

Towards a Definition of the Creative Process

by

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Abstract

Towards a Definition of the Creative Process

The subject of this thesis is to consider how Creativity and the Creative Process might be defined. The aims are to discover if a satisfactory definition of the creative process already exists, or if it could be hoped for, especially within the realm of creative writing.

The research examined the specific writings of a number of practitioners within the remit of this work and keeping in mind its emphasis on creative writing; while attempting to elucidate their particular views and the articulation of these views.

The findings are interesting, even remarkable at times, basically definitions are varied and multiple. But particularly there is a strong bond between the sciences and the arts when writers come to express a view on creativity.

The close examination, of this particular transverse section, (it is important to keep that awareness: this research is one particular cut or take and nothing more) shows that expressions of creativity are mainly descriptive rather than explanatory; at times there is a reluctance to posit an understanding of all that is involved in the process.

Perhaps this cross-section is the most original aspect of the research – it provides evidence of insight and expression; it tracks the concept from classical times to the present and it juxtaposes different voices, thereby giving a synoptic view of how the concept is perceived.

Inherent in the study and the findings are the limitations to our understanding of the very complex and subtle workings, plus the imaginative capabilities of the human mind. Yet, it is hoped, perhaps not in our time, that the very force under discussion, creativity, will push extraordinary minds to probe further, measure and extrapolate from new data what it means to be creative.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and that it is entirely my own work.

I retain full copyright in the original creative work contained in this thesis, namely all the poems within the Poetry Sequence. These poems may not be copied or published in any form whatsoever without my prior written and full permission.

Signed

Dedication

for

Edel Connolly

Doctoral Candidate, University of Limerick

παντα ρει αλλα τι ποτε μικρου μενει

‘all things run, but some little thing remains’

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction	v

Poetry Sequence

Further Thoughts in a Garden	2
Amnesty Day	7
The Carlow Collection	8
A Field in Lower Saxony	10
Becoming Carolyn Swift.....	12
Easter Island	13
Eithne Strong.....	15
The Mountaineer	16
Haiku.....	17
Appearance and Reality	18
Undoing the Years.....	21
In Town.....	22
Marilyn	25
Burning the Leaves.....	40
Crevasse of Winter Spring	42
The Force of Desire.....	44
For Paula Meehan.....	45
Best wishes in the 21 st Century	47
New Alphabets	48
Different Times, Different Moves	50
Weather Patterns	52
From the Train.....	53
What Women Do.....	55
By Rail	56
Guy Wilson Daffodil Garden.....	57

Chapter One	
What Creativity Might Be	60
1.1 Etymology	62
1.2 Usage	62
1.3 Creativity as Value	63
1.4 History of the Term Creativity.....	66
Chapter Two	
Models of Creativity	72
2.1 Concept of Creativity	75
2.2 Jung on the Creative Process	75
2.3 Bisociative Thinking	78
2.4 Serendipity.....	79
2.5 Defining the Creative	82
Chapter Three	
Writers on Creativity	86
3.1 Stein.....	86
3.2 Heaney	88
3.3 Pinsky	89
3.4 Tate	91
3.5 Eliot	91
3.6 Heller	96
3.7 Stevens.....	97
3.8 Oppen	97
3.9 Canetti.....	98
3.10 Gallant	98
3.11 Levi.....	99
3.12 Atwood	100
3.13 Ginzburg.....	101
3.14 Attridge.....	101
3.15 McGahern.....	102
3.16 Hugo	103
3.17 Lowell.....	104
3.18 Bachelard.....	104

Chapter Four	
Creativity and the Reader	106
Chapter Five	
Conclusion	114
Bibliography and Reference	
Books	120
Journals	124
Websites.....	126
Appendix A	1

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Introduction

The research question (embodied in the title of the work) assumes that there is difficulty in reaching a tight, clear, sustainable definition of what it is to be creative and what creativity might be. For that reason it has been entitled ‘Towards a Definition of the Creative Process’. The approach therefore, has been one of flexibility; from the outset it has been felt that many different approaches would be found. These approaches might change within the social, political, literary, philosophical, sociological, religious, psychological and other norms of thought and behaviour within a culture and within a timeframe.

Chapter One examines the etymology of the terms, ‘creative, creativity’, their usage and cognates. It considers how the terms came into use and how there have been shifts in usage and in emphasis through the different epochs and eras of thought and practice. In classical times there is a distinction between the Greeks and the Romans – apparently, the Romans were more concerned with the ideas surrounding being creative than the Greeks, there is no specific word for ‘creative’ in Greek. The verb ‘poiein’, to make (thence ‘poiesis’ poetry) articulated the Greek notion of making or creating. But the Romans contributed much to the origins, implications and nuances of what it might be to be creative.

Researchers, within the terms of this work, who have considered this subject, are very often practitioners in some field of cognitive, reflective, creative, elucidatory processing. For the most part they are writers and poets, working in the English language; largely belonging to the Western World and its canon, as well as its practice and influence. Also there are other thinkers, other

people who have shaped an articulation with regard to being creative and to creativity itself. These people include mathematicians, psychologists, literary critics, academics who have devoted much time to this research into the creative process. They have worked or continue to work from late 19th century to present day in relation to the timeframe of consideration.

Chapter Two discusses Models of Creativity as they were put forward by various scientists, psychologists and mathematicians. Henri Poincaré is an important voice in this discussion; his close examination of the processes of his own innovations informs much of the thinking about creativity throughout the 20th century. Jung and Koestler hold positions of authority in the debate; they too have informed much of present-day thinking.

Writers, who might be deemed researchers for these purposes, who have looked at this subject, are, *inter alia*: Gertrude Stein, whose main contribution to the discourse is that there is such a position as: ‘creative recognition’. She coined that term in order to express her insight that the ‘created thing’ is there, you may have made it and felt it, but it has come itself. The ‘creator’ is most likely, she contends, to recognise it when it happens. ‘You cannot go into the womb to form the baby’. But when it is born you recognise it as a creation. (Preston, 1935)

Her position is interesting, particularly in her feeling that ‘creativity happens between pen and paper, not before in a thought or after in a recasting’. But her metaphor, though constant for centuries, seems somewhat dated now in a myriad of ways. Pen and paper are no longer the exclusive tools of writing especially with voice-recognition software, still at a relatively early stage of development. Even fertilization, gestation and birth are not at all as confined

as in Stein's time. Her statements may now sound rather absolute especially to women who have conceived and carried a baby to full term. They may sound rather absolute, if not indeed limited, to the practitioners and researchers of advanced obstetrics and ultrasonography.

Seamus Heaney's metaphor is the military roadblock in Northern Ireland. It is a very powerful and vibrant image, indeed one with which he had become quite accustomed in his formative years. Perhaps he never set out to explain creativity or the creative process, but he succeeds in explaining it with great clarity. He equates it too with work and the measurement of work from a physics perspective. Interesting that he draws on science, perhaps science in the greater scheme of things gives an objective authority to the humanities.

Chapter Three is entitled 'Writers on Creativity', and it proceeds (after Stein and Heaney) to bring various voices into a polyphony of description rather than either explanation or meaning. There are different voices with different views; it may be worth hazarding that each voice is an extension of each writer's approach to literature, to writing and to the social, political, religious, moral and educational environments of their experience; their formative years.

Chapter Four considers the reader in the process and outlines various critics, researchers and their contribution to the discourse. It notes the shift to inclusion, to a more democratic approach in removing perhaps the classical idea of the creative person as the conduit for the gods; or that person who stood as an intermediary between the mortals and the immortals.

This research has respect for all the many viewpoints. The author believes that more work is needed on the human psyche, with input from all the various scientists of mind and body, so that a much fuller picture may be drawn which might go towards explaining what in fact happens when we create.

The author concurs with the critic Pope in 2005 when he speaks of the need for attention and sensitivity to difference, especially between the sciences and the humanities; that the quest ought not to be for ‘a common language’ but rather recognition for independent modes of communication when we come to analyse these very complex matters with regard to creativity. The author agrees that no one sector of human endeavour has a monopoly on creativity, from that, no one voice holds an exclusive, comprehensive definition of the creative process.

This thesis opens with a Poetry Sequence which has afforded the author a further experience of the actual creative process. The author did not investigate her own direct engagement with the creative process, as she felt that such an investigation was beyond the parameters in this instance. These poems have been work-shopped within the structures of this postgraduate undertaking. That experience has been invaluable, with co-participants who engaged fully and critically with the work. It also allowed the author to withdraw, consider the suggestions, emendations and return with new drafts and versions of the individual poems to be re-evaluated by the participants. Above all, it allowed a definite period of time and thought to the creation of this body of work.

Poetry Sequence

*you are there somewhere alive somewhere vast stretch of time then it's over
you are there no more alive no more then again you are there again alive
again it wasn't over an error you begin again all over more or less in the same
place or in another as when another image above in the light you come to in
hospital in the dark* (Beckett, Comment c'est/How it is, 1961)

Further Thoughts in a Garden

I have come from the John Hewitt Room
curiously enclosed, silent, raw concrete of the 1960's
still curing after all these years,
increasing its tensile strength.
A construction which shows it all,
capillaries of pipe work tacked on.
Embellish nothing, cover nothing,
plain as a song or a pot of porridge.

I have read his foolscap pages of life,
where it all started in a Barber Shop.
In Belfast, early twentieth century.
The letters have left an open-gauze pattern
upon the page, the old typewriter ribbon,
translating, transfixing the life,
letter by letter into an abstract narration.

The dry-bearded face of him, Hewitt,
what do I know, half-profiled, like Pearse,
with a keen eye, perhaps a sharpened tongue.
The pages of this life conjure fingers
good at pressing keys, the right keys,
with rhythm, I feel.
There are no mistakes,
no slips, no typos, a well-set machine,
the red ink never bleeds into the crescent of a C,
or an R's curvature.

There is talk of cricket, the results, the *Belfast Telegraph*;
the drift to Art History.
All of life might be a drift, a chance concurrence
in the snip, snip of a cool Barber's Shop,
the cut off hair falling soundlessly
to the floor.

When I looked up from the Life –
never published, never finished as such –
the concrete blocks are masked in parts
with row upon row of his books.
Five thousand, it is assumed.
I feel locked in again
in a time of moths and cottaged light,
dust motes, endnotes, book stops and rhyme.
It is a time which could be replicated, but why?
These books carry the feel of place, they carry
the weight of printing presses, all the unreleased
carbon of mighty trees
which stood speechless in a forest
of light-filtering canopies.

*This is my country; my grandfather came here
and raised his walls and fenced the tangled waste*

When I looked up, read the spines,
they were all there on well-organized shelves.
The usual suspects as you might expect:
Milton, Wordsworth, Herrick too,
Keats, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Donne, Marvell,
Blake and Morris, W B Yeats.
Auden and Phillip Larkin. Sir Samuel Ferguson,
more cricket in the Phoenix Park,
Cavendish & Burke, images
of the slashing Invincibles.

So many lovely books of American Poets,
poets from the United States, I should say,
not to diminish Canada or negate Mexico,
row after row.
Hewitt must have gathered their voices
to his cool cottage, their take on the world,
dipping, dowsing for trickles of inspiration
or maybe just plain pleasure, quiet,
undemonstrative. Regional identities,
sobering realities in new found lands
of dissent.

There are journals, books of thought,
notes, reflective engagements with memory
and reality. Canons and criticisms.
John Harold Hewitt, naming with authority.

Bill McCormick aka Hugh Maxton,
says in a book of thought on Hewitt's shelves,
that Protestant poets, Protestant writers
list names of Irish places creating an establishment,
an ownership perhaps. Longley does it, he says,
Simmons did it, they, others, among others, he says.
These thoughts I have read, Hewitt read them too,
I thought before I had done
of the challenge of naming these places
in the first instance.

Topography usually, with a myriad of names for different
shapes, sizes; how the wind cuts in; the meadow was pleasing
to a colt; it was the mountain of dogs or sheep or the valley
was dry; had two lakes; it belonged to the son of a priest;
it was the side where the bald one, factotum to a bishop, kept his cows
for summer grazing. How they must sound to a dissenting mind
even to a High Church mind:
*that ocean where each kind
does straight its own resemblance find.*

These place names must seem strange. The relief in getting through,
saying them at readings, in other public domains;
must be akin to gears gaining purchase,
being waved on 'to live in Paradise alone'
beyond the barriers to cultural belonging.

Saying to the world, I too can name these places,
I too can get around
the odd configurations of sound. I belong.
By naming them I enter them:
my grandfather came ... and raised his walls

These lesser well-known cultivars.
Is that what they are, these Protestant poets
who incantate their way out of not knowing better,
not engaging, reciting the litany of dumfounded place,
muted by time and an inability to defend its fences,
its slender vowels, its diffidence.

Litany of shy places.
Pray for us.
Let your perpetual light shine down upon us.

*...yet it creates, transcending these
far other worlds and other seas;
annihilating all that's made
to a green thought in a green shade.*

This naming is a process of comprehending
these places, with wisps of mist, shy celandines,
lesser and greater. Exposed schists, karst limestone.
This naming is done in quiet places
well-removed from the gaudy kerb-stones,
the fluttering union-jacks, often faded somewhat,
a little tattered even, outside dismal housing warrens,
of a kind of grey, ingrained with dirt.
There are no crystal streams,
or rushes of water across lazy grasses
on languid weirs here.
There are only shopping trolleys, mangled,
out of place with other half-charred debris.
People with icons, compact legends
inked into their skin, indelibly.
The Red Hand is held up to stop,
prevent, there is no release of the brake or clutch.

There are other dwellings, individual, stand alone,
though they are all well-formed to a pattern, detached,
blood-red brick, holding their position against a hostile climate.
A bay-window, a curved fanlight, even a glint of stained glass
on front-door panels: Victoria, William Morris, the Pre-Raphaelites.
What are these people thinking?
“Query” is ‘sheep’ isn’t it?

Protestants with horses say it that way, always a rhetorical
interrogation, no time for poets, Protestant or other,
a dimly-remembered ancestor may have lodged
a treatise on hunting horses at the Library of Trinity College.

The people who live in these closed suburban houses
are connected, they are different, row after row of them.
Umbels of Japanese cherry fill their front gardens
with beauty. Oodles of delicate pink blossom
flits and flutters down on well-kept grasses.
There are flashes of forsythia, later the toxic laburnum,
cream against its own green, will hang;
later still, wisteria will droop in light purple panicles:
all these flowering shrubs are replicated
throughout the Protestant world.

*And, as it works, the industrious bee
computes its time as well as we.*

Amnesty Day

We name each other, bright faces,
feeling into who we are, who we might become
in a time beyond this time. Tentative.
Sensitive too on this grey day in Carlow.
This present, this gift of ourselves to each other
to all that cries out to us beyond
these sloping walls, these windows cut out,
angled above us so that we might
suspect the sky, that is, view it from below.

We rinse our words with new meaning –
we rinse our words, cleaning them of the patina built up with use,
abuse even, the act of being thrown about.
We discover that Amnesty is birthed from Amnesia.
Loss of memory, forgetfulness, a total blank.
Pardon, reprieve, forgiveness ...

We thought we had to remember
each other and all those in pain, the pain itself, even the blinding
moment of explosive anger which caused the pain.
We thought we had to remember this day
long after this day has become part of an unreachable past.
But no we have to forget, forgive each other,
our birth, the places, the states of mind
which have formed us, the way we see the world.
We must undo it; keep it in a complex contradiction.
Compassion.
Sympathy.
As we are now, as we think now
that is what we shall become.

Let us know our own power to forgive, let us see it
in the filaments of light and half-light,
in dancing daffodils, in the shafts of winter rain.

The Carlow Collection

*Eres Espanol?**

Ah no, Sisters.

I am just someone
who looks a little Spanish,
with a few words, dark hair,
pale face, high cheek-bones.
I belong to the West; there they told us
Columbus (not Spanish either) stopped,
prayed with us in our Church of St Nicholas,
before finding the New World.
We have found new worlds
with every ship come in
bringing strange exotic things -
*do tháinig long o Valparaiso**
The University President wrote that,
though now debated, it might have been
St John Gogarty - Buck Mulligan to us,
who wrote it first,
we get hung up on provenance.
It is full of romance:
ship-creaking, sail-furling romance.

Ships came, Sisters.
They are said to have spread
their Spanish seed among us.
Blessed are thou, indeed.

*Y tu? De donde Usted?**

Pamplona. You come from Pamplona.
Two Spanish nuns from Pamplona
who race the bulls, are now buying,

in November, in Carlow,
a half-pound of liver
a bit of streaky bacon.

*uno de enero; dos de febrero; tres de marzo; cuatro de abril;
cinco de mayo; seis de junio; siete de Julio es San Fermin!**

All that order and chaos
sacred and profane,
*los Sanfermines**
create the best fiesta
in a rollicking fourteen days.

These Spanish Sisters
have paled somewhat in the Carlow air.
Is it the sun, Bacchus or the bull,
they remember passing back
by Wally Coleman's Bicycle Shop
to their chill rooms, still intact.

- * 'Are you Spanish?'
- * 'a ship came from Valparaiso ... a poem in Irish by Mons. Pdraig de Brun, former Pres. UCG.
- * 'And you? Where are you from?'
- * 'first of January; second of February; third of March; fourth of April; fifth of May; sixth of June; seventh of July is Saint Fermin's Day'
- * 'those who take part in the Festival of St Fermin

A Field in Lower Saxony

We stand outside in the frozen darkness
towns write themselves, an orange gloss,
upon the sky in the flat distance.
Your cigarette glows quite near like
a misplaced fire-fly, tiny, disembodied.
But the winds are gathering, whipping
in from the north and the North Sea;
from the east and the East Sea, as you call
the Baltic, where I have seen the waves
frozen solid in their rush to the shore.
These winds are tearing through
the thin bare branches of the birch,
swirling and squirreling around
the silver strobe-lit bark of the birch.

Your house and barn stand in under the sky,
the roofs are tiled, sharp-angled
to throw off the snow.
The bees are asleep within their hexagons
of honey, tomorrow you will feed them
sugar to keep up their supply.
Famished birds will wing around the hive
hoping to snap up a foolish bee come out
to inspect the fallen snow.

The two rabbits have withdrawn
into the depths of their hutch,
smelling, sensing the inclement
turn to the weather.
The moles are clawing away beneath
the world, not gone at all.

Tomorrow we shall see a wilderness
of tiny craters, finely dispersed soil
in neat heaps at regular intervals.
They do not like the wind.

We do not like the wind.
A small plane drones overhead,
drones in the memory of these
fields long since given back
to the cultivation of root crops and corn.

Out west of this field is the Dutch border
east of us are millions of fields like this
with no break all the way to Siberia, Kamchatka,
frigid Sea of Okhotsk.
While we dance rings around the stars
we are flown, thrown beyond the Bering Strait
back to base.

Becoming Carolyn Swift

Riding into Limerick on that big old motorbike,
you and Alan stopped by the roadside
the Silvermines at your back.
You sat down, remembered Zion,
knew you had lately heard that word: pogrom -
Limerick style, famous for its bacon, some cleric...
You discarded your 'Samuel'
by the road like an old shoe,
biodegradable.
Remembering the Dean, you looked forward
beyond the fatted children, the juicy gammon
beyond being branded by a name.
You left it there,
rode on into Limerick
with your love intact,
clinging to him, the wind in your living hair.

Easter Island

You sold the Beckett manuscripts
Sam's own squiggly hand, endnotes, marginalia
on Godot – it was not so much about the selling
it was about the housing, knowing that you were clearing out;
unburdening. Sending the various pieces to different places.
The money helped too of course, you gave
a big portion of it to the new woman, the new family.
Things were never easy. You knew that.
Practical, caring, knowing there was little to keep the metaphysics warm.

Then when you had tied up all the ends, the lingering pieces,
you could go.
On a lifetime's journey. Chile, Easter Island,
Tierra del Fuego.
The long-nosed faces stand facing inland,
heads, hands, but no legs to stand on.

What drove you to the ends of the earth? That most remote
scrap of windswept land in the world. So easy to overshoot,
thousands of miles in an unbroken ocean
pinned between two horizons.

Hundreds of stone statues are still thrown about at the old
volcano; yet more are scattered along the transport paths.
Long-eared, legless human male torsos strewn in speedy abandon.
There are the toppled ones, great Stalins, broken at the neck,
remnants of failed ideologies, knocked down with pent up anger.

All the bread, food gone to feed the masons; all the trees
cut up and down in the mad pursuit of art, for permanence.
In lording it over the Polynesian peasants so that they might
believe there was a god, that their lords had access to good weather,
good harvests.

Up on the highest point, named Terevaka: 'place to get canoes'
they cut the native trees,
shaped them with an obsidian adze into strong sea-faring vessels
capable of riding far out to sea to catch dolphins, drag them back dead
so the human muscle power could maintain the carving, the hauling
of the mighty heads down to the coast where the elite lived.

How strange the need for huge reflections of themselves
to survey the territory, watch over it, bedazzle everyone
with twelve-ton hat of red scoria stone. They used up all their
energy, all their resources, being too remote to emigrate,
they died and left a strange array of eyeless faces for you
to glimpse before your own demise.

The journey, though difficult,
is worth the effort, Beckett said,
courage for the years of wandering.

Eithne Strong

Parnell Square, the room was blue
at the Writers' Centre.
Eithne Strong was there
grown frail, grown tired, she said,
of the function of poetry,
tired of the everyday.

We chatted to each other, it had been awhile,
yes, I promised to visit her at Eaton Terrace,
stay a night...

We went back
along the years, back a long way,
she and Rupert,
charming, warm, full of bright talk
1976, aeons ago...

We leaned back in our chairs
as if trying to reach a time
before all this inevitable closing of the door,
before the long watches of being alone.

Eithne had no recovery from loneliness
from loss,
no recovery she could trust.
We said goodbye.

The Mountaineer

I saw a man who had reached his pinnacle,
hold his body together with his arms,
so tight across his chest that all his clothes rode up,
up on that platform above us.
Could it be that awkward, that embarrassing
to reach your pinnacle, then know
there is no more.

Or is it something other?
Does this man's body hint
that perhaps it is undeserved
this place upon the pinnacle?

A man famed for being affable now is a stiff,
dead kind of man in uneasy clothing, the weave
is uneasy, it makes us uneasy as he reaches
for the things he feels we want to hear.

This pinnacle seems such a narrow place.
We thought he might slip, injure himself.
His unease and his discomfort make it difficult
for us to remain sitting, to stay and watch
the empty upturn of his face.

The minions flock about,
anxious little dogs, their eyes darting from side to side.

This man was warm on the reaches of the ascent,
showed a humour spiked with fun;
now it is a hollow mask, all his fine warmth
is undone.

They will not make him King or President -
they will keep him where he is at;
wheel him out for these events
because it is their right, with his consent.

Haiku

We are paltry things
walking the cold countryside
rocked universe.

Insignificant
gives meaning to humanity
language splits in two.

Grounded tomorrows
time of love, ash key rattles,
evict the future.

Blink, whole century,
immeasurable instant
wing flits paradise.

Shards of glass glinting
midday sun Greenland IceBergs
singing each to each.

Appearance & Reality

*I'll be fucking married before I'm 19 –
Who'd marry you, you cunt.
I'm dying for a fucking fag.
Who the fuck put that shit on my desk.*

Such fantastic confidence.
The only thing the young teacher from Mayo
took with her was conscience – full seemingly.
No confidence really, no individual voice
laced with expletives, to lambaste the world.
Now the world – *realitas realitatis*, is lambasting her.

All the nuns have flown the coop, almost without a trace.
All the flowers the fragrance flown,
brass, hushed shoes, the swish of the highly-polished
beads all gone.
Sweet chants of morning, dreamy evensongs, all gone.
As if they had never been.
Their stained, varnished pews, their carved office chairs
fill the local pubs with ambience
salvaged from the rush to declutter.

These young ones, hell-bent on marriage, who speak
a language alien to the sweet birds,
swivel their little buttocks
on the nuns' pews in pubs
long before their bodies
can metabolise the mind-altering substances
served in the twilight haze high decibels.

No Henry to undo the monastery, the convent, the place of stone,
for his own end, defying Rome, tired of his latest piece of ass.
They have gone all on their own.

Poor young girls from the West of Ireland,
who bought the line, education could liberate,
are tired now.
Tired of clawing their way out of a pernicious poverty,
with dignity, of course,
still taxed at the highest rate.
The halcyon days at the university
are well gone, like their mini-skirts,
young men who talked of getting on,
of Joyce, of de Chardin ...

This fifteen year old shows only disdain for education,
might well open her own hairdressing salon,
make a fortune, and buy a fucking flat in
Dubrovnik.

The middle-aged young woman from Mayo
balances her nine-month income spread over twelve.
French Literature, which she loves with a passion,
has been reduced to: 'Allo. Ici Jacqueline.
Il va, nous allons, vous allez
ils vont, elles vont ...
if only they would, if only
this too too solid flesh would melt
as her life begins to decay
with imprecision. Slide, perish.
The young ones with attitude
turn their faces with fully-formed
expressions of disdain.

She skimps a little still
so that her children may do even better
at the university.
Scholarship students, like herself,
taking on the world with satchels of enthusiasm.

There are tears for things,
nothing specific.
It is as if all she has become -
carrying herself into a very untidy classroom -
is superannuated, *de trop*, useless.

Even when she opens her mouth
her voice sounds thin, tired too of the enunciation,
incapable of filling the room
right down to the partition.
Her voice has been worn down in her chest
without her knowing.
She can dye her hair, paint the lids above her eyes,
but she cannot amplify her voice
to penetrate this groundswell
of indifference.

Every day she is drowning
as the new regime swings between
Narcissus and Goldmund,
swings to the practical.
All her nested loves, her concentrations,
are washed out of her, screaming.

Undoing the Years

It was strange that morning, the sun had just begun
to burn up the mist hung in strands across the canopy,
to reveal the valley.

We had come, in helmets, strong boots, to do what we had always done.
Do it one by one, a clear-fell, no hesitation,
cut through the years, forty, we could surmise,
we could see; how quickly the eye reads
the height, the life of a pulsing tree.

We braced ourselves against the morning chill,
stepped from foot to foot
in a silence greater than ourselves.
All the energy of forty long years
from spring flushing through stress coning,
to the pulling back of sap for the long dormant periods.
Standing fast against the prevailing winds.
Days and nights of unexpected lashings.
Surviving the line- the selective-thinnings.

It was all packed solid, packed tight into its present time.
The pull of the starting-chord ripped the morning apart,
tore it asunder,
sent blue, half-burned oily smoke
into the delicate filament of the forest.

The blade spat back the fresh dust,
released the overpowering
scent of tree.
Just before the final crash
the tree stood still, poised upon its slender self, daring us
to consider what we had done,
then it fell.

In Town

for Pauline Bewick

We are surprised, delighted with ourselves
coming from the busy sunlit streets to sit
share lunch, recount the day's interests.

We retire, contort our faces
to get the right line of eye-makeup,
the perfect shade of lipstick.
We march back out of the Ladies
with accentuated features like
highly coloured insects,
which take forever to create themselves,
then just die in a day.
What butterflies we are flitting
around the ornate columns of the Shelbourne.

All visits to the hairdresser are fraught
with observation,
we are intrigued by our own distortions.
All the heads, the accentuated features
at the next row of basins.
Women dreaming of how well they will look.
Women forgetting the stress of morning,
releasing their minds into the cosmic
flow of chatter, warm towels, soft
citrus conditioning.

The mind swings back, is there, sees
hanging clumps of red berries on branches
in London, just out of the Underground,
when the train comes up for air. They are
weighed down further by fat pigeons.
A strange woman, with a big face,
turns from the hand-basin in the Chelsea Arts Club, asks:
'Is my lipstick alright?'

We laugh out loud
among all those suited gentlemen
clutching their telescopic umbrellas,
their pink sheeted *Financial Times*.
There are politicians too, we have seen
their grey hair greased back late at night,
odd camera angle from the public gallery,
as they stood before a black stick of microphone
with a red burning light. Now they are
lunching in the Shelbourne, passing bills,
thinking great thoughts about intricate details,
watching their seat, opting for red meat,
they seem so far away, in the routine of their everyday,
from their electorate, it seems a kind of lonely thing
to sit in big chairs in the Upper House,
bring points of procedure to the notice of the Charing Person.
In a talking group of three, the man who talks
loudly about beef and mad cows has very big teeth.

There is a young man in the corner
who looks like a Tuscan with a lovely face;
the Tuscan we know will soon be a father again,
somehow he is sure it's a girl in the womb...he has said so.
That's it, we laugh because we know
we paint our face and lips
to attract them in.
We paint our lips a hectic red
to catch the hue of our unfurled
and unfolded labia, we do it to pull
that man to us from the thin pink sheets
of his newspaper. We do it
so they can glimpse the full swollen blood-red
orifices we keep just for them.

We have the Dublin Bay prawns
with a hint of root ginger
a glass of Rioja aged in oak
before the next round of doing things
in the afternoon: our time in the city.
Oh yes, definitely the crème brûlée,
bold things, we can get more done now

than when we lived here. Focus.
Not eaten up by the everyday sameness of living
in the place. Unburdened by leaving our everyday at a distance.

We discover too that the down-time, the ebb-tide,
is our period of rest, not fear.
The salmon, leaden with eggs, rests
in the aerated pool beneath the weir.
The eels rest above the weir as they head downstream
dreaming their Sargasso.

Marilyn

Word has just come, come loaded down with sorrow and disbelief.
The State and the City have intervened.
Marshals have come, full of uniformed authority, to break the seal,
to force the door. And trample your privacy, your decades of compacted life,
your polished floors and oriental rugs – soft, muting the heavy boots.
They have come to break the silence.

Insistent.

Your clothes, those cared-for things, pressed and starched,
folded with precision or hung from spacious walk-in closets.
You cared, cared always for things, maintaining the fabric in its fresh-made
hue and weave; your linens and beddings too.

Now all of these items of intimacy are strewn or half-strewn
from your closets and well-arranged armoires. Strewn
as if some vandal had run riot
through your bedrooms, throwing and tossing your cotton sheets,
your satin pillow-cases, your warm comforters in some manic search
for portable riches, for a Will even, for Testament.

But there is no Will, no Testament
in the delicate scent of fabric, in the nexus of your life
as it filled the interstices of furnishings and rooms
sailing up sixteen feet to ceilings of pre-war generosity,
the belief that life could only unfold itself in well-designed detail,
floating spaces.

No cramping in, no narrowing of possibility.

Gangs of men came from Met Life
to polish the brass fret-work of the door decorations;
to buff the floors which stretched far into the depths
from wide foyers along ample hallways and corridors.
They came to paint the high-up floating ceilings, biannually,
they came with pots of colour and protective throws.
They came dressed up in white overalls, out of fairytales, spreading new
hues across the walls, singing too. They came at other times
to remove the patina of the City as it formed itself upon the window-panes.

How the Hudson shone and sparkled anew
when they had done. These men who touched things
so they might gleam, glide before your eyes.
How the Hudson stretched over and over to the Jersey Shore,
widening to a mile just before emptying itself into the Ocean.
Come all the way from Albany, Lake Tear of the Clouds,
high up north in the Adirondacks. First seen by Verrazano,
from a European point of view, later plied and named for Henry Hudson,
as if all the generations of trappers and hunters, Mowhawks and Mahican
had never named a thing,
never named in Algonquin the wonders of their world.
But they did, for them it was the 'Muh-he-kun-ne-tuk',
'the river that flows both ways'
with deadly import and connotation, hard to navigate,
ice-floats carried up and down on the tide.
Temperatures dropping down to minus 20 before the wind-chill factor.
A drowned river overrun and overcome by its own tide rushing up from the
vast reaches of ocean come all the way from rapacious worlds far to the East,
where servant girls invested in beaver-hides, traded their options and
accumulated vast fortunes in Old Amsterdam;
trying too to keep the sea at bay.
Shore up a little security against times of undoing.
Those times came with a shift of greed, a drift of power, named again for
Norsemen who had settled in marshes above the Humber,
ousted the Irish yew or 'Iorc',
named it 'Jorvik' which was honed down to 'York' by the centuries.
No Jew could live there by orthodox canon from 1190 to 1990,
remembering the rounding up, the setting fire,
fearing again that smell of seared flesh and remorseless hearts.
There is nothing new.

Down past the Palisades and Weehawken,
down from Tarrytown and the Tappan Zee.

Boats plied up and down, tugging each other,
avoiding each other in paths of merchandize.
Up and down.
When the cocktail hour drew in, the rotary engines droned, up and up,
one after the other, leaving room for their respective rotors,
helicopters going home.

Home along the Hudson, home to Poughkeepsie, home to the wild deer country, home to where the Roosevelts lived. Where Fenimore Cooper set frontier myths and Rip van Winkle slept a bit and woke to a new world indeed. Home to Connecticut even, Mystic, further up to Kingston, north to Rhode Island, Providence.

The Cape perhaps, Provincetown, all those places smelling of the sea, sounding biblical, images of pilgrims progressed beyond Bunyan to times more equitable, more tolerant.

Assimilation.

I had never seen such plush Presbyterian

as I had seen on Fifth Avenue – red pews, carpets, red cushions too as thick as mattresses. Scarlet women, Babylon.

On past the body of John Brown a-mouldering in the grave...

Home along the Hudson, that well-defined line of guidance through so many lives, clinging to the grid, unfolding in a myriad of kitchens, dining-rooms, long-wired telephones and butler's pantries.

The little things. The household gods and dishes, trampled upon, the light, the heat cut off. The silver, the porcelain, the fine bone-china, even some of it was mine, cared for, carefully-packed, shipped thousands of miles to join the things we keep from the past, the selection of what we value, the holding on.

The entertainment. The evening time when day is done, the martini translucent in an angular glass.

The sparkle of crystal, the light come in through the well-cleaned, gleaming windows, refracting, sparkling, plying, reversing upon itself just beyond the Plane trees at the edge of Riverside Park.

The quality of light swung around with the day... a high up sun echoed in the interior courtyard, the carved-out centre of the building, open windows caught an opaque light at breakfast when Spring had come and right through summer, it filtered down from the upper reaches.

In Winter it paled to a viscid chill, grey,

brooding kind of thing with no sun really, an air able to drain colour from the faces, from the skin. But breakfasts were magical, warmed within.

Outside icicles hung for days and days on end. The warmth of words laughing faces of friends around that huge dining-table.

The walnut breakfront holding itself back on two sides while projecting its middle section, lit within, presenting Czech glass, your mother's things, various items lovingly crafted in other countries.

Even my own china cups, wrapped, shipped across a wilderness of wave, thousands of miles of piled up water, mysterious sea beds, lost Atlantis.

All those who perished in the attempt, all their little chattels encrusted with the sea's own life way down in that dark, unfathomable depth of attempt. My china cups took their place in the breakfront, were delicate too after dinner when we thought our lives had intermingled there forever.

All of those, all of us, who have sat, who have taken part in the sharing, the suppers, the uplift of spirit, the well-presented food, so much of it, as a child you had learned, at that table, there was no limit to generosity, you knew the marks of a good host, no limits to joints of lamb, harder to come by than beef. Harry Oppenheim kept the racks for you, generously trimmed, spoke of your mother, Aunt Lillian, other faces in the neighbourhood.

No limit to wines, spirits, jugs of jumping seltzers. Other men with other faces in the neighbourhood. Soft-shell crabs, clams, oysters from Long Island; other older men who remembered you with a little handcart full of empties, drawn all along to Broadway to glean some childish coins, to play selection at the Automat, what fun; they all took you back to some part of a full past. To the palomino stabled on Columbus Avenue you rode in Central Park, even the horse was blonde in dappled light, hardly moist at all, early cantering along beneath the trees, at the heart of things, or were you aware.

At the dinner table there were the ghosts of conversations, differences, heated opinions, politics, all immigrants were not Democratic. There were wisps of the old countries, ghosting in over-indulgence, pulling at the heart-strings, the memories, blacked-out sections of letters in diverse tongues. The State had intervened to regulate, to determine what news, what should be held, what opinions should seep through the censor's blackening hand from the dissolving innards of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire.

These strange letters, from another age, another place indeed, clothes, china, disks, brightly-coloured Moreno glass has been riddled for clues. Some things were boxed and removed by Agents of the State and Public Administrators for the City of New York. All the rest left unkempt, as if all life here in this sacred space had spilled its guts.

Part 2

They had taken you, your remains,
to Holy Name on Amsterdam.
What else could they do, no wishes,
nothing left, no clue, no meticulous directions
with regard to music, Mass, materials for coffins.
They guessed no cremation, not for you,
an earth child, a Capricorn, bound by home,
cautious, stubborn as a goat when you felt
a stand was needed. Hold on, on slim ledges
while all the world slipped off in crumbling indecision,
falling debris from the precipice. You held tight
against the danger of looking down,
tumbling headlong into a state of as is,
nothing more, nothing less, just the expected.
Not you.
You searched for a philosophical framework
to make sense of life, to keep it all within
the social order, respectable behaviour, to keep it
from falling off the edge into meaningless drudgery
within a confined setting somewhere in the Tri-State Area,
even in Manhattan, being a *goyim*, the other, the non-Jew,
could you avoid the strangle of the mundane?

Did you fear stepping out beyond their limitations?
Or are these boundaries real or self-imposed?
Did you fear stepping into their limitations?
Their Halachic laws, their choking Maimonides.
Did Joseph Campbell, that honourable man,
have a myth for you in which you could get context.
To which you could declare a state
of 'no sleeping with', no mentoring exploitation,
but go follow your bliss.
Now sweetheart, you have gone beyond
our strangling fears, our crazy codes of being
on this sacred earth, this entangled nation.

Yes, Holy Name, your parish, overriding
the perceived boundaries of neighbourhood.
So many named their parish when asked for location;
never 29th and 3rd, rather Nicholas of Myra.
It was still a Boroughs thing, more than Manhattan,
perhaps an Irish mode of delineation.
We went there at Christmas, midnight Mass,
friends gathered in, Hungarian Sophie, a poor orphan,
made it in Manhattan by regrouping, caring, being
cared for in the pool of Con Edison down at 14th.
All those young women, European, with differing
tales of survival across the windswept plains, the harsh
centuries of eking out lives of circumscribed reality,
minding every dime accounting for their lifelong friends;
seeing the Church as their home, their beacon
in a hostile world of snowing winters, blood-thinning summers.
Sophie drank Manhattans, that sweet mix of bourbon
and vermouth, the Maraschino cherry, with a stem of course,
angostura bitters, served in an old-fashioned glass.
She had a special fondness for London Broil or a good Porterhouse.
She was generous, made her own way to Harry Oppenheim,
came back with joints of massive cut. She had paid.
Of course she would, for all the times gone by,
for all the Christmases she sat with her Manhattan Sling,
raising it to a future devoid of Medicare & Medicaid
as she, like her friends, had bought
the best health plan subsidized by Con Ed.
The dwindling family friends. Sophie listed them,
the family members already gone to their salvation,
all of them she saw in you; she saw you as a child;
she pooh-poohed the difficult passages as if you had
misremembered, thereby mistreated the dead.

You fought and fought for Columbia, you fought
against the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame; you said
no to Fordham, an emphatic no to Manhattanville
which lured the Kennedy girls down from Boston.
Reluctantly, you did a time at Marymount, Manhattan;
over on the East Side, but felt it a decline,
retrograde, as opposed to other fixed stars,
celestial bodies of great learning, opening up the mind,
tending forward. There were many beautiful Italian

women, all intact, focused on food at Marymount.
It was mentioned in *Prizzi's Honor*, Houston nearing his end,
a comical hit and miss, the good plot, the ironical,
poignant difference between what is expected and what is.
The East Side, all wealth, precious snobbery,
you never forgave it, you never forgave Marymount.
No artistic view, no imagination, no dynamic,
just dull old Park Avenue, dark apartments,
no view, not even across the East River
to tattered Queens, looking back in anger.

You got Columbia, its floating colonnades
of Greek inscription, burnished gold
in a valedictory sun; rows and rows
of white collapsible chairs on lawns
greened, given depth by decades after decades
of care; nurture, concentrated feeding
of the root capillaries.
You refused, point blank, to go to Wall St,
with your father, to mind money, abstract wealth
for others, mainly people whose names reached
back in Roman numerals to pilgrims and protestants,
people who believed, after Luther
had loosened the meaning for them,
that being poor was your own fault,
there is grace in arbitrage,
being rich is just good work, best practice.
A healthy ethic, diligence, frugality too,
an individual relationship with God.
You refused, point blank, to become a banker,
you were your own proof of the stochastic process:
a random variable, whose behaviour in this state
does not determine its behaviour in the next state.
You held to your probalistic properties like a valued
commodity in continuous time.
You refused, point blank,
to sleep with your professor:
not a good career-move, dear heart.
You joined the raucous rebellion,
against the father, the war, the draft, the professor.
The male embodiments of gods, potentates.
There were plenty of them.

You picked up the flu of discontent
from the Sorbonne to the poisoned mud of Vietnam.
You beat your tiny fists on the chests of *Auctoritas*,
riot police, National Guardsmen, Highway Patrol:
Officers to shoot the students at Kent State campus,
wounded Ohio.

Yet the CIA tried to have you on their side, recruit you,
blonde, bright with an ability to abstract, theorize.
But you headed for Woodstock, with all the other kids,
a bevy of Kennedy girls; you were no Kennedy girl,
not you. You would lose your own virginity, take it,
break the sheath so no man could ever trophy you.
Your father voted Republican, hated Eleanor Roosevelt
above anyone, above all else. A woman who could think,
who could feel too, charter what it is to be human;
contribute to world thinking. Did he, with his cronies
at the New York Athletic Club, surmise,
floating in bars, in restaurants above the views
of Central Park South – in ‘the city house’ as they called it,
that Eleanor herself up on 68th between Madison & Park,
might actually be quite Sapphic, content to let
her husband wander. Perhaps it did not matter,
a democratic thing, virility, ability to serve, to rule.

Did you say ‘Hi’ to Ms Ciccone as she picked up
her mail at the exquisite mailboxes in the lobby?
A newcomer from Michigan, lived left of the front door,
bounded up the back stairs, probably, when not beat
from pumping through her routine in a studio
above a shop on Broadway; where you could see
the sweat, the ambition, the energy which burst
upon the world, absorbed from her surroundings.
Madonna took on the whole world, reached
into the minds, the veins, pulses of the universe.
Connected her physical imagination to millions
of throbbing Susans desperately sought.

You were no Republican either, campaigned for McGovern,
anti-Vietnam, overshot, overrun by Nixon, a Californian.
You loathed McCarthyism, felt oppressed
by any patriarchal interference. You father washed up

on a beach in Nassau, just there, to beg you yet again,
to hear him: Chase Manhattan, Citicorp, Bank of America,
Wells Fargo – those pony people galloping bags of money
across the Plains. No. No.

The CIA talked of sending you abroad. Paris.
Nothing dangerous. Of course. London.
No particular assignments. Just blend in.
Get out on the streets. Feel the mood. Report.
The numbers. The profiles. The mood.
Point blank. No.

Woodstock just happened in the excitement,
despite the terrified parents back at Bedrock,
becoming yet more terrified in their lovely clothes.
Wilma & Fred; Betty & Barney – their well-coiffed
hair, as the reports began to swell with the numbers.
Kids from everywhere converging on wet fields.
Oh the muck. The wet dirt. Automobiles
spinning in the deep rich soil of Upstate New York.
While farmers, sensing a turn of events, charged
big bucks for a drink of water.
They had driven up in their Thunderbirds, their
long-winged convertibles, shorts and sandals,
sunglasses; nothing else but a singing need for cohesion.
Joan Baez, strikingly defiant, no more body-bags,
no more young guys coming home dead.
Folded flags tucked into parcels of precise folds
handed to sorrowful black-clad widows, young,
striking, beautiful; girlfriends, mothers, fathers
pale-faced with grief. Johnson holding his head.
Disbelief. It had all come around again.
Coretta Scott King running across the screen
to kiss her man; Ethel Kennedy shattered with shock.
Rose Kennedy took out that black dress, one more time;
they huddled again at Hyannis Port.

Bob Dylan, the 'Age of Aquarius', Janis Japlin,
Blood, Sweat & Tears, Joe Cocker,
Credence Clearwater Revival, Arlo Guthrie,
Jimi Hendrix sang the Star-Spangled Banner
up on a farm in Ulster County. Half a million
made it. Poor Joni Mitchell never did.

The tents went up, farmers locked the gates.
Cars drove in and in, spilled over to Sullivan
County; no going home then, no retreat.
They listened on their automobile radios
to reports of how they were doing. How things
were in the next field. They felt they were the world.
They were history, could never really go home again.
Part of a huge event, but stagnant, stuck, rain-soaked,
sloshed with mud and dirt in some woe begotten field
which became Woodstock, which took the world...
The boy from Brooklyn
played...

Part 3

How the life had run down on you,
even not knowing you at all. Who could ever say
in our years of certainty that our very selves
would become utterly strange again. Back to a time
when atlantics of sea, when sky separated our lives,
chased them with unknowing.
The face, grown very old, gaunt, stared back at me,
where your face should have been.
The Nurse said so, insisted you were ready to see me,
quite definite. Your name rang strange
in the airy halls of polished Mount Sinai.
I could not stay staring at this aged stranger
staring back at me, tentative, I had become
a little child, wandered into someone's space,
someone who looked at me through an invisible
sheath of waiting, someone who would not help

me step through the silence. Someone who could not see the face I was seeing, not recognising it.

Like a little child, I ran from the room,
some mistake, some dreadful game,
it wasn't you. No, no, not you.
Some other woman, God knows who,
from anywhere, dying of cancer.
Wrecked with chemotherapy.
This was not the face which had
filled my world, the only face
among the millions when the heart
lifted itself above the crowded subway,
the teeming streets, the panic
of a broken water mains at 42nd .
The billowing black smoke
from the car park of the World Trade Centre,
February 23, 1993, we held our breath
at the end of the telephone line. I wanted
to leave the sombre East Side that grey afternoon,
rush back across the Park, to you.
To estimate our fear, not knowing
that there we saw the trial run,
the rehearsal for the great undoing.
Our love had kept its nerve.

Ma'am. Ma'am...
The Nurse brings me back
from my childish exit, to face it.
To stand beside the bed
of this paled out, emaciated
stranger, tongue-tied.
Convinced, I do not know this person,
who waits, says nothing, looks at me
in anticipation. Time grinds by.
Waits for me to open my mouth,
break the silence, utter the first word,
reach up along this green coloured
cotton cover, say your name.

I did not recognise you.
It is as if I have failed you now,
what it means to be you, to be loved, although
we never resolved, we never said goodbye.
We have come after all the years
to the edge of your final hours.
In this strange room.
This Mount Sinai.

You have waited so long for this unknowing,
for this undoing, as you become only strangeness
to me. That is your queue. That is why
you have kept me away, without word.

You see my bewilderment, my shock,
in that seeing you know you are readying to go,
very quickly now. You smile, that funny Woodstock,
New York-Bloomingdale-Upper-West-Side-girl
kind of smile, in that I know the Marilyn
I have loved; I have wished, hoped that you too
would go on living every day without
any fading of the light, in a time without me,
in a future, clear, secure, different from mine,
different from our lives combined.
We had bifurcated, I couldn't stay. I couldn't
go all those further miles along that road with you.
We know all this deep in our minds, deep
within our hearts. Through that smile
there is your shock, your knowing very well
it is a time without question, no more battle
with a body already so much changed, eager
to assume its rest, its final place on earth.

Part 4

Your hands had not really changed.
They were the least
re-arranged by this illness
which had sent all your family

to lie in darkness out in Brooklyn.
We never went to that place, ever.
As if they might have undermined
your living on.
Yet it has come, soon you shall be gone
across the Hudson.
You came here day after day
from the French nuns at 79th. Happy times
to sit with your mother, watch the slow,
painful course of her demise. It broke
your heart with helplessness. It blurred
Fifth Avenue on heavenly evenings when you
came, stunned out, into the shock of traffic;
yellow cabs, glittering tail-lights in some
removed drama of the everyday. You
looked back up at the Pei designed slits
of windows, world renowned, the pinnacle,
the best consultants, a public place to die.
The bare Mount Sinai, the Moses moment.

How you wanted to be home,
home among your own arrangement of things,
in the fall of light filtered into your bedroom,
the texture of the high-riding walls, the comfort
of a space familiar with your happiness.
You and I recall that time, that space,
the nexus of intimacy, the text of memory.
We suspend the future, what is to come,
hoping we can find an antidote to knowing
that being at home is gone; it is now a time
tied up, particular only to us, pictures in our heads
albums in our hearts. Love persists
through all our narratives.
That sheltered realm of stillness, the sense
that it all could only end, what that means
as we steal back along the path of our togetherness
filling the silence.

We huddled closer together when a practising mezzo
from West End Avenue floated up and down her notes
beyond the bedroom window in Riverside Park.
Late at night, strange disembodied voice.

The weird mezzo, living so close, each to each.
We devise ways of stretching our lungs, being alone
in the City. Quiet, she had gone home.
Much later waking up in the street-lit bedroom
to a piercing shrill, the high-pitched call of pain.
Like Adrienne Rich in the urban night, we moved
closer, found each other, clung on without words.
Another woman, moved to Manhattan from Hanover,
Marburg, Heidelberg, left her Heidegger with her life intact,
searched for a way to say who we are. All public life is a hunt for beauty.
She was beautiful too; Hannah Arendt held:
'sheer violence is always mute'.

What we heard in the Park, down on Riverside Drive,
an extended, full-blown cry of pain; a waterbird
disturbed off its bed, screaming fear for its unborn
eggs. Arendt felt what we heard was not 'sheer violence',
must be something less; but we were mute, silenced
by it, we failed to run onto the street and counter-scream.
While we froze in indecision our neighbours had dialled
9-1-1. Soon the night was split in two with police sirens
beating against the palmate leaves of the Plane Trees.

Down there where the building is fastened to the ground,
the wave of other people's lives shoosh and splash
in that sphere of hearing what the world says,
the locality of action, the human condition.

Part 5

When Proust, crumbled the Madeleine cake,
all of lost time
came tumbling through
as it melted, broke down
against his palate...

Sea lions pick up stones
from the sea floor – for ballast.

When you, your casket, your remains
slipped through the traffic
to the Brooklyn Bridge, Eastern Time,
I stayed here in Greenwich Mean,
in a place where you had been.
It felt as if you were here, again.
I was outside myself, grief, regret
that it was so, that you were gone,
no longer breathing; you would never speak
to me in any time again. A new silence,
no one or thing could ever break.

Then, drawn to a window, I am undone.
Standing brilliant by the water's edge
is a snow-feathered little egret
with sparkling plumes.
Come from France or Dorset,
I had never seen it, never in this place,
with my eyes. It bred in Cork, when we broke up
on this day, dear heart,
you send a bright word from Paradise.

Burning the Leaves in Mendham Township

It becomes real again when I smell that effervescent
October air; it hangs fresh, blue, accentuating sounds.
Long introductions sung by humming trains.
Slow returns as the sound resolves itself, going to ground.
This is the cycle; this is the rounding turn out of which we are born.

Your house hangs there in the past, old, by New Jersey standards,
eighteenth century, late;
its foundations hold the decades in form, the grey field stone
stands framing the cellar in a dank, a darkened gloom.
It is all beyond the reaches of what is gone.
It has come round again, the Fall for you, for me, Autumn time.

Real again, remembered, rememorized as Toni Morrison said.
Seen again, red, orange, yellow, the great maple, sisley oak,
the piquant smell of spruce, thin blue column of smoke,
no composting. Purple too as the light, quieter now
than in full-blown summer, coruscated through the bare limbs
of trees. Light in the cinema, focused, reeled.

Chipmunks out to play, flash blue flutters
on the wrinkled bark.

Sign of seasonal, ritual change,
flannel shirts and woollen sweaters
neighbours doing the same.
Old Yankee values of thrift:
loathing fantasy, contending with stifled fear.

Labor Day well gone, summer farms,
El Dorado corn rolled in butter; tomatoes full of flavour,
from Welch's Farm, there since forever.
Nurtured in dirt.

It all irrigates memory
flushing out the debris of finished seasons, we closed the pool,
covered it so the deer steps lightly on the protecting fabric,
not through.

The ancient trees - speechless hostages – stand and watch,
captivated, naked, slowing the sap, closing down
for snow storms, jagged ice which paralyses.

As Bishop wept I'm sure, when back at base
thinking on the art of losing you, of all loss,
of fluster, of losing faster: 'I shan't have lied', she said
though it looks like disaster.

Crevasse of Winter-Spring

I want to write that work
which will take you through
the vast range of living
the ordinary, the divine,
the days of brilliant closing times,
when the Clipper dumped feet of pristine
snow on your streets, on the Avenue.
When it came, fluffed, persistent,
millions and millions of fallen flakes.

Rain, how it came,
lashing the new green
of the Plane Trees along the Drive.
Somewhere in that refreshed,
renewed, green the squirrels
hide themselves until the sun
washed them out of their hiding places
to flit and scurry
with Spring fever,
with love
for each other.

Some day I will
bridge that crevasse.
I will obliterate
every trace
of the emotional residue;
the belief in some Virgilian fate
that might sustain
a state of forever remembering
you, that shining place, that light
in patches, where the doormen
had washed the sidewalk
to a sheen of early morning expectation.

A time will come
in which I will no longer
see your face, hear your voice,
the work will be written, it will be done.
I shall know that our entire lives
have been a force to complete.

The Force of Desire

It is a force, sometimes an action
which overtakes us, quite by chance
in public places, in restaurants,
in the moving, ghostly light of cinemas.
More especially when the lights recede;
pulled back into the ceiling at the Metropolitan,
the sparkling chandeliers, bright stars which dim,
disappear.
Just then the music flows like maple syrup, organic,
slowly from those farmed trees up in Canada.
Oh Canada, up in the cold, the pure white cold.
The jewellery glitters, the lights catch the folds
on darkened deep red stoles.
Everything shimmers in this place of strange encounters.

Lucia di Lammermoor was you, your taste, coloratura,
dramatic, tragic, shimmering bel canto
thundering Joan Sutherland reaching those almost
impossible E-Flats
the flame of a candle would not flicker
before her mouth in the quiet of the scaling effort.
Donizetti pushed it up and up before we break,
fall from the high, the agile
turns of the note
to conversation mode
when all the lyrics and librettos are washed out.

For Paula Meehan

You remember his coat, odd that,
others remember the hat, always aware of the cold.
I did not expect to talk of him tonight,
he was in the shadows of the mind, as always,
but not in the main frame.

Your words fill out the view, calmly
downloading from memory the reality of him.
I did not think you knew.
But you talk of him, locate him, Galway,
how he felt the cold, all extremes of him.
Herring-bone Harris tweed, the coat
holding the reality of him
within the definite pattern and satin lining.
The fabric danced upon by eager young women,
singing caulking songs, as if their grace notes
and imagings are woven in the light, in the dark
of the pattern, taking the shape of his shoulders,
delicate, strong not broad, under the tweed.

But you are Finglas too, you know it spilling
out across the heavy fields of North County Dublin.
You know the points of light, the windows, the window panes,
catching the sun unimpeded as it is flung
from the Dublin Mountains across the glistening bay
drawn in behind a myriad of blinds
of highly-coloured fabric.

You rimed 'Finglas' with 'Circus' - that delightful sibilance
muck/mud and magic. I thought of you today and of him,
when looking down on his beloved Fair Green
the Circus had come to town, his town in the turf bogs,
two camels sat beneath the Church quietly chewing the cud.
Magic of being transported to a field near Tarsus
where camels chew, swish their tails like any herd of cows.

I glimpsed beyond the enormous tent, looking towards
the Enclosure, where he had watched a weaver weave some cloth,
where the world revolved around the coloured crowd.
Each strand of wool, purple and puce, red, indigo and brown
were the distinct particulars of his own narration.
There were two huge elephants stepping on
unfamiliar grass as if the great Ganges had washed across
his domain.

Of course you rime 'Finglas' with 'Circus'
all that motley memory, all that teeming life
pulsing across the inert heaviness of the soil.
All those 'bright foreigners' swinging with exuberance
through the silent fields, smelling the trampled grass
exploding into light and movement.

Always a tight-rope act between the native
and the blow-in, the alien, as we squander ourselves
through the universe, balancing our days,
our lives on that taut line above
a honeycomb of heads upturned, gasping
for our survival, wanting to believe
that we are sure-footed on that resonating line.
Should we glance at their collective fear
we will fail, we will fall. We will thud to earth.

Yes, you remind me of that coat, that extension
of himself. I see him, those Finglas days,
peddling up passed Hughes' Dairies, head down,
coming from the dentist's chair, pain,
a cold wind cutting down from Ashbourne.
He cycled smack into the back
of a parked coal truck, compounding
the pain. Facets of our lives, facets of our days
spilled across the asphalt.

In the height of your own celebration,
this night, on Parnell Square, you create a time tucked
into the seam of things.

Best Wishes in the 21st Century

Even at the very beginning, you were preparing me
for reaches of time beyond your time.
Thinking ahead, thirty years from then
at 5.00 am when the monotonous cock is crowing
up another grey Monday morning on the edge
of town...you tried to give me a sense
of what it would be like, July 2002.

For you in 1972, it was 'unconquerable sleep',
a jug of cocoa, a bowl of bread and marmalade,
Hopkins or Emily Dickinson. A sweet kind
of Siberia, you said. You tiptoed about
the house, boiling milk, buttering bread,
as the regular family slept a regular sleep
in the warmth of their unheeding bed...

That room to which you retired, closed
the door upon the dawn with gentle consideration,
tucked into your sweet supper, even daubed
a little marmalade on the edge of Hopkins -
is now open to the sky. The charred rafters
striate the wind. We do not cry for these things.
All is transmuted into the surprise of the living buds
just there by the broken window-pane.

Strange how you saw yourself,
spoke of your own failings:

'I keep the tension clamped too tight,
find correlatives all the time - doors, hills, sunken tracks,
snowfalls and berried wood - refuse to let my private
hair down on the public page.
For there is a gulf here
wider than the gulf of thirty years.
Your voice was the voice of a ghost',
you said.

New Alphabets

When the outboard motor we had bought
from Bertie Shirley died - we didn't think
it had died; we thought that he could work
his quiet and patient magic upon its compact
interior. We were sure that we would chug-chug
again, depressing the stern of our boat
sending a big slow wake out
behind us like an equi-angled triangle
to fill up and spill against the interstices
of the riverbank. Places of rich mud,
tangles of half-exposed roots and crannies
of glouglouing water, backwashes of floating debris interspersed, inserted with
eddies of fallen leaves.

There were big banks of swaying flowering reeds
which passed on our movement by them
with deferential grace, again and again.
Lost di-gammas you had called them
with the young, eager eye of a Greek grammarian.

I felt like Micí Mac Gabhann,*
but with good coffee, good light, an open-fire,
spell-bound. When you taught me Greek.
Excited beyond what I could say, beyond belief
by the new alphabet.
I drew them with my pen
those strange secret things with funny names
until they came, slow, deliberate,
into the memory of my hand.

Though I didn't draw them in the ashes of the hearth
I knew how Micí Mac Gabhann felt
with the nib of his tongs releasing the shapes,
decoding so as to make new encodings
in places far-flung, very remote
along the golden lure of the Yukon.

Places removed from the sound of consonants
like gravel being tipped from the back
of a horse's cart, and bird-chirping vowels
setting the air alight in the sheltered nooks
of Cloch Chonfhaola, along the fertile slopes
of Gort a' Choirce: 'oats in a tilled field',
misted, seasoned, as luminous as beaten gold.
All within the ambit of the wine-dark sea.
These things were as strange to me
as the Aegean blue beneath the wings of Icarus.

* An Irish writer (1865-1948) born in Cloughaneely, Co Donegal. Joined the Gold Rush along the Yukon and wrote an account of his life, *Rotha Mór an tSaoil*

Different Times, Different Moves

In that charged search-space before dinner,
a time of focused energy, delicate timing,
we have exchanged chess pieces
for *Emmerdale* and *Coronation St.*
No more frozen heuristics:
'protect your Queen' at all costs.

We find ourselves in a different
conceptual space
in fictions fashioned by others
day in, day out, relentlessly,
in a Dickens kind of way.
These might be the confessions
of Irish eaters of English fictions.
Opiates, as we echo de Quincey,
he too was a Manchester man.

No need now for complex castling,
diagonal moves of capture, no more
giuoco piano, no more Ruy Lopez
it is all Deirdre, little Fred Elliott,
the Rover's Return, or what happens
in the Woolpack when we know that even
the bitter is a game, the frothy pints
are some concoction of innocuous
combination, non-potent.

We wait the slow trumpet call,
cuts to the backs of custom-built working-class
houses, row upon row of them,
laid out like any chess-board
squared off in lines of preconditions.

We watch narratives made by team intelligence;
artificial too perhaps, no Kasparov, no Capablanca,
the Cuban in Manhattan,

taking on Alekhine; both dying, unconnected,
in Mount Sinai.

The oddity of death, shah mat, checkmate,

Queen's Gambit Declined.

All is well at Weatherfield
at least for another episode.

Then we shall shift, expect a move
to gambits more dramatic
filling in the time between
getting the potatoes to the correct point
keeping the cabbage al dente;
our meat, our just deserts
satisfy our need for pianissimo.

Moments of quieter games,
times of passive moves, chance
and randomness.

Weather Patterns

‘Long illumined silences’

-Nietzsche: *Also, sprach Zarathustra*

Way up in Greenland icebergs rollover,
huge mountains reduced to baubles, toys
in a searing light.
Down here the fields are flat,
squelched and sodden with rain.
It has poured down upon them
with sustained ferocity. It started well
before dawn, continued right through the day.

Throwing itself at these fields,
running into their water courses,
swelling them so that they easily bruise
from touch of hoof or vulcanised tractor tread
from the river valleys of the Po and Rhine.

When the rain stops
there is sun and illumination.
The rain has washed it all:
the brilliant fringes of things,
hedgerows, boundaries, fencing posts run wild;
gates which are cruciform, five-barred, four-spanned
glitter in this bright aftermath.

The melt water will flood our fields, again.
We do not hear the icebergs singing to each other,
breaking the bright silence, as they lumber
towards us.

Great conglobulates.

From the Train

I belong to these green fields,
To the feral ash which runs
By on this journey.

I belong to the lines of sycamore,
Hips, haws, spindlewood, service-berry.
The elms
are gone already:
Lost to the Dutch disease,
(misnamed, a pest from Asia).
We mourned for them
as they slowly shed their life
exposing pale interior skin.

I belong to this land.
It is flat, very fertile.
The old river valley of deep soils enriched by ice,
delighting in itself, stretching along its sunfilled fields.

It is an avuncular countryside, kind and indulgent,
replicated across Western Europe.
Lines of regular distance, decent churches,
tapering spires of quiet devotion reach to the sky
in a modest manner. Humility – of the earth indeed.
The local limestone has been cut, shaped
into arching bridges, which the train tears through.

Slieve Margy contains this spread of land to the West,
to the East, it rises up, the Hill of Baltinglass, we know
the Ice has moved through all of this space leaving
a rich detritus, milder times for us to exist.
Further over to greet the rising sun
Luggnaquilla sleeps like a great cat.
Sometimes visible, sometimes not.
Often it lies, a cerulean blue, reflecting the sky
while watching the land which lies beneath it.
Often it is a stolid grey when the sky spells itself on it

giving us hints, hues of an inclement change.
For long periods of time it reaches up in delicate wisps of lace,
there and not there, as if we lived in China
our curving river was the Yangtze coming all the way from Tibet
to spill itself out into the waiting Pacific at Shanghai.

Yet I know that here is strange, here is homely,
I have walked behind my neighbour's cows,
in and out of gaps and gates, slowly, across these fields.

I have walked behind my neighbour's remains,
in and out of decent churches, Methodist, Anglican,
Catholic of course, some Presbyterian: recently
it is the same cemetery; we are learning to lie
down with each other forever.

In the distance I can only see the trees grow into each other,
clumps and clusters of indistinguishable trees, masses of them,
I cannot see the fields which lie between them.

I see the houses of my neighbours' children rise up
in confidence at the further ends of these fields.
They now have children, little ones,
trying out their new bikes, testing the feel of their land underfoot.
How the little ones will look up, marvel at the train
cutting through their picture-windows, they will hear it reverberate
on the patio, even under their pillow.

Perhaps the little foxes will hear it too and wonder.

What Women Do

You lay it out, set it up
with great precision.
You use a German scales
of highly-polished steel,
which flashes digital numbers at you,
registers the slightest touch, the pause for breath,
while with a steady hand,
concentrated eye, you sift in
the strong organic flour, tiny linseeds,
the explosive and expanding yeast.

There are fat green pumpkin seeds too,
gone now is all their ghoulishness,
they are as fresh as the tentative grass, so new,
so willing to dare it out of winter and into spring.

The moon fills itself in the window,
waxing and growing like a loaf behind you.
The moon is a balloon you have kneaded
with tepid water between your fingers
smoothing over the craters and fissures.

You have fired up the oven
which warms this kitchen
linking it to all the kitchens of the world.
Places that have nurtured us, and to which we return
holding in affection our own household gods:
the distinct smell of home
rising contentment
long-fermented in dark warm places.

We come to terms with love
on a cool March evening.
Your precision gives shape and hope to shadows
to things which are vague.

We consider the breadboard's edge
in our house full of happiness.

By Rail

Distance presses all things closer together.
These expansive fields, a floating
Paul Henry sky of bright clouds
fluffed, lingering. Way above,
the cirrus dry-brushed in tight striations.

We enjoy this gentle day,
this anticyclonic interval
as the year turns to winter.

I glimpse our house huddled
against the high beech, the sheltering sycamores
of Grange. Fennell's Grange,
which is in another county.

Our house sits, waits for us.
It becomes the object of our journeys,
predicated by time.

All our actions take us there,
even when the railway line
is its own parallel.
Bachelard says, just now,
that the image is feminine, the concept masculine.
We know the line will image itself
through a point on the x or y axis.

We imagine each other
along the points which remove us
from times of sweet together.

Guy Wilson Daffodil Garden
at the University of Ulster,
Coleraine

A bird of prey glides overhead
brought up on thermals above the Lower Bann,
too high for me to name.
Then it falls into slow lazy circles
spitfiring without the noise.
Little birds flit, slip, for cover
fearing for their little lives.

The Guy Wilson Garden
falls down a steep gradient.
There are beds and beds
of fluttering daffodils,
all in gradients of colour,
deep creamed honey
to lemon yellow, even ghosts of apple red.
It is a Wordsworthian wilderness
of subtle, imperceptible difference.

More steps steeply falling,
more half-hidden, sheltered beds
'older and lesser well-known cultivars'.
It derives from 'cultivated variety',
a lovely word which resonates
with meanings of careful husbandry.

Strange what happened when Anglo-Saxon
met Old Norse, it took *husband* for the man,
the Scandinavian and kept *wife* for the woman,
the local female joined in marriage.
Yet Anglo-Saxon had the word *husbonde* too
which meant 'mistress of the house'.
Perhaps with elements of 'housebound' within.
How ambiguous it could have been
had the recessive not been overcome.

A recessive gene produces no effect
when present with a dominant allele.
The other gene on the same place, same location,
of the chromosome.

All those old cultivars named in Gaelic,
big consonantal names for fair daffodils,
Slievenamaddy, Slemish, Croaghan...
'as you, or anything, we die. Stay, stay
until the hasting day has run
but to the evensong...'

Cultivar is
a race or variety of plant,
selected intentionally, a hybrid,
genetically modified, even created,
maintained through cultivation.

A clone, valuable enough for its own name,
a pure line. How strange our horticulture is.
When the cultivar is propagated by appropriate means
it retains its particular characteristics and attributes.
It is driven by pragmatism, distinguished by correct
use of single quotes in the epithets of nomenclature.
The cultivar is always in the vernacular.
It can die or disappear if let into the wild. All gone.
But it has its aliases.

Herrick in his little Devon house, living out his days,
a bliss less than solitude, his spaniel, Tracie,
his pet sparrow, his maid Prue, 'by good luck sent'
a pipkin of jelly, a pet pig drinking from a tankard.
These facts, these thoughts passed down
the centuries, these homely things, these histories,
dance upon the inward eye in this Hesperides.

When the wild type meets a mutant
we are thrown into swirls of possibility;
fraction, even faction: 'our own beloved country',
said Lincoln, became afflicted, broke
into two qualities indicating their quotient.
How many times must the hawk hang in the sky,

scanning this garden, this colony of golden daffodils
on quiet mornings when we could 'go with you along'.

Perhaps until the species has exhausted itself
along the Lower Bann, perhaps until Lough Neagh
has emptied itself out through these curving reaches
of river down to a sun filled, sand-duned, sea.
Meantime we will flit and slip in a March breeze
suspecting the lonely clouds, the blue-washed sky
as this day attains its noon, 'we have short time to stay,
as you, or anything, we die'.

Chapter 1

What Creativity Might Be

It might be rather mysterious as creativity has long had an air of mystery about it. Particularly because creativity can not be readily defined in a scientific form that is acceptable and also if it carries a sense of ‘to make or produce out of nothing’ then creativity seems almost divine in its definition. Creativity is not always held in these terms or is it seen solely as a divine undertaking. Joyce Carol Oates believes that the secret at the heart of the creative activity has something to do with our desire to complete a work, to impose perfection upon it, so that, hammered out of profane materials, it becomes sacred. She asserts that through that process the creative outcome is thereby no longer merely personal. (Oates, 1988). It is an interesting assertion, the desire to complete a work, any work, seems plausible indeed and perhaps it forms the basis of all human undertaking. Oates takes on a different notion when she introduces the idea of imposing perfection upon the completed work. Every human may not strive to impose that same perfection. By ‘imposing’ Oates makes the creator/maker very deliberate and conscious in the undertaking. She implies too that the work may be completed but that it may not be perfected, as if these were choices the maker had from the beginning of the undertaking.

It seems as if her idea of ‘perfection’ might be akin to a varnish that the painter may choose to apply to the completed work of art, not only as a means of protection, but as a patina that might in fact contribute to or alter in some way, how the painting is viewed or how it is perceived. It further seems that through the use of the word ‘perfection’, Oates has been taken closer to the

realm of ideals and even to realm of religious belief. Logically, she moves to the idea of the ‘profane materials’ and that in turn takes her to the ‘sacred’ or more precisely to the notion of ‘becoming sacred’; she believes that is possible by ‘hammering’. It is an amazing choice of words in the context. What a force is needed to complete the work, ‘hammering’ is not a very subtle type of force, but she is taking her analogy not just from Christian dogma of the sacred and profane – which might in itself be a troublesome duality – but she is going further back to Vulcan, lame and deformed (profane); the metalworker, the smith, hammering out the new shapes on his anvil. Vulcan married to Venus (sometimes married to one of the Three Graces), the Goddess of Love (sacred). (www.britannica.com 2007)

It is not fully clear here that Oates is giving any new insight into the creative activity, what she is giving is the linking process, in its analogical form, of creative undertakings and classical mythology as well as religious, in this case, Christian imaging and thinking. By inference, she links the creative activity of the individual with the Creation and indeed with the classical mythology of creation by yoking together two very unlikely elements: beauty and deformity; good and bad; beauty and ugliness; light and dark. The duality, the belief that these opposite elements are to some extent fundamental to the creative undertaking explains nothing really, it merely points to age-old connections.

1.1 Etymology

‘To create’ and ‘creativity’ are rooted in the Latin *creatus* and *creare* meaning ‘to make’ or ‘to produce’ or more literally ‘to grow’. (www.oed.com 2007; Lewis & Short 1879) The word is cognate with the Latin *crescere* and the Old French *kere*. These elements link the word to Ceres, the Roman goddess of the earth, and to Cereris, the Italian corn goddess. Therefore, the word and the idea is firmly rooted in the earth. Other cognates are: *cereal*, *crescent*, *creature*, *concrete*, *crescendo*, *decrease*, *increase* and *recruit*. (www.oed.com 2007; Lewis & Short, 1879).

1.2 Usage

‘Creativity’ as a term does not appear in the 1971 Oxford English Dictionary, though the term had already appeared in Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary, International Edition, published in the United States, 1964. (Piiro, 2004). ‘Creativity’ as a relatively new noun, seems to have come into general usage, much as the noun ‘infrastructure’ and the verbs ‘prioritise’ and ‘network’ to say that which could not readily be said in one word.

It is possible too that terms are created and grow in usage not just because they are apt in their expression of a complex matter but because they become fashionable. ‘Creativity’ is fashionable at present; it is used right across a spectrum of disciplines and areas of interest. It is used widely and often. For example, by late 2002, the term was used in more than 15,500 references to titles of scholarly books and articles (Piiro, 2004).

Amazon.com (last accessed 18 March 2007) lists 131,442 books with the word 'creativity' in the title. That in itself is a phenomenal jump from 2002 when Amazon.com listed 1,885 books with the word 'creativity' in the title. (Piiro, 2004, p.5). The titles range right through the disciplines and interests: business, marketing, education, psychology, parenting, spirituality, aging, arts, sciences, mathematics, problem finding, setting and solving, architecture etc. 'Creativity', as a noun seems first used by psychology. J.P. Guilford, 1950 used the term in a speech to the American Psychological Association. Morris L. Stein, 1953 used it in the title of an article: "Creativity & Culture" in the *Journal of Psychology*. (Piiro, 2004 p.6)

It is worth noting that in 1988, *Webster's Dictionary* defined 'creativity' as "a creative ability; artistic or intellectual inventiveness". Earlier in 1986, *The Dictionary of Developmental & Educational Psychology* defined 'creativity' as "man's capacity to produce new ideas, insights, inventions or artistic objects, which are accepted as being of social, spiritual, aesthetic, scientific or technological value".

1.3 Creativity as Value

It is important to note in the definition of creativity as outlined in the paragraph above from *The Dictionary of Developmental & Educational Psychology*, that there is a point of 'social value' included with the other elements such as spiritual and aesthetic values. That element in the definition implies that there is a social utility factor to creativity and that it may well be defined by 'experts' within the society rather than by those who actually

‘create’, namely the practitioners. An interesting example of this judgement relates to the Irish Government’s Finance Act 1969 when it exempted ‘certain earnings of writers, composers and artists’ from income tax. It did so on the basis of what was ‘generally accepted’ as creative and decided by the Revenue Commissioners. (See Appendix A)

Should the revenue Commissioners be unable to make a decision with regard to the creative merit of the work, then they would consult with individuals or members of recognized bodies who could help them with their decision. Again, it is still outside of the ‘creator’s’ domain, other people will decide upon the merit or indeed the use of the word ‘creative’ in relation to work produced. That approach then leads to many questions in relation to the skills of those deciding and much weight is given to what is ‘generally accepted as creative’. That idea of what is generally accepted seems firmly based in society and then the question is what comprises that society and though the tastes, fashions and definitions of a society change, does their definition of the ‘creative’ change also? Is that a desirable situation? For instance what may have been deemed ‘creative’ in 1969 may no longer be deemed so in 2007. Or else there is a very clear definition of the creative laid down which can be referred to as new work is considered in a new era. (See Appendix A)

In 1986 the author of this work applied to the Revenue Commissioners for the Artists’ Tax Exemption. The author was interviewed by the Commissioners and the application was successful. The author does not know if all applicants for the Artists’ Tax Exemption from 1969 to the present day were interviewed, if only some or none were interviewed and upon what criteria the interviews

were held besides trying to determine if the person/creative artist was in fact entitled to an exemption or if in fact the person/creative artist and their work could be deemed creative.

If creativity is the ability to come up with ideas or artefacts that are new, surprising and valuable (Boden, 2004 p.1), then it is society who is the judge of these values. 'Ideas' tend to include concepts, poems, musical compositions, scientific theories, cookery recipes, choreography, jokes etc. 'Artifacts' include paintings, sculptures, steam engines, vacuum cleaners, pottery, origami, penny whistles and many other things besides in the long lists of inventions. (ibid)

Part of the puzzlement and something of the mystery of creativity lies in the fact that a new idea may be creative while another idea is merely new; telling the difference between what is new and what is creative becomes the challenge. Creative ideas seem unpredictable. 'Creativity by individuals and teams is a starting point of innovation; the first is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the second' (Amalibe et al, 1996, p.10). Much of the difficulty arises as an attempt to explain it is made. It begins to emerge that the various definitions of the creative are not just based upon etymologically evidence, the Latin *creatus*, 'has grown' simply links the idea of creativity very firmly with the earth and more particularly with matters of agriculture. In common parlance much of the language of creativity is compared with agricultural undertakings, for instance, sowing a seed; nurturing it, reaping/harvesting it and so forth.

1.4 History of the Term Creativity

The term itself has changed over time and so too has the concept of the creative and creativity down the centuries. The Greeks believed that the Muses were the source of all inspiration and they had no term as such for 'to create'. They had the term *poiein*, 'to make' (from which *poiesis*, 'poetry'; *poieta*, poet). Therefore the poet and poetry were ascribed a great importance and by implication it was the poet who 'made' or brought new things to life. To some degree the artist was viewed as one who imitated. (Liddell & Scott, 1858).

The concept of the Muses is very interesting insofar as they were nine daughters of the god Zeus and the goddess Mnemosyne or Memory. Zeus was the supreme god of the pantheon, who represented most aspects of human life including fertility. He was the most powerful, the brightest, god of the sky. He had an odd beginning as the son of Kronos (Time), whom he overthrew. He divided the universe between his brothers, Hades (the Underworld) and Poseidon (the Seas) so that he was linked to the entire universe and to the range of human behaviour. He was especially known for his relationship with thunder and thunderbolts, not to mention his many amorous affairs with humans, mostly women, much to the displeasure of his wife, Hera, who was in fact his sister. (www.oed.com)

It seems possible that the offspring of Zeus and Mnemosyne, the nine Muses with very specific delineations of duty, should encompass not only all of the universe but indeed all of memory, mentation and human conceptualization. It

seems too that the creation of new works within the arts and sciences relied upon the visitation of the Muse. Of course, by implication, this was a divine intervention. (www.oed.com)

In Rome, the Greek view was somewhat modified, especially by Horace in his critical writings (*Ars Poetica* 13 BC) where he felt that painters, and not only poets, could be daring in what they wished. That daring was indeed a privilege. The Romans also had the verb *facere*, ‘to make’ as well as *creare*, ‘to make’ or ‘to create’. (Lewis & Short, 1879)

At the time neither the Greeks nor the Romans had any word for the concept of ‘creativity’ or any word which directly corresponded to it. Undoubtedly, their art, architecture, music, poetry, drama inventions and discoveries provide endless examples of what would now be termed creative works. Their concept of ‘genius’ is much more likely to encompass their expression of the talents which made these works.

Genius is defined as a person of extraordinary intellectual power, originality and creativity. It also includes the ability to think and work in areas not previously explored. In Roman religion it was the ‘guardian spirit’ of a person, a family, a place, a State, a city etc. The word corresponds to the Greek word: *daimon/daemon*, an energy, an attendant spirit. Though related to *demon* in English, its original usage was not always negative. Historically, the *genii* and *daimons* indicated a superior class of entities holding an immediate

position between mortals and immortals. (www.oed.com; Lewis & Short, 1879; Lidell & Scott, 1858)

When Harold Bloom discusses genius (2002), in fact it takes him a volume of eight hundred pages to discuss it, he links it with another ‘crucial Roman concept’: authority; but in its fundamental Roman meaning which was ‘foundational’. *Auctoritas*, derived from the verb *augere*, ‘to augment’; authority in ancient Rome always meant: ‘augmenting the foundation, thus carrying the past alive into the present’. (Bloom, 2002, p.13)

Plato, in his *Symposium*, gave an indication as to how he saw the *daemons* functioning: ‘from the daemons proceed all the arts of divination, and all the science of priests, with respect to sacrifices, initiations, incantations, and everything, in short, which relates to oracles and enchantments. The deity holds no direct communication with man; but by this means, all the converse and communication between gods and men, whether asleep or awake, take place; and he who is wise in these things is a man peculiarly guided by his genius’. (Allen, 1991, p. 101)

Genius carries a great deal of meaning with it as a concept. There is the strong notion of the ‘genius loci’ (the genius/spirit of the place) in classical literature; relatedly, there is the ‘lectus genialis’ (the genial bed/marriage bed) and there is the ‘vita genialis’ (the genial/joyous life). The idea and concept of genius was quite pervasive in the classical world. (Lewis & Short, 1879)

Genius also has the meaning of 'to beget', 'to cause to be born' 'to generate'. It would seem to have no limits in that part of its meaning. (Lewis & Short, 1879) If we attempt to distinguish genius and talent, we find that 'talent' was classically, a 'weight or sum of money' and therefore, no matter how large, was necessarily limited. The tendency now is to regard 'genius' as the creative capacity, as opposed to talent. (Bloom, 2002, p.14) The idea of extraordinary originality is paramount in the understanding of genius, but according to Bloom, this 'fierce originality' is always canonical, in that it 'recognizes and comes to terms with precursors'. (Bloom, 2002, p.14)

Plato's idea of the divine communication is noteworthy, as is the fact that he posits that the gods do not communicate directly with mortals; therefore the person with genius is in a position to converse with the gods and with the mortals. Or at least the person in that position may act as a conduit between the immortals and the mortals. This idea ties in with the idea of inspiration and is connected too with the idea of the Muses as intermediaries again between the gods and the mortals. (Bloom, 2002, p.15)

A fundamental change came in the Christian period. *Creatio* now came to designate an act of God 'to create something from nothing' (ex nihilo). It took a different meaning from *facere*, to make, and it ceased to refer to human functions. (Allen et al, 1999)

Another shift in the meaning of creativity occurred in the Renaissance period when the human being became aware of its own sense of independence, a freedom and a creative ability; more human-centered than god-centered. They attempted to embody that sense of independence and that sense of the creative – Baltasar Gracian (1601-1658) wrote: ‘Art is the completion of Nature, as it were a second Creator ...’ (ibid.)

By the 18th century and the Age of Enlightenment the concept of being creative was present in art theory but it was especially linked to the idea of imagination. Imagination is not only the ability to form mental images of objects, events and emotions but the ability to deal resourcefully with unusual problems. (www.oed.com)

The Western idea of the creative may be contrasted with the Eastern view; for Hindus, Confucius, Taoists and Buddhists, creation was at best a kind of mimicry or discovery. The idea of creation from ‘nothing’ had no place in their philosophies and religions. (Allen et al, 1999)

The 19th century held great regard for art as an expression of the creative. In fact art alone held a monopoly on the creative. At the turn of the 20th century, there began to be discussions about the creative in the sciences (eg. Jan Lukasiewicz 1878-1957) and in nature (e.g. Henri Bergson 1859-1941: *Creative Evolution* 1907; *The Creative Mind* 1934). It was generally accepted

as a transference to the sciences of concepts more properly belonging to art.
(ibid.)

The next chapter examines models of creativity as exemplified by a number of scientists, cognitive psychologists, educational theorists and literary critics.

Chapter 2

Models of Creativity

Again at the turn of the 20th century, leading mathematicians and scientists such as Helmholtz (1896) and Henri Poincaré (q.v.) (1908) had begun to reflect on, and publicly discuss, their creative processes. These insights were important and they formed part of the early accounts of the creative process as postulated by forward-thinking theorists such as Graham Wallas (1926) and Max Wertheimer (1945). The latter was part of the team who formulated Gestalt psychology; he dealt especially with perception, thinking and problem-solving. Though Wallas was a political scientist, a psychologist and a member of the Fabian Society, his work on the creative process has a telling title in view of the evolution and transference of terms and concepts: ‘The Art of Thought’ (1926).

Wallas, presented one of the first models of the creative process. He explained creative insights and illuminations as a process in five stages:

1. Preparation:

the preparatory work, the ground-preparation required for any undertaking.

2. Incubation:

where the problem is internalised into the unconscious mind and nothing seems to be happening, externally – akin to McGahern ‘looking out of the

window for long periods of time while writing the novel' (McGahern in conversation with this writer, Galway, October 1979).

3. Intimation:

the creative person gets a feeling that a 'solution' is on the way.

4. Illumination or Insight: where the creative idea bursts forth from its preconscious processing into conscious awareness.

5. Verification: where the idea is consciously verified, elaborated and then applied. (Wallas, 1926, p.25)

However, the formal starting point of the scientific study of creativity, from the angle of the orthodox psychological literature, is normally considered to have started when J. P. Guilford addressed the American Psychological Association in 1950 and called his paper, 'Creativity & Culture'. Guilford's introduction of the term and the concept helped to popularise the topic and it also helped to create a focus on a scientific approach to conceptualising and measuring creativity through means such as psychometric testing.

As these developments were happening so also was a more pragmatic approach being developed in relation to creativity involving the teaching of practical techniques. Three of the best known of these techniques are:

- Alex Osborn's 'brainstorming' (1950's)
- Genrikh Altshuller's 'theory of inventive problem solving' (TRIZ, a Russian acronym for "Teoriya Resheniya Izobretatelskikh Zadatch")
- Edward de Bono's 'lateral thinking' (1960's)

Altshuller formulated his approach in 1946 which is an algorithmic approach to the invention of new systems. It is in contrast with 'brainstorming', which is based on the random generation of ideas. De Bono defined his methods of lateral thinking as being concerned with changing concepts and perception. It involved looking at a situation, not necessarily a problem, from many different angles rather than just approaching it head-on. He saw it as a form of reasoning not immediately obvious which could lead to new insights and ideas. These insights and ideas may not have been obtainable by using only methods of traditional step-by-step logic. De Bono's position is a shift away from predictable thinking to new and unexpected thinking and ideas and it is all closely aligned to humour and to jokes. He felt that humour was a major human activity. (de Bono, 1970). He shared this feeling for humour with Koestler. (1963)

2.1 Concept of Creativity

Perhaps the most widespread conception of creativity in the scholarly literature is that creativity is manifested in the production of a creative work (for example, a new work of art or a scientific hypothesis) that is both *novel* and *useful*. Colloquial definitions of creativity are typically descriptive of activity that results in producing or bringing about something partly or wholly new; in investing an existing object with new properties or characteristics; in imaging new possibilities that were not conceived of before; and in seeing or performing something in a manner different from what was thought possible or normal previously. (Boden, 2004, p.13).

A useful distinction has been made by Rhodes (1961) between the creative person, the creative product, the creative process, and the creative 'press' or environment. Each of these factors is usually present in creative activity. This has been elaborated by Johnson (1972), who suggested that creative activity may exhibit several dimensions including sensitivity to problems on the part of the creative agent, originality, ingenuity, unusualness, usefulness, and appropriateness in relation to the creative product.

2.2 Jung on the Creative Process

1933, Jung addressed the creative process of the artist, particularly the literary artist, in his work *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*:

It is obvious enough that psychology, being the study of psychic processes, can be brought to bear upon the study of literature, for the

human psyche is the womb of all the sciences and the arts. We may expect psychological research, on the one hand, to explain the formation of a work of art, and on the other to reveal the factors that make a person artistically creative. The psychologist is thus faced with two separate and distinct tasks, and must approach them in radically different ways. (Jung, 1933, p.120)

He described the work of art as: ‘a product of complicated psychic activities – but a product that is apparently intentional and consciously shaped’. While in the case of the artist, Jung felt that: ‘we must deal with the psychic apparatus itself’. He went on to note that with regard to the work of art:

‘we must attempt the psychological analysis of a definitely circumscribed and concrete artistic achievement while in the second we must analyze the living and creative human being as a unique personality’. (Jung, 1933, p.120)

He believed that these two undertakings were closely related and even interdependent, though neither of them could yield the explanations sought by the other. Inferences could be drawn about the artist from the work of art and vice versa, but these inferences remained just that without ever being conclusive. Jung felt that at best, they were either surmises or lucky guesses. This may be a moment when Jung is less than convincing as his lack of training and practice in the field of literary criticism and textual exegesis is perhaps evident in a rather speedy dismissal of what inferences may be drawn from the work of art by a close reading of it, and especially by a close examination of the language used. Very often the findings of this detective or forensic work are borne out when set against the biographical detail of ‘the living and creative human being as a unique personality’.

He then continued to admit, echoing Stein and Koestler et al, that:

the psychologist may never abandon his claim to investigate and establish causal relations in complicated psychic events. To do so would be to deny psychology the right to exist. Yet he can never make good this claim in the fullest sense, because the creative aspect of life which finds its clearest expression in art baffles all attempts at rational formulation. Any reaction to stimulus may be causally explained; but the creative act, which is the absolute antithesis of mere reaction, will forever elude the human understanding. It can only be described in its manifestations; it can be obscurely sensed, but never wholly grasped. (Jung, 1933, p. 120)

Jung, well-versed in the classics and indeed in the literature of the German language, expressed a sensitive approach to creativity and to literature and art in his delicate attempt to clarify the processes and the understandings which might be gleaned from psychology:

Psychology and the study of art will always have to turn to each other for help, and the one will not invalidate the other. It is an important principle of psychology that psychic events are derivable. It is a principle in the study of art that a psychic product is something in and for itself – whether the work of art or the artist himself is in question. Both principles are valid in spite of their relativity. (Jung, 1933, p.121)

Jung's admittance of a major difference between literary criticism and psychology must never be forgotten. When it is forgotten undue attention is paid to works of inferior merit by a host of people such as psychologists, social scientists or many other practitioners of social change and recordings.

Jung said that:

what is of decisive value and importance for the literary critic may be quite irrelevant to the psychologist. Literary products of highly dubious merit are often of the greatest interest to the psychologist. (ibid)

2.3 Bisociative Thinking

Arthur Koestler, (1964) advanced the theory that all creative activities – the conscious and unconscious processes underlying artistic originality, scientific discovery and comic inspiration – have a basic pattern in common, which he attempts to define. He called it ‘bisociative thinking’. He coined the term to distinguish the various paths of associative thinking from the creative leap which connects previously unconnected frames of reference and makes us experience reality on several planes at once. He also suggested that animals as well as humans were capable of manifesting phenomena analogous to creativity, if we knew what to look for, we should find it in various degrees from flatworms to chimpanzees. (Koestler 1964)

Bisociation occurs when someone combines previously unrelated matrices of skills or information (Koestler, 1964; Smith and Di Gregorio, 2002). After a period of mental incubation, matrices are related and a new way of representing a problem emerges. This bisociative process happens when unsuspected connections or hidden analogies are revealed, enabling the development of creativity. These analogies often result from serendipitous links between information sources, factual or by analogy (Foster and Ford, 2003).

2.4 Serendipity

It is an interesting concept in itself and even more so as it has been coined by a novelist. Serendipity refers to the accidental discovery of something valuable. The word “serendipity” was coined by the English novelist Horace Walpole, in a letter to a friend, the British diplomat Horace Mann, in January 28, 1754 (Remer, 1965). Walpole, as a child, read the “The Three Princes of Serendip”, first published in Europe in 1557, by a Venetian, Michele Tramezzino, and later translated to other languages.(Pina E Cunha, 2005). Inspired by this old exotic tale told of the ancient princes of Sri Lanka, then known as Serendip, Walpole mentioned a special type of luck, serendipity, which resulted from the combination of a happy accident with sagacity, or perspicacity in understanding.

In his essay on serendipity, Umberto Eco remarks that ‘a number of ideas that today we consider false actually changed the world (sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse) and how, in the best instances, false beliefs and discoveries, totally without credibility, could then lead to the discovery of something true (or at least something that we consider true today). In the field of the sciences, this mechanism is known as serendipity’ (Eco, 1999, p.54).

Koestler exemplified his thinking in what may be termed a most creative and imaginative mode of expression. He tried to bring the reader to an understanding of the creative process by establishing notions of codes and matrices. His thinking is fundamentally binary in its approach; he introduced a pair of related concepts in various ways as he tried to express the two planes of

matrix and *code*: ‘frames of reference’, ‘associative contexts’, ‘types of logic’, ‘codes of behaviour’, and ‘universes of discourse’. He then brought all of those dual ideas together as ‘matrices of thought and behaviour’. He used the term, ‘matrix’ to denote any ability, habit or skill, any pattern of ordered behaviour governed by a ‘code’ of fixed rules. His illustrative example is ingenious:

The common spider will suspend its web on three, four, and up to twelve handy points of attachment, depending upon the lie of the land, but the radial threads will always intersect the laterals at equal angles, according to a fixed *code of rules* built into the spider’s nervous system; and the centre of the web will always be at its centre of gravity. The *matrix* – the web-building skill – is flexible: it can be adapted to environmental conditions; but the rules of the code must be observed and set a limit to flexibility. The spider’s choice of suitable points of attachment for the web are a matter of *strategy*, depending on the environment, but the form of the completed web will always be polygonal, determined by the code. The exercise of a skill is always under the dual control of (a) a fixed code of rules (which may be innate or acquired by learning) and (b) of a flexible strategy, guided by environmental pointers – the ‘lie of the land’ (Koestler, 1964, p.38)

He continued to explain why he chooses the words ‘code’ and ‘matrix’ for key-concepts in his theory: ‘the code is the fixed, invariable factor in a skill or habit; the matrix its variable aspect. The two words do not refer to different entities; they refer to different *aspects* of the same activity’. (ibid)

Koestler extended the metaphor of the spider so that the sub-skills become apparent in the activity; we are led further into the process of the interplay of hierarchical ‘members’ in the action of building a web:

in the spider’s case the ‘members’ of the matrix were the various sub-skills which enter into the web-building skill: the operations of secreting the thread, attaching its ends, judging the angles. Again, the order and manner in which these enter into action is determined by strategy, subject to the rules of the game laid down by the web-building code. (Koestler, 1964, p.38)

From this concentration on the process of building a web, he extrapolates that: ‘all coherent thinking is equivalent to playing a game according to a set of rules.’ (ibid). It is noteworthy that Koestler, within reason, simplified all coherent thinking to such an unambiguous statement. He adverts to the specific demands of mathematical thinking, with its barrage of special codes which govern different types of operations, sometimes hierarchically ordered, and the sight of which trigger an appropriate operation. He compared this activity to reading a line in a piano-score which triggers a whole series of very complicated finger-movements. (Koestler, 1964, p.42)

He chose ‘code’ because part of its usage refers to blue-prints embedded in the nervous system, or the ‘code’ triggers activity in the nervous system itself. Much of that coding and activity is very complex. Koestler admitted that ‘everybody can ride a bicycle, but nobody knows how it is done’. (ibid, p.42). He pointed out that neither the bicycle manufacturers nor engineers know the correct method of counteracting the tendency to fall by turning the handlebars so that “for a given angle of unbalance the curvature of each winding is

inversely proportional to the square of the speed which the cyclist is preceding". (ibid, p.42).

2.5 Defining the Creative

Koestler felt there were two main ways of being creative:

- to plunge oneself into a dreaming or dream-like state, where the rules of rational thinking are suspended
- the spontaneous flash of insight which shows a familiar situation or event in a new light. (ibid, p.149, 178)

To access the dream-state was quite a need as Koestler saw it in his time; much had been written since Freud and Jung about the importance of dream-work as an antidote to unbearable realities. (Koestler 1964, p.181) Post-war consumerism, combined with a certain feeling that the person, very often involved in meaningless production, had been reduced to the status of a conditioned automaton, perhaps led Koestler to place a particular emphasis on the dream-state as a mode of accessing all these other potential areas of creativity and even spirituality.

His second method is pure metaphor. Whether it happens by a blinding flash – the Eureka and Damascus moment combined – or whether it is a more pedestrian, plodding way to the divine, it is still metaphor. But the fact that it does happen in that flash moment tends to make it either magical or divinely inspired. In this context, it is rather interesting to follow the French mathematician Poincaré in his detailed account of what in fact might be

happening, to watch him feel after the workings of the unconscious mind and how it impinges upon the conscious mind through a process of concentration and relaxation. Perhaps the relaxation mode may well resonate with Koestler's dream-state:

Most striking at first is this appearance of sudden illumination, a manifest sign of long, unconscious prior work. The role of this unconscious work...appears to me incontestable, and traces of it would be found in other cases where it is less evident. Often when one works at a hard question, nothing good is accomplished at the first attack. Then one takes a rest, longer or shorter, and sits down anew to the work. During the first half hour, as before, nothing is found, and then all of a sudden the decisive idea presents itself to the mind. It might be said that the conscious work has been more fruitful because it has been interrupted and the rest has given back to the mind its force and freshness. But it is more probable that this rest has been filled out with unconscious work and that the result of this work has afterward revealed itself...only the revelation, instead of coming during a walk or a journey, has happened during a period of conscious work, but independently of this work which plays at most a role of excitant, as if it were a goad stimulating the results already reached during rest, but remaining unconscious, to assume the conscious form. (Poincaré, 1982 pp. 390-391)

Poincaré, through his mathematical writings or more precisely through the insights and experiences gained from that process, has attempted to articulate the creative endeavour. He was convinced that the inspiration only happens in the context of surrounding work, which perhaps may also be stated as focus, concentration and to some degree a grappling with complex modes of expression. 'To invent is to choose', he says, for our purposes, we may say "to create is to choose".

He continued to place a particular emphasis on work and concentrated focus in relation to inspiration:

...it is possible, and of a certainty only fruitful, if it is on the one hand preceded and on the other hand followed by a period of conscious work. These sudden inspirations never happen except after some days of voluntary effort which has appeared absolutely fruitless and whence nothing good seems to have come, where the way taken seems totally astray. These efforts then have not been as sterile as one thinks; they have set going the unconscious machine and without them it would not have moved and would have produced nothing. (ibid)

Poincaré then found that there is a further period of work involved in the final outcome, it might be termed, post-inspirational structuring. In creative writing, it may well equate with the process of drafting and redrafting in order to attain an expression as close to the heart's and the intellect's desire as it is possible to get. This is how Poincaré approaches it:

The need for the second period of conscious work, after the inspiration, is still easier to understand. It is necessary to put in shape the results of this inspiration, to deduce from them the immediate consequences, to arrange them, to word the demonstrations, but above all is verification necessary. (ibid)

Poincaré was a mathematician and he spoke from that position, therefore it is easy to follow his methodological argument and realize his necessity to deduce, arrange, word demonstrations and verify. The poet and the creative writer also engage in a process of verification as critically the question is asked 'is it true'? Not so much in terms of verisimilitude or in exact photographic representation of an external reality e.g. the horse looking over the stable door; a visual cliché of just that whether it is represented in oils, watercolour or any

other medium; never suffering, what Shakespeare called, 'a sea-change into something rich and strange' (The Tempest).

Creativity is not at all confined or exclusive to the arts, the use of bisociation and serendipity as valid and legitimate modes of discovery and development in the sciences and in finance, commerce, marketing and management; in fact all disciplines, which involve complex thought processes combined with appropriate expressions of emotional and sensual insights, are of themselves creative.

Chapter Three will consider what certain modern and contemporary writers have written about the creative process and the concept of creativity.

Chapter 3

Writers on Creativity

3.1 Stein

Gertrude Stein, in her own unique and incomparable prose, attempted to articulate the creative process as she felt and understood it. She makes a very sobering point: ‘You cannot go into the womb to form the child ...’ ‘If you knew it all, it would not be creation, it would be dictation’, she insisted as she further attempted to clarify the phenomenon of writing a book. ‘No book is a book until it is done. You cannot say that you are writing a book while you are just writing on sheets of paper and all that is in you has not yet come out. And a book – let it go on endlessly – is not the whole man’.

Stein continues to speak of writing and to objectify it as an action both simultaneously within and without the writer:

You will write, if you will write without thinking of the result in terms of a result, but think of the writing in terms of discovery, which is to say that creation must take place between the pen and the paper, not before in a thought or afterwards in a recasting. Yes, before in a thought, but not in careful thinking. It will come if it is there and if you let it come, and if you have anything you will get a sudden creative recognition. You won’t know how it was, even what it is, but it will be creation if it came out of the pen and out of you and not out of an architectural drawing of the thing you are doing. Technique is not so much a thing of form or style as the way that form and style came and how it can come again. (Preston, 1935, p.194)

Stein named the involvement of the writer in the process as ‘creative recognition’. It is an interesting concept, she tried to articulate the fact that the writer must be the arbitrator of her/his own creative process. It may be inferred from what she is saying that the writer may possibly be engaged in the act of writing without the knowledge or flash which convinces her/him that s/he is being creative in fact. Stein implied this tragedy, this nightmare, which haunts most writers and artists unless they are blinded by arrogance and ignorance:

Freeze your fountain and you will always have the frozen water shooting into the air and falling and it will be there to see – oh, no doubt about that – but there will be no more coming. I can tell how important it is to have that creative recognition. You cannot go into the womb to form the child; it is there and makes itself and comes forth whole – and there it is and you have made it and have felt it, but it has come itself – and that is creative recognition. (Preston, 1935, p.194)

Stein continued to point to the particularities of writing within the larger and more generic notions of a creative process:

Of course you have a little more control over your writing than that; you have to know what you want to get; but when you know that, let it take you and if it seems to take you off the track don’t hold back, because that is perhaps where instinctively you want to be and if you hold back and try to be always where you have been before, you will go dry...

If you feel the book deeply it will come as deep as your feeling is when it is running truest and the book will never be truer or deeper than your feeling. But you do not yet know anything about your feeling because, though you may think it is all there, all crystallized, you have not let it run. (Preston, *ibid*)

She then reached a point of metaphysical insight. It is an insight which resonates strongly with Jung in his attempt to define creativity from the psychological viewpoint. Stein posited: ‘And when you have discovered and evolved a new form, it is not the form but the fact that *you are the form* that is important’. (Preston, *ibid*)

3.2 Heaney

When Heaney addressed poetic composition and tried to verbalize it, he used the image of the military road-block in Northern Ireland (Genet 1996, p.6) (‘From the Frontier of Writing’), the vulnerability and tension of being investigated; the constricting forces bearing down upon him. In life he saw these forces as ‘the results of various political and social impositions, internalised and accommodated’. (Genet, 1996, p.6). These constrictions ‘can represent the repressions and self-censorings which hamper a writer and keep him or her stalled at the barrier of composition’. (Genet, 1996, p.7). He then spoke of that other moment, which may well equate with Stein’s ‘creative recognition’. It is the moment ‘of gratifying permission when the licence is handed back and you are waved on, the brake and clutch release, the gears get purchase, and everything is on the move again – and in my allegory that moment represents the beginning of the slide into fluency which initiates poetic composition’. (Genet & Hellegouarc’h 1996, p.6)

Heaney went on to discuss the idea of the creative or compositional process. Like Koestler, he looks to mathematics, physics and the laws of motion to help illustrate his position:

What I am seeking is a way to illustrate the fact that lyric writing always involves the shifting of a weight of personal experience through a certain distance. I am attracted to this notion for several reasons, not least because it brings the work of art within the scope of a definition of work which applies to work of every other sort. What was taught in school as a formula – the old equation which said that work equalled the product of the mass moved multiplied by the distance it travelled – that now seems to me to be a perfectly apt description of what happens when a poem works. In a poem, the load of the world is not abandoned or absconded from; it is more that by application of imaginative force it is set in motion, and once it is in motion, it feels lighter and more manageable; it is still recognizably a weight but the weight is no longer a dead weight. A poem shifts the constituent parts of a world into a new co-ordination. For all the lines of force which pull it down and back, there are equal and opposite lines which boost it up and away, and the special gift of poetry is precisely that salubrious feeling of having the best of both worlds. (Genet & Hellegouarc'h 1996, p.7)

3.3 Pinsky

When Robert Pinsky came to write about the process in 1999, he used different imagery and he approached it from a different aspect. He gave his answer by being asked the following question (James Kobielus, October 29, 1999):

Question:

As a general habit, how do you personally start writing a new poem? Do you start with an interesting title and then write around it? Or an

interesting first line? Or the kernel of a core subject/message? Or simply an abstract rhythm, cadence, or melody to which you must give voice? Once you start, how do you know you're done? When does it feel complete?

Answer:

A good question, but not only is everybody different--many of us are different at different times of life, maybe even at different times of day. The best I can describe the process for me is that it resembles noodling on a piano: I run rhythms and sentences--or maybe not even sentences, the *shapes* of sentences--across one another, trying out their sounds, and sometimes I get a tune-like combination of sound and syntax that makes me want to go on, extend and refine it, as it comes to dredge sustenance from the great pool of feelings and ideas that accumulates in a life. It's a physical process, because the voice is physical. And everything I've said about germination applies to termination--a silly rhyme I've just stumbled on--as well.

(from 'Poetic Juice', in *Slate* posted November 5, 1999. Robert Pinsky was *Slate's* Poetry Editor).

When Pinsky was asked about the lapse of time before writing the poem for which there may have been strong feelings, or indeed the topic may have been very much to the fore, both in the mind of the poet and in the minds of the public in general, this was his reply:

I think there are subjects and feelings one carries around for many years, perhaps noticing them sometimes no more than a limb of one's body, and then one day the opportunity to write that poem somehow appears. I feel as if "The Unseen" is as you say about what one cannot get at--to return to the haunted ruin idea, the part that is left in ruin. And at Auschwitz, the proportion of what is lost, and the dimension of it, is like a cry as big as the universe ... (<http://www.slate.com/id/2518/>).

3.4 Tate

Allen Tate believed there were certain expectations of the poet to be, as it were, the best authority to explain the origins of her/his poems. ‘But’, he said, ‘persons interested in origins are seldom quick to use them’. (Tate, 1941, p.42). He felt that poets were more interested in the results: ‘what is the poem after it is written? That is the question, not where it came from and why’. (Tate, 1941, p.42). Tate belongs to the school of thought which values the actual work produced to the highest degree, believing that all there is to know and indeed all one needs to know, is, as he said, ‘in the finished poem’. Tate chose a somewhat dogmatic Catholic phrase to make his point: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (there is no salvation outside the Church). It may be inferred that Tate belonged to a time when the biographical detail or reflective considerations of the poet or writer were considered unnecessary to an appreciation of the finished poem. It might be said that Eliot led that school of thought in the early 20th Century as he considered it vulgar to have a background; and less than learned to be expected to give an explanation of his poetry. The line from *Ash Wednesday*, (“Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper tree”) which he was asked to explain by a student in Oxford, his reply was to repeat the line that that moment has entered poetic history in the 20th Century. It might be said it is a moment which makes a case for recalcitrance. (Tate 1941; Kermode, 1975)

3.5 Eliot

Eliot’s early criticism deals with the creative process and a broadening of its definition to include criticism, evaluation, editing as elements of critical practice. (‘The Function of Criticism’, 1923). Within this analysis he came to

the understanding that ‘no writer is completely self-sufficient’; the writer most likely needs the collaboration of others – mentors, other writers, editors, critics et al – in his own case, it had been Ezra Pound for *The Waste Land*. (Eliot,1952).

Though Eliot did give specific accounts of how he came to write the various poems – *The Waste Land* is exceptional by giving copious notes accounting for the allusions, references and voices etc – he tended to deal with the creative process more as an abstract or overview of the practice. (‘The Function of Criticism 1923; Tradition & the Individual Talent, 1919) ‘The most individual parts of his (the poet) work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously.’ This certainly echoes the view of authority as ‘augmenting’ after Bloom (2002) as gleaned from the meaning of the poet having a duty within the creative undertaking to bring the past into the present.

It is further echoed by Margaret Atwood when she delivered the Empson Lectures at the University of Cambridge, 2000. She felt that the entire undertaking of creativity as it pertains to writing is ‘negotiating with the dead’. (Atwood, 2003)

As Eliot evolved his thoughts and ideas around the creative and the critical, he advocated an equation of collaboration, which suited his own persona, between the critic and the artist. (Eliot, 1919,1923) Not only did Eliot posit that creation cannot occur alone, that is without the help of others, but that the

writer/poet must actively suppress her/his own personality. S/he must generate an absence to allow for the collaborator's input.

When Badhausen approaches Eliot's very passive view of authorship he concludes that:

“There is accordingly something outside of the artist to which he owes allegiance”, writes Eliot, “a devotion to which he must surrender and sacrifice himself in order to earn and obtain his unique position. Only the man who has so much to give that he can forget himself can afford to collaborate, to exchange, to contribute.” This procedure suggests a kind of palimpsestic notion of authorship in which the erasure of identity determines whether or not subsequent poetic material can come into focus. In Eliot's case the eradicated impulse is directed towards the self...Eliot's approach conditioned him for collaborative assistance since it elevated the finished product above the producer(s) by encouraging the artist's placement under the guidance of some stronger, external authority. (Badhausen, 2004, p.114)

It becomes clear how Eliot's thinking has influenced so much of the 20th Century in at least two ways:

- the 'suppression of personality' and 'the generation of an absence'

- the non-engagement of the writer/poet with her/his constituency

When contrasted with Pinsky, created American Poet Laureate 1997, not only does he engage with as wide an audience as possible during his tenure, but he does it by engaging with and answering as earnestly as possible, questions in poetry ‘chat rooms’ not only about the poems and the process but about his saxophone playing and his winnings at poker. (See Slate website, of which Pinsky was Poetry Editor)

While Pinsky’s voice is fresh and engaging, access to the poet has changed since the time of Eliot, he may be willing to create a rapport with questioners as he has spent much of his life not only teaching, but teaching about the art and technique of writing. He was less than happy with this reality in the United States, that poets and writers are forced to teach in order to survive. (In conversation with this writer both in New York City & at Boston University, April 1992). It may be of some worth that the actual teaching of the process with the technique may force poets/writers to have a greater presence around their work; and it may force them to formulate concepts of creativity and its practice that they may not otherwise do.

This phenomenon, well-established in the United States by mid 20th Century was officially established in Ireland in 1976 when Thomas Kilroy, writer, dramatist and academic returned from the United States and moderated the first National Writers’ Workshop in Galway under the aegis of The Arts Council & University College Galway. (The author attended one session as a guest, May 1976). Since that time the Workshop is well-established in Ireland as a mode of analysis, stimulation, discussion, debate and at times

disagreement, the whole gamut of inter-relationship between writers at various points in their development.

Eavan Boland has aptly stated what is considered good about workshops, how they function, ideally, and what outcomes may be expected:

Workshops are useful. They address the isolation of the emerging writer. While they are in progress, they act as encouragement and stimulus and they can often put together a critique, which remains effective even after they are finished. A good workshop, perhaps because it encourages poets to externalise their own interior discourse - with all the hesitation and hunger that involves - can bring a writer to a state of crisis in relation to his or her own work. In such a state, illuminations occur and discoveries are made which effect lasting change.(Boland,1991,p.3)

As Pinsky's willingness to engage with readers and with questions indicates an importance of the discussion of the creative process and an engagement with it; therefore it is not surprising to find many other writers thus engaged. Again, it may be as a direct result of teaching creative writing, but it may also be a reflection of the interest in the process. This observation is made by reflecting upon the number and title of books written and published by creative writers in the recent past. There are many books published on the art and craft of poetry as well as the art and craft of other genres.

3. 6 Heller

Generally writers, commentators, critics inter alia, tend to describe creativity rather than explain it. The American poet, Michael Heller (born 1937) felt that:

the tenor of contemporary civilization is marked by its uncertainty, its hesitant mood on matters both cultural and political. Poetry, ever sensitive to the nuances of its surroundings, must limn or bode forth the environmental conditions out of which it arises. That poets, those presumed antennae of the race, might be picking up the signals and putting them somehow into the work seems only too obvious. (Heller, 2005,p.xiii)

Heller was imbued with the sadness of post-warring 20th Century Europe and US. He was imbued with the great uncertainties and that overwhelming sense of loss when he wrote:

Poetry is essentially bent on deconstructing its own presuppositions in order to be open to the uncertainty it had first come to. ‘The Uncertainty of the Poet’ even as it conveys to us our palpable disease, reminds us all that completions and all moments of rest and stasis, are only new opportunities for beginnings. The next poem is always the aim of the prior poem, and this is how poetry develops, not by offering us truth upon truth, but by reminding us that truth is always passing into a lie. (Heller, 2005, pp. 29-30)

3.7 Stevens

To a certain degree there are echoes of a similar ennui in Wallace Stevens when he wrote in 1942 of the strange reality of the modern especially in relation to poetry:

Modern reality is a reality of decreation, in which our revelations are not the revelations of belief, but the precise portents of our own powers. (Stevens, 1942, p.29)

It is notable that Stevens should have felt the entire process in 1942 as a process of 'decreation', and that before the full horrors of WWII were known from Europe or before the atomic bomb had been dropped in Japan.

3.8 Oppen

In those decades another view was expressed by the poet, George Oppen. He attempts to outline the kind of mind necessary for the task of poetry writing and thereby he touches upon what might constitute the creative mind:

The type of mind necessary to the artist, or simply the mind of interest, is touched always by experience, by particulars; cannot remain within dogma, no dogma but this which is not dogma but another and overwhelming force which we speak of or speak of nothing, something like that, maybe in order not to speak of any kind of *correctness* other than awe. (DuPlessis, 1990, p.231)

3.9 Canetti

Much later in the century, Elias Canetti would express it all as: ‘the act of naming is the great and solemn consolation of mankind’. (Canetti, 1994, p.13) Perhaps that is a good definition of creativity when written work is concerned, perhaps it could include the sciences too – discoveries, inventions etc – as all creative undertakings and outcomes may well be a form of naming; shorter in some cases, much longer in others. By transferring that analogy to the visual and plastic arts, perhaps all art might be viewed as a ‘naming’ without being restricted to a mere ‘representational’ position. Naming in and of itself can be a very complex matter.

3.10 Gallant

Also in the 1990’s, Mavis Gallant, a fiction writer, described the drive of the fiction writer as a creative undertaking, with perhaps a slight implication of the stereotypical definition of the creative which allows for a certain instability of mind:

I still do not know what impels anyone sound of mind to leave dry land and spend a lifetime describing people who do not exist. If it is child’s play, an extension of make believe – something one is frequently assured by people who write about writing – how to account for the overriding wish to do that, just that, only that, and consider it as rational an occupation as riding a bicycle over the Alps? (Gallant, 1996, p.2)

3.11 Levi

Primo Levi, a chemist as well as a writer, reduced the writing process and thereby the creative process to a carbon atom, which has motion, is invisible, is common not just to humans, but is fundamental to all life:

I will tell you just one more story, the most secret, and I will tell it with the humility and restraint of him who knows from the start that his theme is desperate, his means feeble, and the trade of clothing facts in words is bound by its very nature to fail. It is again among us, in a glass of milk. It is inserted in a very long complex, long chain, yet such that almost all of its links are acceptable to the human body. It is swallowed; and since every living structure harbours a savage distrust toward every contribution of any material of living origin, the chain is meticulously broken apart and the fragments, one by one, are accepted or rejected. One, the one that concerns us, crosses the intestinal threshold and enters the bloodstream: it migrates, knocks at the door of a nerve cell, enters, and supplants the carbon which was part of it. This cell belongs to a brain, and it is my brain, the brain of the *me* who is writing; and the cell in question, and within it the atom in question, is in charge of my writing, in a gigantic miniscule game which nobody has yet described. It is that which at this instant, issuing out of a labyrinthine tangle of yeses and nos, makes my hand run along a certain path on the paper, mark it with these volutes that are signs: a double snap, up and down, between two levels of energy, guides this hand of mine to impress on the paper this dot, here, this one. (Levi, 1984, pp.232-3)

This view based on intricate chemistry is probably not very attractive to most sensibilities and hardly fits at all within a post-Romantic ideology of genius. Yet, it is another view, though Levi says that no one has yet described the ‘gigantic miniscule game’, he is in fact describing it as he writes. He is not merely describing the complex bio-chemical processes, but he is also describing the writing process – although from a particular scientific

perspective – and thereby the creative process. Generally, the classical education did not include the sciences.

Perhaps because 20th Century education has included the sciences, not just mathematics, then writers and artists may find it simpler to go to the sciences for analogies of the creative and writing processes. Perhaps too these microscopic worlds may be viewed as ‘alternate worlds’ without carrying the stigma of fantasy.

3.12 Atwood

Margaret Atwood in her Empson Lectures notes the shift of divine emphasis and association from image, and certain words, icons; ‘sacred in what they pointed to not sacred in themselves’. Then all of these became allegorical or ‘stand-ins’ for the Real Thing – or more precisely the Real Presence of God. After Newton and various other insights into the natural world, God the Maker was lost sight of: a landscape was a landscape and nothing more. It all became human centred with an inference that God had made it all originally, but did not at all intrude upon the world now. Then God the Creator ‘crept back’ into the realm of Art in the 19th Century, in Western World terms, so that there was a mystic element and sacred spaces were part of the creation of the work of art. (Atwood, 2003, p.53)

3.13 Ginzburg

Another Italian, not a chemist like Primo Levi, but a social historian: Carlo Ginzburg has this to say about narrative or the story and where it might come from:

To narrate means to speak here and now with an authority that derives from having been (literally and metaphorically) there and then. Going into the beyond, returning from the beyond. In participation in the world of the living and of the dead, in the sphere of the visible and of the invisible, we have already recognized a distinctive trait of the human species. What we have tried to analyse here is not one narrative among many, but the matrix of all possible narratives. (Ginzburg, 1991, p.307)

3.14 Attridge

When Derek Attridge was asked if creative writing can be taught, he reiterated his points with regard to creativity *per se*:

A great deal, but not everything, can be taught, whether one thinks in terms of classes in creative writing or in terms of what one learns by reading widely. In *The Singularity of Literature*, I describe the process whereby an inventive work comes into being as both an act and an event: in the act of composition the writer draws on what she or he has learned, and the more there is to draw on the better; but for true inventiveness (my term for creativity that makes a difference in the world) something also has to happen, an event that is as mysterious to the writer as it is to anyone else. There's never any guarantee that it will happen, but it seems to require as a minimal condition an alertness, a receptivity, to otherness, to that which is outside the familiar, controllable sphere within which we live most of our lives. It's an inherently risky business, though the chances of success can be increased by discipline and a willingness to learn from others. I think the old adage gets it about right: 90% perspiration, 10% inspiration. I'm

not making any distinction, incidentally, between "creative" and "theoretical" or "critical" writing here – inventiveness doesn't belong exclusively to any particular kind of writing. (Attridge, 2004, p. 33)

3.15 McGahern

Another writer, John McGahern, cites absorption as a sure test of being engaged in the creative process:

Nowadays, only when I am writing am I able to find again that complete absorption, when all sense of time is lost, maybe once in a year or two. It is a strange and complete kind of happiness, of looking up from the pages, thinking it is still nine or ten in the morning, to discover that it is past lunchtime...(Genet, 1996, p.105-6)

McGahern continues to discuss the process, reluctantly of course, almost citing superstitious fears, yet he comes to places comparable to Bloom et al that the reader has a role – maybe he does not define it as well or as clearly as the critics – in the final resort, in the final resolution of the creative undertaking:

Like gold in the ground – or the alchemists' mind – it is probably wise not to speak about the pursuit at all. Technique can certainly be learned, and only a fool would try to do without it, but technique for its own sake grows heartless. Unless technique can take us to the clear mirror that is called style, the reflection of personality in language, everything having been removed from it that is not itself, then the most perfect technique is as worthless as mere egotism. Once work reaches that clearness the writer's task is ended. Her or his words will not live again until and unless they find their true reader. (Genet, 2006, p.109)

3.16 Hugo

Richard Hugo agrees with Attridge in that ‘all writing is creative writing’ because it cannot be known what is being written until it is actually written. Yet he does not fully agree with McGahern and Bloom et al with regard to the pivotal role of the reader in the process: ‘It is assumed that reading naturally precedes writing, though common sense tells us that in the beginning that could not have been the case’; he feels that at times reading bears no relationship at all to writing: ‘The writing of a poem or story is a creative act and by “creative” I mean it contains and feeds off its own impulse. It is difficult and speculative to relate that impulse to any one thing other than itself...I’m speaking of the impulse to write and not the finished work.’ (Hugo, 1979, p. 54).

Hugo, in his ‘Statements of Faith’ section, actually creates a compendium, though brief, of some of the thinking of writers as they attempt to describe more than explain what happens as they write:

Behind several theories of what happens to a poet during the writing of a poem – Eliot’s escape from personality, Keats’s idea of informing and filling another body, Yeats’s notion of the mask, Auden’s concept of the poet becoming someone else for the duration of the poem, Valery’s idea of a self superior to the self – lies the implied assumption that the self as given is inadequate and will not do. (Hugo, 1979, p.67)

3.17 Lowell

In an odd way Robert Lowell echoes McGahern when referring to how much the writer needs or should know about the creative process and then if s/he actually has some knowledge, how much ought to be revealed. For Lowell it might be deemed unsophisticated, for McGahern it might be a little dangerous – with regard to the poet/writer, Lowell said, ‘it is imbecile of him not to know his intentions, and unsophisticated for him to know too explicitly and fully’. (Lowell, 1987, p.23)

3.18 Bachelard

In this discussion very little has been said about imagination per se mainly because it is a whole other route of investigation and much has been written about it especially from the time of Coleridge (1817) who had much to say on the constitution of imagination. But it is of note that Bachelard places a good deal of importance on imagination as a necessary faculty in the creative process of the poet/writer:

The realist selects *his* reality from reality. The historian selects *his* history from history. The poet, in arranging his impressions, incorporates them into a tradition. In its best form, the culture complex relives and rejuvenates a tradition. In its worst form, it is the academic habit of a writer without imagination. (Bachelard, 2005, p.17)

Bachelard has much to say on dreams and imagination, the aerial quality, the sense of lightness which is achieved through an ability ‘to fly’, to get above

the earthiness of the earth. Eventually, he claims that: 'through the channel of literary imagination, all the arts are ours'. (Bachelard 2005, p.101) He also says that 'the poetic image places us (as readers) at the origin of the speaking being'. 'Expression creates being', he says, (the poetic image) becomes a new being in our language, expressing us by making us what it expresses; in other words, it is at once a becoming of expression, and a becoming of our being'. (Bachelard 1994, p. xxiii)

Chapter 4

Creativity and the Reader

Bloom is of the opinion that creativity is not merely confined to the producer, writer, and poet in literary terms and even perhaps in other forms of writing, e.g. scientific etc. (Bloom, 2002). Bloom has found a follower in Derek Attridge, who believes that a creativity is involved in writing and in reading literature. (Attridge, 2004). He believes that for a work to be truly original or inventive, it must be recognized as such by both the creator/writer and the audience/reader, and not simply by the writer/creator alone.

The reason for this is that creative writing is not only an act, an effort on the part of the writer; but also an event which happens to her/him. This conception of creativity as an event experienced both in the process of writing and in the process of reading, is central to Attridge's understanding of the term. (Attridge, 2004)

However, a consideration of Attridge's definition of creativity is worth making. He has come to an understanding of the creative process by considering the various definitions which have obtained at different times and with different emphases down the centuries. He attempts to make his definitions as comprehensive as possible and he is, therefore, forced to articulate a rather complex network of perception.

He makes a tripartite distinction to allow for a more detailed explanation:

Creativity, originality and invention ... the making of something new, surprising and unpredictable. Everyone can be creative, and importantly, creativity can still be considered 'creative' even when it has been done before and though it can be done again by others. (Attridge, 2004, p.36)

Attridge gives the example of a child painting an interesting or beautiful picture of her/his family and maintains that the child is creative despite the fact that similar pictures have been painted repeatedly by many different children in many different cultures. Of course, many similar pictures are yet to be painted by many children not yet born:

Originality requires a more unique ability to recognize cultural norms and to challenge the tension within these in order to produce something which not only the creator (writer), but also the surrounding culture find surprising and innovative. (Attridge, 2004, p.36)

Attridge believes that an understanding of past originality entails an understanding of the culture in which it was construed:

Invention is different. Not only does it challenge existent cultural norms at the time of its production; it maintains its challenge (along with its ability to surprise) in future cultures... It is lasting (though not necessarily universal) in its effect of surprise, and its recognition therefore does not require historical analysis (Attridge, 2004 p.42-43)

He speaks of the effect of the text on both the writer and the reader; the actual process of writing unearths tensions and vulnerabilities inherent in the culture in which the work is written. This element of unearthing may not be a conscious element in the writer's understanding of what is in fact happening. The writer may be greatly surprised and the act or event of reading reinforces that surprise and causes the reader to acknowledge similar cultural inconsistencies and take a fresh perspective on existing conventions. (Attridge, 2004)

He further believes that authorial intention is not wholly relevant to literary interpretation, but that the author should be recognized as a fundamental participant in the event of creativity, whose meaning extends beyond intention to include both conscious and subconscious elements. 'An invention is not wholly to be explained as a self-generated eruption in the cultural field, but has as its site of origin a mind or group of minds' (Attridge, 2004, p.102). He believes that the writer is 'an origin for textual meaning' dependent upon the further participation of the reader. He believes that because of the author's position, the artistic invention is distinguishable from natural beauty or singularity:

We may experience a natural object – a leaf, a waterfall, a cloud – as singular and other, and its singularity and alterity may produce a reshaping of our habitual modes of apprehension in the manner that we have seen is the sign of alterity, but we do not experience it as an invention. (Attridge, 2004, p.102)

Therefore, for Attridge, creativity involves a specifically human encounter, in which the process itself of creating an artwork gives to that artwork or text an ethical significance unavailable in nature. Artistic creativity, for Attridge, entails a manipulation of ideological tensions; having a social context as an essential hermeneutic element of textual meaning: ‘There is no question of defining the singularity of the poem by drawing around it a line that separates it from something that might be called its “context”. Context is already there in the words...and it is already there in my response, in so far as I respond as a culturally constituted human individual and not a physiological apparatus or a sophisticated computer’ (Attridge, 2004, p.114)

Boden (2004) makes cases for the ‘sophisticated computer’ with its very complex systems and artificial intelligence. (q.v.) However, it is important to note that Attridge sees cultural context as relevant to textual understanding, he is careful to state that this does not imply that a text is open to endless multiple interpretation and that consequently, the best way of handling a text is by giving to it a particular meaning and then using the text to support this. (Attridge, 2004)

Attridge’s thinking and his articulation of the subject is quite contemporary; he has considered the various schools of contemporary thought e.g. The Pragmatists which are based in the views of William James and up to the more recent thinkers like Richard Rorty and Stanley Fish, who hold generally that the meaning of an idea or proposition lies in its observable practical consequences with an emphasis on processes of verification. Likewise, he has considered the New Critics (I.A.Richards, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren,

John Crowe Ransom, et al) who focused on the individual work alone as an independent unit of meaning. They gave no credit to historical or biographical data in the interpretation of the work. (Attridge, 2004) In a work of literature, he believes that textual analysis is possible by showing the co-dependency of content and form. There can be no simplistic reduction of a text's meaning to its context alone. 'It is the combination of elements, rather than the content alone which allows a text to question recognized political and ethical beliefs by momentarily dissociating them from their usual pressing context, performing the ethical decisions and the political gesture' (Attridge, 2004, p.119-120).

Also in 2004, Ronald Carter, wrote about creativity and language, or indeed 'common talk' and how each person speaking a language holds the potential for creativity. (Carter, 2004). His claim is that 'linguistic creativity is not simply a property of exceptional people but an exceptional property of all people'. (Carter, 2004, p.13) Carter believes in the democratic approach to creativity and also that it is not just limited to the written word but occurs, more often than might be expected, in spoken language. He outlines what happens between speakers: 'The main creative functions seem to be in the dialogic building of a relationship of accord between speakers, the extensive repetition here creating what might be termed an affective convergence or commonality of viewpoint' (Carter, 2004, p.8)

Indeed, Rob Pope holds similar views to Carter especially in relation to the distribution and use of the term 'creativity'. He too feels that it has a far more democratic base to its occurrence and that it is not just confined to the use of a

privileged few. He feels too that everyday usage at present is ‘employment-oriented and economy-based’ and these usages limit its function and deny it playful as well as subversive implications. (Pope, 2005, p.27)

Pope makes no distinction between letter writing and poetry writing; picture painting and house painting; he is trying to eliminate distinctions between arts and crafts which are a constant debate. His own definition is:

creativity is the ability to respond to conditions, biological and social, in ways that are healthful and ‘healing’ rather than harmful and destructive. (Pope, 2005, p.76)

He further makes the case that there are recent changes in the philosophy of science, that there are two opposing views of scientific knowledge, though they fluctuate and combine in different ways and in different forms. The first view holds that scientific law is independent of language and observation and therefore ‘attempts to avoid the deceptions of metaphor and ordinary language and the habits of merely received ideas (“myths”) at all costs’ (Pope, 2005, p.173) The second view holds that nature is not independent of human observation and therefore holds that science is not a pursuit of external laws but rather it is a means towards understanding cultural assumptions and values relative to different scientific communities. This view: ‘readily embraces metaphor, ordinary language and myth as key objects of enquiry – precisely because these prove immediately accessible’ (Pope, 2005, p.173). He feels that this dichotomy is erroneous and that both views and perspectives do come together to make changes a reality in the sciences, both revolutionary and evolutionary. There must be an understanding of the laws of science and the

external world for effective creative change but there must also be an acknowledgement of the ways in which new theories are absorbed and become part of cultural and linguistic communities. These considerations are very important, especially at present, when often there can be conflicts of interest and understanding between the sciences and the humanities in terms of university and institutional hierarchies of emphasis and power. These are the contemporary realities and concerns: ‘we cannot get away from the appeals and perils of language (especially metaphor) and the threats and risks of more or less dominant “myths” (paradigms, epistemes – call them what you will)’ (Pope, 2005, p.178-9) This encompasses the natural physical sciences as well as the social sciences and the arts. It all concerns the pursuit of knowledge and what paths that pursuit should follow. Pope feels that the divide between the arts and the sciences should be bridged, not by finding a common language as such, but rather by allowing a ‘natural knowledge’ and a ‘creative art’ to both disciplines. Though the focus of both is different it should not be understood that their methods are any less creative. He makes a very interesting observation in relation to how things might be perceived today when both the sciences and the humanities are considered in relation to creativity:

It is precisely the scientists and technologists who are up there claiming to be the really creative vanguard in contemporary society, whereas the humanities people are tied – even hung-up with anxiety about the nature and function of criticism. (Pope, 2005, p.189)

Yet Pope is very heartening in his recommendation that there be a greater communication, rather than an amalgamation, between the sciences and the arts, so that existing paradigms of knowledge may be recognized and understood:

Perhaps the problem needs re-posing, maybe we need to be more attentive and sensitive to difference: not to dream so much of a “common language” (in the sense of a unitary and potentially homogeneous culture) but to look for the possibilities of exchangeable and changeable modes of communication and understanding (intensely dynamic and extensively heterogeneous) (Pope, 2005, p. 190)

It is an interesting and heartening recommendation at this point in the discussion, as much has been made of the differences between the arts and the sciences in relation to what being creative might be understood to constitute. Is it invention or discovery? Is it inspired or extrapolated from empirical evidence and investigation?

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Having considered various definitions of what the creative might be, it is clear that there are many views, opinions and perspectives on the subject. Very often they are rooted in a particular discipline or interest. It is also clear that people have committed their lives to this search and are searching still at this very moment. It is true too that there are people – Jung among them – who believe that there is no explanation for creativity. Jung himself put it rather well: ‘the creative act will forever elude human understanding. It can only be described in its manifestations: it can be obscurely sensed, but never wholly grasped’ (Jung, 1933, p. 116)

Writers and critics, scientists and thinkers have given descriptions of its manifestations. Perhaps that is the best that can be hoped for; and the very calibre of the description may be the essence of creativity when it comes to expression through writing.

There are hypotheses which have been formed, often by analogy, about how creativity takes place in human minds. According to Margaret Boden (2004, p.198) we know much more now than Koestler did with regard to: ‘a rigorous explanation of how analogical thinking is possible’. She holds that analogy is not the only sort of thinking found throughout the arts and sciences, there is induction and to some degree, prediction. There is also associative memory and computational processes. Despite Boden’s endorsement of the computer

and its evolving programs of complexity, she finds: ‘that today’s computational models of creativity are crude at best and mistaken at worst, if compared with human thinking’. (ibid, p.321) She too, like Bloom, Attridge and others, points to the fact that social context is greatly important ‘in prompting new ideas and in evaluating them after they have arisen’. (ibid)

Robert Welch makes a wonderful plea for the creativity of criticism or indeed evaluation, when it is practiced at an exceptionally high standard. He also feels that criticism has a function to plot creativity, which is an interesting position to hold:

One of the chief functions of effective criticism is to show how works of art originate in the human instinct for creativity...to speak of the act of creation is to speak of a profound movement of human consciousness as it seeks coherence, definition and self-expression...the work of art originates in the complex, delightful and awesome laboratory of being, where new forms, including those of the intellect, take shape...it (criticism) should retain a tactful sense of the supremacy of the creative act itself, by which its own discipline is informed from time to time. (Welch, 1988, p.1)

Motivation is a major factor, Boden agrees with Bloom on this point, the drive to complete the work. That characteristic of strong motivation may need to align itself with self-confidence as Bloom and others have extrapolated from the memoirs and biographies of writers, scientists and other people, either of high creativity, or as Bloom, would say ‘of genius’.

But Boden is admitting that computational undertakings are very much in their infancy; the search has just begun. Much more clarity on ‘computational architecture or the psychological structure’ of the whole mind’ will be needed. She concludes, rather poetically, that: we have some partial explanations based on close personal knowledge or scholarship...human minds are far too complex, too rich, too subtle, and above all too idiosyncratic. In a word, too marvellous.’ (Boden, 2004, p. 322)

Howard Gardner’s definition of creativity is not only apt and inclusive but it draws upon the research, findings and emphases of current investigations. He says that ‘a creative individual solves problems, fashions products, or poses new questions within a domain in a way that is initially considered to be unusual but is eventually accepted within at least one cultural group’. (Boden, 1996, p. 145)

He takes the interdisciplinary approach, which is the only approach possible, as has been made clear in this investigation, allowing for the fact that creativity is rooted in psychology, informed by epistemology and sociology. (Boden, 1996, p.146) In other words this study is not just about the cognitive and motivational elements of creation – the brain and the personality – the area or field in which the individual works must be given due importance. But also the nature of knowledge itself in different domains and how judgements of originality and quality are reached, by experts (or by a general audience) within different domains. All of these factors, singly and in various combinations, work towards providing a definition of the creative.

It is also worth noting that this search – perhaps, most searches in this field – is not exclusive or exhaustive. It may well be closer to the reality of the undertaking that this research is but a slice or a transverse section through a complex continuum of a constantly changing view and interpretation of the process of creativity or being creative.

A host of other writers and thinkers could have been chosen from the many who have expressed careful considerations of the topic. Undoubtedly, many others are, at this time, formulating their own insights into creativity; many more people will be attracted to verbalizing their findings in the reaches of time to come which may change forever the present view of creativity.

The usage of the term ‘creativity’ has increased to a phenomenal level (vid Chapter One). It is possible that the usage may wane as the fashion for it wanes or indeed if it is replaced by another resonant term, to say with panache, the intricacies of parenting, parting from your lover, aging, banking, business strategy, fourth grade slump, leadership, logic and split brains. We may in the future be ‘originative’ instead of ‘creative’ or we may subscribe to a term in language not yet conceptualised.

Following the consideration of the etymology or history of the terms, creative and creativity, it is remarkable that these terms hold a particular place of importance in human thought. These ideas have engaged the minds of many fine thinkers and these ideas continue to engage the minds of thinkers and innovators who feel that further shifts of understanding may occur with the ongoing development of artificial intelligence (Boden, 2004). Perhaps there

will be periods where many of the definitions will stand in and of themselves, where these definitions will always carry grains of truth, but the fundamentals may change again so that mechanisms other than the human mind directly, may be deemed creative by the quality of its outcomes and products. (ibid)

It is also true that psychologists and cognitive researchers admit that there is still so much to know about the human mind, its subtle and amazing workings. That is why Jung was of the opinion that, from his position, it was impossible to define artistic creativity. (Jung, 1933) His modest voice echoes through the century and yet it ought not be a barrier to research in the many different fields of study so that further clarification of human creativity may be reached.

Creativity and being creative will always hold that close position when writers and artists begin to articulate what it is they do, how they do it, what causes them to do it, what they are feeling, what they are thinking in and around their respective undertakings. Sometimes, like McGahern, they may shy away from an articulation on the basis that it is better not to question these mysterious things. Or they may feel like Eliot, Allen Tate et al, that the work is best served when the writer removes her/himself from the process in a biographical, psychological sense.

That position of removal as advocated by Eliot et al had much to do with the *mores* of the early 20th century and is not a comfortable position now for writers at the beginning of the 21st century. (vid. Pinsky)

There are many positions given, practically all of them wonderfully articulated. Perhaps Koestler's spider in pure metaphor may create that which it contemplates with a linguistic and metaphorical aesthetic that surpasses his own very fine intellectual concept of 'bisociative thinking'. Likewise, with Poincaré, though writing original in French, the grace of his prose partakes of the creative in a truly remarkable way. This is also true of Heaney in the engaging and very real clarity of his metaphor and imagery. He takes us there.

The idea of being 'taken there' links in with Bloom's view of the position of the reader as an element of importance in the equation of creativity. (Bloom, 2002)

His view is further expanded by Attridge et al when they laud a democratic approach to creativity which allows for the role of the reader in the process (Attridge, 2004; Pope, 2005)

Yet, for any writer, for any artist, indeed for any reader or any person who sets for themselves a particular task, focus or concentration; who begins a voyage of discovery, who carves out a piece of time from the vast continuum to create that piece of work which must be created, then the view of Joyce Carol Oates may be the most heartening and the most encouraging, when she says that to be creative is to complete the work. (Oates, 1988)

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Appendix A

Exemption of certain earnings of writers, composers and artists.

2.—(1) In this section "a work" means an original and creative work, whether written, composed or executed, as the case may be, before or after the passing of this Act, which falls into one of the following categories—

- (a) a book or other writing;
- (b) a play;
- (c) a musical composition;
- (d) a painting or other like picture;
- (e) a sculpture.

(2) (a) This section applies to an individual—

- (i) who is resident in the State and is not resident elsewhere, and
- (ii) (I) who is determined by the Revenue Commissioners, after consideration of any evidence in relation to the matter which the individual submits to them and after such consultation (if any) as may seem to them to be necessary with such person or body of persons as in their opinion may be of assistance to them, to have written, composed or executed, as the case may be, either solely or jointly with another individual, a work or works generally recognised as having cultural or artistic merit, or
- (II) who has written, composed or executed, as the case may be, either solely or jointly with another individual, a particular work which the Revenue Commissioners, after consideration of the work and of any evidence in relation to the matter which

the individual submits to them and after such consultation (if any) as may seem to them to be necessary with such person or body of persons as in their opinion may be of assistance to them, determine to be a work having cultural or artistic merit.

(b) The Revenue Commissioners shall not make a determination under this subsection unless—

- (i) the individual concerned duly makes a claim to the Revenue Commissioners for the determination, being, where the determination is sought under paragraph (a) (ii) (II), a claim made after the publication, production or sale, as the case may be, of the work in relation to which it is sought, and
- (ii) the individual complies with any request to him under subsection (4).

(3) (a) An individual to whom this section applies and who duly makes a claim to the Revenue Commissioners in that behalf shall, subject to paragraph (b), be entitled to have the profits or gains arising to him from the publication, production or sale, as the case may be, of a work or works in relation to which the Revenue Commissioners have made a determination under clause (I) or (II) of subsection (2) (a) (ii), or of a work of his in the same category as that work, and which would, apart from this section, fall to be included in an assessment made on him under Case II of Schedule D, disregarded for all purposes of the Income Tax Acts.

(b) The exemption authorised by this section shall not apply for any year of assessment prior to the year of assessment in which the individual concerned makes a claim under clause (I) or (II) of subsection (2) (a) (ii) in respect of which the Revenue Commissioners make such a determination as is referred to in the said clause (I) or (II), as the case may be.

(c) The relief provided by this section may be given by repayment or otherwise.

(4) (a) Where an individual makes a claim to which subsection (2) (a) (ii) (I) relates, the Revenue Commissioners may serve on him a notice or notices in writing requesting him to furnish to them within such period as may be specified in the notice or notices such information, books, documents or other evidence as may appear to them to be necessary for the purposes of a determination under the said subsection (2) (a) (ii) (I).

(b) Where an individual makes a claim to which subsection (2) (a) (ii) (II) relates, he shall—

- (i) in the case of a book or other writing or a play or musical composition, if the Revenue Commissioners so request, furnish to them three copies, and
- (ii) in the case of a painting or other like picture or a sculpture, if the Revenue Commissioners so request, provide, or arrange for the provision of, such facilities as the Revenue Commissioners may consider necessary for the purposes of a determination under the said subsection (2) (a) (ii) (II) (including any requisite permissions or consents of the person who owns or has in his

possession the painting, picture or sculpture).

(5) The Revenue Commissioners may serve on an individual who makes a claim under subsection (3) a notice or notices in writing requiring him to make available within such time as may be specified in the notice all such books, accounts and documents in his possession or power as may be requested, being books, accounts and documents relating to the publication, production or sale, as the case may be, of the work in respect of the profits or gains of which exemption is claimed.

(6) For the purpose of arriving at the amount of the profits or gains to be disregarded under this section for all purposes of the Income Tax Acts, the Revenue Commissioners may make such apportionment of receipts and expenses as may be necessary.

(7) Notwithstanding any exemption provided by this section, the provisions of the Income Tax Acts as regards the making by the individual of a return of his total income shall apply as if the exemption had not been authorised.

