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## **'Exit Jesus': Relating the Exegesis and Creative/Production Components of a Research Thesis**

### **Abstract**

In the early 90s a visiting scholar at Curtin University applied through the School of Communication and Cultural Studies to enroll as a doctoral student whose project would be a novel plus exegesis. That application was denied, as University regulations for research degrees couldn't accommodate alternate forms of theses. This "failure," however, motivated a double success. First, the University established two Humanities research degrees that accommodated alternate forms of research theses - a Master of Creative Arts (1997) and a Doctor of Creative Arts (1998). Second, the University later revised its regulations in ways that enabled a wide range of exegesis-plus-production forms of theses across the University.

Key to the success of such programs is an understanding of the relationship of the exegesis and creative/production components of a thesis. It is a relationship far from obvious - witness the Master of Creative Arts student who, learning that she had to do an *exit jesus*, feared she would be crucified. Drawing on the history of establishing alternate forms of research theses at Curtin University, and on lessons provided by successful MCA and DCA theses (creative writing, visual arts, journalism, etc.), this paper explores the relationship of the exegesis and creative/production components of a research thesis. It argues that the two best can be seen as complementary articulations (outcomes) of a single research question (and related set of research objectives). It also canvasses the importance and difficulties of students understanding this relationship, as well as some best-practice models for assisting them.

### **Introduction**

The relationship between the modes of communication needs to be seen as an affinity [. . .]. Art and writing are two different ways of reaching for truth.

Nikos Paperstergiadis, "Everything that Surrounds," 81.

It is important for research educators in Australia (and beyond) to share ideas about the shape and purpose of the written component of a research thesis based in the creative or media arts - what in Australia in the past decade has been come to be called "the exegesis." The novelty of that coinage, and our need to have a more firmly shared understanding of what it means, is suggested by the research student in the School of Art at Curtin University who asked, "but what do you mean - "Exit Jesus?" Our paper sketches the answer we give to our students. It gives a brief account of the establishment of creative - and production - based research education at Curtin University of Technology; surveys what appear to be the dominant models for the exegesis at Australian universities; and describes the model that we have developed across more than a decade of supervising research students, indicating some of its strengths by giving examples of research-student successes. In our conclusion, we signal that there remain critical issues requiring further conversation - still other models to think through, test and evaluate; still other questions regarding infrastructure for research-education in the creative and media arts (guidelines for translating typical university protocols, guidelines for examiners, and the like). We imagine an ongoing sharing of perspectives and ideas through discussions at research education symposia and in area journals.

### **A Local History - Establishing the MCA/DCA at Curtin University of Technology**

Curtin University established a Master of Creative Arts (MCA) in 1996 and a Doctor of Creative Arts (DCA) in 1998. Like many significant innovations, this one began with a failure. In late 1990 (October) an international student enrolled in the doctoral program through the School of Communication and Cultural Studies in the Division of Humanities with the intention of writing a thesis in the form of a novel. University structures and processes did not easily accommodate his proposal: he was required to modify his intention and plan a thesis in the form of a creative *and* a theoretical piece; but even then the University hesitated at the point of accepting his candidacy proposal (November 1991), and the student withdrew his application in frustration.

Still, a start had been made. Several Humanities staff were concerned at the lack of "natural" pathways to postgraduate research from some of its strongest undergraduate majors - in art, in creative writing, in journalism, in theatre arts, in museology, in film and television, in design, and the like. Thus, from 1992 onwards, staff in the School of Communication and Cultural Studies and the School of Art met, developed proposals, and worked through the defiles of university committee system to establish a new type of Higher Degree by Research (HDR) program for those areas - a Master of Creative Arts.<sup>(1)</sup> The new program was given University approval late in 1995 (December) and was effectively underway in the School of Art and the School of Communication and Cultural Studies from 1996 onwards. Looking back, it seems odd that it took five years to establish the MCA at Curtin - a measure, perhaps, not so much of the working party's insight and commitment as of the proposal's novelty within the culture of Australian universities at the time. Certainly, when we looked for models for what we proposed, we found few developed ones in universities in Australia. <sup>(2)</sup>

Yet one success led to others. By the beginning of 1999 Curtin University approved the extension of the MCA program to two other Schools in Humanities at Curtin - Design and the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage. Still more, it approved the introduction by each of the four relevant Schools of a creative - and/or production-based doctoral research program - the Doctor of Creative Arts (DCA). Though not as conflicted as the establishment of a creative/production-based research degree at Master's level, the progress to the DCA also met difficulties. In mid-year 1998 the University's Courses Committee approved the DCA, but then revoked its approval when it was discovered that the proposed form of thesis did not conform to then

current University regulations for doctoral degrees. In 1998, however, there was a new climate of support at Curtin for research education related to creative production, and by the close of year Curtin University regulations for both doctoral and Master (research) degrees were revised and approved by Curtin Council, enabling not only the extensions to the MCA program but also the introduction in 1999 of the DCA program in four Schools in the Division of Humanities.(3)

The history we sketch here is a local history - the story of one struggle to introduce research degrees in the fields of creative and media arts in one Australian university in the last decade of the twentieth century. But we think the story has general import. Curtin is a "new" university in Australia - established as an Institute of Technology in the late 1960s and re-established as a University of Technology in 1987. As such, it illustrates one important path of migration into the university sector of programs formerly more often located in Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs), Arts Colleges and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions. As a "new university," Curtin was both open to innovation yet cautious as it emplaced research-education structures and processes from the late 1980 onwards. (4) In any case, the roadblocks we in Humanities at Curtin University encountered as we developed research education programs for creative and media arts - the delays and frustrations that reasoned proposals met - had the good outcome of encouraging us to think carefully about what we meant when we spoke of a research thesis comprised of a creative or production piece accompanied by a written exegesis.

## **The Exegesis - Three Models**

### **Introduction**

When in 1998 Curtin University revised its Regulations for Higher Degree by Research to accommodate the MCA and DCA, it provided for "a creative or literary work or series of works accompanied by an exegesis." And it described the "exegesis" for a MCA and DCA in quantitative terms - the exegesis of a MCA "shall not exceed 20,000 words excluding appendices, tables and illustrative matter and should normally be within the range 7,500-15,000 words excluding appendices, tables and illustrative matter;" the exegesis of a DCA "forming part of a thesis and accompanying a creative or literary work or series of works shall not exceed 40,000 words excluding appendices, tables and illustrative matter." Then and now, a traditional Master's thesis is prescribed as not more than 60,000 words, and a doctoral thesis as not more than 100,000 words (with all the usual exclusions pertaining) - thus the exegesis was defined as something not more than half of a traditional thesis.

These were supportive Regulations - they recognised creative and production-based research education, and they set limits on the extent of the written component of a thesis in those areas. But these Regulations were, and are, Solomonic: they divide the "baby" in half, but do not indicate how the baby might live as a whole. Thus, imagining how a creative - or production-based thesis might be a "living whole" has been the focus of continued work within Curtin Humanities. We have discussed the issue in Divisional Graduate Studies Committee meetings when deciding on candidacy proposals, in Divisional Research Skills Workshops when advising students, and in subcommittees when developing supporting documents for examiners and supervisors. These conversations, based on our collective experience as supervisors and examiners, and have led to our adopting what we call here the "Research Question Model" for creative and production-based research theses. In coming to adopt that model we have carefully explored alternate models, in particular those we nominate in this paper as the "Commentary Model" and the "Context Model."

Like all models, these three are abstractions. They attempt to identify nodes of critical difference among a range of complex and often contradictory practices across

Australian universities today. In articulating these models we are indebted to the examples provided by Allan Mann and Julie Fletcher in their paper for the 2003 Hawaii International Conference on the Arts and Humanities, "Illuminating the Exegesis," especially to their posing of a number of key issues or questions that inform debates about the nature of the exegesis. Our sense is that the three models we identify emerge on the basis of how clearly a particular practice at a particular university addresses three critical questions, either implicitly or (better) explicitly:

Can practice-based work in the creative and media arts be research?

Is all practice-based work in the creative and media arts research in the sense meant when we speak of research in a university context?

If all or some creative/production practice can be research, how best can we deliver creative and media-arts research education?

Our position is that creative work and production pieces most often entail research, but that not all such work instantiates research in the sense meant when we speak of research in a university context. This position is related to a concern that we, as research educators, do not confuse the politics of arguing that governmental funding formulas should recognise creative work and production pieces as "publications" with our responsibilities for developing higher degree research programs in the fields of creative and production arts.

### **The Context Model**

A common approach in contemporary Australian universities to understanding the nature and shape of the exegesis defines it as a discussion of the context for the creative work. In this format the student submits a written document that rehearses the historical, social and/or disciplinary context(s) within which the student developed the creative or production component of her or his thesis. Examples of this model in university documents provided by Mann and Fletcher are illuminating. At one university the creative- or production-based thesis is described as "'an *amalgam* of studio-based research and the theorising of that research'" and the exegesis as a written document that presents "'relevant contemporary critical debates and practices which *inform and position*' the studio work"; at another, the thesis is comprised of an exhibition and a "'research paper' [that] '*supports and complements*' the exhibition"; and - a last example - still another university indicates that the written thesis accompanying the exhibition "'will be on art theory, history or practice'" (Mann and Fletcher, para. 25-26; emphases added).

What is interesting in these descriptions of an exegesis is the elasticity of the language that describes the relationship between the two parts of a creative or production-based research thesis - "amalgamate, inform, position, support, complement." Such language has advantages. It enables practices that respond to the needs of both students and supervisors in the creative and media arts *and* to the requirements of universities for research degrees, conditioned as they are not only by academic understandings of the nature of research but also by governmental regulations for funding to universities. That is, such language accepts that a creative work or a production piece can be research, *and* it accommodates normative university definitions of research as work that deals with theoretical, historical and disciplinary matters in a fashion that contributes to knowledge in the discipline, and possibly adds to social capital. Even better, it encourages research students to think about connections between practice and institutional, social or disciplinary contexts. Indeed, the Context Model is effective precisely because of the elasticity of its language - and its position as probably the dominant model across Australian universities may be owing precisely to its ambiguity.

Still, the disadvantages of this model are considerable. For words like "amalgam" and phrases like "supports and complements" fudge the second critical question - "Is all practice-based work in the creative and media arts 'research' in the sense meant when we speak of research in a university context?" Put differently, the Context Model does not address clearly or usefully for the research student the question of the nature of the relationship between the exegesis and the creative work or production piece. And so this model cannot adequately address the third question - "How best can we deliver creative and media-arts research education?" For it leaves unresolved the questions of why there are two parts to a creative- or production-based thesis; it leaves research students to imagine that the two parts are the product of two different institutional demands rather than two parts that form a whole. A research student trying to understand the nature, function and value of an exegesis in terms of the descriptions provided by the Context Model well might ask, "What does it mean, Exit Jesus?" Or, as another, more canny and ironical creative-writing research student at Curtin once put it, "No worries, I'll write that Extra Jesus."

### The Commentary Model

A second node of understanding of the exegesis in Australian universities today might be called the Commentary Model. In this model the exegesis is conceived as an explication of, or comment on, the creative production. There are "weak" and "strong" instantiations of this model. On the one hand, in the "weak" version of this model, the exegesis is seen (as one university protocol puts it in regard to an Honours Master of Arts) as a "'brief explanatory annotation'" of the creative work or production piece (qtd. in Mann & Fletcher, para. 24). On the other hand, in the "strong" version of the Commentary Model, the exegesis is conceived of as a "research report" that describes the research process - that "'elaborates, elucidates and contextualises the [...] creative work"; that *'present[s] the research framework: the key questions, the theories, the disciplinary and wider contexts, of the project'*"; that *'tells the story of the research: its aims, its methods, its achievements'*" (Mann and Fletcher, para. 28, 30, 32; emphasis in quoted university documents is original).

At first glance, there would seem to be little in common between these two versions of the Commentary Model, between a "brief explanatory annotation" and an extended "research report." The "weak" version of the Commentary Model presents the exegesis as little more than an occasional gloss, whose connection to the thesis has no necessary relation other than that imagined by the artist or producer, and does not necessarily position it as a research thesis. The "strong" version, however, requires the artist or producer to demonstrate the "research nature" of the creative work or the production piece by providing a "report" that places the work in its disciplinary, intellectual and social contexts, and which conforms to the conventions of the traditional thesis, themselves derived from the genre of reportage established in the sciences across the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Yet, both instances of the Commentary Model - the "annotation" and the "research report" versions - share certain qualities. Both present the exegesis as secondary to the creative work or production piece, as "the means by which the investigation [entailed in the creative or production process] is explained or described" (Mann and Fletcher, para. 30). In this respect, both adopt an approach that is closest to the meaning of the word "exegesis" - in common usage, a "critical explanation or interpretation;" etymologically, from Greek words meaning "to lead out," "to show the way." Thus, each implicitly answers, "Yes" to the key question, "Can practice-based work in the creative and media arts be research?" Moreover, each implicitly answers "Yes" to the related question, "Is all practice-based work in the creative and media arts research in the sense meant when we speak of research in a university context?" It is just that the "stronger" version of this model offers a more cogent means of demonstrating that view in the context of the protocols for research theses in contemporary Australian practice.

Clearly, the Commentary Model has the advantage of establishing the relationship between the exegesis and the creative or production component of a research thesis - the exegesis is a commentary on the creative work or production piece. Still, we have reservations about this approach in both its weak and strong versions. A passing reservation, related to the weak form of this approach, is that it leads to the woeful practice of encouraging research students to write exegeses whose burden is "my work is like/unlike that of all other artists in my field because ..." - research students should not be positioned to be their own critics, reviewers, or commentators. Our central reservation, however, is that the Commentary Model, in both its weak and strong versions, like the Context Model, preserves the theory-practice divide. Certainly, there is an advance - the binaries of theory and practice, or of library and studio work, are reversed, so that creative and production practices are the primary terms and academic writing is the supplement. Still, the binary remains in place. As a result, neither the creative work, nor the production piece, nor the exhibition stands independently as research. And so we again arrive at that moment when it becomes difficult to justify to research students the function of the exegesis as anything more than compliance with the requirements of contemporary academic structures.

### **The Research-Question Model**

It is precisely because we have arrived at this moment again and again - the "Exit Jesus," the "Extra Jesus" moment - that we have developed the Research Question Model. This model introduces a third term by way of understanding the relationship between the binary "exegesis" and "creative/production piece." This third term is "the research question."

In this model both the exegetical and the creative component of the research thesis hinges on a research question posed, refined and reposed by the student across the several stages of a research program. Both the written and the creative component of the thesis are conceptualised as *independent answers to the same research question* - independent because each component of the thesis is conducted through the "language" of a particular discourse, related because each "answers" a single research question. Thus the two components of the research thesis are neither ambiguously related, nor does one undermine the language - the autonomy - of the other. The creative or production piece does not form an illustration of the written document; the exegesis does not form a commentary on the creative work or production piece. In this way the two components of the creative or production-based thesis are substantively integrated, form a whole.

Like the approaches of the other two models discussed here, the Research-Question Model undertakes to honour two masters - the disciplinary forms and languages of fields of study relatively new to Australian universities, and the understanding of research embodied in the genre of the traditional written thesis. Its answer to the question "Can creative or production pieces be research?" is a resounding "Yes." Its answer to the question "Is such creative production always research?" is "It depends." This model acknowledges that research is always entailed in creative production, just as it is in good teaching. But it argues that not all creative or production practice instantiates research of the kind entailed in an HDR program. To be research, a creative work or production piece must meet an "entry" condition - it must be practice conceived and reflected upon in the interests of answering a carefully and clearly defined research question framed on the basis of a sound working knowledge of a particular field, and in the interests of contributing new understandings to it.

There are, we think, critical advantages to this model. First, at a theoretical level, this model resists the theory/practice, artist/scholar, studio/library divide. It asserts that, in defined circumstances, creative production *is* research - and it defines those conditions: there must be a research question related to debates in the field, one that the artist/practitioner arrives at on the basis of an understanding of both the practice and the writing related to those debates. Moreover, also at the theoretical level, this

model respects the authority, autonomy, languages and conventions of the disciplines that produce creative works and production pieces. It asks that such works be "read" (by examiners) on those terms, and not as something which needs an explanatory gloss.

Most potently, however, the Research Question Model helps research students to understand why the "Extra Jesus." It explains to them what research is generically. It enables them to define their topic - their passion - as a research question that, in turn, enables them to investigate how that topic/question has been variously addressed by artists, producers and theorists. It asks them to shape their own work (creative and expository) in terms of understandings gained through such investigation. It encourages them to understand that expository research pieces can be a "creative." It enables them to talk with authority to different audiences. In short, the great potential of this model is that it "frees" research students. It frees them from the key ambiguities of the Context Model (how does the exegesis relate to the creative work or production piece) and the limitations of the Commentary Model (my exegesis is an explanation of my creative work or production piece). It frees them to research a single question in two languages.

### **Three Models of the Exegesis - Reflections**

After years of trialing different models of research education in the creative and media arts, we have come to believe that both the Context and the Commentary Models of the exegesis, as we define them here, entail an unwanted separation of the creative production and the written document. Such division between writing and studio practice (we use this term in its broadest sense to include the creative writer at her desk, or the radio journalist at a console) reinforces a range of unwanted misconceptions: artists are only good with their hands; they work by intuition rather than reason; they do not have the ability to think critically or write intelligently; and academic writing itself is not creative. Such misperceptions - even when unintentionally embodied in prevailing models - sustain unwanted attitudes in some of our best research students: a reticence about writing, a lack of confidence as wordsmiths, a misunderstanding of the nature of research and an hostility toward it ("OK, I'll do that Extra Jesus"), an undercutting of the desire to have prowess as an artist/maker legitimated within academe, and so on. In the approaches framed by the Context and Commentary Models, a student embarks on a creative production, but the written document looms as a secondary aspect, an onerous task that must be undertaken in order to fit the requirements of the degree. This division between practice and writing-based research obfuscates the dynamics of research itself - the quest for knowledge through creative problem solving. We have come to use the Research-Question Model as a way to enable and facilitate this latter dynamic approach to research.

At one level of education (the Honours research level), a research question may simply enable the student/practitioner to ask the question that enables her or him to better understand the field, and to produce a work that exemplifies practice in that field. At another level (the research Master of Arts), that question may enable the research student to identify a question of significance in the field and amplify the debates and practices related to that question in an effective fashion. And at still another level (the doctoral level) that question may be posed in a fashion that not only takes account of presiding debates and practices but also opens the way for contributing new understandings. Thus, at all levels of research education, the Research Question Model attempts to answer the question "What does research education in creative or production fields consist of?" And it attempts to do so in ways that explicitly integrate creative and production-based theses with traditional notions of research.

This third approach - the concept of the creative or production-based thesis as a bi-modal entity whose allied parts arise out of a single research question - mediates the "split" between theory and practice that tugs at research in the creative and media arts. In this approach creativity is seen to be a dimension of all aspects of the research journey from inception to completion. And research is seen as formed and informed by a nexus between doing, making, writing, and reflecting. Put differently, in the words of Nikos Paperstergiadis:

The totality of art's meaning is [. . .] located within a social context, but the [. . .] meaning in writing can never be the same as the meaning in art. [...] The relationship between the modes of communication needs to be seen as an *affinity* rather than [. . .] the text "illuminat[ing]" the image or vice versa. Art and writing are two different ways of reaching for truth. (81, emphasis added)

In this "reaching for truth," this motive that our research students bring to us, the initiating question is fundamental. It generates the objectives and methods of the research, and focuses what background information needs to be surveyed.

We do not deny that this format is perhaps the most difficult for students to negotiate. Thus we put in place various strategies to assist students to become highly competent independent researchers in their chosen field. These strategies start within the undergraduate years where our programs are underscored by the language of research and learning experiences that define research as investigation. Within the Honours programs, the emphasis is on understanding the productive effects of a strong research question, and on encouraging students to explore research methodologies related to both studio and library. We encourage them to think, not of theory *and* practice, but rather of theory *in* practice and practice *in* theory.

At the postgraduate level we require the students to develop a greater level of sophistication in their research. The MCA/DCA is a period of sustained critical enquiry regarding a particular research question. We provide a range of activities to assist students in their research. Since 1999 we have run a Humanities Postgraduate/Supervisor Research Skills Workshop Series and a Humanities Staff/Postgraduate Seminar Series. The Workshop Series brings together students and supervisors from different disciplines into interdisciplinary working groups, with information tailored to the various stages of the research journey from candidacy to examination. At all points of the workshop series (from the Writing the Candidacy Proposal Module, through the Methods in the Humanities Module, to the Endgames Module), the needs of MCA/DCA research students are given special attention. Measured by numbers attending and by the response sheets for each session, research students working in the creative and media arts find the workshops supportive, and we find that they teach the generic skills needed for their becoming artists/researchers. Similarly, our Staff/Postgraduate Research Seminar Series includes events related to creative and production-based research, bringing together students, staff and visiting academics in interdisciplinary conversations to the benefit of those working in a range of modalities.

Finally, we provide support for our students' negotiating the Research Question Model through our annual Curtin Humanities Graduate Research Conference. Inaugurated in 1997, the Conference brings together Curtin, state and interstate research students from a diverse range of disciplines and provides them with the opportunity to presenting their research in a professional yet supportive setting. The Conference includes poster/exhibition sessions that enable MCA/DCA research students (and their Honours student counterparts) the opportunity of presenting research in alternative formats more suited to their disciplinary fields. The graphics for various Conference materials (posters, programs, and the like) "publish" the work of creative and media-arts research students. That work appears as part of the cover



of the commercially published collection of refereed papers following each Conference, which itself includes "photo-essays" of exhibition and poster presentations. In all these ways, we seek to articulate the importance of creative and media-arts based research programs in the Humanities, and to valorise the contribution of such research to our research community.

## Conclusion

Since the inception of the MCA/DCA in the mid-1990s both students and supervisors at Curtin University have developed a fuller understanding of the Research Question Model - of the relationship between the creative production and exegesis. And we have had good results. From the visual arts, one example is the student whose research question centred upon the butch/femme binary within lesbian identity politics and her quest for negotiating an alternative position. In her final submission, that question underpinned both the body of creative work and the exegesis, and she communicated these concerns in ways that reflected the affinity between the two forms. And - to take just one more example from the written arts - there is the creative writing student who began as a Graduate Diploma student who just wanted to be a creative writer telling the stories of Alzheimer patients she encountered as a nursing aide, and ended with publishing a revised version of her doctoral thesis with a commercial press - *We'll Be Married in Fremantle*. In between there was a very special research journey - a successful progress through a Graduate Diploma, an Honours degree, and a Master of Arts converted to a doctoral degree. That journey was made possible by the student's learning to ask in different ways at different level/stages of her research journey - "What is my research question?"

In our paper we canvas the various models that frame the relationship between the creative production and exegesis components of research theses in Australia today. These models reflect not so much the specifics of actual practice at any one university - for practice is always more muddled than any descriptive model would have it. Rather they define different emphases in the protocols (and, presumably, practice) in Australian universities - different presiding assumptions and different consequent pedagogies. In a longer, fuller paper, we would want to explore in more detail at least one other important (emerging) model - the one that argues that creative/production practice as research (see, for example, the Practice as Research in Performance project at Bristol in the United Kingdom, or, closer to home, the work of Dr Robyn Stewart). In the meantime, our hope is that by identifying prevailing models we will contribute to the conversation among research educators who hope to illuminate the exegesis.

Our argument is that the Research Question Model allows students in the creative and media arts who undertake research programs to conceptualise the affinity between the creative/production and the written components of a research thesis in strong and productive ways - ways that address the theory/practice divide, that diminish the sense that the exegesis as just an "academic" exercise/requirement, that enable students to fully articulate and explore their projects. We rehearse the kinds of support programs available through Humanities at Curtin in order to suggest that, whatever model operates, the "novelty" of creative and production-based research theses - the way in which prevailing regulations for HDR study do not "naturally" translate to the experience of research students in the creative and media arts - requires an array of support mechanisms for both students and supervisors in those areas. Most of all, we know from our daily experience that the Research Question Model enables research students, whatever their initial understandings or confidence, to work toward a coherent bimodal thesis - to thrive. We know that, almost no worries, they can write that "Extra Jesus."

## Notes

1. Brian Dibble, Professor of Comparative Literature at Curtin University, led the initiative to develop research programs in creative arts and media production at Curtin University across nearly decade (1990-98). Return to paper.

2. A survey in 1994 of all Australian universities by the Curtin Humanities Working Party for establishing a research Master of Creative Arts (with a view to the Doctor of Creative Arts) indicates that the following universities newly offered, or were in the process of establishing, Higher Degree by Research programs that permitted a thesis comprised of a combination of a creative/production and a written component: Murdoch University; Edith Cowan University; University of Wollongong; University of Technology Sydney; University of Western Sydney; James Cook University; Griffith University; Queensland University of Technology.

The responses to the survey were not complete. Of those who did respond, it was not always clear as to whether or not the MA degrees offered (at that time) were coursework or research degrees (eg., Griffith and the University of Western Sydney [Nepean, Macarthur]). Of the responses which indicated that the Master and Doctoral research programs offered in the areas of creative and media arts were research degrees, it was not always clear that there were formal structures subtending the presentation of a thesis comprised of a written and creative/production component.

Still, responses to the Curtin survey were extensive enough to show that across Australia in the early 1990s universities were responding to the need to develop research-education programs in the areas of the creative and performing arts, as well as in production-based areas. So, for example, in the *Campus Weekly* of 7 May 1992 Peter Lavery announced that Queensland University of Technology intended to introduce a doctorate in the creative arts in 1994, noting that "while Wollongong and James Cook already offer fine arts doctorates, QUT's will be a first for Australia because it will be advanced artistic work in a university setting at doctoral level."

Further, the survey indicated that the approaches taken by universities varied greatly. Some universities appear to have used old structures to do new research, that is, simply to have embraced alternate thesis forms under established rubrics (with various degrees of clarity). Others appear to have established Postgraduate and Master (coursework) programs to carry the burden of a new demand. Still others, like Curtin, sought to establish new research programs that formalised the nature of creative-arts and media-production education when conducted as research education at tertiary level. Return to paper.

3. The critical revision of Curtin's Regulations for Higher Degree by Research (at both Master's and Doctoral levels) entailed the inclusion of a provision enabling a thesis that could take the form of an "exegesis" and a creative- or production-based piece. Dr Barney Glover, Director of Curtin University Office of Research and Development, was pivotal in this development. His recollection in regard to the term "exegesis" (and its problematic implications) is that: "Exegesis was coined by Ray Over when he was PVC(R) at Ballarat and I was Director, R&GS - I appreciate the Biblical context but Ray believed it provided a contrast to Thesis (it means, as you know, a critical exposition or summary, especially of scripture) and partly implies something of a lesser length while remaining critically based. I simply took this with me from Ballarat to Curtin in 97/98 when we revised the regulations." (personal communication, 2 April 2003). Return to paper.

4. Indeed, at Curtin University the concept of the "exegesis" in five short years has expanded to embrace a range of non-traditional forms of thesis - for example, to encompass provision of an explanatory framework for previously published papers. This development makes it more difficult to "illuminate the exegesis" - and more imperative that academics/practitioners in the creative and media arts work out a shared (flexible) understanding of its nature, function and value as it relates to creative and media arts theses in contemporary Australia. Return to paper.

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