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‘And thou shall find your path’: The Manifesto in Doctoral Writing Development

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Abstract

If writing pedagogy aims at writer development rather than text fixing, understanding how the writer sees that development is a key element of our skillset as writing teachers. In this article, we argue that a writing manifesto is a way for academic writers to express their development – one that, crucially, draws on semiotic resources outside the usual palette of academic writing. We situate this argument in the literature about reflective writing, which sees reflection as key in writing development, but which also points to the limits of certain kinds of reflective writing. Specifically, several scholars have noted how the reflective essay, traditionally conceived, tends to be constructed of formulaic mappable moves that can obstruct meaningful reflection. By analysing a corpus of manifestos created by doctoral writers, we show how the writers’ use of distinctive semiotic resources – irony, parody, font choice, layout – allow the writers to position themselves as agentive, and present themselves as the makers, not the recipients, of rules about writing. The manifesto, then, is a useful genre for enabling reflection and development because it can create space for writers’ agency and text ownership. Our analysis highlights the value of further discussion about alternate modes of reflective writing.

Introduction

Writer development is a key issue in writing pedagogy. Indeed, many writing teachers, ourselves included, hold that a main goal is to develop writers rather than to fix texts (to echo Stephen North’s (1984) popular dictum). If this is our goal, an essential question is how to track the writer’s development, and their own sense of that development: how do we make sense of the metacognitive resources (we hope) they are acquiring? It follows that if we are mostly interested in the writer’s development, a ‘fixed text’ might not – at least in any transparent way – say much about that development.

Writing development is a complex concept. In their review of research on writing development, Severino et al. (2020, pp. 166 - 171) identify six different aspects treated in writing development research: psychological factors, cognitive factors, social factors, rhetorical factors, linguistic factors, socioeconomic, political and racial factors. They also note that different strands of research have tended to focus on different factors. For example, research on the writing development of second-language writers has tended to focus more on linguistic factors than research analysing first-language writing (Severino et al., 2020, pp. 168 -169). We recognize the complex nature of writing development as a concept, and the need to specify which elements are of interest to us, and why. As we are interested in understanding the development of fairly advanced writers, our focus is on aspects that are typically understood as the psychological, rhetorical and social factors of writing development. All the writers in our study use English as an additional language, and thus linguistic factors are certainly important. Yet, we argue that the most critical development aspects for these writers have to do with the shift from novice to expert, what in doctoral writing literature is referred to as ‘identity work’ - involving rhetorical positioning, social positioning, authority and legitimation (Barnacle & Dall’Alba, 2014; Kamler & Thomson, 2014; Lee & Aitchison, 2009; Starke-Meyerring, 2011). Common to all

areas of development – whether undergraduate, postgraduate, L1 or L2 – is the idea that writing development is not linear or smooth (Bazerman et al., 2017). So it is no surprise that reflection as part of the writing process has gained importance in the field; as Bazerman (2003, n.p.) says, "As writers, we are all reflective practitioners."

Reflection can be seen as having a dual purpose in writing development. It makes the writer's own processes visible, and available for discussion (e.g., Sommers, 1988), and is also an important device in that developmental process. As Beaufort (2007) points out, reflection helps the student to translate writing course material into their own disciplines, and integrate course techniques into their own writing habits, thereby getting a step closer to effective transfer (Monbec, 2018; Taczac & Robertson, 2016). Reflection can be said to have a metacognitive dimension therefore (Yancey, 2016); reflection means going "beyond the task itself to the wider implications of the work at hand" (Granville & Dison, 2005, p. 101). All of this should make reflection an indispensable part of any writing course.

Yet, different writing courses might require opportunities for different forms of reflection, depending on the needs and contexts of the students. For many undergraduate students, for example, going 'beyond the task itself' means being able to move between writing contexts of different university courses. For doctoral writers, however, going 'beyond the task itself' often means being able to envision writing as an integral part of being a researcher, of writing for peers and for publication. Alison Lee has discussed the development of this type of awareness for doctoral writers as the process of "becoming rhetorical" (2010, p.27). Becoming rhetorical means "learning how to position one's work within a community of scholars, to address a readership of peers" (Lee, 2010, p. 27). This process, for Lee, is essential to successful candidature – it is a becoming whereby a metacognitive experience of audience is internalised and that audience anticipated with each act of writing. This is very different from the writing development at undergraduate level, and so opens the question of different levels of development requiring different kinds of reflection, to best serve the transfer and metacognitive needs of the writer.

As we explain in more detail below, there is a sizable literature on reflective writing, which points to both the affordances and limits of such writing, traditionally conceived. Some scholars have noted that the traditional reflective statement or essay might invite a kind of emotional performativity that precludes rather than encourages reflection (see e.g., Ihara, 2014; O'Neill, 2002; and Macfarlane & Gourlay, 2009). In this paper, we go beyond noting the limits of the traditional reflective essay, to ask what other forms of writing might enable and sustain reflection, development and metacognition for doctoral writers.

We address this question by analysing a set of writing manifestos created by the students on the doctoral and research writing course we run at OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University in Oslo, Norway. As part of this course, we have for many years used the reflective statement to open a dialogue about development with candidates (Sommers, 1988), and have also encouraged the use of literacy autobiographies as ways of reframing and interrogating the idea of academic development (Canagarajah, 2013). To further this range of reflective genres for the students, we also began giving them the option to create writing manifestos as another approach to expressing their own development. The manifesto is a very different performance to the reflective statement. A manifesto expresses, projects or even shouts about tenets, beliefs, principles. The manifesto writer takes possession of a public arena and fills that arena with their own voice.

The present study is based on 20 manifestos that have been submitted as part of the research writing course. We examine here what the manifestos *do*, and analyse what their expanded palettes tell us about the agency and development of the manifesto writers. We argue that one of the benefits of the manifesto is that it is emphatically not an academic text – the reflective statement can slide into a certain kind of academic performance, but the manifestos are humorous, playful, flamboyant and boisterous. In what follows, we explore the ways research writers use the wider affective and tonal palette of the manifesto to play with academic identity and, crucially, occupy the position of rule-maker. Our goal is to offer an empirically-informed

theoretical contribution to the literature on reflection and writing development by exploring manifestos as an alternate form of reflective writing for doctoral writing development.

Reflective Writing and Its Discontents

Granville and Dison (2005) show the value of incorporating reflective exercises into a course in academic literacy development. Their intervention took the form of meta level questions given to students, so that students could reflect back explicitly what they had learned. As Monbec (2018) explains, the limits of any writing course lie with the degree it prepares a student to transfer technique to their own studies and assignments, and reflection is something that can assist with this (cf. Beaufort, 2007). One of the striking elements of Granville and Dison's work, though, is their connection of reflection to identity formation. To reflect means becoming a different kind of student, which echoes Yancey's (2016) emphasis on the idea of reflection as dialogic, Bakhtinian. For our purposes, then, working with research writers, we could make the case that reflection is bound up with Lee's idea of becoming rhetorical that we referenced above, i.e., writer development through the internalisation of an audience of peers.

So far, so good. However, another question emerges from these observations: even if we expect becoming rhetorical to be a component of the reflection, should the reflective statement itself resemble an academic text? In their formality and metadiscoursive components, the reflection statements we encounter suggest that their writers believe that any document produced in a higher education setting must simply bear the hallmarks of academic writing. However, there are two risks here – first, that the reflective statement simply presents 'the best student self,' and tells us what we want to hear (Conway in Yancey 2016) and second, that the document, through continuing to be academic misses some opportunities to reflect. It remains too formally close to the object or process being reflected on. An effect of both of these risks is that the writer ends up writing something quite formulaic (e.g., O'Neill, 2002). The formulaic quality that concerns O'Neill is something Macfarlane and Gourlay (2009) pick up in a highly satirical text, which compares the formulae of reflective writing to the performance of emotional growth by contestants on a reality TV show. It is no surprise, then, that educators have begun to find alternative modes for reflection and metacognition. One very striking approach is getting students to draw their experiences in the form of comic strip: Whiting (2020), experiments with comics as reflection as an escape from what he sees as the artificial, formalised modes of reflection demanded of medical students. Comics, says Whiting, "give practitioners the freedom to explore different ways of thinking, or acting, through an informal, creative medium" (np). Part of the antidote comics offer to more formulaic ways of reflecting is the creation of liminal spaces that demand the participation of the reader: in comics, it is the gutter between the panels, which demand that the reader fills in action from one panel to the next (cf. McCloud 1994). With the manifestos we describe below, this liminal space is opened up by choices in font, colour and layout.

The Manifesto as a Pedagogical Genre

An extensive literature has analysed the form and function of the manifesto in political, artistic, and literary arenas (for an overview, see Yanoshvsky, 2009). There is less work on the manifesto in pedagogical contexts, but we are certainly not the first to draw on this genre in university teaching contexts. Fahs (2019), for example, used the genre in a Gender and Women's Studies class, and points out that some of the pedagogical potential of the genre is that – unlike traditional academic writing - it situates writers in a position of authority. She notes that it propels students to speak with authority, in a context in which they often feel like they have none: "Manifestos," she argues, "tap into a completely different emotional and psychological register than other forms of academic writing. (…) Manifestos push back not only against the traditional practices of academic writing, but they also defy traditional ways of academic thinking" (p. 35). She also notes that in her experience, manifestos are particularly empowering for groups of students who often feel disempowered in university contexts in some way, such as students of colour, working-class students, or students with disabilities.

Williams (2020) describes using the manifesto as an assignment in his creative writing class, and he also notes the empowering aspects of manifestos for students feeling insecure and

hesitant about their position as novice writers. He argues that "the experience of writing a manifesto for these students became an act of writerly self-realisation, a 'coming out' as a writer" (p.78). In particular, he points out how the students used the manifesto to develop a meta-cognitive level of self-reflection necessary to succeed as writers. To him, manifestos are a key resource in arriving at such insight because it offers a way of drawing together discursive modes typically belonging to different domains to offer different identity and authorial positions. To Williams, the manifesto "blurs the boundaries between creative and critical writing and allows possibilities beyond these binaries. Many students ventured into experimental ficto-criticism, parody of academic discourse (e.g., footnoting, inserts, Paris Review style interviews), metafiction, and multimedia (visual or graphic representation)" (p. 78).

Although used in different disciplinary contexts, both Fahs and Williams note how the manifesto puts the writer in charge in different ways when compared to other forms of writing, often inspiring self-discovery, play, and deep sense of agency in terms of making writerly choices. While we started experimenting with manifestos in our academic writing course before Fahs and Williams published their texts, their analyses resonate with our experience of the kind of reflection and development the manifestos enable.

Context and materials

Our context for using manifestos to approach writing development is a credit-bearing, elective course called Academic Writing for Researchers that we and other colleagues in our unit have developed and teach every semester. The course has been running in various iterations over the last 15 years and is open for any faculty member who has at least an MA degree. While the course has been taken by postdocs and professors, most of our students are PhD candidates; so, although our sample includes manifestos written by postdocs and other novice research writers, our analysis emphasises writing development for doctoral candidates.

The course consists of six day-long sessions meeting every two weeks in small groups of max 12 students from different disciplinary backgrounds, mostly from health sciences, education, engineering and social sciences. Throughout the course, the students work on their own writing projects, typically a journal article, a book chapter or some other text intended for publication. The course material follows a mostly genre-based approach, focusing on analytical strategies for discovering the writing conventions relevant to their disciplines and ways that such awareness might be implemented, challenged, or resisted in the students' own writing projects.

The manifesto may be chosen as an element in the final assessment of the course, which consists of three main components:

- A revised version of a text-in-progress submitted at the start of the semester.
- A 30-minute oral exam, which includes a presentation of which changes they have made in their original text and why these changes were made.
- A reflection statement OR a manifesto OR a literacy autobiography OR a visual representation or some other form of artistic representation.

As the final bullet point makes clear, the manifesto, is one of several genres available intended to enable an opportunity to consolidate how the writers experienced their development and how they imagine taking this development further in future writing.

Figure 1 below shows an excerpt from the exam assignment. We provided similar brief explanations for the other reflective genres the students may choose for this element of the exam, but since our focus in this article is on the manifesto, we have only included the text for this option here. As shown in Figure 1, we provide a brief explanation of what a manifesto is, and we provide links to some example manifestos written in other than educational contexts, such as arts and politics. Beyond these brief explanations and resources, we do not formally offer any sessions on 'how to write a manifesto.' Instead, we talk through and discuss all of the reflective genres that the students can choose from, and explain the overall purpose of the reflective component. No matter which option the students choose, we stress that our purpose

is not to test their ability to master a particular genre, but rather, we want them to use the genre to generate a way to comment on their own development and learning. We then urge students to choose the option that they think sounds most interesting, appealing or enjoyable to them.

> Instead of a reflection statement, you might choose to write either a manifesto, a literacy autobiography or make a visual representation or some other form of artistic representation.
>
> **Manifesto:**
>
> A manifesto is a declaration of beliefs, values, commands or ideals often listed as tenets or numbered points. A manifesto can be silly, serious, sad, ironic, over-the-top, angry etc. etc. It does not have to be a realistic representation of how you write, but it can express your goals, your frustrations, your hopes, your ideals about academic writing. Often manifestos are public declarations, but if you would like to, you can write a manifesto for yourself, as a list of points, strategies, ideas to remember.

Figure 1. Excerpt from the exam assignment text

In the years since the greater range of reflective genres have been introduced, on average a fourth of the students in each class have chosen the manifesto option. The corpus of manifestos analysed here stem from 9 classes completed between 2017 and 2021. We wrote to students who had written a manifesto as a part of their exam after they had completed the course to ask for their permission to use their manifesto in this project. By asking for consent after they had completed the exam, we avoided a situation where students felt obligated to participate in order to receive a passing grade. The participants might still have felt obligated to us in other ways since they knew us from the course, so although we stressed the voluntary nature of participation, some might have felt obligated to help us to be 'good' colleagues.

Since the manifestos were first handed in as an exam, we knew the identities of all the manifesto-writers. Upon receiving consent to use the manifestos, we anonymized them by removing names and other identifying information. We also put all the manifestos in one pool without noting which year or semester the participant completed the course. In our consent form, we noted that participants should keep in mind that if they had made their manifestos public in any way (e.g., by posting on social media or having their manifesto pinned to their office wall), readers of our article, might be able to recognize their manifestos from these public arenas. Everyone we asked consented to let us use their manifesto, resulting in a corpus of 20 manifestos. The project has been approved by the Norwegian Data Protection Services (Notification Form 575187)

Our material consists of manifestos written by course participants who chose to write them rather than one of the other reflective genres available to them. Those who chose the manifesto option were not systematically different from the students who chose the other options in terms of their gender, age, disciplinary background, or prior writing experience. However, it is difficult to assess whether they might already have shared certain similarities in terms of levels of self-efficacy, positionality and writerly identity. In other words, we cannot really say whether the manifesto writers shared characteristics that distinguished them from students who wrote other reflective genres, indicating that our analysis might have looked different in a project where the manifesto was required of all students.

Analysing Manifestos

We separately made first passes through the texts, noting anything that struck us and any potential initial categories and groupings. In this first stage of analysis, we focused on what the manifestos emphasised in terms of content, structure, and visual design. This gave us a sense of the range of approaches the students took. For example, we saw that the manifestos fell along a continuum as to the degree to which they stayed close to or moved further away from the course material and course readings. While some manifestos were organised around

course content, others were driven by tone, stylistic elements, or by elements from the writer's discipline.

Based on this initial analysis, which helped us identify the content of the manifestos, we conducted a second round of analysis using concepts from writing development literature. This round of analysis was conducted by moving back and forth between the material and the concepts found in writing development literature of particular relevance for doctoral writing. The concepts that struck us as most useful for understanding the manifestos were the following:

- Self-efficacy – the degree to which the manifestos commented on or expressed the writer's belief that research writing was something they could do.
- Social positioning – the degree to which the manifestos commented on or expressed the writer's perceptions of the social positioning of novice researchers and doctoral writers.
- Writerly identity – the degree to which the manifestos commented on or expressed the writer's perception of what kind of writer they wanted to be.

Based on these two rounds of analysis, we present the ways a selection of the manifestos address these issues in writing development. Although we match a manifesto to each issue, all the manifestos in fact address all the issues: while we chose manifesto 4, for example, to discuss writerly identity, identity is also addressed by manifestos 1, 2 and 3. But structuring the analysis like this allows the manifestos to take centre stage. They are distinctive enough to be shown in their entirety, and for us to want to comment on the unique effects of each.

We are particularly interested in the way semiotic choices of font, layout, and lexis interact with the overall subject matter and emphasis of each manifesto and how this interaction expresses or comments on one or several of concepts of writing development, thus combining the first and second stage of our analysis. The aim is not to say, for example, that in each case 'font x performs x effect,' but to try and attend to the uniqueness of each manifesto and how it creates its own effects, and how such effects speak to the writer's perception of themselves as a writer.

The goal of our analysis, then, is to show how the manifesto as a genre invites students to inhabit positions where they make the rules. Instead of following 'writing rules' or demonstrating genre knowledge, the students articulate their own rules, and put the rules to work for their own purposes. This writerly position, we suggest, allows students not only to demonstrate acquired knowledge about genre, writing, linguistics and rhetorical resources, but also to show how they may put this knowledge to use in future writing.

A Tour of Manifestos

Manifestation 1: Process and Self-Efficacy

One way of beginning to think about the work the manifestos do for their writers is to consider how the writers use them to talk about their writing processes and self-efficacy (e.g., Wood & Bandura 1989, Lavelle 1993, 2009). Self-efficacy – the writer's belief in their ability to complete a task – is what launches our first example (see Figure 2). The manifesto's tenets are arranged like a clockface, beginning with the will to write first thing in the morning, "even the days you don't really want to." As we travel round the clock face, the writer stresses the persistence that comes with self-efficacy (Lavelle 2009), before moving clockwise to more process-oriented tenets – as though the practice and persistence yields the capacity to integrate what they have learned into the writing day.

The way the self-efficacy tenets yield more process-oriented tenets could be seen as a reflection of writing processes as complex and multiple (Bazerman et al., 2017), and the repertoire of linguistic, motivational and cognitive work that makes up writing at this level (e.g., Graham, Harris & Santangelo, 2015). Through its integration of a range of elements (motivational, rhetorical, process-oriented) the manifesto enacts metacognition around writing, which is vital for successful writing development.

Figure 2. Manifesto 1, 'My Academic Writing Manifesto'

We find similar emphases on process and self-efficacy in our second example (Figure 3). Again, we find a combination of process-oriented motivational injunctions and rhetorical techniques being integrated, calling to mind Lavelle's (2003) description of self-efficacy as based on the right strategy or cluster of techniques. One of the interesting things about the manifestos is that they are prospective – that is, they propose and organize change, they project a future writing self into the world. They represent an internalization of the idea that writing development needs to equip the candidate to take their next steps (Bazerman et al 2017).

Figure 3. Manifesto 2, 'My Writing Manifesto'

The metacognitive awareness of these writers is shown when they reframe and re-emphasise rhetorical techniques, showing how they have taken ownership of a technique and made it part of their own repertoire or arsenal. This is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Excerpts from manifestos 1 and 2 where writers reframe course material.

The excerpts in Figure 4 show the two writers skewing, reframing or ironizing course material to reflect their own agency as writers. The writer of Manifesto 2 does not simply tell us that they know that hedging is a feature of academic texts, or that academic writers are meant to hedge – instead, they tell us that their hedging may not do precisely what someone else's hedging does. Hedging is constructed here as a continuum of meaning rather than a binary (hedged or not) and, moreover, is something the writer can select or not: by couching the tenet as a warning ("be aware") the writer says, 'My hedging may not be doing what I want – maybe I need to nuance it, maybe I need to dial it down, maybe I need to turn it off.' Similarly, signposting is not treated as an inert artefact of academic texts – it is something to be crafted, and injudicious signposting may lead to a boring text. These examples, then, show the writer not merely reproducing writing course material but transforming it into a craft and tempering it with an aesthetic sensibility. But this is not the whole story, of course. We need only need look at the amused, parodic gaze these manifestos turn on the serious business of academic writing to see that something else is going on besides, or in excess of, a sober or neutral expression of development (Figures 5, 6 and 7).

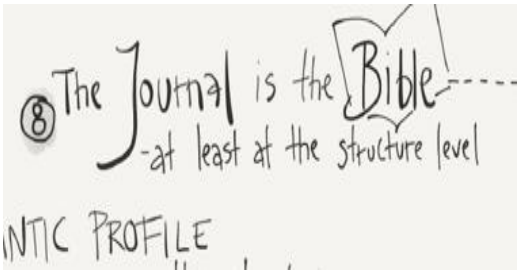

Figure 4. Excerpt from Manifesto 2.

Figure 5. Excerpt from Manifesto 2.

Figure 6. Excerpt from Manifesto 1.

In all these cases, we encounter a wild, gleeful, anarchic disposition, quite at odds with the restrained academic articles the course participants have been working on. We might argue here that these very distinct departures from an academic tone (that usually also marks reflective statements and literacy autobiographies) do metacognitive and motivational work – the writer emotionally charges up their writing intent by, precisely, liberating it from the restrictions of academic language.

We find an echo of this in these writers' choice of fonts, as well – in the fact that font has *become* a choice. Kress (2010) argues that font becomes a mode when a community of users agrees that the deployment of a font has a semiotic meaning; that when a font is used regularly and consistently, it reveals "shared assumptions about its meaning-potentials" (p. 88). The idea that fonts have a semiotic power in excess of textual semantics is well-established; as Juni and Gross (2008) observe, "the choice of font can alter the meaning and emotions attached to the content of reading" (p. 40). Various studies point to the personas of typefaces (Brumberger 2003; Lewis & Walker, 1989); but an interesting counterpoint for the present article is Shaikh, Chapparo and Fox's (2006) observation that serif fonts (such as Times New Roman) have been perceived as formal and practical, while non serifs (such as Arial) seemed to have no distinctive characteristics. The interesting thing here is that the manifesto writers do not choose 'serious' fonts, or 'neutral' ones – in their escape from academic texts, they pick distinctive and personal fonts. So, the choice of font is one way of breaking loose – but can we be sure what it communicates beyond this?

As Kress says, a font in repeated use will be imbued with meaning by its community of users (or designers). But these are not fonts in repeated or consistent use – they are one-time

choices, or if they are not, we do not know that. There is no shared network of meanings between the manifesto writer and us – but this may be precisely one of the effects activated by the manifesto. The font choice rejects the seriousness of Times and the emptiness of Arial, and replaces them with the fact that we, the examiners, and the manifesto writer cannot share precisely the same impression of font choice (although Manifesto 3, below does something different – gothic script is part of its parodic arsenal.) The font choice for manifestos 1 and 2 is therefore meta – the meaning we share is that it performs manifesto writing, or becoming manifesto. It offers a playful refusal of the apparent transparency of academic texts, and academic fonts.

Both manifestos are playful – the second one more clearly perhaps, in its droll, satirical deployment of biblical language – but their font choices and layouts signal that we are not in an entirely academic space now. Each writer plays with the resources of the page, experiments with layout and typography to assert their own agency – the agency is expressed through the experiment. As Kress (2010) observes, a "playful relation" (p. 68) tells us something about the social and power relations between actors. In this case, experiment and play permit the writer to interrupt the usual power dynamics of PhD candidature. The writers create their own rules about writing and write from the position of making the rules. The process in these two cases is dialectical – on the one hand, the absorption of course content might make the manifestos seem like documents that transmit the rules of the game; on the other hand, the rules are selected, personalised, and framed in distinctive ways. It is the manifestos' playfulness that permits their writers to occupy this position – it ironizes traditional academic power relations, even when humour is not an overt element. This ironizing becomes part of the writers' self-efficacy.

Manifestation 2: The Positionality of the Doctoral Candidate

The academic socialization of doctoral candidates is a complex process (Barnacle, 2005; Carlino 2012; Savva & Nygaard,2021; Wisker, 2016). As Grant (2004) points out, the candidate enters their field of research defensively, with the need to make their work acceptable to disciplinary masters. Unequal power relationships with disciplinary others – in particular the supervisor – are facets of the process of socialization or acculturation. Johnson, Lee and Green (2000) observe that the term supervision itself has "powerful overtones of 'overseeing' (of 'looking over' and 'looking after') the production and development of academic knowledge and researcher identity" (p. 142). Aitchison et al. document supervisors explicitly positioning themselves as "powerful knowers," (2012, p. 445), which has implications for the agency and autonomy of doctoral students. Of course, doctoral students are not robots, who must obey supervisor commands, or who merely act out the scripts of malign power relations. Sala-Bubaré and Castelló (2017), for example, document the range of community resources outside the supervisory dyad that doctoral writers draw on to sustain themselves. As they say, "more recent studies adopt different perspectives that stress newcomers' active role in the socialization process, and their efforts to move from periphery to more central positions by engaging in an increasing number of prototypical activities and relationships" (p. 17).

In this context, the manifestos can express both the agency of the writer, as they assemble the techniques that will benefit them in writing, but also the complex power relations and socialization experiences that make up PhD candidature. We see this in the next manifesto, which uses parody and satire to speak back to the power structures the candidate inhabits. It presents a humorous and irreverent set of tenets for doctoral writers. The visual design is that of old parchment, stained with rings of coffee (or other beverages?), with an ornate gothic font, scurrilously conjuring an image of pirates, renegades, or other rebels from the norms of good society. By drawing on this aesthetic, the manifesto visually signals rebellion and the leaving of established norms.

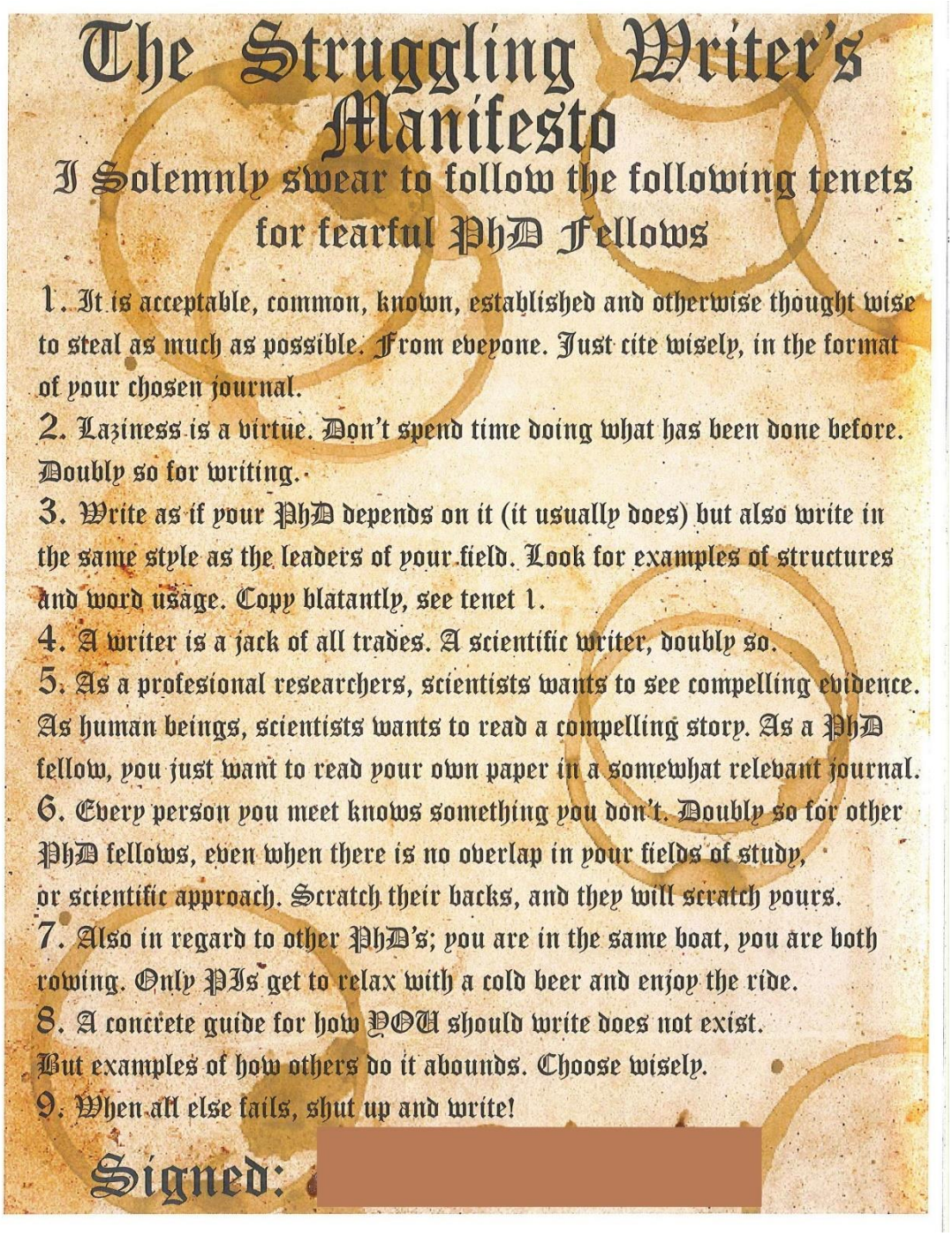

Figure 7. Manifesto 3, 'The Struggling Writer's Manifesto.'

Articulated as an oath, the manifesto turns the 'fearful PhD fellow' into a boastful and irreverent maverick. In the two first tenets (see Figures 9 and 10), the writer swears to steal and to be as lazy as possible, and turns these vices into virtues:

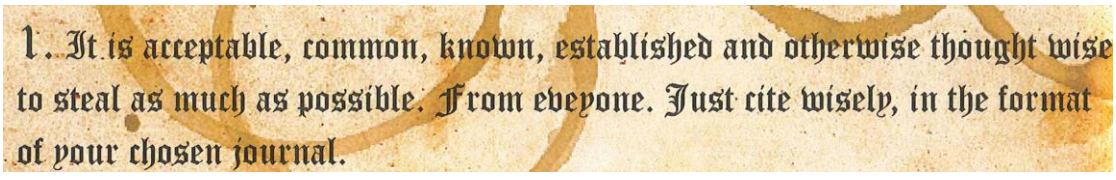

Figure 8. Excerpt from Manifesto 3.

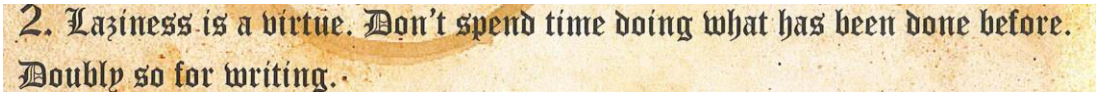

Figure 10. Excerpt from Manifesto 3.

Here, the writer uses the manifesto genre to speak back to the fearful position doctoral researchers sometimes find themselves in to reclaim a position of agency and power by exaggeration and humour. 'Stealing' might, of course, be another way to say 'building on the work of others' in more acceptable academic phrasing, while the virtue of "laziness" might be a way of pointing to the formulaic nature and phrases of academic writing and putting this knowledge to use for one's own purposes. This advice is also reference in the third tenet, which commands the writer to "copy blatantly" from the "style" of "leaders in your field."

In sum, this manifesto comically purveys an approach to writing that re-interprets genre knowledge as 'stealing' and 'laziness.' In other words, parody is one of the key devices used by this writer. Using the aged parchment effect and gothic script to project an image of piratical scandalousness, of swashbuckling braggadogio, the writer proceeds to parody the image of the ideal PhD student, and with it the canard of "hyper efficient candidature" (Lee & Green 2009, p. 625.) Smirking at the diligent, industrious, tireless researcher, the manifesto praises the feckless layabout.

Using parody as a meaning-making resource also recalls Manifesto 2's Biblical turns of phrase. The Ten Commandments-flavoured injunction 'Thou shalt ...' and the grandiose subjunctive 'May it reveal …' cheerfully mock academic writing as an idea and PhD candidature as a serious endeavour. Manifestos 2 and 4, then, use parody with an evaluative and polemical intent (Dentith, 2000). As Nunning (1999) observes, this evaluative function means the criticism of "prevailing aesthetic practices, traditions and styles" (p. 128) – in this case, the perception that academic writing and journal guidelines, are commandments, are inflexible – a kind of divine law. But there is more going on, of course – because the manifesto writers are themselves extremely committed academic writers, and do not parody academic conventions glibly or blithely. Hutcheon (1988) calls parody "repetition with critical distance" (p. 26) – so what we see here is the writers taking a step back and using parody to highlight the constructedness of the conventions. The Biblical language of Manifesto 2 and the gothic script of Manifesto 4 are at once of a piece with the hyperbolic tone of manifesto writing but crucially, in the space of difference Hutcheon identifies, they permit the writer to step into the role of rule-maker. Parody speaks back to the defensive position of the novice research writer, and becomes a resource for writer agency and self-assertion.

Manifestation 3: Writer identity

At doctoral level, the issues of transfer and writer identity are subtly interleaved. If transfer is what the writer is able to reapply from one context to another, from a writing course to their own discipline (Perkins & Salomon, 1994), writer identity is, in part, one product of this – as Hyland (2012) observes, writing for publication is very much a matter of claiming or manifesting a disciplinary identity in one's text. A writer writing for academic publication will demonstrate their awareness of disciplinary conventions and traditions, and write to mark out their belonging to that tradition. This process is marked by what Kamler and Thomson describe as the entangling of text work and identity work; to write is not only to produce text, it is to produce oneself as a scholar (Kamler & Thomson, 2014, p. 17). We see this being played out in all the manifestos, but it is particularly distinctive in our fourth example, here:

Figure 10. Manifesto 4, 'Manifesto for Free and Bold Academic Writing'

The first thing the reader's eye catches – before the title box that mentions writing – is tenet one, meaning that the reader's attention moves from discipline to writing, telling us about the writer's sense of the discipline-specificity of their work. Similarly, the second and third tenets emphasise key features of ethnographic writing to interpret and portray places, people, practices, and experiences. Tenets seven and eight quote anthropological researchers that are important to the writer, again grounding the manifesto in disciplinary specific discussions and ideals of writing.

One of the striking things about this manifesto is the way it plays with register, to borrow a term from Systemic Functional Linguistics. The register fluctuates because the manifesto incorporates texts with different tenors (e.g., Halliday and Martin, 1993). The whole text is written in the imperative, but fused to its injunctions to self are fragments from other texts where the tenor is different – in these, the tenor arises from the social relations between peers, and could be said to be authoritative (in the case of Kapferer quoted in tenet seven) and both droll and exhorting (in the case of Dunn quoted in tenet eight). This means that the text's voices, marshalled by the address to self, become a kind of dialogue – a Bakhtinian composite that enacts Lee's concept of becoming rhetorical (2010). Doctoral writing is often figured as a kind of becoming (see e.g., Barnacle, 2005; Lee, 2011), but becoming rhetorical situates writing, and writing development, as a central aspect of the process. Lee emphasises the importance of Bakhtin's concept of addressivity - writing for someone - in this process (2010, pp. 17-18). The manifesto allows room for a complex and shifting sense of who one is addressing – fellow students, teachers and supervisors, editors, peer reviewers, friends and family, but importantly also oneself. It represents the choir of voices, tones and affects that create addressivity and conjure the writing self. This manifesto, with its collision of tenors, creates a unique register of its own, and permits the writer to write towards herself, to anticipate the writer she is becoming. It inverts Conway's anxiety about reflection merely presenting the best student self (Conway in Yancey 2016) – it posits that self not as present performance but as future ideal, a textual self that the writer tries to summon with each key stroke. In sum, it is what the manifesto manifests.

Concluding remarks

Bringing together expressions of self-efficacy, positioning and identity, the manifesto becomes an unusual, provocative and playful expression of the writer's next steps, something essential in writing development (Bazerman et al., 2017). Indeed, the manifesto's playfulness, its drollness, is essential to this projection of the writer's intent. As Grant (2004) observes, it is easy for the doctoral candidate to feel defensive in the field they try to occupy, but expressing themselves in the form of a manifesto means that they perform the opposite of defensiveness – a variety of tonal effects become available, and the writer writes with aplomb. The bombast of the manifesto makes the reflective statement seem rather nervous, in comparison – still glued to the defensiveness of the neophyte.

It is important to note, though, that manifestos may become just as performative as other reflective writing genres. As both Fahs (2019) and Williams (2020) mention, when they used the genre in pedagogical settings, some students produced manifestos that seems cliched or "non interrogative" (Williams, 2020, p.78). Some of the manifestos in our sample do simply reproduce course material, or seem to try to act out the response the writers think we expect. In this sense, manifestos too run the risk of subjecting students to the emotional performativity that Macfarlane and Gourlay see as a "colonisation of the private self" (p. 458) in which a course is passed only by demonstrating a properly transformed self. Thus, the manifesto can veer into formulaic reproduction or self-colonising transformation just like other reflective assignments.

We began by plotting the manifestos' relationship to writing development issues such as self-efficacy and identity. But we could also plot them along a continuum of affect – the way the manifestos' composite semiotic modes convey whimsy, determination, cheerfulness, even preposterousness – and think about what these affects tell us too. It could be said that these affective modes avoid the pitfalls of reflective statements such as the colonisation of the private self, by not commenting on the writer's emotions directly but implying them with visual choices and subtext. As Whiting says in his analysis of the use of comics, a more creative way of reflecting opens up a liminal space where the writer's intent is subject to interpretation (we could say that the Manifesto 3's piratical parody also invites an interpretation of monastic seclusion – a different kind of parody). Nonetheless, it is a different way of opening up a conversation about academic writing and affect.

It is important to note that we, as the readers and examiners of these texts, are implicated in their construction. Like comics, with their liminal spaces, they are writerly (Barthes, 1974), in that they demand the reader's active participation. This means that they are quite unusual as examination documents. Indeed, to think of their value as limited to the exam is to miss the point. They go on working, go on prompting the writer to think, after the exam. We know one writer still keeps his manifesto pinned up where he writes; another posted hers on Twitter, prompting a discussion from her followers about academic writing.

Whiting also tells us that comics are a fun way of reflecting – something which we do not think should be underestimated. The grandiosity of the manifesto genre, its boisterous, larger than life disposition, invites, as Hutcheon suggests in her remarks about parody, a distance between the manifesto writer and their academic self that is both droll and critical. The importance of play in a range of activities – many of them very serious, many we would not hesitate to call work – is stressed by Winnicott (2005). Play, for Winnicott, means a profound immersion in a task, as when a child is immersed in an imaginary world. This immersion is the source of creative responses – so for the manifesto writers, it is a playful, creative response to academic writing and the creation of an academic self, crucially unencumbered by the paraphernalia of academic writing.

We conclude with some implications for pedagogy. The manifestos, we think, have been successful because they prompt the writer to reflect on academic writing without writing academically. This is the key pedagogical point: if reflective statements often find the writer

writing yet another academic text, more dynamic, unpredictable kinds of reflection can be triggered if the writer is encouraged to use other genres and semiotic resources. The aim is to avoid the writer falling back into their default modes of academic expression; it is to see the reflection as a kind of experiment, and discover what other resources might make of it.

This implication in turn yields an implication about the manifesto as an assessment document, and, therefore, what procedures we might have for teaching it – as Allan and Driscoll (2014) note, reflective assignments are better with judicious prompts and scaffolding. But our aim with the manifestos is not to 'teach' 'good' manifesto-writing. Nor, when we read them, are we asking, 'Has this student understood the salient features of the genre?' Other uses of the manifesto would require the pedagogy surrounding the genre to be adapted to the relevant purpose and context. It bears repeating: we are not assessing whether the manifesto is 'good'; in terms of assessment, it provides a jumping off point for a discussion of the student's learning in the oral exam that concludes the course. For this, it does not need to be 'good' – it is far more important that it is personal. We began using manifestos precisely to escape the routine performance of reflection identified by Macfarlane and Gourlay (2009), seeking responses that might be more unpredictable or less programmable, but this, of course, has another assessment implication. The manifesto, being less 'academic' and less predictable, has the capacity to surprise us, flummox us, startle us, amuse us, and (of course) sometimes disappoint us – meaning that it has more capacity to make us reflect, reassess, re-orient: on our own practice, on assessment, on reflection itself. Such are the manifestations of the manifesto.

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