

The supervisor as editor

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Abstract

The role of the supervisor as editor of the research candidate's work-in-progress is contentious. Apart from the fact that editing of exegeses and creative products requires different skills, more general questions persist, such as: How much editing should a supervisor do? To what depth of editing should she go? When does the edited thesis stop being the candidate's work and becomes a collaboration?

The current context has raised new issues: there is pressure on research students to publish before completion of candidature. What is the supervisor's role as editor now? Today supervisors are asked to replicate the role of commercial editors; what are the academic implications of this?

The commercial and the academic are coming together as publishing houses nuance their editing services and university creative writing schools take on more candidates. How might supervisors orient themselves to the new economic understandings and arrangements?

Old and new: changing demands on the supervisor

A culture that doesn't care about editing
is a culture that doesn't care about writing.
- Blake Morrison (Morrison 2005)

In the past, the role of the research degree supervisor was to give advice to the candidate on advancing the dissertation-in-progress towards a product that is as good as it can be and also publishable after submission. Nowadays, as competition for research dollars increases in universities, more pressure is applied to ensure that research students publish during candidature. In addition to the demands of guiding the candidate to completion, the supervising role now extends to advice on publishing prior to submission, turning chapters into refereed journal articles as soon as possible during the candidature, and in sum, earning dollars for the university while establishing for the student a (very useful) very early career research profile.

A hastening of research publication has been imposed on academics in the last 20 years in response to the increased competitiveness of the research environment. Supervisors are subject to performance indicators which can include rates of publication per annum; for example, in my university, 5 refereed articles (or equivalent) published over 5 years is required to maintain 'research active' status. Supervisors urge publication on their candidates as part of the team mentality now surrounding research. Knowing they contribute to the school's research effort, published students share in the collegial ethos and feel satisfaction when their publication is counted in the school's income. Apart from its adding to their academic profile, the publishing process attracts reviewer feedback on their work; ensures they are doing writing, especially writing towards the final product of the edited thesis; and can include the result of having already-published pieces to stitch into the submission to give it greater credence. Clearly today there is a range of imperatives that say doctoral students should publish.

Nicola Boyd has shown that creative writing doctorates are highly publishable. Of the 199 creative theses in her survey (which covered Australian submissions up to mid-2008), 98 had creative components published in part or whole or were forthcoming, and 36 had exegeses published similarly. That is, 54% of creative doctorates lead to publication (Boyd 2009). In these statistics no distinction is made between publication before as opposed to after submission; nevertheless they reveal a rich field of research production for universities to contemplate, particularly considering the new interest the Australian Research Council (ARC) has taken, under the Excellence in Research for Australia policy, in original creative works (Australian Research Council 2009: 31-34). The PhD pile is a valuable publishing slush pile for universities.

In consequence, I am aware that creative writing colleagues who are supervisors now offer themselves as advisers, sounding boards, readers and editors to creative doctoral students, who struggle with their research degree schedules while also grappling with the idea of publishing prior to completion. An example is Nicola Boyd's article cited above, which developed out of such a situation (where I am the supervisor). Under my encouragement and due to her own motivation, skills and admirable industry, she put on hold the further writing of her novel-in-progress in order to finetune and publish what we thought was an important aspect of her research. Getting her work-in-progress published as a refereed journal article was a significant fillip to the ongoing progress of her writing. It was also a turning point in the supervision she and I shared.

The pressure on creative writing doctoral supervisors to give editorial assistance for both academic and creative components of the work - in the latter especially, replicating the role of a commercial publisher's editor - evokes the situation where the school takes on a role similar to that of publisher, looking to benefit financially from the writing of the young-gun researchers / writers it has engaged. The supervisor acts like a publisher's editor in holding a crucial commissioning function, attracting promising new research students to enrol. (Sometimes, of course, these new students are seasoned published writers.) But also, the supervisor holds a quality control responsibility like that of the commercial editor, ensuring that outputs are at a requisite standard. One way a school can tarnish its reputation is to allow its research students to shoot off half-baked, naïve or poorly-presented research articles to learned journals for refereeing. Another way is to allow doctoral submissions to go out to examiners badly edited.

In advising on research degree submissions and in-candidature manuscripts for publication, supervisors exercise a range of skills, almost none of which they have trained for. Most base their editing strategies on personal experiences as self-editing scholars and published creative writers, and develop their editing skills over years of doctoral and other supervisions. Academics in the humanities and arts are at least trained in critical analysis of texts, and this correlates partially with the work of substantive editing, but professional-level editing involves skills different from, more focussed and perhaps more onerous than, those of the author and the critic:

The editor ... must be a competent and confident liaison person and a good organiser, as well as an arbiter of sense, structure, style and taste, a tactful yet firm adviser, and a watchdog on schedules and costs. (Flann & Hill 2004: 3)

Flann and Hill's *Australian Editing Handbook* here describes editing in terms rarely associated with academics, especially those academics concerned to break out of restrictive traditions and further research agendas. Apart from the other considerations they raise, Flann and Hill capture in just three words - 'sense, structure, style' - significant concerns for the supervisor as editor. In the context of creative doctoral work-in-progress, where exegeses and creative manuscripts can range from very conventional to entirely radical, supervisors are asked to make editorial judgments of wide significance. The fact that, as Boyd reports, 54% of creative doctorates lead to academic and/or creative publication may indicate that the breadth of editing advice being given by supervisors - in substantive and copyediting areas - is currently good. But do we really know what we are doing?

At this point I should give my qualifications for undertaking an investigation of the supervisor as editor. At time of writing, I have supervised 17 doctorates to completion and given editorial advice on almost all of them. I have examined 28 doctorates and from that experience have seen variations of quality in the editing of submitted manuscripts. I have assisted with 4 refereed articles and a number of creative works going through to publication by students who had not yet completed their research degrees. In reference to these figures, it might be asked: Why have I not pushed more of my research students into early publication? On the other hand, I ask myself: Why have I done this much work on behalf of my candidates ... wouldn't it be better to have simply worked on my own research publishing?

I happen to care about writing, and for me (as for many other writers) it goes along with the idea of mentoring a next generation of writers. While I have a deep interest in my own and others' writing strategies - including the processes of self-editing - I have a fascination for publishing. I am particularly interested in the relationship between self-editing (the job we attempt to do on our own manuscripts) and the process we more commonly think of as editing (the job someone else does on our manuscript).

These days, in fiction and nonfiction publishing, as also in academic publishing, publishers select from the slush pile according to how close the manuscript is to final readiness (Morrison 2005). The better-edited the manuscript is when it arrives at the publisher, the less the editing factor eats into the budget (editing is already significantly outsourced by publishing houses). Under this regime, the manuscript with superior literary potential, but which needs a lot of editing work, has fewer prospects than the mediocre manuscript ready to go. While debate about 'the decline

of editing' (Curtis 1993 [1962]: 30ff) dates back decades and continues (Morrison 2005), writers now accept more easily (or resignedly, I would say) that economic arguments provide a rationale for changes which affect their publishability. For example, self-publishing was once decried as 'vanity' behaviour, especially by writers who never did it; today it has transformed into something more respectable because so many services once available only inside publishing houses are now sourced elsewhere.

Publishers can cut costs by refusing to provide editing services. This is lamentable on several fronts: for a start, it insinuates that our culture is happy to dismiss a potential literary or research genius because s/he can't spell or punctuate; and in the end, it indicates that our literary culture is more about the superficial and cosmetic than it is about substance and the effort of achieving it. This situation implies a transfer of role from publishers to authors, suggesting they educate themselves deliberately in how to self-edit, how to know when they need editorial help, or how to outsource their editing effectively. As the commercial and the academic come together, as publishing houses withdraw their editing services and university creative writing schools take on more candidates, it is instructive for supervisors - who are becoming more like editors - to look at the basics of commercial editing.

The commercial editor and the author

Just get it down on paper, and then we'll see what to do about it.
- Maxwell Perkins (cited Safire & Safir 1992: 80)

Max Perkins (1884-1947) is the most lauded publisher's editor of the last 100 years. Working for Scribner's Sons in New York after 1910, he is credited with the discovery and ongoing success of F Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway and numerous others. It appears that Perkins, in his formative sway over several major authors of the early twentieth century, had more cumulative influence on modern American literature than did any one of his charges singly. In summarising the way Perkins worked, and the exemplary nature of his strategies, biographer A Scott Berg describes the job of editor and how Perkins transformed it:

It was not ... as it once had been, confined mainly to correcting spelling and punctuation. Rather, it was to know what to publish, how to get it, and what to do to help it achieve the largest readership. At all this ... Max Perkins was unsurpassed. His literary judgment was original and exceedingly astute, and he was famous for his ability to inspire an author to produce the best that was in him or her. More a friend to his authors than a taskmaster, he aided them in every way. He helped them structure their books, if help was needed; thought up titles, invented plots; he served as psychologist, lovelorn adviser, marriage counsellor, career manager, money-lender. Few editors before him had done so much work on manuscripts, yet he was always faithful to his credo, 'The book belongs to the author'. (Berg 1999: 4)

Famously, for example, F Scott Fitzgerald's first novel-length manuscript arrived on Perkins' desk in late 1918. Perkins proposed it to Scribner's, but it was rejected.

Perkins remained devoted to the manuscript, stayed in touch with the author and gentled him through two major re-writes while the book was again rejected by Scribner's. Finally, *This Side of Paradise* was published in 1920. The eventual 1925 publication of *The Great Gatsby*, possibly the greatest American novel, can also be sheeted back to the persistence of the editor who first had a glimpse of promise in an unprepossessing manuscript which landed on his desk and which others were not keen to support.

The role of the commercial publisher's editor, as Perkins pursued it, is to know the field, to read trends and see gaps awaiting exploitation, to understand the capabilities, directions and potentials of new and continuing authors, to perceive the promise of any given manuscript in light of its context and to encourage its possibilities, to engage with the publishable manuscript at deep structural and stylistic levels, as also at typographical levels, to get onto the manuscript's wavelength (which is, indeed, the author's wavelength), to understand the psychology and behaviours of the author even beyond the professional writing situation and to assist with the author's personal orientation to the manuscript's career ... while, in all of this, remaining invisible.

Perkins' strategies focussed on the particular manuscript, the writing process seen in terms of the writer's abilities, and the personal situation. Each of these, for exemplary editorship, is a fraught and contested space. There are arguments about how engaged or disengaged an editor should be; how much an editor should do, how much of it is 'meddling'; how close an editor should get personally to the author; how great may be the risks of the close editor-author relationship becoming dysfunctional; how likely it is that editor and author can share a worldview, an empathy, a common goal, a communicating wavelength for the work at hand; how much mediation and negotiation can usefully occur (these days) between the editor as representative of a multinational business conglomerate and the author as self-employed small business client; the degree to which editing is a creative pursuit; the degrees to which diplomacy or a more bullying sort of editing can succeed; how much a mentor the editor can or should be; how much the writer should give in or give away to the editor ... and so on.

It might be said that the key role of the publisher's editor is to make both sides look good. The successful editor's work enhances the reputations of both the author and the publisher. It is on the head of the editor to shepherd a work to better sales, better reviews and better income for publisher and author alike. But in this the editor should be invisible; her input into the manuscript should be seamless. There is little kudos for her outside the walls of the publishing house. For the editor, it is all about others.

In my own case, as author of 7 published novels, and editor of 3 creative and academic collections, I have been subject to a variety of publishers' editors' techniques. I believe I have enjoyed among the worst, sometimes the ordinary, and also the best. I would include, among the worst, a situation where the editor did very little to the manuscript. While in theory I may have felt possessive about my own words, and might have been happy with a situation where an editor said, 'It's fine. Just go ahead', I was aware enough to realise that this particular editing job was perfunctory. I complained, and the publisher agreed with me. Subsequently my manuscript received the attention of the doyenne of Australian editors, Beatrice Davis.

In a single letter to me, Beatrice Davis explained exactly what needed to be done to the manuscript of *Matilda, My Darling*. Reading her letter I felt I was learning fast - about my manuscript, about its subject matter, and about myself as a writer. Where she suggested I change things, I knew what she said was for the better: her concisely-stated arguments were compelling. I was a champion egotist, but I felt humbled in the presence of her understanding of what I was trying to do. Similarly, with publication of three novels for teenagers, I enjoyed Julie Watts as reader. Julie invited her Penguin authors to dinner at her house and created much more than the expected professional context in which to pursue her role as publisher and editor. Under Julie's aegis, I was inspired by meeting other writers and discussing aspects of process with them. Julie realised that the author's life is significantly a solitary one, and that the role of the editor should include bringing authors together. Both these editors revealed, I would say, Max Perkins-type qualities in the Australian context.

I learnt much from these experiences. I learnt mainly that as author I craved my editor should be on my wavelength. The first thing I noticed about any editor's comments was whether she understood what I was doing, or what I thought I was doing. The next thing I noticed was whether the editor could talk to me about my work in language I identified with (or something close to it). I was looking for the editor's critical commentary being couched in terms similar to those of the exegetical commentary I would make myself. I have had editorial experiences where my whole novel was edited by someone who, I'm sure, never understood from beginning to end what the novel was really, deeply about.

One looks for empathy and support from spouses, close friends and family members; yet it is rarely a good idea to hand your manuscript to them. The writer-editor relationship may indeed be described as an 'intense collaborative process' (Morrison 2005) but the intensity is not created by friendship, family or sexual bonding: it is created by an intensity of understanding of writing. The love you need to share with your reader or editor is a love of writing and publishing.

The element of loyalty Perkins lavished on Fitzgerald and Hemingway resonates with me in the sense that editing others always entails a commitment beyond oneself. Editorship involves the editor working towards a deep perception of what the writer is doing; it involves diplomacy as well as straight talking; it involves friendship and trust. Everything the editor inserts in the process needs to be received by the author as a gift, a suggestion for the better, something to be contemplated, and not a command. Editing, at the worst end of the spectrum, is full-on bullying, and at the other, is subtlest seduction. At crucial moments in the manuscript, the insight of the editor might be clearly beyond what the writer is capable of. As author, I want my editor / adviser to understand exactly what I am doing - even better than I do. Perkins-style strategies acknowledge that the writer is the key resource for the publishing house (as too, I deduce, for the academic school), but also that the writer must be nurtured and supported coming to terms with manipulation of her manuscript where the good of everyone - writer, editor and publisher (candidate, supervisor and school) - is involved.

Commercial editing occurs in three contexts requiring critical input: the demands of the marketplace and readership; the demands of the manuscript itself; and the demands of the author's capacity to function. Recognition of these contexts applies as

much to commercial publishing as to academic publishing and research degree editing. The supervisor as editor can learn from Perkins-style commercial editing.

Blake Morrison says:

It seems no coincidence to me that there should have been a massive growth in creative writing programmes in Britain in recent years. That the reason so many aspirant writers are signing up for MAs and PhDs is to get the kind of editorial help they no longer hope to get from publishing houses. If Perkins were alive today, would he be editing texts for Scribner? Or teaching fiction to creative writing students at Columbia University? (Morrison 2005)

The kind of talk that goes on between supervisors and creative writing research students -

why not think of losing that, or moving that there? Give the reader more signposts. Stop bombarding us with so many characters. Don't parade your research, integrate it. Show, don't tell. Get in and out of the scene more quickly. Is that simile really working? And so on ... (Morrison 2005)

- is exactly the kind of talk that ensues between nurturing commercial editors and their authors.

Supervisors as editors

There is almost an obligation if you believe and suggest
that the work of a postgraduate merits publication to support the postgraduate
in realising such a challenging and worthwhile goal.
- Mark Hughes (Hughes 2004)

In the 2008 edition of Open University's *How to Write a Thesis*, Rowena Murray cites Brown and Atkins' list of the 11 roles of the supervisor:

- Director
- Facilitator
- Adviser
- Teacher
- Guide
- Critic
- Freedom giver
- Supporter
- Friend
- Manager
- Examiner (Murray 2008: 78)

'Editor' is not included. Murray discusses the possible addition of 'Writing developer', but suggests: 'Perhaps it is to be assumed that several - or all - of these roles are to be applied to writing, as to any other activity' (Murray 2008: 78). Notably, the list *does*

include 'Adviser', 'Guide', 'Critic', 'Supporter', 'Friend', and 'Examiner', each of which may be seen to belong to Perkins-style editing best practice.

Murray also cites Brown and Atkins' list of the 14 possible relationships between supervisor and student:

- Director : Follower
- Master : Servant
- Guru : Disciple
- Teacher : Pupil
- Expert : Novice
- Guide : Explorer
- Project manager : Team worker
- Auditor : Client
- Editor : Author
- Counsellor : Client
- Doctor : Patient
- Senior partner : Junior professional
- Colleague : Colleague
- Friend : Friend (Murray 2008: 79)

This is a contentious list, being substantially about power and voice, and the lack thereof, in a candidature arrangement: the left column is the power column; the right, the subaltern column. Also the list seems focussed on the nature of the relationship at the start of a candidature. Apart from the equality inherent in connections between colleagues and between friends (a welcome inclusion at the end of the list), the one relationship that does not manifest inbuilt deference is 'Editor : Author'.

The editor : author relationship, as a generic indicator, is complex in such a way that it can include the author being the master, the expert, the senior partner - and thus 'Author' can belong also in the power column on the left, as opposed to being of necessity relegated to the subaltern column on the right. Of the relationships listed by Brown and Atkins, 'Editor : Author' is the most satisfactory for describing the supervisor : student collaboration, because the power can shift in the relationship without the names for participants changing. The supervisor knows a great deal in terms of processes that are valuable to the student, especially at the start of the candidature; but as time goes on and the student undertakes the research, there is a shift in respective knowledges. The supervisor may have initially a better broad knowledge about the candidate's area, but at the conclusion, the student will be the expert in her/his specific corner of the field. Commercial editors, it may be noted, are familiar with working on manuscripts where they know much more about the content and strategies under scrutiny than do the authors; but also the reverse is the case. Editors too can be subalterns.

In a workshop I conducted in 2009 for the Australian Postgraduate Writers Network, sponsored by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, I proposed the notion that a PhD supervisor is *expected* to be editor of the candidate's work. Among a variety of responses, one research scholar said:

the responsibility for editing invariably rests with the candidate/early researcher. Supervisors are busy people. I'm not sure we should expect them to do more than just give general advice and support about editing and submitting. If we had the funds I imagine we would all pay professional editors to prepare our work for publication. And then there is the question of ownership, of feeling responsible for our research from start to finish - not to mention the leap of faith required to explain it all to someone who is not as intimately familiar with the work as you are. Editing is just another step in the process. (APWN 2009)

This comment is highly perceptive, and I suspect its understandings are shared by most research students. However, it conflates several of the issues I am teasing out here. First, it collapses the idea of editing onto the idea of another taking ownership of your work. It does not presume that the editor (i.e. supervisor) is 'servant' of the student: it is therefore in line with the voice imbalance demonstrated in the Brown and Atkins power list above. Second, it happily contemplates calling for professional editors to assist closely with the thesis manuscript, but it does not identify that the supervisor may be entitled to that role, may care enough to be pleased to do it, in spite of being busy. Third, it supposes the supervisor will not have an intimate familiarity with the work. But as with commercial editing, and indeed my own experience of it, the question of the possibility of the editor deeply following the work, i.e. being on the author's wavelength, is something the writer must simply insist on.

This astute research student's concerns are consistent with the results of a survey undertaken by Mark Hughes at the University of Brighton, UK in 2004. In his literature survey, Hughes looked at what is known about postgraduate writing for publication, what encouragement and support regarding publication can be offered to a research student, and how co-authorship can assist. He noted that:

little attention has been given in the literature to graduate students' perceptions of the scholarly writing process. In terms of writing for publication there is very little guidance in the 'How to ...' guides ... It is apparent that despite the centrality of writing to academic work ... the academic writing process is assumed to be understood, [yet] academics [themselves] are generally unaware of the scholarship of academic writing ... Although literature reviews have highlighted our lack of understanding about postgraduate writing for publication in particular and academic writing in general ... [t]he concern is the potential assumption amongst academics that this area is well understood, which has implications for their encouragement to postgraduates to write for publication. (Hughes 2004)

Hughes alludes to the fact that supervisors expect research students to be eminently capable in writing. After all, these students have been accepted for enrolment in a doctoral program: they should be capable of writing at doctoral level! Why should they need editing assistance? This is the view from the power column of the Brown and Atkins relationships list: the supervisor expects the equality of the candidate as writer for various reasons, but mainly because the candidate who can write well will cause the supervisor the least trouble. From the subaltern side of the list, the view is different. The candidate lacks experience; in many cases needs yet to develop serious academic writing skills; and, simply by being a candidate, has self-esteem problems. An overarching point here is: academic writing is difficult for academics, let alone for the wannabees. When academics with self-editing problems have difficulty editing

their candidates, the consequence of ignoring the situation is serious. But the solution is simple. The supervisor with the skills deficit must pass the problem on to someone else - an academic better skilled at editing, or an outsourced academic professional. In the business of completing a research degree, those with editing problems - student and supervisor alike - should admit them, and get on with the fix.

Hughes sees co-authoring as the effective method for getting research students into print. His case studies track the experiences of 5 student : supervisor collaborations in producing 5 papers for academic journals. Comments gathered include: 'A postgraduate with publishing aspirations should find a mentor or a co-author, someone with experience'; and 'The student should be in the driving seat. The student is at a stage where they are sufficiently into their research that they are not there as your assistant, you are there helping them as a co-author whose [sic] got experience' (Hughes 2004). A comparison of the student : supervisor writing relationship with that of the mentor : mentee writer is useful (cf. Krauth & Baranay 2002). The idea of apprenticeship, seemingly avoided in academia for its too-practical and too-low-socioeconomic connotations, is valid here. Why shouldn't academics work with their protégés as apprentices in bringing forward the next generation of published research writers?

While usefully suggesting that 'Co-authoring may be undertaken with a supervisor, another academic or another postgraduate' (Hughes 2004), Hughes does not cover the difficulties of the supervisor being identified as lead writer, or even second writer, if the publishing collaboration focuses on a section of the exegesis- or dissertation-in-progress. Clearly the final submission cannot include supervisor co-written material. In this case I would say, for research ownership reasons, it is better for the supervisor to assist by *editing* the work which is then published in the student's name. Alternatively, a co-authored work during candidature, if time permits, will better focus on a related topic, rather than being too close to an actual section of the submission.

Editing and editing

Most students would agree that there is more to giving feedback
on writing than editing. Most students are looking for
feedback on the content of the writing.
- Rowena Murray (Murray 2008: 212)

The role of the supervisor as editor of the research candidate's ongoing work is contentious. How much editing should be done, and to what depth of editing should the supervisor go? Especially in the preparation of 'publishable' creative product manuscripts for submission, but also in assisting with in-candidature writing for publication, supervisors are asked to replicate the role of commercial editors. What are the academic implications of this?

'There is editing and there is editing,' I have heard professional writers say, and it relates to the fact that editing occurs at various levels in a work, and at various levels in respect of the context into which the work projects. There is deep, structural

editing; and there is superficial grammatical and typographical editing. There are levels in between these levels: where meaning is nuanced and negotiated, where argument is finely orchestrated. There is also good editing and bad editing: where the editor is on the writer's wavelength with detailed understanding of the project; or the editor is ignorant of the project's fine-grain trajectories. There is editing where the writer feels brutalised and bullied; and editing where the writer feels supported and enhanced. Ultimately, there is editing done where the editor is cognisant of global understandings in the area; and editing done without the editor having a worldview into which the work will fall.

Editing goes wrong all the time in the commercial sphere where specialist editors are employed. How likely then is editing to happen well in academia where almost no one has qualifications to do it? Yet supervisors are probably the best-qualified editors for doctoral submission. There are cases where the employment of a non-academic freelance editor was particularly unhelpful in the academic sphere because the preparation of a submission for examination is very different from the preparation of a manuscript for publishing. For a start, the readerships are poles apart: in the academic case the readership is a panel of two or three examiners assessing for doctoral-level achievement and for a contribution to new knowledge in the context of the specific genre of the academic dissertation; in the professional case, the readership is initially a panel of readers advising on the commercial and maybe literary prospects of a property, but ultimately they represent a much larger readership of specialists or the general public who will buy the book.

For supervisors, the creative writing component of non-traditional doctorates is examined in terms of *publishability*. Here 'publishability' means the likelihood of the work being taken up by a commercial publisher, and must also include the possibility that such a publisher may not exist for experimental works encouraged in creative writing schools. But in real and immediate terms, the initial *publishability* of the work - which the supervisor principally guides and edits towards - is 'publication' of the examinable copy in a run of 4 or less copies to go to others who already hold doctorates. The wider audience for the creative component is held in abeyance while the examiners-as-audience adjudicates.

A raft of publications provides advice to research students and their supervisors about the handling of the writing factor in the research doctoral submission. These include: *The postgraduate research handbook* (Wisker 2008); *How to write a thesis* (Murray 2008); *The unwritten rules of PhD research* (Rugg and Petre 2009); *A handbook for doctoral supervisors* (Taylor and Beasley 2005); *Helping doctoral students write: Pedagogies for supervision* (Kamler and Thomson 2006); and others. In each of the above publications, writing is treated as a key activity in producing the thesis, and seemingly the most fraught for student and supervisor alike. While none of them seriously considers the writing of a creative component in the research degree context (see, however, Krauth 2008), their views on the supervisor-student relationship in terms of writing and editing are worth considering.

Kamler and Thomson's book is entirely devoted to the supervisor assisting the student to write, and the student assisting him/herself. It not only brings writing to centre stage in the research process, it asserts that 'research is writing' (Kamler and Thomson 2006: 11). It is a useful book because, taking a pedagogical approach, it talks about

teaching thesis writing and learning thesis writing at one and the same time. It acknowledges that supervisor and candidate both need to know how. It considers writing for publication by devoting a chapter to 'institutionalizing doctoral writing practices' (Kamler and Thomson 2006: 144-59) and spotlights the creation of writing-for-publication groups where academics and research students combine at school levels. Perhaps the fact that one of the authors (Barbara Kamler) is Professor of Education at Deakin University gives this work a flavour and focus that I, working in an Australian university, more easily relate to.

On the other hand, Rowena Murray recommends the formation of in-candidature writing groups, but speaks about them being 'teacherless' - they are self-help groups in which candidates workshop / edit their thesis writing (Murray 2008: 285). Murray considers publishing in-candidature briefly (2008: 139-40) and directs students to another of her publications, where she talks about writing for academic journals. The idea of supervisor : student collaboration on a publication project is not canvassed.

Rugg and Petre begin their three chapters on writing with a chapter highlighting supervisor : student collaboration on papers for academic journals (Rugg and Petre 2009: 84-94). This chapter gives advice about processes of publishing and co-publishing, although, as with so much advice written for doctoral candidates, major issues are reduced to dot-point summaries. Supervisors need always be in the wings when doctoral how to do it books advise. Rugg and Petre's other chapters on writing treat the topic as if it is to be dealt with by self-editing - not group- or supervisor-assisted. And this is the strategy used by the other books I survey here. Questions of writing process are dealt with as if the candidate is very nearly on her own; the major editing advice is of the self-editing variety. Only in Murray can I find a topic such as 'Managing your editor' (Murray 2008: 212-14) where the idea of the student dealing with close editing from the supervisor is handled. Here Murray usefully analyses strategies for giving and receiving feedback, especially through student and supervisor agreeing early on 'a typology of comments' - a common editing language - so that each understands what the other is talking about in the feedback process (Murray 2008: 213-14). Generally speaking, however, in these handbooks publishing is considered to be something done after the thesis is completed.

Worst-case scenarios of excessive professional editing involve editors slashing slabs of words, or key words, from author's manuscripts. (Morrison relates several cases where famous authors' works were monstered by the original editors, and were subsequently republished with more enlightened editing.) At the same time, how-to-write manuals for creative as well as academic writing are obsessed with the problem of obstacles to *producing* words, i.e. writer's block. They rarely analyse the problem of getting rid of words, i.e. self-editor's block. The production of too many words, and not knowing how to get rid of those seriously not needed, seems to me to be the greatest bugbear for the research student-writer.

Professional editing emphasises cutting down, refining, achieving greater economy. Books are often accused of being badly edited when they are deemed longer than they should be. Self-editor's block is arguably as fatal to a manuscript as is writer's block. The traditionally understandable part of another editing you is about cutting out and cutting down. But why must this be the external editor's business especially? In advising on cutting down, the editor steps in to exercise a skill that the writer should

have already attained. Editing is part of writing, though not so greatly recognised in our culture, and especially not dealt with properly in our teaching of writing. For doctoral students, who are just as unlikely to have good self-editing skills as are professional writers, the supervisor as editor is a key resource.

I remember on two occasions sending my own novel manuscripts off to publishers and getting them back with extensive editorial commentary, in each case suggesting a complete rewrite. These responses made me so angry I stood in the garden and flung the manuscripts out across the paddock next door. The pages fluttered down among thistles and cow-pats. But I wasn't angry with my editors, I was angry with myself; in the case of those two manuscripts I knew that what the editors had said was spot on. Their insights, and the language in which they expressed them, were so astute I was not only convinced, I was mortified at my own stupidity. I was angry because I was unable to read and dissect my work as well as the editors had done.

Good writing process indicates that the ability to edit oneself entails true mastery over the craft of writing. Undergraduate students learn that two hats are employed in the writing process - the hat of the writer-producer and the hat of the writer-critic. As a writer develops, she improves in her ability to put something down on the page and at the same time, or soon after, critically assess and correct it. In the process, she takes off the hat of producer (where the writing process flows from self to page) and replaces it with the hat of editor (where the writing process flows back from the page to self). Even for established writers, this two-hats interchange is difficult. It involves being the excited and passionate producer of words, then being the ruthless analyst and slayer of words. In this complex and demanding situation, most writers fall short. Their manuscripts arrive on agents' and publishers' - and supervisors' - desks with things yet to be attended to.

Conclusion

To write is human, to edit is divine.
- Stephen King (King 2001: xv)

I can't write five words but that I change seven.
- Dorothy Parker (quoted in Jaymes 2004: ix)

Supervisors can greatly assist their candidates by being nurturing editors. Academic supervisors asked to encourage, mentor, nurture, give advice on how to get published, and work practically on developing student manuscripts for publication, should examine the practices of professional editors for guidance and understanding of the problems. No idea about editing comes without an extensive debate attached. This is true in the professional world, and even more so in academia. There are significant differences between writing a novel and writing a research degree, as too there are differences between preparing an exegesis for examination as opposed to for academic publication. Doctoral candidates (like all authors) are prompted by the current economic culture to become masterful self-editors. But we know already that

this is a big ask, and that good writing still needs good editing. Considering all the parameters, supervisors are, like it or not, doctoral candidates' best editors.

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