance. Further research would establish the ease, or otherwise, of achieving connections across communities of interest in a place with less developed social and cultural capital. The findings, however, point to the potential for a community novel to be made in places that lack such a base, when supported by a model of practice and a toolkit of proven methods.

The Mylor novel attracted individuals who were involved in campaigns and local activities from which ideas and information could be drawn. Once a story emerged, specific community groups could be approached for relevance to the developing narrative, for example the WI's contribution and the Art Group's illustrations which were both meaningful and material. Such engagements cemented the principle of wider influence over decisions and lent authenticity to the localism of the story. Engagement with local issues such as the climate emergency, for example, and debates about affordable homes, deepened volunteers' knowledge of local concerns, and enabled those who were active campaigners to contribute content.

7.3 Participation: methods and cultural democracy

As a study in applying principles of cultural democracy to the novel, this research has designed methods of facilitation that aim to be inclusive and accessible. As the Mylor project

progressed, methods fell into five emerging types of participation. An early iteration of this as a model to inform practice was arrived at through a sorting exercise that entailed close reading and re-reading of field notes and related materials, identifying types of activity, and annotating themes and patterns of facilitation and methods as they emerged. The community novel was progressing into the production stage when I noticed certain recurring types of activity: periods of playful improvisation followed by debate leading to consensus, then decisions that formed the basis of narrative. Figure 49 shows an example of field notes marked with post it notes in a system of colour coding for the five participation types:

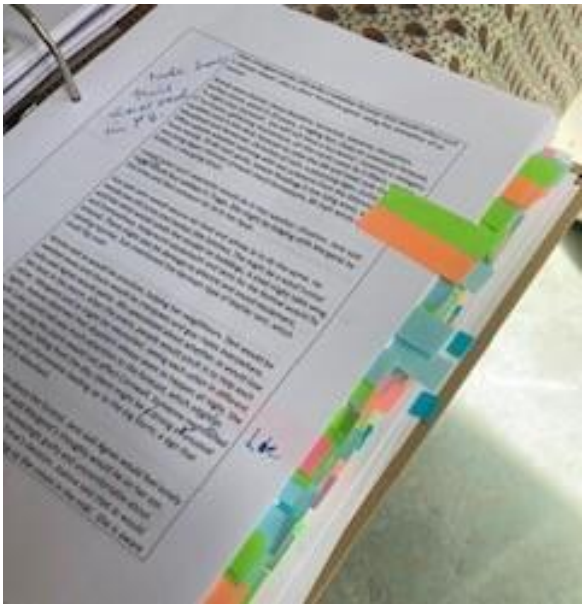


Figure 49: Field notes with colours to tag participation types

Once identified, the participation types of play, plan, produce, publish and promote provided a holding pattern. Naming them enabled me to select appropriate tools for parts of the process, for example when to use playful improvisation to enhance understanding of a character, or when to introduce an aspect of writing craft to aid production. To summarise from examples, playful methods were used in the earliest stages for group bonding, building confidence among the participants and generating ideas. They were returned to as a means of solving problems of characterisation and plot, and became the default when the group needed to take time out from planning or producing the novel, to address a question. Playful verbal warm ups provided a way into improvisation exercises adaptable from creative writing and drama methods. These involved everyone and were instrumental in shifting the novel away from individual authorship and into group culture. The model of participation also helped me manage volunteers' expectations of how long they could expect to be

participating. It enabled stages in the process to be explained and I could point out how much had been achieved while advising the volunteers on how much time certain tasks would take.

As the novel grew, the five elements of participation showed themselves to be processual rather that strictly linear, with an iterative loop that gathered momentum as the novel developed. For instance, having improvised a scene to establish the world of Trevow and some of its main characters, the volunteers returned to the chapter that had already been drafted and reworked it in the light of new insights into their protagonist. This entailed movement between the original stage of play, into planning the scene and writing it, then back into more playful improvisation to develop the protagonist's back story in a way that explained her arrival in the fictional community. The final version of the chapter was revised accordingly, the volunteers moving fluently between play and production.

As the participation types emerged, I expressed them as clusters. Figure 50 shows the typical activities in each cluster:

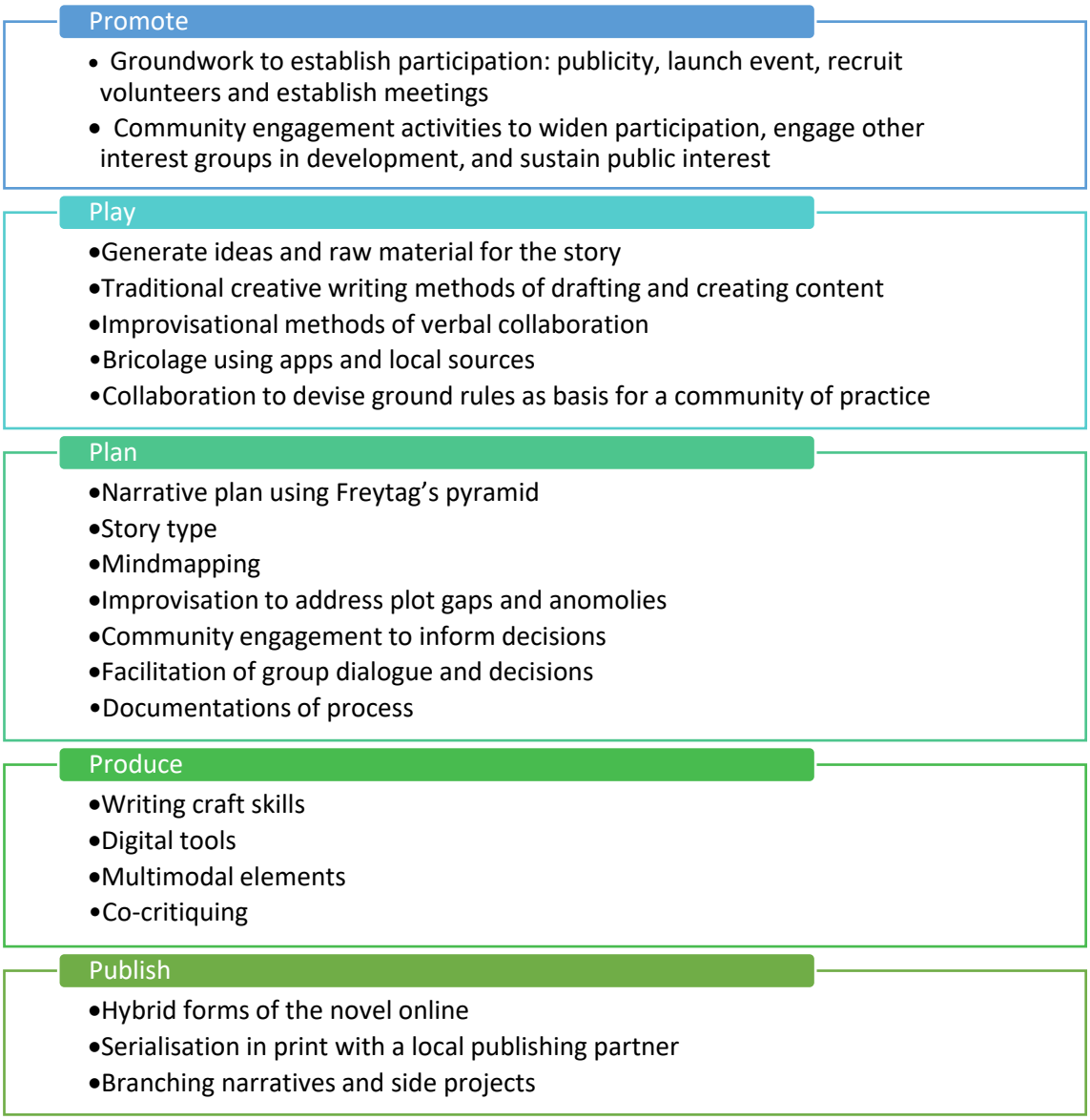


Figure 50: Typical activities summarised within the participation types

A further reading of the participation model shows its contribution to the culturally democratic form of the community novel, by comparison with a novel by an individual author. The table below is adapted from the 68 Million Artists model (ACE 2018) in which the democratisation of culture is compared to culturally democratic practice. My interpretation of this in the table below reveals the difference between a novel written by an individual for other individuals to consume by reading, and a novel written by collaboration, in which people participate in diverse roles.

Novel, solo-authored	**Community novel**
One person's idea	Participatory process to find ideas and generate raw material, with facilitation
Unilaterally planned	Planned collaboratively, finding consensus, and referring to local interest groups
Unilaterally written	Drafted by collaboration, to agreed plan, using multimodal contributions
Edited by a third party (agent, publisher)	Co-edited from multimodal materials
Published (self-published / competition / commercial)	Serialised with a community partner / online / self-published with crowd funding
Readers as consumers	Readers as contributors within the community

Three resource types emerged as essential to participation: place, people and skills. In terms of place, the decision to hold meetings and events in local halls, cafes, pubs, and gardens, lent familiarity to the project. Volunteers met in settings that were local and known to them in their place-based community. Rooms hired in community venues offered privacy and enabled focused concentration on the craft elements of making the novel. Privacy also allowed for noisy, messy making, with materials spread out on walls and tables. Public spaces, for example a café, provided ambient stimulation for ideas and writing. Although sometimes noisy, these examples of 'third place' communities assisted the volunteers' bricolage in found texts and objects, such as the community quilt and the circus poster described in the Mylor study.

The place-based nature of the project did not deliberately dictate the novel's content, but the Mylor volunteers chose to set their novel in a familiar setting. This was a starting point from which they could begin to share ideas and reach consensus about the story. The extent to which such a local focus would be beneficial to further community novels of different genre would be a topic for further research. For *Trevow*, the volunteers' collective decision to write a work of contemporary fiction with a back story set within living memory, grew from their local knowledge and information-gathering. Writing about local landscapes and common issues gave them confidence. Another group might decide to take a different approach, in which case local meeting places would, based on this evidence, provide a comfortable and

known setting in which to bring people together. Accessibility was demonstrated further by the mixed use of pens, laptops, notebooks, and smartphones. Without insistence on a particular set of tools or software, the volunteers could take part, whatever their choice of writing technology.

I have explained that the main platforms for publication of the novel were serialisation with a local publishing partner, *The Magazine*, serialisation on a self-managed WordPress site, and promotion in community Facebook groups. Attempts to engage local book groups, however, were frustrated by their desire to read and comment on the entire novel. The aspiration to engage readers during serialisation, and potentially make them part of community engagement in the developing narrative, proved impracticable because of timing, once the rhythm of the volunteer group was established routines.

For mutual learning to take place between volunteers and facilitator, the studies required flexible design and intuitive facilitation. Gantt chart plotting of interdependencies was too linear and assumed processual movement towards a fixed goal. Intuitive facilitation (Janesick 2001) enabled me to respond to my own insights as the Mylor study progressed. This was in keeping with the principles of community engagement and Freire's theory of mutual learning. It further made use of the novel's intrinsic elasticity, through which methods could be tried according to the volunteers' capabilities and interests. As the five elements of participation emerged through the Mylor study, iteration became the modus operandum at the heart of the process.

7.4 Multimodalities of method and form

Barnard has argued that all writing is multimodal (2019) and has shown how digital methods can become part of an individual writer's multimodal practice. While largely agreeing with this, the caveat for community writing is that methods are often designed for individual authorship. They assume access to and easy use of digital devices and apps, and do not take into account the digital deficits which were encountered in my studies.

This research has contributed knowledge to address that deficit by adopting multimodal methods for collaboration. The consequent multimodalities of form in the community novel's modes of publication are a further contribution to knowledge. While it has proved technically challenging to integrate some of the material that arose from mixed methods, I

have been able to include the most effective in the online version of *Trevow*. They include illustrations by the Mylor Art Group, sound recorded by volunteers and by me on smartphones, alternative versions of a scene improvised live in Zoom, and text in the novel with links to alternative material. Videos made in an app, Texting Story, form part of the novel's denouement, and links are provided to screen shots showing Pinterest boards for settings devised by volunteers. Hidden texts and material produced in side projects can be found through links in the online novel.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, traditional and digital methods were separate modes of practice in community writing and its facilitation. I had used methods in parallel with each other, so that volunteers who were most confident to try a digital mode of writing could do so, while others wrote with pens. I worked within the limitations of my own technological resources: apps on smartphone and PC laptop with Windows 10 Office software. Although appreciating the affordances of bespoke software such as that developed by White Water Writers, I was hesitant to push the volunteers too hard in using digital methods to which many were resistant. Instead, I chose to introduce accessible apps with those who were interested and willing to try. The results of such efforts could be integrated into the whole, for example dialogue, and others such as Pinterest, were easily adaptable to in-person group work, as Chapters 5 and 6 have shown.

Attempts at remote collaboration were frustrated by volunteers' lack of familiarity with platforms such as DropBox and GoogleDocs but forced adoption of the video platform Zoom as our only possible meeting place during the Covid-19 lockdown, proved transformative. During summer 2020 and the winter lockdown of early 2021, a perceived barrier to online engagement was dismantled for the majority. The effect was to create an alternative online community meeting space, with its own etiquette and methods. Volunteers became less risk-averse and the only barrier of note was access to appropriate equipment and knowing how to use it. At that point we lost some participants, for example the one who said "When you do that computer stuff I can't join in" (Mylor field note, 5/12/2018). For this volunteer, weekly in-person attendance at meetings was a large part of her enjoyment of the process. She had neither a smartphone nor a laptop, and no interest in working online. To have insisted on this during the pre-lockdown research activities would have excluded her. During the 2020 Covid-19 lockdowns there was little we could do to engage with her, so she withdrew by choice, although still made some contributions by email. At other times,

someone's inability or refusal to engage digitally did not necessarily exclude them. By designing activities that were multimodal in themselves, participants had alternatives. As Chapter 6 has shown, volunteers could pair up with those who were using smartphone apps, for example. They contribute as well by using familiar methods that could be amalgamated into the novel as part of multimodal text. On this basis, a more technologically knowledgeable facilitator and participants could find further methods to suit their digital capabilities. The overarching principles of accessibility and inclusivity can, as has been shown, give rise to innovation. Remediations to practice are incremental in this context and a bespoke approach works to the volunteers' strengths and capacity. For the writer-facilitator, this research has shown that the introduction of digital methods augments the toolkit of practice. I am left with the sense that my personal palette of methods, developed over more than a decade, has been expanded.

7.6 Conclusions: remediations to practice and pedagogy

This chapter has drawn on field notes, insights from participants, and material examples from my studies, to identify findings. The result is a replicable scheme for production of a community novel. The community novel's potential as a vehicle for participation has been evidenced through production of a finished product, *Trevow*, with consequent insights into the role and skills required for facilitation, and related caveats and remediations. The community novel has emerged as a culturally democratic form, accessible and inclusive to amateur writers and volunteers with few preconceptions about the novel-writing process. It makes use of adapted methods that will be familiar to writer-facilitators, and methods new to practice, for example the use of smartphone apps, social media apps and a blend of online and in-person facilitation. This provides freedom for further innovation which other facilitators will be able to pursue in their practice.

The Mylor study has shown the writer-facilitator role to be diverse, extending beyond the narrower learning-oriented skill-set of the creative writing tutor. It can be expressed thematically as a set of practical skills and responsibilities, best described as the glue that holds collaboration together in the early stages. As the project moves forward, the role combines the tasks of a project manager and creative writing tutor or facilitator, using skills of group facilitation and creative writing pedagogy. It requires communication skills that are supportive, constructive, enabling, and assertive when needed, with the ability to deal sensitively with individual personalities and tensions within group work. The facilitator must

put aside their own creative ambitions and ego. A community novel is not their story. They work alongside the volunteers, not over them. Ethical practice is essential to ensure safety and group agency, including the ability to help participants resolve difficulties. The facilitator serves the project and does not have right of veto over creative decisions; rather they steer, advise and coach. It is a skill in itself to be able to judge when to adopt each aspect of the role.

The blended practice that has evolved is the basis for my argument for a bespoke community writing pedagogy. This is distinguished from the pedagogy of creative writing studies by the requirements of collaborative and participatory methods, and the innovation of a co-created multimodal community novel. The diversity of roles with the novel's participatory process further supports the argument for a bespoke toolkit to inform further practice by writer-facilitators. In a panel presentation to the Creative Writing Futures conference at the University of East Anglia (UEA), in May 2021, I identified the deficits in pedagogy that were encountered during my studies, posing questions about tools of facilitation for participatory community writing practice. In the light of my research findings, I can now provide indicative methods and tools to use, and a participation model to follow. This will enable other facilitators to bring their own methods to the process. Guidance for writer-facilitators and a plan to disseminate knowledge gained through this research are the topics of the next chapter.

Chapter 8: A toolkit for writer-facilitators

8.1 Overview

This chapter defines content for guidance in the form of a toolkit for writer-facilitators who assist community volunteers in making their own novel. Evidence-based examples from this thesis inform the design of collaborative and participatory activities, guidance on timescale and planning, and an indicative budget on which to base fundraising.

The toolkit is mediated in the form of a course of training which I plan to deliver in ten live workshops on the video platform Zoom, with accompanying resources available to download from a website. Other formats are possible, for example a pre-recorded video course on a learning platform such as Kajabi which enables self-guided learning. For the purposes of clarity in the thesis, however, I have chosen a participatory approach, with a maximum of eight learners, in order for methods of collaboration and co-creation to be learned together, experientially.

As currently conceived, the course equips writer-facilitators with the knowledge and skills to support production of further community novels, using methods that enable participants to develop their own cultural capabilities. This chapter provides an overview of content for a series of three-hour workshops which, in summary, cover the following topics:

Workshop 1	Introduction to the community novel: definition, principles of cultural democracy and participation; the role and skills of a writer-facilitator; ethical practice and ground rules; the participation model, and how to plan and start a community novel project.
Workshop 2	Methods to promote the community novel: how to identify local networks and recruit participants; forming a community of practice, and practical ways to start co-creating.
Workshop 3	Methods of playful making: how to generate material for the novel through multimodal techniques of worldbuilding and character development; how to conduct group conversations and begin collaborative writing.

Workshop 4	Methods to incorporate apps into playful processes: for example SMS, WhatsApp, What3Words, Brainsparker, Mindmeister, and others to be devised from the trainees' own practice methods.
Workshop 5	Methods of planning: narrative structure, sub plot and back story; identifying gaps in narrative, and filling them through engagement with the wider community.
Workshop 6	Methods of wider engagement: involvement of community interest groups and local events; ways of using local settings and landscapes.
Workshop 7	Methods of production: teaching creative writing craft; methods of collaborative critiquing, and on-screen revision and editing in the Zoom room.
Workshop 8	Methods of publication: compiling the novel from multimodal material.
Workshop 9	Methods of publication: serialisation, publishing partnership, online publication.
Workshop 10	Plan a community novel project: innovations and remediations to practice, next steps.

The workshops enable collaboration between the trainees who can trial methods among themselves in real time and hold reflective discussion about their efficacy. Each workshop includes illustrative examples of practice from *Trevow*, and practical exercises facilitated by the trainer, to be tried out as co-creation using a variety of modes and methods. Time is allowed for reflection on the efficacy of methods participants are encouraged to consider how to adapt and innovate in their own practice. Illustrations from the experience of *Trevow*'s facilitation are provided, including examples of blending traditional and digital methods, and overcoming barriers to involvement.

In this chapter, part 8.2 defines the toolkit's purpose and who it is for. 8.3 shows how the toolkit addresses the deficits in community writing pedagogy which were identified in the results (Chapter 7). Part 8.4 discusses the five-stage participation model as a strategic and tactical approach to achieving a culturally democratic process. 8.5 encourages innovation as facilitators adapt their own methods to the participatory process. 8.6 sets out the objective, strategy and tactics for plan to disseminate learning from my research, in particular the Mylor

study. Finally, part 8.7 concludes with a proposal to disseminate the community novel toolkit through a Community Interest Company (CIC) and share findings with writer-facilitator peer networks.

8.2 The toolkit: experiential learning methods

The guidance opens by defining the community novel as a form and a process, and the role of the writer-facilitator. Addressing the facilitator as 'you', peer to peer, the toolkit likens the role to that of an animateur of a community music event, a producer of community theatre, or the conductor of a choir. Recommended skills are set out alongside volunteers' roles, to prepare for the activities that will contribute to a novel.

The toolkit takes the culturally democratic approach followed in my studies. It exemplifies Freire's "demythologizing praxis" (Freire 1985: 140) and Clark and Ivanic's pedagogical principles that inform a writing and planning process that is not so rigid that it "may be sacrificing the development of new ideas" (Clark and Ivanic 1997: 234). The writer-facilitator who uses the guidance will require skills of creative writing pedagogy: knowledge of creative writing craft and narratology; design of writing workshops; methods of writing group critique, revision and editing. Knowledge of pathways to self-publishing is also helpful. The writer-facilitator may not be a novelist, but insight into the process of writing a work of long-fiction, and the narratological framework of a novel is an important skill. Faced with a long and multi-faceted process of content creation, the ability to steer participants through a sustained creative project is essential, whether they write or contribute to the novel project in other ways.

A baseline of capabilities and skills is set out, for example familiarity with group facilitation methods, before embarking on a community novel project. That includes, for example, the conditions and resources of community writing, and an understanding of the social and creative motivations of participants. The guidance recommends a defined locality for the activity of making a community novel, so volunteer participants will be associated with that place, be it a neighbourhood, village or street. As their novel project advances, they will form a community of practice with a core writing group. This group will engage with the wider community, for example through communities of interest who become involved materially and to advise. The guidance provides examples and illustrative methods of that wider engagement.

Facilities are specified, for example a regular meeting place with free Wi-Fi, kitchen facilities, and accessible for local transport and parking. The recommended technologies for writing are the pen and notebook, PC or tablet, and smartphone apps for those who have them. The facilitator must have confidence in all the methods and technologies, and be willing to model their usage, train and coach participants in them, and devise alternative methods of engagement with participants who are unable to use certain methods.

Facilitators will be accustomed to forming and managing writing groups in which all participants have equal status regardless of experience. The facilitator will be able to publicise and promote the project locally, be its champion and encourage people to take part. The ability to appeal to local participants with clear messages and a welcoming and positive tone is important, as are empathy and patience towards those who lack confidence. Ethical practice is informed by guidance about consent and ground rules for working together as volunteer participants. An acrostic model is provided as a method to elicit ground rules, embodying the principle of participation.

Having established starting points, the guidance provides tools to aid collaboration and participation, addressing the deficits in community writing pedagogy and community writing practice designed to instruct and facilitate individual writing.

8.3 Guidance to address deficits in community writing pedagogy

In conclusions to Chapter 7 I identified deficits in creative writing pedagogy as it applies to writing in communities. I had encountered these in the course of my research and some of these were anticipated in the consideration of relevant literature: for example, the lack of specific advice about co-authorship in the extensive guidance on creative writing teaching. My PAR studies reinforced this lack and led me to adapt methods from guidance designed for individual authorship, and from other sources. The toolkit is tailored, therefore, to fit the needs and resources of writing in the community. Its guidance augments traditional community writing group practice with methods to enable diverse participation activities, wider community engagement, and the blending of digital methods – specifically smartphone apps – with a mostly analogue field of practice. This leads to innovations which the toolkit demonstrates as indicative within the community novel co-creation process.

The guidance acknowledges that participants in a community novel project are not students, and the writer-facilitator is likely to be self-employed and working alone. Typical types of

community venue and meeting places are described, and facilitators are advised to avoid assumptions about participants' willingness or ability to use unfamiliar methods. The principals of culturally democratic practice are established from the start and adhered to throughout the course.

Remediations to practice are introduced in the first training workshop and continued throughout the course. Workshop 1 provides foundations with a definition of the community novel and advice for facilitators at the start of a project: for example, an indicative time line and budget, advice about project planning, and types of venue and other community spaces in which to collaborate.

The co-creation of *Trevow* made use of multiple places within a parish area. It began with a routine of weekly meetings in familiar venues: a community sports hall and a village hall. This drew participants in, positioning the community novel as an activity that was part of local cultural capital. The format of two-hourly meetings with a programme of activities, discussion and light refreshments, bore comparison with other local clubs and activities. The guidance provides advise about to replicate this approach before branching out into the wider community.

Two other types of community space are described, firstly local venues that are public and shared. Cafes, pubs, parks and gardens, and the premises of other local clubs and societies belong in this category. They represent the types of local "third place" identified by Oldenburg (1997) for their familiarity as social and public places in which people gather.

The other space, which was occupied during the period of research that overlapped by the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns, is online. The toolkit gives practical guidance about using the Zoom room for improvisation and group conversations, real-time co-editing, and group social contact during a time when physical meetings could not take place. The remediated practice that arose from this informs further multimodal exercises to try, and ground rules that reflect the new etiquette required in online meetings. The guidance refers to participants' reactions to that new and unfamiliar type of space, with advice for facilitators on how to manage the practicalities of online facilitation, for example the difficulties of spontaneous group discussion.

Resources for project planning include an indicative timescale and budget, of relevance to projects that raising funds from local sources or seek funding from public grant-maker such as Arts Council England. There is advice on ethical practice, DBS checking and public liability insurance.

8.4 Guidance for using the five participation types

The participation model that emerged through my research provides structure for the main body of the toolkit, with the proviso that the model is not necessarily processual. As a typology of participatory activities it enables a culturally democratic process in which all volunteers contributions are elicited. Whether or not an individual's idea finds its way into the finished writing, it is part of the iterative process of group conversation, planning and selection.

The participation model exemplifies the flexibility of the five types: promotion, play, planning, production, and publication. It acts as a holding device, enabling facilitator and participants to select appropriate methods at appropriate points. As the process continues, the participant types provide a suite of methods between which the participants can move without disruption.

Starting with ways to recruit participants, advice is provided for raising awareness within a defined community of place among related communities of interest, and individuals. There is practical guidance about publicity and a community event to launch the process, and guidance about engagement with the wider community through local networks and established events. *Trevow* provides examples and a principle is established for learners to try the recommended methods, reflect on their efficacy and consider how to adapt their own practice methods to incorporate co-creation and the use of smartphone apps. The toolkit takes this approach throughout the workshops.

The toolkit moves on to playful methods to establish group collaboration and generate material for the novel. Methods are adapted from creative writing pedagogy for group use, to generate a fictional world, devise characters and identify theme. Elbow's creative use of the interaction of individuals' ideas (1998: 50) is salient and the guidance follows his advice to "start writing and keep writing" (25), from the earliest stages of the novel-making process. Mixed methods establish the principle of adapting practice so that no one is excluded. Tools

for writing dialogue are introduced using smartphone apps. Principles of group discussion are established using methods of playful improvisation from drama and comedy, and group conversation. The toolkit provides structured exercises and examples on which to base facilitation.

Narrative planning is illustrated using Freytag's Pyramid and a model of scene planning from Writers Room practice. The toolkit encourages more focused drafting at this stage, to accustom volunteers to turning their ideas into narrative, based on group consensus. Guidance is offered on methods of group decision-making, supported by apps for example word clouds and mind mapping as visual aids to show inputs and consensus. The use of Trello for maintaining records and storing material generated in meetings is illustrated as an aid for the writer-facilitator managing the generative process.

Production is prefaced with skills development in creative writing craft: specifically showing and telling, character perspective, point of view choice, and ground rules for critiquing and revision. Further examples from *Trevow*, with accompanying exercises, show how individuals' drafts combine in a stylistically consistent text. The potential for further community engagement is demonstrated through multimodal contributions by interest groups, for example local amateur artists.

Finally, there is guidance on publication, and how to select material forms for the novel in print and online media: serialisation as illustrated text with a local publishing partner, online platforms with extra content, and self-publishing under commons license.

8.5 A culturally democratic form of literature and practice

The consideration of relevant literature in Chapter 2.2 argued for the novel to be recast as a culturally democratic form of long fiction, capable of engaging with diverse participants in a place-based community. Revisiting that aspiration in the light of my findings, the toolkit provides a spring board for 64 Million Artists' vision of "Recasting the leader as key facilitator [who] opens up culture to far wider numbers of artists, audiences and participants" (ACE 2018). This brings about a shift in the culture of community writing groups, from closed circles of individual writers working and critiquing work in progress, or open groups who meet to exercise their writing muscles and generate new words on the page, to a structured process of participation that is open to all.

The facilitator's role is to provide the open door and steer conversation, bricolage and the practical making of a story in all its elements. In his 'Selfless Art' blog Matarasso has recently described this as a listening task from which ideas and concrete creative material arise: "It's a pleasure and a privilege to listen to someone talk about their ideas and experience, their dreams, desires and hopes. The material and form of artistic co-creation comes out of such conversations" (Matarasso 2023). In my experience this privileged listening takes place before any writing, or hardly any, has occurred. It continues to the very end of the process, the facilitator staying alert to the interdependencies of plot, to the group dynamic, and the fine detail of project management.

The remediation of a novel's production as a culturally democratic process is most evident in the principles of accessibility and inclusivity. Joanna, a Mylor Study participant, pinpointed the challenge when she complained "When you do that computer stuff I can't join in" (Mylor study field note, 5/12/2018). The consequent remediation of practice is potentially transformative, pushing the writer-facilitator to re-invent methods and to consider ways of engaging volunteers who are not writers (although they can become writers), and who may contribute in other ways. The volunteers in a community novel have been compared earlier to participants in a community play whose contributing elements can be broken down into diverse parts. The Mylor study showed how a narratological approach can enable this. The toolkit illustrates how the adaptation of established methods is fundamental to the democratic aims of the community novel: anyone who wishes to can take part and methods are designed to enable that. The toolkit invites learners to consider further remediations.

8.6 Dissemination through networks

The toolkit is the centrepiece of a training plan which will be developed further following completion of the thesis. The plan sets out the objective, strategy and tactics for the toolkit and related training, its principal audience, the collaborative learning methods, related resources, and a timescale for the training's development.

The training plan's objective is to establish the community novel as a form of creative participation for writing groups and their communities.

The strategy to achieve this is to equip writer-facilitators with skills and knowledge to support communities in making their own novel.

Tactics to achieve the strategy are:

- To provide a ten-week course with supporting resources and materials
- To deliver the course online using the Zoom video platform
- To provide evidence-based practical methods of co-authorship and co-creation according to the five-part participation model
- To enable trainees to experience and reflect upon participatory methods for themselves

Rather than publish the guidance in book form or as a self-guided course online, training is envisaged as a live course hosted on Zoom. This reflects the principles of co-creation and collaboration at the heart of the community novel, and enables potential writer-facilitators to experience participatory methods at first hand. Hosted by myself as tutor, the training would be offered to cohorts of a maximum of eight trainees who would form a peer group for mutual learning. Rendered as a ten-week course, the material would cover topics in three-hour workshops accompanied by assignments as indicated above. The training will be accompanied by a web resource, for which I shall seek funding. This will provide links to indicative material in *Trevow*, a blog inviting contributions from trainees, links to relevant projects, and further reading.

Each session includes group writing and discussion, enabling participants to experience methods, consider remediations for their own practice, and find solutions to difficulties encountered. Zoom etiquette is established, with videos on, use of muting where appropriate, screensharing and use of apps within the platform for demonstration.

8.7 Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated how the participation model and related toolkit can be disseminated to practitioners as a course of participatory learning. It has addressed the deficits in creative writing and community writing pedagogy by providing an holistic suite of methods that cover the entire process of recruiting people to work together on a community novel and seeing it through to publication. The principal gaps in knowledge, identified in Chapter 7, have been filled with guidance on the participatory process, blended

methods to use and adapt, and remediated practice and roles to expect for facilitator and participants.

In terms of dissemination, I propose adopting the 'Joined Up Writers' brand name for a social enterprise. The market for a Joined Up Writers CIC is the community of writer-facilitators and writing groups locally, nationally and potentially internationally. I have already taken some steps towards this by putting my research in front of key audiences and networks, as the studies progressed. These include the peer reviewed article referred to earlier (Moss 2021), articles in NAWE conference news (2021 and 2022), presentation of the participation model at the NAWE conference in November 2019, and a panel presentation. These activities with a peer network represent my own ongoing conversation with the community of practice to which I belong.

In 2022 I became co-chair of NAWE's Community Writing sub-committee, a role in which I represent self-employed writer-facilitators operating outside HE. This provides opportunities to represents the community writing practice niche. Future dissemination will be aimed at professional writer-facilitators working with community writing groups, and leaders of writing groups who have the skills to coach others in creative writing. The National Association of Writing Groups, U3A, and members of NAWE, are natural audiences for this.

My research has focused on establishing a model of practice. That has been achieved by enhancing the researcher-practitioner's expertise and practice methods while also working within limitations of digital literacy and resources. Further practice using this model will test its efficacy further and gain insights into its contribution to social cohesion and efforts to build local cultural capital. This chapter concludes with an invitation to others to use the knowledge gained from my studies, to engage other communities in making works of long fiction. Each community novel that follows the toolkit's guidance is potentially a further act of research, as practitioners add their own inclusive methods to the mix of emerging blended practice.

Chapter 9 offers final conclusions.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Overview

An observation by community craft facilitator and researcher Sarah Desmarais has proved uncannily prescient for the community novel's processes of making: "For the most part these concern the ordinary, dusty, jumbled reality of group making; a prosaic and untidy eventscape of irritation, enchantment, challenge, and absorption that is nonetheless a rich vein of information" (Desmarais thesis, 2016:17). Drawing conclusions, I look back over a lengthy, messy and detailed set of activities, aware of the joys and frustrations of "herding the cats", as a volunteer described it (Mylor Study field note, 3/7/2020).

This thesis is the result of both my ambitions and my limitations. Production of a novel with and by volunteers was never going to be quick or tidy. By inviting people to participate in rather than consume a work of literature, I took the risk of abdicating creative control. My ambition as researcher was to test a hypothesis, and this has been achieved. My intention was to enable others to produce a novel together, and to understand that process. A community novel has been produced, and a process established which can be replicated by other communities. Limitations have been to do with resources, particularly in volunteers' digital skills and desire to use them, but innovation overcame hesitation in some notable instances. The resulting enhancements to an already multimodal practice are indicative of the insights that are recounted in this thesis.

In part 9.2 this chapter traces the community novel's progress from my researcher's hunch to an evidence-based process to inform further practice. 9.3 sets out new knowledge in terms of the novel as a multimodal participatory form, the facilitator's role as animateur, and the impact of digital methods. 9.4 reflects on implications for future practice and, related to that in 9.5, topics for further research. 9.6 provides a dissemination plan, including further development of the practitioner toolkit and related training. 9.7 offers closing reflections and acknowledgements.

9.2 The novel as participation

The research was designed to test my long-held speculation that a novel could be a vehicle for community participation. The underlying question was how. I acknowledged the novel as a form of long fiction, traditionally written by a single author, and consumed by readers

in print or digital editions. Seeing the success of other community art forms recognised as participatory, I question the hegemony of the individually-authored novel, hypothesising it as a culturally democratic form. Embarking on a process of making a community novel, I did not necessarily expect the Mylor study to produce a completed novel. In the event, however, methods of making, writing and assemblage gained momentum. The volunteers were motivated to finish their novel, as their confidence grew and the process settled into a routine. Their commitment to completion enabled my conclusions to go further than envisaged. The role of the professional writer-facilitator of a community novel has been clarified as the glue that brings direction and drive to a culturally democratic form of long fiction.

Mylor's community novel, *Trevow*, is recognisable as a traditional novel in terms of narrative and word count, but is the result of community participation using multimodal methods and content. This makes it comparable to other forms of community art, for example the devised play to which multiple people contribute via diverse roles, whether as performers, makers of costumes and set, musicians, stage hands, sound and lighting designers or technicians. By breaking the novel down into its narratological parts, the community novel provides gateways for participation through which people can contribute ideas, materials and written content in accordance with their interests and skills. Rather than being the result of an idea imposed by the facilitator, this openness to collaboration makes the community novel a vehicle for the expression of local culture. People need not be writers in order to take part, but they can become writers through involvement.

9.3 Insights into the novel as a culturally democratic form

My research has achieved insights in three respects: the novel as a participatory form, the facilitator's role as animateur, and the impact of digital methods. Further to the research questions, it has led to insights into remediated practice and the learning and skills needed to support practice.

As a vehicle for participation, the community novel is a viable form, involving volunteer writers and members of the wider community in an act of participatory making. My studies, especially the community novel in Mylor Parish, have demonstrated that the novel can be culturally democratic, enabling participation regardless of creative writing skill and ability.

It enables readers to be makers, not consumers. A value-based approach to facilitation foregrounds access, inclusion and innovation in a process that is flexible and iterative.

The community novel has been shown to be low cost, using accessible community venues, free apps, and online video platforms that, since Covid-19, have become familiar in the workplace and as for a for social activity. It is built through a dialogic and democratic process of making, writing and compiling: not a hierarchy, but a collective endeavour guided and managed by a facilitator who animates the work with multimodal and blended methods of practice. The collaborative mindset is a vital component, and there are positive social as well as creative outcomes.

The scope of the study, especially the Mylor community novel, grew in the light of emergent findings and unexpected occurrences, including the Covid-19 pandemic. These required the researcher and volunteers to respond with elasticity and resilience. Unexpected opportunities were incorporated into the research plan, while some original ambitions were scaled back or dropped. For example, the inability to meet in person during Covid-19 lockdown forced the collaboration online. Intentions to engage with further communities of interest and local public events during 2020 were prevented by lockdown, but new projects and uses of online methods took their place.

Future community novels might follow a similarly elastic and intuitive path, for example adjusting to the limitations of volunteers' attitudes to certain methods, or the availability of resources, and the capacity of the writer-facilitator. The research has shown that if volunteers do not all respond with enthusiasm to digital methods, or have the resources, this need not be barrier. The blending of digital and traditional methods can lead to innovation.

Originally planned over a period of some twelve months, the Mylor study became longitudinal. This was not surprising given the complexities of producing a long-form fiction, and the painstaking negotiations inherent to collaboration. A model of participation was identified in the first 6 months and applied through further practice, before the unanticipated pandemic lockdown in 2020 presented the opportunity to test digital methods further and sustain collaboration during a period when personal contact was not possible. This period, and the subsequent lockdown in winter 2021 was a gift in terms of insights into the social value of participation in the novel. Volunteers who had already enjoyed the routine

of weekly meetings and the playful creation that went into making their novel, became dependent on it for social contact, and learned new digital skills because of it. A conclusion arising from this extended period is to avoid too prescriptive a timescale. There is no opening night performance or concert for a community novel, unless volunteers are working towards a specified time-limited goal.

In Chapter 2 I argued that facilitation of writing in the community places less emphasis on educational outcomes and more on enjoyment of a creative activity in a community of shared interest within a social context. I speculated on whether some emerging methods of digital fiction, for example those that use smartphone apps (Barnard 2019, Farman 2014), could be introduced to practice in ways that would be accessible and inclusive for participants who use digital appliances such as smartphones, tablets and laptops with a variety of levels of skill and confidence. This has been shown to be the case, with some remediation to tailor methods to collaboration. With much of the guidance in creative writing studies and tuition aimed at the individual author, this translation of methods was a major task.

In Chapter 1 I speculated about the early history of the novel as a form of collective expression. I traced the novel's elevation in the 19th and 20th centuries as an elite individually-written form designed for consumption by readers. I considered the challenges and affordances of co-authorship, referring to contemporary examples, and noting their rarity in mainstream publishing and, by association, in public awareness. The challenges inherent in co-authorship were illustrated by interviews with community writing facilitators Anne Taylor, Jen Alexander, Belona Greenwood, co-author Sandra Platt, and radio drama script writer Paul Brodrick.

I then considered the novel's potential within the practice of participatory community arts. Summarising the history of participatory community arts in the UK, I considered definitions of community, collaboration and participation. I noted the shift in understanding between the democratisation of arts and art that is made in ways that are culturally democratic, especially by, with, and for communities. I observed the shift taking place in funding priorities by Arts Council England and the new emphasis on participation in its 10-year strategy, *Let's Create* (ACE 2018). For the first time since the Arts Council's inception, this shows support for community participation in writing, through programmes including, for example, the People and Places programme whose report by 68 Million Artists provides strong statements about the future of participation (ACE 2018).

This thesis has presented insights into a process. The participation model supports production of a novel that is multimodal, with content hosted across diverse platforms and formats. The process of production has indicated that there is scope to revise and abridge the novel as publication progresses in serialisation, with the caveat that printed serialisation cannot be retrospectively edited. This suggests potential for multiple variations of the novel, which need to be carefully managed in terms of discrepancies.

The community novel's hybridity makes it capable of shape-shifting and adapting methods to suit its own story-telling purposes. The potential to amalgamate text, image and sound, illustrates the novel's openness to participation. When the participants decide it is finished, only then, by consensus, does it become fixed. In the process, terms of making, producing, curating, and devising are appropriate. To say the community novel is written, or co-authored, is insufficient. As a title for guidance, based on my experience, 'How to make a community novel' expresses it best.

9.4 The writer-facilitator as animateur: remediation of practice

The creation of a community novel is a considerable endeavour made manageable if the process methods demonstrated in this thesis are adopted and treated with flexibility and intuition. Each writer-facilitator will adapt their own methods, undoubtedly, but this thesis shows how to organise and implement a community novel project. How far can a community novel's co-authorship be managed before competing ideas and egos disrupt progress? I conclude not very far without the holding structure of a model to follow. The role of the writer-facilitator is a more diverse role than that of teacher or project manager. In the diversity of tasks and skills it resembles a theatre producer or the conductor of a choir, although the animateur is the closest match in terms of blending practice and effectively midwifing a creative community project.

I have adopted the term 'writer-facilitator' in this thesis, for its currency among professional practitioners, but it is ungainly. This begs a question for further non-professional or voluntary facilitation, where a different title might be deemed more accessible: a writing leader, or a novel coach, for example. In terms of methods, I have shown that the writer-facilitator role benefits from a mix of expertise: creative writing pedagogy, experience of facilitation in community settings as distinct from formal learning and business; skills of team working and management; project management; partnerships and marketing; editorial

skills; the ability to manage group dynamics including dealing with those who lack self-awareness and empathy in their behaviours around others in a collaboration; the ability to remain positive and encourage problem-solving; to empower the group to be its own problem solver and generator of ideas; willingness to try new methods, including digital methods, and the ability to be flexible and open to a form that is multimodal and evolving.

I anticipated a considerable workload for the writer-facilitator immersed in such a project, and this was added to by the demands of research. In my analysis of results, and in these conclusions, I have been aware of the need to separate the two roles, despite them being intrinsically linked. From the single facilitator's point of view, the community novel is a complex and lengthy process, but can be scoped according to local resources. Other facilitators may frame their project differently, potentially delegating more of the facilitator tasks among a small production team of volunteers: for example, someone to document the creative work, someone to carry out community engagement, and someone to manage use of venue and logistics for events. Such a division of workload would enable more to be done in terms of community engagement and could make a difference to the timescale of a time-limited project (time-limited because of the specifications of funding for a project, for example).

I made a choice not to apply a fixed end date to production of the Mylor community novel but to focus my attention on addressing the research question. The process of finishing the novel could therefore be open-ended, not tied to production of this thesis. As an aside to the main study, I wanted to see whether the novel would take on a life of its own beyond my close involvement, and whether the volunteers, especially the core writing group, would function without me. Both proved partially to be the case. Nonetheless, the facilitator's role as 'glue' was essential to the group's momentum and ability to remain focused.

9.5 Embracing the digital

A delightful discovery was my new-found willingness to use digital methods in ways that enhanced playful methods of making, and which did not exclude anyone. My toolkit as a facilitator was being expanded and enhanced and despite moments of failed equipment, unreliable Wi-Fi and faint mobile signals, I became willing to experiment. I could fall back on traditional methods when the digital proved impractical, or if participants did not take to them (which was often). Gradually, I found myself blending the two. In terms of mixing digital and traditional modes of practice my conclusion is that digital methods need not

preclude the familiar or traditional, but can enhance and complement them. Spencer's advice to work with Lo-Fi technologies and be playful with familiar and easily accessed apps is liberating. There need be no pressure to adopt paid-for apps or software that requires coding. If such skills are present in a writer-facilitator, that can benefit a community novel's production. I would urge other facilitators, however, to use methods that are accessible and inclusive for volunteers. There should be no barriers to participation.

In addition to the model of participation and insights into the multimodal production and form of the novel, significant insight has been gained into the complexity of the facilitation role and its multiplicity of skills. The deficits in pedagogy to support writing in the community have been foregrounded in my experience of facilitation and have informed the guidance set out in Chapter 8. That deficit has implications for the remediation of practice, and highlights the need for bespoke training and associated resources to support the writer facilitator of a community novel.

9.6 Further implications for practice

I have found a lack of recognition of community writing within formal learning. Creative Writing MAs offering modules in how to facilitate writing in the community are scarce. Early-career writers wishing to gain such skills as part of their emerging portfolio careers may struggle to find them. Such a module could include, for example: understanding of funding sources; understanding of the role of the arts in society; insights into the terminology around 'community', community arts, participation and cultural democracy; methods of facilitation including working with group dynamics and working at scale, including scoping of larger-scale creative writing projects; the ability to work across media, using a multimodal approach to production and distribution. With this deficit in mind, the results provide guidance and resources that are potentially helpful if the community novel is to become part of the landscape of participatory community arts practice in creative writing.

Chapter 7 argued for a diversified pedagogy to support creative writing in the community, and specifically the community novel as a participatory activity. This thesis has addressed the lack of guidance for facilitators working with groups and in community (not HE) settings and has demonstrated the efficacy of including methods from writing for wellbeing, community theatre, community development, and other participatory art forms. This is a promising time in which to be proposing a model of participation with supporting methods

evidenced through PAR. As Chapter 2 pointed out, collaborative creative writing is a late-comer to the field of participatory community arts. Perceptions of creative writing as a solo activity persists, even within groups, but my research findings offer an alternative.

The integration of digital methods into practice does not replace traditional methods, but is an enhancement of the facilitator's palette. Spencer's encouragement to use and adapt Lo-Fi or everyday apps and digital platforms to suit the writing task, proved revelatory in terms of ease of transfer and, for some although not all participants, accessible. The use of playful methods, combining pens and apps, making use of locative and immersive methods, and the bowerbird bricolage approach to feathering the writing nest with material before more formal writing, encouraged volunteers to familiarise themselves with applications on their own smartphones and laptops, and to become more open to new methods as the project developed.

My adventures with apps during PAR studies indicate a need to raise awareness of their affordances within traditionally non-digital community writing practice. Confident users of social media apps will easily adapt them to writing group use, but others will benefit from familiarising themselves or being coached to introduce such methods to practice. Experience during my studies has shown me that a facilitator uncertain of new methods leads to unconfident participants.

My approach to the studies has acknowledged the cultural differences between traditional and digital methods of fiction-making and has not sought to impose one to the exclusion of the other. As has been discussed, the custom of writing with pens and switching off digital devices, or leaving them at home, in community writing groups and in writing for wellbeing settings, is grounded in the somatics of writing by hand. The multimodal facilitator should be prepared to break that taboo and model ways of using digital methods that are helpful to the process, and not a distraction from it. I found it easier as the studies progressed, and most useful when there was a deliberate focus on the use of such appliances, for example the use of Pinterest for collaborative world building.

It was not practicable to introduce platforms that are typically used for sharing writing in business and academia. Tools such as DropBox and Googledocs presented barriers and a source of anxiety for those for whom anything beyond basic word processing and emailing was unfamiliar (these were the majority in the St Agnes and Mylor groups). The time it

would have taken to train participants, even those equipped with laptops and confident users of them, would have risked delaying the creative process and losing people. Facilitators with more digitally adept groups might view this differently, but my experience echoed that of the Norfolk Women's Group described by Belona Greenwood in Chapter 4. I maintain my belief in the somatic value of handwriting and the inclusivity of the table around which everyone writes together, not remotely or from behind screens. Other groups may take up this challenge, but I can appreciate why some online-writing groups struggle to maintain their sense of community without the opportunity to meet in person.

I conclude that the role of the writer-facilitator can be enhanced by the introduction of selective digital methods, but that these methods cannot be assumed to be easy for the facilitator or participants, and may require training and time for integration. I further conclude that the use of digital apps should not be limited to their designers' intentions. There is scope for experiment and adaptation, as I have shown with the examples of Whatsapp, Brainsparker and What3Words in Chapters 5 and 6.

The scale and scope of the community novel and the potential for a remediated multimodal practice, suggests potential for further research. The next section identifies some topics.

9.7 Topics for further research

As my research continued it became clear that some of my original ambitions would be beyond its scope. For example, the aspiration to establish a form of novel that could engage communities in diverse social contexts, with outcomes that could be evaluated in terms of social cohesion and social capital, was a mountainous task. Instead, the Mylor study concentrated on the creation of a process model through which a novel can be created in a defined community. Further research would test the longer-term impact on social cohesion and cultural capital. That said, the community novel in Mylor Parish has become an established feature of community life, with ongoing serialisation and connections among the volunteers. The application of the participation model in, for example, an urban neighbourhood or an area undergoing regeneration, could provide further insights into its efficacy.

In terms of remediated practice, there is potential to expand the use of digital methods in community writing, testing other methods with participants who are more digitally adept. In

a separate but related field, multimodal methods could be further applied in writing for wellbeing contexts. There is recognition in the Creative Health Report (HMG 2017) that engagement in creativity has tangible benefits for physical and emotional wellbeing, for active cohesive communities and as a counter to social isolation and loneliness. Funding and new opportunities for writers to embed themselves in communities and work in immersive, inclusive ways, follow from this recognition, and writer-facilitators are needed with skills to engage with communities through creative writing. The community novel offers a larger scale of work to enable them to do that.

9.8 Dissemination of guidance and related knowledge

The plan to disseminate findings is based on the development of the toolkit and participation model, with an accompanying programme training and coaching for facilitators. In its posited form (Chapter 8), the toolkit functions as a website, video, and live course with supporting materials, but could be enhanced by a bespoke app. Members of NAWE, NAWG and U3A are among the market for such a toolkit, and I envisage seeking funding to support its development. A Community Interest Company (CIC) using the Joined Up Writers brand would provide the social enterprise business through which to provide training, coaching and a peer-support network for facilitators of community novels. Based in Cornwall, this would have a national and potentially global reach. The Arts Council's ten-year strategy of participation and creativity for all, mentioned earlier, will stimulate more opportunities for people to participate in writing in their communities. Joined Up Writers would be well-placed to pioneer that shift.

9.9 Closing reflections

Reviewing the period during which I carried out the studies that inform this thesis, I am struck especially by the resilience of the volunteers involved in the Mylor study, and their determination to continue during the Covid-19 pandemic. The importance of the project to their wellbeing was evident during the lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 as they turned to creative activities for purpose, routine, and social contact. This was true for me as well. Within the context of ethical practice and the necessary keeping of boundaries, I can say that a bond was formed that is likely to be lasting. We experienced something extraordinary together and the volunteers achieved a completed novel of which they can be proud.

At the time of submitting this thesis, the community novel, *Trevow*, is complete. The remaining core writing group of six women are considering how to self-publish it in print, potentially supported by crowdfunding. The Joined Up Writers have collaborated further with the community garden, and many have become regular attenders at other local writing events and readings.

One question appeared often in my field notes: 'What is this like for me?' My answers were often to do with being challenged and stretched, of balancing competing demands of work and people, and of keeping plates spinning. There were reflections, as well, on the joys of discovery, moments of fresh insight and creative breakthrough, and the satisfaction of seeing an idea become reality, with all the surprises and setbacks that arise from collaboration and research. I am left with a sense of having raised a personal bar, pioneered a form, and helped members of a community make up a long story from their shared knowledge and imagination, that is worth reading. The community novel has been inspiring to work on, at times frustrating but ultimately satisfying as the realisation of a long-held ambition to bringing individuals together to write something that none of them would consider achievable on their own. I hope that a legacy of this thesis and its dissemination will be that collaborative and long-form creative writing can take its place among higher profile methods of community arts participation, in the eyes of practitioners and funders. I offer the practical and pedagogical insights and the model devised through my research as a starting point.

This thesis ends with a comment by Annie Huxley, a resident of Mylor Bridge. Annie first took part in the Mylor study in October 2018, online from Spain, in a Pinterest exercise. She remained involved consistently whether at physical meetings, online via Zoom, and in her own garden which she offered as a meeting place with meticulously planned social distancing when Covid-19 pandemic restrictions began to lift in summer 2020. She exemplifies the commitment and motivation of the community novel volunteers: willing to try anything asked of her; supportive of others, and an ambassador for the project among her local friends and contacts.

In a group questionnaire and discussion held in September 2020 Annie wrote:

> The community novel has become so much part of my life. I have made friends through it and enjoyed every minute, even when it was sometimes difficult. I cannot imagine life now without it. I hope other things will happen to take its place (Mylor study field note 7/9/2020).

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APPENDIX

CHAPTER 4

Appendix A: Schedule of interviews

Name	Role	Interview
Jen Alexander	Published author (children, YA, adult fiction and non-fiction), based in north Cornwall, has her own Get Writing! app, currently running workshops for Writing Magazine as part of promotion for her book *Free Range Writing*	In person 1 August 2018 JA's house, Callington
Paul Brodrick	Team writing, serial drama writing for BBC radio	Skype 5 December 2018 Repeated on Zoom 23 December 2023
Belona Greenwood	Rural Writes project in Norfolk, *Gull Stones & Cuckoos* anthology – presented at AHRC LitCom/UEA conference March 2017	In person Falmouth 8 August 2018
Sandra Platt	Co-author of romantic fiction	25 October 2019 FaceTime 12 June 2020 Zoom
Anne Taylor	Online training for running writing groups, writing for wellbeing, WEA courses and Lapidus (writing for wellbeing membership network)	6 July 2018 AT's house, Falmouth

Appendix B: Interviewees information and consent form

CONSENT FORM

[date]

[name]

This form is to seek your informed consent to be interviewed as part of research being carried out by me, Jane Moss (the researcher), for a PhD at Falmouth University. The interview will focus on your experience of participating in a co-authorship project, and the pros and cons of that.

Before completing this form please read the information sheet attached.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

The interview will take 45 minutes by Skype interview. It will be recorded and transcribed by me as part of my field notes. I shall also take notes during our conversation. I am therefore seeking your permission to refer to your comments as part of written material including my eventual thesis.

This research will contribute to:

1) A novel, or parts of a novel, co-authored by members of the community in my study in Mylor Parish.

2) The doctoral thesis and associated articles in which I will write up the results of my research.

Please use this form to either give your consent, or with-hold it as follows:

Your name _____Date _____

✔ Yes or No

I agree to having material provided by me included in the researcher's interview transcript and subsequent written material by the researcher, including the thesis	Yes/No
I agree to my first name only being published in the thesis and associated written material	Yes/No
I agree to my initials only bring published in the thesis and associated written material	Yes/No
I would like to remain anonymous as a contributor to the research	Yes/No

If you choose to be anonymous, please confirm your understanding that, while all reasonable efforts will be taken to ensure that your contribution cannot be identified by others, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed. Personal material that may be recognised by family, friends and colleagues is your responsibility.	Yes/No

WITHDRAWING YOUR CONSENT

If you need to withdraw from the research, in the event of illness or for other reasons, you can also choose to withdraw your consent for material you have contributed to be used, up to the point of publication of the thesis. After that point it will not be possible to remove your material, or change the way you are named or not, as a contributor.

YOUR AGREEMENT

Name	
Signature	

If someone is signing this on your behalf (for example a carer, relative or guardian), please give their details here:

Name	Role

Thank you.

CHAPTER 5

Appendix A: Information and consent St Agnes study

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Dear _____

This form is to seek your informed consent to participate as a volunteer in some writing sessions that are part of research being carried out by me, Jane Moss (the researcher), for a PhD at Falmouth University. The sessions will test the use of some digital media tools for creative writing.

You are asked to take part in some creative writing exercises as part of a small group, trying out digital media such as Instagram, Pinterest and a private Facebook group for co-authorship; also to reflect with me, the researcher, on the effect of using digital media in a writing session.

Before completing this form please read the information it contains.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I shall keep detailed field notes of the sessions with members of the St Agnes writers group. I am therefore seeking your permission to refer to your written material and comments as part of those, and in the thesis itself. The results of these sessions will help inform the way I design a longer study, which entails the production of a community novel in Mylor Parish.

This research will contribute to two documents.

1) A novel, co-authored by members of the community in my longer study in 2019 in Mylor Parish

2) The doctoral thesis, in which I will write up the results of my research.

Please use this form to either give your consent, or with-hold it as follows:

Your name
_____

Please ✔ Yes or No

I agree to having material provided or written by me included in the researcher's field notes, transcribed recordings of discussions in writing sessions, and subsequent written material by the researcher, including the thesis	Yes/No
I agree to my first name only being published in the thesis	Yes/No

I agree to my initials only bring published in the thesis	Yes/No
I would like to remain anonymous as a contributor to the research	Yes/No
If you choose to be anonymous, please confirm your understanding that, while all reasonable efforts will be taken to ensure that your contribution cannot be identified by others, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed. Personal material that may be recognised by family, friends and colleagues is your responsibility.	Yes/No

WITHDRAWING YOUR CONSENT

If you need to withdraw from the research, in the event of illness or for other reasons, you can also choose to withdraw your consent for material you have contributed to be used, up to the point of publication of the thesis. After that point it will not be possible to remove your material, or change the way you are named or not, as a contributor.

YOUR AGREEMENT

Name	
Signature	

If someone is signing this on your behalf (for example a carer, relative or guardian), please give their details here:

Name	Role

Thank you.

Appendix B: Information and consent T&PC

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PROJECT

25 April 2019

Thank you for taking part in this short project. My name is Jane Moss and I am a PhD student at Falmouth University. My research asks the question: 'How can the novel be a vehicle for community participation?'

In other words, how can a group of people who live in the same place write a novel together. People put on plays, hold music events and arts festivals, so why not write a novel?

These sessions on 25 April, 2 May, 9 May and 16 May 2019. They are part of my research and you will be helping me find out how apps such as Facebook can be used to write a story. You will develop characters and situations, based on some starting points provided by me to get the story going.

I would like to use what we come up with in these sessions when I write my thesis, and possibly in some related articles and presentations. Please use this form to give me your permission to quote what you write, and to give your permission to have your name included, or not.

Thanks again, I really appreciate your help 😊.

CONSENT

Name	**Yes, you can use my name**	**No, I'd like to be anonymous**	**Signature**

If you change your mind and would prefer not to be quoted or named, just let me know.

Best wishes,

Jane Moss

CHAPTER 6

Appendix A: The Writing Well acrostic

‘Writing Well’
Write without self-criticism
Respond to our words from your feelings
Ignore grammar, spelling, punctuation, and doing it right
Take the words gently in your hands and do not crush them with criticism
Invite the words to nourish and refresh you
No need to read or share if you do not wish to
Go where your words lead, but only as far as you wish to go
Wise words are not necessarily complicated or difficult, they are often simple and straightforward
Excellence is not required, there is always someone who writes better, but they do not write your words
Listen with your ears and from your heart
Let the words remain confidential to us, and do not scatter them thoughtlessly

Gibbons 2018.

Appendix B: Summary of *Trevow* and characters

Trevow is a work of contemporary fiction set in a Cornish coastal village and its once-grand estate, Tregethlan Manor. The protagonist is Anneke Lander, a rootless woman of around 40 years of age. She is live-in housekeeper at Tregethlan. Her employer is Margaret Clemens, a widow with fading glamour and acute money problems.

Anneke’s problem is that she longs to feel at home, something she has never experienced thanks to an unsettled childhood with a mother who lived a peripatetic life. Her family are now dead and she is alone. Slowly, she gets to know others on the estate: John Greatwood, the overworked estate manager; Treve Byghan, tenant farmer; Jacob, an itinerant, homeless

farm worker; Karenza, a young mother living in a caravan, and Emily, who was a child evacuee during the Second World War, now retired to a cottage on the estate.

Desperate for funds, Margaret enters into a money-making scheme with a family friend, Luke Davenport. His ambitious idea is to hold an environmentally friendly music festival, 'Greenfest', on the estate land. The plan causes a split in the community, with Jo, Margaret's daughter, leading protests.

Jo is helped by others including Lawrence, a teenager who is being groomed online by a shadowy environmental protest group. With mother and daughter at loggerheads, and John in despair at Luke's plan, Anneke finds herself torn. She is anxious to keep her job and stay in the place where she is, at last, feeling at home, but cannot see how Margaret can stay financially afloat. She is drawn to John but unsure how he sees her.

In an extended flashback, Emily arrives at Tregethlan as a wartime evacuee. She makes friends with Edward, the estate's heir, and Sophie, a young Dutch refugee and her family. After the war, they remain in touch. Emily grows up to work at the Foreign Office, Edward struggles to accept responsibility for the estate, and Sophie lives a carefree life in Southern Europe.

When Edward marries Margaret she brings a much-needed injection of funds into the family from her manufacturer father. The marriage is not altogether happy and when Edward meets Sophie again, through Emily, they begin an affair. He is heartbroken when Sophie leaves without explanation, but re-commits to his marriage. He and Margaret subsequently have two children, Jo and Rory. Father and daughter are close, sharing a love of the sea. Rory, who is their mother's favourite, dies in a road accident, aged 17.

Back in the present, Luke's festival goes ahead and the estate is overwhelmed. John is stretched to the limit, trying to ensure the safety of visitors and protect the farmland. Anneke does her best to help Margaret and John but is upset when she sees him with Jo. Apparently she has misread his friendliness towards her.

Jacob warns about a turn in the weather and on the second day a storm blows up, causing chaos, damage and risk to life. Anneke saves Karenza's little boy from drowning, and is admired by both John and Jo. She realises her mistake. They are just friends. As they return to the house, the main stage collapses and the great cedar tree that has stood beside the house for centuries, falls, smashing through the windows of the ballroom.

Inside, they find Margaret lifeless. Greenfest has ended in disaster. In the aftermath, Anneke and Jo discover a connection that changes the fortunes of the estate and all their lives. By the end, Anneke has a home, her future with John is secure, and Tregethlan itself has undergone transformation.

Characters:

Anneke Lander

Born 1975 in Holland. Brought up by her mother Sophy, travelling around Europe. She moves to Tregethlan Manor after Sophy dies. Anneke is 43.

Edward Clemens

Born 1934. Meets Emily and Sophie as a child during the war. He meets Sophy again while doing National Service when he is 22 and she is 16, and again in 1973 when she comes to Cornwall to visit Emily. He marries Margaret in 1971. He is 41 when Anneke is born. Dies at sea in 2011 aged 77.

Emily Carter

Born 1932. Meets Edward when she is evacuated to Tregethlan in the war aged nine. She is 86 in the present.

Jacob Byghan

Born late 1950s. Leaves home after a fight with his father. Travels with a circus, marries, loses his son in a high wire accident. After that he becomes an itinerant farm worker. He returns to visit his cousin Treve in 2015 but learns he has died. He is mid-60s.

Keith Mitchell

Pub landlord of The Clipper with his wife Yvonne, 40-something. A genial host, runs a friendly pub at the heart of village life.

Kerenza Pascoe

Youngish 20-something, born c.1996. Lives with Kevin (similar age) and toddler Piran in a static caravan on Home Farm.

Jo Clemens

Born 1982. Drops out of university and goes abroad to volunteer for an environmental charity. Returns home when her father Edward dies. Lives on his boat. She is 37.

John Greatwood

Born 1977-ish. Works for Margaret, lives on a boat, Jo's neighbour. He is 42. He was in the army and has a family he no longer sees. He works hard and is professional and discreet. Takes a shine to Anneke.

Lawrence Woodrow

Born 2002. Son of Sylvia, stepson of Geoff. He is 17, passionate about the climate crisis and takes part in a shady online forum called ecochamber. Has a crush on Jo.

Luke Davenport

Late 20s, works in the music industry producing big events. Wants to strike out on his own. Feel he has something to prove to his high-achieving family. His charm and charisma mask insecurities and lack of experience.

Margaret Clemens

Born 1944. Marries Edward in 1971, when she is 27. Has miscarriages before giving gives birth to Jo in 1982 when she is 38, and to Roland (Roly) in 1984. Widowed in 2011, aged 67. She is 75.

Roly Clemens

Born 1984. Dies in a car accident aged 18 in 2002. He was artistic and helped his mother make the house beautiful. His mother's favourite.

Sophie van Der Laan

Born 1940 to a Dutch Navy father, Henk, and his English wife, Betty. Sophie is a toddler playing with Edward and Emily. Meets Edward again in Holland in 1956 during his National Service (she is 16), and again in England in 1973 when she is 32. They have an affair but she leaves. She has Edward's daughter and supports herself as a language tutor. She is free-spirited and rootless.

Sylvia

Early 40s, mother of Lawrence. She works part time in the Post Office, belongs to the WI and goes to yoga classes. She is worried about her son.

Treve Byghan

Born mid-1950s, cousin of Jacob. He is in his late 60s when he takes his own life and that of his wife Sheila, who has a terminal illness.

Valerie Williams

49 or 50, a teacher from Bristol, married to Derek with daughters of university age. She wants to move to Cornwall but her family are less keen.

Appendix C: Programme and facilitator's notes for 22 September 2018 event

Saturday 22 September 2018

Ord-Statter Pavilion, Mylor Playing Field, Waterings Road, Mylor Bridge TR11

Buy/make

Coffee, tea, milk, sugar

Lemon drizzle cake (gluten free), coffee walnut cake

Set up Friday 21 September afternoon from 4.00pm

Collect key from newsagent

Note: Male Voice choir rehearses at 6.00pm. Leave a note asking them not to move tables set up

Layout: chairs in semi-circle, tables on far side of hall

Bunting at the door and above kitchen counter

Set up kitchen for refreshments

Set tables with consent forms, spare pens and paper, poem handouts, Parish map, examples of co-authored published novels, flip chart and pen.

Bring

Table cloths, water jugs, tea towels, washing up liquid

Flip chart and pens

Blue Tak, drawing pins, stapler, scissors

iPhone and charger

Spare A4 lined paper and pens

Handouts, information sheets and consent forms.

Saturday 22 September 2018

9.00am	Complete set up
	Heating on
	Chairs and tables in place
	Set out coffee, tea, cakes
	Check WCs
9.30am	Open doors

10.00am	<u>Welcome</u> Housekeeping, fire exit Please keep phones on silent <u>Who I am, what this project is about</u> Messages: • Mylor Parish whole area • What we will do this morning: share ideas about what we understand a novel to be, and what it's not • Try some activities to see what happens when people write together rather than on their own <u>Your consent to be quoted and photographed</u> Hand out forms to collect at the end <u>Ice breaker</u> Introduce yourselves to each other in pairs with your name, a favourite novel or type of novel (give my own examples) - 5 mins <u>Share</u> - introduce each other to the rest of us. Record titles and genres mentioned on flipchart (me)
10.30am	<u>What is a novel?</u> Point to examples on the table: Dickens (serial), Gaiman and Pratchett, and Campion (co-authorship), An Afternoon, Flight Path (digital), Kindle, audio, graphic formats. What do you enjoy as a reader? (general discussion) <u>What do you need in order to write a novel?</u> Hand out paper bunting. In different pairs, compare ideas Write your ideas on the paper bunting and we'll string them up If prompts are needed mention, eg: Inspiration, improvisation, dreaming, speculation , research, characters, setting, dialogue, description, decisions on point of view (a narrator?), finding the right voice

11.00am	BREAK
11.45pm	Exercise 30 mins How do you start writing together? Ground rules: you can't do this wrong, no criticism, no comparing or judging, write what you feel comfortable to write. It's OK to write nothing. Hand out John Hegley's *What a Poem's Not* alpha-poem Read a couplet each in turn. Repeat, hearing it in different voices. Hand out letters of the alphabet on squares of paper 5 minutes: in your notebook, come up with as many couplets as you can, using the letters of the alphabet you have been given, then choose your favourite and write them on the squares. Reminder: you can't do it wrong. Read them in alphabetical order, then gather them together and string them up as bunting.
12.15am	Exercise 30 mins Split into three tables (groups of 5 or 6) Everyone takes a piece of A4 paper Read the poem *How Many Miles to Mylor* by A L Rowse [handout – me to read first then invite someone from each table to read it] Choose a phrase or line from it as your starting point – agree together as a table. Table 1: each individual, choose a line from the poem and write your own continuation. Write for ten minutes. Table 2: in pairs, agree a line between you and your own continuation together. Write for ten minutes. Table 3: agree a starting line between you. Write it at the top of your piece of paper, then write the next line and pass the paper to your left.

	Repeat until everyone has contributed to each sheet of paper. Ten minutes Share the results at your tables. Discussion: Has a story emerged from any of these? Do any sound as if they were written by one person, or are they very different? Table 1, how different or similar are yours? Tables 2 and 3, what was it like to write together? Thank you for trying this out.
12.45pm	<u>Round up</u> Collect consent forms. I'll send news of further meetings and ways to take part. If you aren't on email please let me know how you prefer to be contacted, by phone or post (please write your address on the back of your consent form, if by post).
1.00pm	Thanks, final comments and close.

Appendix D: 'What a poem's not'

A poem is not an ant
but it can be quite short.

A poem is not a banana
but there may be something under its skin.

A poem is not a coat
but it may have some warmth in it.

A poem is not a dog
but it might be quite a friend.

A poem is not an endless pair of trousers
but it can be quite long.

A poem is not a football shaped like a cucumber.
A poem is not a great number of things.

A poem is not a hedgehog
but it might be hard to get hold of.

A poem is not an igloo
but it can feel like home.

A poem is not a jumble sale,
but it might contain some rubbish.

A poem is not a kite
but it might enjoy the wind.

A poem is not a light bulb
but you can change it if you want to.

A poem is not a monkey
but can be quite human.

A poem is not a nut
but you can give it to a monkey.

A poem is not an opera score or an open score
but it can be revealing.

A poem is not a prison
and it shouldn't feel like one either.

A poem is not a question...
actually it is sometimes.

A poem is not a radio
but you may have to tune into it.

A poem is not a slot machine
but you may have to put something into it.

A poem is not a toothbrush
So don't clean your teeth with it.

A poem is not an umbrella

but it can give you protection.

A poem is not a verruca
and I'm glad.

A poem is not a wig
but maybe it will change you.

A poem is not an x-ray:
make no bones about it.

A poem is not a year-old bag of vegetables
but it can smell quite strongly.

A poem is not a zylophone
and it can spell words wrongly.

(Hegley, 2007)

Appendix E: ‘How Many Miles to Mylor?’

How many miles to Mylor
By frost and candle-light:
How long before I arrive there,
This mild December night?

As I mounted the hill to Mylor
Through the thick woods of Carclew,
A clock struck the three-quarters,
And suddenly a cock crew.

At the cross-roads on the hill-top
The snow lay on the ground,
In the quick air and the stillness,
No movement and no sound.

‘How is it?’ said a voice from the bushes
Beneath the rowan-tree;

‘Who is it?’ my mouth re-echoed,
My heart went out of me.

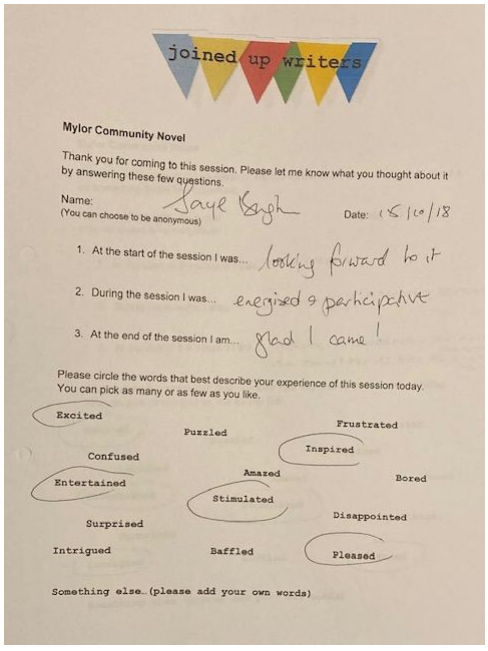
I cannot tell what queerness
There lay around Carclew;
Nor whatever stirred in the hedges
When an owl replied ‘Who-whoo?’

A lamp in a lone cottage,
A face in a window-frame,
Above the snow a wicket;
A house without a name.

How many miles to Mylor
This dark December night;
And shall I ever arrive there
By frost or candlelight?

A L Rowse, 1988, quoted in *The Book of Mylor*, 2007

Appendix F: Volunteer’s comments form example



joined up writers

Mylor Community Novel

Thank you for coming to this session. Please let me know what you thought about it by answering these few questions.

Name: Jaye Keogh Date: 15/10/18
(You can choose to be anonymous)

1. At the start of the session I was... looking forward to it
2. During the session I was... energised & participative
3. At the end of the session I am... glad I came!

Please circle the words that best describe your experience of this session today. You can pick as many or as few as you like.

Excited, Puzzled, Frustrated, Inspired, Confused, Amazed, Bored, Entertained, Stimulated, Disappointed, Surprised, Intrigued, Baffled, Pleased

Something else... (please add your own words)

Appendix G: ‘Golden rules for commenting on our writing’

When you give comments:

1. Before you speak, ask yourself ‘how would I feel if someone said this to me?’ Try to put yourself in the writers’ shoes and frame your comment in a way that will be helpful to them.
2. Make your comments as helpful as you can. For example, ‘I like this…’ becomes more helpful if you say why. ‘I like this because…’. Similarly, ‘This doesn’t work…’ is less helpful than ‘I don’t think this works because…or ‘perhaps you / we could add something about…’
3. Think about how something can be improved on. It’s all about making the story stronger than it is, and making the reader want to read on.
4. Use a ‘good news sandwich’. When you comment on a piece of writing, start with something you like, then make a helpful comment about something you think could be improved or done differently, then end again with something you liked (it might be the same things reiterated).
5. Speak as yourself. ‘I think…’, ‘I like…’. For example, ‘I was a bit confused by…’ rather than ‘This is confusing’.
6. Be specific. If you ‘found this confusing,’ explain why.
7. Soften the message. It can be tactful to say ‘I found this a bit confusing,’ rather than the blunter ‘this confused me.’
8. Make suggestions. If you can, suggest a way to make it less confusing. Perhaps some information is missing, or maybe it would make better sense in a different order.
9. Be polite. ‘This paragraph is a little wordy,’ is better than ‘This paragraph is badly written.’ Try to explain why you find it ‘wordy’ and suggest something that could be cut from an over-long sentence.
10. If someone in the group is taking responsibility for writing a section or a chapter, it may be best for them to take the lead on re-writing it and making changes that are suggested by the group as a whole. Let’s try to make suggestions that everyone can get behind and then stick to what we have agreed.
11. Be accepting. If you disagree with a decision that most others are happy with, or if your idea is different to others’, try to go with the majority. It will become easier the more we do this!

When you receive comments:

1. Each draft represents a lot of work and we can feel quite attached to what we have written. Try to keep in mind however that everything is draft and can be improved on. The changes we suggest are in the spirit of 'let's make this even better.'
2. Try not to take it personally: When someone doesn't like something you've written it doesn't mean they don't like you! It means they want to help the writing become more effective.
3. Be open to suggestions. Someone with a fresh eye can spot things you haven't, and that's always helpful.
4. Ask questions. If someone says they were confused by something in the writing, but don't say what, ask them to clarify. This will help you understand how to fix it.
5. Don't react too quickly. It's natural to shut your ears if you're being told something you don't want to hear, but let it mull over for a while. Sometimes the least welcome advice is the most valuable (sometimes…!).
6. Listen carefully. the most useful suggestions may be ones you don't take in first time. The more you listen and take others' suggestions on board the easier it becomes.
7. Be grateful for people's advice. Writing on your own is a lonely business. Writing with others means you have more brains and imaginations to share ideas with (this can also be confusing!)
8. Take your time. Sometimes it's good to leave a piece of writing alone for a few days while you ponder something in the back of your mind. You'll come back to it with a fresh eye.

Appendix H: A set of fictional minutes following improvisation on Zoom

NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE TREVOW COMMUNITY HALL: PRESENTATION BY MR LUKE DAVENPORT ON THE TOPIC OF PLANS FOR THE GREENFEST MUSIC FESTIVAL AT TREGETHLAN MANOR

Drafted by the Parish Clerk for approval.

1. The meeting was introduced by Col Arthur Pitt in the Chair who requested that the audience listen to Mr Davenport's presentation and reserve questions for the end. There would be ample time to respond to the information he was here to impart.
2. Mr Davenport thanked the community for its hospitality before giving a presentation with slides to explain plans for the 'Greenfest' to be held over the August bank holiday weekend. He paid tribute to Mrs Margaret Clemens for her vision and foresight in allowing the festival to take place on her land. He showed a map of the planned festival site and said that questions of detail about logistics, including routes in and around the site, would be best answered by Mr Greatwood, the estate manager. He mentioned that sound checks in the days immediately before the event would be limited to working hours, and the event itself would have a noise curfew of 11.00pm. He believed these measures would mitigate against noise overspill. He went on to explain some of the logistics associated with setting up the festival site, including staging, catering and camping areas, and outlined the economic benefits of the festival. Local traders would have opportunities to take stands for catering and other commercial and promotional purposes. The event had attracted backing from major finance funds and sponsors were lining up to support the event. Mr Davenport explained that he had been part of the music industry for some ten years and had the capacity to promote such an event under the banner of his London-based company, Davenport Enterprises.
3. Mr Davenport went on to explain the festival's 'green' credentials and measures that would be taken to ensure the preservation of the festival site on Tregethlan estate land. He outlined plans to protect livestock, wildflower meadows, wildlife and a colony of pipistrelle bats that is established in one of the disused estate buildings. At this point the meeting was interrupted by Ms Clemens and supporters who staged a demonstration in opposition to the festival. Ms Clemens challenged Mr Davenport's claims that the event would be environmentally friendly and gave examples of pollution and disruption from other comparable events. The Chair called for order at this time and the meeting was temporarily suspended while demonstrators encircled the hall raising banners and wearing animal masks.

The meeting resumed after 10 minutes, the demonstrators having been ejected. Ms Clemens remained in her seat and the Chair reminded her and the audience to listen without further interruptions. Mr Davenport was invited to conclude his presentation which included further details of the headline acts – Heat Merchants and Spootz among them – and notable support

acts including Jim Glasgow and young local talent Ellie Poole, who was present in the audience with her father.

News item:

Headline: Demonstrators angry at plans for Greenfest

There were angry scenes at a public meeting held in Trevow to unveil plans for a controversial summer festival on local land. Promoter Luke Davenport claimed the festival would boost the local economy, bringing many local job opportunities. There would be a curfew at 11pm, and volunteers would be recruited to control litter.

Keith Mitchell, landlord of the village pub, The Clipper, welcomed the economic opportunities that the festival would provide. 'This will be great for business. I look forward to welcoming these visitors to The Clipper.'

However concerns were expressed by demonstrators about the impact on the environment and the risks the event poses to a local colony of pipistrelle bats. The demonstration was led by Jo Clemens, daughter of landowner Margaret Clemens. Jo said 'I am very worried about the waste that will be generated, the adequacy of toilet facilities, the risks to the local bat colony, and the disruptive behaviour of the attendees. How can a small community cope with 10,000 extra people?'

Mr Davenport announced that there would be a park and ride service running from Portglas to alleviate the traffic, and that he would be recruiting an army of Greenfest volunteers to sweep for litter. He said locals would be able to buy tickets at discounted rates. There was disappointment that Margaret Clemens was not available to answer questions. For more information on the festival, including the full line up and job opportunities visit www.greenfest.co.uk