Research in perspective: the practice of theory
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Near the beginning of my research, I wrote a conference paper on the history of academic study. 1 The conclusions drawn from that essay were twofold: Firstly that academic literature disguised the actual practice of writing and research, and secondly that not only did academic philosophy deny its own practice, but that it was also antagonistic to the site of practice – the physical body itself. In that original paper I concluded by noting that this opposition to practice was something I re-enacted every time I wrote, and that despite being aware of this deception, I could not think of a way to subvert the process and still make the text fulfil the requirements of the Doctorate. This present paper written as I near the end of my research (and the beginning of my thesis writing) is really a response to the problem I posed then, but I wish to concentrate this time, more on the issue of academic writing denying its own practice, than the overt politics of power that are inherent in theory. Thus my main question is whether it is possible to display the actual practice of research and writing within a thesis, while still allowing a coherence to the text. To answer this, I would like to share my musings with you. I reached the conclusion that academic theory was antagonistic to practice in the first place, when I took up my present research studentship, and was allocated a desk in a second-floor studio in the School of Art and Design at Wolverhampton. There I was happily "researching", when I slowly realised that the students around me were mystified by my presence. Gradually they started to come up and ask me "what I did all day", and when I told them, they said "so you just read books then?" Eventually, I realised that this comment actually meant that they thought I was doing nothing at all. This was something new to me as I was from an academic environment and my actions had never before been questioned. But since my time seemed to be passing and I felt that I was doing something, I decided to find out why these design students believed that reading and writing was a non-activity. This search opened the door on a history of academic processes, and I was soon to discover that the philosopher had been seen as inactive and isolated from the "real" world in which everyone else lived, at least since the fifteenth century. From the bespectacled "book fool" to the "ivory tower", the academic had been the target of a growing resentment 2 and according to my own experience, the basis for this caricature was still in place. But before I could have begun to think this reputation unjust, I saw that for theory to "work", this separation from society was necessary.

History

Theorists began to disguise their own creative practice at a time when philosophy declared itself to be for the benefit of society. It was, in Britain at least, the philosophers Francis Bacon and Johann Amos Comenius 3 that really triggered this change, and central to the transformation of theory and the role of the academic were their Christian beliefs.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the Lord Chancellor Francis Bacon, published many texts that criticised the accepted philosophy of the time. He believed that theory, within universities at least, was still dominated by Greek and Roman authors. This stasis after so many centuries had led, he suggested, to a continuous and useless regurgitation of knowledge that was detached and therefore of little consequence to the actual physical world, or to society within it. Thus philosophy had become a web of vacuous self-referentiality. Furthermore, in the wholesale acceptance of these ancient authorities, Bacon believed that theoreticians were blaspheming against a Christian God. Not only were these accepted authors non-Christians, but the constant reliance only on their words had led humanity to disregard one of the main tasks that God had set down. This was the management, by humankind, of the physical world God had created. 4

Bacon's theories about worldly management centred around the figure of Adam who had been given authority over the natural world. By "authority", the philosopher did not simply mean the physical and practical management of the environment, but also the theoretical knowledge of the world. Bacon believed that this knowing was intimately tied to a particular form of language – a language that was wholly transparent, that was capable of encapsulating the Truth about God's creations. This system of linguistic knowing and authority was represented in the Bible by Adam's naming of the animals, according to their visible characteristics. However the intimacy that God had shared with humankind through a language of truth was short-lived. Humanity had rejected the role of manager over nature, and in a desire to rival the Divine judicial power, had forfeited the linguistic capability to speak, and therefore know the truth. In the Bible this was represented by the building of the tower of Babel and its destruction, and for Bacon it was this redundant post-Babel linguistic legacy that was handed down to the Greek authors. Therefore the philosopher envisaged that the only way for theory to change course, and head towards Truth once more, was if theorists turned away from this path of original sin (Greek and Roman authors) and returned to the domain that was bestowed by God to humanity – the study of the physical world.

Bacon's approach towards this study of the environment was by practical experimentation, the results of which he envisaged, would in turn be recorded and analysed by theorists, in order to create further material experiments and inventions. Thus, for this intimate relationship of theory and practice, Bacon returned to the ideals of Adam's "transparent" language, and instead of the words of ancient writers, he urged that only one book should be read, the "Book of Nature". 5

The Visible World Pictured (Orbis Sensualium Pictus) best exemplifies this new linguistic development. Written in 1658 by Johann Amos Comenius, it is a picture book in which elements of the world are illustrated and numbered, the names of each object being then written next to the appropriate number on an ajoining page. Subjects cover most things from God to cattle and the format of the book is the continuation of a theory that Comenius proposed in an earlier text The Gates of Languages Unlocked (1631). In this, he had urged the transformation of language teaching from a system based on the rules of rhetoric to

one based on description – that is, a language of things. 6 In accordance with Baconian philosophy, Comenius included as the preface to the book, the Biblical quote "And Adam gave names to all Cattell [sic.], and to the Fowl of the air, and to every beaft [sic.] of the Field". Thus in this text, the Baconian entreaty for a change in the purpose of language was carried out and it is at this point that the practice and claim to creativity of the theoretical writer was lost. From then on, text and theory were invisibly tied to objects, and the author of those words merely a copyist of worldly Truth. Language became a transparent currency reliant on its reference to the objective world.

What is interesting about the theory that emerges from this change in language is that it demanded a viewpoint from which to study the Truth, as central to the way Adam had named, and therefore known God's creations, was that he had seen them.

From the Classical period, the eye had been considered as the most important channel through which knowledge was gained and this is reflected in the root of the word "theory", deriving from the phrase "to look at". 7 But by the Christian period, this confidence in the eye as a way to know the world, was strengthened by a belief that the ancient science of seeing was intimately linked to Divine wisdom. 8 However, it was only after many centuries when the philosophy of Euclid on seeing began to be utilised by artists, that the real power of optical science was set into place. With the invention of perspective, the idea of theory as a representation of the visible True world, was systematically given a method. Leon Battista Alberti's 1436 De Pictura was the first clear outline of the perspectival vision, and the technique he proposed relied on three important ideas that were, I believe, taken up by theoreticians.

Firstly, it was essential that the picture should be thought of "as a window through which a fixed observer sees the outside world". 9 Note that the observer is singular. The window concurred with the concept that language and text were transparent and had became intricately linked to objects. Just as a painting was merely a space through which Truth could be seen, so words were thus to be envisaged also as a transparent window.

Secondly, although Alberti was unsure whether rays went from the eye to the object, or from the object to the eye, 10 he decided on the latter. 11 And thus, by believing that the object omitted the rays seen by the eye, he set the foundations for the idea that the author, as reader of the Book of Creation, receives messages directly from worldly fact. It is therefore the object, rather than the viewer that initiates vision.

Thirdly, Alberti proposed that a "veil" or grid should be placed between the eye and the object. This, he suggested, would facilitate the intersection of every ray onto the picture plane and would allow it to have a clearly differentiated co-ordinate from every other. 12 A grid where every component of the picture was distinct concurred, and perhaps initiated, a shift from Renaissance to Enlightenment philosophy. As Michel Foucault suggests, this change was characterised by a movement away from the idea of similarity towards a theory of difference, where all objects could be distinguished and categorised in isolation to all others – in essence, a dissection of the physical world. 13 The perspectival view therefore took an unimpassioned, objectifying standpoint where the material world and society within it were categorised, and so differentiated, by a solitary viewer. Thus the science of perspective painting created a method by which the theorist regulated the looking and "reading" of the physical world.

But what interests me profoundly about the perspectival technique is the idea of a viewpoint, or standpoint. One might perhaps assume that this is a neutral, anonymous

space that could be adapted to almost any location, depending on the object of study. However, as I claimed in my initial paper and still adhere to, I believe that the theoretical perspective demanded an architecturally specific location from which to look. This theoretical "building" was a hybrid of a traditional Greek theatre and a tower, or high structure of some sort.

An essay by Marx Wartofsky first inclined me to this idea, in which he put forward the theory that the way we see is socially specific and dominated by our representational conventions. 14 In particular, he discusses two types of representation, the theatre and perspective painting, noting that the former seems to be a precursor of the latter. 15 He explains this by suggesting that the skene at the back of the Greek stage, onto which scenes were painted, required the maker to consider the affects of multi-directional viewpoints. In a sense the skene painter must have considered him or herself to be at the convergence of at least 180 degree angles. This he suggests began a painterly process that logically concluded with the invention of one-point perspective.

A converging viewpoint is found again in another, more curious theatre from the sixteenth-century that was made by an Italian named Giulio Camillo. 16 This "building" has been written about by Frances Yates who saw the transition from occult to scientific thinking in its structure. 17 Camillo made a theatre of memory that was a machine for reading the knowledge of the world. Just like the skene painter the reader of this contraption would also have been placed at the centre of the stage, looking out onto what would have been the audience seats in a traditional theatre. On these tiers were placed images that represented all the knowledge of the world. For the "operator" to glean the information therefore, the philosophy would have been "read" through seeing their visual representations. Thus in a sense, the theatre combined the gleaning of a True knowledge of the world through seeing, with the perspectival viewpoint of a single observer. But Camillo envisaged the standpoint of any reader of his theatre to be far more than just at the centre of a stage. He also hinted at another principle behind his concept of seeing:

If we were to find ourselves in a vast forest and desired to see its whole extent we should not be able to do this from our position… surrounding trees would prevent us from seeing the distant view. But if, near to this forest… there was a high hill… from the top of the hill we should see the whole of it. The wood is our inferior world… the hill… the supercelestial world. In order to understand the things of the lower world it is necessary to ascend to superior things, from whence, looking down from on high, we may have a more certain knowledge of the inferior things. 18

Thus Camillo demands not only a theatre by which one is at the converging point of many angles, but also a tower, or high point from which one may take in the panorama of the physical and societal world. According to Yates, this theoretical achievement in viewing the world meant that "The mind and memory of man… [was]… now "divine" ", 19 and I would suggest therefore, that the aims of the new philosophy and language as put forward by writers like Bacon, really opposed their theoretical intentions. This new language in some ways actually re-built (albeit in metaphor) the Tower of Babel. The philosophy may have been changed in that the world was now its overwhelming subject rather than the rhetoric of other writers, but there had been no transformation in the separation of the academic from society. Rather the new language and its accompanying vision, had only served to strengthen that position and placed the theorist at a God-like viewpoint, high up above the rest of the world at the converging point of a panoramic view. It is perhaps unsurprising then, that Bacon should be described by his followers, the new scientists of the Royal Society, thus:

Bacon, like Moses, led us forth at last,
The barren Wilderness he past,
Did on the very Border stand
Of the blest promis'd Land,
And from the Mountains Top of his Exalted Wit,
Saw it himself, and shew'd us it" 20

From this period on, the theorist was unable to reveal any sense of creativity that may have been misconstrued as of the imagination and not the world, and therefore suggestive of vacuous fiction rather than useful fact. Just as Norman Bryson (1985) comments in relation to perspective painting, the work was idealised by relating only to two points – the retina and the brush, and any hint of "style" was seen as the "residue of the body" that "betrays itself, in the manner of crime". 21 To move away from the actual Truth, to incorporate any sense of one's corporeal self, was theoretically and morally wrong.

Words

The history of academic study still informs the present model for research, particularly in the case of an academic apprenticeship like a Doctorate, and there are certain basic methods and assumptions that can be linked to the history I have laid out above.

Of perhaps the most overwhelming importance is the concept that there is a Truth that exists independently of the individual mind, an existence "out there". This is a huge expanse which no individual may ever see in its entirety, and so each thesis must show that it adds to a repository, a meaningful translation of the physical world, known as the body of knowledge. 22 The idea of a vast expanse of information and of an individual taking on a small part in order to place it with the work of other individuals, mirrors the scientific method of Francis Bacon. If one were to look back at the time when he was forming his theories, one would note what an effect his interest in the increasing geographical exploration of the world has had on the research process. 23 Because in a sense, the very physical nature of this investigation reinforced for him, the scale of the task he had set humanity. If the Book of Creation was to be read, then it would take teams of students, many generations to read it. Thus, Bacon envisaged a system of scholars with different roles who would work together to produce the knowledge of the world, for the rest of humankind. 24 And so it is this basic premise that the doctorate has inherited.

By implication, since one is writing about the world, the words that a writer uses within a thesis must therefore intimately relate to that material. They are a bridge between the reader of the text and the text's subject itself, as in a sense, the author has merely borrowed them from the object. But there are certain techniques that must be set in place for this bridge to be believed, for often the academic reader will not take any leap of faith. Unlike Comenius' picture book, objects for the thesis writer cannot be identified as easily and so one must show the matter of the "secondary" and "primary" source.

The secondary source is an interesting concept and can be considered in two main ways. Firstly it is the stuff of the literature survey which, I believe, again relates to the Baconian process of research. In Bacon's scheme, he identified a set of roles that he termed depredators. These were three scholars who gathered experiments and information recorded in books. The name gives an indication of how the philosopher felt about this necessary work, as "depredator" means some one who ravages or plunders. 25I believe that this role corresponds to the idea of a literature search, where one must pillage

previous related studies and arrange their goods in such a way as to be ultimately overpowered by one's own research. However, this survey is an idealised one where the great array of literature that is somehow expected to be consumed is often overwhelming. The nightmare that one essential study lies uncaptured and loyal to the examiner, haunts every researcher.

Secondly, the secondary source is a salutatory gesture towards the generations of scholars who have gone before, again mirroring Bacon's research scheme. These secondary sources are more like eye-witness accounts where one takes a statement from a previous researcher (as long as it is qualified by the accompanying paraphernalia) and uses it to build one's own argument. This reliance on trust means that one often becomes rather close to these past researchers, having confidence in one more than another through no more objective judgement than the readability and personality of the text. Furthermore, it is often the very personal circumstances in which one has discovered their writing that is often largely responsible for the judgement over, and emphasis one places on, a particular author's output. Whether this be the way a text "speaks" to you at a certain point in your life or if it is the recommendation of a respected colleague, the use of the secondary source is often not down to such a banal idea as objective research. For me the late Dame Frances Yates has my fond regard for many reasons, an admiration only reinforced by finding out that she had a glass of sherry every day at 12 o'clock. 26

This rather personal approach to material would seem to oppose the other reason that a scientific method favours the use of the secondary and primary source. This is the need to create an idea of objectivity by replacing the private view of the "I", with a general unimpassioned consensus. But as anyone who has done research knows, this is never really the case. The techniques by which one pieces and snips the comments of others, even perhaps the very way one fundamentally reads another's meaning, is extremely individual.

However, of most importance, particularly to the Doctoral student is the "primary" source, that precious nugget that goes some way to legitimising the "originality" of a new piece of research. 27 This is the very essence of the Baconian material world, and whether chemical experiment or historical document, it is the object from which the words must be made. As such, the primary source often provides the ammunition by which to assault the contents of a secondary source. This is because the primary source is understood to be the genuine article, the absolute Truth, since it is a physical object in the world, untainted by another's eyes. Yet as Anthony Grafton (1997) notes, the factual nature of the historical object in particular, is just as enigmatic and liable to interpretation as any other secondary source. He notes how the famous historian Leopold von Ranke defeated his fellow writers by his bold use of primary material. Yet when this information was finally analysed by others, Ranke was found not only to have read the documents as though they were "transparent windows on past states and events", 28 but also to have utilised no more primary material than amounted to ten percent. 29

However, it was Ranke that really introduced the materiality of history and he who wallowed in the very physical excitement that a dusty archive full of primary documents can have for an historian. 30 There is certainly an emotional reaction instilled in the researcher by the Baconian primary source. For here lies evidence of the trace of a person one has only read about and will never meet. And this romantic time travel often creates a very personal bond between scholar and subject matter. My own research offers one hundred and twenty eight of such subjects in the members and witnesses of two Select Committees and one School Committee. 31 And as with the secondary author, one is

sometimes more curious about certain of the subjects, than others. Again, this is not dependent on their pivotal role in your history, but often on an anecdotal story that provides a glimpse of their life and character. Or perhaps it is some strange coincidence that makes the material a little more personal. I shall always be interested in the painter John Martin, since my discovery that one of his circle was the author, Jane Webb. Thus although one may be dealing with primary material, the emphasis one give it and its quality of Truth, is still heavily dependent on the researcher's romantic sense of detection.

But let us move on to how these sources are actually represented, because it is after all this graphic act that is the final output of the academic. For the theoretical researcher the conventions of the text demand that these primary and secondary materials should take the form of footnotes, references and bibliographies. And once again, I am indebted to Anthony Grafton for making me realise just how the use of these theoretical conventions indicate a process of socialisation. 32 How else have I become conversant in its language when I have never studied any instructional literature on the techniques? Clearly as a student, I have received a tacit education alongside my subject-specific one, that has trained me to create academic essays. This has not only skilled me in the use of the obvious techniques (the "ibid." and "op cit."), but also in the more subtle tones and shapes of theoretical language that speak to other academic readers. Grafton has noted how the theorist develops a culturally specific language in writing a footnote. For example, he or she will imply an adverse opinion on another author's work, simply by using the apparently innocent "cf" (compare), while for a more overt criticism, a British academic may use the "sly adverbial construction: "oddly overestimated" ", to suggest a misreading of the facts by a fellow theorist. 33

But at least here one may see the life of the academic because, what has become one of my greatest concerns about the footnote, references and bibliography, is that a list of books is all one has to show for living during the period it has taken to write. 34 So often the experiences that have actually shaped the research are only ever vaguely touched on in a brief subject-dominated preface. But what has happened to the haphazard ways in which the sources have been collected? From lucky meetings at conferences, on the train, at dinner where an author or text is mentioned? What of those chance findings of books serendipitously mis-shelved, or left by the photocopier? The book that means nothings and then later means everything, the text that was so hard to find, and yet only clings on to a sentimental place at the bottom of a footnote? And more importantly, what of all the non-textual, non subject-specific experiences that have taken place during the writing process? Those odd conversations over lunch or late at night, the films, novels, weekend thoughts, dreams, illnesses and love affairs? In short, all those events that ultimately shape ones life and character, and more specifically ones time and approach to research? For the research student, these can find no place in a thesis.

The inability of the traditional thesis to acknowledge the corporeality of the theorist is simply because the academic is not considered to be a writer, who engages in the practical and creative activity of writing. As I have noted previously, it is that idealised arc between pen and retina, created by the perspectival viewpoint, that leaves no place for the rest of the scholar's activities. The words he or she produces are still implicitly idealised as merely a neutral window through which the object has been seen. And so the structure of the theorist's narrative can only be shaped by the tempo of his or her subject. This essay has taken me many hours to write and I have changed it, shifted the words, crossed out and reinstated many sentences and yet, as reader, of all this you are unaware. You are solely party to the placid linearity of beginning, middle and end, that suggests a completeness to the object, as though it existed previously and I have merely represented

it. Yet although I had preparatively sketched out the essay, it was solely in the writing of it that its subject was generated, it is only though its practical construction that its logic and structure now exists.

But the dominance of the perspectival viewpoint can only really be seen when this completeness of the text, the regular footsteps of its narrative, are not in place. This is what is understood as inconsistency or contradiction, and it usually comes from another author's viewpoint, looking from an alternative angle onto a text. This criticism may come through knowledge of an opposing viewpoint on the same subject, or from the reader seeing contradiction in the internal workings of the text itself. Imagine that I had written in one place that Francis Bacon did not favour geographical exploration and then in another part that he did, this would be an inconsistency. Imagine also that I had claimed myself to be in favour of one philosophy, but then continued to unconsciously support an apparently opposing one, this would be a contradiction. Both these concepts are dependent on the idea that there is a truth that no matter how it is viewed, must always be fundamentally the same. Inconsistency and contradiction come when an alternate angle make the Truth appear different. If I was drawing a still life on one side of the room and some one was drawing another from the same set of objects, on the other side of the same room, I would expect two things. That the representation of the still life on the other side of the room would not only be made up of the same objects as mine, but that it would also be representing the same spatial relationships between the objects as mine, albeit from a different angle. If the image did not, I would suspect one of our representations to be wrong, rather than believing that the actual set up of the objects was inconsistent. It is thus the same with theory, particularly in a PhD. All its components and relationships between them should remain consistent, no matter from which viewpoint they are being looked at, if the thesis is to make any claims on Truth.

So although the post-modern world should have already driven the Truth to the hills, I would suggest that in the very raison d'être of the Doctorate, in its graphic requirements and guidelines, is the implicit pursuit of all that has been apparently washed away by the post-Baconian tide. It is there in the idea of a body of knowledge, in the secondary and primary sources, in the footnote, reference list, bibliography, and ultimately in the implicit perspectival viewpoint. Seemingly the revolutionary philosophies of post-modernism have not affected the PhD in any practical sense. So why take up this apparently outmoded form of study?

Deeds

It is in the challenge to change the traditions of the PhD that I believe its importance lies. Furthermore, I would suggest that it is by the influence of work done in research in art, craft and design subjects that this change will be achieved. Take my own experience for example. For me it was merely the very act of being uprooted and taken away from an academic environment, that made me ultimately realise what I was doing. Suddenly, my own practice became visible as though a click of fingers had jolted me out of the hypnotising world of the theorist. Just being in a studio had made me realise how the researcher's work was conceived, and in turn made me study the phenomenon. This was the most exciting event as it suddenly plunged the viewpoint of a theorist in the midst of activity.

But to see as a theorist needs a vantage point, separate from society and at a certain height from which to take a grand perspective. So how is one to see in the centre of a crowd, how is one to write in the middle of activity? I cannot say that I have found the

answer to these questions, but I would like to share my various attempts at finding a resolution (although perhaps it is in seeking one that I am most at fault).

One of the key factors that my history had revealed was that the academic had become detached from the concept of bodily activity – that idealised arc moving solely from eye to implement, and taking in no more. In order to try and combat this, my first ideas centred around trying to re-establish the presence of the body within the research and writing processes. Thankfully this took place after my colleagues and I had moved to our own office, as this meant that only two other people would look on incredulously as I lined my desk, chair and the floor under my desk with thick paper. My thinking was that although I was usually just sitting and reading, why should this be considered any less active than someone sewing, etching or painting? Therefore, if I lined all these surfaces with paper, they would record the movements of my body and activity. The pressure of my weight on the chair, the movement of the books' spines on the desk, the trace of my written notes, the ring of my coffee cup, and the marks of my hands and feet - all this bodily activity would be revealed. I considered that perhaps one could exhibit these sheets, alongside any written piece. However, there was a problem with this in that it recorded my movements only at my desk and nowhere else. This meant that at the time when one is most active early on in the research working simply to find the texts before they can be read, all this activity away from the desk in libraries and archives, was unrecorded. Furthermore the life of that chair and desk was short and they were replaced by different furniture in another office, and at this point I abandoned my tracing technique.

Alongside this initial attempt, I tried to record events that were happening to me. This was to try and supplement that list of books with something of my actual life. I attempted this by using several techniques. Firstly, I had kept a diary consistently since beginning my research studentship. In this I incorporated not only the ideas and little inspirations I was having, but also the material fragments of everyday life that betrayed the process of research. The notes on library book locations, slides made, lists to remind myself of things, small timetables I had written, notes to me from fellow researchers and messages from people who had called when I was out. But the constant recording of my actions and thoughts became exhausting, and although this may be a weakness, I am inclined to believe that when something becomes tortuous to one's instincts, it is no longer serving its purpose. So gradually my hourly, daily notes dwindled. However, instead I tried a different technique that incorporated these little comments within my actual notes. Since I am an avid note taker, I began each new day marking the date and my location plus any particular event. Notes made in summer, winter, autumn and spring, in bed, on the train, in the garden, or the office, are all labelled. Furthermore, I tried to note how I had found my sources, mapping whether they had been mentioned by colleagues, through trawling a CD Rom, taken from the bibliography of another text, or found by chance. But although this is still my practice – I began to wonder how all this could be eventually incorporated into a finished piece of writing.

I thought about several processes. Perhaps the text should be interspersed with photographs of me at my desk, or various study locations. Maybe the finished text should be written over a ground of my diary extracts, notes and memos. Or perhaps I should analyse my own practice, making tables and statistics of how my sources were gathered, where I studied most, over which time period I seemed to read quickest or most profitably. Yet however unsatisfactory all these thinking and working processes were, I felt that I had come ultimately to the problem and perhaps also the solution.

The key issue, I discovered, was the separation of the subject matter from the actual process of researching and writing about it. Seeing in perspective terms not only demands one stands away from the subject, but also recreates that distance in the rendering. Although the words are tied to the subject, the sense of measured completeness in the narrative suggests, at the same time, that this is a representation of an object existing elsewhere in the world. The object is not allowed to exist solely on the page surface. With the techniques I had suggested up to that time, I was aware that they were traces of process, that if incorporated using the various methods I had mused on, would provide merely an annoying jab in the narrative, with the effect of occasionally jolting the reader but never fully disturbing the view of the distant subject matter. There needed instead to be a more formalised approach and I believed that the answer could lie in the problem itself – that is, perspective.

As I noted earlier, it was only when painters formalised the way of seeing the world by using perspective, that theory really had a process by which also to formalise its own vision. Thus perhaps answers might lie in graphic alternatives to this linear perspective. In particular the breakdown of the pictorial space by modernist painters and the idea of figure-ground reversal. It seems obvious now, but I had not considered before how painters themselves had combated the separation between their own painting processes and the representation of their subject matter. Immediately on considering their solutions, the work of Paul Cézanne came to mind, and particularly the landscapes of Aix-en-Provence, and the mountain of Ste-Victoire. Here was the compression of pictorial space through the use of colour, repeated in foreground and background and the use of form, with the foreground tree mirroring the line of the apparently distant mountain. Although far less poetic, the idea of figure-ground reversal then immediately occurred to me. That process where the eye alternatively shifts its emphasis on the subject. At one time it may be the faces one sees, yet in another moment it is the vase. Perhaps I thought, this is how I could structure my thesis. Maybe not achieving a constant shift from subject to alternative subject, but perhaps at least making designated points at which the shift between my process and my subject matter would overtly appear.

This meant that I had to consider the material of my subject, rather than simply concentrating on the form of my process. As in order to create a shift, I had to find links between the subject and process so that, at one time, the same statements might be true of both the object of my study and my methods of research and writing. I found three ways of doing this:

Firstly, the subject matter of my thesis, which is fundamentally the interplay between theory and practice, is obviously intimately related to this proposed methodology, as subject and process are both seeking the same outcome. Furthermore, the method by which I have analysed the discourse of the two nineteenth-century Select Committees was to look at the practice (that is the everyday circumstances) of the members and witnesses. This was in order to map their spheres of engagement with each other and with design and manufacturing philosophy. In this way my mapping of myself, and my relation to them as subjects, was merely an extension of this (hence my surprise at seeing my own name mentioned in John Martin's circle of friends!) To link these two spheres of object and object relation, as well as researcher to object, I began to list day to day (for 1835 and 1836) the events involving the members and witnesses of the Select Committees, both within and outside the Committee debates. On finding any information, I would also add the date that I had discovered the particular fact, leaving my traces overlaying theirs.

Secondly, I tried to connect my personal history with the subjects of my thesis, by attempting to co-ordinate information gained from researching my own family tree. This had led me to discover a history of very ordinary people who lived around the Black country, but who in 1835 were still in their home county of Hertfordshire. I began to wonder what my ancestors knew of their member of parliament, Lord Viscount Mahon (if indeed he could be seen to be representing them at that time), as he had been a member of the 1835 Select Committee. And how they, as the general manufacturing populace, and therefore the subject of the Select Committee, were involved or affected by its outcomes.

While thirdly, after looking at my physical ties, I began to consider my own inheritance as a researcher, in relation to my subject. I had studied the history of academic processes until the seventeenth century but I began to research what had happened after this time, as science became established. How had history as a discipline developed from this period? My study aimed to incorporate the output on this subject of some of the Committee members and their associates. Thus I could see, for example, if George Grote's writings on history, may have informed my own methodology. While furthermore, I could note how his circle conceived of education when founding University College London, a place where I myself was educated. Perhaps in this history of history, there would even be a place for one of the Committee members' associates, Jane Webb who wrote her own thesis entitled Conversations on Comparative Chronology in 1830.

Although one may be loath to believe these links between the subject of the thesis, and the process of writing it to be acceptable, I would suggest that at least they go some way to incorporating the actual processes inherent in my particular research. For here the subject is not distant, the researching not solely dominated by the tempo of its subject, the actual life and interests of the researcher are incorporated, and those curious bonds with sources, both primary and secondary, are revealed.

However, at this point, I must be halted by a rather disappointing, but inevitable fact. This is, that not having yet written my thesis, I have no idea whether these techniques will work, or how I will graphically produce them! But then, this is because after all, the theory no matter how it is sketched out before hand, is only ever really generated by the practice of writing. I therefore hope that this continued emphasis on my practice will allow me to produce an exciting (and readable) text that will resolve the relationship of theory to practice, although only in this particular study. I would further suggest, that if my case can be used as an example, how many more stimulating transformations of theory writing may come when theory and practice stand face to face, and practitioners forge new relationships between them.

Endnotes

1 Held at the University of East Anglia, 25 April 1998. "The Craft of Fools?" in Ideas in the Making: Practice in Theory (1998) Crafts Council: 103-113.

2 See Manguel, A. A History of Reading (1997), particularly "The Book Fool": 291-306.

3 Comenius was from Bohemia, but was invited to come to Britain in 1630, by Samuel Hartlib (Yates 1986: 176).

4 The theories of Francis Bacon are well explained by Benjamin Farrington in Francis Bacon: Philosopher of Industrial Science (1973), in particular. Also look at the translation

of Bacon's The Great Instauration (1620) and the New Atlantis (c.1627) in Weinberger (1989).

5 "…humbly and with a certain reverence draw near to the book of Creation… This is that speech and language which has gone out to all the ends of the earth, and has not suffered the confusion of Babel; this must men learn, and resuming their youth, they must become again as little children and deign to take its alphabet into their hands" (quoted from The Masculine Birth of Time in Farrington 1973: 149-150).

6 Alpers 1983: 93.

7 From the Greek theoria, via theoros or spectator, from theoreo meaning "to look at" (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 9th ed., 1995: 1446).

8 Baxandall 1988: 104.

9 Wright 1983: 64.

10 See Manguel 1997: 29, for earlier debate.

11 Wright 1983: 65.

12 ibid.: 64-65.

13 Quoted in Alpers 1983: xxiv.

14 Wartofsky in Hagen 1980: 135.

15 ibid.: 140.

16 Details of it can be found in Chapters 6 and 7 in Frances Yates' The Art of Memory (1992).

17 Yates 1992: 161.

18 Quoted in Yates 1992: 147-8.

19 ibid.: 161.

20 My emphasis. From Abraham Cowley's poetry preface to Thomas Sprat's History of the Royal Society of London, (1668). Reprinted and with an introduction and notes by Cope and Whitmore Jones, 1966.

21 Bryson 1985: 7.

22 Or, as my Research Student Handbook (1998) states "This degree [the PhD] is awarded to candidates who have critically investigated and evaluated topics resulting in an independent and original contribution to knowledge, set out in a thesis…" (p. 16).

23 In the Latin translation of his 1605 text The Advancement of Learning, he states that "…the opened bosom of the ocean, and the world travelled over in every part, whereby multitudes of experiments unknown to the ancients have been disclosed…[allowed him to]

… be raised to the hope that this period will far surpass the Greek and Roman in learning" (quoted in Farrington 1973: 41-42).

24 See these strangely titled roles in the New Atlantis published in 1627, although incomplete due to Bacon's death. Reprinted in Weinberger (1989).

25 See the New Atlantis, Weinberger (1989).

26 Obituary Jacob, M. and Gosselin, E. in Isis 73: 3: 268 (1982): 425.

27 My Research Student Handbook (1998) notes that the primary source is an element of the "working understanding of "originality" " (p. 16).

28 Grafton 1997: 59.

29 ibid.: 61.

30 ibid.: 57.

31 The 1835-6 Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures, plus the 1836-7 Design School Committee.

32 Grafton 1997: 5-6.

33 ibid.: 8

34 Gabriel Josipovici says that when he has been writing "One feels one has been away from the world too long and one wants… to "live" again" (1982: xiv).

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