Swinburne University of Technology

Dominique Hecq and Christine Hill

Creative exchanges: play as the infancy of imagination

Abstract:

This paper extends the concept of collaboration to that of exchange in order to redefine human creativity as an active, continuous process. By focusing on the notion of exchange as interaction, namely, a process of 'giving' and' receiving' (Abramovic 2015: 13) it brings us back to the fraught concept of subjectivity; it then seeks to identify some of the key conditions that enhance creativity by interrogating the difference between 'play' and 'game' (Pope 2005: 119–22). The paper draws on close readings of texts and calls upon evidence provided by case studies based on interviews with artists and scientists.

Biographical notes:

A creative writer and former Associate Professor in Writing at Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, Belgian-born Dominique Hecq has a background in literary studies, psychoanalysis, and translation. Recent scholarly publications include *The Creativity Market* (2012) and *Towards a Poetics of Creative Writing* (2015). Dominique is the author of fourteen full-length creative works. *Hush: a fugue* (2017) is her latest book of poetry.

Christine Hill is a midwife and perinatal psychotherapist in private practice. She also works as a volunteer with infants and their families in immigration detention. Her background includes French and Spanish language, poetry, and theatre studies, and psychoanalytic studies. Her PhD thesis, 'Playing with reality: representing the baby', was nominated for Swinburne University's best thesis 2014.

Keywords:

Creative Writing – Creativity – Exchange – Communication – Collaboration – Play

Creative exchanges

my best buy for the year is an alarming *creativity*
a new concept for management so business becomes
a cute gentle occupation—Nicole Brossard

To paraphrase the opening of an often-quoted essay by Roland Barthes (1977), creativity is now everywhere: it is present in schools and universities, in governing bodies, social institutions, and in cities where it thrives in the workplace, and on playgrounds in the day time. It also works out at the gym, in the bedroom, and on the internet after dark. In the global village, creativity is trivialised, commodified and commercialised. Though creativity remains a problematic concept that conjures up issues of creation, knowledge, power, responsibility, and even lifestyle, it is now valued for its prospective financial returns.

Indeed, the dominant discourse is one that emphasises innovation and productivity rather than creativity as a process. Enter the key words 'creativity' and 'innovation' into your favourite search engine, and you realise that most books published over the last fifty years fall into two broad sub-groups: those dealing with management, and those looking at the creative mind as a means of production as they emphasise the importance of 'creative knowledge environments' (Hemlin 2004). Nowhere is this more obvious than in business-oriented studies drawing on social exchange theory, pioneered by Peter Blau in 1964. Thus, even social psychologists such as Teresa Amabile, Jennifer George, and Jing Zhou tend to emphasise the utilitarian dimension of creativity (Amabile 1982, 1996; George 2007; George & Zhou 2007). Very few look beyond the social aspect of creativity in order to 'articulate how creative people work' (Hecq 2012: 10). Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, best known for his 'flow theory' (1997), also contributes to this discourse, arguing that in order to be creative, not only does one need to generate new ideas, but also to be recognised as 'creative' by peers in a strenuous work environment (Csikszentmihalyi 1999).

What does this mean for creative workers, and writers in particular?

In order to answer this question, we need to go back to basics, that is, definitions and structures. Let's start with definitions. And, after an interlude, we will move on to structures, before beginning to answer our question.

Definitions

Something relevant may be said about creativity, provided it is realized that
whatever we say it is, there is also something more and something different
David Bohm & F David Peat

What do we mean by creativity? Is it an act, a process, a concept, a myth, an ideological strategy, or all of these? Why do we seem to celebrate creativity, and why do we need to? Is creativity innate, cultural, political, economic, or a bit of each? And why do these questions matter? There is no way we can answer all of these questions here but we can begin with some observations that may be helpful.

By and large, creativity research seeks to contribute to society in the form of knowledge and innovation via specialised fields of inquiry. Typically, studies focus on how to measure creativity, how to map out the creative process, and how to increase creative potentials. But what is creativity, and how do our mental and working lives inform the works we produce? In particular, since the mind is both embodied and relational, it is worth examining how our mental lives shape and are shaped by conscious *and* unconscious processes, and how these in turn impact on our working patterns. While the division between conscious and unconscious mind may seem problematic, [2] we draw on the psychoanalytical models of Freud, Lacan and Winnicott to mount our argument that creativity is an event driven by shared engagement; any act of symbolisation entails a narrative process of self-definition. By focusing on the notion of exchange as interaction, by which we mean a process of 'giving' and 'receiving' (Abramovic 2015: 13), we hope to identify some of the conditions that enhance creativity.

We begin with definitions of creativity that are relevant for creative writing informed by established knowledge in selected areas of the arts and the sciences, and forays into a research 'domain' that widens out to include 'fields' (Csikszentmihalyi 1996: 313ff) of theory such as aesthetics, psychology, philosophy, and even politics. The aim of this section is to foster a reflection on the many definitions of creativity while questioning their usefulness in the current discourses that impact on a writer's life and work.

What we do know is that attempts to measure or predict creativity are fraught. American neuroscientist and psychiatrist, Nancy Andreasen (2005) gives the example of psychologist Lewis Terman who, almost a century ago, tested 1,000 students at Stanford (students who were later known as 'Terman's geniuses' or 'Termites'), and calculated the IQ levels of each to determine the long-term predictive value of highly intelligent children. The subjects were then followed for 70 years, and provided most interesting results in terms of creativity: it was found that, while having reasonable levels of professional and material success, very few of the highly intelligent participants ended up being writers, musicians, artists, or innovative scientists, and not one became a Nobel Laureate. However, when those who didn't quite make the cut for the original study were followed up, it was found that a significantly larger proportion of these former students were in creative fields, and that two were Nobel Prize winners. While it is clear that IQ testing cannot predict creativity, one has to ask: can it predict anything meaningful at all? To answer this question, we need to define our terms and look for different types of creativity.

From our perspective, creativity can best be described as an act, a process, or an event; and, at a more fundamental level, as a performative event whereby 'I' am aware of an 'other'. We take our cue from Lacan's later writings—only published at the turn of the century despite being written in the aftermath of May 1968 (Lacan 2001; 2005)—and from French philosopher Alain Badiou (Badiou 1998). More broadly, creativity is that which produces new knowledge. We call it an 'event' because it entails a process as much as an effect. In our field, it is that which sends us back 'endlessly to a truth outside of literature' (Blanchot 1995: 2). This truth is about subjectivity: the narrative (re)making of it. Before going any further, we want to qualify the terms 'truth' and 'subjectivity' as we understand them, at the intersection of creative writing and psychoanalysis. In the words of Charles Shepherdson:

> the 'truth'… is that we have no access to the 'real,' but are condemned to live in a domain of subjective reality,' a domain of subjective 'truth': Lacan's 'truth', no matter how unfathomable and repressed, remains nonetheless the truth of a desire—that is, of a *subject.* It could hardly be otherwise in psychoanalysis. (Shepherdson 2008: 33)

Thus the narrative precedes the author's knowledge of it. As the poet Paul Celan puts it: 'perhaps poetry, like art, is going with a self-forgotten I toward the uncanny and the strange' (2001: 406). The narrative precedes an author's conscious knowledge of what she is doing, thinking, making; and, by dint of this fact, produces something new. Even as an author writes, the process of writing itself surprises her, uncovers tensions, vulnerabilities, and joy embedded in the event of creation of which she herself might not be entirely conscious. Re-reading her own words reinstates this event as it surprises her anew and thereby requires her to take a new perspective on her system of knowledge, use of conventions, and subjective make-up. Creativity and knowledge are rooted in unconscious processes, and as such are about layering and expanding fields, rather than restricting them. In mediating the creative process birthed by desire, what flows from the source must be worked, moulded, interpreted, and understood. The process includes several periods of incubation, what Csikszentmihalyi (1996) describes in his theory of creative 'flow' as the need to go 'underground' for a while:

> The evidence for incubation comes from reports of discoveries in which the creator becomes puzzled by an issue and remembers coming to a sudden insight into the nature of a problem, but does not remember any intermediate conscious mental steps. Because of this empty space in between sensing a problem and intuiting its solution, it has been assumed that an indispensable stage of incubation must take place in an interval of the conscious process. (Csikszentmihalyi 1996: 98)

This 'interval of the conscious process' presupposes the existence of unconscious activity. It is this particular subjective dimension of creativity—the one that includes the dimension of the unconscious—which is missing from management discourses. After all, social exchanges privilege the imaginary dimension of subjectivity while management thinking secures its returns from symbolic exchanges.

This stance stems from a profound distrust of the processes and potential effects of the unconscious: those creative events which entail intuitive decisions that may have 'in(ter)ventive' (Pope 2005: 62), and therefore symbolic effects. Although the origins of creative events may at first appear chaotic, it is only because on the deepest, indeed unconscious levels of our capricious, imaginative capacities that orderly, single-minded thinking is replaced by the multi-dimensional, disorderly and infinite circulation of many different impulses channelled into pseudo-discourses. This 'polyphonous structure', as Ehrenzweig puts it (Ehrenzweig 1975: 3), arises from a superimposition of several different strands of thought upon each other. Ehrenzweig also points out that artists are obviously able to alternate between rationally determined thinking and the polyphonous structure of unconscious processes, utilising both for their purposes in new and surprising ways.

For creative writers, this polyphonous structure is channelled towards the intersection of what Lacan calls the real and the imaginary, or what literary critics call fantasy and mimesis. In an influential monograph titled *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to reality in western literature* Kathryn Hume writes:

> Literature is the product of two impulses. They are mimesis, felt as the desire to imitate, to describe events, people, situations and objects with such verisimilitude that others can share your experience; and fantasy, the desire to change givens and alter reality—out of boredom, play, vision, longing … or need for metaphoric images that will bypass the audience's verbal defences. We need not try to claim a book as a fantasy anymore than identify a work as a mimesis. Rather we have many genres and forms—each with a characteristic blend or range of blends of the two impulses. (2014: 21)

Hume's work is interesting in that it proposes an alternative approach to literature: rather than isolating fantasy as a distinct literary form, she argues for a dual vision, one that would confer equal status to mimesis and fantasy as different, but equally legitimate. She promotes and performs a 'departure from consensus reality' (Hume 2014: 21). Notions of genre, gender, selfhood, agency are here imbued by difference: there is an exchange between 'I' and 'other,' one that occurs in the writing process.

In *The Age of Genius in the Seventeenth Century and the Birth of the Modern Mind*, AC Grayling suggests that change is effected by the minds of 'geniuses', but collaboration plays a part. He believes that 'the nature of progress in European scientific thinking' depends on 'the work of many hands' (Grayling 2016: 233) and cites a dozen leading scientists from Galileo to Bohr, to note, 'Together they represent the collegial, mutually critical, peer-reviewing, competitive and collaborative community which built a new understanding of the world' (Grayling 2016: 233).

Grayling's point recalls Pope's view that creativity can be communal as well as individual and that it can be enhanced by collaboration (2005: 254–56). This may be true for some, and we suspect that this is probably more relevant to the sciences than the arts—though not necessarily, as we shall see. In the recent co-authored article, 'Slipperiness, strange attractors and collaborative sociability' (Webb & Hetherington 2016), the focus is on the conscious sociability of collaboration; indeed the dominant tropes in the paper revolve around the analogy between collaboration and contractual arrangements such as marriages. Similarly, for Kevin Brophy, whose research in theories of creativity reaches back to his doctoral thesis (first published in book form in 1998), 'collaboration in artistic production is both a norm and an uncannily mysterious phenomenon' (Brophy 2016). He sees collaboration as 'addictive', 'natural', 'contradictory', moving from private to public space, which suggests a more primordial definition of collaboration, one that would have its roots in exchanges and interactions that predate contractual arrangements. In this light, we probably need a further definer on the psychological profile of those who benefit from community thinking, collaboration, interaction and communication.

At the forefront of research into the creative mind is the work of psychologists such as Scott Barry Kaufman and James C Kaufman whose *Psychology of Creative Writing* (2009) looks at multiple aspects of creative writing, including the creative writer as a person, the text itself, the creative process, the writer's development, the link between creative writing and mental illness, the personality traits of comedy and screen writers, and how to teach creative writing. James Kaufman's *Creativity* (2009) complements the above study as it offers a comprehensive literature review on academic research into creativity during the past half-century, and draws on concurrent research carried out with Ronald Beghetto in 'Beyond Big and Little: The Four C Model of Creativity' (Kaufman & Beghetto 2009).

We are not psychologists, and so we propose to turn to James Kaufman and his team (2009) for a summary of the nexus between psychology and creative practice, which is the focus of much of his research. This is not a strictly academic publication. However, the analysis of scholarly documents from varied domains of psychology is erudite and backed up by serious research, as the comprehensive bibliography demonstrates. Chapters three and four are particularly helpful in defining creativity. Chapter three, 'Is creativity one thing or many things?' brings forth interesting questions regarding creativity and creative genius. Would choreographer Bob Fosse have been just as creative had he chosen to write? This is an excellent question to start the debate. The consensus seems to be that 'creative genius' is domain specific,

meaning that a genius is only a genius in his particular field. It is quite interesting, though, that this argument holds sway only because there have been so few trans-disciplinary geniuses—Leonardo Da Vinci and Linus Pauling being two rare exceptions, whose 'genius' spread over various fields (Kaufman 2009: 55). Backed up by research, Kaufman claims that one needs ten years to acquire the expertise necessary to make a contribution which qualifies one as a 'genius', and that said, contributors average ten years between their first work and their 'greatest'. He argues that knowledge of a topic may decrease creativity, for it lends itself to rigidity. He also highlights the fact that accomplishment is not the same as creativity; a distinction which is often overlooked, we believe. Also acknowledged is the role that socio-economic status, motivation and environment play in creativity. The chapter becomes bogged down in the middle by a post-Romantic history lesson on the many 'muses', then goes on to define and separate 'domains'. This seems at first redundant given Csikszentmihalyi's extensive work in this area (Csikszentmihalyi 1996). However, Kaufman's purpose is to present a model of his own 'Amusement Park Theory' (APT) where 'domain-specific' and 'domain-general' are the areas in which creativity in the individual can be measured (Kaufman 2009: 67–82).

In chapter four, 'Where does creativity fit in?' Kaufman examines traits such as personality, motivation and intelligence. What is vital in 'Personality' is openness to experience. Interesting here is that 'tolerance', which appears to increase over age, is a key personality component. With Kaufman's help, you can also rate yourself from 1 to 10 on a creativity scale. He argues that 'self-reporting' of levels of creativity are less reliable the less creative the person is—nothing is perfect! However, the more creative a person is, the more reliable self-reporting tends to be. This is significant, for what appears to be emerging, outside of one's immediate awareness, is a level of self-awareness which is a pre-requisite to accurately assess oneself.

When it comes to motivation, Kaufman believes that 'intrinsic' motivation is about enjoying what one does, while 'extrinsic' motivation is grounded in one's feelings that the work is of value. His view is that intrinsic motivation tends to produce better results than extrinsic motivation: doing something for the pure joy of it will usually produce a better work than doing it for a monetary reward, fame or any other external factor. While some research refutes this claim, it is generally justified with the caveat that '*intrinsic* motivation and creativity were not negatively affected by a reward' (Kaufman 2009: 93; emphasis added). In the context of creative writing, this raises obvious questions: what would be the nature of this 'reward'? Kaufman's distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic rewards does not account for the complexity of a working situation as most of us find it: we work to a mix of motivations and reward types (apart from the troubled nature of distinctions between extrinsic and intrinsic rewards), and we would be dismayed if one type was wholly removed. It is hard to imagine a situation where only one form of motivation operates, unless it is wholly biological. This is tricky terrain, especially if one straddles different fields or domains and therefore different discourses. But this is another story. One that involves history, politics, and economics. A story we wanted to reduce to its bare bones.

Interlude

> *Once upon a time, and not a very good time it was, there was a naughty little boy nicknamed Babblething. [3] Quiet at home, Babblething would not shut up in class. So, one winter night after school the teacher headed to Babblething's house to have a word with his mother. Unable to solve the 'problem', the frustrated teacher suggested a reward system where, if Babblething*

> *displayed good behaviour for a certain length of time, he would let him pick an activity of his choice. When he asked Babblething what he would like to do, he said, 'write stories'. When asked why, he shrugged and said: 'because I love to write.'*
>
> *As it turns out, the naughty little boy is now a famous physicist who leads an international team of over one hundred scientists.*

This vignette highlights the significance to the creative process of what the literary critic, Ross Chambers calls:

> situational phenomena ... the social fact that narrative mediates human relationships and derives its 'meaning' from them; that, consequently, it depends on social agreements, implicit pacts or contracts, in order to produce exchanges that themselves are a function of desires, purposes, and constraints. (Chambers 1984: 4)

Of structures and structure

> The number of structures was hard to determine from my near vantage.
> Two, four, seven, nine. Or only one, a central unit with rayed attachments
> Don De Lillo

Taking our cue from Chambers (1984), we want to suggest that creativity is most appropriately described as a transactional, and therefore active and transitive phenomenon. Transactional in that it mediates exchanges that produce change (historical, aesthetic, ethical); transactional, too, in that this functioning is itself dependent on an initial contract, an (overt or tacit—conscious or unconscious) understanding between the participants in the exchange as to the purposes served by the creative function. It is transitive in a mathematical sense—it implies a dialectic; in commonsense parlance, 'it goes both ways'. Although 'narrative' (understood as Barthes does in his 1977 essay 'From work to text' as well as in the 'Death of the author') content is not irrelevant, of course; it is the contractual agreement which assigns meaningfulness to the discourse(s) inherent in texts. At first the agreement is not signed, though already symbolically inscribed.

There should be no surprise at the proposition that narrative involves an act of exchange. In a broad sense almost any social process can be regarded as following that basic structure. During the past fifty or more decades, numerous anthropologists and sociologists have observed that humans habitually deal with one another through interrelations of giving and taking. Many different theories have been developed to explain these processes—far too many theories in fact to be summarised adequately here. In very broad terms, 'exchange' refers to any activity in which objects of value are communicated or transferred. It has become a fundamental concept in fields as different as economics and linguistics. Marx, for example, based much of his analysis on the concept of 'exchange value', according to which labour is made profitable through its circulation in the form of products. Saussure saw language and money alike as any systems of signs, which depend on conventions of equivalence and difference in such a way that a particular word can signify (stand for, be 'exchanged' for) a particular idea by virtue of its comparative relationship with other words, just as a particular amount of coinage can be swapped for a particular commodity. And Lacan devised his economy of jouissance on the basis of concepts circulated by both Saussure and Marx (Lacan 2007). Baudrillard pushed some

of this further by arguing that economic exchange really has little to do with a rational system of supply and demand. In his view, even such apparently basic notions as 'subsistence' result from a primordial code of symbolic exchange: 'For the primitives, eating, drinking, and living are first of all acts that are exchanged; if they are not exchanged, they do not occur' (Baudrillard 1975: 79). In other words, exchange takes place for exchange's sake; it is a matter not of calculating needs rationally but rather of expressing a desire to render things valuable. And this may even be true of the animal kingdom where 'intelligent exchange' has been detected (Clover 2016). The performance artist Marina Abramovic's manifesto (2015 [1997–2014]: 11–17) makes much of the desire to value relationships, including their making, changing, and breaking.

Intuition suggests that the same is true of all creative activity: that it is a form of symbolic exchange. It seems obvious that when Babblething tells us a story, he perceives there is desirable 'interest' (knowledge, perhaps, or amusement) in return for his desirable attention. Or perhaps this is the other way around. Nonetheless, we are canvassing a fairly broad notion, which doesn't explain how communicative exchanges work.

In practice, as writers we know that any storytelling transaction that occurs in written form is seriously intricate, because of the way narrators intervene in the lives of text; how they come to be in the space between author and reader. What, then, do particular narrative structures have to do with general cultural structures? How do the various circumstances of society and history, in which stories are actually told and received, enter into a text when that text cannot, by definition, reflect cultures and societies, let alone desires and fantasies, but can only perform them creatively?

The missing link: communication, miscommunication, and …

American physicist and theorist David Bohm worked to understand how conscious reality could be both 'a coherent whole [and] an unending process of movement and unfoldment Bohm 1980: x). He concludes:

> What we need is to be able to talk, to communicate ... What is needed is a dialogue in the real sense of the word 'dialogue' which means 'flowing through', amongst people, rather than an exchange like a game of ping-pong ... The first thing is that we must perceive the meanings of everybody together, without having to make any decisions or saying who's right and who's wrong. It is more important that we all see the same thing ... It is a kind of implicate order, where each one enfolds the whole consciousness. With the common consciousness we then have something new—a new kind of intelligence. (1996: 144–45)

Bohm's 'flowing through' approach to communication conjures up Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi 1996). It also gestures towards a non-linguistic conception of communication, and creativity, one that is broached by Gilles Deleuze in his essay 'He stuttered' (1997), highlighting as he does, the instability of language. Of particular interest is the point at which Deleuze suggests that language 'starts to stutter, or to murmur or stammer' and 'reaches the limit that marks it outside and makes it confront silence' (Deleuze 1997: 113). This, to us, resonates with Kevin Brophy's analysis of statements by poets who thought silence to be paramount to the creative process because it stirred our own incipient thoughts about what Lacan called 'lalangue' (Lacan 1998), the pre-linguistic babble babies delight in, a type of play which can be associated (historically at least) with Winnicott's 'potential space' (Winnicott 1971). So let's shuffle the decks.

Creativity with psychoanalysis

Eschewing determinism, the British paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott reminds us that:

> There is no sharp line anywhere in the theoretical statement of the universe if one starts with the theory of the pulsating star and ends with the theory of psychiatric disorder and of health in the human being, including creativity or seeing the world creatively which is the most important evidence we have that man is alive and that the thing that is alive is man. (Winnicott 1986b: 229)

When IBM conducted a survey of more than 1,500 chief executive officers from 60 countries and 33 industries worldwide, they found that the most important ingredient for success in a rapidly changing world was creativity. Their study suggested that many of the problems associated with 'a highly volatile, increasingly complex business environment … can be overcome by instilling "creativity" throughout an organisation' (IBM 2010).

When creativity achieves this sort of status we can be sure that it is valued and valuable. However, while we might recognise it when we see it, we struggle to reach agreement on a definition. In our collaborative project, 'Excellence in research: a comparative study', where we conducted in-depth interviews with internationally-recognised artists and scientists, we wondered if we might find some signposts to excellence. Among the many common and uncommon themes there were two that stood out: Joy, and the shared experience of creativity. The artist Michael Leunig explained it this way:

> There's a joy in playing ... in the process of feeling and thinking my way into it, and to discover, and actually a sense of creating, you know, of finding something within that you didn't know you had [and then] I'm offering something. I'm not forcing it upon you. I'm offering something that might awaken or stir something in you. (10 July 2015)

Similarly, a renowned astronomer happily admitted:

> I like that kind of creative process where you have a whiteboard and plan out ... and get smart people in, and they come up with their own clever solutions to aspects of the problem, and it all comes together and it works ... that can be a very joyful, joyful thing. (10 August 2015)

While the research biologist Sir Gustav Nossal delighted in 'the game', he also emphasised the contributory role of others' recognition, insisting that 'it's got to be published before it's a real discovery' (2 August 2015).

Ours is not the only project to examine 'excellent' people in an attempt to discover what might make them so. American behavioural scientist, Dean Simonton (1999) combines his fascination with Darwin and his interest in the notion of genius to concern himself with what he called 'high caliber creativity' (Simonton 1999: 2). According to The Creativity Post (2016) Simonton himself is a distinguished figure, having achieved a certain degree of excellence in his own field of social psychology to boast a Google Scholar H-index of 48.

Simonton calls upon (un-named) psychologists who have concluded that creativity is 'a creative idea or product [that] must be original [and] prove adaptive' (1999: 5–6) *as judged by the recipients of the idea or product* (our emphasis). He tells us that this points to the 'interpersonal or sociocultural' dimension of creativity but, by emphasising the 'evaluation' (1999: 6) of the creative work, he reduces creativity to an object that appears to move in one direction only.

In an entertaining riposte to Simonton's thesis that creativity can be explained by Darwin's theory of evolution, the developmental psychologist, Howard Gardner argues against the idea that creativity is simply about problem-solving. He maintains that this is only one of 'five distinctly separate varieties of creative behavior' (Gardner 1999); the others are theory development, the making of a lasting example of a genre, the formal performance, and the do-or-die contest. In a self-deprecating example—and perhaps a smirking reference to Simonton's 'high-caliber creativity'—he goes on to demonstrate that even 'little C creativity' (np) has merit. Gardner does certainly not have all the answers but what distinguishes his creative idea from that of Simonton's creative idea is that Gardner is not afraid to put himself inside the creation to offer us a creatively self-referential piece of writing. Using subtle humour to engage the reader, he draws attention—perhaps unconsciously—to the essentially dynamic nature of creativity.

This shared engagement between people is, we suggest, what drives creativity. The brain shows us how. Furthering the idea that there is a biological imperative for collaboration, British psychiatrist and writer, Iain McGilchrist explains:

> One of the standard psychological tests that is supposed to measure creativity is the Remote Association Test, an expression of the belief that creativity requires the ability to make association between widely different areas or concepts ... Since the left hemisphere actually inhibits the breadth of attention that the right hemisphere brings to bear, creativity can increase after a left hemisphere stroke and not just in sensory qualities but [also] numerous intellectual and affective components. Certainly there is plenty of evidence that the right hemisphere is important for creativity ... But this is only part of the story. Both hemispheres are importantly involved. *Creativity depends on the union of things that are also maintained separately—the precise function of the corpus callosum, both to separate and connect; and interestingly, division of the corpus callosum does impair creativity.* (McGilchrist 2009: 41–42; emphasis added)

Psychoanalysis, with its beginnings in biology, is very much about the union of separate things (in this case, human beings), starting with the first relationship—that of infant and mother, or primary attachment figure. Psychoanalytic theorists offer a range of perspectives on creativity. Here we will briefly consider the work of Freud, Klein, Winnicott, and Lacan.

One could say that, in developing the theory of psychoanalysis Freud demonstrated a great deal of creativity. The lively writing evident in his case histories is another example of his creative streak. Yet he considered himself a scientist, and for him, creativity was associated with artists. Confessing 'I am no connoisseur in art ... Nevertheless works of art do exercise a powerful effect on me' (Freud 1989 [1914]: 523), Freud shows both his ignorance of and passivity towards the particulars of art, and his interest in and openness to its emotional impact:

> In my opinion what grips us so powerfully can only be the artist's *intention* in so far as he succeeds in expressing it in his work and in getting us to understand it. I realise that this cannot be merely a matter of *intellectual* comprehension; what he aims at is to awaken in us, the same emotional attitude, the same mental constellation which produces in him the impetus to create. (Freud 1989 [1914]: 524)

At the beginning, Freud seemed concerned only with the pathology of creative artists as he attempted to interpret the content of their work. Remnants of this classical bias remain today when we occasionally see the formal appreciation of a work of art or piece of writing filtered through the prism of the artist's supposed neuroses. However, with his description of the primary process, where reality and phantasy coincide, and his explication of the joke

mechanism, which involves a shared pleasure in 'getting it', Freud sets the scene for further developments in psychoanalytic understandings of the creative process.

Freud tells us that art is 'a path that leads back from phantasy to reality' (1916: 423). He describes 'the true artist' who understands how to work with his day-dreams and shape his material into 'a faithful image of his phantasy', temporarily overcoming repressions by adding 'a large yield of pleasure' (1916: 424). In this way the artist 'makes it possible for other people once more to derive consolation and alleviation from their own sources of pleasure in their unconscious which have become inaccessible to them' (1916: 424).

This description of the potential to move to and fro between phantasy and reality created a precedent that enabled psychoanalytic theory to grow, to change, and to have new creative thoughts. Melanie Klein was the first to seriously shift the thinking away from Freud's understandings of the life and death instincts. She understood unconscious phantasy to be 'a core primary activity ... continually interacting with perception, modifying it but also modified by it' (in Segal 1991: 30). Her observations of infants and children enabled her to theorise early psychic development, starting with the persecutory anxiety that defines the paranoid-schizoid position, and moving to the modified anxiety of the depressive position. A full explication of Klein's theory is not necessary to make the point that her ideas opened a space for new considerations of how psychic processes 'mediate the relationship between the self and the world, [emphasising] what happens between one psyche and another, and [support] the interplay between artist and his medium, audience and the artwork' (Glover 2009: 22). The psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell puts the concept simply: 'Phantasy emanates from within and imagines what is without, it offers an unconscious commentary on instinctual life and links feelings to objects and creates a new amalgam: the world of imagination' (1986: 23).

In Klein's first paper on art, she considers the role of anxiety and the creative impulse. Like Freud, she is more interested in interpreting the content and advancing her theory than reflecting on the form of the work or her feelings in response to it. In fact, she has no personal, physical connection to the actual works she cites, relying instead on third party accounts—a newspaper review of Ravel's opera, and a writer's story about a painter. She understands the little boy in the opera to be experiencing 'primary sadism' (1929: 87) complicated by the Oedipus conflict which compounds his anxiety. The fear of castration is imagined to be a real assault and experienced as punishment, which then allows the boy 'to conquer his sadism by means of pity and empathy' (1929: 89). Klein is struck by 'the profound psychological insight of the author of the libretto' (1929: 89)—the French writer, Colette—but shows no curiosity towards the writer's creative process. The story of the painter is also linked to the castration complex and Klein concludes that the making of art can be understood as a reparative act designed 'to make good the injury psychologically done to the mother' (1929: 93).

Psychoanalyst Hanna Segal puts it this way:

> The artist's need is to recreate what he feels in the depth of his internal world. It is his inner perception of the deepest feeling of the depressive position that his internal world is shattered which leads to the necessity for the artist to recreate something that is felt to be a whole new world. That is what every major artist does—creates a world. (1991: 86)

Winnicott might add that the important thing about this created world is that it is made to be shared, because it is only through shared experience that meaning can be found, an idea further developed by Paul Pruyser in *The play of the imagination: toward a psychoanalysis of culture* (1983). Klein's interpretation fails to recognise that the opera and the story were made to be

shared with an audience and readers. Moving away from Freud's focus on content and Klein's on reparation, Winnicott became convinced that form gives meaning to content, and that one's environment is central to form:

> We find that individuals live creatively and feel that life is worth living or else they cannot live creatively and are doubtful about the value of living. This variable in human beings is directly related to the quality and quantity of environmental provision at the beginning or in the early phases of each baby's living experience. (1971: 71)

Through his work with babies and mothers Winnicott developed a theory of creativity and play where the mutuality of our very first experiences provides a template for our future creative life. For Winnicott, creativity is 'the doing that arises out of being' (1986a: 39) but being is only possible in the context of a relationship. He describes how, at the beginning, the baby has no understanding of mother as a separate being and so 'creates' the breast as required because the 'good enough mother' (Winnicott 1965 [1960]: 145) provides her breast more or less as required. This 'gives the infant the *illusion* that there is an external reality that corresponds to the infant's own capacity to create' (Winnicott 1971: 12). The mother can do this because she can identify with her baby; she can 'find the poet that is in herself in him' (Davis and Wallbridge 1981: 109). As the baby grows, the mother gradually disillusions the baby by not always providing the breast when it is wanted. This allows the possibility for the baby to 'create' something else – a thumb or fist to suck, a soft toy to hold, or a blanket. Winnicott positions this possibility and act of creation in an 'intermediate area of experience' (1971: 14) or 'potential space' (1971: 107)—a situation where one's inner world and external reality overlap in time and in space. With enough of these repeated experiences, the baby develops trust in her/his relationship with mother, and grows into a person who continues to be able to re-discover potential space between self and others, a space to play and to create. When it comes to a work of art 'The creation stands between the observer and the artist's creativity' (Winnicott 1971: 69), in the transitional sphere of 'the illusionistic world' (Prusyer 1983: 106).

Winnicott tells us that we understand and create the world through our relationship with its tradition and with each other: 'The interplay between originality and the acceptance of tradition [is] the basis for inventiveness [and] one more example ... of the interplay between separateness and union' (Winnicott 1971: 99). There is no talk of big C or little c creativity here, no measurements of IQ or success, and no need for Kaufmann's ten years of hard labour. Winnicott insists that the potential for creativity is a human right; how each one of us make use of it, develop it, find joy in it, and has it acknowledged and rewarded depends on our environment at the very beginning, and then, every day of our lives .

Whatever Winnicott may have thought of the clever linguistic games of (post) structuralist writing, he would, no doubt, have recognised the creation of a potential space that allowed the games to be played out. [4] We see the paradox of separation and union re-appear in the work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and French psychoanalyst Félix Guattari who herald the process of their own collaboration by introducing their joint work, *Anti-Oedipus* with this line from Henry Miller's *Sexus*: 'We must die as egos and be born again in the swarm, not separate and self-hypnotized, but individual and related' (2013: 1). We can also see how, despite their quarrel with Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari pay homage to his ideas and even rhetoric, especially with respect to his conception of subjectivity as a 'swarm' of signifiers (Lacan 1998: 143).

For Lacan, creativity of the writerly sort involves both the ego and the subject. This disjunction foregrounds the question of the relation between writer and text, speaker and utterance. Through a pervasive interest in the connections between the unconscious and language,

including poetic diction, Lacan came to rethink subjectivity in poetic terms. A key text, in this respect, is *Lituraterre* (Lacan 2001), which presents creativity as an event, that is, as a process as much as an effect and, thereby, a product as well. This text anticipates his final theory that creativity is really a question of 'know-how', or savoir-faire, as he convincingly demonstrates in his twenty-third seminar devoted to James Joyce (Lacan 2005: 133). This 'know-how' entails a praxis, that is, a practice in command of the operative terms of its own agency. In other words, it is a practice that knows—yet doesn't know—what it is doing. Ultimately, such a practice knows how its effects can be produced and, thus, leaves aside any recourse to the improvised, intuitive or irrational. Few creative writers would disagree with this.

Our project not only speaks to the collaborative process, but is also a creative, working example of it—a playful collaboration in both form and content. At times it felt chaotic, not knowing where it was going or how, but as Ehrenzweig (1957) reminds us, this is just another kind of order. We have borrowed both the artist's 'wide focussed stare' (Milner 1988: 410n) and Freud's free-floating attention to produce an article that does not (and cannot) explain exactly what is creativity; to do so would kill it. We prefer to keep it alive through play. A thoughtful paper provokes new thoughts, shared in turn, to ensure a lively continuity of the exchange of ideas, an exchange that is very much more than simple transfer of knowledge. To paraphrase the psychoanalyst Adam Phillips (2012): for creativity to be possible, what we need is not to 'get it', but rather to 'not get it'. In that space of not getting it, the creative imagination can keep at it.

Endnotes

[1] Some of this research has since been published in a special issue of *Axon*. See *Axon: The poetics of collaboration* 10, http://www.axonjournal.com.au (accessed 1April 2016)

[2] We are aware of other models for understanding the conscious and unconscious mind. It was the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty who, in *La Structure du comportement* (1941) rekindled the ancient problem of the dualism between soul and body and, later expanded on this in his *thèse d'État*, *La Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945) where he first put forward the idea of an embodied mind. Merleau-Ponty's ground-breaking work has has had an impact across numerous disciplines, including psychology and psychoanalysis, no less on Lacan (1998). More recently, Iain McGilchrist's *The Master and his Emissary* (2009), referred to later in terms of collaboration between left and right brain hemispheres, is enlightening, while the work of Antonio Damasio and Benjamin Libet throw quite a different light again on the nature of the unconscious mind.

[3] The reader will not doubt recognise the homage to James Joyce whose opening to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* it emulates and contradicts. See Joyce, J 1969 *A portrait of the artist as a young man*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.

[4] Rob Pope reminds us of the difference between 'play' and 'game'. He writes: 'The dominant ancient Greek view of the relation between play and game is articulated by Plato. In his *Phaedrus* (c.360 BCE), he firmly distinguishes 'play' (*paedia*) from 'game' (*ludus*) and ranks them hierarchically. 'Play' he sees as unstructured and lacking in rules and goals, and as basically an activity for children—*mere* child's play. 'Games', however, have structured rules and roles, and have some determined end in view (Pope 2005: 119) Pope goes on to trace how Plato's view has evolved over time and how '*ludus'* has superseded '*paedia'* over time. This is interesting, no less because the artists we interviewed favoured the word 'play' while the scientists insisted on the need to 'play the game'.

Works cited

Abramovic, M 2015 *Private archaeology*, Hobart: Museum of Old and New Art

Amabile, TM 1982 'Social psychology of creativity: A consensual assessment technique', *Journal of personality and social psychology* 43: 997–1013

Amabile, TM 1996 *Creativity in context*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press

Andreasen, N 2005 *The creative brain*, Washington: The Dana Press

Badiou, A 1998 *Being and event*, London & New York: Continuum

Barthes, R 1977 *Image, music, text* (trans S Heath), London: Fontana

Baudrillard, J 1975 *The mirror of production* (trans M Poster), St Louis: Telos Press

Blanchot, M 1995 *The work of fire*, Stanford: Stanford University Press

Bohm, D 1980 *Wholeness and the implicate order*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Bohm, D 1996 *On creativity*, London: Routledge

Bohm, D and FD Peat 2010 *Science, order, and creativity*, Hoboken: Taylor & Francis

Brophy, K 1998 *Creativity: Psychoanalysis, surrealism and creative writing:* Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press

Brophy, K 2016 'On recognising collaboration', http://www.axonjournal.com.au/issue-10/recognising-collaboration (accessed 1 April 2016)

Brophy, K, M Carroll, P Magee, and J Webb 1015 'Poetic judgement: Findings from ARC discovery project number 130100402', Plenary session delivered at the 20th conference of the AAWP, Swinburne University (1 December)

Brossard, N 2013 *A tilt in the wondering*, Montreal: Vallum Chapbook Series 15

Celan, P 2001 *Selected poems and prose of Paul Celan* (trans John Felstiner), New York: Norton

Chambers, R 1984 *Story and situation: Narrative seduction and the power of fiction*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Clover C 2016 'Cross-disciplinary creative research methods', Guest lecture, Swinburne University of Technology (11 May)

Csikszentmihalyi, M 1996 *Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*, New York: Harper Perennial

Csikszentmihalyi, M 1999 'Implications of systems perspective for the study of creativity', in *R* Sternberg (ed), *Handbook of creativity*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 313–38

Davis, M and D Wallbridge 1981 *Boundary and space*, New York: Brunner/ Mazel

Deleuze, G 1997 'He stuttered', in *Essays critical and clinical* (trans DW Smith & MA Greco), Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press

Deleuze G & Guattari F 2013 *Anti-Oedipus* (trans R Hurley, M Seem, and H Lane), London: Bloomsbury

Ehrenzweig, A 1957 'The creative surrender', *American imago* 14.3: 193–210

Ehrenzweig, A 1975 *The psychoanalysis of artistic vision and hearing: An introduction to a theory of unconscious perception*, London: Sheldon Press

Freud, S 1989 [1914] 'The Moses of Michelangelo', in P Gay (ed), *The Freud reader*, New York: WW Norton and Company

Gardner, H 1999 'Was Darwin's creativity Darwinian?' *Psychological inquiry* 10.4: 338–40

George, JM 2007 'Creativity in organisations', in JP Walsh & AP Brief (eds), *The academy of management annals*, vol. 1, New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 439–77

George, J M & J Zhou 2007 'Dual tuning in a supportive context: Joint contributions of positive mood, negative mood, and supervisory behaviors to employee creativity', *Academy of management journal* 50: 175–208

Glover, N 2009 *Psychoanalytic aesthetics: An introduction to the British school*, London: Harris Meltzer Trust

Grayling, AC 2016 *The age of genius in the seventeenth century and the birth of the modern mind*, London & New York: Bloomsbury

Hecq, D 2012 *The creativity market: Creative writing in the 21st century*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters

Hemlin, Sven (ed) 2004 *Creative knowledge environments: The influences on creativity in research and innovation*, London: Edward Elgar Publishing

Hume, Kathryn 2014 [1984] *Fantasy and mimesis: Responses to reality in western literature*, New York: Routledge

IBM 2010, 'Global CEO study', http://www-03.ibm.com/press/us/en/pressrelease/31670.wss (accessed 10 March 2016)

Joyce, J 1969 [1916] *A portrait of the artist as a young man*, Harmondsworth: Penguin

Kaufman, JC 2009 *Creativity 101*, New York: Springer Publishing Company

Kaufman, J & R Beghetto 2009 'Beyond big and little: The four C model of creativity', *Review of General Psychology* 13.1: 1–12

Kaufman, SB & JC Kaufman (eds) 2009 *The psychology of creative writing*, New York: Cambridge University Press

Klein, M 1986 [1929] 'Infantile anxiety situations reflected in a work of art and in the creative impulse', in Juliet Mitchell (ed), *The selected Melanie Klein*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books

Lacan, J 1998 [1972–73] *On feminine sexuality: The limits of love and knowledge* (trans Bruce Fink), New York: Norton

Lacan, J 2001 [1971] *Autres écrits*, Paris: Seuil

Lacan, J 2005 [1975–76] *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XXIII: Le sinthome*, Paris: Seuil

Lacan, J 2007 [1969-70] *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII: The other side of psychoanalysis* (trans R Grigg), New York & London: Norton

Leunig, M 2015 Interview (10 July)

McGilchrist, I 2009 *The master and his emissary*, New Haven: Yale University Press

Merleau-Ponty, M 1941 *La structure du comportement*, Paris: Gallimard

Merleau-Ponty, M 1945 *La phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris: Gallimard

Milner, M 1988 *The hands of the living god*. London: Virago Press

Mitchell, J 1986 *The selected Melanie Klein*, London: Penguin Books

Nossal, G 2015 Interview (12 August)

Phillips A 2012 *Missing out*, Harmonsdworth: Penguin Books

Pope, R 2005 *Creativity: theory, history, practice*, London: Routledge

Pruyser, PB 1983 *The play of the imagination: Toward a psychoanalysis of culture*, New York: International Universities Press

Segal, H 1991 *Dream, phantasy and art*, London: Routledge

Shepherdson, C 2008 *Lacan and the limits of language*, New York: Fordham University Press

Simonton, DK 1999 *Origins of genius: Darwinian perspectives on creativity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

The Creativity Post 2016 'Dean Keith Simonton, PhD', http://www.creativitypost.com/advisors/bio/dean_keith_simonton_ph.d (accessed 27 March 2016)

Webb, J & P Hetherington 2016 'Slipperiness, strange attractors and collaborative sociability', *Axon* 10, http://www.axonjournal.com.au/issue-10/slipperiness-strange-attractors-and-collaborative-sociability (accessed 1 April 2016)

Winnicott, DW 1965 [1960] 'Ego distortion in terms of true and false self', *The maturational processes and the facilitating environment*, Madison, CT: International Universities Press

Winnicott, DW 1971 *Playing and reality*, London: Routledge

Winnicott, DW 1986a 'Living creatively', in *Home is where we start from*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 39–54

Winnicot, DW 1986b 'Freedom', in *Home is where we start from*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 228–38