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The Ignorant Supervisor: About common worlds, epistemological modesty and distributed knowledge

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ABSTRACT

When postgraduate researchers' interests lie outside the body(ies) of knowledge with which their supervisors are familiar, different supervisory approaches are called for. In such situations, questions concerning the appropriateness of traditional models arise, which almost invariably involve a budding candidate's relationship with a knowing-established researcher/supervisor. Supervisory relationships involving creative practice-led research in particular confront significant challenges by new and emerging themes, questions, processes and practices. My lack of disciplinary knowledge regarding two PhD candidates' projects led me some years ago to question the effects of this lack and to search for effective ways of dealing with it. A subsequent commitment to different modes of candidate/supervisor collaborations was based on three assumptions: **One**, a supervisor is not, in the first instance, a conveyor or purveyor of knowledge. **Two**, postgraduate researchers already have substantial and refined pockets of relevant knowledge to draw on. **Three**, and very importantly, they are able to activate networks of distributed knowledge, often outside of the University. The argument presented in this article draws theoretically on Jacques Rancière and Hannah Arendt's ideas of pedagogy and public space, as well as notions of cosmopolitics (Cheah & Robbins), mode 2 knowledge (Gibbons et al.) and not-knowing in Art & Design (Jonas). Reflections on my experiences of supervising PhD and Master of Art & Design candidates, together with ideas offered by contributors to a book I have recently edited, will locate moments of choice and the emergence of the unforeseeable, of vigilance towards singular events as much as collective understanding.

One can never assume that a PhD candidate and her or his supervisors share a common world—more often than not, commonalities have to be created in the process of supervision. But in cases where a candidate's experience differs significantly from the institution's *doxa* and protocols, this need to create a world in common is obvious. Thus, brain scientist Francisco Varela remarked in an interview that he came to the United States and Harvard University 'from another planet', 'a small village in the mountains where everything I had was the sky and the animals' (in Gumbrecht, Maturana, & Poerksen, 2006, p. 44). Varela was an early case of *non-traditional* candidates (until quite recently non male-white-middle-class-and-fit minorities at Western universities),[1] whose participation in tertiary education has recently skyrocketed. At doctoral level, their research begins to create quite different grounds on which future common worlds may form.[2] For these trends to be

successful, though, and for new ideas to be stimulated, intellectual communities need 'an appreciation for the generative potential of multiple perspectives' (Walker et al., 2008, p. 125).

Gaps, Openings

In well-established disciplines, the gaps in knowledge that research is supposed to recognise and engage with concern primarily content (agreement about methods and standards having mostly been reached). By comparison, creative practice-led PhD research projects also investigate gaps in the knowledge about PhD research itself. Even though the relevant body of literature grows, Jen Webb diagnoses a current 'lack of precision' about appropriate methodology (2012, p. 3). James Elkins even asserted in 2009 that 'no one knows how to supervise these degrees'—in which he sees an interesting opportunity 'to rethink the supervisor's role' (Elkins, 2009, pp. xii, 65).[3]

All candidates undertaking creative practice-led research operate on the fringes of the traditional Western University to some extent; some negotiate creative and academic existences across several intersecting worlds. Like Hannah Arendt's poets, novelists and essayists, they owe their very material to the fact that they are embedded in human experience while, at the same time, not 'fully at home anywhere in the world' (Disch, 1994, p. 23). As long as appropriate questions, methods and standards for practice-led creative research are still determined 'on the hoof' (Taylor & Beasley, 2005, p. 42; see also Webb, 2012, p. 3), supervisors, candidates and examiners negotiate a volatile terrain. To openly, coherently and creatively engage with unexpected and surprising aspects of the research and with a lack of certainty in changing circumstances, they all need high levels of negative capability (Keats), that is, the ability to reflect and refrain from premature action, particularly from entrenched defensive routines (Bonz & Struve, 2006, p. 152).

When non-traditional candidates choose to work in new and emerging research arenas such as creative practice-led research, they bring with them distinctive aptitudes. What helped me appreciate this were, in particular, my supervision relationships with Moana Nepia and Azadeh Emadi, in which interesting, generative intersections of creative practice-led research agendas and non-Western approaches to knowledge became apparent. For instance, many non-Western knowledge traditions do not draw demarcations between textual and non-textual knowledge, science and art, discursive and poetic language, or individual and collectively held knowledge nearly as clearly as mainstream Western traditions (and even between theory and practice, or scientific neutrality and ethical responsibility). A more fluid engagement with those oppositions better meets the needs of creative, practice-led research projects. Conversely, many new and emerging research areas are more open than traditional disciplines to modes of knowledge transfer and acquisition typical of non-Western research and scholarship (e.g. the notion that knowledge is an accumulation of often collaborative practices that are situated in communities). The full potential of this nexus would be missed if *culture* were conflated with *non-Western.* In settler societies, culture is often associated with ethnicity rather than other forms, like disciplinary cultures. Moana Nepia is a Māori choreographer, dancer and visual artist. Azadeh Emadi is a spatial designer and video maker from Iran. Self-consciously occupying marginal positions both needed their distinctiveness to be recognised and validated as potential excellence—rather than considered as deviation from the norm (Nepia, 2013). For both, it was important and empowering to participate in redefining 'the standards by which distinctiveness is recognised' (see Disch, 1994, p. 57).

From an institutional perspective, it is not only a matter of social justice to provide appropriate supervision and support for PhD researchers whose projects do not fit into the mainstream paradigm. Since non-traditional candidates have extraordinary contributions to make, their active involvement is also in the best interest of research in new and emerging fields. However, supervisors are often not familiar with their research contexts and/or agendas. Some years ago, my own lack of disciplinary knowl- edge led me to question the effects of this lack and to search for effective ways

of addressing it. A subsequent commitment to different modes of candidate–supervisor collaborations was based on three assumptions:

1. A supervisor is not, in the first instance, a conveyor of knowledge.

2. Postgraduate researchers already have substantial pockets of relevant and refined knowledge to draw on.

3. They are able to activate networks of distributed knowledge, often outside of the University.

Modes of Supervision

> It would be a great error to believe that critical thinking stands somewhere between dogmatism and skepticism. It is actually the way to leave these alternatives behind. … It recommends itself by its modesty. It would say: 'Perhaps men, though they have a notion, an idea, of truth for regulating their mental processes, are not capable, as finite beings, of the truth. … Meanwhile, they are quite able to inquire into such human faculties as they have been given ….' (Arendt, 1992, pp. 32–33)

This epistemological modesty is associated with indeterminacy and uncertainty. It can be difficult to sustain when supervisors face expectations of expertise and mastery (not an uncommon compensatory reaction to uncertainty).[4] Yet epistemological modesty makes room for a creative link between the interests and dispositions of non- traditional candidates and the concerns of non-traditional knowledge areas or fields of research (Arendt, 1992, p. 33; Barone, 2008, p. 35). By contrast, pressure to control candidates' progress and produce timely completions can tempt supervisors to be 'very directive in shaping and guiding students' work; discouraging students from intellectual risk-taking […]; [or] blurring the boundaries between reviewing and writing students' theses' (Halse, 2011, p. 562). Such approaches are likely to suppress knowledge gaps—particularly between supervisors and non-traditional candidates whose research relies on cultural knowledge that is under-represented in the university. One of my colleagues, King Tong Ho, discusses this in 'Transfer and Translation: Negotiating Conflicting Worldviews' (Ho, 2013, p. 84): supervisors who cannot appreciate their candidates' research contexts are likely to pull the contextual/ theoretical focus into their own fields of expertise, away from their candidates' frame- works and interests. If the latter nevertheless continue to pursue their interests in their creative practice research, the disparity between theory and practice may lead to a lack of coherence in the final thesis.

To avoid such disparity, my institution (AUT University, Auckland) requires that supervisors have 'demonstrated expertise in the field' in which the candidate's research is located (University Postgraduate Centre, 2013). This is a common sense expectation, which aligns with the ambition to include PhD supervision in the consolidation of institutional research expertise. However, what if supervisors' and candidates' research are not closely aligned? In emerging research fields (see Webb and Elkins above, p. 2) with increasing numbers of students from different cultures (speaking different languages and drawing on distinctive knowledges and practices), supervisors will inevitably confront areas in their candidates' research in which they cannot claim mastery. Moana and Azadeh, for instance, come from disciplines and use media with which I am not very familiar, and their research fields clearly lie outside the expertise of the collective body of supervisors at our school.

My own experience of the pressure to *perform* as a *master* in the supervision relation- ships with Moana and Azadeh made me look for alternative paradigms. In this, I was able to draw on two sources: educational literature and personal experience. The first will be woven into this article, but perhaps a short narration of two role models that sustained and supported me in resisting claims of mastery is useful. The first is Professor Gert Selle, a drawing teacher at the College of Design in Darmstadt, Germany, during my undergraduate studies. Selle took up a challenge issued by some of his students to discuss their doubts concerning traditional study modes and contents, and to address their theoretical deficits. According to Selle, he never had more than a five minutes' advantage left at the end of each session, and he read up and thought intensively between sessions.

From this originated his first book on the theory and history of German design (Selle, 1987), today a classic in design education. Another role model was Professor Michael A. Peters, my PhD supervisor. An educational philosopher, he knew nothing about the topic of my research project, yet he provided me with relevant and productive challenges and opportunities. With a fine sense for minimal boundaries, he guided me to a very successful submission and examination, within a short time. I concluded that, if these two educators had been able to supervise me, even though they were both in their own ways ignorant of my concerns, there must be a way to support candidates in their project without the pretence of mastery.

As a starting point, it is useful to remember that it is now widely accepted that learning is not based on the unilateral conveyance of knowledge from teacher to student. It is much more effective when students take an active part in knowledge building (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2006). At PhD level, candidates come with substantial resources of relevant and refined knowledge in their field, often gleaned from experience outside of the University. And, crucially, they may belong to networks of distributed knowledge they can activate when needed. Sometimes, these experiences and networks can sustain them in their explorations better than any expertise a supervisor can offer. Accordingly, a supervisor is for Professor Mark Dorrian (University of Newcastle, UK) a 'critical respondent' who engages 'through dialogue', 'rather than speaking from a position of expertise in that particular field'. He even suggests that a supervisor who is 'not necessarily an expert' might be more open to 'a different kind of approach to the subject matter' (Dorrian, Jenner, & Engels-Schwarzpaul, 2012).[5] Dorrian's view has affinity with Jacques Rancière's position, which is based on 'a thoroughgoing resistance to a certain form of epistemological and ontological mastery' (Chambers, 2012, p. 639).[6]

Ignorant Supervisors, Common Worlds

For Rancière, expert explication 'divides intelligence into two': one superior, one inferior (Rancière, 1991, p. 7). In the extreme, a 'method of the riding school master' may then direct students towards surprising discoveries. Paradoxically, their discoveries stultify them: as surprise turns into admiration of the master, students may feel they would never find out by themselves (p. 59). Rancière draws on the accounts of Joseph Jacotot, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, and his discovery of an extraordinary teaching method by chance.[7] In the early nineteenth century, Jacotot fled political turmoil in France and became a lecturer in French literature at the University of Louvain. Jacotot spoke no Flemish and his Flemish students spoke no French. Necessity 'con- strained him to leave his intelligence entirely out of the picture' (Rancière, 1991, p. 9). Consequently, Jacotot developed a method that reversed the roles of passive students and 'master explicator'. He gave the students a bilingual edition of Fenelon's novel *Telemaque* and asked them to compare the Flemish and French words. Testing them, he was surprised how fast they had learnt French. This convinced him that teachers can teach what they do not know, and that individuals can instruct them- selves 'by observing and retaining, repeating and verifying, by relating what they were trying to know to what they already knew, by doing and reflecting about what they had done' (p. 10).[8]

What fascinates me in relation to creative practice-led research is Rancière's emphasis on a *thing in common* (the book in Jacotot's case) establishing an 'egalitarian intellectual link' (p. 13). '[P]laced between two minds', it is a 'gauge of … equality' (p. 13), a bridge or passage, and 'an always available source of material verification …' (p. 32). Thanks to its *materiality*, 'it is also distance maintained' and prevents explication, 'the annihilation of one mind by another' (p. 32). As an *interest* (is-between) it focuses attention of both candidate and supervisor, giving them new places in a common world (Cornelissen, 2010, p. 534). The *thing in common* can also provide an 'opportunity for things to refer no longer to something else but to appear as such' (p. 534). In the context of creative practice-led research, this chance to move beyond denotation seems to me to be a crucial aspect. The art, then, is to bring the conversations always back 'to the material objects, to a *thing* that [can be verified] with [the] senses' (Rancière, 1991, p. 32).

Rancière's consideration of pedagogical relationships occurs in a tightly vertical, hierarchical atmosphere.[9] By contrast, Arendt explores horizontal difference between equals in the public realm, their common world. This in-between, which we constantly co-create through conversations and actions, gathers us *and* furnishes a distance that 'prevents our falling over each other' (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 52). Arendt uses the metaphor of a table to demonstrate the importance of enduring things 'to relate and to separate' people (1958/1998, pp. 53, 55), to provide continuity and a shared reality. Only in

> the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives … where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear. (p. 57)

For her, a *thing in common* not only mediates different perspectives, as with Rancière, it also contributes to a world in which horizontal plurality prevails over vertical hierarchy. Arendt and Rancière both locate knowledge in relationships outside one-to-one instructional settings. Both emphasise the unique contribution each participant can make to knowledge. For Rancière, the *Ignorant Schoolmaster's* role is not to convey knowledge, but to affirm the equality of intelligences and their diversity; to discourage false modesty and encourage learning through the use of one's own intelligence, experiment and experience, attentiveness and persistence. Rancière contrasts *explicator-instructors* with *artists*, who he believes are more interested in equality and common action. These interests support different scholarly identities for both supervisors and candidates and varied forms of collaboration, interdependence and an appreciation of each other's specific capacities.

Knowledge is then recognised in the diverse contexts of its production and distribution (Halse & Bansel, 2012, p. 388). This corresponds to notions of *Mode 2* knowledge production and to epistemologies and transdisciplinary applications that are more 'context sensitive, eclectic, transient, and inventive than traditional (or mode 1) … research practices and methodologies' (Van Manen, 2001, p. 850). In another register, bearing on the conceptualisation of knowledge in creative practice-led research, Wolfgang Jonas, Rosan Chow and Simon Grand argue for the importance of a methodological, theoretical and practical ability to deal with not-knowing: a potential 'unity of knowledge and not-knowledge' would well position design doctor- ates, which are less entrenched and more open to uncertainty, 'to engage with and realise … novel perspectives' (Jonas, Chow, & Grand, 2013, p. 186). The production of any conceivable form of knowledge would then no longer rely on confusing them with certainty (see Baecker, 2000, p. 107).

Arendt's notion of 'train[ing] one's imagination to go visiting' (1992, p. 43), and to think from standpoints not one's own, is pertinent here. Bringing other standpoints to presence not only affords the very interactions and communications that, for Arendt, constitute the public and political; they are also important conditions for critical education. The open space of the visiting imagination allows our conditions to stand next to those of our hosts, always maintaining a distance. It is across that distance that we co-produce our common world (Peng, 2008, p. 74). The imagination's double movement (between representation and visiting) yields detachment from the familiar and opens up a space for thinking and seeing anew. It also yields connectivity with the strange through stories told from plural perspectives. The work of distancing and bridging is not only typical of critical thinking (Disch, 1994, p. 160) but also characteristic of creative processes. Questioning destabilises routine and, together with an associated ability to conceive of alternatives, principally enriches creative research.

The visiting imagination carefully cultivates 'a degree of estrangement from one's own culture and history' (Gilroy, 2005, p. 67). Sneja Gunew, who considers *estrangement as pedagogy*, argues that openness to estrangement extends our repertoire of imagining and interpreting otherwise. However, in contrast to the conditions one is borne into, estrangement needs to be learned and cultivated (Gunew, 2013, pp. 273, 275). Certain European fallacies, for example, can only be recognised by looking at Europe through non-European eyes (Beck & Grande, 2010, p. 424). All

cultures have a blind spot: they cannot see that they do not see what they cannot see Baecker, 2012, p. 109). Each 'particular, historically and regionally bounded culture … permits certain questions and not others' (p. 70). Thus, the engagement with strangers helps confront the limitations of all local knowledge and can increase creativity: *cosmopolitics* (Honig, 2006; Todd, 2010) and Arendt's visiting imagination are mutually enhancing.[10]

The contribution non-traditional candidates make to research is rarely acknowledged. Instead, their potential variance from standard behaviour or performance is still explained by a deficit model (Cunningham, 2011, pp. 145–149). According to Rancière, this is endemic in progressive societies in which teachers or supervisors are 'those at the top of the class' (Rancière, 2010, p. 14). An ignorant supervisor, by contrast, does not start from the assumption of a candidate's ignorance but from the equality of his or her knowledge: 'the one who is supposedly ignorant in fact already understands innumerable things' (Rancière, 2010, p. 5). While expertise almost inevitably shores up existing systems, the heightening of a gap in the prevailing configurations of concepts enables a questioning of current 'ways of being and ways of doing, seeing and speaking' (2010, p. 15).

The Thing in Common

By discussing institutional and theoretical matters before a sustained reflection of the two supervision constellations underpinning this article, I have put the cart before the horse: the experiences gained in these relationships first prompted me to investigate their context theoretically. However, this sequence will, I hope, make it easier to connect the experiential and the abstract and will add weight to the former.

The first of these experiences was the collaboration with Moana Nepia, a mature candidate with an extensive career as a dancer, choreographer, painter and tertiary educator. His thesis, begun in 2008, straddled several disciplines: dance, choreography and video (only the latter is established at our School). Originally entitled 'The Poetics of Performance: strategies for innovation and creativity within the context of Maori visual and performing arts', it was submitted for examination as 'Te Kore— Exploring the Māori Concept of Void'. This change of title reflects a conceptual shift over the course of the thesis trajectory. When Moana developed his Application for Confirmation of Candidature in 2009, some comments made by internal reviewers flagged a distinct risk that the thesis might be evaluated according to irrelevant criteria. As a practitioner and lecturer, but also as a Māori, Moana conceptualised performance differently from his reviewers. Working within Western art and design paradigms, the latter did not realise that Moana used key terms and methods in ways unfamiliar to them. As co-supervisors, Welby Ings and I suggested that Moana might reduce ambiguity by explicitly focusing on the mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge)

underpinning his research. Moana subsequently foregrounded Māori accounts of creativity in his thesis. Its topic, and a specifically developed methodology, *Aratika*,[11] drew upon a field of iwi (tribal), hapū (sub-tribal) and whānau (extended family) knowledge cultures. This greater emphasis on mātauranga Māori meant for me, as a supervisor, that I now knew even less about Moana's research field and methods. This was daunting enough. What made it even more daunting was a prevailing apparent consensus about the importance and necessity of a tight fit between candidates' and supervisors' research fields.

However, such expectation focuses unduly on the dyadic relationship between supervisor and candidate and does not take account of other members of the 'learning alliance' (Halse & Bansel, 2012, p. 384). Moana is embedded in a plurality of intersecting worlds of choreographers, dance practitioners, visual artists, managers, academics and Māori tribal repositories of knowledge. To expand the range of consultation formally available to him, we appointed an additional Māori supervisor, Wiremu Kaa. I encouraged Moana to further develop his collaborations with some of his PhD peers and professional or academic colleagues, but also to engage with the literature on non-traditional PhDs, for instance Laura Brearley and Treahna Hamm's *Ways of Looking and Listening.*

Stories from the Spaces Between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Knowledge Systems (Brearley & Hamm, 2009).[12] Within this network of precedents, expert and peer support, Moana's confidence grew and he gained greater clarity and commitment to his ideas (earlier on, his drifting around concepts and practices had presented challenges in supervision). Moana later confidently responded to criticism by a staff member who could not recognise effective progress. In December 2012, Moana's thesis was examined and he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, subject only to minor editorial amendments. In May 2013, he won a position as Assistant Professor at the University of Hawai'i's Centre for Pacific Studies. To his farewell party came people who had, like me, taken part in the 2009 dance wānanga (workshop) at Te Ariuru in Tokomaru Bay (of old a Whare Wānanga, house of higher learning) that initiated his PhD project. They had continued as ongoing critical friends and advisors in various capacities. Without their support, Moana would not have been able to complete his PhD. Their collective knowledge, I think, was more important than ours as supervisors. Our role, as I see it, was to help Moana shape his trajectory: initially to show him the academic ropes, to support him in critical engagement, determination and maintenance of focus. Later on, we assisted him in drawing together disparate strands; in shaping, honing and connecting the different elements of his work into a coherent whole; and, finally, in forging the submission of his creative practice and exegesis for examination.

What this supervision has taught me is that intercultural and creative practice-led research supervisions need pedagogies about which we may know little yet, and that a transmission of knowledge from supervisor to candidate cannot work in important areas.[13] What it has also taught me is that there are other ways of supporting a candidate towards a successful completion than the conveyance of expert knowledge.[14] Moana's PhD project was not exceptional—Edwards (2013); Grant (2013); Manathunga (2013) and Mika (2013)—all contributors to a book initiated by Moana's and Azadeh's supervision constellations—render similar accounts. Crucial is an 'epistemological position that is open to and curious about different ways of knowing and thinking' (Manathunga, 2013, p. 81) and recognises the intimate connection of knowing and not-knowing. This recognition might at times require joint visits to 'dark, dead-end alleyways', it also offers 'powerful avenues for *transculturation*' (p. 81).

Azadeh Emadi immigrated to Aotearoa/New Zealand from Iran in 2003, changing languages, cultural context and communities. After completing a Certificate in Art and Design, she obtained Bachelor and Master's degrees in Spatial Design at AUT University. Now in the third year of her PhD candidature, Azadeh's video practice explores conjunctions between pixel/frame and individual/community in a realm of transnational moving images. Theoretically, she engages Persian/Islamic art forms and philosophies (e.g. Mulla Sadrā Shirazi's), as well as Gilles Deleuze's work on cinema. With Azadeh, I am truly an *Ignorant Supervisor*, but her learning alliance, too, reaches beyond our school: her second supervisor is Professor Laura Marks from Simon Frazer University, Vancouver. Laura Marks worked intensively with Azadeh in the interfaces of Western and Islamic theories, particularly during Azadeh's stay in Vancouver (September–December 2012), during which Azadeh advanced her literature review on Sadrā and Deleuze.[15] This geographical spread of responsibilities can be challenging: on Azadeh's return from Canada, after months of theoretical discussions, she wanted to increase the written, scholarly portion of her thesis. Azadeh's 'fantasy' of research had shifted, it seemed to me, and her self-image as a researcher was strongly impacted by theoretical preoccupations.

While, in every PhD project, there will be 'inevitably a huge splashing around at the start, where various things are being tried and ideas being tested' (Dorrian et al., 2012), the attendant uncertainty can be intensified by disputes about the relationship between artefact and written component in the thesis. Before Azadeh's return from Canada, I had thought that the proclaimed adversity of creative practice and theoretical engagement belonged to the realm of myth making. Now, I witnessed with sur- prise how writing seemed in danger of stultifying the practice that was to lead Azadeh's research. For Azadeh, this situation is doubly difficult as she still struggles with aspects of English academic writing. In the ensuing discussions, we wondered about the nature of a practice-

led thesis, and how reading and making could be brought into a generative relationship again. To create a *thing in common*, we set out to map the territory of her thesis in diagrammatic form and to articulate the practical modes of her investigation. Azadeh then presented a mock-up of her intended exhibition as an overview of her practice, to identify ways in which practice might lead her research. This presentation brought the production of artefact and exegesis much closer together again.[16] My role in this situation can obviously not be that of a conveyor of knowledge. I see it, rather, as challenging Azadeh to make informed decisions about the focus of her thesis and to start thinking through practice again.

If supervisors are not conveyors of knowledge, how can they help candidates to activate their own knowledge and to draw on the networks of distributed knowledge they belong to? Provisionally, I think an answer involves the consideration of research outcomes as *things in common*. Rather than books written by someone else (as in Rancière), they are, in the first instance, the candidates' own theses (research practice and exegesis). Occasional collaborations between candidates and supervisors on work- shops, papers or publications can also be fruitful. Moana Nepia's initiation of PhD research with the four-day waˉnanga in Tokomaru Bay, for instance, involved me as participant observer and cook. I was there when videos of a day's experiment were discussed and witnessed the coming together of choreographed pieces. These shared experiences created a common ground that supported our supervisory relationship to the end. With Azadeh Emadi, I shared the writing of a paper concerning threshold experiences in PhD research and supervision (Engels-Schwarzpaul & Emadi, 2011), which led to extensive discussions of appropriate epistemologies and metaphors in a PhD research project spread over four different continents. The production of our joint paper (including the revision following feedback from reviewers) provided a Third Space advancing our mutual understanding of the research contexts—as potentiality and new beginning (Masschelein, 2011, p. 532). Our thing in common also repositioned us in relation to each other.[17]

Gradually, attention and will, by which Rancière places great store, manifest in the research outcomes. Increasingly, too, intelligence (see Cornelissen, 2010, pp. 531–532) no longer relies on chance: iterations in the work, to which correspond iterative conversations, 'create the conditions to re-see' similar aspects under different conditions and to 'orm words, sentences, and figures, in order to tell others' (p. 532). The articulation needed for communication with outsiders develops (see Cornelissen, 2010, pp. 531–532). In other words, conversations about research work help generate a vocabulary and theoretical stance that place the work in a context within which it can be scrutinised.

Rancière uses the figure of the poet to demonstrate attentive production of a work: 'All of the poet's effort, all his work, is to create that aura around each word, each expression. It is for this reason that he analyzes, dissects, translates others' expressions, that he tirelessly erases and corrects his own' (Rancière, 1991, p. 69). An 'unconditional tension' requires the presence of both translator and imagined counter-translator (the reader, without whom the work will not exist): 'The artist needs equality as the explicator needs inequality' (pp. 70–71). In this (in)tense space, candidates and supervisors are equally able to think and to question the given. Supervisors can do 'certain things' to advance this by preparing 'themselves (through experiments or exercises) in order to allow for a public space and a thing in common between them and their students to come into existence' (Cornelissen, 2010, p. 537).

Material *things in common* thus enable an exchange of knowledge in different fields and at different levels by supporting the increasing articulation of thinking. In this way, they can open the common world of supervision to welcome outsiders and to forge learning alliances. For Moana and Azadeh, but also for me, their presentations and the ensuing discussions with other candidates, supervisors, practitioners, as well as with academics and non-academics from similar and different fields, were stimulating and contextualising occasions. Not-knowing played an important role as an integral part of knowing—as it should everywhere in research, where uncertainty by definition lies

at the heart of all engagements, but particularly so in the 'creative industries'. The focus on a thing in common created grounds on which negative capability could be maintained and a false sense of certainty suspended. The resulting openness to the unfamiliar on the part of all supervision team members, paired with a tolerance for the incomplete nature of all inquiries, allowed a shared sense of wonder to emerge. This wonder, I think, nurtures epistemological modesty and an attitude of inquiry that takes account of the blind spots in one's traditions. Modesty makes space for genuine interest in the unique contributions to knowledge that can arise from unfamiliar situations and non-traditional approaches.

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Notes

1. Before the 1970s, students at Western universities were overwhelmingly 'male, from high-status social-economic backgrounds, members of majority ethnic and/or racial groups, and without disability' (Taylor & Beasley, 2005, p. 141).

2. Between 1998 and 2006 in Aotearoa/New Zealand, for instance, the number of Māori doctoral enrolments grew by 79%, and that of Pacific doctoral enrolments by 187% (Çinlar & Dowse, 2008, p. 68).

3. The very uncertainty about questions, methods and standards at PhD levels, and the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and candidates in multidisciplinary and practice-led PhDs (Taylor & Beasley, 2005, p. 41) opens onto new possibilities.

4. A 2012 *Google Scholar* search for 'epistemological modesty' and 'disciplinary competence' might indicate the environmental pressures experienced by supervisors to perform competently in their discipline. With various filters applied, the former search generated 16–31 results, the latter 56–112 results.

5. Dorrian speculates that someone who asserts 'a much more dominant position', as 'a recognised expert in the field', might be less flexible. In his experience, it 'is almost always not the case' that the supervisor is an expert in the candidate's field, anyway.

6. Less radical, but with a similar impetus, Chris Smith (Associate Professor in Architectural Design and Techné, The University of Sydney) remarked during the PhD Panel Discussion 'The doctoral beat' at the 2012 *Space|Talk* (Postgraduate symposium in Spatial Design, AUT School of Art + Design) on 24 June 2013 that there should be at least one person on every supervision team who takes care of the logic and construction of the thesis—no matter what their own field of expertise.

7. 'Even Joseph Jacotot himself would never have understood it without the chance event that had turned him into the ignorant schoolmaster. Only chance is strong enough to overturn the instituted and incarnated belief in inequality'. (Rancière, 1991, p. 133).

8. In so doing, they 'moved along in a manner one shouldn't move along—the way children move, blindly, figuring out riddles. And the question then became: wasn't it necessary to overturn the admissible order of intellectual values? Wasn't that shameful method of the riddle the true movement of human intelligence taking possession of its own powers?' (p. 10) In a mode of explication, students have 'to avoid the chance detours where minds still incapable of distinguishing the essential from

the accessory, the principle from the consequence, get lost' (p. 3). However, creative practice-led research partially depends on chance and the recognition of serendipity.

9.   So much so that he does not seem to notice that he transfers hierarchical relationship from the school as an institution of learning into the family (and with few exceptions to the father, not the mother) in his polemic against institutionalised mastership.

10. The co-presence of different approaches non-traditional candidates brings to the research environment also amplifies aspects traditionally considered vital to science: the 'systematic comparison of one knowledge with another for the sake of gaining a third' (Baecker, 2012, p. 70).

11. Aratika is composed of ara = pathway, approach; tika = appropriate, correct.

12. Brearley and Hamm also published a chapter, 'Spaces between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Deep Listening to Research in a Creative Form' (Brearley & Hamm, 2013) in Of Other Thoughts: Non-traditional ways to the doctorate (Engels-Schwarzpaul & Peters, 2013), to which Moana also made a contribution. As the thesis and the book evolved, it was nice for me to watch the intersection shared by candidates and supervisors.

13. See McKinley and Grant (2012).

14. Michael Singh makes a pertinent observation about Western 'conscientious academics' who want to 'transmit their knowledge to international students'—their actions in good faith often come with 'complaints against ignorant students for their lack of critical thinking skills, focused writing, academic honesty and strategies for deep learning' and the request for remedial action 'to compensate for these deficits' unless they look to their own 'cross- cultural ignorance and what it means for enabling the agency of research students' from other cultures and take on the 'challenge of learning about new ways of engaging research students from other educational cultures in ways that use their intellectual capital, about which the supervisor knows very little' (Singh, 2009, p. 194).

15. Closer to home, Geraldene Peters from AUT's School of Communication is an additional supervisor supporting Azadeh's thesis in video practice and the politics and experiences of identity and place and James Charlton has provided valuable advice on matters digital.

16. Shortly after, Azadeh and I had an opportunity to discuss the relationship of practice and exegesis in more detail during a School of Art and Design writing retreat. Another presentation is planned for the end of the year, to lay out the ground for the final version of the thesis, just before the appointment of examiners is due.

17. Another, very important factor, was the fact that I spent between one and two weeks in both Moana's and Azadeh's 'native environments': in both cases, the visit to their worlds (in Ngāti Porou and Iran) helped me make connections in their work which might have otherwise remained unnoticed.

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