Producing a Frankentext

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HOW A WORK OF INTERACTIVE FICTION (IF) THAT WAS WRITTEN FOR USE IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASSROOM WAS PRODUCED

Abstract

Forming part of a larger action research project, this article explores how a work of Interactive Fiction (IF) that was written for use in the secondary school English classroom was produced. Drawing on Bakhtinian Dialogism, New Materialism and Barnard's conceptualisation of multimodal creativity, the article examines how the text can be seen as a product of the writer's creative assemblage via an analysis of two individual passages. Identifying himself as a teacher, writer and researcher, the writer of this paper identifies the significant role that the researcher persona can play in supporting teachers seeking to navigate what Cremin and Baker term as the "writer-teacher identity continuum" (Cremin & Baker 2014: 30). The article also highlights a key difference between writerly and teacherly intentions, namely the teacher's interest in metalinguistic or metanarrative levels of textual engagement on the part of their students. The writer asserts that an acknowledgment of this difference could help teacher-writers attempting to produce works of IF for use in the classroom to formulate appropriate creative assemblages in the future.

Interactive Fiction in the online classroom

Late one February morning during the 2021 COVID-19 lockdown, I sat at my dining room table to teach a year 7 English lesson. During this "live" yet "remote lesson" (Ofsted 2021), we read and discussed a work of Interactive Fiction entitled *Aboard the SS Mendi* (Holdstock 2021b). Table 1 shows a transcript of one episode of the lesson in which we, the class, discussed the passage that is shown in figure 1. Together, we attempted to decide upon which link we should select.

Teacher	Er, I will go to, er, at the top, Milla's got her hand up first so let's hear from Milla. Milla, what next?
Milla	Um I'm not sure if you've already um said this, but I wanted to know like, I would pick <u>ship</u> because like - we would know you would have to jump if you were like, if the ship was sinking, like all the other people would do, but you would be kinda following them, but if you would go for <u>ship</u> you could find a bit more about where the ship started to fill up with water and how it like started to sink.
Teacher	Ok, so you're saying <u>ship</u> cos you wanna find out more about the ship sinking than the individual person, it seems like. Marvin, do you agree with that?
Marvin	I disagree because finding out, finding out the person, if you choose <u>you</u>, you will find out more about the person and how and why he came on the ship. I kind of a- I kind of like… I see where Milla's point is, with seeing the <u>ship</u>, why um it might of went on the sea or why it sank, but mostly <u>you</u> because you'll find out where the g-, probably where the guy's from or, or why he came on the ship or, or where he's going.
Teacher	Marvin, Marvin I'll pause you there. I really like your argument. You've made… You've stated a clear preference; you've given some convincing reasoning; You've also considered the other argument, which is really nice. That's above and beyond – really impressive. Um. One thing you could have improved upon is thinking about using that critical vocabulary - like the noun <u>ship</u>, for example. So, we've had Milla saying um <u>ship</u>, Marvin saying <u>you</u>. Let's have one more, um, next person down in my list is err, Amir. You're the next person with their hand up.
Amir	OK. So, I agree with Marvin and I think that we should choose <u>you</u>, because it, it's a- actually quite similar to the narrative, I mean the choice that we made before. If we choose <u>you</u>, then it will probably like focus more on you; we want to know about the character that we're developing rather than learn about the ship, which would be more indirect, and I just don't think that would be a good idea and way to make the story going. Also, I really like the use of the phrase <u>you</u> have… now have no choice, because it's a lot more intriguing and interesting than just outright saying like, the ship is sinking, and I feel like if we take that narrative then it'll have more of an interesting feel and just, it'll be generally more exciting.

Table 1: A transcript of classroom talk in which we discuss the passage that is visible in figure 1.

You tighten up your life jacket, trying desperately to keep your balance as the deck of the ship tilts. Other people shove past you, confused, shouting through the darkness and the fog.

All you can hear are screams and splashes. You realise that around you men are leaping into the sea. They are leaping for their lives.

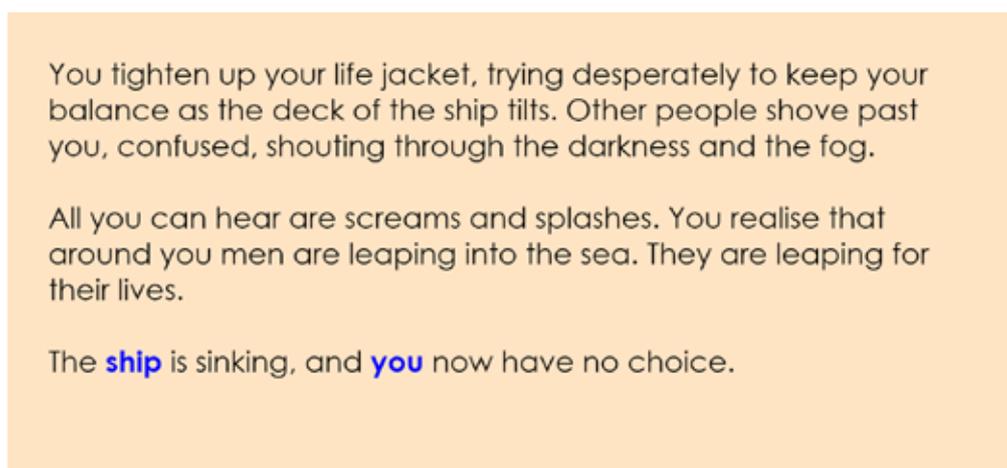The **ship** is sinking, and **you** now have no choice.

Figure 1: A passage taken from *Aboard the SS Mendi* (Holdstock, 2021b)

Considering that monologic teaching practices and the Initiation-Response-Feedback sequence of classroom talk (the IRF) can often dominate classrooms in the USA and the UK (Lyle, S. 2008; Hardman, F. 2019), it is interesting to note the cumulative and interactive nature of this exchange. Acknowledging the positive effects that dialogic teaching can have upon student progress (Jay et al. 2017), it is noteworthy that the classroom conversation I facilitated using a work of IF here enabled students to begin engaging in reasoning, discussion, argumentation, and explanation.

The "contestable" (Reznitskaya & Wilkinson 2017: 59) problems that a work like *Aboard the SS Mendi* presents arguably enable such forms of increasingly dialogic interaction.

Some research has been conducted exploring the role that IF can play in the classroom. For example, Kozdras et al. (2006) have explored the potential for IF as a tool for engaging learners. Moreover, Young et al. have suggested that the social process of reading an interactive text with a group of students can become a form of fruitful "co-writing" (2015: 217). However, little research has focused on the dialogic potential of IF as a classroom resource. More specifically, from a creative writing standpoint, I have found no evidence of practitioners exploring how one might go about writing a work of IF for use as a dialogic teaching tool within the context of a secondary school English classroom. Therefore, in this paper I shall attempt to examine how I went about developing such a work.

What Happens When You Close Your Eyes

In September 2020 I began to develop a work of IF for use in the Key Stage Three (11-14 years old) English classroom as I believed that such a work could help my students become more actively and cognitively involved in the meaning-making process of reading (Holdstock 2021b).

Noticing that my school's year 7 (11–12-year-olds) curriculum featured two schemes of work focusing in different ways on literature written in response to World War One, I decided to create a work of IF that I could use to help my students gain a richer understanding of the ways in which the conflict affected people's lives. I therefore initially produced a work of IF entitled *What Happens When You Close Your Eyes* (Holdstock 2021c). Between the months of October and February 2020-2021, as my research progressed, I continuously revised this work. Later, as I continued to develop ways of incorporating works of IF into my lesson plans, I also created and shared another story: *Aboard the SS Mendi* (Holdstock 2021a). This second narrative is in fact an edited fragment of the original interactive story, created to render the work more usable in an individual lesson. Its existence highlights the fluid nature of the ongoing action research project of which it forms a part.

The inspiration for my work came from a set of resources that were created by Big Ideas© (2018). These resources explored the lives and stories of diverse individuals whose World War One (WW1) narratives frequently go untold, such as, for example, the members of the South African Native Labour Corps who died when the SS Mendi sank. I felt, particularly in the wake of George Floyd's murder and the ensuing protests against systemic racism in America and in Europe (see, for example, BBC 2020), that such underrepresented stories should take a more prominent role in our approach to teaching students about WW1.

As I drafted, redrafted and revised my work of IF, I took field notes, sought feedback from critical friends on the drafts I produced and conducted unstructured and semi-structured interviews with colleagues who witnessed me using IF in my lessons. In this paper, I shall draw upon this data in order to begin answering the following question: How was the work of IF that is entitled *What Happens When You Close Your Eyes* produced? In responding to this question, I shall, by extension, also shed some light on the ways in which *Aboard the SS Mendi* was produced.

Theoretical Framework

For Bakhtin, a word in use is always "half someone else's"; not only does each word have a rich and varied history of usage, but it also means different things to different people (Bakhtin 1981). Meaning is therefore unstable, and using language is not a neutral or impersonal act. Rather, it involves drawing different voices from the past, present and future into dialogue with one another (Bakhtin 1986). From such a dialogic perspective, it makes sense to analyse my creative decisions by exploring the interactions between different voices that may have produced them. For example, how might the voices of my intended audience have influenced and interacted with my writerly sense of voice during the creation of *What Happens When You Close Your Eyes* and *Aboard the SS Mendi*?

Somewhat similarly, New Materialists focus their attention on the relationships between different animate and inanimate entities, exploring how assemblages of relations between such entities produce changes in state or capacity (Fox & Alldred 2015). In the same way that Dialogism positions meaning as a product of interactive dialogue between voices, New Materialism conceptualizes change as a product of the fluid connections between different elements of an assemblage. It is possible to frame this New Materialist approach in dialogic terms if one argues, as Hetherington and Wegerif do, that inanimate materials can be said to have *voices* that enter into dialogue with other animate and inanimate entities (Hetherington and Wegerif 2018).

One can consider the above-described lesson, for example, from this material-dialogic perspective. In the lesson, I used IF as a lesson resource, formulating a de-territorialised lesson assemblage that differs from what I have come to see as 'standard' lesson assemblages - lessons that feature slide-based presentations and inflexible learning objectives which, in my experience, typically produce monologic forms of talk. I here use the term de-territorialise to denote a destabilising flow of change occurring within an assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988). By using IF to change a 'standard' lesson assemblage, I believe that I developed a de-territorialised lesson assemblage that had an increased capacity to facilitate dialogic forms of talk (Fox Alldred 2015; Smith and Monforte 2020). The dialogic exchanges that took place were a product of the interactions between different voices within the assemblage. For example, the voice of the work of IF I used interacted with my teacherly voice and the voices of my students to produce the sequence of talk that can be seen in table 1. Table 2 offers a simplified representation of my research assemblage, as has here been described

My Research Assemblage		
Creative Assemblage that produced What Happens When You Close Your Eyes and Aboard The SS Mendi	'Standard' English Lesson Assemblage	De-territorialised English Lesson Assemblage
• Writerly Resources: (e.g., time, feedback from critical friends, my Action Research Model, the Twine© software I used to create my works of IF and the sources that inspired the work etc.). • Writerly Personas (e.g., Writer, Teacher, Researcher personas) • Creative projects (e.g., my past experiences of creating lesson materials and writing works of fiction and poetry).	• Teacher • Students • Linear Lesson Plan, including an inflexible and prescribed learning objective. • Presentation Slides • Other learning resources commonly used in English lessons (e.g., novels, extracts etc.). • Other materials present during the lesson (e.g., exercise books, desks, wall displays).	• Teacher • Students • Flexible lesson plan, with a loosely defined learning objective. • A work of IF (What Happens When You Close Your Eyes or Aboard the SS Mendi. • Other materials present during the lesson (e.g., exercise books, desks, wall displays)

Table 2: A simplified representation of my research assemblage.

With this material-dialogic approach in mind, and in order to explore how I composed and developed *What Happens When You Close Your Eyes,* in this paper I intend to examine the ways in which my creative assemblage (a part of my larger research assemblage) produced *What Happens When You Close Your Eyes,* over time.

However, the boundaries of my creative assemblage are hard to define. Barnard's framework for conceptualising creativity (Barnard 2019), with its focus on remediation and multimodality, here serve as a useful framework. Barnard describes creativity by suggesting that writing is shaped by the following factors: **Writerly Resources** (external and internal resources that shape writerly decisions), **Writerly Personas** (aspects or versions of our writerly selves), **Expert Intuition** (intuitive convictions about how to proceed), the **Inner Auteur** (our subconscious ability to marshal disparate influential factors and resources) and **Creative Projects** (other creative experiences that we have had) (Barnard 2019). As I intend to focus on analysing how I made communicative decisions by examining the relations and interactions between different aspects of my creative assemblage, I shall attempt to identify how my existing writerly resources, writerly personas and creative projects might have produced decisions that may initially have been intuitive or subconscious.

As I consider myself to be a researcher, writer and a teacher, my writerly personas are arguably of particular interest. Specifically, the relationships and interactions between my various writerly and teacherly personas might be worthy of some consideration. Cremin and Baker (2010) have explored such relationships, suggesting that the writing classroom can become a "site of struggle" between different identity positionings for teachers (19). They have considered the question of identity positioning

in the classroom through reference to "a teacher-writer, writer-teacher identity continuum" (Cremin & Baker 2014: 30). Therefore, although I am focusing on a work of IF rather than my behaviour within lessons themselves, it is possible, when analysing how my creative assemblage might have produced *What Happens When You Close Your Eyes,* to consider the story as a site of struggle which reflects my ongoing identity work as a teacher-writer / writer-teacher. Bakhtin notes that language "is somebody talking to somebody body else, even when that someone else is one's own inner addressee" (Bakhtin 1981). From a dialogic perspective therefore, it is worth considering how my different writerly personas might have interacted with one another. Similarly, from a New Materialist perspective, it is worth considering how the relations between my writerly personas and various other external resources might have produced certain features of *What Happens When You Close Your Eyes.*

Before proceeding, it is also worth noting that, as the author of *What Happens When You Close Your Eyes,* I consider myself to be a multimodal writer in whose work "the inter-relationships between and among" my writerly decisions and various "different media and modes contribute to the production of meaning" (Barnard 2019: 6). Looking at *What Happens When You Close Your Eyes,* for example, a range of modes can be identified: space, written language, colour, typography, images and hyperlinks. One can also consider different genres that the work straddles: Interactive Fiction, Historical Fiction, Textbook, Game, Quiz, Test… Identifying these different modes and genres underlines the multimodal nature of my practice and draws attention towards the fact that my creative assemblage produced more than language decisions, producing instead a work of IF that communicates via a range of modes.

Figure 2: A Meta-Passage taken from *What Happens When You Close Your Eyes* (Holdstock 2021d)

Analysis

To examine the ways in which my creative assemblage produced *What Happens When You Close Your Eyes*, I shall now examine two individual passages from the story, drawing upon my field notes, feedback from critical friends, interview data and earlier drafts of the story to support my analysis.

Firstly, looking at the passage presented in Figure 2, I notice a number of noteworthy features. I remember primarily that this passage did not exist at all in the first complete draft of the story. Also, its green background colour makes it stand out somewhat, as other passages in the story feature more of a pinkish background colour. Interestingly, it features a question that is aimed directly at the reader, using the second person in a manner that differs from the way the second person is used in other passages. It also makes use of metaphor in a clichéd fashion, informing the reader that they will "step back in time" and into someone else's "shoes." Finally, it uses bullet points and single-word links to present readers with a choice of characters, thus foregrounding the significance of choice in the narrative's overall structure.

How were these features produced? They can be explained by considering the relations between my different personas and certain of my writerly resources, all of which formed a part of my creative assemblage. Having produced the first draft of the story as a narrative *writer*, my role as a *teacher* and an action *researcher* then came into play. For example, having built feedback from colleagues and critical friends into my research model, I sought their opinions on what I had written. In my field notes I observed that one critical friend "suggested including some choices at the start of the narrative which would allow students to pick whether they wanted to be a man or a woman," for example. A colleague also asked, after reading my first draft, how my students would know that each reading of the story focused on a different character. I initially chose not to act on these comments, suggesting that a certain degree of conflict existed between my writerly persona, my teacher/researcher personas and the feedback offered to me by critical friends. However, during subsequent interviews with colleagues who observed me using early drafts of the story in my lessons, I became aware that without such a passage towards the start of the story,

students might be obliged to make "random" rather than "reasoned" choices about which link they wanted to select at the beginning of the story. From the perspective of my teacher/researcher persona, this was not desirable. I wanted my students to be able to make and discuss choices intentionally; this explains the inclusion of this passage, a passage in which readers are presented with a choice of options that are clearly and explicitly different from one another. One can see, therefore, that the passage's very existence can be understood as a product of the relations between my writerly persona, my teacherly persona, my researcher persona as well as various external resources: my research model, my colleagues and critical friends, the feedback they offered me and the students in whose lessons I used early drafts of the story.

Later, in another interview, a different colleague commented that IF seems particularly useful for teachers seeking to nurture a "meta-understanding" of narrative and language. I take the 'meta' prefix to denote "moving to a different level of awareness or perspective" and developing an "explicit understanding of language structure and choice" (Myhill et al. 2020: 8). My teacherly self recognises that metalinguistic and metanarrative knowledge is a vital part of what students learn in the English classroom, and various other features of this passage might therefore be explained by the relations between my teacherly intentions and the resources with which I, as a teacher, was working. For example, the green background colour is a product of the difference between my narrative writerly intentions and my more meta, teacherly intentions; the shift to a more meta level is indicated by a change in the background colour. The combination of narrative passages and meta-passages created what I refer to in my fieldnotes as a "Frankentext" — a work that is both an interactive work of historical fiction but also a teaching resource that can stimulate metanarrative and metalinguistic choice and discussion. In this context, the term metalinguistic is used to denote an engagement with language that involves "looking at language, not just using language" (Myhill et al. 2020: 8). Similarly, I define metanarrative engagement as looking at narrative structure, not just experiencing it.

My use of the word "Frankentext" in my fieldnotes is noteworthy, as it highlights elements of my creative

assemblage that would otherwise have remained hidden. As well as teaching a year 7 class, I was also teaching Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to a group of year 12 students (16–17-year-olds) at the same time. In a study edition of this novel (McCallum 2016), I read of the ways in which the prefix "fraken-" has been used in a variety of neologisms to denote a certain degree of (often unnatural) modification, interference or synthesis. This connection between *What Happens When You Close Your Eyes* and *Frankenstein*, highlighted by my use of the word Frankentext, is noteworthy as it again underlines the fraught connection that existed between my writing and teaching personas. The word arguably indicates that I, in some respects, considered the synthesis of narrative and meta-level passages to be both exciting and monstrous. In fact, transforming the text into a "Frankentext" did not happen swiftly. Other elements of my creative assemblage played a role in the change; it was time, critical feedback and the experience of using the story in lessons that produced the following realisation in my field notes:

> "I've been limiting myself, focusing on making a piece of historically literary hypertext fiction. But the text could be enriched - it could be more than this. It could be a story, more of a game, a scheme of work, a slide show, a work of fiction... why not? The boundaries don't have to be so rigid."

One must also note that Twine © (the software I used to write the story), my research into IF as a genre and my experience of using presentation slides as lesson resources when teaching groups of secondary school students were also significant parts of my creative assemblage. For example, the passage in figure two features a consequential choice of links, the likes of which are typically seen in works of IF created using Twine, but not typically found in presentation slides. However, the fact that the passage is quite short and can be projected onto a whiteboard in its entirety without any need for scrolling, much like a presentation slide, makes the passage, in the words of one of my colleagues, "manageable". Another colleague remarked that breaking the story down into short passages could help a teacher to facilitate "slow reading" or "guided reading". By forming a creative assemblage that situated Twine © alongside my teacherly persona and my experiences of creating presentation slides for use in lessons, a somewhat manageable and useful resource was produced. This assemblage might also explain my decision to use metaphor in the clichéd manner that has already been mentioned; the metaphor enables me to explain a complex idea in relatively few words, thus keeping the passage short and manageable. Likewise, in my field notes I document the challenges of writing this passage in such a way as to enable me to make the links into single words rather than longer phrases. My teacherly desire to use the story as a tool for dialogic teaching may have produced this decision; I understood a single word to be more easily embedded into a spoken utterance than an entire phrase, thus making the passage more conducive to interactive forms of talk. As such, the voices of my future students, another element of my creative assemblage, entered into dialogue with

my writerly and teacherly personas, producing specific decisions about how to format links in this passage.

The way the passage uses the pronoun "you" to address my student readers is also noteworthy. The narrative passages are written in the second person, but in this meta-passage the "you" referred to is my student audience rather than an unnamed second person character. This suggests that my writerly and teacherly personas, despite their fraught connections, might share some common ground. While the narrative passages use the second person to immerse readers in the story, this more teacherly meta-passage uses the second person to involve students in a meta-narrative decision. However, both my writerly and teacherly personas are seeking to position student-readers as participants, either within the narrative or within the lesson. The contrasting ways in which I use the second person in my narrative and meta-passages obliges them to mediate between their real-world identities as students in a lesson and the virtual identity of an individual character within the narrative. From Gee's perspective, such identity play can be valuable as it forms part of what enables games to facilitate learning (Gee 2003). From this perspective, the juxtaposition of meta-passages with narrative passages can be seen in a less monstrous light than I might previously have thought.

Turning our attention now to the passage displayed in Figure 3, we see a passage that is part of the narrative of *What Happens When You Close Your Eyes*, rather than what one could term a meta-passage. In this passage, I note the use of the second person, sensory language, similes, italics and the Xhosa words for Mother and Father (Umama and Utata) written in italics and used as links.

The use of the second person can here be explained by the connections between my researcher persona, my teacherly persona and the fact that IF is conventionally written in the second person (Costanzo 1986; Bell and Ensslin 2011). As I am carrying out an action research project that attempts to explore the possibilities for IF in the secondary school English classroom, the use of the conventional second person seems appropriate in a way that it might not be in other English lessons. For example, one critical friend who also works as an English teacher suggested that the use of the second person might feel "out of place" because we "don't read much literature in the second person." It is this tension between what I, as an English teacher, might typically do when writing or reading fiction with or for students, and what I as a researcher have set out to do that has here produced the noteworthy usage of the second person. Interestingly, the "you" referred to here is not my student readers but rather a character within the narrative. *You* the reader have become *you* the character in a way that a third person narrative would be less able to facilitate. As such, my creative assemblage seems to have produced a combination of passages that, through their use of the second person, foregrounds the connections that exist in an English lesson between narrative and more meta-narrative levels of textual engagement, engagement that can involve mediating between different identity positionings on the part of teachers and students alike.

Figure 3: A narrative passage taken from What Happens When You Close Your Eyes (Holdstock 2021d)

While a teacher might be positioned somewhere on the teacher-writer, writer-teacher continuum, students can be encouraged to identify both as readers and as students within a given English lesson.

My decision to repeatedly use sensory language and similes to describe "home" can be explained by the shared intentions of my writerly and teacherly personas and my experience of writing creatively in previous creative projects. One colleague noted, after reading a draft of the story, that I effectively use the senses "to immediately transport the children into the story". As a writer, I am here drawing on my past experiences of writing fictional works of prose and poetry to create a compelling narrative world. As a teacher, I am simultaneously modelling some descriptive techniques that can be used for effect. In this case, the goals of my teacherly and writerly personas can be said to align.

However, it is interesting to note that the links in this passage are not used to directly draw attention towards these particular language features. Instead, as a writer of a historical and fictional narrative, I foreground the Xhosa words that I have used by employing them as links and by using italics. This arguably encourages readers to consider the text on a metanarrative or contextual level rather than a metalinguistic level by obliging them to choose between two characters rather than, for example, two words with more clearly contrasting grammatical functions or semantic connotations. This decision can be seen as a product of the resources that were and were *not* part of my creative assemblage when initially composing the narrative. I was not writing the narrative having formed a lesson plan or fixed meta-linguistic lesson objective. Instead, I set out to write an interactive narrative that was inspired by resources I had read and other materials I had found online, such as *Let Us Die Like Brothers*, a video made by the History Channel for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (Commonwealth War Graves Commission 2016). As such, when creating choices and links in narrative passages such as this one I was more focused on how the branching narrative was structured than I was on drawing the student-reader's attention towards significant sentence or word level language features. I was also writing with an awareness of my school's existing KS3 English curriculum in mind. Knowing that

our World War One schemes of work lacked diversity of representation in their exploration of World War One literature, I was writing to introduce a wider range of stories into the curriculum. The fact that more fixed and specific lesson objectives and lesson plans were not part of my initial creative assemblage therefore influenced the decisions made in this passage. A critical friend noted that these decisions about links and structure drew his attention to words that he would otherwise not have discussed with a class in much detail. Another colleague asked "how did you choose the words" that were used as links? These comments highlight the fact that, as a teaching resource, the text contains some potentially confusing tensions: one colleague noted that the text represents a "a really good way of getting students to focus on language" but also that there is a degree of ambiguity as to my principal intention when using it as a lesson resource. Do I intend to get students thinking about the effects of language choices, components of structure or the historical context of World War One? The absence of a distinct or principal learning objective in my initial creative assemblage can be seen as the cause of this ambiguity. Arguably, this sense of ambiguity can be linked back to my "fluid, open and responsive" Action Research model (Kemis 2014: 18); I began the project with the idea that IF could be put to good use in the English classroom but was open to exploring the specific ways in which this might or might not be the case.

Conclusions

Having looked at just two passages from the work of IF entitled *What Happens When You Close Your Eyes*, I have begun to explore the ways in which the text can be seen as a product of my creative assemblage. This assemblage included a range of resources and personas. For example, I have identified various personas that proved influential: a writerly persona, a teacherly persona and a researcher persona. Other experiences and resources sat alongside these personas within my creative assemblage and helped produce the text; the materials that inspired the original narrative, my past experiences as a writer of fiction, my research model, critical friends and colleagues, feedback, time, my knowledge of IF and some of its conventions, the Twine © software I used to create the text and my experiences of using presentation slides as lesson resources were all influential factors that

interacted to produce some of my decisions. Also, the imagined voices of my future student-readers formed part of the assemblage. I here deliberately use the term student-reader because my analysis has suggested that the text positions them both as readers of a narrative and as English students engaging on a more meta level; the transcribed discussion that can be found in table 1 further demonstrates this meta-narrative form of textual engagement on the part of my students, as facilitated by choices and links contained within a passage from *Aboard the SS Mendi*. In the future, research could be done to explore the relationship between the teacher-writer, writer-teacher identity continuum and a parallel, student-reader, reader-student identity continuum.

It is particularly interesting to note the way that my researcher persona and my research model related to my writerly and teacherly personas; upon reflection it seems that my role as a researcher helped me navigate the writer-teacher identity continuum during the production of this text. It did not help me to resolve the tensions that exist between these two identity positionings, but it did help me develop an understanding of where these tensions might lie, particularly within the context of this particular "Frankentext". For example, my teacherly interest in metalinguistic and metanarrative textual engagement on the part of my students was not something that my writerly persona prioritised to the same extent when initially drafting the narrative. This difference arguably lies at the heart of what made the text feel to me like a "Frankentext" rather than something more unified and coherent. It also draws attention to the identity play that goes on within a written teaching and learning resource; one can see the writer of *What Happens When You Close Your Eyes* as a teacher and / or a writer. Similarly, one can identify its intended student-readers as both students of English situated in a classroom with their teacher, and readers of a narrative that situates them in a virtual and fictional world.

The fact that my creative assemblage did not initially contain a clearly defined learning goal is indicative of the fact that my specific teacherly intentions appeared later, produced by my interactions with critical friends, colleagues and students. In the future, writers, teachers or researchers looking to produce works of IF for use in the classroom could do well to consider the metalinguistic or metanarrative learning objectives they hope their student-readers will meet prior to drafting their work of IF, as this could help them to create links and choices that facilitate the desired form of textual engagement. In short, it is worth considering how the text will align (Whitton 2014) the various teacherly and writerly goals that are at play. For example, a teacher-writer aiming to enable students to improve their understanding of the significance of language choices might choose to create a very different form of IF. They might, for example, create a work in which the student-reader steps into the shoes of writer, making choices between different grammatical options as they develop or adapt a work of fiction. It is possible that discussing a work of this sort could help students develop metalinguistic knowledge through dialogue (Myhill et al. 2019), whilst simultaneously rendering the purpose of the activity less ambiguous. An example of what such a work of IF might look like can be found here: https://makingmeanings.itch.io/a-great-gatsby (Holdstock 2021c). However, such a work of IF might be less creatively fulfilling for the author in question, as it restricts the writer to conducting a form of sentence-level textual intervention (Pope 1995) rather than formulating their own narrative. Finally, my analysis also suggests that teachers navigating the writer-teacher continuum might do well to consider how to adopt a researcher persona as a means of better understanding their own relationship with the writer-teacher, teacher-writer dynamic.

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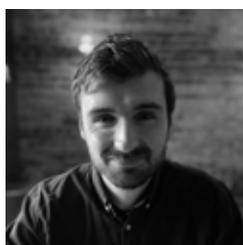
Sam Holdstock is a practicing writer, teacher and PhD researcher who is based in London. His research explores the role that digital, non-linear, Interactive Fiction (IF) can play in the secondary school English classroom. In particular, he is researching the relationship between works of IF that he has written and the quality of classroom talk that they can help stimulate during his English lessons. Some of Sam's Interactive Fictions can be read at https://makingmeanings.itch.io/. Sam has also had work published in The Moth, and Changing English.
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