

## INTRODUCTION

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### DEFINING LANGUAGE AND CREATIVITY

The first thing that will become apparent to readers of this book is that questions regarding the relationship between language and creativity are complex and multifaceted, contingent on how one defines 'creativity' and how one defines 'language', neither of which allow for easy definition.

The term 'creativity' is particularly notorious for being difficult to pin down, and the authors of the following chapters define it in variety of ways, each of these ways aligning them to particular disciplinary traditions (such as psychology, cognitive sciences, sociology, philosophy, and literary studies). For some, creativity is located in the minds of individuals, whereas for others it is more a matter of an interaction among broader social forces. For some the term creativity is used to describe a process undertaken by individuals or groups, whereas others use the term to describe the characteristics of particular products such as linguistic forms, works of art, or clever solutions problems.

Although the definition of 'language' seems much more straightforward, in the context of this book it is also highly contested. Do we mean by language an abstract system of meaning making that exists independent of its use, or are we more interested in the way people use language in particular social contexts? Is language more a matter of what goes

on in the individual mind of the language user, or is it more a matter of what goes on between people when language users interact? What sorts of language should scholars interested in creativity focus on? What makes some instances of language use more creative than other instances?

Rather than dwelling on the differences and disputes among proponents of different definitions of language and creativity, I would like to use this introduction to construct a conceptual framework in which the different perspectives represented in this book can be profitably related to one another. That is, at the risk of sounding overly optimistic, I would like to suggest that that not only are all of the sometimes competing definitions of language and creativity represented in this book valid, but that they can be seen to actually complement and inform one another when situated in a broader conceptual 'map' of creativity, one which takes into account both product and process, both system and use, and both the individual mind and social interaction.

A complete picture of linguistic creativity must take into account at least four aspects of the phenomenon: 1) the materials out of which people create things, specifically the *semiotic resources* people have available for creativity 2) the *cognitive processes* that take place within individuals' minds that make linguistic creativity possible; 3) the *social processes* necessary for linguistic creativity; and finally, 4) what is created, the *product* of the interaction among the other three aspects, whether it be a textual artefact, a verbal interaction, or some nonverbal outcome like the resolution of a problem, the transformation of a social relationship, or the invention of a new social practice (see

Figure 1.1).

[Insert Figure 1.1 here]

***Figure 1.1: Conceptual map for language and creativity***

In the chapters of this Handbook you will find that different authors tend to concentrate their attention on different territories of this map, some focusing more on linguistic resources, others on cognitive processes, others on social processes, and still others on creative products. At the same time, you will also be hard pressed to find any author who is able to stay within the borders of one segment of this diagram. This is because it is almost impossible to deal with one aspect of creativity without, to some degree, taking into account the others: semiotic resources do not really exist apart from the minds that process them and the countless incidents of social interaction through which their functions and values are forged; social processes, of course, depend on the workings of individual minds and a common store of semiotic resources with which to accomplish social actions; and, as Vygotsky (1962) and his followers have so convincingly argued, individual cognitive processes are developed and scaffolded through social interactions with the aid of semiotic resources and other artefacts. Finally, creative products, whether they be durable artefacts like written texts, or more ephemeral verbal phenomena, or phenomena that may not seem on the surface to have much to do with language at all (such as paintings, machines, music, social identities and social practices) all depend on the interaction of cognitive processes, social processes and semiotic resources. Anything

that is deemed 'creative' is somehow the outcome of this interaction. In other words, it is more useful to see these different aspects of linguistic creativity not so much as territories (which need defending), but as reference points which give us access to different insights about the complex phenomenon of linguistic creativity.

### **WHAT IS CREATED?**

I will begin with the issue of the creative product since, no matter which point of reference a scholar settles on, whether he or she is more interested in language as a set of resources for creativity or in the cognitive or social processes that result in creativity, the creative product must be the starting point, for it is how we know that creativity has occurred in the first place. The creative product is evidence of creative processes and, as many of the chapters in this book show, it is often the main means through which scholars make inferences about how these processes unfold. Sternberg and Lubart (1999: 3), for instance, define creativity as 'the ability to produce *work* that is both novel (i.e. original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e. useful, adaptive concerning task constraints)' (emphasis mine). In this and similar definitions, the nature of creativity as an 'ability' is premised on particular concrete characteristics of the 'work' produced (in this case, originality and appropriateness).

But what do we mean by a creative linguistic work? Most studies of linguistic or literary creativity begin with the assumption that what we mean is some kind of verbal or textual artefact such as a poem, a novel, a conversation, or, even a single metaphor or figure of speech. Most people equate the creative linguistic work with the literary work of art, and

many approaches to language and creativity focus on using tools from linguistics as a way of exploring what makes the language of literary works of art 'literary' or 'poetic'. This was the starting point for the Russian Formalists and their followers: 'The object of study in literary science is not literature' said Jakobson, 'but "literariness,"... the specific properties of literary material ... that distinguish such material from material of any other kind' (quoted in Eichenbaum 1971: 7-8, see also Miall this volume). In this view, the main characteristic of creative language is that it is, as Sternberg and Lubart put it above, 'novel', 'original' and 'unexpected' — that is to say, that it is somehow 'different' from everyday language. This difference has to do not just with the use of particular phonological forms (rhythm and rhyme) and 'figures of speech' such as metaphors and puns, but, more broadly, with the operation of 'foregrounding' (Mukařovský 1964) and 'defamiliarisation' (Shklovsky 1917/1965). Foregrounding refers to the way authors and poets make certain aspects of their language use 'stand out' by deviating from what is 'normal' or expected'. Defamiliarisation refers to the more general process of making the familiar seem unfamiliar through language. 'The technique of art,' wrote Shklovsky (1917/1965:12) is to 'make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.' Both of these concepts — 'foregrounding' and 'defamiliarization' — are consistent with Jakobson's (1960) definition of the poetic function of language as that function which draws our attention to the 'message for its own sake'.

These concepts became the basis of early work in stylistics (see for example Leech and

Short 1981; Fowler 1996—see also Hall this volume, Maill this volume). Even as early as the late 1960s, however, disagreements among linguists and literary critics were erupting regarding the appropriateness of using principles from linguistics in the analysis of literary works of art. In the beginning the concern was whether or not such principles could actually capture what was ‘really’ creative about literature, aspects of the literary work which involve, as Bateson (quoted in Simpson 2004: 152) famously argued, not just ‘appropriate stylistic devices’ but also ‘humane value judgements’. By the 1980’s, however, the focus of the argument was not so much on why literary language is ‘special’, but why it is not. Scholars were beginning to notice that those features and devices that had been seen to set literary language apart from ‘everyday’ language actually occur frequently in everyday conversation and ‘non-literary’ writing (such as newspaper articles and advertisements). In 1986, Brumfit and Carter declared it ‘impossible to isolate any single or special property of language which is exclusive to a literary work’ (6), and later, as a result of an exhaustive study of the five million word CANCODE corpus of spoken English, Carter (2004: 66) concluded that ‘it may be more instructive to see literary and creative uses of language as existing along a cline or continuum rather than as discrete sets of features or as a language-intrinsic or unique ‘poetical’ register.’ No place is this more evident than in the frequent episodes of humour and language play that we participate in in our daily lives (Cook 2000; Crystal 1998), but it also surfaces in more serious forms of talk whenever we use language in inventive or ‘out of the ordinary’ ways.

This more ‘democratic’ view of creativity dominates many chapters in this volume,

beginning with Maybin's opening chapter on everyday linguistic creativity, elaborated on in Bell's chapter on humour, Munat's chapter on lexical creativity, and Goddard's chapter on online creativity, among others, but also finding expression in chapters on literary creativity by Stockwell, Maill and Toolen. This view, of course, greatly expands what we consider a creative product, but in so doing it introduces new sorts of challenges for the analyst. Literary works of art, at least, are bounded, durable artefacts. But the kind of creativity described by scholars like Carter and Maybin, occurring as it does in stretches of casual conversation, often go undocumented (except by linguists). There is also the problem, in such situations, of determining where the creative product begins and ends. Are only the parts of a conversation containing metaphors and puns creative, or can the whole conversation be seen as a kind of 'creative work'?

Some analysts solve this problem by focusing on particular forms of creative language such as metaphors (Hidalgo this volume) and new words (Munat this volume). Others, focus on creative language produced in particular contexts or using particular 'technologies of entextualisation' (Jones 2009). Goddard, for example, as well as Knoble and Lankshear, consider the creative language of computer mediated communication, and Carrington and Dowdell address the creative aspects of urban graffiti and 'stickers'. In all of these cases, however, what is creative about the texts that these and many other authors in this book examine is not just the originality of the language, but the way that language interacts with some sort of specific context of communication, and often with the broader social or economic contexts of the societies in which it is produced (see Jones this volume).

The importance of context in judging whether a text is creative speaks to the second half of Sternberg and Lubart's (1999) definition of a creative product. It is not enough that it be 'novel' and 'unexpected'; it must also be 'appropriate' for a particular time, place, audience and task. Of course, what is meant by context can vary from scholar to scholar and from text to text. We might, for example, speak of the appropriateness of a metaphor in the context of a poem, or the appropriateness of a poem in the context of a particular society. Similarly, we might consider the appropriateness of a joke in the context of a particular social situation (for example a wedding or a funeral), or we might consider whether the joke has broader social or political implications (revealing something, for example, about gender or race relations or being used as an indirect means to challenge authority).

This whole business of context presents a particular challenge for scholars of everyday creativity, particularly those interested in 'creative' linguistic forms like puns and metaphors, highlighting the fact that whether or not such forms can be considered creative depends very much on the context in which they are used. An apparently creative utterance exhibiting originality or making use of 'literary' techniques like rhyme or metaphor may actually be introduced into a totally inappropriate context, and an apparently prosaic utterance with nothing at all unique or 'literary' about it, may constitute a particularly creative use of language in a particular context. What this means is that creative language cannot be studied simply by isolating sentences that fulfil some formal criteria for 'literariness' or 'originality' from the world in which they were



produced, any more than the creative language of a novel can be studied by considering sentences isolated from the 'world' of the novel (the plot, setting, characters, etc.). In this way of thinking, a creative text is always more than just a text, for part of what makes it creative is the way that it is contextualised (Jones this volume) and sometimes recontextualized (Bauman and Briggs 1990; Knobel and Lankshear this volume; Maybin this volume). In fact, Pennycook (2007) goes so far as to assert that much linguistic creativity nowadays is not so much about reformulating language as it is about recontextualizing it (see also Jones 2015). At the same time, contexts themselves are often complex and multilayered, a fact illustrated particularly dramatically in Carrington and Dowdall's discussion of urban textual environments. 'Every space,' they write, 'is a layered space — socially and materially — where different texts speak to different audiences in different ways and invoke differing norms and authorities. As part of this, the textual landscape is a cauldron of creativity as people and texts interact across and within these different scales and layers.'

A related issue, of course, is the fact that, especially nowadays, language is seldom the only semiotic means used in creative texts, and so some of what is inventive and appropriate in a text comes from the way words interact with other semiotic modes. This is most apparent in advertising (see Langlotz this volume) and on the internet, but can also be seen in many new forms of literature such as those described in the chapters by Gibbons and Simanowski. Multimodality has always been a central aspect of verbal creativity: any good actor, storyteller, speech maker, or stand up comic will attest to the importance of gestures, facial expressions, and bodily movements for delivering their

lines effectively, and there has long been a close relationship between the modes of spoken language and music (see Jordanous this volume).

This focus on the ‘everyday’ character of linguistic creativity in context inevitably leads us to a view of the creative product that is beyond language. Sometimes what is created is not ‘creative language’, but rather something else — a new way of doing something, for example, or a new way for people to relate to one another. In other words, what is created may be the result of language used in a deliberate and artful way, but may not in itself be considered a creative *linguistic* product. A group of business people might use language to creatively solve a problem, or a group of diplomats might engage in talks that lead to an important breakthrough in relations between two nations. One could not deny the centrality of creative language use in such situations, yet what is created is not a creative text. Linguistic creativity is sometimes spoken of as occurring on three levels: the level of linguistic form, the level of meaning, and the level of language *use* (Cook 2000; Maybin and Swann 2007). The level I am speaking of here is the level of language use, and this aspect of linguistic creativity remains the least researched, though it is well represented in this volume in chapters by Jones, Maybin, and Carrington and Dowdall, among others. It is, as Kramsch (2008: 402) puts it, the ability to use language not just to produce texts, but to ‘reframe human thought and action.’ This view of linguistic creativity resonates with Dewey’s (1971) notion of situated creativity, creativity as it emerges through our interaction with the world. It is also articulated, in a different context, by Toolan (2012: 18), who defines creativity as ‘the happy fitness of some new solution to a new or emergent problem, something we had not fully recognised was a problem.’

What Toolan's definition hints at is that sometimes the most important things we create through language are not solutions, but problems. Indeed, just as creativity in linguistic form disrupts our expectations about language, creativity in language use has the potential to disrupt habitual social practices, social orders and relationships of power. As Lemke (1995) puts it, 'making meaning' is one of our most effective ways of 'making trouble'. For many scholars, such as critical discourse analysts (see e.g. Fairclough 1992) and cultural critics of the Birmingham tradition (see e.g. Hall 1997; Willis 1990), the most potent products of linguistic creativity are these moments of social disruption (see Jones this volume).

Finally, there is a perspective that considers the most important products created through linguistic creativity to be human languages themselves. This is of course easy to see in the case of 'constructed languages' such as those discussed in the chapter by Ball, languages that emanate from the mind of a single creator and are often invented in the context of other creative products such as novels, films, or television shows, or even in the case of other types of constructed languages such as computer languages. It may be less obvious in the case of 'natural' human languages, the creation of which is the result of many iterative acts of lexical, grammatical, phonological and pragmatic inventiveness by individuals and groups over the course of many centuries. In a sense, the languages of the world may be considered among the greatest creative products of human kind. Wildgen (2004), in fact, asserts that the development of language constitutes the first complex expression of human creativity and the foundation upon which all other forms of

creativity (artistic, scientific) evolved, and the German romantic poet August Wilhelm Schlegel (quoted in Chomsky 1966: 17) declared that ‘language is the most wonderful creation of the human poetic ability ... it is an always becoming, always changing, never complete poem of the whole human race.’ Languages are not only themselves highly intricate creative products, but they also provide resources that allow us to articulate the world, to create shared meanings, social relationships, and societies, which is the aspect of linguistic creativity to which I will turn my attention in the next section.

## **LANGUAGE AS A CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY**

In order to create, we need materials and tools. Sculptors need granite or marble, chisels and hammers, and those who wish to engage in linguistic creativity need language, with all of its attendant ‘parts’ (words, sentences, genres and registers). According to Pope (2005: xv), linguistic creativity is a process in which the writer or speaker draws from a finite number of existing items in order to create an infinite number of fresh or imaginative solutions. In this section I will consider not so much this process as the potential of language to facilitate this process. Just as any assessment of a great sculptor must take into account the kinds of materials he or she uses and the kinds of shapes and textures those materials make possible, so any discussion of linguistic creativity must account for the nature of language itself, and the kinds of forms, meanings and actions it makes possible.

The idea of language as a ‘creative technology’ (Jones 2015) is, of course, not new. It is in fact a central tenant of many approaches to linguistics from Chomsky’s (1965)

generative approach to Halliday's (1973) functional approach. It is an idea with a long history, going back to ancient Greek rhetoricians and philosophers, who painstakingly cataloged the many devices language makes available for touching people's hearts and influencing their thoughts, and even further back to the Old Testament in which the act of creating the universe is made possible through the *word* of God (later conceived of as *logos* in the Gospel according to John). It is also an idea which dominated the work of many 19th century linguists and philologists like Michal Bréal, who marvelled at how language has the power to transform the world by making it speakable', and who saw speaking as more than just encoding thoughts, but as a 'creative adaptation of means to ends' (Nerlich 1990: 71).

When viewed from this reference point, creativity is not just located in the texts people make and the actions people take, but is a fundamental *potential* embodied in the linguistic resources people draw on to make these texts and take these actions. To put it in terms popularised by evolutionary psychologist James J. Gibson (1986), language makes available certain *affordances* for creativity, affordances such as the ability to combine a limited number of elements into different patterns and to mix it with other modes to increase its meaning potential. There is, of course, a 'flip side' to the idea of affordances, the fact that for all the things a particular tool or technology allows us to do, there are also many things that it can prevent us from doing. In other words, along with affordances, language also introduces constraints on meaning-making and action. However, as numerous authors in this book point out (see e.g. Goddard, Robinson, Sawyer, Stockwell, and Tin), one of the great paradoxes of creativity is that it often

seems as much an outcome of the constraints imposed on creators by the resources they have available to them as of the affordances. In her book *Creativity from Constraints* Patricia Stokes (2005: xiii), maintains that the 'creativity problem' is always both 'strategic and structural': it involves selecting appropriate constraints and working within them in novel ways.

The combinations of affordances and constraints for creativity that language offers can be seen on multiple levels. They can be seen on the level of lexicogrammar, in the the ability language gives us to, as Chomsky (1965: 6) puts it, use a finite number of elements 'for expressing indefinitely many thoughts and for reacting appropriately in an indefinite range of new situations.' They can be seen on the level of pragmatics in the ability language gives us to combine it with non-linguistic aspects of context in order 'mean more than we say'. And they can be seen on the level of discourse, in the wealth of text types languages provide as means of expressing 'private intentions in the framework of socially recognised communicative actions' (Bhatia 1993: 13).

While, the notion that the creative potential of language lies in its system of grammatical rules is usually most closely associated with Chomsky, the seeds of this idea can be found in the work of 19th century Cartesian linguists, most notably Humboldt (1836/1999), for whom the essence of language was its capacity to 'make infinite employment of finite means', a capacity he summed up with the term *erzuegen*. Attempting to understand what it is about language that makes this possible was really the starting point for Chomsky's generative grammar. 'Although it was well understood that linguistic processes are in

some sense “creative”,’ he wrote in his 1965 *Aspects to the Theory of Syntax*, ‘the technical devices for expressing a system of recursive processes were simply not available until much more recently.’ For Chomsky, the solution to the problem of language’s creative potential lies in this system of recursive processes that are not specific to any particular language, but instead constitute a ‘universal grammar’.

This solution served as a sharp contrast to the view of language held by behaviourist linguists like Bloomfield, for whom language was seen as a set of norms and creativity was seen chiefly in terms of artful violations of those norms, a view, as I noted above, that also dominated early work in stylistics by scholars such as Mukařovský (1964) and Spitzer (1948) (for a more extended discussion see de Beaugrande 1979). For Chomsky, it is the norms, or, as he conceived of them, the *rules* of language that make creativity possible. ‘True creativity,’ he insists, ‘means free action within the framework of a system of rules’ (quoted in Newmeyer 1986: 79).

Chomsky does make a distinction between the everyday creativity of linguistic competence (what he calls ‘normal creativity’ 1974: 152) and the more lasting creativity of literature and other art forms, but even in the case of these instances of ‘big C Creativity’ (see e.g. Simonton 1994), he insists that what makes them possible are the constraints imposed by systems and structures (Chomsky 1976).

There have, of course, been many criticisms of Chomsky’s approach to creativity. Some like Harris (1997: 279) criticise him for confusing creativity with ‘productivity’ and

others like Hymes (1977: 132) criticise him for confusing it with ‘novelty’ Still others, like Sampson (1979) find Chomsky’s vision too mechanistic: seeing creativity in terms of finite sets and rules, they argue, cannot account for the ability of language to express things that hitherto had been inconceivable, and, in some cases, to actually bring those things into existence.

Perhaps the most influential alternative to Chomsky’s view of lexicogrammatical creativity is that proposed by Halliday (1973) in his Systemic Functional Linguistics. For Halliday the creative potential of language is less a matter of some universal set of recursive principles and more a matter of the system of *choices* language offers for making meaning in different social situations. In other words, whereas Chomsky views language as an essentially cognitive tool, Halliday views it as a social tool, forged and used in the context of the social world. It is in this interaction between the structure of language and the structure of society that creativity becomes possible. ‘Creativity,’ he insists, ‘does not consist of creating new sentences. Creativity consists in new interpretations of existing behaviour in existing social contexts; in new semiotic patterns, however realised...the creativity of the individual is a function of the social system’ (Martin 2013: 36). This is a perspective whose influence can be seen in a number of chapters in this volume, including those by Jones, Jaworski, and Van Leeuwen.

An even more radical departure from Chomsky is the integrative linguistics of Roy Harris. Based on what Harris (1977) calls ‘the creativity thesis in linguistics’, this approach, like that of Chomsky, promotes that idea that creativity is an aspect of *all*



language use. Where it sharply diverges from Chomsky is in its insistence that the creative potential of language lies not in some self-contained system, but in the ability of language to be 'integrated' with the physical, psychological and social dimensions of whatever situation in which it is used. What is creative about language is that its words and its structures can mean very different things in different moments of use. This creative potential, however, Harris warned, 'must remain mysterious until we have a linguistics that recognises that communication situations are not the same, and that, typically, language supplies only one ingredient of communicative behaviour in any such situation' (1990: 49).

Perspectives like those of Halliday and Harris push us towards an understanding of language's creative potential beyond systems of rules governing the combination of sounds or words and towards an understanding of language as a tool whose 'affordances' come from the way it is able to interact with the world, or, to put it in Austin's (1976) terms, away from an emphasis on the ways language allows us to produce an infinite number of meanings and towards a perspective that explores the ways language allows us to 'do things with words'.

Interestingly, the most influential proponents of this perspective have not been linguists, but rather philosophers and anthropologists. One such figure was the ordinary language philosopher H. L. Austin, whose work forms the basis for the linguistic sub-field of pragmatics. Ordinary language philosophy is not often associated with the topic of creativity, and Austin himself hardly mentioned the word. Some, in fact, like Bertrand

Russell (1960: 13), explicitly criticised Austin and his associates for ignoring the creative potential of language. But, as Jones argues in his chapter on creativity and discourse analysis, Austin's view of the performative nature of language can be seen as essentially a theory of radical linguistic creativity, one which insists that the greatest affordance of language is not that it allows us to create meanings or texts, but that it allows us to create *actions*, social situations, and social relationships. With Austin, the 'word', so to speak, becomes 'flesh'.

Another proponent of this more action oriented view of language was the American anthropologist Dell Hymes, who proposed an approach to studying language which focuses on 'not only the organisation of linguistic means, but also the *consequence of their use*' (1977: 106, emphasis mine). This approach, which Hymes dubbed the 'ethnography of speaking', in his words, 'shares Chomsky's concern for creativity and freedom, but recognises that a child, or person, master only of grammar, is not yet free' (1977: 93-94). He continues:

I share Chomsky's goals for linguistics, and admire him for setting them, but they cannot be reached on his terms or by linguistics alone. Rules of appropriateness beyond grammar govern speech, and are acquired as part of conceptions of self, and of meanings associated both with particular forms of speech and with the act of speaking itself. (1977: 94)

Two important points can be made about these more 'action oriented' or 'context

sensitive' views of linguistic systems. First, they help to reintroduce into the discussion the second component of creativity in Sternberg and Lubart's (1999) definition discussed at the beginning of this introduction, the component of appropriateness. As I mentioned above, it is not enough that texts or utterances be unique or original. They must also be designed to fit artfully into particular social situations. Second, they remind us that language is not a single system, but rather a set of interacting systems 'whose workings are made possible by mutual correlation' (de Beaugrande 1979: 274). To recognise the importance of a system of norms governing The way language is used in particular speech events, or a system of 'maxims' (Grice 1989) governing processes of conversational implicature, in no way denies the importance of the generative capacity of language on the level of lexicogrammar. As Hymes (1977: 92) puts it, the goal of such approaches is not so much to challenge Chomsky as to '*complete* the discovery of the sphere of "rule governed creativity" with respect to language' (emphasis mine).

Once our view of language as a creative technology is broadened in this way, we are also able to consider how other systems of linguistic/cultural convention help to facilitate creativity, systems governing things like genres and styles. In her groundbreaking work on genre, for example, Devitt (2008) remarks on how, by their very nature, genres 'enable creativity' by presenting writers (and speakers) with sets of choices and constraints. This is as true, she insists, for genres not usually thought to be creative such as lab reports, as it is for literary genres. This is also a point Pennington makes in her chapter on creativity in college composition. Even genres like research papers and argumentative essays provide writers with the means to exercise considerable creativity.

In considering more literary genres, Toolen in his chapter reminds us that ‘forms and traditions’ as much as they may constrain us, ‘are *resources*’ (emphasis mine) which, when ‘redeployed in the new circumstances of today’ create new opportunities for innovation, or, as he puts it, new ‘problems’ to be discovered. Similarly, Hall (this volume), notes, ‘Genre is always mixed, processual (coming-into-being), but also constraining and pre-existent, and is therefore arguably both conservative and potentially subversive.’

The same goes for registers or styles, what Gee (2014) (after Bakhtin 1981) calls ‘social languages’. Here we are perhaps more inclined to see the connection with creativity since the idea of ‘style’ is often associated with the individual ‘voice’ of a particular writer or speaker. But styles (registers/social languages) are also governed by systems of use characterised by constraints, and it is often through playing with these conventions and constraints that creativity is realised. As Hymes (1977: 112) writes, ‘registers are not chosen only because a situation demands them; they may be chosen to define a situation, or to discover its definition by others...’ He writes similarly of styles, declaring that ‘knowledge of speech styles is essential to complete the discovery of the sphere of rule-governed creativity with regard to language’ since ‘it is often complex use of styles that underlies individual acts that are creative in the sense of involving meanings and mediation and innovation with regard to rules...’ (1977: 106).

Finally, a discussion of language as a creative technology would not be complete without a mention of the other technologies it is often used in conjunction with and the systems of

affordances and constraints they entail. As I mentioned above, language, is hardly ever used in isolation from other modes, like font, layout, and images (in the case of written language), and gesture, gaze, prosody and object handling (in the case of spoken language). The notion of ‘multimodality’ (Kress 2010) goes beyond the fact that people, when they are communicating, use more than one mode, to attempting to understand how meaning and action are dependent on how these modes (and the systems of affordances and constraints they entail) interact with one another. In this regard, both writing and speaking are increasingly seen both by scholars of language (e.g. Kress 2010), and by scholars of literature (e.g. Hallet 2009) as processes of ‘design’ in which creativity is chiefly a matter of playing the affordances and constraints of multiple semiotic systems off against one another. This process is evident in the examples given in the chapters by Carrington and Dowdall, Gibbons, Jaworski, Jordanous, and Van Leeuwen.

At the same time, language is also mediated through various other technologies like print, web pages, film and video, and even the human voice, and these different media also involve affordances and constraints. The phonological systems of human languages, for example, are constrained by the human articulatory organs and the kinds of sounds and sound combinations they make possible. The printed page comes with its own sets of affordances and constraints, as do other media like film and television. Recently, of course, there has been great interest in the myriad ways digital technologies facilitate creativity, from allowing people to mix together different kinds of texts and different semiotic modes to allowing them to manipulate the spatial and temporal dimensions of language use in dramatically new ways. These are among the issues taken up in the

chapters by Goddard, Knobel and Lankshear, Simanowski, and Veale. Simanowski, for example, describe digital media as encouraging a 'shift from linguistic hermeneutics to a hermeneutics of interactive, intermedial, and performative signs.' As with other technologies involved in linguistic creativity, of course, constraints are just as important as affordances. As Goddard notes:

One of the issues that arises in identifying an example of language as 'creative' in the CMC (computer-mediated communication) context is that there have been seismic shifts in what Goffman would have termed 'system constraints'. This means that language producers' starting points can be very different, in terms of the raw materials they have to work with.

## **LANGUAGE AND THE CREATIVE MIND**

Probably the most common way of looking at creativity has been to see it as the result of processes that take place in the mind (or 'imagination') of the creative individual. Rather than seeing creativity as a property of the creative work, or of the semiotic systems that make that work possible, this perspective sees creativity as a property of people, whether that property be the 'genius' of 'exceptional people', or the quality of all people which makes them capable of thinking, saying or doing 'exceptional' things (Carter 2004). This approach has not only appealed to scholars from a variety of disciplines, but has also captured the popular imagination, particularly in the form of the valorisation of great artists, and in various attempts to 'unlock the secrets' of the 'creative mind' (see e.g. Evans 1990).

This idea of the 'creative mind' is actually not terribly old. Before the Renaissance individuals were given very little credit for their own creativity. Instead, creativity was seen as the result of possession by some external force such as 'divine inspiration' (referred to by Plato as *mania*). What creative artists aimed for was not to express their unique, individual vision or perspective, but rather to give form to some notion of purity or perfection or divine truth, accurately represent nature, or successfully imitate the work of established masters (Sawyer 2006). Even in the Renaissance, when the idea of individual genius was starting to take hold, the majority of creative works were collaboratively produced: paintings were produced in workshops where apprentices often did much of the work and masters simply added the finishing touches, and literary works like plays -- even those of Shakespeare-- often came from the pens of several authors working either together or separately.

The idea that creativity is an aspect of the individual (and unique) human mind didn't really take strong hold in Europe until the Enlightenment when the notion of the human divinity replaced the idea of an external God as the source of all creation (see Nelson this volume). Perhaps the strongest expression of this new 'cognitive' view of creativity came from Descartes, and it was his ideas that ended up being so influential in later conceptualisations of linguistic creativity, including those of Chomsky and his followers (see above). Arguing against a mechanistic view of human behaviour, Descartes proposed that what separates humans from animals is the ability to think and act in a way that is independent of experience, rooted instead in the internal capacity for reason which

makes it possible for people to ‘operate in all sorts of situations (Descartes 1637/1960: 47). For Descartes and others of this period, the important thing about thought was not just that it proves our existence (cognate ergo sum), but also that it allows us to bring into existence and infinite number of new ideas, and to express those ideas in an infinite number of new ways through language. While neither animals nor machines are capable of such variety of expression, Descartes declared, ‘there are no men so dull-witted and stupid, not even madmen, that they are incapable of stringing together different words, and composing them into utterances, though which they let their thoughts be known’ (47). Here then we have not just the beginnings of a more mentalist idea of creativity, but also the seeds of the democratic notion of linguistic creativity championed in various ways by modern linguistics (e.g. Carter 2004; Chomsky 1965, 1966).

The idea of the individual as the source of creativity was even more fervently promoted in the 18th century by Romantic poets and philosophers whose theories of creativity and the imagination are still extremely influential today. The difference between the Romantics and the Enlightenment philosophers was not their conviction that creativity has its source in the individual, but their beliefs about what aspect of human consciousness is most responsible for it. For Descartes and his contemporaries, the source of creativity was human reason. For the Romantics, it was human feeling. This conviction is reflected in Wordsworth’s (1800/2008: 183) characterisation of poetry as the ‘spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,’ and Coleridge’s (1817/1984: 80) description of the poetic process as the shaping of ‘deep feeling’ through ‘profound thought’ into words that possess a sense of ‘novelty and freshness.’ Two major marks the



Romantics left on contemporary notions of creativity are, first, what has been called the ‘cult of originality’ (Millen 2010), the idea that creative works of art must be, above all, ‘novel’ and ‘unique’, and second, the idea that creativity has its source in the particular disposition of the artist, and that the creative process consists of the personal exploration and authentic expression of that disposition.

Contemporary research on the creative mind takes place mostly in the disciplines of psychology and the cognitive sciences (including cognitive linguistics). In a way, this research agenda still retains a trace of the conceptual split between the romantics and the rationalists, with some research, especially psychological studies conducted in the later half of the 20th century, focusing on discovering the characteristics of the ‘creative personality’, and more recent research, especially in cognitive sciences, more interested in understanding the cognitive processes associated with creative thinking.

Research into the psychological characteristics of ‘creative people’ has suggested a number of traits that seem to be associated with creativity such as flexibility, fluency, openness to new experiences, ambition, and self-acceptance. Undoubtedly the most frequently cited characteristic of creative people discussed in the literature is a penchant for ‘divergent thinking’, the ability to generate a large range of diverse yet appropriate responses to situations (Guilford 1967), and this observation has been the basis of much psychometric testing of creativity, most notably the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (Torrance 1974). In this volume the impact of such work can be seen most clearly in the chapter by Kharkhurin on bilingual creativity, in which he argues, based on the results of

such test administered to monolingual and multilingual subjects, that acquiring a new language may have a positive impact on creativity, by fostering divergent thinking, and attendant traits like flexibility, fluency, ability to elaborate, tolerance for ambiguity, and open-mindedness.

Most tests of creativity, while they usually do not test ‘linguistic creativity’ specifically, generally use language as the basis for assessment, which raises questions, like those discussed by Jordanous in her chapter on language and music, as to whether creativity in different semiotic modes is associated with different sorts of mental capacities. Such questions as whether or not linguistic creativity is related to visual/spatial creativity, or to musical creativity are increasingly important given that producing linguistic texts nowadays more often than not means also engaging with other these semiotic modes.

While psychometric research on creative traits has contributed much to our understanding of the creative mind, it is research into cognitive *processes* associated with creativity that has had the biggest impact on language and creativity research, as evidenced by the strong representation of such theories in this volume (see e.g. chapters by Hidalgo, Langlotz, and Stockwell).

Scholars interested in the cognitive processes associated with linguistic creativity start from the assumption that language structure and use (including features such as analogy, metaphor, conceptual spaces and transformational rules) provide evidence of the creative potential of the human mind. As Langlotz points out in his chapter, researchers in this

area have generally clustered around several key approaches, each with its distinct model of human cognition.

The model that will likely be the most familiar to readers is the computational model, a model which focuses on the mind as a relatively autonomous central processing unit independent of both the body and the social environment and sees linguistic structures as evidence of an innate cognitive capacity, a ‘mental module’ (Langlotz, this volume) specially designed to generate infinite utterances based on a finite set of rules. This, of course, is the model of cognition subscribed to by Chomsky, and, although many cognitive scientists have moved on from this model, finding it too narrow and limiting, it remains the basis for a challenging field of research that raises questions about the capacity for machines, programmed with more and more sophisticated capacities to generate original language, can be said to be ‘creative’ (see Veale this volume).

An alternative to the computational model of creativity comes from the field of cognitive linguistics, which, rather than regarding language as emanating from an autonomous central processing unit which operates based on a set of rules, sees it as arising from a broader collection of cognitive capacities including perception, conceptualisation, and categorisation (Langlotz this volume). Central to this approach is the idea that cognition is *embodied*, that the way we think is partly determined by the way we experience the world through our senses, and that language is chiefly built around these experiential parameters.

Cognitive linguists interested in creativity have focused their attention on several key aspects of language use, the most important being metaphors, which are treated as not just clever rhetorical devices, but as outcomes of cognitive processes of conceptualisation and categorisation. Scholars like Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Gibbs (1994) have argued that a key part of the mind's fundamental capacity for creativity comes from its ability to represent so much of reality metaphorically.

Another important contribution to our understanding of creativity that has come out of cognitive linguistics is the notion of 'mental spaces' (Fauconnier 1994) — mini models of the world and of experience which we build in our minds and map in relation to other mental spaces. This idea forms the basis of Fauconnier and Turner's (2008) 'blending theory', which offers a model of creative thinking that is more dynamic and situated than conceptual metaphor theory. People come up with new ideas, it argues, through selectively mapping and blending mental spaces, thereby generating new mental structures.

It is work in cognitive linguistics that has most profoundly influenced research on the cognitive aspects of literary creativity, which includes not just work on the creative production of literary texts, but also on the creative mental processes readers use then they interpret them. 'Cognitive poetics' (Stockwell 2002a; Tsur 2008) and 'cognitive stylistics' (Stockwell 2002b; this volume), draw on a range of theories from cognitive linguistics to understand, for example, how devices of foregrounding in literary texts operate cognitively, how literary metaphors related to more universal conceptual

metaphors, how texts work to create cognitive ‘frames’ through which readers interpret characters’ words and actions, and how readers and writers work together to create ‘text worlds’ — mental representations of the fictional world of the literary work which readers map against their own experience and use to track various states of knowledge and experience. As literary works have become more multimodal, there has also been interest in applying concepts from cognitive linguistics to understanding how viewers process visual imagery and how they relate it to written text (see e.g. Forceville 1996, 2012; Gibbons 2012, this volume; Hiraga 2005).

One potential danger of focusing on creativity in terms of cognitive processes that take place in the minds of individuals is that it can lead analysts to ignore the fact that individuals exist in societies and cultures, and much of the way they think is shaped and influenced by their interaction with other people. One set of approaches to cognition which attempts to address its social aspects are those which focus on what is referred to as ‘distributed’ or ‘situated cognition’ (see e.g. Hutchins and Klausen 1996), and these are complemented in the literature on creativity in work on what has come to be known as ‘distributed creativity’ (Glăveanu 2014). Such approaches have their roots in the work of Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1962), who saw human cognition as *mediated* through ‘cultural tools’, the most important being language itself. From this perspective, all cognition is essentially social, supported by the resources made available to the thinker by his or her society and reflecting the structures of that society. This more socially grounded approach to creative cognition has also influenced approaches to linguistic creativity based on mediated discourse analysis (see e.g. Jones et al. 2012).

## **CREATIVITY AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE**

In contrast to the more individualistic and mentalist perspectives of most cognitive approaches to creativity are approaches that see creativity not as a process that takes place in the minds of individuals but as a kind of social practice which is embedded in particular social contexts and depends on various forms of social interaction. The key point of such approaches is not just that creative texts are forms of ‘communication’ with which creators interact with audiences and are judged based on the values and fashions of the societies in which they are created, but that the creative act itself is social, and that the notion of the ‘creative mind’ as an entity independent of other creative minds is essentially a fiction. As Carter (2004: 28; see also his Forward to this volume) puts it, acts of creativity are ‘responsive, dialogic, interpersonal acts of mutuality’, not limited to what Chomsky describes as our ability to produce and understand an unlimited number of new sentences.

Like the concept of the creative individual, more socially grounded conceptions of creativity have a long history. In fact, as I mentioned above, viewing the creative process as the result of the interaction of multiple individuals and institutions was actually the norm before the late Renaissance. Interestingly, many of the same philosophers and linguists who inspired individualistic, cognitive views of creativity and contributed to this more social perspective. Humboldt’s (1836/1999) notion of *erzeugen* (meaning to produce or generate), for example, which so inspired Chomsky (see above), also posits a key role for society upon which individual production depends. Language constitutes

more than just 'a linkage of thoughts', but also a 'world-view' that presupposes 'the understanding of all' and 'rests upon the collective power of man' (44).

Among the most influential critiques of the individualistic idea of creativity in the field of language studies comes from the Soviet literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin. As Maybin (this volume) argues, perhaps Bakhtin's greatest contribution to our understanding of language and creativity was his insistence, in opposition to the formalist views of linguistic creativity dominant in his day, that 'the aesthetics of language must have a social dimension.' The operation of this social dimension of linguistic creativity is explained by Bakhtin through his concepts of *heteroglossia* and *dialogism* (see Jones, this volume).

With his concept of heteroglossia, he challenged the idea of that the essence of creativity consists of our ability to generate 'new' and 'unique' utterances. Such utterances, he argues, do not really exist. All utterances are cobbled together from the words of others. Creativity lies not in our ability to say new things, but to say them in new ways in new contexts, to effectively mix together the voices of others and to give to them our own 'accent' (Bakhtin 1981: 293). With the concept of dialogism, he challenged the idea of the autonomous creator. All utterances are created in response to previous utterances and in anticipation of future utterances. Thus, all linguistic creativity is a matter of social interaction or 'dialogue' between the writer or speaker and both those who have written or spoken before him or her and those who will write or speak afterwards.

The ideas of Bakhtin play a central role in many of the chapters in this book, including those by Bhatia, Jaworski, Jones, Maybin, and Swann. They are also evident (though not

explicitly acknowledged) in Knobel and Lankshear's notion of 'creative remix' and in Carrington and Dowdall's description of polyphonic urban landscapes.

One area of study that Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism opens up is the consideration of the reader's role in the creation of literary texts, not just the reader as a cognitive entity, as conceived of in some of the work in cognitive stylistics reviewed above, but the reader as a *social* being, 'located within particular sociohistorical, cultural and local interpersonal contexts that make available certain forms of engagement with text and potentially certain textual interpretations' (Swann, this volume). Another area Bakhtin's work opens up is the study of how these interpretations change as texts and utterances travel across what Lillis (2013) calls 'text trajectories' and what Scollon (2008) calls 'itineraries of discourse'. In both of these cases, linguistic creativity is seen less as a matter of 'generating' or interpreting texts, and more as a matter of sharing, contesting, and transforming them in the course of social interaction.

Apart from the foundational work of Bakhtin, insights concerning the social dimensions of linguistic creativity also come from key work in anthropology and sociolinguistics, particularly around the notion of 'performance'. The work of anthropologists on verbal performances associated with such events as religious rituals, for example, helps to highlight the situated and occasioned nature of linguistic creativity, how it, in the words of Bauman and Sherzer (1989: xvii-xix) arises from the 'dynamic interplay between the social, conventional and ready-made in social life and the individual, creative and emergent qualities of human existence' (see Maybin, this volume). Work in



sociolinguistics, on the other hand, shows how linguistic performance permeates everyday life in the form of stylization and style-shifting (Coupland 2007; Eckert 2000), code-switching and ‘crossing’ (Rampton 2005), and what has come to be known as ‘translanguaging’ (Garcia and Li Wei 2004; see also Kharkhurin this volume), all of which are forms of linguistic creativity that are intimately tied to expressions of social identity and group affiliation.

‘Performance’ is also a key theme in studies on collaborative linguistic creativity such as those conducted by Sawyer (2001; this volume). Basing his observations on the study of improvisational theater, but arguing they they apply equally to the ‘improvisational’ nature of everyday conversation, Sawyer shows how individuals work together to create social realities through the negotiation of ‘frames’ in interaction. This work draws on a large body of work in conversation analysis and interactional sociolinguistics, work also discussed by Jones in his chapter on the discursive dimensions of linguistic creativity, which explores the ways social interaction involves people working together to jointly perform social actions, construct social situations, and enact social identities.

Perhaps the most important contribution that a more socially grounded view of creativity can make is to show how linguistic creativity is not just socially constituted, but also socially consequential — how it can actually act as a force to change the societies in which we live. In 1926 the Marxist literary critic Georg Lukács (1926/2011) railed against an attitude towards art which focused only on its aesthetic value, ignoring its social function. ‘This social uprootedness of the artist goes hand in hand with the inner

rootlessness of art,' he said (160). The same might be said of theories of everyday linguistic creativity which limit their view of the creative to formal aspects of people's utterances. A socially grounded view of linguistic creativity leads inevitably to a socially engaged view, one which asks questions like what are the effects of social orders and economic system on people capacity for linguistic creativity, and in what ways can our facility for linguistic creativity be called into the service of affecting positive social change? These are questions that are explicitly raised in the chapters by Jones and Maybin, and hinted at in the contributions from Sawyer, Knobel and Lankshear, and Carrington and Dowdell.

Maybin raises these questions in the context of performance, pointing out that verbal performances, by virtue of their power to call attention to and heighten our awareness of language use, constitute unique opportunities for performers to challenge linguistic conventions and the social conventions associated with them. Jones raises these same questions in the context of resistance, suggesting that among the most important aspects of linguistic creativity is its potential to disrupt dominant ways of thinking and talking about things that support relationships of power and inequality, its potential to create 'cracks' in the discursive edifices that protect some members of our societies and marginalise others.

Creativity, of course, has multiple functions in human societies. It can be used to entertain and engage people or to distract them, to solidify social relationships or to create wedges between 'us' and 'them', to inspire, to amuse, to educate, to solve

problems or to make mischief. All of these functions have consequences for people's well-being, their security, their agency and their freedom, and theories of language and creativity must eventually find ways to address these consequences.

Finally a more socially grounded and socially engaged take on linguistic creativity must acknowledge that creativity is itself socially constructed and 'discursively constituted' (Nelson this volume). All definitions of creativity (and all definitions of language for that matter) are products of particular political and economic conditions and serve the interests of particular social groups. This is particularly evident today as businesses, governments and educational institutions promote definitions of 'creativity' which reproduce neoliberal notions of productivity and individual responsibility (Hall 2010; Hocking 2011). But, as Nelson's chapter persuasively demonstrates, 'the creative idea' has always been shaped by the dominant ideologies of particular time periods, and well as helping to shape those ideologies. What is of particular interest in Nelson's chapter is not just the surprising roots of contemporary notions of creativity in scientific rather than artistic discourse, but also her wider observations about how, over they years, the notion of creativity has been shaped by 'the ideologies of individualism, the ideas of democracy and freedom, the rise of capitalism, and indeed the foundations of the modern nation state.'

Understanding how our views of linguistic creativity are themselves shaped by language, and how the dominant 'orders of discourse' of our societies affect how we think about creativity, talk about it, and study it, should be a central concern for any scholar

interested in language and creativity. Of course, as Nelson reminds us, to say that creativity is discursively constructed is not to say that it is not real, 'for discourse has a weight and a materiality and a productive power.' The strongest evidence for the creative potential of language, in fact, might be its ability to create 'creativity' itself.

## **THE WAY THIS BOOK IS ORGANISED**

One of the biggest challenges of editing any book is organising the chapters in a coherent way, and, perhaps because of the rich and varied ways of understanding the relationship between language and creativity I have outlined above, I found that settling on a principle of organisation for the chapters in this book particularly daunting. In the end I settled on organising the chapters into four sections as outlined below, but it won't take readers long to find chapters that address issues that straddle these sections, or chapters that, for one reason or another, might have been situated in a different section than they are.

In the first section, which I call 'Dimensions of Language and Creativity' I have placed chapters which deal with different aspects of 'everyday linguistic creativity' and which introduce key theoretical approaches from fields such as applied linguistics, cognitive sciences, discourse analysis, and psychology. Of course, when I speak of 'everyday linguistic creativity' I am not just talking about casual conversation, but include all sorts of linguistic creativity from advertisements to political speeches. This section begins with Janet Maybin's overview of everyday linguistic creativity which draws on theories from applied linguistics, anthropological linguistics, and sociolinguistics. Following this are chapters by Andreas Langoltz on cognitive approaches to linguistic creativity, Rodney

Jones, on discourse analytical approaches, Keith Saywer, on the dialogic nature of linguistic creativity, Judith Munat on lexical creativity, Laura Hidalgo on metaphor, and Nancy Bell on humour and language play. After that is a chapter by Douglas Ball on constructed languages, and one by Vijay Bhatia on creativity in corporate and professional communication, which draws on principles from critical genre analysis. The section ends with Camilla Nelson's reflection on the discursive construction of the idea of creativity itself, particularly as it developed in 19th and 20th century Europe and American as a response to both political conditions and advances in scientific thinking.

The second section of the book deals with 'Literary Creativity', particularly those approaches to literature like stylistics which apply linguistic tools to understanding the nature of 'literariness' and processes of literary creation and literary reading. The opening chapter by David Miall on literariness sets the scene for this section, laying out some of the major debates surrounding this notion. This is followed by chapters by Geoff Hall on literary stylistics, Peter Stockwell on cognitive stylistics, Michael Toolan on poetry, and Andrea MacRae on narrative. The section ends with a more socially oriented take on literary reading by Joan Swann, and an exploration of the challenges associated with literary translation by Douglas Robinson.

The third section of the book, entitled 'Multimodal and Multimedia Creativity' contains chapters that consider both the relationship between linguistic creativity and other modes of expression, and the effect of technology on linguistic creativity. It begins with a chapter by Alison Gibbons on literature and multimodality, which serves as a bridge

between this section and the previous one. After that is a chapter on language and music by Anna Jordanous, and one on silence and creativity by Adam Jaworski. Theo Van Leeuwen's chapter, in which he examines the creative grammar of movement in the mechanistic artworks of Jean Tinguely, incorporates both a focus on multimodality and a focus on technology. Following that are four chapters which address the impact of digital technology on creative linguistic practices: a chapter by Tony Veale that discusses the capacity for computers to exercise linguistic creativity, a chapter by Angela Goddard on creative language use in text based computer-mediated communication, a chapter by Roberto Simanowski on digital literature, and an examination of the culture of digital 'remix' by Michele Knobel and Colin Lankshear. The section ends with Victoria Carrington and Clare Dowdall's exploration of creative linguistic landscapes.

In the final section, 'Creativity in Language Teaching and Learning', I have placed chapters that focus on pedagogical aspects of linguistic creativity. The opening chapter by Tan Bee Tin discusses creativity in second language teaching and learning. This is followed by a chapter by Anatoliy Kharkhurin that explores the connection between multilingualism and cognitive process associated with creativity and introduces an educational programme that takes advantage of this connection. Following that are chapters by Gillian Lazar on literature and language teaching, Martha Pennington on creativity in the teaching of composition, and Graeme Harper on the teaching of creative writing.

This Handbook is by no means an exhaustive treatment of the vast and growing field of

language and creativity studies, and there are many important topics and many important theoretical perspectives that are missing. I take these obvious gaps not just as a reason to offer my apologies to readers who have not found what they are looking for in these chapters, but also as a reason to celebrate the diversity of work addressing issues related to language and creativity, work that is too rich and varied to be accommodated in any single book.

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