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Deakin University

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The PhD by prior publications in the Creative Arts at Deakin University: Advancing industry engagement and social justice outcomes in the doctoral degree (research)

Abstract:

In late 2016 Deakin University's School of Communication and Creative Arts (SCCA) added the PhD by Prior Publications in the Creative Arts (Portfolio Creative Product plus Exegesis) to Deakin's existing complement of PhD by Publication offerings. Candidates from several Creative Arts disciplines, pre-eminently Creative Writing, have enrolled in the PhDPriorPubs. Commencements have included nationally and internationally based artists, including some current Deakin staff members. This article contextualizes the PhDPriorPubs' origins, describes its inner workings, and provides data on candidate enrolments, graduations and thesis outcomes as of November 2019. It also elaborates on the planning and thinking stages behind the degree's development, its relationship to the cognate Practice-Led Research methodology, and future prospects and threats. The present-day relevance of PhDs by prior publication is sometimes disputed. This article argues for the ongoing value of degrees like the PhDPriorPubs in pollinating 'PhD of the Future' debates and in advancing industry engagement and social justice outcomes in the doctoral degree (research).

Biographical note:

Dr Patrick West is a widely published fiction writer, essayist, public intellectual and Associate Professor in Writing and Literature. He was the Higher Degree Research Coordinator in Deakin University's School of Communication and Creative Arts from 2016 to 2019. As a teacher, Patrick has a special interest and expertise in developing real-world writing opportunities for young, marginalized and emerging writers.

Keywords: creative arts, industry engagement, PhD by Prior Publications, Practice-Led Research, social justice

Introduction and methodology

In late 2016 Deakin University's School of Communication and Creative Arts (SCCA) added the PhD by Prior Publications in the Creative Arts (Portfolio Creative Product plus Exegesis) to Deakin's existing complement of PhD by Publication offerings [1]. Creative Writing candidates have featured prominently in the mix of national and international enrolments.

Section one of this article contextualizes the *PhDPriorPubs*' origins, devolving from macroscopic to microscopic theaters of cognition and process, through these lenses:

- i) 'PhD of the Future'
- ii) 'Industry Readiness'
- iii) Deakin's *PhD Xtra*
- iv) Deakin policy and guidelines
- v) Deakin SCCA Creative Arts and Creative Writing staff.

This section underscores the industry-engagement value of the *PhDPriorPubs*.

Section two provides data on candidate enrolments, graduations and examination outcomes as of November 2019, and directs the reader to Appendix 1, which contains the guidelines document for the degree – its 'bible'. I originally wrote these guidelines in late 2016 to convey the degree's workings and key reference points (West 2018b).

Section three looks backwards to the degree's planning stages and makes links to ongoing considerations. What gap in the market had we originally spotted? What tensions involving institutional factors require ongoing stewardship? Matters of the degree's relationship to its industry context figure here and the selection of the degree's title is explained.

Section four explores the degree's relationship to the cognate methodology of Practice-Led Research (PLR), asking how prior, multi-part practice can lead coherent research with present-day relevance. The required *re-composed* portfolio creative product cues an answer.

Section five considers the *PhDPriorPubs*' current state and its future prospects and threats, while advancing a view of why such degrees tend to become polarizing initiatives.

Section six reiterates the degree's industry-engagement value while noting its interweaving of social justice and industry demographics and interests. The *PhDPriorPubs* also advances 'PhD of the Future' discourses by anticipating PhD forms modeled on Creative Arts theses.

Doctoral degrees with a publication element ingrained in their structure are a disuniting force in academia. Referencing her own experience of completing a PhD by Publication in Australia, Denise Jackson relates her 'exposure to academics who embrace the topic with either keen interest or dismissive proclamations' (Jackson 2013: 356). Similarly, Susi

Peacock, referencing candidates who have written scholarly pieces concerning their own experiences of completing ‘the retrospective PhD by publication’ (Peacock 2017: 124) observes that ‘[these] writers note the self-doubt they experienced whilst following this pathway especially when encountering skeptical colleagues who regarded this as a quick-fix solution’ (Peacock 2017: 126). Likewise, Lisa Robins and Peter Kanowski warn that ‘in our experience, not all supervisors are aware that PhD by publication is a legitimate option, and some remain opposed to it on pedagogical grounds’ (Robins & Kanowski 2008: 7). More pressingly, Susan Smith observes that, ‘if colleagues in a particular discipline have perceptions about an award [PhD by published work], it can be tiresome and difficult to have constantly to defend one’s achievements and value, and this can potentially lead to reduced confidence in the perceived value and status of the award’ (Smith 2015: 26; see also Starrs 2008).

This article is informed by the outcomes of, and my experience of, an initial internal review of the *PhDPriorPubs* in June 2019. My mixed-method approach combines critical engagement with the existing literature, small-scale quantitative analysis, and reflection on subjective experience. An ethics exemption for this project has been granted [2]. At the time of writing (December 2019), preparations are underway for a second, more formal, external review of the degree in 2020. One possible outcome of this review is that the *PhDPriorPubs* will be disbanded. This article argues for the degree’s importance, while interrogating the institutional culture, at Deakin and elsewhere, framing decision-making processes related to degrees like the *PhDPriorPubs*. Maggie Butt’s comment, in 2013, that PhD forms like this one are ‘referenced strikingly little in the literature’ still holds weight (Butt 2013). This article aligns with Butt’s interest in developing the conversation.

Five contexts for the origins of the *PhDPriorPubs*

The *PhDPriorPubs*’ origins are productively contextualized through five lenses, presented here in a devolution from macroscopic to microscopic theaters of cognition and process:

i) ‘PhD of the Future’

Attachments to traditional notions of the PhD clash with visions of its radical reimagining to meet perceived future requirements. Googling ‘PhD of the Future’ unearths numerous texts interrogating the value of the present-day PhD and suggesting alternative approaches and models. Google’s top results for the search phrase ‘PhD of the Future’ are numerous and reflect anxieties: ‘what to do after a PhD’; ‘PhD jobs’; ‘PhD careers’; ‘which PhD’; ‘where to look for PhD’; ‘PhD or job’; ‘future plan after PhD’; and ‘life after PhD’.

Clearly, change is inevitable. Leonard Cassuto notes that ‘The number of [American] PhD students ... is already going down in the arts and sciences. But there is more than one way to grow smaller. Here’s what I hope: that doctoral programs learn to shrink gracefully’ (Cassuto 2016). Hope, however, may be blocked by certain realities: ‘Graduate programs (and all of higher education, for that matter) have a bad habit of adding features but never letting go of any. We need to say “at the expense of” more often than we do’ (Cassuto 2016).

Sidonie Smith strikes a similar note of optimism and pragmatism. The subtitle of her book *Manifesto for the Humanities* puts it succinctly: *Transforming Doctoral Education in Good Enough Times*. Under the heading ‘A 21st-Century Doctoral Education,’ Smith advocates that:

faculty need to design doctoral programs that are generative experiences for all students rather than experiences in bending toward conformity to a singular model of professionalization and success. Such programs would strive to enable students to stay true to their passions and affiliative commitments, enable them to follow secret desires, be playful and experimental, be irreverent. (Smith 2016: 155)

Smith’s neglect of Creative Arts doctoral education is understandable given the role the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) plays in her native America. Strikingly though, the final words of the above passage could mimic the playbook of any Australian PhD in the Creative Arts. This is one convergence of the *PhDPriorPubs* with ‘PhD of the Future’ discourses. Still, a more sober tone emerges soon after:

The challenge, as one of the reviewers of this book observed, is to “strike a reasonable balance between being responsible to current expectations, introducing innovation, and stressing new forms of professionalization”. (Smith 2016: 164)

Even so, Christine Halse’s evocation of the PhD’s mutable history implies that ‘introducing innovation’ may be somewhat easier than Smith’s reviewer suggests:

It is inaccurate to assume that the doctorate has a continuous linear history, or is based on long, well established traditions, or that it has had consistent identity over time and between different disciplines, universities and countries. As the emergence of new doctoral forms demonstrates, the doctorate is a discursive entity, fashioned by history and by social, political and economic circumstances, changing in response to and as part of the broader changes that have refashioned the identity, purpose and operation of universities. (Halse 2007: 331)

From a similar position, Chris Park:

calls for nothing less than a wholesale revision of assumptions and expectations about what the PhD is, or could conceivably be today, given the new and still emerging

context within which it is situated and constructed. (Park 2005: 190; see also Brien 2009).

Tempering Park's rallying cry, Robin Usher notices doctoral education's structural locus as a lightning rod conducting wider anxieties manifested as competing images of the academy:

As the highest, most specialized and most knowledge intensive and knowledge producing form of education offered by universities, doctoral education is now right in the middle of a fierce contestation that pits the traditional values of the academy against the new values of the knowledge economy. (Usher 2002: 145)

Sometimes I felt that the *PhDPriorPubs* had become a lightning rod twice over: discharging not only the academy-wide concerns Usher mentions, but these same concerns mutated and *re-charged* along the conduits of the Creative Arts and a prior publication model.

ii) 'Industry Readiness'

'Industry Readiness' is a major strand of 'PhD of the Future' conversations. The *Review of Australia's Research Training System* states that:

Australian industry-university collaboration performance lies close to bottom in terms of the international comparators reported by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Industry-university collaboration would be greatly improved if there was increased engagement at the HDR level. (McGagh et al 2016: 53)

Usher tackles this issue directly: 'the form and culture of the conventional PhD precludes the involvement of industry practitioners who ... are likely themselves to be knowledge producers' (Usher 2002: 150). Relatedly, Park draws attention to a new, more industry-friendly 'way of framing doctoral study – as a combination of training the person and writing the thesis' (Park 2005: 197). Ruth E Davies and Gary Rolfe, rather than working from a university-based institutional location outwards, argue from deep within the nursing industry context for a better, more industry-relevant mandate for the (nursing) PhD (Davies & Rolfe 2009). Patently, the more intensively doctoral programs circulate through academic and industry spaces – knitting them together – the better the resultant (further) industry training, towards which most 'PhD of the Future' discourses aspire.

iii) Deakin's PhD Xtra

The *PhDPriorPubs*' introduction approximately coincided with the introduction of Deakin's *PhD Xtra* program. Guided by the *Review of Australia's Research Training System*, *PhD Xtra* models one 'PhD of the Future' option and incorporates an 'Industry Readiness' ideal:

PhD Xtra – Be Expert

Join the world's best and brightest research professionals in Deakin's *PhD Xtra* program. *PhD Xtra* offers an enhanced learning experience through an individual, flexible learning plan tailored by you. Grow your capacity to relate your research to the broader framework of knowledge in your area and master the ability to competently tackle any problem. (Deakin University 2019b)

PhD Xtra aims to provide graduates with 'an enhanced learning experience' that equips them with the generic and, above all, industry-related capacities necessary to finding post-graduation employment. The aim is to develop the candidate as an individual in command of a portfolio of transferable skills, as well as to assist them to write their thesis in the traditional way. Keynote innovations of *PhD Xtra* include: compulsory research-training coursework in all Deakin doctoral programs; an optional Oral Thesis Examination (compulsory in one Deakin element); a broader array of Career Pathway Placements and internships; Individual Learning Plans (ILP); and, a Portfolio of Assets (POA) in which graduates may collate their learning achievements beyond thesis completion, drawing on their ILP. The coursework requirement in the Faculty of Arts and Education is unit AAE900 Research Framing and Development. All *PhDPriorPubs*' candidates must take this unit.

iv) Deakin policy and guidelines

This policy extract regulated the *PhDPriorPubs*' development:

Thesis by prior publications

(12) Applicants may apply to complete a thesis based substantially on prior publications. The applicant must demonstrate that:

the prior publications could form a coherent body of original work by the applicant that demonstrates an original contribution to knowledge. For a doctoral applicant, this contribution must be significant.

the prior publications have been produced within the last ten years, with the most recent publication/s normally no more than five years old. This may be varied as appropriate for particular disciplines.

the research leading to the publications was conducted in a way consistent with University research integrity requirements.

(13) Applications for thesis by prior publication must be approved by the Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development and Integrity or their nominee in consultation with a senior academic in the discipline.

(14) Applicants for a thesis by prior publication who are successful are automatically granted block credit for prior learning of three years and will complete the course within the remaining 12 months equivalent full-time enrolment. (Deakin University 2019a)

This policy is supported by Deakin's guidelines on 'Thesis Formats':

Thesis based on a series of publications produced prior to candidature

It is possible to submit a thesis based on publications produced prior to candidature. The publications, which need to be specified at the time of admission, must form a coherent body of work that demonstrates a substantial original contribution to knowledge on the part of the applicant. The publications must normally have been produced within the last ten years. The research leading to the publications must have been conducted in a way consistent with university research integrity requirements. Any part of the publications submitted for another degree must be identified, and cannot be considered as part of the contribution to knowledge that is to be demonstrated in the thesis.

Students admitted on this basis may not be required to complete compulsory coursework or the Deakin Research Induction training but this is at the discretion of the Faculty. (Deakin University 2019c)

PhDPriorPubs' candidates *are* required to complete compulsory coursework and induction training. Applicants need not pin down their prior publications *upon admission*, but we do require a threshold number of suitable publications, before inviting an official entry application. For *PhDPriorPubs'* candidates, no ten- or five-year publication date limits apply.

Use of the word 'thesis' in the above documents, rather than 'PhD', leaves the door ajar for a Masters by Research degree of this type. We did not advance this idea. Nor did we countenance a thesis by publications (that is: *in-candidature* not prior) in the Creative Arts. The thinking was that the former, at that stage, would be too complex to conceptualize and manage, alongside the introduction of the PhD form of the degree, and for too little reward given the diminishing popularity of the Masters by Research degree; meanwhile, there is currently no demand for the latter. (The Masters by Research degree is rare, but not non-existent, in SCCA; most often, candidates use it as a qualification pathway into a PhD.)

v) *Deakin SCCA Creative Arts and Creative Writing staff*

The final context was SCCA's Creative Arts and Creative Writing areas. Several colleagues, led by the author of this article as the sole SCCA Higher Degree Research Coordinator in 2016, took responsibility for the planning and thinking behind the introduction of the *PhDPriorPubs*. Associate Professor Maria Takolander was also a leader in this process.

Guidelines for the *PhDPriorPubs* and candidate enrolments, graduations, examination outcomes and scholarship support

The *PhDPriorPubs* differs significantly from other PhD models and we were keen to explain our model clearly and to advertise widely its availability at Deakin. To this end, I wrote a two-page guideline document for public distribution, the latest version of which (as updated on 16 December 2018) is reproduced as Appendix 1 to this article.

The official examiner's advice document, as sent to examiners by Deakin Research, draws very heavily on these guidelines (Deakin University 2017). Supervisors approaching examiners for a *PhDPriorPubs* thesis generally include both these documents with their invitation. The official examiner's advice document adds the key term 'selective-entry'. Not all applications for entry into the *PhDPriorPubs* are successful; the 'nationally or internationally recognised standard of excellence' sets the bar high (Appendix 1). Unsuccessful applicants may be invited to enroll in the conventional (three year) degree.

Our guidelines blend the thinking and language of the university with that of the Creative Arts industry professionals who might be attracted to the degree, recognizing that many academics in the Creative Arts, at Deakin and other universities, are always already dancing across that same divide between academia and their professional artform circumstances; and that many full-time artists must supplement their income with casual teaching at universities. Particularly, the thinking and language of the guidelines seeks to balance the species of rigor familiar within the academy (scholarly rigor) with the type of rigor (craft-based rigor, if one likes) that is the essence of the professional artist.

As of 30 November 2019, there were 151 HDR candidates enrolled in Deakin's SCCA. Nine of these (about six per cent) were enrolled in the *PhDPriorPubs* and to the same date there had been six graduations in the degree, which makes fifteen enrolments in total for the *PhDPriorPubs* (seven men and eight women). The average enrolment period, roughly as anticipated, has been approximately fifteen months. All graduates passed on the first examination – passed easily in fact. The first graduate of the *PhDPriorPubs* won the Alfred Deakin Medal in 2018. Three of the candidates so far (twenty per cent) are current Deakin SCCA staff members. Creative Writing is the best represented artform amongst candidates in the *PhDPriorPubs*. Other artforms represented include: Visual Art, Public Art, Animation and Filmmaking.

In 2017, Deakin Research and the Faculty of Arts and Education committed to provide a string of one-year scholarships to three sequentially commencing *PhDPriorPubs* candidates. Scholarship distribution was competitive based on academic and artistic merit. A fourth scholarship was accepted by a commencing candidate in late 2019.

Filling a market gap, title considerations for the *PhDPriorPubs*, and tensions between Creative Arts industry candidates and Deakin policy and guidelines

The initial motivation for the *PhDPriorPubs*' introduction was our developing recognition of a large number of potential candidates for a PhD in the Creative Arts who had already produced substantial, nationally or internationally regarded bodies of work. Asking members of this cohort – as leaders within their relevant industry context – to produce yet another major creative work *in-candidature* for their PhD felt wrong somehow. In addition, the absence of any language or set of practices at Deakin sufficient to wrangle existing policy and guidelines into a form enabling to Creative Arts prior-publication candidates rankled. The option was 'on the books' but not in a welcoming way.

In section one iv) of this article – 'Deakin policy and guidelines' – I quoted from the section titled 'Thesis Based on a Series of Publications Produced Prior to Candidature' as contained under the 'Thesis by Publication' heading, in Deakin's guidelines on 'Thesis Formats' (Deakin University 2019c). That section refers the reader to the immediately preceding section of these guidelines titled 'Thesis Based on a Series of Publishable Works Produced During Candidature', advising the reader to 'please note the advice in points 1-12 of the [immediately preceding] section... Most of this advice is relevant to a thesis based on prior publications' (Deakin University 2019c). However, the language couching these twelve points is not that of the Creative Arts: 'publications' is replaced throughout by the even more disciplinary restrictive term 'papers', the focus of the twelve points is overshadowed by terms like 'refereed scholarly media' and 'journals', and the only disciplinary cultures name checked are 'the sciences' and 'the social sciences'.

The resultant tension between an emerging demographic of high achieving potential PhD candidates in the Creative Arts and the immediate Deakin context of existing policy and guidelines enlivened our process of developing the *PhDPriorPubs*. Commenting on the raw data for their study of the creative doctorate from the perspectives of students and supervisors, Gina Wisker and Gillian Robinson observe that:

relationships between the researcher's sense of identity as a creative person as well as a creative researcher emerged, so that, for some, the PhD enabled this creative expression, and for others it felt like either a straitjacket or an alien process. (Wisker & Robinson 2014: 55)

The default thesis model for the entire Deakin discourse around theses by prior publications was the traditional dissertation one. Available policy and guidelines merely tolerated variations on this blueprint, rather than promoting examples of prior publication variations of other, less conventional thesis models. By contrast, we aligned ourselves with the radical tradition of Australian activism around doctoral degrees, identified by Stuart Laing and Tara Brabazon in their observation that:

[W]hile Australia was much later in introducing a Doctor of Philosophy [than other countries], the nation's universities were much earlier initiating innovative and diversified higher degrees. (Laing & Brabazon 2007: 259; see also Neumann 2003: 130-131)

A similar degree at Manchester Metropolitan University fed in some ideas (see Manchester Metropolitan University 2013, which we consulted during 2016; the updated version is Manchester Metropolitan University 2019).

Our choice of the degree's title was informed by the dual Creative Arts and Deakin context of the *PhDPriorPubs*. PhD by Prior Publications in the Creative Arts (Portfolio Creative Product plus Exegesis) is admittedly a bit of a mouthful, and the brackets are inelegant. However, we saw this title as an effective and enabling compromise between the Creative Arts provenance of the proposed degree and the blinkered disciplinarity and alienating language of Deakin policy and guidelines. Deakin PhD candidates in the Creative Arts almost exclusively adopt the Creative Work plus Exegesis model. To this extent, we could have called the *PhDPriorPubs* something like PhD by Prior Creative Work or PhD by Prior Creative Work plus Exegesis; thereby matching the name of the degree to that of the relevant model. We rejected these options, preferring to, firstly, make more visible – at Deakin – the connection to the Thesis by Publication model (with its *existing* policy and guidelines), and secondly, lodge the proposed degree in the lineage of what are commonly known – internationally – as Theses or PhDs by Publication. To this extent, the word 'publications' was crucial, even though it needed to operate as a catch-all for Creative Arts outputs we might not usually call publications. Furthermore, the pedantic pluralization of 'publications' signaled emphatically that *multiple* prior publications would be required to meet the requirements of the degree, while also stressing the importance of the portfolio.

All PhDs by publication require linking sections (in Deakin terminology, “glue” sections”) connecting the publications (Deakin University 2019c). This is especially the case with prior publication models, given the prior work was likely not produced in anticipation of a thesis. Structural issues of thesis format and of time arise here. How were the parts of the *PhDPriorPubs* to be ‘glued’ together? And, to inflect this question another way, how were the components of the final thesis product to map onto the chronological division between prior work and in-candidature work? Creative Arts PhDs usually have two main parts (creative product and exegesis) and there are two main parts – parts of time – to a prior publication PhD (pre-candidature and in-candidature). What might be the relationship

between the thesis structure of a generic Creative Arts PhD and the pre-candidature/in-candidature, or work-division structure, of one by prior publication?

Answering this question requires context. A Deakin PhD exegesis must sit within 25,000 to 50,000 words and 100,000 words is the maximum allowable PhD length. The creative work is permitted to take up the remainder of the thesis word count (or word count equivalent by artform) after the exegesis length is subtracted from 100,000 words. That said, in the Faculty of Arts and Education, the PhD-thesis target length is 85,000 words. Ideally, a Creative Writing PhD candidate would produce, say, a novel of 60,000 words and an exegesis of 25,000 words. Our assumption that the prior work would be the creative work and that the entire exegesis would be produced in-candidature was grounded in Deakin policy on the type of PhD we were proposing, advice received from a relevant officer in Deakin Research, and our evolving sense of how the *PhDPriorPubs* was going to inherit (and, as it turned out, modify) the prevalent structure of the Creative Work plus Exegesis model.

As already noted, Deakin policy states that:

(14) Applicants for a thesis by prior publication who are successful are automatically granted block credit for prior learning of three years and will complete the course within the remaining 12 months equivalent full-time enrolment. (Deakin University 2019a)

Based on Deakin Research's advice, we had originally envisaged the in-candidature (or enrolment) period as one year *or more*. The policy statement that one year is the *maximum* enrolment period for candidates enrolled for a thesis by prior publication nuances the scenario. Reassuringly, the official examiner's advice document reads: 'The usual and minimum enrolment period is one-year equivalent full time' (Deakin University 2017).

Working to a one-year *minimum* enrolment period model, we decided that our candidates would produce their entire exegesis (25,000 to 50,000 words) in-candidature, along with a portfolio of prior creative work. (I advise candidates to devote 90% of their time to the exegesis and 10% to the portfolio.) To expect this to happen in under one year feels unreasonable, especially for candidates not in Creative Writing. Patently, the wellbeing of candidates and supervisors is paramount. A one-year maximum enrolment limit would, to avoid doing substantial violence to the *PhDPriorPubs* model itself, necessitate a re-thinking of the in-candidature exegesis word length. Interestingly, Stephen W Draper notes the extreme range of expectations around the length of 'the [exegetical] accompanying document' for UK PhDs by publication – from 2,000 to 30,000 words (Draper 2003). There is nothing necessarily magical about the Deakin 25,000 to 50,000-word exegesis length.

The challenge is to work effectively within the tension between the institution and the Creative Arts industry context of *PhDPriorPubs* applicants. This might involve an ongoing dance with policy, official advice, guidelines, practices and key stakeholder experiences.

The *PhDPriorPubs* and Practice-Led Research

Creative Arts research, and thus the *PhDPriorPubs*, is strongly – though never prescriptively – associated with the methodology of Practice-Led Research (PLR). This methodology has various definitions, and the existence of satellite forms such as Research-Led Practice (RLP) and Practice As Research (PAR) adds to the sense of what Brad Haseman calls PLR’s ‘methodological churn’ (Haseman 2007: 4). PLR is explicitly written into the guidelines for the *PhDPriorPubs* and implicitly into the official examiner’s advice document. Naturally, as the author of the guidelines, the alignment of the degree with (a specific version of) PLR carries with it my own interpretation of PLR [3]. I concur with Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt’s estimation of PLR as an instrument of social justice:

An innovative dimension of this subjective approach to research lies in its capacity to bring into view, particularities that reflect new social and other realities either marginalized or not yet recognized in established social practices and discourses. (Barrett & Bolt 2007: 4)

An imperative of the *PhDPriorPubs*’ development was ensuring PLR’s integrity as a research methodology was maintained – even potentially enhanced – despite the requirement that the multi-part practice has been produced prior to enrolment. Several questions emerged:

- i) How could *prior* practice *lead* the answer to the research question?
- ii) How could a research question answered by *prior* practice be timely *today*?
- iii) How could *prior, multi-part* creative practice cohere with *one* research question?

The mandated critically and reflectively *curated* or *re-composed* portfolio creative product of at least three prior works answers these questions. It steers the creative work, and the thesis (exegesis and creative work) in total, towards alignment with the PLR principle that the practice *leads* the research, specifically in prompting an answer to the research question. Forming a portfolio, in-candidature, allows, simultaneously: for the prior work to be molded into a coherent or framed sub-section of all the candidate’s prior work (thus suiting it for a focused response to the research question); and, for the prior work to be brought up to date (thus suiting it to be the ‘advance material’ of an up-to-date knowledge contribution). I suggested just now that the integrity of PLR might even be *enhanced* through the stratagem of re-working prior (even potentially decades old) creative work. Going over old work – years later – might generate a dialectical synthesis, of initial energy and mature reflection, which allows for a more delicate development of the work’s research potential. Freed from the necessity to create something *brand new*, artists in the *PhDPriorPubs* degree might take the opportunity to *create their work anew*, employing a more dedicated research lens.

The principles of PLR motivated our thinking around the requirement for, and the structure and in-candidature production of, the portfolio creative product, in terms of how the prior

work might be shaped as the avant-garde ('advance guard' or vanguard) of an up-to-date and coherent contribution to knowledge made available for elaboration in the exegesis.

The current state of the *PhDPriorPubs* and future prospects and threats

As of December 2019 (the time of writing) the *PhDPriorPubs* presents well, as judged by completion times, lack of withdrawals, enrolment numbers, and examination outcomes. The initial internal review of the *PhDPriorPubs* held in June 2019 has, I believe, strengthened the degree, not least by more widely disseminating understandings about its operations, market appeal, aims, scholarly integrity, and links to Practice-Led Research. The second, more formal, external review of the degree is scheduled for 2020. Given its well-evidenced success, why am I a little worried that the outcome of this review might lead to it being disbanded? It's down to what I glean from the sub-strata to more official and definitive discourses: that is, the harvest of gossip and *sotto voce* asides. For some, the combination of a prior-publication PhD model and the Creative Arts seems explosive. More optimistically though, the second review might do what the first did: ultimately strengthen the degree.

One more matter needs to be raised in fair consideration of the current state of the degree. Regrettably, the *PhDPriorPubs* has been described as the one-year or 'Deakin quickie' degree. Donna Lee Brien notes that:

the conceptualisation of the whole of the PhD by Publication (as well as each piece of published work itself) may be as much, or more of a challenge, than that of one single work, but may not be understood as such in terms of achievement. (Brien 2008)

I would add, how much more so the case for a PhD by prior publication! The *PhDPriorPubs* requires prior work that may have taken decades – at least the equivalent, in all fairness, of two years – and this, when added to the one year spent in-candidature, amounts to a three year degree by any measure. The title of my piece for *NiTRO: Non-Traditional Research Outcomes* – 'A PhD in a Third of the Time: Deakin University's PhD by Prior Publications in the Creative Arts' – was, in retrospect, unfortunate (West 2018a). If we are going to take seriously the notion of industry engagement at the PhD level, we need to take seriously the (research and time) value of industry practice – be it the Creative Arts industry or any other type of industry. It is erroneous to judge a degree based on 'time served' in candidature. As Keith Wilson notes:

The published work route to a PhD has been criticised for its lack of a compulsory requirement for both a component of formal education and training and the supervision of the candidate by an approved academic researcher during the research program. *Such criticism places greater emphasis on the route to the degree than on the academic quality of the successful candidate and the associated research outcomes.* (Wilson 2002: 71-72, emphasis added)

The final arbiter of PhD quality should be the outcome of a rigorous examination process. Furthermore, the *PhDPriorPubs* absolutely insists on ‘a component of formal education and training and the supervision of the candidate by an approved academic researcher’ (Wilson 2002: 71-72).

Conclusion: Industry engagement, social justice and the ‘PhD of the Future’

The *PhDPriorPubs* advances the acknowledged good of greater industry engagement through its candidate demographic of industry leaders. Section one ii) of this article – ‘Industry Readiness’ – discusses how the *PhDPriorPubs* inherits the industry-engagement priorities of the *Review of Australia’s Research Training System*.

This review also advocates for changes to research training to ensure greater representation of those from ‘low socio-economic backgrounds’ (McGagh et al 2016: 104). The *PhDPriorPubs*-PLR alliance activates this ambition. PLR is not only (as Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt [2007] argue) a methodology that brings the margins to the centre, it is also frequently the methodology of those *on* the margins, where Creative Arts workers cluster. David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya note that:

a substantial majority of artists face an insecure working environment for their artistic work, forgoing the sorts of benefits that employees customarily enjoy such as sick leave, maternity leave, employer’s superannuation contributions, holiday pay, and so on. (Throsby & Petetskaya 2017: 89)

‘The substantially lower incomes earned by women for their creative work’ (Throsby & Petetskaya 2017: 131) puts them on the margins of the margins. Slightly more women than men have enrolled in the *PhDPriorPubs* and three of the four scholarships have gone to women.

Failure to acknowledge the *PhDPriorPubs*-PLR connection can dilute the conclusion that Deakin’s Creative Arts version of the degree has a particular social justice value today. In the following passage, Tara Brabazon is speaking of PhDs by prior publication in general:

The PhD by prior publication had a particular origin, impetus and cause. As an array of polytechnics and non-university institutions moved into university status, research active scholars who had never enrolled in a conventional PhD needed a way to recognize and credential their expertise. The PhD by Prior Publication provided that pathway. *It was particularly useful for women – or men – with careers interrupted by children*. Therefore, this mode of doctorate was a “fixer” for a moment in the history of universities in the 1990s... It is currently a rare mode of candidature. (Brabazon 2016: 23, emphasis added)

Shannon Mason and Margaret Merga similarly note that such degrees were ‘much more prevalent in the past, when it was common to enter an academic career without already having completed a doctorate’ (Mason & Merga 2018: 141). However, aren’t female (and male) careers still being interrupted by children – especially the careers of those on the margins of society, such as Creative Arts practitioners? And isn’t it still quite common for academics in the Creative Arts disciplines to enter an academic career without a PhD? The social justice value of degrees like the *PhDPriorPubs* can still be argued for today, and I would maintain that this extends – *pace* Brabazon, Mason and Merga – to PhDs by prior publication in general. The *PhDPriorPubs* serves those on the margins, who may not have been able to forge the sorts of pathways towards a PhD that the more privileged can access. Further, the social justice methodology of PLR tends to be the one exercised by the degree’s autochthonous demographic. Here, advanced Creative Arts industry engagement binds twice over with social justice advancement: it is a matter of *who* graduates from the degree *and of their original contribution to knowledge*. Self-advancement advances other selves. *PhDPriorPubs* graduates, furthermore, may well become PhD supervisors in coming years.

While serving the marginalized demographic of Creative Arts practitioners, the *PhDPriorPubs* may, equally, also be a pointer towards the ‘PhD of the Future’, on the basis that, as Sidonie Smith argues, future doctoral degrees should ‘strive to enable students to stay true to their passions and affiliative commitments, enable them to follow secret desires, be playful and experimental, be irreverent’ (Smith 2016: 155). Marginalized candidates in the *PhDPriorPubs*, and the theses they produce, just might be the tonic around which doctoral education in general, a ‘centralized’ educational concern, may be reinvented – passionately, affiliatively, playfully, experimentally, irreverently, and creatively.

Notes

[1] The author thanks Dr Athena Bellas for her valuable contribution as a Research Assistant on this project in 2018. He also wishes to thank the two anonymous reviewers of this article for their generous and valuable feedback.

[2] 2019-467, ‘A Study of PhDs by Prior Publications in the Creative Arts,’ Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (DUHREC).

[3] Details of my own interpretation of PLR are available for consultation (West 2019).

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Appendix 1

Guidelines for Degree of PhD By Prior Publications in the Creative Arts

(Portfolio Creative Product plus Exegesis)

The PhD by Prior Publications in the Creative Arts is designed for applicants with a strong record of multiple professionally published or exhibited creative arts outputs, a demonstrated capacity for scholarly writing at AQF Level 10, and high level project management skills [Australian Qualifications Framework Council 2013]. Successful applicants will be established practitioners whose substantial record of major creative arts outputs is at a nationally or internationally recognised standard of excellence.

As per current Deakin University regulations, the minimum enrolment requirement will be one-year equivalent full-time and the expected thesis word count will be 80,000 to 100,000 words or equivalent.

It is expected that most candidates will complete the degree in one-year equivalent full-time.

Applications for entry to this degree will be assessed by a panel of academic staff, chaired by the SCCA HDR coordinator, with relevant expertise in the Creative Arts. This panel will assess the viability of the proposed project for anticipated completion within one-year equivalent full-time candidature.

It is likely that most successful applicants will be mid- or late-career artists looking to further develop and reflect upon their practice, within a scholarly and research context, through the opportunities afforded by the degree of PhD.

Candidates must produce, in candidature, an *exegesis* (minimum 25,000 words; maximum 50,000 words) accompanied by a *portfolio creative product* that critically and reflectively curates and/or recomposes a selection of at least three prior, major, creative arts outputs produced by the candidate.

The exegesis must address a research question or gap in knowledge in scholarly fashion, meanwhile incorporating an engagement with the accompanying portfolio creative product that sets the outputs it samples within the context of the candidate's career as a practitioner, professional artist and thinker.

The form of curation or re-composition of the several prior creative arts outputs into a portfolio will be determined by factors including the nature of the relevant artform/s, the circumstances attendant on the prior outputs, and the thesis research topic. In all cases, the final portfolio creative product is expected to be an essential element of the original contribution to knowledge characteristic of a PhD thesis. In its form and development, the portfolio creative product has a precedent in the way established writers often publish a book of selected works or how visual artists might hold a retrospective.

The requirement to present a portfolio creative product is designed to provide the examiner with a cross-career selection of the candidate's work as the focus material for the concerns and argument of the exegesis. Furthermore, the in-candidature curation or re-composition of the prior creative arts outputs will give the candidate the opportunity, in an artistic and creative mode, to select, shape and mobilize the various elements of the portfolio product so

as to maximize its capacity to productively address the research problem or question. This is consistent with the tenets of Practice-Led Research in conventional PhDs within the Creative Arts.

Some candidates may take the opportunity the degree offers to produce, through the combination of their previous works, a new, singular work. However, the intention behind the portfolio creative product is certainly not to promote the retrospective forging of artificial connections across works. Instead, besides stimulating the candidate to consider their career outputs using a wide lens, the portfolio will enable a methodological activation of their creative work as fresh material orientated towards a sustained and original contribution to knowledge.

In cases where it is impractical to curate the prior works in their original artform, as might sometimes occur in the Visual or Performing Arts, equivalent documentation or materials will be accepted for examination. Such evidence must capture the artistic and creative rigor and complexity of the prior outputs.

There is no time limit on when the original works may have first been published.

Examiners for this degree will be expected to be familiar with the creative arts outputs of the candidate over their career to date, although this doesn't lessen the onus on the candidate to describe, analyze and critique their own work, in the exegesis, as part of their engagement with a research problem or question.

The candidate will provide in an appendix to the exegesis a list of the prior works discussed in the exegesis.

All candidates will be required to take AAE900 Research Framing and Development to meet the unit requirements for online engagement, and to participate in a progress meeting after four (4) months equivalent full-time enrolment. This progress meeting will be chaired by the Faculty HDR Coordinator (or nominee) and will include the panel involved in the original selection of the candidate, the School HDR Coordinator (or nominee), and the candidate's supervisors. At this meeting, candidates will present an account of the work completed to date and a planning schedule for completion. Successful acquittal of this progress meeting results in confirmation of candidature. At seven (7) months equivalent full-time enrolment there will be a second progress meeting (with the same chair and membership as the first meeting) to establish the readiness of the thesis for examination. (This assumes a one-year enrolment.) Candidates will not be eligible to apply for intermission of candidature until after a successful acquittal of the first progress meeting at four months.

It is intended that the PhD by Prior Publications in the Creative Arts will become a distinctive and prestigious offering amongst the Higher Degree Research options provided by Deakin University, tapping into the growing demand for such a degree, nationally and internationally, amongst established Creative Arts practitioners with an interest in, and capacity for, scholarly writing and research.

Further Reading:

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Important Note:

These guidelines are valid for candidates enrolled before 31 December 2018 and may be subject to change in 2019.

Dr Patrick West
HDR Coordinator, SCCA
Sunday, 16 December 2018