

11

Re-imagining Doctoral Writing Through the Visual and Performing Arts

Louise Ravelli and Sue Starfield
UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Brian Paltridge
UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY; CITY UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Abstract: While doctoral writing in the broader academy is a site of anxiety and contestation (Paré, 2019), doctoral writing in the visual and performing arts inhabits an even more contested space. For social and institutional reasons, the visual and performing arts are relative newcomers to the practice of doctoral writing (Baker et al., 2009; Elkins, 2014), and with theses that incorporate a creative/performed component, whole new ways of doctoral writing have opened up, including such features as new academic voices; highly innovative forms of typography, layout, and materiality; and varied relations between the written and creative components. Understanding such diverse texts requires a multi-valent approach to recognise the ways in which doctoral writing has been re-imagined in this context and the ways in which the academy can re-imagine a legitimate space for such academic work. In this chapter, we use a broadly social-semiotic framework to demonstrate the value of Legitimation Code Theory (Maton, 2014) and genre and discourse analysis (Martin & Rose, 2007; Paltridge, 2021) in understanding such diverse texts and their positioning within the academy. We report on an Australian study that examined 36 doctoral submissions across a range of visual and performing arts disciplines, demonstrating the underlying consistencies of these theses despite evident surface disparities. We argue that understanding doctoral writing as a practice of *meaning-making potential* helps lessen individual and institutional anxiety around such texts and provides productive ways forward for doctoral writing pedagogy for these disciplines as well as for the academy more broadly.

Stranger Than Fiction: The Diverse Forms of the Practice-Based Thesis

Academic research is always a creative endeavour, no matter the disciplinary field. Even the driest experimental research following well established procedures requires a spark of originality, a gift of insight, or an element of the unknown, otherwise it would not be research. For doctoral candidates in all disciplines, this element of the unknown creates both the excitement of the project and the anxiety that comes along with it. The writing of the project adds another step into the unknown, at least for the candidate, for whom this is typically a once-only experience. While the writing process is never easy, some disciplines have developed clear expectations and pathways, which at least provide a scaffold for the candidate (see Thurlow, Chapter 5, this collection). In the visual and performing arts, where research is already more explicitly “creative,” its relatively late arrival on the academic scene means that the pathways for research and writing are far less well established, and many studies point to the increased anxiety for students, supervisors, and examiners around the nature of doctoral writing in these fields (Baker et al., 2009; Fairskye, 1993; Hockey, 2003; Starfield et al., 2012). And yet, despite this anxiety, doctoral theses in the visual and performing arts evidence extensive re-imaginings of the nature of doctoral research and writing itself through variations in process, voice, structure, and form. Inspired by Michael Halliday’s (1994) view of language as a resource of “infinite potential” for making meaning (p. 16), we argue that doctoral theses in the visual and performing arts are also a resource for making meaning. By viewing these theses in terms of their meaning-making potential, it is possible to evaluate them positively, rather than simply negatively, in comparison with more established doctoral forms.

This chapter reports on a study¹ we conducted that analyzed doctoral theses in the visual and performing arts in terms of the nature of the writing that took place in these disciplinary contexts. Some doctoral theses in the visual and performing arts may be like theses in some other disciplines, in that the thesis is “about” another subject, such as a critical study of an artist. The theses we were interested in, however, were those that combined an explicitly created or performed work of the author with a written component. As we have noted elsewhere,

1 Paltridge, B., Starfield, S., & Ravelli, L. (2008-2010). Writing in the academy: The practice-based thesis as an evolving genre (Grant No. DP0880667). Australian Research Council Discovery Project. <https://dataportal.arc.gov.au/NCGP/Web/Grant/Grant/DP0880667>

the common denominator in these doctorates is the production by the student of both a creative work of some kind and a written text. Both pieces of work are evaluated as part of the doctoral examination process, and the term “thesis,” in the visual and performing arts, is typically used to refer to the combined work. (Starfield et al., 2014, p. 106)

In our study, we referred to these as “practice-based” theses, though other terms were used, such as “practice-led,” “research as practice,” or “performance as research,” with significant debate around these and other terms (Paltridge et al., 2011). The term “exegesis,” while common, is generally viewed negatively, being seen to construe the written work as a commentary upon the creative with little connection between the two (Paltridge et al., 2012; Vella, 2005).

Practice-based theses are also distinctive from conventional theses in the regulations surrounding them, including the length of the written component (highly variable between institutions), the nature of the examination (which may be separated for the creative and written components), and claims for originality/contribution to the field that need to be substantiated in both components (Paltridge et al., 2012). Ken Friedman (2014) also notes that the pathways and preparation for doctoral study in the visual and performing arts are highly variable between countries, contributing further to the discomfort about their status.

The one overriding finding of our study was the immense variety of possibilities for practice-based doctoral theses in the visual and performing arts. It is hard to describe and impossible to explain just how beautiful, rich, and complex these theses can be. A visual arts thesis, for example, might create an immersive digital art and sound installation that envelopes the viewer in a multi-sensorial experience (e.g., Haley, 2005). A performance studies thesis might invite the viewer to (literally) follow the candidate on/in/to a performance, thus embodying the viewer as subject and as part of the research process (e.g., Fenton, 2007). Another visual arts thesis might have no physically separate visual component but might interweave visual components in the written component itself, perhaps through drawings, artifacts, or fragments of knitting (e.g., Van Niele, 2005; cf. Paltridge et al., 2012). Another might be bound in beautiful embossed leather and velvet used to reframe an assemblage of drawings, photos, collage, and jewellery (e.g., Laird, 2009).

This diversity is not, however, an indication of instability, a lack of clarity in how to proceed, or a case of weak regulation. Rather, it is a productive and necessary outcome of the nature of these disciplines and their specific approaches to knowledge (Ravelli et al., 2014). In this chapter, we explain the history of

creative-practice doctoral theses in the visual and performing arts in Australia and other Western countries, the extensive variation in form they might consist of, and their underlying similarities despite this surface variation. It is by understanding their underlying meaning potential that institutions, supervisors, and students can better occupy this contested discursive space.

Why So Unsettled? The Place of Visual and Performing Arts Within the Academy

Our discussion of the place of visual and performing arts within the academy is limited to Western academic traditions, primarily in Australia but also in the UK and Western Europe, Canada, and the US. In Australia, while relatively recent in terms of academic traditions, the practice-based doctorate in the visual and performing arts is becoming reasonably well established. The first such doctorates emerged in Australia in the 1980s following large-scale reforms of the higher education sector that saw the amalgamation of teacher education colleges and art schools with universities (Paltridge et al., 2011). Around two thirds of Australian universities now have practice-based doctorates, and these programs see around 2,500–3,000 enrollments per year (Evans et al., 2003; Paltridge et al., 2011). Given that there are around 65,000 enrollments across all doctorates in Australia (Croucher, 2016), the numbers for practice-led doctorates in the visual and performing arts are still small, but they are not immaterial. The pattern in Australia follows on from similar degrees in the United Kingdom about a decade earlier, and these two countries together account for the large proportion of such doctorates in the Western academy (Elkins, 2014). The picture is less clear in Western Europe, where the diversity of institutions makes it difficult to ascertain numbers. In Canada and the United States, the Master of Fine Arts degree remains the predominant terminal degree in the visual arts, with the studio-art doctorate in its infancy (Elkins, 2014). There are, however, examples of performing arts doctorates in Canada and the United States, such as the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in composition and performance at the University of Toronto and at Yale University, the latter having been on offer since 1968 (Noss, 1968).

While creative practice doctorates may be relatively new in some regions, their more than 30 years' history in others has led to significant institutional and national-level debates around terminology, the codification of the nature and structure of these doctorates, and relevant processes and procedures for examination (see for example, Baker et al., 2009; Buckley & Conomos, 2009; Fairskye et al., 2008; Phillips et al., 2008; Queensland University of Technology, 2008; Ravelli et al., 2014). In our study, we turned to sociological theories

of legitimation codes and linguistic theories of genre to investigate why this might be the case. In this chapter, we deal with legitimation codes and with genre in the following section.

Legitimation Code Theory (LCT; Maton, 2010a, 2014) builds on the sociological work of Basil Bernstein (e.g., 1996, 1999) and provides insights into how disciplines legitimate their approaches to both knowledge (objects and domains of study) and knowers (those who can engage in knowledge practices). As we noted in *Doctoral Writing in the Creative and Performing Arts* (Ravelli et al., 2014),

a combination of knowledge and knowers can define a “legitimate gaze” (Maton, 2010b, p. 155), whereby “knowledge claims and practices can [thus] be understood as languages of legitimation”, or “strategic stances aimed at maximizing actors” positions within a relationally structured field of struggles” (Maton, 2010a, p. 37). No stance is more strategic in academia than that of a doctoral thesis: it is the ultimate “entry card” both to the discipline, and to the institution. (p. 394)

LCT posits that research is legitimated by different relations to the object of knowledge (epistemic relations) and by different relations to the subjects of knowledge (social relations; Maton, 2010a, p. 45). One particular pattern or *code* of legitimation was the most common in our study—the *knower* code. The knower code is characterized by diversity in its objects of study and/or diversity in its approaches to study (weak epistemic relations) as well as by the privileging of experiential knowledge and an appropriate “voice” (strong social relations). That is, many topics may be legitimately pursued using a variety of approaches, with the subjectivity of the author being highly valued. This way of legitimating knowledge is in evident contrast to the knowledge code, where the objects of study are clearly defined (e.g., physics or chemistry), but where there is little personal discretion in how knowledge is pursued and where established procedures (e.g., to conduct an experiment, evaluate statistics) need to be followed (Maton, 2010a).

It is the very nature of the knower code that contributes to the unsettled nature of doctoral theses (and research more broadly) in the visual and performing arts.² As Karl Maton (2010a) explains, knower codes are typically

2 This unsettled nature relates to the status of creative practice more broadly within the academy, for example in terms of creative works being recognized as research outputs. We can’t address these factors in the confines of this chapter, but see, for example, Burgin, 2006; Fairsky, 1993; Haseman, 2006; and Trowler, 2012.

associated with disciplines that have marginal institutional or academic positions. The relatively recent merger of art schools and colleges with universities contributes to this “outsider” status. Importantly, knower codes are characterized by a blurring and crossing of boundaries

between academic and personal; between the formal and the informal; between disciplines; between modes of presentation . . . The object of study is not necessarily “an artwork”; it may be a feeling about belonging, or a problem in the interpretation of theatrical performance, or how photography can enable learning. The overarching framework might be one drawn from history, from cultural studies, from art theory, or from any number of other pre-existing fields. The methodology may be clear and derived from one of those pre-existing fields, or may be entirely new and invented for the purposes of that thesis. (Ravelli et al., 2014, p. 398)

Intersecting with weak epistemic relations, the knower code is also characterized by strong social relations—the valorisation of individual experience and subjectivity. This defines a key part of the meaning potential of these theses: it is the *sociality* whereby knowers claim legitimacy within their field by asserting their voice, by developing and integrating new habitus (Bourdieu, 1990; Maton, 2010b, p. 164). However, rather than being a weakness, the weak epistemic relations and strong social relations open up the potential of the field by allowing for new objects of knowledge to be explored and for new ways of knowing.

Thus, the place of the visual and performing arts in the academy is seemingly unsettled not just because of an institutional history that positions these disciplines as relative latecomers or even as “gatecrashers” (Fairkye, 1993) but also because it is in the very nature of the field to be constantly reinventing and re-imagining ways to “do” visual and performing arts research. This is not a way of saying that the visual and performing arts are “more creative” than other fields, such as science. As Friedman (2014) explains, “creativity is a human quality that we find among the best practitioners of most professions” (p. 244). Rather, the point about legitimation codes is that there are different ways of approaching and validating subject knowledge, and one of these, the knower code that tends to dominate the visual and performing arts, proceeds in a way that is quite different to that of knowledge codes. It is not that the visual and performing arts are “unsettled”. Rather, it is that they “do” research in a different and unfamiliar way.

Fantastic Theses and How to Recognise Them

Our three-year study aimed to identify and collect a representative range of doctoral theses in the visual and performing arts with the aims of better understanding them as textual products, better understanding their range of meaning potential, and better understanding how this places them within the academy.

As already noted in this chapter, there is wide variation in institutional practices around visual and performing arts doctoral theses and wide variation in the nature of the forms such theses may take. With regard to the written components of practice-based theses, we found these also varied widely in every possible form of presentation. Candidates may have presented their theses on standard printing paper, or with a careful selection of special papers with particular textures, colors, or opacities. These might be used throughout the text or in specific sections; in a systematic way or randomly. The font used for the writing might be a conventional one, such as Times New Roman, likely to be used with conventional punctuation, or something more contemporary, such as Avenir, which might be used with no or little punctuation, especially in headings. Or perhaps the thesis might include handwriting. A chapter might be 35 pages long or half a page. And so on. Such variation may seem to be trivial, being concerned with surface matters of presentation only, but these are in fact intrinsic meaning-making resources and are a fundamental way of positioning a thesis in relation to approaches to knowledge (such as traditional vs new humanities; see also Starfield & Ravelli, 2006; Ravelli & Starfield, 2008).

Actual images may or may not be included in the written component of visual and performing arts practice-based theses. One visual arts thesis had no images of the candidate's own visual arts practice in the written component; another had 500 (Paltridge et al., 2011). The images might be facsimiles of art works, hand drawn sketches, or thumbnail icons at the start of a chapter (Ravelli et al., 2013). Physical objects—fragments of knitting, a hair, a map—might also be included.

Given this wide variation in form, it is not surprising that finding these theses in the first place was not at all straightforward. We used textography, a modified form of ethnography based on work on academic genres by John Swales (1998; 2018). This included identifying the institutions and programs offering relevant degrees and conducting a survey of supervisors in which we sought recommendations of recent, successful theses they considered to be quality examples in their disciplines. In all, we collected 36 doctoral theses across the fields of painting, mixed media, drawing, digital media, photography, sculpture, dance, theatre, and music.³

3 See Paltridge et al. (2012) for a full description of the methodology.

Our second challenge was to find “all” of each of these theses. Not only does the form of these theses vary as already mentioned, but also the creative work can be presented, encountered, and assessed in a variety of ways. In Australia, as elsewhere, there are no standard guidelines. Specifications for the written component vary among institutions, from requiring it to be the “major” component to requiring a specified number of words ranging from 20,000 to 60,000 (Paltridge et al., 2011; see also Elkins, 2014, for further discussion of institutional requirements across regions). There is similar variation in relation to guidelines for the creative component, which either specify its relative weighting in relation to the written component (greater, lesser, or equivalent) or specify it in terms of its equivalence to a set number of words (e.g., 40,000 words) without articulating how this might be measured.

Variation between the practice-based doctoral theses was also evident in the way the written and creative components were explicitly related to each other—or not. We identified four recognizable types (Ravelli et al., 2013) in terms of whether the two components were encountered (more or less) as separate or (more or less) as connected. The first (which occurred only once in our data set in Haley, 2005) was that of *parallelism*, where the written component shared the same thematic concerns as the creative component but did not make explicit textual or visual reference to it. The second relation was that of *influence*, where the written component referred to the creative component and asserted the same influences, but where there may otherwise have been little explicit connection (e.g., Le Guen, 2006). The third type was *incorporated*, where the written component referred constantly to the creative component and in multiple ways, perhaps to describe or illustrate a point or to act as the object of theorization (e.g., Oscar, 2007). This incorporated referencing was sometimes done through language by referring to the creative work and by incorporating such reference as a grammatical component of the sentence, or it was sometimes done visually with photos or other images that referred to the creative work. The final type was *intermingled*, where the written and creative components were encountered together, with the written being highly visualized (that is, with images, decorations, and so on included) and the visual including—potentially—the written, such as a poem embedded within a figure (e.g., Berridge, 2006).

Variation in the voice of the written component was also evident in our corpus. Some writers used a traditional academic voice—impersonal, formal, or technical—while others used a highly subjective and self-reflexive voice (going beyond the use of just first person “I” to comment on the writer’s experience, history, activity, and so on). A poetic voice might be used, or a stream

of consciousness. One voice might be used consistently throughout a thesis, or different voices at different points. As Jillian Hamilton (2014) notes,

[the creative thesis is] a particularly demanding genre of writing. Unlike the traditional thesis, it requires the practitioner-researcher to adopt a dual perspective—to look both out towards an established field of research, exemplars and theories, and inwards towards the experiential processes of the creative practice. . . . It requires the reconciliation of multi-perspectival subject positions: the disinterested academic posture of the observer/analyst/theorist, and the invested, subjective stance of the practitioner/producer. It requires the negotiation of writing styles and speech genres—from the formal, polemical style of the theorist to the personal and emotive voice of reflexivity. (p. 370)

Such diversity might suggest that the meaning potential of these theses is so vast that it is random. However, through an examination of generic structure and underlying rhetorical functions, it is clear that this is not the case and that there are distinct ways of making meaning within doctoral theses in the visual and performing arts.

Same Same but Different: Similarities and Differences Within and Without

The meaning potential of doctoral theses in the visual and performing arts is not random; rather it is socio-culturally constrained. Most importantly, even the most innovative theses “still need, in some way, to address the broader issues of what it is that characterizes successful doctoral writing” (Paltridge, Starfield, Ravelli, & Tuckwell, 2012, p. 11). The primary focus of our study was on the nature of the written component, and in this respect, we found at least two important types of commonalities. The first of these is in overall generic structure: the typical “shape” or organization of theses as written components, referred to as their macrostructure. Typical macrostructures for doctoral theses include the “simple traditional” and “complex traditional” forms—the former based on one study, the latter on multiple studies—both of which include a typical *Introduction-Methods-Results-Discussion* (IMRD) structure. Another typical form is the “topic-based” structure, where a general introduction is followed by thematically-connected chapters pertaining to the main topic (Paltridge & Starfield, 2020). In our analysis, headings alone could not be used to determine the nature of the macrostructure. One thesis (Fenton,

2007) had topic-based chapter headings, but the chapter contents provided evidence that the overall doctoral research (both the written and creative components) constituted something more akin to a traditionally-formulated empirical study (Paltridge, Starfield, Ravelli, & Tuckwell, 2012). Even when the chapter headings appeared to bear no resemblance to more traditional theses, the contents often did fulfill similar functions, such as

the need to contextualize the research, the need to engage with theory, the need to place the research within a broader field, and the need to demonstrate the way/s in which the doctoral project moves the field forward. We found that while there was considerable variation in how the doctoral texts we examined were organized, they were still influenced by these expected requirements of doctoral dissertations. (Starfield et al., 2014, p. 112; cf. Hamilton & Jaaniste, 2010)

The second commonality we found among the theses is in terms of underlying rhetorical functions, as described for research more broadly by Susan Hood (2010). The core rhetorical functions we identified were *research warrant*, *research capacity*, *research evidence*, and *research effectiveness*. We found these may be distributed reasonably conventionally, as for a traditionally-structured thesis, or may be widely dispersed throughout the thesis. Their subcomponents and correspondence with more conventional thesis elements are presented in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1 . Core functions of doctoral texts in the visual and performing arts and approximate correspondence with traditional thesis types.

“Simple traditional” chapter headings	Function	Sub-components
Introduction	Research warrant	Validate object of study Demonstrate space for new knowledge Establish relevance of own contribution
Literature Review	Research capacity	Position study in relation to theory and/or Position study in relation to practice (self and/or others’)
Methods		Explain and validate research process and techniques, including theory/practice nexus
Results	Research evidence	Present study (practice, theory) as research
Discussion	Research effectiveness	Argue that research undertaken is a contribution to theory and/or practice (of self or others)

Note. Adapted from Paltridge et al. (2012).

In other words, we found that

the written component must be more than just “description”: to be doctoral research, the written component must also motivate the study (in personal and/or artistic and/or theoretical terms); situate the practice (in an ongoing practical and/or theoretical tradition); engage with theoretical discussions relevant to the practice; and argue how the practice contributes to the relevant practical and/or theoretical (and/or personal) trajectory. (Paltridge et al. 2014, p. 101)

What is important here is that the practice-based doctoral thesis does not need to be bound by strict convention in terms of organisational structure. The more traditional IMRD structure may work for some projects, and it may do so under recognisable chapter headings or under more inventive ones. For example, a music thesis with a reasonably conventional organisational structure had the chapter headings “Introduction, Transcendence, Methodology, Contextualisation, Forces, My mode of existence, Musical processes, Conclusion” (Vincs, 2002; see also Paltridge, Starfield, Ravelli, & Tuckwell, 2012, p. 8).

However, the structure of the thesis can also be radically reconfigured, so long as the underlying rhetorical *functions* are still met. This liberates the written component of the thesis from structural straightjackets and allows the candidate to be more experimental, so long as they understand and can demonstrate where and how their study meets all the requirements expected of research. The issue for meaning potential is that the underlying rhetorical functions are met *in some evident way*. One thesis in our corpus included an introduction that consisted of images of the candidate’s mother’s garden and descriptions of being in it, and this was a way of laying the ground for the remainder of the research (Sabadini, 2007). In the conclusion of another thesis (Baker, 2004), we previously observed that “the conventionally-expected components of re-stating the purpose of the study, providing a summary of the findings, or referring to the contribution the project makes to the field as a whole can be seen only by applying a generous analogous lens” (Paltridge, Starfield, Ravelli, & Tuckwell, 2012, p. 9); however, through reflection and the posing of key questions, this particular conclusion successfully revisited the earlier components of the thesis and addressed its contributions. A generous analogous lens, then, is one that looks for *meaning*, not formal structure, recognising that what any writing does is shape meaning potential for the purposes of the writer/reader, the discipline, and the culture.

The four key interrelation types between the written and creative components—*parallelism*, *influence*, *incorporated*, and *intermingled*—also tended to

correlate with specific choices in voice, even if the underlying rhetorical functions were the same. The theses with more separated components tended to have more consistent use of a singular academic voice —largely impersonal, even when construed through the first person “I.” The theses with more connected components, particularly the intermingled, tended to make use of a wide variety of voices. In one thesis, we observed a mix of academic, informal, autobiographical, descriptive, and poetic voices.

Similarly, the more intermingled the relation between the two components, the more likely it was that the creative component would be “brought into” the written in multiple ways: as an illustration of a point, a framing device between chapters, or a cohesive element across chapters (Ravelli et al., 2013, p. 416). Overall, we found that in the intermingled theses, the written and creative components resemiotized (Iedema, 2010) each other. In other words,

... there are multiple verbal and visual resources which enable the separate components of the thesis to be brought together, with differing degrees of strength. Through referring to the creative component, representing it visually within the written, giving it a voice or attributes, relating it to underlying theoretical concepts, the two components are brought together. Resemiotization occurs both verbally and visually [and] is not necessarily uni-directional. (Ravelli et al., 2013, p. 416)

The apparent visual and textual diversity in the written components of creative-practice doctorates, as well as their underlying rhetorical similarities, is explained in part by the dominance of the knower code in the visual and performing arts. As noted earlier, the knower code is inherently variable and premised in the subjective; it prioritises individual experience and validates diverse voices without circumscribing the object of study.

What is perhaps more surprising is that, despite the professed institutional and student anxiety over theses in the visual and performing arts, such theses are in fact united by a clear set of underlying rhetorical functions, which can be seen to be closely related to those of any traditional thesis. The underlying rhetorical functions of the doctoral theses create unity, even if students re-imagine and re-conceptualize the forms in which this can be achieved.

Occupying the Academy: Ways of Re-imagining the Space of Doctoral Writing

The relatively unsettled place within the academy of visual and performing arts doctoral theses arises from a failure of imagination. There is institutional

failure to imagine other ways of validating knowledge and to imagine other ways of validly demonstrating such knowledge. If, however, the surface diversity of these theses can be understood in terms of their underlying and unifying meaning potential, then that diversity can be re-imagined as a resource, not a burden. Such a re-imagination needs to attend to multiple institutional processes and practices.

First, academic writing courses need to allow for more open approaches, “as open as the approach to creative practice/research itself” (Starfield et al., 2014, p. 115). While generalised approaches to academic writing have definite benefits (cf. Lowry, 2014), they do not allow for the diverse ways in which meaning potential can be manifested in doctoral writing of the visual and performing arts. Similarly, institutional guidelines for students and examiners must also account for differences, and not just in the more conventional cases. That is, guidelines must allow for the production of the written component to manifest diversity and creativity as much as the so-called “creative” component. As Iain Biggs notes (2014), the visual and performing arts are communities of “transverse action” that work with the tensions lying between the “worlds of the arts and the university sector” (p. 411). It not only makes sense, then, to adopt an approach to writing that is complementary to this tension, but in our experience, it is liberating for students (and supervisors) to be exposed to such an open approach.⁴

Second, the availability of successful prior models, and multiple instances thereof, cannot be underestimated. There are few easily accessible repositories of practice-based theses, and there is an urgent need for a central repository of good examples. At the time of our study, no such repository was available, and we are not aware of the creation of one since. While individual institutions and supervisors might accumulate their own examples, such a pool would necessarily be limited, and a collective pool of examples would enable the showcasing of more diverse examples, and the highlighting of multiple fields and disciplinary approaches. In our own experience of thesis-writing workshops for practice-based doctoral candidates, it is the availability of multiple examples which has the most powerful effect on the confidence of students to tackle doctoral writing in their own way, less burdened by received conventions of what a thesis “should” be. By showing students how others have successfully re-imagined the doctoral writing process, it opens up the space for them to develop their own meaning potential.

Third, the first and second strategies need to be underpinned by an understanding of the underlying rhetorical functions of all doctoral theses in terms

4 See Wilmot (2019) for discussion of knowledge codes in doctoral writing of the humanities and social sciences and the implications for writing pedagogy.

of how research is motivated, understood, and expanded within particular disciplines. Both knowledge and knower codes have much shared meaning potential but manifest these in distinct forms and structures. Institutions need to recognise that typical generic structures have emerged in accordance with the knowledge code but that other structures, suited to other knowledge practices, are also relevant. Together, some innovation in doctoral writing supervision and pedagogy and some generosity in institutional understanding of diversity will help provide a more settled place for doctoral writing in the visual and performing arts within the academy and a better appreciation of the potential of these re-imagined forms.

References

- Baker, S. (2004). *Painting: A new critical voice—Serious pleasure* [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. Curtin University of Technology.
- Baker, S., Buckley, B., & Kett, G. (2009). *Future-proofing the creative arts in higher education: Scoping for quality in creative arts doctoral programs*. Australian Learning and Teaching Council. <https://ltr.edu.au/resources/DS7-624%20Creative%20Arts%20Baker%20Melbourne%202009%20report.pdf>
- Bernstein, B. (1996). *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: Theory, research, critique (Critical perspectives on literacy and education)*. Taylor & Francis.
- Bernstein, B. (1999). Vertical and horizontal discourse: An essay. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 20(2), 157-173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425699995380>
- Berridge, A. M. (2006). *Re-picturing my life* [Doctoral thesis, University of Canberra]. University of Canberra Research Portal. <https://researchprofiles.canberra.edu.au/en/studentTheses/re-picturing-my-life-an-articulation-of-autobiography-memory-and->
- Biggs, I. (2014). From another place: Notes on context. In L. Ravelli, B. Paltridge, & S. Starfield (Eds.), *Doctoral writing in the creative and performing arts* (pp. 407-422). Libri.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The logic of practice*. Stanford University Press.
- Buckley, B., & Conomos, J. (Eds.). (2009). *Rethinking the contemporary art school: The artist, the PhD, and the academy*. The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.
- Burgin, V. (2006). Thoughts on 'research' degrees in visual arts departments, *Journal of Media Practice*, 7(2), 101-108. https://doi.org/10.1386/jmpr.7.2.101_1
- Croucher, G. (2016, November 17). *It's time to reduce the number of PhD students, or rethink how doctoral programs work*. The Conversation. <http://theconversation.com/its-time-to-reduce-the-number-of-Ph.D.-students-or-rethink-how-doctoral-programs-work-68972>
- Elkins, J. (2014). Remarks on the studio-art PhD around the world. In L. Ravelli, B. Paltridge, & S. Starfield (Eds.), *Doctoral writing in the creative and performing arts* (pp. 9-32). Libri.

- Evans, T., Macauley, P., Pearson, M., & Tregenza, K. (2003). *A brief review of PhDs in creative and performing arts in Australia* [Paper presentation]. Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Miniconference, Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia. <https://www.aare.edu.au/publications/aare-conference-papers/show/7973/a-brief-review-of-phds-in-creative-and-performing-arts-in-australia>
- Fairskye, M. (1993). Frankly, I may be a genius, but don't call me Dale, I'll call you. Paper presented at *Ornithology and Art? A Bird's Eye View of Conceptual Rigour in Contemporary Art Practice*. Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, May.
- Fairskye, M., Buckley, B., Elias, A., Arthur, T., Peterson, T., & Taylor, A. (2008). *Sydney College of the Arts Ph.D. review*. University of Sydney.
- Fenton, D. R. (2007). *Unstable acts: A practitioner's case study of the poetics of post-dramatic theatre and intermediality* [Doctoral thesis, Queensland University of Technology]. QUT ePrints. <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/16527/>
- Friedman, K. (2014). Now that we're different, what's still the same? In L. Ravelli, B. Paltridge, & S. Starfield (Eds.), *Doctoral writing in the creative and performing arts* (pp. 237-262). Libri.
- Haley, S. J. (2005). *Mirror as metatag: Contemporary culture as mirror world* [Doctoral thesis, University of Melbourne]. Minerva Access. <http://hdl.handle.net/11343/38739>
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1994). *An introduction to functional grammar* (2nd ed.). Edward Arnold.
- Hamilton, J. (2014). The voices of the exegesis: Composing the speech genres of the practitioner-researcher into a connective thesis. In L. Ravelli, B. Paltridge, & S. Starfield (Eds.), *Doctoral writing in the creative and performing arts* (pp. 369-388). Libri.
- Hamilton, J., & Jaaniste, L. (2010). A connective model for the practice-led research exegesis: An analysis of content and structure. *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, 3(1), 31-44. https://doi.org/10.1386/jwcp.3.1.31_1
- Haseman, B. (2006). A manifesto for performative research. *Media International Australia*, 118(1), 98-106. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X0611800113>
- Hockey, J. (2003). Practice-based research degree students in art and design: Identity and adaptation. *The International Journal of Art and Design Education*, 22(1), 82-91. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5949.00341>
- Hood, S. (2010). *Appraising research: Evaluation in academic writing*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230274662>
- Iedema, R. (2010). Resemiotization of a policy initiative: Promoting open disclosure as 'open communication about clinical adverse events'. In P.A. Prior & J. A. Hengst (Eds.), *Exploring semiotic remediation as discourse practice* (pp. 139-155). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230250628_6
- Laird, M. (2009). *Remnant and reliquary: Fragmentary traces reconciled as object and knowledge. Reading and registering the artefact through material culture research and the lives of women, Australia 1788-1901* [Doctoral thesis, University of Technology Sydney]. OPUS. <http://hdl.handle.net/10453/36654>

- Le Guen, D. R. (2006). *The development of the French violin sonata (1860–1910)* [Doctoral thesis, University of Tasmania]. University of Tasmania Open Access Repository. <https://eprints.utas.edu.au/7868/>
- Lowry, S. (2014). Strategies for artists becoming writers: Tackling the written component of practice-based research in the creative and performing arts (A report from the regions). In L. Ravelli, B. Paltridge, & S. Starfield (Eds.), *Doctoral writing in the creative and performing arts* (pp. 337–352). Libri.
- Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2007). *Working with discourse: Meaning beyond the clause* (2nd ed.). Continuum.
- Maton, K. (2010a). Analysing knowledge claims and practices: Languages of legitimation. In K. Maton & R. Moore (Eds.), *Social realism, knowledge and the sociology of education: Coalitions of the mind* (pp. 35–59). Continuum.
- Maton, K. (2010b). Canons and progress in the arts and humanities: Knowers and gazes. In K. Maton, & R. Moore (Eds.), *Social realism, knowledge and the sociology of education: Coalitions of the mind* (pp. 154–178). Continuum.
- Maton, K. (2014). *Knowledge and knowers: Towards a realist sociology of education*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203885734>
- Noss, L. (1968). Yale University School of Music—Doctor of Musical Arts. *College Music Symposium*, 8, 42–43. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40373217>
- Oscar, S. (2007). *Into this wild abyss: Learning through fabricated photographs* [Doctoral thesis, University of Sydney]. Sydney eScholarship Repository. <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/3965>
- Paltridge, B. (2021). *Discourse analysis: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Bloomsbury.
- Paltridge, B., & Starfield, S. (2020). *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language: A handbook for students and their supervisors* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315170022>
- Paltridge, B., Starfield, S., Ravelli, L., & Nicholson, S. (2011). Doctoral writing in the visual and performing arts: Issues and debates. *The International Journal of Art and Design Education*, 30(2), 242–255. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1476-8070.2011.01700.x>
- Paltridge, B., Starfield, S., Ravelli, L., & Nicholson, S. (2012). Doctoral writing in the visual and performing arts: Two ends of a continuum. *Studies in Higher Education*, 37(8), 989–1003. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.562285>
- Paltridge, B., Starfield, S., Ravelli, L., & Tuckwell, K. (2012). Change and stability: Examining the macrostructures of doctoral theses in the visual and performing arts. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 11(4), 332–344. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2012.08.003>
- Paltridge, B., Starfield, S., Ravelli, L., Tuckwell, K., & Nicholson, S. (2014). Genre in the creative-practice doctoral thesis: Diversity and unity. In G. Garzone & C. Ilie (Eds.), *Genres and genre theory in transition: Specialized discourses across media and modes* (pp. 89–105). BrownWalker.
- Paré, A. (2019). Re-writing the doctorate: New contexts, identities, and genres. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 43, 80–84. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2018.08.004>

- Phillips, M., Stock, C., Vincs, K., Hassall, N., & Dyson, J. (2008). *Draft recommendations for best practice in doctoral and masters by research examination of dance studies in Australia*. West Australia Academy of Performing Arts at Edith Cowan University.
- Queensland University of Technology. (2008). *A handbook for postgraduate research students: Creative industries*.
- Ravelli, L., Paltridge, B., & Starfield, S. (Eds.). (2014) *Doctoral writing in the creative and performing arts*. Libri.
- Ravelli, L., Paltridge, B., Starfield, S., & Tuckwell, K. (2013) Extending the notion of 'text': The visual and performing arts doctoral thesis. *Visual Communication*, 12(4), 395-422. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357212462663>
- Ravelli, L. J., & Starfield, S. (2008). Typography and disciplinary identity in academic writing. *Information Design Journal*, 16(2), 133-147. <https://doi.org/10.1075/idj.16.2.06rav>
- Sabadini, A. (2007). *Exquisite corpse: The rainbow serpent in the Garden of Eden* [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. Curtin University of Technology.
- Starfield, S., Paltridge, B., & Ravelli, L. (2012). 'Why do we have to write?': Practice-based theses in the visual and performing arts and the place of writing. In C. Berkenkotter, V. K. Bhatia, & M. Gotti (Eds.), *Insights into academic genres* (pp. 169-190). Peter Lang.
- Starfield, S., Paltridge, B., & Ravelli, L. (2014). Researching academic writing: What textography affords. In J. Huisman & M. Tight (Eds.), *Theory and method in higher education research II* (Vol. 10, pp. 103-120). Emerald. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3628\(2014\)0000010011](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3628(2014)0000010011)
- Starfield, S., & Ravelli, L. J. (2006). "The writing of this thesis was a process that I could not explore with the positivistic detachment of the classical sociologist": Self and structure in *New Humanities* research theses. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5(3), 222-243. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2006.07.004>
- Swales, J. M. (1998). Textography: Toward a contextualization of written academic discourse. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 31(1), 109-121. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327973rlsi3101_7
- Swales, J. M. (2018). *Other floors, other voices: A textography of a small university building* (20th anniversary ed.). University of Michigan Press. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9859761>
- Trowler, P. (2012). Doing research: The case of art and design. In P. Trowler, M. Saunders, & V. Bamber (Eds.), *Tribes and territories in the 21st century: Rethinking the significance of disciplines in higher education* (pp. 68-77). Routledge.
- Van Niele, I. (2005). *Ambivalent belonging* [Doctoral thesis, University of South Australia]. UniSA Research Outputs Repository. https://ap01-a.alma.exlibris-group.com/view/delivery/61USOUTH AUS_INST/12146657950001831
- Vella, R. (2005). Keeping the degree creative. *Realtime*, 68, 2. <http://www.realtimearts.net/article/68/7916>
- Vincs, R. (2002). *African heart, Eastern mind: The transcendent experience through improvised music* [Doctoral thesis, Deakin University]. DRO. <http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30023145>

Wilmot, K. D. (2019). *Enacting knowledge in dissertations: An exploratory analysis of doctoral writing using legitimation code theory* [Doctoral thesis, University of Sydney]. Sydney eScholarship Repository. <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/20498>