
Article

Qualitative Inquiry as Gegenwerk: Connections Between Art and Research

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Abstract

In this article, the authors apply the findings of research into transitional processes in the arts to a consideration of qualitative research. They identify and describe four types of transitional practice: the transferential, the transformational, the transpositional, and the transgressional. Transitional practices in both art and research are found to be dialectical, involving presencing and absencing, doing and undoing, and repetition with modifications, and to produce provisional or transitional outcomes. Such practices enable both artists and researchers to manage tangled connections, juxtapositions, intertwinings, overlappings, and dislocations. Research is therefore not a simple linear process but, like (other) artistic processes, involves absencing, transformation, and redetermination as processes of emergent disclosure. Transitional practices therefore involve “work against the work”: *Gegenwerk*. An understanding of, and training in, such practices has the potential to develop quality, reflexivity, and criticality in both the undertaking and the reading of qualitative research.

Keywords: qualitative research, art-based research, philosophy of education, methodology

Introduction

Contemporary overviews of approaches to qualitative research pay little attention to the many connections between such research and transitional processes in the arts and technology (e.g., Atkinson, 2001; Sarantakos, 1998), although there has been somewhat of a “linguistic turn” in considerations of qualitative research, neatly exemplified by Geertz’s (1973) championing of “thick description.” Some have drawn attention to the status of both research product and researched situation as (finished) “text” (Stables, 1996). There has also been an increased interest in the research potential of artistic processes such as biography and vignette, whereas elsewhere,

particularly in the postmodern literature, issues of liminality, borderland, and closure are addressed (e.g., Maclure, 1996), with exhortations sometimes made to embrace the first and second of these and eschew the latter. However, these authors generally fail to draw on new insights from theory of art that seek to explain the nature of transitional processes in the arts (Pigrum, 2001) and technology. Such insights serve to reinforce both the understanding of qualitative research as dialectical, incomplete and selective,¹ and the realization that the published research text is always a finished product, whatever the exhortations of some postmodernists, to the extent that a completed work of art is also “finished.”

Pigrum’s (2001) research dissertation and subsequent articles (2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005) and Finley’s (2003) overview of the “newly formed discourse community of arts-based researchers” (p. 281), in terms of its criteria, performance, and cultural politics, form the basis of the considerations in this article.

Pigrum’s (2001) research begins with Bruner’s (1986) reflection that “we know too little about the use of the notebook, the sketch, the outline in reflective work” (p. 21) and ends with Derrida’s (1978) call for research into “the form of signs . . . the cathexes of gestures and movements, of letters, lines, points, the elements of the writing apparatus (instrument, surface, substance etc) writing as nourishment or excrement, the trace as seed” (p. 231). The trajectory of the research between these quotations consists of five cycles of emergent disclosure of the multimode (drafting and drawing) practices of writers and expert practitioners in the visual arts. Pigrum employed qualitative methods to attempt to understand how a group of expert practitioners (in graphic design, art and architecture, and, later, writing) used transitional processes, with a view to developing a curriculum for the teaching of such processes. In so doing, he came to recognize significant connections between the substantive and methodological aspects of his own work, drawing a strong but underresearched parallel between the function of the artist/writer’s transitional practices and the activity of the qualitative (QI) researcher. A turning point in the research was the uncovering of a link in visual art practices to the innovative tropes of rhetoric. This was reinforced by what Goldschmidt (1991) and Herbert (1988) had written about the drawing practices of architects. More recently, in a reading of White’s (1985) *Tropics of Discourse*, we have discerned a clear alignment between Pigrum’s registers of transitional process and White’s description of the function of the tropes of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony in discourse.

Pigrum (2001, 2005) has traced the development of communities of practice in the arts (broadly defined) back to the Renaissance workshop, in which modern disciplinary boundaries held no meaning. Applying this historical perspective to the work of contemporary artists (pure and applied), he has defined four types of transitional process, specifically, although not exclusively, the transferential, the transformational, the transpositional, and the transgressional.

These registers are acquired in the dialogic interaction involving writing, drawing, diagramming, and speech between practitioners in response to an immediate task and are internalized and transformed into personal agency in autonomous use and in work in a group or collaborative context. Primarily, all transitional registers are acquired, like speech genres, in the social field then internalized to become part of the practitioner’s habitus (Bourdieu, 2000), or disposition to think and act in certain ways in situations that call for creative solutions.

The transferential register is used in the analysis and recording of cultural artifacts for use at a later point in time and forms an important part of a practitioner’s background knowledge. The transferential is essentially a copy, note, or record. (In architectural practice, this is sometimes referred to as referential drawing.) The transferential register is the recording in drawing and/or

writing of an object or idea of particular interest to the subject that is subsequently carried over to present creative activity. This process is characterized by a diverse or paratactic accumulation of material. The term “parataxis” is borrowed from rhetoric and signifies a placing side by side of things that are unconnected (Lanham, 1991). This material might be quite disconnected from our present concerns and interests and take on relevance only at a much later date of metaphor construction. An example of this is Giacometti’s drawing of a medicine trolley during a stay in hospital that 9 years later provided the inspiration for his sculpture *The Chariot* (Lord, 1996).

The transferential register most often takes the form of the supplementary memory device (Derrida, 1978), such as the note- or sketchbook and journal. Freud (in Derrida, 1978) talked about the way we supplement and guarantee the workings of memory by making a note, diagram, or sketch that is a materialized portion of the mnemonic apparatus. Pigrum’s (2001) analysis of artists’ notebooks and Gross’s (1996) work on Darwin’s notebooks suggest that supplementary memory devices such as these are in touch with long-term memory and primary mental processes. Both Gross and Pigrum emphasized the paratactic ordering of the material in the notebooks characterized by “an absence of connectives, especially logical connectives” (Gross, 1996, p. 146). Thus, the main function of such notebooks can be seen as not just the deficient storage of material, which both Freud and Derrida attributed to supplementary memory devices, but the maintenance of the prolonged metonymy or unwinding of imagination essential to conceptual transitions, condensations, displacement, and transformation. Work in the notebooks represents, as Gross stated, “a rhetorical transaction with the self” (p. 1509). Pigrum argued that the notebook would seem to be not a quickly saturated memory trace but a “finely meshed weave . . . in which there is a deferral of closure and a modulation of motivation, so that action can be delayed and thought oriented toward theoretical and real possibilities” (p. 278).

By contrast, the transformational register is often used as a form of displacement activity that aids concentration (Gombrich, 1996). The term transformational is borrowed from Henry Moore (Fuller, 1993) and signifies drawing that is done in a state of suspended expectation closely allied to the doodle in its capacity to uncover unexpected and often unconscious material. The transformational register is an unwinding or metonymy, a contiguity of signifiers in a state of suspended awareness where one thing is successively modified until an idea emerges that can form the basis of a more focused development. Examples of this register abound in the drawings of Moore (1957). This register involves what Tinguely termed “dreaming around” a theme (cited in Hulten, 1987, p. 349). It is evident in the drawings of the Italian architect Scolari, who “expands the limits of a problem, without ever seeming to propose definitive solutions” (Moschini, 1980, p. 8). In the autonomous context, it is used to overcome “blocks” and generate material from deeper levels of consciousness.

The transpositional register is constituted by the displacement enacted in the condensed realization of an idea in a rapid note or sketch, or both, that is subject to further transitional exploration, modification, and development. In the transpositional register, ideas come together in an innovative whole that is highly condensed and produced very rapidly and then explored in further drawing. A transpositional drawing is often a “multi-mode” object (Kress, 1997) as a move “towards integration of all apparently particular phenomena into a whole” (White, 1985, p. 73). Alternatively, a transpositional drawing is a synecdoche that forms the basis of the final art or design product by replacing parts for the whole. An example of this register would be Picasso’s first sketches for *Guernica*, which are little more than a scribble in which all the main elements of the painting are present (Chipp, 1988).

These three registers enable both the expert practitioner and the student to respond adaptively to idea generation and development. The hallmark of all the registers is a degree of indeterminacy, provisionality, and non finito signification in which all inessentials are omitted. The registers are open to the use of more than one signifying mode. In all of the registers, modes of negation are employed ranging from transformational negation to radical negation where the surface of inscription is destroyed. This openness to destruction enhances the practitioner's and student's ability to make and unmake, bind and unbind the original idea that is the essence of the fourth, or transgressional, register that works like the trope of irony or parabasis as described by de Man (1997) that is "implicitly critical of all forms of metaphorical identification, reduction, or integration" (White, 1985, p. 73; see also Pigrum, 2001, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005.) It involves what Benjamin described as "a deliberate destruction of form . . . a 'critical act' which undoes the form" (cited in de Man, 1997, p. 183). In the transgressive register, as Lefebvre has stated, "one's own thinking surpasses itself, modifies or rejects its form, remanages its content, takes up again the moments that have passed and looks at them again" (in Gadotti, 1996, p. 26).

The traits of das Gegenwerk

The transitional registers form what Pigrum (2005) has termed the traits of das Gegenwerk.

Das Gegenwerk conceptually bridges transitional practices in the visual arts and the drafting processes of writers. The use of the German word *Gegenwerk* is based on Wuthenow's (1997) characterization of Valery's (2000) cahiers (notebooks) as *Gegenwerk*. The word *gegen* has two meanings in German: one is toward and the other, against. Thus, *das Gegenwerk* is the work toward the finished work but also the work that is in opposition to the closure of the completed work.

What Pigrum (2005) has termed the "traits" of *das Gegenwerk* are based on the investigation of the generation, development, and modification of ideas in terms of the rough notes and sketches, drafts, notebooks, and diagramming of expert practitioners in the areas of sculpture, architecture, graphic design, and writing (see Pigrum, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005). The generic traits or tropes of *das Gegenwerk* are conceived of as what "is common to . . . art in terms of their origination through a shared generative process or procedure" (Carroll, 2001, p. 65).

The word *traits* is used both in the sense of a characteristic that is conceived of as being intrinsic but also—and more closely related to the forms of negation that appear in *das Gegenwerk*—as in the French, in the sense of "the stroke of a pen or brush, a written line—such as one uses to strike something out" (Brunette & Wills, 1989, p. 49), and as such it is of key significance to a notion of arts-based inquiry. The registers of *das Gegenwerk* combine in indeterminacy, provisionality, and non finito signification in which all inessentials are omitted; in the use of more than one signifying mode (or what Kress, 1997, termed a multimode use); in modes of negation that range from transformational negation to radical negation, where the surface of inscription is destroyed; and in repetition with modifications. The master trope of *das Gegenwerk* is irony or the trope of doing and undoing. Pigrum (2000, 2001) believes that this openness to destruction enhances the practitioner's and student's ability to make and unmake, bind and unbind the original idea.

Following Winnicott (1971), Pigrum (2001) conceived of creativity as having its source in potential space, which depends on two main external conditions: the immediate emotional and physical environment and the presence of transitional objects in this space. These two conditions, in a modified form, are viewed as constitutive of the potential space of the adult practitioner in the arts. Potential space, like *das Gegenwerk*, has the structure of an infinite opening beyond closure. In this process a link between "finding" and creating or inventing is central, and *das*

Gegenwerk is viewed as “a place,” a cultural inheritance where what has been “found” can be “put,” made and unmade, modified, and developed toward completed works. Das Gegenwerk is also, however, inextricably linked to Kristeva’s (1986) notion of abjection, a process of the necessary expulsion of the inner object of mother-child unity prior to transitional object use and the acquisition of the symbolic function that in early childhood holds open potential space. Kristeva ascribed to abjection notions very similar to the root word of Entwurf, or draft/design. Wurf in German means to throw, auswurf is to cast out or expel, and entwurf is to draft or design. The Entwurf, like that which is ausgeworfen, expelled, is never banished altogether, because something is always left; in the draft, we can still read words through the crossings-out of cancellation. For Kristeva, abjection hovers at the periphery of one’s existence, constantly challenging one’s own tenuous borders of selfhood. Abjection redefines the borders of potential space. In das Gegenwerk, the surface of inscription is something that is open to negation; something that can be discarded or destroyed thus holds open potential space and forestalls closure, producing a mobile repetitive play of experimental and provisional representations (Pigrum, 2005).

One is tempted to conceive of das Gegenwerk as prior to the work, of being outside the completed work. Valery (2000) summed up this problematic relationship when he stated, “The work is the goal that absorbs, absolves and consumes the means. But for me . . . the work is one state in a development of which the means are a part” (Vol. 1, p. 282).

The coherent entity called the work has its origins in das Gegenwerk that is absent but at the same time residing in the work in a spectral sense as a presence signifying an absence. Even when we are afforded a glimpse of das Gegenwerk in, for example, the rough sketches of the architect and artist or the writer’s draft, or in the fieldwork notebooks of the researcher, it is always as a supplement to the work. In *Writing and Difference*, Derrida (1978) stated, “The history of the work is not only its past . . . but is also the impossibility of its ever being present, of its ever being summarized by some absolute simultaneity or instantaneousness” (p. 14).

The principle of piecemeal construction

In Kafka’s (1988) short story “The Great Wall of China,” the narrator stated,

The wall could not be built in any other way than it is, that is to say piecemeal (Teilbau). Naturally, in this way many gaps were left which were only filled in gradually and bit by bit, some indeed, not till after the official announcement that the wall was finished. (p. 235)

The preoccupation of the narrator in Kafka’s story is to discover why this principle of piecemeal construction was adopted. Althusser (in Hartley, 2003) employed Kafka’s story of the Great Wall in his description of ideological and social terrain. In this article, it is used to gain a deeper insight into the relationship between das Gegenwerk and the concept of closure and the finished work.

Critchley (1992), writing about the all-important concept of closure in the philosophy of Derrida, stated, “To erect a closure is literally to build . . . an enclosing wall . . . dividing the inside of a circumscribed territory from the outside” (p. 62). Conceived of spatially, closure is a limit. Conceived of

temporally closure is the activity or process of bringing something to its conclusion, completion . . . [however] closure must be rigorously distinguished from the concept of end; for an end signifies the completion of the act and not the act of completion. Thus, on

a temporal level, closure signifies a state of being prior to the end, the bringing of a process to its conclusion. (p. 62)

Closure, in both the spatial and temporal context, delimits both “inside” and “outside” of the closure.

Critchley (1992) stated that closure always fails to circumscribe completely, always leaving openings that offer “the promise of a new beginning” (p. 62). If we think of the completed work as what Derrida referred to as a “minor structure necessarily closed” (cited in Critchley 1992, p. 64), then we can think of *das Gegenwerk* as the structurality of an infinite opening beyond closure. In the work, as “minor structure” or delay, there exists the break that opens onto the continuation of *das Gegenwerk*.

The abjection of *das Gegenwerk* allows idea development to take place under the impact of the transgressional register that ruptures the separation of the subject and the object and blurs the notion of inside and outside. *Das Gegenwerk* as abject object is neither subject nor object, neither inside nor outside, neither here nor there. This absence of identity in *das Gegenwerk* is congruent with artistic practices and QI discourse on the borders of signification. Thus, the metaphor of the Great Wall that fails to circumscribe completely a border has a complex resonance with the metaphor of *das Gegenwerk* where meaning is always provisional.

The poetics of QI

Finley (2003) has suggested that art-based approaches might not yet have reached the point of acceptance as serious (i.e., “rigorous”) inquiry, because, she suggests, “[the] research community [is] already biased against the intellectual viability of the arts as a conceptual framework for research” (p. 289). White (1985), Burke (1969), and Hallyn (1990) have made a very strong case for understanding both literature and discourse as grounded in tropes. Lacan posited an interior topology that shapes the general nature of our representations of reality and has “permanently marked the human logos” (in Hallyn, 1990, p. 30). White stated that the research of Freud, Piaget, Nietzsche, and Marx each reveals a tropological structure at work.

It is not necessary for QI to avoid association with fiction writers and poets if they are clear about the function of tropes as models that the subject can adopt during the conceptual transformation of representation. What White (1985) termed the “fictions of factual representation” of the research discourse and the imaginative writer’s “techniques and strategies of composition are substantially the same, however different they may appear on a purely surface, or dictional level of their texts” (p. 121). Although the fiction writer or poet might be dealing with purely imaginary events and the QI discourse with real ones, “the process of fusing events, whether imaginary or real, into a comprehensible totality capable of serving as the object of representation is a poetic process” (p. 125, emphasis in original) in which both use the same tropological strategies. The collective insight of Vico, Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud, and Levi-Strauss is that poetic process “represents a mode of praxis that serves as the immediate base of all cultural activity” (p. 126). The seriousness of QI could be bolstered by searching rhetorical self-consciousness and analysis on the part of qualitative researchers.

Art-based inquiry could be construed as an awakening from “the dream of a value-neutral language” that emulates “the success of the physical sciences in applying stipulated languages and mathematical protocols to the analysis of their data” and the realization that the constitution of QI is “a poetic act, a genuine ‘making’ and ‘invention’ ” (White 1985, p. 252). Writers,

including Hallyn (1990) and Gross (1996), have revived the link between science and rhetoric lost in the 17th century, revealing to science its own poetic nature.

Research conceived of as *Gegenwerk* positions QI in artistic practices but avoids the quicksands of definitions implicit in such questions as “Is good research good art?” (Finley, 2003). As Sim (2003) stated, “unity of execution becomes one of the most sought after characteristics of the artwork, as well as one of the major ways of classifying artistic success” (p. 100).

The orientation in Finley’s (2003) review of performance texts, focusing on process rather than product, is closer to a conception of QI as *Gegenwerk* rather than as work of art. Denzin explicitly asked, “for research that focuses on the process of research activity, rather than on the product . . . the text, in such an instance, is no longer static, staid by time; rather it is malleable” (in Finley, 2003, p. 288). Of the two main currents that have emerged in arts-based QI in the past 7 years, the notion of QI as *Gegenwerk* would seem to belong to the form of arts-based inquiry that seeks expression in contexts of living situations rather than final product (Finley, 2003). It is not a question of whether the research is art but whether the performative function of the texts is one of “the process of shaping and asking questions” (Finley, 2003, p. 288).

Beyond narrative structure

To borrow the language of the United Kingdom’s National Literacy Strategy, the above considers transitional practices at the level of word and sentence. However, they are also evident in consideration of research at the text level, at the level of narrative structure.² What is true of beginnings and middles also applies to the ending of research and other texts. Endings are often in dramatic tension with anticipated closure (Douglas-Fairhurst, 2003); thus, narratives can seem incomplete, have a “twist in the tale,” or leave a profound sense of anticlimax. There is a constant tension between the expected and the found, but each must relate to some existing schema. Effective research texts often round off with a memorable comment relating the findings to a broader field or recommending a way forward for practice and research. It is inevitable that an ending “does something”; no text, of any sort, can just end.

As narrative possibilities are always drawn from existing schemas, the originality of a text always arises from its combination of narrative resources. In this sense, a research text can never produce something completely original, any more than it can entirely replicate another text. Paradoxically, research texts are never fully complete, never fully resistant of closure, nor ever entirely groundbreaking. However, thinking about research as transitional nevertheless demands some consideration of research products as “finished” in relation to the finished work of art. It is commonly acknowledged that only aesthetic or historically effected judgments can determine when a work of art can be seen as complete as opposed to “draft”; there are no grounds for final legitimation. How, for example, should we judge the compositional drawings of Leonardo da Vinci, which are manifestly transitional, or the notebooks of Valery (2000), which he saw as his main achievement? These are like parts of the scaffolding of a building never completed. The same must therefore be true of research: The point at which research is seen to have “discovered something,” or is aesthetic, for example, is a matter of cultural, habituated interpretation.

The choice of narrative structure is an aesthetic choice. The narrative, even if fragmented, is a story of a particular kind that employs “techniques that we would normally expect to find in the emplotment of a novel or a play” (White, 1985, p. 84). The movement of narrative is not the piecemeal construction of *das Gegenwerk* but a movement toward the finished research as “an icon of the structure of events” (p. 88).

Acknowledging this, QI as *Gegenwerk* also produces a finished piece of research, if only conceived of as a delay, or, as Derrida stated, a “minor structure necessarily closed” that opens onto a new beginning (cited in Critchley, 1992, p. 64). Following White, if we conceive of the structure of narrative as figurative, then by suggesting that there is a beyond of narrative, we are at the same time suggesting a beyond to the operation of the figurative tropes. What Deleuze (2003) had to say about the painting process of Bacon has the utmost relevance to the notion of a form of arts-based QI that breaks the hold of narrative structure.

Bacon’s entire process as a painter was to “wrench himself away from nascent illustration and narration” (Deleuze, 2003, p. 94) and to oppose the Figure or the figural to the figurative. Deleuze compared Bacon, in his quest for the Figure, to Proust, who, Deleuze claimed, also rejected “a figurative, illustrative, or narrative literature that merely told a story” (p. 67). Deleuze stated that Bacon’s canvas, like discourse, is populated by figurative givens and strategies, as ways of seeing and probabilities. Figuration cannot, as Deleuze pointed out, be entirely eliminated: Something is always conserved, but what Deleuze termed diagramming emits “a leap in place . . . a deformation in place, the emergence of the Figure as the possibility of fact” (p. 157). Diagramming, through its tentative, conditional, and often random marks, works to extract the Figure from its figurative, narrative state. Diagramming imposes “a zone of . . . indeterminability between two forms, one of which was no longer and the other, not yet. . . and between the two it imposes the Figure [as] the creation of original relations” (pp. 157-158). The beyond of figuration employs the movement or “turns” of figuration to emit, through diagramming, the Figure. The diagramming central to *das Gegenwerk* holds open the space of uncertainty, and it is “the uncertainty of meaning . . . that allows us to generate new information, new understandings and increasingly meaningful research texts” (Finley, 2003, p. 291). In this sense, it shares common ground with the new paradigm in science characterized by Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle and questions Eisner’s espousal of QI as “not exactly art but certainly not science” (Finley, 2003, p. 290).

The places of arts-based inquiry

Traditionally, the research process, as distinct from the mere collection of data, is largely considered as independent of place, such that to be in a physical place or location is merely a formal identity of position (e.g., “research undertaken at the University of X”). Casey (1998) stated, “Such formal identity is featureless . . . site as *situs* is construed as ‘abstract space’ and thus as something entirely extrinsic to ‘what is sited’ ” (p. 178). This is a notion of the site of research “grasped in terms of a generalizable model of functioning” (p. 185), whereby all discrete phenomena are subordinated to mind rather than to the concrete nature of data and the place in which they are subject to analysis. This is Cartesian mind-body dualism. However, the physical place where analysis is conducted can alternatively be seen to correspond to Heidegger’s notion of “place-as-pragmatic-as the realm of worked-on-things” (cited in Casey, 1998, p. 246) and thus be as important as the place in which the artist, architect, designer, and writer works. Pigrum (2004a) has uncovered, in the passage of “charged images” in the place of Bacon’s studio, an aspect of Bacon’s *Gegenwerk* overlooked by Deleuze (2003) and has drawn out from this a conception of the “place” of the classroom and studio as a *topos* of connections that, following Casey (1998), operate as “a reservoir of connections yet to come” (pp. 47-48).

The way the artist “layers” material and work, conventionally in the studio, is mirrored in the reflexivity of the researcher. The essential property of this layering is connectivity: the power of the way in which place is organized to produce connections and links between diverse entities or events. The art studio, like the designer’s and architect’s office, the writer’s room, and the community in which the ethnographer or anthropologist is situated, is a place where entities are always in excess of what the individual is working on, such that they effectively exist in transition rather than stasis. In such a place, artistic concerns, labor, problems, and solutions present themselves not as a fixed configuration of objects but in ever-changing relationships of near and far, juxtaposition, overlap, and dispersion. In the architect’s and designer’s offices, just as in the researcher’s “place,” interests and lines of investigation and analysis are modified by the responses, ideas, suggestions, and data provided by others, often in dialogue accompanied by writing, diagramming, and drawing, in multimode use. Conceived in this way, the place of research closely shadows the configurations of the artist’s studio, in which nothing is ever seen alone but always in relation to other things.

Studying the role that the physical organization of place plays in the research and analysis processes involves examining how data, notebooks, secondary sources, and technology are arranged in place, and how places seem to become conducive to analysis. In other words, external place and the material present within it remain of central importance to the way we mediate between inner and outer in the research and analysis process. On this account, we are clearly incapable of operating exclusively deductively or inductively.

Doing and undoing the text of QI

Pigum’s initial concern was with drawing processes and the possibility of a curriculum in such processes. However, in reality, both transitional processes and analysis in fieldwork notebooks are often multimodal, using words alongside other “signs.” There is frequent use of what Lyotard (1971, in Burgin, 1986) referred to as “word-thing(s)” and “diagram(s)” (p. 57). The distinction here is that the “thingness” of the words consists in their “thickness”: The normal word belongs to a transparent order of language, and its meaning is immediate, but the condensed word-thing is opaque. In practical terms, multimode use is a frequent resource of the researcher. Drawing; diagramming; the use of arrows, marks, and modes of cancellation; emphasis; and elision are deeply implicated in fieldwork notes. Analysis grows on the trellis of multimodality.

In QI, the diagramming that exceeds the bounds of the figurative takes place in the fieldwork notebooks but also, as we shall see later, in the QI as a multimode object:

In a very tangible way, the field notebooks operated rather like the artist’s or designer’s note/sketchbook, situated somewhere between the work in progress and ideas derived, or interpreted from the real world, and replete with abandoned directions and false leads. (Pigum, 2001, p. 42)

The order of analysis would seem to be created by the practice of analytical work itself: It is guaranteed by no necessary logic but proceeds by constant deconstructions and reconstructions very similar to the transitional processes of artist practitioners in *das Gegenwerk*. The progressive coding of qualitative data provides a system for undertaking such transformations and deletions, allowing a key thesis or theme to emerge from the raw material of memory, theoretical sensitivity, systematic data, documents, and so on. The fieldwork notebooks are a visible trace of the cuts, the sutures, the parataxis, and the doings and undos of the analytical process. Transitional practices help us to think of the fieldwork notebook in terms of multimode use,

dispensability, and analysis, not as a linear, stage-by-stage progression but as a transitional movement. Researchers should come to an understanding as early in their careers as possible that they are no less active in artistic processes than artists are, and that their research environments are comparable to studios and workshops of artists and designers.

The analysis that takes place in the fieldwork notebook is work that emphasizes the dynamics of production and place over the actual dissertation or finished work. In such notebooks, we find observations, reflections, associations, evaluations, beginnings, and probes. Analysis in the fieldwork notebook is, as Valery has stated of his thoughts in his cahiers,

a centre that requires an environment, a crossing, a beginning, a part that is connected to a whole that is vague but at the same time open to precision—a term of implicit development—the presence, the arrival, the time these thoughts need to become actualized. From this formal standpoint each one is a functional phase. (in Wuthenow, 1997, pp. 168-169)

The data we collect do not deliver to us the so-called “way it is,” therefore, but, rather, provide blocks from which we can put an account together. It is in the fieldwork notebook that we iteratively combine, substitute, construct and join together, order, supplement, and build our account. The fieldwork notebooks are the construction site of the research dissertation.

The transitional practices of *das Gegenwerk* enable us to model possibilities and allow a constantly changing emergence of ideas, propositions, and interpretations, which we can allocate emphasis and attention to, put on the back burner, or cancel partially or completely. When we have an idea, transitional practices are a way of recording and storing them in the dynamic supplementary memory device of the notebook. Sometimes when we think we have a good idea, putting it down leads to its rejection. When we have not got an idea, transitional practices are a way of getting one. Once we have an idea, we must be able to do and undo it. The form is undone, as Benjamin has stated, because of “the relationship of the particular work to an ‘indefinite project.’ ” (in de Man, 1997, p. 183). QI research viewed as *Gegenwerk* is just such an indefinite project. The doing and undoing that takes place in transitional practices and the “forthcoming” that it produces is, as Oliver (1998) stated, “a subject in process in relation to an object in process” (p. 96), and this applies as much to research as to artistic activity.

Barrett (1997) has stated that meaningful frameworks of how to go about analysis are few and far between, and where they exist, they amount “to little more than a labeling exercise at best, and distortion at worst” (p. 207). Individual researchers might be as vague about the analytic exercise as artists are about their creative processes, but there is clearly a simultaneity between fieldwork and analysis. It can be argued that the process of analysis is learned by doing and by checking with informants, other members of a research team, and supervisors: in other words, through membership of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The more beginning researchers are initiated into this community, and the stronger their awareness of the processes involved, the better for research as a whole. The entries in the fieldwork notebook engage data in a metonymy of repeated acts of “commentary.” This repetition with modifications is one of the tropes of transitional practices in the arts designed to produce a moment of alterity that opens up a wholly new direction or interpretation, and perhaps exemplifies what Lyotard (1986) had in mind in *The Postmodern Condition* in his consideration of scientific progress by paralogy.

Analysis, as well as employing multimodes, also makes wide use of the irony or parabasis of modes of negation. This involves transformational negation, that is to say, ways in which the text is altered or transformed in a passage of states whereby cancellation, crossing out, emphasis,

underlining, circling, and so on are employed to produce the displacement of the illuminating metaphors that act as a kind of temporary anchorage for the research. In Pigrum (2001), one such metaphor was that of the Penelopewerk (the work of Penelope who, to stall her suitors while awaiting the return of Odysseus, unraveled at night what she wove during the day) to describe the process of doing and undoing, binding and unbinding, that seemed to be going on in transitional artistic practices. Pigrum (2001) began to extend his notion of transitional practices to the drafting procedures of writers. For Pinter, as for many visual artists and designers, the “charged” or “flashpoint” image is rooted in the concreteness, the particularity, and the ready-to-hand (cited in Billington, 1996). In research, this often comes in the form of a word or phrase used by an informant or, as in the case of the Penelopewerk, readings beyond the area of study or in something reported but not followed up in related research. In research, as in the arts, the transitional metaphor would seem to operate like a clue that can be followed but, as Pinter stated, “the crucial thing is to get the clue in the first place, to...have a given. If I don’t have that I am in the desert” (Billington, 1996, p. 242).

In both the arts and research, the route of the transitional image or metaphor can result in a form of negation that eliminates it as a separate entity. Schwitters, describing his own creative process (Schaffensprozess) stated,

I find an object, know that it belongs on my Merzsäule (Merz column) take it with me, stick it on, cover it with glue, paint it in a way that harmonizes with the rhythm and effect of the whole. Then one day it turns out that some new direction has to be taken that will partly or completely be achieved over the body of this object. (cited in Krempel, 2000, p. 267)

Pinter stated that in the very process of writing, things emerge that themselves become “controlling metaphors” (cited in Billington, 1996, p. 243).

The ways in which writers, artists, architects, designers, and researchers use transitional metaphors, therefore, offer us a crucial and overlooked clue as to how we might better understand the process of analysis. The researcher has one part of the clue in terms of data, but getting clues of how to go about analysis of the data is what seems to present the problem. Transitional practices give the researcher an awareness of the importance of the clues provided by transitional metaphors for their creative processes. Transitional metaphors are found rather than created or invented; they are ready to hand and interweave with the process of analysis.

Transitional practices, including research, never start from scratch or finish with nothing, and on the way there are turning points, points of condensation and connection, and branching points. Thus understood, all social processes can be seen as transitional. Certainly, transitional practices constitute the “effort of research” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 63), just as they are part of the effort of creative thinking in the arts. Furthermore, transitional processes are often integral to the practices being researched: “The very structures of the world are present in the structure that agents implement in order to understand it” (p. 152). The researcher’s reflexive sensitivity to tentative beginnings, sketches, reappraisals, the advancing of provisional concepts that construct themselves as they become more specific, and the production of successive refinements and revisions collectively constitute another way of imagining standards for both process and product. This constitutes a reflexive sensitivity to the form of the research as a continual series of attunements, transformations, transmissions, transitions, exchanges, and readjustments of proximity and distance, of levels or layers.

In both research and the making of art, we are embedded in the realm of symbols. The symbolic order is that which is “always already here” (Zizek, 1998, p. 137), providing the unsurpassable horizon of subjective experience. Multimode use, and the trope of doing and undoing in conjunction with modes of negation, including the possibility of radical negation or destruction, enable the subject to take up a position that is open and forestalls closure. Kristeva (1986) has already conceived of the “passage from one sign system to another” as part of the destabilization that enables the subject to “unlearn the contiguity between signifier and signified” (p. 71) and learn instead to work with indeterminacy and uncertainty. In Pigrum’s (2001) experience, the field notebook and the artist’s notebook amount to something that is, in effect, not permanently anything, characterized by erasures, cancellations, and transgressions that enable the researcher to distance him- or herself from the products of analysis or, in the case of the artist, from the products of idea generation and development. This distance is achieved because the openness to modes of negation and the use of multimodes constitute the transitional practices as work that does not yet represent value, or, as the sculptor Gerhard Mosswitzer stated, as “a value free zone” cited in Pigrum, 2001, (p. 204).

The reflexive task, therefore, and its attendant educational potential, is to achieve an awareness of the agency of codes in our selections and representations. Reflexivity here implies awareness of the ecology of research, of the total environment of the researcher. To this end, transitional practices intensify the researcher’s awareness of the “limits that thought owes to its social conditions of production” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 121). Reflexivity on our limits can point toward our ability to transcend them, and the ways we can devise to “distance” ourselves. The value of transitional practices to the artist is that they produce detachment, largely through the notion of dispensability: they are always intended as something from which one will move on. At the same time, reflexivity is in itself transitional insofar as it evades fixity and encourages a process of unfolding. Analytic processes in qualitative research work in the same way, developing the interpretive voice as a kind of detached subjectivity.

All of the transitional registers can produce a perspectival shift, the formation of a new level or order of coherence: what Bhaskar (1993) would term a new rhythmic. Research, like all expressive activity, is, as Derrida stated, “beyond a closure of representation of which the form could no longer be linear, circular, encyclopedic or totalizing (but) an open way of thinking” (in Critchley, 1992, p. 85). To enter the symbolic is to take up a position. To do and undo, bind and unbind is to transgress the symbolic, not to take up a position but to remain open and, by multimode use and negation of the signifier, to forestall the closure of idea generation and development and the process of analysis.

The inaesthetics of das Gegenwerk

The aesthetic is an impulse that produces stable images or determines the choice of method and structure and the crafted nature of QI (Finley, 2003). This draws attention to the way in which the artifice of art is figured in the work that supports a view of QI as Gegenwerk. However, following Deleuze (2003), we have suggested that diagramming that breaks the hold of the figurative and the narrative in the direction of the Figure is a defetishization of artifice. The form of arts-based QI must itself remain a Gegenwerk so as not to fall into the trap of metanarrative identity thinking about QI, which would produce a premature closure of its form.

The inaesthetics of das Gegenwerk are those of the sketch done on the back of an envelope; the working drawing pinned to the wall of the workshop; the image that in its passage through the studio gets creased, torn, and besmirched; the rough drawing on a serviette or piece of hotel notepaper. Thus, QI as Gegenwerk is not intentionally aesthetic but what Genette (in Schaeffer,

2000) has termed attentionally aesthetic. Das Gegenwerk is, as the sculptor Mosswitzer stated, “a zone of freedom, freedom from the constraint of aesthetic values” (in Pigrum, 2001, p. 224). Whatever aesthetic QI as Gegenwerk possesses, it cannot be of the order of passive reception central to Kant’s notion of the aesthetic experience as disinterested pleasure (see Schaeffer, 2000, pp. 17-24). If anything, arts-based QI emerges from Findley’s review as a call to action, as an impulse to create anew.

Conclusion

Pigrum’s (2004) research renders unfamiliar the sketches and notes often done on ready-to-hand surfaces that are an intimately familiar part of the everyday activity of artists, writers, architects, and designers. The research does not, as Nietzsche stated “rejoice in the present fact [of the work of art] as though it came out of the ground by magic” (cited in Schaeffer, 2000, p. 228) but looks at “the closest things and ceases from gazing past them at the clouds” (p. 224). Pigrum has rendered these as things that are not permanently anything—cancelled out things, things that sometimes end up in the wastebasket, things adulterated by multimode use—and he traces their all-important dispensability to the operation of the trope of irony, to an openness to negation. This openness to negation is in turn traced to early object relations, to the hidden, pre-aesthetic, prelinguistic origins of creative activity as characterized in the psychoanalytic theories of Winnicott (1971) and Kristeva (1986).

For Winnicott (1971), the child finds the transitional object that constitutes the child’s use of a symbol as an ineluctable interdependence between subject and object, whereby the subject’s finding of the transitional object generates the founding act of the subject’s potential space from which all subsequent creativity has its source. The traits of das Gegenwerk—the registers and the abjection of the scribbled note, sketch, or diagram on a ready-to-hand surface; the notebook or journal entry; the draft, with its cancellations, encirclings, and arrows; the sketch done on the back of an envelope discarded or left in the workplace to get damaged and dirty—are what keep potential space open. Acquisition of das Gegenwerk provides us with the supposition that other ways, not yet known, can replace those we have tried out, allowing us to continually envisage other possibilities in a throwing forward that is subject to modification, development, reflection, and the doing and undoing of the never-completed Gegenwerk.

QI as Gegenwerk is a work toward the work but also is a counterwork and is counterfinite. QI, like the work of art, has neither center nor pure origins; it can never be reduced to its simple presence but is, rather, the finite closure of an opening onto what a particular line of investigation or approach might become. That both art and research share transitional practices of figuring forth (Bourdieu, 2000) does not mean that the modes of transferring meaning are equivalent or that art and research are in some way interchangeable. All it means is that the doing and undoing of transitional practices produces a passage of states. How we determine the boundaries of this passage is the crucial difference between art and research. However, researchers should come to an understanding as early in their careers as possible that they are no less active in processes of poesis than artists are: that both process and product are important, and that neither is final in any absolute sense.

The art base of QI enables research to escape purely linguistic protocols, constituting inquiry as a multimode object. Das Gegenwerk is a multimode weave in which the linguistic sign is one mode. Pigrum has produced large collages and paintings with the titles of some of the main metaphors of his research and reading: Das Penelopewerk, “The Great Wall of China,” The Sirens from Adorno and Horkheimer’s (1997) use of this metaphor, and so on. These works are not forms of self-expression; if anything, they reveal an irreducible otherness within the self. These are part of

the *Gegenwerk* of his discourse, in which silence prevails, presenting as they do things that do not represent the world through language. In this sense, the collages and drawings, like Blumenfeld-Jones's dance, "critique the myth that language is a transparent expression of thought" (in Finley, 2003, p. 292).

The answer to what kind of Figure would be produced by diagramming in arts-based QI is perhaps latent in Benjamin's (1991) notion of the dialectical image developed to avoid mystification of idealism and the idealization of original unity. McCole (1993) has stated, "The dialectical image loads time into itself until the energies generated by the dialectic of recognition produce an irruption of discontinuity" (p. 285). We might see Pigrum's paintings, collages, and diagramming taken together as articulations of the dialectic at a standstill, not exclusively in the form of language, as Benjamin conceived it, but as multimode objects.

By conceiving of QI as a multimode *Gegenwerk*, we are saying that no one mode can any longer suffice in meeting the tall order of representation. At the same time, by using art-based processes, we are renaturalizing or defetishizing artistic process and reinstating it as the exercise of human powers of judgment that, as Nietzsche stated, "sharpened and practiced to the highest degree, reject[s], select[s], knot[s] together . . . [and] are culled out of many beginnings" (in Schaeffer, 2000, p. 228).

Finally, arts-based inquiry as *Gegenwerk* is an intimation of what Derrida (1988) termed "the as yet unnameable . . . the species of non species, in the formless, mute infant and terrifying form of monstrosity" (p. 122); Boothby (2001) stated that Freud conceived "the life of the mind as one ongoing interaction between the two great tendencies of binding and unbinding" (p. 153). We can conceive, therefore, of *das Gegenwerk* as monstrosity, based on a continuation and reinforcement of our propensity to bind and unbind and employ more than one mode, but also the monstrosity of the self and social, political, and economic life, as an indefinite project of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction, a monstrosity possessed of a designifying mobility that undoes and unbinds, producing a demonstration of the researcher's tolerance for the failures of knowledge construction and its inherent contingency.

Notes

1. We would argue that quantitative research is also subject to these transitional processes, although in more covert ways, but will not deal with this here.
2. The exhortation to study textual practices at word, sentence and text level is well grounded in linguistics and underpins (inter alia) the United Kingdom's Literacy Strategy for schools (e.g., DfES, 2005).

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