



Introduction: The Case for Re-imagining Doctoral Writing

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Doctoral education is a practice undergoing considerable transformation. Over recent decades, doctoral education has been re-positioned as an important contributor to national economic success within a global knowledge economy (Cuthbert & Molla, 2015), doctoral enrollments continue to expand across many global contexts (Castelló et al., 2017; McCulloch & Thomas, 2013), and new forms of the doctorate have emerged internationally (Lee et al., 2009), such as professional doctorates in education (Ed.D.), social work (D.S.W.), and nursing practice (D.N.P.). As a result, international organizations (e.g., the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]), governments, and higher education institutions alike have become increasingly attentive to doctoral “problems,” such as persistently high attrition rates (Bair & Haworth, 2005), lengthy times to submission (Starke-Meyerring et al., 2014), and ongoing concerns about graduate employability (Cuthbert & Molla, 2015).

Writing is another area where troubles are seen to belong, with concerns expressed about the academic literacies of an increasingly large and diverse doctoral cohort, worries about the effectiveness of supervision pedagogies for doctoral writing, and questions about the transferability of writing capacities to industry settings. As a result, institutional policymakers have become increasingly interested in surveilling and regulating the written texts and writing productivity of doctoral students (Burford, 2017a). Added to this picture is the growing intensification of the doctorate itself, with students expected to publish not only a thesis/dissertation often within a normative timeframe, but also a larger number of other texts that are seen to “count,” such as book

chapters and journal articles (Huang, in press).¹ This is not to mention the growing assortment of written texts that doctoral students are encouraged to produce, ranging from funding applications to blog posts, opinion pieces to tweets. Given this complex picture, it is timely to explore how doctoral writing is imagined as we begin the third decade of the 21st century. Understanding the varied ways in which doctoral writing is currently imagined also offers us opportunities to consider how it may be re-imagined otherwise.

In a context where many higher education stakeholders are now attuned to the importance of doctoral writers and their written outputs, doctoral writing has also become an increasingly well-researched area of inquiry. While once it might have been commonplace to lament the neglect of doctoral writing research, we no longer think this is a helpful position from which to begin. A cursory glance across library shelves or journal alerts will reveal a wealth of publications on doctoral writing, including many books (see McCulloch, 2018). For example, a number of books locate doctoral writing within the complex process of forming a scholarly identity (e.g., Aitchison et al., 2010; Kamler & Thomson, 2006; Lovitts, 2007; Walker & Thomson, 2010). These books are often intended as guides for students and supervisors, providing resources and strategies to navigate the writing process as well as other challenges in the doctoral journey (Dunleavy, 2003).²

A number of recent books have also examined the complexity of practices, policies, and pedagogies surrounding master's and doctoral students' scholarly writing (e.g., Aitchison & Guerin, 2014; Badenhorst & Guerin, 2016; Carter et al., 2020). In *Writing Groups for Doctoral Education and Beyond: Innovations in Practice and Theory*, edited by Claire Aitchison and Cally Guerin (2014), authors describe collaborative writing pedagogies for doctoral students through a conceptual interrogation of these practices. Cecile Badenhorst and Cally Guerin's (2016) edited collection, *Research Literacies and Writing Pedagogies for*

1 Given the international scope of this volume, we have encouraged authors to use the language that is common in their context. This means that across the volume there will be descriptions of doctoral theses and doctoral dissertations. There will also be significant differences in the organisation of doctoral education, with some chapters writing from a context which assumes doctoral coursework, and others writing from a context where "the thesis" is the single examinable doctoral text. This is reflective of the wide diversity that exists across doctoral education globally.

2 Other texts foreground the unprecedented change that doctoral education has undergone over the past several decades in response to major shifts within and outside of the university. For instance, Boud and Lee's (2009) edited text *Changing Practices of Doctoral Education* and Lee and Danby's (2012) edited book *Reshaping Doctoral Education: International Approaches and Pedagogies* address these changes.

Masters and Doctoral Writers, also takes up these debates, highlighting pedagogical experiences from multiple vantage points (student, writing instructor, writing researcher, and thesis supervisor). Doctoral education researchers, such as Frances Kelly (2017), have also traced imaginaries of the Ph.D. by asking doctoral students to share stories about their doctoral experiences. Because writing is so closely associated with the Ph.D., imaginaries of writing and writers were integral to Kelly's work. Across her 2017 book *The Idea of the PhD: The Doctorate in the Twenty-First-Century Imagination*, we can trace various imaginaries of writing, including the "scholar working quietly and alone on a thesis, with time to do so" (p. 34), writing as a "difficulty to be overcome" and as a "risk to be managed" (p. 33), and writing as bound up with "ideas and imaginaries about being a researcher or a scholar" (p. 34). We have not presented a comprehensive list of texts here by any means, but we hope these examples illustrate the increasingly established nature of doctoral writing research.

Doctoral writing has not only blossomed as an object of research and advice, it has also emerged as an important locus of institutional work and public academic debate. An object of institutional interest, if not concern, doctoral writing is often implicated in practices of performance review and the metricization of research productivity (Burford, 2017b). For example, in many Western Anglophone institutions, doctoral supervision (including writing pedagogies) and doctoral writing outputs are practices which draw significant institutional attention and in some cases resources, particularly when "problems" emerge. Though this varies by context, specialists are often employed to work one-on-one with doctoral writers and/or to coordinate streams of learning around doctoral writing. Social learning opportunities, such as "Shut Up and Write" collectives (Fegan, 2016), writing groups (Beasy et al., 2020; Swadener et al., 2015), doctoral writing retreats (Davis et al., 2016), and other initiatives, have expanded rapidly (see Lawrence & Zawacki, 2018).

Doctoral writing is also a topic that draws widespread public debate across social platforms, including blogs such as the DoctoralWritingSIG blog (<https://doctoralwriting.wordpress.com/>; see Carter et al., 2020; Guerin et al., 2020), the Thesis Whisperer blog (<https://thesiswhisperer.com/>), and the Patter blog (<https://patthomson.net/>); on Twitter with hashtags such as #docwri and #doctoralwriting; on YouTube accounts such as Cecile Badenhorst's (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDXIZhpn7iJcw9BdgzUXW-bA>); and on podcasts such as the Tara Brabazon Podcast (<https://tarabrazon.libsyn.com/>). There are also special interest groups organized around doctoral writing, including the Doctoral Writing SIG community, which holds regular gatherings and operates as a stream at the biennial Quality

in Postgraduate Research (QPR) conference in Australia; the International Doctoral Education Research Network (IDERN), which meets every second year in association with different international conferences; and the Consortium for Graduate Communication (CGC) network in the US.

As our brief survey suggests, doctoral writing has increasingly become a practice of concern for institutional stakeholders and supervisors worldwide as well as an increasingly established area of research and institutional practice.

Why This Book?

Despite the importance attributed to doctoral writing for developing scholars, we have a limited understanding of the extent to which conceptualisations of doctoral writing are shared or contested, how ideas of doctoral writing have shifted over time, or where imaginings of the future of doctoral writing might take us. In this book, we pursue these questions. We also explore what might happen if we begin thinking about doctoral writing without imagining a vast absence in front of us. We hope that beginning from a place in which doctoral writing is seen as a rich, and increasingly deep, area of scholarship might orient our inquiries in some interesting ways.

We chose the title of this book, *Re-imagining Doctoral Writing*, in order to encourage contributors to offer different tools and approaches that might enliven our ideas of what doctoral writing may be and how it might be researched. While we sought out historical studies that tracked how imaginings of doctoral writing and doctoral writers have changed over time, we also sought to uncover what new doctoral writing imaginings have arisen in the 21st century as well as why they have arisen and what their impacts might be. We sought out work on the imaginings of different stakeholders as well as accounts that explore how doctoral writing arises in media and cultural texts. We encouraged imaginings of doctoral writing that saw it as a spatialized, embodied and felt practice—as one bound up with pleasures and possibilities as well as pains. And we sought to bring doctoral writing research into contact with ideas that might extend it, such as feminist, queer, critical race, post-humanist, and decolonial approaches.

Our naming of the book also reflects our view that doctoral writing is too often understood in instrumental ways that would benefit from much more imagination. Oftentimes there is a focus on the pragmatics of “what works” in doctoral writing policies, practice, and pedagogy. Researchers commonly take for granted what “doctoral writing” is and proceed on the basis that knowledge about doctoral writing that is situated in one context is generalizable to others. The title *Re-imagining Doctoral Writing* reflects our belief that a

questioning stance would be a helpful counterweight. While there is a clear demand for practical advice to be offered to students and supervisors (e.g., Aitchison, 2015; Aitchison & Lee, 2006; Kamler & Thomson, 2006; Scevak, 2006; Thomson & Kamler, 2016), and we ourselves have contributed to this genre (Amell & Badenhorst, 2018; Badenhorst et al., 2012; Badenhorst et al., 2015; Burford, et al., 2018), there are other ways to think about doctoral writing that we think ought to be nurtured, too. By positioning the collection as in pursuit of varying conceptualizations of doctoral writing, we hope to tug future scholarship in this direction.

Re-imagining Doctoral Writing brings together a range of scholars from different world regions and disciplines, each of whom brings a distinctive approach to bear on the question of how doctoral writing is imagined. In the remainder of this introductory chapter, we trace the genesis of this project and highlight the aims and purpose of the volume. We also provide brief descriptions of each chapter and aim to give a sense of how readers can use the book—in part or in whole—to re-imagine doctoral writing and doctoral writing research.

Doctoral Writing Research

We have puzzled over how best to describe the current state of doctoral writing research. Alistair McCulloch (2018) has suggested that doctoral education studies is a discipline, but whether doctoral writing research can be described as such is a question that remains open for debate. As editors, we have debated whether to describe doctoral writing as a “field” or “sub-field;” an “area;” a “community of practice;” a “territory,” “zone,” or “domain;” or umpteen other metaphors that might be invoked to give us a foothold in our object of inquiry. While in higher education research we see descriptions of a “scattered field” or “theme” (Daenekindt & Huisman, 2020) or “isolated islands” of scholarship (Macfarlane, 2012) rather than a discipline, we have settled on describing the study of doctoral writing as an area of inquiry. It is our view that the interdisciplinary and unsystematic nature of scholarly involvement in doctoral writing precludes it from being described otherwise at this point in time. Having dealt with the difficult question of how to think our way toward our object, there is the equally challenging question of how we might characterize it.

When approaching doctoral writing, some scholars highlight the *doctoral* in doctoral writing—foregrounding theories and frameworks of doctoral education and higher education more broadly. Others shine their spotlight on the *writing* in doctoral writing—foregrounding theories and frameworks of

writing within the context of doctoral education. Yet *doctoral* and *writing* are inseparable in studies of doctoral writing, and we agree with Claire Aitchison and Anthony Paré (2012), who have argued that “writing *must* be in discussions about doctoral education” and “at the center of curriculum and pedagogy for doctoral education” (p. 22).

How researchers conceptualize doctoral writing appears to depend on a number of variables. In our reading across this area of inquiry, we have identified three interlayered components: geography, discipline, and the predominant “paradigms” that are available for conceptualisations of writing (Lillis & Scott, 2007, p. 9). We wish to draw attention to three broad approaches that prevail with regards to how doctoral writing is theorized in the literature, which are (a) approaches that draw on social and rhetorical theories of writing called writing studies, (b) approaches that are influenced by academic literacies, and (c) approaches that build on sociocultural theories of learning (particularly the cognitive apprenticeship and communities of practice approaches) and that are drawn largely from higher education research.

Despite their differences, these three approaches to researching doctoral writing have much in common. For one, they are all interested in understanding *social practices*—a diverse set of social elements that come to be associated with certain realms of social life (Fairclough, 2003). Practices are patterned and habitual ways of thinking, behaving, feeling, and acting. For instance, an academic literacies approach might see academic writing as a social practice and, as such, seek to understand how writing becomes routinized over time and mediated by power, privilege, and context. Likewise, researchers interested in understanding how doctoral students develop into or “become” academics might also be interested in understanding how academic practices are generated, sustained, and taken on by novices over time. Researchers who draw on socio-rhetorical understandings of writing might similarly be interested in academic practices, but they may look to the role that writing plays in generating, maintaining, and sedimenting academic practices over time.

While in the following sections we aim to mark a number of routes researchers may take as they think about doctoral writing, we recognize that many scholars will combine these approaches in their work.

Writing Studies

Doctoral writing scholars situated in Canada and the United States appear to more commonly draw on theories from writing studies and tend to frame writing from a socio-rhetorical approach. While writing studies researchers have shifted over the past several decades with regards to how they theorize

writing, most relevant for understanding doctoral writing has been the shift from seeing *writing as a product* and *writing as a process* towards viewing *writing as both social and socially constructed* (Freedman & Medway, 1994; Freedman & Pringle, 1980; Paré, 2009).

A *socio-rhetorical view* of writing understands that writers use language to get things done, which is to say that writing and language are inseparable and *rhetorical* (Freedman & Medway, 1994; Paré, 2009). As such, writing and writers cannot be separated from the social and rhetorical situation—which includes an understanding of the community or audience one is writing for; the exigencies and purposes that one has for writing; and the social situation and its inherent pressures, complications, and dynamics (Reither, 1985; Paré, 2009; Dias et al., 1999).

Socio-rhetorical scholars of writing also argue that we need to consider *the written product*—they are, after all, speaking to the social-rhetorical situation via *genres*, or typified, recurring, and recognizable forms (Artemeva, 2006; Freedman & Medway, 1994). Additionally, scholars ought to pay attention to the *processes of writing*—in other words, we need to understand what writers actually do when they write, as well as the role that others can play in the writing process (Paré, 2009). However, we should also consider the interconnected ways in which writing is linked to other texts and communities. Academic writing, then, is inseparable from academic reading, inquiry, and community, since what counts as relevant writing and research will depend on what is valued by the discourse community the writer is connected with or attempting to connect with—and the extent to which the writer grasps what is valued. For example, writing from Canada, Doreen Starke-Meyerring and colleagues (2014) have drawn on North American notions of genre (as typified, recurring responses to social situations) to consider how institutions discursively frame doctoral writing. Similarly, Susan Lawrence and Terry Myers Zawacki's edited collection *Re/Writing the Center: Approaches to Supporting Graduate Students in the Writing Center* (2018) provides targeted support for graduate students to meet the expectations of their audiences.

Academic Literacies

The academic literacies approach began in the UK, evolving out of New Literacies Studies (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007; Street, 2010, 2013), but has since been taken up by researchers across Europe, in South Africa, as well as in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Much of this research branches out of higher education studies and doctoral education research in particular.

Like a socio-rhetorical view of writing, academic literacies researchers also understand writing as situated. However, while writing studies emerged in the US from a history of teaching writing through composition classes, academic literacies emerged more recently as a critical response to the massification of higher education and “powerful and restricted...official discourses” that frame/d “non-traditional” students’ language and writing use from a deficit view (Lillis & Scott, 2007, p. 6). Academic literacies researchers take a “social practices” approach that focuses on the socio-cultural, disciplinary, and institutional contexts in which literacies take place (Kamler, 2003), and the underlying reasons why practices often become obscured as “business as usual” and buried in invisibility.

An academic literacies perspective foregrounds the experiences of writers against a backdrop that includes a critical consideration of power, institutional practices, the epistemological nature of academic writing, and the implications that these have for identity and meaning making (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007; Lillis et al., 2015). For those working with an academic literacies approach, writing and identity are deeply linked, so much so that asking a writer to change an aspect of their writing can feel like a reflection on their identity. This is so, they have argued, because

academic writing is not merely an issue of correct grammar or individual motivation, but rather an identity issue where students require access to the subtle and normalized rules of Western academic discourse and epistemological access to the processes of knowledge production. (Bouhey, 2002, as cited in Doyle et al., 2018, p. 2).

Sociocultural Theories of Learning

Sociocultural theories of learning are often used in conjunction with academic literacies and socio-rhetorical approaches to think about the development of doctoral scholars and the integral role that writing plays in doctoral students’ development. Doctoral student “development” discourse has emerged, at least in part, from sociocultural perspectives in education that stem from theories of situated learning and cognitive apprenticeship (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990), where apprenticeship is a key means through which the craft of research is learned. The idea of apprenticeship in academia views research as a constellation of activities that are grounded in situated knowledge and tacit skills, practice, and ways of being (Wegener & Tanggaard, 2013).

Those working within a sociocultural perspective often find theories of workplace learning to be particularly relevant for understanding doctoral writing because, unlike undergraduate students or many master's students, doctoral students are required to “participate in the ongoing knowledge-making endeavors of their research communities” (Paré et al., 2011, p. 217). This entails seeking opportunities for mentorship that can be shared across a network, for example by supervisors, committee members, and so forth (Paré et al., 2011). Sociocultural theories of learning are often deployed to think about pedagogies for supervision, doctoral “becoming,” and academic identity development (Aitchison, 2015; Badenhorst & Guerin, 2016; Carter & Kumar, 2017; Inouye & McAlpine, 2017; Kamler & Thomson, 2006; Maher et al., 2008; Wegener & Tanggaard, 2013). For instance, Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) posited that a novice learns how to participate in a community of practice by first performing legitimate tasks. In particular, Lave and Wenger's research focused on how apprentices develop their skills starting as newcomers and moving toward becoming “old-timers,” with a concomitant shift in their identity as experts (Artemeva, 2011; Badenhorst & Guerin, 2016). In academia, the idea of apprenticeship helps to explain how research and academic writing practices are passed on via forms of mentoring such as the supervisory relationship (Wegener & Tanggaard, 2013). Like writing studies and academic literacies, sociocultural theories of learning (e.g., cognitive apprenticeship and situated learning) assume development and learning are socially situated.

Although there is a growing number of fora for discussion of doctoral writing in each of these approaches, scholars sometimes work in different silos, perhaps unaware of the depth of doctoral writing scholarship that other researchers are undertaking. One of the goals of this volume is to bring these different ways of understanding doctoral writing into contact to see what resonates and which sparks of possibility might flicker.

Who Are We?

As editors, we were drawn to the idea of this book because we saw it as an opportunity to examine doctoral writing beyond the “how-to,” where much of our own work is also based (Amell, in press; Badenhorst & Amell, 2019; Burford et al., 2018). The how-to framing frequently begins from the position of seeing *writing-as-a-problem* and is often oriented to the practicalities of getting students through a high stakes educational practice. In this volume, we want to explore doctoral writing as something other than pragmatics.

We bridge some of the geographical and disciplinary divides that we have described in the previous sections of this chapter. Jamie is from Aotearoa New Zealand and brings context from the Antipodes and Global South from his work in universities in Thailand and Australia. He is a higher education researcher who focuses on doctoral education and researcher development. When it comes to writing, he is particularly interested in how this practice connects to wider transformations that are shaping universities, such as internationalization, neoliberalism and metricization. Jamie describes writing as a window he is often looking through in order to understand what is going on in the worlds of doctoral students and their supervisors. Brittany, from Canada and based in the discipline of applied linguistics and discourse studies, found herself situated between literacy studies and writing studies. Her curiosity led her to build bridges between the two. Her inquiries tend to focus on how we define and understand scholarship, which includes doctoral writing, and the role these definitions and understandings play in helping universities better respond to evolving realities both beyond and within the walls of the campus. Cecile, originally from South Africa and now working in Canada, comes from a background in higher education and academic literacies and tends to focus on issues of power and difference and how they relate to doctoral writing. She has had firsthand experience in trying to find common language across these geographical contexts. As a team, we also bridge differences across career stages. Jamie is an early career researcher, Brittany, a doctoral candidate at the time of writing, and Cecile, an established scholar.

How did we come together as a team? Brittany, in her endeavor to build connections and understand how academic literacies overlapped with writing studies, contacted Cecile. They began a collaboration exploring doctoral writing, which resulted in co-editing a special issue of *Studies in Discourse and Writing/Rédactologie* titled “Play, Visual Strategies & Innovative Approaches to Graduate Writing” (Amell & Badenhorst, 2018). Jamie was one of the authors in the special issue (Burford et al., 2018). Individuals are often drawn to like-minded people, and the three of us connected immediately. We began with small conversations, which led to much longer, detailed conversations. One of the greatest pleasures about working together is that we introduce each other to new ways of thinking about doctoral writing.

Why Re-imagining?

Increasingly, time compression, financial constraints, and poor job prospects have characterized doctoral experiences in many contexts in the Global North (Aitchison & Mowbray, 2015; Burford, 2018). They have also impacted

available conceptualizations of doctoral writing (see Manathunga, 2019). Often, discussions about doctoral writing have revolved around rhetoric, craft, and technique, but essentially have been steeped in a matter of know-how. In this book, we aim to open a different space to think about doctoral writing. Perhaps we can create space to renew thinking, looking for not only choices that are made but also those that are not made. Can we see the traces, tracks, footprints of what might have been and what could be? Our imaginings may vary and may well remain unrealizable, but as long as we are pushing on the structures that confine us, something fresh is bound to happen. What must be renewed? What deserves continuity? Are there paradoxes in emerging imaginings? Where do we begin?

Doctoral Writing: Shadows and New Horizons

In a recent article, Søren Bengtson and Ronald Barnett (2017) encouraged critical university studies scholars to confront the dark side of higher education, aspects of which “may be dim, obscure or caught in a blind angle” (p. 115). We attend to this call with a particular interest in considering some shadier dimensions of doctoral writing. For example, when it comes to the teaching of doctoral writing, doctoral pedagogues are often positioned as helpful problem solvers with solutions to simplify writing conundrums. However, doctoral writing is a context where ideas are aired, fought over, and debated. As a consequence, doctoral writing is often not “nice” but is instead politically textured and devilishly complicated. We believe there is a need to unpack how pedagogies of doctoral writing are implicated in such struggles. As editors, we are interested in a number of related questions. Where is the turbulence and the mess of doctoral writing captured? Who considers the relation of cruel optimism (Berlant, 2011) that can be discerned in the fantasies that students bring to doctoral writing? Who counts the dreams that remain unfulfilled? Who tracks the disciplinary power of writing, where writing is de-politicized and writers lose their voice? What about the shadow side of academic integrity and the unfair practices that some engage in? Since doctoral writing is the space where ideas are materialized on the page, how does this affect the intersecting identity politics (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, indigeneity) of doctoral writing? What about bodies? Here we are including the ones who ache, the ones who quit, the ones who fail. As we write this introduction, protests about racism, systemic inequalities, and police brutality are taking place in cities around the world. Demands for sovereignty, respect, justice, dignity, and ethical relationality are seared, as they ought to be, in the forefront of our minds. How might this shape possible meanings of doctoral writing? What of the

unprecedented global pandemic of COVID-19 we have all been facing? How will these circumstances affect our experiences of researching, teaching about, supervising, and engaging in doctoral writing?

As we turn to think about the imaginaries of doctoral writing, we should also keep our eyes peeled for those new horizons, the innovations to the forms and practices that are shaping doctoral writing now. What impact are new creative and experimental genres having on doctoral writing? How do the knowledge projects of Indigenous and Southern doctoral scholars push on the borders of what writing, texts, and writers might be? And, what about the joys of doctoral writing? We ought to chart its rich pleasures, the desires writers bring to it, the answers readers might find in reading doctoral texts (Burford, 2014). We ought to attend to the moments when doctoral researchers find themselves participating in the wonderful privilege of knowledge production, and we ought to attend to those people who, through their writing, find themselves part of a community of scholars. What we are gesturing to here are openings, or at least the possibility of openings. We are trying to hold space for the possibility, too, of an ontology of writing, the powerful experience of writing as a way of being (Yagelski, 2011). Sometimes we are romanced by our writing, and sometimes we romance our writing—the thrill of chasing an idea down a rabbit hole, only to emerge with another idea that has changed us forever. An excerpt from Brittany’s personal research journal illustrates an often-unvoiced relationship with doctoral writing:

I can think of one set of papers I had to write earlier on in my doctorate. It was like a polyamorous relationship. I flirted openly with ideas and concepts. I slept with them all. Some ideas were more interesting than others. I was drawn to them, or perhaps they were drawn to me. . . . Other ideas continued to attract me, even though the feeling didn’t seem mutual. These unrequited hot messes were all the things I knew I didn’t want to know—they refused to play nicely, bordering on frantic. They didn’t show up when they promised to. They wounded old wounds, coming when they liked and leaving far too soon. They left impressions—consensual raw welts that rigorously point me to the places where “not everything is composed” (Alexander & Rhodes, as cited in Waite, 2017, p. 6), where resistance is poetic, practical, necessary, and desirable.

In research accounts of doctoral writing, we hear about how much doctoral writing hurts (e.g., Aitchison & Mowbray, 2013)—the excerpt from Brittany’s

notebook suggests that perhaps writers might be drawn to that pain, because it is also pleasurable at times.

Overview of the Book

What imaginings do doctoral students, supervisors, institutions and other stakeholders bring to the practice of writing? What are the dominant imaginings of doctoral writing, and why might these be contested? How might we approach doctoral writing pedagogy, practice, and policy in more imaginative ways? In addressing these (and other) questions, *Re-imagining Doctoral Writing* builds important links between doctoral education research, doctoral writing scholarship, rhetoric, composition and writing studies, and academic literacies.

The fresh contribution that this edited collection brings to existing discussion is the focus on re-imagining. This contribution is manifested through two threads that run throughout *Re-imagining Doctoral Writing*. First, the book traces the ways in which doctoral writing is currently imagined. The book as a whole asks, “When we talk about doctoral writing, what do we mean?” This question arises from the fact that “doctoral writing” is used to signify a number of different ideas and practices. This is both exciting and a challenge. It means that doctoral writing is a concept which is open to fluidity and mobility, and it can also be simplified and restricted. The book showcases the work of researchers who are working with various imaginings of doctoral writing.

The second thread that runs through the collection as a whole is the discussion of how doctoral writing may be re-imagined otherwise. Like others, we are committed to imagining not only what doctoral writing is, but re-imagining what it can be (Paré, 2017, 2019), as well as how we might be more imaginative in our approaches to doctoral writing as researchers, supervisors, and institutions. By homing in on the concept of imagining, we encouraged participating authors to focus on the illimitability, paradoxes, ambiguity, freedom, and mystery of doctoral writing as well as personal processes of divergence and agency (Das, 2012). With the focal concept of “imagining,” we aim to evoke and provoke cross-border dialogue and to foster international connections and exchange. We see current research on doctoral writing as a site of creative invention, and it is this volatile space that we would like to examine as it is unfolding (see also Ravelli et al., 2014). Taken as a whole, this book serves both as a foundation for understanding the different ways in which we might understand “doctoral writing” and as a site for envisioning how doctoral writing could be imagined otherwise.

Following this introductory chapter is Section One of the book, *The Call to Re-imagine Doctoral Writing*. This section features three chapters from

researchers based in Aotearoa New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Denmark. Each of these chapters enacts or examines various calls to re-imagine doctoral writing. Across these three chapters are calls for researchers to engage in re-imagining, whether this is to explore doctoral student imaginaries that may exceed the confines of limiting framings or to imagine doctoral writing itself in more expansive ways. These chapters also examine how doctoral students and supervisors may call for, and resist, re-imaginings of the form of the doctoral thesis.

The first chapter in this section, “Writerly Aspirations and Doctoral Education: Beyond Neoliberal Orthodoxies” by Catherine Mitchell (*Taranaki*), examines the place of “the writer” within imaginaries of doctoral education. Drawing on an empirical study with first-in-family doctoral students in Aotearoa New Zealand, Mitchell outlines the ways in which investments in the idea of “the writer” may exceed narrow neoliberal orthodoxies that shape prevailing doctoral education imaginaries. Across Mitchell’s work, ideas of writers, storytellers, and writerly works are shown to inform both university imaginaries and the formation of doctoral aspiration. This chapter draws attention to the ways in which the discursive and imaginative space of doctoral education and the university itself have not been completely captured by neoliberalism. In Mitchell’s chapter, the aspiration to become doctoral remains, for many, bound up with writing and with what it is to be a writer. As such, Mitchell’s chapter calls doctoral writing researchers to pay close attention to often unarticulated dreams and desires that doctoral researchers may bring to the process of becoming *a writer*.

Julia Molinari’s chapter “Re-imagining Doctoral Writings as Emergent Open Systems,” draws on critical realism, complexity theory, and emergence in support of the call to re-imagine doctoral writing. Molinari argues that academic writing in general is a complex open and emergent social system that can change. She then offers several reasons for re-imagining doctoral writing. The first is that academic writings already exhibit considerable diversity. This suggests that the conditions of possibility for re-imagining them are already in place, providing a conceptual space from which to further imagine. Second, there are epistemic reasons for re-thinking how doctoral students may wish to write, as evidenced by research on socio-semiotics. Molinari then introduces several examples of doctoral writers who have re-imagined their writing in order to advance their knowledge production. To explain how change in social phenomena is possible and how it can continue to be justified, Molinari draws on the theory of complex permeable open systems. By re-thinking academic writings in this way, Molinari argues that we can provide a rationale to explain how they can continue to change. Throughout her chapter, Molinari

argues that these conceptual tools offer doctoral writing scholars a systematic and critical space for continuing to re-imagine conditions of possibility.

The third chapter in this section, Signe Skov's "Ph.D. by Publication or Monograph Thesis? Supervisors and Candidates Negotiating the Purpose of the Thesis when Choosing Between Formats," examines calls to re-imagine (or resist re-imagining) the format of the doctoral thesis itself. Skov works in Denmark and examines interview data with supervisors and candidates in order to investigate how doctoral candidates legitimize their choice between the monograph thesis or the Ph.D. by publication. Her analysis demonstrates how the doctoral thesis is being re-imagined most often through an instrumental discourse that emphasizes what the thesis does for individuals or institutions rather than what it does for disciplines and knowledge. Within this instrumental discourse, the monograph thesis struggles for recognition as a legitimate format. Alongside these instrumental imaginings, Skov demonstrates that there is also another discourse at work, one that emphasizes contribution to knowledge and disciplines. Skov's chapter can assist doctoral writing researchers in understanding how imaginings of the purpose of doctoral writing shape the ways that doctoral researchers and supervisors argue for or against various thesis formats.

Section Two of this volume, *Concepts and Tensions of Doctoral Writing*, features three chapters from researchers based in South Africa, Australia, and Canada. Each of these chapters takes up innovative concepts—borders, paths, queer, meta-genre—and uses them to consider how doctoral writing is and is not imagined. These chapters are also linked by an interest in norms that surround doctoral writing and how conventionality and unspoken assumptions work to regulate imaginings of what doctoral writing can be. While many of these chapters examine dominant imaginings of doctoral writing, they also highlight tensions, hidden practices, and possibilities for re-imagining, too.

The first chapter in this section is contributed by Susan van Schalkwyk and Cecilia Jacobs, offering a voice "from the South." In "Borders and Tensions in the Context of Doctoral Writing," van Schalkwyk and Jacobs explore the tensions involved in becoming a researcher, invoking the concept of "border crossing." The authors argue that borders have an important role to play in maintaining disciplinary integrity but that they can also generate significant turbulence for doctoral students who must learn about, and sometimes contest, established disciplinary practices for knowledge production. Building on work in the field of new literacy studies and more recent academic literacies research, the authors argue that collaborative approaches to supervision and the adoption of a cohort model, both of which foster a social practices approach to learning, might facilitate border crossing while alleviating sites

of tension. Drawing on experiences from South Africa, van Schalkwyk and Jacobs offer more collectivist imaginings of supervision pedagogies for doctoral writing.

Steven Thurlow's "Queer Path-making: Expressing or Suppressing Creativity in Arts Doctoral Writing" is the second chapter in this section. Thurlow explores how doctoral writers in a faculty of arts at an Australian university engage with the notion of creativity, both in relation to what it is, or might be, and where it may be found. He traces the diverse and changing perceptions of creativity held by three multilingual doctoral writers throughout their respective doctoral experiences. Thurlow extends an emerging body of work that has drawn on queer concepts to re-imagine doctoral writing (Burford, 2017a; Weatherall, 2019) via his use of Sara Ahmed's queer conceptual work on orientation/disorientation (2006) and path-making (2019). Thurlow considers both the well-worn path of "standard" doctoral writing and how students make judgments as to whether they can forge their own unique trail of textual creativity. As Thurlow notes, deviation from the "known path" poses risks, and these are risks students may be unwilling to take. However, Thurlow powerfully documents small moments of creativity and departure from thesis writing conventions. For Thurlow, the queer path remains illuminated, even if it is unfollowed.

The final chapter in this section also links doctoral writing imaginings with a concept, in this case, meta-genre. Sara Doody's chapter "Meta-Genre Imaginings: Using Meta-Genre to Explore Imaginings of Doctoral Writing in Interdisciplinary Life Sciences," explores how doctoral writing is currently imagined in interdisciplinary life sciences (e.g., biophysics, computational biology) doctoral programs in Canada and aims to present avenues for how writing might be re-imagined in these contexts. Conceptualizing writing from a rhetorical genre theory perspective, which views writing as social and situated action, Doody explores meta-genres that dictate how writing is imagined, talked about, conventionalized, experienced, and enacted in interdisciplinary doctoral programs. Doody draws on Giltrow (2002) who has defined meta-genres as "situated language about situated language" (p. 190) and has argued that these can be understood as "atmospheres of wordings and activities . . . surrounding genres" (p. 195). In pointing out hidden contradictions between dominant imaginings of writing and writers' own experiences, Doody's chapter suggests that meta-genre offers potential to facilitate a re-thinking of interdisciplinary writing. As a resource that encourages writers to critically reflect on how they are situated and how this impacts writing practices, meta-genre has the potential to be an empowering resource for doctoral writers to peel away writing's rhetorical façade and engage in meaningful rhetorical activity.

Section Three of this volume is called Re-imagining Doctoral Writers and Their Others. This section features chapters from researchers based in the United States of America, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Bangladesh. Extending the work of scholars such as Tai Peseta (2001), the chapters in this section ask questions about the place of identity and embodiment in doctoral writing. Drawing on various methodologies, including cultural rhetorics, autoethnography, and historical analysis, the chapters in Section Three all conceive of doctoral writing as a site of socio-political struggle. For some authors, this leads to calls for the amplification of voices of doctoral writers who are often marginalized in academia, including Southern and Indigenous scholars. For other authors, this leads to a call for greater recognition of the voices of others involved in the doctoral writing process, including community members and typists.

The first chapter in this section, “Embodiment, Relationality, and Constellation: A Cultural Rhetorics Story of Doctoral Writing,” examines cultural rhetorics as a methodological tool for re-imagining doctoral writing. Matthew B. Cox, Elise Dixon, Katie Manthey, Maria Novotny, Rachel Robinson, and Trixie G. Smith offer a series of short vignettes in which they outline the various processes involved in their becoming as doctoral writers. While expectations persist that doctoral researchers are “already ready” as writers, Cox and colleagues destabilise these meanings by sharing stories about learning to become a doctoral writer. At the same time, these vignettes also re-imagine doctoral writing as a practice that is inevitably embodied, experiential, and personal. Across these stories, life events occur, and relationships are formed—both between doctoral writers and with the communities that are being studied. The authors conclude by offering lines of inquiry for future doctoral writing researchers who may wish to take up a cultural rhetorics approach.

David Taufui Mikato Fa’avae’s chapter, “Vā and Veitapui as Decolonial Potential: Ongoing Talatalanoa and Re-imagining Doctoral Being and Becoming,” also considers how doctoral writing may be linked to socio-political struggle. In this chapter, Fa’avae examines how he navigated his own doctoral journey, highlighting the ways he was able renegotiate disciplinary norms and their associated writing conventions to honor Tongan ideas, language, and practices in his doctoral thesis. Taking up questions about epistemic disobedience in doctoral writing, Fa’avae explains how he used the concepts of *vā* and *veitapui* to carve out space for himself as a doctoral writer from the Moana-Pacific. In particular, Fa’avae shares how he used doctoral learning and writing to enact *fatongia*, or an obligation and responsibility to honour and safeguard his cultural knowledges. For Fa’avae, doctoral education is a

practice that is persistently embedded in colonial relations of knowledge production, and yet writing may still be a tool that Indigenous researchers can use in order to re-claim self-determination.

Questions about the relationship between doctoral writing and decolonization are also taken up in Sharin Shajahan Naomi's chapter, "Writing a Doctoral Thesis in a non-Western Voice." In her chapter, Naomi describes the challenge of invoking a non-Western voice in order to challenge the coloniality of knowledge production as a Bangladeshi international student studying in Australia. By waging epistemic disobedience through performative writing, Naomi describes how she created a space for writing her doctoral thesis with a non-Western voice at the same time as encountering struggles for legitimacy. In this chapter, Naomi unpacks some of the strategies she used to re-imagine doctoral writing against the coloniality of knowledge with the aim of showing that writing otherwise is possible.

The final chapter in this section is about those paragraphs that often live close to the front cover of a doctoral thesis/dissertation: the acknowledgements section. In their chapter, "Decentering the Author/Celebrating the Typist in Doctoral Thesis Acknowledgements," Frances Kelly, Catherine Manathunga, and Machi Sato trace the presentation of an emerging academic self in the acknowledgements sections of theses written by doctoral scholars in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and Japan. Here, they consider ways that acknowledgements, those marginal sections of thesis texts, decenter the individual author as sole producer of knowledge and highlight the situated-ness of writing practices, thereby providing alternative imaginaries for doctoral writing. Unlike the main body of the thesis, which must present a legitimate academic authorial self, the peripheral element of the acknowledgements section reveals affective dimensions and recognizes the involvement of others (people and things) in the research and writing process. Kelly, Manathunga, and Sato argue that analysis of these texts-within-the-thesis-text enables a reading "against the grain"—giving insight into who/what *else* contributes to a thesis and revealing the "entanglements" of academic scholarship and writing (Barad, 2007).

Section Four of this volume, *Writing a Re-imagined Doctoral Thesis*, features three chapters from researchers based in Australia, the United Kingdom, and Aotearoa New Zealand. Each of these chapters considers how doctoral theses can be re-imagined, whether through the innovations of the visual and performing arts, experimentations with fictional writing, or the onto-epistemological openings of new materialisms. These chapters are united in their interest in what happens to doctoral writing when key dimensions of the thesis (e.g., its conclusion or materiality) are re-imagined.

Louise Ravelli, Sue Starfield, and Brian Paltridge's chapter "Re-imagining Doctoral Writing Through the Visual and Performing Arts," draws on a study that examined 36 Australian doctoral theses to explore the contested space of doctoral writing in the visual and performing arts. With theses that incorporate a creative/performed component, whole new ways of doctoral writing have emerged, including new academic voices; 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. Ravelli and colleagues 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. The authors offer key strategies that can be enacted to ensure the re-imagined forms that doctoral writers in the visual and performing arts create are better appreciated and have a more settled place in the academy.

In his chapter "Fictional Writing in Doctoral Theses: The (re)Engagement of Play and Reflexivity," Will Gibson makes a case for experimenting with fiction in doctoral writing. For Gibson, fiction may be used as a writing process or a product with the power to push against the constraints of institutionalized academic language. Gibson argues that fiction writing can provide doctoral students with different ways to speak about affect, about their relationships with participants, about contradictions and messiness, about uncertainties, and about decision-making. In short, fictional representation provides a way of playing with the doctoral performance, moving from an obsession with showing one's expertise with language to a more open exploration of how language can make certain things knowable. The re-imagining Gibson proposes in his chapter is to experiment with doctoral writing as a process of "thinking through" (i.e., of doing thought) rather than of simply representing thinking.

In the final chapter of this section, "The Curious Predicament of an (un) Comfortable Conclusion: Writing with New Materialisms," Toni Ingram explores the notion of concluding. An academic conclusion often entails answers derived from questions such as "What does all this mean?" and "What do we now know about the topic we did not know before?" While conventionally appealing, these questions become redundant within a feminist new materialist approach, as they are premised on a separation between the knower (researcher) and the known (subject/s). This chapter explores tensions that

emerge between ontological foundations of research and thesis writing conventions, such as a *tidy* conclusion. Drawing on Karen Barad's (2007) concepts of onto-epistem-ology and intra-action, Ingram considers how a new materialist ontology reconfigures binary concepts, such as question/answer, research/researcher, and knowing/not knowing. These binary concepts, along with doctoral framings of *success* and *failure*, often underpin the conclusions a thesis offers. The chapter ponders some of the questions such a blurring of binaries invites in relation to re-imagining doctoral writing.

The final chapter of the volume aims to draw out key contributions that the authors in this book make to the project of re-imagining doctoral writing, and doctoral writing research.

Together, the chapters in this volume highlight both historical and contemporary imaginings of doctoral writing. By reading across these chapters, doctoral writing scholars can trace dominant writing imaginaries as well as trace ideas about writing, doctoral texts, and doctoral writers that push on the borders of recognition and intelligibility. By drawing together scholarship emerging from various parts of the world and from various approaches to thinking about doctoral writing, perhaps we have multiplied meanings of “doctoral writing” and how it might be imagined. Ultimately, we hope this volume offers resources for researchers and students alike to dream possibilities of doctoral writing otherwise.

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