



UNIVERSITY  
OF SOUTHERN  
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Lay down your guns:  
how authors and editors navigate ego, ownership and the creative process  
in publishing fiction

A dissertation submitted by

Jessica Stewart B.A.(Hons), M.Com

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## Abstract

This study posits that understanding authority in the author–editor relationship will help both parties in its navigation. It argues that the perspectives through which this partnership has been viewed to date have not been helpful to understanding its most productive form. While valuable in articulating some of the editing relationship’s functions, these perspectives have limited its role and scope, doing both author and editor a disservice. This study suggests that prevailing descriptors of editors are no longer useful prisms through which to view the relationship. These characterisations of editing as background, supporting roles impede the development of a relationship in which the editor’s professionalism, their expertise and ability to impart knowledge effectively leads to trust and opportunities for growth. The dissertation argues that in an ideal, balanced relationship, forged to create the best book possible, the editor and the author will acknowledge the process and engage with it throughout the edit. The dissertation proposes that it is time to move beyond the question of who has more authority in the relationship, which perpetuates an infantilising culture and a unproductive dichotomy. A more apt term for the editing process is partnership in which authors, recognising and using the collaborative opportunity to go further, see the relationship as an equal one.

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## Certification of Dissertation

I certify that the work contained in this dissertation is the result of my efforts entirely. I also certify that the work has not been previously submitted for an award and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, that the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due acknowledgement and reference is made.

*Jessica Stewart*

26/10/2018

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Signature of Student

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Date

## Endorsement

*Dallas Baker.*

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26/10/2018

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Signature of Supervisor

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Date

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

This study seeks to identify how authority in an editorial process is understood by authors and editors, and the positive traits that each party can adopt in pursuing a more productive relationship. This study is a practice-led research project which has examined the relationship between an author and an editor over the course of editing three novels in a fantasy trilogy. Qualitative data derived from conversational interviews with authors and editor practitioners add to the practice findings. The study focuses on the fiction genre. The intensely personal nature of this genre for both the author/s and their editors allowed analysis of professional detachment and objectivity; the balance of being both inside and outside the story and preserving the authorial voice while allowing necessary editorial intervention.

This study looks at these relationships in the context of different publishing models, which can be defined as commercial, niche independent, and independent self-publishing. The ongoing transformation of the publishing industry provides an opportunity to examine more productive relationships that are mature and transparent, both parties treated with equality and respect. The project identifies the characteristics that contribute to a good relationship. Experience here shows that it is at its most productive with knowledge, transparency, and engagement in the process.

In the study, I apply critical reflection to my work as an editor and to my relationship with the author whose work is a focus in the study. It uses two practice-led approaches: the editing of three novels published by Black Phoenix Publishing Collective (2017–2019) which forms the autobiographical and subjective basis for the research, and recorded conversations with a select group of practitioners, together providing ‘a means to gain new insights, conclusions and knowledge’ (Donnelly, 2015: 223). This research has provided an opportunity for participants

to reflect on their roles and provides qualitative data for both experienced and new editors and authors, both commercially or self-published, who are entering professional relationships in book publication. It may be instrumental in encouraging respectful and productive editor–author relationships and aid editing as a profession by providing analysis of an under-researched practice and the professional relationship it entails. The study also adds to the body of knowledge in the discipline (editing and publishing).

There are several bodies of literature that contribute to the topic though few scholarly studies that examine both authors and editors objectively. Resources include handbooks, guides and manuals of the publishing trade. Examples include *The Editor's Companion* by Janet McKenzie (2011) and the *Style manual* (Wiley, 2002). These provide some commentary on the author–editor relationships but, in the main, are technical guides. Other texts provide commentary on the publishing industry, including some comment on editorial functions, but constitute guides to industry processes and paint a broader picture, rather than analyse the features of editorial practice. One such example is *Publishing: principles and practice* by Richard Guthrie (2011). Texts like Guthrie provided the outline of practice, the functions of the editor, which is used in the research to define the relationship. A third category of literature is anecdotal narratives by insiders on how authors and editors work together. These are personal stories about publishing and relationships with particular writers. Some, such as the literary memoir or biography, are books but most are short articles written by authors, editors and, occasionally, publishers, presenting an insider's view of the industry (Kim Kelly 2018, Peter Ginna 2013, Kristen Houghton 2016, Diana Athill, 2000, Hilary McPhee 2001, Jane Gleeson-White 2010, and Mandy Brett 2011).

*Good Prose* by Tracey Kidder and Richard Todd (2013) was particularly insightful as it examines the relationship from both sides. Another exception is a long, scholarly article by Bruce Speck (1991) who presents a view of authority and power in the editorial function.

Publishing models are discussed in Todd and Kidder (2013), Peter Ginna (2017), Mackenzie (2014) and Kinberg (2014).

The combined literature shows that editorial practice is surrounded by a mystique with little objectivity. Authors and editors alike indicate that it is difficult to define, complicated, and ebbs and flows in its distribution of power (Ginna 2017, Houghton 2016, Speck 2011, Brady 2002, Schmidt 1990, Ginna, 2017, Burns 1988). As a profession which began as a trade, and is largely invisible (Mackenzie 2011, Ginna, 2017, Flann Hill & Wang 2014), it is unsurprising that there has been little analysis of how editing as a practice has evolved and the conditions in which it yields its most productive relationships between authors and editors.

This project will examine, briefly, how different models have precipitated new ways of working (Johnston 2018 and Friedman in Ginna 2017). These changes have led to what some commentators call more expedient, commercial, and limited relationships (Howard 1989 and 2016). Another perspective is that they are becoming more mature (Lerner, in Ginna, 2017).

This study aims to more closely examine where power and responsibility lie in the relationship. While there is some recognition that it should be a collaborative process (Speck 2011, Todd & Kidder, 2013, Friedman in Ginna 2017) almost all commentators, both editors and authors, cast the relationship as one where the exercise of authority is a given, that one side will prevail, and this should usually be the author. I would argue that the study's findings show this as unproductive. A notion of primary/supporting roles presuming confrontation is a zero sum game and it precludes a more useful exploration of the attributes of a successful relationship. The study draws on Foucault's theories of power in its analysis of how the exercise of authority in the author–editor relationship has limited the scope of a productive author–editor relationship.

## 1.2 Practice-led research

Practice-led research (PLR) methodologies arose out of a growing understanding that practitioners were informing practice outcomes and that this contributed to scholarly understanding (Barrett 2010: 2). PLR advocates saw that rational analysis and criticism left no room for questioning how certain cultural artefacts came into being (Stewart 2007: 130). This project comprises two practice-led approaches. The primary practice component was the editing of K.J. Taylor's three novels published by Black Phoenix Publishing Collective (2017–2019) which forms the autobiographical and subjective basis for the research. A second practice-led component was recorded conversations with a select group of practitioners. These are the tales from the field (Stewart 2007: 130).

The study uses a connective model (Hamilton and Jaaniste 2010: 3) which blends history, theory and analysis with reflection. The research practitioner is invested with the practice, but also able to examine it as a research pursuit and meaningfully articulate the practice to advance the field (Hamilton and Jaaniste 2010: 32). It comprises a dialogue between three main parts:

1. First is the practice: the creative output which is the process by which the researcher created the artefact, the edited manuscripts. The practice identified the following activities: written and verbal communication, text suggestions made as a technical expert (grammar, punctuation, syntax); text suggestions made as an informed reader (narrative flow, construction, sense and meaning); the interaction with the author and management of proposed interventions.
2. The second part is the theory within which the outputs are situated: the literature on the practice which theorises and draws out themes. The activities identified through practice were examined against identified themes in the literature to ascertain what constituted a productive relationship. These themes are:
  - a) Time for the editor to engage deeply with the work

- b) A willingness for the author to participate in the editorial process
- c) Respect for the publishing context
- d) Fostering of an mature relationship
- e) Clear expectations and an understanding of the editorial process.

3. The third part comprises precedents of the practice. In this study, these are the reflections of author and editor practitioners (Hamilton and Jaaniste 2010: 38) interviewed in the research. Art historian and educator, Dr Robyn Stewart writes that this is ‘a way to gather subjective information; documenting how participants talk about their work, the social relationships and social structures which shape their lives and work’ (Stewart 1994: 143).

The research applies a constructivist approach to evaluation of this data, presenting the practice component as a legitimate object of inquiry. The study interrogated author and editor participants’ inside stories – ‘tales from the field’ – against themes and then took key statements and applied a reduction, or analysis (Stewart 1994: 140) which synthesised them. As Stewart argues, this study of stories is a revealing and empowering process: ‘to be an aware, knowledgeable and articulate practitioner surely is an enabling paradigm’ (Stewart 2007: 133). Constructivism is an approach that ‘sees knowledge gained as...uncertifiable, often multiple and constantly problematic and changing...The evaluators and program stakeholders are placed at the centre of the inquiry process and act as the evaluation’s “human instruments”’ (Stufflebeam 2008: 1394). The participants’ stories, together with reflections on experience from practice, provided a well of data from which I constructed knowledge (Nespor and Barylske 1991: 819, in Stewart 1994: 139).

#### 1.2.1 Selection of participants

In addition to K.J. Taylor, the author of the manuscripts edited in this practice-led project, six editors and five authors participated in the study by completing interviews. These participants

are all serious practitioners. The authors selected have all published novel-length works of fiction through different publishing models: niche independent, commercial, and independent self-publishing (more on these definitions later). The editors are credentialed as professional editors and, with the exception of one, each has spent significant years in the industry, editing many works of creative fiction. Two participant author/editors edited each other's novels and this cross-fertilisation of roles gave rise to valuable insights in the conversations. These two participants were interviewed together.

*Table 1 Participants*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Code name and profile</b>	<b>Date of recording</b>
Alice <b>Author/editor</b>	Alice is an editor and an academic and has published a young adult trilogy in urban fantasy.	3 June 2018
Anna <b>Author/editor</b>	Anna is an editor and published author of several joint and solo projects with over ten years' experience in independent publishing.	3 June 2018
Ben <b>Editor</b>	Ben is an editor and publisher and has worked with well-known authors in fiction and non-fiction. He has over ten years' experience in commercial publishing where he managed a digital imprint. He now works in independent self-publishing.	29 June 2018
K.J. Taylor <b>Author</b>	K.J. Taylor published her first work through Scholastic at 18. She has since published multiple books in Australia and internationally.  The Southern Star series: The Last Guard, The Silent Guard and The Cursed Guard, comprises the practice component of this study and is published by Black Phoenix Publishing Collective.	9 July 2018
Robyn <b>Editor/publisher</b>	Robyn is an editor and runs a publishing company specialising in short fiction.	12 July 2018
Lyn <b>Author/editor</b>	Lyn is a fiction editor with ten years' experience in commercial publishing and who now works independently. She is the author of seven novels, published both commercially and independently.	13 July 2018

Miriam <b>Editor</b>	Miriam is an highly experienced publisher and editor. She has worked with many well-known authors in commercial publishing houses, including HarperCollins, Random House and Macmillan.	9 August 2018
Jonquil <b>Author</b>	Jonquil is an academic and award-winning author of several novels, published by niche independent publishing houses.	27 August 2018

### 1.2.2 Conversation and narratology

The study used collaborative conversation which shares understanding and ‘relational knowledge’ (Feldman 1999: 129). Conversation is a cooperative mechanism where ideas can freely mingle and no participant is attempting to convince another that something is right or better (Buchanan 1983 in Feldman 1999: 132). A characteristic of conversation is its unpredictability (Green 2011). Gadamer emphasises the reciprocal relationship in conversation where ‘neither is the leader or the led, and furthermore, ‘no one knows in advance what will “come out” of a conversation’ (1992 in Green 2011: 113). Rather than directing participants to respond to a question, conversational ‘cues’ guide coverage of issues that develops through a free-flowing dialogue (interview with R Stewart, 31 May 2018, Buderim). These cues provided a direction for the conversation, which was not directed by any one participant. The resultant narratives are the stories of participants’ lived experience (Stewart 2007: 130).

A limitation in the research is a lack of gender parity in the selection. The editing industry is disproportionately female and, with the exception of one author with whom I did not conduct a recorded interview, all author participants were female. A further limitation was that, with the exception of K.J. Taylor, the study only allowed each participant to be interviewed once. Supplementary conversations drawing out themes, contradictions and complexities that arose in the findings would have added to the richness of the findings. This is an area of future research.

### 1.3 Ethical considerations

I received ethical clearance to conduct this research project from the University of Southern Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee (USQ H17REA259).

The project includes excerpts from three novels that I edited, by an Australian fantasy author, K.J. Taylor. Each manuscript was approximately 100,000 words, published through Black Phoenix Publishing Collective: *The Last Guard* (2017), *The Silent Guard* (2018) and *The Cursed Guard* (to be published in 2019). While the author was known to me through the editing process, I approached her formally to seek permission to use her edited manuscripts in my research and asked her to sign a formal agreement (Appendix A) and showed her the dissertation and excerpts that were included. I deferred to any requests to redact her comments or otherwise edit my analysis.

The study kept all participants, with the exception of K.J. Taylor, anonymous and code names identify them throughout the research. I emailed each participant to seek their participation, following up with a formal letter of introduction and statement of my research intent and a confidentiality and consent form which the researcher and all participants signed (Appendix B and Appendix C).

Anonymity was appreciated as I discussed potential publication of my research and encouraged all participants to speak candidly of the relationship with others as professionals whose services they had procured, publishers of their manuscripts, or clients with whom they had worked in the production of a manuscript. The interviews were recorded using an app, VoiceRecorder, which can slow the recording to half-speed. I transcribed them myself after using a transcription service for the first which proved unsatisfactory. Inaccuracies in the transcription nullified any potential timesaving. The poor quality may have been due to interference from the outdoor setting but meeting participants in informal, neutral locations was important to the study. I sent each participant the transcription for their approval and edit.

The recordings were stored on phone and my iTunes account which are password protected as is the research which is secured on my computer which is locked with a passcode only known to me. Duplicates in emails were deleted. I will provide the participants with full access to the dissertation and the recordings at the project's conclusion.

## 2 The power construct

Experience and critical reflection in this practice-led research project suggest that authority in the author–editor relationship is a precondition to editorial intervention. Unpacking the authority of both parties will elicit a better understanding of the relationship and will help in its navigation, allowing both parties to move from pistols at dawn, to growth.

Participants in this study described different manifestations of the power imbalance along the creative trajectory from an ‘enriching’ experience at one end of the scale to ‘artistic crisis’ with metaphorical gnashing of teeth and rending of clothes at the other. This negative experience can be born of many things. The research found that contributing factors include misunderstood expectations of the process (two editor participants noted this), the writer’s isolation (three authors and three author/editors noted this), external pressures (one editor noted this), editorial input coming too late coupled with an author’s over-identification with the work (one author and two editor participants), and publishing bullying when a schedule, or marketing requirements overrode an author’s voice to a degree that they found unacceptable (three editors and one author/editor).

Navigating the trajectory between the two parties is complicated by the artistic artefact, the book, as the relationship is different for each creative work, as the participants noted. A senior editor stated that authors will not react the same way to an edit of subsequent books, even if they have built up a good relationship with the editor in editing an earlier work. The creative process, the isolation, and other pressures in their lives, mean that there are no guarantees and make each relationship with each book impossible to predict (as noted by Miriam). Participants confirm that this relationship is pressured from the very beginning because the process of writing a novel is long, difficult, isolated and thankless but the literature discussing editing of shorter pieces (Kidder & Todd 2013; Schmidt, 1990, Speck 1991) raises

the same issues. The creative process appears to be the defining factor in the relationship's stress – handing over a creative work is a difficult place to begin a relationship, let alone forge successfully with someone who may critique it heavily (Lerner, in Ginna 2017: 70).

Drawing on Foucault's analysis of power and social control, it is possible to propose that the power construct in the relationship actively inhibits acknowledgement of the editor's creative contribution in the discourse around the production of a work of fiction. Publishers, authors and editors themselves agree that the editor's creative input to a book is undervalued and overlooked (Blay 2017:35) and recognise it as a failure that can exact a personal toll that editors rarely acknowledge and the industry denies (Blay 2017:35; Gleeson-White 2010: n.p.). The secrecy around editing is pervasive, as Gleeson-White notes: 'Theoretically, we all know books are edited. So why can't we talk about it?' (2010: n.p.).

If the author's goal is to preserve their voice, the editor's goal is to have their edit accepted (Speck 1991: 304–305). An author's creative output, their voice, provides their authority in the relationship. In an essay on teaching creative writing, Larry Watson describes voice as an amalgam of subject, style, attitude and, in a work of fiction, 'it also might have something to do with authority; it has few rules and 'good writing' cannot be defined' (Watson 2002: n.p.). For an editor, authority comes from their professional expertise and experience.

Knowledge is power, and power in this relationship is held by the party with niche value or expertise (Speck 1991: 302–304). Foucault calls this *power in the large* (1980). Other, perhaps more conventional theorists would describe this as 'rational power' defined as 'direct and intentional efforts by a specific person or group to affect another's conduct' (Wrong 1979: 3; Smart 1986:160). Foucault (1980) argues that overt power functions chiefly with regard to the laws of prohibition: licit or illicit, permitted or forbidden; incapable of anything productive, it serves to further restrict that which it dominates. He asks 'Why are the deployments of power reduced simply to the procedures of the law of interdiction?' (Foucault 1980: 86). Editors have

overt power, drawing on their language toolkit. Editors shape a manuscript to prescribed standards and protocols that are visible, and hence tolerated (Foucault 1980: 86), but this is only part of the power structure. Foucault describes power as tolerable (in society) only on condition that it hide a substantial part of itself.

Its success is proportional to its abilities to hide its own mechanisms ... Secrecy is ... indispensable to its operation. Not only because power imposes secrecy on those whom it dominates, but because it is perhaps just as indispensable to [them]: would they accept it if they did not see it as a mere limit placed on their desire, leaving a measure of freedom – however slight – intact?" (1980: 86).

Power-small is diffuse not concentrated (Miller 1993: 254) and controls through the projection of social norms. It makes us complicit in our subjugation (Foucault 1980: 156), unlike overt, institutional power which is visible and can be resisted. Foucault's term for these pervasive hegemonic norms that instil social control is popular reason (1980: 156). Speck claims that secrecy is part of the preservation of power in the author–editor relationship, on both sides (1991). The literature review and the practice data from this study show that the diffuse power of the author, the power that no one owns (Foucault 1980: 156), that is invisible and secret, can be seen to be at least as influential as the overt power of the editor.

One participant editor acknowledged the sleight of hand in the relationship, which gives authority and takes it away at the same time: 'You really want to make sure that you're communicating in a way that the author is going to take on as much of your edit as possible. Whilst maintaining the fiction that you don't care what they do, and it's just a suggestion.' Gerald Howard argues, 'Nobody really knows how an editor works, beside her or her authors' (Howard 2016: n.p.). While practice experience and the literature support the view that the editor contributes creatively, coaxing the author's work into a new shape (Watson 2002: n.p.), the view that an author works in isolation and should prevail in disputes around editorial intervention was found in many of the participant responses. One editor indicated that her rule

is that the author is always right: ‘in the end it is their book’. In the literature, for example, Annabel Blay, fiction editor, is firm that the manuscript belongs to the author – it is ‘always the author’s project’ (2017: 35). This is echoed by Gleeson-White (2010), Howard (2016), Lerner (in Ginna 2017), Alter (2016) and Kent (2013).

It is possible to assert that when editors submit to this narrative of the ‘author’s project’, they are according with an hegemonic ‘norm’ that imprisons them (Foucault 1979: 198), diminishing their expertise as true creative partners. According to Speck, editors have internalised subordination in their inherent respect for authors and deference to their skill, seeing flattery as a precondition to further creativity (1991: 304–305). After a career assisting eminent authors with their books, including Toni Morrison, Robert Gottlieb, editor at the renowned publishing house Farrar Straus and Giroux, is quoted as saying that it was ‘inappropriate that editors be ‘glamourized and revered’ (Alter 2016: n.p.). When he claims that he was never the editor who wanted to write because ‘writing is hard’ (quoted in Alter 2016: n.p.), he is promulgating a view of his inferior status.

Three editor participants in the study touched on how the secrecy, the contained and strained relationship, is not understood in the wider world, even by book critics. This was supported by Richard Todd who ‘winces when a reviewer says, “This book needed an editor.” Often it had an editor, but the writer prevailed’ (Kidder & Todd 2013: 166). One participant noted that the pushback by authors who resist editorial advice can result in publication of a book ‘that’s not the best book it can be’. She also spoke of the frustration when reviewers said ‘this book was poorly edited’, stating, ‘There are only two people who know that relationship, and if one of them wasn’t you … How could you tell?’ Similarly, another senior editor noted that ‘the thing that annoys me … is that critics say that the editor should have really tried harder and they have absolutely no idea what the editor tried to do, or what happened. Most of the time, in my experience, it’s the author pushing back on it, or the publishing house saying there’s

not enough time to do this and we have to make it work, neither of which is the editor's fault. Because they're invisible, ultimately!' Kent, on the power status of an editor, suggests that an 'unspoken compact' of secrecy exists between the author and the editor, yet if an author publicises a broken relationship, the editor has no recourse: 'whatever you say will only make you look defensive and wrong-footed and it would take too long to explain anyway' (2010: 126).

Speck posits that authors and editors have preserved the myth because the concept of a collaborative relationship erodes both their power (Speck 1991). Experience in this practice-led project suggests that in an ideal, balanced relationship – created to produce the best book possible – the hegemonic, popular norm that creates this invisibility will be replaced by an understanding of what each brings to the creation of a work of fiction and a more equal partnership.

The study finds that the exercise of power in participants' author–editor relationships varied according to the publication model in which their books were produced. Therefore, it is worth looking briefly at these relationships in the context of the different publishing models. Publishing is transforming (Howard 2016 and 1989). The new forms and models it is taking do not have clearly defined, broadly accepted definitions. Participants in the study have moved between the models through their careers. For the purpose of this study I have coined the following terms for the main contemporary publishing models:

1. The *commercial publishing* model – in which a publishing house acquires and project manages the production of a book. The editor, either in-house or freelance, works with, and is paid by the publisher. Commercial publishing is most often on a large scale with the motivation being to produce a marketable book that will return a profit to the press. These publishers are often known as the 'Big Five': Penguin Random House, HarperCollins, Simon & Schuster, Hachette and Macmillan

(McIlroy 2016). Participants with experience of the commercial model in this study were authors: Lyn and K.J. Taylor, and editors, Ben and Miriam.

2. The *niche independent* model – a variant of commercial publishing. Also a profit-driven model, aiming to produce marketable books, it is independent of the global publishing conglomerates which make up the first category. Participant authors were Jonquil, K.J. Taylor, and editors Robyn and myself (editing the project's trilogy).
3. Finally, there is independent or author-driven publishing (for example, self-publishing). In this model the author uses a platform or service such as Kindle Direct, Smashwords or Wattpad to produce and distribute their book. All services, including those performed by an editor, are sourced and paid for by the author. Study participant authors publishing in this domain were Daniel, Alice and Anna, and the editors working under this model were Ben, Lyn, and also Alice and Anna.

Several of the study's participants confirmed that authors can become complicit in a commercial editorial process which tells them their book will be more viable as it is moulded to fit expectations of a marketing plan. Richard Guthrie sets out the changes in publishing industry over the past fifty years as it moved from an industry 'where a single company was responsible for all stages of book production, to vast multinationals which he describes as 'conglomerate publishing' (Guthrie 2011: 12). Guthrie suggests that this bureaucratising of publishing impeded creative thinking, where 'we are not left to our own devices, but rather use existing rules, regulations or structures' (2011: 76). In the same vein, Janet MacKenzie argues, '[t]he doctrine of economic rationalism has dominated all business enterprises ... but publishers are beginning to realise what they have lost in sacrificing editorial standards to the bottom line' (2011: 9).

This dissertation shows that ongoing transformations in the publishing industry provide an opportunity to examine relationships that are mature and transparent, in which both parties are treated with equality and respect. In Chapter 5, the dissertation draws together themes from the literature and from the practice data to identify five characteristics of a good relationship. These characteristics are:

1. allowing time for the editor to engage properly with the work
2. a willingness on the part of the author to participate in the editorial process
3. fostering of a mature relationship with clear expectations
4. an understanding of the editorial process on the part of the author
5. respect for the publishing context.

### 3 Editor as teacher

An editor's expert authority as a teacher of language, grammar, punctuation and syntax is supported by experience, credentials, citing of authoritative sources and the justifying of their edit through their technical resources and their status as a professional reader (Speck 1991: 310). The study found wide support from the literature and both participant authors and editors for the concept that teaching was important (even critical) to establishing authority in the relationship (Speck 1991: 311); it is an overt projection of power by the editor. The data gathered in this study identified the following three elements as integral parts of the editor's teaching role:

1. objectivity – editor as reader
2. professional expertise
3. understanding the creative process.

This chapter looks at these in turn, drawing on the themes identified in the Introduction to this dissertation. It sets out how editors demonstrate their competent status and how authors can use the relationship to learn from the process. The analysis draws on Speck's definition of dialogic editing, where changes identified by the editor as necessary are put to and resolved by the author themselves in a trusting environment (1991: 307). Participant editor Ben exemplifies this technique when he indicated that, as an editor, 'you really wants to make sure that you're communicating in a way that the author is going to take on as much of your edit as possible – whilst maintaining the fiction that you don't care what they do, and it's just a suggestion.' He argues that in doing this, 'You develop your authority and an ability to persuade authors as you get more experienced.' Two senior editors posited that the willingness or not to enter into a genuine relationship is gendered because men, and especially older men, are less likely to respond to an edit, and much less likely to work with young(er) female editors who dominate

the industry. One editor said, ‘There are some real issues there about the men taking the advice that they’re getting and often that is just unconscious bias...but some are quite conscious that they just don’t want to be told [anything] by this little miss.’

Both author and editor participants reveal that editorial authority is necessary over the short term (the duration of the book) and optimised over the long term (over multiple books). Miriam, a senior editor participant, states that if an editor knew the author well they would have more confidence in using that authority: ‘I think part of what is fascinating about this process is how far can you push someone.’

### 3.1 Objectivity: editor as reader

Overwhelmingly, both author and editor study participants considered that the most crucial element of teaching that editors bring to the relationship is their role as a professional reader, one proposing that he has ‘been reading for a living for 37 years’ (Howard 2016: n.p.). If the writer’s endpoint, as Tracey Kidder notes, is ‘to talk to strangers’ (Kidder & Todd 2013: 3), the process of smoothing that communication path lies with the editor who must make each book ‘the best conceivable version of itself...for its readers’ (Brett 2011: n.p.). Ben, senior editor, called the editor the ‘readers’ advocate’ whose role to give the author an untrammelled reader’s response to the book. Speck goes further by defining the editor as a ‘pilot’ reader – more than the reader’s representative, they define the audience (1991: 309). Their professional ability to identify with the reader should not be usurped by authorial authority (Speck 1991: 309). This raises the identified theme in this study that a mature relationship and understanding of the editorial process aids productivity.

One editor described it is an ‘intense and problematic affair-of-the mind [with a writer] in which I represent the reader’ (Brett 2011: n.p.). Jonquil, participant author, articulated this clearly.

People talk about how they write, whether they write for themselves, or for other people, and I always, um, have felt very strongly that I write for other people. I like Margaret Atwood's idea that [your] writing...is a gift for other people, and an ideal gift is...something that you've really considered the other person will like, and you've considered their needs and tastes and wants and desires. And for me, that really works...in the editing process *because here's a person who's helping you make it right for all those people it's for. Because it's not for you.* You know, it's not to feed your ego or to satisfy your need for the book to be like this, or like that, you know, it's not...For me that's not the purpose of writing fiction. The purpose of writing fiction is to stimulate and give pleasure to other people [my emphasis].

K.J. Taylor endorsed this position of editor as reader: 'I mean we like to say that we write for ourselves, which we do in a sense, and I wouldn't quit because it makes me happy but when people are paying for what we write, you're no longer just writing for yourself. You're writing for your readers ... You need to have a bit of humility if you want to be as good as you can be.' Another author in the study, Lyn, corroborates this: 'I think [all writers] sometimes ... fall down the rabbit hole of entertaining ourselves and not thinking about the other person. Laughing at our own jokes. That sort of thing.' Anna, an author/editor participant, notes, 'That's the most important part ... I always approach it as a reader. Would I like to read this? Would that irritate me as a reader? Does that make sense as a reader?' Alice, author/editor, added to this position: 'No reader is going to read as close as we do, so if the person who is that invested, who is being paid to try and enjoy it is having trouble making meaning or understanding something, then what hope does the reader have?' An author of a book on writing supports this, proposing that editors are 'almost always intelligent readers; if they have trouble making sense of your writing, what does that say about your success with your intended readership?' (Crawford 2003: 37). The humility demonstrated by these four author participants is a trait of a mature open relationship, according to Marie-Pierre Cleret, psychotherapist, who posits that the editor's input, or the therapist's observations, can be received with shame (humiliation) or learning (humility) (Cleret 2018).

Three participant editors confirmed that reading the manuscript independently from any authorial explanatory addenda was necessary. These editors preferred taking the entire manuscript, and staying outside the author's orbit. One stated that 'it's really important to have multiple editors on the same project. Once you've done one round ... you won't come at it with enough objectivity.' He indicated how the editor can become compromised by their immersion in the manuscript, saying, 'When I read a manuscript after it's been revised by an author after my structural edit, I always think "Wow, this is brilliant" ... You can see your own ideas reflected ... and you don't notice the problems.'

Ben, a senior editor participant, also stated that it was important to separate knowledge gleaned through their relationship with the author from that which is present in the story, stating that 'if [the author] has to explain it, then [they] have failed in that part of the writing.' Similarly, when publishing one author, Robyn, editor/publisher, specifically chose an editor who had not worked with her before: 'there was just too much familiarity ... and it was all too close. [I]t needed now another person entirely to look at it as a collection and I think that the work really benefited from that.'

Three senior editor participants in the study indicated that necessary detachment and professionalism to criticise the work can become muddied with friendships with authors. Yet it was a grey area, with both Miriam and Ben, and editor/authors Alice and Anna, acknowledging that closer intimacy can be helpful in building trust. Data from participants and in the literature shows that the relationship's success hinges less on this, but on whether it is a mature relationship with clear expectations, both parties maintaining their professionalism in the service of the book. Miriam, senior editor, maintained a professional approach, even with writers she had worked with over long periods, avoiding overly casual or truncated comments because of the potential for misinterpretation. She stated, 'I tend not to do that partly because I've had some experiences where it hasn't gone over well so I tend to think just always be

polite, always try to put it as a question, never assume that you're infallible.' This gives the editor authority. As one editor participant stated: 'they still need to have some power and authority otherwise it can get too matey.'

Miriam, senior editor, acknowledged that there were advantages and disadvantages to familiarity. 'I think it's tricky... one of those six of one, half a dozen of the other. Because the value .... from you knowing them and knowing their work is ... you're going to get what they're trying to do and that's hugely important, that level of understanding.' Rather than saying, 'This is something I don't understand, and can you make it clearer?' she altered her approach with the author to ask, 'I know that you're trying to show blah blah blah and it's not coming through.' She was alert to the inherent contradiction, indicating the 'bipolar' nature of editing where 'everything about it can go hard one way or just as hard the other and you have to choose, and balance' (Brett 2011: n.p.). One senior editor reconciled the inconsistency, asserting that the relationship's inception is pivotal.

If you start as friends and then one of you becomes a writer ... and then you're editing someone who is a friend, I think that's a minefield and I probably wouldn't do it... But where the editing came first, and then came the friendship, I would continue because that's how the relationship began, and the editing practice began, and they kind of know how you operate and they know that you're not going to be super soft on them.

This was mirrored in Richard Todd and Tracey Kidder's (Kidder & Todd 2013) relationship which was founded on mutual respect, as professionals, before it became a friendship. Todd always remained conscious of his editorial perspective, holding that it allowed the author to roam free: 'Writers are by nature narcissists...To maintain the concentration and self-belief necessary...requires a distorted sense of reality' (Kidder & Todd 2013:168).

K.J. Taylor welcomed the editorial contributions, asking whether her judgement as an author, working alone, would ever be enough to verify quality. She stated, 'I need to have that outside input and that's why I value editors as much as I do ... no matter how talented you are,

you can't see your own mistakes ... fundamental issues with the plot and the characterisation, you're blinded to.' I worked on K.J. Taylor's novels with no background knowledge of their creation, nor significant experience in editing fantasy. I was a 'cold' reader. This trilogy continued a series of novels, published by a different publishing house, which I had not read. While the author sometimes responded to my queries with a note that an issue in the plot had been explained earlier, each book still stood by itself and my queries regarding confusion in the plot were generally well-received. In the edit of the third book in her trilogy, I raised a plot hole and she drafted a new scene.

*Figure 1 from The Cursed Guard*

They sat together in companionable silence for a while, looking out over their city.

'Well,' Red said eventually. '**I suppose now I'm** alive an' everything, it's probably time you and me...'

'Yes?' said Teressa.]

*Figure 2 an exchange on a plot hole*

**Jessica Stewart**

This made me go back! He hasn't told her yet, has he? I couldn't see it, and I really wanted to know how it went down!

**Katie Taylor**

Agreed – I went back and added a much needed scene!

The edits revealed my ability to see where sense was impaired or a stronger image was needed

(Figure 3 from The Cursed Guard 3 and 4)

*Figure 3 from The Cursed Guard*

'But...' Red trailed off, still looking at Arenadd. The god's words were lulling, compelling, hypnotic, but Arenadd's stare was distracting him. And now, when Red looked closer, he finally saw what it was that ~~had been disturbing him~~.

It was subtle, but there was a tightness to Arenadd's mouth, and the slightest twitch of his hands. He was hiding it very well, but the Night God's servant was afraid.

*Figure 4 an exchange on word choice*

<b>Jessica Stewart</b> I wonder if 'bothering' him is strong enough. I'm sure this was a period of pretty intense emotions! Disturbing?	
<b>Katie Taylor</b> Deleted: bothering	May 28, 2018

### 3.2 Professional expertise

The teacher/student relationship can also be seen as one of expert/novice (M. Cleret 2018). Ben, a senior editor participant, stated that a good relationship hinges on the author's willingness to trust their professionalism and recognise the editor's authority to do the work, demonstrating themes of the author's willingness to engage with and understand the editorial process. Participants' experience validated Speck's finding found that an editor demonstrates their professionalism through dialogic editing where the editor is empathic, asks questions, and uses praise and deference (1991: 307) and also through a number of other areas, discussed further on in this chapter.

The question of editorial expertise is complicated by the finding that authors understand different things by 'competence'. The study found that authors' awareness and respect for

editorial expertise differed among participants. Richard Todd asserts that writers often consider that an edit constitutes a ‘mark-up’ which is an endorsement with some tinkering and ‘fixing’ on the side (Kidder & Todd 2013: 170). Jacqueline Kent raises the point that ‘[o]ften authors don’t know what to expect from editors, though they’re very aware when these expectations – which they have failed to express – haven’t been met.’ (1996: 126). Participant editor Ben stated that ‘a lot of [authors] think that their book is mostly edited [already].’ Author participant in the study, Alice, confirmed this, saying, ‘By the time I got my book to Anna, I had already edited it at least three or four times myself from top to bottom … so she’s like … “There’s an error on page seven” and I’m like, “You’re wrong! What error?”’

Speck discusses this authorial authority at length, proposing that it is a cover for the reality of authorial incompetence and editors have internalised a myth of their inferior status (1991: 305). Tracey Kidder is clear: ‘Editing isn’t just something that happens to you. You have to learn how to be edited’ (Kidder & Todd 2013: 136).

Independent publisher, author and editor Anna confirmed this, stating, ‘Editing should be about learning.’ All participants noted that learning takes many forms: learning grammar fundamentals, learning to write good prose, learning narrative structure, learning what is going to sell. Knowledge in these areas is part of the editor’s professional toolkit: the art, the craft and the business (Ginna 2017: 5). To share this knowledge, they use the techniques discussed here: clear communication, justifying interventions and weighing the relative importance of issues.

### 3.2.1 Communication

All editor participants in the study identified that their ability to teach successfully depends on the clarity of their communication. It is pivotal to a full engagement with the author, a key theme identified in the study, and emphasised by Tracey Kidder (Kidder & Todd 2013) who

appreciated his editor's role in distilling criticism to key elements, crystallising the problem. He saw it as a courtesy and it enabled him, as a writer, to trust the advice (Kidder & Todd 2013). Experienced, literary author participant, Jonquil, emphasised that her ability to trust the expertise of the editor, and feel safe in deferring to their authority, began on seeing their work: paratextual communication from the editor established quickly, for her, whether they respected language in the same way she did. She noted:

So if I get an email from an editor at the beginning of the relationship that is poorly expressed and edited, that really undermines my confidence going into the relationship. Like if you don't care how you express yourself to me, how am I going to trust you? You soon know. It's like reading a book. You know when you start reading a book whether you're in the hands of someone who knows what they're doing, or doesn't know what they're doing. And I think the same is true of editing. Once you get some feedback, know whether you're on the same page, or they're in tune with the work, or you know, a great deal of trust emerges out of their professional expertise.

The immediacy of instant messaging – fast, conversational yet also detached – made it a preferred medium for all participant editors and authors, though they also used email, phone calls and, occasionally, face-to-face meetings.

In my practice, I developed a relationship with the author, K.J. Taylor over the 18 months of editing her Southern Star Trilogy, published by Black Phoenix Publishing Collective. We used Microsoft Word's Track Changes, and communicated through Facebook messages and emails and, when she came to Sydney, meeting in person where we worked through issues in the texts and publishing matters, such as publicity and cover art. We had begun a professional relationship with the publication of her novella, *The Price of Magic* (2016) which I copy edited. Our relationship was straightforward and efficient from the beginning, becoming more familiar and friendlier as it progressed. She was able to trust in my professional status through my

association with the University of Southern Queensland. Tools employed in the edit drew on accepted standards such as the Macquarie Dictionary and Australian grammar use, and with reference to a Style Sheet created at the inception. In the edit across three books, this was an essential tool to aid consistency (Appendix D). For books Two and Three in her trilogy, I returned the marked-up manuscripts with a letter, a practice I developed with clients in my business as a courteous and fuller explanation of the edit.

*16 May 2018*

*The Cursed Guard, K.J. Taylor*

*Dear Katie*

*Congratulations! Your final in this Trilogy matched my expectations. I found it gripping and unexpected. I love the way you have depicted Red's struggles as he confronts an ever-worsening series of events, as well as the conundrum that accompanies being the Shadow that Walks. You've charted Red's self-awareness adroitly. The plot takes off then comes in to close with a lovely finality, but not before some real darkness and lovely twists.*

*On a few occasions, I thought I saw some discrepancies around events in the plot, timing of events, or in characters' personalities. I now know the setting and characters well, giving me that extra tool in the editor's box – familiarity! And, of course, where I suggest alternatives, feel free to ignore them. These are only to give you a feel for my thinking as a reader.*

*I have made some suggestions for consistency in tense, and some reordering of sentences within a paragraph. These comments are where I felt that something said later could be brought forward. As a reader, I felt that these few lines or even words were important in setting a scene or casting an emotion which was important to what follows.*

*Finally, there were some instances where things could be said more simply, and I removed a few words I thought extraneous to your meaning and which didn't add to the imagery.*

*As with the others, I have used the Macquarie Dictionary for spelling and Australian usage.*

*Please, don't hesitate to give me a ring or send an email if you want to discuss anything.*

*Congratulations again, and I look forward to your feedback.*

*Kind regards*

Figure 5 shows her response, and our exchange via email.

*Figure 5 email exchange*

● Katie Taylor 2 March 2018 at 5:01 pm KT

Re: Silent Guard edit

To: Jessica Stewart

All right! :D

"My Initials and My Name Are One And the Same."

On Friday, 2 March 2018, 4:54:45 pm AEDT, Jessica Stewart <[jessica@yourseconddraft.com](mailto:jessica@yourseconddraft.com)> wrote:

Thanks Katie. That's brilliant. Those few extra passages are excellent, and the previous edits make sense.

I've accepted changes, making a few copy edits here and there, but had no other comments back to you. Now we have a clean version for the next stage, and we're on track!

Congratulations again.

Jessica

Jessica Stewart  
[jessica@yourseconddraft.com](mailto:jessica@yourseconddraft.com)  
[yourseconddraft.com](http://yourseconddraft.com)  
+61 409 923 287

On 2 Mar 2018, at 2:44 pm, Katie Taylor <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Hi,  
Okay, I've gone through the whole thing in a marathon effort (I'm exhausted now!). I noticed you were working with the original ms rather than the previously edited version, so I merged the two documents - the last editor had some extremely useful feedback which I had already incorporated. You'll be able to see the differences thanks to track changes.  
Cheers,  
Katie

"My Initials and My Name Are One And the Same."

On Friday, 2 March 2018, 10:22:07 am AEDT, Jessica Stewart <[jessica@yourseconddraft.com](mailto:jessica@yourseconddraft.com)> wrote:

### 3.2.2 Justifying interventions in the text

Being able to support their decisions on editorial interventions demonstrates both the first theme: allowing time for the editor to engage properly with the work, and the third theme, fostering of a mature relationship with clear expectations. All participants in the study saw the editor's constructive feedback as integral to a good relationship. Two participants, both senior

editors, ask their authors to consider the reasons they have suggested changes, even if they reject the suggested alternatives. One stated, 'If they want to address the issues in a different way, that's great, and better because they know the book far better than I do.' She found that justifying changes in the text and grounding them with understanding of the characters' motivation, and overall context, is most helpful to the author. Constructive feedback as a necessary element was supported by the literature – Speck identifies editors' ability to justify their interventions (1991: 309) as the third element that as giving editors authority.

My practice with K.J. Taylor tended toward writing longer comments in Track Changes, and suggesting the new words there rather than making the change in the text. These were often taken up as I had drafted, or in a new way (Figures 6 and 7).

Figure 6 from *The Cursed Guard*

'Eyes!' ~~Isleen~~ said. 'They're rather whitened, but they're definitely there.'

Red didn't need telling twice. He could feel them, ~~turn them~~ in their sockets, ~~even if~~  
~~they were still blind. That, he knew, would come later.~~

And when, at last, his sight returned, he knew who he wanted to show first.

He returned to his quarters at dawn, after a night of training. ~~Kraego~~ was in his nest,

Figure 7 an exchange on adding words

**Jessica Stewart**

As in roll them in their sockets, the muscles working around them?

**Jessica Stewart**

I almost missed this! Perhaps introduce his eyes working again a bit more dramatically., ~~Eg~~ 'When sight finally returned, etc etc.'

**Katie Taylor**

**Deleted:** ~~It did~~

**Katie Taylor**

**Deleted:** ~~and~~

Where I suggest a stronger response, the author indicated the reasons she had written that section in a particular way, providing context for her rejection of the suggested edit (Figures 8 and 9).

Figure 8 from *The Cursed Guard*

“Thank you,” said Liantha. She looked to Red. ‘That’s enough for now. I’s been a long day and we’re all tired. If you’re happy with your treaty, you can go ahead and sign it today if you choose. In the meantime, my friends and I will discuss the terms of our own and set Alaric and Isleen to writing it. As for your... little idea for Liranwee... we can discuss it there with the other Eyrie Masters who, let us not forget, have far more experience in governing than either of us. Let them give us their

Figure 9 an exchange explaining a point

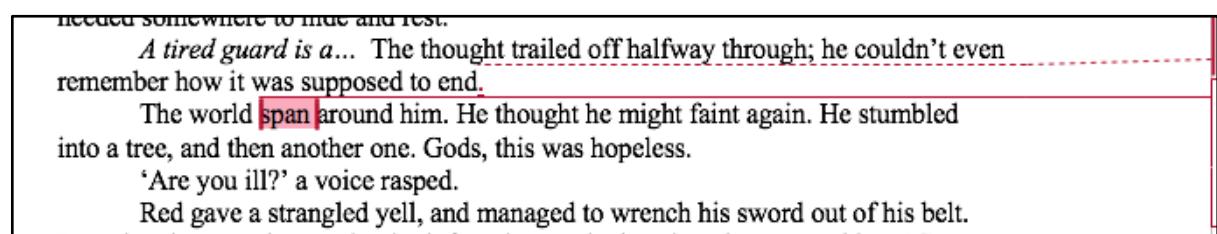
<b>Jessica Stewart</b>	April 30, 2018
This feels dismissive, as though it is of not much importance. Would she say this? She thinks it is outrageous, bizarre, radical, doesn’t she?	
<b>Katie Taylor</b>	May 28, 2018
She’s doing it on purpose to be passive-aggressive by implying that it’s silly and childish and not worth considering.	

As senior editor Miriam proposes, ‘What you leave alone is as important as what you feel need to be intervened in.’ This was my experience with Daniel, a new writer, where I had failed to fully understand his work. I had not built up a trusted relationship with the author, did not explain the editing process or justify my changes. When he saw the process of structural editing, where I had moved passages and reduced their length, he was horrified and withdrew. Ben, participant editor and independent publishing consultant states that irreparable doubt can come about if the editor makes a mistake which is ‘big enough to make the author stop trusting their abilities.’ In Ben’s words, this can poison the editorial process, especially if the author feels this doubt early on. Such a ‘wobble’ can come about if an editor, for instance, asks an

author for something they have explicitly said, in advance, that they will not do, or ‘were really undiplomatic’.

Interventions are influenced by an editor’s personal preferences and prejudices (Speck 1991: 308; Lerner 2013: 69) and participant author/editor Lyn proposes a necessary distance between an editor and the author and between the editor and the book to allow a ‘certain amount of forensic thought’ and allow the editor to ‘recognise [their] own taste, as distinct from the author’s intention, and from the author themselves. You need to leave your prejudices at the door.’ In my own practice, in editing the first book in K.J. Taylor’s Southern Star Trilogy, the author chose an unusual verb form, and elected to stay with it (Figures 10 and 11).

Figure 10 from *The Last Guard*, p.145



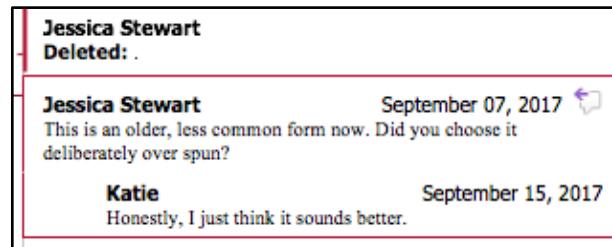
needed somewhere to hide and rest.  
A tired guard is a... The thought trailed off halfway through; he couldn't even remember how it was supposed to end.

The world **span** around him. He thought he might faint again. He stumbled into a tree, and then another one. Gods, this was hopeless.

‘Are you ill?’ a voice rasped.

Red gave a strangled yell, and managed to wrench his sword out of his belt.

Figure 11 an exchange on word preference



**Jessica Stewart**  
Deleted: .

**Jessica Stewart** September 07, 2017   
This is an older, less common form now. Did you choose it deliberately over spun?

**Katie** September 15, 2017  
Honestly, I just think it sounds better.

My structural interventions in the edit of K.J. Taylor’s books suggested moves of lines and sometimes paragraphs for sense and narrative flow which was particularly important in action scenes where sequencing is crucial and the reader has to keep up. Figure 12, below, is a significant moment when a major character, Arenadd, is at an important juncture. The intervention was to minimise confusion and keep the reader following as he falls down a mountain inside. Being the third book in the series, and fourth I had edited for this author, the familiarity and trust is evident, as I have justified a change without asking a question.

Figure 12 from *The Cursed Guard*

Pain twisted in Arenadd's chest, and suddenly he couldn't bear to look at the landscape which had seemed so wonderful a moment before. He turned away from it and started to climb down the mountainside, eyes hard, mouth set into a thin line. He went backwards, knowing that if he looked directly downward, the old fear might paralyse him to the spot.

Jessica Stewart  
Deleted: .

Jessica Stewart  
I moved the way in which he climbed down a few lines up to allow the reader to form the picture, and then feel the 'hard going'

Jessica Stewart  
To avoid two instances of 'going'

Jessica Stewart  
Deleted: kept going, stepping

Jessica Stewart  
Deleted: He went backwards, knowing that if he looked directly downward, the old fear might paralyse him to the spot. Even now it hadn't left him. ¶ As usual,

Jessica Stewart  
Deleted: though, i

It was hard going, even with his inexhaustible strength. He stepped carefully, not really aware of the cold. He had to get to the bottom before nightfall.

It seemed that chance still liked to toy with him though. About halfway down he put a foot wrong, and a patch of snow and loose rock slipped away from beneath him.

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Clumsy in his newly rebuilt body, Arenadd lost his balance and went tumbling down the mountainside, rolling and thudding into rocks and dead shrubs, loose rubble falling with him. ¶

Jessica Stewart  
Deleted: Still

Jessica Stewart  
Deleted: c

Jessica Stewart  
I think this repeats images that you're rendered beautifully in the sentences before and after, without really adding anything new. Suggest delete.

Katie Taylor  
Deleted: He made a grab for any handhold he could catch, but missed, and in a very short time he had reached the bottom anyway

Jessica Stewart  
A nice touch. The final ignominy!

He landed with an ugly crunching sound in the valley at the bottom of the mountain, and before he could get up, a large chunk of rock hit him in the back and knocked the remaining breath straight back out of him.

He lay there for a moment, winded and aching all over. Once the shock wore off he began to get angry – but then, quite suddenly, something turned itself around in him and he started to laugh.

### 3.2.3 Weighing the relative importance of issues

Participants' responses support the finding that deft editorial selection of issues in the text is important to the relationship. Judiciousness in selecting what to address is eased by the editor's full engagement with the work (theme 1), and the author's clear expectations and understanding

of the editing process (themes 3 and 4). Author and editor Anna states that her practice is to focus on the bigger picture rather than overwhelm authors with smaller questions. Another participant, the study's most experienced editor, now working independently but formerly in commercial publishing, posited this as critical to acceptance of the edit: 'You've got to choose your battles. If it's a small thing – "Oh fine, you can have that weird word on page sixty, who's going to notice?" – but if there are larger things, I do come back to them.' This is corroborated by Annabel Blay who writes that when an author rejects a suggestion that she thinks necessary, she asks herself, 'Does this affect the overall book? Will it bother the reader?' (2017:37). In my practice, I removed some of my comments in the second editorial pass because my deeper understanding of the text and authorial style confirmed that my first suggestions were unnecessary – my style intruding.

### 3.2.4 Asking questions of the author

All participant editors demonstrated their engagement with the work and with the author by asking questions. Author/editor Alice worked as a primary school teacher for a number of years and she described how this helped her understand that balancing criticism and support was 'really important for learning.' Rather than returning her clients with an edited product, she wants them to 'feel they've gained something from employing me and so I tried to pose it as questions to get them thinking. I just assume that they're a writer like me who wants to be better and they want to learn something.' Lyn, an author/editor participant, indicated that her experience as a writer helps her understand what authors are trying to do and she considers 'How to ask the right questions to help them get there?'

A senior editor participant, Miriam, stated that her practice was to find the right question that can unlock the author's meaning. She would ask her authors,

"All right, so you think this is fun because....?" "Why did you want people to think that?" "What are the consequences of that particular scene or issue?" The right question that comes

from really deep engagement with the book ... If you don't have that, they're not going to trust you on anything ... That's part of the trust thing and that's what's got me through some difficult situations with authors who might have not had good experiences with editors in the past.

Jane Gleeson-White, editor, observes that when an editor does not 'get it', there is an onus on them to be humble and ask the author for guidance. It may not be a shortcoming in the manuscript (2010: n.p.). The editors' role is in 'inspiring' writers, 'either by suggesting ideas outright (and letting you take the credit for them) or by asking key questions that lead you to think of them on your own.' (Schmidt 1990: 14).

### 3.2.5 Explaining editing practices and outcomes

The participants' tales from the field revealed that beyond justifying individual interventions in the text, authors' understanding of the entire editing process allowed for the most productive relationships – theme 4: the author's understanding of the editorial process. Participant authors who understood what an edit constituted pointed to the benefits of this knowledge. Jonquil, a participant author, stated that she became more responsive to the editor over time: 'the more experience you have of being edited and seeing the work become better, I think the more you can come to trust in that process.' Of the challenging process, she states, 'It doesn't bother me ... I'll just change it back! Or ring them and ask, "Why did you change it. 'I always feel like, "Hey, back off! Why did you do that? I wanted it like that!"' This willingness to open a dialogue to explore the process, rather than seeing it as immutable was assisted through longstanding relationships with several editors that developed into deep collaborative partnerships. Lyn, a successful commercially published author and a professional editor, commented that her editorial background influenced her writing. She stated, 'And I think that [my confidence in writing] comes from having all this sort of background knowledge behind that stroke of the pen ... I had a huge, almost decade of studying that intensively before I dared myself to do it.'

As an experienced author, K.J. Taylor was cognisant of the editing process and worked with me on the edit, accepting or rejecting suggestions and making changes of her own. She said that she had grown in confidence since first publishing in her teens and observed that a writer unhappy with Track Changes, for instance, was ‘the mark of someone who lacks confidence because that’s how I was early in my career. I would get feelings of dread every time I got an edited manuscript back and every mistake the editor pointed out made my heart sink. I was quite young at the time, but the thing is you’ve got to get used to it. Now, when I get an edited thing back, in tracked changes, I just feel sort of a vague sense of irritation like there’s a bug on me, and I’ve got to go through and eliminate those mistakes right now, or I won’t feel right.’

### 3.2.6 Balancing positive and negative interventions

Participants in the study showed that the receptivity of the author to editorial comment was improved by balancing the problems with the praise. Speck suggests that flattery may perpetuate a writer’s view that editorial intervention was unnecessary, intrusive and to be rejected (1991: 305). On the other hand, Richard Todd suggests that the sharing of a creative artefact is an act of generosity, the author shedding their outer layer of protectiveness (Kidder & Todd 2013: 165). Study participant, and author and new editor, Alice stated that the judicial exercise of this knowledge and expertise was a constant balancing act. She works in independent self-publishing where authors are paying for her services. She posited:

As an editor, you've got to find in yourself what's reasonable. Am I being reasonable? Am I being too pushy? Am I being too lenient? Like if I just cave all the time and say, 'You can do what you want' then I'm not getting my message across and they've paid me to help them so if I've said something and they've resisted it, I think is there another way I could have put it? For the next person?

The study found that editors in all contexts want to nurture their authors’ creativity and try many different ways to reach their authors in a way they will be heard. Anna, independent

publisher and editor exemplified this with her approach with one author: ‘[Y]ou feel the exuberance of his writing as you read it. I can read his stuff over and over again and yeah, he has really horrible grammar … [H]e can execute the story fine but it’s the technical stuff. And that’s the thing. You don’t need to know the technical stuff – that’s what I do. I don’t want to squash any of that creativity. I just work around him.’

Participant senior editor Ben stated that in fiction, ‘it tends to be a lot more personal, creative … And they can get super-touchy.’ Tracey Kidder, author of creative non-fiction, demonstrates this: ‘[b]eing told that a piece of writing stinks is the same as being told that we are once and for all bad writers, and therefore also deficient persons’ (Kidder & Todd 2013: 156). This reaction demonstrates the absence, in such instances, of a mature relationship (theme 4), misunderstanding of the editorial process (theme 5) and a lack of willingness for the author to engage with either the editorial process (theme 2).

Pointing out the sections or even single words which work well was seen as a good and necessary part of the edit by almost all participants. Ben, senior editor, describes an edit as ‘the shit sandwich. You sandwich each bit of criticism with praise … I think if you don’t learn how to diplomatically approach an author, they won’t take your edit on board.’ He cited an example of an edit where he took a stronger tone. He had edited four other books for this author and he was seeing the same issues in the fifth. “And I thought, you’re not getting it. I need to be a bit more upfront with you about how this isn’t working.” However, he overplayed and she said that while he might have liked her concept, he thought someone else should have written it. ‘And when I heard that, I thought “Aaaaargh! I’ve failed.”’ His stronger argument about the book’s issues had not resulted in her learning, rather her retreat. Lyn, author/editor corroborated this, stating that the balance of the positive and negative is basic psychology. As authors as well as editors Alice and Anna both took great pleasure in positive comments from their editors, finding them encouraging. Anna suggests, ‘It doesn’t cost you anything and you’ve got to do

it so it's balanced ... You're writing red pen all over it ... and even if it's not negative, it's still criticism.' Alice concurred, 'and it can start to weigh on you.'

In my practice, critique of the text was well-received and helpful in working towards the making of the best book possible. The author, K.J. Taylor notes, 'I like the way you do it ... You're helping something along, helping with suggestion, not letting them do whatever they like but helping them. It's a team effort. That's how I've always seen it ...' Figures 13 and 14 (below) demonstrate how I have offered unqualified praise.

Figure 13 *The Silent Guard* p.277

Red's own eyes narrowed. You. Why're you here? What is this place?  
'No idea,' said Arenadd. 'But what I'm more interested in is why *you're* here, Kearney Redguard.' He walked silently around the altar, trailing the tip of one finger through the pool of blood. 'I must say,' he added, 'We were expecting a sacrifice tonight, but we certainly didn't think it would come from you of all people. Even if you are the Shadow That Walks, I didn't think you were into that sort of thing.'

Figure 14 praising a scene

<b>Jessica Stewart</b>	March 01, 2018
Gorgeous...! This whole scene with Arenadd is just great. Didn't want it to end.	
<b>Katie</b>	March 02, 2018
I love reading it aloud to myself. Arenadd is such a little sassbucket! His dialogue is so much fun to write.	

Figures 15 and 16 demonstrate the editor's offering of praise with suggestions.

Figure 15 from *The Cursed Guard*

'Take him,' ~~Ekra~~ shouted at his friends. 'Now.'

Red stepped back, sword at the ready. 'I am darkness,' he snarled. 'I am death.'

Above, the griffins descended. ~~As Ekra's~~ fellows started forward, a screech stopped them in their tracks, and a massive griffin, black wings spread wide, beak open.

Figure 16 praising and suggesting a sentence restructure

**Jessica Stewart**

Katie, I love this scene, and Red's courage in maintaining the pretence. I wanted to keep the tension high, until this line, hence thought to keep the griffins from descending until Red has spoken once more. What do you think?

**Jessica Stewart**

**Deleted:** descended

Figures 17 and 18 demonstrate my practice of praising while conveying a suggestion on tone.

Figure 17 from *The Cursed Guard*

He slowed down slightly, uncertain, yet with a feeling that something wasn't right. He sniffed the air, but couldn't catch anything out of the ordinary. Still, the strange feeling grew and he stopped and looked around.

Figure 18 praising and suggesting a different word

**Jessica Stewart**

The image is great though I wondered if 'conviction' is a little too strong, if he is uncertain? Can you reconsider how to convey that without the three instances of 'but' too?

Amongst participants, Jonquil was the outlier in that she did not expect or need praise. 'I'm suspicious of excessive flattery!' She found it threatening, the editor preparing her 'before they

flood the page with blood!' She enjoyed receiving small, personal notes from editors, prompted by her work, which brought her insight into their life and experiences. In my practice, as trust built up between myself and authors and we learnt more about each other outside the professional relationship (Figures 19 and 20) this became a natural inclination and helped communication.

Figure 19 from *The Cursed Guard*

Like all Eyrie towers, this one had a flat top for griffins to land on, and Tarak touched down there, closely followed by the others. Once everyone was down, Merca

Figure 20 a personal exchange

<b>Jessica Stewart</b>	February 28, 2018
This brings up a memory. We lived in Colorado once and got to explore the south west. There are hundreds of these land formations there and they call it a 'mesa.' Your US audience would identify! It's a term which is not just particular to the US though. Just a suggestion.... 😊	
<b>Katie</b>	March 02, 2018
Reminds me of the game Half-Life, which is set in an underground research complex in New Mexico called Black Mesa!	

### 3.3 Understanding the creative process: defining authority in a subjective realm

The literature found that editors need to bring creativity to the task and this was corroborated by all participants. The elements of this emotional, creative side of the relationship are discussed in this section, the study finding that the degree to which editorial creative licence could be exercised varied and depends on the willingness of the author to participate in the editorial process (theme 2) and the editor's engagement with the work (theme 1).

A component of a mature relationship (discussed in depth in Chapter 4.4) is shared meaning (Gottman 2018), whereby the parties understand each other's vision. Participants revealed that a productive relationship was assisted by having the right editor for each book. Senior editor Miriam stated that different editors will approach books in different ways and she

indicated that finding the right editor is as important to the process as any of the technical aspects; if the relationship is at odds from the beginning, it may be because the editor was wrong for the project. The study showed that the flexibility of self, and independent publishing models, where the authority to choose an editor lies with the author, allows for more give and take. This was demonstrated by Anna, editor and independent publisher, who has close relationships over multiple books with her clients, most of whom live locally, and by Lyn, author/editor who confirmed that there are genres that she would not edit because she considers that her ‘negativity is going to encroach on the editorial process.’

Editors’ creative contribution comes, as Richard Todd writes, in being able to ‘see or hear prose in a way that the writer cannot’ (Kidder & Todd 2013: 130), to which Tracey Kidder responds: ‘I sometimes felt that trusting him came at the expense of my independence’ (Kidder & Todd 2013: 148). The study suggests that these statements illuminate the unproductive power construct where it can be argued that authority becomes a zero sum game where if one party exerts their power, the other’s power must be diminished. While Kidder learnt to let go of this attitude with greater experience, his portrayal of the author as sole creator is entrenched: ‘Back then, I imagined that complete independence was a precondition for writing well... I resented Todd’s telling me that a character or incident or sentence was getting in the way and should be jettisoned’ (Kidder & Todd 2013: 148). Instead, this study found that an editor’s deep engagement, early involvement and writing talent are instrumental in a productive creative relationship.

### 3.3.1 Editors’ creative authority

In creative writing, what is ‘right’, or even ‘better’ can come down to the difficult task of defending a value judgement (Speck 1991: 309–310). Betsey Lerner attested that she was unable to define what makes a manuscript ‘good’ (in Ginna 2017: 69). Editor Mandy Brett describes the see-sawing between instinct and self-questioning, to retain a clear-headed

distinction between changes made in the service of the book and her own tastes and preferences (2011). Speck notes that the editor relies heavily on their judgement and on responses that are impossible to quantify or codify (1991: 310).

The study found that editors' creative contribution gives them authority in the relationship through showing a deep understanding of the work and of the author's project (articulated by four participant editors and through the edits of K.J. Taylor's works). Participant author Jonquil indicated that an emotional, personal response was essential:

I think that the person-to-person relationship that you have is quite intuitive, but you can have almost a purely intellectual or aesthetic relationship with someone and they really know how to give a technical edit, and they do know how to do their job, but there's no passion at the other end. And I think that's fine, as long as they don't do any damage, but I think it's never as productive a relationship.

An editor with whom she worked with over several books was '[r]eally engaged with the work and really careful and ... found things that I was really grateful for. And didn't just correct ... this was much more of a collaborative process about improving the ... quality and coherence of the sentences and the voice and all of those kind of things.' Famed editor Max Perkins' genius came from his advice on structure and character presentation [which came from a deep understanding of] his authors and their work' (Fenstermaker 2013: 30).

### 3.3.2 Involvement from an early stage

An author's development of a work of fiction in isolation was discussed by three author participants who agreed that it could impede their objectivity and impact the take-up of the edit. Being involved from the beginning was valuable, allowing the editor to take some responsibility for it, as Todd affirms, 'when there is still time for influence' (Kidder & Todd 2013:165). Speck also notes that if an editor becomes involved too late in the process, a writer may become too bonded to it (1991: 311). Participant author Alice stated that her creative process was solitary: 'My first two books took me four years to write and then another two

years to edit to a degree that I was happy with, and then another year of trying to find someone'.

Alice noted that she reacted badly to the edit. Writing something to an end point, when an author can become wedded to their form and structure, can precipitate what one experienced participant author labelled an 'artistic crisis'. This participant noted that she wrote four or five complete drafts before submitting to an editor, and:

I won't show it to anyone until it's finished. Finished! Subjective thing! The more you're alone with it the more you're having a kind of Gollum conversation with yourself, you know, '*My precious*', the more difficult it becomes to separate from it and to give it over.

Given this, it could be argued that an author's artistic crisis can result in a diminution of the editor's expertise in the eyes of the author and their confirmation that they should prevail in contested editorial issues (Blay 2017, Watson 2002, participant editors Robyn and Ben). Watson writes that an author who accedes to changes is not invested and therefore not 'responsible' (Watson 2002: n.p.). His view of a work of fiction as an inviolable construct is apparent, and downplays the value of editorial suggestion: 'when I write fiction, I find it very, very difficult to change something once I've put it down ... now I'm not changing *my* mind, I'm changing what somebody has said or what somebody has done ... So it seems as if there is a kind of permanence about fiction writing ... Maybe the other thing has to do with aesthetics: ... You've made the object, so why would you change it?' (Watson 2002: n.p.). An experienced participant author countered this view, respecting the relationship's collaboration:

[I]t is my work, it is my name on it, but there is this huge, huge input that the publisher and the editor and a workshop group if you're in one, all these people have their voice in it. So even if it's your name on the cover, I don't think many writers really work in that romantic isolation from other people's voices and inputs and if they do, they're probably fools ... And my sense is that their work would be better if they engage in a conversation with those other voices.

### 3.3.3 Editors as writers

Data from the practice-led project and the literature review showed that many editors are also writers. All participant editors in the study, not only those who were published authors, stated that writing of small links or bridging phrases – seamless insertions, in the writer’s style – to make sense of paragraphs that have been moved is a necessary part of the process. My practice with K.J. Taylor suggested new words in Track Changes.

The editor’s ability to get inside the creative process was demonstrated effectively by participants who were both authors and editors. Three participants – all published writers and editors in both commercial and independent publishing spheres – affirmed that they understood its demands first-hand and agreed that their multiple roles helped them grow, as writers and editors. One stated,

And what that means, in terms of my development as an editor, I have really appreciated having an editor who is also a writer who knows how hard it is for me to hand over my work, and so then when I have taken on that role as an editor and received someone else's work I remember that this is what worked for me, this was good for me and this was supportive and this reassurance and so I try to communicate the same thing to people I edit.

An example from the interviews illustrates this. Two participant editor/authors edited each other’s work. One stated that she had known that the other had been working for a long time on a particular problem in her book. When, during the edit, she reached that point, she indicated that as a writer she had:

an appreciation for how difficult that had been to write...I thought, ‘Oh ok. Now I know why you got stuck here!’ And as a writer as well I’m approaching this like, ‘How *would* you get out of this?’ And I could make some suggestions around like, this is how I felt as a reader ... approaching the book as a writer and editor and a reader.’

Interventions that went beyond suggested words or phrases and constructed new text was questioned by editors – what is their place in ‘co-authoring? Richard Todd believed not: ‘I’ve done it, but I don’t like to do it’ (Kidder & Todd 2013: 151). When Kidder responded that he

had taken many from him ‘in conversation’, he responded, ‘Well, conversation is one thing’ (Kidder & Todd 2013: 151). Their modus operandi, working side by side, allowed Todd to shape the text without writing in the margins, effectively pretending himself ‘out of the equation’ (Gleeson-White 2010: n.p.). Senior editor, Miriam, also rewrites the ‘sense’ from time to time but she suggests that when this occurs, she questions whether the author is able to address the issues herself: ‘I’m now wondering what her capacity is? Is she actually able to do the things she needs to do?’ Ben, a participant editor formerly in commercial publishing, takes re-writing on a case by case basis, noting the background of the author makes a difference with regard to their response to substantive redrafts.

One of my authors, really quite early on in my editorial experience, I just rewrote the whole last chapter of his book. I knew he wasn’t going to fix it as I’d already done a couple of rounds of edit with him, and I’d asked him to fix this thing, and he’d agreed with me. But he just wasn’t making it! So I just changed it. It was Tracked. And then he read the final version, and he said, ‘Oh, that’s much better, thank you!’ And I thought, it’s your first book, like how are you ok with this? ... He came from a kind of technology background, not humanities or arts. He had specific expertise he was bringing to his book, and that wasn’t one of them.

The experience of this study contradicts Watson’s claim (2002: n.p.) that in creative work, the author’s prose must be sufficient. The following example demonstrates an analysis of a single sentence that an editorial perspective contributes. A sentence construction jarred in the final book in K.J. Taylor’s trilogy: *And even though it looked nothing like what Red would have expected*. A number of different options were explored. First, *And even though it looked like nothing that Red would have expected* seemed smoother but in the second pass, I changed it back, the original words proved consistent with how Red thought and talked, knowledge gleaned over the edits of the first books in the series. Wanting to improve ‘*what Red would have*’, another option was to use a gerund: ‘*And even though it looked nothing like Red’s expectations*’. However, the author had used a conditional tense which cast doubt on whether Red had any expectations. A final option was to remove the ‘nothing’: *And even though it*

*didn't look like anything that Red would have expected* but the result was just as cumbersome. Looking at the action, and context and the value it added, I decided to ask the author to delete the line. I commented: 'Katie, I've thought long and hard about this line! Did he have any expectations? I feel it's a bit wordy and gets in the way of his response, which is what seems important.' She agreed, and it was removed.

**Reduction:** Editors use similar tools and strategies to engage authors in a learning experience about their practice on the page, and to instil confidence in their sensitivity to the creative journey.

## 4 Editor as partner: the creative collaboration

‘People are always talking about originality, but what do they mean? As soon as we are born, the world begins to work upon us, and this goes on to the end. What can we call our own except energy, strength and will?’ (Goethe in Gleeson-White 2010:: n.p.).

One of the study’s aims was to discover what constituted a productive relationship. Having already looked at three components of teaching that editors bring to the relationship: professional expertise, understanding of the creative process and objectivity, this chapter draws out themes identified in the literature review, in editing practice and from the interviews that led to the most productive working relationships across the different publishing models.

### 4.1 Time for the editor to engage fully with the work

The first theme identified as significant was time to allow the editor ‘deep engagement’ with the book (as identified by four participant editors and the literature). All participant editors noted that changes in the publishing industry across commercial and niche independent publishing models has compressed the traditional multi-stage editing process and thus the time allocated to the editor to engage with the book (Howard 1989: 360; Blay 2017: n.p.).

Participant author Jonquil is published by smaller niche publishing houses and her experience is that twenty years ago, when she was first published, ‘there was a lot of time and space for the structural edit … lots of discursive space.’ Instead, in the contemporary publishing model, there is a ‘rush around that really fine editing … [that] results in bad decisions … and more obtrusive editing.’ Lyn , a participant author/editor, described commercial publishing as a ‘sausage factory’, mashing stories into a product before the author had found their purpose for writing – before they were ready. The relationship is harmed, exemplified by her experience working with a new author who was being pushed by a publisher ‘for cynical reasons’. The author–editor relationship became increasingly fragile. Lyn stated: ‘I felt that if I say the wrong thing, am I going to completely knock her off … so she can’t gather that purpose? You’ve got

to protect the author, the story as well, from this kind of venal horrible publishing monster that [says] “Well, I’ll have that” and just chucked it at the editor and said, “You make it work.” Supporting this, a senior editor participant from commercial publishing asserted that when the editor is given insufficient time or resources to deeply engage with the book, the author’s receptivity to the edit can be damaged. She cited authors who say ‘They just haven’t read the book properly’, ‘They didn’t understand’, ‘They didn’t get it.’ In this model, editors will usually meet with the author before acquisition to discuss the author’s vision but Annabel Blay notes that the author’s agreement can be tainted by the power imbalance where they will agree to whatever vision the editor/publisher proposes because they are eager for publication (2017: 14).

In commercial publishing, Miriam, senior editor, suggested that pressures caused by a publishing schedule, or mismatch of editor assigned to the book, can impede the development of a good relationship: ‘[W]hat you would hope … was that you would have an ongoing relationship with your authors so you, as the publisher, were having input into those early drafts; that it was a creative relationship, talking about ideas’. This is reinforced by Betsey Lerner who writes that publishing houses no longer mentor authors over six or seven books, but only one, or two (Lerner in Ginna 2013: 71). She suggests that the editorial role has been partially colonised by agents, a role she moved into when she left her role as an in-house editor in a major literary publishing house. As some agents may be responsible for the first significant edit of an author’s book, helping craft the vision (Blay 2017), the editor’s role in nurturing an author can be seen to continue, albeit in a different form. Author participant Lyn described a deeply nurturing relationship with an agent that she ended because she felt her voice, her ‘daring’, needed to grow and change and was hindered by this agent’s stalwart support of her earlier work. The agent’s roles in both wanting to sell her work and to develop her as a writer ultimately conflicted.

Ben, a senior editor and publishing consultant, confirmed this position that publishers may want to stay with a trusted formula. He stated, ‘I do think that it is a really, really common in traditional publishing houses that books, particularly with really successful authors, by the time they actually deliver, you don’t have enough time to do a proper edit.’ He further noted that ‘working in-house, the turnarounds were so tight that even if you really liked the book … there was no room to do more work, and the author just had to deliver and if it wasn’t good enough, then it just got published.’ Miriam, senior editor participant, goes further in saying that some publishing houses provide no editing at all. Now working independently, she edits manuscripts for authors before they approach a publisher. These clients are experienced but she confirmed that younger, first time authors ‘would have no idea’ about this editorial gap and would assume, once their book was acquired, that they would be supported throughout the process.

Anna, an independent self-publisher and editor, contrasts the experiences, stating ‘the good thing about indie publishing … is that you do have some control. I’ve heard the horror stories.’ She indicated that her editorial style is different, telling clients: ‘The way that I work is like, “You do the writing, I’ll go through the edits, and you can participate as much or as little as you like.” I’m cool with that.’ Ben, editor and independent self-publishing consultant, corroborates this: ‘timeframes are much more open-ended because the author wants it to be right. That’s one of the benefits.’ These two participants who work with independent self-publishing authors make themselves available to discuss the edit, and do a second round if sought. Independently published author participant, Alice, compared the depth of her involvement in the edit and production of her independently published to her understanding of a large publishing house: ‘I would have died! Everything that I wanted, I either would have had to compromise or I wouldn’t have had any say. It would have all happened behind closed doors.’ Experienced, commercially successful author, Lyn published her seventh novel

independently, unwilling to alter her story to accord with her publisher's ideas of marketability or wait for its publishing schedule to find space for it.

Black Phoenix Publishing Collective, which published the trilogy in the practice component, is a small, independent publisher run by a team of graduate students and staff from the University of Southern Queensland. It aims to maintain close ties with its authors in a way that K.J. Taylor acknowledged was less possible in commercial publishing. Of an earlier experience in the commercial publishing model, she advised that, 'oftentimes, you don't communicate with the editor, instead it comes through a third party ... I haven't even known the name of the person which was unfortunate in one case, because the editor was terrible.'

#### 4.2 Willingness for the author to participate in the editorial process

The data from participants, further corroborated by the literature on the field, revealed that the author's willingness or ability to learn from the editing process, the second theme, is crucial to a productive relationship, and is something that editors look for (Kidder & Todd 2013, Blay 2017, Gleeson-White 2010, Schmidt 1990).

Senior editor participant, Miriam corroborates this: 'the author has an obligation to ... consider what the editor is saying, rather than just 'handing over the manuscript'. She adds: 'With creative work, the author has to be engaged, or why are they doing it? ... The author that just sits back and says, "Whatever you think," makes the job easier in some ways, but it's a bit disheartening.' Ben, participant editor, also saw this willingness as pivotal to building a trusting relationship. He posits, 'I think authors should approach the editorial experience as a learning experience. As well as fixing that individual book. That's why I do think it's important to be able to communicate what is wrong with the sentence, more than just fixing it.' He talked about 'lazy authors' who were reluctant to learn from the process, or redraft on editorial advice, citing one example of an author whose inability to engage with his previous edits resulted in the same

problems emerging repeatedly in each new book. She did not revisit earlier drafts of her previous novels.

As one commentator advises, engagement does not necessarily mean agreement (Schmidt 1990). Schmidt proposes that writers listen carefully to suggestions (1990: 14) and if they feel these changes alter the meaning or undermine the artistic integrity of the their work, and they cannot agree with them, then they can reject them but it is important to think about it (1990: n.p.). Another writer, Walt Crawford, notes that ‘every prose writer in every field … can benefit from judicious editing (2003: 35), further noting that, even if it is ‘egregiously wrongheaded, consider the reasons for the suggestions’ (2003: 37). He also raises the question of judgement, discussed in Part 3 of this dissertation on the creative process, positing that ‘[m]ost of the time “wrong” is a value judgment. Unless your first Pulitzer or Nobel Prize is sitting on your mantel, consider the possibility that the editor may be right’ (Crawford 2003: 39). And even then, Tracey Kidder with his Pulitzer (Kidder & Todd 2013) and Toni Morrison with her Nobel appreciated their editors’ input. Morrison’s editor, Robert Gottlieb, reported her saying, ‘He uses commas grammatically. I deploy them musically. He usually wins’ (quoted in Alter 2016: n.p.). Tracey Kidder, a creative non-fiction author of multiple books, asserts that ‘writing is revision. All prose responds to work.’ (Kidder & Todd. 2013: xviii)

Participant authors stated in the interviews that this learning, and a more productive experience, is assisted by allowing time to process the edit. When editor Richard Todd deemed something ‘confusing’ and sent it back to the author, Tracey Kidder writes in their co-authored memoir that he wanted to scream, ‘Your reading is obtuse!’ (Kidder & Todd 2013: 139). Todd and Kidder resolved this by talking at length over many telephone conversations. Lyn, an author of seven novels, always reacts this way at first. However, rather than thinking the editor was wrong, she said she felt exposed. Her reaction was immediate: ‘You get the editorial report and it’s always [sharp intake of breath], how dare you say Chapter 3 was boring. How dare you

criticise my child!' Lyn changed the way she dealt with the criticism by putting time and space between her and the editor, and the process, walking away, coming back and reengaging. 'And then you hose yourself down, and think "Of course" ... And I think that's pretty normal.' Author Jonquil has learnt, over time, that her defensiveness was a signal that she was over-investing in the work and to recognise that she needed to take a different approach:

I think often [defensiveness] comes out through insecurity and, you know, that kind of ego state, that kind of insecure space where you say, I don't what you're doing, and I don't know how to fix it, and I've already tried, and it's too hard, and it's really defeatist. So what works for me then is to go, "Ok this is where the challenge is. This is where I have to grow as a writer and a human being." You need to feed what the editor, and therefore the universe, has presented you with. This opportunity for growth. And really grapple with it that way, an opportunity.

These are experienced authors and these contributions to the study validate the need for sufficient time for the author and editor to engage in the edit, supporting the first theme. The literature and the practice components indicated that editors value authors' willingness to learn technical aspects. Harriet Rubin posits that writers needed to become better self-editors (2007: 58). Participant author/editor Lyn was infuriated by authors who refused to learn, who continued to display the same 'foibles' over and over: 'Why can't you pay more attention to your spelling and punctuation! Why are you leaving it up to your handmaiden? There's no reason not to learn these things.' Participants found this was more often the case with formulaic mass market authors. Three participant editors with experience in commercial publishing point to older, established authors particularly, who have it 'down pat' and are 'just churning out the next story. It's just laziness!'

#### 4.3 Respect for the publishing context

According to Speck, authors' respect for the publisher's risk is subverted by assumption that they have greater authority (1991: 305) but 'writing is not the same as being published' (Brett

2011: n.p.). This difference constitutes the third theme. In commercial publishing, the publisher bears the risk (Robyn, participant editor/publisher; Pietsch in Ginna 2017: 121). A senior editor participant, Miriam, states that this becomes extremely difficult when an author will not accede to a change. While the publisher or the editor may have the authority if they're paying the author royalties, they cannot make the changes without the author's imprimatur.

Are you going to publish something that's not the best book it can be? And that's very hard. The company's paid an advance, money's been spent, are you going to cancel because Chapter Four is a real dog? It's particularly difficult if you're working with someone with a track record and they've been successful to some degree or another but they've had bad experience with editors, who are overly interventionist, who are not on their wavelength. That's very hard. You're going into a situation where you're automatically being viewed with suspicion.

Miriam recounted a case where a contract was cancelled. In response to structural queries by the editor, the author unrolled a spreadsheet of the entire novel where she had allocated a final placement of every section, indicating no capacity or inclination to change. Ben, senior editor, corroborated this, stating that if an author reacted very strongly to a structural edit, the publisher can pull the contract or insist on a disclaimer at the front of the book.

In niche independent publishing, senior editor and publisher Robyn published a writer who had not accepted some of her significant suggestions. For a slew of cultural and historical reasons, she did not want the book to open a particular way, but 'he would not be moved.' An endorsement blurb was then withdrawn and the work was not as well-received as she had hoped. She indicated in another example that a senior editor disclosed that her company published a writer who chose not to engage with the editorial advice from two editors in her publishing house. The book's first review echoed the editors' observations. Despite professing that the author is 'always right', she commented that an author has a responsibility to respect the editor's judgement, if they want to be published by this model. Her experience is that an author's expectations can be profoundly unrealistic, and need to be re-thought before signing

an agreement, citing one who sent back a contract because it did not include a clause for film rights. In another example, an editor and publisher, also spoke of authors who came to the relationship, entering into contracts, with the view that she was a glorified printer: ‘they come along ... either with their own graphic artist for the cover, or they’ve done it themselves ... and they really just want the imprint.’

#### 4.4 A mature relationship

The interviews and literature review identified editors and authors engaging fully with the editorial process, and with each other, using a respectful approach that featured praise, constructive feedback and a shared vision. Several participants compared the author–editor relationship with an intimate partnership. One author participant, Jonquil, stated:

When you fight, you’re on opposite sides of the table, in your life, and wanting to pull things to your side...the thing to do is to kind of come around and sit on the same side of the table. And I really like that image of sitting next to each other, working together and I think the cordiality that the ideal editing–writer relationship is to me is being on the same side of the table.

Jonquil and her editor worked together for weeks at a time, over meals, at each other’s houses, literally on the ‘same side of the table.’ An editor commentator notes ‘[l]ike marriage, it requires, at the core, mutual respect. If that core feeling begins to waver, the relationship is in trouble and can affect manuscripts’ (Brady 2002: n.p.).

A psychotherapist in couples’ therapy, Marie-Pierre Cleret, states that a strength of a successful intimate partnership is wanting the best for each other (Cleret 2018). She cites the work of the Gottman Institute in its scientific, data-driven analysis (Gottman 2018). They identify trust and commitment as pillars of a healthy relationship (Gottman 2018). Trust is named explicitly by four editor and author participants in the study as essential. Other characteristics applicable to author–editor relationships are sharing admiration (expressing respect), a positive approach to problem-solving, managing conflict, and creating shared

meaning (understanding important visions, narratives). These were all attributes of a mature relationship identified by Gottman (2018).

Commitment, a further element of the Gottman analysis, is defined as nurturing positive qualities over a lifelong journey (Gottman 2018). All participants discussed the opportunities for growth in a productive relationship and the study demonstrated that such a relationship between an author and an editor can grow over time, allowing the writer to grow as well. This analysis compares with a relationship where power is secret (Gleeson-White 2010) and closely guarded, or which infantilises one party (Lerner in Ginna 2017: 74). Author/editor participant Lyn notes: ‘[n]ormal and good human relationships [are those] where you can be honest with each other on that level of being able to say, “Well, we’ve had this disagreement about this but we still not only respect each other, but we respect what the other one is trying to do.”’

The converse is the infantilised relationship (Lerner 2017: 74). Perpetuating ignorance of an editor’s craft can result in authors responding as ‘babies or belligerent toddlers who have been infantilized by the publisher (Lerner 2017: 74). This is ultimately harmful to the writer’s ability to improve their writing and any ongoing relationship with editors (Speck 1991; Gleeson-White; Crawford 2003). A secret editorial process absolves the publishing industry of explaining editorial and publishing decisions or developing authors and manuscripts (Lerner 2017: 74). Lerner notes that ‘it became clear to me that publishers largely felt that the less the authors knew the better’ (2017: 74). Lerner says that an editor working in a large publishing house will be working on more than one acquisition at a time, and editors will fight for their attention, competing for ‘love’ (2017: 72). She suggests that authors often persist in a damaging fantasy that the editor stands between them and greatness: ‘[n]o matter how disenchanted a writer may become, every one I’ve ever met [is] hoping for the editor who will pluck you from obscurity’ (2017: 70).

#### 4.5 Clear expectations and an understanding of the editorial process

Just as editors are obliged to understand the creative process (as outlined in Chapter 3), the study found that authors' understanding of the editorial role is equally necessary for a productive relationship. This is the final identified theme. The secrecy surrounding editing, especially in the commercial publishing environment, precludes transparent discussion of the process (Speck 1991; Gleeson-White 2010; Howard 1989; Lerner 2013; Alter 2016; Blay 2017; Kent 1996) and can lead to a mismatch in expectations.

Two participant editors in the independent publishing context asserted that disclosure of the process with their client authors resulted in a better understanding of the process, improved the authors' expectations of the edit and receptivity and led to a better outcome. For instance, editor and independent publisher Anna stated that an author client may not know exactly what a 'full structural edit, with lots of comments' constitutes, so she pre-empts misunderstandings by explaining the process with the author beforehand. She asks 'What do you want from the edit?' and advises clients what to expect from a marked-up manuscript. She takes a two stage approach, gaining the trust of the author over the structural edit, then changing the smaller things once the manuscript has been worked through with the author. She noted that when they reach that point, she advises them: 'Ok, time now for formatting. We're going to change these to single quotation marks', for instance, raising publishing standards that may be unfamiliar to a new author. Speck suggests that an editor's differentiation between 'necessary changes' justified through authoritative sources, and the 'more substantive editing problems that would require greater judgment and closer collaboration with the author' (1991: 310) is useful in managing the relationship.

Growth and trust in the relationship was seen to flow from this increased understanding of the editing process which is optimised over a longer collaboration. As a young author, Alice stated that seeing the edits of her first two books – which, under editor and independent

publisher Anna's hand, became two books – and then her third, gave her the confidence in Anna's abilities to leave her fourth book with her at a much earlier stage. 'I want a harder edit than what she's done with the previous three which got to be quite polished. And ... there's so many people I meet who are waiting for book four! So I'm going to do my rewrite and my edit and then it's pretty much going to go straight to Anna!' Jane Gleeson-White corroborates that the author–editor relationship produces the best outcomes over a longer process, allowing both parties to fully understand each other (2010: n.p.).

Editor and independent publishing consultant Ben was unequivocal about the benefits of having a long relationship between an author and an editor, over multiple books. He stated, 'I think the trust builds as long as you keep challenging the author. And [the author] is engaged with the process in terms of making the book better.' For instance when editing an author with whom he had a trusted relationship, Ben thought a plot line was weak and suggested a major change:

[A]nd to this day, it is the one that stands out to me as a big ask...I remember him being very, very shocked but I also remember him thinking it was great, and he worked with it, and it definitely made the book better...You can raise the stakes and make the authors fall in love with their own work again.

Jonquil, author participant agrees that the relationship where this understanding can be teased out together is the most productive. Author/editor Lyn describes the trust that comes from familiarity: 'It's about walking up the street with your skirt tucked into your pants at the back ... and your editor coming along and pulling your skirt down for you. It's about self-respect as well. To put out your best self that you can possibly put out there.'

In my own editing practice, my increased familiarity with K.J. Taylor helped me understand how we could improve the relationship and how far I could 'push her'. Taylor noted, 'It's good to have the same editor for the same series. I wasn't bothered by your tone, it was comfortable, and I think we both came to the same decisions on things, that more

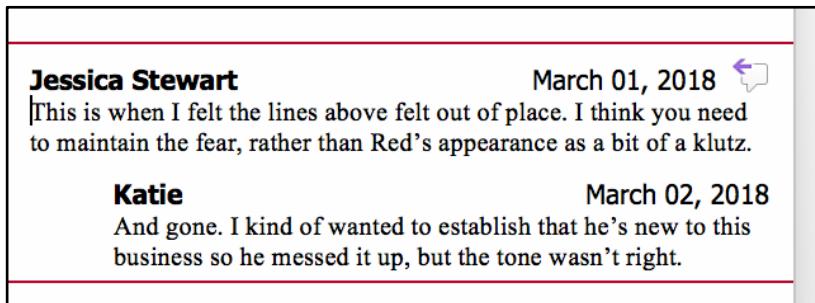
comfortable stage.' I showed my engagement with the text with comments and questions throughout, opening up the possibility of a dialogue with the author and the edits over this time reveal that I became more candid (Figures 21 and 22).

Figure 21 *The Silent Guard* p.258

So here's what you're gonna do. You're gonna take your armies, all of 'em, an' you're gonna leave. You're gonna go back to the North, an' you're never comin' back. An' if you don't do it, an' fast, I'm gonna make you suffer.'

Caedmon did not try and argue. He had seen Red's eyes, and that was all the proof he needed. They were Arenadd's eyes now, and Saeddyn's. The eyes of a dead man.

Figure 22 *an exchange demonstrating trust*



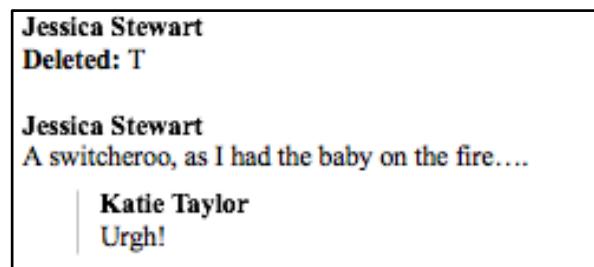
Figures 23 and 24 show that as I grew in understanding of her style and vision, and sense of humour, we became more relaxed.

Figure 23 from *The Cursed Guard*

Beyond them was Liantha's bedroom, as expected, nicely furnished but not overly luxurious. New Eagleholm was not a wealthy city. There was a bed over by one wall, and a fireplace, and the floor was covered by thick animal hides. Near the fire, there was a table and, on it, the baby was in a basket, still crying.

Red might have pulled back then, or gone into the shadows to investigate further, but

Figure 24 a humorous exchange



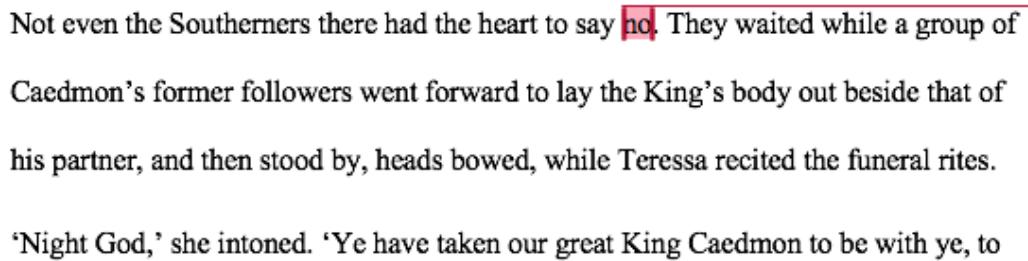
Jessica Stewart  
Deleted: T

Jessica Stewart  
A switcheroo, as I had the baby on the fire....

Katie Taylor  
Urgh!

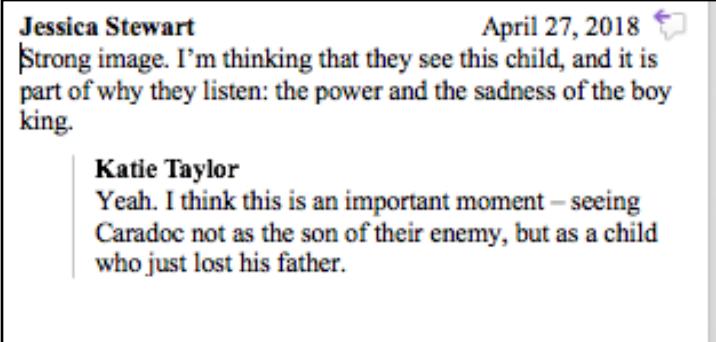
The collaboration was rich because she responded with generosity and openness (Figures 25 and 26). The author accepted many, almost all, suggestions.

Figure 25 From *The Cursed Guard*



Not even the Southerners there had the heart to say no. They waited while a group of Caedmon's former followers went forward to lay the King's body out beside that of his partner, and then stood by, heads bowed, while Teressa recited the funeral rites. 'Night God,' she intoned. 'Ye have taken our great King Caedmon to be with ye, to

Figure 26 an exchange demonstrating engagement



Jessica Stewart April 27, 2018 

Strong image. I'm thinking that they see this child, and it is part of why they listen: the power and the sadness of the boy king.

Katie Taylor

Yeah. I think this is an important moment – seeing Caradoc not as the son of their enemy, but as a child who just lost his father.

**Reduction:** Authors and editors are harmed by a power construct that withholds information, failing to treat them as independent matures. Knowledge of the editing process increases necessary receptivity and engagement; ignorance leads to fear.

## 5 Conclusion – Neonarrative: the creative collaboration

The study found that the skills brought to editing a publishable work are not mysterious. An editors' contribution is verifiable through multiple different tools which demonstrate their expertise. While teaching and learning are integral to the editing process, participants in the study, and the literature review, suggest that this analogy alone does not encourage respect for the process by all participants. Jane Gleeson-White suggests that the idea of editor as teacher may contribute to the myth of the author as sole creator (2010: n.p.). Gleeson-White argues, 'I think the author–editor relationship is mimicked or foreshadowed at school and uni in the teacher's interaction with our writing' which accepts input without acknowledgement or 'visible recognition' (quoted in Aranjuez 2017: n.p.).

Famous American editor Maxwell Perkins went so far as to say, 'An editor does not add to a book. At best he serves as a handmaiden to an author ... an editor at most releases energy. He creates nothing' (quoted in Fenstermaker 2013: 23). The pervasive secrecy around the author–editor relationship can be seen to be a consequence of a harmful power construct supported by an author's misplaced preservation of their authority. Mandy Brett asks, 'why should it be a breach of trust to acknowledge the segue from individual creation to collaborative finishing that occurs in most fiction?' (2011: n.p.).

Gleeson-White reflects on Beatrice Davies' famous description of the editor: 'I don't think our invisible mending model serves anyone, including writers ... [Editors] are mostly treated like shit. Poorly paid and never acknowledged, always blamed when things go wrong ... the secrecy and guardedness [of book editing] is doing the sort of damage that's done to anyone forced into secrecy ... paranoia, depression' (Gleeson-White 2010: n.p.). Participants in this study demonstrated that authors' fear of the process could be inhibiting and close off the creative process, whereas when there is open dialogue and respect, ignorance and fear can be

replaced with a genuine creative collaboration – a relationship where the skills are complementary, both parties acknowledging the process and engaging with it throughout the edit. This serves the interests of not only the author, building trust and opportunities for growth, but the publisher and the reader also.

A more apt term for the author–editor relationship is partnership, one discussed at length by Bruce Speck in his 1991 analysis of authority in the relationship. Speck suggests that ‘both authors and editors could work more effectively if they openly recognized that text-production is a collaborative effort in which different yet similar talents are used in the service of a common goal’ (1991: 305). When writers recognise the collaborative opportunity offered by the editing process as a mature, equal relationship, they can use it to take them further.

Frustratingly, more than three decades after Speck’s contribution to our understanding of author–editor relationships, a view of editors as partners remains poorly acknowledged. This study will address that lack of acknowledgement to a degree, and hopefully lay the ground for future research on the topic.

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## 7 Appendices

### 7.1 Appendix A Confidentiality and consent agreement with K.J.Taylor

I am completing a study as part of a Masters degree at the University of Southern Queensland with the help of a number of professional editors, published authors, and publishers. I am looking to gain a deeper understanding of how an editor and an author work together to produce a publishable manuscript.

As the author of the novels (The Southern Star Trilogy) which I will examine as part of the practice-led project, I seek your permission to discuss the editing process between you and I in my exegesis with direct references to sections of the edited manuscripts which will become appendices.

I also will be conducting unstructured interviews with participants where I will ask you to respond to a number of issues. These will involve reflections on your practice and art, relevant in helping develop an understanding of how the editing process works. Please answer these as fully as possible, raising any detail or experience that you feel is relevant.

Your responses will be recorded on my iphone and I will show you the transcript for your approval, along with the transcripts of our earlier conversations and emails, my journal over the editing process, and any other material I have gathered and intend to use. You will have the right to redact anything before I submit the exegesis and appendices at the end of 2018.

I will sign the agreement below which is my assurance that I will seek your permission to use any material collected in this research and ask that you also sign the agreement indicating your understanding of the process and giving your consent to participate and be interviewed for the purposes of this study.

Jessica Stewart

KJ Taylor

## 7.2 Appendix B Letter to participant authors and editors

### **Confidentiality and consent agreement and background to study**

I am completing a study as part of a Masters degree at the University of Southern Queensland with the help of a number of professional editors, published authors, and publishers. I am looking to gain a deeper understanding of how an editor and an author work together to produce a publishable manuscript.

As a participant, you will be asked to respond to a number of issues. These will involve reflections on your practice and art, relevant in helping develop an understanding of how the editing process works. Please answer these as fully as possible, raising any detail or experience that you feel is relevant.

Your responses will be recorded on my iphone and I assure you of confidentiality. Your name will only be known to me and I will allocate a code name to you, or you can choose one, which I will use in the transcript and any document resulting from the interview.

I will confirm the accuracy of your meaning by giving you the transcript of the interview when I make it, for you to approve. I anticipate that an interview will take approximately one hour.

I will sign the agreement below which is my assurance of the confidentiality of all the material collected in this interview and ask that you also sign the agreement indicating your understanding of the confidentiality provided and giving your consent to be interviewed for the purposes of this study.

INTERVIEWER

PARTICIPANT

## 7.3 Appendix C Consent form for USQ Research Project Interview

 UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA	<b>University of Southern Queensland</b>							
<b>Consent Form for USQ Research Project Interview</b>								
<b>Project Details</b>								
<table border="1"><tr><td style="width: 30%;">Title of Project:</td><td colspan="2">Lay down your guns: how authors and editors navigate ego, ownership and the creative process in publishing fiction</td></tr><tr><td>Human Research Ethics Approval Number:</td><td colspan="2">USQ H17REA259</td></tr></table>			Title of Project:	Lay down your guns: how authors and editors navigate ego, ownership and the creative process in publishing fiction		Human Research Ethics Approval Number:	USQ H17REA259	
Title of Project:	Lay down your guns: how authors and editors navigate ego, ownership and the creative process in publishing fiction							
Human Research Ethics Approval Number:	USQ H17REA259							
<b>Research Team Contact Details</b>								
<b>Principal Investigator Details</b>		<b>Other Investigator/Supervisor Details</b>						
<p>Ms Jessica Stewart Email: U1075092@umail.usq.edu.au Telephone: (02) 9802 2257 Mobile: (0409) 923 287</p>		<p>Dr Dallas Baker Email: Dallas.Baker@usq.edu.au Telephone: (07) 4631 5370 Mobile: 0477 994 672</p>						
<b>Statement of Consent</b>								
<p><b>By signing below, you are indicating that you:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.</li><li>• Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.</li><li>• Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team.</li><li>• Understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.</li><li>• Understand that you can contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email <a href="mailto:ethics@usq.edu.au">ethics@usq.edu.au</a> if you do have any concern or complaint about the ethical conduct of this project.</li><li>• Are over 18 years of age.</li><li>• Agree to participate in the project.</li></ul>								
Participant Name								
Participant Signature								
Date								

**Please return this sheet to a Research Team member prior to undertaking the interview.**

## 7.4 Appendix D Style Sheet – Southern Star series, K.J.Taylor

### Style Notes

- Macquarie Dictionary, Australian spelling
- irregular verb endings standardised 't', as Australian usage (dreamt, leapt, learnt, burnt) not 'ed' (except 'leaned')

### Punctuation

- Semi-colons mainly used to separate two complex clauses (in place of full stops), otherwise commas
- Single space after full stop
- double quote marks for emphasis and quoted speech; single for speech
- hyphens added for all adjectival compounds
- unspaced em dash for discontinued speech (replacing hyphens)
- spaced en dash for parenthetical use (double) and for emphasis (single)
- 'nor', when following 'neither'
- Ellipsis, 3-dot, unspaced (...), and used within and at end of sentences
- Preference for commas, dashes and full stops in speech over semi-colons and colons (used for lists only)

### Headings and breaks

- Chapter heading (Styles Pane)
- Text breaks (\*) centred; not at chapter endings

### Capitalisation

- Eyrie
- north/northward (lc adjectival);
- Northerner/the North (uc, noun); Northern blood etc (uc adj)
- Empire (uc)
- unpartnered (lc adj); Unpartnered (uc n)
- the Council (uc n), council members (lc adj)

A Among (except relating to groups, eg amongst themselves) arse Aotea Alaric Amorani Lady Ahamay Arenadd Taranisäii Arwydd	B build-up bed-roll	C Ceinwen Cadfael Caedmon Caradoc Cymria	D Dreamt Danthirk
E Eyrie (uc) Eagleholm (New and Old) Ekra	F Flell	G Grephe (changed italicis into standard) Gwernyfed	H Half-sister Half-brother halfway

Erian Rannagonson Ereska Essh Elthan			
I In-between Inge Iraka Isleen Instabahn	J	K Kraego Kullervo	L Leaned Leapt Lean-to Liranwee Liantha Laela Taranisäii Leolin
M Marketplace Moustache Malvern Maijan Merca Morgan	N No-one Nelwlyn	O okay	P
Q	R Rannagon Rukeera	S Saeddryn Senneck Serraka	T towards (Aust usage, not toward) Thank you Thank ye  Taranis Teressa Thark Tototl
U	V	W While Warwick Withypool Wylam	XYZ Xanthium Ymazu Zaerih