

## At a loss for words? Hostile to language? Interpretation in creative practice-led PhD projects

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### Introduction

Discussions about the written component of practice-led postgraduate research projects sometimes take on a distinctly logo-phobic style. Existing studies "tend to highlight the potentially antagonistic relationships between artistic practice and the requirement to provide a written account" (Hughes, 2006: 288). Written language features as overbearing and reductive, potentially turning the practice component into a 'mere illustration' of a theory, foreclosing imaginative research approaches, stultifying creativity, and diverting energy away from the main objective: practice. Thus, some of the most gifted students are disadvantaged.<sup>1</sup>

I should admit from the beginning that annoyance partially fuels my approach here; annoyance about the way in which age-old antagonisms continue to lead academics and students into dead-ends, where considerable energy is unproductively spent. Scapegoating writing can also become an end in itself and prevent the real causes of real problems for students from being addressed. The division "between writing and studio practice", observed by Barbara Milech and Ann Schilo<sup>2</sup>, thus reinforces stereotypes:

artists are only good with their hands; they work by intuition rather than reason; they do not have the ability to think critically or write intelligently; and academic writing itself is not creative. Such misprisions ... sustain unwanted attitudes in some of our best research students: a reticence about writing, a lack of confidence as wordsmiths ..." (Milech & Schilo, 2004).

It must cause concern that up to 90% of formal discussions in PhD supervisions can be spent on "the status and value of the written component" (Elizabeth Price in Candlin, 2000).

In the sometimes charged disputes about a new area of formal research, the imagination appears bounded by inherited and habituated binaries.<sup>3</sup> When we do not confront these binaries, we are likely to end up with general confusion produced by inconsistent arguments and practices. Of course, it does not help that many tertiary education providers stall decisions about alternative options to PhD qualifications.<sup>4</sup> For example, at AUT University, in the absence of a good sense of international trends (and under the sway of economic imperatives), we are offering a practice-based PhD, while keeping an accredited professional Doctorate in Design on hold.

My own experiences with writing in an academic context make me sympathetic to stances that emphasise the pain and consumption of energy that writing can potentially cause. Students who

have been trained in material thinking, through drawing and making, can find themselves at a disadvantage compared with their peers in other disciplines, who receive training as writers as matter of course. However, my PhD and post-doctoral experience eventually convinced me that one of my undergraduate professors, Gert Selle (artist, art educator and later theorist/writer) was right: writing is simply another way of thinking.

## Interpretation

Meanings are rules for using and interpreting things, interpretation being always an imputation of potentiality for some consequence. John Dewey, 1925 (1958: 188)

As one would expect of a pragmatist philosopher, Dewey's notion of interpretation is closely aligned with activity and practice. When it comes to the assessment of research outcomes, though, where assessment (in the educational sense, but also in the context of funding) calls for a degree of transparency and certainty, interpretation is expected to provide stability and shun ambiguity. Standards and values have to be reliable to be accepted, and they will favour a static type of interpretation (a final assessment of a final object). In contrast, I will in this paper imply a more active and provisional type of interpretation, which is akin to translation: "an act of invention brought about through combining and mixing varied elements", as Steven Brown (2002: 6) interprets Michel Serres.<sup>5</sup> Making connections and forging passages between different domains, translation establishes communication.<sup>6</sup>

A different concept of interpretation may make all the difference as we explore the potential of creative practice-led PhD projects in the overall University context, and particularly the role of the written component of final submissions. Unless the character of PhD qualifications changes generally and significantly, PhD projects (due to their interdisciplinary character) are obliged to communicate research questions, processes and findings, in a form that allows non-creative communities to understand, or at least come to their own interpretation of, creative practice-led PhDs (Douglas et al., 2000). Such projects also have to consider their alignment with definitions of research (as opposed to advanced practice).<sup>7</sup> Insofar as creative practice research retains strong links to the profession, there will also be an expectation that academic research contributes to the "clarification of existing forms of professional practice from an informed perspective", and to the "definition of new frames of reference for the profession" (ibid).<sup>8</sup>

A good deal of discussion regarding the place of research in creative practice areas is indicative of issues concerning all developing professions.<sup>9</sup> There is often an unacknowledged and frustrated competition with more established disciplines, which are on the one hand envied for their comfort and on the other criticised for their complacency or elitism. Consequently, our interest in interpretation is invariably inflected by academic, administrative, financial, operative concerns, and educational stakes and conditions of possibility.

## Separation

[I]t is an initial separation and the subsequent establishment of a threshold that gives access to a human world and makes possible a relationship to its constituent parts. (Thiboutot, Martinez, &

Jager, 1999)

Emerging disciplines have to prove themselves and will often not only outline, but fabricate, their disciplinary field<sup>10</sup> and establish its identity by elaborating differences with peers or adversaries. Thus, it is no surprise that much rhetorical energy is still spent critiquing the research paradigms and methods of the natural sciences or the humanities. However, the debate about practice-based research sometimes feels a-historic: as if Thomas Kuhn's *paradigm shift* had never been debated (and as if Gaston Bachelard had not taken a great interest in creativity). Arguments are still relentlessly pitched against the worst excesses of logical positivism, rationalism, positivist empiricism, etc., as though they were endemic.<sup>11</sup> Donald Schön's writings from the 1980s are quoted twenty years later as though they were immediately contemporary and as though they had never been challenged.<sup>12</sup> Granted, at the time of Schön's writing, alternative models for academic rigour still had to be developed and recognised, although subsequently this has occurred.<sup>13</sup>

Listening to arguments about creative practice research 'on the ground', it is disturbing how they often show no trace of influence by developments in other disciplines. Could it be that "many staff" who do not "have more than a surface knowledge of research in other fields", as David Durling maintained in 2002 (80), unwittingly perpetuate old myths and reproduce the art sector's isolation? Be that as it may, it almost seems as though some in the creative professions re-enact an inherited and habituated avant-garde ideology: to start from scratch.<sup>14</sup>

The "yawning gulf" dividing those who theorise from those who produce (Howard, 2007: 42) rests on a conflict which Friedrich Schiller described in 1795:

Whilst on the one hand a luxuriant imagination creates ravages in the plantations that have cost the intelligence so much labour, on the other hand a spirit of abstraction suffocates the fire that might have warmed the heart and inflamed the imagination." (Letter IV, Schiller, 1910: 11)<sup>15</sup>

The antagonism - preceding and surviving Schiller - was found alive and well by Jane Webb in 2000.

[I]n the very *raison d'être* of the Doctorate, in its graphic requirements and guidelines, is the implicit pursuit of all that has been apparently washed away by the post-Baconian tide. ... Seemingly the revolutionary philosophies of post-modernism have not affected the PhD in any practical sense.<sup>16</sup>

It depends: the assessment of the relative merit of the roles of language and creativity in research is not the same everywhere. In my own PhD at the University of Auckland's Department of Education (1996 to 2000) with a post-structuralist philosopher as first supervisor, I faced few of those problems. If the layout of my thesis ended up as a conventional format, this was because I wanted to use images *and* footnotes: the software programs that could have handled a more interesting layout were unable to work with footnotes. So, I certainly did find the antagonism between abstract rationality and imaginative aesthetics built into the tools I was using, but did not practically encounter it in the University.

Distinctions between text and image, of course, resemble those between theory and practice (and quantitative and qualitative research) that were topical in the 1970s and 1980s. But is it still

productive today to align the former with out-of-touch procedures, abstraction, and the mind as a thinking entity in full control of interpretation; and the latter with immediacy, the body, and the fertile compost of all that we cannot articulate? Surely, these scenarios conflate related but distinct factors, which are more mobile and mutable than such rendering suggests? The intertextuality of language and image seems at least theoretically well established. If the separation lingers on in our area, this may indicate the necessity for an emerging academic discipline to reconfigure clusters of concepts. However, the frequent assumption that the separation is natural, which seems to have survived largely intact, is a matter for concern when it limits openness and flexibility in debates of goals, frameworks, or values of creative research.

A belief that writing and theory limit the potential of creative practice-led PhD research will call for a reduction of the role and scope of the written component to a 'thin text' (e.g., that of a catalogue), to unburden 'the work' from the request to make it accessible to interpretation. In practice, this stance leads some supervisors to advise candidates to keep their practice in the foreground, lest it be suffocated by theory and writing. It not only endorses resistance against even a preliminary and temporal anchoring of meaning, but also promotes the stance that language (theory) is abstract and reductive.

Umberto Eco once made a salutary contribution to the discussion of the relationship between theory and practice: a theoretical understanding of language "does not reduce the pleasure of speaking, and of listening to the eternal murmur of texts ... even gynaecologists fall in love" (Eco, 1992: 148).

## Research

A researcher worth her name does not turn her energy against other disciplines but admires them and learns from them. Steven D. Brown (2002: 10)

It is generally accepted that no type of research can fully uncover its object: there will always be a huge remainder that it cannot address. Accordingly, conventional research approaches carefully delimit the field of a project's applicability. In creative production, there will be a void that is marked by a work's unfinished quality. Psychoanalysis portrays the principal limitation of our ability to even touch on the 'real'. Thus, investigations or interpretations always leave an inexplicable remainder - creative practice-led research projects are one variation among many.

Our 'horizon of understanding' (Gadamer) is probably much less different from that of the natural sciences than is regularly assumed: Albert Einstein reported visual and muscular anticipations of intellectual concepts, and Bachelard maintained that "natural science remains supported and nourished by the poetic imagination" (Thiboutot et al., 1999). Faced with the gulf created by binary oppositions of subjectivity and objectivity, creative practitioners (whose discipline has a tradition of educating for the "development of individual creativity"; Douglas et al., 2000), are perhaps strongly tempted to position themselves firmly on the side of subjectivity and regard 'the other side' as a threat and/or without value.

However, the slash between binary oppositions (e.g., ratio/passion, reductive/expansive; abstract/material, analytic/productive) divides *and* binds. It indicates a gap and a space for

interpolation as a field for research and creativity. The opposed dispositions are also complementary, even when they have different concerns. Medical research aspires to reach certainty about its objects, and high degrees of reliability and verifiability, which is precisely what we want when we check in for an operation. Quantification and iteration are necessary procedures to reach those goals. However, there has always been explorative research in science, changing the field and its parameters. Also, many qualitative researchers in the social sciences, who were not willing to pay for certainty with undue reduction or generalisation, have developed alternative research paradigms that are now accepted in their fields. These theories and methods are available for analogical appropriation by artists and designers: a normal procedure in the tradition of method, according to Gregory Ulmer (1994: 10f).

If a PhD project is "primarily a training in research" (Durling, 2002), then the rules of research must apply to creative practice submissions for PhDs. They must, of necessity, incorporate multiple viewpoints to test and elaborate alternatives, and they should, in particular, "build, in place of a single argument, a structure of possibilities" (Ulmer, 1994: 34). Creativity, like research, has a lot to do with changing the rules of the game. A creative work (written, designed, made, performed) will exceed the already known criteria and rules. It cannot be "wholly described in terms of its audience or context, because this would imply that we knew beforehand what kinds of social relation it would invoke or entail, and to what intellectual purposes it might be put" (Howard, 2007). Nevertheless, the engagement in creative practice research does require an outward-looking disposition, beyond the experiments of the project itself, to develop an "explicit interpretative-contextual (relational) understanding" (Franz in Durling & Friedman, 2000: 66). Since one's own empirical ability to encounter multiple points of view is limited, part of the material from which to build such understanding will be derived from reading, and from a "process of imaginatively thinking from standpoints not one's own; thus forming what Kant called an 'enlarged mentality'" (*eine erweiterte Denkungsart*) whose "condition of possibility is not the faculty of understanding, but imagination". This imagination is based on what Hannah Arendt termed (in *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*) 'training the imagination to go visiting' (Zerilli, 2005: 161, 175).

Theory can be imagined as an accumulated account of visits of the imagination. Theorising supplies provisional rules, which, in turn, stimulate practice. So far mostly through writing, it assembles accounts, tools and rules in a lasting format that is accessible to others. Contributing to an interpretative-contextual framework, it enables communication, which Hughes considers the "core concept" for practice-led research. Without communication, "practice would remain practice and not additionally a form of research" engaged with "a scholarly as well as professional community" (2006: 285). Hughes advocates that "in work, as in play" we must "seek greater imaginative and intellectual freedom while making ever-greater demands on the tools and materials of our profession, so that we may usefully share such freedom with others" (2006: 297). His reference to play recalls Schiller's notion that it is only "play which makes man complete" and allows him to overcome the divisions imposed by society (Letter XV, Schiller, 1910: 30).

## Potentiality

Most candidates for doctoral studies in art, design and architecture are quite capable of articulating their concerns verbally, which is demonstrated, for instance, in their applications for admission. This

early engagement with text does not usually avert creativity or alternative forms of research. In the face of these circumstances, any certainty about the hostility between image and text seems odd. Are we, perhaps, facing not so much an inability of candidates but rather an anxiety of supervisors?<sup>17</sup> If so, could the latter perhaps be explained by a lack of exploration into alternative possibilities?

Ludwig Wittgenstein, who knew about the difficulty of struggling with the right words, said that he was sometimes "inclined to fight windmills" when he could not yet say the thing he really wanted to say (1969: #400). However, he also tells us about aspect thinking, about the importance of changing perspectives in trying to gain understanding: the dangers of "a one-sided diet", nourishing "one's thinking with only one kind of example", can be avoided by changing one's posture to prevent mental rigidity (1980: 27). Aldo Gargani talks about the friction between thought and necessity: in the writing of a novel, this friction propels creativity through an astronomic rotation by which the characters invented by the writer begin to impose their own conditions of necessity (Gargani, 1988: 79). There is a case to be made for the role of language in complicating the creative process, providing ambiguity, friction and collision rather than control (although it will do that, too); a case for the potential of the complementarity of text and image (or performance) to provide alternative engagements for interpretation, which can relieve the repetitious and metallic regime of simply alternative possibilities (80).

Hostility to language won't resolve our theory/practice tension, which incidentally also exists in creative writing degrees. Rather, we could look at language and writing from a different perspective, as Sarah O'Brien does when she regards the 'traditional thesis', as a practice of writing under certain conditions, as "essential to the creative process" (2007: 73). We could then examine those conditions and address students' genuine loss for words, when and where it occurs, by expanding the creative repertoire of writing styles and their combinations. The written submission could then be regarded as a limit case of writing, with its own specific requirements, and in response to its particular role and context.

Theorists may provide us with enabling concepts for looking at language and writing in a different way. Bachelard and Walter Benjamin attributed great power to threshold conditions, which are characterised by a sense of separation that opens towards the unknown and invites passage. By holding two sides apart, the threshold gives rise to hesitation or desire. Holding together, it creates the very possibility of relating to the world, in an "intersubjective cosmos". There, we can reach beyond ourselves and, through imagination, find access "to an elsewhere and an other" (Thiboutot et al., 1999). The zone held open by the threshold allows mediation through language, art and imagination to produce inhabitable space through the "neverending exchange of worlds and gifts between neighbours" (Thiboutot et al., 1999).

Neighbourly relations around thresholds require alternative concepts of truth. Many philosophers and theorists have elaborated notions of truth that are relevant to creative practice. However, in my experience, many students at Masters level (and even some PhD candidates) still conceive of positive knowledge as 'the truth'. Exposure to the thoughts of, for instance, Giambattista Vico, Martin Heidegger or Ernesto Grassi could help alleviate misplaced fears of doctoral truth requirements. For example, Grassi argues that rational, positive knowledge is necessarily preceded by rhetorical and poetic operations, which in the first place provide the grounds for reason (1976). And, even when

science, with its reliance on analytical reason and correct correspondence, has opened for us "an instrumental and mathematical space and time in which we learn to exert control over objects and events" (Thiboutot et al., 1999), there is still much to be discovered that escapes its logic.<sup>18</sup> What can be discovered by different means can then change epistemological perspectives.

Recent efforts to develop epistemologies and methods commensurable with creative practice have drawn on Bachelard's poetics of material imagination.<sup>19</sup> His differential ontology recognizes the possibility of "interpenetration between subject and object" (Picart, 1997: 68). For Bachelard, the poet is a figure "speaking on the threshold of being" (Bachelard in Thiboutot et al., 1999). This, "the very threshold separating being from nothingness" (Thiboutot et al., 1999), is the realm of imagination, the zone of becoming, or the process of making.<sup>20</sup> Imagination allows us to approach and open up to the world by creating a distance from the perception of reality as naturally caused and certain (Thiboutot et al., 1999).

This loss of certainty can be perceived as threatening, but also as liberating. To be productive in a space of "something, perhaps" (Poirier) students often need to be given opportunities to develop expectation when facing uncertainty. For being creative (not just in writing) means to venture into

that indeterminate space where your ideas are still inarticulate and the vague presentiments of various words and phrases ... seem to be pulling your thoughts now 'here,' then 'there.' It means that you must be willing to put something down on the page before you are really sure of what it is you want to say. And you have to trust that what is there one minute can always be refused, refined, or replaced the next. (Granger, 2006: 55)

Abandoning an attitude that holds reality to be stable and given enables collaborative relationships which thrive on difference and exchanges. Paul Carter encapsulates the processual, relational elements of making in his notion of "material thinking", which leads into a gap or opening, "a realm ripe for transformation" (Carter, 2004: 183). For Carter, this transformation through material thinking is centrally affected by collaborative exchanges, through a give-and-take in which media-based distinctions fall away and all signs (image, dance figure, metaphor) are equally malleable (187). Shuttling between studio and society, the creative work suggests a social relation (7) and is, in that sense, discursive.<sup>21</sup>

Visual, verbal, mathematical, aural and gestural elements can all be drawn into processes of symbolisation. These allow us to rapidly (and reversibly) telescope into (or project out of) a scenario that we want to test or explore, be it with ourselves or with others. As *sensus communis*, language and image can in different ways throw up existing connections. However, in a fusion of "creative and critical modes of inquiry" (Hughes, 2006: 292), they also hone an ability to 'see', or make, new aspects and connections. They can interlace and mutually clarify what they are specifically able to reveal. While they partially operate in different ways, both images and words can be used in what could be labelled *connotative* and *denotative* ways. Both can speed up thinking and generate novel constellations; both can also slow down thought to elaborate and clarify at the level of detail.

The mode of operation which is called for depends on the occasion. During the investigative, explorative phase of research: sketching, modelling, plotting, fast writing, improvisation, workshops,

etc., will make use of the generative capacities of symbolisation processes. During more reflective phases, and increasingly towards the temporary closure that is the submission and examination, making and writing will become more precise, more anchored in specific relationships of theory and practice.<sup>22</sup> Expertise in writing, making and research "consists in moving between creative and critical ... conventions" and the ability to "choose one's 'way of seeing' instead of being ensnared within a relatively narrow range of culturally legitimised perspectives and discourses" (Hughes, 2006: 289).

Obviously, simply turning the table and reverting existing or perceived power relationships will do nothing to open up the full potential of the whole range of symbolisations available, or still to become.

### The Limit Case

Being the limit case of writing as a creative practice, the 'traditional thesis' or 'supporting material' has, in comparison with process oriented writing, the definite task of providing information to others. This includes the examiners, who have to interpret a PhD submission to make a determinant judgement about its academic worthiness.

O'Brien describes the traditional role of the written component of a PhD submission as an interpretation of the practice component and outline of intentions, which amounts to the "justification of the practice and perhaps ... a best practice guide" (2007: 78). However, from a certain perspective,<sup>23</sup> the thesis as interpretation would render obsolete the performance event (the exhibition, the publication, the prototype). This would cancel out the latter's value as one more occasion to perform a Kantian operation of reflective judgement, and thereby advance the development of new knowledge, rules or schemata. O'Brien has her own reasons to refute this claim, partially represented below.

In any event, even 'traditional' PhD conventions take into consideration that many issues and questions will be discovered but not addressed when a candidature comes to its close, or that unforeseen factors or developments regarding data collection or experiment, for example, could not be fully considered. Reporting on these is considered a most valuable contribution to the development of academic knowledge, since it flags potential fields for new research. Translated into the context of the written submission of a practice-led PhD, this simply means that the component of positive knowledge about an object will be smaller than in some other disciplines; and that those of process knowledge or speculative knowledge will be more important. For example, part of process knowledge could be an articulation of how the retrospective framing of an event or object may be able to reveal and articulate aspects of potentiality or force that remained implicit in the performance.

Writing then becomes "an essential component" of reflective schemata. O'Brien comments,

Once I had produced my first performance ... I could then begin to interpret it within a broader theoretical perspective of 'performance'. ... And with these interpretations I can then develop the thesis ... through the writing processes *in the same way*. It was the interpretation of my



performances that led me to research video art and video installation, which in turn led to the outline of my final written thesis. ... Thus intention (determinant) was guided by interpretation (reflective) and each fed the other in a kind of 'hermeneutic circle' ... (80)

This process eventually provides a theoretical perspective of the moments of practice as play, and a structure by which to communicate the journey towards the submission in the 'traditional thesis'.

My performance practice could not have a thesis without having rules to break, and these rules had to be set out by the written thesis in order to offer the performance freedom to play. But importantly, my rules did not necessarily have to take place *before* the performances. (81)

For O'Brien, the written submission, by providing the 'rules', unburdened the practice component from a duty to reveal these rules in itself. It thereby enlarges the practical component's potential for creativity.

A lot of stress about any PhD submission is created by a conception of the final thesis submission as a 'finalised' product of momentous importance. This may well be aggravated in the creative practice research area, where many makers/authors already have a strong '*opus fantasy*' (von Matt). However, research in all areas is an ongoing process, in which a PhD thesis simply partakes. If the submission were therefore regarded as a temporary closure, an anchoring of meaning for the purpose of assessment (or, interpretation) by one's academic and/or professional peers, much of the concern about the thesis (generally and specifically) could be alleviated, and dread-producing arguments would lose substance.

As ongoing research activities, textual and visual exploration can continually open up new aspects, articulate their own remainders, and celebrate the ability of irreducible voids (at the heart of every research) to keep the process going. In contrast, a late 'writing up' of the text accompanying the creative submission may well turn into a 'mere' interpretation of the research-as-artefact. What is important at the outset of creative research projects: the communication with the institution, potential supervisors, and peers, remains important throughout; is still important at the moment of temporary 'closure' that any research project requires; and remains so for its subsequent dissemination.

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## Endnotes

1 Excessive demands regarding research criteria and methods, superfluous in 'creative work as always already research' (Bourke & Neilsen, 2004; Skrebels, 2007) are similarly held responsible. As Durling suggests, the insistence that 'practice is research' in itself may well originate in some supervisors' lack of experience and/or confidence to help with anything but practice (2002: 82).

Interestingly, in my experience, claims that practice is research are mostly advanced by visual arts lecturers, only rarely by those in the design disciplines.

2 Milech and Schilo teach creative writing. They use the term 'studio practice' to refer to 'the creative writer at her desk, or the radio journalist at a console'.

3 In practice, these binaries are not nearly as rigidly demarcated. Thus, the Research into Practice Conference organisers are confident that a 1000 word abstract gives sufficient access to a paper's main issues to permit interpretation. The Working Papers' web pages, like most contributions to the topic (including this), consist mostly of text. Even a page profiling the development of 'a role for the nontextual and nonexplicit aspects' contains no images (research into practice cluster). In practice, we accept that there are not just 'two categories: figure-ground, thematized-unthematized; explicit-implicit' but rather 'different degrees of how figural, thematized, explicit things or aspects are in our awareness' (Martoni quoted in Franz, in Durling & Friedman, 2000: 67).

4 In 2000, Bruce Archer noted that, despite the UK Council for Graduate Education's preference for parallel awards of professional doctorates for highest level of practitionership and PhD for highest level of scholarship, most Universities had failed to clarify their system of awards (2000: 260).

5 Serres' example for translation as transformation is J. M. W. Turner, who contributed through his artistic practice to a new 'cultural and scientific, practical and theoretical' model (Brown, 2002: 6).

6 The passages or interfaces between different domains or concepts are never 'perfectly under control', Serres remarks, no matter what some scientists may think. Rather, these 'spaces between' are complicated and fractal: 'Less a juncture under control than an adventure to be had' (in Brown, 2002: 8).

7 If practice is taken to be research in itself, there is a danger, as was pointed out by a delegate during the 2008 Research Into Practice conference, that the academic environment may simply be

used to access funds for what remains, in essence, practice without any research component.

8 This expectation is likely to lead, in turn, to demands that such new knowledge can be successfully replicated and understood by others. Traditionally, 'replication mechanisms that have ... valorised and validated creative arts practices have focussed on product rather than process' (Barrett, 2006). A change seems indicated for art and design research since the issues addressed are often highly specific and subject to change.

9 Significant changes in professional practice and education have occurred in the 'creative industries', which have brought into question any consolidation its disciplines may have achieved in recent years and lead to their repositioning in a new competitive funding environment. The bidding for funds seems to be a decisive but often unacknowledged factor fuelling the debate. Funding requires not only that a discipline's academic 'rigour' and status are justified externally, it requires internal mechanisms to distribute grants or funding for postgraduate degrees. Further, as the creative disciplines claim their share in the (economy of the) academy, Foucauldian questions of Power/Knowledge are crucial. This cannot be addressed here - suffice it to say that, when unacknowledged, they can play havoc on even the most well intended discussion of problems and possible solutions.

10 As Thomas Szasz has strikingly shown for psychiatry in *The Manufacture of Madness* (1970), the developing discipline invented pathologies that gave it its *raison d'être* (and no doubt also its justification for the funding of its research).

11 I find these polemics puzzling: in my conventional PhD, completed in 2000, 'multiple issues and goals' were deemed appropriate and expected to 'change and grow, and be given different emphasis as the work proceeds', just as Scrivener regards it necessary for creative production (2000).

12 For instance, Stephen Newman (1999) and more recently Peter Erlandson (2006; 2007).

13 'Researchers are recognising that scientific inquiry is just one species of research and that 'research is not merely a species of social science' [Eisner]' (Barrett, 2006).

14 A noteworthy fragmentation appears to prevail within creative practice-led research: debates on related issues in creative writing projects seem to be conducted quite separately, and I cannot find evidence that the respective strands impact on each other. This impression was confirmed in a discussion with a small group of participants at the 2008 Research into Practice Conference. A focus on the difference between image and text, and a failure to consider writing as a (creative) practice rather than as academic argument only, may have unwittingly excluded precisely those creative practitioners who could teach us a lot about the use of language in other than argumentative or rulesbound styles.

15 Friedrich Nietzsche wrote a century later: '[I]f science produces ever less joy in itself and takes ever greater joy in casting suspicion on the comforts of metaphysics, religion, and art, then the greatest source of pleasure ... is impoverished. Therefore a higher culture must give man a double brain, two brain chambers, as it were, one to experience science, and one to experience non-science.

Lying next to one another, without confusion, separable, self-contained: our health demands this. In the one domain lies the source of strength, in the other the regulator. Illusions, biases, passions must give heat; with the help of scientific knowledge'.

16 Webb suggests that 'work done in research in art, craft and design subjects' will challenge the 'traditions of the PhD' and bring about changes. While this is not an unreasonable expectation, it must also be acknowledged that other new academic disciplines, e.g., nursing, have already affected such change.

17 Since in many institutions offering postgraduate degrees in Art and Design, research is a new activity for many staff, this anxiety cannot surprise. It seems indeed that anxious supervisors may tend to place their candidates under pressure to be 'explicit about methodology from the outset'. In those situations, disproportionate and insufficiently reflected recourse to scientific methods can be 'unduly tempting for candidates' (Biggs in Durling & Friedman, 2000: 210).

18 When all scientific questions have been answered 'the problems of life have still not been touched at all' (Wittgenstein, 1922: §6.52). Lehmann emphasizes the openness of the process of writing, which works with the volatility of thoughts performatively: 'text' has to be regarded as performance as much as it is, as 'work', an inert product (2004: 267).

19 Not only the poet, but everyone, all the time, imagines the material world. Simultaneously, the material world is what imagination springs from: material thinking is both 'materiality of imagining and the imagination of the material' (Connor, 2002).

20 This threshold not only separates and interconnects imagination and concept, image and text, but also unconscious and conscious. Freud's concept of the preconscious seems to me to have great relevance to the condition of creative practice. Unfortunately, it has not been much further developed in psychoanalytic theory since the 1970s (except, under a different name, in Julia Kristeva's writing perhaps). Earlier important authors are Lawrence S. Kubie (1958) and Hanns Sachs (1942). For an overview of approaches to the creative unconscious, particularly Alfred Lorenzer's (whose work is not available in English), see sections Desymbolisation of knowledges and On the margins of mastery in Engels-Schwarzpaul (2002: 89ff, 128ff).

21 Carter discusses Bryson's claim that there is an alternating flow between discursiveness in the social field, into the art work and back into the discursive field (20).

22 When intertextuality is not only acknowledged but also cultivated, ongoing and usually language-based moments of criticism and assessment could also link more seamlessly with the final exegesis, and combine with process notes to account for the steps taken to arrive at the research results.

Intertextuality can be expanded to include the mutual coproduction of tools and their makers (Stiegler). Already Nietzsche, who used an early typewriter model, commented: 'The instrument of writing works on our thoughts' (quoted in Hintermeier, 2008: 37). Different tools correspond to different modes of thinking and can help or hinder the unfolding of a project. As already mentioned, software programmes (tools) have their inscribed rules and will allow some operations but not

others. They are marked by previous uses (de Certeau) and situations and bring those traces to bear on their users. However efficient and irreplaceable computers can be, sometimes it is important to step back and involve different tools that are more likely to draw out alternative forms of knowledge: the pencil, the brush, ... . Tim Ingold describes the consequences of the invention of the typewriter, where 'the original connection between the manual gesture and its graphic trace is finally broken altogether, for the punctual movements of the digits on the keys bear absolutely no relation to the shapes of the marks they serve to deliver. In the typed or printed text, every letter or punctuation mark is wrapped up in itself, totally detached from its neighbours to left and right. Thus the letterline of print or typescript does not go out for a walk. Indeed it does not go out at all, but remains confined to its point of origin' (2005: 52).

Regarding various types of productive relationships between practice, theory and interpretation (as evaluation), see also a forthcoming paper by Edmonds & Candy (2008).

23 O'Brien's paper is a response to Susan Melrose's proposal that the use of a 'reflective schema' replaces the 'need to rely on the 'traditional thesis' as the 'material support' of performance' (O'Brien, 2007: 73). Both draw on the same Kantian concepts and their reframing by Eco in Kant and the Platypus. Melrose seems to regard interpretation as more static and final than O'Brien.

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