

More than an Amanuensis: Ernestine Hill's Contribution to *The Passing of the Aborigines*

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Introduction

In 1971 the journalist Max Brown posed the following question:

But look again charming reader, examine the bookshelves of Australia's chairmen, managing directors, leading lights of the Liberal Party, Country Party, even Labor politicians, and there you will find again and again the book that has done more than any other single work to justify and encourage Australia's decimation of the Aboriginal race.

It is *The Passing of the Aborigines* by Dame Daisy Bates. But if Daisy didn't write it. Who did?

Brown claimed that in 1963 Ernestine Hill, 'the ablest and most travelled of Australia's outback writers and a top-class journalist,' had told him 'she had ghosted *The Passing of the Aborigines*'—Bates's 1938 national and international best-seller chronicling her life and work amongst remote Aboriginal people in south-west Australia. As a result, he had been able to 'make sense out of the extraordinary contradictions that it contains' because:

The Passing of the Aborigines, you see, combines the field notes and misanthropy of a savage old lady (Daisy) with the high skill, poetry and certain quirks of a younger, more brilliant woman torn between a genius as a writer and her opportunism as a journalist (Ernestine).

In his article, Brown aired a piece of literary scuttlebutt that had been circulating since *The Passing of the Aborigines* was published. Hill had been telling this story privately—'Daisy's book was written by me, as you know, and many know' (Letter to Louise Campbell)—for the previous two decades: to Barbara Polkinghorne, a former secretary of Bates; to members of the 'Daisy Chain,' a group of women interested in 'Batesiana'; and to literary friends like Rene Foster and to Charles Bateson, the editor of *Kabbarli*. Others such as Dame Mary Gilmore claimed they recognised Hill's familiar descriptive style in the book's prose (123).

Although the book was attributed to Bates, Hill maintained that she should have been recognised as co-author because of her substantial contribution to its writing. She described their working relationship in her memoir of Bates, *Kabbarli* (1973), published a year after her own death, as follows:

Method and manner of writing the newspaper serial and the book were left to me. . . . We decided that she would talk, and I would write, and she would read for additions and amendments, and I would make “fair copy” of the work with these for her finalities. (141-42)

Essentially, she maintained that Bates dictated while she wrote and edited. She also claimed that, early on at least, Bates had insisted that: ‘Your name . . . must be on the title-page with mine’ (*Kabbarli*, 142). Once the serial and later the book were in print, however, Bates never volunteered any formal recognition of their collaboration, although Hill presented Bates’s original offer of co-authorship as evidence of the validity of her claim.

Ernestine Hill came to prominence during the 1930s as a roaming reporter when she travelled throughout northern Australia, dispatching colourful stories about outback life to national newspapers. Over the next two decades she published a series of travelogues, of which *The Great Australian Loneliness* (1937) and *The Territory* (1951) are best known, becoming the front-runner of a wave of travel writers such as Ion Idriess and William Hatfield whose writing opened up the interior for a largely urban, southern-based general public (Bonnin; Morris, *Identity*; Morris, *Great Australian*). From 1935 to 1968 she contributed to the internationally distributed and widely read Australian geographic magazine, *Walkabout*. In 1932 she travelled to Ooldea on the edge of the Nullarbor, keen for a scoop about the ‘woman who lived with the blacks’ (*Kabbarli*, 6). Bates, a self-taught ethnologist, had been living in a tent near Ooldea siding for sixteen years to observe the Aboriginal people who visited the local soak. The two women developed an intense, sometimes conflicted partnership that lasted until Bates’s death in 1951. Bates was almost four decades older than Hill, who bowed to her years of experience camping with Aboriginal people with some disastrous consequences. Her first story about Bates reported acts of Aboriginal cannibalism, which she took on trust without checking the facts. She admitted in later life that it had been the work ‘of a wicked and ruthless young journalist’ (Bonnin 25). The feature, titled ‘Cannibalism on East-West,’ as the Transcontinental railway was known, took out the Sydney *Sunday Sun*’s front page, and she followed it up quickly with a profile, ‘Woman of Ooldea,’ lionising Bates, a fortnight later. Both articles were published across the capital city dailies, consolidating Bates’s reputation as ‘the most remarkable woman in Australia’s first two centuries’ (*Kabbarli*, 1). In 1935 Hill arranged for Bates to travel down from Ooldea to the *Advertiser* office in Adelaide, where she was based as a feature-writer, to write a series of articles about her life and work. The articles were syndicated in serial form in early 1936 to the major Australian newspapers under the title, ‘My Natives and I,’ and formed the basis for the book, *The Passing of the Aborigines*.

Bates had her own journalistic profile, having published over two hundred newspaper articles mainly on subjects relating to Aboriginal people based on her ‘tent life.’ An Irish emigrant, she first settled in Australia at the age of 24 in 1883 but left for London a decade later after the breakdown of her marriage to a drover, Jack Bates. She supported herself by working in the office of W.T. Stead, editor of the *Review of Reviews*, where she learned reporting skills. After reading a letter to the London *Times* alleging that pastoralists were mistreating Aboriginal people in the north-west, she returned to Australia in 1899 intending to write articles investigating these claims. She travelled to the Kimberley where she became intrigued by the intricacies of kinship relationships amongst the local Aboriginal population while staying at Beagle Bay Mission. In 1901 she joined her husband Jack at Roebuck Plains, where he was working on a station, and began learning and documenting Aboriginal dialects and cultural practices. As a result of her demonstrated interest in the area, the Western Australian government offered her a position in 1904 collating a survey of Aboriginal languages across

the state. Bates claimed that she had been ‘bitten with the virus of research’ through these experiences (Letter to J. A. Fitzherbert), and started camping alongside Aboriginal people, recording her observations about their life and culture, initially at Ma’amba Reserve outside Perth in the early 1900s then along the Great Australian Bight and at Ooldea.

Bates fabricated stories of her early life by pretending to be descended from Anglo-Irish gentry rather than of lowly Catholic stock, which Hill incorporated officially into Bates mythology in ‘My Natives and I.’ Biographical research in the decades following Bates’s—and later Hill’s—deaths revealed the lack of veracity of her account of her childhood, and other colourful details of her personal life she had obscured, namely her bigamous and even trigamous marriages to Jack Bates and Edwin ‘Breaker’ Murrant, and potentially a third man, Ernest Baglehole, during 1884-85 (de Vries). Bates’s capacity for fabulism, both in relation to aspects of her personal history and of Aboriginal culture, contributed to her work and reputation falling into disrepute for several decades, although recently there have been efforts to recuperate sections of her ethnographic corpus to support native title claims and Aboriginal cultural restoration (Reece, *Daisy*; Thieberger; White).

The Passing of the Aborigines contains views and statements now recognised as contentious, such as Bates’s claim that Aboriginal cannibalism was widespread and that children of mixed descent were a menace who should be removed from Aboriginal families and groups to ensure racial ‘purity.’ Her outlook was underpinned, as the book’s title suggests, by the widely held late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century belief that Aboriginal people were a ‘Vanishing’ race and that their extinction was inevitable in the face of colonisation. *The Passing of the Aborigines* was hugely influential for several decades after its publication, becoming an international bestseller and a long-time staple of Australian school curricula. First published by John Murray in London in 1938, it was reprinted four times in the United Kingdom before an Australian edition was published in 1944, and was reprinted twice before a second edition was re-issued with a foreword by Alan Moorehead in 1966 and again in 1972 (Reece, *Natives*). Leading anthropologists such as Elkin and the Berndts were, however, critical of Bates and her work with Aboriginal people, and her subsequent lionisation (Reece, *Elkin*). But the book did what no work produced by the male, professionally trained Australian anthropological fraternity had yet achieved: it communicated ideas about Aboriginal life and culture in remote areas to a broad readership. Arguably it was the most significant work of its day in shaping public perceptions, nationally and internationally, of Australian Indigenous peoples, and has had long-lasting impacts on Indigenous policy. Lisa Waller observes that:

The media’s consecration of her scientific and welfare work resulted in popular recognition of Bates as *the* expert in these fields. The book, which ran to six reprints, and Bates’s media-generated image, continued to shape public understanding of Indigenous people and issues for many years. (11)

It was also Bates, supported by Hill in their collaborative biographical project, who cut the cloth for framing European women’s ‘missionary’ relationship to Aboriginal people on the frontier. There were other European women, such as Constance Ternent Cooke, Mary Bennett, Ursula McConnel, Olive Pink and Annie Lock (Cole, Haskins and Paisley), who wrote about human rights abuses on the frontier or who supported Aboriginal people, but it is Bates’s ‘long shadow’ that has been cast over the area (Waller 9).

The backlash against Bates and *The Passing of the Aborigines* was only gaining momentum in the decade before Ernestine Hill’s death in 1972. But for Hill, the book had become a running

sore for personal and professional reasons, not least because her contribution to forging Bates's media image had never been acknowledged in full. This included her role in talent-spotting Bates, as it were, her foresight in recognising the potential of a newspaper serial and book based on her friend's life, her labour in producing and editing the narrative material, and in shepherding Bates and her manuscripts to the *Advertiser* office.

'[S]o many evidences of your own words and sentences': Bates and Hill's collaboration on *The Passing of the Aborigines*

In 1935 Hill approached Sir Lloyd Dumas, the *Advertiser*'s managing director, with a proposal that he bring Bates and her trunks of 'thousands of notes of unfamiliar sequences, languages, legends' (*Kabbarli*, 135) from her work with Aboriginal people down to Adelaide to collaborate on a newspaper serial. She had further plans for a book based on the serial, which she envisaged her London and New York-based agent, Curtis Brown, publishing in England, America and beyond: 'The story, as I see it, should be a big seller, translated into many languages' (Hill, *Bates*). Dumas was, however, skeptical about the older woman's ability to produce publishable copy—'her writings, especially in recent years, were diffuse, profuse, rambling, too mannered and out of date or too obscure' (*Kabbarli*, 135)—as well as her failing health and sight. Bates was then in her mid-seventies, had been malnourished for years and suffered from sandy blight, an eye infection common in desert areas, resulting in near blindness.

Hill later wrote that she had 'offered to be the ghost in this very unusual case.' Dumas agreed, 'without any further parley' (*Kabbarli*, 136) and responded with a handsome advance of £500 for Bates, 'the largest sum ever given for an Australian writer's work' (Letter to John Murray) for the rights to the newspaper serial, along with all-expenses paid transport to and accommodation in Adelaide. Bates initially refused to leave Ooldea because she feared losing her campsite to neighboring missionaries. To coax her down to the *Advertiser* office, Hill appealed to Bates's vanity by downplaying her own potential rights to the fruits of their collaboration. 'How happy we shall be working at that book together?' She wrote. 'Cannot you realise that it must be your book? Let me help with the presentation, because it will be such a joy to me. That is all' (Hill, Letter to Daisy Bates).

Bates then travelled to Adelaide where she and Hill entered a kind of prophet-scribe relationship cloistered in the *Advertiser* library. In *Kabbarli* Hill describes how she developed a 'biography without tears' approach to working with Bates in which:

The morning was given to the interviews, natural conversation of events, impressions, people, flash-backs and the Aboriginalities as they came to mind.... I jotted down everything in shorthand and set it in sequence of time for chapter and verse, not forgetting highlights for newspaper serial.... I was careful, and she would wish it, that all material of the book was exclusively hers, only the paraphrasing, the actual writing and the arrangement mine. (142-43)

Although this estimation of her contribution seems relatively modest, Hill made bolder claims to literary friends in private. 'I used to say I was "the Daisy Bates editor" back on the *Advertiser* many long years ago' (Letter to Rene Foster), Hill wrote to Foster, and to Louise Campbell, her cousin Coy Bateson's daughter: 'She never actually wrote a line, nor did she sub-edit. It was all done in the *Advertiser* Library by interviews,—each day she read it through and remembered on' (Letter to Louise Campbell). These combined accounts of their process

suggest that while Bates contributed her intellectual property orally to the manuscript, Hill did the editorial heavy lifting, shaping the book structurally and stylistically to make Bates's rambling anecdotes and Aboriginal material accessible to twentieth-century, Anglophone readers. As Reece observes, Hill 'did a vast amount more than merely "help with the presentation."' She was *confidante*, amanuensis, editor and typist, all in one' (*Natives* xvi).

While they were working together at the *Advertiser*, Hill repeated her offer to Bates that the book be attributed solely to her, with only her name on the cover. Why she persisted in doing so, after successfully luring Bates to Adelaide, is unclear. Polkinghorne recounts that 'Ernestine, with her usual damnable quixotry, allowed Daisy to claim authorship of "The Passing et [sic]" because "it gave my dear Daisy so much pleasure." Oh dearie me!' (Letter to Elizabeth Riddell). In doing so Hill ceded any authorial rights to *The Passing of the Aborigines*, a decision she later regretted. After the book was published, Bates acknowledged her assistance but claimed it was essentially her work and that Hill was merely her typist. When an interviewer asked a couple of years before her death whether Hill had helped with the writing, she replied: 'No, she typed it, she typed it, but every word in that manuscript is my own, every word of it' (Smart 8). Prior to the book's publication, Hill asked for 'a few brief lines acknowledging our work together' on the serial and Bates responded:

As I read through the chapters, I come upon so many evidences of your own words and sentences—the loving-kindness and the beautiful way in which you gave of your own genius to its expressions—that I shall always look upon the completed work as as much yours as mine. (*Kabbarli*, 150)

But she never made any formal or public recognition of Hill's role in writing the book: 'it would not occur to Mrs Bates they were customary,' Hill wrote, '—except that on many occasions she introduced me to her acquaintances as "my dearest friend—she wrote my book!"' (*Kabbarli*, 154.)

There was a further complication in the final stages of the book's editing. Hill left Adelaide to write *Water into Gold* (1937), a book about the Murray River irrigation system, and then went to the Mitchell Library in Sydney to research her novel about Matthew Flinders, *My Love Must Wait* (1941). In her stead another *Advertiser* journalist, Max Lamshed, completed editing *My Natives and I* into *The Passing of the Aborigines* and despatched the manuscript in person to its London publishers, John Murray. How much editing of the manuscript Lamshed and then John Murray undertook is not clear from remaining records, although Murray axed the original opening chapters about Bates's youth—with her permission—so the book would begin with her observation of an initiation ceremony (Reece, *Natives* xix). When later Hill read the book, she was disappointed to find that 'it was shorn of the earlier chapters' (*Kabbarli*, 154), because she was proud of this section—'the Life'—which she saw as substantially her own work. She wrote to Louise Campbell:

Murray, who published the book in London, strangely didn't use the personal life, or very little, which rocked me, it was very vital I thought. Daisy was surprised too—but she never questioned anything about it. . . . I have no copyright to this [i.e. *My Natives and I* material], it legally seems, though the writing is all mine. So [I] let that go.

Although Hill initially claimed she wanted recognition as a co-author because, 'in the years to come, if the book was a success and brought all the happiness I wished for her, [it] would mean

so much more to me' (*Kabbarli*, 150), copyright and the potential royalties became increasingly significant issues for her as she, like Bates, struggled financially after decades of surviving on the proceeds of her writing. Above all, Hill believed she should receive credit for seeing the possibility of Bates as a scoop writ large and bringing her onto the world stage, as it were, given that the older woman was by then experiencing health limitations that prevented her from producing a coherent, major literary work without significant physical, emotional, financial and editorial support.

Bates's and Hill's conflicting perceptions and accounts of this process of authorial collaboration leave some tantalising threads to tease out. Did Bates only dictate and Hill merely type? Did Hill play as substantial a role as she claimed in writing and editing *The Passing of the Aborigines*? To what extent, if any, did Bates contribute to the writing process? Were there any others involved, such as Max Lamshed, in shaping the final book manuscript?¹

Investigating the Claims with Computational Stylistics

To investigate these issues, the authors turned to computational stylistics techniques to develop profiles for the authorial signatures of Daisy Bates and Ernestine Hill, attempting to assess their respective contributions in compositing and crafting *The Passing of the Aborigines*. These techniques are based on the understanding that the 'way in which authors use large sets of common function words . . . appears to be distinctive' (Holmes 114). In the early days of computer analysis of texts John Burrows made the discovery that the incidence of the very common words of English, the 'function' words,² varies significantly between texts by different authors while remaining comparatively constant within a single author's work.³ More recently, Burrows showed how the techniques might be extended to include words 'in the large area between the extremes of ubiquity and rarity,' claiming that 'it is also possible to identify many words (not all of them unusual) that a given writer employs with some consistency while most others do not' ('All the Way Through' 27). Over the years these techniques have been used to explore a wide variety of issues demonstrating that 'it is possible to distinguish clearly between texts according to author, genre, era, gender and even nationality' (Burrows and Craig 64).

In recent work on collaboration in one of Shakespeare's plays, *Timon of Athens*, John Jowett concludes that: 'To understand the play, it is helpful to understand it as a collaboration, whilst viewing collaboration itself as a valid and different mode of play production' (26). The Bates-Hill authorship problem however, and the assessment of the respective contributions of each author to the text moves us into rather different attributional territory, as we are not speaking of a collaboration such as that of Shakespeare and Middleton in *Timon*. Here Jowett can specify which 'specific areas of the text' Middleton took responsibility for, and which Shakespeare. He can point out that 'where Shakespeare's language is metaphoric and hyper-expressive, Middleton's is satiric and reductive' (25). If, as Hill asserted, there was only one hand holding the pen,⁴ we would be venturing into unknown territory, looking for a new text-type—that which results when one author with her own set of distinctive stylistic preferences creates a narrative framework for the oral anecdotes of another. On the other hand, if Hill were 'merely a typist,' as Bates claimed, the text of *Passing* would be to all intents and purposes identical with the Bates newspaper publications that predated her meeting with Hill. The third possibility would be that of a total Hill transformation into something equivalent to her own publications. The results of computational-stylistic testing for the last two options would be clear-cut—the text sections of *Passing* would sit comfortably with one or other of the two 'authors.' Assuming that the 'ghostwriter' inevitably left traces of her own signature on the text, while at the same

time endeavouring to retain as much of the immediacy and individuality of the original material as possible, we would not expect a clear-cut result.

The Textual Preparation:

For the purposes of carrying out these tests we assembled a body of texts⁵ comprising:

- (i) The complete text of *The Passing of the Aborigines* (*Passing*). Some speech/reported conversations were left in the text.⁶
- (ii) Hill: (a) The complete text of *The Great Australian Loneliness* (GAL) and (b) around 25 newspaper articles written by Hill on various topics.⁷
- (iii) Bates: (a) A series of letters written by Bates to various people⁸ and (b) A collection of newspaper articles written by Bates on similar topics to those covered in *Passing*.
- (iv) The first three articles from the *Adelaide Advertiser's* original serial release of Bates's *My Natives and I* (MNAI), which Hill had claimed were largely her work.

Computational Stylistic Tests:

A series of preliminary tests ascertained that the texts of Bates and Hill could easily be separated while a distribution test⁹ of the function words of the corpus demonstrated marked differences in each authors' preferential usage of these.¹⁰ The final tests used two control sets of texts comprised of each author's newspaper article narratives since these were the most comparable text types. This allowed us to use Bates's letters and Hill's non-fiction narrative (*The Great Australian Loneliness*) as test texts. It was also found in these early tests that the deictic words¹¹ of the function words list confused the issue because they dominated the differences between the two control sets, but were not helpful when it came to introducing *Passing* into the tests.

One of the early researchers in the field of computational stylistics, Tabata, found that the presence of strong differentiating signals between texts could obscure the more subtle differences one was looking for. Tabata observes in the opening paragraph of his article:

Since differences in point of view are obvious between first-person narratives and third-person narratives, between narratives told in the past tense and those in the present tense, it is desirable to exclude deictic words, such as personal pronouns and finite verbs, from statistical analysis so as to diminish the overshadowing effect of what is already evident. Otherwise vectors that differentiate first-person narratives from third-person narratives and texts couched in the past tense from those in the present tense will be so strong that other determinants of style may be submerged. (165)

In this case the marked preferences of each author's frequency of usage (noted in Table 1, Appendix A) in respect to these words created a scenario of dominance and submergence of determinants of style, similar to the one described by Tabata.

Table 1

Extract: Each authors' relative frequency of usage of some deictic words.

Bates uses relatively more often	Hill uses relatively more often
1st & 2nd sg. & pl. 3rd pl. Person Pronouns	3rd sing. Person Pronouns

I me my our you your they them their	he him
Function Verbs	Function Verbs
am have having had be being been do don't I've I'm	None

The 140 non-deictic function word tests

The 140 non-deictic function words list¹² obtained after the removal of the personal pronouns and tensed verbs from the longer function words list was then used in all subsequent tests. A series of tests was devised to determine the ability of this word list to make successful authorial distinctions before the chapters of *Passing* were introduced. The series of tests was as follows:

- i. Bates's and Hill's narratives alone¹³
- ii. Bates's and Hill's narratives with Bates's Letters to see if they clustered with the Bates's narratives
- iii. Bates's and Hill's narratives with some chapters of Hill's *GAL* to see if they clustered with the Hill narratives
- iv. Bates's and Hill's narratives with the first 3 chapters of *MNAI* which Hill claimed was largely her work
- v. Bates's and Hill's narratives with the 21 Chapters of *Passing*.

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) testing¹⁴ was used to ascertain how well the non-deictic function words set worked on texts of known authorship. Principal Component Analysis is a data reduction technique, which finds 'in order of importance the sets of weightings for the variables that account for the most significant variations in the data' (Craig 200). It highlights the most important likenesses and differences among the specimens and allows us to see something of the complexity of the relationships between the variables in the data. In Figure 1 we see the Bates and Hill narratives clearly separating, thus showing the effectiveness of the non-deictic function words as the variables in the test.

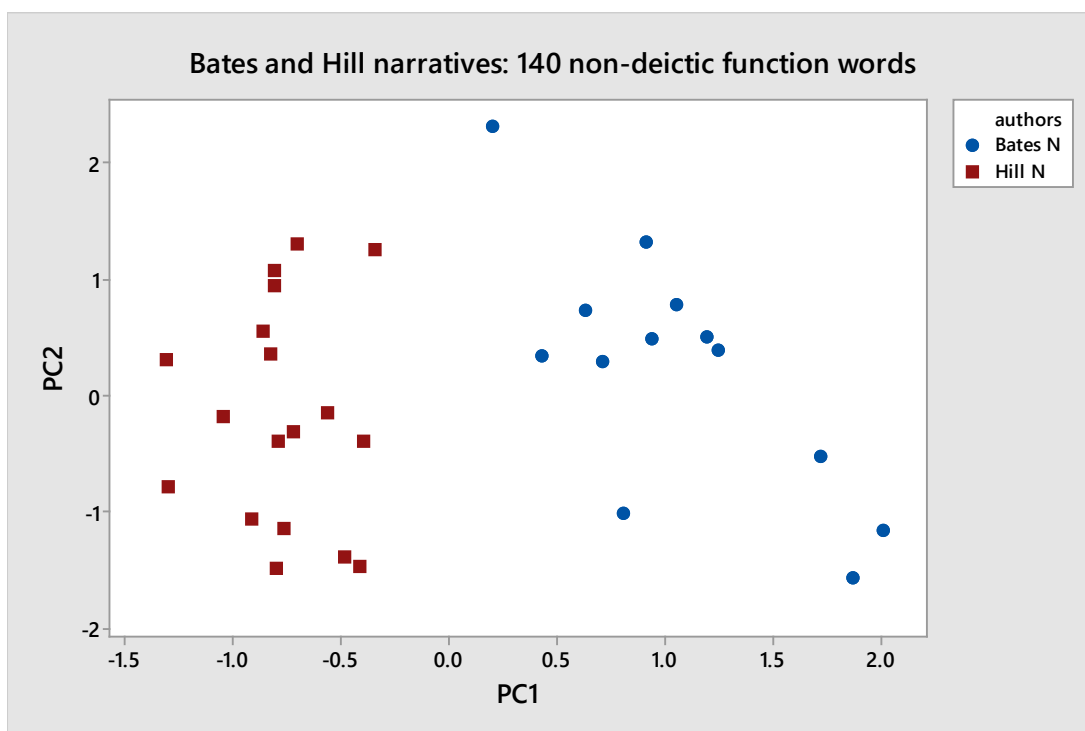


Figure 1. PCA plot: Bates and Hill narratives: 140 non-deictic function words.

Figure 2 shows the Bates letters clustering together and comfortably joining the Bates narrative texts on the right hand side of the plot, while Figure 3 shows the Hill chapters of *Great Australian Loneliness* clustering among her narratives on the left hand side of the plot.

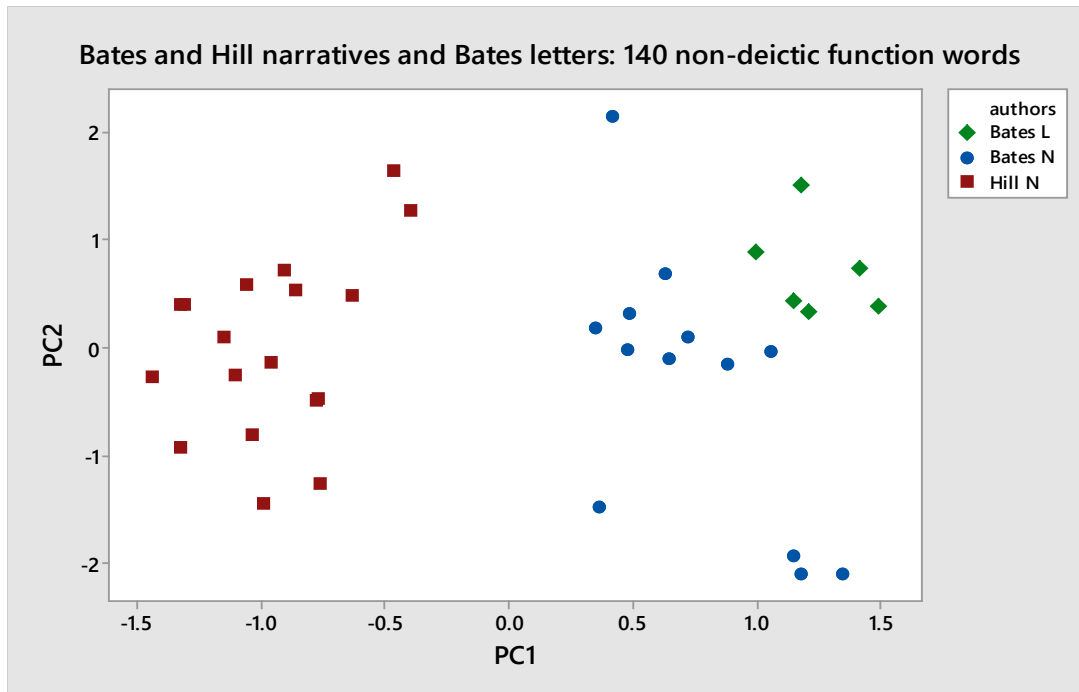


Figure 2. PCA plot: Bates and Hill narratives and Bates letters: 140 non-deictic function words.

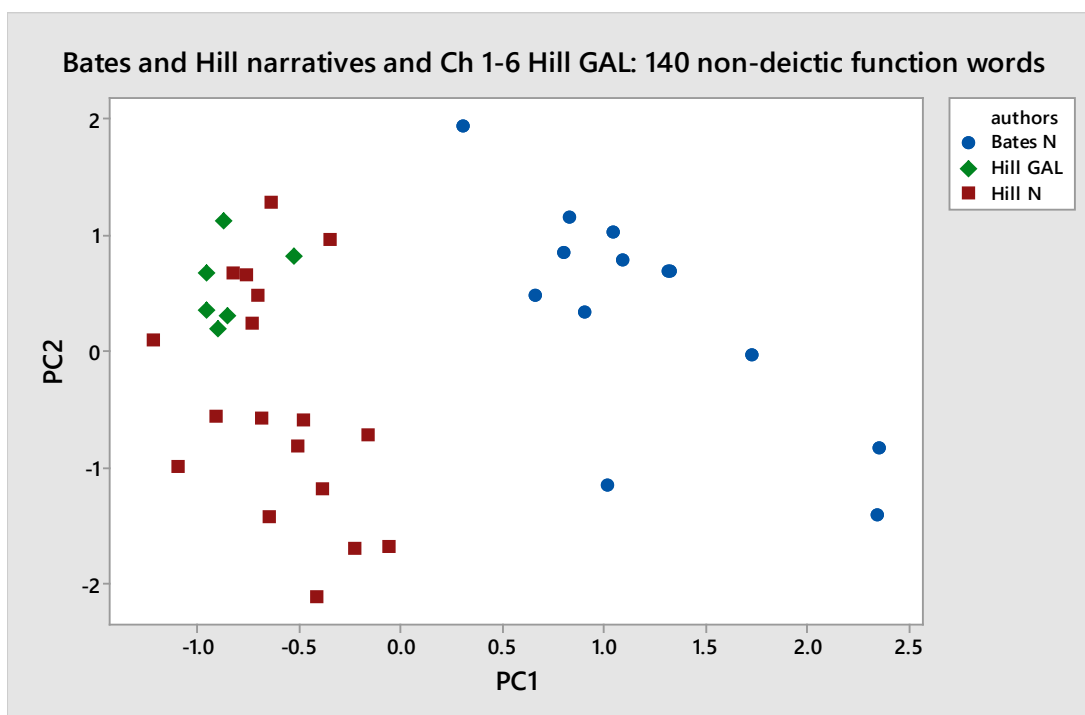


Figure 3. PCA plot: Bates and Hill narratives and Chapters 1-6 of Hill’s *GAL*: 140 non-deictic function words.

Having shown the ability of the non-deictic function words list to separate texts of known authorship, they were used to test Hill's claim that the early chapters of *My Natives and I* were largely her work. Hill's claim appears to be vindicated in Figure 4 where the first three episodes of *My Natives and I* cluster with the Hill narratives.

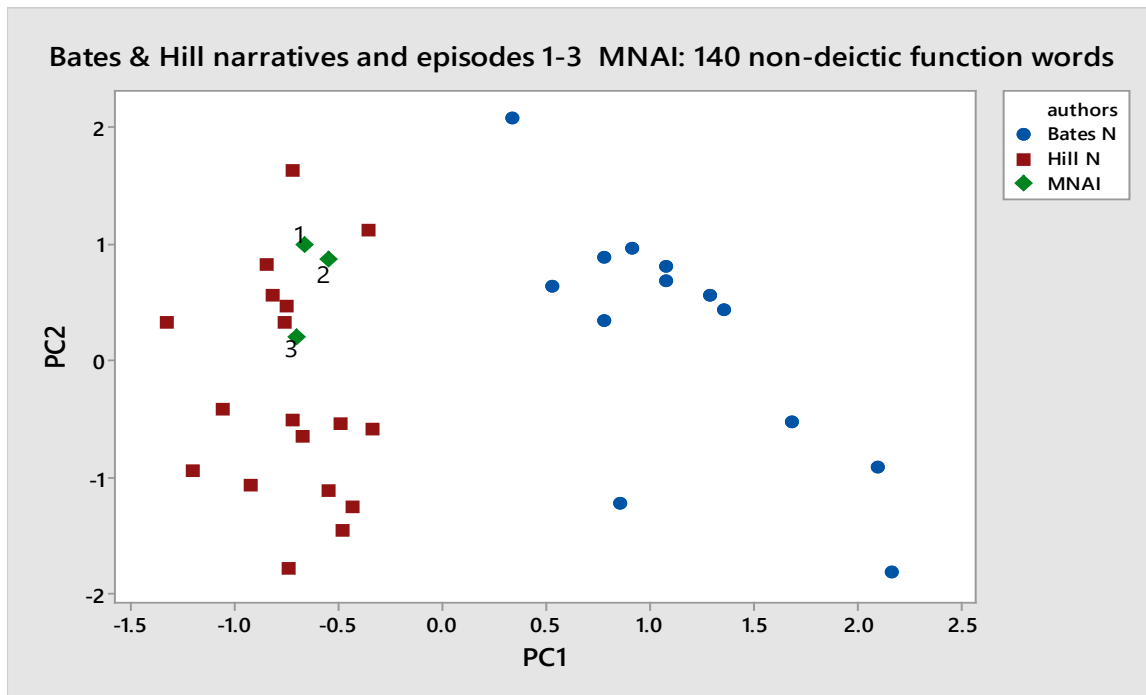


Figure 4. PCA plot: Bates and Hill narratives and episodes 1-3 of MNAI: 140 non-deictic function words.

Using the 140 non-deictic function words to test the Chapters of *Passing*

Having demonstrated the robustness of the two control sets and the efficacy of the word list in separating texts of known (and claimed) authorship, we move on to the main question of whether we can detect the contribution of Hill in the various chapters of *Passing*. In principle PCA for classification works best with a large number of control samples and a small number of mystery samples. If too many mystery samples are introduced, the differences within them are given too much play. For this reason, the chapters of *Passing* were introduced three at a time. It was found that some chapters showed an affinity for Hill's texts while other chapters had more affinity for Bates's texts. The remaining chapters aligned themselves in the middle of the plot, some closer to Hill and others closer to Bates. Only two of the seven PCA plots will be shown here with an estimation of the relative chapter placements summarised in Table 2 below.

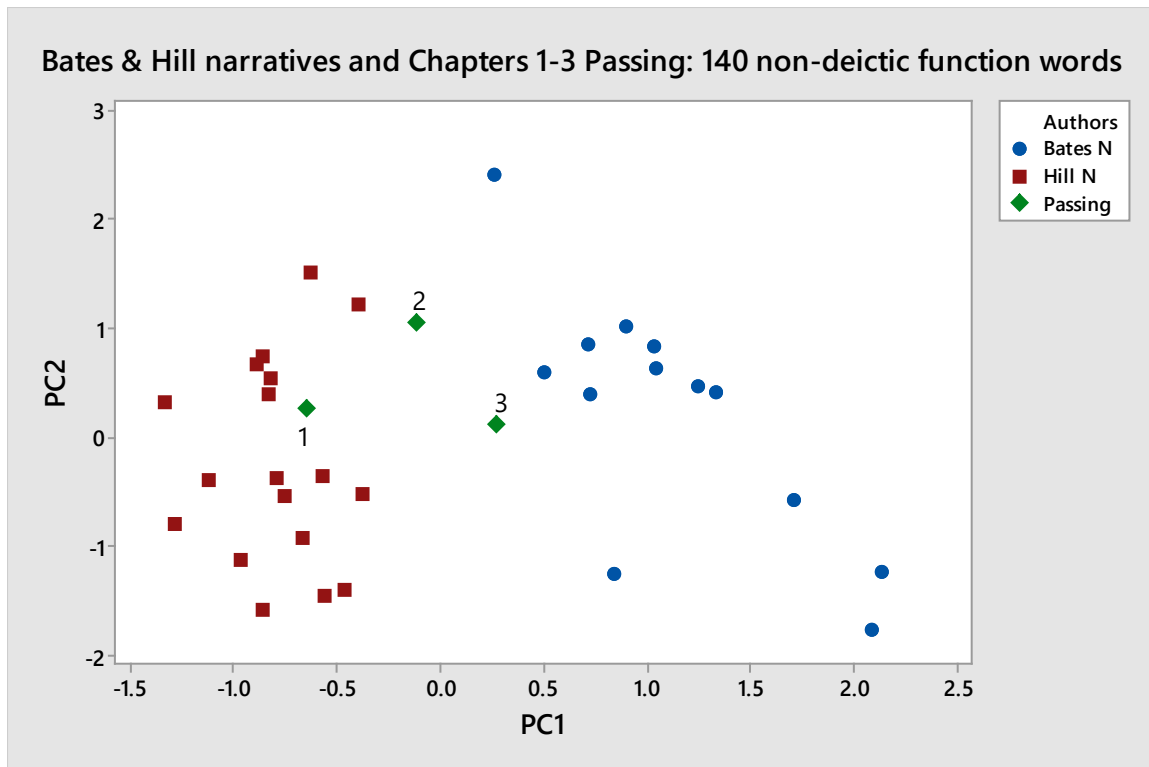


Figure 5. Bates and Hill narratives and chapters 1-3 of *Passing*: 140 ND function words.

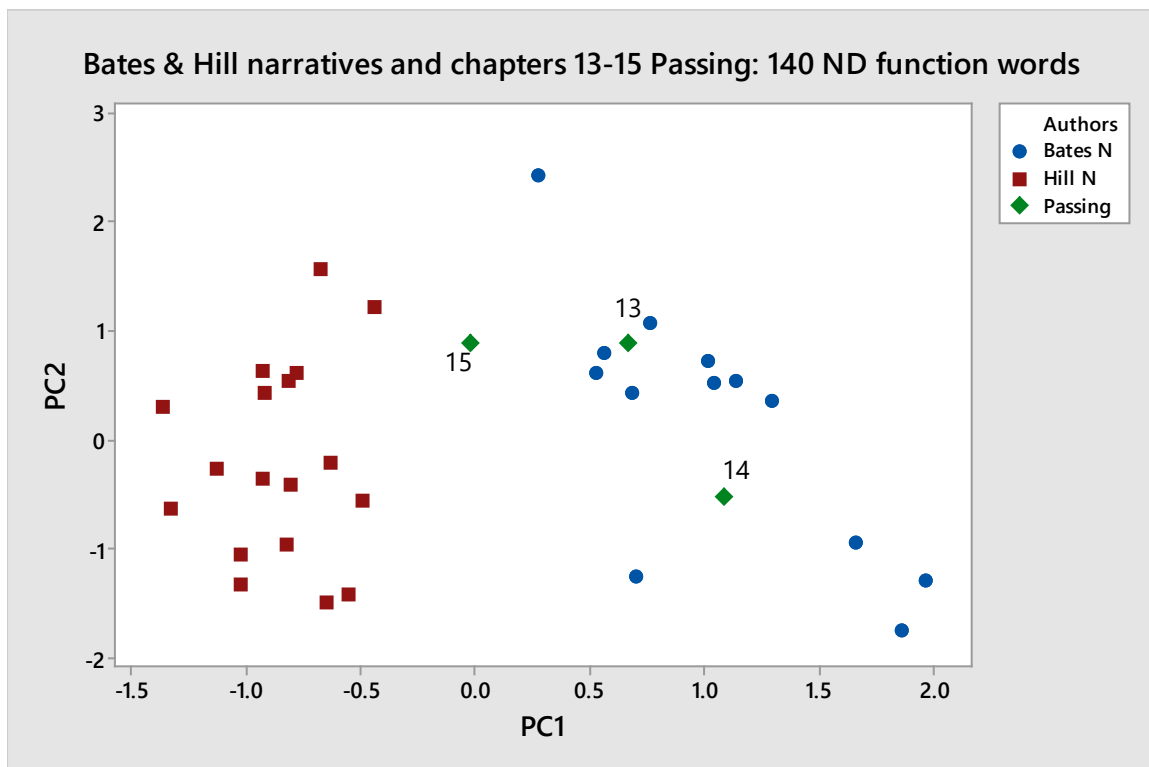


Figure 6. Bates and Hill narratives and chapters 13-15 of *Passing*: 140 ND function words.

Table 2

Placement of chapters of *Passing* in PCA plots with narratives of Bates and Hill.

Sits with Hill	Sits near Hill	Sits in Middle	Sits near Bates	Sits with Bates
1	2	3		
4	5	6		
	9	7	8	
	12	10	11	13
		15		14
16		17		
		18		
19		20		
		21		

This result seems to support the idea that Hill's contribution to the writing of the *Passing of the Aborigines* was as she claimed more than simply the work of an amanuensis. The fact that four of the chapters sit within Hill's narrative set, while another four chapters sit close by, suggests that in spite of her avowed self-effacement and intention to simply 'paraphrase' and 'arrange' Daisy's material, her own writing style was not always suppressed. Equally, the fact that two chapters sit within the Bates's narrative material with another two sitting close by suggests that at times the anecdotal material of Bates was merely incorporated into the chapter without much modification. On the other hand, there are nine chapters out of twenty-one which aligned themselves midway between the two authors, indicating the existence of a new hybrid text-type—that of the ghostwriter.

Analysis of Results and Discussion

When an author picks up the pen to write someone else's story, of necessity they make some changes to their own normal style. We see this in the opening passage of *Passing* where Hill adopts the ghostwriter's 'I' to begin the story. Apart from this use of the first person personal pronoun, the writing exemplifies the journalist's ability to write a catchy lead, provide a background of well-organised details and set the scene for the remaining narrative:

As I dream over the orphaned land of the Bibbulmun, my thoughts fly back, too, to the events which brought me on a second visit to Australia after a period of journalism in London with W.T. Stead, on the *Review of Reviews*, back to the stone-age nomads whom I had but glimpsed on my first visit to Australia, but among whom the rest of my life was to be cast. It was in 1899 that circumstances made possible my return to Australia. (1)

Hill's influence on *Passing* seems strongest in the chapters which start a story, set the scene, pick up the threads and keep the narrative going. Bates's influence seems stronger in the anecdotal, ethnological parts. This would explain the chapters that show more affinity for one or other of the authors. The location of the middling chapters reflects the hybrid nature of the ghostwriter's narrative. A comparison of Hill's version of Bates's Bibbulmun material in *Passing* and Bates's own 1924 version published in Perth's *Western Mail* demonstrates the way Hill framed and organised Bates's rather rambling material without losing the immediacy of Bates's own voice. Bates's newspaper version opens in this way:

The largest homogeneous group of aborigines in all Australia were the Bibbulmun of the South West, whose territory covered the whole coastline between about lat. 29 deg. long. 115 deg. and lat. 34 deg. long. 122 deg. (55)

Hill opens Chapter VII of *Passing* with an introductory link before launching in to Bates's narrative in her second paragraph:

Perth brought surcease from the struggles and crudeness of the north-west and refreshing contact with those of my own kin, but it was not to be for long. The call of the task to which my life had been dedicated was insistent. It drew me first to solacing the passing of the last of the Bibbulmun, that once great race which had roamed the fertile coastal plains on which Perth is set and the delectable uplands of the Darling Ranges.

The Bibbulmun race was the largest homogeneous group in all Australia. Their country extended for many hundreds of square miles, and comprised the extreme triangle of the south-west, its base drawn from about Jurien Bay, slightly south of Geraldton on the West Coast, to Esperance on the Great Australian Bight. (59)

The passing of the last of the Bibbulmun is told in the concluding paragraphs of both versions and again it demonstrates how a different text type has resulted from the transmission of the story by means of the ghostwriter's pen. Bates wrote:

"Don't let them take me," he cried to me.

I said: "It's all right, Joobaitch; you will die before you pass the kaan-ya tree at Karragullen, and your kaan-ya will rest there before it goes to the sea."

Joobaitch died as the cart crossed over the little creek near Maamba, "frightening the life" out of the Irish carrier who hadn't bargained to carry a "corp" in his cart. Joobaitch was buried in the aborigines portion of the old Guildford cemetery which formed part of his people's ground. He had had fifty years of Christianisation and civilisation. He was always a quiet well-behaved man, liked as much by the old pioneers as he liked them for their refined ways and gentle dealing; but he died in the faith of the Bibbulmun and looked forward to Kurannup and reunion with his kind as earnestly and hopefully as the most devout Christian looks to the heaven of his desire. (55)

Bates's writing here is anecdotal and includes local details less likely to be of interest to a broader audience. In the *Passing*, Hill provides a faithful rendition of the dialogue but organises the material more succinctly.

One day the cart came to take Joobaitch to hospital. "Don't let them take me!" he pleaded. I said, "It is all right, Joobaitch. You will die before you pass the kaartya tree at Karragullen, and your soul will rest there before it goes to the sea." Joobaitch died as the cart crossed the little creek near Maamba, as he had wished it, still on his own ground, close to the kaanya tree.

So the last of the Perth tribe was buried in the aboriginal section of the old Guildford cemetery, which formed part of his people's home. He had had fifty

years of Christianity, but he died in the faith of the Bibbulmun, looking westward to Kur'an'nup. (76)

Bates's writing style in her letters and articles is personal and anecdotal whereas as the blended, 'ghostwriter' style in the *Passing* is descriptive. This transition has a distancing effect, like the shift from an intimate story-telling mode to a more omniscient narration. Another way of describing this difference of styles is related to the level of formality and the assumed knowledge of the audience, with Bates generally writing in an informal way and Hill normally assuming the professional journalist's mantle of a formality suited to a wider unknown audience.

Deixis as a measure of informality/formality

The removal of the personal pronouns and tensed verbs from our list of variables introduced a more level playing field for the comparison of our two sets of narrative texts because, when deictic words were included, the contrast between Hill's more formal style of writing and Bates's informal style was so great that other differences were obscured.

A classic study on measuring text formality by Heylighen and Dewaele¹⁵ reinforces the findings in this paper by drawing attention to the features of formality that Hill would have introduced to *Passing* when she sat down to write Bates's story. Heylighen and Dewaele say that 'an expression is formal when it is context independent and precise (i.e. non-fuzzy), that is, it represents a clear distinction which is invariant under changes of context' (8). Hill would naturally have used a relatively formal style of expression when providing the organised framework (a series of book chapters) into which the anecdotal and ethnological stories of Bates would have been inserted. Bates's own informal style of writing, on the other hand, would have been particularly useful when she was describing phenomena 'for which no clear expression' was 'available in the language as yet' (9-10), particularly that relating to Aboriginal lore, culture and languages.

Conclusion

As far as we know this is the first time a computational stylistics analysis has attempted to assess the extent to which a ghostwriter's own stylistic habits—reflected in the relative frequency of their usage of preferred sets of function words—are transferred to the text in question. This study demonstrates that Hill's collaboration with Bates on the original serial resulted in the development of a new hybrid text type that blended her own more formal, professional journalistic style and Bates's personal, anecdotal one. It is unknown to what extent Lamshed and John Murray edited the text that became *The Passing of the Aborigines*, which could indeed form the basis of another investigation. However, the evidence of the computational stylistic analysis nevertheless supports Hill's claim that her own contribution to the writing of the newspaper serial and subsequent book was substantial. The results help define the parts of the book where she turned the raw material into a finished product which is in her style, rather than Bates's. Bates and Hill must share the responsibility for *The Passing of the Aborigines* and for its popular success, as well as for its lasting and profound impact on relations between Aboriginal peoples and Europeans in Australia.

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¹ Investigating the possible influence of Max Lamshed was beyond the scope of the current investigation.

² Words can be classified as 'function' words or as 'lexical' words. Function words have a grammatical function; there are a limited number of them, new ones being added only rarely. Lexical words are those like nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that can be substituted for each other in a given position in a sentence. New lexical words are constantly being added to the language.

³ Burrows' seminal book *Computation Into Criticism: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels and an Experiment in Method* used the novels of Jane Austen to show that 'a quantitative study of function word use can reveal subtle and powerful patterns in language' (Norman).

⁴ 'I offered to be the ghost in this very unusual case' (*Kabbarli* 136).

⁵ All texts were edited to remove extraneous material (headings, quotations, page numbers and so on) from the count.

⁶ The text could be used as a whole, as 21 separate chapters or as blocks of a nominated size.

⁷ A few of the shorter articles were combined with other articles.

⁸ These were too short to be used as separate texts, but were able to be combined into 4 different recipient groups and used either separately or divided into blocks.

⁹ Distribution testing, such as Student's t-test, estimates whether the difference in mean between two groups of observations means a genuine, consistent difference or reflects a chance effect arising from fluctuating counts. Each t-value has associated with it a probability that the two groups of observations derive from the same parent population and do not differ from each other (Burrows, 'Not Unless' 97).

¹⁰ See Table 1 in Appendix A.

¹¹ Deictic words are the ones that point to the time, place, or situation in which a speaker is speaking.

¹² See list of non-deictic function words used in Appendix B.

¹³ See list of narrative articles used in Appendix C.

¹⁴ Principal Component Analysis has long been the standard 'first port of call in computer-assisted studies of authorship' (Holmes 114).

¹⁵ The Formality Score (F-score) proposed by Heylighen and Dewaele as a rough measure of the degree of formality in texts is based on the expectation that the non-deictic category of words (noun, adjective, preposition and articles) would increase with the formality of a text while the deictic category (pronouns, verbs, adverbs and interjections) would decrease. Even without applying the F-score to the texts of Bates and Hill, it can be ascertained from the distribution patterns of relative frequency of usage of each author (seen in Table 1, Appendix A) that their preferred usages of deictic and non-deictic categories reflect their respective writing styles with Bates's more frequent use of the deictic personal pronouns and function verbs and Hill's more frequent use of the non-deictic articles and prepositions.