

## The Dark Would Curriculum Vitae

The Dark Would is a collaborative and transdisciplinary teaching and learning project which was established in May 2014 and is based at the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning (IATL) at the University of Warwick.

The project seeks to develop new pedagogies and teaching spaces which are informed by an awareness of the relationship between form and content in teaching, interrogating how learning environments shape the learning experience - and vice versa.

To facilitate investigation, a physical installation – also referred to as The Dark Would – has been created. The installation allows experimentation with spaces and how it can transform users as well as challenge traditional forms of teaching and learning.

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- Teaching and learning connected to the curriculum;
- Workshops and conference papers in the UK and internationally;
- Events;
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### **Teaching and learning connected to the curriculum**

TDW has been successfully integrated into the IATL module 'Applied Imagination', leading to positive student feedback and student outcomes.

2014 - [Applied Imagination](#) (Naomi de la Tour; Phil Gaydon)  
2015

In the initial stages of TDW's development, the convenors of Applied Imagination used the space for a session; it was so successful that they repeated it in the following academic year and intend to do so again. The aim was to give the students a space in which they could explore their imagination in a creative, embodied way. The students' feedback directly informed the development of TDW's key principles:

#### *Challenge and dis/comfort*

"The first time I entered the space, I knew no one within it. This was creatively beneficial as I was alone with my thoughts, and could concentrate on the imaginative tasks. Entering an unknown space filled with strangers was daunting; this vulnerability was healthy as I felt alert and aware of the possibilities of the space."

#### *A direct relationship between learning spaces and students' learning*

"It was interesting to see how people in different subjects seemed to immediately gravitate to exercises that fitted their subject... It made me initially start thinking

we are pre-disposed to certain types of creativity or at least we prefer that which we are better trained to. This is where I first started exploring my theories of where creativity comes from, if it is something intrinsic or something we learn for ourselves."

*A childlike approach to problems can reveal hidden nuances and complexities*

"[TDW] fascinated me because for once, we had to think for ourselves due to the limited amount of instructions given at each creativity station; which made me think, are we ALWAYS instructed on how to think? I was baffled at first by the room, but also excited by the unexpected freedom. Each creativity station was also very childlike in nature, which made me think perhaps childhood is the main time in our lives when we have the most freedom to think creatively; in adulthood we live in a world of direction and right or wrong."

*Embodied 'whole-person' experiences can enhance learning*

"I found this session to be a very different way of learning. Prior to the session all my learning experiences had been very formal, consisting of lectures and labs. This session adopted an informal approach in a small group setting, which made it feel very intimate, and I was made to feel comfortable expressing my opinions and ideas. The session also allowed me to gain a new perspective of different ways of understanding concepts through participation, feel and touch."

The convenors found using the space for teaching was a good opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of alternative spaces in pedagogy in relation to different students, particularly in terms of learning styles and disabilities.

### **Workshop/conference papers**

The TDW team have delivered practical and interactive sessions in the UK and overseas, disseminating their scholarship to an international audience and using each opportunity to develop their practice.

#### *In the UK*

December 2014     National Centre for Coordinating Public Engagement Conference: 'Research Stories' (Amy Clarke; Dr Rebecca Fisher)

TDW was offered as an 'encounter' session on the first evening of the conference, and was open to all conference participants. This iteration of TDW was designed to offer an opportunity to think about how the environment affects the way research is experienced and understood, and was in itself offered as an example of an embodiment of our research into innovative pedagogy.

The profile of IATL and TDW was increased through participation in a national conference with hundreds of delegates from all over the world. The conference also provided an opportunity to test TDW with a new audience (academics interested in public engagement) and a new purpose (reflecting

on public engagement techniques), which in turn pushed forward discussions of the essential parts of TDW. For example, the campfire/storytelling area had a real practical application for these particular participants, and was the most popular, which suggests that there needs to be an element of purpose and 'usefulness' somewhere within the space. The crafting materials were well-used and created an energetic and fun environment, but in hindsight we needed to connect these activities more explicitly to the overall purpose of the activity. The event also offered challenges in terms of replicating TDW outside the studio, particularly in a venue without studio lighting and the ability to hang objects from the ceiling: the two outcomes of this challenge were (1) to realise that each iteration does not - cannot - replicate the previous one, but must adapt to the new surroundings and participants; and (2) that more work needs to be done on identifying the essential aspects of TDW that cut across the restrictions and needs of different venues and participants.

Participants expressed their pleasure in seeing "people feeling differently and so thinking differently" and having "the space to think and be creative", positing that TDW "could stimulate imagination in the most beige person".

May 2015 Teachers' Conference: 'Pedagogic Innovations' (Phil Gaydon, Amy Clarke)

Workshop for attendees of the Teachers' Conference (an event organised by the WP and Recruitment teams in SROAS), focusing on pedagogic innovation in schools and IATL's experimental transdisciplinary teaching space, The Dark Would.

The session used props and tasks from The Dark Would to communicate IATL's practices and principles to secondary school teachers and helped participants to develop a greater understanding of movement between different stages of university and the barriers that might prevent this movement. Feedback was positive, with visitors commenting that TDW brought a sense of enchantment back to education that they felt was missing in 'normal' secondary and higher education settings and they discussed how they might do similar things in their own schools.

May 2015 Academic Registrars Council Timetabling Conference: 'Innovative spaces' (Dr Rebecca Fisher)

Delivered presentation on developing and using innovative learning space. The objective was to talk about IATL's work in this area in general, focusing on the Reinvention Centre, the CAPITAL Rehearsal Room, and the Ramphal redevelopment as case studies of pedagogy informing teaching space design. TDW was discussed in the Q&A as a future direction for study, and sparked further discussion of the ways in which spaces determine power in teaching. TDW booklets were circulated. Following the presentation, colleagues at Wolverhampton's new College for Learning and Teaching

visited Warwick to learn more about the spaces and the setting up of an IATL-like department.

Jan 2015 Warwick Innovations in Teaching talk (Naomi de la Tour, Phil Gaydon)

Gave a talk on TDW - both the [event](#) and role in [AI](#) - discussing student outcomes. A small version of TDW was built in the Teaching Grid. The video of this session is internally available on the [WIT website](#) and has been the most viewed entry in multiple months since being posted, clocking over 400 internal views.

July 2016 Ideas Lab V, Gregynog: 'What's Your Story?' (Phil Gaydon, Conor Heaney, Erzsebet Strausz)

Created space and delivered a presentation with 'Learning, Exchange, Play' creator Conor Heaney (see below) and Warwick PAIS Teaching Fellow Erzsebet Strausz. The space combined elements and tasks from TDW and LEP and challenged participants' assumptions concerning the hierarchies, learning, and general interactions that operate at the Ideas Lab summer school. Was delivered to an international audience of postgraduate students and academic staff and was followed by a two-hour seminar dedicated to discussing the space and presentation.

#### *International*

April 2016 American Philosophical Association, San Francisco: 'Philosophy Begins in Wonder' (Phil Gaydon)

Talk given on different pedagogical methods and spaces that can be using when teaching philosophy in HE - activities used during the talk, pictures, examples, were taken from The Dark Would event and underpinning theory. The Dark Would booklets were used and disseminated. Talk was presented to around 20 people - a mix of PhD students and academic staff. Most of these were members of the American Association of Philosophy Teachers.

The outcomes of this talk include: dissemination of ideas to an international and unfamiliar audience via practical activity and discussion; awareness raised of project at an international level.

#### **Events**

The team have delivered a wide range of internal and external events, disseminating scholarship, developing their practice, and creating opportunities for innovation.

#### *Internal*

June 2014 Alumni celebration, 'Becoming IATL' (IATL team)

IATL's biannual conference was used to celebrate the tenth anniversary of work in IATL and the CETLs (Reinvention Centre and the CAPITAL Centre).

The final evening session at the event was held in Robbie Foulston and Leah Eggleston's 'The Making Space', which Robbie and Leah created for their undergraduate dissertation in the department of Theatre Studies. It was anticipated that the space would be deconstructed at the end of the first day but such an interesting atmosphere had been formed it was decided that it would be kept in place for use in the second day sessions at this two-day event. Event attendees appeared to be stimulated by the environment and formed new techniques for tackling issues and explaining ideas.

The space showcased at this event was very much 'The Making Space' and a creation of Robbie Foulston and Leah Eggleston. However when the 'play space' that they created and set up for the evening session became the 'pedagogical space' used for workshop sessions on the second day it planted early seeds of the ideas of TDW and how ideas of play and transformation could be used in a teaching environment.

May 2015

TDW event (Amy Clarke, Dr Rebecca Fisher, Phil Gaydon, Naomi de la Tour)

Two-day conference on innovative pedagogies, interdisciplinarity, and teaching spaces. There were 76 attendees drawn from 32 departments, representing a range of administrative and academic roles, as well as under- and postgraduate students.

The event provided an opportunity for the TDW team to design a large-scale conference event that challenged, surprised, and stimulated change. The programme was kept deliberately vague to stimulate curiosity and a sense of wonder in the participants, and the session leaders were encouraged to offer sessions that were as interactive and embodied as possible. We also gave each participant learning journals that contained some guided reflections and space for their own notes, which represents an innovation in conference and event design.

The event offered a great opportunity to raise the profile of IATL and TDW: some sessions were offered by external speakers, the transformation of the space was facilitated by local creatives, and the panel discussion was chaired by Professor Christina Hughes.

Engaging with local artists and practitioners - set-designers, musicians, film-makers - provided us with opportunities to engage with different perspectives and types of knowledge and new ideas were formed as a result. For example musician Alex Miles played with ideas of power and permission in the space by allowing participants to interact with and transform it.

The second day of the conference was designed to offer an opportunity to make plans for future projects and research, and resulted in applications for IATL funded projects. An example of the feedback received after the event can be seen in Appendix Two. The event also received feedback from a colleague who wrote: "Thank you so much for inviting me into The Dark Would. I was sceptical of what I would get out of [the event] [...] I was unprepared for the path ahead. The Dark Would has renewed my passion for teaching - or rather, exploring with students. My year of teacher training gave me a toolkit and a map covered in warnings. "Do not enter." "Here be dragons." "This way to level 7.". Two days in The Dark Would gave me a backpack with survival essentials and a map covered in doodles. "Uncharted." "Goblins (friendly?)." "Last sighting of unicorn."

An output of the event was the booklet, which was an experiment in extrapolating the 'TDW experience' into a printed format.

August 2015 Warwick-Taiwan Summer School: 'Hopes and Dreams for the Future' (Dr Rebecca Fisher)

Set up a large scale campfire scene in the Humanities Studio for students on Warwick's Taiwan Summer School. The campfire was chosen as the most appropriate TDW 'zone' for reflection; the students were asked to discuss their experiences of the Summer School and how their dreams and hopes for the future might have been changed or somehow affected.

The students commented that they felt able - for the first time - to open up and discuss their experiences of education in Taiwan, exploring the extent to which they are permitted to make choices about their academic aspirations. This sense of freedom was created, in part, by the use of the informal, comfortable TDW setting, but also by the cumulative effect of the previous two weeks, which built a strong sense of cohort. This raises the question of the context of TDW: how do previous interactions that the students might have had with each other and 'non-traditional' teaching spaces affect their experience of TDW? Are their experiences more effective or positive when they have spent time together as a cohort previously? In this way this session can inform the development of teaching sessions that use TDW.

*Public*

August 2014 Young Writers' Workshop (Naomi de la Tour)  
TDW was set up in a compact form for a week in Milburn House for a group of young writers (11-19 years old) visiting the university for an outreach summer school in collaboration with the Warwick Writing Programme and the ACE portfolio organisation Writing West Midlands. This included teaching and learning activities, self-guided study for the

young writers and a performance at the end of the week which was open to the families and friends of the young writers.

The use of TDW materials in this context allowed for experimentation with different ways of deploying the concept and its use with children and young people in an environment in which the young writers were under close supervision (in contrast to the Festival of Imagination later on, which posed different challenges of access regarding access by children and young people). This was the first use of a form of TDW both in public engagement and in a teaching setting. It played a part in developing the concept of how space and environment can influence learning processes and outcomes and the use of space to give learners the opportunity to explore and shape an environment. 36 young writers from across the West Midlands engaged with the space across a week, which was used to support them in understanding writing and imaginative processes and how they might develop their own practice.

October 2014 UG Open Day (Amy Clarke; Dr Rebecca Fisher)

Hosted an IATL stand in the Open Day marketplace. We offered information and leaflets about IATL modules, funding, TDW, and support for students. There were some positive general outcomes from this activity, such as increased visibility with potential students and internally (for example, with departments such as SROAS). A useful outcome to note for IATL is that people unfamiliar with IATL need concise and clear explanations of why IATL is important to them.

More specifically for TDW, it was useful to discover that without knowledge of the context and purpose of TDW, the principles and embodiment of it are not that useful: because we couldn't inform visitors about TDW and how it works, they interpreted the stand on face value. That is, the saris and lights were read as crafty and frivolous, rather than a technique with a pedagogic goal. This raises interesting questions about perceived validity and trust, particularly in terms of how scaffolding can be used to reassure students/visitors to TDW that there is a solid academic and pedagogic foundation supporting the experience.

November 2014 PG Open Day (Amy Clarke; Dr Rebecca Fisher)

Hosted visitors to the Open Day in TDW, which was set up as a full-size installation in the Humanities Studio. The activities and challenges focused on asking visitors to imagine their futures, with the goal of helping them to consider PG opportunities in a creative way.

As with the UG Open Day, this activity allowed us to generate increased visibility with potential students and internally, and presented an

opportunity to test ways in which IATL can reach out to different audiences. There were small numbers of visitors, but they were fully engaged in the space. It was clear that having a defined purpose - i.e. considering PG study - offered some reassurance to the visitors as to the validity and 'worth' of the space.

October 2015 Festival of the Imagination (Amy Clarke; Dr Rebecca Fisher; Naomi de la Tour)

The TDW installation was set up for the 'Festival of the Imagination' to celebrate Warwick's 50th Anniversary. This two-day event brought a large number of people from a wide range of ages into the space which brought forward new challenges, particularly how we can use a 'childlike' teaching space for adults as a space to engage with children and the general public. In order to do this we had to re-think a number of sections within the space as well as the overall structure to ensure that it was accessible and safe.

TDW was visited by an unprecedented range and number of people over two days. When designing the space we were aware that people attending may have already seen earlier versions of TDW, and so we were keen to differentiate the space from earlier iterations. Furthermore, with a less explicit teaching/learning focus and increased exposure to the general public we focused on creating a striking aesthetic as well as populating the space with engaging and creative activities.

We embraced the seasons and heightened the feeling of nature within the space by introducing an abundance of autumn leaves which were scattered across the floor and hung from the ceiling. The setup for this iteration was incredibly labour intensive but the extra effort resulted in some wonderful feedback on the space. Light levels were an issue with such a broad audience as (knowing there would be children in the space) we increased the level of light in the room above the normal levels but there were still some younger visitors who felt unable to enter. The sections within the space were re-designed to make them larger, broader and more accessible and seemed to work well for the audience. The main difficulty was maintaining the aesthetic of the space so that new visitors arriving were able to get a full experience - whilst not detracting from the experiences of those already within TDW.

## **Publications**

A range of publications have allowed the team to increase the visibility of TDW and IATL.

December 2014 Poster: 'The Making Space is a Question, not an Answer' (Amy Clarke; Dr Rebecca Fisher, Naomi de la Tour, Phil Gaydon)



This poster was created to accompany TDW (which, in December 2014, was still being referred to as 'The Making Space') at the Engage conference. It explored key philosophies that were informing the development of the installations (wonder; Open-Space Learning; serious play; the role of the teacher; politics of knowledge; form and function; discovery; and reflection).

The form of the poster was designed to reflect the content, and vice versa; the poster was double-layered, with the detail in each section accessed by lifting a flap. The layout of the poster - bubbles connected by straight lines - was intended to demonstrate connections between the concepts, as well as calling to mind molecular structures.

May 2015

TDW booklet (Amy Clarke; Dr Rebecca Fisher; Phil Gaydon; Naomi de la Tour; Hannah Vickery)

Creation of a booklet to introduce TDW project. The form of the booklet was considered as much as the content, with the two being inextricably intertwined. We worked extremely closely with graphic designer Hannah Vickery to create a physical object whose shape, size, and tactile nature reinforced and engaged with the text within. The main objective was to communicate information about TDW alongside a taste of the TDW experience, particularly in terms of feelings of curiosity and surprise.

Individual newsletters were sent to all IATL contacts, Senior Management, and Heads of Department to help publicise the project. They continue to be distributed at meetings and events to provide further information on the project. Positive feedback has been received on the unusual nature of the booklet, which suggests that form and content should be considered for all IATL publications: how can the form of our publications say something about who we are and what we do?

Forthcoming

*The Warwick Handbook of Innovative Teaching* (Phil Gaydon)

TDW will be the subject of a case study as an example of innovative practice at Warwick, available to all teachers at Warwick.

Forthcoming

'Identity', 'Structure', 'Teaching and Learning', 'Geography' (Amy Clarke; Ben Cook; Dr Rebecca Fisher; Phil Gaydon; Naomi de la Tour)

Local film-maker Ben Cook created four films in response to TDW event. 'Identity' was showcased at ['Roots to Shoots'](#) in December 2015, and the other three films will be hosted on TDW website.

*In the national press*

October 2015 Times Higher Education article, 'Enter the Dark Would and let your imagination run free' (Dr Rebecca Fisher)

Phone interview published in [article in THE](#). The publication of the article online in October led to an enormous spike in visits to TDW webpage; from 10 - 38 hits per day in the preceding week to 35,000 hits at its peak.

### **Practice**

TDW has been adopted and adapted by colleagues within and outside the University, demonstrating that TDW's concepts and practices are being effectively shared and disseminated.

September 2015 ICUR programme (Amy Clarke; Dr Rebecca Fisher; Naomi de la Tour)

Consultation on the way that the programme for ICUR 2015 was constructed, resulting in creating space for ICUR students to reflect and adding in prompts to support further questioning.

November 2015 TDW tree (Amy Clarke)

A tree - salvaged from the TDW event - was placed in the IATL office space. It was given an explanatory blurb that invited students/staff to think about and engage with particular ideas from the event and to write their own notes and ideas to hang on the tree. Staff engaged with the tree, but we noticed a particularly high degree of student engagement.

The tree was adapted as a means of supporting a meeting with visitors from HEFCE, intended to demonstrate IATL's creativity and commitment to innovation.

November 2015 Cormac McCarthy workshop (Dr Nick Monk)

Dr Nick Monk used the campfire zone of TDW as the setting for a day-long workshop on McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, demonstrating that TDW is being absorbed into IATL teaching more broadly.

November 2015 - '[Learning Exchange and Play I](#)' and '[Learning Exchange and Play II](#)'  
March 2016 (Conor Heaney and Hollie Mackenzie)

After attending The Dark Would event, Conor was inspired to create a 'classroom configured as a space of encounters', and cited TDW as making his experiment possible (see Appendix One).

March - May 2015 Consultations with New Model in Technology and Engineering team (Amy Clarke, Dr Rebecca Fisher, Naomi de la Tour)

Consulted on teaching spaces and conference design inspired by TDW with NMITE team.

May 2014 -  
present

### Continuous professional development

Each member of TDW team has identified the legacy of TDW in the development of their professional skills.

Amy Clarke found that working on TDW has made her better able to join up ways of thinking within and outside of the workplace and the confidence and skills she developed throughout the experience have helped lead to a change in role. A greater awareness and understanding of playful learning techniques has helped to support her work and undergraduate studies and her continued interest in the importance of inspired and curious thought have evolved into a number of creative writing projects outside of her work at IATL.

Dr Rebecca Fisher found that working on TDW led to a WATE nomination, and plans to write an article testing Celia Whitchurch's 'third-space' theory: bringing together ideas about being a whole person at work, legitimacy of ideas, and permission/power/purpose in the context of cross-silo working at the University of Warwick.

Phil Gaydon found that working on TDW: heightened his pedagogical understanding and ability to articulate ideas and design sessions in different ways; led to a WATEPGR nomination; and led to the shaping of a PhD thesis which contains a chapter on praxis within a context where this is outside the norm.

### Naomi de la Tour

Teaching and workshops, ongoing development of related pedagogical theory and research.

## **Appendix One**

*From 'The Dark Would' to 'Learning, Exchange, and Play': A Story of Epistemological Praxis*  
Conor Heaney

I attended *The Dark Would* in April 2015. At the time, I was researching and writing my M.Phil thesis in Philosophy; specifically, I was writing on Gilles Deleuze and Karen Barad, connecting their thought and considering what kind of *epistemological praxis* (learning experiences) their thought might be able to inform. Naturally, this consideration of *epistemological praxis* flowed into an attention to *pedagogy* as a very specific form of *epistemological praxis*. As such, upon entering *The Dark Would* learning space, I was quite excited as to the potential vectors of

imagination it might send me in, and how it would inform my own *epistemological praxis* and pedagogy (since I knew I would be pursuing a PhD and be involved in teaching practices).

I was not disappointed, *The Dark Would* was, for me, a lived manifestation of what Deleuze describes as *the encounter*. The encounter, for Deleuze, is an experienced event which shocks or disturbs us in such a way that we are *forced to think*. For Deleuze, *encounters are the condition of thought*. Through exploring the stations, collaborating, sharing, and experimenting, I was immediately drawn to the question of the *political*, as well as the pedagogical, potential of these types of spaces. Perhaps this is one of the early seeds through which what would become *Learning, Exchange, and Play* would veer in a slightly different direction to *The Dark Would*.

*The Dark Would*, no doubt, shaped my own research and writing in my thesis greatly, and enabled my philosophical research to combine with pieces of imagination outside of it (whether or not what I actually wrote captures that combination well enough is not likely, unfortunately!). More fundamentally, it produced a spark (in me at least) in future conversations I would have with Hollie Mackenzie. Hollie is a good friend of mine who is undertaking a PhD in the same department in which I am now also researching (Politics & International Relations in the University of Kent, Canterbury), working on Deleuze and Luce Irigaray in particular; she is also an artist who produces beautiful wooden sculptures, often with political and feminist affective components. We shared interests in Deleuze's notion of the encounter, pedagogy generally, as well as with approaches to politics. These conversations were imaginative and enriching, and were the types of conversations and feelings we wanted to help produce in the spaces we imagined. This soon became an abstract, and then our first workshop (with Dr. Iain MacKenzie): *Learning, Exchange, and Play: Practicing a Deleuzian Pedagogy*.

Ben Cook, who I met at *The Dark Would*, is also an indispensable part of *Learning, Exchange, and Play* (LEP). He would help us conceptualise and imagine, and would go on to direct and create two brilliant short-films for us at the time of writing: *LEPI* (based upon the first workshop I mentioned above) and *LEPII* (based upon *Learning, Exchange, and Play II*, which we installed at a conference entitled *Transforming Moments: Dissonance, Liminality and Action as Learning Experiences* at our home institution). Both of these films were "premiered" at subsequent conferences (LEPI at 'Social Class in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' at the University of Amsterdam (October 2015); and LEPII at 'Undisciplined Environments' at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm (March 2016)). Through these films, we sought to generate conversations upon pedagogy, politics, transformation, and so on. Some conference participants were extremely welcoming and excited by the approach, and some remained intensely critical. Nonetheless, helping to generate the conversations seemed an interesting and rewarding avenue for us. Neither of us had questioned whether or not to stop experimenting.

## **Appendix Two**

### *Reflections on the Dark Would: Joel Lazarus*

'Hello! My name is Joel and I am really stupid!' - words I might have expressed to myself in some of my darker moments, but ones I had not hitherto contemplated sharing with a group

of strangers. Yet, here I stood making this declaration to a dozen or so new faces stood around me in a circle. It felt brilliant! It felt liberating!

I was participating in the 'Clowning Workshop', a session run by Robbie Foulston as part of IATL's *Dark Would* event – a two day shared exploration into the world of alternative, radical pedagogy. By 'radical' here, I refer to the word's etymology. We were getting deep down into the *roots* of teaching and learning, and this meant getting deep down into the nature of the human condition itself. To live is to learn and to teach. How we do it as individuals, who is able to do it within our organisations, communities, and societies, says everything about us, our society, and our 'civilisation'. Pedagogy is political.

If you agree with me so far then surely it follows that a democratic society can only be rooted in and borne from democratic principles and practices of education. The practices are shaped by the principles and, for me, the fundamental principle of democratic education is the democratisation of the social relations within the learning group. While scientific expertise remains respected and utilised, the hierarchy and barriers between teacher and student are dissolved as all come to teach and learn from and with each other. Knowledge is *co-produced* by all and for the benefit of all. So, what does this all have to do with clowning and the *Dark Would*?

Our lives unfold, and our worldviews evolve gradually, but occasionally something happens that punctuates this steady process. For me, such a punctuation happened at the *Dark Would* and it happened in the clowning workshop.

If I were to describe the central goal of my work, I would say that it was about trying to help people believe in themselves and each other as intellectuals, that is, people who are able to understand their lives in the context of society and history and, consequently, are able to change that society and that history for the better. Consequently, I am constantly trying to find methods of group facilitation (and communication generally) that can cultivate this personal and collective intellectual and political self-belief. What this shared, collective declaration of common stupidity gave me was a wonderful new tool to use to this effect.

So many people out there are scarred by their personal experiences and alienated by the common concept and practice of education. We are all burning up with opinions to offer, doubts to express, and questions to ask about the things that really matter, but all too often, particularly in our depoliticised society, we self-censor. And the cruel, naked Emperor continues his reign.

As a teacher, I know the best question so often begins with the qualification 'I know this is a stupid question, but...' I know that question so often cuts through the niceties of academic debate to reach the underlying ethical or political issue. So, why not just encourage this 'stupidity'? Why not do it right now? Feel free to email me your stupidest question about politics and economics. I'll come back onto this blog with the list and I bet there's a sharp intelligence and vital curiosity behind your 'stupidity'! I bet the questions you ask will be difficult, but not impossible, to offer persuasive answers to. As teachers, yes, but as members of societies, communities, even families, these are the questions we need to start asking and answering. The answers we find might help us to collectively make the world a much better

place for all. And it starts with the teacher. The stupidity angle also helped me find a powerful way to begin to democratise my learning groups. As teachers we lead by example, so it is always me up first to proclaim my stupidity.

There is an obvious, creative, playful, and symbolically powerful subversion in publicly declaring our stupidity as a means to cultivate our intellectuality. It is an example of a broader need to accept our own and each other's flaws and learn to fail. We cannot learn, we cannot change without making mistakes, without temporarily failing, and without sharing these 'failures' with others. This is why I found the 'Failing Better' workshop, led by IATL's own Jonny, equally compelling and incredibly helpful. Jonny asked us to share experiences of perceived personal failure and dominant negative tropes about failure before inviting us to rethink what it means to fail, to accept failure as an unavoidable and necessary component of life and learning, and whether failure is indeed failure at all. This really helped us to think about how we might 'fail better' – an amazing achievement in such a brief session.

All of the sessions I participated in were exciting and inspiring. The *Dark Would* itself – a journey into a sensory wonderland – was an unforgettable experience, not just for the sensory stimulation it aroused, but for the energizing conversations it stimulated.

'Another world is possible' is a slogan we see with increasing regularity at (increasingly regular) protests. I believe this with all my heart. But I believe it with my head too. It is at moments such as those created by the *Dark Would* event organisers that one gets a glimpse, fleeting but real nonetheless, of how our world could, should, and, I hope and believe, will be like. There is a freedom, an energy, an honesty, and a collective creative sheer power that makes one believe that anything is possible. Inspired and educated by IATL and the whole *Dark Would* team, I continue my own modest attempts to work with others to spread this energy, this democratizing power throughout the university and throughout our society. I remain extremely grateful to all who contributed to creating this wonderful event and I feel privileged to have participated in it.

### **Appendix 3**

[Links to further feedback on \*The Dark Would\* event](#)

Student blog: <http://storytelling4health.blogspot.co.uk/2015/05/a-vignette-of-iatl-in-dark-would-wood.html>