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A practice based PhD is never an easy thing to put into words – the quality of both the research-through-practice as well as the commentary on it is mutable and varied, a combination of process, practice and consideration. I am a doctoral candidate in Creative Writing, which consists of two parts: firstly, a poetry collection that I am writing, and is both added to and altered by every poem which I write. Loosely, ideas of absence and presence, loss and memory are an exploration of boundaries and borders, playing with the notion of something being at once something and also its opposite. This possibility, to be more than one thing at once, is something which I have always found most compelling about poetry, and it's the biggest creative challenge I think I face when writing. How do I take the familiar and make it strange? How do I make the unusual into something accessible? How can I be personal, and honest, yet still make something which offers something universal?

This questioning is mirrored in my critical component, which is an attempt to address the difficulties that writers face when being asked to write about writing, particulary in an English department where criticism is traditionally understood to be the critical study of existing literary works. I want to call into question the idea of "a creative writer" as a singular body when, like all people, a writer is composed of myriad changing parts. The question of a fluid and changing identity is an idea borrowed from contemporary criticism, where reader-response theory challenges the idea of one stable notion of "reader". I call this critical side *writer-response theory,* which offers the opportunity for me to explore not only my creative practice, but the process of all writers, and the range and scope of practice-based research. This in turn can be used to question what we mean by 'knowing' and the kind of research that is garnered by practice led research of this kind.