

Colleen McCullough's

# TIM

adapted for the stage by  
Tim McGarry



EDUCATION RESOURCES



christine dunstan

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Curriculum Links</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>About Colleen McCullough</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Synopsis</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Play Context</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Class Activities</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>From the Playwright</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>From the Director</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>From the Designers</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Forms, Styles and Conventions</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Characters</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Issues and Concerns</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Teaching Tim, Inclusivity and Ableism</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>The Elements of Production</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Assessment for Learning</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>45</b>

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## Education Resources: Tim

### 1. Curriculum Links

#### Drama

#### **Stage 5: Based on Making, Performing and Responding.**

Scripted Drama: Realism

#### **Stage 6: Based on Making, Performing and Critically Studying.**

Year 11: Australian Drama and Theatre

#### English

##### Stage 5

Students are required to engage meaningfully with:

Drama texts (including at least **one** Shakespeare play **in Stage 5**)

Across each stage, the selection of texts must give students experiences of:

- a range of fiction and non-fiction texts that are widely regarded as quality literature
- a range of texts by Australian authors
- a range of quality texts from around the world, including texts about intercultural and diverse experiences<sup>1</sup>
- a range of cultural, social and gender perspectives, including from popular and youth cultures.

##### Stage 6

- English Standard (Year 11)  
Outcome 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8
- English Advanced (Year 11)  
Outcome 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8

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1

Might include literature by authors with diverse backgrounds and experiences, including authors with disability



## 2. About Colleen McCullough

Colleen McCullough was an Australian novelist who worked in a range of genres but was best known for her second novel, the sweeping romance, *The Thorn Birds*, and for her *Masters of Rome* series, a painstakingly researched fictionalised account of Rome in the age of Julius Caesar. Prior to her career as an author, McCullough worked as a neuroscientist in training in various Sydney and English hospitals before settling into ten years of research and teaching in the Department of Neurology at the Yale Medical School in the USA. In 1974, her first novel, *Tim*, was published in New York, followed by the bestselling *The Thorn Birds* in 1977 and a string of successful novels, including the acclaimed *Masters of Rome* series. In 1979 *Tim* was made into a movie, launching Mel Gibson's international career. In 1978, she received the Golden Plate Award of the American Academy of Achievement. In 1984, a portrait of McCullough, painted by Wesley Walters, was a finalist in the Archibald Prize. The depth of historical research for her novels on Ancient Rome led to her being awarded a Doctor of Letters degree by Macquarie University in 1993. She was named a "living treasure" by the National Trust of Australia in 1997 and appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2006 for service to the arts as an author and to the community through roles supporting national and international educational programs, medico-scientific disciplines and charitable organisations and causes. McCullough died in January 2015 and is without a doubt one of Australia's most revered and loved authors. She has sold more than 80 million books worldwide.

## 3. Synopsis

*Tim* is a new Australian play based on the novel of the same title by Colleen McCullough. Central to the story is an unorthodox love that develops between Mary, a career driven, mid-50's business executive and Tim, a handsome 25-year-old labourer with a mild intellectual disability. Tim has grown up in a small but loving working-class family who have tried to shelter him from the cruelty of the world. He is often the brunt of ridicule by those around him, particularly his uncharitable work mates. What begins as a chance meeting between them, soon develops into a life-changing relationship for both. Tim's protective family grapple with a deep suspicion of sexual coercion, a disability system that has failed them and the devastating loss of Tim's mother. Whilst Tim's disability is

never labelled in the play, it is a constant, underlying theme, embedded in a story that explores the importance of embracing differences, opening oneself to the fullness of life and the opportunities it has to offer. Filled with notions of love, loss, and acceptance, and set in the modern day, this seminal Australian story has been sensitively adapted for the stage by playwright Tim McGarry (*Boy Swallows Universe*). *Tim*'s gripping and controversial storyline catapulted Colleen McCullough to international fame. She remains Australia's biggest selling author, with over 80 million books sold worldwide.

#### **4. *Tim*'s Context: The 1970s and Today**

##### **a. Feminism – From the Second Wave to Today**

*Tim* was written at a time of great change in Australia. Society, which had been very conservative, was being challenged by the groups that had been excluded from Australia's narrative about itself. Unleashed by the ferment of the Vietnam War and the generational conflict it created, women, First Nations people, LGBTQI people, disability groups and migrant communities began to clamour for inclusion, challenging hegemonic notions of white, male, working class Australia.

Second Wave Feminists, seeking to achieve equality with men, demanded change including equality of pay, educational opportunity, reproductive rights, and childcare. Alongside these demands was the growing exploration of female sexuality and freedom of expression. Feminists saw the inequality in the private/domestic sphere and made the connection between the domestic and wider societal inequality. Feminists believed dismantling the power of the patriarchy would occur if there was a challenge the way in which sexual relationships reinforced, reflected, and supported gendered power on a cultural level.

There were two schools of thought about the ways in which women could respond to power imbalances in sexual relationships. The first was to push accepted societal boundaries through sexual exploration. The second was to

reject the structures that reinforced male power, including the abolition of pornography and sex work.

McCullough's *Tim*, written during this period, explores the sexual agency of women. McCullough was interested in the question of how an older woman might have a sexual experience that reflects her desires in a way that is positive and centred on her own pleasure.

Contemporary constructs of female sexuality and its expression has developed from the debates generated by Second Wave Feminism, with current notions of women's sexual agency largely reflecting the notion that women should explore their sexuality consensually in a way that best suits them and their desires. McGarry's *Tim* is less about the taboo of Mary's age than the original novel, removing references to her grey clothing, girdle, and stockings - a negative construction of the ageing body - and more about exploring current ideas of female sexual empowerment, diversity, and equality in the face of current challenges to female expressions of sexuality.

## **b. Class and Masculinity**

McCullough's *Australia* was one in which patriarchal power was explicitly enacted in society and was informed by constructions of class. McGarry's *Tim* sits in a contemporary world in which hegemonic ideas about masculinity are under challenge from decades of feminist thought whilst also being reinforced by neoliberal economic policy.

### **i. What is Class?**

Notions of economic class have been influenced by the writing of Karl Marx. Marx defined class as being created by the relationship between those that owned the Means of Production (including land, capital, and property) and the working class (or proletariat) who sold their labour power for a wage.

ii. **Traditional Australian Masculinity (Working Class Masculinity)**

McCullough's Australia was defined by the celebration of working-class culture and masculinity. Trade Unions, inspired by Marx's analysis of the capitalist system, had challenged the power of the capitalist class, and had won significant changes to the way that governments regulated the economy to protect the working person. Trade union membership was strong, with notions of a fair go, protection of worker rights and appropriate payment at the forefront of the movement. Trade Unions were dominated by men and as such, traditional understandings of male roles were celebrated. This included the concept of the breadwinner, which reinforced the public/private divide between men and women. Both McCullough and McGarry's construction of Tim's family life with his parents is in this contextual understanding of class and gender roles.

iii. **Contemporary Understandings of Class and Masculinity in *Tim***

In the decades following the publication of McCullough's novel, Australia's economic system changed, with the increasing popularity of neoliberal ideas. Neoliberalism is based on the notion that:

"...human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms.... within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade". (Harvey, 2005)

In response to these ideas, the government began to remove the regulation of the market, encouraging supply and demand to organise the economy. Public assets, including Telstra, Qantas, and the Commonwealth Bank, were privatised. Importantly

for *Tim*, the result of these changes to the economy was to remove the protections afforded by the welfare state, to encourage efficiency, competition, and profit, to all areas of society. This included those areas of the economy that provided support for those with a disability.

The marketisation of service provision, increased reliance on the labour market and the minimisation of support for overcoming barriers to the marketplace (including the labour market) for those with a disability, has eroded the participation of disabled people, resulting in the deterioration of the right to autonomy and self-determination. Societally, the result has been the decline of values such as community responsibility, redistribution of wealth and support for those that require it.

#### **iv. Hegemonic Masculinity**

Hegemonic Masculinity is a term that refers to the way in which society privilege types of masculinity over others. That is, certain attributes of what it means to be masculine are valued more highly than others. These attributes are dependent on historical, social, cultural, and economic contexts.

In McCullough's context, Australian men were valued for their looks, anti-intellectual values, physical prowess, and working-class origins. This type of masculinity was typically Anglo – Saxon, able-bodied and heterosexual. Mateship, male bonding rituals including drinking at the pub and supporting rugby league were celebrated. Relationships with women were informed by traditional gender stereotypes in which women were expected to stay in the home and look after the family.



Contemporary hegemonic masculinity is more complex. Many old-fashioned values have been retained in modern Australia, including privileging whiteness, heterosexuality and being able-bodied. It is possible to argue that the overt expression of these values is less common in contemporary Australia, driven underground by the sustained voice of feminism over the past fifty years. There has been change, however, and it can be seen in the ways in which gender roles, class and education continue to be negotiated and renegotiated within neoliberal culture. To that end, the celebration of anti-intellectual masculinity has, in some iterations, been exchanged for celebrating high earning, market driven, competitive notions of Australian masculinity.

**c. Disability and Ableism**

The concept of 'disability' is a way of defining people and their bodies. It originates from the humanist tradition that advocates the notion that all human beings are equal and share commonalities amongst them, whilst at the same time, also have differences between them. These differences are not neutral, but rather, signify as a:

“... lack or loss and as a spectatorial glitch that attests to the power of our recent industrial past to structure our perception of the world”.

(Conroy, 2009)

Recent theorists have begun to challenge this concept of disability. Their work, in reaction to notions of loss and lack, has begun to explore disability as a social construct, much like other social movements including feminism. Disability theorists argue that disabled people are disabled by society and its structures, rather than their bodies (Manderson and Peake 2005).

In Australia, the World Health Organization's (WHO) International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) is used to define the term disability. The definition is included below:

*"The ICF conceptualises a person's level of functioning, in terms of body functions and structures, activities and participation, as a dynamic interaction between their health condition(s) and environmental and/or personal factors. Disability is an umbrella term for impairments of body function or structure, activity limitations or participation restrictions".*

World Health Organisation: International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)

Ableism is a term that has emerged from America and the United Kingdom as part of the Disability Rights Movement that emerged as part of a wider social critique of hegemonic culture over the past 50 years.

Ableism has been defined as:

*"Ideas, practices, institutions, and social relations that presume able-bodiedness, and by so doing, construct persons with disabilities as marginalized ... and largely invisible 'others'".*  
(Chouinard 1997).

It is important to note that this definition focuses on the presumption that disability is focused on the body. It fails to include those with disabilities that are not physically apparent.

#### **d. Approaches to Teaching Context**

*Tim's* original context must be considered by teachers and students when studying McGarry's production to ensure that students find the resonances of the values of McCullough's novel whilst evaluating its values as a contemporary creative work.

1. Watch the following clips from YouTube. They provide an insight into Australia in the 1970s.

Tempo Australia in the Seventies.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdaNa4HUZPE>

Pubs: Fair Dinkum Retrofocus

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pnGgWI\\_KSU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pnGgWI_KSU)

Class Activities:

- Brainstorm the groups of people in society that you can identify in the videos. Note these groups on the whiteboard.
  - Brainstorm adjectives that describe the qualities of each of the groups and write these adjectives around each societal group in a mind map formation.
  - *Walk as Though*: Using the adjectives generated by the class, warm up using 'Walk as Though' in which student actors walk in the space, taking on the physicality of each of the adjectives.
  - Evaluate the ways in which each physicality suggests power and status. How might it impact on the way that the narrative of *Tim* plays out?
2. Students will work in groups of 4 – 5. Using the textual information provided in the document about the contexts of *Tim* assign each group a particular focus area and a character from the production

Group Work:

- Students to imagine that the character they have been allocated has been given the information that they have been given as a group.
- As a group, imagine how the character that they have been allocated might respond to the information.
- As a group, write a short monologue of approximately

a paragraph as the character. This monologue could capture the thoughts of the character about the context allocated. For example, the group that has been allocated the character of Ron might have been allocated the Second Wave of Feminism. The monologue could cover how Ron might respond to the concepts generated by the movement.

- As a group, perform this monologue for the class, with each group member taking on the role allocated and dividing the dialogue between them.
- Allocate another group in the classroom to respond to the performance, noting what they learnt from the performance about the context and the character.

## **5. From the Playwright: Tim McGarry**

### **1. Can you tell us a little about your writing process? What were some of the challenges for you as you adapted a well-loved novel and film into a stage production?**

Collaborating on the creation of new Australian stories for the stage is one of my greatest passions. It is a process I'm well versed in after many years of creative practice, a process I am enthusiastic about, a process I'm continuously inspired by. As I begin any adaptation, I take a meticulous and clinical approach to cross examining, analysing, and imagining a new structure for the stage. Once I begin to formulate a stronger vision for a piece, and prior to writing the first draft, I like to develop a lengthy treatment document, share it for dramaturgical and directorial input, musing early on possible structures, styles, and consider other textures that might be layered in to strengthen a work; how we might tell a story with fewer words. Another important element, when possible, is to include the author in the journey, the original creator of the work, giving them the opportunity to understand my approach, to read early drafts and attend the creative development exploration if desired by the team. It has been my experience

that author involvement in this early process is an important step in bringing them on the journey of transformation that inevitably occurs, as their original story undergoes shifts and changes, and evolves into a new artistic work inspired by the original work, knowing in advance that they will not just see the original novel on the stage. The novel is in effect the raw material, the starting point - and the reimaging, the condensing and amalgamating events and characters will inevitably end up somewhere new. With the writing and development of *Tim* the play, author Colleen McCullough had died several years ago, but I worked closely with her long-term friend, and journalist, Bernie Leo. For me, he became Colleen's eyes and ears, and we developed a sensational working relationship. Once I have completed several drafts of a new work, the opportunity of rigorous script developments with the creative team become invaluable in moving the play forward – exploring the text out loud, making sure the words and syntax strengthen narrative, actors feeding into character journey, designers having an opportunity to imagine the aesthetic of the play. It's crucial to never be precious about moving, cutting, rewriting text – whatever works best for the play, and critical feedback can highlight aspects you hadn't yet considered, or help reinforce the decisions you have made. It's the only way a work will truly grow. Draft after each draft brings us closer to a clearer cleaner draft ready for rehearsals, and once on the floor in the rehearsal room the play will continue to evolve. The success of any adaptation is the capturing of the spirit of a story, while taking an audience beyond the novel, bringing fresh perspectives, helping them to experience the story anew. Probably the greatest challenge of this work was bringing it into the modern day, considering the vast changes in the way the community and government view people who live with a disability. This aspect, together with the many societal changes, women in the workplace as leaders in business, the perception of marriage, and making sure our thriving multicultural community are represented.



**2. Colleen McCullough published Tim in 1974. Australia was very different at that time. What do you think the similarities are between 1974 and today? What are the key differences?**

Colleen wrote Tim in a very different era; nearly fifty years ago. There are many similarities and some vast differences in comparing both time periods. In many respects both Mary and Tim suffer from a social alienation, and this holds true for both characters in the modern-day version, and the original story. Disability, and the understanding of people with disabilities has improved markedly, but we still have a way to go. In the 1970's institutional care was very much the way of dealing with a person with a disability. Families were still being told the lives of children born with a disability would not amount to much, some doctors advising parents to place their child immediately into state care and forget about them – and some followed this advice. Our attitudes to people with disabilities only really changed dramatically after the 1983 Richmond Report was completed; a report about redressing the imbalance between institutionalised hospital care and community care in mental health services, while advocating strongly for a more decentralised and integrated model of care and support. Governments took heed of these suggested reforms and we've seen the dramatic rise in independent living opportunities together with a societal change in attitude and respect for people living with a disability. Of course, change is slow and there is a long way to go, but we have come a long way. In terms of the play, I have reflected that change by introducing the notion that a group home is a possibility for people in Tim's situation of aging care givers, in his case his parents. Sadly, one aspect of the story that hasn't changed is society's attitude towards older women in relationships with younger men. It seems the greater the age gap the more negative the judgement – not always, but there is judgement, nevertheless. Of course, an older man dating a much younger woman is somehow different, and often positive affirmations are attributed to these unions 'a free ticket to ride'. Colleen's original work centres around a friendship that develops

between a mid-40's businesswoman and a 25-year-old labourer with a disability. I have leaned into the age gap and made Mary's character a woman in her mid-50s. In the original work Mary was the secretary to a mining executive, in this modern-day version Mary is the mining executive. Similarly, Tim's sister, who left the family home to marry in the 1970's novel, in this version is a budding law graduate, who leaves Sydney with her partner to pursue a career as an environmental lawyer with an interstate law firm. Another difference in the production from the original novel is the encouragement for production teams both now and in future incarnations of the work, that the roles of Raj, the group home team leader, Nate, Dee's partner, and the builder's labourer are played by an actor who identifies as black, Indigenous, or a person of colour or comes from a non-English speaking background. We live in a rich multi-racial, multi-cultural society and our community must exist, be celebrated, and be represented in work we create.

**3. One of the differences between the original Australian context and today is our understanding of inclusivity. Can you tell us a little about how you approached the character of Tim with this in mind?**

Our understanding of inclusivity has changed markedly in 50 years, however the actual practice on inclusivity lags behind. Disability inclusion is often described as understanding the relationship between the way people function and how they participate in society, and making sure everybody, no matter their ability, has the same opportunities to participate in every aspect of life to the best of their abilities and desires. However, we are not quite there yet. We still see younger people with disabilities living in nursing facilities designed for older Australians in the final chapters of their lives. Some have followed their parents, some are placed as their health requires additional nursing care, not readily available in the city, region, or town in which they live. The demand for independent living far outweighs the supply of such facilities be it group homes or supported living in apartments or homes. The introduction of

the NDIS has gone a long way to redressing this situation, but it is still relatively early days of this new insurance scheme, and funding is always limited and the processes time consuming. Families rightly or wrongly are protective over their members with disabilities and can exclude them from situations that either they, or their family member, may find challenging or act in a way that is considered 'unhealthy' or not the norm, or may embarrass others – hence people with disabilities can still be excluded from attending family funerals or family weddings or parties celebrating significant milestones. The death of a parent may not be reported to them or held back and the opportunity to grieve is stymied. Inclusivity in the workplace is also improving but again there is an increased likelihood of bullying at work, which statistically increases dramatically for a person with a disability, or they become aware they are not as respected as other colleagues, not valued, the brunt of people's humour, or considered that they have feelings and know they are being ridiculed. Society hasn't fully grasped that people with disabilities deserve the same respect and celebration when they form or live in a relationship with a person who may have different abilities to themselves. Furthermore, they are seen as not worthy or capable of enjoying healthy sexual relationships. In Colleen's story, and in the modern-day adaptation the character of Tim still faces all these issues of inclusivity or lack thereof; he still battles the judgement of those around him who think they know how he should be living his life.

**4. The character of Mary is also one that is framed differently in contemporary Australia. How did you reimagine Mary for the audience?**

In Mary's character I've heightened the character traits originally set up in Colleen's work. Mary remains a workaholic, one who has never considered or acted on her desires. She sees herself unworthy in sexual relationships, unworthy of love. I have leaned into these aspects, I have made her ten years older, and I have given her a career more befitting of

her experience in the industry she has worked in for many years. She was a powerless assistant or a secretary in the 1970s. In 2020s she runs the company. But the same questions remain - can a woman in her 40s or 50s partner a man half her age? Society rarely applauds such relationships, and they often become a source of judgement, negative commentary, and innuendo. Tim is about a woman's journey from shame, battling accusations of grooming and seduction, grappling with her own sexual awakening, to a realisation that a full-blown loving union with a much younger man can not only exist, but flourish. It's about a woman who faces her fears and neuroses, and eventually finds clarity and affirmation, allowing her to rise above feelings of inadequacy, and embrace her newfound freedom and truth.

#### **5. Why is Tim still relevant for a theatre audience?**

In this rapidly changing, yet often static world for people living with a disability, this work felt ripe for a modern-day theatrical interpretation. I was drawn to the story because I'm attracted to theatre that challenges attitudes, societal norms, morals, and ethics. Theatre that can be at times brutal, but personal and ever hopeful. Tim does all of that, and more. I truly hope Tim helps to shine a light on the many issues facing people with disabilities, their fight for equality, their fight to be recognised as a person first, their disability second.

#### **6. From The Director: Darren Yap**

Darren Yap is a well-known Australian actor and director who has enjoyed a long career in the Australian entertainment industry.

##### **1. Can you tell us why you are drawn to the story of Tim?**

I am attracted to stories that challenge what is considered normal or moral in society's eyes. The idea of a successful career woman in her 50's and a handsome 25-year-old labourer with a mild intellectual disability becoming a romantic couple is still considered taboo in our society. In the end, Love is Love and it's nobody's business!

**2. Why do you think that the novel, Tim, written in 1974 by Colleen McCollough and made into a film in 1979, is relevant to contemporary audiences?**

The novel's themes are incredibly relevant still. We condemn what we think is not 'normal'. As a society we must try to embrace the differences in people, their cultures, or their beliefs. Also, the script explores the nature of death. I believe in our western society we're not good at processing the death of someone we love. So, this is a study on grief as well.

**3. What was your vision for this production?**

I love working on new Australian work. I wanted the production to have complex characters who are in conflict, grappling with big life issues. I wanted the acting style naturalistic, but the set design has a surreal and theatrical architecture. I wanted to show key emotional moments of Tim when he would have his anxiety attacks. Because of this, the sound and lighting play a big part in the production.

**4. How did you approach the casting of the production? What was important to you as you sought to tell this story?**

I read the script several times and got to know the 6 main characters. I had conversations with Tim McGarry how he saw the characters. This gave me a framework to understand the 'essence' of the actors before I auditioned. Good casting relies on the different energies and versatility of the actors. We wanted to be authentic casting the role of Tim. We were fortunate to cast Ben Goss who lives with cerebral palsy. We were delighted to find this incredibly talented actor. I am very excited about the actors we assembled for the production.

**5. McCollough's Australia was very different to contemporary Australia. How did you preserve the beauty of the Australian language and culture of the original story whilst bringing it into the present?**

Tim McGarry has kept the heart of McCullough's Aussie novel but found a fresh and gritty danger to this unorthodox



love story. Tim captures the Aussie vernacular perfectly. His dialogue feels honest and comfortable in the character's mouths. But at the same time, Tim has updated the conflict which means the story has more urgency for the stage. Australian audiences will have a strong visceral sense of Sydney suburbia and the Hawkesbury from the '74 novel. Some parts of the production feel nostalgic intentionally, but the dialogue and energy are now.

**6. How did you work with your creative team to realise your vision for the production?**

As a creative team we have had many conversations about the themes in the play. We then moved from discussions to brainstorming; what would the physical world look like? The idea of gardening, rebirth of nature and seasons passing was our starting point. The team felt that the climax of the love story is Mary and Tim's wedding. And so, the design transformation into their wedding is a big moment for our production. James Browne, Ben Hughes, Max Lambert, and Lucy Scott have brought their creativity to express the visual and aural aspects to our production.

**7. From the Designers: Set**

**1. Can you tell us a little about your creative process?**

The creative process begins with reading the script to get a feel for the characters, the story, the locations and to discover and unravel the ideas and concepts within the writing that will evoke and convey the themes and emotional concepts that the writer has intended. The set designer must marry the practical needs of the director and present the conceptual ideas within the script. So, it's a careful balance.

**2. How did you work with Darren Yap, Director, to realise your creative vision?** Darren and I begin our process by firstly creating mood boards of images that may trigger ideas about the set design. We were looking a lot at the concept of a 'green house' combining glass walls that house a lush garden. We felt

that the play needed to revolve around the garden. Because the season of change, time passing, life spans and nature's instincts are all themes we discovered within the text. The metaphoric reference of the greenhouse is that whilst it's beautiful and growing and alive, it's also contained within walls and these walls represent the barriers that the lead characters are faced with in their lives. We then start to sketch ideas on paper and after many, many discussions about the scenes within the show, we begin the process of building a scale model of the set that will demonstrate to the entire team involved exactly what it will look like.

**3. Tim is an iconic Australian novel and film. What are the visual images that you have chosen to use that represent the world of the play? What references have you kept from the early 1970s, when the original novel was published? Can you explain why you made these choices?**

We felt that we wanted to set the play in the present day because the story is very timeless and universal. It's relevant to so many people today and we wanted audiences to relate to the characters. I think a lot can be said about a single furniture item. For example, Mary's furniture is sophisticated, simple, and practical. It's almost restrained and methodical but it's also quite modern. This tells us a lot about Mary's character and who she is. This is contrasted with the furniture of the Melville household which is a bit more 'lived in', hasn't been updated since the 70's perhaps. The metaphoric reference of the greenhouse within the set design is that whilst it's beautiful and growing and alive, it is also contained within walls which represent barriers which are faced by the lead characters within their lives.

**4. Tim moves through various places throughout the production. What were some of the challenges in creating those locations for the audience?**

Tim is written in quite a filmic way; the scenes jump from locations very quickly, so we didn't want to slow down the production with too many set items being brought on and off.

We decided to have the furnishings of the two main house ever present on the stage so actors could move from scene to scene at times without leaving the stage. And lighting can then re-focus the attention of the audience. We have these large glass greenhouse walls that can move to create various shapes and locations as needed and reveal the garden as the central focus. It's almost as if the garden is the world of Mary and Tim. We will bring some items on and off and transform the garden into various locations. For example, the garden will illuminate with fairy lights during the wedding scene.

## **8. From the Designers: Costume**

### **1. Can you tell us a little about your creative process?**

When it comes to designing costumes, I start by reading the text and trying to imagine what I would wear if I were each character. If I am Tim, I might wear gardening clothes that my mum bought for me.

Then I think about what I might wear as each character, in each scene. If I'm Mary and feeling like I'm in love for the first time, then suddenly I no longer want to wear my usual pants and shirt combo and instead feel like wearing a floaty, resort dress. I'm transforming my exterior as my inner life transforms. This is the way I go about conceptually justifying my design decisions.

Once I've got a bit of a feel for the text and a basic design interpretation of the costumes then it's helpful to have a chat with the director about their vision and character interpretation to make sure we're on the same page.

Next, I like to draw a full body image of the actor on my iPad, this will be my template for trying different designs on the character. This way I can also make decisions about costume, taking into consideration the actors shape, natural hair colour, complexion (if these are not changing or being augmented for the role).

**2. *Tim* was written in the early 1970s and clothing at that time has an iconic shape, colour, and texture. How did you negotiate the 50-year difference in context for a contemporary audience?**

It's true that the 1970's has an iconic look, just as the 80's or 2000's do. *Tim* would be relevant in any decade or era, I feel. That it was written in the 70's and is still relevant is testament to the universality of the story.

In this contemporary production, I have simply tailored my designs to fit the aesthetic of today. Some things haven't changed much over the years either. A business suit in the 70's (although maybe more fabulous) performs the same function as a business suit from today, just as gardeners clothing, or swimming costumes haven't changed in essence.

My key aim is to use costume, from whatever period, to signal to an audience some of the key facts and feelings of each character. Just like we dress ourselves according to who we are and how we feel.

**3. *Tim* is set in Australia and in many ways is a celebration of who we are. How did you keep this sense of Australia in a contemporary production?**

In terms of costume, I made design choices that were informed by my research into contemporary Australian fashion and design trends. Australia has a broad but distinct style. This is driven by many factors, most importantly, climate, socioeconomic environment, cultural heritage, social mores, and attitudes.

In the costumes of this production, we have a meeting of different worlds: Mary's affluent, corporate aesthetic; Dee's young corporate look and Harry and Jim's practical, manual worker aesthetic. Ron is a retired blue-collar worker, Joy a housewife and Emily might have once worked but is now retired and so wears comfortable clothes with no particular

need to impress. Nate has an arty aesthetic. Each of these styles represent aspects of Australian culture today.

- 4. The character of Mary is an interesting one to costume because Australia's understanding of the older woman has changed in many ways. How did you see that character and what were some of the challenges in creating her costume?**

I see Mary as a woman who has worked hard to prove herself in her professional life to the detriment of her personal and love life. She has created a tough, "take no prisoners" persona which over time has become a shell in which she is trapped. She perhaps has begun to believe that she doesn't get to have love, and maybe doesn't deserve it. Certainly, she feels unattractive to men, but that has been a deliberate choice she's had to make, working in a male dominated industry. She's made a life for herself, never thinking she could be loved.

The challenge for costuming Mary is to reflect the growing awareness she finds around herself in the first instance, which brings her to softening and opening to Tim and his family. As she grows to feel safe, desirable, even sexy, her aesthetic changes.

## **9. Forms, Styles and Conventions**

McGarry's script has been written using the form, style, and conventions of Realism. The playwright has used moments of the Surrealist theatrical style to communicate both structure and the inner world of Tim's mind.

Realism is a theatrical form and style that aims to recreate real life on the stage. Every aspect of the production including the narrative, characters, acting, dialogue, the Elements of Production (set, lighting, costume, sound) works together to create the illusion of reality for the audience with the aim of producing an empathic response in the audience.

There are several conventions that are associated with Realism.

The narrative form is primarily episodic and linear, which means that it



usually progresses from beginning to end without interruption. This allows the audience to immerse themselves into the emotional journey of the characters. There may be flash forwards and flashbacks in the narrative and these choices are usually made to heighten the emotional response to a climactic moment.

Realism relies on the conventions of the Fourth Wall and Suspension of Disbelief. The convention of the Fourth Wall is based on the premise that the actors are not being watched by the audience. Rather, the audience will be watching the action through an invisible wall. This means that the actors will not make direct contact with the audience at all and will (paradoxically) disguise the theatricality of the performance so that the audience is not drawn out of their connection to the emotional lives of the characters. Related to this is the notion of the Suspension of Disbelief, in which the audience agrees that even though they are sitting in a theatre aware that they are watching a theatrical performance, they will pretend that they are watching reality occur in front of them.

Surrealist Theatre is a theatrical style that incorporates both Realism and symbolic representations of the human condition. Emerging in the 1920s in Paris, Surrealist Theatre makers sought to free the artistic process from conscious thought and release that which lies in the human subconscious. To do this, theatre makers used Sigmund Freud's research on dreams and the symbolic meaning of images that emerged from the human subconscious.

The conventions of Surrealist Theatre include dream like sequences, confusion of time and place, and chaotic worlds within the world of the play, designed to allow the audience to access the inner world of the characters.

## **10. Characters**

The character list below is based on McGarry's script of *Tim* and reflects his commitment to reflecting contemporary Australia on the stage. Some of the characters in McGarry's *Tim* have had their name changed from the original novel. Tim's Mum in the play has been renamed Joy, whereas in the book, her name is Esme. Tim's

sister in McGarry's script has had her name changed to Dee. In McCullough's novel, Dee is called Dawn and she is occasionally nicknamed 'Dawnie' by her immediate family. In McGarry's *Tim*, Dee's boyfriend is artist Nate. McGarry has updated McCullough's novel so that the dated notion of Dawn being in a relationship with her boss, Michael (Mick) has been contemporised. The community worker and Mary's friend is Raj, whereas in the book, it's John Martinson.

**Tim:** A handsome young man in his late twenties. Tim is a talented gardener and handy person. He lives with his parents, Ron, and Joy Melville in the family home. Tim's family is loving and positive. At the beginning of the play, we see that Tim struggles with his sense of self and self-worth. Tim lives with an intellectual disability that is not named by the playwright.

**Mary:** An attractive businesswoman in her mid-fifties, Mary has worked hard to develop her career, after having been orphaned as a child. She runs a very successful and lucrative business working to defend the environment. Mary has not been confident in pursuing her relationships with men and divulges to her neighbour, Emily, that she has never been in love.

**Emily:** Mary's older next-door neighbour and good friend. A "rough diamond" who speaks her version of the world and celebrates her experiences within it.

**Ron:** Tim's father. Ron is retired from paid work and spends his days looking after Tim, watching sport on the TV and spending time with his wife, Joy. Whilst very much a traditional man, Ron is gentle, kind, and compassionate and he sees the depth and value of human connection, irrespective of societal expectations.

**Joy:** Tim's mother. Joy is a traditional home maker who has spent her life caring for her children. Now that Ron has retired, Joy enjoys attending Probus and exploring the world around her.

**Dee:** Tim's sister. Dee is an exceptionally intelligent woman who has trained as a lawyer. Dee's law firm represents large energy and mining companies, but Dee finds that she has to change roles because her conscience won't allow her to continue to work in this field. Dee is fiercely protective of her brother, Tim.

**Nate:** Dee's boyfriend. By the end of the narrative, Nate and Dee are living in Melbourne, and expecting their first baby together, which indicates a distance of time has taken place over the course of the play. Nate is an artist with huge ambitions for his career.

**Raj:** A former work colleague of Mary's who has shifted from the corporate world to working in Community Care, specifically as a team leader in a Group Home, where people with disabilities reside. Raj is an insightful, thoughtful, pragmatic and compassionate person who is passionate about ensuring that all humans can reach their potential.

## 11. Issues and Concerns

### a. Family Life and Constructions of Gender and Class

*Tim* explores the relationships within Tim's family, with the arrival of Mary shining a light onto the structure of their familial relationships and the assumptions that underpin them.

Tim's family is a working-class nuclear family, in which Ron and Joy function within traditional gender and class stereotypes. Ron, retired from paid work, has functioned in the role of the breadwinner. The audience is made aware that, unlike some stereotypical representations of older fathers, Ron is a committed and interested parent, within the confines of traditional gender roles. Ron does his best to look after Tim where possible, particularly in ways that are traditionally considered to be masculine, including taking Tim to the pub, managing the family's finances, and providing protection for his wife and children.

Joy fulfils the traditional role of mother and carer, based in the home. The audience sees Joy packing his overnight bag and shopping for the family's food:

*Joy is unpacking Tim's overnight bag. Ron is on the phone.*  
(Sc. 14).

As such, Joy is the implicit centre of the family home, providing the emotional and (unpaid) domestic labour traditionally

expected of women. Feminist theatre makers would note that the character of Joy mimics the inequality found in constructions of gender roles within Realism, reproducing the inequalities of the world it seeks to represent.

Ron and Joy care for their children within this world without support from wider community structures. They have done the best they could for their both with limited support. Emerging from a working-class family, both Tim and Dee have paid employment, with Dee's intellectual abilities rewarded with a place at university to study law. Tim works as a gardener and his obvious talent, his care and connection to the local environment is clearly linked to Mary's understanding that regulation and community responsibility are vitally important.

Mary's entry into Tim's family brings with it a change to the family's understanding of traditional gender roles and the confines of working-class culture. Both Mary and Dee are bright, hardworking, and ambitious. Both are highly intelligent women. Both have pursued corporate careers, although McGarry's Mary works for the environment, a counterpoint to Dee's more conservative positioning in society as a lawyer for a large energy company at the beginning of the play.

Dee: Defending a company with a staggeringly dodgy moral compass. It's hard to stomach.

Act 1, Sc. 5. (pg. 11)

Dee's access to the labour market, her intellectual privilege and prestigious law degree so valued by wider society, impacts on her ability to see her brother as a fully complex human being, with desires beyond that which involve status and wealth. Dee's inability to see Mary and Tim as anything beyond consumers in a marketplace result in suspicion, selfishness, and self-interest, cloaked in the language of care:

Dee: "A postal address. If Tim is going to spend so much time with you, I'd like to send him a mobile phone. I want to be able

to talk to him whenever he wants”. Act 1, Sc. 22.

McGarry’s crafting of the relationship between Dee and Mary, particularly when reflected against their romantic partnerships, highlights the impact of class on a family. A clear link between the impact of neoliberalism and the ways in which Australia has abandoned the disabled community and the environment – the areas that benefit from a collective and compassionate approach.

## **b. Approaches to Teaching Family Life and Constructions of Gender and Class**

The activities that follow are based on an embodied approach to exploring Family Life and Constructions of Gender and Class.

1. Students will work in groups of approximately 3 – 4 people. Allocate each group a character from *Tim* and ask them to find 4 examples of McGarry’s script that could be used to explain the class origins of this character and the character’s view of gender roles. Once each group has found their examples, the group should summarise their findings including a decision from the group about the class of the person and their view on gender roles.
2. In the same groups, students use the internet, magazine images and other resources to create a collage of the way that they would envisage their allocated character. Once the collage has been completed, each group may take on the role of a director and draft an email to a casting director in which they explain, using this collage, the actor that they would like the casting director to find for their production of *Tim* and the reasons for their choice.
3. Provide each group with the email and collage from a different group. In role as the casting directors, find the actor that the group thinks best suits the brief from the director. Present the group’s decision to the class, justifying the way that their choice reflects the appropriate class that the actor will be inhabiting.
4. Once each presentation has been completed, the rest of the class may ask clarifying questions of the casting director



if needed. From there, the class should decide, in role as director, whether the actor will be cast. This should be accompanied by a class discussion of that evaluates the representations of economic class.

5. Ask each group to formulate their view on Nate. What class is he from? What kind of masculinity does he ascribe to? Why has McGarry included him in the play and what does he represent about contemporary masculinity?

**c. Tim, Inclusivity and Ableism.**

McGarry's *Tim* uses the conversation between Mary and Raj in Act. 1, Sc. 21, Act 1, Sc. 23, and Act. 1, Sc. 26 to explicitly unpack the relationship between neoliberalism, misogyny, and ableism.

The conversations occur at a point during the narrative that, with Joy's death and Ron getting older, Tim's care is becoming a pressing issue for his future happiness and well-being. Both Mary and Raj have exited corporate life for work that is more rewarding to them – the environment and the maintenance of community bonds. Raj, however, immediately explodes the traditional notion of community caring, acquainting Mary and the audience to the construction of community in a neoliberal Australia.

Raj: Technically, they're called consumers.  
Act. 1. Sc. 21.

Mary's second conversation with Raj in Act. 1, Sc. 22 makes connections between the flaws in the logic of neoliberalism, as Raj explains to Mary how, even though members of group living are called "consumers" and that neoliberalism promises the power of the market will direct resources to where they are needed, the lived reality for families is quite the opposite.

Raj and Mary's pivotal interaction, however, occurs in Sc. 26 where, having met Tim, Raj is able to challenge Mary's

assumptions about the best course of action. Raj notes in the process that it is Mary's ableist beliefs of what is right, proper, and loving for Tim that she is acting upon, rather than the reality.

### **Teaching Tim, Inclusivity and Ableism**

The activities that follow are based on an embodied approach to exploring Inclusivity and Ableism.

1. Working as a class, ask students to find the place in Act 1. Sc. 21, Sc. 22, and Sc. 23 where Tim is consulted about his own care. Generate a class-based list of these instances. At the completion of this list, generate a class mind map of the reasons why these interactions might have occurred. How might Tim's life have been different if there had been more consultation between him and his family?
2. Using Act 1, Sc. 21, make a class list of the references to the behavioural strategies used in a group home to encourage harmony between the housemates and with the wider community. Brainstorm both the negatives and benefits from these strategies. Why might these strategies be used and how could the community change them to facilitate a more fulfilling life for those in community care?
3. Work together as a class on the dialogue where Raj uses the word "retard" in Act 1. Sc. 26 to discuss why Raj might have used this word?
4. Mary's frank conversation with Raj in Act 1. Sc. 26 has an enormous impact on Mary. Using the Drama strategy of Conscience Alley, explore the dilemma that faces Mary at this stage of the play.

### **d. Sexuality, Diversity and Gender**

#### **i. Positive Performance of Sexuality, Intellectual Disability**

*Tim* is an exploration and celebration of marginalised human experience. The play is a joyous expression of love between Tim and Mary, who both live with

bodies that have been categorised by society as being different, or other, to societal norms.

Tim's body, as a man with an intellectual disability, played by actor Ben Goss, is inscribed with meaning that prevent Tim from accessing notions of hegemonic masculinity. In this discourse, masculinity is active and able-bodied. Despite Tim's noted physical beauty, his body differs from societal expectations, and he is stigmatised by those around him.

Further, cultural constructions of masculine disability have been built on heterosexist and ableist notions of sexuality, in which disability is conflated with passivity, impotency or sexual incapacity. McGarry's Tim, in Act 1, Sc. 2, appears to be framed in such a manner. Tim's colleague, Jim, representative of traditional notions of hegemonic masculinity, makes a habit of showing Tim images of heterosexual pornography on his phone. In the exchange below, the audience watches with Emily, Mary's next-door neighbour, who acts to protect Tim:

*They (Tim and Jim) keep watching, angling their heads to get a better view.*

Tim: What's she doing now?

Jim: Spanking his monkey, mate. Spanking his monkey.

Tim: Where's the monkey?

Emily: Holding the phone.

*Jim fumbles to switch off his phone.*

Act 1, Sc. 2.

The audience, however, has been privy to the exchange between Tim and Mary when they first meet in which both are immediately entranced by each other. McGarry's choice to place this first interaction between Tim and Mary before

the extract above, positions the audience's ableist (and sexist) assumptions about Tim (and an older woman) to be activated. The audience assumes that Tim is, perhaps, unable to respond to Mary because he is shy, nervous, or incapable, rather than the real reason, which is an instant attraction to Mary that he can't put into words. Further, the audience assumes that Tim is as active as Jim in the consumption of the pornography on Jim's phone, assuming a deficit, or a lack of fulfillment on Tim's part. McGarry, after the interaction with Jim, in Act 1, Sc. 3, demonstrates a second time to the audience that Tim is deeply attracted to Mary – he struggles to say goodbye. Again, the audience misreads the moment, confirming entrenched ableist and misogynistic assumptions about the blossoming attraction between Mary and Tim – an attraction that would not be misread by an audience watching the unfolding of a traditional romantic narrative.

As the relationship between Tim and Mary develops, McGarry's writing demonstrates the agency that Tim has in his relationship with Mary. He is an emotional equal in his interactions:

Tim: Do you get cranky a lot?

Mary: Do I sound cranky?

Tim: A bit.

*Tim keeps working.*

Act 1, Sc. 9.

In the scenes following Act 1, Sc. 9. McGarry's script allows the relationship between Tim and Mary to unfold gently and equally, with both characters learning from and engaging fully with the other. Mary's assumptions about Tim's sexual feelings, coloured by her ableist narrative, means that she struggles to see Tim as a fully sexual human being, which she disguises as "self-sacrificing bullshit" (Act 1, Sc. 26). Once married, McGarry's stage directions, sourced directly from McCullough's novel, draw attention to the beauty and power of Tim and

Mary's new life in which all the joys of adulthood are present. Importantly, the relationship, as it enters its new phase, is led by Tim.

*Music continues as Tim leads Mary to the cottage, he 'inexplicably gains the ascendancy'.*

Tim: Are you OK?

*Mary nods*

Mary: I'm more than OK.

*Tim takes Mary by the hand. They walk through the cottage, turning out the lights. They make their way to the bedroom, in a silhouette of light.*

Act 1, Sc. 31.

## **ii. Positive Performance of Sexuality and Age**

Western society has a long history of constructing the boundaries around women's experience of desire, enforcing strict misogynistic punishments for those women that transgress societal and cultural codes. From 'slut-shaming' to rape and murder, women's sexual desire is policed to serve heterosexual, capitalist, patriarchal narratives that contain its power for the benefit of the reproduction of the workforce and a new generation of consumers.

Contemporary representations of women (and men) in the media saturate society with messages about what is attractive and desirable. These images are used by women as the standard against which women (and men) judge themselves. Celebrating youth, beauty and a particular image of sexuality, the aging body is rarely presented as desirable or beautiful. Unsurprisingly, the onset of menopause is seen as the beginning of discourse of decline, with women encouraged to fight against it with all the resources available to them.

McGarry's Mary is in her 50s, older than McCullough's original character, and she reflects the changed context

of contemporary Australia in that she is a successful businesswoman who has built a successful career and lifestyle on her own. Mary battles against ageist assumptions about older women and desire. This societal narrative dictates that an older woman is not the object of desire but also that an older woman is incapable of experiencing such feelings for herself.

Ron: Did you touch her, mate?

Tim: Yes. On the hand.

Ron: How old is she?

Tim: I don't know. She's got lots of white hair.

Ron: Oh right.

Act 1, Sc. 7.

McGarry's script also explores the taboo of the younger man/older woman relationship through the characters of Dee and Nate, who employ the "politics of disgust" (Fahs, 2017) to police hegemonic societal boundaries. The concept of disgust is one that allows people to have justified feelings of moral superiority toward those that they feel to be beneath them.

McGarry's script illustrates the power of this misogynistic discourse directed toward Mary and Emily from the outset of the play and reinforces the power of such attitudes.

Tim: That's what Harry said. I stayed back to clean up because Harry didn't want to 'face the ugly old cow again Monday'.

Act 1, Sc. 4.

McGarry then, has primed the audience for Dee's reaction to Mary, normalising societal attitudes to older women, allowing them to listen unquestioningly to Dee's suspicions. Dee's suspicion of Mary is, in part, generated by a sibling's care for a brother, but it is also deeply rooted conscious and unconscious ideas about predatory older women. Dee's embrace of the neoliberal agenda is also an influence here, with "women-as-product" (Fahs, 2014) also influencing the disgust felt toward older women whose lifelong attempts to hold the aging process at bay has failed.

Mary, too, holds these ideas about herself, with her views on her body clearly articulated to Tim and later, Raj. The power of *Tim* is that the audience sees Mary through the eyes of both Tim and Raj, free of ugly prejudice and cultural notions of what is attractive. When Mary finally marries Tim, the audience knows that Mary and Tim will enter this part of human life with a partner who only sees and loves the beauty of the other.

McGarry's *Tim* contrasts Mary's outlook with that of Emily's. Mary's neighbour, Emily, is an older woman who actively embraces her life and the joy and pleasure of her older body. It becomes apparent that Mary has not been interested, or had the opportunity to be, romantically partnered throughout her life and has not had an orgasm. McGarry's Emily provides another perspective on the joyous nature of female pleasure. Emily's sense of ownership of her body and its capacity to generate enjoyment is a direct challenge to societal notions of what might be appropriate for a middle-aged woman.

### **iii. Teaching Positive Performances of Sexuality, Disability and Age**

The activities that follow are based on an embodied approach to exploring Positive Performances of Sexuality, Disability and Age.

1. Act 1, Sc. 10 is a pivotal scene in *Tim*. Mary first speaks to Joy and Dee in this scene and the audience is positioned by the character of Dee to be suspicious of Mary's motivations. Working as a class, divide the whiteboard into two sections. Each section could have its own heading. An example could be Connection and Love and Societal Expectations. Using Sc. 10, generate a class list of the examples in the scene that fall under the headings. For example,



Connection and Love	Societal Expectations
<i>SFX Radio announcer “It’s just gone 8am on this glorious autumn day, here’s Kasey Chambers singing...”</i>	Ron: Still in court? Dee: Yes.

Once the table has been filled by the class, each suggestion that has been included should be allocated to small groups, as appropriate to the number of actors engaged in the dialogue. Each group should rehearse the moment that they have been allocated but, instead of finding the subtext underneath the dialogue, they speak the dialogue and then include the subtext as spoken text.

After each performance by student actors, create a mind map of the ways in which connection and love is policed in the scene. An extension activity might include posing the following question.

*What are the connections between the policing of human love and a neoliberal economic and societal structure?*

- Act 1, Sc. 11, and Sc. 13 are key scenes in the development of the relationship between Tim and Mary. We see Mary explicitly relying on Tim to help her swim, and we see that Tim drives the development of their emotional connection when he touches Mary’s hair and gently kisses her on the forehead. Working in groups of two, student actors can rehearse these moments and present them to the class. Additionally, if there are other moments in which Tim and Mary’s developing relationship challenges ableism, sexism and misogyny, students may also choose to include these moments. One group of four should rehearse Scene 12. This group should be aware of where ableism and

sexism/misogyny are evidenced in the dialogue they are rehearsing.

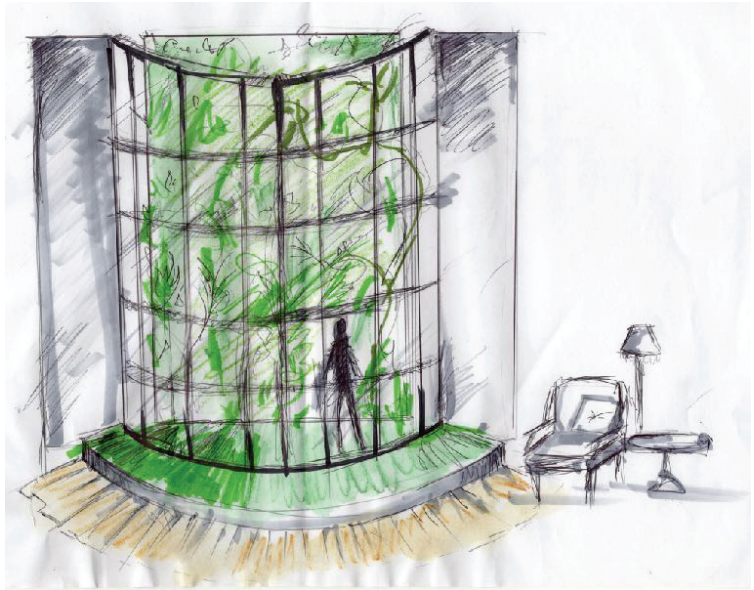
When the groups are ready to perform, the class teacher might organise the performances according to moments of Mary and Tim's connection. The teacher may organise the performance of an extract of Sc. 12 to occur between each. For example, if the class has three examples of the moment Tim helps Mary to swim and three examples of Tim kissing Mary on the forehead, these performances might be interspersed by an appropriate moment from Sc. 12 where Tim and Mary's relationship is portrayed in an ugly light by Tim's family.

Discuss the structure of McGarry's *Tim*. Why is Sc. 12 positioned where it is? What is the impact of the playwright's structural choice?

3. As a class, work through the script and find all the examples of the way Mary speaks about her appearance and note the adjectives on the whiteboard. Discuss how Mary sees herself and make links between those feelings and wider societal ideas about a middle-aged female body. Contrast these adjectives with the ways in which Tim sees Mary's body. Make a list of the words that Tim uses to describe Mary. Would we expect to see these words used about middle-aged women in wider society? Why? What would change for women if Tim's view of Mary was commonplace across men and women in Australia?

## 12. The Elements of Production

### i. Set Design



Set Design sketch above, by designer James Browne. Used with permission.

Director Darren Yap and Designer James Browne have worked together to create a space that can represent and transform the variety of situations and places within the play, fusing the Realism of the family home/s with the importance of the garden in Tim's life.

The Realism of the Melville home and Mary's home are established using furnishings that would be typically found in an Australian home to evoke audience connection with each place. The type of furnishings chosen are based on class, with the Melville home showing signs of age and use. Mary's wealth is seen in the use of different, newer, fabrics and more contemporary props. Browne has enabled the set to transform between homes by placing different types of furniture in different sections of the stage, facilitating

smooth scene transitions.

The heart of the narrative is the love story between Tim and Mary. Director Darren Yap, and Designer James Browne, have placed the heart of their connection at the centre of the stage. The outdoors, in one way or another, is the reason that Mary and Tim meet, and their enjoyment of gardening, the Hawkesbury, and the outdoors is woven through their developing relationship, culminating in their wedding night in Mary's Hawkesbury home.

Made of metal and suggesting the boundaries between indoors and outdoors, the framework that surrounds the plant life can be interpreted as the structures that are used to police societal structures designed to keep hegemonic power structures unchallenged. Both Tim and Mary are kept from living full lives through notions of what is appropriate for each, unable to reach the beauty of their potential because of these boundaries. Director Darren Yap, by placing the culmination of Mary and Tim's physical encounter within this space, reminds the audience of what is possible when humans are allowed to live their truth.

Tim: Yeah, we're getting there. Spring is nearly here. The flowers should be back in bloom soon.

Act. 1, Sc. 26.

**ii. Costume Design**

Costume Sketches, by designer Lucy Scott. Used with permission.

The sketches below follow Mary's narrative arc throughout the play, visually demonstrating the changes that Mary experiences after meeting Tim. The designs move from structured and monochromatic to loose, unstructured clothing. The colour palette also changes to muted tones with the final image of Mary's wedding incorporating

soft florals. The connection between Mary and Tim is represented by the colour, fabric, and line choices of the designer in which the outdoor is used a motif for the unfolding of each character's potential.









### iii. Teaching the Elements of Production

1. Working as a class, make a list of the number of scenes in the play in which Tim is either in the garden or outdoors. Evaluate the list using the following questions.
  - How often do we see Tim feeling whole and positive when he is in the garden/outdoors?
  - How often do Mary and Tim connect when they are in the garden/outdoors?
2. Working in groups of the appropriate size, allocate these scenes to the class. Ask each group to recreate James Browne's Garden using props found in the classroom. Stage the allocated scene so that the blocking adds to the audience's understanding of the themes and issues explored in the play as they relate to Tim and Mary's journeys.
3. Using James Browne's Set Design Sketch, consider how Director Darren Yap might work with the actors playing Dee and Nate in this space. What choices might Director Darren Yap and the actors make to explore the themes and issues of *Tim* in James Browne's set?
4. Working as a class, and using Lucy Scott's sketches of Mary's costumes, find the scenes in the play in which Mary is either in the garden or outdoors. Evaluate the list using the following questions.
  - How suitable are Mary's clothes for outside?
  - How have Lucy Scott's first two designs visually represented the disintegration of Mary's connection to her corporate life?
  - How has the final design sketch of Mary's wedding pulled together the garden motifs of the play to reflect Mary's journey?
5. Using Lucy Scott's design sketches of Mary as a guide, imagine the way in which Scott might develop Tim's character arc using costume design. As a class, determine the five moments of the play that reflect Tim's journey. Moving into groups, allocate one of

these five moments to each group to design a costume. Once the design is complete, place each sketch into the centre of the classroom, in linear order. Using the questions below, discuss the information that the costume designs provide for the audience.

- Describe the changes in Tim that can be seen?
- What are the similarities between Mary's journey and Tim's?
- Where can the audience see the visual connection between Mary and Tim's journey? How does this reflect the issues and themes of the play?

### **13. Pulling it Together: Assessment for Learning**

The following are suggestions for student assessment and incorporate Making, Performing and Responding/Critically Studying. Each assumes a study of Australian Drama and Theatre as found in each Stage 6 Syllabus. The tasks can be modified for the appropriate focus of each State and Territory.

#### **i. Performance Essays**

Working in groups, students work collaboratively to perform selections of McGarry's script based on the following stimuli. Teachers may choose to limit the performance essay dialogue to script extracts or, they may choose to include student analysis as part of the dialogue.

- Using your understanding of *Tim*, choose extracts from the script to perform to answer the following question.  
*"McGarry's Tim is a challenge to Australia's understanding of itself as a place of a fair go for all".*
- Using your understanding of *Tim*, choose extracts from the script to perform to answer the following question.  
*"The characters of Tim and Mary challenge the audiences' assumptions about love and connection".*
- Using your understanding of *Tim*, choose extracts from the script to perform to answer the following question.

*“McGarry’s Tim uses characters and their relationships to comment on Australian culture”.*

- Using your understanding of *Tim*, choose extracts from the script to perform to answer the following question.  
*“McGarry’s Tim is a story about outsiders”.*

## ii. **Written Responses**

Students write an extended response based on the following questions. The stimuli used in Performance Essays could also be used as a basis for a written response.

- *“The characters in McGarry’s Tim stage the social, cultural and political realities of Australia for the audience”.*

In your response, refer to the play, *Tim*, and your own experiential learning of the topic.

- *“The character of Tim challenges Australian society to see itself in a new way”.*
- In your response, refer to the play, *Tim*, and your own experiential learning of the topic.
- *“How does McGarry’s Tim create an audience response to the issues and themes seen on stage?”*
- In your response, refer to the play, *Tim*, and your own experiential learning of the topic.
- *“Australian Drama and Theatre is like a mirror for the audience”*

In your response, refer to the play, *Tim*, and your own experiential learning of the topic.

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**Tim** is a new Australian play based on the novel of the same title by Colleen McCullough. Tim is a young labourer with a disability. Mary is a successful mid-50's business executive.

What begins as a chance meeting between them, soon develops into a life-changing relationship for both. Filled with notions of love, loss and acceptance, and set in the modern day, this seminal Australian story has been sensitively adapted for the stage by playwright Tim McGarry.

Also by Tim McGarry:

***The Peasant Prince*** is a vivid piece of storytelling that is skilful, theatrical and inspiring ... It was a loving and honest adaptation of Li's treasured memoir

**Peter Pinne, Stage Whispers**

***The Peasant Prince*** is vital, exuberant, aspirational, and inspirational

**Richard Cotter, Australian Stage**

***Boy Swallows Universe***, adapted for the stage by Tim McGarry, is a gritty, raucous and mystical juggernaut of a play that prosecutes a booming argument for the supremacy of the live theatre experience

**Bronwyn Lea, The Guardian**

***Boy Swallows Universe*** soars ... Loud, vibrant, full of laugh out loud scenes and moving moments, the stage adaptation is everything it needed to be, and then some

**Michael James, Q News**

***Boy Swallows Universe*** captures the big heart of Dalton's book and delivers it with inventive stagecraft and cinematic flair

**Elise Lawrence, Limelight**



christine dunstan  
christinedunstan.com.au