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A search for a creative pedagogy: How research can inform teaching practice in creative writing

Abstract
This essay begins by placing learning style theory in context and then looks at three aspects of learning style theory: deep and surface processing, relevancy, and field dependence and independence. The central research question in this essay has two parts. Firstly, can research into learning style theory inform a search for a creative pedagogy? Secondly, within the academic discipline of Creative Writing, how can research inform teaching practice? To answer these questions I read three texts (Dalton and Smith 2005, Coffield et al 2004, and Hammond et al 2003) which give an overview of the application of learning style theory in an academic environment. These texts avoid categorisation of individuals and instead discuss practical application of research. I argue that, as such, they are part of an emerging tradition, fuelled by the Internet, involving the creative exchange of ideas. I use case studies to look at my own teaching practice, as it seems appropriate to include reflexivity as a methodology.
Keywords: creativity, creative pedagogy, learning style theory.

Introduction

This essay explores ideas about learning in relation to creativity. It describes the second part of my research into both the epistemology and etymology of 'creative' as it operates and intersects with 'writing'. The first part of the process was reflexive: I looked at my own creative processes and broke them down into small steps to discover what it was I did when I claimed to write creatively. I have written about that discovery elsewhere (Tondeur 2009; Tondeur 2012a), for instance, by looking at the reiteration of the clichéd question 'can creative writing be taught?' The second part of my search for a creative pedagogy, which I describe in this essay, comes from a reading of learning style theory and from further reflexivity, in relation to particular case studies. I hypothesised that some of the discourses prevalent in learning style theory would enable me to describe both creative practice and creative writing [1].

Because they provide a useful overview of learning style theory, in this essay I refer to *Learning Styles and Pedagogy in Post-16 Learning* written in 2004 by Frank Coffield, Kathryn Ecclestone, Elaine Hall, and David Moseley (at London, Newcastle and Exeter respectively), *Getting to Grips with Learning Styles* written in 2005 by Jennifer Dalton and Peter Smith at Deakin, and *Applying Psychology Disciplinary Knowledge to Psychology Teaching and Learning* written by Nick Hammond, Annie Trapp and Lucy Zinkiewicz at the University of York in 2003.

The terminology does vary slightly in the material under interrogation, but by *learning style theory*, I mean the ideas that have grown out of thinking about cognitive development (see Coffield et al 2004, Cools & Rayner 2010, Pritchard 2008 and Sternberg 1998, for instance) and that have been applied to the interactions that take place when an individual learns. I should add, as a brief caveat to that idea, that feels problematic that much writing about learning style models focuses on the individual learner, or at least appears to do so. I return to this idea at the end of the essay.

I begin by contextualising learning style theory and follow that by discussing three of the ideas arising from my research that most closely relate to my creative writing teaching, and in particular, the aspects of that pedagogy that relate to teaching creativity. I start with deep and surface processing, then I look at relevancy, and field independence / dependence. As reflexivity is a key aspect of creative practice, I have included case studies based on my own engagement with students.

Where did learning style theory come from (and where is it going)?

Learning style theory has gained a reputation for being outmoded. The idea that one can test students to understand the way in which they learn is either reductive or the resulting strategies are difficult to implement. There are so many different ways of learning, it would be impossible to consider every aspect of the shifting and contradictory needs which occur when learning or teaching, for oneself, or one's colleagues or students. It is also notable that, although we may *prefer* and *automatically use* a particular strategy, it is not usually advantageous to use or know about only that strategy.

Learning Styles and Pedagogy in Post-16 Learning argues that research into learning style theory is complicated because it is not a unified discipline. Their own review 'identified 71 models of learning styles' many of them adaptations and interpretations of each other, and 'categorised 13 of these as major models' (Coffield et al 2004: 1). This essay explores, or at least begins to examine, how those models can apply to creative writing pedagogy, not necessarily by respecting the origin or history of an idea, but, appropriately, by finding a creative application.

Coffield describes 'a growing body of theoretical and empirical research on learning styles in the UK, the US and Western Europe that began in the early years of the 20th century and is still producing ideas and an ever-proliferating

number of instruments.' In addition there is 'a vast body of research into teaching and learning which draws researchers from ... psychology, ... sociology, business studies, management and education', with each area using its own contexts and methodologies (Coffield et al 2004: 1). Because of the different disciplines and influences involved 'leading theorists and developers of instruments tend to ignore, rather than engage with, each other. The result is fragmentation, with little cumulative knowledge and cooperative research' (Coffield et al 2004: 2).

Therefore one must own right from the start that attempting to apply learning style theory to a search for a creative pedagogy will not be straightforward and will require a filter, or translator – a role that needs to be fulfilled, in my opinion, by a creative practitioner and teacher, which is the function I have attempted to fulfil here. In other words, the teacher or lecturer is an acting subject, manifesting the results of a creative search for meaning in these texts.

A number of commercially-oriented learning style inventories or questionnaires also exist. These can appear to catagorise learners very specifically and fixedly and may therefore seem either reductive or unhelpful to the teacher or lecturer concerned. It is these that appear to have given learning style theory its difficult reputation. However, while it might be unhelpful to be categorised, permanently, as a kinaesthetic learner, for example, I could use knowledge *about* kinaesthetic learning in my creative practice (see, for instance, Gardner 1983 and 2006): and it is these kinds of avenues I wished to explore, despite the complexity and 'fragmentation' noted by *Learning Styles and Pedagogy* (Coffield et al 2004: 2). What appears to have been happening over the last ten years, at least as far as further and higher education practitioners are concerned, is that although, as Coffield notes, those creating particular models still act as if in isolation (Coffield et al 2004: 2), some educators are bringing various theories together and looking at how they might be practically useful. In doing so, they move away from categorisation of learners, or specific specialisms, and towards *application* in a given teaching and learning dynamic. The three texts I refer to in this essay are examples of this movement, and my own examination of learning style theory, as it informs a creative pedagogy, follows that emerging tradition.

The Internet in particular has allowed the proliferation of these kinds of summaries. A number of the learning style inventories are available online, such as the VARK questionnaire (Fleming & Mills 1992) as are numerous summaries of learning style theories. Of course the Internet is an unwieldy resource, and changing web address mean that a text that was once designed to be widely accessible becomes frustratingly unavailable. This, added to the problem of quality control, can make learning style theory feel even more 'fragmented', but, perhaps paradoxically, the Internet is also allowing cross-disciplinary discussions and influences where they would previously have been impossible.

How to use learning style theory in the creative seminar-room

This project's central research question was concerned with how and why one might link teaching and research in Creative Writing. In my search for a creative pedagogy, I wanted to think practically about interacting with students in the seminar room. How do I enable them to be creative and how do I teach creatively? I had already looked at my own creative practice and devised tools to share with students to that end. Now I wanted to know whether the application of research into learning style theory would also help.

It is, of course, possible to take a direct approach, involving student-led research or lecturer-led research. For example, one could discuss Kagan's theories of 'reflection-impulsivity' (Kagan 1966) or Guilford on convergent and divergent thinking (Guilford 1970) [2] with students, and examine at whether reflection or impulsivity, convergent or divergent thinking, makes one more creative. One could ask students read some of Sternberg's work on creativity (Sternberg 2006) or research Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (Gardner 1983 and 2006).

Secondly, some general themes emerge from research into learning style theory and one can apply them, specifically, to one's own situation. For example, one might look into Rita and Kenneth Dunn's work (Dunn & Dunn 2003), and at the idea of scaffolding based on the work of both William Perry and Lev Vygotsky (Jonassen et al 2004: 79-80 and Hammond et al 2003: 15-6) [3].

By doing all this we can open up a debate, amongst students and colleagues, which can include further research into creativity and reflection on creative practice, but from doing so it is still not clear how learning style theory informs the process of becoming creative or practicing creativity either pragmatically or theoretically. Instead one needs research-led *creative inferences* that can be applied in the seminar room to specific ideas or material. Over the following few pages I begin to examine some of the recurring and overlapping themes that I found most striking and, using my own creative practice as translator or filter, I attempt to make just such creative leaps.

Deep and surface processing

An approach to thinking and learning known as deep processing (Marton & Säljö 1976) links the learning to some part of the student's prior knowledge or experience, usually involves personal motivation, and leads to long term assimilation into a person's outlook and approach. Surface processing involves learning because one has been told to do so, for an assessment or examination. The student does not usually link the learning to his or her prior knowledge or experience and the learning is not fully assimilated into the learner's approach. (See Hammond et al 2003: 21 and Houghton 2004 for a comparison of deep and surface learning.) One might assume, therefore, that deep processing is more rewarding and valuable, and that carefully planned pedagogical strategies can encourage it, although I have found this does not always hold to be true, as I explain in this section.

Getting to Grips with Learning Styles draws out an important point. According to its reading of Marton and Säljö (1976), 'deep processors ... are keen to understand underlying concepts and theories' whereas 'surface processors are more likely to be satisfied with knowing the facts or techniques without necessarily developing an understanding' (Dalton & Smith 2005: 8). They argue that these ideas should not be seen as 'value judgements'. Although deep processing 'sounds superior' – and is treated as such in some literature (see Robotham 1999 for instance) –in actual fact these are two kinds of thinking that work in different situations. Dalton and Smith give the example of a competent driver knowing the

'techniques' for driving a car without a need for a deep and personal understanding of how the engine works (Dalton & Smith 2005: 8). Indeed, deep thinking may well be disadvantageous in this situation.

Coffield et al (2004) place these ideas in context, describing how 'deep and surface strategies are linked closely to [Pask's] holist and serialist approaches' (Coffield et al 2004: 90), a pertinent example of how ideas within learning style theory, although often presented as a dialectic, continually overlap with and inform one another (see Pask 1976). Another overlap can be found in ideas about 'sequential / global' thinkers (Felder and Spurlin 2005: 103) [4] and I come back to these overlaps briefly later.

Interestingly Coffield et al (2004) discuss deep and surface processing in relation to the work of Noel Entwistle, describing how 'Entwistle argues that summative assessment in higher education usually encourages a strategic approach where students combine deep and surface approaches in order to achieve the best possible marks' (Coffield et al 2004: 92-93). Strategic learning is a combination of deep and surface learning involving 'optimal engagement in the task' (Hammond et al 2003: 21) where the student feels the task is relevant to the intended outcome. Notably, the focus is on the outcome – passing a course, for instance – and not on learning for the sake of meaning, which some might call a disadvantage. The strategic approach doesn't allow for contingency, that is, learning in the moment, or unexpected learning as a result of an experience, in the way that deep learning does. Arguably contingency and unexpected learning are crucial for creative practice.

We have said that it is essentially the link between current learning and something personally valuable to the student, or prior embedded knowledge, that makes the learning deeper. Therefore one could encourage deep learning by deliberately drawing attention to the link between the material and something that is important in the students' lives or to something already understood and embedded in their thinking. That said, one might question whether deep learning is always appropriate within a creative pedagogy for four reasons. Firstly, and simply, not every technique (like Dalton and Smith's driving example) needs to be deeply understood or felt in order to be useful. For example, I might learn the technique of freewriting in a five minute writing exercise (Elbow 1998: 13-19), without a deep understanding of stream of consciousness. Secondly, deep learning needs prior knowledge to build on. For example, I could gain a deep understanding of the internal censor – Dorothea Brande calls it 'the judge' (Brande 1981: 45-60) and Natalie Goldberg 'the editor' (Goldberg 2010: 33) – by building on a previously acquired skills in freewriting. That prior knowledge might be garnered in a range of ways, not necessarily deeply. Thirdly, and tangentially, fruitful work has been done on the links between creativity and therapy, and creativity and mental health: for all creative pedagogy to involve deep learning might involve a bias towards the psycho-social or psychoanalytical or even the spiritual. Finally, the same person can perform deep, surface or strategic learning on different occasions, so the term is not as oppositional as it looks.

Both surface and strategic learners have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo in terms of the instructor's authority, whereas deep thinkers are likely to come to a more nuanced understanding of their relationship with teachers. As Jonassen et al put it, in their reading of William Perry's model of epistemological development (see Perry 1970), at the higher levels of development 'students [come to] see teachers as fellow seekers in a relativistic world who have legitimate claims to authority based on experience and expertise' (Jonassen et al 2004: 80). Students who haven't reached this level of Perry's model may be highly suspicious of a teachers who acts 'as fellow seekers', preferring the stable sense of binaries including right and wrong, teacher and student, or expert and enquirer. It will be difficult for these students to become deep learners in a creative context, if they are waiting for their lecturers to 'provide the right answer' to creativity, its meanings and applications. Indeed, it follows that a student's capacity to become a deep thinker in creative terms relates directly to the ways in which he or she has learnt to learn.

We can make two assumptions, that might seem contradictory: Firstly, one needs to employ 'deep learning' in order to come to an understanding of and reconciliation with a mature, personal creative life. In fact, the summary of 'deep learning' in the literature under consideration reads like a theorisation of the personal context required to practice creativity. Secondly, a lecturer could harness both surface and strategic approaches – especially as Higher Education encourages the strategic approach – in order to teach students techniques or tools, which they will build on later in their degree course or later in their writing lives. The following case study demonstrates how that might work.

Case study one

One of our fiction modules, developed by my colleagues, uses a version of the classic Aristotelian narrative structure. Students learn an 'eight point story arc' (Watts 2006), applying it to both writing and reading. Surface learners, 'knowing the facts or techniques without necessarily developing a [deep] understanding' (Dalton & Smith 2005: 8), may learn the arc off by heart, preferring short stories with a clearly defined arc because they 'fit' the model learnt. Strategic learners might deliberately change their style of writing to include the arc – as they see it in order to gain marks in the assessment – and discuss doing so in tutorials quite openly, while removing any such (seeming) dissention from their commentaries, which will only refer to the usefulness of the arc model. They maintain a separation between their own 'true' style of writing and our (the authority's) plot model.

A deep learner is much more likely to fight the model. These learners are also likely to have a greater suspicion of our 'authority' as instructors in creativity, because they already know creativity as a personal journey. Unless they have developed a quite sophisticated trust for their tutor, these learners are much more likely to report 'writer's block' or to complain that the plot model is stifling their creative output. I have met deep learners who would rather fail the assessment than write something (seemingly) by rote. Ironically we are inviting them to 'see teachers as fellow seekers in a relativistic world who have legitimate claims to authority based on experience and expertise' (Jonassen et al 2004: 80) but we have provided them with a plot model that seems – at first glance – to be formulaic.

What helps these learners? Reading a range and variety of short stories will help them eventually, but giving that advice doesn't help with the immediate problem. As far as they are concerned, they already read. What helps is reiterating the concept of *redrafting* or to put it another way *creative practice*. Practice is a deeply held notion: something that is personal to us, that relates to our previous knowledge and experience. In other words, when learning to write, creative practice and deep learning work hand in hand [5]. When I give these students permission to redraft, to write a first and

second draft with no regard whatsoever to the story arc, and then to use the arc as a redrafting tool, they can produce beautifully written work, and use the arc with depth and a nuanced understanding of narrative structure.

Notably all three approaches – surface, strategic, and deep – result in the students knowing the eight point story arc. Once students do further studies in narrative, the concept is embedded, and we can build on it. We can use the Aristotelian narrative structure to embed prior knowledge, and encourage deep learning – and a greater level of creative engagement – in the future. The model is also an example of the use of *constraint* to encourage creativity.

Relevance

The notion of relevancy (Kember, Ho & Hong 2008) links to deep learning because if a student views learning as relevant, he or she is more likely to forge a deep connection to it. According to *Applying Psychology*, adult learners in particular 'need to see high practical relevance in order to commit to learning' (Hammond et al 2003: 17). The idea that learning should somehow be relevant to the so-called 'real world' as if learning takes place outside reality, is used particularly in relation to employability. For instance, in *Getting to Grips with Learning Styles*, the authors argue that teachers can 'increase the relevance of course content and the levels of student engagement with it, by making clear connections between what is being learned and how it will be applicable to the workplace' (Dalton & Smith 2005: 21).

A learning point need not necessarily be practical or vocational in nature in order to be perceived as 'relevant', rather students need to be able to view it as applicable in another scenario, especially a work-based one. This suggests that understanding that a piece of knowledge, idea, skill, technique or tool can be flexible, portable and mutable is the key learning point. Relevancy isn't only about teaching transferable skills, but also learning *about* the notion of transferability.

If we concede that relevancy means how relevant the learner perceives the learning to be in relation to his or her life, this is surely complicated by at least three further ideas. Firstly, those who have learnt to adopt surface processing in most formal learning situations may not even consider relevancy to be at stake. Secondly, if a deep learner is learning for learning's sake and, especially in the creative arts, as a personal journey of discovery, then regular additional input by the lecturer about relevancy may not appear at all attractive. Thirdly, if we allow that in a Higher Education context, relevancy is another way of talking about employability, we must also acknowledge that some students may interpret relevancy in a different way: some may ask 'how is this relevant to my background, family or cultural traditions?' and others may want to learn about creativity outside the framework of traditional employment.

Given these complications, how can relevancy help in a creative pedagogy? Firstly, strategically, we can use students' perceptions of relevancy to enable them to discover a personal, and therefore deep, relationship with their own creative journey. Often this can be done when speaking to writing students about the working life of a freelance writer or about the publishing industry. Secondly, we can discuss the paradoxes presented by relevancy, particularly in relation to employment and publishing: 'do we limit our creativity by considering the demands of employers or publishers before we write?' can turn into a question about the place of the writer in the world. Thirdly, we can include the idea that a piece of knowledge or technique is flexible, portable and mutable, by demonstrating it as such, in any given creative module. Another case study will usefully illustrate these three applications of relevancy.

Case study two

Speakers from the publishing industry usually attract a large student audience in the university where I work, particularly if students view the speaker as associated with employment or publication opportunities. We want students to engage with the process by working on questions to ask over several weeks, and in discussion with their peers. We then move from rather clichéd questions like 'How do I get published?' to 'What is the role of the editor in contemporary literature?' or 'Should I change what I write to fit what publishers want?' or 'Should writers always tell the truth?' or even 'Would you ever rewrite a client's work?' Questions like these tend to facilitate discussion rather than a question and answer session with the speaker viewed as 'expert'. Secondly, we try to find speakers who can talk to the relevancy remit (employment or publication, or an immediate connection with the students' lives) but can also speak about their own creative journey.

The idea that a particular piece of knowledge or technique is flexible, portable and mutable arises directly or indirectly across the Creative Writing curriculum as students come into contact with similar structures, tools and concepts and is also something to which we can draw their attention. For example, in our first year, we talk about how both freewriting (Elbow 1998: 13), close observation and creative visualisation (Tondeur 2009) can be used as creative tools in the rest of the students' writing lives. In a sense, it is unimportant in the first year whether the students take these tools on deeply or whether they seem them as relevant. It is the ability to refer back to them as the course progresses that becomes important. By their third year, students who have heard these tools referred to in various ways, have usually understood the idea that a given skill is flexible, portable and mutable. Discussions about transferable skills in the workplace function much better as a result.

As an addendum, abstraction is another learning tool referred to by learning style theorists. A creative teaching strategy based on abstract ideas means encouraging students to learn theoretically, in a way that is (at least temporarily) divorced from practical application. (Coffield et al 2004: 24-29; Dalton & Smith 2005: 7-9). This suggestion seems at odds with relevancy, particularly in regard to employability. I would argue that abstraction used in combination with relevancy provides contrasting learning situations for students, which gives their experience more depth. For example, on a MA Poetics and Critical Writing course I taught recently, we looked at Kenneth Goldsmith's ideas about conceptual writing. Abstraction appeared to encourage contingency, that is, unexpected learning, unplanned for, in-the-moment, from-the-interaction learning about the creative process. What is more, students were able to relate that in-the-moment learning to their personal writing journeys.

Field dependence / independence

Applying Psychology explains how the Witkin's theory of field independence 'focuses on an individual's ability to 'disembed' their perception from the effects of context' (see Witkin 1962). Apparently a learner who is field-dependent will 'prefer interpersonal interactions' and a field-independent learner will 'prefer areas involving analytic skills' (Hammond et al 2003: 20).

Getting to Grips with Learning Styles hints at the idea that there are positives to both approaches:

> some people [are] able to analyse and learn things in isolation from other surrounding issues, while others needed to learn on a more holistic basis which included the surrounding matters as well. (Dalton & Smith 2005: 7)

The literature in question demonstrates a link between deep and surface processing and Gordon Pask's work on serialists and holists. *Learning Styles and Pedagogy* summarises this aspect of Pask's work as follows:

> serialists ... followed a step-by-step learning procedure, concentrating on narrow, simple hypotheses relating to one characteristic at a time [and] holists ... tended to form more complex hypotheses relating to more than one characteristic at a time. (Coffield et al 2004: 90)

Pask also discussed problems these learners come across when approaching material, suggesting that 'holists search for rich analogies and make inappropriate links between ideas' whereas 'serialists often ignore valid analogies' (Coffield et al 2004: 90). That Pask gave negatives for both ends of the continuum is useful in the current discussion, because field independence has been seen as the preferable or 'better' learning style. It is also interesting to note from the start of this section an implicit irony in this bias: field dependence, when linked to the idea of global and holistic thinking, surely encourages learners to link material 'to personally meaningful contexts or to existing prior knowledge' (Hammond et al 2003: 21), which is how we defined the – usually preferential – mode of deep thinking [6].

More useful for teaching creative writing is, perhaps, the sense that the related idea that at one end of a continuum are thinkers who automatically make (often multiple) connections to the world around them, whereas at the other are those who see the precise close detail. This is an idea, related to Pask's work, described by Felder and Spurlin as 'the sequential / global dimension' (Felder & Spurlin 2005: 103). When learning creativity, it is helpful to be able to exploit both connectivity and precision. Practicing the connection of one idea to many other ideas enables us to tell better stories, though narrative formation, and to use language in innovative ways. Practicing detailed precision will help writers to apply constraint, make choices about the direction of a narrative, and to redraft their work so as to include only the most economical and direct use of language. In other words, through creative practice, one becomes more proficient at both of these ways of thinking, even if one is suspicious of an (apparently) opposite way of thinking to one's automatic mode.

It is also interesting to note that we often default to the more analytical approach in the seminar-room, practicing detailed precision when editing someone else's work in a writing workshop or when learning and practicing a particular structure or technique. Perhaps that is because the practice of connectivity feels in turn more dangerous and more child-like, whereas analysis is what one is 'supposed' to do in Higher Education. Another case study demonstrates how this works in the seminar-room.

Case study three

I recently organised a conference on practice-based research, where I facilitated a workshop on the links between life writing and the novel [7]. I talked participants through the creation of a mind map (Buzan 2002) using different aspects of the writer's life as tools for idea generation. Each branch of the map was a different source of ideas. To each branch participants added specific details from their own life that they may previously have considered too 'silly'. I often return to the quotation where Cixous asks her reader to confront the idea that 'writing is at once too high, too great for you, it's reserved for the great, that is for 'great men'; and it's silly' and one way to respond is to incorporate the 'silly' and the mundane (Cixous 1991: 335). I described to the participants at the workshop how I resisted setting my first novel in a hotel because I grew up in a hotel, until finally accepting that this was a crucial connection (Tondeur 2003). Deliberately mapping one's (mundane, silly, personal) experience is a way of bypassing one's internal censor. I went on to share several creative tools, such as close observation and creative visualisation (Tondeur 2009) which they added to their maps. Once again, linking to the personal encourages a deep level of creative learning.

The workshop participants demonstrated their surprise at this approach and indicated that they were expecting a precision-based or sequence-orientated workshop, given that much advice on writing the novel takes that form. I shared my self-published book *How to Plan a Novel* (Tondeur 2012b) which not only describes (at least in part) a sequence-orientated approach to structuring one's ideas, but was – especially because I used it as a way of learning self-publishing – in and of itself an exercise in precision-based and sequence-orientated thinking. The life writing – or creative plunder – mind map approach and the ideas I share on planning the novel in my e-book are both examples of teaching creative writing, at different ends of this particular continuum.

Concluding thoughts: the ways in which we learn

1. The texts under examination in this essay presuppose that while individuals may prefer or automatically defer to one way of learning over another, it is important to own that one tends to learn through a *variety* of approaches, that one can adopt several deliberately as a way of learning *strategically* and that it is therefore useful for educators to use a range of pedagogical tools.

2. We learn in a community – where teachers and their colleagues as well as students think and learn in a variety of ways and come from a variety of contexts – and we apply our learning in a community. This is particularly important in the

creative arts. A search for a creative pedagogy requires one to think about community and context and not an isolated individual learner. Recent works written for the Creative Writing imprint at Multilingual Matters (such as Leahy 2005; Donnelly 2010; Donnelly & Harper 2012) and for Professional and Higher (such as Walker 2012) are creating a contemporary body of work on the notion of creative writing communities and the contexts and paradoxes involved, on which ideas from learning style theory can be brought to bear.

3. I said at the start of this essay that I am interested in the way 'creative' acts on 'writing' when we put these two words together, and in finding out more about the epistemology and etymology of 'creative' as it operates and intersects with 'writing'. As a result of this search for a creative pedagogy, are we any nearer to finding a way of talking about the 'creative' half of the epithet 'creative writing'? As many others have discovered, I find Kagan's theories of reflection and impulsivity (Kagan 1966), Guilford's work on convergent and divergent thinking (Guilford 1970) and extrapolations from Gardner's multiple intelligences (Gardner 1983 and 2006) particularly useful for expressing what I mean when I describe writing as creative.

4. The common oppositional presentation of learning style theory (see Robotham 1999 for example) can seem to set up a dialectic but it is perhaps more useful to think of these binaries as a continuum, and as heuristics that are never free from contextual complications and inferences, especially socio-cultural ones. From a reading of some of the key ideas regularly reiterated in learning style theory one can create a flexible, portable and mutable set of tools, applicable in teaching the creative arts and useful for establishinga creative learning environment and in developing creative teaching strategies. They can also provide springboards for further thinking about and research into the 'creative' part of creative writing.

Notes

[1] I gave a version of this paper in workshop format at the annual Roehampton Learning and Teaching Conference in April 2013, and put some linked resources online at: http://www.louisetondeur.co.uk/a-search-for-a-creative-pedagogy/ return to text

[2] For more on Guilford, see Atkinson et al 2012: 305. return to text

[3] I write about these ideas in a blog post. 'How to think outside your lesson plan' at http://www.louisetondeur.co.uk/how-to-think-outside-your-lesson-plan/ return to text

[4] Articles by Richard Felder can be found via Dr Felder's home page on North Carolina State University's website: http://www4.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/RMF.html and http://www4.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/Learning_Styles.html return to text

[5] A few years ago I compiled an extensive bibliography on creative practice and practice-based research for the Roehampton website: http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/Research-Centres/Centre-for-Research-in-Creative-and-Professional-Writing/Practice-based-research/ return to text

[6] Pat Burke Guild and Stephen Garger's *Marching to Different Drummers* dedicates a chapter to field-dependence and independence, relating it to an educational setting, and include a table of characteristics of typical learners at both ends of the scale (Guild & Garger 1985: 83). Notably they remove the bias towards field-independence, and their table, much cited online, is useful for an awareness of these two different modes of thinking. return to text

[7] A digital version of the Creative Plunder Mind Map we used in the Novel Writing workshop at the Practice-Based Research Conference can be found online at the bottom of this page: http://practiceprocessparadox.wordpress.com/2013/03/19/links-and-resources/ return to text

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