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**The Pedagogy of Graduate Supervision:
Figuring the Relations between Supervisor and Student**

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requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education,
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Abstract

The supervision of graduate research students is a pedagogy under pressure. Increasingly, in neo-liberal universities, it is subject to regulation and surveillance as well as stringencies of time and intensified expectations. Yet it is an elusive pedagogy, one that has not been much theorised. This is the field that my thesis is situated within. Through a series of small studies, I explore the ‘and’ that relates ‘supervisor and student’ in order to shed some light on the “unstated ethics” (Jagodzinski, 2002, p.81) that shape how they act towards each other in supervision’s enclosed space. In the course of my enquiry, I critically engage with several dimensions of supervision: the public discourses that give it intelligibility, the layers of social relations that come into play, the meanings offered by a university’s code of practice, and those made by supervisors and students in an empirical study of several masters-level supervision pairs in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The main methodology used is a form of textual analysis that rests on an understanding of the slipperiness and ambiguity of texts and the inevitable partiality of interpretation. The mode of ‘knowing’ offered here is one of reading and re-reading supervision through a series of figurative rather than literal accounts, none of which is intended to offer the last word on this complex pedagogy. Reckoned together, the interpretations offered here – supervision as a discursive object, as a palimpsest-like field of triangular relations, as a project of governmentality, as a fantasy, as the relation of Master-Slave, and as improvisation – give an overarching sense of supervision as a messy and unpredictable pedagogy in which the academic and the personal come together in an unusual way. The significance of this understanding is that we cannot easily or meaningfully regulate or ‘train’ for supervision. Because of its implication in the production of original, independent academic work and the authorised academic subject, it must be as much a practice of improvisation as it is of regularity.

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