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In recent years there has been an explosion of interest in creativity, or artistry, in everyday language, and in potential continuities between such everyday creativity and literary language. Linguists have discussed the poetic nature of ‘common talk’, creativity in language play amongst children and adults, and the appropriation of literary-like patterns in genres such as advertising and Internet discourse. Ethnographically oriented research has added the study of creative language practices and their location within particular cultural contexts. Meanwhile, there has been a massive growth in Creative Writing as an educational practice and academic subject, often in or around English.

Literary language itself has come under scrutiny from those who would challenge or defend its singularity; and boundaries around the literary – and indeed around language – are pushed and prodded by those with an interest in transformation and change: in generic hybridity and creative play across modes, media and technologies. Writers have also engaged in theorizing creativity across language, literature and culture. In addition to its theoretical and research interest, such work has implications for the English curriculum at both school and HE level and may challenge traditional distinctions, e.g. between ‘language’ and ‘literature’. This is a forum for the meeting of linguistic science, critical understanding and creative practice: the ‘state’ as well as the ‘art’ of all three may change as a result.

Interest in language creativity spans several academic areas, including English (English language and literature, creative writing) as well as linguistics (applied linguistics, stylistics and sociolinguistics), language studies, communication studies, cultural studies and media studies, anthropology and education. We hope this book will be a resource for teachers, students and researchers in these and related areas. We also hope it will support interchanges with creative practitioners within and outside the academy.
‘Creativity’ Words: A Continuing Conversation

From ‘Creation’ to ‘Creativity’: Ancient and Modern

To many people’s surprise, the first use of the abstract noun ‘creativity’ recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd edn, 1989) is as recent as 1875. (It was not even included in the first edition of 1928.) From the first, ‘creativity’ tended to refer to a general human trait or capacity rather than a primarily divine or specifically artistic one. In his *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Raymond Williams (1983: 82–5) sums up the momentousness of this change thus: ‘Creativity, a general name for the faculty, followed in the early 20th century. This is clearly an important and significant history, and in its emphasis on human capacity has become steadily more important’. The divine or artistic senses were associated with the older term ‘creation’. ‘Creatio(u)n’ had been around in English since at least the thirteenth century and was identified initially with ‘God the Creato(u)r’ and, by extension, from the late eighteenth century onwards, with more or less divinely inspired or naturally gifted ‘creative artists’. Taken together, the ‘create’ words span an array of senses that may be schematically plotted thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Divine (archaic)</th>
<th>Special artistic (early modern)</th>
<th>Common human (later modern)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God the Creator</td>
<td>Creative artist</td>
<td>Creativity of humanity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What complicates and often confuses matters is the fact that all these senses are simultaneously available nowadays whenever a ‘create’ term is used. For – depending on context, assumptions and aims – it can be coloured by older senses that are more specifically artistic or sublimely divine, even while a broad gesture is apparently being made to embrace humanity at large.

Current claims for, and constructions of, creativity, predominantly in terms of the ‘new’, ‘novel’ and ‘innovative’, have to be seen in the context of a deeper historical perspective and a broader cultural understanding. Such claims may themselves be symptomatic of values associated with modernity in general and with Western modernity in particular. The standard definitions of creativity in the ‘expert literature’ produced by psychologists and educationists stress it as being ‘new and valuable’, ‘novel and original’, ‘innovative and adaptive’, etc. (These are all taken from Sternberg’s influential *Handbook of Creativity* (1999): chs 1, 5, 7, 12 and 22.) Only Lubart (ch. 17) sounds a sustained note of caution about the modern Western assumptions that such definitions express. In their place he argues for a cross-cultural and historical perspective that (re)values
ancient and traditional notions of making as craft and design and, indeed, shifts the emphasis to notions of creative being and becoming – not just getting and doing. Justin O’Connor issues a similar warning, with a sharper political-economic edge, at the close of his review of the research literature on The Cultural and Creative Industries (2007: 53–4): ‘But maybe creativity is the problem... The creativity mobilised in the new spirit of capitalism is one based on a particular modernist artistic tradition of rule-breaking innovation, of the shock of the new’. So, with a view to an alternative politics as well as aesthetics, he adds pointedly, though also guardedly (ibid.: 54):

In particular we might look to the ecological challenge to accumulation, which sees constant innovation as a form of waste... while also cautioning against a kind of New-age eclecticism which may itself go indiscriminately searching through past, marginal, indigenous and experimental cultures alike for the next big hit.

In short, the presumed ‘newness’ of creativity may itself be an obstacle. And so may any merely reactionary attempt simply to turn the clock back nostalgically or look longingly at the supposed simplicity or purity of other, non-Western cultures. All these terms – modern and ancient, Western and Eastern or (non-Western) – carry with them the appeals and perils of binaries in general. What may initially serve as valuable contrasts to provoke thought can quickly turn into unthinking reflexes.

Old Terms for New? Inspiration, Imagination, Originality, Genius, Invention

We must also bear in mind many other terms that are freely and apparently naturally associated with the ‘creativity’ debate. These all regularly and routinely crop up in policy statements as well as informal conversation, and yet each has its own distinctive associations and complex, often contentious and contradictory, history. Chief amongst these are inspiration, imagination, invention, originality and genius. Each of these words has expressed and will continue to express meanings and values that vary radically depending on the current rate of change – and cultural rate of exchange – in which it is implicated. Though all may get pressed together to serve some apparently homogenized agenda, each brings its own cultural baggage that needs unpacking and scrutinizing separately. A very brief review of each term in turn will confirm the possibilities as well as the problems opened up by a fully historical and critical sense of what they have meant – and may yet mean differently (see Pope 2005: 52–89 for an extensive overview and further references).
Inspiration may still be infused with its root sense of ‘breathing-in’ (from Latin in-spirare): this is the sense that Patience Agbabi celebrates in her performance piece ‘Word’ and expressly draws attention to in her commentary on it, ‘Give Me (Deep Intake of Breath) Inspiration’ (Chapter 2). In general, however, inspiration now tends to mean energy or stimulation, even just influence, of many kinds; though the sense of the divine afflatus (breath) may still be invoked on occasion (see Clark 1997).

Imagination has always had the capacity to refer or appeal to ‘images’ that are far more than merely visual and to ‘imagery’ that is by no means tied to poetry alone. Imaginative capacities have themselves at various points been extensively characterized as everything from ‘gardens’ and ‘houses’ to ‘mirrors’ and ‘books’, and ‘lamps’ and ‘labyrinths’ – even to ‘infinite libraries’ and ‘halls of mirrors’ (see Kearney 1998).

Originality is a particularly tricky and apparently contrary concept. Up to the late eighteenth century it had the primary sense of ‘ancient, traditional, from the beginning’ (a sense that is still with us in the phrase ‘original inhabitants’ and the archaic notion of ‘aborigines’, ‘from the beginning’, ‘primitives’); this was itself the ancient or classical sense. However, from the late eighteenth century onwards ‘original’ increasingly tended towards the opposite and now-dominant sense of ‘novel’, ‘innovative’, ‘never-been-done-before’ (in the modern sense of ‘an original idea’, ‘strikingly original’); this is the modern or romantic sense. Interestingly, the distinction between the two can be activated by something as slight yet significant as a change of article: ‘the original painting’ refers us back to the initial version (not a copy) and invokes the earlier sense; ‘an original painting’ refers us to a kind of painting that has not been done before and assumes the later sense. It is therefore important to weigh whether the originality one has in mind looks back, forwards or, indeed, attempts to do both at once (see Chapter 3 by Richard Danson Brown, Chapter 20 by Rob Pope and Chapter 23 by Daniel Allington; see also Attridge 2004: 35–40).

Genius is another term with a remarkably wide array of historical senses, many of which survive into contemporary usage. Initially, from Roman times and before, it was associated with ‘genius of place’ (genius loci) and could be identified with whole ‘peoples’ or ‘tribes’, too (Latin (in)gens; whence references to the German/English/Chinese ‘genius for’). In the late eighteenth century it commonly meant the characteristic trait of anyone, their primary but not necessarily exceptional distinguishing feature: ‘Every man has his genius’, observes Dr Johnson in 1780. Though even then it was beginning to acquire its currently dominant sense of ‘an exceptional talent’ and tending to be used with the indefinite article to designate an individual, ‘a genius’. Typically, and problematically, such individuals were explicitly – and often still are implicitly – gendered as masculine and the term applied more or
less exclusively to prominent men: Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking, Bill Gates and, in retrospect, Leonardo da Vinci, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and William Shakespeare. In *A Room of One’s Own*, Virginia Woolf (1992 [1929]: 63) remarks ruefully that ‘genius of a sort must have existed among women, as it must have existed among the working class’; but the fact that the term was hardly ever applied to them massively obscured this fact. Meanwhile, it remains possible to identify ‘genius’ with time rather than person or place. In Germany it was common to refer to the high Romantic period of *Sturm und Drang* as *Genieperiod*; and a BBC radio series on great scientific inventions and inventors was called ‘Moments of Genius’ (BBC Radio 4, 2010). Clearly, as with the supposed ‘Eureka moment’ of discovery, the act of genius may be as much bound up *in the event* with the ‘when’ as the ‘who’ and the ‘where’ (see Chapter 24 by Guy Cook; see also Preminger and Brogan 1993: 455–6; Howe 1999).

**Invention**, meanwhile, we may note, went through a similar kind of volte-face to that undergone by ‘original’, only at a slightly earlier historical moment. In the sixteenth-century sense it still retained its root etymological sense of ‘finding out’ (from Latin *invenire*, *inventum*, to find out, found); hence rhetorical *invention*, referring to the finding and gathering of materials, and ‘inventory’, an itemized list of contents. But thereafter, particularly under pressure from the seventeenth-century scientific revolution, it tended increasingly to acquire its now-dominant, primarily technological sense of ‘making up’ (e.g. the invention of the steam engine, Davy lamp, telephone, computer, etc.). As such, the term has a shifting and dynamic relation with the concept of ‘discovery’ (itself complex), which can refer to the scientific discovery of oxygen but also to the ‘discovery’ of, say, North America or Australia – which happened many times and is invariably framed from a Western European point of view (see Howe 1999: 176–87).

In all these ways, the continuing history and teeming conversation that characterizes the ‘creativity’ words is at once clamorously confusing and fabulously rich. Such terms and concepts as those featured above – and many more picked up and turned over in the pages that follow – may appear to be natural and necessary fellow-travellers with ‘creativity’. But in reality many are much older and each has its own vexed and complex – if not plain contrary – story to tell. Mixing all these up with the potential meanings as well as actual applications of such a relative newcomer on the scene as creativity (the term first appeared in the late nineteenth century, remember) makes for a heady mix indeed. What’s more, these are living verbal histories in which we each have our say, ongoing cultural conversations to which we all contribute. The latest word is always ours: the first or last word, never. That is perhaps the most crucial – critical and creative – lesson we can learn from a contemporary history of the ‘creativity’ words.
Culture is Un/common, Creativity is Extra/ordinary

These are the axes on which many debates on creativity revolve – sometimes just going round in circles, occasionally getting somewhere else. They are partly interchangeable, too, so we also find talk of creativity being more or less common or uncommon and culture being more or less ordinary or extraordinary; and of both of them being in various ways ‘everyday’ or ‘exceptional’. At any rate, there is a dynamic in play which, if it is not to be self-defeating or simply seize up, has to be conceived as moving in some direction or switching dimension. In short, there must be a purposeful sense of historical process if not exactly progress.

‘Culture Is Ordinary’ is the title of an influential essay first published by Raymond Williams in 1958, later elaborated around the proposition that ‘creativity is as ordinary as culture’ in the first chapter of his The Long Revolution (1961). To this he added the important qualification that ‘there are no ordinary activities, if by “ordinary” we mean the absence of creative interpretation. We create our human world as we have thought of art as being created’ (ibid.: 27). In the area of youth culture in particular, Paul Willis and others in Common Culture: Symbolic Work at Play in the Everyday Cultures of the Young (1990) offered a strongly evidence-based as well as political argument for ‘a vibrant symbolic life and symbolic creativity in everyday life, everyday activity and expression’, especially ‘the multitude of ways in which young people humanize, decorate and invest with meaning their common and immediate life spaces and social practices – personal styles and choice of clothes, selective and active use of music’ (ibid.: 1–2). Variations on this championing of the creativity of common culture can be found throughout contemporary Cultural and Media Studies; indeed, they are part of the foundational rationale of these comparatively recent subjects (see Jones 2009: 52–7).

All these issues can be framed conversely, however, with the emphasis upon culture as uncommon and creativity as extraordinary. From this perspective, the array of opinion and insight is if anything even more varied. At one extreme lies the reactionary rhetoric of Roger Scruton (2001), lamenting the passing of an elite culture of creative artists and proposing a restitution of narrowly idealist, resolutely non-materialist aesthetics. In another direction, virtually another dimension, we have Derek Attridge’s subtle arguments for The Singularity of Literature (2004), with its fresh inflections of ‘invention’ (combining its ancient sense of ‘finding out’ with a modern sense of ‘making up’), partly derived from the ‘deconstruction’ of Derrida (1992) and driving towards ‘reconstructions’ (‘stagings’, ‘performances’, ‘displays’) that are uniquely tuned to each intelligence and sensibility that has learnt to respond (also see Chapter 26 by Jon Cook).
Meanwhile, there are many insightful and openly idiosyncratic positions somewhere in the middle(s). On one side there is George Steiner’s *Grammars of Creation* (2001) with his pointed and poignant acknowledgement that ‘creation in its classic sense and connotations’ – inflected in terms of the ‘divine’ and ‘artistic’ senses identified above – ‘turns out to have been a magnificently fruitful invention’ (32). On another side is Peter Abbs’s sustained and openly combative argument in *Against the Flow: Education, the Arts and Postmodern Culture* (2003). Abbs is expressly for an arts and crafts approach based on a ‘living inheritance of examples and procedures transmitted by the culture’ and a ‘symbolic vocabulary’ of ‘metaphors, models, ideas, images, narratives, facts’ that can stimulate and sustain a ‘flowering of consciousness’. He is vigorously against both ‘an individualistic expressive arts paradigm’ (wrongly seen as ‘progressive’, he says) and a ‘consumer democracy’ where a combination of naked market forces and veiled public accountability conspire to make it ‘impossible for profound levels of creativity to be released’ (ibid.: 2, 17, 59; also see Jones 2009: 48–50). Abbs’s position is complex and vexed, partial and sometimes idiosyncratic. In fact that might be said of all the arguments reviewed above, whether nominally for or against ‘common’ and ‘everyday’ or ‘extraordinary’ and ‘singular’ creativity and/or culture. Readers must therefore decide for themselves where – or whether – they wish to place the oblique in that last phrase or any of those preceding. Invoking ‘extra/ordinary’ creativity and ‘un/common culture’ is an apparently even-handed option, of course. But so is fence-sitting. Learning to juggle and removing the fence are also options. We explore the initial utility and eventual futility of binary thinking at many points in the book. Ronald Carter expressly returns to this issue in the Epilogue. For the moment, we shall move directly to multiples and pluralities.

**Multiple Creativities for Each and All?**

Creativity may be grasped as not one thing, but many. The plural form may be superficial or significant, depending on how it is handled and what it is taken to mean. Howard Gardner’s work (1998) helps set the scene with the trajectory of his work moving from multiple intelligences to plural creativities. Both of these have implications for plural learning styles: spatial, kinetic and tactile, for example, as well as verbal, aural/oral, visual and, latterly, what has been dubbed ‘emotional intelligence’. Anna Craft’s ‘little c’ and ‘big C’ creativities (Craft et al. 2001) offers another take on this, the former equated with fresh learning of any kind and the latter with achievements, discoveries and inventions that are recognized as generally significant by the authorities in some field (after Csikszentmihalyi 1996). This in turn may be compared with
Margaret Boden’s (2004) distinction between ‘P-creativity’ (Person-centred, psychological) and ‘H-creativity’ (Historical, world-changing) – respectively, “‘Tis new to thee’ and “‘Tis new to everyone’, so to speak. Boden’s argument, like her labelling, is less overtly hierarchical and more discriminating than Craft’s in the kind of relative valuation implied. (The latter qualifies and elaborates her position in Craft 2011.) Meanwhile, in a broader perspective, we need to recognize all the ‘Multi-’s: Multimodality, Multimedia and Multiculturalism. These also open up the possibility of creativity in and through many senses, perceptions, modes, media, periods and cultures (see Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001; also Marsh 2010). We pick up some of these multi-s shortly, when situating language in relation to communication at large and learning in particular. They are treated at length in Part 2, and expressly reinvoked in Chapter 27 by Ruth Finnegan.

Creative Learning, Industries, Partnerships

‘Creativity’ and ‘creative’ have become buzz words, rallying calls and weasel words in many areas of commercial enterprise and public policy from the late twentieth into the early twenty-first centuries. This has been especially marked in the UK in education (‘creative learning’), employment (‘creative enterprise’) and culture (‘creative industries’). Indeed, so ubiquitous and pervasive – some would say invasive – has the rhetoric of creativity become in the modern corporate state that for better and worse it offers (or threatens) to blur the boundaries between education and employment altogether, with projects and programmes such as ‘Creative Partnerships’, for example. A brief review of the characteristic rhetorics and discourses of ‘creativity’ in and around contemporary UK education policy will help set the scene (see Banaji et al. 2006; O’Connor 2007). This extends from the setting up of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in 1997 to the latest reports on ‘innovation’ in education, business and industry.1 ‘Innovation’, rather like ‘invention’ earlier, is often used instead of or alongside the ‘create’ terms; it gives them a technical edge, projecting a kind of ‘creativity with attitude’.

The richness, complexity and contentiousness of approaches and arguments in this area may be gauged by a representative sampling of the main topics, by chapter heading, treated in just a couple of the reviews of the recent research literature:

Creative genius; Democratic and political creativity; Creativity as economic imperative; Play and creativity; Creativity and cognition; The Creative Affordances of Technology.

(Banaji et al., The Rhetorics of Creativity, 2006)
Cultural conservatism; Mass culture and progressive education, 1945–65; Cultural Studies in the new order: Common Culture, 1980s; Creativity and economic change, 1990s; Cultural and Creative Industries, to the present. (Jones, *Culture and Creative Learning*, 2009)

Reading through these reports and reviews, what comes through time and again is a fundamental tension between two models of creativity. These may be characterized as:

- creativity for personal growth and cultural awareness;
- creativity for the knowledge economy and employment.

These two models may be seen as complementary or in conflict: certainly they tend to compete and sometimes they may cooperate (in a more or less corporate kind of way). For graphic convenience, the overall situation may be further modelled as follows, with two-way flow-arrows connecting all the items, around and across, and ‘creativity’ as the term at issue in the centre:

![Figure 1.1 A dynamic model of creativity in the public sphere](image)

**Creativity in Relation to Reading and Rewriting**

Much of the work reviewed above has emphasized production, whether in terms of creative processes of production or the outcome of such processes in creative texts or other artefacts. However, accounts of reading, or the reception of literary and other texts, also differ in the extent to which this is seen as a creative activity. And different conceptions of reading have implications for how we conceive of writing. For instance if all reading is in some sense a form of rewriting (recasting what one reads in one’s own mind), and if much writing is a form of rereading (recasting the resources of the language and texts as found into what one makes of them), at what point can a really fresh reading or writing be said to appear? This also has a bearing on what may be meant by creativity. For if human creation is not from nothing (*ex nihilo*, on divine
INTRODUCTION: CREATIVITY, LANGUAGE, LITERATURE

lines) but from something or someone else (ex aliis, say, a broadly materialist view), is it all really just a matter of re-creation? (See Pope 1995, 2005 and Chapter 20 in this book; see also Knights and Thurgar-Dawson 2006.)

These are questions that bulk large and have been very variously addressed in many areas of theory and analysis. Debate ranges (sometime rages) from ‘Reception Aesthetics’ (associated chiefly with Iser 1978 and Jauss 1982) with its roots in Western European phenomenology to ‘Reader Response Criticism’ (Bloom 1973, Bleich 1978, Fish 1980) with its roots in Anglo-American pragmatism and individualism (see Holub 1984; Bennett 1995). Such debates tend to draw on earlier twentieth-century Eastern European traditions of formal and functional analysis (Mukarovsky 1970 [1936], Jakobson 1960) and, in the early twenty-first century, are increasingly informed by insights from physiology and psychology and artificial intelligence as well as linguistics and critical theory, and currently assume the form of Cognitive Poetics and Text World Theory (see Chapter 16 by Peter Stockwell; see also Oatley 2003). Famously – some would say infamously – there has been much heat and some light generated by responses to Barthes’s essay ‘The Death of the Author’, especially its provocative last line: ‘the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author’ (Barthes 1977; and compare Wandor 2008 and her Chapter 12 in this book).

Nowadays there is a rich array of approaches that may be broadly characterized as forms of ‘reading-as-rewriting’, each with its own more or less distinct project of what may be called ‘re-vision as re-valuing’. Marxist, new historicist, feminist, gay, psychoanalytic and post-colonial approaches all have their critical agendas and regimes of reading, often partly overlapping – reading for class, gender, sexuality, trauma, ethnicity, and powers and pleasures of many kinds.

Meanwhile, openly post-structural and deconstructive ‘readings’ may issue in kinds of (re)writing and (re-)presentation that exploit devices of lay-out and graphology and strategies of textual organization (crossings-out, collage, parallel and hybrid text, alternative annotations) usually associated with experimental poetry, drama and fiction and the more literary kinds of philosophy (for examples, see Chapter 13 by Patience Agbabi and Chapter 20 by Rob Pope; see also Sheppard 2008). Alongside these traditions, research on the history of reading, and the empirical study of contemporary reading practices (how people actually read and discuss their responses to literary texts, as opposed to more idealized conceptions of reading) offer insights into reading and reception as literary activities that are very different from those familiar in the literature and language classes of formal education (see Chapter 17 by Joan Swann).

Linguistic Approaches to Creativity in Language

Set against these broader debates about creativity, contemporary empirical research has highlighted the prevalence of linguistic creativity even in the
most routine utterances. The swell of evidence has led several researchers to identify continuities between such ‘everyday’ creativity and literary language. This research tradition forms a major stimulus for the present volume, and is the starting point for many of the chapters that follow.

Three Approaches to Linguistic Creativity

‘The central fact to which any significant linguistic theory must address itself is this: a mature speaker can produce a new sentence of his language on the appropriate occasion, and other speakers can understand it immediately, though it is equally new to them... the class of sentences with which we can operate fluently and without difficulty or hesitation is so vast that for all practical purposes... we may regard it as infinite.’

(Chomsky 1964: 7)

‘[Creativity] is the everyday process of semiotic work as making meaning.’

(Kress 2003: 40)

‘Creativity is a pervasive feature of spoken language exchanges as well as a key component in interpersonal communication, and... it is a property actively possessed by all speakers and listeners; it is not simply the domain of a few creatively gifted individuals.’

(Carter 2004: 6)

The idea of ‘creativity’ is important in several areas of linguistics. In his theory of transformational generative grammar, for instance, Noam Chomsky referred to ‘the “creative” aspect of language’ (1964: 8) to denote its productivity: the fact that it enables speakers and listeners to produce and understand entirely novel sentences that they have not encountered before. In this sense, ‘creativity’ refers to an essential property of the language system rather than to language use that is creative in a literary or poetic sense, although the ability to produce novel sentences allows for the possibility of literary creativity. This distinction between, in Guy Cook’s terms, creativity of and with the system is addressed briefly in Chapter 24 of this volume.

In a rather different intellectual vein, socially oriented research on language in use (e.g. in the areas of applied linguistics and sociolinguistics) has come to see this as a relatively creative process in which language users constantly refashion linguistic and other communicative resources rather than reproducing static rules of language use. While emanating from a different discipline, such research is consistent with the work of Williams and others, cited earlier, that foregrounded the commonness of ‘culture’ and ‘creativity’.
Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen (e.g. 2001), for instance, have developed the concept of ‘design’ to account for the integration of different modes in the production and interpretation of texts. Design necessarily involves transformation, however slight, and in this sense the ‘semiotic work’ of meaning-making is always creative. Similarly, within the study of language variation and diversity, a significant body of research has focused on speakers’ appropriation of language varieties to style themselves and others – a shifting, creative performance of particular personae (Coupland 2007; Eckert 2000; Pennycook 2007; Rampton 2005). Practice-based approaches to the study of literacy have also emphasized the creative role of participants as active, strategic agents, using literacy practices to represent or create histories, social relationships and social identities (Bloome et al. 2005). Within these and similar traditions of enquiry researchers do not see the communicative strategies adopted by individuals as entirely unfettered, but there is an emphasis on language users’ creativity within and in relation to social, contextual and medium-specific constraints (Maybin and Swann 2007).

It is against the backdrop of this general trend that research has begun to document the pervasiveness of creative language that may be considered, in various ways, literary-like. The extracts below provide examples, including features such as wordplay, repetition, metaphor and imagery often associated with poetry and other literary texts. Extract 1 comes from a study by Ronald Carter of a substantial (5-million-word) corpus of spoken interaction: this is an example of word play – a near pun based on the similarity in form between *reason* and *raisin*. Carter notes that initially he was not looking for evidence of creativity, but found this was surprisingly common in his data. In Extract 2, two speakers echo and re-echo one another’s words, giving their interaction a poetic texture (similar forms of interactional repetition recur throughout Carter’s data). Extract 3 comes from research on language play by Guy Cook, who focuses on word play of various sorts and on the playful construction of imaginary or fictional worlds evident in children’s rhymes and riddles; adult forms such as Valentine messages; adverts; and more serious genres such as oratory, poetry and song. In Extract 4, from research by Janet Holmes on workplace humour, creativity turns not on wordplay or other manipulation of linguistic form but on the discursive play evident in conversational joking – in this case Sam comments humorously on the length of a meeting and the chair, Jill, maintains the humorous tone in her response. The final extract comes from research on narrative by Michael Toolan: here, a speaker selects words and phrases (*amazingly scary, unbelievably screech, a massive... stone wall*) to create powerful images of the events in her story and intensify the feeling of danger.
Some Examples of Language Creativity

Extract 1  Members of a family are preparing food for a party:

C  Foreign body in here. What is it?
B  It’s raisins and [inaudible]
C  Er oh it’s rice with raisins is it?
D  No no no. It’s not supposed to be [laughter] erm
C  There must be a raisin for it being in there.

[laughter]

(Adapted from Carter 2004: 93)

Extract 2  Three children are engaged in small-group discussion in a classroom. They have been asked to consider a moral dilemma – what should happen to a boy who stole chocolates for his mother, who was sick. Two of the children are speaking in this extract:

Emily  Right em
Gemma  I think he should be punished and grounded
Emily  [I think he should be punished and grounded
Gemma  [I think he should be grounded
Emily  For em like a couple of weeks mmh
Gemma  I think he should be ( ) at least a month because like
         imagine if like you stole
Emily  The police would find out
Gemma  The police would [find out
Emily  [And then your mum would be really
Gemma  And your mum would be really angry
Emily  Your mum would be really angry
Gemma  She’d be like panicking and
Emily  Everything
Gemma  She’d probably get even more ill
Emily  Exactly
Gemma  Imagine how she’d feel ( ) OK

(Unpublished data)

Note: ( ) = brief pause; square brackets = beginning of overlapping speech.

Extract 3  Beginning of a rhyme for young children:

Diddle diddle dumpling my son John/Went to bed with his trousers on

(Cited Cook, 2000: 24)
INTRODUCTION: CREATIVITY, LANGUAGE, LITERATURE

A great deal of research, such as the studies reported above, involves creativity in spoken interaction (see also Norrick 2001; Tannen 2007). Studies have also, however, looked at creativity in written texts and practices (from diaries and letters, graffiti, signs and leaflets, and various electronic texts, to canonical literature – see examples in Goodman and O’Halloran 2006; Maybin and Swann 2006).

This body of work is not inconsistent with the more general, theoretical re-viewing of all language use as creative and indeed some researchers would align themselves with this view. In many cases, however, research with a specific focus on literary-like creativity sees this, while prevalent, as distinctive – as a type of language use that stands out and, however fleetingly, draws attention to itself. In Extract 2 above, the creative patterning is more covert – while it is evident in a transcript it is unlikely to be noticed by speakers. In other extracts, however, linguistic or discursive patterns are more marked and, where we have evidence of this, they are responded to by others – by laughter in Extracts 1 and 4. Such usage corresponds to one of the functions of language identified by Roman Jakobson, which he termed the poetic function: an occasion in which there is a ‘focus on the message for its own sake’ (1960: 356). Jakobson is referring here to the highlighting of the linguistic form of a message (word play, rhyming, etc.). While this is a dominant function of poetry, taking precedence over other functions such as conveying information, it is also evident in non-literary texts, although in this latter case other functions may be dominant.

Extract 4 A Board meeting in a small IT company is almost finished and the main agenda items have been covered. The participants are now discussing only minor points. Jill is the chair of the meeting:

Sam: keep going until there’s only one person standing
Jill: [laughs] oh you’ve been to our board meetings before
[laughs]

(Holmes, 2007: 525)

Extract 5 Part of a story told by a student about a near accident in a car:

... so we were like [laughing intonation] coming over this hill not too fast but fast enough for it to be amazingly scary and he pressed the brakes again and we started to skid and I’ll never forget the unbelievable screech as as we started to move towards the right of the road and there was a massive sort of erm stone wall that we were heading towards and I’ve [laughing intonation] never been so scared in my life...

(Toolan 2006: 59)
Alongside the identification of creative forms in discourse, there has also, importantly, been a focus on the socially embedded nature of language creativity, and on its interactional, interpersonal and affective meanings within specific contexts of use. Such language is often seen as inclusive in various ways. Carter (2004) argues that creative episodes, in his data, are associated with informal, friendly relations and in this context they function to align viewpoints and create convergence. Tannen (2007), similarly, argues that language that she sees as ‘poetic’ creates involvement in the conversational topic and between speakers. On the other hand, Cook (2000) notes that while play may serve to include others it may also exclude, e.g. in humorous taunts or put-downs. The examples cited above all provide evidence of inclusion and the creation of involvement, but in Extract 2 the closeness of the two children speaking together may also exclude a third member of the group who does not speak on this occasion (elsewhere in the discussion there is more overt friction between Emily and Gemma, and Dan, the third member of their group). Extract 4 demonstrates the fairly complex negotiation of relationships in the workplace, in which a teasing comment has the potential to subvert authority, but in this case the humour in both Sam’s remark and Jill’s response also takes the edge off the criticism.

Maybin and Swann (2007) develop a more overtly contextualized approach to language creativity, drawing on linguistic anthropological notions of performance (Bauman 1986; Bauman and Briggs 1990; Hymes 1975), and a dialogical model of language associated with the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin.

Performance in this sense may be defined as:

a mode of communication, a way of speaking, the essence of which resides in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative skill, highlighting the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content. (Bauman 1986: 3)

This idea is closely associated with Jakobson’s poetic function. Performance calls attention to the act of expression itself and to the performer. For Bauman it is: ‘the enactment of the poetic function, the essence of spoken artistry’ (ibid.).

Bakhtin (e.g. 1984 [1929], 1981 [1935], 1986 [1953]) sees language not as a unified whole, but as highly differentiated:

- Language itself is heteroglossic – it includes different social languages, associated with particular social groups and contexts of use (e.g. the language used by different professional groups, by older people or younger people). There are often tensions and struggles between such social languages.
• At the level of particular utterances, too, language is polyphonic or multi-voiced: any utterance reproduces the voices of other speakers and contexts of use. Words, phrases, discourses carry with them the ‘taste’ of these prior speakers and contexts. This is most obvious where speakers are actually quoted, i.e. in direct speech; but it permeates language use more generally (e.g. reference to someone being grounded in Extract 2 will derive its associations from previous contexts of use).

• Language use is dialogic, both in the sense that it addresses a particular person/people and a particular context, and in drawing on other voices (in this latter sense any utterance is a response to previous utterances, contexts or people).

• The associated term intertextuality is often used (from Julia Kristeva 1986) to refer to ‘chains of communication’ – the idea that all utterances or texts are made up of words and meanings from other utterances/texts.

This view of language would see utterances as always having an evaluative dimension (i.e. reflecting a speaker’s evaluative stance or viewpoint). Bauman and Briggs (1990) argue further that, because they call attention to themselves, performances have an enhanced potential for evaluation and critique. An example here would be the workplace extract (Extract 4) where Sam’s comment serves as a humorous critique of his boss.

Such ideas have been highly influential in contemporary language study and have implications here for the study of language creativity. In terms of the ‘creativity words’ discussed above, creativity would be seen not as something completely novel or original, but as a process of transformation, where words and phrases, or communicative practices, are taken up and recontextualized – i.e. bringing associations from prior contexts, but also refashioned, and imbued with particular meaning in the current context of use. Such ideas about creativity underpin several chapters in this volume (Chapters 4, 9, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20).

To summarize these rather complex arguments:

• creativity has been identified as a common feature of language use;

• some researchers see all language use as creative; others restrict the term to particular types of language (e.g. metaphor, word play, the use of powerful imagery);

• in this latter case, attention is drawn to the form of language; this process has been termed the poetic function of language, but it is not restricted to poetry;

• some researchers focus, not just on creative forms of language, but on language creativity as a contextualized practice – so that its meaning is dependent on particular contexts of use;
• in this case, creativity may be seen as a matter of performance (however fleeting this is), designed for a particular audience in a particular context;
• drawing on ideas from Bakhtin, language creativity is also seen as a process of transformation, where words and expressions draw on meanings from prior contexts, but are also reinvested with meaning in the current context of use;
• like any form of language use, language creativity reflects the values and standpoints of speakers and listeners; some researchers argue that, because creative episodes stand out, this increases their potential as a means of critique (of other people, standpoints, etc.).

On the basis of these ideas, Maybin and Swann set out a schematic representation of different ways of analysing language that may contribute to the study of language creativity (see Figure 1.2).

Some Implications for the Relationship between Everyday and Literary Creativity

Anthropological conceptions of performance, building on Jakobson’s poetic function, apply to literature (literary performances) but also more broadly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension of analysis</th>
<th>Analytical focus</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textual</td>
<td>Linguistic forms and structures, at word/sentence level and above; may also include formal multimodal analysis.</td>
<td>Word play; narrative structure; voice quality used to enhance the point of an ironic or playful comment; placement of emoticons in electronic chat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextualized</td>
<td>How language is used by participants in specific interactions, and/or how it shapes, responds to, and is shaped by particular sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts (the balance varies in different analyses).</td>
<td>Joint construction of a narrative, or word play, and how this is responded to by others; the cultural understandings necessary to make sense of a joke; economic, social and technological conditions associated with contemporary electronic creativity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>Creativity as necessarily evaluative, with the potential for more developed critique of social relations/positions and associated values.</td>
<td>Conversational narrative that indexes a speaker’s moral stance; joking that subverts or critiques authority; the potential of poetic language to call attention to a critical stance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.2 Dimensions of analysis

Source: Adapted from Maybin and Swann (2007: 513).
to language creativity wherever this occurs. They serve as a way of bringing together a microperformance in conversational word play and a fully developed literary work. They also allow researchers to explore commonalities and differences between everyday and literary creativity.

While for convenience we have referred so far to relationships between the ‘everyday’ and the ‘literary’, clearly neither of these is a unitary, undifferentiated category. The idea of ‘multiple creativities’, discussed earlier, would suggest here that instances of creative language use relate to each other in complex and contextually specific ways, varying across texts, genres and contexts to a range of aesthetic, affective and interpersonal effects.

In addition to broadening conceptions of creativity and challenging the distinctiveness of literary language, the ideas discussed above pose challenges to conventional conceptions of the nature and functions of language itself. Carter for instance suggests that ‘creative language may be a default condition, a norm of use from which ordinary, routine “non-creative” exchanges constitute an abnormal departure’ (2004: 214). And Cook, similarly, states that ‘it might be that, both ontogenetically and phylogenetically, the first function of language is the creation of imaginative worlds: whether lies, games, fictions or fantasies’ (2000: 47).

How this book is organized

The ideas sketched out above form a historical and disciplinary backdrop for the present volume, and are variously elaborated and extended, played with, challenged or contested in the contributions from different authors. We have tried to bring together and to mix up contributors with a range of disciplinary, aesthetic, ideological and practical perspectives on creativity, language and literature. These include scholars, teachers and researchers in English Language and Literature, Literary Studies, Linguistics, and Education; and creative practitioners in Writing (novelist, poet, dramatist, storyteller, literary editor) and Film (director), all of whom have been or are currently also involved in teaching Creative Writing, Performance, Drama or Film Studies.

The contributions themselves are different in nature: many are conventionally academic, concerned with analysis, argument or debate. Practitioners bring a more personal and reflexive perspective to their own engagement with creative practices. But we also include a wider range of formats: an interview discussing bilingual joking; a poem with a commentary by the author; extracts from an interview with a storyteller and an illustration of his performance; a
brief extract from a lecture on creativity in poetry; a poetic ‘A–Z of textual re-creation’.

The volume therefore forms a kind of vortex – in a more contemporary scientific idiom, it acts as a ‘strange attractor’ – to draw together a wide but not disparate range of people, activities and institutions, and ways of presenting ideas about creativity, language and literature. The contributors and editors have done this because they believe it is not only an exciting and energizing thing to do but also a desirable and perhaps even necessary one. In short, to be upbeat and open about it, we reckon this is one of the shapes of things to come. But even if this eventually proves not to be the case, being more modest and unassuming, it is hoped that the idea and design of the book will have modelled at least one of the shapes that things might become.

Part I extends the earlier discussion on the relationship between the ‘everyday’ and the ‘literary’, focusing on multiple creativities and the potential instability of boundaries between these. Authors take contrasting positions on the relative distinctiveness of, and relationships between, a range of diverse creativities – drawing on insights from linguistics/language studies, literary scholarship and cultural studies, and poetry/performance art. The theme of literary value/aesthetics surfaces across chapters.

Part II further elaborates these ideas in the consideration of creativities across different modes, media and technologies, and the potential offered by multimodal, and often ethnographically grounded, understandings of creative practices. Analysis and commentary foreground processes of transformation and (re)contextualization in writing and performance, face-to-face and electronic discourse, material texts and film.

Part III turns to processes of reception, response and ‘creative interpretation’. The role of the audience, imagined and actual, has already been highlighted in relation to performance and film, and ‘production’/‘reception’ necessarily blur in interpersonal interaction. The focus here is on imagined responses to film from different audiences, literary reading, editing and judging, and the dynamic of rereading and rewriting. There is reflection throughout on the nature of critical response and on conceptions of aesthetic judgement and literary value.

Part IV concludes the volume by pointing to some persistent questions and ongoing debates – on the historical construction of creativity, around contested notions of ‘genius’, and about the problematics of teaching ‘creative writing’. Further perspectives on creativity in language and literature are supplied through philosophy, aesthetics, performance and multimodal communication. An epilogue to the volume offers ‘postscripts and prospects’ for studies in creativity, language and literature at large.
NOTES

1. For example and in particular: *All our Futures* (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999); *Creativity: Find it, Promote it* (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2003); *Nurturing Creativity in Young People: A Report to Government to Inform Future Policy* (Roberts, 2006); *Creating Growth: How the UK Can Develop World-class Creative Businesses* (NESTA, 2006); *Education for Innovation* (NESTA, 2007); *Innovation Nation* (DIUS, HMSO, 2008).

2. See Chomsky’s discussion of what he termed ‘true creativity’ as manifested in the arts and sciences (Chomsky 1966).

3. These data come from a project directed by Neil Mercer, called Thinking Together in Primary Classrooms, and analysed by Joan Swann in previous research. We are grateful to Neil Mercer and the Thinking Together team for permission to cite data from their project.

4. Some practices are more ambiguous. For instance competitive play – sounding, verbal duelling, etc. – may involve ritual insults which combine competition with inclusion/involvement.

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