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THE JEALOUSY OF IDEAS

RESEARCH METHODS IN THE CREATIVE ARTS

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THE JEALOUSY OF IDEAS

a practical anatomy of creative ambition

SYNOPSIS

This book presents an analysis of artistic ambition, exploring the judicious egocentricity that accounts for major literary, musical or artistic works. The archaic concept of jealousy is invoked to describe the fraught ambition that propels artistic work; and from this candid recognition of artistic desires, a methodology is hatched for reconciling the anxiously selfish zeal of artistic motivation with the poetic loftiness of artistic aspiration and its rehearsals in academia. The text confronts the new sanitized conditions brought about by the global assimilation of the practicing arts into universities. What happens psychologically to the artist or composer or writer who is absorbed into academic research? The text provides a conceptual survival guide for artists of all kinds who seek the academic dignity of artistic inspiration.

1 POSITION AND PRINCIPLES

1.1 JEALOUSY AS CULTURAL PSYCHE

This chapter sets out the need for the book. Drawing upon archetypes in the Graeco-Jewish tradition, it describes the personal forces inherent in creative work and reveals how much they are at variance with texts on the subject, such as Graeme Sullivan's Art practice as research. Against the psychologically sanitized structures that are put forward as essential to art as research, the chapter identifies artistic motives through the ancient idea of jealousy. Both jealousy and ambition are explored in the history of ideas and are shown (a) to be shifting and equivocal notions that symbolize a deep insecurity of affection through various cultures and (b) to be suitable for candidly representing the psychological cocktail of artistic imagination and zeal in the present age.

1.2 TOWARD A CRITIQUE OF CREATIVITY

Creativity sounds positive and is promoted as a universal virtue. But it also carries certain values. The word was invented in the industrial period and flatters middle-class European individualism. Just how culturally specific the idea is can be checked with reference to Australian Aboriginal art. Indigenous cultures are structured along genealogical lines, in which material is passed down from old to young; and the gestation time for creative expression can be close to a life-time. The spirit of creativity is not vested exclusively in the imaginative autonomy of the individual, as is commonly understood in European culture. Rather, it is an aggregated energy of many individuals in a line. The chapter provides a critique of the romantic autonomy of the individual and invites an alternative social paradigm for creative ambition.

1.3 RECOGNIZING AN ANTI-METHODICAL TOPIC

This chapter returns the discourse to the framework of an individual setting out to make a creative cultural contribution with unique authorship, an idea—now ideologically qualified by the previous chapter—that predicates the entire book.

The chapter begins by asking why artists of all persuasion have never needed to speculate about research or research methodology in the past. The great changes in the circumstances of artistic production and art education are discussed; and the need for sound research-oriented methodology is firmly established.

1.4 MOTIFS AND MOTIVES: METHOD THROUGH THE SOCIAL AND PERSONAL CONTEXT OF ART

Method is initially derived from the big picture of other disciplines, notably the sciences, humanities and social sciences. The difficulties of interpreting today's scene are discussed by contrast and the artists in extremis are viewed in historical contexts. Past modes of support and synergy and the realignment with the political avant garde in the industrial revolution are discussed. Against the strong motif of resistance, the basis of method relying rather on the history of the person—'method as me'—is brought out.

2 CREATIVE PROBLEMS

2.1 IN SEARCH OF IMMANENCE: THE FORCE OF BECOMING

Immanence is initially defined through its roots in Romantic philosophy; its attraction to the romantic temper is considered; and attempts are made to understand it as a quality in art, embedded in style and stroke, as it were. From this, anti-method is invoked, a metaphor for the artistic project as whole. The chapter asks if there are any systematic steps to immanence? and, even if not, if the zeal for immanence still amounts to a kind of a method.

2.2 MEASURE AND PLEASURE: TWO IMMEDIATE REASONS FOR WRITING

This chapter considers the centrality of pleasure in all accounts of creative work. Measure and pleasure are apparently antithetical; indeed measurement—the cornerstone of method in the sciences—is often seen as foreign to art. Yet measurement is a powerful surreptitious motif in art, extending to defining importance, as in the disciplinary norms that characterize most fields of university research.

2.3 NO LAUGHING MATTER: ART AND SEMANTIC SUBVERSION

Among the artistic themes most inaccessible to explanation and foreign to scientific method is humour. Humour is seen as the signal wit, the spirit of contemporary art. Humour is also viewed as normality and people are stigmatized for lacking a sense of humour. This accusation is actually not funny. Historically, humour is analysed pre-eminently through language and action; and Bergson and Freud, for example, do not draw examples from the visual arts. Yet art is funny from early times in which the high institutionality of art is relieved. Art becomes overtly subversive in the industrial revolution, reaching a high point in Dada. Trajectories toward irony and the critique of seriousness, the diversion from fixity, are now central to the spirit of artistic inquiry. How might these premises relate to research?

2.4 PHENOMENOLOGY: A PHILOSOPHY OF THE SENSES

Phenomenology is initially discussed through the word phenomenon but then through the German and French philosophical sources of the broad movement. Links to existentialism are described and the emphasis on perception and experience is related to the arts. The cultural importance of describing the limits to systemhood is considered and examples of how the outlook can be liberating are given. Maximum relativity is proposed; and the method matches many art-making processes, being lateral, imaginative, misbehaved. The question of essence and essentialism is discussed, as is intelligence through the senses and the high prestige of perception.

2.5 THE POETIC: A PROSAIC APPROACH

Aspects of the poetic are discussed in relation to defining knowledge. Like humour, the centrality of the poetic is a paradox in research. But also like humour, it is not so straight-forward. Esteem for the poetic can be frowned upon. Recognizing it or apologizing for the poetic was often a stigma in art history. Since the 1970s there has been a certain aesthetic shyness, which is debated. Four elements of the poetic are outlined on a psychological plane, in its metaphoric agency and through imagination. An original definition is attempted in the concept of the cross-discursive, relating to medium consciousness and the classical idea of an aesthetic congruence of form and content.

2.6 AUTOBIOGRAPHY: BETWEEN EGOTISM, CHATTER AND NECESSITY

In no other discipline is autobiography seen as crucial to research. It is rather on the academically illegitimate side. Autobiography might be entirely trivial, may descend to mere chatter or be accorded too much monumentality. The justifications are nevertheless worthy and the force of autobiography is proposed alongside deconstruction, the dispelling of false objectivity, critical curiosity and bedrock relevance to the creative task.

2.7 IMAGINATION: KNOWING HOW TO WONDER

Imagination is central to all kinds of research. It is the faculty of seeing links or connecting ideas or motifs or data sets and observations. It is also a key aesthetic criterion. If work is considered imaginative, it is praiseworthy. Two ways of characterizing imagination are attempted. Areas of imagination in the visual and in writing are given special attention. The idea of playing with the truth—so foreign to canonical research—is seen as fruitfully entertaining the unpredictable.

2.8 CURATORSHIP & STUDIO RESEARCH: OPPOSITES OR ONE AND THE SAME THING?

As different as they sound, curatorship can be likened to studio research, just as curatorship can be likened to publishing and event designers. The chapter conducts a brief history of curatorship, noting the moment in which it becomes suddenly politicized. With new sympathies for deconstruction, the practice of curating is now artistically dynamic and interventionist. It becomes artistic practice, as curators tend to be 'vision assemblers'. From selection to presentation, curatorship compares with art-making. Especially since Duchamp, when the practice of art ceased to be uniquely defined by a craft of making, the bringing together of artefacts is alike in the studio and the gallery. So what is the difference? It is what might be called responsibility for immanence.

3 RELEVANT INVESTIGATIVE PARAMETERS

3.1 I KNOW SHE'S THE BEST: RESEARCH AS CHOICE OF INFORMATION AND WILLFUL INTERPRETATION

The line from Madeline referring to the dog Genevieve 'I know she's the best' is used as an example. How does one know that one's dog is the best, when you do not know any other dogs so well? A definition of bad science and good science is attempted. In some instances, the parallel with the arts is hard to see. It is especially problematic with the subjectivity assumed in all artistic understanding. Who or what mediates? The fact that artists change their ideas or solicit criticism is not in itself a form of mediation. Mediation is in the record. The chapter describes the charm and methodological benefits of the discursive. In the process it seeks to save the personal and to place it alongside venerable ideas of historical truth.

3.2 THE ISSUE OF AN APPROPRIATE BIBLIOGRAPHY: SEARCH AND RESEARCH

Research in some other disciplines is 'search' oriented. The key to research in this area is finding out by doing rather than finding out by reading. However, the bibliographic sophistication of artist is still extremely important, not just for the possibly inspirational gleaning of other artists' practices but to establish the extent to which the work of the artist is original. This chapter presents the best ways (and above all the best attitude) to gain the appropriate information and use it productively.

3.3 HOW MANY BOOKS? AN APPROPRIATE TEXTUAL INPUT:THE AGONY OF WORD AND SENSORY EVOCATION

Following the theme of the previous chapter, this chapter asks how many books it takes to establish academic credibility. Bibliographic measures are not the only issue; but they are symptomatic. Superabundance and dearth beset the scholar-artist in books, articles and also visual works, music, performances and so on. Four types of reading are described and five types of relevance are proposed. The example of landscape is taken to show bibliographic function at its most exacting. Throughout, the research is guided by synergies of knowing, which are not to get bogged down in a pedantic quest for comprehensiveness. Bibliographic research needs to be organized like vision.

3.4 THE RESEARCH ELEMENT IN ART

This chapter tackles the challenging question of what distinguishes research from studio practice. The text examines a number of paradigms of research in other disciplines which have a fundamentally epistemological structure. The chapter shows how there are few meaningful analogies between knowledge-based research and visual practice; and it argues that it is dangerous to be conceited about a strong relation between them. The chapter concludes that the character of artistic progress is better understood in an ontological sense, rather than an epistemological sense.

3.5 EPISTEMOLOGY AND BEING: A CRITIQUE OF ARTISTIC KNOWLEDGE

Following the theme of ontology in the previous chapter, this chapter considers epistemology and being from the consciousness of artists. What is artistic knowledge? Artists do not normally organize their knowledge systematically. Artistic knowledge is probably more complicated and less transparent than the reception of art, which is obscure enough. Further, unlike in science, there is dubious advancement in the quality of output from one generation to the next. The chapter seeks to examine the ontology of artistic intelligence. The knowledge of the notes in music is used as an example. A working definition of aesthetic consciousness is sought.

3.6 METHOD AND METHODOLOGY IN OUR CONTEXT

The idea that research paradigms are different in the visual arts to those in other disciplines may be granted; but we still need methods. What makes for good method in the visual arts and what makes for poor method? This chapter considers the methodological strengths and weaknesses of traditional research and advances patterns of reflection and interrogation which mobilize creative ideas and ensure that the artist, musician or poet always has the academic language with which to represent these often fugitive ideas.

3.7 HAVING A QUESTION: WHY WOULD YOU NEED ONE?

Does any artist need a research question? Is artistic activity essentially question-driven? Or is it possible to have an innovative artistic project without having a question? In a sense, art produces answers before questions. The answers are then the basis for a further question. Research must be inquiry, so the belief goes. History is full of questions. To each question a thesis obtains. Much momentum and authority abide in this paradigm. But studio work is not question-based. There must be an etiquette of asking questions, for it is by no means clear that questions are integral or cognate with artistic inspiration, even though artistic work is increasingly referred to as 'inquiry' or 'investigation'. The proposition that 'I, as the artist, am the question' is considered.

3.8 RESEARCH IN DESIGN AND THE DESIGN OF RESEARCH

Research in design is relatively new and subject to further problems. Design embraces multifarious disciplines, at times as remote from one another as each may be remote from art or music. By nature, design is interdisciplinary. It is involved in all cultural production but lies conspicuously within the economic domain. Alas, it is stalked and overwritten by market determinism and has structurally become a field of empiricists. But even with a scientific bias, there are many methodological pitfalls. One is to ignore the high subjectivity behind most aspects of design. Methods of making are also not happily described by mechanistic processes. Writing to design is described; and an analytical structure is considered which is cognate with invention.

3.9 ART AND INQUIRY: MODES AND CODES OF MAKING AND RESEARCHING

Art and inquiry are contrasted. Method in other disciplines is examined with regard to the dominant theme of correlation. Correlation is considered the 'queen of insights'. But all structures geared toward discovering correlations in data sets are prone to error or flaws. All, furthermore, present analogies to the creative arts. The example of perceptual painting is given, yielding evidence of the centrality of subjectivity. Good method in art is discussed in relation to suspected flaws in art. A panorama of pejoratives is described by which art can be criticized. In art correlations are in consciousness; but risks abound in describing them. The example of theology is given as a means of logically reconciling the disparate methodological expectations of art and scholarship.

3.10 PROCESS: THE MACHINE IN THE GHOST

'Process' is a term much used by artists, greatly preferred relative to 'method'. Process is more than just the making. It is a kind of belief system. This chapter first tries to analyse for stages or dimensions within process and notes, of course, that approaches to it vary. The paradigm of intention shifting through material process leads to the idea of a permeability of intention proper to artistic work, a responsive intentionality, which resists the mechanistic and intellectually authoritarian. The historical significance of this is noted, recognizing imagination in the intellectual apparatus, as it were. The antithesis of a process-orientation may be seen in the baroque, as opposed to modernist aspirations. Two meanings of process are discerned. Avoiding the stigma of the illustrative is a key motif in canonical modernist process-orientation. Process needs deconstruction. Process discourse is still viable but it presents risks.

3.11 ORIGINALITY: TOO HOT TO HANDLE?

When the distinction between research and professional practice was discussed, the problem of defining originality emerged. This chapter discusses how, against all native modesty, the artist constructs a claim to originality; it discusses how much the artist has to be original to do research, even when professing a traditional genre. A theory of affinities is offered, according to which originality is almost automatic whenever the inspiration proceeds genuinely from the individual desires of the artist. This is also described as the originality of consciousness.

3.12 FOUR PARADIGMATIC METHODS OF RESEARCH

Returning to the theme of other disciplines, this chapter seeks to extract the benefit for the artist from the various basic paradigms of doing research. It describes four kinds of researchers. Taxonomists are people who classify information in original categories; orators start with a novel theory and rhetorically pull information toward its support; narrators are story-tellers who have a new progression of events to relay; and eclectics are researchers who mix all of these. The bearing of such

types upon the visual artist is discussed through the concept of dilettantism. The codes of scholarship and the self-gratification of the expositor are not at variance in the artistic disciplines. The chapter suggests how this may be expressed circumspectly.

3.13 RESEARCH AND IMAGINATION

This chapter asks if there are methods by which the imagination can be cultivated. It defines studiocentricity as the philosophy according to which all imagination proceeds from the process of making. Bibliocentricity, on the other hand, puts the sharp end with cultural encounters and reading. Deterministic philosophies of imagination pay more attention to a person's psychology, a view characterized as genocentricity. The chapter distinguishes four types of imagination: aesthetic or musical imagination, irony or humorous imagination, fantasy or sympathetic imagination, causal or scientific imagination. Separating the categories in this way reveals what parts are nourished by reading and cultural encounters and which parts are apparently prompted by will. The chapter concludes with a view of cultivating imagination through sympathy with artistic conventions.

4 EXEGETICAL CONSOLIDATION

4.1 THE BEST OF INTENTIONS: PROPOSING WORK AND HAVING AN APPROACH TO IT

This chapter asks key questions about the work that an artist, composer or writer is about to undertake. It centres on the intention that the artist has, the ways in which the intention may be excessively fixed from the outset, the way that it might respond to external influences, the way that it is enriched by challenge and through the process of creating. The chapter is a practical guide to developing a proposal but also provides philosophical reasons for doing so: the mutation of intentions is integral to the artistic process and creative inspiration.

4.2 CREATIVE WORK AND A JEALOUS TIMETABLE

Most concerts, stage performances, exhibition and higher degrees in the creative arts have written elements, from proposals to exegeses. This often causes the practitioner much vexation; for there are apparently unanswerable questions about when he or she should stop work on the creative project and start writing a text of an exegetical or even promotional kind. The problem arises with creative writing as much as it does with visual art, for both require a scholarly handling of method in a reflective academic text. This chapter shows ways in which the work of writing may be integrated with the process of making and, through this method, contribute to the inspirational process.

4.3 WRITING INTO SENSORY PRACTICE

Academic creative arts research degrees and applications for exhibitions, publications and concert series have something in common: they begin with a proposal. The chapter examines the status of that preliminary document, especially vis-à-vis the creative process. Writing, it is suggested, assists the creative process. The hierarchy of documents that begins with the proposal is very different from the structure of diaries, which are common in undergraduate years. The need to preserve the autonomy of the creative domain is emphasized; but writing is put forward as creating a second energy in the creative process.

4.4 THE GENRES OF WRITING AROUND ART

There are many ways to write about art; and many of them have limited appeal to artists. This chapter discusses the history of art and the art of writing history so that it has relevance to a creative project. The argument exploits the example of John Berger, whose writing, though politically incisive, is artistic in a structural and expressive sense. The chapter attempts to define a written genre appropriate for artists; it is posited as an art of implication rather than linear exposition.

4.5 WHAT TO SAY WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE

These methods do not yet guarantee that an artist will have useful content in any verbal presentation. There is always a certain embarrassment when artists talk about their own work. This chapter talks about the linguistic nitty-gritty of expressing ideas when they are self-consciously projected as one's own. It discusses notions which suggest progress, words like exploring, investigating and talking. These verbs of art are best managed when concrete is matched with concrete and abstract is matched with abstract. Attention is given to the idea of investigation: do artworks really investigate? Artworks do not, though paradoxically, the process of creating artworks does. The chapter concludes with the importance, in spite of much theory to the contrary, of self-expression.

4.6 DETACHMENT OF PURPOSES: THE DULL END OF WRITING

This chapter is concerned with writing. Writing-problems are inherent, beyond the specific woes of writing about artistic research. This chapter examines eight discouraging contentions: (i) that writing is always impure, (ii) that writing is always incomplete, (iii) that writing is complete artifice, (iv) that writing is always motile and organic, (v) that writing is always tendentious, (vi) that writing is always in the wrong order, (vii) that the elements of writing all depend on one another, (viii) that writing is a scramble for authority and finally (ix) that writing is for someone else. In short, writing is like anything else creative. The chapter expresses how the concerns over writing work to the advantage of describing artistic projects.

4.7 CRITICAL ISSUES: THE SHARP END OF WRITING

This chapter seeks a definition of critical writing as opposed to uncritical. It begins with some definitions and identifies what is meant by the phrase 'your writing is uncritical'. The uncritical is not dogma, an occasional risk, but rather the mediocre idea, which is described in terms of banality and the mechanistic. Meanwhile, interesting utterances are positioned as not necessarily the antithesis of the uncritical but as foregrounding criteria. A framework of criteria leads to the enrichment of observations. Even in analysis—supposedly a mechanical process—the critical element comes to the fore. Concepts of inconsequentiality in writing are discussed; and these are opposed to the dynamic relationship of sections within a writing. The movement between discourses, where the voice travels through themes and issues, is identified as one of the salient features of critical writing. Thus writing follows art and art follows writing.

4.8 HISTORY AND US: HOW TO EXPLOIT THE PAST WITHOUT EMBARRASSMENT

Art history, musical history, literary history, these are illustrious fields but risky terrain for the artist proposing his or her new ideas. The chapter examines the scholarly activity closest to the subject matter of the studio, noting the power of the discipline in establishing frameworks of artistic authority. The information handled in art historical texts can situate a project or intention in an enviable context. But it is also a trap, because comparisons with historical exemplars involve a certain temerity. In addition, some histories are less relevant than others. Artists have a tendency either to avoid or distort their position. It is a relationship to be managed with caution.

4.9 MISE-EN-THÈME: FILM ANALYSIS AND MISE EN SCÈNE AS CUE FOR WRITING

A working definition of mise en scène in film and theatre is developed, drawing upon the critical writing of the film critic and theorist Adrian Martin. Examining film theory means encountering an embarrassment of riches, but as a hermeneutics of invention that deals with multiple timing and sequencing, analysis of mise en scène stands out with special relevance to the 'staging' of ideas in writing. Discussion of the control of the angles—above all the expectations set up through one scene in anticipation of the next—is useful for appreciating the organizing principles of the text. This also has wider parallels with art environments or installational regimes in galleries. The manipulative artifice of sequenced ideas in visual, spatial or performative languages provides useful analogies to the rhetorical devices of writing.

4.10 SCHOLARSHIP IN THE BALANCE: THE AGONIES OF SCHOLARLY WRITING IN STUDIO RESEARCH

This chapter argues that the special kind of learnedness which is demanded in artistic research is best demonstrated through the concept of balance. Returning to a definition of research, the fields of knowing and proof which are traditional in other disciplines are not quite our affair. In the creative arts, the opposite qualities are sometimes more compelling: open-endedness and doubt. Art often contests the lure of objectivity; but then it also calls for something to be said—especially as research—and the written element in the research refers in part to truth claims by other writers. The chapter goes on to describe the sins of a bad doctoral submission. The themes include blandness, evasion, pretence, naivety, inconsistency, problematic ideology, poor structure, the uncritical (already discussed), the unpoetic and pomposity. They are not hard to avoid.

4.11 METHODS AND MARKETS

On one level, research can mean investigating how to be successful as an artist. This chapter explores the extent to which the proposed work is 'sexy' in the current climate, how much it seems destined to capture the imagination of various sectors of the public. The chapter presents a methodological framework for juggling such considerations within the integrity of artistic inspiration. It considers the interests of the art market (private and public collectors) and the role of arts criticism, both areas to which the writing of artists is often ultimately directed. How much can the communicative work undertaken through the research result in a tangible benefit to the artist?

4.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter synthesizes the core contentions, explaining how jealous subjectivity can be reconciled with good research method. It charts how we have distinguished methods proper to our disciplines, that we can recognize when and where—in the context of necessarily jealous ambitions—we might welcome interventions from outside the creative arts, that we know what to do in the library, that we can explain the practical (almost income-generating) benefit of research in the creative arts, that we do not need to be embarrassed when explaining what research in the creative arts means in the strenuous context of university research. All of this enhances our idea of vision. The text ends by recognizing the artistic and intellectual vitality of the cause of research and looks forward to contributions of cultural significance to come.

CHAPTER ONE
POSITION & PRINCIPLES

CHAPTER 1.1

JEALOUSY AS CULTURAL PSYCHE

Contemporary artists, composers and authors have many neuroses in common. They seldom develop a creative idea without seething emotional energies that charge it to move from guardianship to glory. This may be true of all ideas, not just creative ones; but my interest is in that peculiar class of personal ideas that are grainy and volatile in the imagination, apt for development and transfer at some point where they become apparently original and important to others. Artists, composers and writers handle ideas with an instrumental elasticity that allows the same ideas to grow into poignant or powerful forms that are impossible to imagine until they have been hatched. The five notes that form a simple tune are fingered and breathed by the composer with a shifting spirit,[1] as another idea—which is not altogether contained in the simple melody—drives the tune toward a rich musical argument. The prospect of a larger unfolding of ideas is entertained with mixtures of fear and greed; and the artist experiences a psychological condition which is both euphoric and stressful.

Artistic thinking is strikingly labile, on the move and tense: it proceeds from inscrutable inspiration and is conditioned by agony. Regardless of the equanimity of the artist or idealistic spirit or pious altruism, there is a structural tussle between proprietorship and sharing. The artist wants to share the idea but equally wants the idea to remain eternally fingerprinted as his or hers, to be remembered not as a general proposition but only in the special expressive incarnation that the artist has given it. The idea must not escape into the sensual or intellectual commons without an authorial tag. In the creative arts, ideas are developed not solely for the artist but for others, possibly other people across the globe.[2] There is an optimum moment—a propitious tide among countless and nameless waves—which inclines the artist to feel that a concept is set for communication; it is judged to be publishable and the author wants to disseminate the insights. Until then, the idea is in personal asylum, perhaps gestating, perhaps indefinitely retained according to the Freudian model of deferred pleasure, or perhaps held in storage by anxious procrastination or fear that it will be misspent or wasted.

On another plane, the high-minded poetic scrupulosity and integrity of the artist might explain the reluctance to publish: the purpose in making art or music is to make art or music; it is self-sufficient and selfless. This has been often celebrated. A memorable example is a scene in the film *Tous les matins du monde*,[3] in which the young and brilliant composer Marin Marais—after absorbing the musical wisdom and exploiting the daughters of the reclusive Sainte-Colombe—asks the older composer: 'why don't you publish your works?' The answer is implicit: Sainte-Colombe is too noble

1 The shifting spirit is acknowledged in somatic terms from the time of Cavalcanti and Dante in poetic literature as the sigh (*spirito peregrino*) which remains the subject of emotive description throughout the baroque: see Robert Klein, 'Spirito peregrino', *La forme et l'intelligible: écrits sur la Renaissance et l'art moderne*, Gallimard, Paris 1970, pp. 29-40.

2 Expressed as an almost erotic seduction or 'cruising' in the diction of Roland Barthes: 'ce lecteur, il faut que je le cherche (que je le "drague"), sans savoir où il est. Un espace de la jouissance est alor créé', *Le plaisir du text*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1973, p. 4.

3 Directed by Alain Corneau, 1991, with the writing of Pascal Quignard and featuring the bowing of Jordi Savall. Marais is played by Guillaume Depardieu as a young man and Gérard Depardieu when old.

to condescend to greedy competitiveness. Marais is all showy ambition and politically-inspired Catholic compliance, whereas Sainte-Colombe has the Huguenot integrity to pursue his music by faith alone. With his craving for worldly authority, the young Marais goes on to dazzle the courts while the hermetic Sainte-Colombe retires to his hut in austere melancholy, producing the gravest music with the tenebrist sincerity that Marais could only imitate.

Creative ideas and inspiration can thus be placed in dialectical relationships, as conflicting forces advise the artist of the most favorable occasion, when the opportunity for maximum impact avails. Art is a tussle in all respects, because a thousand factors potentially cruel the chances of an idea reaching an exquisite realization; and one of these, ironically, is the very zeal required to drive the project toward its inner fulfillment, to say nothing of a favourable strategic reception. Surplus ambition is as damaging as dearth of talent, because the claim inevitably outruns the substance and the art-lover is set up for disappointment. So the artist owns not just the idea but much of its trajectory, from its gestation to the control of its release; and whereas obtaining and nurturing the pure idea may be rewarding for the artist, the judgement involved in building its fortune is a cause of anxiety.

Whether shared by other workers or not, artists experience a fraught custodianship of ideas; and with art, it is easy to see: on the one hand, a great undivided love for the concept and its potential and, on the other hand, a zeal to exploit it, a nervous jealousy over its destiny, by which the artist apprehensively eyes off all likely contenders for the recognition that might be in the offing. Much is at stake in a personal sense; and the artist could be forgiven for competitive feelings—alongside the admiration—in the face of another artist's brilliance in approximating the idea. This condition involves jealousy in all its meanings.

Jealousy has long been associated with artists, as in the ancient Greek theme of the jealous potter,[4] meaning a craftsman who is so keen to guard his (alas not her) competitive advantage that he never reveals knowledge of the throwing technique, glaze formulae or painting; because this potential generosity would devalue the uniqueness—and hence negate the authority—of the potter's work. There are commercial interests at stake, too, and anxiety over the business escalates with workshop hands who may not always respect the fiduciary relationship with the master; and so how much should the apprentice know?[5] The motive to protect copyright, as it were, is powerful and may override collegiality. It may, for example, explain why so little is known of the techniques of the masters of Renaissance and baroque painting: an almost universal secrecy was maintained by workshop tradition. No one expected that the layers of transparent oil paint would be analysed in a treatise by an artist, any more than the drawing that supported the subject matter would be explained in its perceptual underpinnings.

Perhaps because traditional skills no longer enjoy such currency, the jealousy of artists is not primarily related to know-how but content; it is no longer about secret traditions, as in the phrase 'jealously guarded secret.' As technology becomes more available in standardized packages for artists and musicians, artistic invention is no longer about handing down secret recipes and conventions but rather it has turned to the invention of subject matter or audio/spatial encounters or *mise en scène*. In one sense, the jealousy of all artists is closer now to the condition that has always been experienced by writers; because all writers have technical knowledge alike (at least in the sense that they all perfectly know their mother tongue), and only their ideas and inventive use of the resources of language make the difference. In that quest to discover new content with an appropriate medium,

4 Also the famous title of Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The jealous potter*, translated by Bénédicte Chorier, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1988.

5 So long as concepts like reputation can be seen in competitive terms, they attract the condition of jealousy, hence phrases like Montaigne's from the sixteenth century, 'Jalous de leur reputation', *Essais* 1.25 ed. M. Rat, Garnier, Paris 1962, vol. 1, p. 141. See the same author's 'la jalousie de leur apprentissage', *ibid.* 2.12, *ed. cit.* vol. 1, p. 511.

the great internal scramble on the part of the artist to clinch an idea with zeal most closely resembles the deeper meanings of the word jealousy inherited from antiquity. The word jealousy, which is etymologically the same as zeal, takes us to deep archaic assumptions in western culture—from both the Hebraic and Hellenic sides—which are indelibly stamped on the western psyche.

In the history of ideas, few concepts are so uncanny in expressing the cultural equivocation in creativity as does jealousy. It is an area of passion and doubt which has no resolution, for it is simultaneously fervid and uncertain. Jealousy is both good and bad: it is either a formidable condition of morally necessary solicitude or a dissatisfied state of venomous craving, akin to envy. Among the Greeks, the concept of jealousy (ζηλος, from which our word is derived) was overwhelmingly positive, more closely approximating zeal than jealousy as understood today, for which there was another word (φθονος) meaning envious jealousy. In relatively few texts are these concepts associated.[6] Usually the word for jealousy was not pejorative but indicated eagerness in rivalry, an emulation spiked with ambition to exceed someone else's achievements.[7] And in some authors, the idea of jealousy reaches into the high zones of pride, honour or glory.[8] There is also a verb, to make oneself jealous over something (ζηλοω) which could also express esteem, admiration or praise;[9] and these conceptions extended to an abstract noun describing a work or deed which is worthy of jealousy (ζηλομα), the object of emulation, envy or ambition, high fortune, which could definitely apply to art.[10] So, with a paradox typical of the dialectical culture that we inherit from Greece, the measure of something good is the degree of envy with which it stings a competitor.

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Nothing in Greek antiquity, however, compares with the understanding of jealousy among the ancient Jews, whose highest institution and object of faith is jealousy: 'thou shalt worship no other god; for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.'[11] God's identity is equated with jealousy; it is not simply one characteristic among several in his incomparably holy personality but his very spirit and name. The God of Israel is never so abstract as to escape from keen and drastic emotion. And God himself invokes the image of the rage of personal hurt (as in the modern understanding of a jealous husband) to project his wrath at sinners. 'And I will judge thee as women who break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy'.[12] The benignity of this affection is hard to establish. It is not totally satisfying to translate jealousy as simply an anxious solicitude, because it is angry. Even the gentle Solomon, in expressing the pre-eminence of love, calls upon this conception to demonstrate the uncompromising fierceness in the economy of desire: 'Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal

6 Hesiod, *Works and days* 195, Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 1526, Plato, *Philebus* 47e, 50c, *Laws* 679c, *Republic* 550e (specifically as ζηλοτυπος) 553a; and also as a verb, to vie with or emulate, *Symposium* 213d.

7 Aristotle, Rhetoric, 1388a30 (where also (ζηλωτικος)1388ª36, Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonna*, Plutarch, *Theseus* 25, *Coriolanus* 4, *Perikles* 2

8 Sophocles, *Ajax* 503, jealousy and joy (χαρα), Demosthenes 18.217 and 120. Repeated in the Renaissance, as in Montaigne 'parlant de la jalousie de gloire quie estoit entre les Ætoliens et les Romains', *Essais* 1.49 *ed. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 333, and the baroque, as in Racine, with phrases like 'jalouse de sa gloire', *Alexandre le grand* 1.3.333, *Bajazet* 2.5.770, *Iphigénie* 4.8.1453.

9 Sophocles, *Electra* 1027, *Ajax* 552, Euripides, *Orestes* 521, Plato, *Phaedrus* 232a

10 A similar conception (ζηλωσις) in Longinus specifically applies to the imitation of great works of visual art (μεγαλων συγγραφεων μιμησις), 13.2; for ζηλομα, see Euripides, *Iphigenia on Taurus* 379.

11 *Exodus* 34.14. See also Ezekiel's vision: 'the spirit lifted me … to… the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there… *Ezekiel* 8.3

12 *Ezekiel* 16.38.

upon thine arm; for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.'[13] So for all the warmth, the seal on the heart is maintained with the threat of death. Jealousy is culturally instituted to provide a constant menace to emotional freedom; it is appointed through wrath to control desire.

Jealousy in the Hebraic tradition is, above all, righteous. It is not considered perverse by the person who owns it but necessary, indignant and punishing.[14] It is supremely the quality of divinity, the jealous God of Israel, whose resolution of universality is checked by the angry glance at putative Other gods. The Other gods are constantly to be denounced; and the affection that a Jew might spare for them is an abomination, perhaps the greatest horror in the eyes of the Lord God, who demands exclusive recognition. The jealous God of Israel is offended by attention going to another divinity, even when the other divinity does not exist. Seduction away from the Lord is mortally cursed and the deviants suffer penalties whose severity afflicts succeeding generations. In this jealous spiritual economy, the worshipper must constantly reassure God that there are no other gods in his or her conspectus, that the true God will never be forgotten and only the unique God is worthy of the highest.

Only once does the *Bible* contemplate a situation where jealousy might be unfounded, namely in the law of jealousies, which describes a *jealousy offering* in which the priest must perform sacred offices should 'the spirit of jealousy come upon' a husband. In this circumstance there is a question of whether 'he be jealous of his wife and she be defiled ... or if ... she be not defiled...'[15] In this dilemma which cannot be resolved empirically, the law of jealousies prescribes unguents and words to cater for either possibility. By this rite, we trust that further jealous reprisals and punishments were thereby avoided.

With the weight of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the severity of jealousy as a moralizing force toward legalized and institutionally justified love might have prevailed to the present day.[16] But an element of jealousy must also have come under suspicion in the Renaissance. Doubt about the concept of jealousy emerges strongly with sober writers like the French sixteenth-century philosopher Montaigne, who classes jealousy with ambition, avarice, envy, crazy greed and calumny; though he also speaks highly of honorable people, jealous of justice.[17] On the one hand the word is associated with virtue and on another it is loaded with hate and responsible for war.[18]

In this epoch, therefore, the estimation of jealousy became equivocal. The word could be used in a variety of senses and with a certain structural wisdom in the confusion. Montaigne could see that

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13 *Song of Solomon* 8.6. The fraught affections in a marriage as a metaphor for the joyful yet stressful relations with God carries into Christianity in which all true love remains sanctified in terms of jealousy. As St Paul says to the Corinthians, 'For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy (ζηλω γαρ υμας Θεου ζηλω, literally the jealousy of God); for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. *2 Corinthians* 11.2.

14 See the dishonour over a woman: 'For jealousy is the rage of a man; therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance', *Proverbs* 6.34. Love confounded with disappointment is the *Leitmotiv* of the *Old Testament*: 'the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease; for I was but a little displeased and they helped forward the affliction.' *Zechariah*, 1.14-15

15 *Numbers* 5.15 11-31

16 See Mariella Di Maio, *Il cuore mangiato: storia di un tema letterario dal Medioevo all'Ottocento*, Guerini e Associati, Milan 1996. For the industrial period, see Philippe Chardin, *L'amour dans la haine, ou, La jalousie dans la litté rature moderne: Dostoîevski, James, Svevo, Proust, Musil*, Droz, Geneva 1990, and Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious masculinity in early modern England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK, New York 1996.

17 'l'ambition, l'avarice, la jalousie, l'envie, les apetits desreglez, forcenez et indomptables, la guerre, le mensonge, la desloyauté, la detraction et la curiosité', *Essais* 2.12, ed. cit., vol. 1, p. 537; for the reverse, 'les gens de qualité avoyent plus de jalousie de telles recompenses que de celles où il y avoit du guein et du profit', *Essais* 2.7, ed. cit., vol. 1, p. 418.

18 'pleines de haine, de jalousie', *Essais* 2.37, ed. cit., vol. 2, p. 183. On the Trojan war: 'L'envie d'un seul homme, un despit, un plaisir, une jalousie domestique, causes qui ne devoient pas esmouvoir deux harangeres à s'esgratigner, c'est l'ame et le mouvement de tout ce grand trouble', *ibid.* 2.12, ed. cit., vol. 1, p. 523.

jealousy is relative. It depends on a prior order of expectation. The placid philosopher gives the example of the jealousy of women in European culture: it is directed toward exclusivity of affection, whereas in polygamous communities, women are keen to augment the number of wives as an ornament to the authority of the marriage.[19] This liberal moment in the history of ideas allows us to identify a kind of emotional collusion between hatred and love: emotional pleasure involving the beloved is not simple but inherently fraught. As Montaigne says, there is a frustrating jealousy and envy among our pleasures; and Tasso notes in the same century that envy is the daughter of hatred, whereas jealousy is the daughter of love.[20]

Alas, it seems to me that out of the many options that the Renaissance had hatched, the spiritually dubious part supplied—almost exclusively—the contemporary meaning of jealousy. In spite of the delicious and engaging semantic pregnancy in the single term, the concepts were too large for one word; and so two words were informed by the single root, yielding jealousy and zeal.

Summing up the trend from Dante to Titian, the two ideas are literally drawn up in the later Renaissance by Cesare Ripa, whose *Iconologia* was a commonly-exploited source for visual artists of the baroque. In this frequently-reprinted book of symbolic images, Ripa shows the personification of jealousy (*Gelosia*) as a person singularly indisposed with a cock in one hand and a spiky club in the other; her clothes are covered in eyes and ears, signifying the exaggeratedly vigilant insecurity by which she lives.[21] Zeal (*Zelo*) is a priest who is wholly righteous, an upholder of religion and one who castigates incorrect belief and practice, thus protecting the Biblical privilege of righteous orthodox jealousy.[22] On a spiritual scale, jealousy (*gelosia*) has definitely been demoted from its archaic godly status in Israel. But Jealousy is still nowhere near as grotesque and hateful as Envy (*Invidia*), a hag who is self-consuming, malicious and vile in her self-inflicted torments.[23]

The woebegone auto-traumatizing image of jealousy emerges strongly in the baroque, as in Shakespeare's 'Self-harming jealousy! Fie, beat it hence!'[24] The affection is more deplorable than glorious, inclined to be importunate or brutal, hence 'Improvident jealousy'[25] or 'savage jealousy', terms which arise similarly in continental dramaturgs like Racine.[26] As an affection, it is unreliable where objective information is needed: 'Rumour is a pipe', Shakespeare says, 'blown by surmises, jealousies, conjectures'.[27] People who follow jealousy are stupid, as in a 'Jealous fool'.[28] 'How many

19 'Les hommes y ont plusieurs femmes, et on ont d'autant plus grand nombre qu'ils sont en meilleure reputation de vaillance; c'est une beauté remerquable en leurs mariages, que la mesme jalousie que nos femmes ont pour nous empescher de l'amitié et bien-veuillance d'autres femmes, les leur l'ont toute pareille pour la leur acquerir. Estans plus soigneuses de l'honneur de leurs maris que de toute autre chose, elles cherchent et mettent leur solicitude à avoir le plus de compaignes qu'elles peuvent, d'autant que c'est un tesmoignage de la vertu du mary', *Essais* 1.31, ed. cit., vol. 1, p. 243.

20 For Tasso, *Stanze della Gelosia* 6.8; for Montaigne, 'Il y a de la jalousie et envie entre nos plaisirs: ils se choquent et empechent l'un l'autre', Essais 3.13, ed. cit., vol 2, p. 565.

21 'Donna con una veste di torchino a onde, dipinta tutta d'occhi e d'orecchie, con l'ali alle spalle, con un gallo nel braccio sinistra & nella destra mano con un mazzo di spine. Gelosia è una passione e un timore che fa che il valore della virtù, o de' meriti d'altri, superando le qualità virtuose di chi ama non le tolga la possessione della cosa amata.' Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, Padua 1611, pp. 194-95

22 'Huomo in habito di Sacerdote, che nella destra mano tenga una sferza, e nella sinistra una lucerna accesa. Il zelo è un certo amore della religione col quale si desidera che le cose appartenenti al culto divino siano esseguite con ogni sincerità, prontezza e diligenza. A che fare due cose accennate in quest'imagine sono necessarijsime, cioè insignare a gl'ignoranti, e correggere e castigare gl'errori; ambe due queste parti adempì Christo Salvatore… *ibid.* p. 552

23 'Donna vecchia, magra, brutta, di color livido, havrà la mamella sinistra nuda e morsicata da un serpe, il qual sia rivolto in molti giri sopra di detta mamella, e a canto vi sarà un'hidra sopra della quale terrà appoggiata la mano. Invidia non è altro che allegrarsi del male altrui, e attristarsi del bene con un tormento che strugge e divora l'huomo in se stesso.' *ibid.* pp. 261-63

24 *Comedy of errors* 2.1.102

25 *Merry wives* 2.2.302

26 *Twelfth-night* 5.1.122; for Racine, 'sa jalouse fureur', *Mithridate* 1.5.356, 'jalouse rage', *Phèdre* 4.6.1258, 'jaloux transports', *Phèdre* 4.6.1263

27 *2 Henry IV* Induction 16; *cf.* Racine's 'soupçons jaloux', *Bajazet* 2.5.751

28 *Merry wives* 4.2.137

fond fools serve mad jealousy!'[29]

And so the bard describes the self-deceits of suspicion as 'the forgeries of jealousy'.[30]

In the whole Shakespearean corpus, there is little evidence of the European psyche retaining the holy righteousness of jealous affection. On the contrary, you can sense the poet poking fun at ancient tradition, as if the concept had quite fallen into discredit. Heaven can be praised for lending a suspicious nature: 'God be praised for my jealousy';[31] or alternatively, God can be asked to lend relief from jealousy: 'Good heaven, the souls of all my tribe defend From jealousy'.[32] Jealousy is a blot on a person's nature, a contagion, whence the 'nobler heart and brain' are tainted 'with needless jealousy'[33], a scourge of faith: 'O! how hast thou with jealousy infected The sweetness of affiance![34] In short, jealousy is base and fell.[35]

Today, jealousy is usually understood as something abject, a bit like envy (as when Salieri is consumed with jealousy over Mozart's superior musicality, according to a dubiously reliable film, *Amadeus*). Families use jealousy in this sense whenever they describe sibling rivalry or a competitive feeling among classmates that turns sour, poignantly described from the twentieth century as a 'best friends' situation. But this destructive negativity is not the essential story in western culture.

Although modern languages can separate jealousy from envy and zeal, there is logic in the overlap. Jealousy is like zeal because, in the matter of affection, a person is zealous for love. It is about psychological possessiveness which, in turn, is about ownership. Jealousy assures us that love is dialectical, if ever there were doubt; and indeed many spiritualized renditions of love, from Christian charity to filmic romance, would persuade us that love is a lyrical blessing from heaven. Alas, wherever there is love, there is jealousy. As Shakespeare says, 'For love, thou knowest, is full of jealousy' and Racine confidently asserts as axiomatic: 'if Titus is jealous, Titus is in love'.[36] Jealousy is a part of all relationships to the extent that they are insecure (and how can they not be while there are other adorable and libidinous folk in the vicinity?). According to Montaigne, jealousy grows with love and strangles it with capital hatred, achieving the opposite and utterly ugly effect.[37] Horrible but necessary, which is why we resent it.

On a social level, where all emotion is insecure, jealousy is intrinsic to the legislation of love, and certainly to the desire that all westernized societies have to make love obligatory, for lovers to be answerable for their affections, for love to be extorted on promises and thereafter to be responsible to ownership. The only way to mechanize love—to regulate wandering affection and criminalize the

29 *Comedy of errors* 2.1.116. See also Falstaff's line: 'dwelling in a continual 'larum of jealousy', *Merry wives* 3.5.75

30 *Midsummer-night's dream* 2.1.81. Compare also Racine: 'Funeste aveuglement. Perfide jalousie', *Bajazet* 4.1.1150, 'Le perfide intéret, l'aveugle jalousie', *Esther*, Prologue (spoken by the personification Piété).

31 *Merry wives* 2.2.324

32 *Othello* 3.3.176. See also the thought that jealousy might compromise an innocent person: Let not my jealousies be your dishonours, but mine own safeties, *Macbeth* 4.3.29

33 *Cymbeline* 5.4.66

34 *King Henry V* 2.2.126-27

35 *Othello* 3.4.28 and *King Henry V* 5.2.391 respectively.

36 *Two gentlemen of Verona* 2.4.177; for Racine 'Si Titus est jaloux, Titus est amoureux', *Bérénice* 2.5.666

37 This is said of women: 'Lorsque la jalousie saisit ces pauvres ames foibles et sans resistance, c'est pitié comme elle les tirasse et tyrannise cruellement; elle s'y insinue sous tiltre d'amitié; mais depuis qu'elle les possede, les mesmes causes que servoient de fondement à la bienvueillance servent de fondement de hayne capitale. C'est des maladies d'esprit celle à qui plus de choses servent d'aliment, et moins de remede. La vertue, la santé, le merite, la reputation du mary sont les boutefeus de leur maltalent et de leur rage: *nullæ sunt inimicitiæ, nisi amoris, acerbæ* [this is from Propertius, 2.8.3: no bile is as bitter as that of love]. Cette fievre laidit et corrompt tout ce qu'elles ont de bel et de bon d'ailleurs, et d'une femme jalouse, quelque chaste qu'elle soit et mesnagere, il n'est action qu ne sente à l'aigre et à l'importun. C'est une agitation enragée, qui les rejecte à une extremité du tout contraire à sa cause'. *Essais* 3.2, ed. cit., vol. 2, p. 291.

transfer of love—is to infuse its passion with a possessive temper, to make it integral with hate.

In a remarkable book, the German philosopher Max Scheler described the centrality of resentment to all ethics.[38] It is a radical thesis because counter-intuitive: morality is quintessentially good, while resentment is unequivocally and universally sensed to be oppressive, a dire emotional affliction, a wretched feeling that can do nobody any good. Yet the basis for the link between resentment and morality is powerful. In the economy of affections, resentment provides the motive to check for fairness and to create rules about it, to insist that no one receives undue advantages. But if resentment is structurally necessary to morality, I think that you could say with equal reason that jealousy is central to all ambition, and especially artistic ambition.

Many philosophical traditions which have informed contemporary consciousness would not accept the seduction of spiritualized inspiration. It is an ideological vacuum; nor does such inspiration have a material cause, which would give it credit in a dialectical sense.

Like romantic love (maybe dating back to the tradition of Petrarch's poetry), artistic ambition has been linked to a divine font of inspiration, the muse, the sacred brook of Helicon, as you can see in the beautiful *Fête champêtre* of Giorgione from the early sixteenth century, where two naked women with recorder and wellspring assist the courtly and rustic poet-musicians. It is charming as a metaphor; and, especially when absorbed in the lyrical and learned transports of Renaissance humanism, you can easily give credence to the neo-Platonic link between holiness and creative intuition. This conceit has obvious appeal, because there is undoubtedly something a bit spooky about artistic inspiration, akin to the dark and moody atmosphere in Giorgione's landscape. But I think that it is no longer possible to romance inspiration in this way, as flattering as it may be for anyone pretending to original creation. Many philosophical traditions which have informed contemporary consciousness would not accept the seduction of spiritualized inspiration. It is an ideological vacuum; nor does such inspiration have a material cause, which would give it credit in a dialectical sense.

Even if you could accept some holy agency in connecting original mind with originary cosmos, the implied deities are interested parties and they will want to protect their copyright. As noted, the very motif of divinity in the Hebraic tradition is already infused with jealousy, a mechanism of mistrust and control that denies the freedom of love and restricts its legitimacy by severe injunctions. The supreme creator, the archetype of demiurge (or artist), is intolerant of errant affections; and through the motif of the jealous God of Israel, religious tradition in the west has furnished European culture with an anxious creative psychology.

From its basis in severe Hebraic interdictions, this anxious psychology was then grafted onto the naturally competitive and greedy ambitiousness of Hellenic culture, with its urge to codify and historicize individual attainment. It seems to me that all of the arts are professed and celebrated in global culture on the basis of this dual inheritance, which the critic and poet Matthew Arnold had already recognized in the nineteenth century.[39]

I want to take my cue from this motif but not to be shackled by its history. The history of jealousy remains a great topic for research in another project[40] but my motive is not to conduct a cultural

38 Scheler's work, *Das Ressentiment im Aufbau der Moralen*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 1978, originally 1955, presents a critique of Nietzsche's attribution of resentment to Christianity; but in the process, the work analyses the sentiment in systematic phenomenological style, separating it from envy and competitiveness.

39 'Hebraism and Hellenism,' Chapter 4 of Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*, 1867-68.

40 An enormous project at that! It would entail a survey of almost every play or short story or film in world literature. It would pay special attention to signal moments such as Cervantes' *El celoso extremeño* from the *Novelas ejemplares*, in which Carrizales, the jealous old husband of the young wife Leonora is a bizarre figure of fun, and the exploits of the adulterer seem admirable; however, the tables turn and the sympathy of the story falls in moral favour of the jealous Carrizales.

history of the theme so much as to propose an analysis of the zeal—in specifically artistic contexts—that leads an author from uncertainty to confidence and ultimately toward cultural generosity in the creation of artistic works. Artists and musicians and writers are not so much possessive of the things that they have (the jealous husband syndrome) as full of unmet cravings for the work to be, if not also the acclaim and privileges that the work may yield. In a word they are ambitious: in the first instance ambitious for the quality of the work and, in the second, ambitious for the credit that should follow from its reception. Few would conform to the hermetic paradigm of Sainte-Colombe and disavow the pressures of personal hunger and public approbation that drive the work of most artists.

If jealousy has a fraught history in western culture, so does ambition. The word is not very ancient and has a technical origin, deriving from the behaviour of politicians in classical Rome. Like today's candidates in any electorate, they canvassed themselves throughout the neighbourhood on a zealous mission (*ambitus*), sometimes unlawful. The habit of going around (*ambio*) on the hustings, soliciting support and persuading people to vote for you, was described as *ambitio*. It grew up in the context of competition for office, and did not exist before the epoch of a (more or less) democratic political contest between adversaries or rivals for leadership. There is no Greek equivalent, even though you might be able to discover various noble conceptions of honour or love of glory (φιλοδοξια, φιλοτιμα) in Greek.[41]

Ambitious people, even in Rome, are not to be trusted.[42] Ambitious people vie with one another or seek to usurp an existing order or obliterate an equally legitimate opposition, in all events to displace and prevail. They are pretenders. They want you on-side and know how to seduce. They are more skilful than others at getting their way. They may become glorious when they assume power and handle it prudently, like Caesar, and have an admirable determination to reach their goal. But suspicion dogs their ascent to power, as the authority of one candidate relative to another is questionable. They seek love but are full of hate; their love is a shameless and manipulative form of competitive solicitation—ultimately cynical and self-seeking—and their hatred is just as mechanistic, aggressively damaging the credibility of their rivals and mischievously cultivating other fellows to adopt a similarly hostile relation to their adversaries.

Renaissance literature is full of contempt for the concept, even though you could imagine that the great epoch would adore ambition, revel in its seething glory and celebrate its transcendence to magnificence. Renaissance writers, musicians, architects, painters and sculptors rose to new levels of audacity in the period and celebrated their virtues with an almost shameless competitive pride. But still the taint of ambition agonizes the striving; and Ripa, whose horror of jealousy has been noted, stigmatizes ambition on the authority of St Thomas Aquinas. The personification of Ambition is winged and blind—not unlike the image of Cupid, which is also stigmatized in concepts such as cupidity, a kind of greed or avarice—and is handled ambiguously. The ambitious one 'has an inordinate appetite to make himself or herself great, to join high rank, arrive at positions of state, lordship, legislature and offices, by whatever just or unjust intention and by whatever virtuous or evil means.'[43] Ripa allows that it can be good, in the same way that high office can be good and in the same way that it is right to honour your superiors. It is just that the trajectory from upstart to ruler is dubiously legitimate and the psychological impetus to get there is equally

41 These are rather more desirable and agreeable than the Latin *ambitio*, even more than the Latin *aemulatio*, a restless striving to succeed which, ironically, is the origin of our word emulation (seen, since modernism, as slavish).

42 Shakespeare judged this in his famous interpretation of Antony's apologia for Caesar, invoking the dead ruler's sentimental side and saying that 'ambition should be made of sterner stuff,' *Julius Caesar*, 3.2.97. Shakespeare's Anthony is, himself, terrifically ambitious.

43 Donna giovane, & vestita di verde, con habito succinto, e con li piedi nudi; haverà a gl'homeri l'ali, & con ambe le mani mostri di mettersi confusamente in capo più sorte di Corone, & haverà gl'occhi bendati, & in Sua compagnia vi sia un leone con la testa alta. Ambitione, secondo S. Tomaso 2.2 q. 131. art. 2 è un'appetito disordinato di farsi grande, & di pervenire à Gradi, Stati, signorie, Magistrati, & Officii, per qual si voglia giusta, ò ingiusta occasione, virtuoso, o vitioso mezzo.' Ripa, *Iconologia*, *s.v.*

inclined to be bad. And so he continues of this upstart would-be muse: 'She is depicted as young and dressed in green because youth is presumptuous: it is their vice that they cannot control the impulses of the soul'. Further, 'they crave and ardently desire things that do not belong to them, that is to fly above others and become superior to all'.[44]

Audacity, presumption, arrogance: these qualities tag ambition with impiety, regardless of the good that an ambitious person may achieve. Like jealousy, ambition in European culture is built around anxiety, a simultaneous thrill and horror at the Oedipal scorn for the father which imposes stresses upon the artist that are difficult to manage. It seems to go with envy, emulation, vanity, deceit and treachery quite as much as glory.[45]

Nowadays, the tables have turned and superficially ambition is publicly lauded. In effect, it has been sanitized, in which its necessarily jealous constitution is denied. Websites for art and music academies boast of their corporate ambition and vaunt the individual ambition of their students and graduates. The number of highly ambitious students who then go on to fame is a benchmark of institutions. Projecting ambition is a way of selling hope. For the individual, ambition is held as a prerequisite for success; and no one wants to be a loser. The quality of ambition is unequivocally projected as grunt, motivation, force, get-up-and-go or initiative: it is a form of drive with vision attached. This shameless declaration of ambition works for a corporation; but the life of the concept in the psyche of the individual artist is not so settled, because the individual, unlike the institution, still has to own the jealousy. In the artistic psyche, the individual never really knows how far to presume, how much to project and clamour. We are at heart always disturbed by ambition; and, as if shy of the temerity, many artists fervently set themselves up in resistance to ambition, or at least to qualify its direction. The New York Studio School of Drawing Painting and Sculpture has emblazoned on its entrance and on its website the philosophy of its Dean, Graham Nickson: 'Ambition for the work, not ambition for the career.' This adage contains a disarming sentiment, recommending to the art student a hermetic dedication to the goals of excellence but confined to the creation of the work and not extending to the reception of the work.

In the artistic psyche, the individual never really knows how far to presume, how much to project and clamour. We are at heart always disturbed by ambition; and, as if shy of the temerity, many artists fervently set themselves up in resistance to ambition, or at least to qualify its direction.

Very commendable in spirit but perhaps not so clearly distinguished in practice.[46] You will never find an artist who would confess to having ambition for the career and not for the work. Few artists would be so cynical as to profess a greater dedication to their career than fondness for their work; and if they were, you could argue that they are not really artists but businessmen or women. But even allowing that there may be artists who have this brazen *chutzpah*, how much sense would the confession make? Philosophically, how do you separate so neatly the dedication to make ambitious work and the ambition for the trajectory of the work toward other people's appreciation? If art is communicative, it probably calls for an audience at some point. Leaving self-publicity and

44 'Si dipinge giovane vestita di verde, percioche i giovani son quelli, che molto si presumono, e molto sperano essendo lor proprio vitio, come dice Seneca in Troade, per non poter reggere l'impeto dell'animo, che perciò se gli fanno l'ali a gl'homeri, dimostrando anco, che appetiscono & arditamente desiderano quelle cose che non convengono loro, cioè volare sopra gl'altri, & essere superiore à tutti.' *loc. cit.*

45 On the evidence of Shakespeare alone, as with Oliver describing his brother, 'the stubbornest young fellow of France; full of ambition, an envious emulator of every man's good parts, a secret and villainous contriver against me', *As you like it*, 1.1.149; it is also synonymous with vanity, as in 'ambitious for a motley coat', *ibid*, 2.7.43; and elsewhere it arises as a form of turpitude: 'Virtue is chok'd with foul ambition/ And charity chas'd hence by rancour's hand', *2 Henry VI*, 3.1.143-44.

46 The subtlety of the species of ambition reminds me of Hamlet's satirical reassurance to Guildenstern: 'I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow', *Hamlet*, 2.2.271-73; elsewhere, the Prince confesses to Ophelia that he is 'very proud, revengeful, ambitious', *ibid.* 3.1.126; and see the same quality being described as pitiful, *ibid.* 3.2.49.

schmoozing aside, the career is nothing but congealed creative work in the context of its reception, yielding a tangible and official rising in people's estimation. Why would you not want people to fall in love with your work? Ambition for the work is integral to ambition for the career, if the two can be separated at all. Is it really necessary to cultivate an abstemious indifference toward other people's estimation of the artwork—and to the place of the artwork in the scene—as if the work is self-sufficient and requires no conversations, just as the artist needs no encouragement from a critical community? It seems unreasonable that the artwork on its own should substitute for a culture of feedback, reinforcement and, after all, a desire to be heard and seen, embraced and absorbed.

Artists have dedication to their work partly because they see their work as part of their personal growth, a productive ageing, which at times you could even characterize with the word career. It is not some kind of disgrace but a necessary part of the psychological backdrop to ambitious production.

It sounds so noble to seek to suppress this kind of ambition; but it is, psychologically speaking, naïve. Ambition acts upon us whether we like it or not; and while it may seem better etiquette to sublimate the ambition into the purity of the creative process itself (and therefore to entertain no thoughts of fame and renown) it seems likely that the origin of the sublimated ambition is the same desire for recognition which Freud called *Geltungsdrang*, the drive to be esteemed. Artists have dedication to their work partly because they see their work as part of their personal growth, a productive ageing, which at times you could even characterize with the word career. It is not some kind of disgrace but a necessary part of the psychological backdrop to ambitious production. The very word *ambitio* contains an image: the circling action that describes a vicinity, a circling around, suggesting an almost physiognomic picture of the eyes casting around to suss out the opportunities in the neighbourhood, a searching around, a darting glance to penetrate the local interests, to find the place and moment to lay a claim. It is the same energy and motif in the creation of an artwork and in the scene that might receive it: to find the gap—the unmet chance or unrealized potential *vis-à-vis* both the work in hand and its cultural ambience—and clinch it with the peculiar insights and talents that we have.

The idea that artists have methods is a complicated theme which has been handled before, most extensively in a long and useful book by Graeme Sullivan, *Art practice as research: inquiry in the visual arts*,[47] which my own authorial jealousy inclines me to characterize as incomplete. To be fair, it is a helpful resource; for the text presents a comprehensive survey of literature in the field and proposes a number of axes along which the various contributions can be aligned. The problem is not that the text is flawed or wrong; rather, the terms of the discourse—nicely summing up anterior contributions in the field—are unsympathetic to everything that I sense about the artistic psyche and the way it works, its inner method, if you like. Sullivan's discourse, while inflected, is methodically definitional; and a key element of artistic teleology is lacking, namely the poetic. An elaborate index is provided. It lists terms like 'idea visualization' and 'intersubjectivity' but not 'inspiration'. 'Falsifiability' is there but not fantasy. 'Theorizing art practice' is there but not theatricality. 'Mixed methodologies' are there but not 'metaphor'. 'Inductive analysis' features but not 'immanence'. 'Sensory-based learning' gets plenty of attention but there is no 'sensuality'. 'Participatory action research' is there but not 'passion'. 'Policy' is there but not 'pleasure'. 'Positionality' features but the word poetic is absent. Phenomenology is listed; but the reference is a minor mention in the introduction. Sullivan's text, though clearly earnest and deliberate, does not speak in harmony with the chaotic or impulsive temper of the artistic voice. It is written with paragraphs like the following:

47 Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 2005

> Thinking about *Visualizing Texts* conjures up an image of an idiosyncratic stance whereby personal constructs shape ideas and actions. Yet wider interpretive communities also serve as mediating spaces through which conceptions are reformed that influence views. At the heart of these ideas are the way different agencies create the dialectics and the dialogues that help present new insights. For instance, the reduction and reinterpretation of existing category structures into alternative systems according to other conceptual cues is a type of inductive analysis that is very common in research. Although this kind of reconfiguration helps us synthesize information, perhaps the most value is in the heuristic appeal it holds as a way to see things differently. Furthermore, the plausibility of any interpretive schema can be clarified or confirmed through intersubjective agreement and other consensual strategies. Therefore visualizing texts suggests that the process of engaging critically with received information requires the capacity to 'talk back' and this can take many textual forms. Two strategies are relevant here, *representing* and *narrating*.[48]

The text, with its concatenated abstractions, is wonderfully logical but also somehow inimical to creative work. The language could even be suspected of discountenancing the author's goals:

> The approach I take makes the case that informing theories and practices are found in the art studio, and the image of the artist-theorist as practitioner is taken as the locus of action rather than the arts teacher. Therefore visual arts research has to be grounded in practices that come from art itself, especially inquiry that is studio based. In addition, an axiom of research needs to be followed which accepts that different paths can be used to get to the same place.[49]

If nothing else, my own contribution to this discussion aims to restore to the creative arts the dignified selfishness of artistic motivation in a period where it is being methodologically sanitized. Through art as research, we have entered an epoch characterized by inspirational cleansing, that is, the academic purgation of artistic thought.

This is a worthy point; for the centrality of the studio to inquiry in the creative arts needs to be emphasized. However, the idea of the research 'coming from art itself' indicates an imaginative spirit, because art is inventive, risky, flamboyant, iconoclastic, rhapsodic and fantastic. Alas, this ultimately ambitious connexion is somehow disappointed by Sullivan's remaining text, which covers a great deal of similarly studious literature with great scrupulosity but without a spontaneously artistic resonance. Though in many ways comprehensive, the text lacks a critique of disinterest (a term also missing from the index), which is the cornerstone of research method elsewhere, because creative work is pursued in a fanatically jealous egotistical spirit which in many ways puts it at odds with traditional research.[50] More recent attempts to fill the gap strike me as similarly incomplete and shy of the core psychological predicates of creative ambition.[51]

If nothing else, my own contribution to this discussion aims to restore to the creative arts the

48 *ibid*. pp. 196-197

49 *ibid*. p. xvii

50 This word and the methodological thought that go with its examination are also absent in Lesley Duxbury, Elizabeth M. Grierson and Dianne Waite, eds, *Thinking through practice: Art as research in the academy*, RMIT Publishing, Melbourne 2007. Although written by artists in the context of a large university art school, this text displays similar coyness and awkwardness in discussing the inspirational. The text is cited in chapter 3.7, where a critique is provided of the perceived need to have a 'research question'.

51 A good collection is Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, eds, *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, IB Tauris, London 2007. Barrett's own text, 'The Exegesis as Meme', pp. 159-164, is helpful but it tends not to challenge what she calls 'art as the production of knowledge'; nor does Brad Haseman's, 'Rupture and Recognition: identifying the performative research paradigm', pp. 147-158. None of the chapters comes near the jealousies identified here and they therefore strike me as positivistic. This is even so with Paul Carter's 'Interest: the ethics of invention', pp. 15-28, and Barbara Bolt's 'The magic is in the handling', pp. 27-34.

dignified selfishness of artistic motivation in a period where it is being methodologically sanitized. Through art as research, we have entered an epoch characterized by inspirational cleansing, that is, the academic purgation of artistic thought. Texts and university courses at the top-end encourage artists, writers or composers to think of their work in wholesome terms like information gathering and synthesis, which in many ways are warm and sweet but the exercise quite betrays the deeper motives which I want to outline in this book. In other ways the sanitizing trend is a methodological catastrophe, relegating to eccentricity and spiritual squalor the artist's share, and urging artists to dissimulate their jealous ambitions and organize their work—through plans and structures—with an exaggerated appeal to a body of fact or research conventionally defined. Rather, without this academic gloss, the inspiration of artists is simultaneously illustrious and shameless, sublime and dirty, and fits in no paradigm but its own.

All artists, before they are artists, are critics. They do not imitate canonical virtues but frequently scorn them. Everyone else is trained to appreciate aesthetic and symbolic virtues, taught to analyse, venerate and admire. Artists are a bit different.

The argument of this book, however, is not that artists lack method just because their work is driven by impulsive ambitions to satisfy ineradicable jealousies. On the contrary, the argument is that jealousy is a kind of method in itself or a key methodological element in managing any creative ambition; for it leads to the essential desire for positionality. Jealousy is messy, to be sure, but it behaves according to patterns of distinctiveness, building and fortifying the subjectivity of authorship and establishing the critical grounds for artistic innovation. Behind every creative act lies a string of repudiations. All artists, before they are artists, are critics. They do not imitate canonical virtues but frequently scorn them. Everyone else is trained to appreciate aesthetic and symbolic virtues, taught to analyse, venerate and admire. Artists are a bit different. To be sure, all artists have their heroes but they also fervently have their black beasts; they are full of rejection and damnation for what others are trained to esteem. This perverse trait distinguishes even very junior artists from children, say, who might simply display artistic freedoms and facility, a good ear or uninhibited sense for colour, plus much application and discipline. The artist is not just the person who can put things together beautifully but the person who can, at a pinch, take them apart vengefully, especially the work of others in the vicinity, or those parentally honoured specimens held up as exemplars, the material that they are expected to emulate. For these, they may even cultivate an incurious contempt, an apparently irrational and philistine impatience which renders them almost unteachable.

Up to a point, jealousy is about exclusion or feeling excluded. Artists were the kids who, from early days, were capable of rejecting the standard because of a feeling of not being included by the standard, perhaps prompting a degree of alienation or incompatibility which was stubbornly cultivated as a jealous feeling. The artists were the children who did not always like the way the other children sang or danced or drew (even when they seemed to enjoy themselves); they were the ones in the classroom who felt impatient and uncomfortable with the authority charged with their conformity, the teacher or parent who wanted them to join in for their own benefit.

Jealousy, if we are thinking of boys in a Freudian economy of desire, unquestionably proceeds from exclusion. It is related to not being able to sleep with the mother, looking upon the father as a privileged nuisance, in every sense (other than the daunting functionality of his penis) inadequate and objectionable, who needs to be eliminated. It might later occur to the boy that the father is in fact a very fine and loving fellow, most admirable in many clever things and marvellously forgiving and dedicated to his family; and this compensating intellectual esteem—miraculously overcoming the instinct to kill the competition—creates the final preconditions of a creative life, namely a successfully resolved Oedipal complex in which the boy can identify with the father and match the father's performance with greater ambitions. But this does not happen without an intervening phase of abject jealousy. The boy's subjectivity is never effaced in the process; on the contrary, the boy's

subjectivity proceeds in its own way to discover that it has an affection, not an obligation; and so the child's subjectivity is nourished with internal confidence.

Jealousy itself can arise, as in Israel, because the Other has too much fun, too much power and too little piety. It can be utterly misanthropic, as when we heap scorn on someone else's pleasure, never having experienced the pleasure but disdaining it on the basis that it is trivial, primitive, unworthy and contemptible, in other words for no reason at all, other than that you cannot join in. So in cultural matters, the condition of jealousy is not far from arrogance, hatred, prejudice, stupidity, pride, obstinacy and willful blindness. Not normally qualities associated with art; and this is why it needs a methodology around it. As an artist, you cannot rely upon a naturally jealous nature, by which all intuitions escalate to the most provident artistic perspicacity. You have to be a critic, constantly on the lookout for weaknesses (as well as virtues) in everyone else's production. But you also have to be a critic of your own jealousy, to recognize its agency, to negotiate with its power of motivation and to turn its negative impulses into joyful and generous alternatives. You cannot negate the independence and strong subjectivity that jealousy affords—else you would also lack positionality—but nor can you be strangled by your own powers of negative estimation, to the point that the scope for alternative joy is cruelled and the personal encounter with culture loses its gorgeous festivity.

Artistic jealousy is ultimately useful and beautiful, even though we have a tendency to deny it or at least not recognize it in the academic conspectus of research. I am calling my subject matter 'the jealousy of ideas' to distinguish it from the jealousy of people; because ultimately, it is not about how people exclude one another but how ideas do—new ones and old ones, jostling in furious contention—as if by themselves, just as they often achieve marvellous new accords and syntheses when the moment seems right. At the same time, ideas are only human; and the same jealousy prevails among our intellectual avatars as among us. So whichever way I look at it, it seems especially retrograde that we seek to define creative work by research methodologies that do not accommodate this essential motivational energy.[52]

Nevertheless, the great virtue of Graeme Sullivan's book is that it advises us of a new energy throughout the creative arts, even though Sullivan's subject matter is confined to the visual arts: it is a global cultural shift toward the academic, emanating from universities (which more or less control education in the creative arts) and their perfectly laudable research objectives. Throughout the Anglophone world, art, dance, composition, theatre and creative writing—which I am collectively calling art, for convenience—have been subsumed by universities, all of which are predicated on the prestige of research. This is not in itself a bad thing. On the contrary, much vibrancy can (and will) emerge. But the fortunes of art in this highly bureaucratic and bibliometric context depend on how the relationship with research is conceived and directed.

Personally, I have a jealous view of the academic trends in the contemporary creative arts. Like Sullivan, I am a teacher in a good art academy with a studio program bristling with excellent doctoral candidates. I too live in a culture in which artists, composers and writers are encouraged to apply for research grants that require bibliographic methodology; and we do everything that we can to help. But at the same time, I recognize something inviolable in the autonomy of the artistic imagination and jealously guard its somewhat arrogant personal independence and wayward faculty of growth. My view of research takes as its point of departure the development of the individual

52 There are also gratifying signs that the poetic side of creative research may be recognized. A good example is the recent article by the poet Kevin Brophy, 'Writing PhDs: Integrational Linguistics and a New Poetics for the PhD', *TEXT*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2007. Brophy gives plenty of air to metaphor, though this does not extend to the rather rattier side of the psyche that I am describing as jealous. Time will tell how much such cues are taken up. Certainly, the spread of methods subjects in research degrees will eventually force the issue in either direction, according to the flavour of the academy. See an interesting survey of the proliferation of such subjects in design academies, Gavin Melles, 'Global perspectives on structured research training in doctorates of design — what do we value?', *Design Issues*, forthcoming at the time of writing but available on web, 2009.

artist. The keynote of creative research at my academy[53] is set by the research graduate program, in which the core preoccupation is the growth of an artist in and beyond the program. The richness of the program lies in its tactful rapprochements with research methodologies in other disciplines, cultivating an etiquette of curiosity in research graduates as to when to seize upon and when to reject the premises and authority of other disciplines, to seek the unique balance of curiosity and inspiration proper to the studio.[54] The visual work is the research, symbolically accompanied by written documentation concerning the context and the sundry and sometimes inscrutable process of developing the ideas.

The keynote of creative research at my academy is set by the research graduate program, in which the core preoccupation is the growth of an artist in and beyond the program. The richness of the program lies in its tactful rapprochements with research methodologies in other disciplines, cultivating an etiquette of curiosity in research graduates as to when to seize upon and when to reject the premises and authority of other disciplines, to seek the unique balance of curiosity and inspiration proper to the studio.

Life is short and its rapid course is—in itself—cause for jealous protection. We do not have our students for very long and, in the short duration of a candidacy, the individual preoccupations of each graduate also preoccupy us as mentors and supervisors. By and large, the mature candidates in creative arts academies have reached a pass where they want to speculate on the direction of their work in relation to contemporary practice. They welcome new input but not distractions. Many are already calibrating the optimum time remaining, as if a biological clock is ticking relentlessly and their scope for realizing their potential is limited.

The economy within which the research is defined therefore acknowledges a kind of pressure. Because set in the conspectus of opportunity within the individual, we have time for speculation, for wondering at the marvels of past and contemporary directions and their ambitious theoretical exposition; we have time to talk about ethics, about subject matter, metaphor, space and various visual or philosophical systems and their discontents; but we do not have much time for pursuits extraneous to the development of each artist. The guiding principle in judging the pertinence of various discourses to this urgent personal agenda—pressured by jealous ambition—is the strength of the studio work in aesthetic or moral terms. An artist may have only three decent works remaining in him or her; and we do not want to pass up any opportunity of bringing them forth. The concentration on this task of judicious evaluation demands an almost monastic circumstance, greatly relieved by the levity of group participation but nevertheless austere in its exclusive dedication: the imaginative trajectory of an individual artist.

Creative arts academies may historically have done their best work in undergraduate courses because, although frequently bullishly crammed with the prejudices of aggressive or jealous lecturers, the programs are possessed by a single-minded zeal for the greatest possible imaginative growth of individual students. The processes might be under-theorized or theorized very patchily but the structure is determined by competitive comparisons: how are my students faring by contrast to other people's, perhaps especially students in rival academies in a big metropolis? Potentially, research graduate studies extend this: at their best, Masters and PhD programs are conceived educationally (albeit with a wholly different pedagogy) to yield the greatest creative outcomes, the keenest exploitation of the resources of the artist and the potential of the theme or area of inquiry.

But when the focus is narrowed down to research and funded as such, the integrity of what we do and how our imagination works seems less obvious and the aspirations less lofty. I sense that we disappoint the high autonomy of this dedication and acquiesce to some dubious intellectual habits

53 Faculty of Art & Design, Monash University

54 Shakespeare's 'jealous curiosity', *Lear* 1.4.75

(dominated by the promiscuous marketing of intentions in ingenious grant applications) which are extraneous to the imaginative trajectory and faith of an individual. Often, the discourse in research is not about art but about money. Academies are understandably obsessed with scoring research grants; and the rewards of research can easily be measured in terms of income.

This is in itself symbolically unfortunate, as the art of the avant garde, for over a century, has been professed in staunch resistance to the monetary pressures surrounding any form of art or its dissemination—as when priced as commodity—and any form of marketing, the puff, or the hype generated by the commercial gallery system and sometimes state system when it comes to door-charge exhibitions. The whole recognition of artistic merit is strictly separated from the market, else there would have been no Duchamp in art history or Schoenberg in music and we would continue to valorize costly pictures by Bouguereau and his legion polished contemporaries which were vigorously competed for by upper middle-class collectors and nations.

For a very long time, artists, writers and composers have had no money to spare, so little money as to be vulnerable to massive discouragement. Research graduate candidates in the creative arts are the faithful inheritors of this mantle of poverty, usually supporting themselves with other work, which of course subtracts valuable time from their vocation. They endure hardships for themselves and their families for the sake of the calling. Work at a day-job and a guilty conscience for not supporting better their children may impinge on their jealous quality-time at the easel or keyboard; but it does not compromise their artistic integrity. They know, in most cases, what they want to do and, within their dedicated time, can marvellously rise to the creation of memorable works, including when they involve expensive technologies.

The organizational structures demanded by research grants would be worth taking seriously if only they yielded good art, literature and music. At this stage, speaking as a critic, I have yet to see the benefits of the socialized dissolution of artistic jealousy.

These are the impassioned souls for whom I work as an academic and also as a critic. Research candidates follow ambitions of a jealous nature but possessed by the greatest integrity. This clientele is exceedingly discerning and is not impressed by their senior academic mentors defecting to the mandarin treasury, when apparently the stakes depend on a kind of theoretical spin wholly foreign to the darker jealous lyrical and imaginative energies of the studio, the libretto, the composer's keyboard and so on. Interestingly, funded research projects encourage group endeavour in which the artistic jealousy of the lone artist is suppressed in favour of the corporation (a theme which we pick up later in relation to mainstream film, which is always a team effort). The organizational structures demanded by research grants would be worth taking seriously if only they yielded good art, literature and music. At this stage, speaking as a critic, I have yet to see the benefits of the socialized dissolution of artistic jealousy.

In the fullness of time, competitive research grants may be awarded on artistic merit; but in the meantime (in Australia for example), they specifically exclude art as an outcome of research. This induces the applicant into a complicated apologia for some kind of creative methodology that involves artistic experiment, but undoubtedly so embedded in legitimating strategies from other disciplines that the artistic intention (if there genuinely was one) is carefully disguised. The lucky recipients of such grants are likely to be rewarded with more than money: a bureaucratic commitment to onerous project management, reporting and accountability measures, all lugubrious demands which are antithetical to studio cultures.

I feel uneasy about the attraction to this source of revenue and the insidious projection of the motif as a priority in the arts across the creative academies of the Anglophone world. It seems to me to betray the principles by which we advertise our services as credible artistic, literary or musical mentors. To attract research students, we cultivate a rhetoric of utter commitment to core

creative values, implicitly untainted by the trivializing pressures of arbitrary funding arrangements for research. These appeals to practicing artists (who may contemplate taking up a higher degree candidacy with this institution or that) are fraudulent if we then so blithely decamp to the side of high bureaucratic manipulation, promising outcomes in language and aspiration foreign to the studio.

Research is a systematic quest for new knowledge and ideas, adorable in its own right and useful for generations of good chrestomathic souls who study or practice. The question of how much scientists and scholars are motivated by jealousy in the Olympian quest for knowledge remains open. It could be that there are also fierce personal motives operating across the sciences. But the structure of knowledge-generation in disciplines beyond the creative arts does not have a jealous heart. Knowledge is sought where knowledge is likely to be found; and the great semantic manipulations and aesthetic engines artificially brought to bear in support of an artistic ego are not structurally in evidence. Taken as a whole, the scientific literature might be thought of as a kind of liquid, like rainwater, which always finds its way into the cracks and the deepest spaces, by the infallible direction of gravity. Other workers have established x, y and z; but they have not connected them or seen their relationship to w. The new worker courses over other knowledge in order to find the convenient breach in the picture so far painted by science. In personal terms, this impluvial model of knowledge-generation is possibly naïve. The psychological resignation of scientists to objective methods—wholly consistent, like the predictable behaviour of rainwater—does not resonate with the zeal of many a scientist. But structurally, there is no necessary moment of jealousy informing both the motivation and the meaning of the scientific work. There is little relationship between this rainwater research paradigm and the jealous syntheses required of artists. In the arts, it is not just the motivational backdrop that contains the jealousy but the very content and expression that distil it.

This book aims to restore the dignified selfishness of artistic motivation to the creative arts in a period where—as already suggested—it is being methodologically sanitized.

Although I am suspicious of the new research agendas throughout creative academies, I do not think that it is prudent to ignore them or disavow, decry, deplore and retire to personal asylum. It is more useful to propose ways to negotiate the new circumstances and expectations with the necessary skepticism; and, once within the portals, it is possible to make credible protestations in favour of the artistic jealousy which has possibly never been previously admitted. The examination of research agendas needs to be undertaken, first, on the basis that we retain as artists of one kind or another the artistic jealousy which seems essential to the developmental energies of creative projects. There are core values that need to be put first; and the core values are these: what am I going to do in my studio—drawing upon the resources that I have in my personal artistic command and growing consciousness—that someone will look upon (or listen to) with rapture in another century? Maybe we should have no time for anything less. This view proceeds from jealousy, I fancy, of the nobler kind; and it remains untainted by that philistine scorn for theory among practitioners that used to prevail in academies in the period of high modernism. The project of this book is unrelated to the promotion of creative intuition at the expense of intellectual speculation. In fact we commence this study with a critique of the very idea of creativity, which I feel is somewhat suspect and its popular educational discourses can even be an embarrassment to artists, writers and musicians.

This book aims to restore the dignified selfishness of artistic motivation to the creative arts in a period where—as already suggested—it is being methodologically sanitized. The text that follows is at times polemical and passionate and at times has appeal to philology and the history of ideas. With the several frontiers that need to be tackled, I want to provide an explanation of methodological processes specific to the creative arts in a language specific to the creative arts. I would like to offer conditional philosophical credibility to the academic aspirations that are now rampant throughout

the educational system; but with this ambition, I also want to stay within the creative heartland, allowing a thematic structure to grow in imitation of the creative project, and not merely seeking a mechanical overlap of the creative arts and academia.

This book is designed to set out some challenges to the methodological underpinnings of creative work in the section to which this introduction belongs, 'Position and principles'; it then moves to describe what I see as the core issues in creative practice which might require decisions. These are laid out in the section 'Creative problems'. Next, I outline what I see as the most helpful means of negotiating our jealous desires in the context of research in the section 'Critical investigative parameters'. And finally, I turn to the expository prerequisites in academic institutions (which are in fact not dissimilar to the subtle issues of marketing in contemporary practice) to attempt to achieve maximum dignity for the natural jealousy of artists faced with their increasingly academic dependencies. Throughout the text that follows, I use the word artist in the most inclusive sense to mean any author in the arts. I am thinking of composers and writers, choreographers, performers, to some extent even critics, as much as painters or photographers and so on. They all share great similarity of method; and keeping them together in my mind (unlike the fragmentation that I see in the literature) is essential in discovering the jealous methodologies that stimulate creative work in its greatest integrity.

CHAPTER I.2

TOWARD A CRITIQUE OF CREATIVITY

Creativity is a modern word. There is no counterpart in ancient languages, such as Greek and Latin;[55] nor is there any evidence of the concept among artists or theorists during the Renaissance, Baroque or Enlightenment. The creators of the Parthenon and its lofty sculptures had no need for this concept. In our terms, the artists of the red-figured vases, like the authors of the tragedies, were creative, in the sense of imaginative, inventive, visually intelligent.[56] The Greeks must have recognized and energetically nurtured musical, literary, visual or plastic brilliance; and the unknown sculptor of the *Nike of Samothrace* would have enjoyed a cultural context that rewarded artistic ambition. You often wonder about the education that such a sculptor received. It was presumably an apprenticeship, as in most cultures prior to the industrial period; but on philological grounds I can reasonably conjecture that whatever form the aesthetic education took, it lacked a discussion of creativity.

In one sense, creativity clearly existed among the ancient Greeks and succeeding artists; but a word to describe it would have been an unhelpful redundancy. Giorgio Vasari, whose compendious biographies promoted the artistic genius of Florence, also had no need for the concept. His subject matter includes the quantum steps taken in the imagination during the Renaissance (like the invention of linear perspective); and these, all celebrating the individualism of early modernity, have been hailed as historically exemplary ever since. But somehow they were not predicated

55 The Greeks did have a word to describe creation (δημιουργια), which normally involved handicrafts—*e.g.* Plato, *Republic* 401a—but could extend to the divine creation of animals, as in the same author's *Timaeus* 41c. There is an adjectival form (δημιουργικος) but this is also understood as 'being of a craftsman', Plato, *Phaedrus* 248e. Occasionally, the word surfaces adverbially (δημιουργικως), Aristophanes, *Peace* 429. In the holy centuries, this even transfers to the Godly: Numen from Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 11.18. But there is no case of an abstract quality of the faculty of creativity. The same proofs are available with the Latin conception of *creatio*. This chapter is grafted from my paper, 'From welfare to world-fair: encouraging Indigenous creativity through the workshop', *Backing our creativity: Education & the Arts, Research, Policy & Practice, National Education & the Arts Symposium* (Australia Council) September 2005

56 Even the adjective 'creative' is an invention of the industrial period. A convenient snapshot of the relevant dates is given the *Oxford English Dictionary:* '1816 Wordsworth *Thanksgiving Ode* 30 Creative Art..Demands the service of a mind and heart..Heroically fashioned. 1876 George Eliot *Dan. Der.* II. III. xxii. 73 A creative artist is no more a mere musician than a great statesman is a mere politician. 1900 W. B. Worsfold *Judgment in Lit.* iii. 25 Aristotle has once and for all characterised the method of creative literature, and distinguished such literature from all other branches of letters. 1903 A. Bennett *Truth about Author* iii. 29 It was eight years since I sat down as a creative artist. 1907 G. K. Chesterton in Dickens *Pickw.* p. viii, In creative art the essence of a book exists before the book... The creative writer laughs at his comedy before he creates it. 1917 J. E. Spingarn (*title*) Creative criticism. 1922 Holliday & Van Rensselaer *Business of Writing* 100 Then, actually, there is comparatively small demand for creative writing. 1930 *English Jrnl.* XIX. 635 Courses in creative writing. 1934 *New Republic* 29 Aug. 84/2 Conrad Aiken, who received a Pulitzer award in poetry and holds a Guggenheim fellowship in creative writing, is now in England. 1938 W. S. Maugham *Summing Up* 232 One of the reasons why current criticism is so useless is that it is done as a side-issue by creative writers. 1942 *Times Lit. Suppl.* 29 Aug. 427/1 Creative literature deals directly with life. 1958 *Oxf. Mag.* 4 Dec. 164/2 In America..established, or at any rate committed, writers have been absorbed, permanently or temporarily, into the apparatus of creative writing workshops. 1960 C. H. Dodd *Authority of Bible* (ed. 2) i. 32 The creative artist, who would scorn slavish imitation, yet finds inspiration and direction in the masters.' *sv*.

on creativity. The word creativity arose during the industrial period.[57] It goes with the status of the individual as one who resists, rather than bears, the radical respect for traditions—and the consequent inspirational tuition—inherent in pre-industrial cultures.

In our own culture, we just accept that creativity is a core value throughout all endeavour: it is necessary to art, science and even business; and because it is so germane to industry and commerce, it is highly capitalized, a worthy investment if you could identify the mechanism to attract it and stimulate it, as in the enterprising hi-tech corporations of California. And I guess that is part of what a benign government might mean by 'backing our creativity'.[58] This chapter does not argue against the existence or the need for creativity, least of all because a word to define the concept is absent in older cultures. But if we know anything about culture, it is the extreme relativity of everything thought to be essential or of absolute value; and my intervention in this discussion is first and foremost to underline aspects of creativity that may be alien to a large and important part of artistic production.

Creativity is a culturally specific concept. We recognize it in our culture as a prime educational objective; but who are we? Whose culture do we mean when we, in the world of Anglophone universities, say 'our culture'? Unfortunately, it often means white middle-class European culture; and I think that this is especially the assumption when we extol individual creativity as a key educational objective.[59] It seems natural to us—speaking for ourselves as the inheritors of European tradition—that an individual rises to creativity by means of innovation, realizing his or her subjectivity or originality with invention, making things that did not exist before using ideas that did not exist before or exercising the imagination toward novelties by means of brainwaves, a great freshness from within the individual, which requires spontaneity for its liberation.[60]

In this spirit, we rather distinguish creativity from learning and ritual (a nexus which I think of as *inspirational tuition*); and we certainly do not associate creativity with inherited stock or material transmitted with negligible change from generation to generation. On the contrary, the two are almost antithetical. The idea of a traditional treasury in which cultural authority is deposited for thousands of years seems almost inimical to the contemporary understanding of creativity. Creativity is the paradigm which empowers the individual to go it alone, albeit upon a background of his or her upbringing. In this conspectus which so privileges the expressive autonomy of the individual, the person's inherited stock is understood as little more than an exotic backdrop—or a felicitous

57 The earliest sources are cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: '1875 A. W. Ward *Eng. Dram. Lit.* I. 506 The spontaneous flow of his [*sc.* Shakespeare's] poetic creativity. 1926 A. N. Whitehead *Relig. in Making* iii. 90 The creativity whereby the actual world has its character of temporal passage to novelty. *Ibid.* 152 Unlimited possibility and abstract creativity can procure nothing. 1959 *Radio Times* 23 Jan. 3/1 He [*sc.* Burns] was a man of overflowing creativity in so far as the phrase applies to his poetry.' *sv.*

58 Title of the conference at which much of this chapter was presented, 'From welfare to world-fair: encouraging Indigenous creativity through the workshop', *Backing our creativity: Education & the Arts, Research, Policy & Practice*, National Education & the Arts Symposium (Australia Council) September 2005. Australia is far from alone in this. In Italy, for example, there is a 'giornata nazionale dell'arte e della creatività studentesca', *e.g.* 10 April 2003, which celebrates the concept in education. In this event, students 'avranno la possibilità di far conoscere la propria espressività attraverso i più diversi linguaggi artistici, sia mostrando i risultati dei propri lavori, sia illustrando il proprio percorso artistico e le metodologie utilizzate in un'ottica puramente formativa', http://www.istruzione.it/news/2003/giornata_arte.shtml A similar day was had on 8 and 12 May 2004, http://www.scuolaer.it/page.asp?IDCategoria=133&IDSezione=402&ID=35007. All web sources attached to this chapter were last accessed in the month of presentation of the original, *i.e.* September 2005.

59 The majority of places in which creativity is discussed belong to education, frequently art education, but I think very seldom the professional literature in art. As an art critic, I do not believe that I ever use the word. A smaller proportion of the uses of the word creativity belongs to psychology. For example, the Dordogne program of 2005, asking: 'Où se trouve la créativité dans notre société? Qui en a besoin? Qui s'en empare? Quels moyens lui sont offerts? Conférence par un neuroscientifique', . The conference was dedicated to creativity *qua* rehabilitation for users: http://www.psycho-ressources.com/bibli/vincent-et-moi.html

60 Discussion of novelty is critical in identifying creativity in Europoean culture: 'La creatività è uno dei tratti salienti del comportamento umano, è dettata da un'intelligenza non logica più evidente in alcuni individui che sono in grado di produrre novità e cambiamenti grazie alla loro capacità di intuire nuove connessioni tra pensieri ed oggetti.' Alessandra Banche
http://www.psicopedagogika.it/1rubriche/arte/creativita.htm

cultural resource—which explains how far he or she has travelled in synthesizing a personal vision, effectively achieving a modern transcendence from the headspace of previous generations. Under the rubric of creativity, the material handed down for millennia is demoted as the cultural mole upon which the tower of individual assertion is built.[61]

Most cultures other than ours (read modern European) are based on privileged cultural stock, often requiring initiation and even a form of lyrical indoctrination: invoking the communal and ancestral cultural assets presupposes an established sacramental enchantment that yields poetic access to belief; it requires inspirational tuition and, in most communities, this pious charm gives onto the creativity of divine beings and their shaping of the earth, its physical features, its seasonal rhythms and its denizens. In such communities—pre-eminently the Aboriginal communities of the desert and north of Australia—there is also a conspicuous lack of jealousy in all artistic undertakings and the career of individuals. For that reason alone, leaving aside their extraordinary prowess in the visual artists globally, the Australian Indigenous relation to creativity deserves special attention.

For teachers encouraging creativity in children we have nothing but praise; and for obvious reasons, because quite enough in the lives of children lies ready to suppress their wonderful imaginative potential; and who would want children to be uncreative? Creativity is universally endorsed, partly because its antonym is so disgusting; and to avoid the dire overtones of the robotic and mechanistic, we understandably extol creativity as spiritually essential. But on whose terms is creativity cultivated? What does a given form of creativity presuppose? Liberation from conventions? Autonomy of individual vision?[62]

In the following section (chapter 2.6), we will address the legitimacy of using personal experience in the context of our research. If I could anticipate this justification and indulge with some personal experience, I feel that we could arrive at some conjectures about the hidden suppositions of pedagogically institutionalized creativity. And here I would like to draw upon the method so creatively hatched by Jean Piaget, the psychologist, who developed his systematic analysis of language acquisition on the experience of his own children.

So, when I (as parent) paint with one of our children, I automatically call upon their daring. Throughout the primary years, I can perceive that the children seek a mimetic skill which they cannot adequately comprehend; and almost as a reflex, I urge them to drop the imitative aspiration and have more fun, enjoy their freedom, use more colour, work the brush more energetically, mix colours on the canvas rather than on the palette, fill the field with gesture and life. The results are pleasing. Our children produce pictures with a confidence and thump that firmer fingers and surer arms seldom yield, which gives me sympathy with the modernist *topos* that artists like Picasso

61 The politics of creativity are actually quite varied and intricate. For example idea from William Morris that art is joy in labour occasionally survives under the rubric of creativity. She the generous anarchist text for 'Créativité, inventivité, poiêsis', 10 April 2003: 'Comme nous critiquons le travail quand il est salarié, nous critiquons l'art quand il est marchand; pour privilégier l'« activité gratuite » et généreuse. On nous dira qu'«il faut bien vivre!». Sans doute, mais pas n'importe comment. Est-ce «vivre» que de s'abrutir à un travail imbécile en échange d'une intégration médiocre et précaire dans la société du capital? *Parvenir*, non plus, ne peut satisfaire notre raison de vivre. Vivre de son art, vivre de sa plume, vivre de sa truelle, vivre de ses traductions ou de son savoir en telle ou telle activité peut se discuter. Le métier de bourreau, même si ce dernier est très habile, n'est-il pas haïssable ? De même le scientifique quand il participe à des oeuvres de destruction? Que dire du métier de politicien, professionnel du pouvoir et de la fausse promesse sociale? En revanche, il est difficilement contestable de mettre en question la nécessité de la pratique professionnelle du médecin, du plombier, de l'architecte, du jardinier, etc.; et il est sans doute impossible de faire l'unanimité quant à la valeur d'une oeuvre d'art quelconque. Et qu'en est-il de l'utilité sociale de cette dernière?'
http://1libertaire.free.fr/Garnier08.html

62 It is certainly the case that creativity is invoked in popular psychology as a method for realizing individuality (*zur Förderung des Individuationsprozesses*): 'Schöpferische Tätigkeit besitzt in der analytischen Psychologie nach Carl Gustav Jung einen hohen Stellenwert. Sie unterstützt den Weg zur Selbstwerdung des Menschen. Diese Individuation ist das zentrale Anliegen der Jungschen Psychologie', unnamed author, 'Kreativität spüren: der Offene Kanal als ein Mittel zur Selbstwerdung: *der Weg zur Selbstfindung bei C. G. Jung*', http://www.offener-kanal.at/deutsch/beitraege/kreativitaet.htm

echoed: if only I could paint like a child!

The method for cultivating artistic confidence is different to the way that I might help the children with music, for example, which involves an executive and interpretative skill. I am not the person to teach them composition; and in any case, we feel that we have to master the notation before we can go on to greater things. We go through the score and observe which note is F natural and which is F sharp or B flat: it is a system and we encourage observation of the rules, for without this discipline the music of our tradition is inaccessible. When they get to play a nice piece, they are quite inspired and sense that a realm of musical intelligence lies at their disposal.

That is, roughly speaking, the difference between learning and creativity. In our music practice, there is little creativity but in the studio it visibly runs riot. The child's access to musical language is seized by means of absorbing a series of fixed givens, whereas their access to visual language is gained by exercising their muscular freedom, with a high degree of self-determination and risk. Both, incidentally, are enjoyable in equal measure; but the painting studio, not just because of its permanent stainy colours, is notably more stressful.

In my imagination, artistic creativity is pursued throughout our official education system by means analogous to those that I enjoy with the children in my family. Get the children out of a rut, encourage their gestural perspicacity and assist them in achieving pictures with naïve vitality and colour. It is enjoyable on many levels. It produces exuberant and cheerful pictures which are satisfying to look at; and, if closely involved, the tutor might have as much fun as the child in pursuing the peculiar automatic richness that goes with an expressive idea and uninhibited application. For painting education at primary school level, we possibly have no other useful method in European culture. But while many aspects of this habit are worthy and could rightly be celebrated, it might be noted that creativity in this guise is tantamount to style.

So what is happening between me as tutor and the children as pupils? They know that I do not know what they should paint. They learn that there are many technical options that might apply to any number of intuitions; but they centre on a kind of vacuum, which in other cultures would be filled by what we understand as a symbolic order.

An example can be seen through a photograph documenting the authenticity of a painting by the late central-desert painter Lorna Fencer. It reveals the formidable artist painting in an outdoor studio, surrounded by three girls. The painting which is horizontal on the floor is one of her famous *Caterpillar dreamings*. The girls who are watching Fencer, a respected Elder of their community, have the opposite experience to my children. The Indigenous girls know that Fencer has a good idea of what the painting needs to be; for it must rise to an inherited vision of a religious nature.[63] They also know that access to the several spiritual intuitions is an affair of inspiration, which is partly personal but overwhelmingly based on knowledge of the Dreaming and its invocatory rituals. Unlike the normal individualistic assumptions embedded in the concept of creativity, Fencer is working with intuitions that she did not create. Those intuitions are the fabric of the Dreaming, aspects of which she undoubtedly absorbed while sitting around watching and listening, just as the girls now attend her. The young women who witness are not passive. By an ancient paradigm, they are learning (or so we hope) and this is a privilege if anything superior to the assumption of creative autonomy.

Cultures outside the onslaught of globalization, and in particular our Indigenous cultures, have been based for many millennia upon transmission and interpretation rather than invention and novelty. Ironically, the work of artists like Fencer may be prized among Europeans because it superficially resembles the inventive styles of abstract painting, with their exigency of personal expressive vim and spontaneity. But while Fencer's works do exhibit spontaneity (in the sense that

63 See Wally Caruana's thesis that Aboriginal art 'is inherently connected to the religious domain', *Aboriginal Art*, T&H, 1990, p.

the colourful and movemented surface is never chewed or laboured) they reveal above all a firm understanding of what the brush should narrate. Her paintings, for that reason, have pictorial authority. And in turn, their deliberate visuality is based on religious authority.

This is a paradigm that Europeans can recognize and honour; alas, the same paradigm cannot be shared or used as the basis for education beyond Indigenous communities who enjoy (a) a continuous living relationship to an ancient Aboriginal cosmogony and (b) a freedom from individual artistic jealousy, where the work, for thousands of years, was often ephemeral (as in body paint) and communal. Aboriginal art reminds us that the quest for individual creativity on the basis of personal confidence is not the only paradigm; nor should we pursue it to the exclusion of anterior systems which operate on different genealogical lines. So this is my first conclusion: creativity is not universal and should not be universally sought in art education. There are other paradigms that need to be respected.

Globalization, however, has denied the Lorna Fencer experience to a large number of Indigenous Australians, especially those in the South-East of Australia where I live, which was already highly industrialized by the nineteenth century. There are special questions in my mind as to the appropriate paradigms for art to flourish in the many communities in Victoria, for example, where Indigenous people enjoy neither the affluence of Eurasian Australians nor the traditional sacred ways of Aboriginal communities to the north.

I do not mean to stigmatize creativity as a kind of heresy promoted by well-intentioned colonists. It undoubtedly has its place. But it also carries values and some of them are suspect among—if not antipathetic to—the original cultures of Australia.

Structured art activities, often centred on rehab programs, are popular and productive, promising aspects of healing and creative empowerment.[64] So what about the nigh-tyrannical assumption of creativity as the goal of art education? Should Eurocentric people who institute or assist or fund such programs assume that the great paradigm of inspirational tuition in Indigenous culture in the north is officially extinct in the south and therefore individual creativity should replace it? Or do we tread more warily, mindful that the Elders hold great respect in all Indigenous communities, and foster creativity in a provisional spirit, awaiting and preparing the return of inspirational tuition? Elements of the traditional ways regenerate themselves among urban Indigenous communities; and wherever cultural memory can be identified, the potential for transmissive agency exists and the tradition is alive.

It would be tragic if the effort to cultivate the creative energy in Koori culture weakened traditional potential; because that would certainly lessen the chances of effecting the southern counterpart to the great fortunes of Aboriginal art in northern communities. As I contemplate the idea of creativity, it becomes apparent that this bullish confidence in a future redemptive art strategy is misplaced, not so much because the project cannot be realized but because the very notion of creativity is contestable. As we push for creativity, we inadvertently promote secular individualism over sacred connectivity. There would be nothing wrong with that if we could safely assume that Koori identity has already been totally desecrated, that connectivity with family is as much annihilated as tribal language and Dreaming, that the connectivity has been effaced.

To me this smacks of more than arrogance; it is a kind of cultural sacrilege by which one culture unconsciously judges another to be defunct. I do not mean to stigmatize creativity as a kind of heresy promoted by well-intentioned colonists. It undoubtedly has its place. But it also carries values and

64 By 'healing' I do not mean to invoke creativity as a kind of therapy, as with the treatment of psychosis. This is seen as a tempting clinical measure throughout European culture: 'In questo spazio la Creatività viene riconosciuta come fondamentale manifestazione delle risorse innate dell'uomo, quindi strumento di Cura soprattutto se integrata in un percorso personalizzato che preveda interventi farmacologici e psicoterapici sia individuali che di gruppo orientati analiticamente.' http://www.artiterapie.it/seminari/seminarioMelorio.htm

some of them are suspect among—if not antipathetic to—the original cultures of Australia. And so this is my second conclusion: every time we use the word creativity, we should also invoke the concept of connectivity with the past and the community of the present.

While wanting to avoid a polemic against creativity, I have to recognize a final burden in the concept. Creativity originated with the verb to create (*creo*). The result of this verb is the product, a creation (*creatio*). From this, and many millennia later, we obtain an adjective to describe the air of something having been made artistically: it is creative. Very soon, this could also apply to a person: he or she is creative, which is a dispositional trait, psychologically abstract in suggesting tendencies of the individual. And from this again, we posit the human faculty with a highly abstract noun, creativity. The very word creativity reifies creative urges. It turns them into a thing, as if they could be a Kantian thing in itself (*Ding an sich*), a self-sufficient and self-justifying entity which does not require a purpose or a goal beyond it.

To me, this is an inartistic persuasion, which is somehow semantically decadent in seducing us from the higher purposes of art. The teleology of art deserves areas of rhapsody and epiphany that go several stages further than the making; and we should not confuse the instrumental or executive elements with the ideological or spiritual or psychological aspirations. To me, art-making ought to presuppose a purpose beyond the instrument, namely whatever faculties go to assist in the charge. With any emphasis on creativity, I always fear that we risk mistaking the instrument for the purpose.[65]

This can also be developed in a context which is not devoted to Indigenous invention, because the hypostasis of creativity is a concern well beyond it. Creativity is by and large used as a word by communities who lack a symbolic order. It unconsciously fills in a gap. The symbolic purposes of art are sidestepped, under an inscrutable mantle of genius and personal development, which have dubious relations to reception theory. But creativity is not the *summum bonum* or be-all-and-end-all of studio activity. Rather, though a necessary an integral element of making any music, art or literature, creativity is unhelpfully isolated from cultural purposes, easily reified, whence it becomes a somewhat mystifying abstraction that might even distract many a community or individual from the more natural sources that bear artistic results of the highest integrity.

65 See Giancarlo Livraghi: 'La creatività non è un mestiere. È una risorsa importante, ma non si può produrre o riprodurre a comando. Per capire la situazione in modo più realistico e funzionale, credo che sia venuto il momento di riscoprire un concetto antico, ma più che mai di attualità. http://www.gandalf.it/arianna/mestiere.htm

CHAPTER 1.3

RECOGNIZING AN ANTI-METHODICAL TOPIC

In spite of our scruples over the term creativity and our need to deconstruct the concept, it seems difficult to live without its slightly older adjectival form, creative. Rightly or wrongly, we need the word, for it helpfully badges a kind of work with a beautiful subjective teleology, as romantic as that may seem. This book is specifically about method in the creative arts where subjectivity is potentially fetishized. Many texts have been written on method in other disciplines, few of which integrally involve subjectivity and passion. Most of the writing therefore has limited relevance to the creative arts practitioner. When you try to apply methods from alien disciplines, there are major embarrassments and a certain pomposity arises.

For over two millennia of western progress, artists have made works without extensive philosophical discussion of method, as with creativity. We have plenty of evidence that artists were 'methodical' or systematic in their approach to image-making, music, dance, theatre, poetry and architecture; and abundant evidence suggests that they loved theoretical discussion of their subject matter and the broader spiritual or social aspirations of their work. But the treatises from former ages leave little information about the gaining of inspiration, the processing of cultural information which is organized by the artist toward the artwork, the organic development of sensual ideas and the presentation of the sensory result in other media.

THIS BOOK ADVANCES METHOD AGAINST A SKEPTICAL BACKDROP OF CONTEMPORARY SUSPICION OVER THEORY, AND ALSO A HISTORICAL AWARENESS THAT ART METHODOLOGY MAY BE RELATIVELY NEW.

There is therefore some legitimacy in the romantic protestation by some artists that the whole philosophical scrupling over method is dispensable if not vain or even counterproductive. This book advances method against a skeptical backdrop of contemporary suspicion over theory, and also a historical awareness that art methodology may be relatively new. So many artists of the highest order have managed to do without it. Presumably all artists are highly intuitive people and derive their understanding of making art from experience, bit by bit growing from apprentice to master in an artistically osmotic environment of the workshop or studio. In many ways, it would be ideal for this simply to continue. If we could all work in the studio of Perugino since puberty, we could all have the grasp of artistic structures and processes which Raphael shows in his Olympian output.

But artists are no longer in this position. Leaving aside the early training dedication and family tradition that sometimes still persists in music, artists no longer serve apprenticeships from puberty in the almost clannish ambience of a Renaissance studio; nor do they function as artists within a community anxious to supply them with poetic or religious texts and visual cues. For the most part, we are grateful that there is no governing order of public ceremony, larded with conformist classical conventions and orthodox biblical belief, no commonly-held symbolic structure within which the artist sought only the loftiest expression.

Even if you date the self-conscious discussion of method to the eighteenth century—say with the discourses of Joshua Reynolds—you enter a period in which the symbolic order is already so

challenged by interrogative reason, a period in which academic art institutions arise, effectively replacing the venerable pact between private patrons and artist, Church and artist or royal government and artist. You enter a period of capital in which the artist is alienated from authority, is no longer helped by humanist advisors supplied by rich patrons, feels disenfranchised and often seeks novelty in expression through the darker side of human experience (as with Füseli and Goya).

The idea, today, that artists might generate their own inspiration and find their rightful place in the world strains for credibility. There is an element of wishful thinking in it which is actually attractive and perhaps potentially inspiring; but it is naïve to think that artists are automatically sustained in matters of inspiration, process and promotion. No one, if not the institution of creative arts academies, is there to help. No one is there to talk to you, much less ask you to make art. And when people agree to talk to you, they probably do not understand what you want to do, much less sympathize with your intentions. The contemporary artist functions within a highly pressured context: there are intense demands for theoretical sophistication but there are few demands for a defined product which satisfies a given person or institution. It is hard to make your way with any confidence.

THIS BOOK IS ABOUT 'COMPLETING' THE EDUCATIONAL CYCLE IN THE CREATIVE ARTS: IT IS ABOUT EDUCATING YOURSELF IN ALL THOSE CRITICAL ASPECTS OF RESEARCH IN WHICH NO ONE WILL HELP YOU, IN WHICH NO ONE SHARES THE INTIMACY OF YOUR VISION, IN WHICH NO ONE CAN APPRECIATE THE BASIS OF YOUR BELIEFS OR REPLICATE THEIR EXPRESSION IN VISUAL OR VERBAL FORMS.

Unlike in former epochs (or in today's Australian Indigenous culture), the artist plots a course of action with little guidance. You have to invent not only your images or sonorities (or objects or spaces or sequences or whatever) but your method for doing them as well, your theoretical context for doing them, your vision for their reception, your reasons for doing them. Almost none of these tasks had to be performed by the artist in former ages or in Indigenous communities; for they were given almost as a default by tradition, tradition both within the workshop and within the social franchise of art-loving institutions. To some extent, you have to be your own institution, to supply your own capital, your own belief system, your own articulation, your own analysis of what is important to your epoch and will bring lasting cultural authority to the work. In other words, you have to make your own method.

That is why it has occurred to me in writing this text that I have to address what publishers call the target audience with the personal pronoun, you, and occasionally lapsing into a hopeful tribal us! Cultivating intellectual self-reliance, of course, is the highest ambition of all education. This book is about 'completing' the educational cycle in the creative arts: it is about educating yourself in all those critical aspects of research in which no one will help you, in which no one shares the intimacy of your vision, in which no one can appreciate the basis of your beliefs or replicate their expression in visual or verbal forms. In this sense, it is in itself an 'ambitious' text. It is designed to be very simple. It does not send you to do extensive further reading. It assumes that you already have a learned perspective, well nourished by reading in an area for which you have enthusiasm and which sustains your deeper enthusiasm for art-making. It is not my business to dabble in your font of inspiration and tell you what books to read for better ideas. I have no criticisms to offer in the relevance of your bibliographic inclinations. Our sights are fixed firmly on the kinds of reflection which bring heightened awareness to the artistic process. We have no interest in 'analysing to death' the artistic moment or talking about the instinctual artistic imagination beyond a practical level, just as we have no interest in flattering you with the most advanced kind of 'corporal thinking' that humans are capable of, namely sensory creativity. But I am interested in what makes our work research; I am interested in the calibre of our reflections on what we might be doing and the ways in which it is hatched or sparked or forged or thrashed out to be meaningful and to make a contribution of substantial cultural significance.

It would be logical, therefore, that this is a book with which you can have a great deal of fun. There is nothing so demanding in the text that it takes you away from what you most want to do, namely to make memorable art or music or literature and so on. The demands it makes are all in that dedicated line of work. There could be no profit in taking you away from this enthusiasm; indeed we have every interest in reinforcing it. The challenges which lie ahead are all about you being the artist who you want to be but in a sense to want it more or to want it with greater insight and hence probability of success. The speculations, however abstract they may at first seem, have only one purpose: to proffer conceptual cues for the development of artistic vision. Every opportunity exists for you, in turn, to challenge the terms of the inquiry. As in criticism, the study of method needs to accommodate difference of opinion and debate.

As I have been thinking about the intellectual preconditions of creative work, it has been difficult to resist that feeling of kindling visual or musical or literary ideas, a surge of enthusiasm for making images or whatever which I—as a fellow artist—adore doing above most activities. I hope that in successfully picking your way through this book you share that creative thrill as well as the relish in the philosophical speculation.

CHAPTER 1.4

MOTIFS AND MOTIVES METHOD THROUGH THE SOCIAL AND PERSONAL CONTEXT OF ART

Motivation is unrewarding to study in material terms. Especially in the arts. There may be no more egotism in the arts than there is in any other field (like management) but it seems that there are fewer material motifs that explain behaviour in a structural way, even if the narrative is a bit incomplete in psychological senses.

It is helpful and horrible at the same time to derive method from the big picture of history, in which motives were somewhat more transparent and which I wanted to contemplate before moving on to the next section of our inquiry dealing with creative problems. We think of methods as something a bit like an archive or an open cupboard upon which we can draw according to our genius. And so we love history when it seems to be a narrative of private vision prevailing over public discouragement, the triumph of individualism over conformity. But if we look to the past (and to Indigenous culture) it is easier to see that methods are also laid out by social expectations, historical patterns and educational templates which are very hard for the individual to control.

For example, the history of art and music in the west is informed by modes of patronage. It is seldom conditioned by philosophy according to the fancy of the practitioner; or, if it is, then philosophy (read the prevailing discourses) in turn is conditioned by patronage, at times even by law. Dominant ideology creates energies through patronage, which is a kind of method of control. By selectively extending largesse to compliant artists in pursuit of self-interested display of property and ritual, the upper classes celebrated and maintained their authority. Meaning—hence the artistic method that created it—is inevitably linked to money.

There is some difficulty, gratefully, in translating this deterministic pattern into contemporary terms, no matter how strongly we adhere to Marxist materialism. Interpreting today's scene in relation to money always seems rather reductive; and indeed it probably always was reductive when explaining Monteverdi or Borromini in terms of liturgical practice, edicts from princes and directives from the Council of Trent or indulgent contracts approved by flamboyant Cardinals for creating those sublime works. But then we still need to know what factors condition meaning or compel method (if any) beyond ourselves and our own determination and invention? What controls production (because it is not likely to be *just* a matter of the individual)? Or even if seen in individual terms, what encourages, what authorizes, what promotes? And if patronage is not forthcoming for our exertions, I guess we have to tell all Marxists why we do it without remuneration?

We have already touched upon the theme of artists *in extremis* (Patrick McCaughey's phrase) and we need to return to it. We are so extensively self-funded and have to be self-reliant to the point of fragility. In pursuing an artistic, literary or musical career, we can recognize few stakeholders who can adequately share our vision. There seems to be limited public demand, especially in poetry,

experimental theatre and dance and avant-garde music. Exclusive gallery networks certainly have their patrons and acquire great prestige; but they tend to be boutique operations and do not take care of the material basis of art in the expanded field. And then we can recognize a fragmented educational system, with material being taught in great detachment from common projects linking, say, the artist and apprentice which used to prevail three centuries ago.

The historical contrast is useful for more than nostalgia's sake. The artist used to be spiritually and technically looked after, as in Renaissance apprenticeships. The creation of symbols for community was based on a shared belief system—well, perhaps not altogether shared, especially not if you were a Jew or gay or a witch—but many common aspirations can be recognized, especially if you could interpret 'majesty' in metaphorical terms, which must have been a great convenience in the imagination of the intellectual artist unwilling to submit to autocratic subordination. We do not particularly want to recognize either scenario today, neither the blithe subscription to authority nor the devious agreement with its tenets by means of poetic abstraction. For so many of our beloved periods, one way or another, there is a common sympathy for despotic ideology; and old art can be seen as a colossal celebration of authority, all of which is unthinkable today.

Scorn and contempt for the establishment go with resistance. And with this, there is warmth and sympathy for dialectical methodology, as opposed to the rhapsodic verities of tradition.

Unthinkable but still instructive. Various past modes of support and synergy lurk in our consciousness; and it is tempting to think that we might either be able to engage the coefficiencies of past cultures or to delve into the devious insights by which intellectuals survived in the age of authority. How to negotiate the tyranny of method? We find it hard to see (beyond the Mafia) how much families were like corporations or how much the Church could sustain major artistic projects with sometimes secular language. It seems a mystery to me that there was ever such a figure as the 'humanist advisor' laid on to help the painter formulate a program of frescoes: there was a poet in the household, a philosopher or theologian who helps with iconography and allegories. This liberal scholar would be a joint generator of meaning, helping to formulate an ambitious program of imagery. And even at home, the artist's family created nourishing networks and undoubtedly conversation, as the younger members were schooled in the service of the parent artist or musician.

The massive realignment that occurred with the industrial revolution affected every kind of social relationship, including the dynamics in alienated families. The spread of capitalism removes ancestral patronage. In its place, there is private production for shops or *botteghe*, which are the ancestor of commercial galleries from the seventeenth century. The industrial revolution strengthens the market paradigm for art. No one takes care of you, financially or culturally: the production, if not the artist himself or herself, is disenfranchised. Simultaneously, and not coincidentally, there is a growth of academies, usually professing antique virtues: a whole methodology of recovery is proposed and taught, reviving the visuality (though not the presuppositions) of the old masters.

The industrial revolution is also the mother of resistance in the arts. An avant garde (both political and artistic) can be identified from the Romantic period. Its social artistic purpose, in a sense, is to handle alienation intellectually and emotionally. There are plenty of ambient discourses—challenging, poetic and subversive—but, with this intellectual vibrancy, there is also no money, unless through compliance to the market and bourgeois taste. Consequently, we witness a devaluation of academic art. Scorn and contempt for the establishment go with resistance. And with this, there is warmth and sympathy for dialectical methodology, as opposed to the rhapsodic verities of tradition.

All history, up to a point, can be seen as the history of me. The historical background is assumed in your outlook, your world view, your consciousness and your outward persona. Even the unconscious component of your psyche can possibly be historicized. The part that makes you dispositionally attracted to political manifestations or suspicious of social cohesion (to say nothing of the aetiology of your private ambition) is to some extent a product of history. We are the outcome of history and we conduct history to produce a further stage of history. Maybe historians do not conventionally analyse historical method in these organic terms, because it deflects the focus on good empirical discovery about the past; but as sensory practitioners, the ancient information and management templates that go toward consciousness are integral to the work that we do.

No matter how scrupulously I try to imagine the great moods and energies of philosophy and history, I always return to the theme of 'method as me'. So long as it is not romanticized! The me-factor is imperative; but it has to be a nuanced me, infused with social pressures and prejudice and a sense of their history. As an artist or musician or writer, you are the principal subject matter of your research. But in a way this also begs the question. Further questions proliferate, the fertile corollaries of identity which are also the ancestry of our thought and consciousness. Who are you, psychologically, politically, artistically? What are your motives? These are also historical constructs, created in an interval between pressures that have to arise for historical reasons. Hence, the me-method that I want to recommend in this text remains, paradoxically, a task of referencing. The me is also a movement and some part of it is an old narrative. As creative researchers, we have to tell various personal stories that account for our motivation, else our discussions will be bland and incurious and fail to reflect the richness of what we do and what we might do in the future.

CHAPTER TWO
CREATIVE PROBLEMS

CHAPTER 2.1

IN SEARCH OF IMMANENCE

No matter how unfashionable, immanence is indispensable as a concept for defining the aesthetic. Without an agency that we identify as imaginatively self-enlarging and willful—growing and advancing its intentions through fantasy—we have difficulty recognizing the artistic anywhere. Without immanence, the whole category of the aesthetic collapses upon either prettiness (formalist aesthetics or beauty discourse) or ideology, which would emphasize the rightness of the content. In a world without immanence, things created could still be recognized as handsome or correct but not yet as art. There would be no vibe, no chill, no compelling obsession that infectiously grows, suddenly and expansively, in your mind with hints and metaphors and resonances.

Impossible to define, immanence is a force inhering in something. It is the condition of becoming, that is, developing, unfolding, continuing, engaging movement and inducing absorption or marvellously concentrating the mind. Immanence is related to the faculty of growth and could be identified as the creative potential in an object or phrase or action. Because of this air of vitality, it is linked to aesthetic virtue, that peculiar strength of an image or musical phrase which makes you feel that there is more below, more to come, more proposed, more to desire, as if there is more undercurrent than surface, a surge of ideas that plays itself out in your mind mysteriously and hauntingly. It is the opposite of closure, the sense that a message is finite, delimited by intention and keeping reception within the control of the sender. But just because of these qualities, you cannot easily identify or delineate (or de-fine) immanence. It seems borderless and spooky. Perhaps because of these rather intangible virtues, immanence is vulnerable to materialist philosophy: it does not seem to have an altogether material cause or material manifestation.

Immanence is easier to demonstrate by example than to argue from first principles. I think of two pieces of music, both written in a similar epoch, both weighting their phrases with analogous rhythms, both making similar patterns and supporting them with chords in a similar logic. But one of them makes the music rise in the imagination more than the other, as if clinching a sentiment. It rises but not physically, not in pitch: it affects you in a way that the other might be experienced as flat. Something about the music is invocatory; it seems somehow to make an appeal to something else (but not necessarily by way of representation). It is likely to be an appeal entirely within its own resources, as if each note appeals to the next while satisfying the last; and each phrase promises its fulfillment in the next phrase. You wait for the outcome, anticipating the swell and turn of the music as each bar enjoins the fantasy to supplement the moment with the promise of the next. Such music draws a longer breath in the instant and makes you experience the logic of the melody as a pleasure heightened by constant anticipation, a web of expectations that are conditioned and reshaped dynamically, organically reforming and growing as you listen.

Music, generally, is a powerful instance of immanence because it occurs in a succession of identifiable moments which, to some extent, you can read by examining the score. With this reference, you can almost predict that something requires the satisfaction of coming down to the

keynote or chord of the same. With this form of 'hindsight' at the ready while the music is played (or with you playing it) it is possible to see the inevitability of the changes in pitch and rhythm, how the turn *must be*, how it needs to resonate with phrases proposed earlier at the time that it has to be played. Perhaps because the time-based medium of music (and film for that matter) is so traceable in the expectations that each note sets up that we think of immanence as something 'about to happen'. The music requires itself as it indicates its growth and progress; its fulfilment is always on the verge of happening, which is why you are often overcome with rhythmic convulsions as the music progresses and may even experience a satisfied form of exhaustion when it is finished. It is always 'about to' happen. The next development in the music is always imminent.

However, 'imminent' is not the same as 'immanent'. These two words have a different root though they are related in meaning and sound; because the two words are pronounced identically in most kinds of English and it is usually impossible to know by listening alone which is intended. The parallel might be compared with 'sorrow' and 'sorry', which are related in meaning and phonology but derive from different roots (albeit of the same language). This is unlike 'fancy' and 'fantasy', for example, as the delicate fancy derives from the Greek fantasy. Imminence comes from the Latin verb to hang (*minere*) whereas immanence comes from the Latin verb to stay or remain (*manere*). Or an even better translation, which is seldom given, would be the archaic English word 'abide'. The images hold true for the meaning. Following the logic of the root, imminence essentially describes a physical condition of something pending, being in a condition of snap-back or hasty and inevitable action. It means soonness, as of a departure. In my imagination, it always carries the image of a train about to pull out of the railway station, timetabled to leave at 8.00 am and it is now already 7.55 am. This is known as an imminent departure. In one sense, this is also grand and sublime, because trains are somehow larger than life and full of awesome dreaded energy; besides a personal disaster could occur if you do not get on board and reach the desired destination. But in most senses, leaving aside the melodrama of missing a train (or even the phenomenological energy-filled trepidation as the diesel roars to charge the electrical system), there is nothing spooky about this imminent departure; it is a mechanical consequence of following the timetable.

Immanence is different. It may coincidentally involve something 'about to happen', as in music; but it is never inessential or episodic in a mechanistic sense. On the contrary, it errs to the spiritual. A spirit inheres in the circumstance. Though having ancient roots, the abstract word belongs to the theological period of Latin language and always has God in it or some angelic part of him. This suits the aesthetic in ways that frustrate analysis because, like divinity, the innards and works remain inscrutable.

Good materialists all, we are naturally shy of such spooky or mystifying constructs, which are either aligned with the sacred or the aesthetic angels of the sacred; and this suspicion rises to mistrust and even a sense of stigma through further attachments of immanence to the Romantic tradition. Immanence has a fateful attraction for the Romantic spirit, because it represents the intuitive at its most auratic. Immanence invokes a life-force, the organic thrust of being, a ghostly urgency that inspires art and poetry and music of the passions, as opposed to the institutional or the conventional. Immanence is the deep aspiration opposed to the classical fixity of systems, like the choreographic rules of Renaissance dance or the dramatic conventions of French Baroque theatre but especially taxonomic arrangements, scientific principles and the invariable laws of physics. Immanence points to a mood at the core of thought and the universe; and in the creative arts it points to the spiritual agency in making, an internal necessity as opposed to an external convenience. Immanence expresses freedom, will, the emergence of volition and ideas in organic unity, and hence an inner levity, an exciting and intoxicating exigency for an intuition to grow into intelligence. Framed with some prudence, it is in fact one of the more exportable qualities grown and extolled by Romanticism.

Especially as a quality in art, the celebration of immanence can be identified with grainy and muscular styles of handling a medium, expressive, evocative, somatic and emotional. The quest for immanence, conscious or otherwise, often results in a palpable registration of making, an extroverted expression of the growth or development of the work through the gestures by which it is built. The sense of the work proceeding from impulse, accepting revisions, changes of thought, may be built into the very style of making. The artist enjoys an absence of closure in the vision, for things have shifted in the duration of making and the result can embody all the changes and shifts, the edits, the surges and prunings, the internal contests and also the maladroit moves that somehow found their way toward a resolution. The spontaneous, the informal and the energetic support slightly ambiguous outcomes, which are process-oriented. In any medium, like music or writing, it is the genius of the painterly (as opposed to the masterly, according to Woelfflin).

For painters, the quest for immanence is embedded in the stroke in a picture, not so much that the brushstroke is vigorous or violent but that it reveals the decision that committed the paint of a certain colour to a certain thickness and direction. The look of the artwork is not dragooned into discipline and conformity; rather, the gesture reveals moments of decision, revision, provisionality, inadequacy. The picture is a story of trial and error, allegorizing by stylistic means the agency of the mind in proposing and seeking to clinch—mostly prematurely—the invention at the height of desire. This necessarily entails a rejection of rules and systems, though of course the artist still inevitably works according to certain habits and patterns of familiarity.

THE LOOK OF THE ARTWORK IS NOT DRAGOONED INTO DISCIPLINE AND CONFORMITY; RATHER, THE GESTURE REVEALS MOMENTS OF DECISION, REVISION, PROVISIONALITY, INADEQUACY. THE PICTURE IS A STORY OF TRIAL AND ERROR, ALLEGORIZING BY STYLISTIC MEANS THE AGENCY OF THE MIND IN PROPOSING AND SEEKING TO CLINCH—MOSTLY PREMATURELY—THE INVENTION AT THE HEIGHT OF DESIRE.

Whence the quest for immanence (which is seldom declared as such) is a kind of anti-method. In one sense, it has to be antithetical to method because it presupposes the primacy of intuitive growth of ideas and forms at the expense of tools and formulae. The sense that you should begin with a plan and proceed by defined stages—with a template of aesthetic excellence and moral virtue superintending—is anathema. As in all Romantic aspirations, the formulation of ideas and intention are concurrent with making; the one is the coefficient of the other and there is certainly no priority of planning. The work and the process that brings it into being are not predetermined or designed or anticipated intellectually. The next intuition is not dictated by a method but arises by the stimulation of the last move. This spontaneous and at times erratic determination is one of the more charismatic expressions of subjectivity. The sensory is determined by sensory process, autonomous, relying only on the artist's independent volition to achieve urgent expression.

Immanence is thus a metaphor for the artistic project as a whole. Within the great network of organically changing intentions, there are some that are peculiarly apt in the circumstance and are due to be discovered in the course of making. Once attained through the creation of form, the perspicacity is activated in the expression, which celebrates the process most gratifyingly. As with all things of immanence, the artistic intentions cannot be prefigured without consequent damage to the transparency of intuition. The privilege of intentional mutation is sacrosanct. So the project has no method or one method: to respect the intuitive basis of invention. It is the implicit rejection of frameworks.

So are there no steps to immanence, no logic, no schemes in which it is more available than with others? Frameworks may not dictate the next move but the next move occurs within frameworks. Methods, *qua* headspace, may exist for propitiating immanence but they are not necessarily sustainable (and after all we are dealing with rather fugitive values). The right conditions, the right

image, the right preparation, being in touch with consciousness and guiding it toward the moment, that is the challenge. If only you could say: let me get some immanence into this! But immanence is not a thing and cannot be reified. You can only provide a prudent supply of cues to yourself, with all the cultural nourishment that stimulates the organic flux of ideas; and for the rest, it is a case of submitting to chance.

Of course, this is still a method, even if it does not sound very systematic or foolproof. The quest for immanence as a creative pressure is always there, even if unconsciously; and there is no need to protect it as if it were the holy grail. The artist has many resources to grapple with; and sometimes the experiment of a technical nature only takes on the artistic quality *par excellence* toward the end, when the glimmer of immanence is perceived in a moment and the rest is good or bad luck. The conscious engagement of the wits toward an expression of immanence is only ever a stage, or number of stages, engaged throughout a project. At best, our speculations here represent a method for a period in the course of an artistic project; and how you engage clairvoyant techniques in the right moment is likely to remain unknown.

Given that artistic processes are so heavily steeped in the unknown, beginning in unknown intentions and enjoining unknown abilities to imagine, we can only gaze at certain options at our disposal. In one sense, everything avails for retracing and documenting what happens after the event and during, for that matter, from the culturally determined to inner spiritual powers. But that does not mean that they are available to explanation. We naturally want to know them all in order to see how they might relate; but you cannot know them all, much less explain their agency. After the event, artists and composers might be able to identify connexions between intuitive processes and referenced philosophical discourses; and these connexions are of course prestigious. But though conferring glamour, this can also be a manipulative strategy which is almost the reverse of immanence, crafting a poem from the index rather than growing it from the sentiment.

For artists charged with some exegetical responsibilities, the best complexion to put on this most fugitive quest is often hard to establish. The several factors that lead to immanence may be expressed beautifully or clumsily, may sound inspired or defensive. As suggested, the devotion to immanence can be sheer Romantic conceit or highly enlightened; it depends to an extent on the rhetoric of the narrator or the creative faith in the artist who makes the work. Intuitive faculties can be alienated or, depending on the voice and zeal of the expositor, related to curious and vibrant discourses; and in all probability, this is their natural home. The artistic project as a whole has slippages but anchors too; there is a cultural history, a theory and history; and these beckon for rapports in explaining the immanence that is felt in the artistic outcome.

CHAPTER 2.2

MEASURE AND PLEASURE THE ARTISTIC RATIONALE OF HEDONISM

The theme of writing is inexhaustible and the final section of this book makes an attempt to handle it in the context of the creative arts; but contemplating the ineffable qualities of phenomena with immanence reminds me that the difficulties of recognizing something are also difficulties of language. Writing for the sake of documentation is sometimes resented for confessing our limitations of consciousness, where it can be hidden more easily by the opacity of another medium. Against this, there is a revelatory power of writing (which is also challenging and forbidding); because writing can have a proactive agency in the creative process, which deserves attention. Both as a sign of flawed intellect and an unrealized resource, writing causes anxiety for most people, including professional writers.

But writing seems to let us more deeply into a paradox that is harder to see in other media. In writing, there are apparently antithetical motives. First, you write in order to calibrate the world, to record, to analyse, to systematize. This is measurement, in short, for the purpose is comparative and orderly. In this vein, writing is scientific, rational, with little need for justification. Second, you write to yield psychological satisfaction; this could be hedonistic, even if phrased as exploration, poetic, enchanting, indulgent, possibly big-headed or evasive. They are incommensurable activities, both potentially inspired or boring, potentially enlightening or stilted or unintelligible.

Measurement in itself is a rich area of methodology, by no means untheorized and mechanical, which it is sometimes supposed to be by artists and scholars in the humanities. Measurement entails establishing the yardsticks, the criteria for measurement; and if this is open to question, then what are the indicators? There is also enormous difficulty measuring things. Quantitative assessment of things that are inherently difficult to measure has particular prestige. If it is easy to measure something, like the number of bicycles relative to cars using a given road, there is little magic in the research. But if the technique of measurement eludes researchers (the problem of noisy data or the inability to separate the things that you are counting), the new quantitative methods of the researcher attract careful scrutiny and are often the subject of debate. Which road was chosen and in which season? Measurement is also the genius of the social sciences as well as the physical sciences. They are also full of argument, also leading to conclusions in dialectical context.

Measurement, oddly, is also powerful in art. It does not immediately sound probable but it depends on the interpretation. Much of art history follows highly systematic methods. Sorting, dating, typology, identifications, attributions: these are all forms of measurement. You measure stylistic and iconographic features (albeit subjectively) and assess the objects by comparisons, often of a kind involving numbers, as with periodization. Normally, we refer to this form of inquiry as qualitative;

however, it is still a kind of measurement. Even beyond connoisseurship—in the heady and opiniated zones of ideology, even critical value judgements—you charge yourself with measuring cultural factors. The influences, even ideological concerns, are assessed against one another in a grand search for evidence.

This extends to defining importance, which is often defined as the role of criticism but which is also the hidden agenda of art history (of which more soon, chapter 4.4). Given some axioms—for example, the incontestable belief that cubism is historically significant—the identification of relationships confers importance. If you can allege that some artist or movement had rapports with cubism, you induce upon compared the prestige in the comparator. Measurement of kinships with traditions or lineage is implicitly valorizing. Further, identification of novelty in the history of ideas (which might be searched with rigorous philology) brings traditions into the modernist ascendancy. The paradigm of progress guarantees that stepwise contributions are valorized. This means, of course, that they are measured and that the measurement has values (in all senses) attached to it.

Then there are the necessary disciplinary norms. No matter what form of scholarship outside the creative arts, you have to establish new knowledge, which is also the great cliché of doctoral studies. So how do you do that? You scrupulously evaluate previous knowledge. You propose your contribution against this background (which is carefully measured) and perform this with sufficient rigour to establish that your contribution is measurably an advancement upon the discoveries of others. The whole scholarly paradigm involves a kind of measurement in the methodology. How have you measured these phenomena? And there is always a fear that some other scholar will discover that there is a fault with your measurement.

Measure is not the same as measurement. Measurement is strongly identified with numerical indices, as with a measuring tape. Measure—especially in the plural of 'measures'—connotes method, the means, the steps taken. For example, what measures did the commission suggest to prevent child abuse? Measure, in this sense, is a highly active and charged concept, used in social reform and management (or plumbing for that matter), anything where steps are taken toward a goal. Antiquity and Renaissance authors also recognized the term as a social and psychological concept, centring on the ideal of moderation. An action, if good, was to be measured. A reproach or complaint, a punishment or reprisal, needs restraint. The noble person always needed to conduct himself or herself in a measured way. The idea of a medium between extremes was in many ways the core recommendation of philosophy from Aristotle to Leon Battista Alberti and Baldassare Castiglione.

For the labours of criticism that abide in art history, we can deconstruct the concept of importance. Importance is inherently conceived within the context of measurement, which is almost physically tied to the idea of weight. Hence we have terms like onerous proof, the burden of proof (*onus probandi*). Importance is always calibrated. How important (extremely, very, somewhat, not very?) admits a scale to allow or imply measurement. The image of weight is installed in the very word importance, which derives from the Latin for carrying (*portare*) or lifting. The very term for weight is highly metaphoric, with a load of significance. It has 'gravity', all metaphors of substantial meaning, and all physically measurable in their origins. You feel from this physical substrate underlying our abstract concepts in western language that weight and measurement are inextricably related. No measurement, no weight, no importance. We are a metrical culture; and, at least in the west, some artistic media, like music and architecture, engage measurement to an obsessive degree. Most western music till recently, and in most genres, is highly metrical.

Establishing artistic value, though clearly very contested, is less of a burden. Importance for us is not easily measured. Perhaps this is because pleasure is not easily measured. Artistic engagement is experiential, involving countless chaotically intersecting contingencies and what I think of as thick variables. Throughout our creation and reception of the creative arts, the experience sought is

pleasure. For example, the reception of quality, or perception thereof, would generate pleasure. In art, since the Romantic movement, we downplay instruction, enlightenment or new understanding (which may be somewhat didactic and pompous in our context).

I am an apologist for pleasure in all artistic and intellectual contexts; but all pleasure is immeasurable. Fun, happiness and gorgeousness are subjective beyond all measures. They are fugitive among those who experience them most intensely and want to write about them with the greatest determination. It is not just that we become coy or smug or boastful. Pleasures are recalcitrantly vague. They cannot easily be communicated. Further, with regard to good method, maybe pleasure is also tainted with irresponsibility, as of orgasm. And even in the field of sexual pleasure, we note the lower prestige of masturbation relative to 'the right thing', the socialized relational experience which, in the case of heterosexual couples, structurally (or 'naturally') leads to offspring. This essential teleology ratifies the leap of faith in which a couple indulges in their bliss.

Ultimately, we do art for pleasure, if we follow Freud's theories or those of Lorenzo Valla. It sounds naïve but it is even more naïve to deny it. My pleasure is my guide. It informs all of my choices in art and writing. It constitutes what I want to talk about (my subject matter) and how I want to talk about it (my style & structure) and whom I want to engage (my address). My pleasure explains what parts make me feel secure and reinforced. If you deconstruct the idea of relevance, you find pleasure at the bottom of it, even if stigmatized as egocentric, ideologically bland and unchallenging. The subject is relevant to me because it makes me feel good; it flatters my identity, interests, status, my own production.

My method is whatever gives me fun. For someone outside the field of the creative arts, this 'method' must appear unscholarly, unaccountable, possibly arbitrary, resting on taste, flattering big ideas, vanity, maybe snobbery, indulging an altogether unwarranted sense of superiority.

So, you call this method? At the base of artistic production—so contrary to all the earnest measuring disciplines—lies a giant hole containing nothing but self-interest, a cavity of moral purpose to be filled by self-gratification. I like this. I can get off on this stuff. This is what I will do. My method is whatever gives me fun. For someone outside the field of the creative arts, this 'method' must appear unscholarly, unaccountable, possibly arbitrary, resting on taste, flattering big ideas, vanity, maybe snobbery, indulging an altogether unwarranted sense of superiority. Perhaps in an age of relativity, the person's joy is the sole remaining absolute, obdurately structured around the priority of the individual, erring to the anti-social, with a right to profess the ideologically unsound? The artist may go to some lengths to deny such motivations. In some, pleasure is jealously guarded in the expressive machinery; and in others, it is suppressed or tortured. Very often, the various art-forms communicate suffering and ostensibly speak on behalf of the hard-done-by. But in all of these heroic willful transactions, the agency of the artist's pleasure strikes me as undeniable in motivation and method.

Still, something mediates. Nothing disqualifies pleasure but much attenuates it and various kinds of artistic protocol make it somewhat transferable. Parameters exist within all discourses to accommodate pleasure. Humans have had to socialize their bliss for so long to make it acceptable to the tribe that there is no slyness to compare with this skill. We will always find excuses. Method must synthesize pleasure toward reason, toward the generalizable, in favour of the others. Pleasure can be shared; it is not exclusive but communicable in generous sense. Maybe if it does not reach self-consciously toward the generalizable, it is experienced as unpleasurable in others. Which is experienced by critics as an artistic scandal: potential annihilation of esteem, credit, authority, the claim on the audience's time!

And so I find that there is always some measure of pleasure. We as artists ultimately go about the cunning task of measuring pleasure. And if we are happy artists, the measures are on pleasurable terms. You compare your pleasure with someone else's. You find out about other people's pleasure

the moment you perform the music to a relative or show the picture to a friend; and you find out a heap more with any critical forum. Though bracing, this preliminary encounter makes the making more fun, first because the artistic work is not conceived in hermetic and insular terms and, second, because the transport can be expressed and even referenced. Pleasure itself should have authority. It should make a claim on cultural significance. How intolerably alienating, then, if it is banished from the dialectical republic when it explains our very reasons for belonging to it!

In all of this, I am conscious of not having explained what yields pleasure, other than vaguely to allege that it is likely to be egotistical. Investigating this possibly reveals a bottomless pit of psychological introspection; because it seems likely to me that a good person finds pleasure in the joy of others while an angry person gains greater satisfaction from scoring points with other people's displeasure, thus acquitting the accumulated resentment of a lifetime of snubs and rejection. In the end, it is love that counts; it is all explained by the economy of infantile affection over which we have no control as artistic adults. Too bad! And this somewhat fateful receptiveness (or otherwise) to the generosities of pleasure is possibly a dead-end; it possibly explains why pleasure is so seldom handled in accounts of artistic method or even of artistic evaluation, in brief, the discipline of criticism. It holds key importance for us and we continuously seek a useful frame to place it in.

CHAPTER 2.3

NO LAUGHING MATTER
ART AND SEMANTIC SUBVERSION

Among the many means of access to pleasure, the most convivial is humour. In the expectations of a socialized life, humour is normality. For someone to assert that you lack sense of humour is like an injury; there is no insult to compare. To lack knowledge, intellect or some aptitude—say an aptitude for maths or language or music—can be accommodated in the great economy of talents and education. We cannot all have a head for microbiology or accounting. This is perhaps comparable to lacking a healthy body or having a lisp. Yes, you undoubtedly have a defect but it is no terrible shame, just one of the accidents of upbringing or education or a committed preference that left you with more abilities in one field than another. But to lack a sense of humour is more basic: to lack humour is to be found wanting as a human. You are psychologically destitute and spiritually dysfunctional. It is almost like lacking a fundamental and necessary attribute, like compassion or generosity.

But what is this allegation, to lack a sense of humour? Often, it is illegitimate and is simply a reflection of one person not recognizing another person's vein of humour. And it can be very political, too. I do not laugh at your jokes; they are not funny. How cruel! And even if you know that the other person is being mean, it does not mitigate against severity of the accusation. Declaring that someone else lacks a sense of humour is deeply arrogant; and this yields our first insight, namely that humour is structurally invidious. It is always more than a rebuff: you are too serious, you do not laugh or have a sense of fun; you should lighten up and maybe enjoy some booze to loosen your earnest disposition. Rather, there is a gap. Someone with a slightly malevolent agenda is claiming to identify a hiatus in your psyche. You cannot understand relations between the intended and the unintended. A kind of relativity is missing in your apparatus.

Not funny indeed! Leave aside the awesome arrogance which declares: I have humour; you do not. Having no sense of humour is an inability to relate; because humour is the ability to handle slippages. In the famous analysis of Henri Bergson in *Le rire*, jokes are explained as a correction to the mechanical in favour of the organic pulse of life. When behaviour or thought follows a mechanistic predictability, we laugh: we know in our unconscious how to circumvent the mechanistic and humour, ironically, is a part of the machinery that lets us do this graciously. For Bergson, this includes double meanings. They are a mechanical fault in language, where two words with separate meanings share the same phoneme. When you crack the joke (an amazing physical image of breaking something, namely the integrity of language), you expose the mechanical flaw in language and explode the literal mind that would have no means of telling the difference in sense judging by the sounds alone. So humour is functional. It deconstructs the psychotic literalness of fixed institutions or any behaviour which does not respond to the organic or recognize the organic flux of life.

Humour is recognized pre-eminently in language and action. Double meanings are funny where the mind stretches around the mechanical limitations of phonetics. Jokes mostly have a narrative structure: time elapses for the incompatibility to be revealed. For example, in Freud's remarkable

study of humour and jokes (*Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten*), the examples do not include the visual arts or music. And you would have to concede that most art and music are not rich in humour; ironically, art and music historians are often funnier than their subject matter; and in part this is because they draw in anecdote, paradox, malicious evaluations and biographical information, rather than analysing the music or art.

For all that, art is funny from early times; and the detachment of music from the comic stage is hard to date. Hellenic antiquity still provides the keynote for western art: lofty, uplifting, chauvinistic, godlike, ideal. In sculpture, for example, the classical impassiveness gradually overtakes the goofy archaic smile in statuary from the early fifth century BC; and monumental art makes its immortal claim on divinity with all the high seriousness that go with Olympian ambition. But the lesser genres reveal the ongoing agency of the naughty. In a vase by Psiax, for example, Herakles wrestles with the Nemean Lion (naked, of course, as the Greeks always performed their battles artistically for greater choreographic effect). The hero, confronting the fearsome danger of having his private parts in such daring proximity to the lion's maws, does wee-wee.

There is a history of humour, in which the high institutionality of western culture is relieved. Græco-Roman production is dominated by state patronage; also, when family patronage makes its mark in bourgeois Rome, it is still as an institution, the ideal of hearth and *paterfamilias* upholding the status, generally, of the patrician class. It is seldom funny. Pottery was always more bourgeois, irresponsible and ratbag. Romanesque and Gothic art likewise appeal to absolute divinity in their grand ecclesiastical schemes; but the minor arts are professed with a more eccentric freedom. The masons and carpenters have their fling on the capitals and the pew, which are bizarre, grotesque and fanciful.

Humour grows and becomes overtly subversive from the time of Hogarth and Goya. The graphic, grotesque and satirical tradition, from the Renaissance and Baroque provided ample cues; and there is also some humour in bacchanalian subject matter (Bellini, Titian, Rubens) which is significant because it is both monumental and apparently irresponsible. But the greatest promotion of humour occurs when the jokes are given a political charter. Humour enters the topical and political with the generation of Daumier, where satire in mass media occupies a similar position as it has today. This material expresses the inability of institutions to embrace fairness, feeling and reason. It is a critique of self-interest, the basis of the enlightenment; it challenges the great confidence in capital that grew exponentially with the industrial period.

If there is a history of humour, it may have its high point in Dada. This is not just because the Dada artists vaunt the chaotic and anarchistic impulse, which is often celebrated. It is the critical purpose that they put this impulse toward. The core iconological motif in the extrapolations of mechanical drawing by Francis Picabia and Marcel Duchamp is a critique of the scientific view of human volition. As noted earlier, the underpinnings of the psyche described by Freud are mechanistic. The psychodynamic model of forces (environmental and biochemical) acting upon the ego are explainable, the one energy offsetting another or having defined consequences in the neurosis. This model conforms to all the assumptions of materialist philosophy—which is still the best act in town—giving a slightly deterministic slant to behaviour. The outrageous extrapolation of psychological machinery in Dada results in absurdity. The economy of libidinous energy and external factors is allegorized by machine-drawings of a patently absurd nature. To this, the Dada artists then add the condiment of shock, with absurdity as transgression, sometimes even supplemented by violence and bating.

Ever since, there has been a gradual but consistent trajectory toward irony. Contemporary art is not especially moving but it is often funny. Since modernism, sentiment of all kinds has been attenuated relative to the narrative habits of previous epochs. Modernism made culture forget that audiences used to cry visibly in front of Victorian pictures. The discourse was once in narrative but then it slid

dramatically into the formalesque. Alas, the formalesque is not at all funny. With the caesura of postmodernism, the great strength of contemporary art is in teasing out concepts; and usually this proceeds with some irony. In our epoch, direct exposition is seen as prosaic, illustrative, didactic; and the prestige of irony is structurally similar to the value of the poetic in avoiding this literalness.

Humour in art is a critique of seriousness. It accords with various disruptive impulses, one of which is infantile. It recuperates childhood. Children are mainly serious about their interests—food, hug, toy—but they may be somewhat indifferent to yours. They tend to think that your interests are silly, worthy of ridicule. Their understanding is limited by relatively low levels of empathy and insight. But then they are often right. We are quite ridiculous with our serious preoccupations. It depends on where you look at things from, above the table or below the table. The relativity of interests and viewpoint underlies the relativity of humour.

Diversion from fixity is the key psychological agenda of humour. The impulse to play with meaning arises first in dissimulation. From childhood, the elasticity of communication is understood. There is a latitude of terms and gestures. The adult pretends to be giraffe; the child laughs. The adult is not a giraffe and the gestures are not really giraffe-like. The child already knows that the adult is pretending and is attempting to entertain the child. The untrue guise is recognized as theatrical invention but a bit stupid. Its failure as reality is its success as humour. There is something confessional and touching in the stupidity, because you can easily become self-conscious and the act is spoilt or becomes terribly tedious and embarrassing for those in the tragic ambience. If all goes well, with all this risk, the seriousness is diverted and institutionality is negated. Humour is the distance from which stupidity can be apprehended with sagacity.

What happens to this precarious energy with research? The explanation of artistic method is trumped when it comes to humour because the respective teleologies are so at variance with one another, the one (research) constructively seeking to institutionalize intuition and the other (humour) seeking to deconstruct it. Besides, there is always something intractable about humour, because it is impossible to explain. To explain a joke is to kill it; it is no longer funny within hermeneutic parameters. There is potential disaster when art is returned to unsympathetic institutionality, when its *raison d'être* has been its refusal of the institutional. There is a consequent need for humour in the exegetical exposition—or any written negotiation with the public—to parallel the sentiment in the creative work.

CHAPTER 2.4

PHENOMENOLOGY
A PHILOSOPHY OF THE SENSES

Chosen by German philosophers proud of their Greek, the brand of philosophy known as phenomenology belongs close to the artistic imagination and the discussions that support it. The Greek word phenomenon gives a cue to the meaning, that which appears before you (το φαινομενον), from the verb 'to appear' (φαινω). By implication, the phenomenon is something tangible, a thing-scenario, a happening that you can see or touch. It compares with reality, which derives from the Latin word for the thing (*res*), which is replicated in the Greek conception of reality or the pragmatic, from 'the thing' (πραγμα). Though both words are 'thingy', neither the Greek nor Latin concept of reality involves the senses; whereas the phenomenon is present to the eyes. In modern languages, a phenomenon is any situation that impresses itself upon your senses. Hence phenomenology is the study of things that have a tangible presence, that are known through the senses, that are grounded in experience rather than abstractions or knowledge derived *a priori*, as with mathematics.

Of the several philosophical traditions that bear a relation to art, phenomenology is the slant that most acknowledges experience as the core and privileged part of artistic consciousness. Experience is the route and vehicle of awareness, the supreme form of knowing which is committed to memory in the instant and lives with you as a part of you. There is a consequent suspicion of philosophies that abstract experience in categorical systems, even though there is no denying the truth and consistency of mathematical theorems and other less pure forms of systematizing knowledge.

With phenomenology, the sources are sometimes not referred to because the tradition trades on individual awareness and is not intrinsically referential in the bibliographic sense. Perhaps because of this inbuilt subjectivity, everyone has his or her own definition and working approach, some a bit eccentric; and this is perhaps also a part of the expectation. As noted, phenomenology has its origins in German philosophy circa 1900, especially by Edmund Husserl in his *Logical investigations* of 1901 and *Ideas for a pure phenomenology* of 1907. The aspiration was to find a method devoid of presuppositions, establishing meaning (hence knowledge) through experience and intuition. This knowledge would be true to consciousness rather than an abstract grid which is learned by convenience. Things neither perceived nor experienced cannot be a route to consciousness, and are hence excluded from the discourse.

Phenomenology has links to existentialism but it is above all a philosophy with me in the middle. It is pursued by Martin Heidegger in *Being and time* of 1927—in some respects a precursor to existentialism and Sartre—seeking to analyse the authenticity of being, and examining concepts like 'care' and 'mood'. The concrete ethical and religious demands made on an individual are brought into the argument but on the basis of recognizing the subjective commitment before the abstraction.

The side of the tradition that interests us most relates to perception and experience. The method in phenomenology recommends the descriptive and is rooted in observation. Much of what I feel emboldened to talk about derives its confidence from describing consciousness. I do not

have extensive empirical evidence much less scholarly support. The study of consciousness seeks patterns of sense awareness in experience; but why be apologetic, given that his is unthinkably vast? How are experiences arrived at? Mainly because things happen and we build awareness through imagination or objects perceived with the senses! Consciousness has no life apart from objects that it encounters or considers or events that it experiences; because even imaginary or religious constructs are entertained in the imagination, enlivened by the way you identify with the protagonist or fantasize about divinity of whatever. In this combination, objects—and space—enjoy new prestige. Where once they were decidedly inferior on the Platonic hierarchy of forms (far from the originary idea), now they enjoy parity with the sacred. There is no priority in the cosmos, according to which material objects were far from the creator and hence inferior to the spiritual. For hundreds of years the Christian divinity was held to be contactable by immaterial or purely spiritual means; and the things of the world (*mundus*) were scorned, even though God might have been the demiurge responsible for their shape. A shell or a weed, for example.

With the advent of phenomenology it also became philosophically legitimate and plausible to appreciate the maximum relativity of an otherwise fixed world. Where before, philosophical traditions had erred to the absolute, seeking principles and generalizing sets of observations toward immutable and universal truths, now philosophical discourse was authorized to defer this urgency in favour of exploring how the world shapes up according to the attention that we devote to it.

With phenomenology, religious sentiment is implicitly cast as an encounter with the imaginary potential of the human; and in this structure, it has an immanence and authenticity analogous to the way that the memory and imagination can activate the space under a table for a child or a hot wind is remembered on the occasion of arriving at a foreign town. These are all epiphanies, owing their prestige for the individual to the wonders of the mind and the infinitely cherishable precipitate of experience, which is contemplation.

Coming from a position of the incidental, phenomenology quickly discovers the limits to systemhood. Phenomenological investigation may be systematic but ultimately and structurally it is about charting the subjective. The world is not understood objectively, even if it can be measured objectively. It is impossible, for example, to have an objective awareness of a chair. Things lie buried in consciousness, memory, association, habits of sitting or arranging an interior. There are ways of noting the upholstery, frame, surface, disposition in the room, the effect on posture or the size of the bottom that sits in it.

Thinking of the chair, you have to ask: which chair? not just in the sense that there is a green chair or a red chair, a kitchen chair and an armchair. A single chair acquires a kind of multiplicity according to the viewpoint. It seems to be as different as there are people to define it by their experience. The child wonders if his or her feet will touch the ground. For the same chair, the baby is concerned for the space underneath and whether you can get through there. The youth wonders if his or her posture can be cool in it. The adult wonders if the stretcher will get kicked and damaged or is filled with anxiety about whether or not the chair will support a large seated person or creak in a threatening way. The middle-aged person may be anxious about back support. An older person might legitimately be worried about how to get out of the chair. The dog is interested in the space between the chairs under the table. Maximum safety and opportunity for scavenging!

With the advent of phenomenology it also became philosophically legitimate and plausible to appreciate the maximum relativity of an otherwise fixed world. Where before, philosophical traditions had erred to the absolute, seeking principles and generalizing sets of observations toward immutable and universal truths, now philosophical discourse was authorized to defer this urgency in favour of exploring how the world shapes up according to the attention that we devote to it. Things

are not always independent of our consciousness of them and, as our consciousness is necessarily different from person to person, the thing or situation is necessarily inflected by many narratives. Objects and circumstances do not inhabit a perfect Platonic region of original forms or ideas (ιδειαι). Things are never absolute, even if chemical composition can be standardized universally. The architecture of things impresses people differently. Understandings and even perceptions are different, because hinging on experience, histories, patience, mood, more contingencies than you can ever imagine.

And for handling this slightly chaotic list of variables impinging on the physical and behavioural world, phenomenology is lateral, imaginative, misbehaved. The great linearity of method in most discourses can be somewhat dispensed with; because finding causes in phenomena—which dominated discourse for so long and still dominates science and empirical history—is not necessarily the point. Objects or situations may also be explored by associations, coincidence, following irresponsible enjoyment. Cues are poetic, tangential, unrestricted; and so the inquiry can also be guided by contingencies as much as the essence of phenomena.

But there are many paradoxes, because phenomenology is also concerned with essence. It is essence, perhaps not as an absolute but as the lived. Essence is a term, like spirit, that covers everything from 'being' to 'petrol' (you know, the French *essence* means gas), ontology and turps. In phenomenology, it is often proposed that things have a core, a notion inhering in them, which emerges in Merleau-Ponty. From our colourful example, irrespective of the florid and diverse realizations of what the chair is, there is also a concept of chairness, and beyond the image of the chair, a 'thisness' or quiddity which belongs to all objects. The clarity of something immediately impressing you with being, being what it is, can have aesthetic corollaries in regard to the assumed quality of the object. This is vigorously sought in Hamada-Leach tradition in pottery, which was evoked earlier (Chapter 1.5). Has the pot heart? What does the pot want to be? One pot is just a lump of clay turned in the form of a bowl or a vase whereas another bowl, for Bernard Leach, is magically endowed with an essence of what it is. There is always a temptation to summarize key elements of objects—formal, structural and functional—and thus expect to clinch the soul of matter. This could also be quite conceited and certainly very difficult to verify or place in any kind of defensible discourse. I suspect that this is why the tradition of brown pots has lost its lustre for forty years. It relies on the phenomenological appeal of textures and volumes and their associations but sneaks in too many absolutes to retain credibility in a period of high relativism.

Essence and essentialism are of course quite different things and articulating the distinction could well save the case. Essentialist discourses are totalizing. By defining essence, you eliminate difference. It is fully analogous to any other process of generalization, as, for example, the stereotype of the typical Australian (presumed blonde crocodile-wrestling barbeque lover). Essentialist discourses deny variety of experience and origin, the disparate array of 'where people are coming from'; they seek universal principles against the sundry contingencies that really inform and explain the diversity of meaning of encounters with the world. Essence as the assumed core being of a thing somewhat universalizes the phenomenon, expropriates it from my peculiar ownership through experience and attachment, effaces the affection that I can find in my memory, eliminates my perception and the self-sufficient pertinence of my view of things.

But then this is not a very phenomenological view of essences, either! Essence exists but infinitely inflected by perceptions, hence the lived (*esse*) which is the Latin root of essence. The essence of any phenomenon is regenerated with each experience of the object. Categorizing phenomena helps provide a sense of their spread, creating indices of difference, and hence the dimensions of so many contingencies or the apparently incidental circumstances that mediate your experience of the phenomenon. How does a phenomenon vary according to experience? You can be systematic about intuition. Just because phenomena are chronically inflected by narratives, it does not mean that

these cannot be put in some kind of order. It is a terrific challenge: how to see a structure where the key pieces of information are subjective, observational and poetic?

This tradition has major value in the creative arts. Artists of all kinds are natural phenomenologists. They are by and large resistant to abstract systems, including when abstract artists or concrete poets or composers. They have a high investment in their personal view, jealously fortifying its independence and privileging the artist's subjectivity. Phenomena in this economy can be handled to outline the individual's response rather than the phenomenon in essence. The construct of perception is perhaps the only 'higher' overarching principle that phenomenology gives to artists.

Intelligence through the senses gained maximum prestige and robustness through the phenomenological tradition. Phenomenology keeps sensory and intuitive faculties at the centre of consciousness (which, as discussed, is necessarily individual). Art, music and performance are a logical repository of phenomenological insight because supremely sensory and individual. The cerebral element is still not abstract but linked to the senses. Categorical themes and analysis mesh harmoniously with imaginative freshness. The artist seeks to construct a new view or new idea of something. How can you do that if you believe that everything has an irreducible essence and some other artist has already reached it? A classical form of artistic paralysis.

Hence the prestige of perception among artists. This is not some kind of backward pseudo-scientific discourse of how the eye and brain work or ear and brain; to me, perception has equal relevance to writers. Via phenomenology, perceptual discourses work in favour of analysis of seeing but not on a systematic level of representation (for example, perspective). Perception is not about laws of retinal or neuronal activity but the investigation of a personal response. It poses challenges to methods of standardizing seeing and hearing, touching, organizing human movement, and so on. It stresses relativity and subjectivity, the I-ness of the person who represents. This is a philosophy that suits me and the methods sought throughout this book.

CHAPTER 2.5

THE POETIC
A PROSAIC APPROACH

All discussion of the poetic is liable to fall into redundancy or futility, because it has already been handled by philosophers since Aristotle's *Poetics*, and I think to little avail.[66] It is an area both well explored and well exhausted:[67] much has been laboured upon and little achieved; and all of this frustration beside the ongoing and relatively untheorized production of artists and writers who are striking a high poetic note in their creative productions. So what is the point of another disquisition on the topic which risks, in any case, the antithesis of the poetic, a baleful demonstration of the prosaic, which is so often the fate of scholarship in its intellectual attempts to enhance our consciousness of the creative?

For all that, I feel that past attempts at discussing the poetic are somewhat limited—almost anachronistic—and I am hoping to develop a new theory which seems more congruent with the times.

Though many aspects of the poetic (like most things aesthetic) are handled today with great shyness, there is in studio culture little hesitancy in using the term and invoking its historical lustre. Among artists and critics—whom I would include in studio culture—the poetic is the inspirational element recognized in the best art. It is sought in your own, if you are an artist, if not self-consciously then at least unconsciously or in the oblique surreptitious way that old agendas survive in contrary times. But in all times, the poetic has been highly fugitive, hard to pin down or define, associated with many other things equally hard to define, the mysterious, the subjective, the unfathomable or the sublime. It seems resistant to logic, impossible to explain, almost like a joke (which is no longer funny if explained, perhaps in itself a recalcitrant sign of intellectual caprice), as if losing the point if in need of explanation.[68]

It follows that it is an equally recalcitrant paradox in research, the kind of research that we conduct in studio.[69] And in this, it is a symbol of many of our embarrassments in equating studio production with research. If the poetic is a key virtue in art, it is somehow inaccessible to research

66 And, as you might expect from the age of authority, also the subject of aesthetic regulation, *e.g.* Ignacio de Luzán, *La poética: o, Reglas de la poesía en general, y de sus principales especies*, Barcelona: Editorial Labor, 1977.

67 *e.g.* Roger Caillois, *Le champ des signes : récurrences dérobées : aperçu sur l'unité et la continuité du monde physique, intellectuel et imaginaire ou premiers éléments d'une poétique généralisée*, Paris: Hermann, 1978; García Berrio, *Antonio, Formación de la teoría literaria moderna*, Madrid: Cupsa, 1977-1980; Vuillemin, Jules, *Eléments de poétique*, Paris: Libraire. philosophique J. Vrin, 1991; Staiger, Emil, *Les concepts fondamentaux de la poetique*, translated and annotated by Raphael Celis and Michele Gennert in collaboration with René Jongen, Bruxelles: Lebeer-Hossmann, 1990.

68 But ironically, the poetic is intimately tied to philosophical thought, which is brought out in numerous studies, *e.g.* Winkel, Maria Angela, *Denkerische und dichterische Erkenntnis als Einheit: eine Untersuchung zur Symbolik in Hermann Brochs* Tod des Vergil, Frankfurt am Main and Bern: Lang, 1980. But there is always the case that the poetic is allied to madness: Geyer, Horst, *Dichter des Wahnsinns: eine Untersuchung über die dichterische Darstellbarkeit seelischer Ausnahmezustände*, Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1955.

69 The link between the poetic and natural research has been observed for some time: Enrico Carini, *La stagione delle riviste: la parola poetica come ricerca*, Milan: Nuova Omicron, 1997.

and unavailable, through modesty or logic, to inquiry. Artists who make statements of having a great aim of the poetic risk big-headedness: their claim may even be also embarrassing, because conceited, unfalsifiable, uncheckable, almost a form of intellectual arrogance. So while the poetic is pursued as one of the highest virtues in the studio it is duck-shoved even as the legitimate material of doctoral documentation, for fear that it will sound glib or obvious, vain or smug. This impenetrable avoidance of the most glamorous part of our projects rather makes mockery of research in studio art. So I have good reason to want to visit the theme afresh.

But before my own inquiry takes on too much studiocentric anxiety, I would like to observe that a dedication to the poetic is also a stigma in art history. The search for the poetic is seldom seen as scholarly, unless revealing the poetic theory of writer or artist. Thus, if an art historian can explain what Lomazzo or Bellori meant by the poetic, drawing upon the apparatus of classical philology, the theme is highly creditable. But if exploring what makes Poussin's pictures so poetic or Bernini's sculptures compelling in similar terms, the writing is likely to be somewhat devalued as 'connoisseurship', bellelettrist, indulgent, dilettantish. Alas, the idea has suffered through postmodernism. Inquiry into the poetic has the air of aristocratic values, 'art appreciation'; you instinctively feel that it is likely to be uncritical, bourgeois, anti-revolutionary, reactionary or neutral at best. It evokes satisfaction with other aesthetic conceits, as in the arbitrary measures of 'good taste': it is absolutist or anti-discourse guff, which cannot easily be made more defensible.

The search for the poetic is seldom seen as scholarly, unless revealing the poetic theory of writer or artist.

And to be fair, there is good cause for this aesthetic shyness. As with 'quality', the poetic can indeed be used in an arbitrary way, so that the author lacks curiosity and the term acts as a platitude. It is highly personal, subjective, unmediated, whence the poetic for one person is another person's kitsch. In this vein, the poetic is susceptible to supporting complacency, middle-of-the-roadness, a quaint charm identified with the sub-professional galleries.[70]

Unfair intolerance? I think so. It is especially unfair to marginalize the poetic from the political. The poetic operates equally through ideology. The great impetus of gender, class and ethnicity discourses can have a poetic point, a barb, a killer note. It seems to me quite illogical that the poetic might be confined in some way to complicity with dominant or mainstream ideology. If there is a valuable critique of this social practice or that, it is surely not dulled by having poetic expression. On the contrary, provided that the poetic thrust does not compromise the issue of social justice or whatever, the message is likely to have greater sustain if encapsulated in some poetic form.[71]

I think that we always have to ask: why is it art? Surely not just because of content, not just because there is a worthy message of which the picture or film is but the convenient vessel. An artwork does not become an artwork solely because well-intentioned socially. Rather, the message—if I can speak unpoetically, because I think it is a feeling that suggests a message rather than a message as such—has found an imaginative voice, a form, an image, a peculiarly appropriate rhetoric to express the content.[72]

Content can disqualify an artwork from being poetic but can never guarantee the poetic character

70 Really the opposite of the meaning that most scholars associate with the poetic, *e.g.* Meschonnic, Henri, *Les états de la poétique*, Paris: PUF, 1985.

71 Charnet, Yves, *et al.*, *Critique de la théorie critique: langage et histoire: séminaire de poétique*, Saint-Denis: Presses universitaires de Vincennes, 1985

72 I am conscious that I am framing the poetic in terms of images and hence not abstraction, which I think errs to music, perhaps less poetic than rhapsodic, an equally valid aesthetic virtue but perhaps not quite poetic. I guess that with the visual, we easily slip into the realm of *ars rhetorica*; though all of this is subtle and without finality: Richard Kearney, *Poétique du possible: phénoménologie herméneutique de la figuration*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1984; Ivan Fónagy, *La ripetizione creativa: ridondanze espessive nell'opera poetica*, Bari: Edizioni Dedalo, 1982; Heuvel, Pierre van den, *Parole, mot, silence: pour une poétique de l'énonciation*, Paris: J. Corti, 1985.

of an artwork. For example, a repugnant message cannot easily be poeticized: a sentiment which is unironically racist or misogynistic or anti-queer cannot be considered poetic. So, irrespective of the technique, the content disqualifies the work from the poetic. But it does not work in reverse. A good piece of content does not always result in a poetic work, because the voice, the framing, the chords, the tempo may all render the content pedantic, annoying, even a bit superior or supercilious. As a critic, I confess to finding this all to often, when noble intentions are confounded with some inappropriate zeal, whence the results are somewhat ruined and rendered unpoetic.

Typical of this discourse, I have only turned up negatives. I can say what does not work. And I am sure that I cannot define the poetic any more than the beautiful or the glorious or even the passionate. But perhaps it can be analysed somewhat, because I think that the poetic possibly has a number of elements. The elements of the poetic are the following. First, it is psychologically engaging. Second, it involves a degree of metaphoric loosening of meaning, a clever exploitation of ambiguity. Third, it is imaginative, perhaps dreamy, perhaps poignant, but in all events evocative. And fourth, the poetic is cross-discursive, *i.e*. it crosses or straddles thematic languages or methods. I would like to go through these in greater detail.

It is most obvious to begin with the claim that the poetic must first be identified on a psychological plane. By definition, the poetic cannot be cold or inhere in some purely intellectual argumentative proposition, if such were possible. By the poetic, we always understand that some emotional engagement is enacted. There is a psychological connexion suggested through the motif, the imagery or sequences or whatever, (as when a subjective state, such as longing, is activated for the spectator). The artwork will invite your psychological interest in an outcome, a hope, a pleasure, an embarrassment. Thus, the poetic agency intrudes in consciousness, lodges in desire or some other emotional centre, perhaps in shame or some sad part of a person's vanity. The spectator's attention is implied in archetypal situations, in which the psychological momentum of a treatment of a motif or event is transferred from the representation to the individual who witnesses. In this, the poetic undoubtedly touches on the unconscious, probably certain sexual investments, and brings to awareness the spectator's own motives for owning or rejecting attachments which are variously shared throughout culture.

Second, the poetic is identified with the agency of metaphor.[73] Metaphor is itself psychological, for it is a psychological extension of the physical. We could define metaphor by its Greek roots (μετα φερειν, transferring, carrying across) as a way of expressing the psychological by means of the physical. Thus we speak of a cold character, a hard man, a thin argument, the inner person. A person is physically no colder than another person, for we are all approximately 36°. The coldness is a kind of image, a withdrawn and ungiving personality who issues little air of kindness (or warmth, to maintain the metaphor; but even the word 'air' in the phrase is metaphoric). Similarly, the hard man and so on; but I do not need to define metaphor, as it is well understood. A physical thing is a vehicle for a transport, making the vessel (pardon the inevitable metaphors) a bit transcendent, enigmatic and mysterious. Metaphor entails a certain elasticity of meaning, for the meaning always goes beyond the physical origin of the concept; and to understand the metaphoric involves a readiness to read beyond language.[74] Hence, perhaps, the presence of ambiguity wherever the poetic is identified. For that reason, I am not sure that we need to go so far as allegory. Allegory may indeed be less ambiguous; it might consist in simple symbolism (whereas for the poetic, we want resonance unhemmed by an equation).

73 Metaphor is impeccably ancient and recognized as an aesthetic entity in high pictorial periods. Giuseppe Conte, *La metafora barocca: Saggio sulle poetiche del seicento*. Milan: U. Mursia, 1972.

74 'The metaphor is language reaching beyond its insular self for knowledge; we might think of it as thought escaping the thinker.' Kevin Brophy, 'Writing PhDs: Integrational Linguistics and a New Poetics for the PhD, *TEXT*, vol. 11, no 1, 2007. Brophy's spirited defence of the poetic in academic contexts is timely, though I feel that his analysis of metaphor is more about similes rather than the transfer of the physical to the psychological, a process which is inherent in the formation of all abstract nouns, hence language itself.

Third, the poetic necessarily entails imagination, first on the part of the creator and second the reciprocal reception in the spectator or reader.[75] Metaphors abound but not all of them are very poetic. So often, they are nothing but clichés, hence of course not poetic, not felt afresh in the imagination of the artist or the viewer. Some claim for originality is possibly inherent in the poetic; but not everything original is poetic. Some innovations are prosaic. The imaginative element is first and foremost recognized through plumbing the original quality of experience. You can see the metaphoric potential in the image and it is not just fixed as an object or a space or a narration. Upon seeing, we extrapolate, evoke, enlarge, find hidden content, make connexions. And often the results are paradoxical, which is also a lynch-pin of the poetic.[76]

Fourth, the poetic is cross-discursive. An artwork or utterance cannot really be poetic if it cleaves solely to one discourse. It may not be boring: it may be flashy, well-written or well-painted and argumentatively engaging but it will not yet rise to the poetic unless it can cross from one set of ideas (or language) to another. A discourse I am defining as an identifiable theme or topic with intellectual conventions and assumptions attached. To some extent, all discourses are set up to be deconstructed, for they are ways of talking about topics that predispose you to a way of conceiving; and the potential to enlarge the perspective with conflicting emphases becomes conspicuous especially when times move on. The poetic always resists the confinement to a single discourse, not because it is philosophically superior or presupposes greater intellectual autonomy or perspicacity but because it is possessed of a maverick wandering spirit that wants to see connexions beyond the discourse.

To me, in looking at the works of poets and artists, it is natural to play with the terms of the discourse, not to respect entirely the purity or integrity of a given discourse but to seek the vitality of straddling them. It is normal while holding to the physical to engage the psychological. While expressing the psychological, however, we extend to the social. And while speaking of the social—as in class or gender or ethnicity—we return to sensory freedom, phenomenology, sexual or sensual experiment, as a cipher of the great parental paradigms of authority which are so far beyond our comprehension. While evoking history we touch on the contemporary. And above all, while embodying content we speak of the medium.

THE POETIC ALWAYS RESISTS THE CONFINEMENT TO A SINGLE DISCOURSE, NOT BECAUSE IT IS PHILOSOPHICALLY SUPERIOR OR PRESUPPOSES GREATER INTELLECTUAL AUTONOMY OR PERSPICACITY BUT BECAUSE IT IS POSSESSED OF A MAVERICK WANDERING SPIRIT THAT WANTS TO SEE CONNEXIONS BEYOND THE DISCOURSE.

On this last point, let me add a fifth salient feature of the poetic, which I would like to call medium consciousness. I mean by that the idea of being thoroughly conscious of the medium while working ideas within it. The character of any given communication is never pure or untainted by the character of the medium which is its vehicle, natural or otherwise. The nature of the medium and the force of the content are highly interactive, mutually influencing, potentially symbiotic or explosive.[77] There is great potential for mutual enhancement, and for symmetrical reflection. I think that a poem is seldom very poetic if it does not say something about language or metre or versification; and so with paintings and photographs and so on: they all tend to be self-reflexive at the upper poetic end, for the handling of the medium is tweaked to such a degree that its harmony with the content yields some *tertium quid*, some *je ne sais*

75 Jean Burgos, *Pour une poétique de l'imaginaire*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982.

76 Especially in certain sensibilities, such as Shakespeare's and Baudelaire's, which so much identified the contemporary world through its paradoxes. See Dominique Rincé, *Baudelaire et la modernité poétique*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1984; Barbara Johnson, *Défigurations du langage poétique: la seconde révolution baudelairienne*, Paris: Flammarion, 1979.

77 André Spire, *Plaisir poétique et plaisir musculaire: essai sur l'evolution des techniques poétiques*, Mayenne: Librairie José Corti, 1986.

quoi, which is the pregnant synthesis of ideas and their communicative vessel. In this rather sublime condition, saying something about the medium does not deflect attention from the message but magically adds intensity and even adds to the integrity of the statement.

To some extent, this is another way of expressing something which classical aesthetics has always argued for, namely a congruence of form and content. In visual analysis in a good art history program or 'prac crit' in literature, you would always look for a magical link between form and iconography. The one tells the other how to be; they are so informed by one another that a peculiar harmony results which had never been thought of before, which is clearly very gratifying to create and behold.

It follows that when content is detached from the medium, the work is unpoetic. In all classical aesthetic discourse, an appropriateness of the medium for the material was deemed essential; and I think that this is prudent enough. I also think that 'genre' is an issue. It may be that some genres are not so well able to express certain discourses. For example, political content is not readily advanced by musical genres. There may be exceptions but generally the genius of music (in the sense of essential character) is about abstract arguments of sound, whence the particular keen circumstances of politics do not quite belong. Similarly, narrative genres are perhaps not ideal for the iconic and *vice versa*, in much the way that Lessing announced that painting is very good at describing how someone looks and literature is miserable at this task, whereas literature is well suited to explaining action and motives in just the way that painting cannot manage except with the greatest awkwardness and self-consciousness.

But of course you can break the mould: you might find a new unforeseen dimension in a given medium which has long been considered inhospitable to your discourse; and hence you could hatch a whole new poetic vein by making the previously intractable genre live a new life.[78] That could in fact be the king-hit of your whole studio career; but I myself would not depend on it for the next painting that I want to do. Mostly, we find the poetic in agreement with the consensus that some media are better than others for a given drama or reverie.

To me the greatest aesthetic marvel is that there is a poetic paradox inherent in my own medium, which is painting. I find it endlessly seductive that a brushstroke can signify a dog's tail or a Doric column or a twinkle in a person's cheek. These are paradoxes of signification that somehow invite reverie too, for they are inherently suspended, where meaning is deferred and the medium is somehow slightly autonomous. In painting, I feel free to indulge this reverie in the knowledge that it puts my imagination at full stretch, where the logic comprehends a certain paradox. And so, yes, reverie has a politics,[79] for we are not always free to conduct our minds toward it and the font of imagination has jealous guardians; but still, when you recognize that there is also a poetic legitimacy in where my mind wants to arrive with the brushstroke (your own or someone else's) you can tell that you are imaginatively empowered and growing.

78 Tzvetan Todorov, *Les genres du discours*, Paris: Seuil, 1978.

79 A case can be made that even abstract artists are fundamentally political in this regard: see David Carrier, 'Piet Mondrian and Sean Scully: two political artists' *Art Journal*, vol. 50. no. 1, Spring 1991

CHAPTER 2.6

AUTOBIOGRAPHY BETWEEN EGOTISM, CHATTER AND NECESSITY

In no other discipline would autobiography be academically acceptable. I am thinking that with the entry of art, dance, composition and creative writing into the academy, the core inspirational methods come under scrutiny; and one of these is the personal. Access to the personal is autobiographical. And yet autobiography betrays academic values. Objectivity is impossible; but worse, it is unreproducible. No one can check your sources or your interpretations. You are the unique authority; and there can be no debate. You put yourself in a position of assumed trust.

In most disciplines, this presumption of trust is academically illegitimate. To propose, without evidence, that your parlance is unverifiable but also unassailable, incontrovertible, unfalsifiable, is an offence to dialectical method. And there is something still worse: how do you know its importance? How can someone else deny its value, question its relevance or evaluate its causal agency? To doubt the aptness of documentation of purpose via someone's life-experience is impertinent. So you have to accept what the author dishes up.

It might be inspired or it might be entirely trivial. The unfootnoted personal history is potentially embarrassing and indulgent. I write about me (also as creator, that is, the illustrious type, which is very flattering). The pitfalls cross into all kinds of egotism and big-headedness. There is a risk of bad taste. How do you enjoin the reader to savour these virtues sympathetically? What is the necessary etiquette, without descending into false modesty? It is a history out-of-bounds to historians, though paradoxically, historians of the future may use it as good primary literature.

So where do you draw the line? There is no limit to how much you might do. All of your life is potentially interesting to the reader, vital to the project, the necessary subject for analytical description. Self-analysis also could be revealing, especially for the project in hand. The auto-psychoanalysis may well be naïve but I consider it axiomatic that the deeper causes for production are necessarily biographical.

One of the dangers is that this may descend to mere chatter. Since it is all potentially relevant, there is apparently no logical border at which you can terminate the personal narratives. It may therefore spread with licence amorphously, rhapsodically, incoherently. Fond anecdote, remembrance, Dear Diary, self-love, big-headed recollections of yourself, forgetfulness of the reader: where will it end? There is huge scope for inconsequentiality, very likely at the expense of reader, who may experience a certain indignity in having to absorb unwanted personal information. In short, the autobiographical project risks being documentation for morning coffee, maybe joyful, sorrowful but somehow frivolous, precious and academically specious.

Or it could be too monumental for its critical or academic receptacle. You could be charting the turning point that made you into an artist, a person with these fears, this obsession... It all undoubtedly belongs to the impeccable spirit of investigation; but taken to the n^{th} degree, it can be somewhat intimidating and scary. What if the circumstances are very powerful (and this is not unlikely)? Or dire, as with history of sexual abuse, trauma of all complexions? There are two issues. What justifies and what regulates? What rationale can be brought forward in its defence? What are the academic parallels that helpfully contextualize this 'indulgence'? What codes or protocols may be adduced to keep the reader on-side? And how can you maintain decorum?

Historians take an interest in an epoch for reasons of a dark nature. They involve lost rituals, the fabulous, the marvelous, old patterns of submission, corporal culture, erotic fantasy, chivalry, faith, gorgeous diction. It is not just because something in the archive remains to be discovered.

The justifications are not hard to find. All too many persuasive reasons attend! The most convincing is that the work is occasioned by personal factors. To acknowledge them is the logical extension of relativism; autobiography is the apotheosis of circumstance, a pure phenomenological hymn to the contingencies of your every action in the arts. Moreover, all the most sober academic disciplines have a counterpart. If you deconstruct them, they all reveal personal factors behind the method, because all methodology is about the scholar's interest. The expression of my reasons, as a scholar, for undertaking the research. Deconstruction recommends that we go there. All good method reveals the author's interest in the field. It goes without saying that 'interest' is personal, is created by—and reflects—the author's background or upbringing. It cannot easily be revealed if not through recognition of the author's life and nature. If history were honest, it would always begin with words to the effect that I am narrating this because I am interested in what makes one person prevail over another, I like smut, I enjoy intrigue, I get a thrill from the Gothic...

In the end, it is not so far from a learned fortification of fantasy. Scholarship undeniably has learned conventions; but it has wayward motivation. Historians take an interest in an epoch for reasons of a dark nature. They involve lost rituals, the fabulous, the marvelous, old patterns of submission, corporal culture, erotic fantasy, chivalry, faith, gorgeous diction. It is not just because something in the archive remains to be discovered. Historiography may be advised by such opportunistic empirical paradigms (which we described by the image of running water above, chapter 1.1, always seeking the lowest point) but this does not explain its energy. It is a wish to know; and generations of idealism have imputed to this wish a kind of altruism that puts the investigation onto a very lofty academically unimpeachable plane. But the stories that get told are also somehow gratifying to the narrator; and finally the enterprise is not so removed from our 'indulgence' as artists.

Contemporary theory, with the authority of deconstruction, has been able to dispel the false objectivity that so long have guarded scholarship with an academic merit, bristling with footnotes, radically detached from creative work. The old rhetoric that the background of the author is immaterial is no longer credible. Rather, this is now seen as a denial of authorial ideology, a denial of values embedded in class, ethnicity and family cultures. The air that the discourse comes straight from Olympus—universal and eternal—now seems like an arrogant aristocratic presumption. In all disciplines, it is better to acknowledge the personal basis of the investigation.

So how acceptable has it become through this revisionism? If warranted in theory, autobiography can nevertheless be embarrassing in practice. So what informs or instructs autobiography toward good taste? What brings balance, reciprocation from the reader and integrity with other aspects of the investigation which might indeed be called objective? Autobiography is unlikely to be the only part of the writing, nor even the prime focus; for our first purpose in writing is to talk about art (or music or dance or writing). So you also have other stories and analyses. These are linked, mutually

necessary, mutually reinforcing, enmeshed toward the integrity of the work.

The mix is integral to curiosity. We approach autobiography in relation to the thematic content investigated throughout. Hence it is never gratuitous but 'indicated'. Also, it cannot easily become pompous, as if the stories lie to hand and an artificial pretext has conveniently been found to volley forth. But nor should humility be overemphatic, else an air of inverted overstatement arises, the false modesty suggested above. Drawing attention to yourself by any form of apology may be experienced as narcissistic—set up for gratifying self-reflection—and is problematic.

There is undoubtedly no infallible autobiography but if there is a convenient principle it is economy. Words should not seem wasted for aggrandizement. They have to be built in the spirit of explanation. The reason for the text is neither to promote yourself nor to show off but to render transparently what may have happened. It serves curiosity, which is equally the curiosity of the writer. It needs to communicate a degree of discovery for the narrator, an almost salutary realization in which things of the present are connected to those in the past, the sense of where this will take me, where it links with the other information presented. This is as close as we get to a guarantee of good etiquette.

CHAPTER 2.7

IMAGINATION
KNOWING HOW TO WONDER

There is no need to emphasize that imagination is central to everything that we do or want to do. It is clearly central to the creative work, else the art will be exhausted, boring, mediocre, quaint, full of truisms or clichés or platitudes. Imagination is the invigorating principle of new work. But we equally need to see imagination as central to any contextual writing that expands the project. What rises to the frisson of the moment? And more, the expression also wants to recognize the imaginative content of others. It gets richer. We want to make these circumstances resonant and evocative.

Imagination is the faculty of seeing links or ideas. Which means ideas in the broader sense of a sensory idea as well as abstract thought. It belongs to the very word imagination that an image is installed in its name; and this is no coincidence. There are analogies in Greek with fantasy (as we have already noted the visuality of the root φαινω) and in Greek, a form (ιδεια) is quintessentially seen, from the verb for seeing (ιδειν). So you could argue that the concept of a visual idea has impeccable roots; though these assurances do nothing to produce more visual or sonic ideas or better ones. Of this we know little. They are uniquely generated by mental confidence plus some agility to try out matching thoughts. But not accidentally, rather highly driven, sometimes structured, a dreaming which is mysteriously goal oriented.

For anyone evaluating art, imagination is sought as a key aesthetic criterion. It is critical, though not complete. Imagination might not always run along satisfying formalist lines or yield beauty that gratifies the senses. Art is evaluated by how inventive it is and, when detected, it tends to vouch for any inadequacies or obscurities in form or content. It is hard to place in a critical context, no matter how important it is; and normally other things get discussed. Also, there is something dire and fatalistic about imagination as a discourse. While most artists are inventive or imaginative, you cannot decide to become more so. It is therefore identified with native genius, which is possibly one of the least helpful constructs in the studio.

Let us suppose the creative work is imaginative, which is not an unreasonable assumption. What to say about it which might extend the thoughts productively, perhaps enhancing the germ of imagination for a future production? Alas, writing can typecast the creative work, even discredit it. For example, if the content were referred to native genius, the discussion will slip easily into the uncritical. Or the calibre of the writing itself could compromise the artistic encounter, could be dull, prosaic, plodding, tedious, obvious and mediocre. The writing induces same on the creative. It would certainly be good if the writing, while remaining tolerably academic, could rise to the creative. Or vice versa! It does sometimes happen that an ill-conceived creative project is bundled up in the most eloquent and learned exegesis. But of this, more follows in the final section of this book.

In my mind, there are two ways of characterizing imagination. First, originality and second enchantment. Of the two, originality is the only one capable of empirical proof. If you can attest to the fact no one has been here, no one before has come up with the ideas, sonorities, images and

sequences in your work, you have a kind of indisputable claim on originality. But then the empirical proof that imaginative activity has occurred is set out in defensive or paranoiac terms. It is a somewhat uninspiring epistemological approach, where the knowledge of a historical advancement (your own) is demonstrated by charting the achievements of everyone else and then jealously identifying 'the next step' that you took and which no one has either dared to take or consider possible. It seems to me somewhat impious and horrible to force creative people into these boastful declarations of historical pre-eminence. It is the kind of jealousy that we do not need, a reactive negative jealousy (concerned with what other people have done more than what we have done) rather than the proactive positive jealousy, covetously concerned with gaining the next idea, which is of course what we want to cultivate.

This is why I would rather invoke the idea of enchantment. Enchantment as a consequence of imaginative agency is the preferable peg upon which to depend for proof; but of course it is supremely subjective. The rhapsody of being drawn along by connexions is a much stronger proof of imaginative engagement than some painstaking demonstration of novelty. The problem with showing the novelty by dint of comprehensive and pedantic coverage of everyone else's novelties is that the particular novelty which is claimed may have little sustain, little grip on your own imagination. It may be laudably intentioned and the proofs may all avail as to its impeccable timing; but none of this really assures us that the contribution was imaginatively engaging. If something is imaginative, it has a power, a magic, an ability to hold the mind and cause our own mind to behave imaginatively. This aesthetic appeal of seductive mental skipping I think of as a kind of enchantment. You know that a great acrobatic turn has happened in someone's mind because this same turn is induced upon your own mind. As opposed to the epistemological rigour and proofs, I think of this as an ontological approach.

The rhapsody of being drawn along by connexions is a much stronger proof of imaginative engagement than some painstaking demonstration of novelty.

There are many areas of imagination in the creative arts. The contributions arise through seeing and thinking to record sights untouched by other representations (and also therefore their emotionality). Or it could be iconographic, involving a recognition of themes in otherwise stereotyped audio-visual resources. It could consist of combining images (or sounds or concepts) to form some yet-unthought-of compatibility. Or it could be a certain gestural perspicacity clinched at the moment of greatest immanence. It could lie in the use of materials or spaces clinching the potential of form or content (again, emotionality). And finally, it could involve picturing the normal but with innuendo through titles, ironic suggestions that cause an audience to frame old stock in new ways, somewhat as a curator ir essayist might do.

The areas of imagination in writing are similar. Here too, the reader seeks originality, new themes, new insights, new classifications, new structures, new words. The combination of ideas—with the peculiar flow that makes for good writing—that accords complementary power, a zing in which two concepts receive mutual reinforcement by their uncanny contiguity. The stitching together of motifs, as of narrative, that creates suspense or intrigue is another zone, perhaps most conspicuous in the playwright's art. It all presupposes a recognition that writing has imagery. The use of metaphor, colour, inflected understanding of terms, emotionality again: these are all signs of imaginative writing which are very appealing when yoked to a sympathetic argument. Indeed, it may also consist in the invocation of (clashing) discourses.

Artists and creative writers are the only people who have a licence for playing with the truth. From fiction to satire, they manage a curious balance between extrapolation, falsehood and truth. You can play, though the game has rules. In poetry it is always hard to achieve credibility when straying from the truth or downright wrong. If something is wrong—and you know it—you are unmoved, as a reader, by the text: it does not transport you. But fortunately truth is plural, has internal antagonisms

and slippages within it. Your personal reading of 'universal' truths can be funny, subversive, marvellously dislocating. And it usually follows that the uproarious is imaginative, as with satire.

Imagination is about entertaining the unpredictable. Something goes against expectations to reveal an unseen perspective. People normally are interesting when they make sense, can relate, are informed and use information logically; but with imagination, you get all of this minus the predictability. Whatever truths are handled logically, there is a condiment: you do not quite know what they will say or do next. The sense of them thinking of the next thought while leaping from old creates an animation in the logic, because they are connecting things that you might not have considered pairing. This suspense is highly entertaining; it dramatizes thought, activates intelligence beyond the utterance. It stages or enacts, within the fabric of the voice, the labile field of doubts and solutions that allow the thinker to become oriented. If the voice can reveal the volatile organic reciprocal character of reason and emotion, the imagination is transparent.

The movemented energetic writing that makes for imaginative reading is not merely a consequence of style. It is the texture of the thought and the thought itself. The writing itself creates allegories of the sketching pad. This informal dock for drawing is the supreme theatre of imagination: the artist's notebook. You have no idea, some idea, oodles of inchoate ideas, incoherent but driven. They are driven but dreamy: they could go either way—any way—in the absence of pressure. The pad is also an altar: ideas are killed, sacrificed, deleted. When writing is closest to these moments of thrill and horror, it has the greatest chance of retaining and preserving the vivacious character of thought which is instantly recognizable as imaginative.

After all of this, when the editing is complete and the apparatus is organized, the curating, the programming, the negotiation with others and your own insecurities and neuroses, the work may or may not retain evidence of imaginative process. But at least we will have commenced the project with faith in the goal rather than fearing that the philosophical will necessarily cripple the imagination that it seeks to celebrate.

CHAPTER 2.8

CURATORSHIP & STUDIO RESEARCH OPPOSITES OR ONE AND THE SAME THING?

I love the naïve history of curatorship. You used to be a keeper, as in keeper or conservator of Hellenic antiquities at British Museum. This was assumed to be a mighty scholarly calling, with special emphasis on periodization, connoisseurship; the keeper would necessarily be abreast of art-historical or archaeological literature and had to have a very rigorous training in the field, else the displays would not be authoritative. It was considered a job of high objectivity and almost scientific classification, involving a talent for organization, conservation (which is also scientific) and above all a command of taxonomies. This would provide the unassailable basis for the control and display of works.

In my lifetime, this learned labour was suddenly politicized. With John Berger's critical writing on the ideological underpinnings of the western canon, curatorship could no longer be seen as simply good (or bad) science. As curator, you establish the canon, privilege epochs and masters, neglect ethnicities and promote individual talents. It is more than subjective: you create a whole portrait of values, chauvinism, conceits, identification. In this august gathering of trophies, symbols of old values—perhaps suspected of being reactionary—are brought out for a purpose that is not entirely self-evident or transparent or naturalized. It is a manifestation of somebody's prowess, and it can instead be the subject of severe critical scrutiny.

Like most cultural activities, curatorship is in perpetual need of deconstruction. The humanist basis of western culture, at least, can be deemed to be aristocratic, vaunting the education and tastes of a privileged class and neglecting the stories of the people who were always oppressed, downtrodden, shamed and despised. So, along with western art history, the organization of the museum or indeed the exhibition is now understood to be ideological. In some cases, it can even be suspected of high snobbery or class, race and gender exclusiveness, disenfranchising people with little grasp of Græco-Roman tradition. These values must be revealed, if not repudiated or reformed in the process, else art and its criteria of selection and emphasis are authoritarian and constantly reproduce themselves as an educational instrumentality.

Curatorship has experienced at least a second wave of scrutiny, perhaps not with so much threat of rebuke and perhaps with a sense that all is not bad. Curating is ideological and interventionist, promulgating values without doubt. But is that always so dreadful? Interpolation by the curator can be creative. Yes, the museum picks winners—and often invidiously selects work from a winning class—but subjectivity, even when privileged, is important. The curator's subjectivity, especially, should not be effaced if we are true to deconstruction. It is a part of things and can be revealed. Besides, if museums purvey ideology, why not good ideology? There is ample opportunity for

social critique. Curatorship is not intrinsically reactionary just because its objects are congealed social privilege: it might be reformist or revolutionary and above all imaginative. It might yield new insights, frameworks and useful interpretation.

With this glamorous new charge, curatorship becomes a kind of artistic practice. It possibly carries more responsibility than we bargained for. We seem to be handing over the palette. The curatorial imagination discovers things artistic, formerly unheralded or unknown. It compares images, regroups objects, formulates new interpretations. Curatorship reinvests objects with ideas (sometimes taking liberties with the original intentions). It takes more than a hand in the artistic meaning of objects; indeed, you could argue that art objects—the pieces created by artists—are the curator's palette. The curator contrives the context, which then acts as an installation in its own right, possibly poignant, highly licenced and even subversive. It is a lot like art.

Curators, like artists, are vision assemblers. And, like a lot of artists from the conceptual tradition, they assemble visions created by other people (in their case, artists). If we can use the word artificial in its correct sense, curating is an artificial labour of hatching, mixing and matching, and so approaches art. They are also not unlike writers on art and music (even critics) who gather bodies of work under unfamiliar rubrics and orchestrate constellations of ideas. Up to a point, they are also performers. Works that may be previously known to the public are suddenly brought forward and animated with untoward or unforgettable inflexions. There is a strong research dimension to all of this, from the archaeological to the critical, usually involving writing and often highly original. Exhibitions have a spiritual rationale, a subjectively felt core: the curatorial proposition.

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From selection to presentation, curating begins with an idea, identifying a theme, sometimes original and inspirational. Curating chooses objects that support a view, that have coherence and artistic resonance. It may not depend on the artistic worth of artworks in the show (though it normally does)—because, to you, they might be ghastly—but they are asserted as important. It excludes matters, possibly of great artistic merit, but deemed to be irrelevant to the theme; and there is normally no pretence at universality, unless inordinately pompous. On the contrary, curating may be idiosyncratic. It extends beyond the artworks to wall text and catalogue essays and influences the public in proactive ways.

It compares with art. As an artist, you decide what is interesting in the world, what captures your imagination or is useful. Most of the world is excluded from your gaze, both in form and content, though you certainly do not think of this as invidious or chauvinistic. You have themes (both the subject matter and the visuality) and pursue them to achieve an impression on public. Also, once you begin a project, your curiosity is delimited by visual and thematic economies, things that you have learned and know. And like a curator, you edit, not just what you perceive but what you create.

Especially now, the borders of curator and artist grow fuzzier, as the artist stocks up on cultural meanings rather than necessarily tubs of orange and crimson. Postmodernity has artists using museum contents, quoting, appropriating, borrowing. Some practices do not make, which has been legitimated already for eighty years with Duchamp's ready-mades. Artistic practice consists of identifying the object (made by you or otherwise) with contestable meaning. If objects are created for the purpose, their formal merit may be immaterial. Similarly, the clout of the work is not simply due to some imputed supremacy of archives but rather to the necessity of discovering relativity of meaning, with poetic or critical insight, amid the stock of material that informs culture.

And then, as an artist, you exhibit. With this, the full curatorial métier comes into play in four

organizational areas: first, the spatial sequence, installation (which involves more selection); second, the auxiliary construction of meaning, as in the catalogue essay (which causes certain information to be privileged); third, the event management, the advertising, mail out, contacts, opening; and finally, the labour of promoting the material to perpetuity, as in literature and acquisitions, which the artist attempts to secure with prolific emails, perhaps—in extra jealous cases—attempting to direct or control the interpretation. As an artist, you have to admit it: you are a bureaucrat, only without help, without an office or a fat-cat's salary.

So in terms of method, what is the difference between artists and curators? Curators, just like artists, have imaginative ideas and put themselves on the line, are vulnerable to critics, have investment in their efforts and vanity with the outcome; they get hurt. The key difference between artists and curators lies in the relationship to the idea: the curator cannot change the objects when the idea changes. It is not such an organic process. Curators only change their selection of objects. The degree of moulding, the organic response to process, is less immediate and more cybernetic. Curators cannot suddenly and spontaneously opt to do 'another one like that one', only altered this time, revealing progress of the idea.

There is also a structural difference in the degree and type of responsibility. Curators cannot afford to be irresponsible. They have a job to do and a director or board to answer to. Artists can enjoy autonomy; they owe less to the public than to the progress of their practice. The audacity of obsession exercised through control of a medium—which is an essential element of artistic concentration, not just Romantic myth—has no counterpart in the curatorium, no matter how obsessively curators go about their inspired projects. The ratbag devotion to a motif or idea unauthorized by the canon or exemplars is a thing of artists. When a curator takes up the work and matches it with other pieces, it is already established by artist: there is a licence for transgression afforded by the art itself, created by artists.

Artists above all have responsibility for immanence. Taking their cue from music composers, all artists make the notes, the next ones that hang with the current ones, as in a melody. Artists make the inalienable connexions, not absolute but not wholly relative either. Artists make the miniature truths (the fact of the sequence or the brushstrokes) even if banal or wanton here or there. Artists and curators share ideas but only artists work on the next breath that inheres in the last exhaling.

They can be we and the contrast should not be exaggerated. There are two roles but no apartheid. Curators become artists and artists can become curators. The one can be the other at different times and maybe even at the same time. Sometimes artists achieve the final audacity: they curate themselves into their own show, a bit shameless but certainly nothing like as bad as a critic reviewing himself or herself as an artist. All in all, the spiritual or vocational segregation would be misguided. There are strong partnerships to develop between artists and curators: they belong together in the joint production of meaning. The position of curators relative to artists of all kinds is analogous to that of writers: they can be we. Artists write. Indeed, curators are usually writers too, occasionally good ones, and hang pictures with words (with or without the evidence on the walls). But this relationship is the topic for a further discussion in the final section, when we turn to the role of art history and criticism.

CHAPTER THREE

CRITICAL INVESTIGATIVE PARAMETERS

CHAPTER 3.1

I KNOW SHE'S THE BEST
RESEARCH AS CHOICE OF INFORMATION AND WILLFUL INTERPRETATION

Some insecurity in theorizing research in art prompts the perverse example of Madeline, the charming protagonist of the eponymous TV episodes, based on the children's books by Ludwig Bemelmans. The young Parisian heroine of the program has a dog, Genevieve, who is shared by the other eleven girls in the loving custody of Miss Clavel. In a sweet little song, Madeline professes her belief that Genevieve is the best dog. 'I know she's the best', she chants.

According to the song, therefore, Madeline *knows* that Genevieve is the best. Among the great superabundance of dogs—mostly unknown to her—an evaluation is made: her dog, Genevieve, is superior to all of them. This form of knowledge is based on affection. It is unscientific but compelling. The claim is unsustainable if you consider truth to be universal and dogs to be comparable. With a less charitable word, you could call Madeline's knowledge a form of prejudice. She has applied no test and has no basis for comparison. But if you consider truth to be personal (and therefore limit the field to 'what is best for me'), the claim springs into credibility.

There is a kind of truth which is not very true for one person but alarmingly absolute for another, and with reason: it is called love. It is the subject of jealousy. All love is like that. A dog owner who does not consider his or her pooch to be the best is emotionally derelict. It is like a parent who would accept that another child is as gorgeous and intelligent as his or her own. This is Platonically so; but psychologically it is unacceptable. Acknowledging that offensive truth would signal a parent who is deficient in love. And a lover who considers that lots of other people are equally lovable as his or her lover is clearly no lover at all but a kind of rat. In love, such open-mindedness is detestable. The psyche has missed its calling. It should commit to exclusiveness by automatic affection; but instead it goes for a loathsome maintenance of options, thus negating the very energy which is love.

Our minds are not cast in science, rightly or wrongly, but have emotional parameters which limit the discourse to the room. Our affections are conditioned by the vicinity and the very word remoteness has emotional connotations of the irrelevant. As with Plato's cave, you only know passionately what is within the room. Knowledge belongs to an economy; and that means that it is conditioned by interest. What lies beyond the room—because you are indeed aware that there is a beyond—is not entirely relevant. The world beyond is the foil; it is the great unwashed against whom you measure your exclusive affection. The world outside is relevant but not in the same way that it would be if we were seeking a video camera at the lowest price, for which all suppliers line up in equal stature and win your custom with the cheapest item.

Affection is inherently insular. It cannot be globalized. To speak in a way other than Madeline's way is to lack the necessary convictions of a passionate soul. It is to default on the essential jealousy that defines any passion, much less a creative one. To lack this jealousy is to be derelict as a pet-owner, a lover or an artist. I am wondering how this relates to the kind of knowledge sought in our fair western institutions which are designed to eliminate such jealousy.

It is not the occasion—and I am not the person—to denounce the principles of science. Just because we love truths that belong to ourselves alone it does not mean that we cannot negotiate with those which are universal or held to be so by good method. And scientific method is undoubtedly good. It needs no apology, as you can tell from the example of bad science. We know and hate bad science. It is the flawed imputation of cause. It only occasionally comes to consciousness. You may have had an experience along the following lines, where you become aware of bad science. You look at pot of old curry in the fridge. You decide that the rice is a bit iffy and give to the dog. Later that day, you get a very bad tummy. It cannot be the fault of the rice, because it was all thrown out; but you realize that you would have blamed the rice if you had eaten it. The rice had all fingers pointing to it, plus your own guilt for taking an imprudent risk. As the rice can now be eliminated, the culprit must have been something else. But the inclination to have jumped to a conclusion is very strong. Your reason for accusing the rice (if you had eaten it) is primarily because you need to have something to blame and circumstantial evidence made the rice the likely suspect. This is bad science.

Good science begins with recognition of a prime fact: I do not know. For a true scientist, the investigation begins from modesty, the presumption of ignorance on the part of the investigator. Umpteen possibilities for an explanation (or none) may present in the imagination. The scientist remains unprejudiced till each imaginable possibility is tested equally. It is perhaps too hard to be totally comprehensive and scientists avail themselves of a large amount of brainy deduction from axioms and economical knowledge management. But the principle of science is that no matter how many ideas are tested, the scientist eliminates all affection for his or her favourite guess. It is a methodology of disinterest, based on objective experiment or at least observation. When experiments are conducted and hypotheses established on the basis of them, the results must be reproducible.

In all of this, the parallel with art hard to see. An artistic project is driven by desires. As with Madeline, an absence of interest seems to disappoint the art passion and may even somehow disqualify the aesthetic calibre, for want of the magical air of commitment. In art, it is all pet theories. It is all: 'it was the peas'. Establishing what works in a painting or video is conjecture, at best; and throughout the creation of the work, the knowledge is substantially based on hope. It is built on fondness and ends there, no matter how altruistic and Olympian and no matter how rigorously valorized once the work is launched. Beliefs on the causes of success are guided by what will mesh with your abilities and opportunities, a great juggling of contingencies. You always do the best in the circumstance but it is often chaotic. Objectivity, if you can recognize it at all, is not easily secured.

Who or what mediates? Against the natural bias, can objectivity remain an aspiration? In science, all inquiries aspire to the same standard of proof. Are there shared criteria in art, music, literature and dance? Not likely! Nor is the presence of a critic external to the project necessarily the issue. This person, if trusted with great aesthetic wisdom, may or may not add any objectivity; in all likelihood, he or she simply adds more subjectivity. Reception is not necessarily the issue. I am personally unclear about the role of a review written by a critic (as I am an art critic and know how much reviews are conditioned by the author's caprice). Assuming that the critic would provide a measure of dispassionate distance is dangerous and indicates a mechanistic view of reviewing.

We have no counterpart to experimental method, with its reliable themes of reproducibility and falsifiability; but we do function empirically, up to point. We test by making, exhibiting and moving on. Making new work again is a kind of platform for mediation. With the new work, you either feel

dissatisfied within yourself or reinforced; a critical process, with a degree of distance and candour, takes place.

And so the prospect of 'the next idea' acquires a methodological status that goes beyond mere impatience or eagerness or ambition or imaginative mobility. The next idea is both tyrannical and redemptive. It displaces the old idea, rightly or wrongly, and assumes urgency and gathers enthusiasm. It is a process that signals revaluation, even if the old idea is still respected. The old ideas might be considered good but also in some way unsustainable. With the next idea, you have achieved a certain distance from the old ideas and are ready to move on.

For some, there is a kind of melancholy in this reflection. The previous body of work may seem better than anything further that might be forthcoming. The creative project folds inward upon regrets. But this pessimism, while not unusual, is the normal kind of self-discouragement that artists overcome in their celebrated agonies. And those agonies, as painful as they may be, go some of the way toward the mediation that we are seeking, especially if they occur in a reflective framework.

Though we reflect on change, sober objectivity is not achieved by vacillation. A high frequency of redirection is not necessarily helpful. Change in itself is not mediation. Redirection may be compulsive and scatty. There may be no sign of a sober appeal to shared criteria. The changeable nature of an artist's projects may proceed from a restless temperament. It may be evasive, a feature of unstable practice. Instead, the motive to remain with an idea—to see it to some kind of end which is not yet reached—may be more prudent, as the major step can often only be achieved by obdurate persistence and at least unconscious scorn for criticism. In this context of a fixed focus, it may be more artistic and heroic to resist the temptation of other inventions and decamp to other opportunities.

To enter discourse—even with yourself—inaugurates the process of making leavening our artistic judgements with something relative and referenced. The relevant judgements do not cease to be personal but nevertheless enter the dialectical sphere, becoming challengeable and falsifiable.

Rather, if you see the poles of change and reflection forming an axis for the direction of the project, mediation is in the record. Change rises to reflection when it is conducted reflectively. It is still not necessarily a wise move. But when recorded—even discussed among fellow travellers—it becomes available to review, to debate and alternative readings. It approaches the ideal of 'critical objectivity', even if that is an oxymoron.

This explains a great deal of the charm of the discursive. It is not a matter of fashion or the pre-eminence of spoken language over musical or visual or haptic language. To enter discourse—even with yourself—inaugurates the process of leavening our artistic judgements with something relative and referenced. The relevant judgements do not cease to be personal but nevertheless enter the dialectical sphere, becoming challengeable and falsifiable. A higher level of consciousness is achieved. Possibilities of advancing the work are enhanced.

And so mediation involves saving the personal. It is natural to seek objectivity outside yourself; and all input from outside is potentially useful. However, it is illusory to imagine that it yields objectivity. If nine out of ten people like your melody, this impressive statistical approbation in fact validates your music no more strongly than if five or two out of ten enjoy it. That is why we are artists; because we stubbornly resist the nine out of ten—if need be—rather than allow ourselves to be pushed into conformity with their alien taste. We might be hardy enough to normalize the disapproval of ten out of ten. To make any credible impact on our estimation, we would always have to know who these ten people are. What kind of scrutineers are they to be judging the score? Where are they coming from? And when you have analysed their points of view, you realize that they do not contribute objectivity in any number. They are either collectively self-negating or complacent or grumpy or statistically scattered to make any sense of.

It belongs to the foibles of human nature, however, to consider any admiration as somewhat persuasive; and so while we have a propensity to dismiss the *vox populi* as statistically insignificant when negative, the same source is gratifying, artistically perspicacious and psychologically affirmative when its judgements reinforce our own. But for all the errors of delusion and conceit, it is still far better to seek the necessary mediation through the personal than the outside, else our arts would be ruled by thousands of impromptu *de facto* committees, over-socialized and subject to endless pedantry.

As creative artists, we need to be able to eyeball our projects with a degree of fearlessness for error as well as bullish conviction in a vision or the preparedness to seize one; and, paradoxically, up to a point this also means being fearless of receiving—or ignoring—other people's judgements. In the end, there is a form of integrity which is best known to the artist: does this direction accord with what I want to do, who I am, and what I am capable of thinking, feeling and giving out?

Also, the personal is by no means our problem alone. Other disciplines, as noted, are also guided by willful interests, especially in the humanities. You need an obsession to be a historian. The prime motives—supposedly discovered through methodology—are always a dark horse, camped inscrutably outside the mighty fortress of scholarship. You can accept that the scholarly community will have its say and pretend to set all the benchmarks and, up to a point, you have to submit in order to get your work published; but there is also a point at which the scholar must ignore the discouragement of the editorial panel and continue to build up the case which is deemed so unfashionable. One day, we trust, the doomed historical or anthropological perspectives will be published and redeemed; but only by the scholar retaining faith against the prevailing scholarly judgements. To be doomed in the short-term is sustainable if there is integrity in the future vision.

In all fields, the means guide the ends. In the humanities, research has always been based on the avenues that are convenient to follow. If you know the avenue, you use it. I read Italian: much of my subject matter and documents will be in Italian. The project is structured around the exercise of my talent, not necessarily the integrity of a research question. In the scholarly text, you never confess this and such candour is never called for by methodological convention.

Historians seek historical truth; and truth is not hard to find in history. For example, there are dates, documents, monuments and public records. History is full of facts, even though they are apprehended through layers of interpretation. The methodological questions relate to selection and interpretation. Why are you interested in this topic? What do you want to do with it? Which truths will you thus be neglecting? These questions can be picked up and challenged by a panel of peers or professors; but ultimately, it is for the scholar to decide: how does this area relate to me as a person? This is a form of knowing which a scholar neglects to his or her peril.

CHAPTER 3.2

THE ISSUE OF AN APPROPRIATE BIBLIOGRAPHY SEARCH AND RESEARCH

Research in some other disciplines is 'search' oriented. The key to research in this area is finding out by doing. However, the bibliographic sophistication of the researcher is still extremely important, not just for the possibly inspirational gleaning of other artists' practices but to establish the extent to which the work of the student is original. This chapter presents some sympathetic ways (and above all the most sympathetic attitude) to gain the appropriate information and use it productively.

Go into the rest of the community and ask what is meant by research. Most people do not understand the concept of generating new ideas, new facts, new forms, modes or formats, new processes or new expressions of subculture or spirit. Most people consider that research means finding things out in the library, the internet, the Bureau of Statistics or a survey company. The vulgar view of research means looking things up.

The pre-eminence of libraries—real or virtual—in the way research is commonly understood is not confined to the *hoi polloi*; the motif of archives of knowledge is also extremely central to the way that universities respect the body of established fact or learned opinion. The design of most university campuses gives this crucial status of the library a centralized physical expression: the library is normally located in the middle of the complex, a focal point upon which the several disciplines converge.

In many disciplines, a subject labelled 'Research methods' is not a particularly philosophical affair. It depends on the slant of the lecturers. Some will conduct Honours, Masters or PhD research methods seminars without mentioning the philosophical basis for the key decisions of any researcher's inquiry. They limit themselves to outlining the mechanical steps that need to be taken to survey the literature. If you want to know the status of research into terpenes, say, you will need to survey *Chemical Abstracts*. It would also be a good idea to check all the references provided by the leading journal articles that you encounter as a result of this search. A whole semester can be spent on this kind of process. And of course, all scrupulosity is necessary. It is pointless developing a thesis on terpenes (and doing all the necessary experiments to prove the thesis) when Bloggs has already done this work long since.

Disciplines closer to ours have a similar reliance on gathering information. Art history, for example, cannot develop very logically unless each researcher has read almost everything in the field. A new and substantial contribution to the Poussin literature will almost certainly demand a comprehensive awareness of what has been written on Poussin up to this point, including all the material in foreign languages. Indeed, so fundamental is this assumption to the humanities disciplines that the research

skills of source and information-gathering are usually an integral part of undergraduate studies before the honours year. More senior levels assume that students already have such skills. A senior methods forum is therefore free to examine the less technical and more philosophical issues of research. The higher-degree enrolment always has a rich complement of natural sleuth-hounds. It wants to make them 'real' researchers, that is, people who can offer a critique of the investigation, its aims and assumptions.

In the practicing arts, the research skills may or may not be well cultivated by Masters or PhD level. We all hope so; but then students often have a certain brilliance in their studio work which compensates for their bibliographic shortcomings. Furthermore, the emphasis on 'research' in the creative arts relates to the creative act rather than 'searching'; hence the bibliographic dimension of research is sometimes structurally neglected. It therefore behoves us to devote some time to presenting and reflecting on some of the more obvious processes. Also, what may seem obvious to some may be less so to others; in all events, each practical step that we will take presupposes a host of philosophical assumptions, so that the practical leads to the theoretical regardless. Every philosopher will assure you that this is inevitable.

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From the outset, your fact-finding research will be governed by the way that you define your field. To use any index or data-base or search engine effectively, you have to work out the key-words or themes which are germane to your sensory work. For example, suppose you are a landscape painter. Landscape is a good word. Your searches will certainly yield some general texts. But there will be numerous landscape painters world-wide whose work will not be revealed through that channel. You will want to try other related words, perhaps 'realist painting'; or you could broaden your search to include 'genres'. In all probability, large indexes will not yield as much as the technique of systematic browsing. This involves what we have already described in Chemistry, namely checking out the references provided by whatever books and articles you have encountered so far. Many have extensive footnotes and bibliographies. The only disadvantage of this method, of course, is that it only yields titles anterior to the publication citing them.

In asking how you have gone about gathering information on your themes, you will probably already experience a degree of soul-searching. What, actually, are your themes? The theme of landscape, for example, may not really reveal your true interest, which may lie in directions such as surveying, ecology, green politics, the critique of anthropocentrism, agribusiness, branding, the critique of perspectival optics, phenomenology, atmosphere, formalism, symbolism, romantic mother-earth imagery, the critique of nature, land-rights, the sociology of travel, the artistic cult phenomenon of setting up and being subject to the elements and so on. In other words, you have to define your interests, at least to yourself. It may be that in looking up some of these areas you find the theme powerfully moving and inspiring; alternatively, you may find it boring and a waste of time.

The question of whether or not your search is world-wide (including material written in foreign languages) may be vexing. There are several stages of inaccessibility of sensory and written material. One is that all your sources do not reveal material in languages other than English; hence you will never even know of their existence. Another is that you may know of the text but not be able to get hold of it. This happens with small catalogues which have all been sold out, or enjoyed tiny distribution and cannot even be sourced in international libraries. And finally, you may be able to get hold of the material but it is written in a language that you do not read. This may not be a problem if the material is substantially visual or musical. But if it is textual, you have a problem. Translation services are very expensive and you will not know if the expense is justified if you still cannot

accurately gauge the scope of the text. It is probably a good idea to get a copy anyway; for a friend may just read it for you and give you an inkling as to whether or not it should be pursued. In the extreme case of the work being absolutely central to study in the area, a supervisor in the humanities may even recommend that you learn the foreign language. This happens frequently in all kinds of history and cultural studies. Scholars in that area are expected to go to any lengths to become masters of their field. And they do go to great lengths.

There are always going to be practical constraints which guide oour searches. It is fair to say that practical constraints will also in some way prejudice your research. Up to a point, you can rationalize this limitation. You could almost believe that your ignorance of a certain body of literature is the logical consequence of your own enthusiasms for the area that you have your heart set on. The legitimacy of this attitude is debatable and the debate is worth taking seriously.

In general... it is a good idea at least to attempt a diagrammatic rendering of the themes and ideas that arise as you seek information and prepare to dispose it toward the creative process. This will help you establish how systematic you are in following a hierarchy of categories in your search.

Some scholars have a fondness for mapping out their research in diagrams; others, on the other hand, proceed in an intuitive and even disorderly way. There is no necessary correlation between these approaches and neat versus messy theses. Both approaches may result in clear-headed and imaginative research. In general, however, it is a good idea at least to attempt a diagrammatic rendering of the themes and ideas that arise as you seek information and prepare to dispose it toward the creative process. This will help you establish how systematic you are in following a hierarchy of categories in your search. You can immediately see how carefully you have proceeded from successive stages of specificity to generality. The theme of landscape suggested earlier is a good example. The word landscape is actually quite specific, for it relates more or less only to art. The other areas are much broader. But they then feed back into the artistic realm. It is very useful to be able to trace the dynamics of these themes in your own mind as you entertain the ideas for creative ends.

Scholars in the humanities speak of two kinds of literature: the primary literature and the secondary literature. Primary literature means original works such as Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. Secondary literature means the texts written ever since, but especially recently, which critically discuss Shakespeare's play (or whatever other work). What is an appropriate balance between these huge categories.

Bibliographic searching is one thing: reading for research is quite another. The bibliographic searching reveals all the reading that you might do. But once it has yielded a host of titles, you have to make decisions about what you want to read. You cannot read everything. Any theme, such as homosexuality or suicide, is celebrated by more books than you can read. No one has read them all. There is no such thing as comprehensiveness in this region. You fall back upon your preferences and therefore always need to examine the soundness of their basis. This is part of what we mean by research methodology.

Since we mentioned Shakespeare, you might consider how much of the writing in your thematic area is recent and how much is 'classical'. How much belongs to the secondary literature and how much to the primary literature? It may be that your bias toward one or the other is very telling. In fact, there is sure to be an expression of this bias in your visual work. Artists' studios typically have photographic reproductions of art within them. Artists like to be surrounded by the art which they like or with which they feel a certain kinship. The status of your bibliography is similar. Your reading is inspiring you in certain directions and undoubtedly reveals your cultural affinities and values. It can sometimes be a cause of guilt. A greater interest in the themes and dynamics of classics such as Shakespeare's plays may suggest a vein of aristocratic humanism—as with a Poussin reproduction

pinned up in the studio—because they are based upon values which, to some extent, have been discredited in the critical literature. Be brave about this. Nothing should force you to renounce your artistic enthusiasm. Just because there is a plethora of critical contemporary literature which you have not read, there is no compulsion to put Shakespeare back on the shelf and tear down the Poussin. We are above all concerned with what is functional in an inspiring capacity. Nor will we ever aim at cultural comprehensiveness.

Is there a method, as it were, for solving the problem of the academically proper balance between primary and secondary literature? The only principle is that a devotion to the one should at least countenance the existence of the other. It is actually bad pedagogical method to recommend that the secondary literature be privileged at the expense of the primary literature. This often happens in the humanities. So much seems to be happening in post-Marxist writing on various texts that a young scholar feels pressured to read post-Marxism to the exclusion of the rich underlay of earlier (pre-Marxist) texts. The result is scholars who have an indifferent acquaintance with archaic texts, the very sources which often best reveal the inherited value systems of western culture.

There are analogous agonies in determining what proportion of your material-seeking research is (a) sensory, (b) scholarly and (c) literary or poetic. They are all very different and their respective emphasis is likely to yield a distinct kind of influence on your project. Sometimes a scholar will plunge into one area much more than another and, with no more reflection, some other scholar will do the opposite. The guiding principle behind these preferences ought to be more than personal taste. However, when asking what has guided such preferences, it is important not to discount taste. We want cultural inclusiveness but selection of material is never objective. The expression of your desires is a part of your work; so it is logical that it will also be a part of your preparatory research. You have an identification with an area of cultural production and emphasize it more than another. It would be nice to think that choices in material were governed by a notion of scrupulosity for gathering the facts; but we should not deceive ourselves into believing that these choices appeal to an objective standard.

Nevertheless, there are ways of guiding the choices. The choices of what to read are best referred not so much to a notion of probity but to a notion of functionality. It is a question of what your argument needs. Does it need plenty of visual examples through which to demonstrate a pictorial ancestry of—or contemporary parallels to—the current body of work? Or does it require historical and theoretical underpinning (hence require critical material from the scholarly secondary literature)? Or does your work simply want to thrive on the literature that you love (directing your inspirational reading to poetic or creative writing). These choices are taken because you know from the experience of reading that certain texts yield something practical; in effect, you have empirical evidence that they are useful in prompting your enthusiasm for ideas, emotional states and knowledge.

The functionality of your reading can be difficult to assess. You may not know for some time how useful certain encounters are. Moreover, the pleasure of a text is seductive and it makes you believe that it is extremely useful. But you could be deceived in this impression. It could just be wishful thinking: you are enjoying yourself and so you persuade yourself that your reading is efficacious. This is also a tough issue for your supervisor, if she or he senses that this might be the case. It seems culturally mean to deny that reading in some direction might only have limited value. Nevertheless, our purposes here are not general cultural self-education. We need to feel assured that x is causing y in the gestational process. And it is worth looking into (something that we will talk more about in the next module). It may help you enormously for the creative future.

There is no need to feel draconian pressure over bibliography. The highest principle is that both the search and the reading should be inspirational. Until the searched-for books or articles have been digested with inspirational consequences, the whole process cannot really be called research in the creative arts but a form of snooting around. Similar pressures are felt over the extent to which your

understanding of international practice can be said to be comprehensive. Is it necessary to have a picture of world production in art in order to formulate a new body of work of substantial cultural significance? No it is not. Nor will you ever conduct a search which is exhaustive. The indices are not sufficiently comprehensive. You will create in ignorance. Our field is very unlike science in that much. Every piece of information about analogous practice that you uncover is all to the good. You should conduct the best search that you can with whatever resources lie at your disposal. A time comes, however, when you have to say that you can no longer chase what may never have been done. It is idle and could take the rest of your life. It is better to make headway with your work and put it forward with the status of provisional novelty.

But here is an issue that involves deep questioning. How much novelty are you ever likely to claim? What is research if not finding out new facts? What relation does art have to research as commonly understood in universities? These are some of the knotty questions that we confront in the following chapters. But before this step, there are further scruples to entertain on the matter of books.

CHAPTER 3.3

HOW MANY BOOKS? AGONY OF THE WORD AND THE SENSORY

In the previous chapter, we noted that artists' studios typically have photographic reproductions of art within them. Artists enjoy being surrounded by relevant art with which they feel a kinship. We compared this with the status of a bibliography. But we could go further. The display is, in itself, a form of bibliography. Bibliography consists of image, sound and dance as well as word. Books and journal articles are equally an image bank, not just textual resource. Any citation, visual, sonic or textual, is bibliographic and wants to be treated similarly. Galleries (state, commercial or artist-run) and museums—even internet—are publishers too. So are concert halls, theatres and radio stations and so on. An artist's bibliography tends to be amorphous; and this spread matches the paradox that goes with bibliographic organization in all humanities disciplines.

All bibliographic research is characterized by simultaneous superabundance and dearth. The archives are bursting with material. On all topics but the most esoteric the literature swells beyond your grasp. No one has read it all, seen it all, or even knows of its existence (as when in foreign languages). You make your way by selection, for which the criteria are dubious. Usually, they involve convenience. Paradoxically, your precise theme may be served by few, if any, directly useful texts. But you have to look: no one will believe that there is nothing. So you have to find indirect relevance.

Regarless of our art form, the scholarly parameters include creative visual production (pictures, pots), performances (musical and theatrical), creative literary production (plays, novels, poems, essays), learned books and articles (also internet), popular books and articles, reviews, conferences, forums, debates, chat rooms, and personal communication (interview, letter).

Among these, there are four types of 'reading' that might dictate the patterns of investigation. First, there is the compelling idea of simply following a passion; second, surveying in order to be comprehensive—fat chance—or at least to be impressively versed; third, finding historical or philosophical material that augments the interest, extends the imagination, enriches the work; and finally, building a case defensively, pre-empting attack, working out where the examiner or critic might find fault with the work and forestalling the scrutiny on a potential weakness.

Against these, there are five types of relevance. First, the directly inspiring (as when you are captivated by Dante, say, on whose epic the work may be based). Second, the indirectly inspirational (for example, the motif of sewing or stitching together, which is a marvellous metaphor. Third, encounters in reading that yield historical or critical information (as with technology or musical history) that helps contextualize the production. Fourth, material that supports or yields meaning or valorizes (as with the great interpreters, like Freud or Derrida or Kristeva). And finally, what directly

or implicitly devalues the project, the arsenal of supporters and aggressors who can either valorize or demolish the discourse and your contribution to it. This spread goes from enthusiasm to paranoia, with yourself—you would hope—constituting an intervening phase of method.

If drawn to account for these patterns, it is useful to consider outlining the inspirational debts (in art and 'life'), the general cultural sources of the given enthusiasm, the contextual information gathered on the topic, the discursive environment, the handling of related ideas in topical books and their philosophies, the antagonistic, the antithetical, the sore point, the embarrassment, the cause for being skeptical. In the latter, it is best to take the bull by the horns. The case against you is a powerful resource, effectively a tool for persuasion (already contemplated in chapter 1.4). It is a wonderful empowering moment to discover it, give it a name and define its lineaments. All discourses are somewhat predatory: they discredit as well as reinforce; and it is only natural that there will be many lined up against your own. You want to superintend the interpretation and, as much as good intellectual etiquette allows, control the terms of the discourse. There is a temptation to join the contest; but for mood's sake in a creative enterprise, it is also important not to become defensive or paranoiac but entertain the case against you (which in itself is productive) somewhat sympathetically.

All discourses are somewhat predatory: they discredit as well as reinforce; and it is only natural that there will be many lined up against your own.

One of the great tragedies of the contemporary scene is the disqualification of genres, basically because they do not have a good bibliography. Take landscape as an example. It is not very hip in the contemporary scene. You are more likely to see landscape in a conservative gallery than an experimental space; and it is hard to find throughout the avant garde. A great deal has been written about landscape, sympathetically and skeptically. The case against landscape—bizarre, you might say, that there ever could be one—is only the volume of well-intentioned art-historical interpretations that relate the genre to bourgeois consumption and objectification; without a polemic against landscape as such, various interpretations of this epoch or that see landscape as a form of escapism, tourism, denial of colonization, a paradise in denial of genocide, a form of sampling folded into middle-class holiday-making. There may be no single text which decries landscape in this way; but the ideologically-based discussions of famous landscapes (much less the daubs that we are likely to produce) is ultimately unflattering to the genre.

You might be a landscape painter and never know that there is a kind of hidden energy against your practice in general. The way landscape does not seem to get its due is a mystery to you. You have your inspiration in great masters, perhaps like Corot, with his inimitable silvery light. You are also attracted to the experiments with space of the British painter David Hockney or the tracking of perception in the Australian painter Mary Tonkin. But an annunciation of the technical features that you find and seek will never persuade the curatorial audience that the genre has powerful things to say to the contemporary world which have not already been said by Cézanne.

For this reason among many others, the deeper traditions of the genre warrant a bibliographic place in the studio. Alongside the great canvases from the Renaissance and the Baroque, there is a large body of pastoral poetry, beginning in antiquity, to which the artists often consciously refer. This includes farming (as in Virgil's *Georgics*) and ultimately grows into both agribusiness and environmentalism.[80] The history of the genre from the seventeenth century to contemporary times allows you to impute or suggest patterns. And certainly, folded into this is class discourse, ownership of land, economics, optics in picture-making, romantic or scientific motives. Just as all of these

80 See Mark Dober's doctoral dissertation accompanying a fine body of landscape painting at Monash University, 2005.

fields can be co-opted in discourses unsympathetic to the genre, so they can be enjoined to support the genre. They can equally be used to head off that horror of conservatism, that fear of ideological regression that cripples reception of the genre and ultimately thins out the representatives of the genre to the naïve, who are all too easy to associate with jingoistic patriotism or chocolate box aesthetics.

And so the bibliographic function is crucial. If it is not active, the genre languishes, defenceless, unenergized and lacking in avant-garde recognition or widespread curatorial credibility. Bibliography is a mighty proactive agent for building confidence, to assist inspiration and vision, to enrich the work, to enhance the grasp of artistic and cultural brilliance. It is not simply to enlighten the reader, while extending his or her curiosity; though this alone would be enough to justify it. The task of relating the work to broader cultural enthusiasms and to establish positionality has an importance to the studio that cannot be overestimated. Bibliography is certainly not confined to an exercise of forestalling disapproval or even psychologically to ward off discouragement. It is a proactive and somewhat promotional organ, but promotional only as by-product, else artificial!

Bibliographic research creates some seductive synergies of knowing. We always say that creative research is the making but in a context (easel and archive) which is very juicy. It involves reconnoitring somewhat systematically which, in a paradoxically convoluted way, establishes a reasons for looking or listening. Research in this sense is about activating the background, with its huge potential for proffering direction but probably in concert with creative production. If the bibliographic research is not conceived in these terms, it becomes dictatorial, with the destructive potential of making the sensory work illustrative.

Bibliography is a mighty proactive agent for building confidence, to assist inspiration and vision, to enrich the work, to enhance the grasp of artistic and cultural brilliance. It is not simply to enlighten reader, while extending his or her curiosity; though this alone would be enough to justify it.

Sometimes bibliographic research is experienced by artists as a bit oppressive, usually at the beginning or end of a project, where they fear getting bogged down as they confront a nigh infinite pile of important and ambitious reading. Artistically speaking, bibliography as a discipline oscillates between the neat and the unmanageable. One or two sources may prove essential, the rest peripheral; but which ones? How do you know without finding and reading them? Bibliography does not represent all stages of reading but also involves scanning a field for the sake of rapidly gaining a perspective.

In this sense, it is a bit like vision itself. The peripheral field must be engaged to identify the centre of the field, to make sense of a concentrated interest. But the physiological analogy does not sustain our analysis for long. Research, unlike the reflexes of the eye, is all motivated by prior experience, comfort zones and ease, dark gratification and delirium. It is also highly dependent on the prior identification of a topic, which often puts bibliographic research in a bizarre cycle of fond guesses.

Topic, question and theme: they are relentlessly logocentric and have a skew relationship with the sensory, especially in the subtle fields of art and music, dance and poetry. As will be considered in a chapter dedicated to this conundrum, chapter 3.7, these forms of art may not be essentially question-driven (consider music). Yet to a large extent, bibliography is thematic. It is not always a good match. Doing bibliography, for most souls, already presupposes a focus, a core issue around which searching takes place. If you do not have a literary or moral or psychological theme (*e.g.* abstract painting as visual music) what guides the bibliography?

In the struggle to find the balance between thematic and rhapsodic interests, the prestige of certain larger questions often takes over. Potentially, all studio projects, like historical projects, relate to certain key preoccupations of contemporary thought. Those texts revaluating our relationship with

inherited canonical knowledge (*e.g*. deconstruction) are an example. Hence the enduring pertinence of Freud and certain French authors of great verve, Barthes, Foucault, Baudrillard, Derrida, Kristeva, Irigaray, Deleuze & Guattari and so on. It is always tempting to ask: do you relate to their themes?

Exaltation or delinquency? There is no *via media*. The question is how to achieve a sense of ease with inadequacy. Bibliography is not a moral concept and you are no reprobate for bias among the shelves. Bibliography is instrumental but in a curiously organic way; and it is unfair to recriminate artists for not sharing someone else's theme: let us choose. Bibliography is to be used creatively: so long as themes abound, let the ideas achieve their bearing. Research in the creative arts nevertheless stands to benefit by maximum efficiency in bibliographic habits and the ideal balance is struck on a case-by-case basis.

CHAPTER 3.4

THE RESEARCH ELEMENT IN ART

In the chapter 'Imagination: knowing how to wonder', the distinction between epistemology and ontology was raised, revealing a peculiar sympathy for the ontological. In this chapter, we try to provide some of the academic background for the intense interest in research and methodology in the creative arts, which I will end up characterizing as ontological. The topics here converge on the final discussion, that is, 'the ontology of artistic advancement'. We attempt to go through some of the nitty-gritty of how the creative arts stack up against other disciplines in their obsession for measurement (which was considered in chapter 2.2. The final topic, however, takes you back from the slightly embattled and defensive tenor of art-school jockeying to the genius of artistic contributions to cultural history. It forms the philosophical basis of the justification for research *in* art—or *through* art—as opposed to research *on* art.

Until recently, the word 'research' has not been linked to art and design except in the humanities disciplines of history of art and history of design, whose research results in the publication of explanatory theoretical or historical texts.

Unlike the sciences and humanities, the studio arts and design have not until recently been located in the traditional university (with few exceptions such as the Slade School in London University, the Ruskin at Oxford and the Pratt Institute in New York) and have consequently not developed under the research structures and culture of traditional universities. However, for over two millennia of western development, progress in art and design has occurred not only through studio practice but through education obtained via guilds, workshops, salons and academies which have fostered sophisticated critical appraisal.

On account of these rich traditions, many artists are understandably skeptical of the relatively sudden need to adjust the terms of their practice to the alien criteria of research in the sciences and humanities. In any other circumstance, there does not seem to be anything inadequate about the concept of praxis, which is destined to progress by the same energies that have always promoted the development of ideas, techniques and imagery in art and design. Furthermore, there are fears that a peremptory enthusiasm for research could even distort the creative logic of an artistic undertaking. At the present time, the acceptance of art and design under the banner of research takes place within the context of such reservations; they constitute an important element in the debate about research in art and design, and it is necessary to acknowledge them.

First, there is concern that the very concept of research might co-opt the artist or designer into an epistemological paradigm which is essentially at variance with the poetic and aesthetic frameworks of art and design.

Second, there is concern that artists and designers might face pressure to come up with something technically or conceptually new and disavow traditions like figure painting, landscape or portrait sculpture, whose rationale depends not on making significantly original departures from earlier art but rather on cultivating sensitivity, seeing power, skill, persistence and even a certain clairvoyance

which is impossible to articulate as progress, even though the honest pursuit of such traditions undeniably results in artistic progress.

Third, there is concern that to qualify as a researcher, an artist or designer would be better off creating process-oriented art or design, that is, sensory work whose goal is to reveal a process rather than an end-result, to demonstrate an interaction between material and intention over time; this may artificially promote a form of art which is all about confession of processes rather than genuine formal or iconographic qualities, thus possibly even tipping art and design into the insubstantial and self-reflexive.

Fourth, there is concern that practitioners will artificially need to define (a) the attainments which previous practice has achieved, (b) what remains to be achieved and (c) what methodical steps were taken in achieving it, steps which—even if not actually antithetical to the intuitive and inspirational character of their work—require the practitioner to complicate the creative process toward bureaucratic ends, resulting in pomposity and inartistic conventions.

Research is normally defined as systematic and rigorous investigations aimed at the discovery of previously unknown phenomena, the development of explanatory theory and its application to new situations or problems and, in recent time, has extended to the construction of original works of significant intellectual merit.

These concerns do not relate to a fear of rationality or systematic thinking. The romantic antagonism toward reason and empirical investigation are not at the heart of the reservations; for there are (and have probably always been) as many artists who nourish enthusiasm for scientific and technological progress as those who are anxious about its effect on their artistic work. Rather than an irrational objection to empiricism on behalf of the creative, the anxieties above simply call for caution lest research or practice in art and design be uncritically managed according to the intellectual assumptions of other disciplines.

However, all creative work constitutes research in a catholic sense; and we embrace the challenge to define the convergence of the two cultures and to determine the kinds of activity which can be legitimately placed under the aegis of research.

In most universities, creative work sits somewhat uncomfortably somewhere between research and professional practice.

Research is normally defined as systematic and rigorous investigations aimed at the discovery of previously unknown phenomena, the development of explanatory theory and its application to new situations or problems and, in recent time, has extended to the construction of original works of significant intellectual merit. The last phrase actually comes from the definition of research at Monash University.

Professional Practice, meanwhile, is normally defined as an engagement in the activity characteristic of professions, either for the purpose of providing special expertise or to keep abreast of current practice.

There is plenty of overlap in the three categories. Ironically, 'research' better approximates what you might understand as 'studio', while the category of 'Professional practice' has less to do with it. Under the rubric of research, 'the construction of original works of significant intellectual merit' strongly acknowledges the kind of activity undertaken in studio. For example, the radical design of an object which in some sense redefines that object falls felicitously into the category of research. A body of paintings which explores an atmosphere or topography or dramatic narrative or ideological position hitherto unexpressed similarly fits into the category happily enough.

The category of Professional Practice does not normally contemplate such creations. Instead,

it envisages the honing of skills for work of judgement, diligence and an established reserve of knowledge, as in the practice of a GP, a solicitor or psychiatrist. Professional practitioners are not constrained to propose a publishable vision with aspirations to a universal forum. Meanwhile, every creation of artists and designers is intended to attract the attention of the largest community of experts, who judge the work according to its contribution to the history of the genre.

All work undertaken in art academies, even from intermediate undergraduate level, is predicated on the demand for originality. This does not mean that the medium or technique or genre needs to be conspicuously innovative: it does mean, however, that the work must be genuinely hatched from the vision of the student or artist who created it. Usually, moreover, when a student or artist carries on a studio practice with little or no visionary integrity, a poor result is visibly confessed.

For these reasons, art academies prefer to use the term 'studio practice' or just 'studio' rather than professional practice. Many academics take the view that within definitions of professional practice and research, professional practice can be seen as the routine application of existing knowledge and experience within a discipline, whereas research involves investigations in which the previously unknown is studied, explanatory theory is advanced, and original works of significant intellectual merit ensue. By such criteria it would be misleading and harmful for studio practice to be understood as professional practice. Very few aspects of studio practice are routine. As in all research environments, there are routine phases in achieving the desired result; but the objectives in each case do not involve any element of routine but are absolutely governed by visionary and imaginative faculties, driven—for the artist or designer—by ambitions of the most compelling kind.

It is worth trying to compare studio practice with research in the sciences and humanities. Research is the business of systematically finding things out. In conducting research, five stages or elements may be identified: (i) surveying, (ii) problemmatizing, (iii) theorizing, (iv) gathering and (v) arguing.[81] There is considerable overlap between these elements and, of course, there are dangers in excessively schematizing what is often a fluid and organic inspirational process. However, in general surveying means looking at the knowledge in the field, a literature search, that is, one reads original documents (primary literature) and scholarly commentary on them (secondary literature). Problemmatizing means discovering a problem with the material: something does not fit or is missing, does not answer one's sense of the fullness of a possible explanation; one identifies the unexplained, the significant gap. Theorizing means formulating a hypothesis or hunch that might lead to an answer to the problem: one fills the gaps in the available explanations; creating a solution, insofar as a problem has been identified. Gathering means collecting lots of information both to refine the idea and to support the hypothesis; and arguing means testing, subjecting the theory to counter-arguments to check how plausible it is.

This much all belongs to a culture of explanation, the very genius of the traditional university. It may not always be as systematic as in classical empirical science but in all events it (a) assumes disinterest, (b) is based on a mission of removing misunderstandings, (c) challenges misconceptions and (d) helps to fulfil the search for truth and assumes, perhaps in spite of poststructural arguments to the contrary, that truth may be found.

Art and design do not carry the same sense of disinterest and, while often concerned with areas of knowledge inaccessible to the non-practitioner, the studio practice of art and design submits to epistemological structures neither in method nor aspiration. There are definite differences between studio practice and the research of the sciences and humanities; however, in the context of studio practice, surveying could mean keeping informed about the scene, not only looking at art or design (primary literature) but reviews and essays (secondary literature). Problemmatizing could mean the critique of current or past practice, generally reflecting on the virtues of past or current production.

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Theorizing could mean the construction of intentions, possibly through drawing, thinking of options, trying them for the sake of knowing what to do, developing a sense of positionality. Gathering could mean the making, the development of a confident and coherent body of work, that is, the gathering of knowledge of what one can do and the inspiration to do it, not necessarily information which is available to anyone else. And arguing could mean the case that one makes for the body of work, either simply to locate it in the context of the history of ideas or to advocate its legitimacy in the current critical climate.

For some practitioners, however, the final stage of arguing is not entered into. In most art academies, it is a requirement only for us, namely higher degrees (and special leave reports for staff).

On a social level, you could argue that across all the disciplines, research in art and design (i) investigates and creates appropriate symbols of community identity and fosters the ongoing critique of such symbols, thus contributing to the national discourse; (ii) produces innovative objects and environments which help shape the culture and define its material and aesthetic standards; (iii) develops mechanisms that allow information to become more accessible through the use of a wide variety of sensory languages; (iv) develops ideas and forms suitable for industrial production with the potential to contribute a direct value to the community and national economic welfare, (v) can be a source of stimulation for research in other disciplines. For example, the studio production of artists can be a starting point for development of critical and cultural theory; and (vi) may embrace the methods of the humanities, especially of history.

The studio practitioner or post-structural writer prolifically conducting ungrantable research is no less a researcher, in the eyes of most art academies, than one who wins national competitive research grants.

In spite of this, much research funding in the context of art and design discriminates against studio practice. First, it is nigh impossible for many practitioners to obtain research grants, since national competitive research grants specifically exclude works of art as a legitimate outcome for research. Second, in order to have any hope of obtaining a national competitive research grant, the artist or designer would face pressure to conceive a research project in terms of a commentary upon an artistic activity rather than the artistic production itself. Third, all practitioners in art academies are engaged in undergraduate teaching which, on account of the necessary demands of the studio teaching paradigm, requires a considerably greater commitment of time than in other disciplines.

Given these inclemencies, many practitioners are disinclined to write applications. The limited time which is available after teaching duties seems rather vainly spent on seeking a result with either slight probabilities of success or certain hazards of dislocation from studio practice if rewarded for a project promising analytical or inartistic results. Only a small proportion of the practitioners has a specific interest in such research projects; and, while giving that contingent the greatest possible support, art academies do not wish to discriminate against the researchers who understandably consider national competitive research grants inaccessible and who therefore do not make any attempt to secure them. The studio practitioner or post-structural writer prolifically conducting ungrantable research is no less a researcher, in the eyes of most art academies, than one who wins national competitive research grants. Nor would most art academies wish to alter the profile of their staff in favour of those whose work centres on reportable research projects rather than studio practice; for this would threaten the inspirational integrity and rationale of an essentially studio-based institution.

Although there are clearly parallels between studio research in fine art and studio research in design, there are special issues related to design.

Design is no less involved in 'cultural production' than the fine arts. Not only are all the elements of imagination, originality, innovation and so on present in design but the visionary dimension also

extends to ethics and cultural values. Objects of design have profound social connotations; they are vessels of meaning, endowed—by virtue of their design—with a faculty of communication. Objects of design are therefore also the symbolic bearers of social values: they enshrine aesthetic and moral priorities and collectively embody the enthusiasms of an age. And for that reason, objects of design furnish the historian with insights and information about a given epoch in a way analogous to autonomous objects of the fine arts.

Progress in design, however, is extraordinarily hard to measure, as if it were not hard enough in the fine arts. In the fine arts, as fraught by contention and diversity of opinion as they are, there are nevertheless organs of professional dissemination of intellectual advances. There are numerous galleries, representing individual and group achievements on a continuing basis. There is a curatorial structure which evaluates, ranks and categorizes; and from this culture of sifting and sustained critical exposure (however biased), the material of the fine arts enters the world of critical debate in vibrant journals and newspapers.

Design is not so well served. Design exhibitions are few and far between; and when they arise with any degree of prestige, they are often dominated by rather unadventurous commercially-oriented interests whose main priority is not to identify advances in cultural production but to provide a forum for companies to jockey for a greater share of the domestic market. The idea of research in design is largely at variance with that culture.

There are very few opportunities for designers to publish their opinions about their designs. There are critical journals, to be sure, but they are by and large dedicated to the views of learned critics, historians and theorists writing about other people's designs. As in the fine arts, there is suspicion for practitioners conducting their own connoisseurship.

Furthermore, design which is consciously directed toward solving problems, realigning the appearance of objects for the sake of a refreshment of the ideological connotations of that object, or in any other way advancing the vision of objects or spaces, may require a framework of explanation. There are very few opportunities for designers to publish their opinions about their designs. There are critical journals, to be sure, but they are by and large dedicated to the views of learned critics, historians and theorists writing about other people's designs. As in the fine arts, there is suspicion for practitioners conducting their own connoisseurship. The exegetical labours of higher-degree students may be necessary from a pedagogical point of view; but in the world beyond the university, the structure of artists or designers extensively narrating and appraising their processes and results is wholly artificial. If a designer wants to publish, he or she is basically compelled to write about someone else's work.

Thus the idea that research is undertaken 'within' the design process is structurally deprived of an expression. The research which is design is extraordinarily mute. The ideas and values all have to be expressed through the object; but that object, unlike the autonomous communicative output of artists, is not readily exhibitable in a context which makes intellectual or cultural claims. There is little sorting of an intellectual kind. The design is expected to submit to the sorting criteria of commercial patronage, ultimately a market, whose concerns are not fundamentally investigative. It does not matter how rigorous a designer may be in fulfilling the terms of a project-oriented inquiry; for there is no structural interest to support the speculative dimension and recognize the labours as intellectual advancement.

The intellectual insularity of design is, of course, not a predicament consciously sought by designers; it is a cultural given into which the designer—however idealistic and intellectually ambitious in a personal sense—steps with predestined acceptance. Design is intensely innovative but its context is structurally non-speculative.

Designers may have opportunities for collaborative research with industry. The design professions are in constant dialogue with industry. But the problem noted above persists. The research will remain mute unless there is a tangible form of publication. And, of course, if the research is not intended for some form of publication, it will lack credibility as research and will not have much likelihood to achieve Co-operative Research Centre grants.

Even if it did (and at this stage it is only a shadowy chance), art and design academies are wary of forcing their designers into areas of industrial involvement where these are remote from the core studio practice of design, an active experimental pursuit of aesthetics and symbolism which we are calling 'cultural production'. As in fine art, a designer may have a special talent for innovative work in furniture, for example, which—on account of the low levels of research in the industry in Australia—is not funded and is unlikely ever to be funded in a partnership arrangement, as with the CRCs mentioned above. Historically, design may be undertaken on spec. It is a worthy paradigm, which probably explains revolutionary work such as that conducted at the Bauhaus. Art academies do not want to lessen the vitality or the dignity of this culture by greatly promoting the need to find competitive funding sources which lead the designer into areas peripheral to the intellectual and cultural advancement of design.

Studio practice is not alone in being disadvantaged by the national research infrastructure. Many of the disincentives for studio practitioners apply equally to staff in the theory area. Their work is often necessarily contingent upon local artistic activities and cannot, by nature, conform to the conventions of scholarship with its rigorous apparatus of authentication. The integrity of contemporary art criticism, for example, depends on the specificity of its address to contemporary conditions and local knowledge; it is not easily moved to a universal forum; and a claim of adding significantly to international knowledge would lack modesty and logic. An experienced and penetrating critic of art or design has little chance to build up the requisite credentials for achieving national competitive research grants. Indeed newspaper criticism—however analytical or original—does not have widespread academic standing as research.

But art academies generally support such activity for its intrinsic merit and for its bearing on the culture of art and design. The dynamic of artistic production involves reciprocal energies between making and criticism and, in promoting the cultural energies of practice, art academies do not wish their theorists to abandon their critical practices and default to the humanities discipline of art history. This would arguably lead to greater recognition and academic authority according to conventional definitions of research; but a retreat to conventional scholarship would deplete the art school culture of its inspirational discourses.

The incentives for any likely candidate applying are self-evident; for, upon achieving success, the researcher has funding to do research effectively, with time-release and equipment and so on. What, however, are the incentives for the staff who, for one reason or another, cannot apply for national competitive research grants? And in what way do art academies encourage them to improve their output?

In the past, research was performed by each individual lecturer 'afterwards', against the pressure to devote fuller time to teaching and administration. In some sections, the single-mindedness of staff to devote more time to their research was deemed selfish and sometimes aroused hostility and resentment.

Some forms of art and design are more consonant with the goals of traditionally recognised research than others. Such work may also be better suited to the traditional methods for assigning a quantified rating for their contribution to the history of ideas.

The definition of research used by many universities contemplates the 'construction of original works of significant intellectual merit'. What is required is to demonstrate the significant intellectual

merit? In any discipline this is at base a judgement made firstly within and then outside the discipline. Challenges from outside the discipline to the merit of research within the discipline are imprudent; and the University culture generally upholds the wisdom of avoiding such charges. The external judgement currently most in favour in all University disciplines is that of citation, and the exposure and flavour of citations establish the merit of research.

The judgement of quality or merit in a particular piece is best made from within the discipline, and best validated through citation criteria. Judgements about the value or quality of research in the arts can—with certain hazards—be quantified, as they can in other disciplines, through the development of research performance indicators and scoring systems.

Many academics in art academies believe that the scoring mechanisms are (a) unfair when art and design are compared to other disciplines and (b) open to question in their assessment of importance within the disciplines of art and design. First, judgements of major or minor risk arbitrariness, for the proof of visionary artistic virtue often escapes contemporary notice and is only appreciated decades—or centuries—later. Second, a small art work which was only seen in a local context (as with the paintings of La Tour or Vermeer) may be greatly superior to a whole series of large works which achieves international exposure in prestigious venues.

...THE RECEPTION OF ART AND DESIGN IS SINGULARLY VULNERABLE TO FASHIONS AND THE GREATEST SUCCESS IN EXHIBITIONS, COMMISSIONS OR CONTRACTS WITH INDUSTRY DOES NOT NECESSARILY INDICATE MORE THAN AN ADEPT COMPLIANCE WITH THE FICKLENESS OF CONTEMPORARY TRENDS.

Third, the subjective nature of the appreciation of art never yields objective criteria but merely compounds subjective opinions from various sources in ways that risk being more inscrutable than the judgement of an individual. Fourth, the reception of art and design is singularly vulnerable to fashions and the greatest success in exhibitions, commissions or contracts with industry does not necessarily indicate more than an adept compliance with the fickleness of contemporary trends. Fifth, the curatorial agendas of most galleries are political: some favour ideologically neutral art which is scorned and rated negatively by progressives, while other galleries and practitioners despise the expression of mainstream values and only support artistic interventions which offer resistance.

Sixth, the structures for the exhibition of art are not pre-eminently academic; they are often clannish and feudal, concerned with 'gentlemen's agreements' for mutual support in a relationship with the buying public. Seventh, on account of such tribalism, the success in an exhibiting career sometimes reflects the practitioner's ability to belong, or be attached, to a commercial gallery or government-funded networks. Finally, reviews by critics are not necessarily obtained because the work is especially distinctive or of particularly high quality but because the work—regardless of its calibre in any one else's eyes—accords with the values or bias which the critic inevitably brings to the task of reviewing.

Art academies tend to acknowledge these concerns and most advance their scoring mechanisms with a sense of the provisional.

Some of the anxieties over the ratings of studio-based creative arts are also felt in the department of theory and history. Writing about the contemporary arts shares the circumstantial contingencies of the studio: it must intersect with a living culture which includes the public and is therefore published in newspapers and magazines of an unrefereed kind. The calibre of the writing in such publications is often superior to that in refereed journals, in term of originality, perceptiveness and clarity. However, on account of its remoteness from journals with refereed authority, criticism of contemporary art is not rated generously by scholarly convention. Art academies must begrudgingly accept the scores assigned by government and those modified by their universities; but it must be noted that the criteria of merit based on epistemological assumptions inherent in these mechanisms

discriminate unfairly against both the theorists and practitioners of art academies.

Other disciplines within universities may encounter difficulty with art and design in two areas: the means of publication, and the nature of visual language. Painting, for example, may communicate publicly through exhibition. Because of intimate links between the theory of art and the practice of art its content can also be communicated through written equivalents (both occur within a written theoretical and conceptual framework) but direct parallels between the visual and the written suffer from the deficiencies of translation. Publication in the arts usually involves exhibition as a means of making public the outcomes of both research and practice with or without accompanying publication in other media such as the written word. The context of publication (that is, the selection and curatorial processes of professional gallery staff) offers certain structural parallels with the scholarly process of recognized professional critical appraisal and provides an independent review stage beyond that of internal review processes. Independent verification of this kind is usually associated with the role of editors or referees in relation to books or other scholarly publications. The standards of publication are also posited in distinctions between the regional, national and international standing of galleries in which exhibitions occur.

It may be anticipated that developments within art and design disciplines will lead to further avenues of publication such as video recordings, film and works of art and design published in electronic media and that such means of publication must also be subject to appropriate critical and peer review processes.

Higher degree candidates, especially in the PhD, are expected to create original works of substantial cultural significance. The means by which this level of attainment is adjudicated are not to be confused with any of the indicators discussed so far; for higher degree exhibitions, while forming a part of the examination process, (i) are arranged internally, (ii) contribute little prestige by virtue of a venue, (iii) are not considered a form of publication in advance of the degree and (iv) do not in themselves testify to the calibre of the work exhibited.

As in all other disciplines, art academies rely upon the process of senior review: they appoint examiners in whom they trust for judging the artistic and intellectual worth of the sensory work and its coherence with its documentation. But the issue of innovation—implicit in the contribution to knowledge in other disciplines—is especially complicated in art and design. The following section provides a philosophical basis for the concern in art academies (a) to prevent a superficial view of innovation determining the judgement of studio work and (b) to analyse the concept of innovation for the benefit of assessing and promoting its research performance and higher degrees.

Histories of art, music and literature recognize two underlying paradigms of artistic contribution: there are innovations in content and innovations in form. Naturally there is overlap; however, numerous artists, composers and writers of the highest invention have historically contributed little by way of innovation to the forms of their age. This is true, for example, of Vermeer, Mozart or Pope. Just as Vermeer painted pictures quite analogous to genre pictures by De Hooch or many others, so Mozart, in most of his output, changed little of the chamber or symphonic conventions of his epoch; and the satiric poem so brilliantly professed by Pope was established with canonical rigour since the times of Dryden.

Distinguishing between innovation of form and innovation of content is important for the purposes of identifying a research element in artistic work. Innovations of form are more conspicuous than those of content. It is notable, for example, that Schoenberg invented a twelve-tone system. Meanwhile, a coeval such as Elgar can be credited with nothing but a string of well orchestrated tunes; and it would therefore be easy to identify Schoenberg as an innovator or even 'researcher' (one who breaks new ground) while Elgar, in spite of his melodic invention, would implicitly be

deprived of such status and may even be relegated to the ranks of conservative. In the fine arts, the innovations in the medium which occurred in the early century are clearly striking and have persistently attracted the epithets of daring and innovation (and, retrospectively, artistic research). Meanwhile, artists remote from the formal experiments of Cubism or Expressionism or De Stijl have often been branded as academic and unadventurous. Yet the content of such artists, from Gérôme to Spencer, may be highly innovative and rich in invention.

On account of a fundamentally formalist bias, Modernist paradigms of artistic advancement have greatly promoted innovations in medium at the expense of innovations in content. Perhaps unfortunately, the contemporary enthusiasm for identifying a research element in artistic production rather flatters the conceits of formal innovation; for a radical approach to form forcefully advertises itself as innovation with demonstrable strides in the history of a medium or technique. The rhetoric of a cutting-edge appeals to tangible signs of things which have never been done before. Fundamental changes to a medium—or the invention of a new genre, as with abstract painting or installation in the 1910s—tend to arrogate artistic progress and cultural prestige to themselves.

Innovations in a form are apparently congruent with the great epistemological enterprise of western science and materialist philosophy; for they reveal an apparently new slant on the production of knowledge, a paradigm shift of undoubted historical heroism.

Equating artistic research with innovations in a medium is a perilous cliché. The obvious indicators of innovation in a form or genre are easy to align with quantum steps taken in the discovery of new knowledge. Innovations in a form are apparently congruent with the great epistemological enterprise of western science and materialist philosophy; for they reveal an apparently new slant on the production of knowledge, a paradigm shift of undoubted historical heroism. The onus of innovation in medium, however, disqualifies most artistic production (which has historically occurred in a tradition of one kind or another) and is liable to skew the logical priorities of artistic invention.

Against an 'epistemological' framework which favours innovation of medium, it is important to recognize an 'ontological' framework which accommodates innovation in content. Like the invention of melodies, the poetic pictorial description of a mood or circumstance registers a kind of intellectual 'being' which cannot be collapsed into epistemological structures. As with melodic invention, there is an argument of sensory data whose internal logic and connectedness constitute a kind of intelligence. The production of this intelligence is inventive in a distinctly non-mechanistic sense; it involves constructing sequences of notes or passages of illusionistic light (or whatever) in a way that suggests the immanence of another passage or idea or even the immanence of the whole to which they belong. The 'immanence' of artworks is the most intangible but arguably the deepest dimension of western aesthetics.

Any work which has the properties of invention or aesthetic immanence is necessarily innovative; but the innovation does not produce new facts so much as new sensations of being. The concept of evocation enshrines the creative margin of content very well. What one artist or poet evokes may differ very little from what umpteen others have evoked. But the poetic calibre of the evocation is the inventive issue, the extent to which it artistically replicates the perception of the being who views, the extent to which it organically suggests the sense of 'life', a term which has so often been used in critical and ecphrastic literature from antiquity to the twentieth century. It well acknowledges the ontological character of artistic innovation.

The idea of content is not confined to subject matter but to a peculiarly pregnant stylistic interaction with a motif which is deemed artistic in its celebratory, sensual or evocative power. Because they are essentially ontological, artistic innovations in content are difficult to articulate and impossible to prove. The artistic inventions do not necessarily say something new. They do necessarily say something especially well or poignantly or insightfully or vivaciously; and these elements contribute

the margin of novelty. But in a deeper sense, the invention of a new scene, no less than the invention of a new melody, is self-evidently innovative, for no one has thought of putting just those notes together in just that way.

Bold innovations made with an artistic medium or musical or literary form may or may not distinguish themselves with concomitant innovations in content. In all cases, however, the innovation of form or medium is easier to demonstrate while the innovations of content present intellectual hazards whenever one attempts a definition. Identifying innovations of content risks self-referentiality: one is reflecting about arguments within the work rather than outside it; one fails to relate the work to an established body of fact or convention against which the work represents a significant departure; one might even risk the air of dilettantism in relishing an aesthetic virtue of a work at the expense of measuring its innovative status with respect to contemporary artistic progress. The ontological framework of artworks suggests the very opposite kind of evaluative processes to those required in a conventional research culture.

From an epistemological perspective, there may appear to be a structural introversion in the way in which art or music is about itself, is so often discussed in terms of its internal aesthetic resonance, and resists objective or systematic comparisons with other works which would collectively yield a pattern of progress. But the ontological rationale of artworks makes the application of any other framework somewhat grotesque. Moreover, the apparent introversion of artistic innovation matches the whole concept of studio research, as opposed to the analytical skills fostered in the humanities. Research is the 'doing' rather than the commenting upon. The historical commentary professed in other disciplines is rich in references, systematic explanations and proofs or cases of plausibility. The research, on the other hand, which is the making of art is often argumentatively null beyond the work itself which is created in the studio. This should discredit neither the work nor its commentary from the status of the highest innovation.

CHAPTER 3.5

EPISTEMOLOGY AND BEING
A CRITIQUE OF ARTISTIC KNOWLEDGE

What do artists know? They know some of their personal strengths and limitations. They know their sources of inspiration and appreciate their range and character. They know the relevant techniques, their history and associations. They know good and bad in other artists, at least by estimation; but they know their opinion. They know the aesthetic and symbolic consequences of appropriation, the resonance of imagery and inconsistencies of style and iconography. They know about networks, history, museums, ethics, libraries, the other arts, cultural values in general. Let us leave aside for the moment what this knowing is about and what its limitations are; because these categories of knowledge are comprehended patchily.

What might artists not know? They may not know who in Vienna has been doing similar work to their own. They may not know who in Amsterdam has been writing about it. They may not know how the present body of work compares with contemporary literary and philosophical trends in Korea. They may not know where the current body of work will end and what it will mean. They may not know how to make money, either.

Artistic knowledge is possibly no more inscrutable than any other kind of knowledge; and in a sense, it manifests itself in visible and audible ways. The most remarkable thing about artistic knowledge is that it has a great deal of wonder at the end of it. It leads to many unsolved curiosities. It is a bit like insight. It has a critical dimension. The core piece of knowledge is an intuitive sense: what I can do with what I have? What might be a misuse of my ability or at least a wasteful use of it? These insights are necessarily self-critical; and at their core, they are about doing, even when condensed as abstract criteria (*e.g.* taste). Artistic knowledge may be supplemented by any other form of knowledge—and without doubt, the more the richer—but a specific kind of artistic knowledge is apparently only gained from within, from experiment, from experience, coincidental meetings, haphazard or serendipitous entry into techniques, media, imagery, groups. And apart from these more empirical addenda, it seems intrinsically personal. Unlike knowledge gained from scientific research or the good disciplines of the humanities, artistic knowledge is difficult to generalize, hunch-like, provisional.

Though you would not extend this to art history, literary or musical history, which has its rigours, you can see reciprocal uncertainty in the reception of all art. It occurs by similar intuitive processes and is not really about an easily codified form of knowledge. The appreciation of Haydn or Cézanne may not add to a body of fact. It is about enlarged perspectives, personal identification; it is about gratifying reasons for being there or going there, reasons so highly relative that their transfer is

impossible to recreate verbally. And conversely, if you think historically, you might even suspect that our understanding may be inferior to that of contemporaneous critics. A Samuel Johnson or De Sanctis or Vasari (their heads brimming with grammar, metaphor, chords and drawing) very likely had access to levels of appreciation that we have difficulty imagining, much less assimilating. In this sense, there is no historical advancement, which is the great positivistic principle of all learning and especially research. It is the great epistemological trust of our society, unlike tribal societies, where you assumed the opposite, namely that the elders knew more than we do, with their inestimable privilege of sitting closer to various origins.

In the history of appreciation, there is dubious advancement in absolute terms. These grounds for empirical pessimism go beyond appreciation and into the creative itself. A benign ghosts haunt us: how can music be better than Bach or Brahms? Or how can poems now hold a pen up to Dante or Shakespeare? Science makes demonstrable strides but artistic endeavour is non-linear. As styles and modalities progress, there are plenty of negatives. Consciousness improves; the epoch becomes more critical, more sensitive, more knowledgeable. But the art that synthesizes it may not make credible improvement in any absolute sense. Ultimately—or even fifty years hence—the art that we now consider steeped in a backward historical ethos may altogether displace the daubs and warbles that we make today.

Knowledge favours logical or empirical proofs, which are impossible to obtain even if desirable. Art is about consciousness, moods, evocative connexions, representations of being, arguments, passions, enthusiasm, egotism. It is profoundly ontological in that it produces life again; it restages experience, even in abstract arts like music; and this representation clinches an aspect of being.

So is research forced knowledge, a kind of fib that says that we systematically build upon former achievements, identify the things that we can uniquely do today and create something better? Perhaps we should keep alive a conservative concern that the research paradigm induces artist into a knowledge-mindset which is illusory. As feared in the previous chapter, art as the propounding of newness seems unfortunate. Especially with exegetical documentation, grand empirical rigours seem to apply, encouraging a mechanistic identification of advancements, as in the technical use of the medium. It seems easier to record tangible innovations in technique or subject matter than fugitive matters of consciousness, which are cumbersome to express as some kind of knowledge, if they constitute knowledge at all. Research is about you as much as the medium.

For this reason, as in the previous chapter, we tend to commend an ontological conception of creative endeavours. The study of knowledge (epistemology) may not be for us: it is both too abstract and too particular. Knowledge favours logical or empirical proofs, which are impossible to obtain even if desirable. Art is about consciousness, moods, evocative connexions, representations of being, arguments, passions, enthusiasm, egotism. It is profoundly ontological in that it produces life again; it restages experience, even in abstract arts like music; and this representation clinches an aspect of being.

In deciding on the epistemological character of the creative arts as research, music provides a most helpful base-line. Artists of all kind possess a 'knowledge of the notes', an awareness of the organic meeting of symbolic associations and technical potential. Artists create new knowledge insofar as they hatch new arguments (like vision or melody) on a sensual level. No one 'knew' the sequence until it was invented by you; hence 'discovered' or 'invented' and 'synthetic' knowledge have an inscrutable overlap. But in all of this invention, it is likely that no single element is new, just a synthesis in language. So we pre-eminently discover a kind of lyrical knowledge: it is the peculiar life of connexions, derived and appreciated intuitively, and pre-eminently of the body: it is sensory or somatic knowledge, if knowledge at all.

Lest we bury the argument in semantic distinctions, it is perhaps more helpful to speak of consciousness, which is somehow fresh and relived as it arises right now. Consciousness is the supreme expression of being (more than just 'life', which an ant or a tree has). It may be a form of knowledge but it is not fixed; it is constantly subject to flux and growth. You do not always know what you think and feel. Knowledge is tardy and lumpen in trying to comprehend the depth and vivacity of mind, whereas art provides an ethereal transport into consciousness of the most poignant kind, entirely sidestepping the semantics of epistemology.

Rather to be knowing: the knowledge is not professed for the sake of knowledge but for access to wonder; and this requires a knowingness, a facility with enigmas that inspire flights into otherwise imponderable consciouness in others. To know a tune, to know a mood, to know a kind of behaviour is the substance of intuition. It is assimilated somatically in the intelligence of the artist where it is also simultaneously manipulated; indeed, the wisdom of the artist is knowing how to keep manipulating the signs and sounds in order to generate the intelligence itself. It is a willful preoccupation, guiding the way we use information, the character of the medium and technique. It is a knowledge already activated as ideas, disposable to will and contingent upon creative engagement. With whatever historical baggage besides, we have subjective knowledge, which is relative to the use that occasions it and the use that we put it to.

To know, in this sense, is to innovate. If true to consciousness—or some earnest reflection of experience—art is bound to be original. We know the measure of our capabilities: we negotiate afresh the mix of form and content. It will infallibly result in distinctiveness, at least originality at the margin, though this may not in itself grip the world. Bringing consciousness to life in your own language is reliably authentic and original to qualify as new knowledge; but its significance lies on the ontological side, where it prompts the further life and growth of someone else's intelligence of the world and themselves.

CHAPTER 3.6

METHOD AND METHODOLOGY IN OUR CONTEXT

The idea that research paradigms are different in the creative arts from those in other disciplines may be granted; but we still need methods. What makes for good method in the creative arts and what makes for poor method? This chapter considers the methodological strengths and weaknesses of traditional research and advances patterns of reflection and consultation which mobilize creative ideas and ensure that the candidate always has language with which to represent them.

Method is a *sine qua non*, literally: something without which nothing is possible, an indispensable condition or qualification. Method is something that you are expected to have. Rightly or wrongly, it is regarded as the soul of research, in the same way that facts are the substance or 'body' of research. If you lack a method, you are assumed to be somehow derelict. Maybe, by this score, you are a creative person in some non-professional way but nowhere near the forefront of development in your field. There is a psychology that goes with this, too. People who lack method are assumed to be scatty, disorganized and hopeless at getting things done. They are the kind of people who forget appointments or due dates for the repayment of bills. They are unreliable, wayward, dilatory, erratic and emotional.

Interestingly, this psychology conforms to certain vulgar stereotypes of the artist, an eccentric figure full of extraordinary feeling but no structural discipline. Let us not be offended. In all disciplines (but especially the humanities), the whole idea of method is contested and has been subjected to doubts for a long time. We like to use the word 'methodology' to characterize the contestation of method, the argument that one method may be inferior to another, the way that methods are interrogated, called into question and 'problemmatized'. In short, methodology is the critique of method.

There are plenty of potentially unsavoury aspects to method. Among artists, method may be felt to have prescriptive connotations, as if directing your inquiry or asking your thought processes to conform to certain principles or to operate within limited parameters. In one sense, method connotes a lack of intellectual freedom or at least imaginative freedom. It suggests to some people the disciplinary 'straight and narrow', which is the opposite of creative innovation.

Of course methodical thinking is not uncreative, just as methodical thinkers are often highly imaginative and achieve extraordinary innovations. Amid all the perceptions—some of which can be quite damaging, culturally chauvinistic and insulting—method remains to be defined. Etymologically, method means a kind of route, a 'pathway toward' something. The identity of the something is critical. Method is always conceived (I fear somewhat mechanistically) relative to a defined goal. The goal, in research, is normally to know something, to have facts or a plausible interpretation.

In fact, the Greek origins of the word point to a more liberal teleology. It couples the path (ὁδος) with the spatial preposition for 'with' or alongside or across (μετα). As in metaphysics, the root

signals a going beyond, and is often translated in Latin with trans-. Indeed, there is something ever so slightly 'transgressive' in its connotations, in that it slips alongside the route that it accompanies, as in the Italian *traviato*, seduced, which is in formal terms identical to method. I love this image. The road simply takes you in one direction. But the 'slip-road' or the method presupposes a perspective from just above or beside or along or around or in some other sense skew or parallel to the path; it is somewhat independent of the track and subsumes a large topography, gathering the very deviations and sense or otherwise of the track itself.

Method is never routine. If it is just a habit, I personally do not call it method. I guess in a way, you have a method for cleaning the dishes. First you stack them in a way that reflects the best sequence for cleaning them, beginning with the glassware which demands the freshest and cleanest dishwater. But before stacking, you need to scrape off the excess food. Then you have to make sure that the sequence according to which you wash the dishes accords with the available space on the rack and which will fit in the pre-wash bowl in order not to get the dishwater too greasy. Everyone has such methods and they are all the result of theories and strategies. But they are ultimately a routine because they do not serve a heuristic purpose and are not conditioned by heuristic information.

In universities, method is a systematic procedure which moves from a question to an answer. It is a mandatory question in all research undertakings. And people who like method enjoy outlining the steps and stages along the way with target deadlines, a carefully timetabled order by which defined tasks get done. You could easily confine your conception of method to a very mechanistic paradigm. It all looks so objective. All of this, however, would obscure the great subjectivity in the very word 'goal'; for this is all about volition, wishes, desires, things hankered after.

Goals are things you want. They are not facts. You may want a fact; but having the goal means wanting the fact, not having the fact. An objective—a funny and bizarrely concrete word in itself—is the same. It sounds terribly corporate and mechanical but it also signals something desired, effectively something subjective. These expressions of wishes and desire are so deeply encoded in scientific and managerial rhetoric that we tend to forget that they are based on values. One person's desire is distinguished from another's by purely personal preferences; they may be ranked relative to one another in a whole scheme of further desires. Social priorities are expressed: there are ethical and psychological discourses constructed around the values by which one goal is promoted over another in anyone's consciousness.

Method, then, may be better expressed as a relationship between an ambition and an outcome which is designed to satisfy the ambition. Washing the dishes is not ambitious enough to qualify, even though the outcome is defined and systematically achieved. There is actually no need for method to be wholly systematic. It can be chaotic and serendipitous and, in fact, probably always is in the creative arts. Above all, though, the outcomes are relative to the ambitions. Finding out a new fact in science, say, sounds terrifically rigorous and hard; but actually the quest already presupposes a whole scheme of 'soft' priorities according to which the desired facts are valued more highly than anything else. Hence the goal of the research—as opposed to the experiments once the work is in train—is rather subjectively determined.

But the goal of the research is not the only element which is subjectively determined. There are actually very few stages of research which are mechanically determined; else the work would be merely routine and would neither be intellectually challenging nor imaginative nor innovative. The method that serves the goal is generally tainted, in some telling and fateful way, with the priorities enshrined by the goal.

Experimental method in the physical sciences is fairly objective, to be sure; but even in the life sciences, and especially in the social sciences, the appearance of objectivity is often deceptive. Take

a hypothetical example from the life sciences. Suppose you have a hypothesis. 'Sport makes you healthier'. To prove this, you survey two sorts of people, those who play lots of sport and those who sit still of a weekend. You discover, through random sampling in the community, that the people who play lots of sport have fewer coronaries, have less arthritis, have less asthma, fewer cases of lower back pain and heaven knows what. You tabulate all these differences and produce a very impressive paper. Your method is rigorous insofar as you apparently base everything on facts, statistical facts gathered from hospital admissions and surveys at surgeries, whose analysis has an exact mathematical probity. Your paper is written up in a journal of epidemiological medicine to lend conclusive support to the now apparently unassailable thesis that sport keeps you healthy.

Actually, what has happened in the method disqualifies the conclusion of the research. The conclusion is by no means supported by the facts. The people who play lots of sport in your sample are healthy people, people who, by genetic disposition or good fortune, have neither had heart problems, asthma, back problems nor any other major problems. If they do suffer from one of these, it is to a slighter degree than the statistical average. The people who do not play lots of sport are the people who, by the opposite genetic disposition or bad fortune, have statistically suffered such ailments to a degree that they are prevented from enjoying active physical exercise and so participating in sports. All that the study has revealed is that healthy people may do strenuous activities while unhealthy people by and large do not. You have certainly not proved that the strenuous activities are the cause of the health. Any given person is not necessarily going to become healthier by playing sport. There is even a possibility that they may become unhealthier as a result of playing sport, as when people suffer from sport injuries, which account for a large proportion of hospital admissions.

The problem of method in this example is a failure to distinguish between cause and effect. The playing of sport is an effect of being healthy, not necessarily a cause of being healthy. It may just be a cause…but your study has not proved it, indeed has not even lent credible support to the idea. You have only convinced us that people who are already healthy are inclined to demonstrate their health while those who are not so healthy are unable to demonstrate their health. We do not need a scientist to tell us that. The problem was that the goal, namely to prove that sport makes you healthy, was so attractive to you that you wishfully—and unconsciously—twisted the facts to appear to support it.

When you move to the social sciences, the field opens up even more. Psychologists and sociologists are alleging all sorts of connexions in the journals, having written up papers that prove by empirical means that their hypotheses are well founded. If you look into it, however, you often find one of two scenarios: first, that the hypothesis was obvious to start with. For example, young people who are culturally disadvantaged do not perform well at school or babies who are subjected to sudden loud noises eventually get used to them. Second, you find that certain cultural prejudices are at the basis of both the hypothesis and the method for proving it. An example might be the famous historical case of a psychologist (*cf*. Eysenck) proving that blacks are less intelligent than whites. You construct a test which will flatter the kinds of problem-solving task or paradigms of thought with which Eurasians are enormously familiar and well practiced while Afro-Americans are not. You obtain a startling result in the relative performance of the two groups and swagger your way through publications indicating that Afro-Americans are less intelligent than Eurasians. This is almost as methodologically faulty as a proof that English-speaking people are more intelligent than non-English speakers, on the basis that they answer questions in English much better than do Hispanics and Chinese.

Method, then, can be a thinly disguised system for shoring up a kind of unconscious prejudice or preconception. If your prejudice is widely shared, the method for lending it scientific authority will be widely accepted; and it could take generations for the telling faults to be revealed. When enough people have a sense of the values which underpinned the method and its conclusions, the

work will be discredited. But at the time, when everyone wants to believe a view, it is hard to see the preconceptions installed in the method which are destined to produce preconceived conclusions. The method prejudices the results.

Art history is littered with methodological issues like that. There are plenty of equivalents to the race, class and gender problems that can be encountered in any discipline. Most western art history is constructed around white male upper middle-class and modernist values. The criteria for judging art tend to follow from this. They favour art such as that produced by Cézanne and Pollock. They do not flatter the production of female basket weavers or potters; indeed such work is stigmatized for not belonging to a paradigm of progress, innovation, formal invention; it may even be seen as quaintly backward and marginal. Never mind the rituals that attend the baskets and the experiential and lyrical meanings that are embedded in them. If at any point in our age you had gone over the century's art history—which is so exclusive and which sustains modernism so generously and accommodates craft traditions so condescendingly—you would not necessarily have detected any methodological faults. It is not as if someone made a mistake in confusing two traditions or systematically getting attributions wrong. The broader methodological bias is rather an expression of the widely held beliefs of an age. They are hard to identify at the time.

Most western art history is constructed around white male upper middle-class and modernist values. The criteria for judging art tend to follow from this. They favour art such as that produced by Cézanne and Pollock. They do not flatter the production of female basket weavers or potters; indeed such work is stigmatized for not belonging to a paradigm of progress, innovation, formal invention; it may even be seen as quaintly backward and marginal.

Unless you can take a dispassionate view of your age, you will fail to see the subtle ways in which your circumstances bring about methods which flatter the key beliefs of your age. And it is very difficult to take a dispassionate view of your age, unless your consciousness is steeped in history. Who will help you do this? Your age is full of enthusiasm for the ideas which flatter contemporary circumstances.

Perhaps because method and methodology are so often the expression of ambient prejudices, some philosophers have been disaffected with method altogether. You could explain much of post-structuralism as a reaction against method, and against western empirical method in particular. The idea of assembling data into categories, it is felt, causes one's view of phenomena to be categorical. In other words, when you look at plants, say, you look for the features which distinguish them and place them relative to one another in a systematic taxonomy. This means that you may never look at the plants for the sake of anything else, perhaps the poetic dimension of perceiving nature or even the political reality of forests. Your vision is predetermined by the enthusiasm for putting all phenomena into categories. It may work against the kind of phenomenological awareness which artists pursue. The same may be said for measurement in physics or psychology or the obsession with causes in history. If your basic purpose in conducting history is to establish the causes of events, you are likely to be incurious for the full texture of documents, the way that historical circumstances are conveyed through voices, symbolic language and poetic conventions. You will therefore most likely not relay any part of the historical document which does not support the causes which you are attempting to identify.

These are only a tiny sample of the kinds of methodological difficulties in other disciplines. Methodology is not a technical discussion about know-how and channels of inquiry. As discussed in chapter 3.2, it is not about how you find out information, as with library searches (although methodology does, to some extent, presuppose a knowledge of technical procedures). Methodology is about matching the means and the intentions of research; it is about flaws in the logic between fact-gathering and arguments or conclusions; it is a critical appraisal of argumentative reason. Method

itself is continually changing to embrace new findings.

The question is, of course, how this relates to art, specifically art practice as opposed to art history. On one level, there are parallels; for the whole business of identifying intentions and goals is shared. The greatest difference lies in the outcomes of research. The research in other disciplines results in a new body of fact or interpretation. In our disciplines, the research results in images, sonic sequences or objects or spaces. Only in a fairly loose sense would we speak of these outcomes constituting fact or interpretation. We therefore do not tend to be so preoccupied about a method prejudicing the data, for we often do not deal with data at all. But that does not mean that we do not deal with method. Method among artists is difficult to identify and is perhaps carried out unconsciously by artists. Even the appreciation of research objectives may be slight. If you ask a medical researcher about the aims of a given study, he or she will no doubt have immediate answers, such as 'we are trying to create a contraceptive pill for men'. It is unlikely that medical research, especially when funded to cover the laboratory expenses, begins without a focused intention.

Artists, on the other hand, do not always know their goals till they work through a project to the end. Art is highly provisional until it is complete. Poetry and music are surely the same. You can imagine some scholars looking upon the whole process as quite unstructured. You do not know what you want until you have finished. Some method *that* is! Let us caricature the artist: 'I do not know what I'm doing but I'll do it anyway and then I'll tell you about what I've done once it is done; and in fact, once it is done I won't have to tell you anything because you'll be able to look at it and see for yourself.' All stereotypes of artists make much of the intuitive faculties, whether positive (praising the ability to think laterally) or negative (condemning the absence of coherent logic and rationality).

But let us not be bothered too much with what other people may think of us. Artists are not the only intellectuals whose work is organically determined as it evolves through being done. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida has also acknowledged that writing is a thoroughly organic process, that you do not know what you will have written until you have written it, that the writing is a process by which you work out what you are going to write, a process which resists prediction, no matter how resolved a writer may be to say something in particular or to put a case across to the reader with precise objectives.

The process of creating artworks is inclined to be inscrutable. A witness or helper (or supervisor) has access to a certain insight but no more. He or she works basically from the outcomes of the artist, pointing out faults of a stylistic kind or opportunities to clinch expressive potential or embarrassments with subject-matter, handling of materials or any number of taste problems. All of this may be highly subjective; but the way nevertheless lies open for the artist and confidant to have frank discussions about numerous decisions that the artist has taken. Where the confidant cannot actually penetrate is in the gestation of an artistic idea. This comes from the artist who is already engaged in working with a medium.

In music, for example, a composition can be praised or criticized on all manner of grounds with a degree of transparency; but the formulation of a melody—supposing that the music is melodic—occurs in a 'black box'. Once the melody has been written, the learned listener can suggest that its rhapsodic character would be suited to symphonic form; another might say that its intimate character would be suited to piano; another might suggest that the oscillation of contrapuntal writing and melodic line would be ideal for string quartet. These judgements are all undoubtedly justified in some way and may each lead to a productive decision with the melody itself. While the comments do not directly interfere with the structure of the melody, they may suggest a direction in which to develop the melody. The suggested idea of embracing a quartet-form could cause the composer to add various inflexions to the melodic flow which would in effect change the whole character of the melody.

All of this is a method. It is not a very systematic method; but its shagginess is functional. It is a bit like trial and error in which the trials are almost random (or certainly not subject to consistent or systematic design) and the errors are only evaluated subjectively. Stronger definition of the trial and error may result in a less creative ethos. One has no idea what goes through a composer's head when he or she is formulating melodies. You do not have privileges of access. And the composer may not be able to elucidate what happens. The parts that you might have access to are the adjustments. Obviously these lie toward the end of the creative process.

What stages are there in the creative process? The attempt to sketch them is possibly a little forlorn in advance, for the advent and processing of ideas appear to be inscrutably organic and to occur within time-frames which cannot be properly described. It may nevertheless be useful to distinguish a number of phases of creation—all of which are contiguous and present generous overlap—not for the sake of establishing a systematic chain but to indicate just how interpenetrating the stages are. You could, for argument's sake, distinguish between four cs: (i) context, (ii) creation, (iii) correction and (iv) criticism.

Beginnings are very exciting. Creation is often expressed at its most heroic when a blank canvas is imagined.

The context would be understood here not just as the passive vessel of an artist's ambience but it involves the artist's penetration of present circumstances, an inquiry within a tradition or current of change. This engagement ought to involve a literature search; it may be, or should be, inspiring, supplying the mind with potential content.

The creation is clearly the phase of doing; but some part of the doing has already been done before the work has begun, because an idea to do the work had already occurred. Beginnings are very exciting. Creation is often expressed at its most heroic when a blank canvas is imagined. Thus, to indulge in a Biblical excursion, God's creation took place 'in the beginning', presupposing that there was nothing before that time. In the western imagination (and there are plenty of Pagan counterparts), this is the radical or original creations. But even with that most monumental of creations—when there was no light and dark, no land and water and so on—you would have to say that there was a context, a context consisting of two elements, namely chaos and God.

If we can step away from this original heroism, creation should perhaps not be thought of as isolated from the process of negative feedback and therefore correction. Corrective measures are integral to the process of making, in which the conceptual or perceptual work is constantly being revised or massaged according to what the artist sees in the artwork being created. All drawing and designing, not just the finishing touches, are full of the spirit of revision. You are constantly putting up forms and gestures, only to knock them down again when you see that they do not serve what you had intended. The making of art looks more inspired when you are not the person making it. When you are *in the thick of it*, the labour is often almost humiliating. It is a trial of reshapings, unmakings, a trap of amendments, provisional marks which are provisionally altered. The labour of judgement often labours very hard at wiping out the work that you have already put in. Some styles, we could add, fetishize this corrective paradigm. Works are often left deliberately scruffy, revealing all the corrective stages which in some sense aesthetically authorize the result with the evidence of agonized struggle.

Clearly criticism is related to this, though criticism does not normally take place within the rectangle or the time-frame of the artwork. It is normally *post-facto* and not from yourself. It is the external influence, the judgement of other people (preferably authoritative people). You are expected to respond to criticism, either by (i) justifying—or attempting to justify—the work under criticism when you feel your directions are defensible, (ii) altering the work being criticized when the criticisms seem valid and (iii) acknowledging the criticisms and keeping them in mind for further work.

The last may sound equivocal but remains a strong and necessary strategy in many instances. But nor is it simple. First, the criticism may not be wholly intelligible to you. It may seem to have hidden depth; you scramble to understand it and ask questions but you find it difficult to distil the message toward a practical outcome. Second, you may have a good idea that the criticism is valid and a good appreciation of what it implies for your work; but you may also feel that your work has been realized to a point that it will be inefficient to change it radically: it would be better to have the work stand in its current form and later to generate another work (informed by the criticism) with which to compare it. Third, you are not sure of the validity of the criticism. It would be necessary to test the suggested changes without corrupting what work you have already done. It is too risky to rely on the advice and effectively scrap a secure achievement for the benefit of a dubiously achievable change. Prudence suggests keeping the ideas in mind, coping with their content but not overreacting. Prudence also recommends being cautious in mounting defences. Rejoinders and refutations make a heroic impression, but a researcher is not a warrior. Polemics tend to lock you into a position which is potentially incurious and even dogmatic. Besides, you can waste a lot of time and adrenalin getting back at people for saying things that seem discrediting to no one but yourself. In art, the air is often thick with imaginary discouragement.

Much criticism is unhelpful and could be destructive. As artists, we have already developed a thick skin. Just because you are now doing work in a forum that encourages criticism, you do not have to make yourself especially vulnerable or submissive to criticism, just as you do not need to feel that everything you do must be justified.

Criticism comes from nowhere and all quarters at once. For months, no one seems to say anything; then, sometimes unsolicited views are expressed which are quite demoralizing. Much criticism is unhelpful and could be destructive. As artists, we have already developed a thick skin. Just because you are now doing work in a forum that encourages criticism, you do not have to make yourself especially vulnerable or submissive to criticism, just as you do not need to feel that everything you do must be justified. You keep space around your practice for your private mysteries, for the elasticity of your imagination and the rightness of your own development. Challenge is better entertained in your own time and absorbed without feeling an urgency to respond. There is a productive comfort in feeling free to be gracious and a bit inscrutable.

There are issues of judgement in this which are also very tricky. Many academics would not agree with the advice above, feeling that all art students typically take care of criticism by filing it in a cloud of possible future works. They avoid confronting the difficult questions by shunting the embarrassing criticisms into the deferred context of potential works. They shirk the awkward call upon them to fix the manifest shortcomings of their work. It is another excuse for not doing things better. Students perpetually escape from doing the necessary remedial repairs to their works beneath a curtain of vague promises. Lecturers get frustrated. They want to make an immediate impact. They think that they know what to do. And maybe they do. But the student also has a right to frustrate them. You are not doing it to be bloody-minded. If you need time to think about the opinions and to change if and when you feel like it, it is the lecturer's problem and it will need a little negotiation.

For all this, criticism definitely does feed back into the creative process. Artists who go for years without the benefit of criticism often atrophy and lose interest altogether. Criticism contributes to our understanding of the receptive context, that concept that we considered at the outset as the framework within which the work is initially formulated.

CHAPTER 3.7

HAVING A QUESTION
WHY WOULD YOU NEED ONE?

A wonderful Jewish joke goes like this. Sarah, noticing an annoying habit of her friend, asks: 'Jacob, why do you always answer a question with another question?' To which Jacob almost predictably replies: 'why not?' It is a most amusing story but also somehow telling. It presupposes frustration on the part of the person initiating the question, because anyone who asks a question wants closure in return. Instead of providing an answer, Jacob provides a kind of banter. It is open. He answers by not answering or at least deferring the answer for a further question. For him, this is habitual. And maybe not for pedagogical ends, as when we patronize children with oblique or bounce-back answers. A child may ask: What are seven eights? And you respond: okay, so what do you think they make? In this routine, the child does not get what he or she wants—namely the answer—but rather an unwelcome invitation to work it out for himself or herself.

The economical and sardonic Jewish parable makes me think of the consequence in our context. Why would you need a research question? Well, why would you not have a research question? After all, this is the great default of research: we do not know; we ask and then seek answers. Would there ever be a reason why you would want research to lack a focus, a specific zone of inquiry that can be described as a question? Artists, too, assume that there is always a need for a research question if they are doing research.[82]

It seems obvious in all fields of research but ours. In our context, however, answers are the question; though it does not work in reverse. How nice it would be to say: the question is the answer, as if framing and posing a question constituted its own response and hence an infallible fulfillment! Alas, this does not follow. Our problem is simply that the status of answers is questionable; and it follows that the status of questions is artificial.

What is an answer? It is a claim presumed to be true in response to a question. In fact, at least in our field, it is just a response—a riposte, a view—and is unlikely to be more than that. In our field, it is never likely to be absolute, as of mathematics. An answer in our field is ever so slightly a swindle. It presumes a question for which it is the fulfillment. If you have information or a belief, you ask the question that calls for what you intend to deliver as the answer; and this circular invention of

82 This is assumed in Lesley Duxbury, Elizabeth M. Grierson and Dianne Waite, eds, *Thinking through practice: Art as research in the academy*, RMIT Publishing, Melbourne 2007, e.g.: 'All artists have reasons for the ways that they go about their practice but the artist-researcher is a conscious practitioner who sets out to realise an objective that has been defined in accordance with the question to be answered, for as with all research, the research question is central to the creative project. "A research question may enquire into a problem to be solved; a creative opportunity to be explored or exploited; or an issue to be examined, whether any of these be technical, procedural, philosophical, theoretical, or historical." So, Timothy Emlyn Jones sets out some of the ways a research question might be addressed and it is no different for the creative artist. The artist-researchers in the School of Art [at RMIT] answer their research questions through the making of artwork and reveal the processes leading to the formation of an answer in both visual and textual formats', p. 10.

artificial questions for prefabricated answers is rhetorical and ultimately incurious. While much imagination might be engaged in hatching relations between what you already know and deviously setting up decoys so as not to bring attention to your disingenuity, it is also unpoetic and finally discrediting.

We like questions and we take part in the culture of questions. Research, we know, must be inquiry. And for some, the quest naturally defaults to a set of questions. How did the lay commoners understand Shakespeare? What is the common origin of Indo-European language? What cures are there against degenerative skin diseases? Why does bread go stale? Why are there no machines in nineteenth-century art?

The neighbouring discipline of history (the history of art, music, literature, performance and dance) is full of questions. There are questions of periodization, connoisseurship, identification of authorship (a taxing and urgent question of whose is it? around which a lot of prestige and money may be at stake). Then there are questions of iconography: what do certain symbols and subject matter mean? There are questions of iconology: why do certain themes come about in certain epochs? And finally, there are questions from social theory, gender studies, readings in class and ethnicity. Somehow they all implicitly include the question of why you would want to know.

Studio is not question-based. ..studio method relies on the artist exercising his or her abilities in pursuit of a vision.

To each of these wonderful questions lies a potentially scintillating thesis. Each question calls for a hypothesis. An explanation is proposed for each definable aspect of the hypothesis. Support is sought by gathering information, authorities and arguments. The case is put coherently: the collective explanations are gathered so that the central thesis is systematically unfolded. The structure of such essays is always analytical. Causes are identified. The investigation adds to the stock of knowledge.

Clearly this scenario has great appeal. It has momentum and authority.

Formulating appropriate questions is an ancient paradigm, a venerable route for wisdom. At the end of it, as in science, we have a procedure that yields answers: something tangible is achieved, histories written, views cast. In many ways it is utterly beguiling, because there is also a narrative vein running through the quest and leading to clarity.

As the studio is richly preceded by past art, analytical questions appropriate to art or music history can be transferred to the studio. But there is a danger. Studio is not question-based. Of course if you are analytical, everything can be turned into a question (why do I do this?). But studio method relies on the artist exercising his or her abilities in pursuit of a vision. The vision might be argumentatively unimpressive—maybe not exactly dumb—but it seems prudent and reasonable to 'ask questions later'. In seeking the answer to a question or even identifying a question, the abilities of the artist will be limited. And for the final analysis, questions of an analytical nature are useless in the really high stakes of inspiration; because questions will not augment your talent.

Questions are clearly useful in respecting the world in art as in research; but it depends on what kind of question. There must also be an etiquette of asking which is congruent with the kind of idiosyncratic wonder that goes with an artistic temperament. So what method creates a code of useful questions (which are vast, disparate and arise chaotically) such that they are answerable, somehow, and not merely rhetorical or circular or platitudinous?

Rather than having a monumental question (against which 'the thesis' musters several analytical details in a coherent hierarchy of information) the studio generates what I think of as rhizomatic questionettes. They are not exactly incidental (because they may be integral to the wonder that goes with the inspirational) but there is no superintending structure, capped by a final question, that subtends them. They resist being summed up. Our questionettes are mostly related to the infinite

and devious relation between subject matter and form—an eternal quest rather than question—which evaluates how choices of presentation affect the latent meaning in the subject matter. Every artist, musician, dancer, writer and film maker shares this rhizome of wonder and hunches, charged with unreasonable energy, that amounts to nothing but the art work and further questions. If there is one absolute in this farrago of questionettes, it is that there is absolutely no closure.

With the helpful attendance of analytical verbal language, it occurs to us to inquire: which are the good questions to ask? There is definitely some unease about this, partly through the pressure of an academic context. Institutions with the liberality to recognize the prolific tumble of questionettes nevertheless risk some hypocrisy to declare the research in terms of a topic. A broad-minded university like Monash asks you, through the very proposal that you need to submit for admission to its Masters or PhD program, to state your topic. This is implicitly to require a specific research question. I am looking at... I am investigating... This may not be restrictive and may not require a question either but could be interpreted (as most candidates do) as a general area in which work will be undertaken. But it is always more specific than just 'landscape' or 'the body': what you will do with the genre or subject matter, what focus, what impact?

Any topic—construed as subject matter—is likely to shift according to the success or failure of the work-in-progress. A deeper critique of the process may put pressure on the very idea of a topic, which is liable to become a bit artificial. Our topic is often process itself, rather than subject matter traditionally defined.

The institutional demands are reasonable but rankling. The topic is art, myself and the observer. Any topic—construed as subject matter—is likely to shift according to the success or failure of the work-in-progress. A deeper critique of the process may put pressure on the very idea of a topic, which is liable to become a bit artificial. Our topic is often process itself, rather than subject matter traditionally defined. The topic is unlikely to be flower painting but what can I do with painting. Still less is the topic flowers, though this could be an accurate way of describing the subject matter *qua* iconography. The degree of abstraction or synthesis which the iconography undergoes seems to add credibility, rightly or wrongly, to the idea of a topic.

Lest we plunge headlong into the conceited absolutes of abstraction, I would rather posit the end of this trajectory of inquiry with the artist himself or herself. I am the question. Given my aptitudes, my history, my affections for Dogsbody, my propensity to read whatever and play whatever music, what should I do? How might I clinch the potential in me? Practical questions. What should I steer clear of? Whom should I look to or whose work should I consider (even if not identify with)? What directions should I take?

Then there are ancillary questions which it deserve a prudent eye. How compelling are the efforts to date? How is your genre travelling? Who is supporting it with useful discourse? What are the themes of today? Who is achieving big things in it currently? If no one can be named, do you mind? How do you reconcile what you do with the hearts and minds of the scene? I would never be ashamed of this pragmatism. Even opportunism, suitably defined, can be research. How can I get some of the action? It is a legitimate question. And so why would it not also be a legitimate research question, entailing an investigation (a) of the key themes, outlook and voice of one's age and (b) a critical evaluation of ambient discourses. The practical evaluation of abilities to absorb or disavow, thence gain the high moral ground is fertile consciousness-raising material, which is answered in the creative work.

So we consider the uncanny return of the research question. In what pocket of creative production do I make an original contribution? How do I answer the impasse that my kind of thing has already been done, as when Cézanne or Brahms seems to have done it 120 years ago? Why would it be significant to be revisiting this kind of work this year? Hence what are the new ideas?

This question can also return in the most trivial guises. Having a research question is no guarantee of a compelling research program. An artist could say: yes, I'm repeating what Cézanne did but instead of using apples as the motif, I'm updating his formalist questions using cell phones and iPods. This artistic question errs to the frivolous. Logical reasons for doing images do not necessarily make strong art; and the temptation to go for an identifiable question can easily corrupt artistic integrity.

Our business with art and music, creative writing and movement, is to deinstitutionalize questions. It is to return to what questions are really about, namely a quest. In art, we naturally chase things. And though after 2000 years of institutional abstraction, you can still see—via the Latin etymology—that the deeper root of the word question belongs to desire and will: it involves a seeking, a lust for a desired outcome. The root in Latin (*quaeso*, I seek, search for, ask) always includes the concept of soliciting knowledge. But it also suggests a hankering, an arduous wanting, which is not purely intellectual. The word is somewhat confounded with another Latin conception of similar sound and related meaning (*queror*, I complain, I move dissatisfaction) and it is sometimes hard to disentangle the derivatives, such as inquire, conquer, inquire, acquire.

Both words have a juridical timbre, as they apply to contested claims, inquisitions, disquisitions, inquiries. And because they were useful to express the judgement of authority in settling claims and complaint (often using torture in the attempt to extract the truth from felons and victims), their meaning was somewhat hijacked, and for a very long time. But I fancy that the original sentiment survives in derivatives such as the English 'quest' or 'acquire' and the Spanish *querer*, meaning to love or to want strongly: I love you (*te quiero*).

The distinction also arises in Greek, where the technical academic word for question is a form of inquiry (ζητησις) while the practical word for asking something is (ερωτησις). It is even possible that there is a connexion between the direct question and love (ερως). The distinction might otherwise be compared with the French and Italian alternatives: the academic style of question—as of an inquiry—is like the English word (*la question, la questione*) while the activity of asking has a much more urgent and imperative tenor (*demander, domandare*). Not as inviting as love but in all events passionate and compelling!

The idea of artists needing to have a research question is irksome unless the very idea of a question is understood in such liberal and passionate terms. If the research question is the quest for better art, deinstitutionalized and loosened from the framework of systematic inquiry, well and good! But the thought that an artistic project needs to be shackled to an empirical knowledge-search, with implicit answers, strikes me as somewhat contrary to art and our very faculty of asking questions of everything, even if they do not amount to an answer.

CHAPTER 3.8

RESEARCH IN DESIGN AND THE DESIGN OF RESEARCH

With design, so often associated with the tangible regimes of manufacture, we enter the borderless. There is no limit to the activity of design, from the development of a timetable to the layout of a city. Design comprises multifarious disciplines: industrial design, an outgrowth of craft batch production, graphic design, an outgrowth of pictorial and typographic traditions but in print media; then there are the thoroughly established and ancient disciplines, like architecture, which is forms the context and basis of art, deeply rooted in glamorous constructs of art history, which includes garden design, landscape architecture and town planning. There are more recent forms of design, best known as multimedia, the hybrid outgrowth of photography, graphic design and library, book or archive, in which information and interactivity is organized in sequences, imagery, sound and text.

To complicate this spread, the fields are all by nature interdisciplinary. Not only do many straddle fine arts, such as architecture, decorative arts and photography (and also film) but they all have contingencies in the social sciences, where modes of living are investigated and the designer's vision meshes with, or grows out of, an apprehension or intuition of how activities might better be served or realized.

Wherever disciplines are brought together, there is tension; and so it is with design. Photography, for example, is highly schismatic in the educational system, either erring to 'fine art' or 'design', with the same lens activity being pursued with apparently irreconcilable objectives and methods by two different creative constituencies. Cameras are a most contested piece of equipment. There is no end to the polemics over what a camera might do, either as an investigative tool or a method for projecting messages of a persuasive kind. The intentions encompass the highest regions of artistic speculation and the vulgar depths of popular media, engorged with capital and prolific in florid pornography. Perhaps no different to words, which swing with unseasonable ease between majesty and filth.

Design is historically an intimate partner of the fine arts, in fact historically inseparable from the fine arts. Design was undertaken by artists (think Brunelleschi, da Maiano, Michelozzo, Michelangelo, Raphael, Bernini) and for most of history the separation of the two—artist and designer—is nowhere in evidence. The same person performed both jobs, presumably because both presupposed an understanding of scale drawing and the only training available was the studio preparation for being an artist, such as sculptor, painter, goldsmith and so on.[83] And it makes a lot of sense. The methods of conditioning space with cultural meaning, historically based on drawing, are shared; and the project of the one is still generally dependent on that of the other.

83 For a discussion on the role of artist an architect in the Renaissaince, see the monumental study by Richard Goldthwaite, *The building of Renaissance Florence*, Johns Hopkins, Baltimore and London 1980, especially pp. 90-112.

It is a suitable time to extend some of the speculations to all cultural production, including music and theatre. It is all based on ideas of what is good for us, constituting a highly ethical domain of aesthetics. It is for that reason inherently theory-rich, especially in architectural discourse, also borrowing from social theory. In fields where decisions must be made on behalf of other people, the art is tied to policy, economic agendas, social priorities; it is never neutral. Like art, it embodies values and may be criticized accordingly, as associations (of class, gender) and imagery lay the bed for semiotic contestation.

Design necessarily lies within the economic domain. There are other arts that are hugely tied to capital—such as film—upon which many livelihoods depend in a single undertaking. But the scope of a film is limited to the cinema or the broadcast; it is not a medium by which people live or conduct business and life, as with a computer, a baby capsule or a fire escape. Unlike fine art and music, design is (a) integral with living in an almost involuntary way and (b) historically tied to capital and private or corporate interest. Design can seldom express ideology other than mainstream ideology, unless at the margins of the economy, as with counterculture. And even with counterculture, the plurality of design depends on the plurality and self-determination of capital. By nature, money is centralizing; and hence the independence of design is fragile.

Unlike fine art and music, design is (a) integral with living in an almost involuntary way and (b) historically tied to capital and private or corporate interest.

Maybe discussion on design is shy because of the spectre of market determinism. Industry cultivates design on the basis of likely sales, not for critique or speculation. Design enjoys an imaginative life but somewhat within the parameters of risk management. Creative autonomy, as of fine art, tends to be induced artificially upon the field by myth, and for the sake of prestige. The dictatorship of the market seems absolute, even for countercultural niches.

In turn, this explains why design is a field of empiricists. In scholarship in design, the flavours are chaste, even bland; and sometimes, contributions to the area are only accepted when accompanied by charts and tables that provide quantitative evidence around which an argument cautiously represents a view. The united disciplines of design are overwritten by material factors; and the mechanisms operating within practice logically spill into the discourse surrounding it. In design processes, each stage is analysed for cost/benefit within the business. Design is integrally linked to investment. It goes with market research, safety provisions, legality, ease of production, packaging, distribution, assembly, image control and exclusivity. All can be quantified in design research, including image, with limitless surveys and statistics.

Just because a field is empirical, it does not mean that it is therefore free of methodological pitfalls. Demand revealed in statistics may be for socially retrograde products, which brings into play a whole crisis in ethics. For example, you might be designing a mobile phone (cell phone) for children. Parents may or may not want them but children, once advised that another toy is within reach, probably do. So there is demand. They can be sold on the basis that they provide parents with added security, the emotional and physical certainties of staying in touch, which everyone craves. If the child is in trouble it can call for help. You could advertise the benefits persuasively, with the implication that it is almost derelict not to provide your child with a mobile phone.

But then the phone, now considered a necessity, supplies parents with further tools to handle anxiety, in effect presupposing an escalation in anxiety and technologically cementing anxiety. Where once you left your child with suitable carers at school on the basis that the child was safe, you now have a tool to assure you that a disaster could happen at any time; and the tool for reassurance creates anxious dependency, a sophisticated instrument for acculturating and normalizing anxiety. Anxiety sells: it is much exploited. So there is an ethical dilemma in the design and production of such devices and their dissemination by means of advertising. By and large designers look at such

arguments but restrict themselves to the design of the phone and let others argue about the rights and wrongs of it. Especially if the market, ostensibly, is the only arbiter! The motif of people 'voting with their feet' or with their dollars is apparently persuasive. The designer can fall back upon good democratic liberalism and argue that parents know best and the epidemic of child cell-phones is clearly a social boon.

This spectre of market determinism is unfortunate, as behaviour is not uniquely determined by markets and never will be. There is also legislation and other 'patronizing' strategies according to free-marketeers. Further, there is a large amount of design belonging to government or semi-public organizations and agencies, where designers create systems and templates for access to information. Graphic design, for example, is by no means limited to advertising (though it is powerfully associated with the industry of persuasion) but equally operates in the design of books, tax forms, railway maps and ticketing systems. There is no end to it, for the design content can extend to the system of which the graphics are the vehicle, in the scheme that Richard Buchanan has characterized as 'fourth order design'.[84]

For many areas of design, the same principles apply as with any other art. Methods of making always dictate aspects of visual or haptic or spatial or sonic language. It is similar to fine art: you invent different forms, hatch the mode of construction and seek a logic between surface and structure.

Still, even in these higher reaches of the field, design researchers love case studies. And this also follows a motif born from marketing. You assiduously map the successes, as these suggest avenues of further success. Commercial prudence recommends this; though it is hardly visionary. Methodological pitfalls, as in any discipline, abound. The analysis of contributing factors is limited by what you look for; and these aspirations (sometimes little but vanity) deserve serious critique rather than the authority of destiny.

And even within commercial parameters, there are gaps and embarrassments that make the work of researchers something less than science. Language often predetermines the result. Besides, how do you investigate with the one measure the link between dreams and hard outcomes? No instrument is so elastic. So while conceptualized in empirical terms to approach science, design research may show little progress without recognizing the high subjectivity of design. It is a highly image-driven field, difficult to mediate. Empirical methods may be used but often the key element is emotional (affections) with ideological corollaries, especially surrounding lifestyle and chic. Fashion, for example, which engages the wits of some mighty creative people, is bad subject matter for science. In its structure, it is highly arbitrary, as in the preference for wide ties during one decade in vehement repudiation of the thin ties of the previous decade. To make sense of the chaotic variables of design, the researcher has to be attuned to associations of disorderly complexity, as with age, sex, income and background, but also historical movements and moods that seem to stamp our epoch in contradistinction from another.

For many areas of design, the same principles apply as with any other art. Methods of making always dictate aspects of visual or haptic or spatial or sonic language. It is similar to fine art: you invent different forms, hatch the mode of construction and seek a logic between surface and structure. You recognize an image, push associations, contrive somewhat spooky links between historical forms and modernity, charging a robust archetype with an air of novelty. To do this, you perform trials in numerous stages, many prototypes; you settle on a form worthy of investment. And in spite of all academic indoctrination—forever demanding rigorous planning—this may occur before, during or

84 Buchanan's taxonomy is elegant. First order design is objects for manufacture, such as a toaster. Second order design would be the images created for the proliferation of this object, say a poster, which is a less material incarnation of the toaster. Third order design would be the design created toward the assembly of an article, as in the layout of a factory. And fourth order design lies with modes of intelligence, information organization and transfer and their systems (e.g. tax). See his keynote address at FUTUREGROUND, Melbourne 2005; and also

after market research.

When we design, we make methods. Research in design could just as easily challenge the various deterministic scenarios—all assuming the self-sufficiency of technological or image paradigms—as accept them. You look at the object to which you want to contribute (like the genre of music or painting) and the social and personal circumstances likely to impress you toward the bias that you come up with. You ultimately express the potential genius of the object relative to constructs of identity; and hence you defy all senses of the absolute. There is no absolute chair, as discussed earlier, but any number of chairs, even when the design is the same. The phenomenology of the object, the memory surrounding it and our fantasy, operate on each object in every circumstance. This can only be recognized in evocative frameworks.

I would love to read more writing in design which is about experience, stories, other circumstances. To contemplate a new start with objects (or images) via an exploration of memories, appearance and logic of the object in the researcher's experience would enliven the field currently overwritten by empiricists. I would rather we seek the subjective thrill, the element of inspiration in discourse, the imaginary life of the object. Our emotional connectedness to a given object reveals how the object becomes intelligible and meaningful. It is not just a case of what was designed but what was encountered; and some aspects are coincidental while others are telling, possibly full of ideology or twisted aspirations, all of which, when recognized, yield a more complete analysis.

Research in design has to be written in parts because it needs to be all of these: it must recognize the technical, the technological, the rational steps. It has to be statistical, analytical with market trends. But it also has to contemplate the social, the ideological, the ethical; and therefore it has to be critical. Further, design research must embrace the poetic; it needs to contact the psychological, with sundry emotional associations; it needs to contact the phenomenological and the imaginative. And all of this before we get to the aesthetic, that eternal discourse about the beauty of form.

The writing in this liberal and inclusive vein will be cognate with invention. As in any creative field, one can forge a body of writing in sync with the imaginative work of design. This yields insights, suggestions, humour, a levity which is as useful in the studio as it is within the text. As in all arts, we want to mirror intellectual sympathies and create new ones toward an innovative view and an innovative new reality. There is no need to promote discourse as a means to further design practice; because the discourse is inherently there in design projects. It is only a question of the richness of the discourse and perhaps appreciating that design begins with consciousness. Research in design, just as in the other creative arts, has to go there.

CHAPTER 3.9

ART AND INQUIRY
MODES AND CODES OF MAKING AND RESEARCHING

Method in other disciplines is not without stages of copious making. In engineering, for example, the researcher may go so far as to build a miniature pulp mill to conduct the science. The creative arts distinguish themselves from other forms of research as much by their ends as than their means; nevertheless, our methods engage the motif of making in a unique way. It may be helpful to compare our habits of making with those of the traditional research disciplines.

Scientific method proceeds by hypothesis. The hypothesis may arrive by observation, conjecture or reasoning from principles. You then experiment, assay the idea with a process of testing, predicated on reproducibility. This yields results, establishing new knowledge or refuting old theories. The social sciences, by contrast, use a somewhat more passive form of data collection, proposing taxonomic frameworks, often doing some modeling and in all events handling a vast array of variables. Finally the humanities used to be seen as situated at the extreme end, neither built around experiment nor modeling but argument, the analysis of meaning and values in cultural production, and arriving at theory.

In all of these, correlation is Queen of insights. The interpretation of phenomena centres on relating data to factors. Identifying character and causes is the *summum bonum*, described as new knowledge and gained either through new data sets, archives or imaginative connexions. Post-structuralist discourses never unsettle the canonical aspiration to plausibility, even if in self-reflexive language with revisionist values.

All of the methods in all disciplines are prone to error or flaws. High among them, especially in the social sciences and epidemiological studies, is the failure to distinguish adequately between cause and effect. You can also be asking the wrong question of the data. You could be excluding or ignoring salient evidence (looking in the wrong place) or prejudicing the outcome by the design (the 'leading question' syndrome) of the experiment or survey instrument. In the humanities, you could encounter failure to deconstruct the ideological assumptions in the rhetoric of your subject text and interpret the work uncritically.

All of these present analogies to the creative arts. The scientific parallels are tempting, because in the arts, we certainly engage an empirical element (as in studio work) and equally operate by hunches, which up to a point we test and challenge. Our work here tends to be non-reproducible, unless perhaps in design. Parallels to the social sciences are also tempting: as we so often engage in representation, we perform a kind of schematic modelling of untold variables, and consequently conduct a search for norms, archetypes, generalizations. Finally, the humanities, especially

from post-structuralism onward, have direct appeal. Their deconstructive investigation of values in cultural production yields a speculative and dialectical outcome, contesting the basis of generalizations, especially in art, music and literature.

Take perceptual painting. It has a curious relationship to scientific modes of understanding in building a picture according to ocular reality. For centuries, systematic options have been available for transcribing 3D to 2D, which have been discussed by writers like David Hockney, better known as a painter. There are lenses, grids, photography and measurement, all with a basis in the physics of light and the geometry of spatial relationships. Alas, they all have shortcomings of one kind or another. They render the world with implications of a position in perspective, a master viewpoint, which denies the infinite multiplicity, the mutating relativity, of the way we see. For the perceptual painter, the mechanical options are all rejected in favour of the organic expression of seeing, relative to feeling, your somatic existence, with all its movement, contingencies, ambient atmosphere and accidents. For the perceptual painter, painting is the act of finding out what the body's relationship to the motif might be, and above all how the painting can be wrestled into some conformity with the intelligence that the motif gives to the painter, squared with the potential of the painting itself to condition the perception.

Unlike a gridded cone for gazing at the world—with a diaphane of measurement determining the placement of detail—the multiple pathways of perception trace the will to see, the lust to connect things in the process of finding a personal relationship to the motif.

It is hard to maintain but worth it for its ontological corollaries: the painting by this method becomes a post-Cartesian assertion of the dignity of an individual's unique experience. It celebrates the erratic wholeness by which intelligence of the world arrives in almost coincidental pathways, to be systematized by the desire to live the experience meaningfully. Unlike a gridded cone for gazing at the world—with a diaphane of measurement determining the placement of detail—the multiple pathways of perception trace the will to see, the lust to connect things in the process of finding a personal relationship to the motif. This process-oriented method thus brings into the logically descriptive an element of subjectivity.

Subjectivity may easily be annihilated by the methods of other disciplines. What is considered a weakness among other disciplines is necessary for ours (the creative arts), where it is also important in design. It causes us to identify with discursive disciplines sympathetic to the worth of the individual voice. We have a consequent bias toward the humanities—which love to handle art, literature and music—in an engagement with values, and with a recognition of semantic relativity.

Good method in art could be summed up as the appropriate handling of subjectivity. It is not an asylum for the insular, where the individual retreats in the hope of never encountering a reality beyond. But subjectivity is not easy to socialize as research. It is not unilaterally good stuff, either, but potentially exclusive, prejudiced and totalizing. For example, subjectivity is difficult to countenance when it reveals the ideologically repugnant (like racism). Subjectivity is unfortunate when incurious, when not taking stock of facts, previous work in the genre, criticism and speculation. And it is also vulnerable to scruples over the same. It is unhappily compromised when doctrinal attachments efface the imaginative preconditions of subjectivity, when the terms of inquiry are overwritten with external authority; and this can sometimes be suspected when you sense that the work is excessively bookish.

Although we lack a simple code of method such as prevails in science, there are modes of conducting the work. Part of our knowledge of method arises through the suspected flaws in whichever art. You notice it when form and content are at variance, when there is an inconsistency or lack of integrity in the output. You notice it when technique or the manner hijacks the imagery, inappropriately arrogating symbolic codes because the technique enables it. You notice it when the content is self-

sufficient but merely achieves closure, when the relative is shackled to the absolute, and the result seems incurious or unconducive to wonder. You notice it when content is based on platitudes (relating obvious things) or is psychically or morally trivial. And this is all before the horror of recognizing that the style or content purveys retrograde values.

In every art or music academy or even newpaper, there is a panorama of pejoratives that attest to this. Work is accused of being bombastic, imposing without justification. It is patronizing, arrogant, incurious, ignorant, dumb. Or it is mawkish, indulgent, narcissistic, self-absorbed, big-headed, gloating, egotistical, self-centred. Elsewhere it is accused of being unoriginal, derivative, hackneyed, clichéd. Or worse, it is held to be reactionary, chauvinist, discriminatory in its connotations. In short, these insults belong in the orbit of what used to be called bad taste: offending norms for arbitrary reasons.

If in other disciplines, correlations may be the supreme goal. In the creative arts, such correlations are set somewhat more inscrutably in consciousness. To pursue the analogy, the artist and the things that he or she can do present as the prime data set. The form and content of the work relate to the artist's imaginative potential. They constitute an exploration of inventive possibilities, given the constraints of upbringing and circumstance that always confine the artist, no matter how ambitious, to the consciousness that he or she is likely to have and upon which any new idea may be grafted. Judgements of good and bad method are made in the context of the artist's make-up, disposition, training and cultural capital.

Risks abound. Unlike in some other disciplines, there is a massive risk of prejudice: the critique of method is based on knowing a person (you). It is perhaps analogous to the methodological perils of psychiatric theory, bound up in chosen metaphors, images, scenarios and language. They are not arbitrary but not well mediated either. Objectivity is impossible; hence it sometimes appears as the antithesis of method. But there is something reassuring about the way other disciplines handle this potential embarrassment. Consider theology. For centuries of theologians, knowing divinity comprehensively is impossible and arrogant: you know God, but as faith, not science. You also acknowledge mystery, the sacramental element, and express this through enigma, as St Paul says.[85] This necessary modesty does not prevent grandiose scholarship, the apparently exhaustive collation of sources, opinion and conjecture. Orthodoxy—appealing to an absolute text—does not preclude multiple readings, debate and dissent.

The creative arts and scholarship are ideal bedfellows, not surprisingly, as both are imaginative forms of cultural production. They involve a profession of faith but elevated through a referenced grid of contributions, which we earlier called socialized knowledge. It is imaginative work (engendering cultural significance) and is always heightened with discursive vigour, whence it is more readily identified as a contribution to culture. It is not a big step to recognize that the artistic self can be valorized as the legitimate subject of research.

85 This is the Greek word for Paul's famous expression 'as through a glass darkly', .

CHAPTER 3.10

PROCESS
THE MACHINE IN THE GHOST

For artists, a focus on process may be pedantic, mechanistic or deliriously inspiring. In chapter 3.6 we contemplated some stages or dimensions in the four cs, (i) context, (ii) creation, (iii) correction and (iv) criticism. We also diligently paid attention to models from the earlier chapter 3.4, with its surveying, problemmatizing, theorizing, gathering, arguing. But our conclusion with all of these ways of separating stages is that they are emphatically linked in an energetic organic continuum, else arbitrarily separated and wooden. They are not a sequence, perhaps not even capable of being separated qualitatively.

In all the arts, approaches vary as much as resources do. But you can recognize patterns in the processes and the results. It occurred to me that you could draw up a table schematically representing the approaches along two axes, creating a matrix of four categories. On the top left hand corner you have artists who are thematically sophisticated and technically sophisticated. To the upper right, you have artists who are thematically sophisticated but technically unsophisticated. On the bottom left, you have artists who are thematically unsophisticated but technically sophisticated; and on the bottom right, you have artists who are thematically unsophisticated and technically unsophisticated. Notionally, there is maximum prestige in the top left hand corner and minimum prestige in the bottom right hand corner. Looking at the other diagonal, the respective prestige of top right and bottom left remain in epochal contestation, with tribal affinities going to the instinctual painters (bottom left, somewhat rear guard) and avant garde sympathies favouring the top right.

Many artists are candid enough to place themselves in the flanks of the matrix; though none would place themselves in the bottom right, unless they considered themselves as losers and about to give up. But it always makes me wonder how much we set out with the intention to be in one box or another—and determine ambitiously to remain recognized there—or how much we can relax and shift ourselves on the matrix for gaining optimum inspiration. Our intentions seem sometimes to be our worst enemy.

Intentions vary in their permeability. You can hit upon idea, lock it in with technique and carry it out, impervious to argument, even when the arguments might be close to the project and could augment its appeal. Or you could hit upon a technique, somehow subsume the idea in technique, and churn out product. Better, however, you could hold ideas provisionally, remain adaptable to stimuli, ambient thought, art, music and reading. Of course this risks inconsistent output, a kind of chameleon syndrome in which the practitioner is subject to the vicissitudes of the surrounding impulses. Chopping and changing in attachment between provisional ideas can possibly signal something under-committed; and there is potential for loss of integrity.

Ideally, you can enjoy a responsive intentionality. Intentions change by doing and are arrived at by doing. In carrying out the intention, the intention mutates. You paint a jug. You find that you need a horizon or the composition fights the pattern; you eliminate light and add colour which are neither in the jug nor the room. The intention to paint the jug is so severally inflected with a series of other intentions, each one of which assumes an almost dominant importance in the moment. Intentions are formulated as you go. The same with music or with video: circumstances are chaotic and unforeseen leads for new images and content arise. Exploitation of chance contingencies is germane to inspiration.

If artistic thinking is in the doing, by the logical symmetry of such things, it follows that doing is equally in the thinking. A shut-off mode, where the artist excludes external accidents, is useful to get projects done and to keep up the energy, free of threats; and there are clearly occasions when it is pointless to interrupt. But if theoretical content is installed in making, a somewhat healthier balance is achieved. You have no problem with the mechanistic and no need to fear any pejorative tag of the illustrative. And for that reason, all incentives lead to process-orientation, an artistic ethos associated with modernism.

Imagination comes first in all events, whether in structured processes or serendipitous ones; but its priority is not always so easily recognized from the way the creative artist organizes a project. For example, the design paradigm considered earlier may be better for some kinds of work, as with the painting of large frescos or the writing of operas in the *ancien régime*, where the work is commissioned and you do not begin until many problems have been resolved. As in the baroque, you may have an idea, work it out on paper, elaborate, square up and apply (all art involving external space). Carbon is not paint—and paper is not plaster—but the one is envisaged in the other. These several stages of realization may be remote from the inspired moment as well as the medium. It was ever thus with architecture, as when you drew features such as balusters, which then have to be realized with a process of turning that bears no relation to the marks that you draw on paper.

In many ways, the idea of process finds its antithesis in the baroque, in spite of its obvious vitality and almost convulsive energy. In fact most things were scrupulously mapped out and available to control. But maybe back then the techniques were so ingrained that a concept could be detached, deferred, rendered on paper, and then finally transferred to the other full-scale medium. Their drawings would contain the sensibility of the painting. It was not just skill but a visceral love of light, form, composition, music, always at the ready to be applied because so utterly assimilated. The concept could therefore be hatched elsewhere, agreed upon with an advisor and patron, then executed. This is still the dominant mode for realizing movies. The unity of inspiration and actualizing may be a thing of the garret, historically isolated and carrying certain bourgeois modernist assumptions.

Many artists have no choice but to respect modernist aspirations, because they belong with the genre and saturate it with expectations. During modernism, the artwork is autonomous, free of contingencies of time and place. No other stakeholders count, from the social and political or economic to family and tradition. The purity of the artist's expressive manipulation of the medium seemed a prerequisite; and the work was conceptualized unfettered by references. Hence abstraction evolved as the highest sanctity, the apotheosis of process or the self-sufficiency of means.

To be sure, there are two meanings of process in the creative arts. First, process may be seen as the methods of research: the stages followed for obtaining new cultural contribution. Second, there is what I have been calling process-orientation, a dedication to the making, that is, a deliberate focus on the medium and technique as the means by which ideas are arrived at (and inalienably contained within). The idea and the process are inseparable. You are not supposed to look for an idea that is not in the process. The first meaning of process is about selection, design and strategy; the second is about exclusion and purity.

Through a sometimes righteous profession of process-orientation, many modernist assumptions persist, irrespective of postmodernism. An example is the stigma of the illustrative. The illustrative is scorned for two reasons: first, it is identified with closure, where the communicative element to be fulfilled by the spectator is minimal; so the work has no way of recognizing or accommodating ambiguity. Second, the illustrative is dependent on literary sources, disappointing the high hopes for aesthetic and expressive autonomy. Statements seem to be sealed, prosaic, lacking immanence. They have only enjoyed an aborted evolution in the artistic process, where the thought was cut short, prematurely to clinch a one-dimensional idea, as in propaganda. These criticisms of the illustrative may sometimes be fair; but the reciprocal promotion of a self-contained and hermetic process-orientation may be no more legitimate than the literalism that it discredits.

You can appreciate the exalted enthusiasm that canonically promoted process-orientation during modernism. It seems so worthy that artists were celebrated as leaving their mark in the medium—as opposed to academic artists concealing all trace of their encounter with the medium—and thus revealing, expressing and celebrating the process of perception or construction or responses to the work itself. So the post-impressionists, fauves, expressionists, cubists, New York abstractionists deserve their heroic triumphal reputation for winning subjectivity for the artist. But then modernism also leaves little room for anecdote, allegory, sentiment, narrative. The concentration on purity of means has spiritual implications, by and large connoting transcendence of the particular, as was realized in the grandiose ethereality of abstraction.[86]

Process needs deconstruction. Process-orientation looks and sounds neutral, for it has no text, no program (and is allegorical only of the self). No ideological attachments, no allegiances seem to compromise its purity. But in fact it is highly laden with individualist prerogatives, sometimes aristocratically insular and forswearing critical connexions with the political world. It is exclusive and eliminates difference. The preserve of tasteful autonomy is achieved at the expense of social Others, a whole denial of the circumstantial.

Process discourse is still viable and art will not be viable if it is denied. It may still be the best tale in town, untainted, fine and necessary for modernist practice. And there is something admirable in the indemnity that it grants a fragile intention in need of time and confidence. It is an inviolable conceit of art, a message without a message, an urgency without a need, apt to confer upon any project an impressive clout of the experiential and the necessary, a predestined trajectory of trivial things toward great synthesized things, which is simultaneously about being in the moment. Sure, it is full of self-referential content, infallible, an unassailable tower of freedom and taste. It is especially powerful when related to perception, psychological paradigms and ontology. And it extends to being a general metaphor for the liberal spirit, all of which makes it potentially a mighty potent wank.

Process: it guards us and we guard it. However, process-orientation, the self-conscious bias toward process at the expense of the ends, does entail a risk. The biggest problem is its strength: self-referentiality. A discussion of one's process can be highly inward-looking, incurious, boring, an instrument used to mystify the innocent scrutineer. As it also indemnifies complacency and pomposity, it must be leavened with metaphor but especially references to literature and sister arts. Process-orientation will long enjoy a clean bill of health if the stages of contextualizing and surveying are embedded in the way we speak of it.

86 See Robert Nelson, *The spirit of secular art*, Monash University Press, Melbourne 2007, chapter 8.

CHAPTER 3.11

ORIGINALITY
TOO HOT TO HANDLE?

Writing comes naturally to some people more than to others. Some artists are from the outset attracted to the creative arts precisely because the creative arts are not necessarily verbal: apart from creative writing, they let you communicate without words. As noted earlier, there is suspicion about co-opting the sensory media into a written medium. There is a debate about the pre-eminence of writing versus the primacy of the sensory. This debate strikes at the very definitions of research; so we ought to go through the reasons now before advancing further into areas which presuppose agreement on the validity of writing.

The status of artists writing explanatory material about their work relates to the issue of how artistic research might distinguish itself from professional practice, the same thing that artists have been doing for centuries and may continue to do, regardless of the title. Professional practice means artists making artworks, much as they have always done, in their studios for an exhibition, a market or a commission. The thought that there may be no difference between research and professional practice—other than writing—prompts anxiety and, in unseasonally promoting the status of writing, resentment.

This can be expressed in a different way, too, which puts another slant on it. Perhaps there is nothing so special about research in art. The distinction is a furphy. Perhaps all art is a form of research (as though by default) and there is no distinction to be made between research in art and professional practice in art. This we could call the case of the epistemological cavaliers. It has several corollaries.

Epistemological cavaliers declare, first, that all art is research by its nature because it is concerned with innovation: it always was research but simply had not been labelled thus because people in the past did not know about such things and did not care; we, however, are wiser and appreciate that art is the very soul of research and research is the very soul of art. Researchers in other disciplines (like medicine or engineering) can say what they like but there is no validity in a distinction between practice and research in art: what people might once have called professional practice we now describe as research; so the whole rubric of professional practice in art is obsolete.

Second, they declare that the reason art is research is that artists make original works in order to remain artists: if they did not forge new things and break new ground, their work, by definition, would not be art but some kind of menial trade; so the kind of intellectual advancement that belongs to the severe and stressful cultures of research elsewhere in the university is inherent in the making of art.

Consequently, third, they declare that there may be no need to write any form of dissertation to explain what the nature and the results of the research are, for the integrity of research-as-art means that art carries its own explanations: the research is revealed uniquely by the artwork and to translate this knowledge into the verbal is to diminish its intrinsic validity as research.

Fourth, they declare that the demand to represent artistic progress in words risks intellectual chauvinism which privileges the literary over the visual, sonic and tactile; it is in danger of suggesting that the whole point of the creative arts is redundant (or even illegitimate as a form of intellectual communication); for the writing imposes a legalistic framework on that which is inherently mobile if not subversive.

Fifth, they declare that it might be fair to allow the artist/researcher to record artistic intuitions in a diaristic or even essayistic form; but this should not be in any way equated with the sensory and, when a candidate submits for Masters, such evidence should not be given to examiners to take away for scrupulous perusal—as with other Masters—but should be whisked away from the examiner as soon as he or she has finished looking at the works in a given space.

Sixth, the cavaliers declare that if some measure of evidence beyond the artwork is required—such as a permanent library record of this research—it may be fair to submit to the legalistic framework of the traditional university a series of pictures and titles documenting the art which may be subsequently dispersed or otherwise lost.

THE EMPHASIS ON ORIGINALITY REPRESENTS A RETURN TO AN OLD MODERNIST CONCEIT AFTER A DECADE OF POSTMODERN REVISION DURING WHICH THE AVANT GARDE HAS CONCEDED THAT NOTHING IS NEW, EVERYTHING IS RECYCLED AND EVERYTHING FITS WITHIN A HISTORICAL TRADITION...

Do we have an argument which takes care of the claim that, on account of its intrinsic originality, art is not just professional practice but research? Some of these issues are a matter of belief. The claim above rests on your belief in the necessary originality of art. This, of course, is questionable. In postmodern times, it seems difficult to maintain a construct of originality like a Shibboleth of the individual genius. The emphasis on originality represents a return to an old modernist conceit after a decade of postmodern revision during which the avant garde has conceded that nothing is new, everything is recycled and everything fits within a historical tradition whose cultural software is written in advance and installed in ideological inscriptions in artists' work as if by *zeitgeistliche* inevitability.

Originality is, of course, a sure way to guarantee research status for the arts. In academic politics, it is very handy; and all art-school administrators fall back upon it. But political and financial expedience should not make us collectively hypocritical. When it suits us to agree that modernism is dead and quotation and paradoxical endgaming with artistic progress is all the go, that is what we celebrate and profess with high sophistication. But when money (in the form of research funding) is put on the palette or the keyboard which reinstates the authority of artistic originality, we accede to the pre-eminence of an old-fashioned and immodest boyish creative genius as if no one had ever given serious thought to the opposite case and supported it with persuasive arguments. Without a debate which makes bids for old-fashioned modernism—in which no one, as far as I know, any longer believes with any conviction—the whole edifice of artistic credibility faces imminent collapse.

One of the great advantages of using words to talk about your own work is that you can express how *little* your work is original rather than how *much* it is original. It is a better way to consider the research challenge, not so much because it honours your native modesty but because, paradoxically, it will result in a more powerful announcement of your artistic contribution. In demonstrating the many achievements which other artists have made in your territory, the context around your work accumulates a kind of solidity and momentum. You then step upon the stage that you have created, bringing demonstrably new work with you, never mind how original. The mere fact that you can appear on such a platform at this time in history with a contribution which has never been proffered in exactly the same way vouches for the originality of your cultural intervention and almost guarantees an air of importance in your artistic mission.

In a way, originality *is* too hot to handle. It is embarrassing to have to explain that you are doing

what no one else has done. It should be self-evident and go without saying. To this extent, the epistemological cavaliers are right. New work is automatically innovative in some way. And, as acknowledged earlier, once it is incumbent upon you to demonstrate this novelty, unfortunate pressures importune upon the making of future work, pressures to make the work artificially innovative or to make the new work seem more demonstrably original than it wants to be.

Innovation and originality need only be marginal and, from a postmodern perspective, can only ever be marginal. As discussed earlier, innovation in art is analogous to thinking of a new melody, not necessarily a new musical form or compositional structure. Suppose, for example, that I begin by painting a boy by a window and, finding the challenge compelling, I try another such portrait, then another. In short order, my whole project turns out to involve painting children in their domestic interiors. There is a long tradition of representing children in oblique light, from Botticelli through Velázquez to Balthus and so on. It would be prudent to discuss this history from a practicing viewpoint, without necessarily going into the complexities of patronage, sumptuary conventions and family decorum in the Renaissance and Baroque. It would also be a good idea to mention the tradition of photographic portraiture. The sum of all of this will be to suggest that everything that I could possibly do now has already been done. My project, in truth, is not terribly original. But that does not mean that it is inspirationally exhausted before it is ended. On the contrary, it may be supremely artistic. My reasons for doing it will be pictorially or psychologically or phenomenologically distinct from any one else's reasons; and it is likely, as a corollary, that the work will manifest these distinctions: it will show the children in a way that has probably never been possible before. It could be, for example, that my work will look somewhat self-conscious, will agonize over what to do about the power-point or the Teletubbies in the corner. The reasons that Velázquez painted children were clearly different from mine and, as both the physical and motivational circumstances no longer obtain, I have naturally had to hatch new reasons for doing such work. The invention can come in at several levels. But I am more likely to find the inventive core of the conception and execution of my work by sympathetically addressing myself to the comprehensiveness of past practice than by anxiously or conceitedly cultivating the assumption, from the outset, that my work is intrinsically innovative.

To be sure, most work conceived through affinities and executed with sincerity is likely to be original. It is also true that originality is a kind of *a priori* of art-making and, yes, mere copying is not really art. But what is 'mere copying'? The person who made the *Apollo Belvedere* could be accused of that. Who says when a work is so derivative that it constitutes replication (or by implication plagiarism)? Artists are inherently keen to avoid producing hackneyed work. When you feel an affinity with a certain kind of theme, imagery and mode of representation, your reinterpretations are likely to be original, for it almost belongs to *chaos theory* that no one has felt the need to approach it in the way that your times and circumstance suggest. It is remarkable, for example, how a standard type in art history—such as the *Virgin and Child* which was done hundreds of times by most artists in key epochs—is treated in a slightly different way by each artist. All can claim some originality. They can even claim distinctive changes between their treatments of the same theme. Good enough, I say, to qualify as research.

Obviously this should not encourage complacency about originality. Any scrutineer from another discipline would find it hard to believe that we are earnestly suggesting that originality is inherent or very likely inherent in sensory work. That is why I have deliberately chosen a research example which defies the normal understanding of avant-garde artistic originality. How, in the face of external challenge, would the claim for originality—or a research outcome—be substantiated in my example of naturalistically painting children, something which has been done for hundreds of years?

The research element in that project is the combination of the paintings and the consciousness that the paintings have a proper place in the history of technique and subject matter and the history of

ideas. While the paintings do embody that consciousness and, from an artistic point of view, are the ultimate expression of that consciousness, they do not argue. Consciousness can be represented in many ways, depending on the material of which you are conscious. When consciousness lies close to sensibility or some phenomenological reality, it can pre-eminently be expressed by visual and musical means. But when the consciousness centres around a historical relationship, its expression demands an argumentative genre. Writing is elegant for this much.

I would therefore want to write about the historical relationship between my interpretations of children and those of other artists. I would look at the factors suggested above, my self-consciousness in painting my subject matter, my agonies about what to do about the power-point or the Teletubbies in the corner. I would talk about the dress of children today, the consumerist culture of their parents and the welter of toys that surround them. It would be good to note the different conventions of photographing children and the projection or fulfilment of parental desire through child-images . The comments that I make are, in the first instance, put down for myself. I want to think about these issues. How much contemporaneity do I want to express and how much contemporaneity do I want conceal or suppress? Why? What is the purpose? Is it nostalgic? And nostalgic for the times of Velázquez or nostalgic for my own childhood? Or am I sorting out perplexity that my childhood was so very different so many decades ago? What did I miss out on? Or what do these children today miss out on?

These speculations are infinite. I assume that on some wonderfully inaccessible unconscious level my mind is awash with such thoughts while painting. But when I write them down, even as notes on a tablet in the studio, I am stimulated to pursue the thoughts more deeply. My paintings become more pregnant with speculation. My mind is abuzz with possibilities. The imagination is in overdrive and I sense that I can clinch something visionary in the history of ideas. With this, I can see reasons for painting my pictures better. I can constructively question the value of doing what seems to be technically or iconographically obvious. In short, the method of writing out the issues embedded in the evolving work is the best way to challenge your complacency about image-making; for it is not only poetically organic (developing alongside the work rather than above and beyond it) but it is artistically productive. It is not merely a form of criticism. It does not challenge you from outside with an artificial sense of interrogation on the basis of work that you have already done. It is your own ideas actively working toward a future vision. It is an accelerated and profound way by which artistic ideas evolve. I do not think that research in our field could have a much higher destiny.

CHAPTER 3.12

FOUR PARADIGMATIC METHODS OF RESEARCH

Many issues in research method, right down to the practical question of an appropriate bibliography, can only be properly answered with respect to the use to which you are going to put the reading, listening or viewing. There are in fact few topics in research methodology that can be discussed on a totally abstract plane; and it is pointless to generalize in a context where all apparent principles depend on contingencies. Let us nevertheless illustrate some options through two fundamental examples. This discussion will have particular relevance if the research involves a substantial written component.

There are four basic paradigms of method in non-artistic research which are especially relevant to the humanities. Let me characterize these paradigmatic methods by their researchers: taxonomists, orators, narrators and eclectics.

Taxonomic research is probably the most kosher method, the one that shares most with the scientific. The researcher wants to look at a body of texts, say the writings of Montaigne for argument's sake. In the first instance, the researcher will read every word of Montaigne. The researcher's copy of the book will be underscored on every page. Key phrases, ideas and lines of thought—reflections on jealousy, for example—will be written out on the computer. We used to use index cards for this purpose. The references can then be easily arranged into categories. Here are all the places where Montaigne talks about devotion, these are the places on self-love, vanity, anger, prudence and so on. This thematic index will be set within limits, for it is potentially vast. The choice and structure of these categories are purely a reflection of our scholar's interests. By the end of this process, the scholar has a good understanding of the corpus. He or she will have identified certain telling characteristics in the morality or cultural assumptions of the sixteenth-century essayist.

To these categories, however, the scholar then adds views of other scholars in the secondary literature. There has been a great deal written about Montaigne and, of course, much of it will fit into the categories, or possibly not, which indicates that other scholars have not identified certain themes. Nevertheless, the reading of the other scholars will itself be absorbed in some kind of note-taking structure, probably also on the computer, where quotes are parked under headings.

Do not be misled by this apparently deadly *esprit du système*. Taxonomists are highly imaginative people. The challenge comes with synthesizing the material. It is already laid out in some kind of order; but the scholar will now weave an argument through the quotations—both primary and secondary—to build up an argument. It may prove some quite radical ideas. The work takes a long time to do and is probably quite scrupulous in its attention to detail. The scholar will never have to chase anything up in the eleventh hour. It will all have been assembled in neat and meaningful files.

Scholarly orators have also undoubtedly read volumes; they have slices of quotation to hand; but they never bother assembling the data in a classificatory system. Such paragraphs as they note down, they keep with a firm view of where it is going to end up. They already have a provisional view of

where their reading will lead: from the outset, they have an argument in mind; they are rhetors, waiting for little till they launch into a discourse of their own.

Scholarly orators have confidence that they have an argument and that it is original. Their writing will be a proof of that. They begin creating their texts early. There is an urgency about their writing because they are only going to recognize the full compass of their ideas once they handle their ideas through writing them. They spend much of their time writing in a state of heat, chasing an inspirational idea and finding it fugitive, rich, haunting and necessary. They are a little like artists. The inherited material of scholarship and sources is very much at their disposal; they gather it in and synthesize it toward theories often of a strikingly original kind. They are led by the promise that they make to themselves: I have a theory or I can make one. Their work is intuitive, exploratory, dangerous. At the beginning of their project, you would swear that they have no method at all. They will not listen to anyone talking about systematic method. They only want to talk about method *qua* philosophy and values. Sometimes, they pay for this blitheness. They can write whole chapters which subsequently have to go into the bin because it has later transpired that the contents were based on false suppositions, or someone else had already said it all in a text which an incomplete literature survey did not reveal. But that is a legitimate risk to run; and, for this personality type, there is no attractive alternative. They write, as they say 'from the seat of their pants'. They are artists, in effect, only their canvas is some form of cultural history or related academic discipline.

People with theories are always dangerous. They are apt to overgeneralize, to use their powers of intuition wilfully to totalize intensively nuanced material. On the other hand, because they work from intuition, they can have exceptional insight into the nuances of cultural material and can give this sensitivity an appropriately poetic expression.

Of course there is then a reckoning. Mere assertion will not do. Even if the orator wanted the work to be spontaneous and dashing, it will need footnotes and publisher or candidate, supervisor and examiner will see to it. There is then a whole process of attaching scholarly authority to the text, developed, as it is, in an intuitive, artistic process. This stage of the orator's work is often enormously rewarding; for the scholar sees the work grow from a list of private analyses and poetic assertions to a volume which embraces the world of scholarship, which gathers the force of other voices, which assumes both inclusiveness and authority. It is also a stage of consolidation which puts the orator's writing skills to the test; for the assimilation of scholarly material into an almost autonomously constituted rhetorical text requires imagination, delicacy and taste. The attaching of sources must not look too artificial. Frequent use of footnotes is made. They are immensely convenient for this scholarly strategy, for they seem to shore up certain otherwise unfounded points without interrupting or corrupting the rhetorical flow of organically related arguments.

The confidence of orators is often outrageous and needs to be checked. People with theories are always dangerous. They are apt to overgeneralize, to use their powers of intuition wilfully to totalize intensively nuanced material. On the other hand, because they work from intuition, they can have exceptional insight into the nuances of cultural material and can give this sensitivity an appropriately poetic expression. A lot depends on their will. From the outset, they have their eye on an idea which they believe no one else would have expressed (or expressed in just this way) and if they do not actually have the idea yet, they trust that they will imminently seize it as they crash through with writing. They have a certain conceit which they must subsequently spend time justifying. But this is the challenge that they want. It is a phallic style of doing research.

Seen superficially, the results of an orator may not be so different from those of a taxonomist. Two volumes of densely documented and well-connected text are produced. But there is an unavoidable difference in mood and texture. The work of taxonomists is orderly and intelligent; but, as the work

of orators has its origins in a desire to argue something, it expresses a flair and energy which are difficult to reproduce by any other habit of research.

Scholarly narrators are, as you could imagine, builders of stories. To some extent, they take their method from both paradigms above; because, like good taxonomists, they assemble the facts well before writing and, like good orators, drive an argument through their pages from beginning to end, guided by a sense of rhetorical urgency in telling a story. Often old-style history is written from this perspective. It would not work so well with cultural history; for its genius does reside in a single narrative. Narrators are systematic story-tellers, often less theoretically oriented than both taxonomists and orators. They may have a great awareness of contemporary theory but it will only influence their writing in an indirect or sublimated way. Narrators are as theoretically sophisticated as anyone; but theory is not a story: it is an abstraction. Narrators therefore assimilate theoretical material, whence it informs their judgements, their aims for telling a story in a certain way, for holding certain values, indeed for telling one story as opposed to another. You should never underestimate the methodological complications of scholarly narrative.

Seen from a distance, the genre of scholarly narrative may seem very safe. Old scholar-bones has concentrated on an area (probably of history) which is so small that contributions are easy. No one else bothers to look into such minutiae. It is a genre of moles. Do not be deceived. It is true that some kinds of narrative history are very specialized. But the reason for this is the scholar's desire for depth, not a devious avoidance of breadth. Thus, you often find areas of the narrative (no matter how chronologically confined) in which the pattern of the story is compared to other stories, in which historical constants are sought, in which human motives and their emotional roots are seen with clairvoyance, in which the author's humanity is exposed and in which various ideological values are challenged. It depends on the calibre of the scholar.

All these methodological paradigms involve imagination in equal measure. It is unfair to say that orators are the *real* intellectuals, because they formulate original ideas provisionally with only the support of their own *Kopf*. It is true that thinkers of the highest stature fit into this category, such as Jacques Derrida or Bruno Snell. But the taxonomists are quite as brainy, for they are intellectual pattern-merchants and perceive connexions between the material which they diligently collect. The logic in the assembly of their material is syllogistic; it is already an expression of an intuitive synthesizing faculty. This power of seeing connexions is sometimes not expressed in the written texture of the result but there is a good chance that it will be inherent in the work. But even with narrators—whose imagination often results in gripping the reader with a sense of anticipation—we have not exhausted the possibilities. Once you have listed all the alternatives, there is always one remaining, namely all of the above.

Sometimes imagination and sometimes sensitivity to the material allows a scholar to move between methods. Often this is suggested by the division of chapters. If you are considering setting up chapters, you will note that some chapters involve 'surveying', others involve 'arguing', others involve 'telling' and so on. It could be that you decide that each should have a method proper to its own genius. A method is not really an aesthetic. It is not something that is applied for the sake of uniformity. Arguments need to be consistent but their gestation, shape and development do not need to be press-ganged into one scholarly habit. There is absolute freedom in the world of scholarship to chop and change between the dominant options. Indeed, apart from the internal reasons for wanting to change method, there is often an ulterior attraction. Candidates and supervisors sometimes feel comfortable with a series of proofs of the candidate's scope and ability. In the introduction, you show that you can see specific questions and problems in your field; in the first chapter, you show that you are a scrupulous bibliographer; in the second, you show that you have the knack of taxonomic order; in the third, you show how you can identify and narrate a compelling story; in the fourth, you show that you can argue an original idea with vigour; and in the

conclusion you demonstrate that you can synthesize these approaches within a coherent conceptual framework. Unless the contents are flawed, the switching between methodological emphases will not invalidate your work.

Nothing in our area prevents dilettantism. Other disciplines have a horror of dilettantism, a condition of academic complacency in which the spoilt scholar operates for private titillation rather than for the edification of the discipline. In this circumstance, the would-be scholar is dismissed as less than serious: he or she seems not to be interested in advancing the course of knowledge but seeks personal delight, like a tourist, a pleasure-seeker, an Epicurean, a connoisseur in the popular sense of aristocratic aesthetician, albeit one concerned with data rather than artworks. A dilettante is the reverse of a scholar. The scholar is devoted to the self-less search for objectivity and originality, determined to make a contribution to the state of knowledge, usually at the expense of enormous pains, diligence and scrupulosity. A dilettante is simply enjoying himself or herself with the privilege of knowledge and perhaps the aesthetic virtue of representation. A dilettante operates outside the teleology of science and scholarship. The end is lost sight of; the spoilt scholar has forgotten the 'higher good' and is unprepared to sacrifice himself or herself toward its promotion.

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In other disciplines, dilettantism is stigmatized, anathematized. In our disciplines it is tolerated and regarded more benignly. It is a perpetual invitation open to the artist, both a pitfall and a source of sustenance. We only criticize artists when they fail to come up with interesting art or gauche art or politically distasteful art. We have few moralized sentiments about their personal interests or motives for their practice and expect that they are doing art partly for the egotistical rewards that it yields. We would therefore be very unhappy if personal delight were frowned upon. Indeed we do everything that we can to cultivate it. We do not by and large oppose personal delight with something grave and powerful, against which it seems frivolous and unworthy of a true artist. Dilettantism may be worthy in an artistic research project provided that it is artistically productive.

Clearly some notion of productivity is inherent in art. You cannot make pictures or quartets and so on without having that margin of selflessness because, as Bach said, it is hard work; so there is a necessary discipline, a rigour of setting up sensory ideas in a medium which can subsequently be scrutinized by any number of people. The idea of a dilettantish essay, for example, has few equivalents in the creative arts. A paper which quotes Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw and uncritically relishes their posh humour without finding historical causes or substantially contributing to the literature on such wits is deemed trivial and trifling; it may also seem unctuously contrived to place the narrator's ego alongside the grandeur of historically noble figures. There are no analogies to this in the creative arts. In a painting, you can certainly quote any number of venerables in the history of art; but this will be on your head and you know it. Anyone can debunk your work as a silly collage; and you will never have drawn any benefit from the quotations. The artwork must build, it seems, upon its sources; there is no simple case of 'borrowing' the easy charm of the patrimony for an air of false ownership.

Part of the difference is simply that the outcome of work in the creative arts is not knowledge but a form of communication. Thus, when the spoilt scholar in the humanities indulges with prestigious sources, the disappointment of not having achieved new knowledge at the end of it will immediately be felt. But the toying of the artist with illustrious material is never expected to yield knowledge. It may be a little idle but it could also be highly artistic.

The earnestness of artists is commendable but so is their playfulness. Inspiration must be recognized wherever it comes from; and the legitimacy of this inspiration may be no greater if the artist is slaving away than if he or she were coasting along phlegmatically. There may always be a kind of authority attached to hard work but it can also be the butt of jokes and accusations of pomposity. Above all, artists are expected to have an artistic disposition relative to their sources; they exploit them, find the spooky fun in them, extrapolate from them and ultimately owe little to the historical integrity of their context.

CHAPTER 3.13

RESEARCH AND IMAGINATION

The link between research and imagination is obvious: you need imagination to have new ideas, to investigate areas which are likely to yield new insights and, above all, to think of the ways to clinch those insights, perhaps not only to have them but to express them in a compelling way.

Research in other disciplines sometimes seems unimaginative. Many a scholar plods his or her way through a mediocre thesis in which the question is boring, the method is unchallenging, the argument is linear and the outcome is in any case a foregone conclusion. Try, for instance, looking at the field of psychology. In great contrast to Freud (now there is an imagination!) contemporary psychologists tend to publish material which seems to lack intellectual stimulation. But in general you would have to say that all the disciplines converge on this most 'internal' of resources: the imagination. How can it be cultivated? Is there a secret method for extending it? And does it belong to research methodology to assist that cultivation?

You can look at this question a number of ways. One is to say (and I would prefer not) that the artistic imagination is honed and used exclusively in the studio. By this belief, all imagination would have to be cultivated in the studio and the speculation about methods—such as we are attempting here—would have no part in it. But the studio has a very arbitrary boundary. Even the most unlettered Romantic artists would agree that they may be inspired when looking at a landscape or a car crash or a contented baby many kilometres from their studio. Sensory inspiration or imagination is hardly confined to a room in which some canvas is stretched on an easel or the piano stands with authority in the corner. Probably the article of faith that the 'Romantic' view of imagination clings to is that inspiration is not pre-eminently intellectual. To express this 'instinctual' philosophy of imagination, the Romantic artist uses the term studio as a metaphor for 'doing' and 'experiencing' rather than thinking or intellectualizing.

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Another way to look at the question (and again I would prefer not) is to say that artistic imagination is charged up and honed outside the active studio. The easel (or whatever other tools form the context of the making process) belongs to an executive stage, namely a process of fulfilling an idea that you already have. For some artists, incidentally, there may well be some truth in this. Some artists are seized by an idea and fix it in their minds in a flash while crossing a road or listening to music, just as composers may discover their sequences while gazing at a picture. Their artistic media lie far from the hand at that moment. When they come to their easel or keyboard, they in some sense illustrate that idea. By the time they get there, they may have already worked out what kinds of image they will need. They have been to the library, have taken out source material, have asked friends if they will help set up some shots or perform certain actions necessary for the fulfilment of the idea. Hardly

an imaginative stroke is left to the execution of the work by technical means. The physical making part is marginal. It is a relatively mechanical physical realization of a project which has already been designed in advance. According to this philosophy, all speculation about enhancing the imagination would belong in a theoretical or textual environment.

Another approach is to say that imagination cannot really be cultivated. It is inborn. If you have it, you have it; if not, you will always lack it. It is like innate talent, the faculty of being sensory or not. Some people have immediate iconographic or recognition almost from birth, while others cannot recognize images for five minutes unless they have a typed caption under them. As with tone deafness in music, you cannot do anything about this lack. Imagination is innately present or not. Perhaps the dispositional ground is related to upbringing rather than genetics; but that is an unnecessary subtlety. The speculations are vain. Either you have it or not and there is no point trying to cultivate what you will never have; for you will only succeed in fudging it or creating anxieties for yourself.

Through method, we try to be systematic; but in a deeper artistic sense, we try to be systematically imaginative.

Imagination is an extraordinarily fugitive notion. The way I would prefer to see its cultivation—and I do think that it can be cultivated—would acknowledge that fugitiveness. Imagination is clearly involved in all stages of work, from the conception to the development to the manual execution and even commentary. In certain creative traditions, as discussed, the conception is inextricably linked to the manual execution, as with pottery in the Hamada-Leach tradition; so the separation of an imagination belonging to one as opposed to the other may be artificial.

In the creative arts, any method which does not involve the imagination is probably suspect. Through method, we try to be systematic; but in a deeper artistic sense, we try to be systematically imaginative. Of course this oxymoronic aspiration is only hypothetical. You are never consistently systematic nor consistently imaginative. You are lucky if you are either at any time and in any spasmodic measure. But there may nevertheless be some useful cues to follow for being as imaginative as nature allows. To assist with this, it may be useful to distinguish four types of imagination: (i) aesthetic or musical imagination, (ii) irony or humorous imagination, (iii) fantasy or sympathetic imagination and (iv) causal or scientific imagination.

An aesthetic or musical imagination is the faculty of particular interest to us. It consists of being able to visualize form in whatever medium—sound, paint, photography—to create argumentative sequences of intrinsic meaning. The invention of a powerful composition which memorably clinches the impact of the subject matter (or apparently dispenses with subject matter, as with abstract painting or dance) depends on this faculty. So, pre-eminently, does the invention of a new tune. The thought that two images sitting beside one another might have special impact or meaning is not commonly entertained. It is a special gift, like the ability to fondle a keyboard and hear a sequence of sounds ahead of the notes that one is actually striking. Melody is born in this way, not by the casual or random action of the fingers but the mind running ahead of the fingers and, while listening to what the fingers are doing, determining the shape to come. The seduction of such processes is powerful in itself; and the contemplation of how a melody came about is perhaps a hidden undercurrent in aesthetic estimation of musical sublimity.

This grandiose faculty seems quite removed from irony or humorous imagination. The invention of jokes seems to have little to do with the invention of melody. One is apparently so serious and the other is all levity. The invention of jokes is an ability to see the absurd, to identify the ludicrous possibility of misunderstanding or double meanings which fracture the normal continuities of action or language, to spot the mechanistic element in behaviour, to extrapolate from people's idiosyncrasies, to fool around with ideas, make havoc with systems of knowledge or etiquette, to contrive the breakdown of conventions which mask the absurd basis of actions or beliefs. The

imaginative element of such intellectual pranks is again potentially infinite and may strike you with a sense of awe for the mind which has forged them. It is seldom a sublime product; humour is usually at someone else's expense—at time the narrator's own expense—and can be intolerably mean, as discussed in chapter 2.3. But it can also have great profundity and, as we considered earlier from the writings of Bergson and Freud, it grants privileges of access to the unconscious.

It is possible for humour to be compassionate but it can also be cruel. I assume that all aspects of imagination are cultivated by psychological energies, a predisposition to want to ridicule or form grand architecture in the mind or what have you. But given that we have treated this to some extent in the earlier chapter, let us come to the third category. Against the bounteous scope for malice in jokes, the faculty of fantasy or sympathetic imagination is by definition benign. The invention of stories is akin to the invention of melody. You have to think of a linear sequence in which the event happening in your mind has an extension to something which has not quite been formulated in your mind. There is a kind of keyboard of happenings in which, like levers and hammers striking the wires, protagonists perform in a network of implications, where consequences are envisaged and harmoniously or discordantly interact with other events. There is definitely an aesthetic side to this. The reason I call it sympathetic imagination is not that narratives must always demonstrate some sacramental kind of blessed feeling toward another person. The sympathy of narrative is the ability to appreciate the emotional consequences of actions, to see what would be happening in someone's mind, to see the psychological causes and effects of events which one sets up through the process of narration.

The normal definitions or research would recommend that we emphasize causal or scientific imagination. The faculty of seeing causes is definitely a part of narrative and has strange parallels with fantasy or sympathetic imagination. When a scientist formulates a hypothesis, there is a kind of sympathy for the imagined processes: what would happen between these compounds, what would be the effect of their interaction, what would be the basis for the events that I can observe in my experiments and why would they not happen otherwise? As with engineers, scientists design and contrive situations in which events may be rehearsed. They say 'tested' which sounds wholly unimaginative to our ears; but it is in fact a highly imaginative process, in some sense 'sympathizing' with a natural tendency of materials or forces. We strictly divorce science from fantasy; indeed science is the very process of exclusion of fantasy from the building of explanations. But ideas nevertheless spring forth; nor are they mechanically produced by the experiments, for the experiments are designed in part by the nascent ideas which they are contrived to test. The scientist has an idea of causes; the analytical scientific process is activated by these ideas and, if they were not present in the most imaginative degree, the whole of science would be merely mechanical and could never advance.

There is enormous overlap between these imaginative faculties. An example is the common ground between the more aesthetic pair, namely musical imagination and fantasy or sympathetic imagination. A poet, for instance, who relates a story or motif by means of regularly rhyming metre engages both. The poet is able to hold the story in the mind while also thinking of words of a common sound which will form an echo at the end of the line. More generally, we could say that imagination is a supreme kind of intelligence which is held and cultivated by anyone who does anything clever.

All forms of imagination are linked by a common thread, the ability to make mental connexions. But the imagination operates in strangely diverse ways, to the point that an imaginative faculty possessed by one person may be quite absent in some otherwise highly imaginative person. A mathematician, for example, may be quite lacking in fantasy or sympathetic imagination but may be equipped to make ingenious puns and have wonderful irony or humorous imagination. Mathematicians, it has been observed, are also often extremely musical. Meanwhile, an artist—who is obviously likely

to have a vibrant aesthetic or musical imagination—is also likely to have fantasy or sympathetic imagination. Alas he or she may be quite lacking in causal or scientific imagination. Basic concepts in science may strike horror in the artistic heart, a very strange consequence which I have often observed. After all, science is one of the loftiest expressions of intellectual and cultural advancement.

The psychological component is the nub of all this. No one can say how imagination happens. It occurs by virtue of connexions in the brain (synapses) which account for all intelligence, right down to the identification of objects through perception. Perception, of course, is not a mechanical process but organic and intelligent to the highest degree. That is why some artists can see more than others when they paint. It is not because they have superior lenses in their eyes but because they are able to devote more brain (or useful optical synapses) to the task of looking analytically. But, I submit, you will never understand anything practical from talking about the brain. The brain is not a manageable platform for improvement. It is better to think of imagination in more ghostly metaphoric constructs such as 'the mind' than neuronal biochemical constructs such as 'the brain'.

There are two practical strategies for cultivating the imagination; and I think that they work with all kinds of imagination. One is to nourish the mind with relevant knowledge and the other is simultaneously to be conscious of will. There is a peculiar category of will which is intellectual. It seems quite distinct—at least in its manifestations—from other types of will such as the drive for food or sex or property. Intellectual will is a desire to think things or to know things. People who can master foreign languages, for example, have a peculiar will to do so: they hungrily want to know how they can express ideas in someone else's patch; they are intellectually avaricious for words and expressions which are not theirs by nature. The faculty is obviously much assisted by a good ear but it is not a physiological asset; it is a talent which proceeds from will, a strange sympathetic desire for what one does not yet possess. When it comes to speaking the foreign language, another faculty comes into play, namely confidence, shamelessness, *chutzpah* and it is easy to be defeated if you lack that. The knack for foreign languages is a signal example of imaginative behaviour; for the talent seems somewhat mechanistic but it is thoroughly and irritatingly steeped in inscrutable psychological motives that we call confidence.

Ambition does not necessarily make people more imaginative; nor, admittedly does will, so it remains to describe what kind of will is meant by intellectual will. The reason why ambition does not necessarily make people more imaginative (and indeed often cripples their imagination) is that ambition is often too psychologically identified with a desire for higher status and authority

Intellectual will is slightly different from ambition. Ambition does not necessarily make people more imaginative; nor, admittedly does will, so it remains to describe what kind of will is meant by intellectual will. The reason why ambition does not necessarily make people more imaginative (and indeed often cripples their imagination) is that ambition is often too psychologically identified with a desire for higher status and authority (as in Graham Nickson's critique of career, cited in the introduction). This in turn provokes an urgency in intellectual processes which forecloses on the speculative leisure, that profitless playing with ideas, which is the prelude to originality. What I mean by intellectual will is free of social constructs such as higher status and authority. It is the driving force of an idea. It may be vain to conceive a psychological purity of intellectual will which is divorced from the contingent ambitions of social circumstance; but, insofar as the ideal can be chased, it relates to a kind of selflessness with ideas, a desire to let the ideas have their own life, to put energy into their development but not prematurely to extract profit from them. It is a freedom from anxiety for advancement, akin to generosity. Paradoxically, then, this form of intellectual will is cultivated, Buddhist style, by shedding ambitions of a non-intellectual kind.

The final element which assists the imagination is sympathy for one's genre. It is also akin to love; and, as mawkish as it may sound, I think that all artists would intuitively know what I mean. There is an emotional investment in the tradition: there is a sense of belonging with it and working to the utmost within its parameters. The artistic imagination does not function in a vacuum but within a recognized system of messages for which one has peculiar affection. You are attached to a kind of art for which you nourish almost tribal belonging. These feelings are crucial in the will to make the intellectual contribution to the field, to perceive the cultural aspiration of the genre at its most sympathetic to your own psyche and to think of the further stage of fulfilment of that tradition. Original ideas inhere within the identification with a tradition.

Artistic conventions are often understood as a constraint upon the imagination. This is neither a good way to see imagination nor convention. Artistic conventions are simply a framework within which the imagination operates. The use that you make of that tradition may be imaginative to the highest degree. Anyway, you do belong to a tradition—you have no choice—and that tradition has its conventions. Your imaginative role is what you do with them. It is good to know about them and (I suspect) work sympathetically with them; for imagination springs from relish rather than antagonism. This is just a theory but it is included here, like much in the text, in order that you might provide a better theory.

CHAPTER 4

EXEGETICAL CONSOLIDATION

CHAPTER 4.1

THE BEST OF INTENTIONS PROPOSING YOUR WORK AND YOUR APPROACH TO IT

Before venturing into methodological relating the creative process to writing about it, this chapter recognizes something which is almost prior: the 'thing' called a proposal which seems to be a gateway to almost all arrangements for creative output (from grants, residencies, exhibitions, performances and the like) and increasingly the context for developing work. From the outset, I want to see this 'thing' as organic and for writing to be understood as an appropriate sketching tool to realize the organic nature of the proposal in the context of creative research.

So this chapter centres on the intention that you have, the ways in which the intention may be excessively fixed from the outset, the way that it might respond to external influences, the way that it is enriched by challenge and through the process of creating. The chapter is a practical guide to developing a proposal but also provides philosophical reasons for doing so: the mutation of intentions is integral to the artistic process and creative inspiration. This book, generally, is about what happens when you make art or film, compose music or write literature; and it casts an especially jealous eye toward the artistic project conducted toward a higher degree. If the outcome of the book were nothing more than an enriched proposal for creative work—such as we require in the professional contexts suggested, not just academic ones—it will have yielded a valuable service. In creating such a statement of intention, you are called upon to enter into a discussion about the creative process.

You do not know at this moment exactly what you are going to produce. You have ideas but they may not be realized in the way that you think. In all probability, you cannot quite 'see' the works that you are about to produce. You have to begin to produce them and 'see' by doing. This is the process that we could designate visual research.

In order to know about this and reflect meaningfully upon it, you have to entertain some scruples about intentions. How much do you really want to formulate them? Could they not be to the detriment of the creative freedom of a normal working method? After all, statements of intention can easily foreclose on intuitive processes. They risk prescriptiveness. It is easy to imagine that statements of intention can prematurely commit an artist to a kind of inflexibility which is inimical to creative work. So what is an appropriate method for artists working at this level?

No one is interested in statements of intention for the sake of it or for purely bureaucratic reasons (which, alas, are remarkably common for grants and higher degrees). It should not be an arbitrary hurdle. It is useful to know at strategic moments within a project how you are thinking about the possibilities in order (a) to maximize the potential and (b) to hone the focus. You would only

formulate the intention to help the project grow, not to hem it in. And beyond that, it is absorbing and engaging to know what happens when you make art. We want to know what transpires between the stages of creation, that is, before, during and after creating the work. Some of these phases are particularly exciting, as they have a dimension of thinking which probably does not normally happen in the course of daily life. Particularly in the phases during creation, the intentions are themselves evolving as the work begins or progresses; you are engaged in the chasing of immanence, the process of clinching what you are about to generate. The artwork which results often leaves signs of the pursuit of such immanence; and indeed the expression of various levels of the creative process is quite possibly also a critical factor in the aesthetic and symbolic value of the work. In all events, it interests us here for the light that it throws on the 'magic' processes of art-making.

Consider the stages briefly. Before you began, you definitely had an intention to make work, to produce something in a conversational environment, to engage creative faculties in a structured context, enjoy discussion and feedback. You would have entertained certain ideas about the work that you might do in this context. Otherwise you probably would not have had the confidence to reach to these levels. Your notions of work may have been a projection of earlier work. That is logical enough. But more than that is perhaps unlikely and certainly not required.

The thinking during this creation is a kind of task-searching, a form of learning by doing. Of course it is not only by doing that you learn. It is because the doing has reflexion in it; we achieve insight by reflecting candidly on what we have just done, especially in relation to what other people have done.

But now you are starting. This brings us to the 'immanence' of the artwork during the process of art-making (the semantic excitement and coincidences of which is discussed in a later section, chapter 2.1): you become conscious of an 'about-to-happen' in which the ideas are still not formulated in advance but are in fact advanced by the doing process. The thinking during this creation is a kind of task-searching, a form of learning by doing. Of course it is not only by doing that you learn. It is because the doing has reflexion in it; we achieve insight by reflecting candidly on what we have just done, especially in relation to what other people have done. This means confronting opinions from two sources: criticism of your own work and contemporary discourse about art in general (where is it at?) That is a major topic, which could involve any amount of immersion in contemporary journals, a speculation which, if allowed, could easily overtake everything else, to the point that nothing further would get done.

The key to the phase that we are describing is integral to the process of making. It means to attempt afresh, to put forward in a new vein. It also means a period in which you determine to assess your faculties, your talents, your inclinations, your ambitions. Again, there are terrible hazards. At any moment, the project can become paralytically introspective and you might never emerge with anything beyond some doodles. But the ideal result of all of the 'assaying' of your faculties and possibilities is the identification of appropriate directions. This could involve curiosity for subject matter (in whatever ideological framework) and curiosity for reproductive technologies (which includes painting). You have to consider 'options', even if it means staying with the same kind of thing that you have worked with before. It is a period of reckoning. You come to appreciate the discursive implications of whatever you are choosing. And this leads to greater knowingness about what you are doing. From there, you can work toward positionality—a much sought-after condition of knowing how to position yourself amid ambient discourses—or decide not to go there, depending on the degree to which the ambition is inherently socialized. In short, it is the maturing of intention.

And finally, we might skip to the stage of after—what happens after the work has been done—even though this need not concern us in this section, for we are not envisaging that the research will have

been completed at this stage. But it does concern us in this much: if you can imagine the moment at the end of your research project when you have to report on it to anyone or express the process through documentation, it will be desirable to be able to describe the original intentions, intentions in a proposal which were not arbitrary or artificial, even though they may have been outgrown by the momentum of the work. Just as it is always the right time to start that work, so it is always the right time to reflect upon it.

In an academic context, there is very likely a demand for exegetical documentation. Its purpose is oriented toward establishing what was achieved and, to some extent, it is an expression of the processes suggested above. Unfortunately in some art academies, the process has been seen slightly cynically, as if it is an artificial effort *post facto*, an apologia expressing the dignity of the work to its best advantage, a labour to flatter the content or to position the work in ways which excuse its technical or conceptual shortcomings. While understandable in an environment build around anxiety, gilding the lily by this pattern is incurious and anathema to all academic method; and all kinds of conflation are to be discouraged on principle. The best way to avoid it at any stage—regardless of academic demands—is to take the reflective critical process seriously from the beginning. From the outset, as is only natural, the project of doing the art should be integral to a process of thinking about it; and why not declare the thinking in the broadest possible way?

Management jargon has so infiltrated every aspect of academic life that the term 'strategic' may inspire nothing but horror; but in a sense all artistic work has a strategic dimension. It just happens to be somewhat organic, more malleable and a little less teleological than the strategizing of corporations. Much to do with art relates to positioning. Rightly or wrongly, successful publicity is often the art of making convincing claims about the position which a body of work occupies. When you think about what you might want to do in your creative work, it is worth pondering how well the position of the work—even still to be formulated—can be expressed. It cannot hurt to do this at every stage.

If there are long-standing historical precedents for your kind of work, it is good to be able to argue for the relevance of the tradition.

Part of the prestige or air of bankruptcy of artworks relates to the ancestry which our ideas can claim to have. When starting a project, you undoubtedly already have influences which determine your directions up to this point. It is good to feel that they are interesting and worthwhile. But then it is also good to demonstrate that you do not have excessive reliance on your sources, to the point that your originality may be questioned. Your sources are a point of departure. You are influenced afresh.

One of the cardinal points of all documentation is to identify other artists who have been doing somewhat similar work to your own, preferably in recent times. It is also good if your survey demonstrates knowledge of the international scene, in countries whose languages are not necessarily English. Having looked at various figures, it is useful to express your relationship with the ambitions and outcomes represented in their work (such as you know it). If you do this successfully, you then authorize yourself not just to argue—as a bureaucratic technicality—what might be novel in your work relative to that of contemporaries, but also how the work might proceed so that it really is novel, informed and valuable.

There is a further point about the ancestry of your ideas. If there are long-standing historical precedents for your kind of work, it is good to be able to argue for the relevance of the tradition. If you are in this position, it is most likely that your work belongs to an identifiable genre which already carries certain cultural inscriptions. An example from the visual arts might be heroic landscape (sometimes with overtones of colonialism) or portraiture (sometimes with overtones of authority) or still life (with overtones of bourgeois consumption). These examples are a bit gauche and we can think of counterparts in music and literature. But it is good to elaborate on the richness of the

traditions that you tap into (either to accept or reject). If your genre is symbolically encoded you may either want to embrace it—because you agree with its values—or deconstruct it. You can allow for irony and ambiguity but it may also be useful to let the reader know where your deeper sympathies lie.

In all likelihood, there are complex ideological connotations of your proposed work, depending on the perspective from which you analyse it. The typical field includes class, gender and race. It is not necessary to adopt one or any of these discourses but it is wise to place where the intentions may relate to the ideological. Of course they may be null and a good defence could be interesting to read. But an apology for ideological neutrality will be greatly strengthened by evidence of knowledge of voices who might speak against you. If you can identify writers who might have been conducting a polemic against the kind of work that you are wanting to do, you will automatically be able to attempt a refutation or even an elegant dismissal which will grant your work the high moral ground and possibly stronger or broader scope for growth, undaunted by the case against it.

The greater hazard is a lack of authors who are either supportive or hostile. If authors have apparently neither been promoting nor prosecuting your kind of work, you have a potential problem. One is that your knowledge is inadequate: you simply do not know the whole of the literature. This is an anxiety which besets all scholarship in our field, because so much gets written in such a vast array of unindexed publications that systematic searches are impossible. But unfortunately a failed quest for authors on your kind of work has negative implications. None of this may be your fault nor the fault of your kind of work. But how do you contenance it yourself? Leave aside the impression that may be obtained from the outside; because some will read the absence of critical comment on your kind of work as evidence that you are stuck in a backwater which never gets to be discussed. It is always possible to come up with artful expressions to explain such a predicament in order to forestall pejorative judgements; but what do you say to yourself, as if you are working in a critical vacuum?

The extent to which your kind of work captures the imagination of the art scene is a major issue which you will almost certainly want to address. The idea that it is fashionable may or may not have appeal; it could go either way. Fashions do not enjoy high credibility in the critical community and enthusiasm for them is often taken to be a sign of lack of integrity; besides, they are seen as inducing a passive, 'follower' sheep-like mentality, probably of an ideologically unsound nature. So in spite of being up-to-the-minute and up-to-speed, the overly fashionable are, paradoxically, seen as unoriginal and definitely uncritical. But why, you might retort, would you stigmatize a current enthusiasm with the word fashion? Furthermore, there is authority in communal growth; and it is reassuring to think that your inspiration is current.

In the case that your kind of work is neither fashionable nor current nor whatever else indicates mainstream or avant garde success, you probably have to recognize that you are marginal. There is then a question of whether or not you accept your marginality in the scene. There are numerous disadvantages that marginality brings. Few artists actually enjoy being ignored. Some might enjoy the freedom from 'hankering' after greater recognition; but in general it may be true that the lure of success is compelling. Sometimes, often over a long period, artists change their practice in pursuit of their missing part in the action.

Crunch time is jealously deciding: is it worth examining any options for altering my work so that it has some consonance with contemporary agendas, without of course compromising my artistic vision or conforming to the dictates of fashion? For this exploration, it is necessary to try to identify the themes of chief relevance in the scene today (and that means the whole scene beyond my medium) and the reasons for their popularity. An easy way to ascertain these is to list ten or so buzz-words in today's magazines. Also tricky, because magazines vary a lot in their affection for certain themes, and some are quite complacent and incurious. Anyway, you will undoubtedly have

sympathy with some pre-occupations and horror, fear and contempt for others. Explanations of all of the above would be helpful.

The worst outcome of this encounter, both for the artist and posterity, would be to accommodate fashionable agendas superficially. They could have the effect of cheapening your work, making your otherwise honest work suddenly vulgar and unlasting. The best outcome, on the other hand, would be to make your work richer, more connected, more robust and visionary, to add vision and hence endow your work with more prestige.

In your experiences with studio work you will (or should) always encounter specific and pointed questions about whether your work could be done better on a technical level. Now is the time to bring this into the discussion; for this is a major consideration in the possible realignment of method and priorities in the artistic work which we call creative research or studio research. You need to be very candid about the judgements which you have encountered from supervisors or anyone else in the past for that matter. The way in which you have psychologically countenanced their criticisms is not so much the issue. Do you have any plans in response, and do these affect the direction and character of the work?

Conservative critics often complain about artistic projects lacking a sound aesthetic footing, almost as if there were a necessary contradiction between aesthetics and ideology or as if beauty and ethics were mutually exclusive. If you aim to charm with beauty or harmony or good composition and drawing and so on, it would be excellent to point to an inherited body of theory which may be efficiently valorized; for that saves you some of the work of valorizing it from scratch. But again, if you want to argue the eternal worth of an anterior discourse, your apologia will have much more force if it includes a critical discussion of the dubious status of that body of theory today.

CHAPTER 4.2

CREATIVE WORK AND A JEALOUS TIMETABLE

Looking at the two poles of creative research, there is an equal uncertainty about starting and stopping. When is an appropriate time to begin writing up? Or writing anything? Is there a stage when you can say: 'this is what I want to achieve or have achieved in my creative work'?

Ideally, there would be no need to divorce the writing task from the creative task. Depending on your writing abilities, the consequences of splitting them may be dire. You single-mindedly pursue a body of work, the result of which is an exhibition, publication or performance of high standard which constitutes evidence of your research. But then you have to write something to demonstrate in what way you have achieved something of significance. How to begin writing? It presents an annoying embarrassment. The project has already been done. Now all that remains is this artificial stage of representation. You do not feel particularly suited to it. You are not a critic in the field. The task of review belongs to someone else. What is the point of reviewing your own work? You are neither a writer nor—even if you have a knack with words—a suitable scribe to be reporting on your own work. There is a natural fear of self-promotion and vanity in blowing your own trumpet. You do not want to become a connoisseur of your own work. The whole thing is going to risk pretension. Where do you start and how do you get over these dreadful inhibitions?

Then there is another problem. What caused you to declare that your work was finished? Limitations of time? Are you running out of candidature or the period of a residency or a research grant? Is your work ever really 'finished' in a final sense or is the pressure more a matter of dates for examination, by which time the exegetical documentation also has to be squeezed in?

Finishing a body of work and hence drawing a line on the flow of ideas is something that artists are used to. There is nothing artificial about that; after all, artists are having exhibitions and performances every two years or so and they always face deadlines from their galleries. The discomfort and anxiety to arrest the flow of production arise instead from the uncertainty of writing up. How long will it take? I will have to abort my visual project prematurely, because I do not know how long it will take. I am going to resent it. It will hog all my time and kill my project. I will no longer have enthusiasm for doing anything because I will no longer be doing the creative work—which is now cold coffee—but just writing about it as if it were dead, as if it were the work of a minor unrecognized Mannerist from the provinces. I should never have begun.

If you have ever experienced these anxieties and remorse, it is not your fault. It may just be the fault of the degree structure or the general ethos of higher degrees in the creative arts. The idea that you suddenly stop creating in the sensory realm and suddenly pick up the task of analytical or scholarly writing is alien to all creative processes. Small wonder that it is resented by the creative confraternity! Once you have quarantined the creative part (the sensory work) from the exegetical documentation (the writing), you have effectively determined that one part is alive and the other part is dead. The one part is led by creative impulses; the other is led by bureaucratic impulses. The stage of writing up is simply a university-style requirement (or acquittal process in a grant) by which academic authority

is gained; but it has no life of its own, for it is divorced from the imaginative gestation and refinement of the visual work.

It is a scandal; and it arises because candidates do not begin writing from the first weeks of candidature and continue all the way through, to the point that the writing arrives in a reasonably final form at the same time as the creative work comes to an end. The process of writing functions as the essential dialogue that you have with yourself. It ideally shares in—and promotes—all the imaginative inklings that you entertain while working. It is a form of annotation which carries an argument, extends ideas and inspires further work. In its organic habit of growth and development, it is very like your creative work, but perhaps with even a slighter sense of closure and greater provisionality. Ideally, we should always be writing as the work evolves. The writing would share in the thrill of hatching new ideas. If the work is not in train, you will definitely lose some of the magic of writing and experience the onus of gratuitously *post facto* verbalizing as a drag.

The recommendation from all of this is not, however, without its perils. Provided you know what the dangers are, the risks are not great; but no method is foolproof. First, there is a risk that joint formulation of sensual and analytical might displace or even falsify the sensory process of creation. Take an example of pottery in the Hamada-Leach tradition. The shape and character of the vessel are not designed. The form never sees a preliminary manifestation on paper or on a screen. The shape and character of the vessel are developed in a process of making. Before the potter sees the movement of the clay on the wheel, he or she has no idea what the vessel will look like. There are no enormously revealing or inspiring thoughts that the potter can entertain before beginning the process. The creative act is informed by doing. All reflection seems to take place in the context of making and does not seem to have so much meaning when taken outside that context. To discuss what is intended to happen before the process is to cultivate a kind of blindness. To discuss what has happened after the process is idle. The creative space—and its reflection—only seem to have life during the gestation. It seems, from the potter's wheel, that there is little cultural incubation for the ideas outside the route from soft clay to kiln.

To discuss what has happened after the process is idle. The creative space—and its reflection—only seem to have life during the gestation.

Second, there can be a risk of inspirational congestion. Sensual and verbal may hold one another in suspension. The sensual waits for verbal and vice versa. They both attend one another, without a protocol by which one steps forward to the benefit of the other. So while perhaps beginning in a mutually deferential relationship, they soon start frustrating one another and may even end up with a mutually choking effect. Which takes the leads? Must it be one? How can they both go together? When you are doing one you cannot do the other. There is no clear inspirational guidance according to the genius of a medium, for you have artificially promoted an alien medium—writing—to the status of sharing the inception of ideas. Thus both are potentially stymied, mutually constipating; and this provides the prevaricating student with a good excuse for never doing any work. It is hard enough for art to go on its own much less drag writing along with it.

Third, and this is the worst, you will only do a certain kind of creative work because it is the kind that you can write about. We started out cultivating an essentially creative discipline and have ended up only being able to pursue those parts of it which lend themselves to verbal translation. The ineffably sublime parts, the parts closest to the genius of the sensory, we disadvantage, implicitly discredit or twist unrecognizably toward the alien discursive sophistication of another medium. It is an institutionalized form of treachery (*la trahison des clercs)*.

All these risks can be borne easily enough; but questions of balance will always remain. First, the potter. It is true that the pot itself has a gestation proper to the wheel and not to the pen. But this cannot be said for the idea of pottery, the collective genius of the objects and their appreciation. In

such genres in particular, the cultural context is enormously rich and layered. Before the pot gets thrown, there are deeply assimilated cultural visions at work, the sum of which will guarantee an outcome consonant with the tradition which has produced all those pots in the past.

Thus, while it may be true that there is a limited amount that you want to say about throwing, there is an infinite amount that you could say about the symbolic calibre of the class of objects and the aspects of them that you particularly want to enhance. The relationship to this residue of the patrimony needs to be owned by the artist; and the surest way of achieving this is a synthesis of the sensory and the verbal.

CHAPTER 4.3

WRITING INTO SENSORY PRACTICE

This section is concerned with the relation of writing to sensory practice. It builds upon the understanding of what research is, the knottiest questions which we discussed in the last chapters. Let us recapitulate in the most schematic way.

Your research started with a proposal. This in itself is based on (a) a survey—albeit somewhat subjective—of current practice and current preoccupations in an area which is both close to your heart and in which you have been practicing already and (b) intuitions of what novel or worthwhile artistic ambitions might be achieved in your sensory work. But the proposal was a fluid thing. It was never intended to be a blueprint for work to be contracted out, so to speak, by yourself, as if you were a tradesperson interpreting the plans of an architect. The proposal was a point of departure which articulated intentions in order that they may be critically scrutinized (above all by yourself) and possibly modified. In all events, the beauty of the proposal and its declaration of intentions is to act as document against which the studio production can be compared. Anyone intimately involved with your work can refer the one to the other, find one or both of them lacking or one of them inspirationally superior or presenting special potential which the other might rise to.

This process is rich and, in one sense, reflects the soul of research in the creative arts. But the process does not end with a proposal. It does not end with any form of writing but a relationship between writing and sensory work. Once the proposal is written, annotated, reviewed and rewritten, it has probably served its role. You are now embarking on a further stage, which sees the maturation of a body of work. We need a different kind writing which will supply analogous assistance for the further development of the sensory project and which is not merely confined to clarifying the beginning. The question is, of course, what is such writing? What is its scope?

There is no writing in this conspectus which is not related to your creative work. We are interested in a whole dynamic between the word and the image which is peculiarly productive from the beginning of a project to the end. At each stage it clarifies, prompts, interrogates, searches, poeticizes and strengthens. We are not therefore concerned with writing in general or research in general. We are concerned with a specific address to the creative processes which either occur automatically in the unconscious, as it were, or by design or, most probably, a seductive combination of the two.

But we are also not psychologists and now is not the time to begin surveying the scientific literature of brain functions and the panorama of behavioural or clinical testing that advances the course of neuro-science. All of this happens on a different level. We do not want to speculate objectively about the creative process as if the process takes place in someone else. The creative work happens within yourself and by your ambitions; it works toward results and has a communicative outcome. We are more interested in the management of desires and poetic impulses than a medical understanding of what happens through the neuronal pathways in the head. But nor are we interested in monitoring creative impulses for the sake of it, as if the outcome would be superior if measured. Designers

sometimes fall into this insecurity. The creative stages of any undertaking do not conform to a particularly systematic grid of behavioural processes, certainly none that we would ever be able to assess. But designers and particularly design educators crave assurance that all parts of their work are on track, that they can first be designed and second charted in reviewable phases. The supplication of method to measurement in our disciplines is so contrived as to resemble caricature. Our disciplines are organic and spontaneous.

Perhaps in seeking some respectable conformity to strategic project-management, some artists and art educators undertake a brushstroke-by-brushstroke description of their work, imagining, I suppose, that this scrupulosity will confer the status of research upon their pictures. The practice of keeping records in turn has its origins in an old paradigm of undergraduate teaching: a visual diary is kept, partly as a pedagogical device to shore up the enriching of the student's visual curiosity and partly to let the lecturers have ready evidence of visual and mental activity on the student's part. There is much merit in the system for undergraduate teaching; but diaries do not make research, nor does an earnest abstraction of diaristic remarks make for research either.

Research cannot be reduced to paradigms of surveillance. Since we are always being tempted outside our discipline, it might be worth considering once again the scientific paradigm of research. You begin with a hypothesis, gained imaginatively from a gleaning of the literature. You then set up experiments to assay the truth of your hypothesis, attempting, in effect, to disprove it. You hope to goodness that it will stand up to the rigours of testing. In the creative arts, the counterpart to the hypothesis is the notion—contained both in the proposal and the first works produced in the project—that you have identified an area in which you can make a contribution of potential cultural significance. The next stage is simultaneously to produce more work and greater refinements to the ideas adumbrated in your original proposal. As the ideas progress, your understanding of the body of work becomes clearer. You have, in some sense, been 'assaying' the ideas behind the work and the work itself. No matter how inscrutable is your inspiration, the way that you fulfil the project is reasonably empirical. What have you been doing with each new work? You have been chasing what you had not done in the previous work. Or if you had already done it in a previous work, you are checking to see that you can reproduce it, that the methods required for achieving the desired result are perfectly within your command. It is not wholly unlike the process in empirical science, except that the whole enterprise does not devolve upon a fact but an issue of sensibility or an expressive persuasion, quite likely of an ideological kind.

The work contains these ideas. We do not want the work to have to rely on a textual exposé; the sensory work may have one, to be sure, but most artists legitimately cling to an idea of the formal and conceptual autonomy of the sensory. The reason you have the writing is not to explain the artworks. You hope, indeed, that the meaning is self-evident (or poetically self-sufficient) from looking at the artworks and their titles. What an exegesis can contribute is a poetic extrapolation of the creative curiosity of the work. The writing that we have in mind in this book is not quite of that order, though you may have it high on your agenda to produce an expository argument, an apologia for the sensory work which enhances its communicativeness and even marketability. Writing can achieve all this and more; and we will not cramp your style.

But before we get to writing as either poetic elaboration or as seductive communication or as a promotional organ, we have a simpler role to focus upon. It is the gestational assistance of the project, the formulation of ideas in concert with the activity of studio. The one is constantly interpreting the other. The inspiration oscillates between ideas beheld in writing versus those beheld at the easel or anvil, so to speak.

You develop a certain fondness for your work in progress. You want it to succeed very much. You do not see its flaws. The fact that the work is fairly unintelligible or that it rests upon a contradiction or that the rationale is terribly unclear…these concerns elude you. The quest of making art exhausts

your scrupulosity. In fact the inspirational and synthesizing dedication to the project sometimes incites an understandable impatience with subtle analysis of causation. You particularly cultivate an enthusiasm to make more art works; and this energy discourages consciousness of the shortcomings of the work. The writing which advances the ideas, on the other hand, sometimes projects the conceits with greater transparency, whence they can be recognized and subsequently countervailed in further artistic directions, changes which will finally result in the chastening of the writing as well but which have their greatest benefit in revealing problems in the work. At other times, the conceits are already manifest in the artwork while the writing preserves a certain modesty in the face of pictorial bombast. The writing can suggest more credible directions and can effectively supply appropriate parameters for the audacity of the sensory work.

The to-ing and fro-ing between provisional text and images in progress coincidentally produces documentation of the research. Under the title of documentation, we do not mean documentary records created in an artificial explanatory stage when the work is all completed. It is the material worked up from the very growth of the artistic concepts and their sensory manifestation.

In the chapters which follow, therefore, we look at some very practical advice about when and how to start writing toward the documentation of your sensory work. But these chapters are not limited to technical and procedural hints. We are equally concerned with speculations about where the written outcome fits in the scheme of texts. What are the genres of writing? What are the agendas which they structurally tend to serve? What is the relationship between the writing done by artists (in the course of developing art) and that done by critics or art historians who are not responsible for making images or objects but who are responsible for communicating their effect or place in history?

In answering some of these questions, we will need to come back to issues which haunt the artist, issues about the placement of art in a market, issues of the role of criticism in determining the priorities of a market and the psychology or ideological commitment of artists who produce their work in the full knowledge of marginal demand for their work.

Methodology, research and documentation are all impeccably academic concepts; and we want to pursue them with full philosophical rigour. But we must also recognize that research in the creative arts takes place by grace of artists making enormous sacrifices, spending substantial parts of their livelihood on making aesthetic and symbolic objects which in their life-times are not recognized in the public domain. This book does not stand aloof from the contingent realities which have an impact upon the research project. They are the constants of art practice, perhaps, however, brought into yet sharper relief by the added expenses of paying for tertiary education. It is important to recognize and honour the sacrifices made by higher-degree students and not only to celebrate their faith but to include it in the very methodological fabric of post-graduate research. The following chapters, therefore, provide as much practical and theoretical assistance as they can and, in striving with this material to complement the cultural generosity of participating artists, this book salutes their beliefs and commitment.

CHAPTER 4.4

THE GENRES OF WRITING AROUND ART

You are not an art historian at this moment, even if you have trained as one. The following topic fits into a larger speculation about the kind of writings that artists relate to, that artists find inspiring and that artists want to do. It also fits into a personal speculation of the kind of art that I, as an art historian and critic, would like to make, as if there could be an ideal exchange between the history of art and the art of history. In the first instance, I want to ask general questions concerned with what artists want with writing.

There is a reciprocal kindness in the arts by which artists and art historians take a polite interest in each other's work. As the chronological scope of art historians nears the present time, the curiosity of artists is sparked by a certain interest in the competitive circumstances of their own career. As the scholar's field stretches back in time, the relevance is perceived to diminish exponentially. The scholar on Duccio or Rogier van der Weyden is sometimes received by living artists with a kind of courtesy bordering on condescension.

There are many artists who have a profound interest in art history and read a great deal, especially, of course, on the artists and themes that inspire them. They tend to share a period with a given art historian but not the same enthusiasm for that period. Their relationship with the past has a different predication. Of course, some art historians are also artists and vice versa. But for the most part, artists have different reasons for studying the past than art historians have. What are the special reasons for an artist wanting to deal with art history?

Many artists who adore art history are prepared to endure the gruelling scrupulosity with which art historians sift their causal information; they tolerate these apparently pedantic practices because they credit their worthiness in generating clearer knowledge in the long term.

Artists by and large are not attracted to art history in the same spirit as art historians are. Their interest is not to adduce sources in style or iconography; it is not to attribute causes for developments in doctrinal history or movements in capital; it is not to distinguish hands in the connoisseurial separation of contemporaries in the establishment of a corpus; it is not to explain the iconographic intrigue of inscrutable pictures with learned contemporaneous texts or sources from antiquity; it is not to explain the terms of patronage and their impact on the political and stylistic directions of art; it is not to conduct the history of ideas using art as a document or as a historical phenomenon analogous to war or liturgy. In fact, such likenesses strike the artist as bizarre and wanton, conceptually extravagant and somehow missing the point.

The articles of key thematic interest among art historians are often those which have the least bearing on the enthusiasm of artists. Perhaps an exception is biography and anecdote, for the identification with great figures of art is shared by artists and art historians. Many artists who adore art history are prepared to endure the gruelling scrupulosity with which art historians sift their causal information; they tolerate these apparently pedantic practices because they credit their worthiness in generating

clearer knowledge in the long term. But the pages with copious quality-illustration are inclined to abduct all concentration. The interest is often of a technical nature, a side of art history which is actually not well served by art historians. A contemporary artist curious about the silvery light in Corot, for example, will find no clues among art historians as to how the nineteenth-century painter went about separating the tones to achieve his magical results. Nor do artists ever express disappointment at this shortfall, for no one ever expects art history to distil its inherently worthy speculations into a technical manual.

Mutual respect through mutual distance: artists and art historians have long been a paradigm of benign stand-offishness. In the early seventies, the artist and art critic John Berger changed all this. Berger found a way of talking about art which sprang directly from the interests of an artistic vision. To many an art historian, it was probably rather brash, scarcely respecting the immense iconographic research which had been undertaken in recent decades and which has remained awesomely exemplary, as with the Warburg scholars, untouchable and Olympian in its scholarship. Berger's view of art was scarcely even historical: there was no evidence of Diplomatik nor the search for classical or interpretative places nor any of the resources or methods of Kunstgeschichte; instead, Berger's work was a form of criticism. His view of masterpieces of western painting, for a generation so inured to the ancestry of humanist *topoi*, was abrasively steeped in ideological discourses of class, race and gender which had never been applied to the objects of historical speculation before. For art historians in the Viennese tradition, it possibly seemed especially gratuitous, for their thematic interest in artistic objects—though broadly humanist in orientation—had always been relatively free of the aesthetic connoisseurship and fetishization of masterpieces of the English tradition.

Berger set in train a whole genre of art history devoted to broadly Marxist discourses. I think that they would have arisen anyway. Berger only prompted their dissemination with a focal immediacy, an unforgettable rhetoric which brought the issues to a level of urgency and communicated very successfully to artists. But these discourses had an infectious life of their own and were perceived—especially in culture raised upon aristocratic English connoisseurship—as having been long overdue in their application to art. Before long, you could depend on art historians forswearing the aesthetic tenets of humanism and launching into polemics against one structure of social dominance or another. For the most part, however, these discourses were championed in a very different vein to the discussion inaugurated by Berger in *Ways of Seeing*. In their own way, they were more self-referentially academic than any of the old humanistic art-historical methodologies that they replaced. Often they were written in a kind of anti-aesthetic language, tinged with resentment at the kinds of privilege which repressively spelt the terms of artistic production in the past. Much art history is still conducted with a vengeance, righteous enough and important as statements of Marxist and gender criticism.

If the seeds of this are all to be found in *Ways of Seeing*, Berger had presented the material in a different way. Yes, the judgements of Renaissance and Baroque painting are often harsh; but, even from a position of sympathy with the old masters, the often terse descriptions are strangely enjoyable: they start from within the works and, in spite of relating to social themes, they end up within the parameters of the work. Berger's writing is radically visual. It does not locate a painting in an extended historical or contextual vista: it takes up a narrative relationship with cues from the image. It extrapolates from the protagonists of a given image to the status of the model; it finds the archetype, the generalized social or sexual motif which the painting illustrates. When talking about *Adam and Eve*, the words of 'the woman' and 'the man' have a deconstructive value, a pregnancy of addressing a circumstance behind the image which haunts the image long after you have appreciated the intricacies of the plot.

What Berger sees and what he narrates is therefore an act of visual imagination. His studies are

essayistic and do not submit to the tough teleology of art history to produce new facts about masterpieces.

But Berger's contribution is more than that too. It positions art in a new dilemma, essentially the kind of aporia which is reflected in the status of the image in contemporary practice. The image is at once seductive and beloved but densely infunded with distasteful discourses, predicated upon unsustainable social assumptions for which few artists would make apologies. The museums are full of glorious images, gathering the finest aesthetic and philosophical perspectives of their day; but their status today is deeply contested. The question is what happens to the visual patrimony? Into what kind of ideological alienation does it slide, and consequently one's disaffected affection for it? What happens to the artworks—otherwise adorable—which are steeped in a discredited ideology?

This is not really a problem about which art history can tell us anything very profound. It is an artistic question; for the negotiation of symbols takes place on the stage of symbols, in art works and in the critical literature which flows from those visual experiments. The question of what happens to the patrimony or what happens to the artworks which are steeped in discredited ideology can be expressed more constructively with the following question: how can the patrimony be appropriately re-appropriated? How can you look at work which champions theocratic principles and hierarchically suppressive values and yet cling onto that credibly poetic part of it, that part which is supremely visual, which is not just formally sonorous but which is symbolically manipulative in seductive ways?

The question of what happens to the patrimony or what happens to the artworks which are steeped in discredited ideology can be expressed more constructively with the following question: how can the patrimony be appropriately re-appropriated?

Because the answers to these problems are artistic, they cannot be summarized in a theoretical formula. There are no answers that one could simply represent in the schematized framework of words. They are questions which are not conducive to objective explanations. The teleological imperatives of art history are not concerned with 'saving' some poetic part of the patrimony and juggling it with the repressive social order which in some way it expresses. Artists alone are free to float images beside one another, to compare the ideological calibre of one work with that of another; they can copy works and give them deconstructive titles which throw up their moral connotations and the cultural connotations of their tradition.

The project calls for an art of implication rather than an art of invocation or an art of celebration. It requires a pointing hand—perhaps neither recriminating nor remonstrating nor even necessarily negative—but critical. And, broadly speaking, this is the direction of post-Vietnam practice. All pre-industrial western art is celebratory and most art of the industrial period is too, including abstraction and to some extent even Dada and surrealism; for they celebrate the power of the artist to conquer the unconscious and to master the absurdity of mechanistic models of the psyche. But while post-Vietnam practice owes much to the languages of Dada, they are concerned with cultural history in ways which are difficult to identify through Picabia or Duchamp. They do not negotiate with the patrimony; they do not argue with the people and the feelings expressed in art history; they do not take seriously the power of the ancient symbolic order nor its aesthetic apologies in the form of connoisseurial art history. Dada artists, in short, are not concerned with the politics of visual affection. We are and, to a large extent, this comes from Berger.

Berger's contribution was to have seen the ideological underpinnings of western art in their creative potential. He has begun the artistic appropriation of the patrimony, which involves reviewing old art qualitatively but on the artist's terms, on that basis that they are going to create upon. He has tackled the cultural assumptions inherent in pre-industrial visual practice but has decided, within a given art work, not to tell the story within its own terms. He does not narrate the art-historical production

of the work; he avoids the heroic story of how the work became what it is. Berger's discussions lie outside the teleology of a historical narrative. They take up an independent, almost naïve narrative of 'the man' and 'the woman' as they betoken cultural status of an inherited kind.

What John Berger saw was his own innocence as an artist before the manipulative sophistication of an ingrown tradition. The beauty of this tradition he knew well; but he saw another beauty, namely the freedom of interpretation to range beyond art history and behind the iconographic conventions of an age. To see the archetypes of prejudice is a beautiful thing, a labour for artist to come who may have any number of ways of deconstructing masterpieces toward 'the man' and 'the woman'.

Ways of Seeing assumed an inverted connoisseurial position. While debunking the fetishistic valorization of masterpieces and discrediting the excitement of hierarchies in aristocratic painting, Berger proposed visions of the ancestral material which are not only inherently beautiful but which return the material to the intellectual, which allow the material to be entertained imaginatively and for the good of a critical republic. This is a position for artists to pick up, not, of course, from the dogmatic extremes of ideological discourse but from their unique faculty of sympathetic innuendo for which no genre of writing provides an equivalent.

CHAPTER 4.5

WHAT TO SAY WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE

Perhaps no genre of writing is as difficult as an essay on your own work. It is contingent upon shadowy stages in your studio work; it has enormous risks of revealing your ignorance, your conceit, a somewhat shameless tendency toward hyperbole or conflation, your inner vanity or perhaps false modesty; and finally, it is unpublishable outside the context of university studio research. There is an audience of perhaps five to ten people, a small proportion even of the exiguous circle who will view the work when it is exhibited publicly. But perhaps the greatest difficulty is that the writing will reveal that you have nothing much to say. Your artwork may not give that impression; it might be buoyed along with stylistic conviction, a kind of formal energy which is almost impossible to translate into language, much less into academically credible language. And even when you have identified themes, your exposition of those themes—and especially the way your sensory work is supposed to add to those themes may—seem dreadfully superficial.

There is always a certain embarrassment in expressing the agency of the work. What does it do? How potent do you assert its effect to be? How much do you have to be a connoisseur of your own work? Do you confine yourself to describing the aims and say nothing of the communicative result as you see it? Surely not! Else what was the purpose of all that research? Presumably you have established something. Are you not caught in a bind? How, in trying to avoid blowing your own trumpet, do you produce anything but a list of ideas with which the work in some oblique way intersects? Some research that was!

So manifest are the perils of explaining the achievements of a sensory project, that many candidates in the past have chosen to avoid the onus of reporting altogether, not by shirking the onus of writing but by invoking an old academic structure, the essay in partial fulfilment. This is a writing which can narrate the history of a genre and explain issues in the theory of such representations. It sets up the context within which the artist undertakes studio work and implicitly reflects on what is achieved in the studio; but it does not directly account for anything that happens there, makes no claims for the originality of the sensory production; and yet it still has the potential to make a contribution of substantial cultural value.

Announcing the themes of the work is possibly not too hard. The themes probably have some ancestry and the tenor of your description will very likely have a certain authority. But how does your work add to that stock? The closer you get to your work, the harder it becomes. The topics which you can explain in relation to their historical development become a thematic aporia. No one can tell you how to express what the work is trying to say. The locutions that you come up with in speaking for the work are ugly and hypostasizing. Expressions such as 'my work looks at…' or 'my work deals with' or even 'my work is about' sound dreadfully dim. And perhaps the worst is one that most commonly lurks beneath the surface of academic rationalizations, namely, 'through this work I express myself'.

As a witness to these agonies, we should cite the terrible testimony of a memorably scathing article by Edward Colless in *Broadsheet*, claiming that higher degrees encourage an unconsciously self-

parodic claptrap in which artist-candidates profess slogans like: 'I'm interested in the body' or 'my landscapes aren't simply pictures of scenery but they're about landscape painting'. 'This work looks at questions of gender.' 'This work looks at the body'. Colless is particularly critical of such expressions compulsively conflating the importance of the artistic undertaking. It is not enough, he implies, that an artist use perceptual or symbolically imaginative powers in representing landscape, even when the landscape has political dimensions. You must say that the work is 'about' landscape painting, so that it will have the sophistication of reflexivity, as if it were higher on the karmic scale of art on account of 'looking' or 'acting' on a plane of consciousness which normal landscape does not know about.

Let us not dwell on these problems but provide a few practical clues which will give the writing around the most problematic areas the best chance of having critical authority.

Perhaps the most useful advice is tellingly grammatical. It is best to avoid expressions which personify or animate the work, as if the work were a person with the faculty of seeing or speech. Thus 'my work looks at', 'the work asks questions about' or 'my work contemplates' or 'the work analyses' or 'my work talks about'... undoubtedly sound awkward because they are conceptually awkward. It is not the work which looks but we who look at the work. Indirectly, the work may look at something by reference to its motif. The work shows something of a physical nature; but it is you, the artist, who have looked at the motif and have represented it through the work. When the work is personified or hypostasized by having an almost human agency imputed to it, the result is an air of bombast which enters at the worst time, for you are already in danger of crediting yourself with too much importance relative to your artistic forebears and contemporaries.

Perhaps the most useful advice is tellingly grammatical. It is best to avoid expressions which personify or animate the work, as if the work were a person with the faculty of seeing or speech.

But even if you say 'through this work I look at' some complicated theme, an air of awkwardness enters which enfeebles your case in a way that is hard to explain. Colless would probably not mind if you said that 'through this work I look at a peach'; after all, you surely looked at the peach before painting it and probably while painting it too. An active word like 'looking' works well with something physical—the peach—but not so well with an abstraction, such as the category of still life. The degree of abstraction of the noun to which the word 'look' applies is perhaps the central problem. Perhaps, in turn, that is because 'look' is such a physical word with such general metaphoric associations. It can mean perception but is used to mean philosophical inquiry as well.

There are probably no rules in this area, but it is important to remain conscious of the rhetoric which you engage. Although not quite a principle of writing, the following suggestion may be useful. It is a good idea to keep the physical with the physical and the abstract with the abstract. A physical verb should normally address a physical object; an abstract verb should normally address an abstract theme. Thus, there is nothing wrong with the statement 'I look at a peach' for both verb and direct object are physical in orientation; nor, on the other hand, is there anything wrong with saying that 'the work attempts to deconstruct the tradition of still life', for both verb and direct object are intellectual constructs. It would be wrong to say that the work deconstructs the peach. The process of deconstruction is abstract; it applies to abstractions of a socially encoded kind and cannot be applied to a product of nature like a peach. It can be applied to the way that peaches have been constructed or the way that the historical tabletop has been historically figured, but it cannot bite into the raw fruit, so to speak.

The verbs applied to artworks are extraordinarily telling. The process of research does encourage a form of overstatement to which many artists are inclined even without the incentives of academic prestige. It is common, for example, for artists to talk of a work 'investigating' or 'exploring' an issue.

Gratefully, I have never heard of a work 'researching' an issue but that may just be my personal good fortune. Behind such words, which in one sense sound brazen and hyperbolic, lies an important clue to the positioning of artistic work as research.

What, then, do we say about investigation? Do artworks investigate? Let us try to skirt around the scruple raised earlier about agency, the question of who is doing the investigation. Sure, it is not the work which investigates but the artist who investigates through the work. But then why blanch at the work doing the investigation? Perhaps it is a somewhat pedantic and Talmudic concern. After all, you would say that the scientific research 'investigates' the nature of terpenes. You would not mind some report telling you that the project is doing the investigation rather than the scientist; indeed, the project is often called an investigation, while the scientist is called the investigator. It is quite fair, then, that the investigation investigates. Hence, by analogy, if the process of making the artwork is an investigation, why not say that the artwork investigates?

If we can momentarily leave the artist out of the picture, there are still two elements left in the question: one is the artwork and the other is the process of creating the artwork. I would argue that while the process of creating the artwork can be an investigation, the artwork itself cannot be an investigation; moreover, the slippage in logic by which the artwork is accorded the same heuristic nature as the process of creating the artwork is dangerously pompous.

Artworks are very different from the process that created them. Artworks operate aesthetically and morally: they celebrate and they ridicule; they are purposefully beautiful and ugly; they are rhetorical constructs, with enormous symbolic, aesthetic and ethical dimensions. None of these dimensions is actually investigative. They all assume positionality. They evince the determination of artists to express the decisions that they have made, even while doing the work. But the work is the work; it is not being done now that it is finished. Indeed it belongs to the silent and hallowed condition of artworks that they are eternally complete; that their mutations were stopped at a certain point when the aesthetic or communicative inclination of the artist was most perfectly expressed. They are high incarnations of bias.

Artworks operate aesthetically and morally: they celebrate and they ridicule; they are purposefully beautiful and ugly; they are rhetorical constructs, with enormous symbolic, aesthetic and ethical dimensions. None of these dimensions is actually investigative.

The process of creating artworks, on the other hand, is legitimately investigative. The making is an investigation. You are always asking how to do something. You are always posing problems, even when you think that you are working toward a solution. You are calculating the implications of doing what has been suggested in the process of doing itself. It is not a straightforward or linear investigative process but an organically agonized one, fraught by immediate feedback loops and contestation. It is a process of investigation which investigates the dominance of energies, so to speak, in the will of the artist. You could find, for instance, that rational doubts were overcome by seething impulses; your investigations threw up an almost instinctual desire to forge the imagery in a certain way, against the normally corrective screen of taste or reason. Perhaps no process is so multi-layered, so rich in psychological strife, so apt to oscillate between serenity and vehemence, between questions of technique to those of intention, from perception to taste, all intertwined with wilful emotional thread of love or malice.

Artworks may leave traces of these agonies; indeed there is a certain prestige in the stylistic expression of the contested ground of intention in the process of creating the artwork. For all that, the artwork is not merely the repository of the process of creating the artwork. It is more than that, just as the process of creating the artwork is more than the artwork. The two, in some sense, are incommensurable or, as Derrida would say, both mutually necessary and irreconcilable. The artwork, in a technical sense, gathers or reconciles all the contrary impulses that went to its creation;

but it transcends its creation; even in leaving the studio, it enters the public spectatorial realm where it functions alongside other messages and acquires a symbolic status which may be quite different to the symptoms of its creation.

As discussed earlier, the twentieth century has from time to time fetishized the process of making. But the works in the galleries for much of the century and nearly all artworks before it tell another story. The artwork is like a poem or a symphony: it manifests its own resolve to be what it is, to communicate, to argue a theme, to thrill, to seduce. These concepts are very far from investigation and, while many educational strategies almost compel you to make process-oriented art (art which conspicuously confesses the agonies of its making), the artwork itself achieves the status of art by virtue of going beyond the investigative parameters of its creation.

Thus, to complete the expressive etiquette of this section, I would recommend that the verb 'investigate' be confined either to the artist or to the process of creating the artwork but not applied to the artwork itself.

But rules will never eliminate our embarrassments, for some discomfort is intrinsic to our personal and expressive projects. Scientists and psychologists never have to express anything of themselves; their work is structured in impersonal ways and perfectly accords with the grand institutionality of research. We, on the other hand, are always talking about our interests and soulful foibles; and, at its root, artistic inspiration is all about you, your feelings and desires. Consider the irreducible and unfathomable instinct to 'express myself'. Could anything be further from a scientific principle? It sounds mawkish enough even in an artistic context but, in the context of research, it sounds obscene.

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But although romantic, egocentric and unfashionable, self-expression must nevertheless be granted legitimacy. It is not politically interesting and will never belong to the critical avant-garde; but you cannot begrudge it a place with the innermost integrity of art. Some kind of self-expression is probably a large motivational element among artists. I personally do not really know what self-expression means; and it sometimes makes an indulgent and slightly dopey impression on me; but that does not mean that it should be dissimulated. The research process should be nothing if not honest. Research is not an intellectual ceremony of gilding the lily and making all artistic enterprise—no matter how naïve—prestigiously deconstructive.

Thus, if you are a self-expressionist, the challenge will be to explain what aspect of your 'self' you want to express. We know what self-expression is in the abstract sense—it means projecting your feelings and identity—but the challenge is to explain (a) what the feelings and identity are and (b) why communicating such feelings and identity would be interesting for anybody else. In other words, what would be the emotional or social function of the art? The idea of functionality is too little invoked in the arts. It should not be impossible to outline the emotional or social function of the art, since they are presumably dear to your heart. There are many possibilities. The most general would be to incite empathy, to elicit in others an ability to identify which is educational and salutary. But the case will be more convincing the more specific it is about the emotions and identity being projected.

The contemporary discredit accorded to self-expression has arisen for sound reasons: it is because self-expression is often used as a mantra without curiosity for what is expressed; it is suggested to be an end in itself, absolving you of explaining any other intention in your work. Sometimes amateur artists, having no conscious method, resort to the phrase self-expression because they can think of no other purpose in their art and it seems authorize every undisciplined stylistic extravagance, taste

problem or iconographic weakness. Self-expression has long been the unfathomable default of the uncritical. But if you can get around this mystification, self-expression actually becomes interesting and potentially critical. Nor need the adherence to self-expression lessen the vitality of any other area of artistic decision-making. Explaining any aspect of the intention behind self-expression would involve all the usual considerations of artistic means. It would always entail describing how expressive phenomena were identified and artistically projected.

It is important to clear away some of the stigma associated with self-expression and to answer the implicit intolerance toward it in the critical literature. The reason is not for the sake of those poor disaffected self-expressionists alone. It is for the sake of artists who consider themselves to be more conceptually sophisticated but whose work in fact rests upon self-expressive premises. The whole notion of self-expression is so unfashionable, as adumbrated above, that artists are disinclined to see or acknowledge the personal squishy core of their inspiration. That is a pity and potentially self-deluding. We would like to think that our work proceeds from a lofty critical mission but, no matter how politically sophisticated or how analytically structured around the formal or iconographic preoccupations of art history, the motivation of an artist is personal. Making art is a labour of love; and if there is affection in the exercise and hence necessarily an emotional investment, how can it be divorced from self-expression?

It is true that the concept of research is not primarily linked to self-discovery—and so perhaps self-expression is structurally discouraged—but research should occur with openness and must candidly recognize those factors which may not belong to the *bon ton* of traditional disinterested research. If a key part of the motivation for image-making is self-expression, or if self-expression is essential to artistic integrity, it is important to deal with it and not keep it a secret lest anyone wince at something so vulgar.

On one level, it is hard to have art which is not self-expression. You cannot be expressing truths felt by anyone but yourself. All artistic authority (while deriving from a host of sources) ultimately comes through your own agreement, your own feelings. The sincerity of artworks has much to do with the extent to which the content is felt. Admittedly concepts like authenticity and sincerity are not the most currently attractive; but that is perhaps only a short-term estimation of postmodernism which postmodernity itself will soon overcome. After all, how long will people have an enthusiasm for the authorless transparency of ubiquitous mediated and medialized cultural messages and self-confessed duplicity in subverting it? These games will surely pass, and then everyone will be seeking authenticity and emotional sincerity with a vengeance.

CHAPTER 4.6

DETACHMENT OF PURPOSES: WRITING AS CRISIS

This section is centred on writing; but writing is centred on the creative work, especially the background (with some history given), the outcomes (with discussion of process and research), the critical context (what the criteria are) and the positioning (who the bedfellows or even the competition are). All of this assumes that the creative work feeds writing, conditions writing, writes the writing, makes the meaning. If only that was all! If all we had to consider were chicken-and-egg scenarios of which comes first, it would be relatively simple. But writing is itself problematic.

Writing problems are inherent in writing. Writing is always impure. Writing is always incomplete. Writing is always organic (it is mutant and is not easily designed). Writing is always tendentious or biased. Writing is always in the wrong order. Writing is always a scramble for authority. Writing is always for someone else. And when you write, all these incongruities compound and are experienced at once. I would therefore like to isolate each and thereafter imagine how the problem in one area can alleviate a problem in another.

WRITING IS ALWAYS IMPURE.
WRITING IS ALWAYS INCOMPLETE.
WRITING IS ALWAYS ORGANIC

Writing is always impure. Writing has a purpose. It is never autonomous beyond its communicative goal. It is seldom self-sufficient, if not poetry, novels and other literatures. And even then, it could be seen as a vindication of things felt, an appraisal of things experienced, highly referential and with a job to do. Writing is applied, that is, it inevitably has subject matter to which it relates and which it serves. Writing is handmaiden of themes. The themes have a larger life, that lives in other writings with grand trajectories and an air of historical destiny.

Writing is always incomplete. As with a photograph, there is always something to the side; there is always a story behind lens, before the moment and in the moment; but the view is neglected and will never surface. Subject matter handled by writing (even when the biochemistry of termites) is inexhaustible, unfathomable. Experience is infinitely richer than any representation (in one dimension or another) and continuous, which writing can never be. You can never be comprehensive: you leave volumes unsaid, unanswered, unaddressed.

At the same time, however, you do not really want to reveal these lacunae and confess that your text is empty in various departments. You want to create the impression at the end that a sufficient amount has been said. This involves complete artifice. To invent completeness, you need an artificial vessel. The most obvious is to delimit the field by means of a narrow question. But the illusion still only works if formal factors are in agreement. Many extravagant strategies have arisen to propose completeness by stylistic means. For example, in poetry, the sonnet, the elegiac couplet, the heroic stanza of *ottava rima*, are templates that the poetic reader immediately recognizes as self-contained, with a beginning, middle and end, suggesting that the last line clinches what needs to be said. The function of the shorter poetic genres is to make sentiment suggestively complete, to freeze thought (which is fluid and continuous) at an optimal intensity where it appears as monumental. Sentences,

paragraphs, chapters, indexes serve this ceremony, potentially just as much as pentameter. They can be organized to create the satisfying illusion of great comprehension by means of internal adequacy or self-sufficiency.

Writing is always organic. The language, the argument and the purpose relate to one another and influence one another. Neither has pre-eminence in the process, even if the purpose has priority in the writing. Writing cannot be designed in advance: as suggested above, it is mutant, growing, self-engorged and unpredictable. Derrida has noted: you do not know what you will write until it is written. The contingencies of language, form and content, means and ends, make writing an inspired frustration.

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But that is only an embarrassment to the writer. Unfortunately, other embarrassments are also reserved for the uncomfortable delectation of the reader. For example, writing is always tendentious. The reader has to watch out. As a writer, you have an interest in the case. Your story (or your version of the truth) will flatter your values and outlook. You are selective from subject matter to voice, from quotations to logic. Logic becomes subjective and is conditioned by rhetoric. You cultivate a persuasive agenda, an air of objectivity, to bring authority to your bias. Whether it deserves this or not may emerge in the fullness of time.

Writing is also always in the wrong order. What comes first in the introduction? The statement of a problem? A question (which the Germans sometimes call *Fragestellung*)? Your answer? Or should you foreground your creative work, albeit leading onto these questions? Or other people's work? Or your past? Your personal context? An exposé of your creative work and the outcomes of research? Or should you talk of the context, as in the narrative of other people's work? Or the history of the genre? There is no convention and no etiquette that guarantees the right first move, much less the sequence that follows it.

Thoughts, themes and chapters all depend on one another. They are interdependent. So it is an agony to decide what to privilege, not because it is then artificially the most important but because it is projected without the benefit of the other themes. So you are always deciding: what comes next in the chapters that follow? Should it be an expounding of theories before all else? Should it be an analysis of the creative work (especially your own)? Should it be a description of research process? Should it be phenomenology of your subject matter? Should it be phenomenology of your medium? Should it be your sexuality or ethnicity (*i.e.* subjecthood)? Should it be your or others' ambitions? And the history of such?

Despite these uncertainties—which, if we are creative, can be investigative in themselves—writing is also a scramble for authority. You can write in a confessional vein but you never write to lessen your status. It may begin as a learning exercise: you write to see what you can come up with, how you can arrange your thoughts; but it ends as projection. How can I make a good impression? By what thoughts or claims or connexions do I gain in esteem? How do I look good? It is a delicate balance. Sometimes you write to gain strength, to be strong in effect; but this easily shades off into 'seeming strong' and indulging your narcissism with learned justification.

Most uncannily, writing is for someone else. Ultimately, it is not about yourself completely, nor even your subject matter. Even if the subject matter is about yourself—or certainly about your ideas—the writing is not directed to yourself. It is directed to a reader, ideally anonymous. Dear reader, a disingenuous expression that only writers use. You do it for yourself but it is not for yourself (not to yourself) and hence it serves a party beyond yourself, even if only conceptualized to aggrandize yourself among studious Others. Writing is an inherently neurotic activity, oscillating between self

and outside (zeal and disinterest), whence it is often duplicitous in voice, and inscrutable in rhetoric, hard to pin down and find integrity. Sometimes, it is not a good investigative tool because conceived merely as a strategy for projection.

But all of this is to say that writing, even when academic, is like anything else creative. It is not unlike music or visual art in this sense. You 'paint' for yourself but for others. The construct of yourself is somewhat schismatic, lacks integrity of itself, and is for reception by an unknown public. You present yourself as persona, as the person whom you want to be seen as, flooded with sonorities and activating patterns of thought in others. Exegetical writing reveals this, which is possibly a part of the reason for the anxiety surrounding it. But the self protracted thus need not be feared because it subsists in the realm of the aesthetic, where admittedly little is secure and much is risky and big-headed; but the medium, just because of its numerous pitfalls, is permeable and a perfect resource for resolving and extending artistic consciousness.

CHAPTER 4.7

CRITICAL ISSUES: THE SHARP END OF WRITING

The term crisis, invoked in the previous chapter, leads us to a critical definition in our field. Critical and crisis have a fateful and necessary connexion. Critical is from Greek for judgement (κρισις), which is also our word for crisis. Criticism is a crisis because it means discriminating between good and bad. On what basis? One that can always be criticized! You can expect agony around the criteria, the very word being also derived from the same root. Somehow, from this painful knot, we extract the term critical which has illustrious and enviable qualities.

When used of texts, arguments, statements 'critical' indicates something about content. It denotes an appreciation of values contributing to the case. In our context, it has less to do with examining our own work to confess its weakness. We leave that to someone else, even though it is inherent in creative work to be self-critical. Rather, 'a critical text' means one that represents something with acknowledgement of values or criteria behind its judgements: its methods and statements are reflexive. This goes far beyond simply mustering a great number of pertinent references, which sometimes passes for critical method in the humanities.

The positive meaning of critical is most easily understood when we flip the word into the negative, 'uncritical'. If someone says: 'your writing is uncritical', this is experienced as a terrible demoralizing accusation. It suggests naivety, gullibility, superficial intellect, unreflectiveness. You stand accused. Sophistication is lacking in your work: it is a recital of others' boring opinions or a rhapsody of your own. You cannot cut the mustard; you are not aware, are not curious, engaged or switched on. It is potentially discrediting alongside an otherwise credible studio project.

Being uncritical: what is it? It is different to being dogmatic, which is rather to be intellectually dictatorial. Being uncritical means saying something without considering the basis of challenge. It is non-reflexive and unaware. The authority of the utterance is vulnerable to dismissal on scientific, political or psychological grounds. Being uncritical is a case of not seeing the issue but rehearsing circular fact or reproducing a mediocre idea. It is immaterial if these circular arguments or mediocre ideas are quoted from other authorities or are generated by yourself. Even if they emanate from a great mind, the utterances can be used in a mediocre and uncritical way.

Dogma is a much more occasional risk. It also derives from an ancient Greek word (δογμα), meaning opinion or doctrine. Statements against which there is no appeal are dogmatic. They are not facts (that is, statements which are necessarily true, such as 'black is extremely dark') but assertions, usually based on belief, faith or doctrine. They are unsubstantiated by conclusive evidence or consideration of the contrary case. The most recognizable form of dogma is the illegitimate projection of the absolute upon the relative. Dogma is a decided imposition of views upon the reader, denying the question which needs to be asked of the statement itself.

Anti-scientific or anti-rational patterns are easy to recognize and condemn; but it is harder to identify the simply mediocre idea, inoffensive, benign and commonplace, and to distinguish them from the

brilliant idea that they pretend to be and which they may serve. A thought—maybe sincere—that is not discovered with new insight can be mediocre. Originality is not quite the issue, else all quotation would be mediocre. We know that this is not the case, because old ideas can be exciting. Rather, a known idea, housed in customary logic, which is not reinvested with personal motives, deserves the title of mediocre. The reiteration of a shared perspective which is not made uncanny through individual subjectivity or personal experience is mediocre.

The term is cognate with banality. Something stated which has never been doubted is banal. Its expression is also likely to be a cliché. War is bad. Companionship is rewarding. You can also locate the motif in music, such as trite melodies, or imagery, like beautiful youthful women in magazines (pouting stereotypes, related to *Kitsch*). Ideas are banal when advanced without inviting a useful corollary. They have a hermetic logic but without hermetic mystery; they are invulnerable verities not susceptible to dialectic or stimulating wonder.

Dialectic—argument between values in contention—does not save banality, because dialectic can be handled in a boring and finite way, as with economy, class and gender.

Another angle on this is the mechanistic, which denotes the opposite of the inspirational. If an idea is banal, it does not necessarily become less so by dialectical challenge. Dialectic—argument between values in contention—does not save an idea from banality, because dialectic can be handled in a boring and finite way, as with economy, class and gender. All these intrinsically exciting areas can be rehearsed with dire predictability, owing to a mechanistic rehearsal of facts and values. An uncritical take on ideology and dialectic is certainly possible; the discourse becomes unreflective and conventional. The groovy theorists and their underlying philosophies are all there; but there is a mechanistic failure to acknowledge variety, subtlety, the psychological, circumstantial and aesthetic inflexions of subject matter.

Interesting utterances have obscure structures, because they are usually made up of less interesting elements, before and after. No statement is likely to be self-sufficient unless some witty epigram, aphorism, *pensée* or maxim; and even these tend to pale when rehearsed unimaginatively. Phrase-making skills are a bonus; but the prolific facility with inventive sayings is not the point, nor is ornament. As readers, we seek the curious connexion between ideas, the flow of thought, relationships that are not just in the words. Writing that reflects organic structure of thought. Certainly, it is likely to be championed in language and the diction may acquire a florid or moody character depending on the thought; but these flashy characteristics are not in themselves necessary to the purpose.

For the enrichment of observations, it is first necessary to recognize that some are moody to begin with; they are intrinsically inflected because of making them and are in themselves complex. If so, we are lucky and are unlikely to disappoint the moment. Other observations that need to be made are simple and of themselves boring. Yet stretched out, built up for connexion to next observation, possibly from another field or discourse, they snap into immanence. The simple observation becomes larger because the neighbouring thought induces a richer complexion upon it. And behold, you have writing.

Even in analysis, the apparently boring, mechanistic process of splitting the integrity of phenomena can be engaging and lively. The dreaded anatomized thought, the isolation of observed detail is somewhat artificial, yielding dead facts; and writers sometimes avoid it in order to retain an organic connexion with their subject matter. But analytical detail can also be enlivened by reassembly, whence it becomes highly dynamic, vigorous, poised toward a purpose and leading surreptitiously toward view, a disposition or argument. The molecular fact—while retaining the authority of fact—becomes an agent in a connected insight and contributes a certain immanence to the text.

The negation of this is inconsequentiality. The evidence of the senses, quotation of a learned kind, personal revelations, names, dates, chemical composition and so on can all be inconsequential. It depends on what follows, how an idea musters detail and follows through. All the observations, quotes and facts have to lead somewhere, else they are not generators of meaning. And certainly they will not dramatize the apprehension of meaning. The thinking has to be wrought, forged by will to gather support and arrive at insight.

This entails conspicuous movement. Meaning is dynamic and arises through movement between the general and particular. From the general propositions you are taken to specific instances. These are staged simultaneously in support of the general and serve as further exploration. From individual detail you are led to generalizations. Both gain a reciprocal force in which the detail apparently transcends the limitation of the particular. Intelligence travels: it is mobile between fields of consciousness.

This brings us to discourse again. The word is still used in French in the sense of conversation. But for us, it has the specialized additional character of a theme, a topic, with an implicit way of talking, an attitude to subject matter with implicit guidelines. It is in a sense always plural, even when used in the singular, with given subject matter being owned by a number of discourses. Discourse is always a characterization, with a determining element. It proposes kinship between phenomena. By nature, this may be somewhat exclusive; and we have already noted how discourses, when unfamiliar, can be forbidding and render your own thoughts somewhat less relevant or even legitimate.

So the great potential in writing itself, the gentle knitting of ideas, is to overcome this isolating force of discourse. Good writing travels through discourses. Though somewhat exclusive, discourses relate to one another. Writing can find links, thus generate imaginative intelligence. Writing has to be so much more than merely conducting discourse, because it is charged with a theme that has potential links with numerous discourses. Any subject matter can be talked about from inexhaustible complementary perspectives. As noted in the discussion on the poetic (chapter 2.5), the cross-discursive handling of themes creates a peculiar set of insights that are transportative imaginatively rewarding. The cross-discursive yields the magical impression of simultaneous intellectual energy and control, which is dynamic and willfully invested.

This is naturally good for writing in the creative arts. The arts lends themselves to the cross-discursive, because they are intrinsically multifocal, ambiguous, multivalent. Art—especially when good—operates through discourses; it does not just belong to one. Single issue art (as Robert Hughes called it) is arguably dogmatic or *Kitsch*, an *idée fixe*, a cliché. And it is almost impossible to imagine in arts like music, unless dominated heavily by the military march or overwritten disastrously with advertising jingles; and even then, it is likely to be conversant with the critiques of appropriation. In all events, chasing discursive breadth of writing discovers semantic richness of whichever art.

Thus writing follows art and art follows writing. What can be said of the one is true of the other, even though the one declares itself to be autonomous and the other declares itself to be exegetical and subordinate. It is logical that same principles apply, since imaginative processes are integral to both. The great economy to the purpose—even when voluptuous—honours and develops the inspiration. Both live in their connexions, their relationships, the links they form imaginatively between phenomena. And for that reason, the relationship is precious and worth cultivating.

CHAPTER 4.8

HISTORY AND US
HOW TO EXPLOIT THE PAST WITHOUT EMBARRASSMENT

The history of art, music, theatre and literature is posh but risky. Rehearsing it in our writings has undoubted benefits. It confers the blessing of scholarship on studio. It adds authority, an air of importance; it places work in a high league. But there are also risks. First, it is easy to get wrong. After all, history is much contested and is treacherous even for experts. Second, you conflate your work and set yourself up to be debunked.

Scholarly activity is daunting. An immense learned body of thought on our genres lies in the archive, proposing new insights. There is an exhaustive labour of dating, sorting (by umpteen indices) and interpretation, hence construction of meaning, hence power and influence. This material is clearly relevant, unavoidable discourses that 'place' or position the work at hand. You can develop an analysis of historical paradigms, join scholars, differ from their emphasis and so on, all very exciting and seductive.

The blessing in this extensive region of cognate inquiry lies in the discovery or assertion of roots. You come from somewhere; you have a lineage (which has relations beyond) and a trajectory, almost a sense of destiny. The explanation of a project (albeit implicit and allusive) almost necessarily involves the tracing of sources. By what other means do we judge its originality? It is the essential stock of inspiring content, with inbuilt connexions, arguments, language, habits of looking, values. With history, the grand prestige of traditional and radicala frameworks stands at the ready and potentially at your disposal.

The authority of the big picture is beguiling, with its weighty connexions and sagas. For us as artists, the presentation of the history of ideas creates intellectual momentum. Not all history is discursively rich, of course; some is boring, prosaic, perhaps helpfully factual and still good if you have direct or prior interest. Sometimes, you cannot always see the point of the narration and it is as if the historian is narrating a whole lot of facts simply because he or she has encountered them in the historical research. But within history, there are many challenging moments. It seems most convenient for us as artists when it is already written in such a way that it relates a relationship between aesthetic developments and major movements (like Protestantism, Marxism) and also when it adduces a relationship between the creative arts and other disciplines, like criminology or philology. The grand ascription of meaning to styles, iconography, function, economy, and mode of display, is breathtaking.

True to good historical method, to inform is to put in form, to place facts in a certain shape and reveal maybe an uncanny resemblance or connexion between them. A creative project stands to gain in its stages of gestation and exegetical expression by that very energy, but certainly by the sense that

a given symbol or style can be related to a spread of factors which may or may not be in the artist's control. The knowledge of precedents points to the awareness of causes (philosophy); and this is empowering, because it argues for a degree of intellectual control in perception. The meaning of the creative work is enhanced by analogous conjectures about what caused this visuality or that sonority; and this gives the work in progress a kind of blessing, as if history could be proactive. Building arguments in relation to history places you—if not your work—in a position of creative judgement. Ironically, it makes positionality active.

But it is also a trap. Your view of art history is skewed by your favourites or what supports your practice. You neglect a vein of writing (groups of historians who profess different ideology). Your interpretations are naïve and homespun, ignoring important connexions or dates. You accept an uncritical reading by a mediocre art historian or any number of them. Or more embarrassingly, you misunderstand the gist of the quoted text. Very risky.

And then there is chutzpah. With a certain immodest rhetoric, you seem to be saying: First there were the Greeks; then there were the middle ages and the renaissance, the baroque, the enlightenment, romanticism, realism, impressionism... Then there was modernism, post-modernism... And then there was me. This is a shameless arrogation of ancestry to self-inscribe yourself as hero-inheritor of progressive tradition. Alas, the reader encountering this may say: but you have neither the sublime divinity of the Greeks, nor the piety of the middle ages, nor the intellect of the renaissance, the passion of the baroque, the wit of the enlightenment, the rebellion of romanticism, the synthesizing of modernism. Nor any virtue implied by the parade. Seen in that company you are a loser. It would have been better to keep mouth shut. The audacity of mentioning Velázquez's name or Shakespeare's or Bach's name alongside his!

Inevitably, some histories are less relevant than others, in spite of your affections; and sometimes they advertise shortcomings in your own work. You might adore a given historical moment but this fondness does not come through in your work. Your work disappoints expectations set up by the discourse. Or vice versa, you omit the discourse that would be so apt. A connexion that lacks pertinence is worse than idle chatter: it is confusing for the reader. The reader goes searching for something that is not there, which is very unrewarding. And confidence will be lost, because you have revealed poor self-knowledge, hence poor research.

Suppose, however, that the historical material is good stuff, apposite and useful. The question remains: where do you put it in an exegetical document? Before the autobiography? Maybe after the phenomenology of the subject matter? Or perhaps before the discussion of style, materials or medium? Where will it support—rather than detract from—the other fields of inquiry? They may have a very different texture (for example, there may be no footnoted references with weighty books in the autobiographical section). So this can lessen their authority and the appeal of their relative autonomy.

There is always some agony of the referenced versus the unreferenced in writing exegetical essays. Creative arts history may or may not have footnotes; however it is essentially referenced. It concerns labels, views, knowledge and images that lie in the archive. Autobiography, evocation, explanation of experience of photographing or painting, discussion of evaluation, are not referenced. They are liable to seem unwholesome in their gross subjectivity beside highly authorized theoretical or historical sections.

Because these sections are not natural bedfellows, there is a tendency to avoid or distort one of them, the better to conform to the others. You may even be tempted either to delete one altogether and thus eliminate the disjunction and consequent threat to the integrity of the text. Or you might make the historical rhapsodic, avoiding references, pretending that history is a mere story and thus hope that it will mesh with the more subjective accounts of experience elsewhere. Or finally, you could lard the

autobiographical element with historiography, inducing objective method on subjective personal recall, a tactic which risks major pomposity.

This is a relationship to be managed cautiously, as a key element stands to be effaced or wrecked in the process. In general, it is better to accept difference in the texture and content (like Venturi's 'messy vitality') than to seek homogeneity of tone and back-up. Different thoughts have a different rationale, hence require a separate voice as well as space. Chapter headings can be used to flag the differing purposes, so that the caesura is advertised rather than hidden. The explanation of method justifies changes in voice. Even while the creative project has the integrity of its creative works, the research involves heterogenous elements. This calls for the articulation of heterogeneity; and drama and surprise will be added to the journey.

It may be worth proposing a structure, for which you could suggest the follwoing plan, to be filled out in sections or chapters of any length. It seems logical to begin with an introduction, move to the contemporary context, then the historical context (or vice versa: it matters little), then proceed to some account of the the works or bodies of work; and finally, it is good etiquette to supply a conclusion, even though the only thing that has really been concluded is a body of work; and even that is undoubtedly destined to grow into a further body of work and in that sense will resist its own conclusion. To go through these in turn...

1 In the introduction, you would normally say something to the effect that I have produced a body of work broadly concerned with (whichever topic or mode). It might be something along the lines that I used to do portraits (or flute sonatas or whatever) but departed from this convention or sought refreshment for it. My background also involves growing up in Murrumbeena (as this affords a follow-up involving memory and chasing some or the circumstances of your consciousness might have been conditioned). I have always wanted to engage with something that has so far not been clinched, at least in the way that I might want to approach it. Several influences have acted upon me. I want to position this project within contemporary and historical readings.

2 It seems best to place the contemporary context next, as this sets the scene for the need for the work. My central theme is this (which could be subject matter, genre, style or even an ideological sympathy). I look to certain other artists who usefully broach this field (and they are not necessarily numerous). These artists do not necessarily produce work that sounds or looks like mine; but there is a relation. Mine may sound or look the way they do for certain reasons (not aberrant beside exemplar) which I will try to explain. Some absences of content or technique relative to the exemplars can be countenanced. This is important when the genre is not fashsionable and the field may be flooded by conservative and incurious practitioners.

3 Having handled these urgent matters and justifying the contemporary relevance, through personal interest, it makes sense to move to the broader location of the project in a historical context. The meaning of the themes can be seen historically. The territory has been vacated or alternately visited and deserted historically. The reasons for this deserve to be followed up. It would be necessary to interrogate values inherent in specific treatments. The theme indicates closeness to values and may even be discouraged by prevailing mores, spirituality, ideology. This larger picture in the history of ideas is constructed with great benefits to the appreciation of the contemporary work.

4 Then come the works themselves. The works are in x parts, have y features for z reasons. From the beginning of the project, I set out with the intention to produce something slightly different. This is very likely the case; and this motif of change within the project invites a natural speculation on method. Pursuing the original intention, I was discouraged by a perception that

they failed...or could be seen as...or missed the point, or conveyed the opposite, were marginal (and again, this naturally invites a description of an evaluative process, with all its criteria). The works function within their medium (so the relationship between intentions and medium can be broached) and while touching on certain themes would avoid the didacticism that they could easily attract. It may well attempt to translate the political into the personal.

5 And finally a conclusion! This might contain a modest claim to originality. This text investigates how others have done similar work or handled the theme at various times. It demonstrates that the approach taken, if only dependent on my personal circumstances, is original or independent. A part of this demonstration has been an acknowledgement that the work is informed by precedents. The significance of the work may be strongest in its intentions but the outcomes of the research have been rewarding for me personally. None of this writing is likely to be disingenuous or cynical and all of it would be propelled by the same energy that it took to create the work in the first place.

CHAPTER 4.9

MISE EN THÈME
FILM ANALYSIS AS CUE FOR WRITING

Mise en scène is a delightful term comprehensively analysed by the film theorist Adrian Martin.[1] It was originally a term used in theatre—putting in the scene, placing on stage—but is now strongly associated with film, where it has a somewhat more demonstrative or active presence. The purist definition of mise en scène therefore identifies all parts of a film with overlap with theatre. This may be a bit reductive; also, it would include the script. The general use as 'staging' means everything but the script. The lighting, the camera angle, the distance from the lens, the sound (like not only the music or sampling but the distance from the microphone) and above all the sequence.

It is a slightly confusing and supersaturated semiotic territory. Everyone has different definition, consciously or otherwise. And often exclusive definitions serve a tendentious purpose. Mise en scène may identify parts of film for which the director emerges as an autonomous auteur/artiste. This falsifies the essentially collaborative genius of film. A safe working definition would be the sensory engineering of a film (which comprises contributions by any number of individuals). Mise en scène is the visual and audio environment that conditions your reception of narrative. It is how you encounter scenes, how you experience the thing represented. Mise en scène is the key artifice that goes beyond writing. It is what generates feeling (rhetoric) in addition to the text.

Imagine the talk. To describe the intricacies of a text is enough: the content and expression, the words, the sequence, these are infinitely inflected in themselves and their permutations and combinations have a bewildering complexity. Any text has manifold perspectives, emotional or sentimental, political or ideological, original or derivative, and all with psychological impact on the reader. Texts have potentially have an imaginative use of metaphor, symbol, allegory, humour, absurdity; and understanding how they operate is an impossible challenge. But then extend this to the visual and audio environment. Factors intersect and proliferate chaotically.

It presents an embarrassment of riches. Film is also a fertile analytical field, with diversity across numerous countries. Language differences are apparently no object. Add television, videos, advertisements, animations, now desktop manipulation. For theorists, it is a daunting volume of subject matter, all arising with modernity, even thought the content is often not modernist but archaic and conservative.

1 Much of my speculations of how useful this idea is derive from Martin's prolific texts.

Is film theory a help to us? Some have sought to systematize the various approaches.[2] The methods often at variance with one another, for example, the straight reading of narrative or symbolism, the classical relating of form/content toward aesthetic, the description for the sake of theory (particular/general), theory that produces basis for fuller description. There is a huge superabundance of material and methods.

Traditionally, we have seen film as providing two fields of invention. First, is the text, the underlying plot of who does what, what happens, who says what. It may or may not be invented by you; it could be hatced by Shakespeare, for example. It could be documentary or the interpretation of fact. Second, there is the mise en scène, the interpretation in the most demonstrative sense. The world is set: you find the angle from which to see it, do the lights, get the sound happening, the voice-over, create backdrops and work out the perspectives tumbling through the viewer's experience.

This dichotomous structure is not unlike the twin manifestations of research in the creative arts. For example, creating new a design or composition is the invention of form, which means visual, sonic or tactile coherence. As in abstract painting, sculpture, ceramics, glass, wood. Although these genres might even seek a universal language ofform, you also have to observe: what ceremonies are served by the new thing? There tends to be absence of text in the object itself. On the other hand picturing (figurative painting and so on) and installation give you a stronger sense of an inherent mise en scène. You notice how things are related, how they grow in experience almost like a narrative. You can easily recognize what ceremonies attend the view. They are intrinsically rich in text, in the proposition of a viewpoint.

No text is really natural, artless or merely objective reportage. Each is guided by the author's energy and imagination, narrative vigour, polemical vim, momentum, head of steam, mise en stream.

The control of the angles is a key element of picture-making. Invention within genre is all about how things are seen. It is, up to a point, about what is seen; but the art entersmost obviously in the manipulative genius by which the optimum poignancy or impact is obtained through the staged encounter. This may also be true of the symbolist and surrealist tradition, which stages the appearance of phantoms yet unseen. For the rest, picturing is a determined conditioning of a motif. It approaches what we mean by mise en scène in rendering motifs with a purposeful susceptibility to moody inflexions. It is a rhetoric of the transparent.

There are wider parallels with the art or musical environs. Irrespective of the genre, we stage an encounter, not limited to the brushstrokes or the notes. The mood in gallery determines the reception before you enter with art. Works are sequenced for maximum drama. The sensory core may in addition be given textual readings, as with labels. Sometimes installational elements may encroach on the integrity of the work. The work is never so pure, autonomous or independent of the site. If purity projected, it is also through mise en scène.

The parallel with reading and writing is striking. Your encounter with the text is never so neat. There is always a preamble. Then, through quotes, other people's judgements enter and influence the reception of the rest of the text, as if the socializing of the text. Ideas are judiciously—or haphazardly—sequenced. It depends on the author's will to impress with seamless continuities or vibrant contrasts. The text is a constant influence on itself: a setting up of encounters, a staging of moments. It is dynamic and organic in all the ways that Derrida revealed; but it is also highly theatrical: each sentence is the proscenium arch through which you go and gaze upon a further scene.

2 *e.g.* Stephen Bordwell, *Making Meaning*,

Writing is therefore a benign manipulative artifice. No text is really natural, artless or merely objective reportage. Each is guided by the author's energy and imagination, narrative vigour, polemical vim, momentum, head of steam, mise en stream. The reader's consciousness is conditioned by voice, volume, colour, angle, distance, intrusiveness of the background. The air of ceremony—or denial of such—produces intensity to match the thought.

In presenting our research, we doubly enjoy the control of son et lumière. The audio, written or visual work is presented along with its documentation: the sensory and the text are joined the better to stage one another's reception. It is analogous to the theatre or cinema with synaesthesia through the visual, music and words. The production of the creative arts within the couch of written documentation is a new artistic genre in the making, at this stage only for the archive (and the candidate and examiner); but potentially, it conveniently produces a further kind of art experience. It is a promiscuous Gesamtkunstwerk, a mixture of genres with their own peculiar integrity. Because the documentation does not actually impinge upon the structure of the creaetive work, we have a unique teasing out of authorship.

With this potential, it seems wasteful to act dumb; though this remains the preferred option when you want to say that the work speaks for itself. There is of course no need to rise to cinematographic ambition in conducting documentation. But work does not always speak for itself; it is always being spoken for (as in gallery). The fuller multiplicity and richness of the art experience is within our grasp; only now it is we as artists—rather than external authorities—who are the orchestrators of the encounter. Even if this does not change the work, it adds a symbolic vitality, as artists themselves take on the methods of reception and interpretative synthesis that the work demands.

CHAPTER 4.10

SCHOLARSHIP IN THE BALANCE
SCHOLARLY WRITING IN CREATIVE RESEARCH

According to a canon that developed unchallenged for a very long time, academic research exists in fields of knowing and proof. It is identified most memorably and with the greatest severity in the physical sciences, which establish facts on the basis of observation, very often extending to empirical experiment, where circumstances are carefully created and controlled, and tests are reliably designed around an unsolved question. This method is reflected in the social sciences (as we considered in chapter 3.9), which describe, quantify and model social phenomena—economic or behavioural—without experiment but with the same code of measurable rigour. The humanities, which are by and large non-quantitative and definitely present a greater kinship with the creative arts in their cultural subject matter and often in the ideological spirit of their contentions, also cleave closely to the motif of knowing and proof. Disciplines like philosophy, history and languages interpret and argue with the support of sources; a thesis in the field is held to be defensible when its conclusions and methods withstand the contrary argument.

What then is the counterpart in the creative arts? The primary motif is making; and then there is normally further supplementary material, whence a further question of 'saying what?' arises. Somehow the additional saying (the verbal accompaniment to new creative work) seems auxiliary and in some post-structural work, for example, may even present certain embarrassments. Some artists would challenge the logocentric suppositions of the other disciplines. It seems an unhappy compromise to capitulate to the terms of linear argument in language when the whole project seems dedicated to avoiding those premises. In the creative arts, the 'fields of knowing and proof' are not always as obvious as the sensual transport of the work; and it is even difficult to identify that conclusions have been arrived at. The material established through the research is often fugitive and resists a satisfactory definition. We all agree that creative work is research, for its self-evidently innovative character and generation of new concepts, forms and emotional engagement; but its disciplinary criteria suffer vague parameters.

In university life, there seems to be a seamless tradition without us, an integrity of knowing what to ask, knowing what to do and knowing what to say that perhaps reflects the mutual intimacy of reading, gleaning, judging, assaying, proving and arguing. The other disciplines have a 'natural' rapport between the various stages of searching, testing and reflecting; they are based on a designed closeness of stab and lab. You read, scrutinize, learn, find fault, make notes and gather sources critically alongside your own gestating ideas. You identify the unknown or the unspoken, perhaps even certain things unfelt by others. In this exploration, writing logically completes the journey. There is no disjunction between the 'work' and the writing, even though we know that many

researchers in some technical areas are chronically dysfunctional writers.

The creative arts could almost be seen delivering the opposite framework. In research degrees, candidates complete a schismatic project that comprises (a) doing and (b) writing about doing. The two are ideally linked but nothing guarantees the link and much discourages it. The creative element is normally central and has to be granted some dignity as an autonomous entity, not necessarily connected with writing. Among some artists, the work may be perfused with dependence on an exegetical text, like a catalogue essay; but this synergy of word and image cannot be generalized. However much influenced by writing, the creative work has to be allowed an inalienable integrity.

Further, the key body of investigative work (the creative output) has fierce attachments or investments of an emotional or ideological kind and therefore contests any lure of objectivity that the other disciplines may project. When we write, we somewhat shamelessly undertake a thinly veiled labour of valorizing what has been achieved in the creative work. No one really wants to challenge the work, for this would perversely invite the examiners' disapproval; besides, as artists we are hardwired to construct arguments in our favour. Challenging the data with impartial tests is inconceivable in our field. More often than not, we create a rhetorical text to convince the reader that the conceits of the creative work are topical and necessary.

We have an exegesis to assist evaluation of creative work, to mediate between art and judge; but this explanatory text is never structurally neutral but neurotically oscillates between impulses to auto-connoisseurship and history.

The problem is not the writing itself—the fact that we use writing when our medium is paint or pixels—as if writing is an alien medium in which nothing properly translates. The problem is equally encountered in creative writing projects, where the candidate is an expert word-smith. Our core problem is rather that of a schismatic soul. We have an exegesis to assist evaluation of creative work, to mediate between art and judge; but this explanatory text is never structurally neutral but neurotically oscillates between impulses to auto-connoisseurship and history. And because of its dubious grounding, you may notice as a reader that the exegesis all too frequently produces auto-connoisseurship of an egotistical kind and history of a bland kind. Neither is inherently critical; and neither conspicuously advances knowledge. In many ways, I feel, the problem of defining the research for the candidate is the problem of defining the exegesis.

At Monash University, we felt that the cliché defining doctoral research as 'a contribution to knowledge' was misleading and perhaps even pretentious in our disciplines. We appealed to a kind of truth to the calling. The objective in doctoral projects, we pleaded, was 'a cultural contribution of substantial significance'. This has been a very liberating declaration, which Monash as a whole received with relief and embraced warmly in amendments to the doctoral regulations. Our researchers are thus under no obligation to define their work in epistemological terms. They do not have to demonstrate a stride taken in global knowledge. But it creates other expectations and stresses on the exegesis. The work (or conceptual background) has to live on the page. It has to come to life again in order to appear as a significant cultural contribution and hence the writing cannot disappoint the high charter of the creative work. The creative material is in constant rebirthing through the text that sits beside it.

The issue of what work the exegesis should do may never be solved by reference to abstract definitions of research or creative arts, no matter how well steeped in the authority of other disciplines. This would be an approach of the Mandarins, for in referencing innumerable venerable academic virtues, it could well fail to reference experience. We now sit atop a considerable little mound of doctoral submissions—some brilliant, some premature, some overworked and some dire—upon which analysis can begin; and this observational argument is much likelier to yield helpful insights into the construction of exegetical essays than a whole phalanx of a priori ingredients

for high rigour. Rather than a supplier-driven approach, a reader-oriented approach is called for.

Another key motif recommends this approach. Method in our field is not universally generalizable. The most interesting elements that you might forcefully promote to one researcher you would never whisper to another, for it would manifestly not apply; it could corrupt the intention or mess up the natural flow that the individual project indicates. Method in our area is best handled on a case-by-case basis; there is nothing paralleling scientific method. Each candidate establishes a method proper to himself or herself; and the applicability of any given discourse to candidates can only be seen on an individual basis. To formulate a method, and hence an exegetical framework, would risk dragooning the candidate into unworkable disciplines. As with negative theology (in which the pious scholar can tell you what God is not but would never presume to tell you what he or she is[3]) it seems prudent to emphasize what to avoid rather than what to include.

For these reasons, it has occurred to me that the most useful appreciation of what an exegetical essay should achieve may arise out of avoiding the numerous methodological pitfalls that litter the field. In this chapter, therefore, I wanted to enumerate some of what I consider 'the sins' of exegetical writing; for I find that consideration of these 'sins' yields systematic insights into the structure of the task. There is a difference with the faults and omissions that might crop up in other fields, which might be characterized as errors (σφαλματα); for the peculiar wrongheadedness that I want to identify is a fault (αμαρτια) of a kind that became theologically burdened, in later Hellenistic times, with implications of guilt. The list that I want to cover comprises indulgence, blandness, inconsequentiality, evasion, pretence, naivety, inconsistency, problematic ideology, poor structure, uncritical writing, the unpoetic and pomposity. I would like to devote the rest of this chapter to treating each with a paragraph.

In all these shortcomings that I want to discuss, however, the one that I would not include is that the text fails to explain the work. I do not see it as at all obligatory to furnish a key to the meaning of the creative work; and this requirement should not be considered part of the rigour. Further, though in general each and every sin is equally wrong, none is unpardonable; and at any moment we may allow ourselves to be seduced, for a peculiar charm in the work may sustain a degree of presumption in the exegetical commentary. Numerous caveats of absolution must be described alongside each description of sin.

INDULGENCE

The issue with indulgence is not about having fun. Artists are allowed to enjoy themselves and to project this relish in all candour. To disguise this element of pleasure would falsify the artistic project. Rather, indulgence in this context may be defined as the wanton concentration on material flattering to the abilities of the writer. We detect in the concept an element of self-gratification, an exhibitionist delivery or unnecessary rehearsing of esoteric knowledge. The reader is somewhat alienated because not included, not spoken to, not seduced. No attempt seems to have been made to negotiate with the reader's patience. But sometimes an author deserves to be indulged. It is a justified obsession in the context of the creative work. And whereas bellettrism, dilettantism and amateurship are anathema in other parts of the academic world, they are defensible expressions of enthusiasm in ours, for they may reveal essential aspects of the inspirational integrity of the artist's vision.

BLANDNESS

There are two kinds of blandness. One is saying things that are neither here nor there, that are non-committal, lacking opinion or character. The other is saying things that do not require a proof, that do not invite contestation. The material collected is already well-enough known not to be brought together again, unless for the purpose of debate; but then the blandness would arise in the debate

3 unless you speak in positive platitudes, such as God is truth, beauty, wisdom, light and so on, every virtue in which there is no contestation.

not being invoked or adequately pursued. Under blandness, you could mention the air of the platitude, the predictable thought, the kind that makes you suspect that other souls would have said the same thing, even though you cannot prove it. And even when you feel that others may not have said it, the utterance still strikes you as mediocre. The bland exegesis often cruels the hope of the creative work to reach cultural significance. It is often a hum-drum historical narration, for example, that buries the creative impulse.

INCONSEQUENTIALITY

Material brought together without due connexions is inconsequential.[4] For example, a fact—worthy in its own right—may not be chased by an insight or a further fact which would support it. No matter how weighty the fact may be in another context, it is inconsequential here, for it is not argumentatively related to a meaningful structure. It is not given a constructive home. Hence, meaning is somewhat missing, as meaning lives in the synapses. As the etymology suggests, things do not follow one another to build up a case or a vision; therefore a case does not follow. It would be unfair to demand that everything said must be automatically yoked to an argument. Evocation and imaginative thoughts may be limited by this discipline. Writing can be flashy, learned, flitting and up to a point skittish. However, a point must be made, even if eccentrically conveyed.

EVASION

Writers of exegetical documents are often evasive; and the due that they most usually evade is talking about the creative work. Somehow, the aesthetic premises of the work are avoided. The text talks about matters on which there is no question regarding the artistic rightness of judgements. Judgements have assuredly been made on aesthetic or moral bases; but these artistic choices are not illuminated. Thus, the paradigm of the creative work is somewhat absent from the exegesis. The reader not inducted into the choices—and hence the method—of the artist. In this way, the criteria are not helpfully laid out.

PRETENCE

It is tempting to present the creative project as if it were absolutely defensible, as if a thorough investigation has been conducted, of which the creative work is the infallible outcome. Whom does one want to fool in projecting this fantasy? We sometimes find a dependence on social science to be erroneous or misleading. Partly this is because the creative force underlying an artistic undertaking is wayward and hardly foreseeable in scientific results. Pretension can also arise through the 'application' of theory, especially when the theory is of limited relevance but is artificially used for rhetorical purposes (as opposed to the garnishing or decorative or authoritative purposes which still fall on the side of the scholarly). The will to subsume the prestige of inappropriate discourses or texts tangential to the direction of the creative work is pretentious.

NAIVETY

Alas, the opposite is just as scandalous. References may be partial and pitched eccentrically; but they cannot ignore with impunity all critical literature, or at least they cannot ignore the sense of it. The author has to be able to portray contemporary feeling at the sharp end. Failure to note creative work or critical writing which would contest (or even support the thesis) is disappointing for the reader, who wants to feel that the research has unearthed such key cultural connexions. Certain assumptions underlying the creative work (and its exegesis) could involve falsehood, disprovable by, or at least debatable according to, social science method. A failure to take into account revision in the terms of the discourse in recent times weakens the authority of the writer. It is not necessarily Romantic either, as is often the hope with 'purely intuitive' artistic conceits.

4 *cf.* Latin expression for fault in argumentative link: *non sequitur*.

INCONSISTENCY

I would typically identify inconsistency as a gap between the exegesis and the creative work; for it sometimes appears that they are possessed of a different spirit, perhaps because they were created at different times and under different pressures. This also arises within exegesis itself, as variations of discourse and voice can be quite disorienting. The logic and assumptions can be at variance with one another, not just the spiritual content, so to speak, which you would normally expect might reflect the unique vision of the individual. This therefore creates the impression of a lack of integrity, a single guiding mind that has brought both the creative work and its commentary into existence. Internal contradictions can be countenanced, of course, and are probably necessary up to a point; but these contradictions need to be expressed as poetic paradoxes and are somehow different from the fragmentation of writing that does not correspond to the broader vision.

PROBLEMATIC IDEOLOGY

In art, it would be ideal (in the utopian sense) for ideology to be immaterial, since inclusiveness would ban no discourse and frown upon no voice, irrespective of the opinion it carries. Everyone has a right to his or her own prejudice; and you have to allow that not all great art arises out of an open mind. Unfortunately, however, ideological soundness still comes into play, for the underlying cultural assumptions in an artistic project may be repugnant, as when the material is racist, sexist or snobbish. This chauvinism presents an insoluble problem for the examiner, who is required to give an honest response to form and content. He or she is sometimes put to the point in deciding which is more important and whether or not an element of odious content can be overlooked in favour of the gorgeous form. But then the unhelpful attitudes may also be revealed in the voice, the texture of both the exegetical writing and the creative work. You may suspect that there may be inappropriate metaphors, dubious analogies, all of which suggest an aesthetic miasma of contemptible moral origins, a fault that folds into bad taste. It could be said that style has always been understood as the reflection of an ethos. And so, much against our instincts, the natural faith in the moral—and aesthetic—calibre of the candidate is called into question. The confidence of the examiner is spooked by the ghost of fundamental wrongness. This crisis may never have arisen were it not for the exegesis; and I think that we have to be grateful that the issue has come to light.

POOR STRUCTURE

Good structure depends on the judicious balance and flow between (a) the historical content, by implication the lineage of the artist or his or her creative work, (b) the placement of the creative work among contemporaries, (c) the contemporary critique of both and (d) the comment on the methods in creative work. These parts are apt to be either repetitious (when the core ideas are driven through each section) or incoherent (when the same ideas are detached from one another). In this, the mechanical function of the introduction and conclusion is vital for explaining the links and rhythms of the text and perhaps excusing the inevitable overlap in the several parts.

THE UNCRITICAL

The presence of a scholarly apparatus is sometimes only understood as a necessary sacramental convention of academic writing, a tactical or diplomatic requirement to do learned obeisance. Its prime purpose, however, is not to show reverence but to separate and identify ideas that otherwise flow and coalesce in the body of the text. In turn, the purpose of identifying the various origins of the ideas—rather than letting them merge in glorious rhapsody—is to indicate the relative originality of the various contributions that go toward the current text. There is a critical disposition to this labour, which is sometimes little understood.

The critical is a faculty that requires a more sustained analysis than we were able to give it in the text dedicated to the concept (chapter 4.3). In essence, however, the uncritical means lacking curiosity for the criteria of judgement. It could mean a failure to see that the favourite themes or tropes of the

research or text could be at issue, could be seen as conceits or otherwise thin or plain old platitudes. When authors are cited, the uncritical could mean a failure to see associations and values embedded in style, genre, imagery; it could be a failure to observe the bias or the tendentious character of cited texts. The inevitable result of uncritical writing is a boring and unstimulating outcome.

THE UNPOETIC

The greatest stress arises with the expectation of imaginative freedom. Again, the poetic is a faculty that requires a more sustained analysis than we were able to give it in the text dedicated to the concept (chapter 2.5). The exegesis must rise—somewhat—to the poetic character of the creative work. It is a daunting prospect. It is a shame if the author excessively falls back upon social history or history of technology, or some other worthy area of knowledge, without interpretative inflexions. The agency of imagination must emerge in the linking of ideas. It is not easy to attempt a definition of the poetic; but the prosaic is easily identified, the hum-drum, the unimaginative, the literal, the grind of heavy data-base against mediocre or unoriginal insights. The poetic is recognized in the humour or levels of meaning in an art work, the understanding for images or spaces to embody concepts or make general reflections beyond their material and images. So too in the writing, either on the works or on the conditions that the works describe. This is revealed in the comparison and flow of ideas, verbal images, wit, paradox, the great range of qualities that make for engagement with the reader. The peculiar imaginative vivacity is also in language, probably spiked with metaphor, perhaps allusions, comparisons, liberties in summing up scholarship, and clever means of bracketing ideas. Ideally the exegesis explores scope for emotional content within the academic.

POMPOSITY

As in conversation, so in exegeses, pomposity is hard to suffer. It is the expression of arrogance and presumption. This could be as minor as reading one's own work as if one were a critic (as if ghost-writing one's own review). It could also arise with the presumption that one can explain the creative work, thus implicitly denying the viewer's independent interpretation or devaluing the spectator's own journey of discovery, a discourtesy at the least but at worst a negation of the work in favour of its creator. Pomposity can be seen when authors align their creative work with the loftiest in the western canon—with a qualitative implication—as if they are next in the line of accession to the archive. Pomposity may also be evident through mystifying the reader with oblique meanings (where not inherently fugitive) or artificial connexions. It may also be felt in statements implying: 'I do not need to explain', which lacks modesty as much as 'I can exhaustively explain the content of the works'. It is also off-putting and pompous when a reader assumes the reader's interest and sympathy, as if the author is already a cultural hero.

It is possible, in conclusion, to aver that some positive features should be present in an exegetical commentary. It is all too easy to extol antonyms for all of the sins above and call for clarity, vivacity, imagination, insight, perceptiveness, great knowledge, originality and the rest. Why not? These features, when found, nearly always accompany creative work of the most inspired kind. They are hard to bundle into one document; but the symmetry of creative work and exegetical text is a hard task-master. The exegesis must reflect the same qualities that are present in the creative work to effect the rehearsal and rebirthing that was suggested above. In truth, it is not an easy labour; but it is rewarding for candidate and reader alike; and the great consolation for all the pains is that neither the student nor the examiner needs to explain the ultimate meaning of the creative work.

CHAPTER 4.11

METHODS AND MARKETS

On one level, research in the creative arts could mean investigating how to be successful as an artist. The chapter presents a methodological framework for juggling market considerations within the integrity of artistic inspiration and research.

Ever since I began thinking and writing about art, I have been conscious of the impact on our practices of the market. As an artist, I experience (perhaps like you) a common frustration that there is so little buying interest in the community. Art markets condition both the production of artworks and the priorities of artists, even when artists are determined to subvert the market system. Markets have always been hugely influential, even though the basis of art-making has changed since the seventeenth century from a paradigm of patronage to a shop-style paradigm or gallery system.

The art market is a tangible indicator of the value that the community puts on art. If you believe in the logic of natural markets, the art market is there to testify to the real levels of interest in art, as opposed to the 'artificial' representation of interest in government-funded magazines, university courses and media coverage.

Because our research is also a practice, discussing research methods in art is incomplete without touching on the market, that material reflection of the major influences on art. From the perspective of an ivory tower, the contents of this chapter are almost scandalous. In all disciplines, the two issues of (a) what good method is and (b) what is a shrewd use of your skills in the market-place are jealously separated. In science, for example, it makes good sense that they are kept apart. The principles of scientific method are—and always should be—removed from the contingencies of industry or the politicized pressure of government funding. The same is true of the humanities. You would expect that the methods of history, for example, would be immune from the destiny that many humanities graduates face, namely writing at a popular level in journalistic publications.

In the practicing arts, this lofty disinterest and indifference to the 'downstream' use of research amounts to a kind of contempt for the very cultural economy which inspires art and in which art makes sense. It is fine for other disciplines to cultivate a methodological ethos which ignores the pressures of supply and demand; but in art, this is a kind of scorn for the context in which all cultural gestures have meaning. This is especially true of art which deliberately ignores market pressures. Its conceptual status is wholly defined in terms of an opposition to mainstream market forces. While it defies the ideology of the market, subversive or alternative practices are paradoxically informed by the capitalist backdrop to which they provide dialectical contrast.

Some years ago, I wrote an article 'Why do not people buy art' for *Art Monthly Australia*, which asked questions for which I still do not have the answers. This chapter draws upon that argument and ends

with recommendations for methodologically handling the embarrassments of the contemporary status of art in the wider community.

Everything about art is subjective except the art market. The art market is a tangible indicator of the value that the community puts on art. If you believe in the logic of natural markets, the art market is there to testify to the real levels of interest in art, as opposed to the 'artificial' representation of interest in government-funded magazines, university courses and media coverage. The testimony of the market is sobering: it reveals that throughout the community there is only marginal interest in art. And for that reason, the art market is the focus of deep unconscious resentment. It tells us everything about art that we do not want to know.

In Sydney and Melbourne (with populations of three to four million each), there are only a handful of successful commercial galleries. Few of them have sell-out shows more than a couple of times a year. Many shows in those galleries yield few if any sales, despite the support of state buyers. The trade in new paintings is tiny. It would be dwarfed by the sales in model railways or candlestick holders. The art market basically tells us that people do not want art.

Collectors undoubtedly have a kind of vision though they are not necessarily people of great discernment. It is just that they are persuaded that they have special insight into the value of art. It follows that if you were a commercial dealer, you, in turn, would develop the art of flattery; because persuading the potential collector that he or she has special insight is likely, sooner or later, to yield a sale.

Anecdotal evidence supports this picture. When you go for walks throughout leafy luxurious Melbourne—in both the inner and outer suburbs—you can peep inside the front rooms; and your impressions are sure to be negative. There is no art in those houses. This is confirmed by the way real estate is advertised in photographic pamphlets, showing the posh interiors as well as the façades. What do you see? The interiors are full of mechanical reproductions of old European masters or of Victorian paintings of the Heidelberg School. There are no original works of any significance.

The reasons ordinary people do not buy art are not hard to conjecture. People out there do not feel that they understand art; so why should they buy it? If you want to sell art, you have to find people who either think they understand it or are prepared to gamble. These are the rare race of collectors, a small group within the community assiduously and jealously cultivated by all the successful commercial galleries. Collectors undoubtedly have a kind of vision though they are not necessarily people of great discernment. It is just that they are persuaded that they have special insight into the value of art. It follows that if you were a commercial dealer, you, in turn, would develop the art of flattery; because persuading the potential collector that he or she has special insight is likely, sooner or later, to yield a sale.

Collectors are adored and worshipped them as the post-Medicean patrons who are responsible for culture surviving. But the enlightened self-interest of collecting is not necessarily noble or essentially altruistic. Among collectors, it matters not at all that the market is small, that art is generally incomprehensible, that it is alienating, obsessive, ugly, indulgent, uncritical and stupid. Collectors have no interest in the broadening of the exclusivity of art, just as they do not necessarily have an interest in art which is particularly logical, accessible, beautiful or sensible. On the whole, they would be more flattered to think that their special judgement is inscrutable voodoo, counter-intuitive, capricious, recalcitrant, scornful of reason; and thus the collector shares in the privileges of autonomy and arbitrariness for which artists have a kind of stereotypical trademark. The artistic appreciation of the market owes nothing to canons of aesthetics or ethics; and it is very happy with mystification.

Study of the market strikes me as singularly bleak. First, it yields the painful conclusion that most

people do not want art. Second, it suggests that those people who do want art have unreliable cultural motives. Third, the market perversely explains why we do not have better art than we do, or why we do not deserve better art than we get. Yet while the market in some sense potentially explains so many of the deeper questions about contemporary art, it harbours its secrets darkly and taciturnly resists inquiry. You can never really ask the market an intelligent question, just as you cannot accuse it of making the wrong decisions (such as putting a high price on daubs by Brett Whiteley). Markets do not argue. They just settle supply and demand with a price. The abstraction of the market is always a platitude which says: this much demand there is and no more.

In art history, questions of patronage and the market are fundamental. When art historians make conjectures about basic directions in the styles of art and the nature of subject matter, they tend to check the material grounds, the economic pressures and the market, to explain how it was that a culture expressed the incentives to create the art that it did. But when it comes to contemporary art, there is a great reluctance to use the data or even to take any interest in such data as are thrust at us. We fundamentally believe that markets have nothing to say to us.

Part of the reason for no one talking about the market in contemporary journals has to do with the purity of theory. When you go to a journal, you do not want anything that smacks of a buyer's guide. You want elegant theory which explains important things which are basic to art; you want arguments with the power of abstracting from the particular to the general; you are less keen on pedantic detail which explains incidental contingencies and does not synthesize information toward a theory or general view. Information about prices in galleries and the art auctions and so on disappoints the theoretical abstraction of the literature; for the market is the most boring form of dialectic ever invented.

It is not entirely inverted snobbery, but the inertia in discussing the market is linked to the prestige of non-market art, that is, non-object based art, conceptual art, neo-Dada, installational art in general and, now, electronically mediated practice or screen-based art. Since the war, non-market practices have occupied the high moral ground. They have consistently been understood as the logical and proper vehicle of the avant garde. Object-based practice is often understood as conservative; and the final proof of this conservatism is the thrall to a capitalist structure—the market—according to which the critical content of any art work is structurally neutralized and rendered into a consumable.

So, if you have a deconstructive agenda in your practice, pointing out the intellectual tyranny of western epistemology or whatever, best not embody it in an art object and put it on the market. If it gets bought (or even if it does not but looks as though it wants to be), the deconstructive content will be deemed no more potent than the deconstructive content of soft drink or soap powder. The critical or deconstructive statement which sets up its own reception in the market appears to be complicit with the very establishment which it would criticize; and this hypocrisy is anxiously guarded against by all artists who are jealous of the critical credibility of contemporary discourse.

Meanwhile, those artists who are content to stay with the capitalist market have difficulty mixing it with journal editors and artists who aspire to the international avant garde. International magazines like *Kunstforum* and *Neue bildende Kunst* seldom feature market-oriented object-based art. If you set your historical standards by such things, the kind of art that we see in the commercial galleries of Sydney and Melbourne is an anachronism. Oil painting, printmaking and even mixed media sculptures which stand alone as aesthetic or expressive objects all share the stamp of antiquity. The market and the art which is native to it are internationally unfashionable. People only ever take them seriously in a localized context. They are extraordinarily resistant to being transported.

Some artists, of course, will always have it both ways: they will sell whatever they can in a commercial gallery but, perceiving that they have already saturated the small potential market for their art or that they are not getting decent returns on their crafted objects, they become acutely aware of the greater

prestige of non-market based art and begin to create for that region too.

Behind this apparent opportunism, there is a principle which we hold dear, the principle of the independence of art from the market. The market does not determine art. The destiny of art is to go beyond the market. Most art is produced without a reasonable return for the artist; and the only way an artist can remain within the profession is by obtaining an income from teaching or some other service industry such as hospitality.

From this, it follows that a focus on the art market would produce a distorted perspective on art. First, most artists in the commercial galleries derive a negligible proportion of their income from the sale of art works within that gallery. But second, most artists do not have a commercial gallery at all and stand firmly outside the market, whether they want to or not. They produce art for non-selling shows in alternative spaces, sustaining their practice by money from anywhere else. These alternative practices are not necessarily the most avant garde or fanatically experimental. They might be straight genre pictures done in what would be called a conservative illusionistic idiom. Any artist doing such work is unlikely to find a place in a commercial gallery like Rosslyn Oxley or Sutton. They would be more likely to show at one of the artist-run spaces or work their way into a group show of heterogeneous taste.

In general, the price which an artist puts on a work in an alternative space is immaterial. The work probably will not sell. There are striking exceptions but, in general, artist-run spaces do not attract collectors. And for obvious reasons. The artists who tryst there usually do not have any credentials vouching for a commercial trajectory. It is like vanity publishing. The works might be intrinsically worthy but, in 'real' terms, the artists seem to be going nowhere: no one is taking them up and their works are not likelier to have greater value the following year. In fact, it may even be likely that they will have vanished from the scene within the next ten years.

The art market may not be the whole story but it is an important part of the whole story, even for this sector that apparently stands outside it. The discouragement of not selling work in an artist-run space can be countenanced for the short term. But in the longer term, it ends catastrophically for the artist. He or she begins to accumulate a stockpile of work in the garage. Each piece may have taken months to produce and now it languishes in the most undignified condition, without prospects of yielding pleasure to anyone, much less rewarding the artist with the gratification of material recognition. Nothing is so demoralizing as an inert archive of old stock. To spare themselves the shame of the unwanted arsenal, artists frequently give work away or try to exchange works by swapping and so on. But the pressure of the dormant production adversely affects the enthusiasm to produce further work for a show of dubious prospects in the future. Its destiny is dismal: to augment the embarrassment of the congested garage or loft with the tangible burden of rejection.

In other words it is foolhardy to assure oneself of the independence of art from the market. The independence happens spasmodically but is not structurally sustainable. The belief that artists enjoy freedom from a market is a form of complacency which takes no account of the fact that most students leaving art school fail to become artists in any recognized sense other than their degrees. To become an artist means, above all, to remain an artist.

What has gone wrong? You cannot really blame the market because the market is just a reflection of demand. If there were more demand for art, there would be a larger market. The problem is that art has successively alienated most of the public in what seems a scornful repudiation of middle-class values. I do not mean that art abrasively expresses contempt for the icons of bourgeois life, like the home and the family dog. That is petty and the public is certain, from its esteem of the old masters and Victorian painting, that art deals with complicated ideals. The public can accept that art has loftier objectives than to flatter the everyday. The only expectation that the public has—and which contemporary art resolutely rejects—is the paradigm of tradition.

You could say that the entire history of modernism is based on the rejection of tradition; for modernism is about rupturing the conventions of tonal figuration, perspectival space, style and subject matter which were inherited from the past. This rejection is the paradoxical credo of the avant garde and it has served it well. The prestige of leading the assault on tradition proved enormous; and once the public recognized the heroism of the modern in sufficient number, those attached to tradition were seen as the abject cultural losers. The paradigm of tradition was harshly derided as having no place or suitability in contemporary life; and its adherents were reviled with the kind of Œdipal vengeance that one applauds in the displacement of political reactionaries. In no time, all the talent deserted the vessel of tradition, till it was destitute and properly earned the scorn of its modernist detractors. The pathetic vestiges of tradition now survive as those hopeless gumtree painters whose work is generally poorly drawn, weakly painted and stripped of all ideas but the most uncritical sentimentality.

The problem with the market is the death of tradition; for there is no market to answer the stigmatized demand for objects which belong to the deeper traditions of western art; and because such demand is unrecognized, it cannot possibly promote the unwilling supply of such objects from artists who have their unique hope fixed on the only market which they know, namely the commercial galleries which sell avant-garde art.

The general public is wise enough not to invest too much money in that kind of painting either. There is actually very little art in all the galleries which seems to merit the money. The problem with the market is the death of tradition; for there is no market to answer the stigmatized demand for objects which belong to the deeper traditions of western art; and because such demand is unrecognized, it cannot possibly promote the unwilling supply of such objects from artists who have their unique hope fixed on the only market which they know, namely the commercial galleries which sell avant-garde art. The artists cannot be blamed, since all paradigms of prestige compel them to compete in the race for the only rewards on offer; the market cannot be blamed, for it passively reflects what people will pay for whatever is produced; the galleries cannot be blamed, for they survive by identifying the kinds of art that matches the kinds of aspirations which collectors have; and the collectors cannot be blamed, since they are responsible only for their own taste and their largesse has no obligation to patronize ideals beyond their personal preferences.

There is no easy answer to the present decline of the visual arts, as reflected in the tiny market for art and the dedication of ever greater numbers of artists to supply increasingly incomprehensible works to an ever more saturated clique of avant garde collectors. The potential to fill the vast office towers of Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne, to say nothing of the hectares of prosperous suburbia choked with expensive imported cars and domestic appliances, must be enormous. In our hour of despair, this prospect is tantalizing. If tradition does not find some way of breaking through the impasse of alienated modernism, I think we will continue passively to preside over the greatest tragedy that has ever happened in the history of art.

Art depends on confidence, both on the part of the artist and the community. A cornerstone of productive method in the visual is maintaining hope. By this, I do not mean upholding an unrealistic optimism for your success, a narcissistic delusion which animates many an undergraduate. On the contrary, the hopes that might be cultivated by a prudent method would be positioned alongside the backdrop of the greatest pessimism for external success in the market place. In the knowledge that fame and fortune are not imminently on their way, the hopes for an artistic career can reach a certain intellectual purity.

This is not to recommend some kind of complacent idealism, for intellectual purity does not presuppose its own efficacy. I suspect the reverse: intellectual purity is rather self-castrating. Intellectual purity encourages the renunciation of familiar symbols and has stylistic corollaries.

It often results in negation; it expresses a crisis for the communicative. It may partially account for much of the conceptually pure and abstract art that we see in galleries, endgaming with is own frustration, devoid of imagery or sensory titillation, a symbol, in short, of the abstraction of hopes from all communicative and commercial contexts. If so, the purity-ethos must be challenged, quite as much as defeatism.

This is where method ties in. The hopes that we might nourish strike at the core of artistic intention. It would be a pity if the research-ethos encouraged an artistic introversion, a receding from the social circumstances of artistic communication and the great challenge of the market. This retreat has been created long before the advent of academic pressures to consider art in terms of research; but the pressure could nevertheless have the unhappy consequence of confirming the alienation of art by implicitly sanctioning its departure from the public eye, by valorizing the great artistic abdication from commerce, invoking a spurious purification of motives.

There is no reason why you cannot build market interests into your research. They can feature as some part of a proposal. There is no shame in this; if anything, there is a strange perversity in locking out the incumbencies of the communicative economy which is the public. Nothing compels you to talk about your placement in the market or who wants, or who does not want, your kind of work. But considering such issues (and favouring one way or the other) could be a helpful part of your project and could contribute to the status of your speculations as research.

CHAPTER 4.12

CONCLUSION

Writing is a great vessel of scruples and desire. There is method in it, impressive and momentous in its balance of the systematic and the intuitive. But in concluding on the efficacy of writing as handmaiden to the creative, I do not want to carpet over the cracks that form the loose and wobbly floorboards of creative work itself. The largest gap in anyone's conspectus is the personal motivation of the artist—even when altruistic—caught in a jealous economy of ambition: competitive, tense and fraught. The more you seek the elegance of artistic method, especially through writing, the more you find a large zone in the middle, cut in the shape of the artist's jealous personality. This element intrudes surreptitiously, no matter how carefully we construct methodological machinery around it and insist on free intellectual transfer and promote the splendid etiquette of sharing knowledge and inspiration which is research.

The restless dispositional factors that energize and condition an artist's subjectivity are difficult to contemplate analytically, first because they are obscure and locked in individual experience (which is hard to scrutinize much less generalize) and second because there is something discouraging in the profile of ambition, maybe something competitive or ruthless or impatient. It seems a lapse of good taste to draw it to our attention, because the subject is slightly distasteful or in any event less than Olympian; and we would prefer by gentlemen's agreement graciously to pass over this dormant scandal. In the end, I am still not sure what profit we obtain by recognizing the jealousy of the artistic psyche; though instinctively I feel that we would be obtuse to neglect it. To lack insight into our motivation condemns us to a kind of inspirational stupidity, an artistic determination which is ultimately inert, incurious, lacking adaptive agility and rapidly degenerating into pomposity.

From time to time we have used the word vision. A beautiful word; but all artists pride themselves on it, correctly, in a sense, but also to the point of dogged conviction, which is also incurious, a kind of self-assured confidence which discourages inquiry. Sometimes I feel that the destiny of vision in the individual is to conduct the artist from hope to complacency without an intervening phase of self-awareness. This is a good reason to confront the darker theme of personal jealousy, regardless of our coyness and readiness to sanitize the field with impeccable research methods.

If we knew more about this construct, a book on method for research in the creative arts may not have been necessary. Vision is all you need—with its heady cocktail of immanence, the poetic, the fondness for the medium and some science and skill—apart from the external material support which is conspicuously lacking in most artists' careers. But when it comes to making art, there is little doubt that vision is the magic ingredient which explains most aspects of the purpose and originality that we seek.

Vision, however, is symptomatic of the whole problematic enterprise of research in the creative arts. Its ambiguities embody just the kind of balance between seduction and frustration that we have tried to explain throughout this text. First, it is a fugitive concept, difficult to discuss in the abstract and impossible to define. Second, as elusive as it may be and as much as it furnishes the artist with

honorable delusions, it is absolutely essential in art-making, from the first hints of formulation to the final stages of execution. Third, it curiously straddles a physiological faculty and, by means of metaphor, a psychological faculty. It has its origins in the power to see in a retinal sense but reaches glamorously to a power to see in an imaginary sense. In this way, it is not unlike other visual metaphors, such as perception or observation, again commencing their philological trajectory with a physiological organic process but extending to prestigious psychological notions of shrewdness (as when you say that someone is perceptive or observant) and even opinion (as when you talk of public perceptions) or, to use another visual word, viewpoint. Fourth, artistic vision is unique to a person, an artist, and embodies the charm and force of that person's make-up, desires and education at its most communicative. Further, and perhaps paradoxically, it is unique to each interpreter of the art. The way I see Goya's vision is both distinct from the way you see it and the way Goya saw it. Fifth, in spite of an artistic vision being confined to a unique individual, the larger idea of cultural vision is paradoxically shared; indeed the motif of a 'shared vision' is one of the most powerful totalizing means of expressing a franchise between people, a goal in common, a desire to which they conform, a social agreement or a contract of thought, desire and opinion.

And finally, vision cannot be gained artificially. It is fickle and precious; it cannot be forced or fudged. Every artist knows vision by its results and its almost tangible operation throughout the creative process; but still they cannot hold it fast in anything more than the making, that conceptual and technical hankering which so often fails its aspiration. Vision comes and goes: you try to clinch some useful expression of it; but you often wonder what you have at the end of the quest to realize it; and you can never really check your works against a documented form of it. Vision is powerfully necessary and necessarily ghostly.

In the last section, we have devoted plenty of attention to the issue of documentation. The intention was never to create a 'creative policy' (any more than a jealousy-free zone of lofty speculation) against which the artworks could be checked for the fulfilment of its objectives. Writing would be quite as inept at exhausting a vision as painting or music or creative work in any other medium, just as it can fall prey to the conceits of the 'visionary' artist. Writing is also vulnerable to egotism and is never disinterested. Our intention was always only to instigate a creative synergy between writing and creative work in pursuit of a vision. The artistic vision is not some universal Platonic form or sempiternal *ideia* or holy mojo: it does not have a divine pre-existence before the creative work is commenced but undergoes an anxious gestation (a) through prior work, (b) with reading and viewing of other work and (c) during the discussion about the work. The creative process is all of this and more. It is not just the time spent at the easel or piano. It is the forging of the vision, the production of the ideas, sometimes crippled by impatience as much as advanced by zeal. The engendering of vision is active *par excellence*. The role of documentation is to animate the silence and to bring the competitive tremor into the friendlier realm of the conversational, to make the process more reflective, not to negate the impatience but to accelerate the power of making imaginative connexions and to make its agency more profound.

This is by no means to suggest that in this wonderfully productive relationship between writing and making we have the supreme blueprint for doing art. This is only one way to approach art. It is an academic way. The validity of our approach is open to challenge from age-old studio paradigms whose logic and dignity we have often acknowledged. Ultimately, moreover, you may decide that this reflexive method does not suit your genius far beyond the timeline of a course. It is too cumbersome, too artificial, too interrogative, too forbidding, too intellectual or too analytical. But even so, with whatever values you conclude by placing on it, the quest will have been worth it. What we have at the end of it is not necessarily a method which will universally create profounder art but a motif of talking about what we are doing, or even just a mood of contemplating purposes and processes.

In an earlier discussion, we considered the relative destitution of the contemporary scene, especially in regard to the material, spiritual and even educational help that artists now get compared to the mentoring and patronage of ages past. But the element of older workshop and studio cultures that is most missing is just discussion about shared artistic interests (or, let us be bold and say visions). Today, I fear, these discussions must be held primarily with yourself. We live in an alienated world where our individual jealousies are abject and, increasingly, education is directed to supply what we need in an alienated condition. Perhaps the greatest sustenance of all is talk. Alas, it is hard to generate and, like vision, it is frustrating and impossible to fudge.

Insofar as there are conversations flourishing already, they sometimes succeed only in inflaming our jealousy. The world of publication is vibrant and everyone wants to know about the creative arts, even economists and social planners. On the face of it, nothing is lacking in our culture. There is newspaper criticism every week in every metropolis which reports on current exhibitions; there are radio and television programs devoted to the creative arts which often handle current exhibitions; there are articles, reviews and debates in contemporary art magazines which analyse or represent artists and themes of topical value; and finally there are refereed or learned art-historical publications—both journals and books—which tackle the facts and ideological interpretation of the historical record. In one sense, there is little to complain about. You will often find fault with the level of criticism and debate; for its authors and participants, in trying to widen the audience, frequently write in a somewhat vulgar idiom. But for all its shortcomings, there is plenty of material being sustained by a combination of the capitalist press and state-funded magazines or university-funded journals and publishing houses. So we should not be churlish and ungrateful.

Nevertheless, there is one thing that is lacking: it is the discussion about you. All those publications are always about someone else. Established artists who do feature in papers and magazines remarkably feel the same way. It is a long time between drinks. Years may go by before the chain of author and editor determines to treat them again. They experience the same artistic jealousy that everyone else does. Meanwhile, the sustenance must be abstracted from things written about other people, which is sometimes hard to do, unless you can recognize your jealousy and—as Freud hoped with unconscious neurosis—overcome it by dint of awareness. Friends who appreciate what you are trying to achieve may help in this; but the career of relevant artistic speculation demands self-reliance.

Art schools are sometimes understood as havens in which people are engaged to talk about your work. In the academy,the deal is that we defer our personal ambitions, lay off with our several jealousies and approach one another as good creative brethren who are infallibly supportive and sharing. Outside those walls, the community is at best neglectful; inside there is a sanctuary of interest, stimulation and nourishment. The promise that they extend to minister to your ideas and share some of the responsibility for your output is a sociological miracle (because it is genuinely warm and wished-for on all sides); and the generous cultures of some academies also explains a large part of their fortunes. But the enduring value of creative art schools is not to plug up a hole in the economy of attention by generating more attention external to yourself. This artifice would be noble folly; for it would falsify the monkish reality of art-making. In the end, however cynical we are of personal conceit, art-making is a great visionary loneliness; it is solitary in an almost heroically prophetic way; for the artist has a vision, almost by definition, which no one is able intimately to share. It is unreasonable to expect that the environment of the creative art academy can overcome the loneliness of art-making in any sustainable way. What the school might do is enrich the loneliness, not negate it but explore and enlarge it, sympathetically assisting its passage from obscure wishes and inchoate ideas to inspired productions.

That, at any rate, has been the intention of this book: to attend this most hermetic calling in a way that respects its inspired closure within the jealously determined self. With that key element of

artistic integrity preserved, all outside influences become creatively available. At its deepest level, research in the creative arts is the process of appreciating how the great information overload of world knowledge and discourse may be assimilated within the inner sanctuary of private artistic volition, that cryptic desire to communicate something marvelous of yourself, to create something which will then stand for the enrichment of others but whose gestation was always only possible within yourself.

Research in the creative arts is about putting art first; it is about foregrounding the preconditions of inspirational curiosity and privileging the terms of creative work. It is not about winning grants or impressing other disciplines with academic authority. In turn, this reflects a wider paradox. Artists are socially somewhat abject; but art is a charismatic profession: it still carries the gene of imagination. In many ways, the realities of art practice today are bizarre; and if the new research culture that we now belong to uncovers the paradoxes and vanities of our situation, it will indeed make a historical contribution to knowledge of the discipline. It is not a contribution along the lines of science or the humanities—both of which augment knowledge that already enjoys epistemological momentum—but an expression of the consciousness of the creative artist, something which, till our generation, has almost been as silent as art itself. And if, in the end, you feel that our investigations add too much speculative clamour to an inherently taciturn medium, the option of the inner quiet of art still remains available the next day and all our theoretical interrogations will never have threatened it.