

Creativity and the Dynamic System of Australian Fiction Writing

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Abstract

Given the growing interest in fiction writing in Australia, seen in the rise in the number of festivals, writers' centres, how-to books, biographies and creative writing classes, it is surprising that very little research has been done within Australia on the nature of literary creativity itself. A review of international literature on creativity from areas such as the arts, history, psychology, sociology, cultural studies, business and education shows movement away from traditional and conventional ideas of creativity that focus primarily on the individual, towards more contextual approaches that reconceptualise creativity as the result of a dynamic system at work. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's tripartite model of creativity, which includes a field of experts, a domain of knowledge and an individual author, has been successfully applied to the arts and sciences in North America. It is argued that the systems model is also relevant to Australian fiction writing, a term which is used here to include novels in literature, popular fiction and genre fiction categories.

This thesis is primarily based on in-depth interviews with 40 published Australian fiction writers. With over 400 publications between them, the individual writers interviewed represent a broad cross section of Australian fiction categories at both the national and international level. In addition to literary writers like Carmel Bird and Venero Armanno, this sample also incorporates writers in other genres such as Di Morrissey and Nick Earls (popular fiction), Paul Collins (science fiction and fantasy), Anna Jacobs (romance), Peter Doyle (crime) and Libby Gleeson and Gary Crew (children's and young adult fiction). Although the individual writers possess unique combinations of characteristics, biographies and processes, their collective responses demonstrate common participation in systemic processes of creativity.

By analysing these responses in terms of Csikszentmihalyi's systems model, this thesis presents evidence that demonstrates a system of creativity at work in Australian fiction. The analysis of the collected data provides evidence, firstly, of how writers adopt and master the domain skills and knowledge needed to be able to write fiction through processes of socialisation and enculturation. Secondly, it is also the contention of this thesis that the individual's ability to contribute to the domain depends not only on traditional biological, personality and motivational influences but also socially and culturally mediated work practices and processes. Finally, it is asserted that the contribution of a field of experts is also crucial to creativity occurring in Australian fiction writing. This social organisation, comprised of all those who can affect the domain, is important not only for its influence on and acceptance of written works but also for the continuation of the system itself. The evidence shows that the field supports further writing as well as writing careers with many authors becoming members of the field themselves.

In sum, the research demonstrates that, rather than being solely the property of individual authors, creativity in Australian fiction writing results from individuals making choices and acting within the boundaries of specific social and cultural contexts.

Acknowledgements

As I repeat throughout this thesis, writers never do their work in isolation. They are constantly drawing on work that has come before and interacting with people and institutions that judge and support their writing. This process has been no different.

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Most of the things that are interesting, important and *human* are the results of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 1).

1.0 Introducing creativity and Australian fiction writing

While the term ‘creative’ is used liberally by academics, critics and journalists, few look closely at the word ‘creativity’, let alone try to explain it. It is most often there in the text as a given. The literature on Australian fiction writing echoes this trend. It contains very little explicit discussion of creativity as a process or as a concept. In the lack of any sustained discussion, the words ‘creative’ and ‘creativity’ appear in this writing as little more than clichés, which bring a train of Romantic assumptions about individual agency in their wake. West Australian writer Mudrooroo (1990) attacks such tendencies, and in the process offers one of the few extended discussions of creativity in Australian literary studies:

I start here, at the root, because so much bullshit has been put forth on this subject, usually from a Western perspective beginning with the ego existing in splendid solitude and from this divine monad coming the great work. I, instead of seeing the ego as splendidly isolated, see it as being social, that is man or woman is a social being and that the ego of a man or woman is not only formed by society or by the community, but extends out from the head or beyond the skin, the bark, to thrust back into the community. There is really no inner or outer isolation, and the tree of the ego is swayed and moved more by what is happening around, the breezes, the earth, the touching heads of a human being, than by say the sap rising from the roots and up the trunk and permeating each branch, twig and leaf. Naturally, if we did concentrate on the inner sap of the tree, its essence so to speak, we would find that it too is determined by outer things, the soil and its content, the rain, or the moisture and so on. So it seems that this isolation, sometimes put out as being the abode of the writer and his ego, this splendid isolation is an illusion or, if you want, a man-made construct (1990, pp. 180-1).

The highly metaphorical nature of Mudrooroo’s language should not be allowed to obscure the rigour of his argument.

Mudrooroo argues that creative writers do not exist in isolation. In positing that “man or woman is a social being”, he removes the writer from an elevated position as a “divine monad” or god-like being and places him within the everyday contexts of society and culture. Rather than springing fully-formed from the womb, writers are “formed by society or by the

community”, developing their identities and capabilities in multiple, and sometimes continuous, processes of socialisation or enculturation. Even after their identities and capabilities are formed, writers and their work are still connected to the society and culture they inhabit, “thrust back into the community” to interact with its rules and artefacts as well as its individuals and institutions.

By contextualising the writer in this way, Mudrooroo also argues that individuals do not have the only input in the creation of fiction works. Not only is the writer himself the product of social and cultural forces but those same forces continue to influence his practice and its products in both direct and indirect ways. Mudrooroo uses the metaphor of a tree to describe how the individual “is swayed and moved more by what is happening around” than by their own ego or essence. Just as a tree needs nutrients from the soil to grow and water to introduce oxygen and keep sap flowing through its leaves and branches, so too does the writer require the input of their social and cultural worlds in order to develop and produce a piece of writing.

Mudrooroo’s statement diverges from the dominant discourses on Australian fiction writing. In most cases, the literature completely ignores an explicit discussion of creativity in favour of a focus solely on either the social and cultural forces at play or the individual and the mechanics of their writing process. Instead of answering what would seem to be fundamental questions of creativity - how Australian books are created or even how Australian writers produce them - debate has tended to concentrate instead on nationalism, diversity, celebrity and procedure. Although such debates are important, they leave significant gaps in the current literature on Australian fiction writing.

From the mid twentieth century to the 1970s, literary criticism of Australian fiction can be seen to be focused, to the exclusion of nearly all other issues, on how to stake out the boundaries of a national literature from what was previously viewed as merely an offshoot of its English predecessor. Until World War II, literary criticism in Australia was largely based on British ideals. In 1856, for example, the first critical essay on Australian literature (Sinnott, 1966), suggested a move towards universal themes to attract an international (namely British) audience and to avoid reading like travel books. Colonial attitudes to fiction produced in Australia led not only to obsequious admiration of English culture and criticism, but also deference to their publishing industry, drawing (now well-known) Australian writers such as

Mile Franklin, Henry Handel Richardson, Christina Stead and Patrick White to publishers based in London (Nile, 2002).

From World War II onwards literary circles initiated a preoccupation with nationalism that came to dominate Australia's literary magazines and journals for decades (see B. Bennett, 1981; Hergenhan, 2003; Lindsay, 2004; McPhee, 2004; Syson, 1999). The debates featured in these publications were by no means trivial. In fact, they were vital to reinvigorating the Australian writing industry and establishing the study of Australian literature in universities during this period. In 1956, for example, A.D. Hope (in D. Bird, Dixon, & Lee, 2001) articulated the need for an educated body of readers "who not only read books but read criticism and discuss the opinions of critics" (2001, p. 3) in order to establish and sustain literary standards and tradition. Exhaustive discussion of issues such as the need to produce books that reflected Australia's unique social, cultural and geographical conditions and the importance of home-grown cultural products for the national psyche and economy all aided this purpose. Yet this heavy focus on how to establish a national identity at home and on the world stage meant discussions of creativity as a process were missing from the literature on fiction writing.

By the 1970s and 80s, the discourse on Australian writing had started to incorporate discussion of writers' biographies and particular works and forms of writing that had been ignored by literary criticism. Under the influence of post-modern and post-colonial thought, nationalism, as it had been represented in the years since World War II, was now seen as a dominant or imperial force that repressed anything which did not conform to the mainstream. The emergence of feminist discourse in the 1970s led to increased awareness not only of women writers, but also groups previously neglected in discussions of Australian writing, namely ethnic minority and indigenous writers. The recovery of these writers and their texts from the sidelines of literary history helped to expose the ways that specific social and cultural elements influenced writers and their work.

In each of their fields, feminist, ethnic minority and indigenous literary criticism all offered radical new ways of viewing Australian fiction writing in terms of analysing texts as well as re-evaluating writers in purely social and cultural terms (see, for example, J. Davis & Hodge, 1985; Ferrier, 1982, 1992; Gunew, 1984, 1986; Shoemaker, 1989). Drusilla Modjeska (1984), for instance, produced a group biography of women writers such Eleanor Dark, Miles

Franklin and Katharine Susannah Prichard, which encompassed analysis of their politics and feminism as well as an examination of the social context of each woman's writing and publishing experiences in the first half of the twentieth century. Not only were literary works that had been rendered invisible by a patriarchal Anglo-Celtic mainstream society made visible to the general public but the circumstances of these writers' lives were seen to be influential on form, content, publication, criticism and interpretation. Looked at together, these discourses of diversity all accentuated the need to explore the varied social and cultural experience that informs a great deal of Australian writing.

While broaching creativity as a topic, the majority of criticism in this period focused intently on the ways in which social and cultural marginalisation was overcome to establish or develop unique styles and forms of writing. That such critical work was necessary is indisputable but, like the discourse of nationalism that came before, it disguised additional diversity at an individual level. Although feminist, ethnic minority and indigenous literary criticism all discussed writers' identities, most commonly using psychoanalytic theories (see for example Gunew in Ferrier, 1992), such examinations were done to further explore ideological concerns rather than individuality. The specific focus of each of these discourses of diversity meant they could only provide a partial explanation of creativity. The shift in criticism to a focus on the individual that followed also failed to adequately explain creativity and Australian fiction writing.

Mounting public interest in celebrity writers and the practice of creative writing in the 1990s and 2000s saw a movement away from criticism focused on social and cultural factors towards more mainstream publications that highlighted individual cases and writing processes. In this new phase of celebrity (explored in Indyk, 1997; Nile, 2002; Turner, 1993), writers were no longer isolated from their audience but became the primary tool in the marketing of their work, featuring in the media and writers' festivals.

For writers it was not simply that writing style, design and inner thoughts were put on public display once a novel was published, but rather that the packaging of literary consciousness in the material form of a book, began the complex public life of something that was once very solitary and private (Nile, 2002, p. 193).

The public's interest in writers and writer events coincided with an increased interest in learning to write and a proliferation of creative writing classes and workshops. These dual concerns are reflected in the literature of Australian fiction writing that dominated this period.

A rising number of auto/biographies, interview and guest lecture collections published in the last twenty years provided rich details of writers' lives from childhood and through their careers. Published proceedings of literary events and programs on radio and television joined interview collections in providing additional personal, practical and professional insights of Australia's celebrity writers. Feeding the interest in learning to write were publications that offered a diverse range of advice to would-be writers. Resources such as *The Australian Writer's Marketplace* (Queensland Writers Centre, 2006) and how-to manuals such as *The Writing Book* (Grenville, 2001) provided directories of local publishers, writers' centres, literary magazines, agents, organisations, competitions and prizes as well as a range of planning, plotting and revising techniques and other advice garnered from those with successful writing careers. While these first (and second) hand accounts of writing and the writing life were fertile sources of information on the creative activities of individual Australian fiction writers, few explicitly discussed creativity beyond this. The social and cultural contexts of nationalism and diversity explored in earlier criticism were replaced instead with individual cases of writing success, the mechanics of writing and limited discussion of the publishing industry and other writing-related institutions.

Moving through these three broad phases of criticism, it is possible to see that, individually, each has failed to provide a single cohesive theory of creativity or creative writing in Australia. This is not to claim that discussion of creativity has been totally lacking. Indeed, many elements of Mudrooroo's statement on creativity have been pre-figured in writing on Australian Literature. Early criticism focusing on nationality corresponds to Mudrooroo's idea that writers are "thrust back into the community", their works playing an important role in social and cultural life. Later work on gender, cultural and racial diversity has parallels with Mudrooroo's ideas of writers as social beings "formed by society or by the community", their identities and capabilities shaped by experience of the world they live in. Finally, recent publications that focus on the individual somewhat resemble Mudrooroo's ideas about factors that are specific to each writer, the "inner sap of the tree, its essence so to speak". That these three phases of criticism in the literature on Australian writing have each examined one or more of these components lends support to Mudrooroo's view on creativity. Crucial to his

position, however, is that rather than being isolated elements, the social, the cultural and the individual interact with each other in complex ways to produce creative works: “there is really no inner or outer isolation”. An exploration of Australian fiction writing that incorporates this holistic perspective of creativity has yet to be attempted.

That the interactions of social, cultural and individual elements have not been explored in this context leaves room for a more comprehensive account of creativity than is provided in the current literature, one that synthesises the previous concerns of Australian literary criticism and mainstream literature rather than rejecting or dismissing them outright. Research from this position may help to answer questions that have not been resolved in publications that focus on nationalism, diversity, celebrity and procedure alone: Why do Australian writers write books? How do they learn to write? What processes do they use? What influence does the publishing industry have on a writer’s work? Who else can affect an Australian fiction book? Such questions point to sources beyond the individual that necessarily influence or contribute to the creation of a book. To construct a comprehensive account of creativity and Australian fiction writing then, this research must look beyond the isolated trends in the current literature and investigate, as Mudrooroo suggests, how these individual, social and cultural elements interact to produce creative works.

1.1 A theory to incorporate individual writers and the contexts in which they write

In order to remedy the fractured view of Australian fiction writing seen in the literature, it is necessary to find a theory that combines a discussion of individuals and social and cultural contexts in its treatment of creativity. Such theories are available. A review of the extensive body of literature on creativity in general (seen in Chapter 2) shows a rise in multidisciplinary research that investigates multiple factors that may influence creativity (see, for example Amabile, 1983; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; H. Gardner, 1993; Sternberg & Lubart, 1996). The most compelling of these, for reasons that will be explored in the next chapter, is Csikszentmihalyi’s (1988; 1997a; 1999) systems model.

Although his research is not based on Australian fiction writing, Csikszentmihalyi (1994) uses language startlingly similar to that of Mudrooroo to argue that studying creativity by focusing

on the individual alone “is like trying to understand how an apple tree produces fruit by looking only at the tree and ignoring the sun and the soil that support its life” (1994, p. 147). Csikszentmihalyi’s ideas on creativity stem from several decades of research on the lives of creative people when he conducted a longitudinal study of painters and fine arts students with a follow-up several years later (Csikszentmihalyi, 1965; Csikszentmihalyi & Getzels, 1973; Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976). A second follow-up eighteen years after the initial study (Csikszentmihalyi & Getzels, 1988) found that none of the testing on skill, personality types or thinking styles could accurately predict which artists had gone on to be successful or those who had given up art altogether. After pulling apart some of the basic assumptions of the nature of creativity, Csikszentmihalyi was forced to admit that “creativity does not happen inside people’s heads, but in the interaction between a person’s thoughts and a sociocultural context” (1997a, p. 23). In the systems model of creativity that arose from this research, Csikszentmihalyi (1988; 1994; 1997a; 1999) separated these sociocultural contexts into the domain and the field.

The domain encompasses the knowledge, symbol systems and cultural conventions of a particular area that an individual draws on to produce a creative work, and gives the systems model a deep cultural grounding lacking in most traditional representations of creativity. Rather than emerging fully-formed and capable from a cultural vacuum, creative people must access, acquire, learn and master the knowledge and skills of the domain before they can contribute something original and valuable to it. Nobel Laureate Patrick White, for example, was drawn to books and writing as a child, studied French and German literature at King’s College in Cambridge, wrote plays and poetry and published a book he called *derivative and inconsiderable* before finding critical success with works such as *The Tree of Man* and *Voss* (White, 1993). In most cases, the information required to produce a creative work “existed long before the creative person arrived on the scene” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 329-30), stored in the culture surrounding a particular area of creative enterprise. This information can be found in the rules and practices passed from person to person and in the language and symbols they use to communicate and record it. These rules and practices are then embodied in the creative works that have already been accepted as well as those that will go on to be accepted into the domain.

The decision to accept new works into the domain is the task of the field. Making social judgements on an individual’s works, the field is the social world in which an individual

operates, made up of all the people, practitioners, groups and organisations who act to stimulate or filter innovation according to an (often internalised) set of criteria for judging what is valuable in a particular domain. “Changes are not adopted unless they are sanctioned by some group entitled to make decisions as to what should or should not be included in the domain” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p. 315). Through their judgement and support, members of the field have the ability to influence individuals and their work prior to, during and after production. The varying effects of the field can be seen in the example of Patrick White, who was first published because a magazine editor recommended his manuscript to a publishing company but almost gave up writing after being panned by critics in Australia (White, 1993). In recommending, financing, accepting, contesting or rejecting a work, the field helps to stake out the boundaries or the rules and criteria for creativity within a domain.

A key tenet of Csikszentmihalyi’s theory is that the field and domain must be considered just as vital to creativity as the individual. The individual generally carries out the work, but must first acquire skills and knowledge from the domain. They then transform that information in some way and the resulting variation must be judged both original and valuable by the field to be included into the domain and made available for following generations of individual producers. From this perspective, “the actions of all three systems are necessary for creativity to occur” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 329). In Chapter 2, further explanation will be provided on why this model is much more cogent and useful than competing theories of creativity. The chapters that then follow draw on Csikszentmihalyi’s three categories, the domain, the individual and the field and apply them to Australian fiction writers and their work. It is hoped that this approach will provide a more meaningful approach to understanding how individual, social and cultural elements interact to produce Australian fiction books.

1.2 How this study was conducted

Given the emphasis of this study to place creativity inside an extensive contextual framework, the researcher utilised a combination of data collection methods that immersed her in the system of Australian fiction writing, including participant observation, artefact analysis and in-depth qualitative interviews. Between 2005 and 2007, the researcher interviewed writers and writing industry professionals; attended writers’ festivals and over 30 readings, lectures and panels; surveyed coverage of Australian fiction in national and state based newspapers;

collected or viewed artefacts of analysis such as secondary interview material, process journals, draft manuscripts, how-to manuals and personal websites; and accumulated a small collection of Australian fiction works by those writers interviewed and others.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 40 Australian fiction writers. Although other forms of fiction writing are recognised, for the purposes of this research a fiction writer is defined as those producing novel-length works of prose describing invented or imaginary people or events. Aside from this, there were three further decisive factors for selecting in-depth interview participants:

1. The writer must have published more than one fiction work, including at least one novel-length work, and have accrued a reasonable public profile associated with their writing.
2. The total participant pool should represent a wide variety of fiction genres.
3. Each writer needs to be accessible and agree to participate.

There are somewhere between 3289 (ABS, 2005a) and approximately 7300 people (Throsby & Hollister, 2003) who consider that being an author or writer is their main occupation.¹ To track them down I relied on industry-compiled lists, such as publisher and agent rosters, and Australia Council grants recipient lists as well as the referrals of initial participants to gradually build a broad network of participants.

Once they had been identified as potential participants, 89 writers were sent a letter of invitation, outlining the scope of the study. Of those contacted, 67 responded. Seven of those responses were to decline the invitation to participate, overwhelmingly because of writing commitments: some were deeply immersed in the writing of a new work; others were engaged in promotional, festival or speaking tours that made finding time difficult. Twenty writers expressed an interest in participating but later withdrew due to work commitments or simply did not respond to further communication. In some instances, these writers chose not to participate but provided assistance or advice in an informal capacity. The remaining 40 writers represent a broad cross section of Australian fiction categories at both the national and international level in order to ascertain differences (if any) between types of writing. In

¹ For the 2001 census (ABS, 2005a), the occupation of 'author' is defined by the Australian Standard Classifications of Occupations as someone who produces a written work for publication or performance including novelists, playwrights, poets, screenwriters and scriptwriters. For Throsby and Hollister's survey (2003), 'writer' includes authors (as categorised above) as well as book and script editors not categorised elsewhere. Separate figures for novelists alone were unavailable in either document.

addition to literary writers like Carmel Bird and Venero Armano, this sample also incorporates writers in other genres such as Di Morrissey and Nick Earls (popular fiction), Sean Williams (science fiction and fantasy), Anna Jacobs (romance), Peter Doyle (crime) and Libby Gleeson and Gary Crew (children's and young adult fiction). A brief biography of each writer can be seen in Appendix 1.

A list of interview questions, which can be seen in Appendix 2, served as a guide or prompt for the interview process. These questions are similar to those used by Csikszentmihalyi (1997a) during his study of creative persons, but encompass eight broad themes that could help to fill the gap in the current knowledge on Australian fiction writers and their work: basic form and publication details, developing an interest, training, writing practices, ideas, professional support, peer support and personal history. However, given the organic and dynamic process of in-depth interviewing, adherence to this question list was flexible. Few interview questions were asked, for example, during the interview with crime writer Kerry Greenwood. After an initial question, Greenwood's response evolved into a narrative that touched on the eight broad themes listed above and required little intervention on the part of the interviewer.

In general, interviews were conducted by phone or email or face-to-face in the homes and offices of participants or venues accompanying writers' festivals. These interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour, though some were considerably longer. Three interviews were conducted in smaller blocks over a period of months because of the writers' time constraints and family commitments. Each type of interview had its own set of challenges: phone calls were occasionally interrupted by the interviewee's children, colleagues or call-waiting; the 'green room' or media centres of writers' festivals were seldom empty; and emails offered less personal contact and lacked the immediacy of face-to-face interviews. These problems were overcome with follow-up questions (generally by email) and careful transcription of interviews that, in some cases, were then sent on to participants for clarification. Overall, these interview transcripts form a rich pool of data about Australian fiction writers and the way they work.

In some cases, writers were also interviewed regarding their roles in the field of Australian fiction writing, with more than half of those interviewed working as editors, writing teachers, mentors, committee members or judges at some point in their career. Sophie Cunningham, for

example, was an editor and publisher with McPhee Gribble, Penguin and Allen & Unwin before pursuing writing of her own. These additional questions offered not only a deeper insight into the writers themselves but also of the broader social and cultural contexts in which they write. To round out these views of the publishing industry, six additional writing industry professionals were interviewed using the same methods of data collection and analysis as those used for the writers. A shorter list of interview questions (seen in Appendix 3) was developed according to their roles, which varied from publishing director (Shona Martyn), agent (Fiona Inglis and Mary Cunnane) and magazine editor (Allison Pressley) to writers' organisation directors (Anne-Maree Britton and Jeremy Fisher).

1.3 Structure of this research

By focusing on how Australian fiction writing is created in the complex interaction between an individual writer and the social and cultural contexts in which they write, the central organising themes of this research are structured around the three fundamental elements of Csikszentmihalyi's systems model of creativity: the individual, the field and the domain. This introductory chapter has shown that these three components are present in some form in the current literature on Australian fiction writing but have only rarely been viewed as simultaneously operating and interacting variables. Rather than working towards unifying all three elements, this history of writing on Australian literature betrays a marked movement away from sociocultural contexts towards a focus on the individual. In **Chapter 2**, 'A literature review of creativity', a comprehensive overview of the broader literature on creativity shows quite a different pattern. Drawing on disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, education and business, it is possible to trace general trends in creativity research that show a movement away from a focus on the individual and towards a contextualised understanding of how creativity functions within a social and cultural framework. My overview situates Csikszentmihalyi's systems model as the high point of this movement and, in turn, the most appropriate model for this research.

Chapter 3, 'Learning and mastering the domain of Australian fiction writing', describes how the writers in this study first engaged with, then learned and mastered the skills and knowledge of the domain before they could contribute an original work to it. With the skills and knowledges of Australian fiction writing based firmly in language and the written word, it

can be seen that these writers undertook a long process of domain acquisition beginning in early childhood and continuing into their adult lives. After an examination of the social acquisition of language, this chapter observes how these writers developed their interest in writing, generally via an early exposure to storytelling, reading and writing.

It started, I think, with my mother telling bedtime stories and reading stories to my sister and me. So I was fascinated from the start with books and the process of storytelling (Earls 4/8/06).

That such exposure to storytelling, reading and writing is largely facilitated or encouraged by the family shows just one of the ways in which individuals in this study interacted with social and cultural factors to produce a work of Australian fiction writing.

This chapter details further social and cultural interactions by looking at the ways the participating writers acquired the skills and knowledge necessary to be able to write Australian fiction. Although several writers were early readers, most acquired both reading and writing skills in a school environment, developing and formalising the learning processes of early childhood. Their acquisition of skills and knowledge continued after schooling across a range of formal and informal processes. In terms of informal and largely self-directed learning, for example, almost all of the writers in this study agreed that reading is fundamental to acquiring a range of domain knowledge and skills that directly inform their writing practice.

I couldn't have attempted a fantasy novel without being a fan of the genre and understanding some of its conventions, what a reader expects from a good fantasy novel. You learn so much from reading the quality writers in each genre (McIntosh 4/10/06).

In many cases, these writers looked upon their adult reading habits as a form of mentorship, investigating the decisions each book's writer has made about style, technique, language and content. Here, the books already accepted into and embodying the domain of fiction writing can be seen to have provided them with the opportunity to engage in some way with those who have already mastered the domain but may no longer be accessible members of the field.

Chapter 3 also looks at the way that the writers in this study consolidated these formal and informal processes of acquisition. They undertook a considerable amount of writing practice

before publishing their first novels, with a body of unpublished manuscripts or short stories submitted to competitions, journals, magazines and newspapers laying the groundwork for later works.

I'd done more than 10,000 hours of writing before I was published and I learned a lot about the art of storytelling (Irvine 18/7/06).

This continued practice and immersion in the domain of Australian fiction writing is argued to have given many of these writers a second sense or intuitive feel for work that wasn't present when they began writing. While it may seem at times mystical or inexplicable to the writer, the writing process they use can more readily be seen as a logical and dedicated application of the domain and the skills and knowledges acquired through socialisation, enculturation and practice.

Chapter 4, 'The individual and the writing process', argues that the writers in this study were not isolated in the creative process. It shows that, although they possessed their own unique combinations of traits such as biology, personality and motivation, the production of a draft manuscript was also influenced directly and indirectly by social and cultural factors. Far from being isolated from the field and domain while engaged in the acts of idea generation, research, development, drafting and editing, these writers negotiated a range of social and cultural contexts.

Focusing first on ideas and inspiration, this chapter details the ways in which the participating writers drew on observation and experience of people, places and events as well as various fiction and writing domains and fields for story ideas. In some cases, ideas originated more directly from social and cultural spheres: they were suggested by readers in fan mail or other interaction; they were suggested by publishers, agents or people commissioning specific projects; or writers were unable to find books they themselves would like to read and recognised potential gaps in market.

Ideas are a strange fish. They come from all over the place. From countries I've travelled to, TV shows I loved as a kid, internet skimming, news articles, a mood a song puts me in, letters from kids suggesting gadgets or sometimes the letters have a theme that comes through that the kids really want addressed, eg when will the lead characters kiss? (Abela 10/10/06)

Once generated, these ideas were generally selected or evaluated using a feeling labelled here as ‘resonance’, an intuitive feel for what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ in one’s work, which can be seen to have developed through continued practice and familiarity with the domain of Australian fiction writing.

Following this analysis of idea generation and evaluation, the chapter accounts for the ways in which research and story development can be seen as another means by which the writers in this study developed an intuitive feel for writing. How they researched a story’s content can be viewed in a similar way to domain acquisition, for it involved multiple interactions with social and cultural elements. In some cases, a familiarity with content gained prior to writing helped these writers develop an intuitive feel for plot, character and setting during the drafting process. A similar process can also be seen at work in the development phase, which occurs in the writing of notes, character sketches, story and plot outlines. Although not all writers developed their ideas in these ways and very few followed their own plans exactly, this expansion or structuring of ideas was, in some cases, a requirement of the field, with some writers sending synopses to agents or publishers in order to pitch or sell their manuscripts prior to drafting.

Building on these ideas, this chapter analyses why descriptions of drafting in this study swung between hard work and a more mystical discussion of characters or story taking over the writing process.

I have had characters take control and pull in a scene from left field. It is all very complex to sum up in a few words. The perfect state for a writer is when the subconscious is hard at work as well and I am in the head of a character the whole time (I. Martyn 10/10/06).

It is argued that the deep familiarity with the content of a particular work during the social and cultural interactions in preparatory stages such as research and development means these writers developed an intuitive feel for production where they can work ‘without thinking about it’. While this intuitive feel for practice made facets of writing such as characterisation appear effortless, it does not negate the conscious effort or hard work required before a draft is completed. This chapter shows that not only were these seemingly uncontrolled phases rarely sustainable over an entire draft but the products of them were never left untouched.

Rather, they were continually and consciously evaluated in the first and subsequent drafts as well as when editing.

In outlining the editing phase of writing, this chapter shows writers drew on their knowledge of the field's criteria for judgement and engaged friends, family or fellow writers to act as preliminary readers to improve chances of being chosen for publication.

There are little things, for example my first editor hated the word 'got' and I hardly use that now, also my own tics like using too many adjectives. I have editors in mind and try to correct myself (Constable 25/11/06).

As this and the previous phases of the writing process show, these writers constantly engaged with the world, with people and with all types of resources while writing a manuscript. Although they were physically isolated for periods of time, this does not indicate they were alone in the creation of Australian fiction books. Rather, their writing can be seen as both socially and culturally mediated, this process of mediation continuing as the draft manuscript moved out of the writer's hands and into those of the field.

In **Chapter 5**, 'The field of judgement and support for Australian fiction writing', it is argued the field had the power to affect which of the individuals in this study became a writer, how and what they wrote, how that work was produced, manufactured and disseminated to its readers and whether that cycle continued or ended. For these writers, each point of contact with the field indicates a negotiation with an intermediary who not only accepted or rejected their work but also shaped it and their broader practice in different ways. Generally, it was the editor who could be seen to most directly affect each writer's work, interacting with them in a number of different ways: some acted as a midwife for a writer's work, providing support and advice and easing the writer through the experience of publication; some made deep structural level edits while others merely made judgements on a cosmetic level; some even helped to improve writing skills and processes rather than the manuscript itself.

This chapter also analyses the interactions between the participating writers and their agents, who were increasingly performing in more nurturing, editorial roles as well as their traditional contractual, strategic and sales functions. It shows that this greatly increased the influence of

the agent in the creative process but it was an influence that is largely mediated by the writers themselves who decided on the nature of their relationship with the agent.

My agent does provide feedback on my writing if asked, but he is primarily a business manager (Maguire 14/8/06).

Depending on the personalities involved, some writers developed a supportive or nurturing relationship with their agent, relied on their agent's judgement and editorial skills to improve their work and increase chance of publication or (if both of these roles are already being performed), used their agents as a business manager to help control or advise on the strategic or financial aspects of their career. Whatever their role, agents' decisions, like those of editors, represent early moments of social validation that are crucial in determining whether each writer's books were considered creative.

As well as describing these interactions with agents, this chapter shows that real and imagined interactions with readers influenced writers and their work. Although it is less clear than that of the editor and agent, the readers' influence came directly from fan mail and interaction in person or online, or indirectly with writers using conceptions of a potential or known audience during the planning, drafting and editing processes to shape stories that appealed to or were understood by particular groups of people.

I have the story in mind, the characters and the plot. I do, however, sometimes simplify my language in the editing process when I know I'm writing for a younger age group, and certainly when I'm planning a book I know what audience I expect will read it (Forsyth 28/8/06).

Readers can also be seen to have affected the creation of a book with their book-buying habits. Despite being an imperfect measurement of a reader's judgement of a book, book sales are often used by intermediaries in the publishing industry to make decisions on the acquisition and publication of future works by that writer or others writing in a similar style or genre.

This chapter argues that the field was not just a structure of judgement but also one of support. Ostensibly, the publishing industry provided financial support for a writing career through advances and royalties, giving the writers in this study the time and resources to produce more manuscripts. Often, however, a shortfall in these areas meant these writers were

required to supplement their income, whether through grants, funding, awards or employment, generally provided by varying levels of government or other institutions. This chapter will also show that several of the writers in this study entered into this structure of support themselves, taking on roles within the field as mentors, judges or committee members in order to promote, sustain or transform the system of Australian fiction writing for future writers.

Chapter 6, ‘Implications of a systemic view of Australian fiction writing’, will summarise the findings of this thesis as well as the ways in which this research can be used as a stepping stone to further studies of Australian culture or creativity. In presenting evidence of the complex system of interaction between the individual, field and domain, this research highlights several points that have often been forgotten in studies on Australian fiction writing. Individuals do not write in isolation. Without a body of knowledge and networks of judgements and support to draw on, they would be unable to become a part of the system, produce works that may then be considered creative or to sustain a career in writing. Individuals are not completely unbounded in the creative process. The social and cultural contexts in which writers work both constrain and enable them, providing ideas, skills and knowledge as well as boundaries for what is possible or acceptable. Although they may make choices and act in ways that alter or extend these structures, individuals can never entirely break free of them. Finally, any study of individual writers and their processes that ignores these vital contextual components does not provide an adequate understanding of creativity in Australian fiction writing.

Explaining creativity provides more than intellectual satisfaction; it will lead to a more creative society, and will enhance the creative potential of our families, our workplaces, and our institutions (Sawyer, 2006, p. 5).

2.0 Defining creativity

An overview of the literature on creativity is a necessarily complex undertaking. Over the years, writings on creativity have covered an immense spectrum of ideas from divine inspiration, genius and madness through studies on personality, cognitive processes, neuroscience, biochemistry, motivation and sociology to confluence models that incorporate multiple components. At the end of the twentieth century, Richard Mayer (1999) looked back at over fifty years of writing on creativity and concluded “there is a lack of consensus on such basic clarifying issues as whether creativity refers to a product, a process or a person; whether creativity is personal or social; whether creativity is common or rare; whether creativity is domain-general or domain-specific; and whether creativity is quantitative or qualitative” (1999, p. 451). With little interdisciplinarity and few commonalities between the perspectives, there is often disagreement on what or who should be the subject of the study of creativity. This makes finding a useable definition of creativity amongst these often conflicting ideas a complex process in and of itself.

What is clear in this overview of literature and research is a gradual movement away from a focus on the individual towards confluence or systems approaches to creativity. With the notable exceptions of thinkers and philosophers such as Aristotle, Hobbes and Locke who emphasise the conscious, empirical or rational elements of creativity (see, for example, Aristotle, Heath, Halliwell, & Innes, 1996; Hobbes, 1998; Locke, 1995), pre-twentieth century ideas concentrate on creativity as divinely inspired, as the product of an extraordinary individual or genius or as a symptom of mental illness. These ideas were criticised in the twentieth century within the discipline of psychology as attempts were made to make creativity the subject of scientific study. Working under many of the same assumptions as those they criticised, this intensive period of research did little to alter the fundamental belief that creativity is located in the individual. Evolving from these studies and gaining momentum in the disciplines of sociology, education and business, however, was a growing awareness that factors outside the individual were also influencing creativity. More recent multi-disciplinary work by theorists and researchers such as Simonton, Wolff, Giddens,

Bourdieu and Csikszentmihalyi shows we can only arrive at a fuller understanding of creativity if we consider how the individual functions within a social and cultural framework. In showing this complex evolution of ideas, this overview will also work towards the overriding definition of creativity used in this study.

2.1 The muse and divine inspiration

The conflict of modern Western ideas of creativity can be seen in the varied concepts of creativity since the works of Homer (approximately 800 BCE). References are made throughout Homer's *Iliad* to creation by craftsmanship as the transformation of materials that exist in nature. Pandarus' bow, for example, came from a goat he killed himself. "Its horns were sixteen palms long, and a worker in horn had made them into a bow, smoothing them well down, and giving them tips of gold" (Homer, 2000, Book IV). Margalit Finkelberg argues writing from this period showed a view of creativity where the implements and tools used in the crafting process as well as *sophiē* (craft, wisdom) allowed craftsmen to surpass the physical limitations of ordinary man. "Although the tools are indispensable, it is nevertheless the professional skill, *technē* and the cunning of hand, *mētis* that employ those tools and thus, eventually, produce things" (1998, p. 105). This view is similar to Aristotle's (1996) use of the term *technē* (in approximately 335 BCE) to refer to both skill and reason in creative production.

Aristotle's formal study of poetic structure in *Poetics* (Aristotle et al., 1996) represents an attempt to ground creativity in the conscious, rational processes of the human mind. This study was in direct opposition to Plato's rejection of poetry in *The Republic* (Plato, 2000) on the grounds that it was created by emotion and inspiration rather than reason and understanding. In response, Aristotle (in Aristotle et al., 1996) argued that as poetry could be broken down into a set of rules ('first principles') and formal elements (such as plot, character and diction), writing of this kind was a skill that could be learned and performed.

As Plato's view of poetry showed, Greek writing also encompassed concepts of creation through supernatural or divine means, a view that evolved further with the introduction of Judaism and Christianity and dominated discussion of creativity for centuries. Plato's dialogue between Socrates and Ion (in *The Ion*, written approximately 380 BCE) discussed

inspiration and the resulting creative process as being drawn solely from an external and heavenly source. Plato argues a poet is only able to create that which the Muse dictates while he is in a state of irrationality, “for a poet is a light and winged thing, and holy, and never able to compose until he has become inspired, and is beside himself, and reason is no longer in him”(Plato, 1996, p. 32). The knowledge or skills used by poets were explained by Plato’s Socrates as a temporary but invaluable gift whereby,

the god would show us, lest we doubt, that these lovely poems are not of man or human workmanship, but are divine and from the gods, and that the poets are nothing but interpreters of the gods, each one possessed by the divinity to whom he is in bondage (1996, pp. 33).

Here, Plato placed creativity firmly in the hands of the gods, with man relegated to the position of messenger. This inspirational view of creativity is still common in modern parlance with writers referring to inspiration from an (often divine) external source. Rudyard Kipling gave in to his ‘Daemon’ (Kipling & Pinney, 1991); Henry Miller’s writing came direct from the ‘celestial recording room’ (H. Miller & Moore, 1939); Ray Bradbury’s ‘lighting strikes’ had to be written down immediately (Zdenek, 1983).

Man’s status as the inspired conduit of divine powers was also reflected in the holy books of Judaism and Christianity. Moses, for example, acted as God’s messenger after receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai (Exod. 20:1-17).² The Second Epistle of Peter in the New Testament confirmed this messenger view of creativity, arguing that the Bible itself was inspired by God as “no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:20-21). Christian denominations differ greatly on the question of whether the Bible was the literal plenary inspiration of God, leaving the Bible’s authors as either amanuenses taking dictation at the fundamentalist end of the spectrum or gifted and spirit-filled writers at the other.

Within the Bible itself, acts of creativity or creation are solely attributed to divine sources. According to Barry Liesch (1999), the 86 instances of the word ‘create’ in the Bible refer only to those deeds carried out by God such as performing miracles or creating the heavens, earth

² All Bible quotes are sourced from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version* (Committee of the Council of Religious Education, 1971). This is an American revision of the Tyndale/King James version published in 1611.

and man. Although Genesis never explicitly states God produces the world *ex nihilo*, its creation from nothing is implied elsewhere in the Bible. “By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear” (Heb. 11:3). By comparison, man is referred to as merely a ‘maker’ with (literal) god-given skills. “Bez’alel and Oho’liab and every able man in whom the Lord has put ability and intelligence to know how to do the work in the construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all that the Lord has commanded” (Exod. 36:1). From this perspective, as with that of Plato, man is incapable of creating original works and ideas without the intervention of God.

The idea of divine creativity dominated until the last years of the Middle Ages when a renewed interest in forms of inspiration and the developing Renaissance emphasis on the individual, saw poets and writers explore the idea of a poetical ecstasy (Tigerstedt, 1974). Rather than receiving inspiration from an external force, poets were driven by an internal *furor poeticus* (literally a poetical madness). The influence of religious doctrine could not be entirely dismissed. Rather the status of poet was elevated to that of “second Creator, inferior to God but akin to him” (ibid., p. 350). E.N. Tigerstedt (1968) traced these first mentions of a human creator to their origin in Christoforo Landino’s commentary on Dante’s *Divine Comedy* in 1482 AD. From Landino’s perspective, as God is capable of creation *ex nihilo*, so too are poets able to create great works almost out of nothing. Just as God’s creations are mysterious so too is the artist’s work inexplicable by reason alone. Whether the influencing power is external or internal, this belief that creative ability is both extraordinary and unfathomable can be seen in views of creativity and the artist still accepted today.

2.2 Genius

The various concepts of creativity that emerged after the heavily spiritual emphasis of the Middle Ages were influenced by those social and economic upheavals that effected profound cultural change across Western Europe. From the thirteenth century onward the working population of craftsmen and artisans became increasingly organised into trade guilds (S. R. Epstein, 1998). These largely voluntary associations saw a rise in commercial transactions and a revival of long-distance trade. Combined with the economic upheaval and labour shortages caused by the Black Plague, which struck Europe around 1347-50, this early

capitalism saw a corresponding change in the social structures where a newly affluent class emerged (C. Bell & Lewis, 2004; Cohn, 2007). This increase in disposable wealth and desire for luxuries led to a new marketplace where highly skilled artists were forced to differentiate themselves from other guild artists in order to attract the patronage of wealthy individuals, families or organisations.

The significance and power of the guilds diminished as more importance was placed on master artists and craftsmen with established reputations. This need for artists to establish themselves as exceptional or extraordinary was reflected in disagreements over money. According to Rudolph Wittkower (1974), disputes emerged between artist and guild on whether payments should be made according to the artist's experience and quality of work rather than the manual hours taken to produce them, largely emphasising a distinction between artists and craftsmen. Painter Michelangelo, who was himself patronised by the Medici family of Florence, illustrates this point. "I value highly the work done by a great master even though he may have spent little time over it. Works are not to be judged by the amount of useless labor spent on them but by the worth of the skill and mastery of their author" (cited in Wittkower, 1974, p. 305). Wittkower argues this movement away from the guild system could be seen to repeat centuries later as artists fought for individualism in the increasingly institutionalised academy of art where focus was placed on skill and technique or using the conventions of classic works as the ideal.

Just as the individualism of the Renaissance artist put an end to the sheltered position of the late medieval craftsman, so the new romantic vocabulary—enthusiasm, naïveté, spontaneity, feeling, autonomy of artistic creation, intuition, totality of vision, and so forth—reversed many basic tenets of the academic artist. The spectre arose of the artist as a kind of being elevated above the rest of mankind, alienated from the world and answerable in thought and deed only to his own genius... (Wittkower, 1974, pp. 303-4).

The modern concept of 'genius' as an individual with exceptional intellectual or creative abilities did not appear until the eighteenth century. Prior to this, genius, like creative inspiration, was supernatural in origin. The word '*genii*' indicated the spirits connected to a person, tribe, period or place (Soames, 2003). Genius from this perspective was seen as a guiding presence, a sense of place or else as a natural disposition similar to 'genial'.

According to Rob Pope (2005), the concept of genius as a natural and innate creative power emerged in English from “confusion and conflation” with the distantly related word ‘ingenious’ (then simply an ability or capacity). “More generally, however, the overall trajectory of ‘genius’ can be closely associated with the rise of individualism and humanism from the sixteenth century and, from the eighteenth century, with the particular forms this took under the pressure of Romanticism” (2005, p. 102).

On the back of radical social change across Europe and broader debate on the limits of knowledge and freedom of thought and expression, questions about the nature of genius and the associated idea of talent continued throughout the eighteenth century. These debates centred primarily on a person’s ability to create in light of the perceived constraints on creative capability, seen particularly in the artistic conventions of neo-classicism and formal education. By the end of the eighteenth century, philosopher Immanuel Kant had concluded that genius, as opposed to mere talent, would not flourish in institutional settings. In *The Critique of Judgement* (1952), Kant argues genius, as “the exemplary originality of the natural endowments of an individual in the *free* employment of his cognitive faculties” (1952, p. 531), conceives the rules of art, while education can merely teach an artist to imitate or follow genius. This attempt at a rational definition effectively separated genius (and creativity in general) from its external supernatural roots, centralising the individual as the sole originator of a creative work. The resulting focus on the individual was to hold sway not only over the Romantic view of artists as isolated creators but also over the scientific work on creativity that followed.

Along with an emphasis on the individual, several philosophers central to Romanticism such as Rousseau, Kant, Goethe and Schiller proposed a return to nature and authenticity and a reliance on feelings, instinct and subjective thought. They believed these elements had been made redundant in the ‘narrow’ view of the world offered by scientific rationalism, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution and rejected by British empiricists such as Hobbes (1998), who saw creativity or the imagination as derived from experience and the five senses, or Locke (1995), who argued the imagination was derived from both the senses and ‘ratiocination’ (or reason). The Romantic movement did not explicitly oppose rationality (see discussion in Baumer, 1974). Coleridge, for example, who was at the heart of the movement in England, described his writing and writing processes variously as spontaneous, involuntary, laborious and intentional (Coleridge, 1983; Fruman, 1971; Halmi, Magnuson, & Modiano,

2003). His discussion of poetry in *Biographia Literaria* as the product of primary and secondary imagination (conscious and unconscious thought) and fancy (re/production derived from memory) both foreshadowed the work of Freud and incorporated elements of empiricism (Coleridge, 1983). Despite the inherent complexities of the Romantic movement, a distinction between reason and instinct/intuition has persisted.

The notion of creativity driven by feelings and intuition was maintained in later forms of Romanticism, drawing on the lives and works of earlier artists who came to represent stereotypes of artistic genius. Commemorated in work by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats and Rossetti, the English poet Thomas Chatterton became a symbol of the suffering of misunderstood genius after his suicide in 1770; a related stereotype of highly sensitive and passionate genius was influenced by Goethe's ([1774] 1990) fictional hero Werther who relied on pure feeling but was also driven to suicide; although disdainful of many of the central tenets of Romanticism, Byron embodied another aspect of the stereotypical Romantic genius, that of the social deviant permitted to live and act outside the realm of accepted social behaviour because of his artistic contributions.³

In *The Man of Genius*, Cesare Lombroso (1891) attempted to explain this abnormal behaviour and extraordinary creative output as a type of inherited madness. Lombroso's theory maintained genius and madness are two facets of the same psychobiological reality where insanity is biologically based, balancing an overdeveloped intellect. Similar to his work on the criminal mind and body, Lombroso believed signs of this creative madness are visible in the artist's physiology such as facial asymmetry, extreme shortness of stature or a general sickliness of the body. According to Mazzarello (2001), Lombroso visited Moscow in 1897 for a medical conference and arranged a meeting with literary genius Leo Tolstoy, hoping to scrutinise the man's degenerative aspects first hand. Understandably, the meeting was not a success. Tolstoy did not conform to any criterion for artistic madness in either physicality or general attitude, nor did he agree with Lombroso's opinions on criminal behaviour and punishment (*ibid.*). While Lombroso's visit left a mark on the world of literature,⁴ his theories on the creative mind were later scientifically discredited.

³ This view of the artist as outside mainstream social behaviour is still maintained through society's permissive tolerance of artists' drug use, alcoholism, misogyny, adultery, fetishism, reclusiveness, violence and other destructive behaviours.

⁴ After Lombroso's visit, Tolstoy's revised the draft of his novel *Resurrection* to include a scathing rebuttal of Lombroso's ideas (Mazzarello, 2001).

2.3 The evolution of a psychology of creativity

Along with fields such as biology, anthropology and palaeontology, the scientific study of creativity was transformed in 1859 with the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*. According to Albert and Runco (1999), Darwin's claim that evolution took place through the natural selection of varying hereditary characteristics for survival brought the basic features of creativity "into sharp focus, especially its value in adaptation. One important role that creativity has had since Darwin has been in solving problems and in leading to 'successful' adaptations that are individual in character" (1999, p. 24). Even though Darwin avoided explicitly applying his theory to humankind, the fortuitous and often unintended character of adaptation in nature allowed for "the possibility of research on creativity if we try to observe adaptations in controlled everyday conditions" (ibid.).

For Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton, the *Origin of Species* (and its 1868 sequel *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*) acted as a catalyst for his own study of the variability and heredity of individual difference and human faculties such as mental ability (Galton, 1907). In 1869, Galton published *Hereditary Genius* (1892), in which he attempted to demonstrate that man's natural abilities (including creativity) are transmitted from generation to generation by the same mechanisms addressed in Darwin's theory of evolution in plants and animals.⁵ To do so, Galton collated biographical and familial information on men of eminence in fields such as science, literature, art, jurisprudence, music, divinity and the military. Recruiting 'geniuses' based on the results of intelligence testing in college and academy entrance exams, as well as by reputation alone, Galton amassed a sample of over a thousand Englishmen, belonging to approximately 300 families.

Although Galton's work proved heredity was still in the realm of probability, his results could not be explained by chance alone with around one in ten of the eminent people chosen having one or more close relatives who had also achieved eminence. Even though others had theorised hereditary genius before him, Galton argued he was the first to "treat the subject in a statistical manner, to arrive at numerical results, and to introduce the 'law of deviation from an average' into discussions of heredity" (1892, p. vi). Limiting the usefulness of this study, Galton quantified only genetic relationships without considering the influence familial

⁵ Galton's idea of genius was not limited to mental attributes; the book also included two chapters on the physical abilities of oarsmen and wrestlers.

nepotism may have had on their positions in the society in which the study was conducted. Galton's influence on modern quantitative psychology, however, expanded beyond the limited application of statistics in *Hereditary Genius*. The methods he used to imply a biological basis for genius (and hence creativity) as well as those methods used in his later work including intelligence and word association tests, twin studies and fingerprint analysis, have underpinned many empirical psychological studies of individual difference and creativity.

One of the first major approaches to the study of creativity to appear in the twentieth century was that proposed by Sigmund Freud. According to Albert and Runco (1999), Freud had also been influenced by Darwin's theories of adaptation for survival. "Freud, who read Darwin and met Galton, was later to incorporate this idea in his psychodynamic theory of defences and creativity" (1999, p. 24). Using the mechanics of biological drives and wish fulfilment, Freud argued neurosis and anxiety could be transformed into creativity. Freud believed a person's sexual drive could be sublimated and positively channelled into creativity rather than compulsive behaviours (Arieti, 1976). In 'Creative Writers and Day-Dreamers', Freud (1959) equated creative writers with small children at play, both producing a fantasy world where unconscious wishes may be fulfilled in a socially acceptable manner. Drawing on his earlier work on the unconscious as the repository of repressed experience, Freud argued:

[a] strong experience in the present awakens in the creative writer a memory of an earlier experience (usually belonging to his childhood) from which there now proceeds a wish which finds its fulfilment in the creative work. The work itself exhibits elements of the recent provoking occasion as well as of the old memory (1959, p. 151).

From this psychoanalytic view, writers (and by extension all creative people) are neurotic day-dreamers attempting to resolve tension between unconscious drives and a conscious reality.

Although a keen follower of Freud's theories of psychoanalysis, Carl Jung (1966a; 1966b) disputed Freud's view of creativity. Jung argued that a work of art (and therefore creativity) "is not a disease, and consequently requires a different approach from the medical one" (1966a, p. 71). Rather, Jung distinguished between two types of creative acts: psychological and visionary (1966b). Psychological art is a process of the active imagination or the conscious mind, where the artist creates intentionally and in traditional forms, drawing on the material of everyday life

such as family, love and their environment. In contrast, visionary art taps into the collective symbolic unconscious, challenging traditional forms and content. According to Jung, visionary art is outside the control of the artist. “While his conscious mind stands amazed and empty before this phenomenon, he is overwhelmed by a flood of thoughts and images which he never intended to create and which his own will could not have brought into being” (1966b, p. 73). This definition of visionary art is heavily dependent on prior ideas of an external source of creativity, though rather than being supernatural or divine, the collective unconscious draws on the experiences of community, society or humanity in general.

While Jung’s ideas on visionary art and the collective unconscious can be equated to earlier mystical approaches, his lasting contribution to the study of creativity evolved from his work on individual difference and dichotomous personality types (Jung, 1971). Jung argued behavioural differences could be categorised into eight basic personality types determined by the way people collect and process information and interact with the world.⁶ As with Galton’s work on inherited mental attributes and Freud’s ideas on the unconscious mind, Jung’s personality types have influenced a variety of interdisciplinary studies and procedures that attempt to paint a portrait of creative people or even to predict those who may produce creative ideas and products in the future.

2.4 Psychology’s rationalist response

In 1950, J.P. Guilford’s presidential address to the American Psychological Association (APA) unexpectedly highlighted creativity as an area of significance, and one in need of further empirical research. Guilford reported that in the 23 years prior to 1950 fewer than 0.02% of 121,000 entries in the APA’s literature database dealt with creativity (1950).⁷ Following on from Galton’s work on genius, psychology’s early twentieth century concern with identifying extraordinary individuals had turned their attention to the testing of intelligence. Guilford’s work on ability testing for the military during World War II, however,

⁶ Jung (1971) asserted that there are four functions of consciousness. These four functions (thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition) define the ways in which people understand the world while two attitudes of consciousness (introverted and extroverted) define the general orientation or direction of their interests (e.g. the physical world or the psychological one, action or analysis). It was suggested most people display a dominant function and attitude with its opposite type often repressed and acting on the unconscious. According to these types, writers, artists or musicians are more likely to fall into the introverted intuitive and introverted sensing categories. These personality types were later formalised as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (I. B. Myers & Briggs, 1985).

⁷ Sternberg and Lubart (1996) analysed the same database for the period from 1975 to 1994. Entries focusing on creativity in this period made up 0.05%.

showed standard IQ measures paid little attention to creativity and were unable to predict those individuals who would excel at “leadership, innovation or technological inventiveness” (Feldman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Gardner, 1994, p. 5). As outlined in his address, Guilford saw the need to construct tests for creativity that, rather than testing for convergent thinking which sought out a single ‘right’ answer, were based on divergent thinking skills which tended to frame problems in new ways that lead to (multiple) novel solutions (Guilford, 1950).

2.4.1 Psychometric tests for creativity

Guilford’s address and proposed tests for the study of creativity marked the start of nearly thirty years of intense research on the individual dominated by psychometric (also known as pen-and-paper) tests. Creativity, from this approach, was viewed as a measurable mental trait or characteristic, present in all humans, but at different levels of ability. In this way, tests could be applied to the general population, isolating creative abilities and traits by comparing those with high and low scores. Guilford’s Alternative Uses and Consequences tests (1954) presented open-ended questions in order to induce answers based on divergent thinking, or the ability to produce ideas that are different from the norm. These tests were based on the assumption that those answers that diverge from common ones are more creative. Answers were rated using scores for: fluency (number of relevant answers); flexibility (range of answers); originality (difference from average answers); and elaboration (answer detail). Although this system of testing is largely considered the first standard scale for measuring creativity, the usefulness of its measurements has been questioned. According to Weisberg (1993), a number of investigations concluded that divergent-thinking tests did not actually measure the capacity to be creative. They showed “little or no predictive validity: children’s test scores [were] of marginal help in predicting creative performance several years later” (1993, p. 61).

Refining Guilford’s work, E. Paul Torrance developed a battery of creativity tests known as the Torrance Test for Creative Thinking (TTCT) (1962), primarily for use on children. Consisting of three figural (drawing) based exercises and six verbal (word) based exercises, the TTCT was used to identify gifted students using the same scoring system for divergent thinking as Guilford’s tests. While follow-up studies of Guilford’s child subjects provided mixed results for the validity of his factor analyses, Torrance’s battery of tests proved more successful in predicting creative accomplishments in adulthood. According to Kerr and Gagliardi (2005), a longitudinal study of those tested using the TTCT in early childhood

showed 62% of men and 57% of women identified as creative twenty-two years previously had some level of creative achievement in adulthood. “Although these coefficients demonstrate only moderate predictive validity, Torrance notes that they are commensurate with, and sometimes even higher than, coefficients for intelligence in predicting adult achievement” (2005, p. 12). The relatively low correlation between IQ and divergent thinking was also confirmed by Getzels and Jackson (1962; 1963), who reported that while there appeared to be a minimum level intelligence required for creative achievement (approximately 120 IQ), higher levels of intelligence do not guarantee high levels of creativity. Simonton (1994) argued extremely high intelligence may even hinder creative production.

The popularity of the Guilford and Torrance tests throughout the 1960s challenged the widespread view that creativity was both rare and unmeasurable, encouraging the transformation of educational programs that previously treated intelligence as the sole measure of giftedness. Their divergent thinking tests also lay the groundwork for further quantitative studies of creativity. Critics of this early psychometric approach, however, argued divergent thinking was an inadequate test for creativity; scoring based on fluency, frequency, originality and elaboration only highlighted task specific abilities (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Others argued that studies using pen-and-paper tests alone measure only the amount of creative ability an individual possesses and “may unnecessarily restrict a fuller understanding of human creativity” and its underlying mechanisms (Mayer, 1999, p. 454). Alarming,ly, Barron and Harrington’s (1981) examination of hundreds of psychometric tests found test scores could easily be affected by slight differences in test conditions such as duration or whether participants are given verbal or written instructions.

2.4.2 The creative personality

Despite these inherent problems, the use of psychometric tests was not limited to exploring intelligence and creativity as independent measures of giftedness. From the 1950s onwards, researchers built on Guilford’s basic tests to isolate those personality traits characteristic of creative people across a range of professions. Donald MacKinnon (1962; 1965; 1966) identified three main areas of personality study that relate to creativity: socialisation, richness or complexity of psychological development and psychological health and adjustment. MacKinnon utilised the socialisation scales from the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) (Gough, 1975) to measure the creative personalities of architects. Architects whose products

had been rated highly creative by a group of experts were found to score low on self-control, responsibility and conformity to both social and professional norms. Rather than being socially irresponsible, however, MacKinnon argues “their behaviour is guided by esthetic [sic] values and ethical standards which they have set for themselves” (1965, p. 280). These architects were also found to be introverted and socially withdrawn, but usually dominant within those few social interactions they experienced. These findings were confirmed by Cross, Cattell and Butcher (1967) who studied student and professional artists in Britain using Cattell’s 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (1957; 1966) and by Frank Barron (1969) who investigated creative writers using Gough’s CPI measures. Ann Roe (1952; 1963) found similar anti-social traits in her study of the creative scientist.

MacKinnon’s second area of the creative personality, the complexity of psychological development, was revealed in the creative architects’ high scores on scales of flexibility, openness to experience and ambiguity, curiosity, intuition, interest in multiple fields and a preference for chaotic aspects of the world (1965). MacKinnon also found male subjects scored highly on a femininity scale, although this was unrelated to homosexuality or effeminate appearance and behaviour.

Their elevated scores on femininity indicate rather an openness to their feelings and emotions, a sensitive intellect and understanding self-awareness, and wide-ranging interests including many which in the American culture are thought of as more feminine, and these traits are observed and confirmed by other techniques of assessment (MacKinnon, 1966, p. 154).

Roe (1963) reported similar scores on masculine-femininity measures in her study of scientists, as did Barron (1963) in his research on Air Force officers. In a study of eminent musicians in India, Manas Raychaudhuri (1966) found that, along with greater femininity of their response, the musicians were involved in a rich but realistic fantasy life, again indicating an openness to both internal and external experiences.

Based on his earlier work with the personality traits of young artists (Csikszentmihalyi & Getzels, 1973; Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976), Csikszentmihalyi also researched the complexity of the creative personality. Rather than inhabiting one of a pair of polarised character traits, he argues creative people across many professions often integrated seemingly disparate elements into their personality. Csikszentmihalyi (1996; 1997a) identified ten

antithetical traits creative people are likely to combine, such as playfulness and discipline. “There is no question that a playfully light attitude is typical of creative individuals. But this playfulness doesn’t go very far without its antithesis, a quality of doggedness, endurance, perseverance” (1996, online). Other antithetical traits include rebellious/conservative, smart/naïve and fantasy life/reality. According to MacKinnon (1966), for some creative people the balance or complexity of traits described by Csikszentmihalyi can only be arrived at after considerable “psychic stress and turmoil” (1966, p. 154). Anxiety, conflict and psychopathological (or abnormal psychological) traits belong to the third area of the creative personality presented by MacKinnon (1965): psychological health and adjustment.

Harking back to Lombroso’s interest in the association between madness and genius, the incidence of psychopathological traits in creative people has been well documented. The cause and effect of such traits, however, has not. Very few studies addressed whether the participants possessed innate psychopathological traits or whether they were adopted as a result of socialisation into a particular profession. Barron’s (1963; 1969; 1981) studies of architects and creative writers using the psychological measures of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) revealed higher scores for anxiety, emotional instability and hysterical, paranoid and schizoid responses in those deemed highly creative than the control subjects. These, however, were accompanied by high scores for psychological functioning such as personal effectiveness and ego strength (1969). Roe (1963) found creative scientists also displayed high scores on ego strength, but were sensitive to aggression and conflict. Cross, Cattell and Butcher (1967) established that their group of creative artists measured significantly higher scores for suspiciousness, guilt and tension.

Andreasen and Cantor’s (1974) study of creative writers revealed 73% had personality traits associated with mood, affective and bipolar disorders, depression and schizophrenia compared to just 20% of control subjects. While similar results arose from a later study (Andreasen, 1987),⁸ the theory “that creativity is crippled by emotional suffering appears to make good sense, but operationally it is not borne out by our data” (Andreasen & Canter, 1974, p. 129). Those writers displaying psychopathological traits were still considered both creative and productive. In a similar fashion, Arnold Ludwig (1992; 1994; 1998) compared

⁸ The second study indicated 80% of writers showed psychopathological traits compared to 30% exhibited in the control group. Both studies also examined the prevalence of psychiatric disorders in subjects’ first-degree relatives (Andreasen, 1987; Andreasen & Canter, 1974).

creative people from varied professions, finding those in the artistic professions more likely to exhibit psychopathological traits than those in the sciences. This, he argued, showed that no true relationship existed between mental illness and creativity in general. Moving closer to the question of cause and effect, however, Ludwig argued certain personality traits may be considered acceptable by different professions.

In the arts, the emphasis on the subjective is more likely to attract people who wrestle with their personal demons or, at least, try to contain them through their creative activities. In the sciences, the emphasis on the impersonal and objective is more likely to attract more emotionally stable people who have the capacity to focus on objective problems outside of themselves (1998, p. 94).

Ludwig's ideas on personality traits and profession also appeared on a micro level, with differences in level of psychopathological traits occurring amongst different artistic professions. Writers of poetry, which may be considered the most personal and subjective of the writing professions, were found to have a significantly higher incidence of mental disorders (particularly depression) than general fiction writers (1998, p. 97). From this view, the perceived weaknesses of traits such as anxiety, conflict and emotional instability are adapted by creative people to yield positive results.

While these psychometric tests showed some difference between professions or at least that tests for personality traits are often biased to the profession under study, an overall picture of the complex (and often contradictory) creative personality did emerge. In general creative people were seen to be enthusiastic, driven, anti-social, intelligent, dominant, childlike, expressive, disciplined, disorganised, inquisitive, spontaneous, perceptive, intuitive, independent, sensitive, flexible, self-confident, critical, unconventional and showing symptoms of psychopathology (though are not necessarily mentally ill) (Arieti, 1976; Barron & Harrington, 1981; Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1967; MacKinnon, 1966; Roe, 1963). However, the identification of a core set of characteristics through the use of psychometric tests leaves some questions unanswered. Which of these personality traits "specifically facilitate creative behaviour? Which are by-products of social achievement and recognition of almost any forms? Which are specifically by-products of creative achievement and recognition? Which are merely non-causally related correlates of creative achievement?" (Barron & Harrington, 1981, p. 455). To answer these questions, research that goes beyond psychometric pen-and-paper testing was required.

2.4.3 Creative thinking

While psychometric tests attempted to quantify individual difference between creative and non-creative subjects, cognitive psychology placed an emphasis on the mental processes involved in the creative act. Building on the tests for divergent thinking pioneered by Guilford and Torrance, cognitive psychologists employed experimental conditions and manipulations to analyse the thought processes used when subjects engage with creative tasks within the controlled environment of the laboratory.⁹ The experiments on mental processing grew from earlier, untested models for creative thinking.

In 1905, for example, Freud (1931) pre-empted his concept of creativity as the by-product of neurotic daydreaming during his attempt to understand the thought process involved in creating jokes. Continuing his ideas of the unconscious and based on analysis of a series of case studies, Freud argued creative thought is dominated by primitive primary process thinking that develops irrational ideas and associations usually in a sleep or day-dreaming state. In this unconscious mode, ideas appear fluid and flexible producing combinations unrelated to external rules and reality. These seemingly illogical thoughts are then distilled or refined by what Freud considered conscious secondary thought processes, those associated with rationality, problem solving and interactions with the real world. From this perspective, creative thinking originates with the imaginative freedom and insights of the primary process and is then controlled by secondary process logic.

In 1926, Graham Wallas (1976) elaborated his own model of creative thought in a similar way to Freud's primary and secondary processes. Based on the self-reflective work of mathematician Henri Poincaré and his reported experience of the 'Aha!' or 'Eureka!' moments of discovery and invention, the model maps creativity in stages described as preparation, incubation, illumination and verification. Preparation gathers knowledge and skills. Incubation involves the (not necessarily conscious) consideration of these knowledges. After a period of consideration, whether brief or drawn out over years, illumination or the sudden presentation of the idea occurs. Verification is then the testing of that idea and its production into its final form.

⁹ The laboratory-based studies and experiments of cognitive psychology included further study of intelligence and divergent thinking but these were primarily based on the psychometric tests mentioned previously.

Arthur Koestler (1964) also elaborated on Poincaré's experience when he coined the term *bisociation*. Like the primary process proposed by Freud, bisociation is a process that brings together and combines seemingly unrelated ideas unlike the logic of everyday thinking. "Thus at one end of the scale we have discoveries which seem to be due to more or less conscious, logical reasoning, and at the other end sudden insights which seem to emerge spontaneously from the depth of the unconscious" (1964, p. 120). Koestler argued creativity occurs in the suspension of reality, where the mind is open to the synthesis of unrelated ideas to create a new idea or product. He used Gutenberg's printing press as an example of bisociation at work in the process of invention.

'The ray of light' was the bisociation of wine-press and seal - which, added together, became the letter-press. The wine-press has been lifted out of its context, the mushy pulp, the flowing red liquid, the jolly revelry... and connected with the stamping of vellum with a seal. From now onward these separate skills, which previously had been as different as the butcher's, the baker's and the candlestick maker's, will appear integrated in a single, complex matrix (1964, p. 123).

Bisociation, then, is the creative leap made by the mind that allows for insight into new combinations of ideas contrary to habitual or pre-learned associations or patterns.

Though still accepted as useful descriptions of creative thought, the three similar theories of insight devised by Freud, Wallas and Koestler have been criticised for their lack of empirical rigour (M. W. Eysenck & Keane, 2005; Weisberg, 1993). Some empirical evidence showing moments of creative insight was gained from the problem-solving experiments of the Gestalt psychologists. Wolfgang Köhler's (1927) study of chimpanzees, for example, showed the primate Sultan manipulating two sticks to reach food in a sudden and unexpected solution. Weisberg (1993), however, cited separate primate studies by Herbert Birch and Harry Harlow to clarify that chimpanzees could only find solutions if they had previous experience or expertise with sticks. The creative leap variously labelled insight, primary processing, incubation and illumination and bisociation was shown to involve ordinary cognitive processes such as memory retrieval and knowledge application (analogical transfer) rather than a special mental process reserved for creative problem solving. These results appeared to confirm the position put forth centuries earlier by British empiricists Hobbes (1998) and Locke (1995), who saw creativity emerging from experience, the five senses and reason. As a result of these studies, more comprehensive and complex cognitive frameworks emerged in order to better understand those ordinary thought processes that resulted in creativity.

Ronald Finke, Thomas Ward and Steven Smith (Finke, Ward, & Smith, 1992; S. Smith, Ward, & Finke, 1995; Ward, Smith, & Finke, 1999) proposed the Genevieve model of creative cognition, which distinguishes between two processing phases of creative thought: generative processing and exploratory processing. The generative phase includes the memory retrieval of knowledge gained from past experience, as well as other processes such as synthesis, transformation, categorical reduction and analogical transfer. These and other generative processes give rise to mental representations called ‘preinventive structures’ or what may be considered the germ of an idea. These preinventive structures are then interpreted and evaluated during the exploratory phase using cognitive processes such as hypothesis testing, functional inference, attribute finding and the search for potential functions, implications and limitations.¹⁰ This process repeats until an acceptable final product or idea is devised. “The Genevieve model assumes that, in most cases, one would alternate between generative and exploratory processes, refining the structures according to the demands or constraints of the particular task” (Ward et al., 1999, p. 191). Rejecting the notion that creative works are the product of a mind with special mechanisms for thinking, the creative cognition approach links creative and non-creative thinking on a single scale of creativity: the optimal functioning, number and combination of processes used “merely increases the likelihood that a creative idea or product will result” (Ward et al., 1999, p. 193).

2.4.4 Computational models and simulations of the creative mind

As can be seen in the language used to describe the Genevieve model, psychologists found a new metaphor or mental model for human thinking with the advent of the computer. One of the first to use the computer as a conceptual structure for the mind, Donald Broadbent (1958) proposed an information processing model that visualises mental processes running like software on the hardware of the brain. Concepts such as information processing, retrieval, encoding, input and output and short-term and long-term memory were borrowed from computer science and studies of artificial intelligence (AI) and used in cognitive psychology to describe the creative process. Kintsch and van Dijk’s (1978) computational model of the cognitive process involved in writing, for example, concentrated on the role of long-term memory in idea-generation. Hayes and Flower (1980; 1986) also incorporated long-term memory into their threefold model of writing, which includes planning, generating and revising. These three sub-processes are non-linear and recursive, operating at different levels

¹⁰ While no single process in either generative or exploratory phases is a necessary condition, it is believed creative thought displays some combination of these processes (Ward et al., 1999, p. 193).

and times, throughout the “goal-directed, problem-solving process” of writing (1980, p. 4). The computer analogies used here allow for simplified representations of the complex cognitive process involved in creative thinking.

In her review of computer models of creativity, Margaret Boden (2004) argued AI concepts help to “do psychology in a new way, by allowing us to construct (and test) hypotheses about the structures and processes that may be involved in thought” (2004, p. 6). Underlying the computational approach is this possibility of not only testing theories but simulating the cognitive processes involved in human creativity. Based on techniques developed by AI pioneers Newell and Simon for programs such as Logic Theory Machine (1956), General Problem Solver (Newell, Shaw, & Simon, 1960) and Human Problem Solving (1972), several computer programs were designed to mimic creative thought and production using problem-solving guidelines (heuristics) to search through inputted data sets. The computer program BACON was reported to have rediscovered Kepler’s laws of planetary motion using empirical data available to the scientist and numerical heuristics (Langley, Simon, Bradshaw, & Zytkow, 1987). Comparing BACON to a forger of artworks, Csikszentmihalyi (1988) argued such a program cannot be considered creative because it merely replicates what has already been discovered, invented or made rather than conceiving of its own novel and useful variations. However, some programs do appear to produce original work.

Harold Cohen, himself an artist of some eminence in the 1960s, designed the AARON program to produce original line drawings (1979) and then to colour its own illustrations (1995). The program mimics human art-making processes using a hierarchy of decision making procedures based on mapping and planning functions and movement sequences for the mechanised pen as well as inputted information such as Cohen’s own specialised knowledge of the rules of art and drawing. These drawings were displayed as artworks at venues around the world, including London’s Tate gallery (1995). Philip Johnson-Laird developed a jazz improvisation program that uses basic jazz chord sequences, harmonic constraints and randomised decision-making processes to produce improvisations rated by experts as that of a talented amateur (1988). The story-telling program BRUTUS was written by Bringsjord and Ferrucci (1999) to produce literary fiction. The program utilises wide variability in linguistic, literary and thematic knowledge databases at the conceptual level and in thematic concept substantiation, plot generation, story structure expansion and language generation algorithms at the production level. While the success of these programs has been

mixed, the use of machine and computational analogies to describe human functioning is widespread in the everyday language used to describe the mind. However, little was done in both cognitive psychology and AI to understand what Broadbent described as ‘the hardware’ of creative thought. Does the brain itself play a role in human creativity?

2.4.5 Biological foundations for creativity

The biology of creativity has been explored from several areas, most notably Galton’s earlier work on the heritability of genius, which compared creativity to inherited physical features such as eye colour or height. More recently, cognitive neuroscience explored the various parts of the brain and how it functions during creative activity, as well as the physical correlations between the brains of various creative people with varying levels of success. Using techniques such as electroencephalogram (EEG), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and positron emission tomography (PET), these studies have measured “various aspects of brain function including blood flow, metabolism, and neurotransmitter activity. These techniques also allow for the measurement of these parameters in specific brain structures and hence can provide a functional map of the brain” (Newberg & D’Aquili, 2000, p. 65). However, given the confined spaces and restricted movement of the brain scanning and imaging devices, these studies are often limited to performing simple verbal or psychometric tests to record brain activity, forms of testing shown earlier to have little predictive value or stability against trivial changes in conditions.

Colin Martindale and Dwight Hines (1975) used EEG techniques to record the combined electrical activity of neurons while 32 male subjects took the Remote Associates and Alternate Uses tests of creativity. These tests found those subjects with high scores on the creativity tests measured a slightly higher alpha wave presence (usually found in daydreaming, resting or sleeping states) while performing creative tasks than during their basal (baseline resting) conditions. This result indicated that those judged as creative people have lower levels of cortical activity during the creative act, a surprising outcome given “virtually any mental task generally induces an increase in cortical arousal” (Martindale, 1995, p. 260). In further tests, Martindale and Hasenfus (1978) found comparatively higher alpha wave incidence while creative subjects thought up a fantasy story (inspiration) than when writing that idea out (elaboration).

In a similar study (Jung-Beeman et al., 2004), researchers combined EEG and fMRI data to observe the moment of 'insight' while tracking brain activity during a creative task. The researchers saw an increase in alpha wave presence for 1.5 seconds prior to a sudden burst of gamma wave activity as subjects found a solution. In comparison to the idle or resting state of the alpha frequency, gamma waves are associated with higher order thinking such as perception and problem solving. Jung-Beeman et al. associated the increase of alpha wave prior to the solution with a form of 'gating' of excess information "in order to protect fragile or resource-intensive processes from interference from bottom-up stimulation" (2004, p. 507).

Bekhtereva, Dan'ko, Starchenko, Pakhomov and Medvedev (2001) combined EEG and PET data to analyse the organisation of creative thinking in the brain. By measuring the changes in local cerebral blood flow (CBF) while subjects composed stories, Bekhtereva et al. identified use of the frontal lobes in creative thinking, an area of the brain commonly associated with cognitive functions such as impulse control, planning and problem solving. According to Bjorkland and Kipp (1996) the frontal lobes (particularly the prefrontal cortex) are also responsible for cognitive inhibition, or the brain's ability to suppress irrelevant stimuli in order to process information efficiently. Martindale (1999) and Carson, Peterson and Higgins (2003) argued highly creative people have less ability to inhibit extraneous information and are therefore exposed to more opportunities for connecting previously unrelated ideas.

Also seen in the Bekhtereva et al. study (2001) was the importance of a functional interaction between the right and left hemispheres of the brain for creative thinking. In the 1960s, Nobel laureate Roger Sperry (1973; 1981) demonstrated that the human brain is divided into a right and left hemisphere and that each hemisphere has separate but complementary functions and ways of thinking. These separate hemispheres communicate with each other through a thick bundle of nerve fibres called the corpus callosum. In his studies on 'split-brain' patients with a severed corpus callosum, Sperry isolated verbal and non-verbal thinking to the left and right hemispheres, respectively. Similar splits were found between language and environmental-based sounds as well as between reading, writing and mathematics and geometry and visual spatial tasks (Jaušovec, 1999). Bogen and Gordon (1971) found left and right splits between rhythm and melody when asking patients with a single drug-numbed hemisphere to sing a song.

Interpretation of these results has expanded far beyond the original data. The left brain is now commonly associated with logical and analytical thinking, objectivity, order and abstraction; the right is associated with intuitive thinking, improvisation, emotion, humour and creativity. Using these associations, tests were developed to find left or right brain dominance and books emerged that encouraged right-brain thinking in order to improve creativity (see for example Edwards, 1979). Sperry, however, argued against such dramatic characterisation.

In some cases the conclusions along with the growing wave of semi-popular extrapolations and speculations concerning ‘left-brain’ vs. ‘right-brain’ functions call for a word of caution. The left-right dichotomy in cognitive mode is an idea with which it is very easy to run wild... Furthermore, in the normal state the two hemispheres appear to work closely together as a unit, rather than one being turned on while the other idles. Much yet remains to be settled in all these matters (Sperry, 1981, online).

Further studies of patients with brain damage and the use of brain-scanning technology have shown categorising functions solely to the left or right hemisphere is problematic. Despite their own earlier work identifying abilities specialised to either the left or right hemisphere in ‘normal’ brains, Sperry, Gazzaniga and Bogen (1969) found each hemisphere could learn to perform its counterpart’s functions. In the absence of a functioning left hemisphere, the right brain can learn reading, writing and mathematics within six months. The right brain is forced to compensate by activating latent abilities previously dominated by the left hemisphere.

Joseph and Glenda Bogen (1969) argued the corpus callosum and the role it plays in coordinating the functions of both hemispheres is important for creativity. Classifying the brain into propositional (left, logical and linguistic) and appositional (right, non-rational and visual spatial) hemispheres, Bogen and Bogen believe creativity “requires more than technical skills and logical thought; it also needs the cultivation and collaboration of the appositional mind” (1969, p. 217). Whereas intellectual tasks may require integration of cognitive functions within a single hemisphere, studies using EEG showed creativity tasks, which often encompass logical and intuitive functions, depended on interaction between the hemispheres (Bekhtereva et al., 2001; Jung-Beeman et al., 2004; Mölle, Marshall, Lutzenberger, Pietrowsky, & Born, 1996). Carlsson, Wendt and Risberg (2000) found similar results measuring a subject’s cerebral blood flow during creative activities. Low-creative subjects showed predominantly left hemisphere activation, while highly creative subjects showed

greater bilateral activity. Carlsson et al. argued that rather than being a single function of the brain, creativity is a functional system of interaction between the hemispheres. These studies and others (Hellige, 2001) show that, given the range of past, present and potential creative ideas and products, compartmentalising creativity into a single hemisphere of the brain gives only half the picture of the creative brain at work. Both sides are necessary to provide unity of thought and action.

While technological advancements such as EEG, PET and fMRI allowed non-invasive observation of the adult brain during creative acts, research on the development of a creative brain is still uncommon. With synaptic growth continuing for several years after birth, a newborn's brain retains some plasticity or a margin of flexibility to allow for the stimulation of both the structure and function of neural pathways. In other words, stimulation of a developing brain could improve creative potential. Beatriz Manrique (2001) studied the effects of pre- and post-natal sensory stimulation (including music, massage and breathing techniques) on mental abilities such as creativity in children up to six years old. With evaluation beginning at birth, babies who received stimulation were more alert and recognized music heard in the womb. They grew into relaxed, social and curious children with good hand-eye coordination and higher scores on age-appropriate tests for intelligence and creativity than the control group.

The effect of stimulation on creativity has also been studied in adults and school-aged children. Kaltsounis (1973) measured the creative performance of fifth-graders as they listened to a series of sounds, finding students' performance on creative tasks was higher while listening to music than listening to speech, industrial noise or quiet. How this stimulation affected the brain, however, is unknown. The students' prior experience with studying to music was a possible explanation for these findings. More complex experiments on the effects of stimulation on adults found people who scored highly on psychometric creativity tests exhibited a higher level of sensitivity and slower adaptability or habituation to stimuli such as strong tones (Martindale, Anderson, Moore, & West, 1996; Martindale & Armstrong, 1974) and electric shocks (Martindale, 1977). Creative subjects not only produced more alpha waves to block out stimuli, they also amplified the intensity of the stimuli in self-reports, effectively showing a lower threshold for noise and pain.

2.4.6 Biochemical creativity

The study of the effects of stimulation on adult brains and creativity has also been conducted at the bio-chemical level, examining the effects of introduced substances on the natural chemical balance and function of the brain. According to Kandel, Schwartz and Jessell (2000), brain activity occurs with the release of neurotransmitter chemicals such as serotonin and dopamine that modulate the electrical signals that jump from neuron to neuron across the synapses. In the frontal lobes, serotonin aids in decision making and problem solving; in the thalamus, it helps to control the flow of information from the senses, acting as a gatekeeper for extraneous information (Kandel et al., 2000, pp. 50-1, 280-3). In general, serotonin is thought to regulate mood, emotion, learning, sleep and appetite. Reduced levels of serotonin have been associated with depression, apathy and a general lack of interest in moving and performing tasks. However, too much serotonin in the brain causes irritation, tension and stress as well as loss of control over sensory information. Dopamine, on the other hand, is typically thought to modulate the brain's reward system and movement control. In the frontal lobes dopamine regulates the flow of information from other areas of the brain, lessens pain and aids memory; the release of dopamine into the limbic system just below the thalamus causes pleasure to reward activities such as eating and sex. A shortage of dopamine may contribute to poor memory; too much may lead to paranoia (ibid.).

In this way neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine modify and shape human behaviour depending on the areas of the brain in which they are released. At the same time, these neurotransmitters can also be modified and shaped by environmental conditions and individual action. As with most systems associated with the brain, the counterbalance between levels of serotonin and dopamine is delicate; if one is raised the other tends to be lowered. Introducing drugs into this system interferes with the normal signalling process by mimicking, blocking or amplifying natural signals, giving the drug-user a wide variety of unusual or magnified sensations and behaviours. While there is little doubt drugs can alter people's perceptions and behaviours, the available research is mixed on the question of chemical stimulation initiating and enhancing creativity.

In a clinical trial lasting from 1954 to 1962, psychiatrist Oscar Janiger gave doses of lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD-25) to more than 950 subjects (Janiger, 1960; Janiger & de Rios, 1989). Although generally concentrating on the effects of LSD on the brain and possible

application to psychotherapy, a sub-study within Janiger's research focused on artists and creativity. Each artist painted a picture of a doll before and after taking a dose of LSD. Although the artists' LSD-effected paintings used brighter colours and were more abstract and they reported "original insights, fresh perspectives and novel, creative ways to express themselves through their art" (Janiger, 1999, p. 6), evaluation by an art expert showed no improvement in creative ability. Indeed, later studies using similar experimental design found artists' technical abilities were impaired by LSD (Krippner, 1969).

In an exploration of LSD-induced hallucinations, Siegel and West (1975) argued the combination of the drug's stimulus of the brain's sensory information and the drug's ability to raise pressure inside the eyeball explains the presence of hallucinatory lights, shapes and figures. It is these visions that could account for participants' unusual painting under the influence of LSD. Despite the participant reports of insight and creativity, Janiger did not believe LSD enhanced creativity, rather the chemical's effect on the brain offer a fresh perspective, or access to remote associations (De Rios & Janiger, 2003). Only those artists with an established level of knowledge and technical ability are able to ground these exploratory visions or hallucinations in the reality of a creative task, a conclusion shared by other prominent LSD studies (Harman, McKim, Mogar, Fadiman, & Stolaroff, 1966; Krippner, 1969; McGlothlin, Cohen, & McGlothlin, 1967; Zegans, Pollard, & Brown, 1967).

While marijuana has its own cannabinoid receptors in the brain (CB1 and CB2), its active ingredient delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (or THC) affects the dopamine system of the brain (Hubbard, Franco, & Onaivi, 1999). During a study of marijuana users, Block, Farinpour and Braverman (1992) found light to moderate users scored slightly higher on remote associations tests than non-users but were impaired in all cognitive abilities besides abstraction and vocabulary. Bourassa and Vaugeois (2000) compared the divergent thinking scores (frequency, fluency, originality and elaboration) of heavy and first-time marijuana users after smoking a joint. Novice users showed no effect overall, while frequent users displayed reduced fluency and flexibility while under the influence of the drug. Regular users scored significantly lower on tests of elaboration than novice users, even while under the influence of a placebo. The reduction in divergent thinking ability in long-term users implies marijuana does not improve creativity but actually decreases it over time. Importantly, Bourassa and Vaugeois (2000) as well as Plucker and Dana (1998), who researched the effect of marijuana

on undergraduate student creativity, believe the relationship between the drug and creativity exists only as a popular assumption or mythology.

A similar mythology appears to exist around opiates such as heroin, particularly in the music industry. The coverage of high-profile musicians' heroin-related deaths appears to have done little to stem the belief that heroin increases creativity. Heroin mimics the body's natural endorphins causing an increase in dopamine, blocking pain and leading to a feeling of euphoria and contentment (Gleitman, Fridlund, & Reisberg, 1999). According to Barchas, Berger, Ciaranello and Elliott (1977), depleted stores of dopamine lead to addiction or a dependency on the opiate to replace the naturally occurring chemical, making heroin withdrawal extremely painful. Each use of heroin places stress on the cells that produce dopamine incrementally reducing pleasure and gradually acting only as pain relief. The need to use more heroin to produce the same high increases risk of death from overdosing where, in most cases, breathing is slowed until it stops altogether (Barchas et al., 1977). Although very little has been done to research the links between heroin use and creativity, self reports from heroin users indicate the drug's side effects have a negative impact on creativity.

In the beginning, heroin seemed like the perfect solution. I could sleep and didn't think about suicide every day. Heroin blocked out my pain. But writing was always difficult: you need money for paper, pens, envelopes and postage stamps - not easy when you're a homeless junkie (Bud Osborn cited in O'Brien, 2003, online).

I've been clean for eight months, but I used to paint, and write, and I was a photographer. I have no creative energy left. Perhaps it's because so much of my energy has to be spent to remain focused on staying clean, but I think that heroin actually saps creativity. I figure, it took me years to lose the energy, it may take me years to gain it back (Franks cited in Bonni, 1996, online).

In the same way as heroin, alcohol triggers dopamine as a mechanism of addiction (NIAAA, 2000). David Lovinger (1999) argues alcohol also affects the brain's serotonin systems stimulating the release of various other neurotransmitters controlling the level and symptoms of intoxication. Low levels of alcohol consumption can act as a stimulant, reducing social inhibition and producing a mild high. Larger quantities act as a depressant resulting in emotional instability, poor coordination and motor control, blurred vision, memory loss and a

general impairment of judgement and reason. Harvey Nash (1962) found the equivalent of two alcoholic drinks (a low dose) had minimal positive effects on cognitive abilities such as remote association, while four or more alcoholic drinks (a high dose) impaired performance on complex tasks and general comprehension. Gustafsen and Norlander conducted various studies of the effects of alcohol during Wallas' four creative phases, determining moderate consumption inhibited preparation (Gustafson & Norlander, 1994), the number of ideas during illumination (Gustafson, 1991) and judgement during the verification phase (Norlander & Gustafson, 1997). Alcohol consumption appeared to facilitate originality during the incubation phase, however, no overall improvement was found in the final product (Norlander & Gustafson, 1996). While these studies showed alcohol consumption has a negative impact overall, other research highlighted the complexity of the relationship between alcohol and creativity.

Ludwig's (1990) study of the biographies of 34 writers, artists and composers, all well known and heavy drinkers, found 75 percent experienced direct impairment of creative performance after consuming alcohol.

For Jack London, his stories became more conventional, his vocabulary and imagination deteriorated and he became repetitious as his alcoholism got worse... For Jack Kerouac, the quality of his writing decreased as his alcoholism progressed and much of what he planned to write was never written (1990, pp. 957, 961).

While this result indicates a negative impact on creativity, other variables were also present. Forty percent of those studied found they could control their drinking so it did not impair their work. Fifty percent believed alcohol had indirectly enhanced their work, particularly in initiating creativity, by reducing other inhibitions. Ludwig's study, however, addressed the question of whether these perceived benefits are "entirely illusory – that is a self-serving rationalization to keep them drinking or an artificial result of alcohol itself" (1990, p. 961). While Ludwig reached no conclusion on this question, studies by Lang, Verret and Watt (1984) and Lapp, Collins and Izzo (1994) showed alcohol consumption has a considerable placebo affect on creativity and the creative process. Lapp et al. (1994) found some enhancement of novelty whether or not subjects had consumed alcohol while Lang et al. (1984) found a difference in the judgement of creative work. In both of these studies effects on the placebo conditions demonstrate that there was an expectation among participants that

alcohol would enhance creativity. These social expectations or myths persist despite significant evidence to the contrary.

The belief that a chemically-induced altered state of consciousness leads to creativity or insight is not a recent phenomenon. Prior to their use as popular recreational drugs, plants such as cannabis, coca, tobacco and coffee were regarded as sacred or ceremonial (Tart, 1969; Walsh, 1998; Weil, 1973; Weil & Rosen, 1998). As well as chemicals and plants, techniques such as breathing, sensory deprivation, sleep, hypnosis, meditation, chanting, dance, yoga, sex and near-death experiences have been used by various religions and cultures around the world to produce similar altered states of awareness. Based on the same biochemical mechanisms as drug use, these methods also alter the levels of serotonin and dopamine in the brain affecting emotions, perception, memory, visual imagery, attention and cognitive functioning (Delmonte, 1985; Shanon, 2002). Though not specifically used to induce creativity, many of these practices are used to experience the god or spirit-like connections, bliss-like states, or insight characteristic of historical perspectives of creativity. While these experiences do not equate to the ability to produce creative ideas or products, the belief in the use of these techniques to alter the state of consciousness and improve creativity is widespread even outside religious and cultural contexts.

People from a wide range of cultures and professions from creative artists to athletes and labourers have described an altered state of consciousness while engaged in difficult yet satisfying activities. Csikszentmihalyi (1977; 1990; 1997b) argued creative activity occurs within a state of optimal experience he terms 'flow' where a sense of clarity and enjoyment derived from a balance of skill and challenge leads to an 'autotelic' experience, where the activity is worth doing for its own sake. If the level of challenge is too high and the available skill set too low, then anxiety occurs; in comparison, low challenge and high skill induce boredom. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1993), the right balance causes an optimal flow experience which includes:

A sense that one's skills are adequate to cope with the challenges at hand in a goal directed, rule bound action system that provides clear clues as to how one is performing. Concentration is so intense that there is no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant or to worry about problems. Self-consciousness disappears, and the sense of time becomes distorted. An activity that produces such experiences is so gratifying that people are willing to do it for its own sake, with

little concern for what they will get out of it, even when it is difficult or dangerous (1990, p. 71).

From this perspective, the achievement of this state of optimal autotelic experience operates as motivation for and during most creative activity. It may be argued it is this state of consciousness described in historical accounts of creativity taking place either in a bliss-like state, in flashes of insight or in the presence of a god or spirit. It may also be argued this is the state sought when individuals attempt to induce creativity with drugs and alcohol.

2.4.7 Motivation beyond the individual

Researchers in the 1960s began to argue that the motivation for pursuing creative activities is not simply a matter of stimulating the brain's neurotransmitters via biological or chemical means; social and cultural myths and beliefs and the quest for pleasure and satisfaction also led people to seek out and produce creative products and ideas. Research on creativity and motivation, in particular, incorporated these environmental elements with internal or biological influences in an attempt to discover what drives a person to seek out and sustain creative activity. As mentioned earlier, Freud (1959) believed creativity is motivated by the need to act out socially unacceptable and repressed behaviours, an idea disputed by Maslow (1943; 1968), who instead argued a hierarchy of needs (physiological, safety, belonging and esteem) needs to be fulfilled before self-actualising behaviour such as creativity can occur. Rogers (1954) also believed creativity is driven by a need for self-actualisation or the desire to fulfil potential, arguing creativity can only occur with the freedom of self-evaluation or the absence of external constraints or evaluation. This return to a largely Romantic ideal of self-determination and freedom from constraints is also apparent in the research of Teresa Amabile.

Teresa Amabile was prolific in her examination of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors of motivation, including these aspects in her tripartite theory of creativity alongside task specific skills and knowledge and creativity relevant cognitive style (see for example 1983; 1985; 1995; 1996; 1998). "Intrinsic motivation is the motivation to engage in some activity primarily for its own sake—because the activity itself is involving, interesting, satisfying or personally challenging for the individual"(Amabile & Tighe, 1993, p. 15). Extrinsic motivation, by comparison, relies on external (and generally socially mediated) incentives such as deadlines, evaluation, competition, surveillance or reward to engage in creative

activities. Amabile's (1985) initial study of the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators on 72 creative writing students showed creativity decreased after the application of extrinsic motivation. Amabile, Hennessey and Grossman (1986) later examined the effect of rewards (in this case the use of a Polaroid camera) on children's creativity, finding more creative stories were told where there was no reward condition. Effectively, rewards reduce the intrinsic interest in the task by dividing attention and purpose. Overall, Amabile and her colleagues argued people who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to produce creative works or more creative works than those primarily motivated by extrinsic factors (Amabile, Goldfarb, & Brackfield, 1990; Collins & Amabile, 1999; Conti, Amabile, & Pollack, 1995; Hennessey & Amabile, 1988). Recent challenges to this position, however, forced Amabile to revise her original view of extrinsic motivation and creativity.

A growing number of studies showed that in some instances extrinsic motivation could have a positive effect on creativity. Deci and Ryan (1985) made a distinction between types of extrinsic motivation, arguing that while those that appear to control or inhibit freedom can decrease creativity, some extrinsic motivation can provide meaningful information that is useful to task performance. From this viewpoint it is possible that the belief in constrained freedom may be more restrictive rather than extrinsic forms of motivation. Research by Eisenberger and others (Eisenberger, Armeli, & Pretz, 1998; Eisenberger & Cameron, 1996; Eisenberger & Selbst, 1994; Eisenberger & Shanock, 2003) found that reward for high creative performance increases perceived self-determination and competence (and hence intrinsic enjoyment) as well as under various reward conditions.

In response to studies such as these, Amabile (1993; 1996) revised her Intrinsic Motivation Principle to distinguish between synergistic extrinsic motivators, which enable creative activities and increase intrinsic factors, and non-synergistic extrinsic motivators, which decrease perceived self-determination and intrinsic motivators. "Intrinsic motivation is conducive to creativity, controlling extrinsic motivation is detrimental to creativity, but informational or enabling extrinsic motivation can be conducive, particularly if initial levels of intrinsic motivation are high" (1996, p. 119). In these cases, the positive effects of extrinsic motivation highlighted that the individual's role is not the only one that needs to be examined. While many psychological studies of creativity occur at the individual level, some attempts were made to also investigate the role the social environment may play in creativity.

2.4.8 *The creative environment*

In attempting to discover just what makes creative people creative, psychologists such as Dean Keith Simonton (1984a; 1988a; 1991; 1994; 1997; 1999), Howard Gardner (1988; 1993), the Goertzels (Goertzel & Goertzel, 1962; Goertzel, Goertzel, & Goertzel, 1978), Howard Gruber (1982; 2001; Gruber & Wallace, 1999) and Herbert J Walberg (1969; 1982; 1988; Walberg, Rasher, & Parkerson, 1980) borrowed from Galton's techniques and conducted in-depth biographical or historiometric studies of eminent individuals or those judged to be creative. By quantifying or analysing the real-life social and environmental conditions under which creativity developed in each case, certain events and environments were found to be common to a majority of creative individuals. These studies of the lives of individual scientists, musicians, philosophers, artists, psychologists, writers, political leaders and others, aimed to reveal which factors (particularly during childhood) contribute to creative success in later life. Although childhood factors can only be considered "possible clues or indications of adult eminence rather than certain predictors" (Walberg, 1988, p. 356), studies have indicated commonalities among the birth order, trauma, home environment and family background of creative individuals.

Galton's (1874; 1892) study of eminent individuals was the first to suggest birth order may be related to creativity, finding significant numbers of firstborn children achieved eminent status, particularly in scientific fields. More recent data on birth order disagreed on the role birth order played in creativity. While some studies show higher general levels of achievement or eminence among firstborns and only children who receive undivided parental attention (see for example Roe, 1952; Simonton, 1991, 1994; Sulloway, 1996; Zajonc, 2001), others have argued later born children are more creative than their more conservative and conventional elder siblings (Eisenman, 1964; Staffieri, 1970). Birth order also appears to differ among the professions: although there is a predominance of firstborns engaged with science, later born children are more likely to become revolutionary scientists (Sulloway, 1996). Classical composers and poets are also more likely to be first born while fiction and non-fiction writers tend to be later born (Joubert, 1983; Ludwig, 1995; Schubert, Wagner, & Schubert, 1977). Baer, Oldham, Hollingshead and Costa Jacobson (2005) included the number, age and sex of siblings in a recent study of creativity and birth order and found that "growing up with a large group of opposite-sex siblings or with a large group of siblings relatively close in age seems to positively affect the creativity of firstborns" (2005, p. 75). In many of these cases, however,

a firstborn's creativity appears to suffer when they take on a caretaker role with younger siblings, ultimately lessening time for their own childhood play and exploration.

While it could be assumed the experience of stress would also take away from childhood play and exploration, studies have shown trauma also acts as a catalyst for creative behaviour or productivity. The loss of a parent, in particular, emerged as a factor contributing to adult creativity (Albert, 1980, 1990; Eisenstadt, 1978; Eisenstadt, Haynal, Rentchnick, & De Senarclens, 1989; Piirto, 1998, 2002; Simonton, 1984b, 1994, 1999, 2000). In a study of 575 eminent individuals from the humanities, sciences and the military, Marvin Eisenstadt (1978) found almost half the subjects had lost a parent by the age of 21, with mother loss in particular three times higher than that of the general population. With creative behaviour considered both a sign of trauma and a form of therapy (Edelman, 2006; Gerity, 1999; A. Miller, 1990), Edelman argued the loss of a parent provides some scope for creative potential. "Grief needs an outlet; creativity offers one. Some psychiatrists see mourning and creativity as the perfect marriage" (2006, p. 265).

As well as the death of a parent or orphanhood, creative individuals do not always come from stable home environments (Albert, 1990; Eisenstadt, 1978; Goertzel & Goertzel, 1962; Goertzel et al., 1978; Kohányi, 2005b; Piirto, 2004; Simonton, 1999, 2000; Walberg, 1982). Whether they encounter neglect, parental alcoholism, sexual and physical abuse, suicide of family members, parental disability or mental illness, constant moving, poverty or other forms of trauma, artists in particular appear to face an unusual amount of stress during childhood. Colin Berry's (1981) biographical study of Nobel Prize winners made a distinction between the humanities and sciences reporting 30% of literature winners had lost a parent "through death or desertion or experienced the father's bankruptcy or impoverishment, whereas Science Prize winners have experienced such 'disorder and early sorrow' rather rarely" (1981, p. 387). Similarly, Jane Piirto (2004) also found scientists and mathematicians generally came from stable homes with strong paternal influences. Her in-depth studies of writers (1998; 2002), however, revealed more than 60% had experienced some form of trauma during childhood.

Unhappy childhoods were a common factor for more than 80% of poets, novelists and playwrights in a study by Goertzel and Goertzel (1962). Goertzel et al. (1978) found 67% of the 65 writers included in their study of eminent personalities reported an unhappy childhood,

with many suffering from illness or handicaps as children. A review of the biographies of actors and rock musicians (Piiro, 2004) revealed many had experienced trauma or unconventional childhoods. Swiss psychoanalyst Alice Miller's (1990) case studies of artists also found some measure of childhood trauma, but argued a traumatic environment could be the catalyst for creativity if warmth was also present. In many of the cases she presented, love, protection and physical affection from family or friends redirected a potentially destructive experience into creative behaviour. A supportive social environment, then, can be seen to influence creativity in later life.

While studies on the social aspects of creativity tend to focus on the variables seen above, some research focused particularly on socio-economic status and marginality. Studies of Nobel Prize winners by Berry (1981) and Moulin (1955), indicate those excelling in science tended to develop in wealthy families or those of middle to high social position while literature winners tended to rise from more humble or even declining financial backgrounds. Wallace and Walberg's (1995) study of famous female writers, however, showed most grew up in financially advantaged families. While a poor background produces creative individuals if they were provided with appropriate levels of financial support (Powell, 1994), overall, it is acknowledged that some level of wealth or access to resources is required in the development of creative individuals (Piiro, 2004; Simonton, 1988b, 1999; Walberg, 1988). Too much wealth, however, leads to thrill seeking or boredom rather than a desire to be creative (B. Kerr & Chopp, 1999). While some creative individuals may experience marginality because of an excess or lack of wealth, others are marginalised because of religion, cultural background, social structure and other forms of isolation within communities and the family itself.

According to Howard Gardner (1993), marginality was a recurring theme in his study of seven eminent individuals and could be seen as an influencing factor in the development of their creativity. Arieti (1976) argued protracted discrimination against gender, race and religion, even after "severe oppression or absolute exclusion" were lifted, could prompt a rise in creativity. "A desire to challenge the difficulties, to fight for the abolition of whatever discrimination has remained, and to obtain what was previously denied can all be powerful motivations" (1976, p. 320). Judaism, in particular, was often cited as an example of religious marginality where creative individuals (both historical and contemporary) overcame discrimination to achieve eminence (Arieti, 1976; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a; H. Gardner, 1988; Piiro, 2004). Other creative individuals experienced religious marginalisation through

an absence of belief, growing up in atheistic, agnostic or non-practising backgrounds (Feist, 1993; Simonton, 1986). As with religious marginality, creative individuals experienced marginalisation when distanced from their traditional cultural centres (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a; Simonton, 1988b). Goertzel et al. (1978) argued a significant number of the creative individuals they studied were first and second generation immigrants who experienced two or more cultural perspectives. Arieti (1976) believed it was during this exposure to “different and even contrasting cultural stimuli” that some creative individuals develop the ability to combine seemingly disparate ideas.

Similar to the effects of cultural and religious discrimination, creativity was also seen to develop from the marginality of individuals and their families within strict social structures. Walberg et al. (1980) found 73 percent of the eminent people studied lived within strict social class structures “with little social mobility” (1980, p. 228). In Japan, Shimonji theatre and Tsugaru Shamisen music forms were developed by outcasts from the rigid social hierarchy (Naoyuki, Kazuo, & Rausch, 1998; Rath, 2000). In many cases, their low status enabled them to transcend the roles and standards of behaviour expected of those in a higher social position. Goertzel and Goertzel (1962) indicated other deviations from social norms, such as illegitimacy, add to many creative individuals’ sense of marginality from the community. These and other studies on the family group as a major social influence on an individual’s creativity highlighted that creativity, like most human acts, cannot occur without context. Indeed, individuals are seen to inhabit multiple social milieux that may be conducive (or unconducive) to creativity at any one time. Research of the broader societal contexts of creativity has focused on areas such as the school environment, mentoring and work environments, geographical and historical location and political and economic stability.

2.4.9 The broader social milieu

The education system is often seen as the earliest social influence on creative individuals outside the family group. Despite efforts to encourage creativity (or innovation) such as America’s National Defence Education Act in response to the launching of Sputnik in the 1950s, the open classroom movement of the 1960s and the gifted child emphasis of the 1970s (Esquivel, 1995), research on educational environments found schooling suppresses creative potential in nearly all cases; “Teachers, peers, and the education system as a whole all diminish children’s urge to express their creative possibilities” (Dacey & Lennon, 1998, p. 69). While some individual teachers and schools proved influential in the lives of eminent

creators (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a), the learning environment is often constrained by attitudes towards creative behaviour. Westby and Dawson (1995) found many teachers discourage autonomous exploration, risk taking, and non-conformity in the interest of class cohesion and equitable treatment of all students. In some circumstances, students are devalued by their teachers for nonconformist behaviour, even when teachers believe they were encouraging or rewarding creativity (R. E. Myers & Torrance, 1961). Sternberg and Lubart (1995) argued creativity may also be suppressed by teachers with little tolerance for failure or risk-taking. These learning environments promote creative inhibition in order to avoid failure and any resulting punishment or ridicule by teachers and fellow students (Amabile, 1996; Clifford, 1988; Torrance, 1968, 1970). This discouragement of creativity or creative behaviour is seen in the traditional educational methods of many modern schools.

Overall, traditional Western education systems privilege the one-way transmission of knowledge with an emphasis on convergent thinking or finding the ‘right’ answer to a given problem. Howard Gardner (1991) argued traditional schooling methods interfere with the natural or spontaneous learning systems and imagination of early childhood. In a similar but more extreme view, Catholic priest Ivan Illich (1970) wrote in *Deschooling Society* that universal education is dumbing down most students and that the best learning environments are not in the school system, but in the real world. Rather than eliminating schooling altogether, Gardner (1991) argued real world methods could be integrated into the education system to encourage creativity. As well as changing teacher attitudes and introducing different models of delivery and assessment, he suggested apprenticeship or mentoring expose children to models of creative behaviour, knowledge and action in real situations rather than providing abstract information (1991). In an interview with Ron Brandt (1993), Gardner argued that official programs are unnecessary when teachers and parents themselves can act as mentors.

If the parent watches TV instead of reading, or the teacher reads one book a year – I’m told that’s what the average teacher reads – that’s the message the kids get. But if the adults read and write and talk about current events, the kids will do it, too (in Brandt, 1993, p. 6).

Outside the school system, mentoring in both official and unofficial capacities has proved to be beneficial in developing creativity. Providing preparation, training, early validation, support and social network connections, exposure to or the opportunity to interact with

influential people was vital in the formative years of those who went on to be eminent creators (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a; Feldman, 1999; H. Gardner, 1993; Simonton, 1984a; 1988b; Walberg et al., 1980). The form mentoring takes, however, has changed over time.

A traditional mentor is considered not only an experienced and trusted advisor and guardian for a young adult but also “a person of absolute authority and wisdom, an all-knowing guru who the mentee looks up to unconditionally” (Keinänen & Gardner, 2004, p. 169). From this perspective, a mentor is in a powerful position to shape the identity and future career of the mentee. Research in the area showed that, although valuable, these traditional and often intense mentoring relationships are prone to a number of negative effects. As well as the potential for exploitation and psychological and physical abuse (*ibid.*), such heavy dependence on a single mentor for knowledge and support is often detrimental to creativity (Simonton, 1977; 1984a; 1988b). Based on a one-way transmission of information from mentor to mentee, the power imbalance of a traditional mentoring relationship sometimes leads to excessive imitation and the inability to break free from the mentor. “It is acceptable for a youth to imitate seniors, but to continue to do so into maturity is most damaging to the reputation of one’s creative efforts” (Simonton, 1977, p. 813).

According to Simonton (1984a), mentoring need not be an intimate face-to-face relationship, using the term ‘paragon’ to describe creators (living or deceased) who are admired, idolised or emulated from a distance of geography or time. This distance often makes it difficult to sustain imitation of another’s work, allowing the potential creators to develop their own identities and styles. In the same way, multiple mentors and influences limit excessive imitation of a single creator. Rather than a one-on-one relationship, studies showed eminent creators are often exposed to a systematic collection of mentors (Kealy & Mullen, 1996; Keinänen & Gardner, 2004; Simonton, 1984a). With each mentor performing a different role for the mentee, novice creators are able to tap multiple resources that help to redress the shortcomings of any single mentor.

Adding further complexity to the mentoring process is recognition of mentor-type relationships of engagement and interaction among peers, family members and romantic partners (John-Steiner, 2000). Although traditionally seen as an isolated occupation, writers frequently belong to communities of like-minded individuals with a culture of heated debate and shared ideas. Siblings often create their own small-scale creative communities, depending

on each other for inspiration, collaboration and discussion of new ideas. According to John Steiner (2000), Dorothy Wordsworth's position as trusted reader and critic as well as the direct stimulation of her own journal entries were crucial to her brother William's writing. In childhood, the Brontë sisters, Charlotte, Emily and Anne, along with their brother Branwell, invented worlds together for literary composition, collaborating on some stories and sharing others for pleasure and critique (Howe, 1999).

Romantic partners, whether husbands and wives or lovers, also provide support, inspiration, criticism, encouragement, entrance to social networks and a sounding board for ideas in the same way as traditional mentors. John-Steiner (2000) argued couples like Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre were productive primarily because of their intimate relationship and mutual belief in the other's ability to write.

I had one special reader and that was you. When you said to me, 'I agree; it is all right,' then it was all right. I published the book and I didn't give a damn for the critics. You did me a great service. You gave me a confidence in myself that I shouldn't have had alone (Sartre in de Beauvoir, 1984, p. 410).

Intimate relationships, however, often require a delicate balance of dependence and individuality that some couples are unable to achieve (John-Steiner, 2000). Though productive, partnerships like that of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes and Charmian Clift and George Johnston proved destructive.

Often building on intimate or sibling relationships, creators also gather with peers in larger communities that provide mentor-like encouragement, criticism and access to social networks. In the UK, formal and informal meetings of the Bloomsbury Group (prior to, during and after World War One) included not only well-known painters of the time but fiction and non-fiction writers Virginia Woolf, Leonard Woolf, E.M. Forster, John Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey, Vita Sackville-West and Roger Fry. At various times, this company also included D.H Lawrence, W.H. Auden and Bertrand Russell (Q. Bell & Nicholson, 1997; Lee, 1992). As peer groups are less prone to the negative effects of traditional mentor relationships, Keinänen and Gardner (2004) argue this kind of 'horizontal' peer mentoring has the same benefits but "without having to surrender to somebody else's aesthetic prominence and

possibly idiosyncratic reality. Peer mentoring may also amplify the collective power of the generation to influence and change the genre” (2004, p. 188).

Although members of the loose groups formed by peers, siblings and intimate partners influence each other’s works in different ways, creative products (and the bulk of their production) are generally attributed to an individual creator. A number of studies have been conducted, however, on the properties and dynamics of groups that produce a single product or idea. Although studies showed interactive groups are less creative than individuals working alone (Karau & Williams, 1993; McGrath, 1984), the research on group creativity, centred primarily on business innovation in large organisations and corporations, rose largely as a result of increased market rivalry pushing companies to produce more innovative products and ideas more often. The results of these studies were mixed and often inconsistent.

In terms of group processes, for example, although it was a highly recommended group creativity technique in business literature (see for example Kayser, 1995; Rawlinson, 1981), studies on the use of Osborn’s (1963) brainstorming technique showed a general failure to produce more or better creative ideas (Mullen, Johnson, & Salas, 1991; Taylor, Berry, & Block, 1958) despite high participant satisfaction and belief in the technique (Paulus, Dzindolet, Poletes, & Camacho, 1993; Stroebe, Diehl, & Abakoumkin, 1992). Some studies showed cohesion to be an important condition for group creativity (C. R. Evans & Dion, 1991; Moore, 1997) while others found groups successfully utilise conflict to produce more innovative ideas and products (Janis, 1972; Leavitt & Lipman-Blumen, 1995; Leonard & Swap, 1999). Adding further complexity to the research on group creativity was the fact that the preceding results are primarily found in Western countries, specifically the U.S.A, where individualism is encouraged. Studies based in non-Western countries revealed increased quantity and quality of group creativity where collective attitudes are also seen as a social or cultural value (see for example Khaleefa, Erdos, & Asharia, 1996; Schwarz-Geschka, 1994).

2.5 Towards a sociology of creativity

Delving deeper into the effects differing cultures and societies have had on creativity, a number of studies looked at the societal forces in play not only across periods of time (*zeitgeist*) but also in specific nations or places (*ortgeist*)(Simonton, 2003). In response to

Galton's work on hereditary genius, Candolle (1873, as reviewed in Simonton, 2003) was one of the first to study why nations differed so radically in terms of scientific innovation and prominence. Comparing national attributes, Candolle argued favourable societal conditions for the emergence of scientific creativity include, among other factors, a favourable public opinion of science, a large leisure class, freedom for intellectual inquiry, a largely independent education system, an influx of intellectual immigrants and a close proximity to other cultural centres (*ibid.*). Follow-up studies showed many of these societal factors have a positive effect on creativity in general within one or two generations. Geographic proximity, for example, allows greater access to available monetary, material and human resources (Simonton, 1977; Therivel, 1995), while immigration and population growth expose individuals to new ideas and differing attitudes from a changing and diverse social milieu (Lehmann, 1947; Matossian & Schaefer, 1977; J. M. Simon, 1986; Simonton, 1997).

A changing political environment was also seen to influence the emergence of creative individuals. Surprisingly a large number of studies of the political climates in various periods and nations have shown that, rather than inhibiting creativity, conflict and instability may nurture creativity (Kroeber, 1944; Kuo, 1986; Naroll et al., 1971; Simonton, 1975; 1988b; Sorokin, 1968). The resulting ideological diversity from instability caused by civil wars, revolts or rebellions by the masses and the fragmentation of empires into many sovereign states provides fertile ground for creative minds in following generations. Not all political conflict, however, has positive effects; war between nations and power struggles among the political elite cause a general decline in creativity in response to a rise in traditional ideologies, for example, or a redirection of resources to military action (Cerulo, 1984; Simonton, 1988b; 2003).

This distribution of resources is an important social and economic factor for encouraging the emergence of creativity in a particular time or society. According to Kavolis (1964), it is "the proportion of social resources which is allocated to non-instrumental pursuits" (1964, p. 334) rather than military or civic projects that promote creativity. Rather than general economic prosperity, several studies showed it was a society's actual investment in areas like the arts and sciences that provides the necessary time and financial freedom to produce creative products or ideas (Florida, 2002; Inhaber, 1977; Kavolis, 1964; Schmookler, 1966; Silver, 1981). In a similar way, Arieti (1976) believed the means for creative expression (including physical and monetary resources) are crucial for a 'creativogenic' society.

Like Candolle's study of national conditions that encourage creativity, however, Arieti (1976) combined this economic variable with eight other factors including openness and access to cultural stimuli, tolerance for different views, opportunities to interact with eminent people and freedom from oppression. Theorists from a broad range of academic areas also combined these environmental, political and economic influences, developing cyclical theories of when creativity is likely to occur. Cultural anthropologist Alfred Kroeber (1944) was one of the first to realise creative people and products are not randomly distributed but occur as clusters in time, appearing like the peaks of a wave. Charles Edward Gray (1958; 1961; 1966) confirmed Kroeber's curve of creativity but added new depth with his epicyclical theory, developed from his empirical investigations of western civilisations. Gray argued economic, political and social fluctuations occur within the overall wave-like pattern, creating cycles within a cycle. Although creative clusters could appear with the rise of any of these internal cycles, large explosions of creative output occur at points when the economic, political and social cycles peak at the same time.

In the field of sociology, Pitirim Sorokin (1941; 1968) collected an enormous amount of data on cultural changes in western civilisations from 540BC to 1900AD, positing that at particular points in time, societies can be characterised by one of three dominant mentalities or value systems. Civilisations cycle from an ideational mentality with a focus on religion, reason and moral absolutes to a sensate mentality emphasising the senses, materialism and an ever-changing reality. The idealistic mentality acts as an intermediary between the ideational and the sensate, synthesising both sets of values. Sorokin argued these basic patterns are not only seen in belief systems, social institutions and scientific development but these cycles account for the dominance of particular styles of art and literature in time. Although Sorokin's analyses were shown to be statistically flawed (Simonton, 1976), his basic hypotheses were verified by other studies (see for example, Ford, Richard, & Talbutt, 1996; Klingemann, Mohler, & Weber, 1982). Of particular value is that Sorokin's study provided an immense body of data for subsequent academics.

Based on both Sorokin's and Kroeber's data, sociologist Vytautas Kavolis (1963; 1964; 1972) explored cycles of creativity in painting, aiming to identify the social conditions that promote peaks in creativity at various points in time. Like others before him, Kavolis found that not only are the style and content of art influenced by a society's dominant mentalities but heightened artistic activity and significance occur during periods of social, political and

economic stress. Kavolis (1972) overlaid these peaks and troughs within the various social systems with the Parsonian AGIL model of social change, which shows that change occurs when a society attempts to restore equilibrium cycling through phases of adaptation (A), goal attainment (G), integration (I) and latent pattern maintenance (L). According to Kavolis' (1972) use of this model, general peaks appear when any social system responds to stress and attempts to redress imbalance (during the A and I phases), but are highest during integration. Creativity drops off in phases where the social systems' resources are redirected to pursue goals or the status quo is maintained.

2.6 Art as a social product

As these studies show, social systems play an important role in developing or influencing when and what types of creativity are dominant at particular times in history. Society, however, has also been seen to play an important role in valuing, validating or recognising creativity. English poet and critic Matthew Arnold, for example, argued in 1864 that criticism was an objective (or disinterested) "endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world , and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas" (Arnold, 1913, p. 61). Here, Arnold argues a critic's purpose is to recognise what is valuable with a view to enriching a culture and the society that consumes it.

In his article 'Creativity and Culture', Morris Stein (1953) was one of the first psychologists to argue that a work must not only be novel but considered valuable or useful within a socio-cultural context in order to be deemed creative. From his perspective, some form of consensus is needed to judge not only whether the work is acceptable but also its comparative value to other works. Novelty by itself is not a sufficient condition for something to be deemed creative; rather, some form of social judgement or validation "is required to differentiate between creations and merely eccentric or banal entities and experiences" (Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976, p. 7). Combined with the idea of political, economic and social systems changing and evolving over time, this concept of social validation helps explain why works by artists such as Vincent Van Gogh or scientists such as Gregor Mendel were not appreciated or valued until years after their initial introduction into society. This element of value has since been incorporated into many definitions of creativity (see for example Bailin, 1988a; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Feldman et al., 1994; H. Gardner, 1993; Negus & Pickering, 2004).

Social systems appear to play an important role in developing or influencing when and what types of creativity are dominant at particular times in history. Concentrating on the study of art in particular, several sociologists took these ideas further to argue that social structures are necessary for creativity to occur at all, that art is essentially a social construction rather than a production by a single individual (Becker, 1982; Wolff, 1981; Zolberg, 1990). Despite their differing theoretical and methodological approaches, both Howard Becker (1982) and Janet Wolff (1981) firmly dismissed the myth of isolated artistic genius with a thorough examination of the social and collective experience of producing art as well as the many socially-mediated constraints operating on the individual artist.

Becker's (1982) *Art Worlds* provided a rich portrayal of collective activity and divisions of labour in the art industry. Rather than solely considering the individual artist's process, Becker followed the production process from idea through execution to distribution and evaluation, unveiling institutionalised subcultures made up of the complex networks of cooperation among those people needed to produce an art work. Art worlds, then, "consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art" (1982, p. 34). The labelling of roles within these art worlds, however, is based on artificial rather than natural divisions. With generally implicit (and often arbitrary) distinctions made between core (art) and support (craft) activities, Becker argued it is often circular logic that differentiates a single artist from the collective. "The ideology posits a perfect correlation between doing the core activity and being an artist. If you do it, you must be an artist. Conversely, if you are an artist, what you do must be art" (1982, p. 18). From this perspective, the art work physically embodies the talent of the artistic genius but the artist is also labelled a genius because he produces a valued art work. Becker argued that this ideology is legitimated and maintained, despite its flaws, by the broader social and legal systems that regulate reputation, earning capacity and property rights.

Although the individual considered the artist is accorded special status and privileges by broader social systems, Becker (1982) argued their artistic choices are still constrained by the norms, techniques and resources of the art world in which they exist. Rather than re-inventing the wheel for the production of each art work, those participating in art worlds "rely on earlier agreements now become customary, agreements that have become part of the conventional way of doing things in that art world. Artistic conventions cover all the decisions that must be made with respect to works produced" (1982, p. 29) including the materials, technologies and

techniques used, division of resources, recruitment of support personnel and the means of distribution and display. Evolving from the social systems they informed, conventions make collective activity and the resulting art worlds efficient, conserving the time, energy and money needed to produce radically different or unconventional works. Change is therefore not impossible, “only more costly and more difficult” (1982, p. 369).

Balancing out Becker’s focus on the production process is Janet Wolff’s (1981) *Social Production of Art*, which investigated the conditions that make that production possible, looking explicitly at the relationships between art and the institutional structures that determine artistic production and the experience of individual artists. Whereas Becker failed to address individual motivation to become a member of these art worlds, Wolff believed an individual’s biography helps to locate them within the various social structures that influence every stage of art production. “In the production of art, social institutions affect, amongst other things, *who* becomes an artist, *how* they become an artist, how they are then able to *practice* their art, and how they can ensure that their work is produced, performed, and *made available* to a public” (Wolff, 1981, p. 40). From a Marxist perspective, Wolff argued art is a social product in that an individual’s motivation, abilities and practices are historically situated, derived from and embedded in their socialisation in the traditional conventions discussed by Becker (1982) as well as various familial, academic, ideological, economic, class and political systems.

Moving beyond the production process and the socially-determined artist, however, Wolff was also concerned with audience reaction to and influence on art works. Using Marx’s statement that “consumption produces production” (cited in Wolff, 1981, p. 95), Wolff investigated audience consumption or reception to further displace notions of the individual artist or author, arguing against the one-way base-superstructure model and traditional transmission models of communication that portray the audience as passive receivers of information.

In fact, the meaning which audiences ‘read’ in texts and other cultural products is partly constructed *by* those audiences. Cultural codes, including language itself, are complex and dense systems of meaning, permeated by innumerable sets of connotations and significations. ...In short, any reading of any cultural product is an act of interpretation (1981, p. 97).

Just as individual artists are socially-determined, so too are members of the audience, bringing their own complex socialisation to any reading of a text or any attempt to take meaning from an artwork. Combining these ideas with Becker's notions of collective art production, the privileging of an individual artist becomes more problematic. Some poststructuralist concepts of authorship, however, dismiss the individual artist or author from the work or text altogether.

In his provocatively titled essay 'The Death of the Author', Roland Barthes (1977) took the ideas of a receptive audience to their extreme. Rejecting the classic literary criticism tradition of considering aspects of the author's identity to distil meaning from a text, Barthes considered the originator of a work as merely a 'scriptor' imitating experience and influenced from multiple sources.

Thus is revealed the total existence of writing: a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination (1977, p. 148).

From this perspective, the author (as a location of meaning) is no longer important once a text is written; the author disappears because any meaning is constructed or interpreted by the reader. It becomes "necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (Barthes, 1977, p. 148).

Somewhat less extreme was Michel Foucault's (1977) call for the re-examination of the author's role. In his essay 'What is an Author?' Foucault questioned the ways in which the author's name functions as something other than a proper noun. Rather than the complete disappearance of the author, what he presented is the death of traditional definitions of authorship. Like Barthes and Becker, Foucault distinguished between the physical work of writing a text and the historical use of author identity not only to distil meaning but to reproduce social and literary discourses such as text classification, appropriation, ownership and copyright. These author-functions, then, act as a system of beliefs or assumptions that

govern the production, distribution and reception of texts, which Foucault summarised as follows:

(1) the author-function is linked to the juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines, and articulates the universe of discourses; (2) it does not affect all discourses in the same way at all times and in all types of civilisation; (3) it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a discourse to its producer, but rather by a series of specific and complex operations; (4) it does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subjects - positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals (1977, p. 153).

This final point reinforces the point that, despite criticism (or misinterpretation) to the contrary (see for example Abrams, 1993), neither Foucault nor Barthes before him attempted to deny the existence of a person who physically performed the task of writing a text. Rather, Barthes and Foucault called for a vigorous renegotiation of conventional definitions of creativity where the author is considered solely responsible for creation. Although traditional notions of authorship had been deconstructed, this did not imply that individual producers should simply be ignored. As Janet Wolff (1993) argued, “we have to reconceptualise the producer as (non-unitary, provisionally fixed, psychically and socially produced) originator of the text” (1993, p. 153).

2.7 Redefining creativity and cultural production

One way in which the individual as creator was reconceptualised is presented in the work of sociologist Anthony Giddens, who argued “the de-centring of the subject must not be made equivalent to its disappearance” (1979, p. 45). Rather than an explicit discussion of creativity and the production process, Giddens engaged with the question of agency and structure or, in other terms, with the issue of to what degree a producer exerts his or her free will or exercises their right to choose (agency) when opposed by the limitations or boundaries of various social or cultural factors (structure). Rather than giving primacy to one or the other as can be seen in the opposition of objectivism and subjectivism, Giddens emphasised the interdependence of structure and agency. He conceived the term structuration, which conceptualises structure (including all rules and resources) not as “a barrier to action, but as essentially involved in its production” (1979, p. 49). This duality of structure is recursive in that action is both enabled

and constrained by social structures that are themselves created and reproduced by social action. Structuration then can be understood as “recurrent practices which form institutions. Those practices depend upon the habits and forms of life which individuals adopt. Individuals don’t just ‘use’ these in their activity but these life practices constitute what that activity is” (Giddens & Pierson, 1998, p. 76). In this way, Giddens’ notion of structuration accounts for the individual producer’s ability to act within structured and structuring social and cultural systems.

Like Giddens, French sociologist and anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1990; 1993b) was concerned with the social agent’s ability to act within systemically structured contexts. For Bourdieu (1993b), the social world is made up of a conglomeration of structured contexts he called ‘fields’, each with its own goals, rules, logic, institutions, conventions, hierarchies and peculiarities. Like Giddens’ structuration, these fields are maintained, reproduced and evolved by interactions and competition among its participants. In this way, fields can be considered arenas of contestation for the tools, resources or status Bourdieu (1977) describes as ‘capital’, whether cultural, economic or symbolic. All the products made from recombining this capital according to the rules and conventions of the field are accumulated in a ‘field of works’. This culture or “heritage accumulated by collective work presents itself to each agent as a space for possibles, that is as an ensemble of probable constraints which are the condition and the counterpart of a set of possible uses” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 235). However, in order to account for each participant’s action in production, Bourdieu (1977; 1993b) redeveloped the term *habitus*.

For action or cultural production to occur, individual participants must have acquired a *habitus* or a “system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of *perceptions, appreciations, and actions* and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 95). The ability to reproduce and transform fields and aspects of consciousness were added in a later definition of *habitus*.

Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, *structured structures* predisposed to function as *structuring structures*, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the *operations*

necessary in order to attain them. Objectively “regulated” and “regular” without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor (1990, p. 53).

This concept of *habitus*, as a mediating notion between agency and structure, is often ignored in favour of Bourdieu’s more structural ideas on power and class (see, for example Alexander, 1995; DiMaggio, 1979). This may be due, in part, to its relative complexity.

In order to simplify the conceptual density of his ideas, Bourdieu (1993b) used the analogy of sports or games.

[T]he disposition to act is generated between a space defined by a game offering certain prizes or stakes (what I call a field) and a system of dispositions attuned to the game (what I call a *habitus*) – the ‘feel’ for the game and the stakes, which implies both the inclination and the capacity to play the game, to take an *interest* in the game, to be taken up, taken in by the game (1993b, p. 18).

In this way, the field or arena of contestation is considered the game and the participant’s *habitus* is seen as:

a “feel for the game”, a “practical sense” (*sens pratique*) that inclines agents to act and react in specific situations in a manner that is not always calculated and that is not simply a question of conscious obedience to rules. Rather it is a set of dispositions which generates practices and perceptions. The *habitus* is the result of a long process of inculcation, beginning in early childhood, which becomes a ‘second sense’ or a second nature (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993a, p. 5).

The game has a set of rules which dispose an agent to act and the capital that is valuable or useful within that field is seen as the stakes or prizes of that game. “In order for the field to function, there have to be stakes and people prepared to play the game, endowed with the *habitus* that implies knowledge and recognition of the immanent laws of the field, the stakes, and so on” (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 72). Although it was not included within this analogy, the field of works may be usefully conceived of as a stock of previous game footage, used for analysis in order to make future plays. Cultural production, then, occurs when participants in a particular field utilise their accumulated capital and knowledge of the field of works and

make choices within the contexts provided by that field according to their own socially-acquired dispositions. The resulting product is added to the field of works alongside all other products within the field. The structure of that field is then altered given each participant's actions, interactions and contributions.

In constructing ideas of the field, capital, the field of works and *habitus*, Bourdieu provided a rationalist explanation for cultural production or creativity that accounts for the individual's role without denying the function played by stores of knowledge such as culture and broader social groups and contexts. Rather than viewing the entire process from conception to consumption as a continuing series of interactions between individuals, socially located and constituted fields and culture generated through a body of works, the majority of creativity research presented in this chapter from psychology and sociology in particular has tended to isolate or focus on single components with particular emphasis on the individual. Those who study creativity rarely look outside their own school of thought for competing or complementary views. Although most of these approaches are considered valid within their own academic frameworks and supported by the evidence collected, what they reveal does not give a full picture of creativity. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's conceptions of creativity are similar to that of Bourdieu's but delivered in an elegant and discrete model. This systems model presents creativity as a dynamic system in operation comprised of an individual, a field (largely overlapping with Bourdieu's use of the term) and a domain.

2.8 Csikszentmihalyi and the systems model

Csikszentmihalyi (1988; 1994; 1997a; 1999) uses the term 'domain' to describe the cultural or symbolic aspect, similar to Bourdieu's concepts of field of works and capital. Incorporating this concept of domain into notions of creativity provides the deep cultural grounding lacking in most traditional representations of the artist as genius or singular individual. Accordingly, the domain refers to the discipline or discourse of a particular area and includes all the knowledge, symbol systems, culture and conventions an artist is immersed in when working in that area. Csikszentmihalyi argues individuals must access and then build on the domain of a given area if they hope to be creative within it, returning to the adage that you must learn the rules before you can break them as "it is impossible to introduce a variation without reference to an existing pattern. 'New' is meaningful only in reference to the 'old'... Without these

rules there cannot be exceptions, and without tradition there cannot be novelty” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p. 315).

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1997a; 1999), the domain can affect creativity in three ways consistent with its clarity, centrality and accessibility. Firstly, he argues “to be creative, a person must first understand the domain” (1997a, p. 340). If the knowledge within a domain is incomprehensible, then few people will be able to achieve a sufficient level of cultural literacy in order to produce a creative work. The greater the clarity or internal logic of the domain, the easier it is to make decisions about what constitutes creativity within it. The sciences, for example, are often more clearly structured than the arts. The heavy reliance on formal rules in areas such as physics and chemistry means novelty is recognised and accepted more quickly than in the arts where subjective appraisal of content and technique is required. Secondly, the domain’s centrality within a culture will affect its appeal to newcomers and the opportunities it can provide as well as the allocation of resources from governments and other areas. With the currency of environmental and global warming issues, for example, innovation and research in green power is coming to the forefront over developing traditional fossil fuel technology. Green power’s centrality in the current political and cultural climate may lead to a dramatic shift in support, including greater resources and more job opportunities in the area. Finally, in a similar way to a domain’s centrality, its accessibility can affect the amount of creativity produced within the domain. Greater access to information within a domain, for example, increases the speed with which innovation is accepted and reproduced and then used as the basis for further creativity. Individuals exposed to this novelty at a slower rate will take longer to accept and incorporate it into the domain.

Change in a domain occurs when new products are added to the stock of common knowledge, transforming the domain for the individuals who follow. In order to gain entry into the domain, however, the new work must first be judged as appropriate or valuable.

Csikszentmihalyi (1999) explains “most novel ideas will be quickly forgotten. Changes are not adopted unless they are sanctioned by some group entitled to make decisions as to what should or should not be included in the domain. These gatekeepers are what we call here the field” (1999, p. 315). In the systems model, the field is comprised of all those who can affect the structure of the domain. In the domain of creative writing, for example, this may include members of the publishing industry such as publishers and editors, agents, critics and readers. Similar in superficial ways to Becker’s art worlds and more closely aligned to Bourdieu’s

notion of field, Csikszentmihalyi's use of the term field identifies the social world in which the person operates, where individuals, groups and organisations may act to stimulate or filter innovation according to an (often internalised) set of criteria for judging what is good or bad, valuable or useless, acceptable or unacceptable, new or old. A field, Csikszentmihalyi says, "is necessary to determine whether the innovation is worth making a fuss about" (1997a, p. 41). In this way, creativity is also the product of social systems making judgements about individual's products.

As with the domain, Csikszentmihalyi (1997a; 1999) argues the field can affect creativity in three ways: through their connection to the wider social systems, by being reactive or proactive or by using broad or narrow filters. Firstly, the level of connection to the wider social systems relates to a field's ability to attract new members and channel resources into their own domain as well their autonomy from outside influence. Higher visibility and accessibility of current field members is more likely to draw new members as well as greater financial support from private enterprise, not-for profit organisations, institutions or governments. Related to the allocation of resources is the field's autonomy from other domains or social groups; new members may be difficult to attract if a field is seen as an extension of a political or religious affiliation because of funding or shared ideology. A field's autonomy may also affect their ability to accept new products into the domain.

Csikszentmihalyi (1999) illustrates this using the Soviet Union as an example where "specially trained party officials had the responsibility of deciding which new paintings, books, music, movies, and even scientific theories were acceptable, based on how well they supported political ideology" (1999, p. 326).

Secondly, the field may also affect creativity by how actively it solicits or stimulates innovation. "A reactive field does not solicit or stimulate novelty, while a proactive field does" (1997a, p. 43). Actively seeking novelty may create a larger pool of works from which to choose as well as the potential to influence the direction creativity takes. In comparison, a reactive field is more limited in the scope of potential works but is better able to preserve its resources and maintain the status quo of its domain. Finally, and in a similar way to being reactive or proactive, the field also affects creativity by the level of difficulty with which new products filter through into the domain. A field using a broad filter will accept more novelty, changing the domain at a faster rate than those using a narrow filter that accepts fewer products as creative. As mentioned above, commercially based fields may use broader filters

in order to gain an edge over competitors. Csikszentmihalyi (1997a) argues, however, that a balance between the two is required. Taken to the extremes, domains can stagnate without fresh novelty or become chaotic and collapse from a glut of new ideas and products where value is no longer recognisable.

Although the systems model shows creativity is dependent on the sociocultural contexts of the field and domain, it does not imply that the individual is any less important than the other two components of the system. The systems model, rather, moves away from a Ptolemaic view, where the individual is the centre of the creative universe, to a more Copernican view, where the individual acts as part of a larger system (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Instead of ignoring the individual agent altogether as in some sociological theories, studies of the individual are still considered relevant in order to recognise how these people are capable of internalising domain knowledge, producing a novel variation based on that information and interacting with the field in order for that product to be considered creative. As we have already seen, psychological research on creativity has provided a wealth of information about the individual including the genetic and biological differences, personality traits, cognitive processes, motivation, family background and development that may affect creativity. As this same research has shown, however, not all individuals who are considered creative display the same traits, processes, aptitudes, motivation or genetic make-up. In this way, no single characteristic has yet been isolated as a sufficient or even necessary condition for creativity.

Csikszentmihalyi (1994; 1997a; 1999) argues the systems model accounts for the lack of universal characteristics across all creative individuals. If creativity is systemic, and not solely the province of an individual, then “the personal contribution will vary according to the states of the other subsystems. Hence it is possible to imagine that at some peculiar conjunction of social and cultural conditions creative variations will be produced by persons who are unlike any other ‘creative’ person who lived earlier or later” (1994, p. 151). Rather than acknowledging or understanding the system in action, most individuals describe this confluence of factors as ‘luck’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a) in order to keep the focus of the creative process on the individual. Studies have confirmed that considering the individual as a part of a larger system allows for the individual’s unique characteristics to be operative in a similar manner to Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* as well as accounting for that individual’s ability to internalise domain knowledge and interact with the field in order to produce a novel

variation that may then be considered creative (E. McIntyre, 2004, 2006; P. McIntyre, 2004, 2006b).

According to Csikszentmihalyi, internalising the rules and knowledge of the creative system is one of the key functions of the individual in the systems model (1994; 1997a; 1999). Without this information, the individuals cannot then go on to produce a novel variation on the products within domain. This internalisation occurs in two ways: immersion in the domain and absorption of the criteria of the field. “Writers say that you have to read, read, and read some more, and know what the critics’ criteria for good writing are, before you can write creatively yourself” (1997a, p. 47). Before an individual can change a domain, they must first master its tools, techniques, symbol system and rules. This mastery comes from an immersion in the domain over time, both through absorption of the information within it as well as training and practice in utilising this acquired knowledge. Although many creative ideas may seem to be instantaneous or like a bolt of lightning, Csikszentmihalyi argues “an important breakthrough usually follows a long period of gestation in the domain” (1988, p. 332). This deep connection to the domain allows the individual to recognise any potential for creativity whether from holes or problems in the current domain or how the rules may be broken to extend its boundaries. In this way, Louis Pasteur’s edict that chance only favours the prepared mind is less about luck than domain immersion.

In a similar way, individuals who absorb the criteria of a field are in a better position to recognise opportunities for creativity. Csikszentmihalyi argues that, by internalising the preferences and criteria for judgement and selection used by the field, individuals obtain the ability to “choose the most promising ideas to work on, and do so in a way that will be acceptable to one’s peers” (1999, p. 332). Individuals are better equipped to tell a good idea from a bad one and to realise when errors have been made. In Csikszentmihalyi’s view this ability to recognise error is highly valuable. “You’re lucky if you can throw a bad idea away immediately. Some of the most creative people I’ve interviewed say the reason they are creative is that they can throw away the bad ideas much quicker than other people can” (Csikszentmihalyi & Epstein, 1999, p. 60).

After internalising knowledge from both the field and the domain, the individual is then able to produce a work. Rather than simply being a realm of ideas, creativity must necessarily involve the elaboration of that idea into an acceptable form for judgement to occur. A person

cannot be considered a creative novelist, for example, without ever having written a book. The writer must transform ideas on plot or character into a structured series of words, a transformation that usually only takes place by sitting and writing for hours on end. For Csikszentmihalyi (1997a), this ‘work’ aspect of the process is often ignored in traditional ideas of creativity even though it is generally when individuals expend the most time and effort. “This is what Edison was referring to when he said that creativity consists of 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration” (1997a, p. 80). During this work phase, Csikszentmihalyi argues individuals are not isolated from the other two components in the systems model, but constantly draw on their knowledge of the field and domain.

There are four main conditions that are important during this stage of the process. First of all, the person must pay attention to the developing work, to notice when new ideas, new problems, and new insights arise out of the interaction with the medium. Keeping the mind open and flexible is an important aspect of the way creative persons carry on their work. Next, one must pay attention to one’s goals and feelings, to know whether the work is indeed proceeding as intended. The third condition is to keep in touch with domain knowledge, to use the most effective techniques, the fullest information, and the best theories as one proceeds. And finally, especially in the later stages of the process, it is important to listen to colleagues in the field. By interacting with others involved with similar problems, it is possible to correct a line of solution that is going in the wrong direction, to refine and focus one’s ideas, and to find the most convincing mode of presenting them, the one that has the best chance of being accepted (1997a, pp. 104-5).

In this way, the creation of a product does not necessarily signify a single cycle through the systems model but may in fact represent a series of complex interactions between the individual, the field and the domain (represented in figure 1).

Following the systems model, the starting point of these interactions is no longer solely located with the individual. While traditional views of creativity assume it is the individual’s inspiration or desire for self-expression, the field and domain are equally capable of initiating novelty.

One might start from the ‘person’, because we are used to thinking in these terms – that the idea begins, like the lighted bulb in the cartoon, within the head of the creative individual. But, of course, the information that will go into the idea existed long before the creative person arrived on the scene. It had been stored in the symbol system

of the culture, in the customary practices, the language, the specific notation of the ‘domain’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, pp. 329-30).

Instability or technological advances within the domain raise problems for individuals to solve and provide opportunities for creativity. Csikszentmihalyi (1997a) argues the field can also be the impetus for creativity in several ways. The field may not only offer training, resources and rewards to encourage creativity in a particular area but directly commission specific works. In the Renaissance era, for example, many great works of art were initiated by church or state, controlling not only the content of paintings but also the materials, techniques and colours to be used (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1994; 1997a). In the domain of writing, publishing houses often commission fiction and non-fiction books based on predicted or sales trends as well as stories for themed collections. In this way, the domain, the field or the individual could be considered the starting point. According to Csikszentmihalyi, the interdependence of each of the three components means choosing a starting point is often “purely arbitrary” (1988, p. 329).

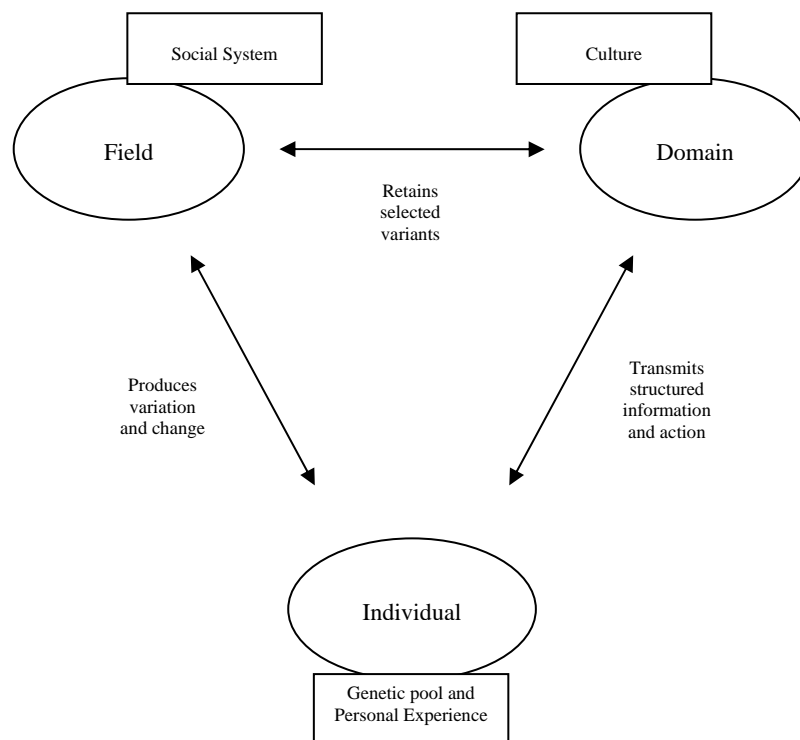


Figure 1. Csikszentmihalyi's Systems Model of Creativity (1988, p. 329).

Although other confluence approaches to creativity are available (see for example the componential model by Amabile, 1996; or the investment theory by Sternberg & Lubart, 1996), Csikszentmihalyi's model appears to have been more readily accepted, cited over 3000 times,¹¹ within disciplines as varied as psychology, computer programming, business, economics and education. Texts utilising the systems model have only recently emerged, primarily American and in the discipline of psychology, but are works that are often cited in the current literature on creativity. Best known for his work on multiple intelligences, Harvard professor Howard Gardner incorporated the model in his studies of creativity (see for example H. Gardner, 1993). Noted child development professor David Henry Feldman used the model in various works on creative development, giftedness and child prodigies (Feldman, 1988, 1999). Vera John-Steiner (2000) used Csikszentmihalyi's systems model to explore aspects of group creativity in her book *Creative Collaboration* and has set his work as compulsory texts for psychology courses on creativity. R. Keith Sawyer (2006) used the sociocultural model in his book, *Explaining Creativity: The Science of Human Innovation*, to explore creativity in general as well as aspects of creativity in art, writing, music, acting, science and business.

Although texts such as these discuss the ways creativity occurs in diverse domains such as science, the arts, education or business, they largely originate from within the discipline of psychology. Further research on the model originating from the arts, for instance, is almost non-existent. In the UK, however, Rope Pope (2005) examined the systems model in his literary studies work *Creativity: Theory, History, Practice*, describing it as a "powerful corrective to notions of creativity focused exclusively on creators or on creative products" (2005, p. 69). Pope pointed to its usefulness within literary or cultural studies but also suggested the model should be modified to more explicitly account for collaborative work, hybrid forms that cross domains and how new domains are formed.¹² While it can be argued

¹¹ Searching through academic journals, publishers, professional societies, universities and other scholarly organisations, Google Scholar returns more than 15,000 citations for Csikszentmihalyi, 3,320 for his work on creativity and the systems model alone.

¹² Pope's work presents one of the few critiques of the systems model. Criticism of Csikszentmihalyi's work largely centres on his work on flow. However, Csikszentmihalyi (1997a) raises concerns about his own ideas on creativity, arguing the model could equally apply to acts we view as evil or negative (creating weaponry or Nazism) as it could to good or positive ones (creating a poem or a cure for a disease) and should therefore not be applied to creativity uncritically. "It is as absurd to believe that progress is always desirable as to reject it out of hand" (1997a, p. 322). Weisberg (2006) also criticises the model although this does not stem from any apparent inadequacies with the model itself. Instead he considers it representative of new psychological definitions of creativity where value or judgement is present. Weisberg believes Csikszentmihalyi has provided a "valuable analysis of the way in which multiple factors come together in determining whether an idea will be accepted by the intellectual community" (2006, p. 64) but would limit the definition of creativity to the individual's contribution only, removing all concepts of value and leaving only novelty and intentionality as necessary conditions for creativity. "Accordingly, I will assume that you can be creative even if you produce a new scientific theory that is totally wrong, or new music that no one likes, or a new airplane that never gets off the ground, or new clothes that no one ever wears. All that matters is that the product be novel for you and intentionally produced" (2006, pp. 65-6). Weisberg adds the

that Csikszentmihalyi does explain each of these points (see for example Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 89 for ways in which the model embraces interdisciplinarity), Pope's interest in the model shows that the evolution from individual to more systemic approaches to creativity was not limited to disciplines of psychology within the United States. It had crossed the Atlantic and permeated areas that traditionally relied on analysis of an individual artist/author or interpretation of their work.

In Australia, Csikszentmihalyi's systems model has been utilised in a range of disciplines. Within the domain of computer programming and design, Peter Kandlbinder (1999) used the model to analyse the process of web design collaboration and to facilitate collaborative experiences for teachers and students within the university system. This was followed by a case study of student groups designing an online art exhibition (Elias & Kandlbinder, 2001). Rob Saunders and John S. Gero (2001; 2002) used the model to develop computational models of creativity and explore artificial creativity. In the domain of music, Stephen Holgate (1997) applied the model to the teaching and assessment of music composition. Phillip McIntyre (2004) verified the model with an ethnographic study of contemporary western popular music songwriters, followed by work on the role radio program directors and music directors play in the creation of popular music (2005) and a case study of Paul McCartney and the creation of the song 'Yesterday' (2006b). The systems model has also been used to study video production (Kerrigan, 2006), script writing (E. McIntyre, 2004, 2006) and journalism (Fulton, 2008) and was recently cited in the popular press in an article on the importance of creativity research (McWilliam, 2007).

Limited work has been done within Australia on a systems approach to fiction writing. Marcel Freiman (2003) briefly described the model as useful tool for teaching and researching creative writing within the university system. With Phillip McIntyre, I used the model to suggest new ways to conceptualise creative writing and creative writing teaching (P. McIntyre & McIntyre, 2007). Its value in these and other spheres shows there is the potential for a study of individuals and social and cultural contexts and how they interact to produce creative works of Australian fiction writing. As seen in the previous chapter, a study that combines each of these components has not yet been attempted but could provide a rationalist

proviso, however, that these products must be judged to be novel; someone other than the producer must verify that the work exists and is actually a novel variation. Both of these issues, the benefits and judgement of Australian fiction writing, will be discussed at different points in this thesis.

explanation for cultural production or creativity that accounts for the individual's role without denying the function played by stores of knowledge such as culture and broader social groups and contexts.

As well as providing a theoretical framework for the current research, the systems model of creativity can also act as a guide for defining creativity. As we have seen throughout this chapter, definitions of creativity have evolved from ideas of divine inspiration, through concepts of genius and extraordinary individuals to confluence approaches that believe creativity occurs in the confluence of multiple components. One of the earliest definitions of creativity is provided by Aristotle in his doctrine 'on being' in *Metaphysics*.

Of things that come to be, some come to be by nature, some by art, some spontaneously. Now everything that comes to be comes to be by the agency of something and from something and comes to be something. And the something which I say it comes to be may be found in any category; it may come to be either a 'this' or of some size or of some quality or somewhere (Aristotle, 1928 [350BCE], p. 791).

From this perspective, creativity occurs through the agency of someone and by taking existing materials and ideas and giving them new form. Phillip McIntyre (P. McIntyre, 2006a; 2006b; P. McIntyre & McIntyre, 2007) used Aristotle's ideas in combination with Csikszentmihalyi's view of creativity as the result of interactions between the individual, field and domain. The result is a rational definition of creativity as "a productive activity whereby objects, processes and ideas are generated from antecedent conditions through the agency of someone, whose knowledge to do so comes from somewhere and the resultant novel variation is seen as a valued addition to the store of knowledge in at least one social setting" (P. McIntyre, 2008, p. 1). As seen earlier in this chapter, this additional element of value has been incorporated into many definitions of creativity (see for example Bailin, 1988a; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Feldman et al., 1994; H. Gardner, 1993; Negus & Pickering, 2004), reflecting that a work must not only be novel but considered valuable or useful in order to be deemed creative.

Using this definition of creativity, the study that follows will necessarily look at each of the component parts in order to portray a complete picture of creativity in the area of Australian fiction writing. The work that follows is based primarily on a series of in-depth interviews with individual writers who discuss the conception, production and reception of their books in addition to their influences, resources and support systems. Simply put this study of creativity

involves the examination of people, processes and products as well as their interactions with and reactions to and from other people, processes and products.

Without those forerunners, Jane Austen and the Brontës and George Eliot could no more have written than Shakespeare could have written without Marlowe, or Marlowe without Chaucer, or Chaucer without those forgotten poets who paved the ways and tamed the natural savagery of the tongue. For masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice (Virginia Woolf, 1945, p. 66).

3.0 Learning and mastering the domain of Australian fiction writing

The introduction of technology, from the alphabet to the printing press and the internet, has dramatically increased the number of tools available to the storyteller. Despite these changes, the methods for learning, composing and transmitting stories remain remarkably similar to earlier techniques. Based on an examination of epic poetry and the field transcripts of Slavic oral poetry collected in the 1930s, Albert Lord (2000 [1965]) observed a three step composition process that was followed by storytellers and bards. This process began with a period of listening and absorbing, followed by imitation and application before finally performing in front of a critical audience. With clear parallels to Csikszentmihalyi's systems model, Lord observed storytellers drawing on existing knowledge and mentor performances. While immersed in this domain, the storyteller imitated and practised existing styles. Once the storytellers had mastered known styles, they were capable of improvisation and adapting their performance to each critical audience. As with written forms of storytelling, this process then repeats, building on an increasing store of knowledge. It is argued here that a similar sociocultural process occurs in Australian fiction writing: before they contributed an original work, individuals, whether literary or genre writers, have first engaged with, then learned and mastered rules and knowledge of, the domain.

3.1 Initial interest in reading, writing and telling stories

Perhaps understandably, articulating how they developed an interest in writing was not an easy task for the majority of writers in this study. "Um. I don't suppose that 'no' will serve as an answer? I thought not. I guess, and it's only a guess, that I loved to read stories and found myself telling them" (Luckett 22/7/06). Rather than being able to pinpoint an event or process, many writers in this study suggested their interest had been there since early childhood. Some, like Kate Forsyth, felt their interest in writing had been with them since birth.

I think I was born wanting to be a writer. I certainly don't remember a time when it wasn't the passionate focus of my interests and ambitions. I learnt to read very early, about four, and was reading fluently by the time I started school. I was about five when I began writing my first novel, and by the time I was seven or eight I'd completed a full novel in an exercise book, called 'Runaway'. I have never not been writing a novel since (Forsyth 16/8/06).

Other writers could not remember a time when they weren't interested in writing.

I think I always knew I was going to be a writer. I don't understand how that is. I can remember in primary school saying to people 'one day, there's going to be a book with my name on the cover'. I don't really understand where that came from. Some people imagine that they're going to be an astronaut or whatever. I always just imagined I was going to be a writer (Cusack 30/8/06).

In a similar way, Gary Crew felt his writing was based less on interest than a seemingly common sense use of skill. "I'd talked to people who published and said they'd always wanted to be a writer. That wasn't my case at all, I was quite different. Like people grow black hair or people grow tall, I just knew I could write and that was all I could do" (Crew 21/8/06). Bourdieu (1977; 1990) argues this production of common sense beliefs about the self and the world is one of the fundamental effects of *habitus*. Built on the individual writer's personal, social and cultural experiences to that moment, *habitus* helps construct choices and trajectories that seem both necessary and normal. "The practical world that is constituted in the relationship with the *habitus*, acting as a system of cognitive and motivational structures, is a world of already realized ends – procedures to follow, paths to take" (1990, p. 53).

As seen above, some writers were unable to articulate more than a description of a common sense, a *sens pratique* or a 'feel for the game' when asked how they became interested in writing. As a part of *habitus*, an interest in writing is the result of a long process of inculcation and enculturation that is difficult to unravel into component parts. In keeping with *habitus* as a normalised set of dispositions that only function effectively if the individual is uncritical of their origins (Bourdieu, 1990), few of the writers here traced their interest in writing beyond three broad and initially superficial sources: through an interest in storytelling, an interest in books and reading or an initial engagement or success with writing. While most writers who pinpointed one or more of these factors offered little more than a cursory response to the question of interest, it is clear from those who were reflective of this development, that an

interest in writing can be traced through their writer's *habitus*, made up of their experiences of the social and cultural worlds in which they operated and including engagement with the domain of writing and its symbol systems.

For Kim Wilkins, all three significant domain factors, that is storytelling, reading and writing, contributed to her early feeling or belief that writing was the only occupation she wanted to pursue.

For me it was always just the urge to be involved with stories. I never really made a distinction, as a child, between reading and writing. I always made up stories and I was in grade one when I wrote down my first story kind of thing and got to read it in assembly. To me they were an equal pleasure, writing and reading. It was not unusual for me as a child to finish a story I really liked and then sort of start writing a sequel, which I didn't get very far into. I had no idea of intellectual property or anything like that. To me the stories, the reading and the writing urge were kind of the same. It wasn't till later when I was about eight or nine when I realised that this was a job you could do, be a writer, and I immediately thought 'well, that's what I'm going to do'. There was no question about it (Wilkins 1/9/06).

Although engagement with specific symbol systems of storytelling, reading and writing may not have actually occurred simultaneously, Wilkins has identified these as the source of her overall early interest in the domain. Other writers' early engagement and interest in the domain of fiction writing was more compartmentalised, with most writers pinpointing only one source to their interest.

Of the five writers who believed their interest in writing derived from a specific interest in storytelling, three supplied no further qualification, stating simply that storytelling was a precursor to their interest in writing. Reflecting more critically on his social and cultural experiences, Nick Earls was unsure if early exposure to a strong cultural storytelling tradition in Northern Ireland influenced his desire to write. Rather, he believed the storytelling culture within his family more directly influenced his interest in writing. "It started, I think, with my mother telling bedtime stories and reading stories to my sister and me. So I was fascinated from the start with books and the process of storytelling. We were quite a storytelling family; it was a normal thing that we did" (Earls 4/8/06). Family circumstances also normalised storytelling for Kerry Greenwood, making it as much a part of the daily routine as household chores.

My job was to get everybody into the bath, wash, dried, undrowned and out of the bath, into their jammies, out of the bathroom and put them to sleep with a story... After the *Hop on Pop* incident when the book got thrown out the window, you know how little kids are with their favourite books, I thought 'alright, I'll tell a story, and the simplest possible story is a fairy story'. Everyone knows how it starts, with 'once upon a time', and finishes with 'the end', but in between you could say anything you like. It was much easier for me to tell a fairy story than to choose a different book every night (Greenwood 6/11/06).

Greenwood described in detail a period of listening and absorbing the structures of storytelling, followed by imitation and performance, a process similar to that of the Slavic oral traditions examined by Albert Lord. These structures were absorbed and learned not only from listening to adults tell stories but also from engaging with books and reading.

The majority of writers in this study believed reading directly developed their interest in writing. Nineteen of the forty writers mentioned an almost compulsive engagement with books and other written materials as children, whether as indiscriminate or critical readers, reading for pleasure or to learn about the world. Venero Armanno says he became interested "like most writers do, just by being a voracious reader".

I've always been a reader from as long as I can remember. I remember before I went to school, I learnt to read by learning to read on my own and my parents being amazed that I could read the newspaper to them before I went to school... So that's always what interested me and in all its different forms. When you're a kid you start off with comics, or you read adventure stories, you know, that kind of thing. You sort of graduate through different styles of writing but at a very young age I kind of thought 'it's not that I like reading this, I also want to be the originator of this. I want to be the person behind this.' I think around the age of nine I knew I wanted to be a writer (Armanno 24/8/06).

Like Armanno, most writers described themselves as avid or passionate readers as children.

I was an avid reader as a young boy, so I think it naturally sprang from there. I loved words and narrative. Experimentation was perhaps inevitable (Williams 4/9/06).

My interest in writing is strongly related to my love of reading. When I read a great book – even a great sentence – I feel that writing something like that is work worth doing (Maguire 14/8/06).

I've had a love of writing as long as I can remember fostered by my love of books. Books have always been my friends since I first learnt to read. Writing was a flow on from that early passion (Pennicott 4/10/06).

For almost all, this early interest in reading was developed or encouraged by their family. Louise Pakeman believes her interest in writing was a direct result of her family's love of books. "I was lucky to be brought up in a bookish family. Books were everywhere, the preferred present by most of us for birthdays, et cetera. Both my parents read aloud to us a great deal and talked about books. From the age of seven I knew that all I wanted to do was write books" (Pakeman 24/7/06). Similarly, Libby Gleeson believes her interest was socialised by her family's attitudes to reading and writing.

I was always a great reader. I was raised to believe that good writing and great literature were really very important. I think I was also raised to believe that writers and poets were who you celebrated and praised. Also, anything I did as a child was always praised. So I suspect I was raised in a context of supportive parents and supportive ideology of the schooling, that sort of thing. From a very young age, I thought I did want to write (Gleeson 5/9/06).

In a less formal way, parents and other family members are mentioned as encouraging their children to read when they could or did not, as great readers themselves or as providers of books and trips to the library. Kate Forsyth's experience is typical of those writers whose family provided important access to books. Taught to read by her mother, Forsyth also mentions her grandmother and great-aunts as well-educated women with a passion for books and history. "They told me stories and gave me books and let me loose in their extensive libraries" (Forsyth 16/8/06).

Unlike the majority of writers who became interested in writing through reading in childhood, several writers did not develop this interest until their late teens or adulthood. James Maloney found he became interested in reading and writing after losing interest in activities that had occupied his childhood.

This didn't happen until my final years at high school when I was growing tired of all the sport I had played as a boy and my mind began to demand nourishment. The books I was assigned to read in

year 11 and 12 sparked an interest in the ideas that good novels contain and explore and from then I have been hooked on good quality writing across a variety of genres (Maloney 20/8/06).

John Dale became interested in writing following an engagement with particular texts after leaving school. “When I was 18 or 19, I was reading then and I read all the Russians, the great Russian writers and after reading Tolstoy and Dostoevsky and others, I wanted to be a writer” (Dale 21/8/06). Janet Woods was also an adult before engagement with a single book developed an interest in writing. “I read a romance novel in hospital and thought it might be interesting to try and write one” (Woods 21/7/06).

Although generally preceded by the ability to read, some writers believed their interest in writing developed through their early attempts or successes. Deborah Abela developed not only her interest but also her skill level with her early attempts at writing.

From the age of seven, I knew I wanted to be a writer... I began writing short stories and plays that I performed for my family. I wrote stories and gave them away as presents and loved reading them aloud in class. Even if people didn't like them, my aim was to provoke a response, get a reaction to what I had written and hopefully learn about writing each time I did it (Abela 3/9/06).

These early efforts at writing were often supported by parents or teachers who encouraged their interest. Jonathan Harlen thanks his mother for actively encouraging his “ridiculous” attempts to write as a child “because she sat down with me and got me interested, found me books I enjoyed and got me interested in the whole process, I suppose” (Harlen 11/9/06). For Josephine Pennicott, it was her teachers who encouraged her to submit her early stories for publication. Nick Earls' interest in writing was also supported by various teachers, with one providing more than encouragement. “I had three English teachers in five years of high school who were supportive, some of whom, at least one of whom wrote things himself, and showed it to me, so we compared stuff” (Earls 4/8/06).

For Lizzie Wilcock remembering a teacher's encouragement twenty-five years later reignited an interest in writing when she was dissatisfied with her career as a teacher.

I thought ‘what else am I possibly good at, what else do I like?’ and that's when I remembered the words of my year nine high school

teacher - it says this in the back of the book - my year nine teacher who told me I had a talent for writing and I just thought 'what if she's right? What if all this time I've been teaching class instead of doing something I have a talent for?' (Wilcock 8/5/06).

Louise Cusack's interest in writing also lay dormant for some time but never completely disappeared. "It wasn't really until I'd had my two children, and my daughter was born and that was it, that was my family, and somehow, my father had just died, and suddenly I just remembered 'oh, I was going to be a writer'" (Cusack 30/8/06). At whatever stage their interest occurred or reignited, all of the writers in this study underwent a critical engagement with the domain over an extended period of time or at some point in their lives. As seen here, this was often a socialised process, with parents, relatives and teachers providing exposure and access to cultural artefacts and activities such as storytelling, reading and writing as well as encouragement and support to maintain that interest.

Among the limited number of studies available on interest and initial engagement with creative writing, Kohányi (2005a) and Piirto (2002), posit that the presence of a range of 'predictive factors' such as childhood stress, mood disorders, high verbal ability and voracious reading is sufficient to predict who may become a creative writer. Although these factors cannot be discounted, the development of creativity appears to be more complex than these factors alone. Rather than a predictable course of events and individual traits, the data presented here appears to more readily conform to Bourdieu's (1977; 1993b) concept of *habitus*, which recognises the often unique social and cultural trajectories that lead the individual writer to engage with the domain or 'game' of writing, "to take an *interest* in the game, to be taken up, taken in by the game (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 18). As with the development of an individual's *habitus*, however, it is not enough to be exposed to and interested in the domain of Australian fiction writing to be able to function as a writer of either literary or genre works. The content, rules and procedures of the domain must also be acquired and internalised.

3.2 Skills and knowledge acquisition

As will be shown here, individual writers internalise the content and symbol system of the domain, including its rules and procedures, in order to then use that database of information to craft their own work. Through immersion and mastery of the domain, the individual may

gradually develop a ‘feel’ for what constitutes a creative contribution to the domain, where practice within the domain appears ‘automatic’ (Schon, 1983) or ‘intuitive’ (Bastick, 1982). However, the data collected in this research shows that before this can occur an individual, regardless of which genre they write in, must acquire the relevant domain knowledge and skills. In this study, domain acquisition occurred across a range of formal and informal processes of socialisation and enculturation. These include reading and schooling as well as some degree of self-directed learning, mentoring, and specific and additional training.

3.2.1 Reading

Csikszentmihalyi (1997a) argues reading is one of the principle forms of acquisition for those interested in the writing domain. “Writers say that you have to read, read, and read some more, and know what the critics’ criteria for good writing are, before you can write creatively yourself” (1997a, p. 47). Nearly all of the writers interviewed in this study agreed reading is not only an important skill, but also a fundamental tool for learning how to write fiction. “It is the by far the biggest single factor, no question” (Doyle 14/11/06). Dave Luckett takes this strong assertion a step further arguing “one could - and perhaps should - learn to write fiction with no other input” other than reading (Luckett 22/7/06). Reading and the acquisition of reading skills, however, is a complex process, one that has been the study of investigation in areas such as education and psychology for decades.

Studying reading at the beginning of the twentieth century, Edmund Huey (1908) wrote that to completely understand the processes involved in reading “would be to know very many of the most intricate workings of the human mind, as well as to unravel the tangled story of the most remarkable specific performance that civilisation has learned in all its history” (1908, p. 6). In its basic form reading may be described as the comprehension of written symbols and symbol systems (Appleyard, 1990; Coltheart & Prior, 2007; Rayner & Pollatsek, 1989; F. Smith, 2004), although, as Huey recognised, this definition does little to illustrate the complexities involved in its acquisition, function or application. For the purposes of this study, reading involves a process of recognising and decoding or comprehending written words in conjunction with a basic knowledge of language.¹³

¹³ Huey (1908), Gibson & Levin (1978) and Raynor & Pollatsek (1989) offer further information on the psychology of reading, including details of studies on eye movements during reading, inner speech and reading rates as well as the use of mental processes such as memory retrieval, attention and pattern- and word-recognition.

Most of what individuals know about language is not formally taught but learned through socialisation as children. George A. Miller (1977) has likened children in this process of language acquisition to apprentices, learning by watching, listening to and comprehending adults and older children. This heuristic or flexible and self-adaptive learning enables the child to construct a vocabulary of up to 500 words by two and a half years of age and an average of 2000 words by four (Gleitman et al., 1999). Turning this rapidly expanding vocabulary into the ability to recognise tens of thousands of words in a range of type-fonts or handwritten styles within a fraction of a second is also a socialised process but not necessarily a completely formalised one.

Just by virtue of being a reader, every one of us has acquired a sight vocabulary of at least 50,000 words, words that we can identify on sight the way we recognize familiar faces and houses and trees. How did we acquire this enormous talent? Fifty thousand flashcards? Fifty thousand times a teacher wrote a word on a board and told us what it was? Fifty thousand times we blended together the sound of a word through phonics? We have learned to recognize words by reading. Not only can we recognize 50,000 words on sight—and also, of course, by sound—we can usually make sense of all these words. Where have all the meanings come from? Fifty thousand trips to the dictionary? Fifty thousand vocabulary lessons? We have learned all the conventions of language by making sense of it. What we know about language is largely implicit, just like our knowledge of cats or dogs. So little of our knowledge of language is actually taught; we underestimate how much of language we have learned (F. Smith, 2004, p. 196).

The process of learning to read, then, begins with progressive language development in early childhood, regulated by heuristics that are then formalised and connected to written symbol systems in the education system.

Although several writers in this study were early readers, connecting the linguistic and symbol systems before entering Kindergarten, most of the writers acquired both reading and writing skills in a school environment. All of the writers in this study, whether literary or genre writers, were formally educated in reading, writing and English as the study of prose and poetry, although their experiences differ dramatically. Across a broad range of generations, these writers experienced English at varying levels of content, formality and

depth.¹⁴ Some writers were early-leavers; others continued their education after finishing high school in various university and TAFE [Technical and Further Education] courses. Several of the writers experienced primary and secondary education outside Australia,¹⁵ but most underwent education in one of Australia's state- or church-run systems, predominantly in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

3.2.2 Experience of the English curriculum

With education administered by the states and territories in Australia, it is difficult to obtain a national picture of literacy programs and English curriculum and assessment from Kindergarten through to Year Twelve. Although national bodies such as the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) and the Curriculum Corporation have, in the past, provided statements and profiles on core subjects based on national goals and benchmarks (see, for example Curriculum Corporation, 1994a; Curriculum Corporation, 1994b), there appears to be little cohesion in the skills acquired and the texts and assessment methods used for teaching English in different parts of Australia. The recent 'Year 12 Curriculum Content and Achievement Standards' report (Australia Council for Education Research, 2007) outlines just how little commonality there is not only across the states but also between schools. According to this report, there are no compulsory texts covered by all Australian Year 12 students and just 25% commonality in the types or categories of texts covered. Among the eighteen different English courses on offer across the country there is only 30% overlap in the essential skills or objectives covered. "In summary, there is an infinite number of ways of satisfying curriculum objectives for a subject called English" (2007, p. 32).

Given the lack of commonality in modern English frameworks and curriculum, it is unsurprising that the writers in this study, educated across several decades and in different systems, are divided on the impact such learning had on their ability to write, particularly compared to the modern system. A writer of young adult novels and a primary school teacher, Lizzie Wilcock says the current curriculum is almost unrecognisable from the education she received.

¹⁴ The level or type of education these writers received appears to have no bearing on the genre of writing they pursued. Writers of similar age and education level, for example, have written in different genres.

¹⁵ Those who underwent some form of education outside Australia did so in English speaking countries such as New Zealand, England and Northern Ireland.

Maybe this is showing my age but I don't think we were ever really taught fiction writing. It was the how-to write, well, not even how-to, it was the Friday write-a-composition and sometimes you were given a topic and sometimes you weren't and you just had to write and you'd get a mark out of ten or something but it was never actually taught. The basics were taught. You need a basic plot, and you need characters, you need a setting and as a teacher when I look now, what I'm teaching my year one and year two kids about how to write a narrative, it was a stuff I wasn't taught at school, even in high-school (Wilcock 8/5/06).

Like Wilcock, few of the writers were given any explicit instruction in creative writing in primary or high school.

Spelling was drummed into us (I wish they focused more on that now) and grammar to a lesser extent. But I don't ever remember being taught anything about how to write. We tended to focus on the books we were reading and how Shakespeare, for example, might be using a metaphor to reinforce his description and so on. All basic but fundamental stuff (McIntosh 4/10/06).

As is the case with most students prior to current education reforms, these writers were more likely to be instructed on exposition and argument, analysis and reportage, objective historical or scientific and technical writing than narrative forms.

Gunther Kress (1982) argues a society's preference for teaching non-fiction over fiction forms may be a reflection of its broader value system and the norms it chooses to impose on individuals. Kress argues a child's initiation into non-fiction forms indicated a process of learning rules and procedures that 'subordinates' creative ability to the mastery of fixed and formalised rules of writing. This notion that learning fixed and formalised rules hinders creativity, however, is flawed. Rather than subordinating their creative ability, all of the writers in this study went on to produce and publish narrative works after learning the rules and procedures of writing, if only in non-narrative contexts. This appears to align with the position of Sharon Bailin, who argues that the learning of formal rules actually enables creativity to occur.

It has been shown that there is not a real discontinuity between achieving highly within the rules of a discipline and achieving highly when it entails going beyond or changing some rules. The latter is, rather, an extension of the former... Furthermore, one never breaks

down all the rules, since to do so would be to abandon the discipline. And when rules are broken in the course of significant achievement, it is generally by a master of the discipline who is at such an advanced stage in the discipline that he can see the point in doing so (Bailin, 1988b, pp. 96-7).

Although creativity, from this perspective, may be more about mastering rules than breaking them, the writers' views of this perceived subordination of creative ability to rules and conventions in their education are mixed.

Alan Horsfield, who also authors literacy and English tests and text books for NSW schools, believes the heavy emphasis on structure in the 1950s was not of benefit to his writing. "Most of the primary teaching I had leaned towards rote learning and high school was a succession of repetitive periods. Education was more focussed on getting a good job for life when you left school. Being a writer was not considered an option" (Horsfield 26/9/06). His education was so unsatisfactory he 'wagged' a lot of primary and high school, as did Leigh Redhead. The education system was equally unenjoyable or unsatisfying for Paul Collins, Amanda Hampson and Louise Cusack who had all left high school by sixteen. While she didn't leave the school system as other writers did, Susanne Gervay says traditional methods of teaching of English inhibited her creative writing. "School required conformity and my most painful moments were when I was denigrated for writing differently. So I hid in the formula writing they wanted" (Gervay 3/10/06). What these writers emphasise is that, although it generally plays a large role in a child's acquisition of skills and knowledge, primary and secondary schooling may not always be the most crucial period of acquisition. As will be discussed later in this chapter, other periods of socialisation and enculturation may also help individuals acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to become a writer. This does not, however, discount the influence of schooling in general and English in particular on many of the writers in this study.

While some writers admitted they disliked or were bored by the traditional systematic study of grammar and fiction, many believe they benefited from it in one way or another.

My English teachers were great grammarians, so I did a lot of that. We would do a lot of comprehension tests. We would strip stories apart like they were car engines and we would learn a lot about their bits. I don't know that that necessarily prepared me much for actual writing though and it's not a process I particularly like. I actually

think that sometimes one of the great things about a story is that you get to consume it whole. You don't have to break it down into its component parts and go 'well, I've worked out the tricks now and here they are' ... But sure, I had several years of working out what those bits were. So, I knew what a transferred epithet was before I read Thea Astley talking about louvres sweating when she was writing about North Queensland. I thought 'I know those louvres didn't sweat, I totally get your point, that image completely works for me and it's a transferred epithet, thank you' (Earls 4/8/06).

James Maloney is more explicit in seeing the benefit of systematic and structural learning. Although his English classes were dull, they did inform his ability to write fiction. "Our study of literature in school was conventional and I suppose at times it was dry, but I gained an enormous amount from it which influences my writing still today" (Maloney 20/8/06). Carmel Bird, on the other hand, found her traditional English lessons both enjoyable and critical to her development as a writer. "Grammar and spelling were fabulous and vital to my love of language. So were all the novels and all the other books" (Bird 19/7/06). Indeed, Bird believes fiction writing should not be under the purview of teachers at all. In her opinion, "school English teachers are generally unequipped to teach writing. I say this from close and current experience. The people who can teach writing are writers (who can also teach). Such people are in fact fairly rare" (Bird 19/7/06). Whether they enjoyed their schooling experience or not, each writer did receive some instruction and training in the English curricula, whether this was at a basic or more advanced level. As such, traditional schooling cannot be discounted as a necessary factor in learning to write Australian fiction.

3.2.3 English and the study of grammar

Perhaps the biggest division in opinion in this study involves the usefulness of formal grammar lessons in preparing writers for their later work. As noted by Nan Bernard (1999), in 'The Fall and Rise of Grammar in the Australian English Curriculum', the explicit teaching of grammar was missing from Australian schools particularly during the 1970s, 80s and 90s. Changes in educational and literacy philosophies saw many students miss out on the systematic, or even rote, grammar instruction received by many of the older writers in this survey. "Yes, I was one of those kids that went through when grammar wasn't trendy, so that was kicked out and I didn't do grammar. When I was at uni, grammar was still out so I didn't do it, and then they brought it back in about ten years into my teaching career and I thought, 'What? What's that?'" (Wilcock 8/5/06). Writers such as Amanda Hampson, Kate Forsyth

and John Dale were also forced to compensate for this lack of foundational instruction at later stages in their writing careers, self-teaching or attending ‘refresher’ grammar courses.

On one side of the argument, writers such as Anna Jacobs, Sean Williams and Sandy Curtis believe grammar is a fundamental tool for fiction writing. “This has been most beneficial to me as a writer as I don’t have to do the edits a lot of writers do because they haven’t learned the grammar basics. Without the basics of grammar and spelling a writer can’t produce their best work, not matter how creative the text” (Curtis 30/12/06). This ineffective communication of story ideas through a general deficit of language knowledge is also frustrating for some of those writers who also teach creative writing. Peter Doyle argues the lack of basic grammar principles he sees in his students’ work can stop a writer’s career before it even starts.

I teach now, and the lack of basic grammar and syntax knowledge is the single most disabling handicap my students have. And it’s strangely hard to convince many of them that it even really matters. I guess that’s because they’ve basically been marked by indulgent teachers, who overlook the grammar and syntax if they deem the intention to be sound. This too is very disabling: the entire writing-for-publication industry places great store on grammar and syntax and anyone who can’t get it right more or less puts themselves out of the race (Doyle 14/11/06).

Given that grammar acts as the rules and procedures governing word usage, it was expected that formal grammar training in the English classroom would be seen as useful. In direct opposition of this view, however, writers such as Libby Gleeson, Susanne Gervay, Gary Crew and Louise Pakeman argue grammar and spelling are irrelevant or less important components of writing fiction when compared to the ability to tell a good story.

Publishers employ editors to check these if you can write a damn good story that catches the imagination and then holds the reader. I once heard a publisher say that Enid Blyton couldn’t spell for nuts and her grammar was haywire but it didn’t matter because she had such a wonderful imagination and could tell a story so well (Pakeman 24/7/06).

Rather than the systematic teaching of grammar in schools, some writers believe these structural elements of language can be picked up informally, absorbed ‘by osmosis’ from

reading. “That’s why I write grammatically well because I read a lot, so you learn about sentence construction by absorption rather than by rules. That’s what I mean. I read a lot, so I understand sentences, but I couldn’t tell you the rules that apply to them” (Armano 24/8/06).

Although the usefulness of formally studying grammar is contentious, what this quote by Armano indicates is that grammar itself is important. Whether it is learnt formally in school or absorbed through more informal social and cultural processes as children or adults, it can be argued that all writers, regardless of genre, have some fundamental knowledge of grammar. Without at least a basic (even if an automatic and therefore incommunicable) understanding of how language functions, a writer would not be able to tell a ‘damn good story’.

3.2.4 English and the study of literature

Unlike the teaching of grammar, the systematic analysis of fiction works has not gone similarly in and out of fashion. As well as aims of imparting reading, writing and language ability, most English education in Australia has included some form of textual study, moving from a simple exposure to classic literature in the late 19th/early 20th century ‘tripod’ model (grammar, composition and literature) (Little, 2004) to an appreciation of literature (Australian Council for Education Research, 1973). The study of English has moved towards a ‘cultural studies’ or ‘textuality’ model (Peel, 2004; Thomson, 2004), which widens the range of texts from novels, plays and poetry to include film, television, and internet material as well as other popular or mass market products and media, reading at deeper levels of language analysis and social and cultural understandings.

Some writers in this study felt analysis, particularly thematic analysis, of the books they studied made the experience less enjoyable. “Studying books like that sort of ruins them for me” (Redhead 23/8/06). For others like Libby Gleeson, the level of analysis was inadequate. “Although in our study of literature we probably looked at great themes but we didn’t actually study the mechanism of how you actually articulated those great themes” (Gleeson 5/9/06). Although they too found the experience dull or unenjoyable, Sean Williams and Sean McMullen both saw the benefit of such study. “I was compelled to read a lot of books in school that I would not have read otherwise. I think that this was good, in terms of broadening my style and outlook” (McMullen 9/10/06).

Whether reluctant or voracious readers of the chosen school texts, approximately half of the writers interviewed believe the study and reading of fiction books as a part of the high school English curriculum did help develop either their own writing skills and knowledge or their appreciation of others' work in some way. For Kate Constable, analysing novels was "much more useful than grammar because it exposed me – us – to the beauty and power of crafted language" (Constable 25/11/06). For others, understanding how great writers utilised particular styles and techniques to craft their most influential works was important.

I began to understand that fiction wasn't simply telling great make-believe stories. Great writers, such as Thomas Hardy, used all manner of ways to make that story come to life through magnificent settings, characters you cared about, dialogue that leaped off the page and could provoke intense emotion in me (McIntosh 4/10/06).

For some, the benefits of the English curriculum's aim to teach students "to read critically and respond imaginatively and analytically" (Board of Studies NSW, 2007, p. 2) were delayed.

Back then, in the 1960s, students routinely read quite a bit of classic fiction. That was good. Didn't understand much of what was passed on to me, so in a 'learning outcomes' or 'competencies' educational framework, that wouldn't have shown up, but years and years later I was able to benefit from what I was told (Doyle 14/11/06).

Susanne Gervay believes her experience with critically reading fiction in school laid a solid foundation for her writing in adulthood. "Reading and studying books inspired me and I believe gave me the craft to write later in life" (Gervay 3/10/06).

Building on the foundation of skills and knowledge provided by the English curriculum in Australia, many literary and genre writers continued their formal and informal analysis of books outside of the school environment. Rather than undertaking training in creative writing, several of the writers in this study benefited from university level study of English and Literature.

When I was about 16, I was given some excellent advice, which was that the only way to learn to write well was to study the work of great writers. So I went to university and did a BA in Literature, which enabled me to study a great many different writers, from Shakespeare to Virginia Woolf to Helen Garner. I found that absolutely inspiring and very worthwhile (Forsyth 20/8/06).

This experience aligns with the work of J. A. Appleyard (1990), who argues the development from adolescent to ‘college’ level reader is a movement away from reading to gain specific information or insight towards reading for a more holistic understanding of books, writing and the social and cultural systems that produce them. A university level student typically approaches the study of literature “as an organized body of knowledge with its own principles of inquiry and rules of evidence, learns to talk analytically about it, acquires a sense of its history and perhaps even a critical theory of how it works” (1990, pp. 14-5). This is the view put forward by Kate Forsyth and Kim Wilkins, who both believe the analytical study of books provided a more beneficial education for their writing careers than taking a university level course in creative writing. Herself a lecturer in creative writing at the University of Queensland, Wilkins advises would-be writers to reconsider their study options. “To this day people come to me and say ‘I want to be a writer, should I study creative writing at uni?’ and I say ‘No, you should study English literature at uni’” (Wilkins 1/9/06).

3.2.5 Adult Readers

Outside of a structured system of learning, adults read books for a variety of reasons. Appleyard (1990) argues an adult may read for pleasure, as a form of escapism, to add meaning to their lives, to broaden their understanding of their known world or to gain intelligence of the world beyond their direct experience. Beyond these reasons, however, adult reading is also a learning process directly related to the writing profession. With each individual novel embodying a set of conventions governing elements such as language, alphabet, grammar, narrative and genre, reading provides access to many of the rules and knowledges needed to produce, understand, compare or evaluate creative works of fiction.

Whether they read intentionally or without purpose, critically or indiscriminately, almost all of the writers interviewed agree that reading is fundamental to acquiring a range of domain knowledge and skills that directly inform their writing practice. Writers of literary fiction as well as writers of genre fiction used reading to learn how to write, “not only to learn the craft but also to learn what to write and what not to write” (Jacobs 23/8/06). Reading may also help the writer develop “models for rhythms of prose or plot, for uses of imagery, for permission to do things in new ways” (Padmore 9/11/06) or an “innate sense of style by observing what you think is good or bad about other people’s writing” (Gardner 31/8/06). For Fiona McIntosh, reading broadly within the fantasy genre provided essential knowledge and skills that enabled

her to produce her best-selling trilogies. “I couldn’t have attempted a fantasy novel without being a fan of the genre and understanding some of its conventions, what a reader expects from a good fantasy novel. You learn so much from reading the quality writers in each genre” (McIntosh 4/10/06). For those like McIntosh who have cornered a specialist market or genre, reading provided a specialised learning experience unavailable as formal instruction until recently.

For those writers, in particular, who received no formal instruction on writing in their primary and high school education, books acted as a surrogate teacher, master or mentor. “No-one taught me how to do that, plenty of great writers showed me how to do that” (Earls 4/8/06). In many traditional occupations, individuals undertook a period of apprenticeship, where they would formally or informally observe or receive instructions on methods to complete a simple task, and may be given feedback or corrections while attempting to master the task before undertaking more challenging assignments. Historically, some writers were also given the same opportunities for enculturation into the writing profession before being expected to produce high quality works. However, this nurturing of new writers seems to have disappeared as the publishing industry in Australia has evolved over time.

Someone once wrote a critical thing on [my first book *The Inner Circle*] saying ‘this is an apprentice work’ and that’s right, it was. The difference is in those days publishing houses didn’t expect you to leap from the head of Zeus fully formed like Athena. They apprenticed you as investments and Ron Norman, that was the guy’s name who picked me up, he worked with me, he worked with me as a mentor. That’s almost unthinkable nowadays. They expect you to write *The Bride Stripped Bare* and that’s all they care about (Crew 21/8/06).

As well as a changing industry, physically isolated periods of work during the writing process are often unamenable to the observation, instruction and direct contact of traditional apprenticeships. As argued by Simonton (1984a), however, mentoring need not be an intimate face-to face relationship. He uses the term ‘paragon’ to describe those creators (whether living or deceased) who may still be admired and provide instruction from a geographical or temporal distance. In her book *Reading Like A Writer*, Francine Prose (2006) argues writers have been learning from such paragons for centuries.

They studied meter with Ovid, plot construction with Homer, comedy with Aristophanes; they honed their prose style by absorbing the lucid

sentences of Montaigne and Samuel Johnson. And who could have asked for better teachers: generous, uncritical, blessed with wisdom and genius as endlessly forgiving as only the dead can be? (2006, pp. 2-3).

From this perspective, individuals are able to learn from paragons of writing through an ‘interrogation’ of their works, investigating the decisions each writer has made about style, technique, language and content. Carmel Bird articulates this process of learning to write from reading the works of others as a discussion among writers. “In a sense a writer is engaged in contributing to a vast conversation – so it is important to listen to who else is talking” (Bird 19/7/06). Here, the books already accepted into and embodying the domain of fiction writing provide writers with the opportunity to engage in some way with those who have already mastered the domain but may no longer be accessible members of the field. Some writers, however, were able to learn the skills and knowledges of the domain directly from a living writer.

3.2.6 Mentoring

According to Throsby and Hollister’s (2003) report ‘Don’t Give Up Your Day Job: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia’, only 18% of the writers they surveyed had some form of private tuition or mentorship with a living or known person. In contrast, thirteen (or approximately 33%) of the writers in this study experienced either a formal or informal mentoring relationship with a person who had mastered the writing domain.

Although these numbers are not statistically significant, mentoring itself can be seen as important in that this relationship acts as yet another locus of social interaction that leads to acquiring knowledge and skills relevant to the Australian fiction writing domain.

For those writers who took up this form of acquisition, the roles played by their mentors can be divided into three categories: firstly, technical help and skills development to improve written work; secondly, providing knowledge of or access to the industry; and thirdly, encouragement to write and publish. For those writers who experienced technical or skills oriented development, the mentoring process was more formal, often mediated by writers’ organisations or centres. Emily Maguire had a short term mentorship through the Australian Society of Authors, working on a specific project. Stephen Gray and Leigh Redhead were introduced to their mentors through programs at the Northern Territory and Northern Rivers writers’ centres respectively. Catherine Padmore experienced a sense of mentorship through a university course in creative writing taught by Alex Miller.

It was tough at times, when Alex needed to give frank and constructive criticism. It wasn't always what I wanted to hear, but it strengthened my work immeasurably. He offered me practical knowledge about the craft and the process of managing a long work: 'this is what a draft looks like'; 'this is how you might consider editing it' (Padmore 9/11/06).

In these cases, mentors acted as unofficial editors, providing feedback on first drafts or developing manuscripts. "I doubt I would have been published without the mentorship with Marele Day. I'd done a couple of drafts but I was too close to the manuscript to figure out what was wrong with it. Marele got it straight away" (Redhead, 2007, p. 12).

In a similar way, some mentors provided information on or access to the publishing industry. Both Amanda Hampson and Scot Gardner paid to participate in writing workshops, connecting with the established writers who ran them. After attending an intensive course with Bryce Courtenay, Hampson finished her first fiction manuscript and sent it to Courtenay, who then passed it on to a publisher. Gardner developed a mentor relationship with John Marsden during his experiences with Marsden and other writers at Tye Estate¹⁶. For Gardner, the professional connection with Marsden was an important one for both his career and development as a writer. "He greased the slide of my passage into publication and helped me get my head into the space that suits me best while I write" (Gardner 31/8/06).

For the other writers, their experience with mentoring was a more personal one, primarily providing encouragement to continue with the writing process or the writer's life. Louise Cusack was introduced to fellow writer Kim Wilkins through their mutual agent. Rather than working in a formal editing or advisory capacity, Cusack argues Wilkins acted as a role-model through her early career.

So it wasn't so much critiquing as moral support, emotional support to keep going because, very often, you don't really need critiquing while you're drafting, you just need to keep going. You can critique it at the end. You just need to have the momentum to keep going to get to the end. So that positive motivation and I guess everything I've learnt off

¹⁶ Marsden's Tye Estate, 850 acres of bushland north of Melbourne, was initially used as a centre for writing conferences for adults and camps for teenagers. In January 2006, the estate became Candlebark School, an alternative school for students aged five to fourteen (Candlebark School, 2006).

her about how to handle yourself as an author, that sort of mentoring has been really important to me (Cusack 30/8/06).

The personal mentor role, however, was not always filled by another writer. The writers in this study drew encouragement and support for their writing from mentors in both related and unrelated areas. Both Nick Earls and Gary Crew found their publishers served this purpose; Peter Doyle's postgraduate supervisors were significant to his writing career; influenced by actor Chips Rafferty and poet Dorothea Mackellar as a child storyteller, Di Morrissey feels her uncle, retired ABC journalist Jim Levitt, has acted as a personal mentor throughout her entire career.

3.2.7 Domain specificity or generality?

Like the encouragement and knowledge provided by mentors from disparate areas, the acquisition of skills and knowledge useful to a fiction writer does not necessarily occur strictly within the domain of fiction writing. This question of whether domain-specific or general skills are more useful for achieving creativity has become one of the central disputes in creativity research (see, for example: J. Baer, 1994, 1998; Finke et al., 1992; Guilford, 1954; Kaufman & Baer, 2004; Simonton, 1991; Torrance, 1962; Weisberg, 1993). What this body of research attempted to discover was whether creativity is achieved using mental processes and skills that are specific to the domain in which one works or whether it is realised using skills and processes that are relevant in all domains. Do creative writers, for example, use the same skills as creative physicists to achieve different ends or are there skills specific to creative writing?

Centred primarily in cognitive psychology, the research on domain specificity for writing has focused on the importance of content knowledge for non-fiction and academic writing with mixed results (Bart & Evans, 2003; Jolliffe & Brier, 1988; McCutcheon, 1986). Given the content of fiction works is often imaginary, there is some difficulty in establishing the relevance of these results for this study. Tackling this issue, Charlotte Doyle (1998) argues that the 'fictionworld [sic]' writers inhabit requires different or additional skills and modes of thinking than that of the practical 'writingrealm [sic]'. Similarly, Lubart and Guignard (2004) suggest different skills and knowledges may vary in generality and specificity to the domain overall or over time. In other words, some skills and knowledges may be generalised across creative domains but others are specialised within a particular area. Both these approaches

appear to correspond with the acquisition of skills and knowledge by the Australian fiction writers in this study.

At a fundamental level, knowledge of the general writing domain is essential in order to be creative within it. All of the writers in this study received a solid grounding in English language and writing skills in their childhood and schooling, internalising these symbol systems until they became seemingly ‘natural’ abilities. The skills and knowledge beyond this acquisition, however, diverge in their levels of domain specificity or generality. Akin to Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997a) findings that the career trajectories of creative people led them to acquire skills and knowledge in often unpredictable or unexpected ways, many different paths were taken to the destination of creativity within the domain of Australian fiction writing, some related and some seemingly unrelated to the domain.

Only two of the writers in this study had engaged in a career in the Australian book publishing industry. Isolde Martyn was a book editor (as well as a lecturer and mother) while writing the manuscript that went on to become her first published novel. Sophie Cunningham was editing and publishing for 15 years before attempting her first novel. This experience in the publishing industry not only developed her editorial skills and ability to recognise a good story but also eased the transition into the writing life.

I think it was a benefit because it meant that I was aware of the process and the fact that it could be slow or complicated and not take that too personally. I knew it was quite a nerve-wracking, fairly creepy bureaucratic process in some ways waiting for responses to things and that can be very nerve-wracking for authors who don’t have an understanding of how all that works. It can be quite demoralising because you work in isolation and I had more sense of that. Also it meant that I had contacts that were useful. It was basically a real plus, I have to say (Cunningham 28/8/06).

Although only two were directly engaged with the fiction writing industry, other writers in this study received experience and training useful to their development as a writer in other writing domains such as journalism.

Although it may provide more relevant skills for the ‘writingrealm’ than the ‘fictionworld’ (Doyle, 1998), the related domain of journalism has proved a rich training ground for many well known writers internationally as well as in Australia. In his article ‘Birth of a Novelist,

Death of a Journalist', David Conley (1998) argues journalism and fiction writing not only share similar skills but also a history in that early literary Australia was also largely "a journalist's Australia".

A symbiotic relationship developed between newspapers and novels in that Australia's early novelists could not write fiction without the prop of journalism in providing supplementary income. In addition, newspapers were, and remain, forums for critiquing, promoting and publishing literature. They also have served as a training ground for some of literature's greatest novelists, including Dickens, Twain, Zola and Hemingway (1998, p. 47).

In Australia, Frank Moorhouse, Robert Drewe, Kate Grenville, Nikki Gemmel, John Birmingham and Geraldine Brooks are just some of the names that stand alongside Dickens and Hemingway in honing their researching, writing and editing skills in journalism before turning to fiction.

While Conley (1998) argues journalism's cynicism and strict conventions have the potential to hinder a fiction writer, Jonathon Harlen says the conventions of news reporting and the close supervision of his editors led to a successful fiction writing style.

I was a journalist for most of my twenties so my editors taught me a lot about writing, a lot. My style is always trying to be as simple and universal in terms of access as possible. So I will always try and choose a simpler way of saying something even if it means sometimes you lose a little bit of nuance. That makes me suitable for writing for kids and young adults whereas a more lyrical, perhaps a more reflective writer would dwell on a particular moment and eke out all the nuances of it rather than just barrel along. But that's a journalism thing. You don't have the luxury of your reader being willing to read ten pages about someone having a cup of tea, it just doesn't work in journalism (Harlen 11/9/06).

For Di Morrissey, her journalism experience (including a four year cadetship) taught her both to search out and get to the heart of a story. "It was useful because it taught me to research, to get my facts right, to write simply and directly and to communicate immediately – or it was cut from the bottom by the subs" (cited in Pressley, 2004, p. 18). In line with the findings of Csikszentmihalyi (1988; 1997a; 1999), Wolff (1993) and Giddens (1979), the conventions of journalistic writing and news organisations both constrained and enabled these writers in the development of their skills.

Outside of journalism, other writing careers have provided on-the-job training for writers in this study. Fiona McIntosh began her working life in PR but later started a travel magazine with her husband. Beginning in the sales area, McIntosh soon began contributing articles and editorials.

I realise now as I look back over my working life that I have always been writing. It never occurred to me until recently that all of my jobs have required word crunching and even when I was selling advertising space for our magazine, I was actually using creatively produced proposals that I'd written to lure prospective buyers. It worked really well for me and our magazine won a major business award for its small business achievements. So although I hadn't attempted a fiction novel before, the writing skills I have to presume were well honed, although I never stop learning (McIntosh 4/10/06).

In more visual or aural media, Jonathan Harlen, Deb Abela and Posie Graeme-Evans found writing for radio, stage and screen also developed or informed their writing ability and style. "I think I received a very good free training in how to tell stories... What's interesting to me is I've had feedback quite consistently from people saying the way I write is visual, that people see pictures" (Graeme-Evans 8/11/06).

Not all of the careers undertaken by the writers in this study, however, were directly related to writing. Stephen Gray and Kerry Greenwood trained and work in law, Gray in Aboriginal culture and copyright law and Greenwood in criminal law, issues that are central in their literary and crime fiction works respectively. Nick Earls' experience in medicine not only taught him diagnostic and problem-solving skills that translated to his writing but also allowed him to "meet people I wouldn't otherwise have met and learned how they told their own stories. I would take histories from them and listen to their stories in their voice, listen to the details they picked out, listened to the way they tell their stories. It gives you an idea about voices that aren't your own" (Earls 4/8/06).

Five of the writers in this study began their careers as primary and high school teachers. While dissatisfaction with this work drove Lizzie Wilcock to writing fiction, dissatisfaction with the texts on offer led Alan Horsfield to attempt writing his own books for children and young adults. For Alan Tucker, writing extended from producing creative English assignments for his students. Tucker was later employed in writing and publishing assignments and courses for distance education in South Australia.

Because I was also teaching what I wrote, I had to write two styles of things for distance education. You write the assignment but you also have to write the instructional material that tells students what to do. I learnt to be very precise in that instructional stuff because I had to teach it myself and then I also had to balance it with creative ideas to give them starting points for their own creative ideas, but the instructional material had to be very different sort of writing (Tucker 17/8/06).

His work being read and used by teachers and children across the state gave Tucker not only the ability to write for different audiences but also a precision of language important when asked to write and illustrate picture books and historical fiction for children. Although he had not intentionally set out to train for writing fiction, Tucker, like many of the writers in this study, accumulated knowledge and skills that made the transition from his previous career to the domain of fiction writing a smooth one. Although it is not within the purview of this study to assess the specificity or generality of mind/brain processes, what this diversity in career trajectories tells us is that not all of the skills and knowledge required to produce a work of Australian fiction writing are specific to that domain. Some are relevant in non-fiction writing domains and others appear to be applicable across several unrelated domains.¹⁷ What is clear is that these skills and knowledges were acquired when they were socialised or enculturated into the rules and practices of an occupation regardless of whether it was directly related to the domain of Australian fiction writing or not.

3.2.8 Additional tuition and training

As we have seen, the writers in this study did not always directly pursue creative writing in their careers. The same is true of their further education. Some studied and completed degrees or the equivalent in areas as disparate as Business, Science, Medicine, Law, Fine Arts, History and Education. Others undertook writing-related degrees in Communication, Journalism and English. In equal portion, though, are those writers who pursued specific creative writing courses within these degrees, at TAFE and specialist schools or completed studies in dedicated Creative Writing degrees at the Honours, Masters and Doctoral level. This level of higher education is unsurprising, with numbers in this study (68%) close to the 63% of writers found to have some university or TAFE level qualification in Throsby and Hollister's (2003) survey of Australian artists. The figures for training in non-award study such as workshops, retreats, masterclasses and short courses were also similar, approximately

¹⁷ Domain acquisition and fiction content will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

40% of writers in this study compared to the 38% in the 2002 Artists Survey (Throsby & Hollister, 2003).

Despite these figures, only 36% of writers surveyed by Throsby and Hollister (2003) believed formal or qualification studies to be the most important form of training. This figure drops to only 10% for workshops, short courses and non-award study. For Kate Forsyth, a higher degree was useful to her development as a writer, but not essential. “I did an MA in Writing - which taught me a great deal about the discipline of writing, as we had to produce a piece every week for our writing workshop, and also taught me how to take criticism, another invaluable lesson. I could have learnt these things without going to uni, of course, but not so quickly” (Forsyth 20/8/06). Debate surrounding the importance or effectiveness of workshops, courses and degrees for achieving creativity in fiction writing has continued since their introduction in the 1970s. While numbers studying Australian fiction have dwindled (Neill, 2006; Sullivan, 2004), the number of Australians enrolled in creative writing workshops and courses is estimated at 15,000 (Moorhouse, 2006a). Criticism of these forms of learning generally returns to the belief in natural talent or genius seen in the previous chapter and, consequently, that creativity cannot be taught at all. More recently, surveys of students’ expressed motivation for studying creative writing courses have added new complexity to questions of effectiveness.

In a survey by Evans and Deller-Evans (1998), students undertook creative writing courses and workshops for a variety of reasons, not all of which related to gaining or developing skill and knowledge levels. The most common reason was purely for enjoyment or interest in writing, with “looking for spill-over benefits in other areas of study” and “a chance to gauge one’s own talent” also mentioned (1998, online). Given this variety of student expectations, it is unsurprising that not all students will (or even want to) become writers. Researching the effectiveness of teaching creative writing by counting how many students become published writers would not take into account those people pursuing fun, a hobby, extra credit points or a rounded education. From this perspective, the effects of workshops and courses on creative writing are more practically explored from a retrospective study of those identified as creative.

The writers in this study who undertook creative writing workshops and courses in a range of forms encountered varying levels of effectiveness, though most, like Kate Forsyth, suggest

they were of qualified value. Most of these writers immersed themselves in as many workshops and courses as they could find to develop a general set of writing skills, knowledge and contacts. “I became a magnet for writing information for a few years in the beginning. I went to every workshop I could find, day courses at TAFE and heaps of festivals and conferences” (Gardner 31/8/06). Others used the experience to learn or master specific skills they felt they lacked, targeting themed workshops or those run by particular people. Amanda Hampson regularly checked which workshops were being held at the University of Sydney and UTS.

When I was writing my book, I saw [Life Stories Workshop founder] Patti Miller was running two hours over four weeks on something on writing the senses and that was something I really wanted to develop, writing about smells and writing about textures and things like that. So it's sort of a layering effect of different aspects of writing (Hampson 29/8/06).

For those writers without such keen focus, creative writing workshops and courses helped to make decisions about the direction their writing or development should take. Though she didn't complete it, Janet Woods found her experience with a correspondence course in creative writing helped her focus. “It helped me to sort out which areas of writing I should concentrate on” (Woods 21/7/06).

Although some correspondence courses were available, access to writing workshops and courses was limited for those developing their writing in the 1970s or 80s. A flood of interest in the 1990s meant more and more courses became available. However, for some writers, particularly those in regional areas, access to workshops remained a problem. “There was nothing I could do at TAFE, which I was more interested in. At university, I couldn't find anything on creative writing that was part time. So I did a lot of WEA [Workers' Educational Association] courses” (Wilcock 8/5/06).

Finding the right workshop or teacher appears to be the primary problem for those who questioned the effectiveness of creative writing workshops and courses. Sandy Curtis was pleased with the quality of workshops run by other writers or industry professionals but found her TAFE experience lacking “because the tutor was hopeless and knew less than I did. And I'm not being big-headed about it, but I used words that he told me didn't exist but they were in my dictionary and weren't uncommon” (Curtis 30/12/06). Some writers warned against

such courses where tuition from inexperienced or non-writers could not only be unsatisfying but harmful to a writer.

I went to one or two workshops once I found out they existed, but they didn't tell me the sort of thing I wanted to know. I think anyone going to a workshop should check out the credentials of the presenter. How can anyone teach you to write fiction who hasn't done so successfully themselves? (Jacobs 23/8/06).

Several writers were similarly dissatisfied with ill-matched instructors and workshops that did not meet their needs. For these writers, creative writing instruction did not improve their writing ability. This does not, however, indicate that they are of no value. Rather, they represent a potential locus for acquisition where, given the right combination of access, personalities, motivation and teaching experience, some writers are able to acquire and develop the skills and knowledge necessary for Australian fiction writing. Many of the writers who had neither access nor a positive interaction with a teacher or workshop leader supplemented their growing catalogue of writing skills and knowledge with information in interview, industry and how-to books.

3.2.9 Self-directed learning

Without the face to face contact of creative writing workshops and courses, many writers were able to benefit from the personal, practical and professional insights of their peers through a variety of non-fiction publications. Compared to the more formal learning undertaken in tertiary education and workshops, this largely autodidactic form of learning is highly individualised given each learner's unique *habitus* and experience up until that point. This is a position shared by Merriam and Caffarella (1999), who argue self-directed learners often pursue skills and knowledge in a different way to formalised learning and “do not necessarily follow a definite set of steps or linear format” (1999, p. 55).

In essence, self-directed learning occurs both by design and chance – depending on the interests, experiences and actions of the individual learners and the circumstances in which they find themselves. Self-directed learning does not necessarily mean learning in isolation – assistance is often sought from friends, experts, and acquaintances in both the planning and execution of the learning activity (ibid.).

In this instance, self-directed learning is aided by professionals and fellow-writers sharing their knowledge and experience through various manuals and guides.

As shown in chapter 1, the number of auto/biographies, interview and guest lecture collections, industry manuals and guides and how-to-write books has increased dramatically. Biographies and autobiographies offer developing writers a model for the writing life and publication. Radio programs such as Radio National's 'The Book Show' (previously 'Books and Writing'), specialist magazines such as *Good Reading*, collections of interviews and lectures not only probe into the life and business of featured Australian writers but also explore the books they write. Other works examine books and the process of writing them from traditional literary criticism perspectives but also in non-traditional ways such as Kate Grenville and Sue Woolfe's (1993) deconstruction of the writing process of ten Australian novels in *Making Stories*. In 2006, Grenville supplemented her fiction work *The Secret River* (2005), publishing a memoir style account of its writing in *Searching for the Secret River* (2006). This book described not only the ideas and research behind the fiction work, but also more technical elements such as developing dialogue and revising character, themes also covered in her how-to-write manuals *The Writing Book* (2001) and *Writing from Start to Finish* (2002).

A glut of international and a growing number of Australian how-to-write-and-publish manuals may at first glance, appear to confirm the stimulus-response model of critical theorists such as Theodor Adorno (1976), who argued the use of technical manuals reduced authenticity and encouraged standardisation. Each manual offers reasonably similar advice and activities on inspiration, motivation, planning, plotting and revising techniques. Indeed, two of the writers in this study said they simply consumed as many of these resources as they could find. However, the eight other writers in this study who utilised manuals such as Grenville's books, John Marsden's *Everything I Know About Writing* (1998) and Carmel Bird's *Not Now Jack, I'm Writing a Novel* (1994), *Dear Writer* (1996) and *Writing the Story of Your Life* (2007) did not do so uncritically. They were often selective, not only in their choice of book, but also in what they took away from them. "How-to books were my main teachers, and I found some very good ones for my purpose. What you need depends on what you're trying to write and where your skills are currently at" (Jacobs 23/8/06). Both Kate Constable and Kate Forsyth found these manuals were useful for inspiration and diagnosing and solving problems that occurred during the writing process. For many of the writers in this

study it was this largely self-directed process of writing itself that both facilitated and consolidated domain acquisition.

3.3 Practice and mastery

Alongside reading, the writers in this study named writing practice as a principle and fundamental method of domain acquisition. This process of ‘practice makes perfect’ has been investigated from a number of perspectives. In the economic realm, for example, Kenneth Arrow (1962) argued workers could improve productivity through practice and self-perfection, a theory similar to the Japanese production strategy of ‘Kaizen’ based on the statistical work of William Deming (1993) in Japan in the 1950s. John Dewey (1938) and David Kolb (1984) dominated the educational domain with their emphasis on learning from experience or practice, an emphasis implicit in the teaching and assessment of creative writing in school, university and workshop settings (Blain, 1989; Freiman, 2002). While studies such as these outline the benefits of experiential learning in these highly industrialised or institutionalised settings, the complex process of learning-by-doing in writers or similar learners has been left unexplored. “We know a great deal about learning in highly controlled settings where there is task analysis, a curriculum, a trainer and support resources, but relatively little about learning in the messy reality of the workplace” (Boud & Walker, 1991, p. 9). Despite this lack of dedicated research in the area, it is possible to see parallels between these theories of learning by doing and “the messy reality” of the writers in this study.

Very few of the writers in this study published their first novel without first undertaking a considerable amount of writing practice. Many, like Kim Wilkins, have a number of finished but unpublished (or unpublishable) manuscripts they consider their apprenticeship in the craft.

I really, really wrote a lot. I was not exaggerating: I would have written around ten novels before I got anything published. I started writing my first novel at eleven; I’d always written short stories, but when I was eleven I started writing a novel. It was ridiculous, it was terrible, I was an eleven year old, but I kept writing and then when I was thirteen I wrote a fantasy novel. I’ve still got that, it’s two hundred typed pages long. Just after I left school I wrote another one and then just a couple of years later I wrote a couple of children’s books. I never tried to get any of these published. I’d get to the end of them and think that’s not good enough. I just had to keep going (Wilkins 1/9/06).

This process of learning by doing was quantified for Amanda Hampson during a workshop with Bryce Courtenay, who told the class becoming a writer took years of experience. “He says to become a writer you need to practice writing three hours a day for six years” (Hampson 29/8/06). Ian Irvine undertook even more hours of writing practice before publication. “I’d done more than 10,000 hours of writing before I was published and I learned a lot about the art of storytelling” (Irvine 18/7/06). Not limited to the writing domain, Ericsson and colleagues (Ericsson & Charness, 1994; Ericsson, Krampe, & Clemens, 1993) found a similar level of intense practice in musicians. The best violinists, like Irvine, averaged 10,000 hours of practice compared to good violinists, who averaged 8,000 hours and music teachers, who averaged just 4,000. Bloom (1985) verified that the achievement of master status in a range of professions was often foreshadowed by years of intensive practice and immersion in the domain, a pattern also found among the writers in this study.

I wrote my first novel sitting in my mother’s apricot tree one school holiday when I was sixteen and realised that I wasn’t any good at writing short stories but I loved writing novels. I just kept on writing novels for fun when I was in university... Then I thought ‘before I’m thirty I’m going to try and get published’. I started writing and sending historical novels off to publishers and getting them back again. I did this for four years (Greenwood 6/11/06).

In their study of chess players, Simon and Chase (1973) were the first to coin the ‘10-year rule’, arguing it takes a decade of intensive practice to master any field. “I was all about trial and error. I had the 1980s as trial and error and into the 90s as well” (Earls 4/8/06). Gardner (1993) found a similar pattern in his study of seven eminent people, finding it took 10 years to move from novice to master. Hayes (1989) also confirmed this rule in a biographical study of composers, painters and poets across several generations, where these creators were engaged in years of ‘silence’: practising, producing and perhaps even publishing works, but nothing that added to their reputation. “Getting my novels published came about because I worked for 10 years, getting rejections that were nicer and more encouraging as the years went by. I was determined to get published. So I worked damned hard” (Jacobs 23/8/06).

While not significant of themselves, these early minor works are often crucial in laying the groundwork for the works that came next. Ninety percent of the writers in this study were first published in a form other than the novel. With only four writers in this study (10%) having a

novel as their first publication, it is clear that the majority of writers interviewed took advantage of shorter form writing opportunities to practice their craft and build on their skill and knowledge of fiction writing. As well as writing manuscripts and stories nobody would ever read, these writers entered a range of writing competitions and repeatedly sent stories to literary journals, magazines and newspapers. Sean Williams says he slowly progressed through the ranks of genre magazines before ‘graduating’ to the novel form.

I worked my way up from the fanzines, to semi-prozines, to magazines paying pro rates for short stories; then, when I had enough of a reputation in Australia, I jumped to novel publishing for HarperCollins Australia (but also with a local small press). From there, I secured a US agent and began making sales in the US. This process took about eight years (Williams 4/9/06).

After writing his first novel in 1979 and having it rejected, Venero Armanno set himself the task of writing a novel a year until one was published, submitting these manuscripts to publishers as well as *The Australian/Vogel* awards. Although shortlisted for the award several times, Armanno persisted unsuccessfully with writing novels until he was advised by a publisher to try short stories.

So I started writing short stories instead and they started getting published around the place. When I had a lot of them I sent them round to UQP and UQP selected the ones that they wanted and published the first collection of those. That’s why I was saying it’s a long story because there was a lot of stuff that went before it. Even though it’s a really slim volume of stories, there was like a million words that went into the creation of that book (Armanno 24/8/06).

Combined with the years of practice writing in a longer form, Armanno’s experience with short stories developed a solid body of work that made further publication possible. As shown here, these writers accumulated greater levels of skills and knowledge through immersion in the domain and continued practice over time, leading to an expertise in the domain of Australian fiction writing and the eventual publication of one or more novels.

This continued immersion in the domain of Australian fiction writing through various social, cultural and personal experiences, including reading, schooling, training and practice, gave many of the writers in this study a second sense or intuitive feel for work that wasn’t present when they began writing.

In the early stage, I wrote a lot that was wrong, before I wrote what was right. I don't really think I had that character's-becoming-real thing first up. I think I would try and drive the story and make characters do things. That often didn't work. Now I really don't tend to make a lot of decisions. I have an idea of how it's going to go. I think in recent years there's only been one time where it's happened, through heading down a certain way and I thought 'this isn't working at all' so I pulled back five or six chapters and I thought 'now why would that character do that? That doesn't make sense'. So I guess there are still times where I look at it and think 'that doesn't seem realistic' so I might make decisions based on that. But most of the time it's just the characters dictating what happens next and me not really looking at it until I've got the whole draft and looking at the structure (Cusack 30/8/06).

Statements such as these appear to correspond with Donald Schön's (1983; 1987) argument that producers often develop an internalised sense of their own work, which allows them to instinctively judge what is good or bad even if they've forgotten how or when they learned how to do so. "I have no way of judging what works, what doesn't, what is good or bad. I go on instinct and what feels and reads right to me" (Morrissey 26/9/06). This intuitive sense develops through continued practice and familiarity, where the skills and knowledges acquired become implicit or tacit and appear as seemingly spontaneous action. Schön calls this process 'reflection in action' where the practitioner is able to reflect "in the midst of action without interrupting it. In an action-present - a period of time, variable with the context, during which we can still make a difference to the situation at hand – our thinking serves to reshape what we are doing while we are doing it" (1987, p. 26).

A writer's intuitive sense of their own work, then, is also generative. Writers are able to 'think on their feet', adapting to new contexts or challenges as they arise. Reflecting on his own practice, Dave Luckett says he is aware there are processes at work in recognising and solving problems he encounters in his own writing.

Over time, with practice, I think I installed a series of filters, which have different labels. 'Clumsiness' is one, I think. 'Elegance' is another. 'Metaphor' might be one more. 'Consistency', "character's self-interest" and "rationality" might be others. Mostly, I now don't have to consciously refer to these. They work of themselves (Luckett 22/7/06).

Rather than a mystical or illogical thought process, Weisberg (1993) argues this intuitive ability utilizes ordinary thought processes (1993, pp 27-68). Tony Bastick (1982) also uses the term intuition to describe this non-mystical system of judgement. Taking this a step further, he asserts intuition can be more aptly described as “non-linear parallel processing of global multi-categorized information” (1982, p. 215), where experience in an area allows multiple thought processes to engage with disparate types of information at the same time rather than in a linear sequence. Intuition in this sense becomes an ordinary way of thinking developed from familiarity and expertise with domain knowledge and skills rather than an extraordinary or even paranormal ability.

It's very hard to describe! The story drives the plot, the characters drive the story, the story demands the right language and structure, the characters demand the right dialogue. Sometimes you do it wrong, and have to keep on trying out different ways until you find the right one. Sometimes it comes effortlessly. It's always a matter of intuition, in that it 'feels' right or wrong, but then it's always a rational choice too (Forsyth 16/10/06).

This perception of creative intuition moves towards a non-linear process, with implications similar to the description of Bourdieu's (1993a) notion of *habitus* and dispositional action.

From this perspective, a writer's ability to write is not simply a process of acquiring skills and knowledge relevant to the task at hand. Rather it is a complex process of acquisition and internalisation that occurs over time, with each new piece of information influencing future decision making in the creative process. This intuitive feel for production, also proposed by the work of Schön (1983) and Bastick (1982), is strongly linked to a writer's expertise with various domain skills and knowledges, gained over the writer's lifetime from their experiences in childhood, primary and high school, tertiary education, career training, self-directed learning and practice. This process of learning, perfecting and adapting develops and continues as they write even if they are not consciously aware of it.

Sometimes I feel like I'm channelling fiction central: this isn't anything to do with me because it just feels like it's completely separate to me, it's just coming out of nowhere. But most of the time I think 'I did this'. I don't know where it came from but this is mine, I'm owning this (Cusack 30/8/06).

While it may seem at times mystical or unexplainable to the writer, the writing process to which we turn now can be seen as a logical and dedicated application of the domain and the skills and knowledges acquired through the socialisation, enculturation and practice outlined in this chapter.

Writing is not an inherently private act but is a displaced social act we perform in private for the sake of convenience (Bruffee, 1981, p. 745).

4.0 The Individual and the Writing Process¹⁸

As seen in the previous chapter an individual's contribution to creativity is far more than a personal connection to a divine muse or the sum of a person's various personality traits. In analysing the ways in which individual writers interact with the domain and develop their skills and knowledge, we can see that the writing process begins long before their first book is published or even written with the formation of a writing *habitus* that guides an individual writer's contribution to the system of creativity. This chapter furthers that analysis, arguing that even during periods of physical seclusion writers are not isolated in the creative process.

As will be seen here, the system of creativity at work in Australian fiction writing is bigger than the individual alone. This does not, however, imply that the individual should be overlooked in this research. Rather, the research considers these individuals as part of a larger system. While no longer at the centre of the creative universe as suggested by past writers such as Rousseau, Thoreau, Nietzsche and Jung and more modern writers such as Paul Auster (Barbour, 2004), the individual remains as important to creativity as the domain and field. In this sense, an individual's personal characteristics are just as crucial to an exploration of creativity as is discussion of their interaction with the domain and field. For these reasons, the first section of this chapter ('4.1 The individual mind and body') focuses on previous research on individual elements such as genetics, biology, personality and motivation and how these may relate to the writers in this study. In some cases, the writers discussed how physical or psychological traits affected their work. Interestingly, it can be argued that these traits or characteristics are influenced to a certain extent by factors external to the individual writer. These sections are limited, however, given that the writers interviewed did not undergo specific physical and psychological testing for this research nor were they asked to offer opinions on areas outside of their own expertise or experience.

¹⁸ Sections of this chapter were presented in a paper, 'Encouraging Creativity: Csikszentmihalyi's Flow and Motivation', at the Creative Engagements: Thinking with Children 3rd Global Conference and subsequently published on the conference website (E. McIntyre, 2007).

The writers' personal experiences with producing manuscripts provide the foundation for the rest of the chapter in '4.2 The work of the individual'. This section moves away from previous research and concentrates on the writers' descriptions of their own practice. These descriptions suggest that writers negotiate a range of social and cultural contexts when moving through the writing process in phases of idea generation, research, development, drafting and editing. The writers' interactions with social and cultural factors are present not only in terms of providing ideas and inspiration but also research materials, knowledge and techniques, professional guidelines and peer support. By considering these social and cultural interactions in combination with individual action and physical and psychological elements, this chapter aims to present a more cohesive account of creativity than that provided in the literature on Australian fiction writing.

4.1 The individual mind and body

Despite the numerous studies on the genetic and biological differences, personality traits, cognitive processes, motivation, family background and development that may affect creativity, not all individuals who are considered creative display the same traits, processes, aptitudes, motivation or genetic make-up. As shown in the last chapter, even creative individuals working in the same domain have experienced different childhoods, educations and career trajectories. In this way, while the individual is the most studied component of the systems model of creativity, it also remains the most elusive as no single characteristic has yet been isolated as a sufficient or even necessary condition for creativity.

This lack of common individual characteristics may explain why some sociological theories ignore the individual contribution altogether. However, studies of the individual are still considered relevant in order to recognise how these people are capable of internalising domain knowledge, producing a novel variation based on that information and interacting with the field in order for that product to be considered creative. Although the creative person can no longer be thought to exist outside of social and cultural contexts, the individual is of equal importance to the field and domain. Indeed, research in this area is yet to exclude the possibility that factors such as genetic inheritance, personality and motivation may help account for why some individuals are more creative than others.

4.1.1 Genetics and biology

Studies of genes and creativity are generally founded on an oversimplification of genetic influence on traits and behaviour (Lumsden, 1999; Runco, 2007). Rather than translating directly into particular traits or offering a direct ‘blueprint’ for creativity, genes simply offer a framework for possible behaviour and preferences.

Talk about genes of major effect means that within a target population differences in a trait among individuals can be traced in significant part to differences among their genomes, not to differences in the environment (or in the laws of physics that sustain their ontogeny and physiology). Such a claim is not equivalent to asserting that the specific trait is determined or blueprinted in the gene itself, or that the environment or chemical physics of development is irrelevant... The DNA is not a blueprint except in the clubhouse stretch of a tired metaphor, but it is a principal subsystem of development’s tempos and modes, the one to which we look in most organisms to explain the origins of heritable variation (Lumsden, 1999, p. 158-9).

In an attempt to reduce both oversimplification and the influence of environmental factors, studies comparing groups of monozygotic (identical) and dizygotic (fraternal) twins raised together and apart have found a modest yet significant genetic influence on creativity (Grigorenko, LaBuda, & Carter, 1992; Nichols, 1978; Waller, Bouchard, Lykken, Tellegen, & Blacker, 1993).¹⁹ Most recently, a pilot study (Reuter, Roth, Holve, & Hennig, 2006) tested for two genes, DRD2 and TPH, believed to be related to creativity through their influence on dopaminergic and serotonergic neural transmission (pathways). In this case, genetic influence accounted for just 9% of the variability on six creativity tests.

Despite these modest yet significant signs of genetic influence, there is little evidence to suggest that creativity is familial or runs in families (Bullough, Bullough, & Mauro, 1981; H. Eysenck, 1995; Waller et al., 1993). Unlike Galton’s findings that one in ten eminent individuals also had a close relative achieve eminence in a related field, only one participant out of the forty in this study had a parent who also published written work. Indeed, revision of Galton’s study (Bullough et al., 1981) found creativity rarely carried beyond one generation, with few children of eminent individuals also reaching similar levels of achievement. This

¹⁹ According to Runco (2007), despite their attempts to do otherwise, twin studies are not completely impervious to environmental influence. While there is an assumption that twins reared apart do not share the same environment, “they are both human, breathe air, live in houses, and are likely to speak the same language(s). They experience the same culture, which means they encounter the same values, expectations and experiences” (2007, p. 105).

apparent contradiction is explained by Waller et al. (1993) using Lykken's term *emergensis* that describes those higher order traits that only result from the synergistic interaction of a cluster of other fundamental traits.

An important feature of emergenic traits is that they are unlikely to run in families because it is unlikely for relatives to share all, or even a large percentage of, the necessary components of the trait cluster. Nonetheless, emergenic traits often arise from the expression of unique gene configurations, and thus are often highly heritable (Waller et al., 1993, p. 235).

Combining these ideas with the studies shown above that suggest genetics may account for a modest proportion of the difference between creative and non-creative individuals, it is reasonable that creativity may have a heritable and genetic component without being inherited linearly through the family. This potential for a genetic inheritance again points to factors apart from the individual in question that may influence the creativity of a fiction writer. In this case, the creativity of near and distant relatives may also be important.

As well as the potential for creativity-relevant genetic traits, Csikszentmihalyi (1997a) suggests individuals may also be biologically predisposed towards creativity in a given domain. He argues those people whose nervous systems are sensitive to colour, light or sound may achieve more easily in domains such as painting or music than those who are less sensitive. "And being better at their respective domains, they will become more deeply interested in sounds and colors, will learn more about them, and thus are in a position to innovate in music or art with greater ease" (1997a, p. 52). Conversely, achievement is also possible in those same domains without genetic advantage. Indeed, some achievement seems to have been accomplished despite considerable disadvantage. "El Greco seems to have suffered from a disease of the optic nerve, and Beethoven was functionally deaf when he composed some of his greatest work" (ibid.).

In terms of this study it is unclear what physical advantages would be of benefit to those in the fiction writing domain. While good posture or hand-eye coordination may aid long periods of writing by hand or on a computer, it is also possible that these may be developed or improved with time and/or training. Megan Watkins (2005) argues children develop a form of bodily discipline that contributes towards the formation of a scholarly *habitus*.

Much of the first few months in kindergarten are devoted to a form of corporeal induction whereby children's bodies are attuned to the temporal rhythms, spatiality and comportment of schooling. As time progresses there is an ongoing refinement of these disciplinary procedures as students' bodies also assume the regularities of literate practice: the grip and movement of the pen and a particular posture for writing (2005, p. 546).

As with training a body for sporting achievement, it may also be possible that a writer's physicality is enculturated or trained for writing from an early age. Equally, however, long periods spent writing may cause degeneration of physical aspects such as eyesight or posture.

Physical disadvantages to writing may include dyslexia, arthritis or structural issues although these may not necessarily slow down or stop the writing process. With chronic back and shoulder problems, Kate Forsyth incorporates hydrotherapy and Pilates into her daily schedule alongside large blocks of writing time. Kerry Greenwood has both adapted to and been hindered by various physical conditions.

At the moment, I'm at page 167 of a new novel which has been vastly delayed this year because I've been sick, the poor thing. The novel kept on getting scotched while I blew a sciatic nerve and couldn't sit and couldn't walk and couldn't sleep (Greenwood 6/11/06).
Towards the ends of my last couple of books I tend to type for 24 or 36 hours without stopping and I look up and it's dawn again. I'll finish the book and then I'll realise I'm stiff, I'm so stiff I can't move. I've actually grown into the shape of the chair and my left hand and ankle have swollen up because I've forgotten to stop and do my exercises and I'm terribly hungry and thirsty and I've got a headache but I've finished the book! (Greenwood 6/11/06).

As with El Greco and Beethoven, it is possible Greenwood and Forsyth's ability to continue writing in the face of physical disadvantage may have more to do with an individual's personality than the physical limitations of a specific disease, disorder or dysfunction.

4.1.2 Personality

Like creativity, personality is a complex interaction of genetic and environmental factors that (in general) consistently affect an individual's thoughts, feelings and behaviours across time and place. This complexity of personality is also reflected in the seemingly paradoxical results for many of the studies of the creative personality as outlined in Chapter 2. Studies by Mackinnon (1962; 1965), Barron and Harrington (1981), Csikszentmihalyi (1996; 1997a) and

colleagues (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2004; Csikszentmihalyi & Getzels, 1973; Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1967) and Gardner (1993) show creative individuals across a range of domains displaying seemingly disparate or polarised elements of personality. While these qualities are present in all individuals, most generally develop only one side of each pair of antithetical traits. Creative individuals, on the other hand, are able to adapt their personalities to suit the situation, moving from one extreme to the other as required. When the writers in this study were asked what personality traits they believed had helped them with their work, some answers reflected this complexity.

Being observant and being fascinated by detail – and being focused on a task – and not giving in to negativity and criticism etc. – but also being open to ideas about my own work (from trusted editors, etc) (Bird 19/7/06).

It's a strange mix. Stubbornness but malleability, focused but free thinking, hard working but lazy or at least willing to stop and let the ideas settle or grow away from the computer (Abela 15/11/06).

These seemingly contradictory traits reflect the ten paradoxical personality traits of creativity identified by Csikszentmihalyi (1996; 1997a), which include being rebellious/conservative, smart/naïve, energetic/restful, playful/disciplined, extroverted/introverted, humble/proud, masculine/feminine, passionate/objective, rich in fantasy life/grounded in reality, and able to feel suffering/enjoyment from their openness or exposure to the world.

As seen with the use of each of these polarised personality traits, perhaps the overlying trait of creative people is their ability to adapt to a given situation or environment. It could be argued that some writers are creative because, like in biological evolution, they are the ones who have best adapted their personality to the various social, cultural and even biological environments they inhabit. Csikszentmihalyi (1997a) argues most people take a 'fatalistic attitude' towards personality, that once determined it is impossible to change.

Strangely, in our culture we spend billions of dollars trying to improve our looks, but we take a fatalistic attitude toward our personal traits – as if it was beyond our abilities to change them... To change personality means to learn new patterns of attention. To look at different things and to look at them differently; to learn to think new thoughts, have new feelings about what we experience (1997a, p. 359).

While this ability to change or adapt a personality raises a similar question of cause and effect to that seen in the review of personality literature in Chapter 2 (see for example Barron & Harrington, 1981, p. 455), personality does appear to play some role in creative people surviving and achieving in their chosen domains.

Overwhelmingly, determination, persistence or doggedness, particularly in the face of obstacles or rejection, are the personality traits that have been most beneficial to the writers interviewed.

I think I'm more determined than I realised. Looking back on it now, I stuck with it for a lot of years when rationally it looked like I should have given up, but I stuck with it. I think determination's a big part of it. I'd like to say a preparedness to learn but I actually think at some level I'm quite stubborn and resistant to things but eventually I just learn them anyway (Earls 4/8/06).

Doggedness. I say to my students 'don't talk to me about bright ideas or talent, talk to me about hanging-on-ness, be a Jack Russell, give it a go, be a terrier'. How long can you sit on a seat? That's what it's about (Crew 21/8/06).

I think probably more than anything, if you don't have persistence, I can't imagine how you're going to get published. Nearly everyone I know who has become published has that trait of being persistent, of not letting themselves get talked out of it and just continuing on. Even when they thought 'oh, what's the point?' they just got on and did it anyway (Cusack 30/8/06).

Although it is difficult to assess under the current research conditions whether writers were born with these specific traits and drawn to the domain of creative writing or, conversely, attracted to the domain and adapted to its specific social and cultural conditions to achieve within it, it is clear that they feel they could not have achieved without these particular aspects to their personality.

For literary writer Stephen Gray, these personality traits of persistence or diligence, confirm previous ideas on the craft aspects of writing and dispels both traditional and modern discourses of writing genius.

I tend to be really slap-dash with a lot of things, that I often tend to be a near-enough's good enough sort of person. Whereas with writing,

although I'd love it if I could dash it off and it would be a work of genius, in reality it's not like that and I suppose having been prepared to go back and look at stuff over and over again and I guess the willingness to sit down when I have the time and actually do it even when I don't feel like doing it, that's something... Part of the promotion of a book is to put out the idea that you dashed it off in a drunken stupor over two nights, you know, that Andrew McGahan's *Praise* sort of myth. There are novels that are written that way I'm sure and quite possibly *Praise* was written in that, whatever it was, six week period. But I reckon most of the time it's fairly rare (Gray 18/8/06).

Statements like this flag the seeming constructed nature of myths and discourses about genius that are often seen in distinctions between literary and genre or 'commercial' writers. As Gray shows, however, literary writers do not necessarily describe any personality traits that set them apart from other writers. Rather, the writers in this study, who spanned a number of genres, largely shared the belief that traits of determination or persistence have been the most useful during their writing careers. These similarities between literary and other writers are apparent not just in terms of personality, but also in discussions of a writer's motivation.

4.1.3 Motivation

As seen in Chapter 2 the motivation for pursuing creative activities is not simply a matter of identifying and isolating personality traits, cognitive patterns or stimulating the brain's neurotransmitters via biological or chemical means (although these factors cannot be ignored). Studies on the effects of drugs and alcohol on creativity and religious experiences show that social and cultural myths and beliefs and the quest for pleasure and satisfaction also lead people to seek out and produce creative products and ideas. As reviewed in Chapter 2, Csikszentmihalyi (1990; 1997b) argues individuals are motivated to repeatedly undertake creative activity when they experience 'flow', a theory since supported by physiological and bio-behavioural studies (Marr, 2001). Flow, in this sense, is a state of optimal experience, where a sense of clarity and enjoyment derived from a balance of skill and challenge leads to an 'autotelic' experience. From the Greek words *auto* and *telos* meaning 'self' and 'goal', this experience is one where an activity is worth doing for its own sake, or is an end in itself. The achievement of this state of optimal autotelic experience can operate as motivation for and during most creative activity.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), the optimal flow experience occurs not only when an individual feels their skills will meet the level of challenge, but also when a domain has a set of rules to follow and goals to pursue that provide “clear clues as to how one is performing” (1990, p. 71). An individual with this clear relationship with their domain is capable of concentrating so intensely that “there is no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant or to worry about problems. Self-consciousness disappears, and the sense of time becomes distorted” (ibid.). Isolde Martyn used similar language to describe her own experience of intense concentration. “If the writing goes well, time is gone in a flash. Rather like meditation, in a sense. Writers lose all sense of time when the story is flowing well” (I. Martyn 10/10/06).

For Kerry Greenwood the flow experience is almost a mystical one, usually occurring towards the end of each book when she is most confident about character, setting and plot.

It's like riding a whirlpool, riding or surfing. I've never come across similar sensations you get in the physical world with greater buzz than the flow of a book. The book just takes you. In Welsh, there's a thing called 'hwil', H.W.I.L. It's exaltation when a preacher starts talking and gradually this sermon takes him over and he delivers a beautiful complex, high-flown, lengthy sort of sermon; it's kind of like that (Greenwood 6/11/06).

As Csikszentmihalyi explains, this feeling of competence derived from the balance of skill and challenge, coupled with an experience of intense concentration, acts as an autotelic form of motivation, where the activity “is so gratifying that people are willing to do it for its own sake, with little concern for what they will get out of it, even when it is difficult or dangerous (1990, p. 71).

Many of the writers, both literary and otherwise, reported possessing the autotelic motivation garnered from experience of this state of ‘flow’ where self-consciousness disappears and action and awareness merge. Kate Forsyth demonstrates this deep level of motivation to pursue a writing career; “I love writing, I love every aspect of it, and I have no desire to do anything else. It's a dream come true to be able to spend my days doing what I love best and

make a living out of it” (Forsyth 16/8/06). Indeed, 73% of the responses to questions of motivation mentioned a love of the writing process itself or a profound desire to tell stories.²⁰

Although this deep or intrinsic level of motivation appears to be an important driving force behind writers pursuing their work, external factors are equally present. Extrinsic (and generally socially mediated) incentives such as deadlines, evaluation, competition, surveillance or reward also motivate the writers to pursue creative activities. Alan Horsfield feels most productive “when there’s a deadline to meet” (Horsfield 26/9/06). For Fiona McIntosh, it is a combination of extrinsic motivations that keep her writing.

The success of the books – going to #1 regularly, winning a fan base, impressing overseas publishers, earning new and more valuable contracts - is highly motivating for me. I find it very rewarding to use my imagination to touch other people’s lives. There’s nothing so satisfying as receiving the regular emails from readers to tell me they haven’t done any housekeeping, they haven’t fed the family, they haven’t been able to sleep for reading my stories (McIntosh 4/10/06).

Following a study of the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators on 72 creative writing students, Amabile (1985) argued extrinsic motivation such as rewards reduced the intrinsic interest in the task by dividing attention and purpose. None of the writers mentioned reward (such as payment) decreasing their involvement or interest in writing. Some have, however, struggled with other forms of extrinsic motivations. Gary Crew felt a minimal loss in his level of motivation after evaluation. “Like any author I’ve had my failures and that hurts but it doesn’t last beyond a glass of brandy. That’s a fact. About five years ago I had a manuscript rejected and I literally sat on the back steps and drank a glass of brandy and said ‘get over yourself’” (Crew 21/8/06). Louise Cusack felt that sudden deadlines and surveillance by the publishing company put pressure on her early career. “I can really understand how people get that second book complex because it’s really hard to motivate yourself when the goal is publication. You need to have goals beyond that” (Cusack 30/8/06). Despite these few examples of the negative effects of extrinsic motivators, most interview responses did not support the view that extrinsic motivation such as feedback, deadlines or reward decreased creativity.

²⁰ This rate rises to 97% when including any mention of pleasure derived from the activity of writing.

Analysis of the interviews appears to support findings opposing Amabile's position on the negative effect of extrinsic motivation (see for example Deci & Ryan, 1985; Eisenberger et al., 1998; Eisenberger & Cameron, 1996; Eisenberger & Selbst, 1994) with just over half the writers mentioning feedback as a primary motivation for continuing in their careers. Deb Abela considers feedback from her readers a big reward. "The response via mail or during school or festival visits is so exciting and the enthusiasm from kids who love what I do, is the best inspiration to keep writing" (Abela 3/9/06). Literary writers also felt that recognition in the form of fan mail, publishing contracts or awards justified and reinforced their decision and desire to write fiction.

Simply having my work published is very rewarding, as it is the fulfilment of a long-held dream and a vindication of certain choices I have made to make that dream come true. But the absolute best thing is to receive letters from readers. I get such a thrill when I hear from people as far as Russia and Poland who have been touched by my words (Maguire 14/8/06).

Of the 21 writers who claimed they had experienced a decrease in their involvement in their writing at one time or another, 95% of these instances were caused by factors such as a lack of time due to family commitments or an alternate career, rather than the presence of extrinsic motivators such as reward.

As shown here, extrinsic factors such as deadlines, feedback and recognition have had a positive impact on many of the writers in this study. With 97% also indicating a love of or pleasure in writing, it is reasonable to argue that extrinsic motivational factors may contribute to a deeper autotelic or self-sustaining love of writing for its own sake. Keith Sawyer found most creative activities were driven and sustained by this kind of autotelic motivation where experiencing the activity itself is the primary goal.

Creative breakthroughs take years of hard work, and you won't be able to stay the course if you love the endpoint but not the process. It's often said that even the sexiest careers involve only 10% fun stuff, with the remaining 90% being work that most people would find tedious. The most creative people are the ones who choose a career in which they actually enjoy that 90% (2006, p 309).

Venero Armanno finds this is true not only of his own involvement but others' as well. "Most of the writers that I know, who I think of as real writers, they do it because they're happiest

when they're writing.” (Armanno 24/8/06). It is important to note, however, that while the experience of autotelic motivation can encourage an individual to engage with and continue writing and reinforce the pleasure in doing so, this does not negate the (often hard) work an individual must do in order to be considered creative.

4.2 The Work of the Individual

Regardless of their biology, personality or motivation, almost all of the writers in this study acknowledge that writing is hard work. “No one knows how challenging and hard it is to write—and finish—a book unless they've done it” (Morrissey 26/9/06). For each published book, large amounts of time are spent thinking about, researching, developing, drafting and editing manuscripts prior to publication. Many writers paraphrased Thomas Edison's edict that creativity is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration.

Anyone can come up with the germ of a story idea. The creative part, when it comes to the job of an author, is to turn that spark of an idea into an engaging, meaningful story for a sizeable audience. I'm reminded of a doco I saw recently about penicillin. Fleming saw the effect of the mould on bacteria and thought there might be something to explore in it. But it was Florey who did the hard work. It was Florey who created penicillin out of that hard work, not Fleming out of a brief moment of inspired observation... Writers create their work from the hard slog of writing (Maloney 20/8/06).

Rather than simply being a realm of ideas, creativity must necessarily involve the elaboration of that idea into an acceptable form for judgement to occur. The writer must transform ideas on situations, settings, images or characters into a structured series of words, a transformation that usually only takes place during an accumulation of time spent writing, whether measured in hours, days, weeks or months.

As the remainder of this chapter will show, individuals are not isolated from the field and domain during this work phase, but constantly draw on their knowledge of them during the processes of idea generation, research, development, drafting and editing. Despite largely being viewed as physically isolated activity and the realm of the individual, these stages are not always internal or without the influence or input from outside sources. Individuals negotiate a range of social and cultural contexts, which provide not only ideas and inspiration

but also criteria for evaluation, research materials, knowledge and techniques, professional guidelines and peer support.

4.2.1 Ideas

For idealists such as Croce (1909) and Collingwood (1938), the real work of creativity occurs entirely in the head of the individual. According to Collingwood, “a work of art in the proper sense of that phrase is not an artefact, not a bodily or perceptible thing fabricated by the artist, but something existing solely in the artist’s head, a creature of his imagination” (1938, p. 305). From this perspective, a “work of art” refers not to the material object but the ideas behind it. This concept that creative thinking and consequently idea generation constitute the bulk, if not all, of the creative process is common, providing the basis for many marketed creativity ‘how-to’ books and training programs (see, for example, de Bono, 1992; Osborn, 1963). Divergent, productive and lateral thinking, brainstorming and blockbusting have all been sold as programs to improve creativity by increasing fluency, flexibility or frequency of ideas generated. This interest in creativity as a realm of ideas is also reflected not only in the number of products available but the discourse of writing used by readers or audience members, who frequently ask the writers in this study where their ideas come from. Their answers, however, do not comply with the idealist perspective or with the myths and discourses of literary genius that creativity occurs solely in the head of the individual. The generation of ideas appears to occur regardless of writing style and genre from the interactions between individual writers and external social and cultural factors.

Although it may be assumed from the proliferation of training programs mentioned earlier that ‘creative’ ideas are elusive, most of the writers interviewed see an abundance of ideas in the world around them, drawing on observation and experience of people, places and events as well as various fiction and writing domains and fields for story ideas. Kim Wilkins argues ideas can be found anywhere but are used in different ways.

There’s ideas and there’s ideas. If you’re asking how do you come up with a premise for a story, I could do that in twenty seconds, do you know what I mean? All you need is a good character in a great conflict with a really good context to keep it all together. It’s really, really easy to come up with an idea for a story but every story is full of ideas, you know, ideas about how you’re going to describe how the sun pours in through the window of a certain house or ideas about how the two main characters are going to interact. There are just

levels of ideas, so where do you get your ideas from? From everywhere, because you use so many of them” (Wilkins 1/9/06).

Most of the writers agreed that ideas of all kinds could be found ‘everywhere’. For Ian Irvine, newspapers are a generous source of story ideas. “Ideas are everywhere. I’ve enough for a dozen lifetimes. Every time I read the paper I get one, but most are never used” (Irvine 18/7/06). Like Irvine, however, few writers rely solely on second-hand or narrative sources for inspiration. Rather, they combine written and visual accounts with personal observation and experience.

Ideas seem to come from everywhere and anywhere: an article in a newspaper or magazine, something I’ve been told, a news item that sparks a ‘what if’ question in my mind, a memory. Sometimes it’s just an interesting person I see in the street (Curtis 22/2/07).

All over the place: newspapers, overheard conversations, personal experiences and memories, dreams, strange encounters... (Padmore 9/11/06).

My life, the lives of others, the world around me, other people’s work, films, my previous forms of employment, eavesdropped conversations (Gardner 31/8/06).

Like Curtis, Padmore and Gardner, Libby Gleeson finds ideas are generated equally from both global and local events from secondary sources and personal observation.

They’re very much rooted in my personal life and philosophies and so on. Certainly big picture ideas will come out of social beliefs because I write fiction but some of the smaller ideas within that will come out of things I’ve seen or observed or heard. A big picture idea might be... I’m writing a new book at the moment about refugees fleeing Afghanistan under the Taliban. I consider that a big picture idea rooted deeply in my philosophical position on social justice. But I might also write a picture book. I have just written a picture book about little kids and the despair when your best friend leaves. That’s a very acutely observed moment of pain that small children go through, so it works on a couple of different levels (Gleeson 5/9/06).

As can be seen from these examples, writers of all styles and genres are receptive to the details of the world round them. This openness to outside influence, whether social, cultural or personal, provides them with a rich array of information useful in generating ideas for their work.

In most of the cases presented thus far, writers have used personal or second hand observations and experiences of the world around them for story ideas. In other cases, however, ideas have arrived more directly from social and cultural spheres. As well as using observation and experience to generate ideas, children's writer Deborah Abela received idea suggestions directly from the field in the form of fan letters from her target audience.

Ideas are a strange fish. They come from all over the place. From countries I've travelled to, TV shows I loved as a kid, internet skimming, news articles, a mood a song puts me in, letters from kids suggesting gadgets or sometimes the letters have a theme that comes through that the kids really want addressed, eg when will the lead characters kiss? (Abela 10/10/06).

Here, rather than spontaneous inspiration in the mind of the individual writer, the audience is the originator of ideas. As in cases where writers are commissioned or contracted for specific projects, publishers and agents may also provide the original ideas for a story. Kim Wilkins, for instance, has a close relationship with her agent Selwa Anthony, which allows for a free exchange of ideas that has directly influenced Wilkins' work.

A number of occasions in my career she's come to me and said 'this publisher looking for something like this and I think this sounds like something you'd be interested in', for example a children's series that's being published at the moment. I'd never thought of writing a children's fantasy series and she found out Scholastic was looking for people to do this and she phoned me and said 'I really think you'd be good at this'. So I did it and I'm so glad I did it. It's so much fun and I never thought of writing for children. Now it's opened up this whole new area for me to think about, a whole new place for me to go in my imagination (Wilkins 1/9/06).

As this suggests, writers are not isolated from social factors during idea generation. Rather than initiating inside the individual's head, ideas may also be generated by the professionals that constitute the field of Australian fiction writing.

In a similar way, the domain is also capable of initiating the creative process. Familiarity with the domain allows writers to more easily recognise potential gaps in knowledge or the works available. For some writers this occurred on a consumption level where the books they themselves would like to read had not yet been created or were scarce. Lizzie Wilcock

identified not only a gap in the domain but also in teaching resources for her work as a primary school teacher.

I'd found a gap in the market, a topic that hasn't been written about: child sexual assault as it happens, showing the manipulations that a paedophile uses to lure his victims. Nothing's been done like that, that I am aware of. I wanted this to be a teaching tool so kids, young people, could look at it and go 'oh, that's inappropriate, that's happened to me' so they could recognise the signs. So, for the publishers, I'd found that gap in the market and that's what I wrote in my cover letter. And I think they recognised that, especially since sexual assault and paedophilia are so often in the news (Wilcock 8/5/06).

In this case, Wilcock's familiarity with young adult fiction generated an idea for a book (*Losing It*) that has gone partway to filling this gap in the domain of Australian fiction writing, with her second book, *GriEVE*, also addressing previously unexplored areas of young adult fiction (such as depression, self-harming and obsessive behaviours).

As this discussion of idea generation suggests, most of the writers in this study have a clear concept of where or how their ideas originate. For some of the writers, however, relating how they generate ideas is not such an easy task. "I can't really say. Total life experience, perhaps" (McMullen 9/10/06). Janet Woods usually answers by asking the same question.

'Where do *your* ideas come from?' Ideas are hard to explain. Examine an ant on a leaf, you can write a story about it. The idea is triggered by the ant, the story grows from it. But it could just as easily grow from the leaf the ant was on. Give the ant on the leaf to six people and you will get six different stories. 'How did you get the idea to write a story about an ant?' someone will ask. How can you explain it? One of my romantic short stories grew from the big red K on a cornflakes packet (Woods 21/7/06).

As Woods suggests, individuals may each react to the same stimulus in very different ways, with writers potentially choosing different aspects of the same phenomena as the basis for a story idea.²¹ While many of the writers were able to pinpoint sources of ideas, some qualified this with a sense that something unexplainable was also occurring inside their mind. "From

²¹ In a radio interview, Carmel Bird and Marion Halligan describe publishing a pair of stories in *Island* magazine, after discussing the shooting of a fox in Victoria. Although both coincidentally featured a wedding and Lily of the Valley, the stories moved in different directions (Koval & Shirrefs, 2005).

my own head and goodness knows how they get there. They just do. I also get ideas from my research. Details may come from my life experiences or my contact with other people.” (Jacobs 23/8/06). For both Kate Constable and Kate Forsyth, observation and experience collected from the outside world ‘feeds’ deeper thought processes.

Mulling, mulling. I might have an image (eg horses sweeping down a hill, a tapestry made of body parts), a situation (how did the Tibetan Panchen Lama feel when he was kidnapped by the Chinese?), a theme (the power of false magic), a character (a girl like a young knight). Those are the ideas I started with when I was thinking about writing *Taste of Lightning*. I let them float around in my mind for months, swirl around and collide and spark off other ideas, before I set pen to paper or fingers to keyboard (Constable 25/11/06).

Where ideas come from is one of the great mysteries of the creative artist. I usually say they come from the same place that dreams come from – the deep primordial bog lurking somewhere in our brain, populated with will o’ wisps and monsters, and fed by the trash and treasure of our days – all that we feel and think and experience and wonder about and imagine, if only for a fleeting second – it all goes in there and is slowly changed into something else – and we writers never quite know what we’re going to get when we dip our ladle in” (Forsyth 16/10/06).

Despite being invisible to both participants and researchers, these seemingly mystical and unexplainable thought processes have been the subject of scientific examination for some time.

As seen in Chapter 2, Freud’s primary process thinking and Koestler’s bisociation were attempts to describe what was occurring within the unconscious mind during this idea stage of the creative process. Forsyth and Constable’s descriptions of the ‘primordial bog’ and thoughts that ‘swirl around and collide’ both appear to point to Freud’s (see 1931) theory that creative ideas are generated by primitive primary process thinking which combines seemingly unrelated ideas in a similar way to Koestler’s (1964) bisociation. That both writers also include description of outside sources suggests Freud and Koestler’s theories can be taken a step further. Rather than primary processing and bisociation occurring spontaneously or solely within the mind, these thought processes may be influenced by outside factors.

Wallas's (1976) four stage model of creative thought includes elements such as preparation that account for the outside influence on a writer's ideas, with the preparation stage incorporating the gathering of raw data from observation and experience. Once preparation has been made and a problem identified, the individual moves into an incubation phase where they 'walk away' from a problem or do not consciously think about it, turning instead to alternate tasks such as sleeping, showering, housework or exercise. According to Wallas' model, this supposedly defocused attention takes the problem into the subconscious (primary-process) mind where it is 'incubated', or mulled over by the primitive or irrational aspects of the mind, until a solution is uncovered (illumination). Venero Armanno describes a moment of 'illumination' that occurred on a train trip.

For *Firehead*, I got the first line free, the first line just sort of appeared in my mind out of nowhere and seemed unrelated to anything I was doing or anything I'd thought about. But once I'd written that line and then three pages of lines that went with it, once I actually looked at it I thought 'oh my god, I know what this is'. My subconscious has been working on this for twenty years. I knew exactly what the book was because somewhere in the back of my mind, I'd been processing it for all of that time (Armanno 24/8/06).

When asked if they had experienced idea generation doing unrelated tasks, many writers replied that they had. Carmel Bird says she experiences this 'all the time'. "Dreams, walks – I get lots of ideas as I walk – also as I drive – then they get used as I work" (Bird 19/7/06). Other writers in this study describe similar experiences with idea generation while travelling, exercising, showering and dreaming.

I have often woken up with the solution to a particular problem and scribbled it in my journal to use later (Padmore 9/11/06).

Walking is especially good. So are trains and buses. Driving or riding the bike. When I used to walk a lot, that was the absolute best. I buggered my knee and don't walk as much. I fear my writing has suffered (Doyle 14/11/06).

Often had good ideas, or solved knotty problems in the shower. Not so much now I'm water-conscious (Constable 25/11/06).

This experience of idea generation during tasks unrelated to writing, however, may not necessarily align with the unconscious processes described during the incubation stage of Wallas' model.

While most of the writers interviewed have experienced idea generation during an unrelated task, these experiences appear to be more rational than arising spontaneously from the unconscious. Rather than defocusing attention or walking away from a problem, many writers purposefully or consciously utilise undemanding tasks as 'thinking time'. "I walk to think through the next chapter of the book I'm writing. But good ideas come in the shower. I have been known to stand in the shower if stuck" (Morrissey 26/9/06). Alan Horsfield says he experiences ideas during unrelated tasks "quite often, but maybe that's why I walk, go to the cinema, et cetera" (Horsfield 26/9/06). While ideas have been generated in his dreams, Sean Williams says he deliberately uses unrelated activities as thinking time. "In fact, like a lot of writers, I seek out such tasks in order to harvest ideas or force my way through temporary blocks. Some favourite activities include showering, doing the dishes, driving a car and walking" (Williams 4/9/06). Many of these writers deliberately schedule these kinds of unrelated activities in their daily work schedules, generally in the form of exercise or housework.

Given these descriptions, it is difficult to evaluate how much idea generation may be attributed to unconscious processes such as incubation. Although these processes may exist, they do not always appear to function as outlined by Wallas and other theorists. In their investigation of insight, discussing these moments of incubation, Csikszentmihalyi and Sawyer (1996) and Csikszentmihalyi (1997a) argue that unconscious processes are just as affected by social and cultural factors as other methods of idea generation outlined earlier. Firstly, ideas will only arise from incubation where a person has an adequate knowledge of the cultural domain or social field in which they are working. Secondly, observation, experience and knowledge of the outside world both directly and indirectly influence the unconscious processes.

Even though subconscious thinking may not follow rational lines, it still follows patterns that were established during conscious learning. We internalize the knowledge of the domain, the concerns of the field, and they become part of the way our minds are organized... These internalized criteria of the domain and field do not disappear when the

thought process goes underground. They are probably less insistent than when we are aware of what we are doing, but they still shape and control how combinations of ideas are evaluated and selected (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, pp. 102-3).

From this perspective, idea generation does not occur entirely within the head of the individual, as put forward by the idealist perspective or myths of genius. Rather ideas are generated both directly and indirectly from a writer's knowledge and experience of the cultural and social world they operate in, with the individual acting as part of a larger system of creativity. As mentioned above, this influence continues, not only through idea generation but also as ideas are evaluated and selected.

As with unconscious processes of idea generation, it is difficult to measure the role of the unconscious in evaluation and selection. For those interviewed here, evaluation and selection occurs primarily as a feeling, labelled here as 'resonance'. Gary Crew describes this resonance with reference to horror writer Stephen King. "Stephen King says, and I agree with him in one way, if you've got to write an idea down it wasn't very good in the first place. I tend to think that a worthwhile concept will resonate and grow. If it won't go away, then it's talking to me and I'll start gathering" (Crew 21/8/06). Both genre and literary writers use this resonance as their primary means of selecting an idea to work on.

I just wait to see how much it niggles me. But if I'm being honest I know immediately whether an idea has that spark that can ignite a huge story to arc over three books. Each time it's happened, I've known (McIntosh 4/10/06).

If I can't help but return to it I know it matters to me and is worth pursuing. The bad ideas shrivel (Padmore 9/11/06).

It's the ones that stick. I've been thinking about this idea and developing it for, you know, five years now, so obviously it's intrigued me enough to stay in my mind but I tend not to make a lot of notes. I usually only do that when I'm really desperate or really bored. If an idea is good enough, it will stick and they're the ones I'm really interested in pursuing, the ones you just cannot get out of your mind (Armano 24/8/06).

During this phase, writers have described ideas that niggle or worry at them, that fit, persist, twang or feel right, that obsess, affect or mean something to them, or have the writer in their

grip. As with idea generation, this resonance or intuitive sense that an idea is good or bad can also be seen to originate from sources outside the individual's unconscious and to connect writers with the social and cultural worlds they inhabit.

As discussed in the previous chapter, many of the writers developed this resonance or intuitive feel for what is good or bad in their work through continued practice and familiarity with the domain of Australian fiction writing. Through reading, schooling, training, mentoring and practice, writers internalise the rules of both the domain and the field. Csikszentmihalyi and Sawyer (1996) argue these internalised rules may then act as filters in the unconscious or between the unconscious and conscious minds. Several writers recognise their use of these socially or culturally generated filters. Isolde Martyn sees this acquisition and internalisation of the rules of Australian fiction writing more and more as her experience with writing continues. "There are rules about what works and doesn't work, especially in certain genres. The more one writes books, the more one learns what won't work" (I. Martyn 10/10/06). Anna Jacobs believes this internalised sense of what is good or bad results from her interaction with the domain. "My reading gives me a basis for judgement, as I know the area of the fiction landscape in which I write very well indeed. If an idea has been done to death I won't get it as 'my idea'. I'll avoid that area/topic" (Jacobs 23/8/06). This intuitive sense for their work is similar to Bastick's (1982) description of intuition as a 'non-linear parallel processing of global multi-categorized information' (1982, p. 215). From this perspective, the resonance felt by these writers is a rational system of judgement where practice and knowledge in an area affects unconscious processes.

For many of the writers interviewed this intuitive system of judgement is utilised in further evaluation of an idea through trial and error, where 'bad' ideas manifest as a loss of resonance. "It's a bit like the perils of romantic love. You might feel the stir of early attraction but you soon feel uncomfortable, uneasy, like you are fooling yourself and only a few days after you dismiss the idea, you wonder how you could ever have imagined it was a good idea" (Maloney 20/8/06). For John Dale, an idea that cannot sustain interest is unlikely to survive the initial attempts at writing. "I have to be obsessed by the idea about the project. Some things you might start and think are a good idea and then you might realise after you try and work on it for a while that it's not sustainable because you just don't have the passion for it or it's just not a great idea" (Dale 21/8/06). Here, writers can be seen to use trial and error as a

conscious and logical evaluation of an idea, showing evaluation occurring not only in the preliminary stages of writing but across the whole writing process.

Despite this, idealist perspectives of creativity have entered the popular discourse of writing, disguising the full creative writing processes undertaken by writers like those in this study. Marilyn M. Cooper (1986) argues many writing texts are based on a cognitive theory of writing where it “becomes a form of parthenogenesis, the author producing propositional and pragmatic structures, Athena-like, full grown and complete, out of his brow” (Cooper, 1986, p. 366). That such texts are used in creative writing classes and other teaching contexts perpetuates the myth that idea generation and story concepts constitute the bulk of the creative process. The data collected in this research challenges this emphasis on ideas.

The idea – that is, the cause of the central conflict of the narrative – is perhaps the seed; but growing that seed into a sturdy and fruitful tree requires the performance of other tasks, no less creative in their nature than planting it, and involving, generally, far more labour, skill, effort and time. Making characters that live and move like human beings is not merely a skill, but a creative process. Economy and elegance of plotting involves a creative sensibility akin to removing excess marble to reveal a sculpture. Selecting the integral or necessary elements of a setting is an art rather like orchestration. Pacing is something like the same process as dynamics in music, involving an aesthetic of its own. All of these and many others are creative challenges, and they must be met creatively, and in detail and harmony. Ideas, by comparison, are easy (Lockett 22/7/06).

Resisting this continuing discourse of creativity occurring spontaneously or in the unconscious, not one of the writers in this study believed idea generation to be the whole of the creative process.

In opposition to the idealist perspective and discourses of genius, the writers interviewed followed a more pragmatic or materialist perspective (see for example Dewey, 1934; Joas, 1997) where creativity occurs across the entire experience of writing and not just in idea generation. From this perspective, creativity in writing requires conscious attention, generally occurring within a structure of disciplined ‘work’ that continues from planning to drafting and editing. When asked what she thought were the creative aspects of their work, Di Morrissey replied it was “the whole box and dice from conception through creation to commercial release” (Morrissey 26/9/06). Peter Doyle found each aspect of the creative process “pretty

much equally demanding of my ‘creativity’, whatever that is” (Doyle 14/11/06). Catherine Padmore’s definition of creativity closely matched the pragmatic approach to production. “That the base elements I use are all around, but only I put them together in this particular way. All aspects are creative in this way – ideas, language, structure, editing and research” (Padmore 9/11/06).

4.2.2 Research

Although almost all of the writers conducted some form of research for their fiction writing, some of the writers interviewed felt the research process is less creative than other aspects of their work. “Just about everything. Less so the research part but what I do with it afterwards is definitely part of a creative process” (Abela 10/10/06). Despite viewing research itself as less creative, Abela regards the outcome or the effect of research as creative. From a pragmatic as well as a systemic perspective, research may be just as important to the creative process as other steps in the writing of a work of fiction. In terms of the systems model, research is another form of domain acquisition that may occur prior to or during the writing process. For individual writers, research contributes to their store of knowledge, not necessarily of *how* to write but *what* they write about in terms of content. As they do during other forms of domain acquisition, the writers interact with a variety of people, environments and cultural artefacts during this research phase.

In their research, the writers in this study have explored an array of secondary resources largely in book form but including journals, letters, amateur biographies, memoirs, specialised histories, magazines as well as general fiction. These written resources were found in their own or friends’ collections as well as local, state, national and academic libraries.

I use books heavily. That doesn’t mean I’m a Luddite. Obviously I use Google for confirmation of dates and things like that but mostly they’re books, which I find is crazy but I have an academic account. As senior lecturer I get to decide what to do with that (Crew 21/8/06).

I mostly read books to research and have a huge research library. I particularly like amateur books of memoirs like ‘Uncle Ben’s Years as a Policeman in Bolton from 1896-1923’. I have a book with that sort of title. I also use the Internet, particularly to get photos, for example, of old cars and motorcycles for my last historical saga (Jacob 23/8/06).

I consult history books, biographies, et cetera, to get my facts right and establish the chronological order of historical events, and make sure I know where my characters were at the time of the action in the scenes in my book. If I have to find out something specific, I might email an academic with a specialist knowledge. I immerse myself in the literature of the time to get a feel of the language and imagery (I. Martyn 10/10/06).

Besides these written artefacts, writers also accessed the internet, newspaper and court archives and electronic databases, documentaries and other programs on film, television and radio, as well as image banks of photographs and maps.

In addition to these secondary sources, a large number of writers also conducted first hand research in the form of interviews with laypeople and experts, travel, training courses, observation, participant observation and photographic documentation. “Travel is arranged a long time ahead. I take notes and photographs, record interviews and my partner videos everything including interviews” (Morrissey 26/9/06). Typically the writers in this study uses multiple sources, both first-hand and secondary, to find and develop content.

For the last few years, I have written soccer books, *Jasper Zammit (Soccer Legend)*, without knowing anything about soccer and in my over-the-top spy series, *Max Remy*, I will always research the locations quite thoroughly and the science behind the gadgets. With *Jasper*, I read books, poured over internet sites, watched soccer on the tellie and went to watch kids’ soccer teams play, spoke to players, coaches, mums and dads and managers (Abela 10/10/06).

Fiona McIntosh combines travel and first hand experience of locations with books and the internet. “I travel overseas twice a year. That always yields ideas, books, articles, sights and sounds, et cetera. I go looking for books now that might help me and I use the Net for specific research. For example, I needed to know about an illness and the Net was great for that type of information” (McIntosh 4/10/06).

For many writers, working with research materials relevant to their particular fiction writing domain directly influences idea generation and drafting. For Dave Lockett, the effect of research is similar to a chicken/egg paradox. “I read a lot of non-fiction, and sometimes it throws up ideas. If such an idea occurs to me, was I researching it before I had it?” (Lockett 22/7/06). This apparent paradox shows that creativity is less linear than process models such

as Wallas' suggest. Catherine Padmore sees a dynamic system of circular causality at work in her own research. "Generally the two trigger each other: writing requires research and through research come ideas that need to be channelled back into the writing" (Padmore 9/11/06).

Sean Williams is less active in his research, but still views it as a generative process.

I'm a big believer in passive research, whereby I absorb vast quantities of information on a regular basis with no specific goal in mind. I read a lot of specialist magazines, for instance, in the course of my daily life. I never know what will fire up my imagination next, so I try to keep my eyes open. When something sparks an idea that must be immediately pursued, I have to make time for it (Williams 4/9/06).

More active in searching out both primary and secondary information, Sandy Curtis uses research as both a generative and testing process, not only to get new ideas but also to verify what she has already written (Curtis 22/2/07). Similarly, Sean McMullen also uses research to verify or supplement his writing. "Often I get my Karate students to act out the action scenes to get the look and feel right" (McMullen 9/10/06).

Whether research is used as a generative or testing process, most of the writers agree that the process is often a variable one depending not only on the resources available but also the genre the writer is working in. Writers of fantasy works, for example, conducted little research compared with that indicated by writers who worked with historically based settings.

Depends on the book and genre. Fantasy often doesn't require much research. My eco-thrillers required heaps (Irvine 18/7/06).

Not as a rule. I did for *The Dog King*, because that focussed on Henry Lawson. I also emailed a lot of ferret clubs when I worked on *The Great Ferret Race*. But for [Science Fiction/Fantasy] I don't (Collins 15/8/06).

Depends on what I'm writing. At the moment with this book on Afghanistan, yes, I had a huge amount of research to do but with picture books or with other novels based on memory or less specific geographically placed things then I won't (Gleeson 5/9/06).

Despite indicating she generally did not do research for her fantasy work, Kate Constable adds there are points where she verifies her writing with factual sources. "I will check the odd thing as I go along – like beehives, or snakebites or Art Deco houses – I've had to do more of that with [*Hannah's Ghosts*] as it's set in our world" (Constable 25/11/06). Fantasy writer

Fiona McIntosh says she generally conducts very little research for her writing but made trips to Istanbul, Rhodes and Dubai for her latest fantasy series based on the Ottoman Empire. “Both visits were a major help and the story is far richer for that research” (McIntosh 4/10/06). As seen here, research may still be conducted even in genre writing where setting, technology, society and politics may be largely imagined or constructed by the writer.

Research may also vary according to each individual writer’s writing process. Some of the writers conducted a large amount of research before writing occurred.

I do massive amounts of research. For the historical novel I’m working on now I took a year off from writing just to research (Pennicott 4/10/06).

At the beginning of the project I may not do any actual writing at all as all my time is used researching (Maguire 14/8/06).

I tend to research a lot early, then let it sink in, then write without going back to the research sources (Doyle 4/11/06).

For other writers, research is conducted after writing the first draft, largely for verification purposes.

At times I have researched some things after writing the first draft. This happens when I am too wound up with the writing to care about detail. I make up what I don’t know for sure and adjust the details later, as I come to know them. Occasionally, this has proved a poor way to go about things and I have had to make significant changes because my assumptions were so completely off the mark” (Maloney 20/8/06).

I do research after at least a couple of drafts. I make stuff up to get me through, then research at the end when I know what I need to research (Redhead 23/8/06).

In a similar way to Redhead, the remaining writers conduct research when they know what it is they need to research.

Research is an ongoing process, though – I often stop writing in order to find out what I need to know – and as soon as I know it, I go back to writing (Forsyth 16/10/06).

Yes, I'll continually have to check new things that come up as I write (Pennicott 4/10/06).

Yeah, it does, especially towards the end and you're getting a bit frightened you've misrepresented something quite significant or well known in which case you know you've got to verify the thing you've written about (Gleeson 5/9/06).

Here, research is reiterated throughout the writing process as necessary, recursively drawing on or accumulating domain or content knowledge as the plot changes or develops.

4.2.3 *Development*

Whether they produce ideas through research or other methods of inspiration and generation, a writer must develop them from this conceptual stage into a written work. How they transform ideas into a structured series of words that constitute a manuscript involves the writer developing character and story elements by drawing on knowledge of the domain and researched content as well as what may or may not be considered acceptable by the field. Rather than simply developing these elements as they wrote, however, some of the writers interviewed for this research discussed development of ideas in terms of a pre-production phase prior to writing a first draft. During this development stage, writers often elaborated their ideas in extensive notes, character sketches and story or plot outlines. Similar to the preliminary sketches and studies in painting and illustration, this stage appears to act not just as further evaluation of ideas but also as a process of familiarisation with story and character elements that (as will be discussed later) becomes valuable during the drafting phase. In many cases, years of experience with the domain and field of Australian fiction writing has generated or revealed a preferred *modus operandi* for developing the germ of an idea into a written work.

Several writers collect ideas, choose among those ideas and then expand them into more detailed notes, often accompanied by preliminary character sketches and scenarios. Kate Forsyth keeps an ideas notebook and chooses from it the most interesting or appropriate idea to develop. "Then I buy a new notebook (I love this part!) and I copy all the jottings from the idea book into it, and begin developing them, asking myself questions, doing brief character sketches and plot outlines" (Forsyth 16/10/06). Similarly, Catherine Padmore begins "in fragments", elaborating, connecting and testing different ideas in a journal. "I brainstorm

these in a highly chaotic fashion and watch for shared themes or images in the pieces. Once these appear I start to draw up structures or maps for the form of the project” (Padmore 9/11/06). Also a non-fiction writer, Emily Maguire says her development process “depends a lot on the project. For novels I write copious notes and write a heap of character sketches and scenarios before I start the novel itself” (Maguire 14/8/06). James Maloney describes this fragmented process of idea development in the most detail.

At first I walk around with general ideas swirling in a mess of confusion – trying to make connections. Notebook is handy here. When the ideas begin to solidify, after a few days, normally, I sit at the computer and just write down what comes to me – ideas, plot events, character details, family relationships, all sorts of statements that begin with ‘perhaps...’. This can go on for days and will end up with twenty or thirty pages of A4 of thoughts, but a coherent story line will be beginning to emerge. Some of the ideas included might have come to me months, even years before. Out of all this brainstorming I try to start again, writing myself just two or three pages of a story outline, a synopsis if you like, that makes some kind of sense. It will include the bones of the plot, the relationships of the main characters and the ‘journey’ they will go on – how they will change, what will happen to them. After reworking this a few times, I hope to have something that is logically consistent and most of all, excites me (Maloney 20/8/06).

Here, fragmented notes, character sketches and scenario details begin to coalesce into a form that can then be transformed into a draft. Other writers, however, prefer a more structured approach to idea development.

Twelve of the writers interviewed developed their ideas by writing more or less detailed concepts, synopses, outlines or plans for the story or plot. For some of them, these forms of development are a necessary part of the business of writing.

I write a synopsis for the publisher before I sign the contract. I then use that, or often start afresh, and outline in more detail. Then work in considerable detail whenever I get stuck (Irvine 18/7/06).

I usually sell my novels from synopsis, so at some point I’ll have written one of those. Prior to that point, I’ll have accumulated pages of bullet-points that may or may not go into the final book but to which I’ll frequently refer. The outline always changes during the writing of the first draft, but not with respect to key points like the ending, main character arcs, et cetera (Williams 4/9/06).

The adherence to this either socially or self-imposed structure of development varies. Even when seen as a requirement by the field, very few of the writers followed their story or character plans precisely. Sandy Curtis is one of only three writers interviewed who developed their ideas into outlines or scene breakdowns that then guided their writing from beginning to end. “Yes, I’m a plotter, not a (seat of the) pants. I have to know where my story is going so I know it’s going to work” (Curtis 22/2/07).

The remaining writers were generally more flexible with the development of ideas. Of those remaining who did write outlines or synopses, these were not always followed exactly. Rather, growing experience with the domain and content material as well as unplanned factors or encounters were also allowed to shape or direct the work.

In terms of character and storyline, I draw up a one page document, sort of starting here and working out who the characters are. I work out where the story is going but then characters sometimes come up with stuff you don’t plan and relationships develop that you hadn’t planned (Tucker 17/8/06).

Sometimes I write short outlines. Sometimes I’ll write a scenic outline for 6 chapters, and then tick them off as I use them. Usually the book will take its own course, and I forget I’ve written an outline (Woods 21/7/06).

Although writers like Tucker and Woods utilised outlines or plans as loose and flexible guidelines with room for changes in direction, others were unable to find a similar balance that suited their own style of writing. “I used to try and work out a plot and write a synopsis and follow it. I found this didn’t work; my characters did not always want to do what I had planned for them. This meant the book did not ‘fit’ the synopsis” (Pakeman 24/7/06). For others, early negative experience with pre-planning their work highlighted that knowing the details of the story from beginning to end lessened their motivation to continue writing.

I’ve learned the hard way that if my outlines are too detailed too early I lose interest (Constable 25/11/06).

I don’t write a synopsis anymore because I find it very limiting and I hate to know what the story’s going to be about. I like to discover it as I go along. [HarperCollins] has learned to trust me, they’re terrific about it (McIntosh 4/10/06).

Including Constable and McIntosh, sixteen writers said they did not write outlines. This does not, however, indicate that their work was without some preplanning or structure. Some, like Isolde Martyn, have a starting and ending point in mind before they begin the first draft. “I write by the seat of my pants. I have the beginning and the end. The middle is an adventure” (I Martyn 10/10/06). For other writers, their initial ideas provide either a starting point or a natural structure that develops as the process continues. “You might have a character in a situation and that situation then develops and you can see a real direction for the narrative” (Dale 21/8/06).

This level of flexibility in planning and development of ideas is similar to that found by Csikszentmihalyi (1997a) in his study of eminent individuals, five of whom were writers. The writers he interviewed showed a similar propensity towards a ‘problem-finding’ style of creativity where individuals do not focus on a known goal but discover new problems or areas that need attention and then continually reevaluate and refine goals while working towards a solution. According to Csikszentmihalyi’s findings, “the person must pay attention to the developing work, to notice when new ideas, new problems, and new insights arise out of the interaction with the medium. Keeping the mind open and flexible is an important aspect of the way creative persons carry on their work” (1997a, pp. 104-5). This flexibility to incorporate ideas or new directions that arise during the process not only continues but directs them as they write. “They usually start a working day with a word, a phrase, or an image, rather than a concept or planned composition. The work evolves on its own rather than the author’s intentions, but is always monitored by the critical eye of the writer” (1997a, p. 263).

4.2.4 Drafting

This balance between critical evaluation and flexibility to follow ideas wherever they lead is most clearly articulated in discussion surrounding the drafting phase of writing. The discourse used by the writers in this study to describe this process swings between hard work and a more mystical discussion of characters or story taking over the writing process. Although these may seem oppositional in their dichotomy between conscious, controlled writing and a subconscious or uncontrolled state, it may be argued that experience with content garnered from preparatory stages of writing such as research or idea development may bring about a state of flow with regards to content such as character similar to that suggested by Csikszentmihalyi (1997b). Although it is unclear whether this state derives from actual

experience as opposed to an accepted or expected discourse of process, it is nonetheless common to many of the writers interviewed.

It is common for writers of varying styles, genres and nationalities to discuss their characters as if they were real people. Like the storytelling itself, there is a continued illusion that characters in a story are independent of the writer. Rather than continually foreshadowing discussion with “my character”, “I wrote them to” or “I made him do”, characters are often discussed as conscious beings who are, who do, who choose, who discover (see for example writer interviews and lectures in Koval, 2005; Roberts, Mitchell, & Zubrinich, 2002; Wyndham, 1998). This discussion of living, breathing characters in ‘real’ situations is furthered in discourse of the drafting process where writers describe characters who take over, hijack or guide the storyline in unexpected ways (see for example Grenville, 2001; King, 2000), a situation familiar to the writers in this research.

Although content and the exact writing process may differ from one project to another, Kerry Greenwood says “there’s always the point at which the book takes over” (Greenwood 6/11/06). Dave Luckett begins that process with only “the general shape of the story when I start, and the characters seem to create themselves to fit into it” (Luckett 22/7/06). Isolde Martyn describes a ‘hijacking’ not only of the storyline but also, in some sense, of herself.

I have had characters take control and pull in a scene from left field. It is all very complex to sum up in a few words. The perfect state for a writer is when the subconscious is hard at work as well and I am in the head of a character the whole time (I. Martyn 10/10/06).

Rather than a literal lack of control, it is this experience of imaginative empathy, of knowing and understanding a character’s motives, thoughts and feelings, of ‘seeing through their eyes’, that indicates a writer may enter a state similar to that of flow when dealing with particular characters and aspects of story.

Rather than the complete immersion in an activity that balances an individual’s level of skill with level of challenge described by Csikszentmihalyi (1997b), flow may be altered here to describe the writer’s emotional resonance with fictional characters. Rather than an altered state of consciousness that encompasses the whole activity of writing, it may be argued that by developing an intense familiarity with character whether in idea generation, research,

development or the drafting process itself, a writer may experience flow in this particular aspect. Popular fiction writer Nick Earls and literary writer Venero Armanno both describe in detail quite similar experiences with this process of familiarisation and sense of flow in characterisation.

I do go in pursuit of the voice before I write the novel and I'm typically using the first person narrator so I need to know that person's voice. I need to know how language works for them. I need to know how, if they walked into this room... I need to know what they would see and how they would see it. I need to be able to pick up on all that. As far as I'm concerned there are parts of that I can control by asking questions, by saying 'what would that person say if they walked into this room?' 'What would those things mean to them?' I get to know them that way, and by getting to know them, by getting closer to them. That gets me closer to the point where the voice falls into place, and when it falls into place I can write and I don't have to look for as much then. It comes to me because I've found them (Earls 4/8/06).

A lot of it comes out of how well you know the characters. So if, for example, your characters in your mind are fully developed, sometimes a lot of it is subconscious as well. You unconsciously know these people just because that's the world that you move in... But if you do know your character, if you do know the characteristics of those people, that tends to do most of the work, tends to make most of the choices for you, i.e., the way they speak and the way they look and the type of things they do and the type of things they don't do. For me, my stories come out of character rather than plot, so if I feel like I know who the protagonist is or who the protagonists are then I feel pretty confident that the story will make sense in itself. People always make the choices that are right for them, they do things, you know, in given situations or confrontations, depending on who they are they'll either fight or run, or yell or scream or whatever. If you know them to start off with then you know roughly how the thing is going to develop (Armanno 24/8/06).

Here, a character's ability to metaphorically take-over the writing process reflects an individual writer's deep understanding or knowledge of the current project's characters and content. This derives not just from a balance of writing skill and challenge but more specifically from a balance of domain knowledge and content familiarity.

While this sense of flow may make facets of writing such as characterisation appear effortless to the writer, it does not negate the conscious effort or hard work required before a draft is

completed. Those who described experiencing an unconscious or uncontrolled state also discussed their work as being the result of discipline and hard work.

I research the background, then I think about the characters, then I find names for the main characters. Then I may make a few very brief notes (less than a page in all) about sub-plots. Then I start writing. Only then do I really ‘see’ and ‘know’ the characters and story. I write and rewrite the first three chapters several times, usually, to get the plot threads fixed in my mind and ‘see’ all participants (Jacobs 23/8/06).

The more I stay with it, the more it works itself out (Abela 10/10/06).

It’s very hard to describe! The story drives the plot, the characters drive the story, the story demands the right language and structure, the characters demand the right dialogue – sometimes you do it wrong, and you have to keep on trying out different ways until you find the right one – sometimes it comes effortlessly. It’s always a matter of intuition, in that, it feels right or wrong – but then, it’s always a rational choice too (Forsyth 16/10/06).

As Forsyth alludes to here with her dichotomy of intuition versus rationality, although they appear to be oppositional, it is possible for a writer to experience both a state of flow and the hard work of writing. According to Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi and Damon (2001), flow and hard work often go hand-in-hand. “Few things in life are as enjoyable as when we concentrate on a difficult task, using all our skills, knowing what has to be done” (2001, p. 5).

Although flow is most likely to occur while an individual is working, this does not imply that work is always done in a state of flow. Even when it is productive, work is not always easy or flowing. Some writers encounter writer’s block, a much discussed but seldom investigated phenomenon. In one of its few scientific examinations, neurologist Alice W. Flaherty (2004) investigated writer’s block as the antithesis to *hypergraphia*, the medical term for the overpowering desire to write. From this brain function perspective, writer’s block can be caused by persistent depression and anxiety and other changes in the person’s executive functions centred primarily in the frontal and pre-frontal lobes of the brain. However, only a small percentage of writer’s block can be sourced to the brain.

Writer’s block is not *agraphia*, the selective loss of the skill to write (usually caused by strokes, and strikingly rare). Unlike *agraphia*,

writer's block tends to be restricted to a genre or particular project, with all other forms of writing normal (2004, p. 83).

Rather than a disease or disorder, Flaherty discusses environmental factors, negative self-perception and lack of skill as the cause of most writer's block, all aspects identified by the writers in this study.

Most writers agreed that writer's block did not exist as anything other than the manifestation of negative self perception, environmental factors or lack of preparation. Also a creative writing lecturer, Gary Crew is perhaps the most scathing in his dismissal of writer's block.

That's just a stupid expression someone made up to excuse their laziness. There's no such thing. It's an excuse for an unprepared writer... I see it daily 'I don't have anything, I have writer's block' and I say 'go away and read a book and do some homework' (Crew 21/8/06).

While the beliefs or definitions surrounding writer's block may be unsupported in the writers' responses, the effects of a perceived block are still very real; 15 of the writers in this study said they had experienced some difficulty with their writing at one stage or another. Of these 15 writers, 12 qualified their answer with the exact causes of the problem, most commonly citing laziness stemming from boredom, outside interruptions or lack of research. This high level of awareness often allowed them to 'cure' their perceived writer's block. Nick Earls believes he has identified strategies to avoid blockage in the first place. "It hasn't happened to me for a long time now... and I think that comes from allowing myself to think things through a lot before I write" (Earls 4/8/06). In all but one case, the writers wrote through the 'block' to produce a work that then went on to publication.²²

Using a similar method, writers were able to overcome periods where they were not necessarily 'blocked' but laboured over words, phrases and paragraphs or struggled to meet a daily word target or concentrate on their current project. Dave Luckett experiences a 'hump' with each book where he "can't see how it'll ever get finished, and realise that I'm certain to fail" (Luckett 22/7/06). Stephen Gray finds it hard to write some days and easier on others.

²² Children's writer James Maloney says on two occasions he left projects unfinished and went on with other work. "Both were really the result of not knowing what I was trying to say, or trying to achieve. Since I simply couldn't see any answer, I had to admit that the spark had gone out for these projects for me. But I have never felt I could not write any more" (Maloney 20/8/06).

Some days are good and I can feel from the beginning that it's going to be a good day. I feel high energy, start with happiness and am ready, that sort of thing. Other days are just a drudge. I guess everyone's like that to some extent. Sometimes it's related to obvious things like not having had enough sleep the night before or having drunk too much the night before, that sort of thing. Other times you might even have done that and the conditions are perfect anyway. It depends (Gray 18/8/06).

Ian Irvine says "it can take hours to get right into the work" but like Gray continues to write "whether I'm inspired or not" (Irvine 18/7/06). Each of these writers persevered through any difficulties or interruptions, pushed through their initial inertia and continued to work at their writing regardless of whether they were inspired or not.

Ninety-eight percent of the writers interviewed worked even when they felt lacking in inspiration. For James Maloney, Hemingway's first rule for writers holds true for his own work as well. "Someone once said that if you wait for inspiration, you'll never write a thing. Mostly, you get to your desk and make it happen. 'Apply the seat of your pants to the seat of your chair', Hemingway" (Maloney 20/8/06). Rather than waiting for inspiration, most of the writers found hard work could produce its own kinds of stimulation or insight. "I never wait to feel like writing; I stick to my routine as much as I can. I don't believe in waiting for inspiration to strike. Inspiration strikes during the process" (Pennicott 10/10/06). In this way, work is conducted and completed whether the individual achieves a state of flow or not. Rather than a passive experience, most of the writers encourage a similar state of productivity with successful work habits and discipline.

The descriptions given by these writers of their writing habits and processes during the drafting phase do not support common myths that creativity is uncontrollable, unconscious or undisciplined (similar to findings by Boden, 2004; Sawyer, 2006). Even when they do not derive their primary income from their written work, most of the writers interviewed approach their writing like a job or business, working regular hours or in a similarly disciplined manner regardless of their style or genre.

I write every day, all day if I can, just like going to work. And sometimes in the evenings and weekends too (Irvine 18/7/06).

I view myself as self employed in the creative business of ideas – 50 hours per week (Edwards 22/8/06).

I suppose I'm a bit more business-like, it feels more like work, which is not to say it's not pleasurable! I'm more aware of trying to write a certain number of words per day just to shove myself along and make sure I'm productive (Constable 25/11/06).

This business-like approach to their work manifests itself most clearly in the writers' set working hours or target number of words and daily schedules. Those who cannot achieve set hours due to family or alternate work commitments, however, are no less determined and disciplined in finding time to write.

Some writers have taken a dramatic or extreme approach to finding and setting aside time to write. Victor Hugo reportedly forced a servant to take away all of his clothes until he finished his day's work. Unable to leave the house naked, Hugo was left with nothing but pen and paper and time to write (Hendrickson, 1982). In an interview for ABC Television's *Talking Heads* programme (2006), Bryce Courtenay revealed he generally wrote for twelve hours a day, often without getting out of his chair. Less extreme in their approach, but perhaps not their dedication to writing, seventy-five percent of the writers in this study structured their writing around a set schedule of working hours.

I work from 10-6.30 and then from 9.30-midnight Mon-Fri. I also work 3-5 hours on Saturday and Sunday... When I took the plunge to become a full-time writer I simply set myself a schedule and have mostly stuck to it ever since (Maguire 14/8/06).

I'm in my office from 5.30am to 5.30pm most days, with regular excursions to exercise my body or put the damned washing on or do some damned shopping. Domestic, I'm not! (Jacobs 23/8/06).

These self-imposed set hours vary radically from 1 to 12 hour days, 1 to 7 days a week, generally increasing with an approaching deadline and frequently punctuated with breaks for rest, meals, exercise or family time.

Rather than a set number of hours, other writers aimed to achieve a minimum number of written words in whatever timeframe they had given themselves. Scot Gardner aims to write "between 1000 and 1500 words, depending on the project. I do nothing else until that's done,

life permitting, and it can take from an hour to all day” (Gardner 31/8/06). Also a television producer, Posie Graeme-Evans could only use her weekends to write. For her first series of books she had “a set target of trying to get to around 5000 words, ten pages each weekend and that was really useful, it was the only structure I gave myself” (Graeme-Evans 8/11/06). Peter Doyle found by rising early and writing his target number of words before other work commitments he stopped “resenting the day job”.

If I get up early, drink a pot of coffee, do say 500 words or so, then I find I spend the rest of the day sort of half thinking about what to do next, so next morning I know pretty well what is to be done. It’s a low-ish daily average (500 words) but if I manage that four days a week then it really starts adding up. I’ve written my most successful work that way (Doyle 14/11/06).

Although the range for these daily targets varied from 500 to 5000 words, most writers in this category aimed for between 1000 and 1500 words a day. Sean Williams delivered nine contracted books in two and a half years by writing 1500 words a day. “That I did, thus proving to myself (a) that I liked writing everyday, and (b) that writing every day makes one terribly productive and doesn’t reduce the quality of what I write (on the whole)” (Williams 4/9/06).

While writers like Williams do manage to meet daily word targets, this target number does not always give an accurate picture of the amount of time needed to write a manuscript. Calculating based on 1000 words a day, it would take 100 days to write a 100 000 word manuscript. Life, however, often intercedes. As well as writing and dealing with “outside chaos (which seems to be fairly constant for some unknown reason)”, Sandy Curtis cares for elderly parents with medical needs.

When I have a deadline I try to set a goal of writing so many words a day. If I fall short one day I try to make up the deficit the next. Usually I always want to write, but I don’t always have the chance (Curtis 9/2/06).

In this same vein, Fiona McIntosh has a word of warning for anyone who underestimates the amount of work behind the number of words or who is fooled by the ‘romance’ of writing.

I've now written six novels for HarperCollins – there's probably almost a million words between them because fantasy authors usually deliver big fat books and almost always in trilogies so we're talking whopping stories. When I embark on a series I'm producing each of those books in 16-week blocks and they are published within six months of each other. That can't be too hard, you're thinking – not when you can work all day at it. But you see I can't. I'm like a lot of modern day writers. We're married, we're parents and most of us hold down full time jobs (McIntosh, 2004, p 14).

Many writers not only contend with 'outside chaos' but also deal with family responsibilities and work that is unrelated to their writing. Under these circumstances, schedules, regular hours or words targets can be difficult to achieve. "I slot in writing in between life's demands. There are so many of them. I often write at night... I write when I have time and energy" (Gervay 3/10/06).

Like other writers in this study, those who had no set hours or word targets did not wait for inspiration to occur. Rather, each utilised whatever spare time they could find or carved out periods of time from sleeping or other activities for writing.

Because I'm a senior lecturer at university and I run a huge department with nine staff and four hundred students, I can't run home from work at five or six o'clock and knock up another chapter. I'm exhausted. But I do assiduously say to myself and to my wife 'I'm writing this weekend' or 'I've got two weeks off, I'm in my study' ... so I conscientiously set aside bulk time. I've got major writing time coming up, uni vacation in September (Crew 21/8/06).
In the past, I've written before work (say, 6am to 7.30), when my baby napped (10-11am then 2-3pm) or on odd days when my mother came to baby-sit. When I can, in fact – but not at night. Never worked at night, too tired. I'm a morning person. Which is inconvenient, because my children are too (Constable 25/11/06).

Like Constable, many of the women interviewed described difficulties in writing regularly while pregnant or raising infants, children and teenagers. Despite numerous studies that explore the effects of psychological, domestic, social and political factors on women's creativity and careers (see for example Kirschenbaum & Reis, 1997; Piirto, 1991), this familial disruption to writing time was also described by the fathers interviewed. Indeed, both genders undertaking writing at home, whether full or part time, noted a decrease in the amount of space, time and energy available to devote to their work. "At the moment I can only write for an hour to two hours a morning with my toddler's sleep time. Prior to the birth

of my daughter I would write up to six hours a day” (Pennicott 9/11/06). Now a fulltime writer, James Maloney began writing while still working as teacher.

In my early years, when I was still working all day, I wrote in the evenings, holidays, weekends, whenever time was available. One novel was written entirely between the hours of 4.00am and 6.30am over a long period, since our children had gradually claimed the bedrooms in which I worked and I had to use a laptop on the kitchen table when the house was quiet. When I ditched the day job, I still couldn't work past 3.00pm because the children needed minding after school (and a teacher becomes habituated to running out of puff at 3.00pm) (Maloney 20/8/06).

Although there appears to be some equalising of commitment to raising children and time spent away from writing in this study, it is female Australian fiction writers who have described how their children changed or positively influenced their writing in terms of style and content. Nikki Gemmell, for example, attributes the choppy, spare style of *The Bride Stripped Bare* to frequent interruptions to care for her young children (Delaney, 2005). The traumatic birth of her daughter provided Danielle Wood with emotional and descriptive insights for a chapter of *Rosie Little's Cautionary Tales for Girls* (Wood, 2007). In this study, Kate Forsyth describes both a direct and indirect influence on her writing.

My children are an endless source of joy and inspiration, as well as making my task more difficult by needing their mum. Many of my poems and children's books were inspired or influenced by them, and my eldest son Ben has a knack for going right to the heart of a problem I'm having with a book. Once he asked me, very astutely, 'But who's the bad guy, Mum?' and I realised that I did, indeed, have no clear antagonist. Brilliant boy! (Forsyth 17/10/06).

Regardless of gender and how much or how little time they could spend on their writing, the writers in this study were all committed to their individual projects and work in general. Whether writing was conducted according to a regular schedule, set targets, late at night, before dawn or while their children napped, each writer found or made time to write and was productive even when the work was laborious or difficult.

As explored earlier, productivity often arises from the act and discipline of sitting and writing itself. In this sense, it is understandable why many of the writers felt time, particularly long

periods of time, was important to their productivity. For Alan Tucker, increased time spent on writing also increased the focus of the work. “I’ve learnt that if you can put a whole day into it, the more hours straight you can put into it, the more focused and better the result” (Tucker 17/8/06). Time to focus on a single project was also important for Venero Armanno.

Usually when I have large slabs of time that I can just apply to one thing, you know. Most writers have a day job. I always knew how lucky I was beforehand but I’ve entered into that world where most, almost 90 percent of writers find themselves. They’ve got a day job and they’ve got to juggle many, many thing and writing, as important as it is for them, can’t be the main focus anymore. The times that you do feel more productive are the times when you can strip yourself of all those things and just focus on the one thing (Armanno 24/8/06).

In an overview of research on time and creativity, Mainemelis (2002) suggests those with control over the way spend their time are better able to structure their work and minimise additional mundane tasks that detract from creativity.

Time may also be a factor in the influence of setting on productivity. Several writers associate particular venues with productivity, describing not only tranquil settings but a venue compatible with writing for long bursts. Libby Gleeson believes her best writing experience was at Arthur Boyd’s rural property ‘Bundanon’, now an arts and education centre with artist residencies. “I wrote every day from half past eight in the morning until four thirty, five o’clock in the afternoon. I wish I could do that more often. In general I probably write for three or four hours a day” (Gleeson 5/9/06). Venues such as Bundanon often remove the pressures on time that writers face in their own homes or offices.

This same effect may also be experienced in the change of location that accompanies a holiday. Removed from her often hectic home schedule, Fiona McIntosh found the relaxed mood and atmosphere of her family holiday in Tasmania stimulated her most productive period of writing.

The air was so clean and the nearness to water had some amazing effect that had us all heading to bed early and sleeping deeply. I was up with the birds each day and whilst the house slept in, I was able to get my word count done by the time everyone was just thinking about the morning cuppa at 0830... I wrote half a book in about three weeks

using that method. I'm going to do the same thing at the end of this year (McIntosh 4/10/06).

For Lizzie Wilcock, holidays periods not only took her away from fulltime work as a primary school teacher but also the distractions of home life.

When I'm sitting in the boat, when we're out in the middle of wherever, in the middle of a lake or some river and Phil's fishing and there's no phone calls and don't have to go put the washing on or anything like that, there's no distractions. Another one is when we're camping. We've got this special place that we go up to on the Myall Lakes and Phil is happy to sit on the bank and fish and I'm happy to sit in my camp chair. And that's when I am most productive because there's no distraction except for maybe goannas coming in" (Wilcock 8/5/06).

Here, writers like Wilcock and McIntosh could physically remove themselves from the distraction of work and home, by visiting an environment that allowed them to devote uninterrupted time to their work.

With holidays an irregular or short term option, many of the writers in this research sought to create a similar environment for their daily writing schedule. For some this search for freedom from distraction leads them to work in libraries or rented office spaces.

That's why I like going to the State Library because there are no distractions of family or chores or jobs that need doing. If you're in an environment that's sterile in a sense you just focus on what you have to do and you can't be distracted from it (Tucker 17/8/06).

I've got a little office and there's no phone. It's in a shopping centre type thing, over a chip shop. No phone, no contact with the outside world (Hampson 29/8/06).

Other writers attempted to find a similar level of segregation from disruption at home, often designing physical spaces or rules that aid this attempt.

I've got the most magnificent study, which I designed myself with antique furniture, which is simple Art Deco stuff, but everything is where I want it to be and I'm actually in my zone. I don't have to close the door when my wife's home because she knows that (Crew 21/8/06).

I hate being interrupted, so I've had to train my family and friends not to ring me on work days, and not to come in to my study unless it's important (Forsyth 28/8/06).

In some cases, it may be argued that the need for uninterrupted time described by these writers may be a deeply rooted psychological desire for solitude or isolation as discussed by Piirto (2002, pp. 109-11). In most cases, however, the writers in this study are primarily family-centred individuals who do not desire distance from their family but simply a temporary distance from the distraction of family life. In this way, they appear to comply with Kenneth Bruffee's assertion that "writing is not an inherently private act but is a displaced social act we perform in private for the sake of convenience" (Bruffee, 1981p. 745). Writers may require solitude for their work but at the same time rely on interactions with the domain and field in order to work at all. While the social aspects of writing will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, the following section outlines some of the ways in which the writers in this study interacted with industry professionals, other writers, a number of critical readers and even the audience itself during the redrafting and editing process of writing manuscripts.

4.2.5 Editing

Earlier research on the composing process (overview in Humes, 1983), examination of the manuscripts and drafting processes of ten Australian writers (Woolfe & Grenville, 1993), how-to-write books (C. Bird, 1994; Gleeson, 2003; Grenville, 2001, 2002), how-to-edit books (Jacobs, 1998; Seidman, 2000) and author accounts of their own processes (Grenville, 2006; Phelan, 2005; Roberts et al., 2002) all suggest editing of some kind is both an essential and integral part of the individual's writing process. Amongst other advice given to young writers, Kate Forsyth argued beginners should "realise that writing is only the beginning of the job – rewriting and editing are vitally important" (Forsyth 15/8/06). Described variously in these sources as revising, redrafting or editing, it is clear that, while there is some overlap, there are several different processes described by these terms.

Humes (1983) describes reviewing as an edit-as-you-go technique where the writer scans through previous text to assess "what has been done and what needs to be done" (1983, p. 212). Not only does this familiarise the writer with storyline but also alerts them to elements of character, style or grammar, for example, that may need to be rewritten before progressing to the next section. Several writers in this study use this edit-as-you go technique. Dave

Luckett and James Maloney both review their work on a daily basis with Maloney breaking this down into even smaller pieces.

I start at the beginning of the story and work through to the end. I begin each session by reading what I have so far, correct it, and go on. I don't write in 'draughts' but in a continuously developing stream (Luckett 22/7/06).

The first task each morning is to re-read and edit what I wrote the day before. I often stop after three or four hundred words and re-read, editing on-screen as I go and when satisfied with that section, go on to the next (Maloney 20/8/06).

Like Maloney, Janet Woods and Lizzie Wilcock edit as they write, revising after completing a section of work. Woods works in blocks of three chapters. "I then go back and give them an edit before starting on the next block of three. I do a lot of weaving back and forth, like a piece of embroidery. When the first draft is finished it's fairly clean" (Woods 21/7/06).

Rather than editing as they write, other writers in this study revise their work over a number of drafts. Here the writer reviews a complete but often imperfect first draft, which is then revised according to that analysis. This revision of the work often entails major reformulations of structure, storyline, style or character, changes of tense or point of view and the addition or elimination of significant amounts of content, a process that is similar across genres.

There's a big difference between a first and second draft. The first draft can be a monolith. But the second draft could be a very tight two hundred pages. Sometimes you just need to have the monolith, like a director goes out and shoots ten hours of the feature film and in the editing room cuts it down to the 90 minutes. Sometimes you just need to do it that way and, most of the time, that's how I work. Don't tell my students (Armano 24/8/06).

I'm into the second draft of it now, a lot of pick and shovel work to do, a massive amount of rewriting because whilst there's good stuff it's not actually the story. I lost the plot (Graeme-Evans 8/11/06).

I don't hesitate to go back, like for example, I'm working on a novel at the moment. I started it out with one sort of structure and I've just gone back and started it all again because I'm confident that was not the way to do it (Gleeson 5/9/06).

This process occurs over several iterations, refining different elements with each draft or rewrite and continuing until they are generally satisfied with the quality of the work. The number of drafts each writer in this study requires varies greatly with some achieving a submission quality manuscript in one or two drafts, and others completing up to ten. Rather than a reflection of the quality of the writer or their work, however, the number of drafts generally indicates whether the writer addresses the major problems or changes to be made individually or holistically. In this way, a writer may rewrite their first draft several times taking all elements into account or redraft separately for character, style, story arc and so on.

The term editing in Australian fiction generally has two different uses, referring to either the deep structural level revision described above or light surface revision, checking for minor inconsistencies, wording issues and grammatical errors. In this light edit stage, Janet Woods also checks the timelines of her story “since I always get muddled by maths and sometimes write numbers down back to front” (Woods 21/7/06). For many writers, self-editing of this type can become easier or less frequent over time and with greater experience with writing.

After you’ve been writing for a long time, when it comes to language, it’s almost automatic that your mind picks up words, sentences or passages you’ve written that you’re not happy with and you know you have to change them (Curtis 22/2/07).

I’m probably more aware of editing and techniques now. I read my first books sometimes and wish I could change stuff, pick up mistakes in tense or clichés (Redhead 23/8/06).

Here, experience with writing and an expanding knowledge of the domain of fiction and language generate an automatic or intuitive feel for writing and editing. Writers are more able to avoid minor problems in the writing of the first draft or more easily notice mistakes during a light edit of their own work. The importance of self-editing, whether at a structural or surface level or whether done during or after the writing of a first draft, cannot be stressed enough. Not only can editing or revision add to a writer’s intuitive sense of their own work but Michael Seidman (2000) argues this process is often the primary distinction between a professional writer and the amateurs who submit manuscript after manuscript but never get published.

It is in seeing the idea again, and revisiting it regularly, in revising and rewriting, that a finished piece of writing is honed, perfected and made good enough for someone else to look at, for an editor or agent to consider (2000, p. 8).

Some of the writers interviewed used their knowledge of the preferences of the field to better self edit their own work. By internalising and drawing on knowledge of industry professionals as well as fellow writers and audience members, writers are able to anticipate the judgements to be made on their work by the field, thereby increasing their chances for selection into the domain. Although the importance of the field in creativity will be discussed in depth in the next chapter, several writers recognised their consideration of the field or various readers of the work during the revision and editing process.

I don't write with the audience in mind for first drafts, but do consider later where I might find homes for the piece (Padmore 9/11/06).

It's only when I'm doing my rewrites that I keep in mind if my publisher would approve of certain things or if my readers would prefer something a little different (Curtis 9/2/06).

I never consciously simplify my language or anything. I guess the awareness must be there, but it's at the back of my mind not the forefront. There are little things, for example my first editor hated the word 'got' and I hardly use that now, also my own tics like using too many adjectives. I have editors in mind and try to correct myself (Constable 25/11/06).

Whether the reader they considered was an agent, editor, publisher or a member of their book's target audience, these writers called on their knowledge of the field to edit their manuscript into an acceptable and appropriate form that may further increase their chance of selection, recognition or sales by the audience or publishing industry. Even when physically separated from the field, writers are never isolated from this social sphere of Australian fiction writing but rather use their previous interactions as a guide for their current work.

For many writers a polished first manuscript can provide a 'foot in the door' to the publishing industry. Previously an editor and publisher, writer Sophie Cunningham says she perfected her first manuscript as much as she could before it was sent to other industry professionals.

I had done so much work on it that it was kind of polished, it was kind of as good as it could be, which isn't to say that it couldn't be better, but I had done all I could with it before I took it to the publisher. I think with second books, you might show material to people earlier because you have a standing relationship because of the first book. The first book you don't know who's going to be your publisher, so it has to be as good as it can be to get the publisher, so it's sort of a different dynamic. In a way, I think this book will be more demanding for all of us because it needs more work and I'll be expecting more feedback and that could get curly or whatever (Cunningham 28/8/06).

As Cunningham mentions here, once situated in the industry a writer may draw upon various industry professionals to aid in the revision process. Indeed, most writers' work will be polished or perfected, revised or edited by various members of the field including agents and editors. As well as these professionals, writers may also utilise fellow writers or a limited audience of readers to help draft or edit their work and receive feedback before submission.

For several writers, interaction with members of the field of Australian fiction writing occurs as an explicit process of collaboration with fellow writers. Paul Collins co-created the fantasy world *Quentaris* with Michael Pryor, establishing a background scenario and location that they and other writers including Gary Crew and Sean McMullen then used to write twenty-six stand alone novels (Nahrung, 2007a; *The Quentaris Chronicles*, 2005). In a more traditional collaborative arrangement, Nick Earls co-wrote *Joel and Cat Set the Record Straight* with Rebecca Sparrow, with each writer drafting alternating chapters (Earls & Sparrow, 2007; Perkins, 2007a). Sean Williams co-wrote the *Evergence*, *Orphans* and *Geodescia* series and *Star Wars: New Jedi Order: Force Heretic* trilogy with Shane Dix. They brainstormed and determined the plot together, Williams generally writing the first drafts before turning them over to Dix for “weeding out the dead wood, tightening the characters, strengthening key scenes, and so on. If *he* gets stuck then, again, we consult. And when he's finished, I take one last look over the [manuscript], then submit it” (Williams, 2006, online).

Other participants in this study use their acquaintance, friendship and other relationships with fellow writers in a less explicitly collaborative process of support and criticism. Several writers in this study belong to informal or formal critiquing groups where they share and assess each other's work whether during the writing of the first draft or in later redrafting stages. Susanne Gervay participates in “conferences and festivals with fellow authors. My best friends are authors and we share our happiness and disappointments and challenges in

writing and life. We also critique each other's work" (Gervay 3/10/06). Like Gervay, Louise Cusack pursues both formal and informal contact with other writers, enrolled in a Masters of Arts (Research) in speculative fiction at Queensland University of Technology as well as participating in a peer critique group.

I do have a circle of critique people who'll look at my work and obviously I look at their work too. And also this year I'm in that Masters group, there are seven or eight of us who are all published speculative fiction authors and we'll be workshopping each other's books. I'm really looking forward to that, to having people at my level, in my genre, to be looking at my work. That will be really good (Cusack 30/8/06).

Cusack and Kim Wilkins both expanded on these peer evaluation roles, and offer professional manuscript assessment and editing services. While these business arrangements do not involve sharing their own work, both agree they have learnt more about their own writing from evaluating other writers' manuscripts.

Certainly when it comes to the craft of writing and how I write, probably what's been most influential has been my manuscript assessment business where I've assessing other people's work and all the time I'm seeing where the problems are and where they can fix them and that's really honed my own editing skills and the way I write now (Cusack 30/8/06).

Reading bad manuscripts, I read a lot of... well, not bad manuscripts... reading mediocre writing, because I do editorial assessments and all that, is such an education. You look at something and think 'why is that wrong?' and then hope you never do it! It really helps me (Wilkins 1/9/06).

Rather than a formal or business arrangement, some writers have family and friends who act as critical readers of their work. Wilkins regularly shares her work with fellow writer and friend Kate Moreton, meeting each Saturday to swap chapters and discuss writing in general. "Before Kate, I worked with another fantasy author. I always have to work with somebody. I can't work in a vacuum. I really do like to have... not necessarily feedback, but I love being able to talk to somebody else, talk about ideas and things like that" (Wilkins 1/9/06).

Although not a fiction writer, Fiona McIntosh's husband critiques and edits her work. "I married a journalist/editor so he was quietly grooming me in the first decade of our life

together and to this day is my first draft reader for all the novels. I continue to hate his red pen... but I do respect it" (McIntosh 4/10/06). Anna Jacobs relies on a critique group of peers who generally read the first six chapters of a work but the final judges of each story are two 'wise readers'. "My husband is my first wise reader. He helps me to avoid clichés. And he choreographs all my fight scenes. He's a very astute critic and doesn't pull any punches and I don't want him to" (Jacobs 23/8/06). Like their interaction with fellow writers, these more personal critical readers provide writers with valuable feedback, whether at a structural or surface level, on their first or later drafts.

Critical readers are often able to provide feedback or insights into the work that the writer themselves have not have been able to see. Often personally and professionally invested in a manuscript, many writers describe the difficulty but necessity of constructive criticism and editing.

They say in writing that you have to kill your baby. Sometimes you can find you're terribly attached to something and that you're making everything else work a lot harder to include the lyrical description of the leaf with the raindrop on and you have to jettison them, because they're pulling you down (Hampson 29/8/06).

Rather than keeping words, phrases, paragraphs or even whole chapters that weaken a manuscript, almost all of the participants in this study advise developing writers on 'developing a thick skin' and not being 'precious' about their work. By giving their work to personal or professional readers, many of the writers in this study achieve a distance from their work that allows them to see their own work less subjectively or with 'fresh eyes'.

There are times when you just have to hand it over when you can't see it anymore and someone else has to look at it. I guess the one thing I've learned is that giving it to someone else means you can get some positive feedback but it also means you haven't looked at it in a while. I don't tend to work on it when someone else is looking at it, so I can see it with fresh eyes and so therefore you pick up things yourself, most often the same things the editors have commented on (Tucker 17/8/06).

As well as improving a writer's self-editing skills and, in the long run, their overall writing practices, the 'handing over' of a manuscript discussed here by Tucker also clearly articulates a writer's engagement with the field.

Although interaction with industry professionals may occur even before the idea generation phase of a particular story, it is during this revision process when agents, publishers and editors in particular take a more explicit role in the production of Australian fiction books. All of the writers in this study, for example, had their work reviewed and revised by an editor prior to publication.

Typically I do about five drafts before the editor makes her structural comments, then another two drafts after, then another two after getting her final comments (Irvine 18/7/06).

I have almost daily contact with my editor as I write (Morrissey 26/9/06).

I'm on the fifth full draft of [*Hannah's Ghosts*] now, probably the last before I show it to the publishers. And after they've seen it there will probably be two or three more drafts incorporating their suggestions/criticisms (Constable 25/11/06).

As we can see here, while writers may spend many hours working in solitary conditions, this does not in any way indicate that they are alone in the creative process. Rather, writers of all styles and genres engage with both the domain and field during the idea generation, research, development, drafting and editing stages of writing. The overlapping roles of individual writers and industry professionals during these later stages of the writing process further highlight the systemic nature of creativity. As will be described in the following chapter, creativity does not begin and end with an individual drafting of a manuscript. The writer's manuscript must also be judged by the field to be both new and appropriate before it can be published and entered into the domain of Australian fiction writing.

With a huge number of manuscripts competing for publication a title succeeds when it is accepted to be turned into a book in a manner that positions it well for further success on the market. For this to happen, a title needs a series of champions to push it. These champions, such as agents and editors, would use their own reputations, skills and identities to further interpret and shape the artefact to convince other actors of its quality and relevance (Grau, 2005/2006, pp. 61-2).

5.0 The field of judgement and support for Australian fiction writing

The creation of a book does not end with a draft manuscript. Rather, writers seek out publication and communication with an audience as the culmination of their work. In general terms, this process involves a publishing house accepting the draft manuscript, structural and surface editing, printing and criticism and then the eventual sale and reading of the book by the public. At each stage individual actors and institutions other than the writer make decisions that can affect the content, style, design and reception of the work as well as the publication of future works and the writer's career. As such, publication and communication represent another, more explicit, network of relationships an individual writer must negotiate before they may be considered creative. In order to understand creativity in Australian fiction writing, then, it is necessary not only to investigate the individual writer and the domain of knowledge they draw on but also how this social system operates, makes judgements and shapes that knowledge. Accordingly, this chapter outlines the literary and genre writers' points of engagement with the social system of Australian fiction writing and how these networks of judgement and support influence both the writer and their work.

Those involved in the various facets of publication mentioned above embody, in Csikszentmihalyi's terms, the field of experts and individuals who determine what is both appropriate and valuable enough to gain entry to the domain. This field of operatives, largely members of institutions themselves embedded in broader social systems, utilise an (often internalised) set of criteria to select and disseminate new variations in the domain of fiction writing. The job of the field, however, extends further than a simple selection or 'gatekeeping' role. In the larger view, the field has the power to affect who may become a writer, how and what they write, how that work is produced, manufactured and disseminated to its readers and then if or how that cycle continues. For the writer, each point of contact with the field indicates a negotiation with an intermediary who may not only accept or reject their work but also shape it and their broader practice in different ways. It is in the complexity of

these relationships and negotiations that some similarities can be found with Pierre Bourdieu's similar use of the term 'field'.

For Bourdieu (1977; 1993a; 1993b; 1996), fields are the structured contexts that make up the social world. Like Csikszentmihalyi, Bourdieu sees the field as having its own goals, rules, logic, institutions, conventions, hierarchies and peculiarities and maintained, reproduced and evolved by interactions and competition among its agents. Unlike Csikszentmihalyi, however, Bourdieu concentrates on these interactions in terms of social contestation, rather than the functional aspects of this social system. For Bourdieu, fields can be considered arenas of contestation, where "agents and institutions are engaged in struggle, with unequal strengths, and in accordance with the rules constituting that field of play, to appropriate the specific profits at stake in that game" (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 88). The stakes of the game generally entail authority over or possession of particular types of capital including: cultural capital (knowledge, skills or objects beyond that of other agents); economic capital (control of monetary funds or resources); or symbolic capital (reputation, honour or prestige). Those who control or possess large amounts of capital are able either to maintain or change the structure of the field to their own advantage but "have to reckon with the resistance of the dominated agents" (ibid.).

Although Bourdieu's overriding ideas on class conflict and mobilisation (see for example Bourdieu, 1984) do not necessarily play out in the current research, some sense of contestation or struggle between agents is present. In the publishing field, for example, struggles may occur at various points: between publishers when bidding for a book contract; and between writers and industry professionals, such as when an editor makes changes to a manuscript. Contestation may also occur between writers for prizes, media attention, positive reviews and sales. There are also struggles, as Csikszentmihalyi (1997a; 1999) indicates, between fields.

Left with *carte blanche*, every field naturally wants to control as many of the resources of society as possible, and more... In addition, even if there were no selfish, material reasons involved, each field would still push for the implementation of new ideas in its domain, regardless of long-term consequences (1997a, p. 323).

In this way, different fields fight each other for resources and recognition from the broader social system in which they operate. Fields may also encounter struggles in relation to both the broader society and their internal organisation, such as the extent to which they are ‘ideologically open or closed’.

Highly hierarchical institutions, where knowledge of the past is greatly valued, generally see novelty as a threat. For this reason churches, academies, and certain businesses based on tradition seek to promote older individuals to leadership positions as a way of warding off excessive change. Also creativity is not welcome in fields whose self-interest requires keeping a small cadre of initiates performing the same routines, regardless of efficiency (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p. 326).

While Csikszentmihalyi does not emphasise the role of contestation to the extent Bourdieu does, he does explain the field in terms of its functionality or ability to affect creativity. As discussed in Chapter 2, the field may affect creativity in three ways: through its connection to the broader social system, by being reactive or proactive, and in how much change it can and does support. Bearing these and Bourdieu’s concept of field in mind, it is possible to analyse how the agents and institutions of the field change the domain of Australian fiction writing by making decisions about an individual writer’s work.

5.1 Access to the field

Estimates of the number of writers in Australia range from 3289 people with author as their primary occupation (ABS, 2005a)²³ to 185500 people who were engaged in some form of paid work in the writing area (ABS, 2004)²⁴. While not all of these writers attempt to publish novel-length works of fiction, these figures go some way to explaining the competition for attention faced by those who do. If all (or even half) of these people wrote a manuscript that was then published, the domain would be saturated and the value of the books within it no longer recognisable. To prevent this occurring, one of the roles of field members is to filter

²³ As noted in Chapter 1, the 2001 census uses the Australian Standard Classifications of Occupations definition of ‘author’ as someone who produces a written work for publication or performance including novelists, playwrights, poets, screenwriters and scriptwriters (ABS, 1997). Separate figures for novelists alone are unavailable.

²⁴ For 2004 Survey of Work in Selected Culture and Leisure Activities survey, ‘writing’ includes the writing of “works of fiction and non-fiction and includes: writing novels, textbooks, short stories, poetry, plays, scripts, lyrics, screenplays, biographies and newsletters; copy writing, journalism and editing of written material; and writing articles for journals, magazines, technical writing, etc. Persons whose only writing involvement is letter writing (e.g. letters to the editor) are excluded from this category. Writing for own use or that of their family was classed as a hobby” (ABS, 2004, p. 36). This number rises to 336800 if you also include unpaid work aside from writing undertaken as a hobby.

manuscripts and choose only the most appropriate and valuable. At these various filtering points or ‘gates’, bottlenecks are formed by increasing numbers of writers vying for attention.

Writers who want to catch the attention of an editor long enough to have their work read have to compete with thousands of similarly hopeful writers who have also submitted their manuscripts. The editor typically has only a few minutes to dedicate to each writer’s work, assuming he or she even glances at the submission in the first place. Getting a literary agent to sell the manuscript is no solution either, since a good agent’s attention is as difficult to get as that of an editor. Because of these bottlenecks, access to a field is often determined by chance or by irrelevant factors, such as having good connections (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a, p. 55).

Although rising numbers of writers attempting to have their manuscripts published over the last two decades have made competition for attention fiercer (as evidenced in the decreased numbers of publishers accepting unsolicited manuscripts, which is discussed below), members of the field are also becoming more visible and accessible. Not only are publishers, editors and agents gaining a more visible public profile through writers’ festivals, workshops and recent publications on the industry (see for example Carter & Galligan, 2007; Munro & Sheahan-Bright, 2006; Smart, 2007), but writers are taking advantage of new or alternative forms of access. Although Csikszentmihalyi describes ‘having good connections’ as an ‘irrelevant factor’ it is clear from his argument and the evidence presented below that these and other means of accessing the field do have an impact on creative process.

The descriptions of how writers in this study sought and gained publication for their first novel show five different ways of accessing the field of Australian fiction: unsolicited manuscripts, agents, networking, competitions and work. Although the writers have been sorted into one of these five categories, classifying can conceal failed attempts at accessing the field through other means. Some writers, for example, entered writing competitions such as *The Australian/Vogel* multiple times without recognition. Others submitted unsolicited manuscripts before gaining an agent or built up a reputation in other writing forms before encountering a field member. These circumstances may be considered both a form of practice and mastery of the domain (as discussed in Chapter 3) as well as a period of learning the field’s criteria for acceptance. Those who absorb the criteria of a field are often in a better position to recognise opportunities or the best methods for access.

5.1.1 Unsolicited manuscripts

Of the 40 literary and genre writers interviewed, 16 had their first novel-length book published after submitting unsolicited manuscripts to one or various publishers. Here, writers sent a manuscript to a publishing house where it entered a ‘slush pile’ of other unsolicited works before being read and accepted by trainee, assistant or commissioning editors or the publisher themselves.

It was pretty much pulled out of the slush pile. I got a call at home from the publisher – she was a high flyer in the trade too – said they wanted to do it. It was a different time then, early 90s, and a lot more publishing risks were being taken (Doyle 14/11/06).

Others, like John Dale, had their initial manuscript rejected but were asked to write another based on the quality of the first. “I’d written a manuscript novel and I sent it to a publisher. They said it was quite good but they didn’t want to publish it and wanted to see my next work. It was a direct consequence of having a rejection for a manuscript” (Dale 21/8/06).

Compared to the publishing scene in the early 90s that Doyle describes, fewer publishing houses are accepting unsolicited manuscripts, limiting the usefulness of this method of accessing the field for future writers. Although sending unsolicited manuscripts was the most successful means of accessing the field for writers in this study, publishing director at HarperCollins Australia Shona Martyn believes writers are now far more likely to be successful using other methods.

Very few slush pile manuscripts ever make it to publication – less than two a year in my experience – and it is not a good use of staff time to have them sifting generally substandard material. Generally anything unsolicited sent to our company is sent back with a letter indicating that we do not look at unsoliciteds (S. Martyn 10/10/06).

Like HarperCollins, most major publishing companies in Australia only accept fiction manuscripts submitted via an agent. Scribe Publications also prefers submissions from agents but will accept unsolicited works from authors with a publishing history. UQP only accepts unsolicited fiction manuscripts for children or young adults. Despite the self-imposition of such restrictions since the mid 90s, a few publishing houses resist such limitations. Pan Macmillan and Text Publishing, for example, remain open to unsolicited manuscripts. Allen

& Unwin fiction publisher Louise Thurtell has a unique approach to unsolicited manuscripts, instituting the 'Friday Pitch' for popular fiction, only reading a writer's synopsis and sample chapter on Fridays (Allen & Unwin, 2008). Including opportunities such as these, this method of access to the field is still available but increasingly limited with most publishing houses preferring writers access them through an agent.

5.1.2 Agents

For five of the writers interviewed, an agent became their access point to the field. Seen as another gatekeeper in the field's selection process, agents received manuscripts and assessed them in terms of value and appropriateness to particular publishers. In some cases, a writer's completed manuscript was accepted by the agent who then used their knowledge of the industry to sell it to a publishing house. "I sent the ms of my first fantasy novel to a literary agent; she took it on and sent it to publishers" (Constable 25/11/06). Other writers, like Louise Cusack, worked with an agent as the manuscript was written, the agent sending it to a publisher on completion. Selwa Anthony had taken Cusack on as a client and worked on an erotic novel manuscript as well as a psychological thriller, neither of which were published. After publishing a fantasy novella with HarperCollins, Cusack had an idea for another fantasy story.

Selwa said 'oh yes, darling, fantasy's hot, write that'. So I did. And I thought it would be a stand alone. But by the time I got to nearly the end of the first book I suddenly realised all these sub-characters who'd invented themselves had their own stories. In fact it could be more than one. She said 'oh, yes, yes, trilogies are good, write and finish that book and just write a one page blurb of what you think the other two would be about'... So she took that completed novel and synopsis or my little bit about the other two and shopped it around and two publishers bid on it, for the trilogy, and in the end we ended up going with Simon & Schuster, which was pretty exciting (Cusack 30/8/06).

Most agents are accessible via web sites, referrals from other writers or association lists, however, as pointed out earlier, gaining the attention of an agent is becoming almost as difficult as accessing a publisher, with the bulk of works sent to an agent also ending up on a slush pile that must then be read and assessed.²⁵ Managing director at Curtis Brown, Fiona

²⁵ This growing difficulty is echoed in recent studies in the US that analysed rejection letters and tested the effectiveness of various proposals for gaining an agent (Erdim-Payne & Payne, 2005/2006; Payne & Erdim-Payne, 2007).

Inglis says they do accept unsolicited manuscripts but “the pile always seems to be big and getting bigger. We check them every six to eight weeks so that is our turn around time” (Inglis 28/11/06). In a similar position, Mary Cunnane of the Mary Cunnane Literary Agency says time makes it difficult to read and comment on every manuscript she is sent.

I generally encourage people to either phone or send email inquiries and briefly describe the project because we can pretty much tell right away. If someone writes and says I’m writing a horror novel or a young adult novel or science fiction we can immediately say ‘thanks, but we’re not the right agency for you’. We don’t handle those genres (Cunnane 4/12/06).

Similar to attempts to directly access a publishing house by sending an unsolicited manuscript, agents are not necessarily the most accessible members of the field. They have become, however, one of the industry’s preferred and preliminary access points for gaining publication. As such, once their attention has been gained, agents represent a valuable point of contact with the field for writers.

5.1.3 Networking

Rather than sending unsolicited manuscripts or making contact through an agent, 13 of the writers interviewed in this study were aided by a friend, associate or even a stranger to gain publication. Far from being an ‘irrelevant factor’ in the creative process, networking has provided many of these writers with access to the field they may not have gained otherwise. This does not necessarily mean the adage ‘it’s not what you know, but who you know’ applies, as the writer’s work is generally still judged by the same criteria as those who submit unsolicited manuscripts to publishers and agents. Writers who have industry contacts or chance encounters with field members, however, *are* better able to gain the attention necessary before that judgement can take place. Sandy Curtis, for example, encountered the publishing director of Pan Macmillan Australia, James Fraser, at the Brisbane Writers’ Festival.

He was very friendly and helpful, and when I came close to finishing *Dance with the Devil*, I had typical author doubts so phoned him to see if he thought I was on the right track with this gutsy romantic-suspense manuscript that I was writing. James was away on holidays but his secretary had Editor Cate Paterson phone me back the next day. We spoke for half-an-hour about why I thought readers would like this cross-genre novel and at the end of the conversation she

asked me to send the manuscript to her. Within three and a half weeks of her receiving it and my proposals for four other novels, I received three contracts (Curtis 21/10/06).

In these circumstances, contact with a member of the field can provide both a direct line to the publisher as well as information about the publishing industry that starting writers may not be aware of. Some, like Gary Crew, had ‘no idea what to do’ with their early manuscripts.

It was lying on my desk as a teacher and some fool from an education publishing house came and asked would I write an article for a teaching textbook and I said, ‘I don’t want to’. I had a Masters in postcolonial fiction at that time and he wanted me to write an article on postcolonial fiction. I said ‘no, but I have a novel here’ and he literally, as God is my witness, ran away. And then two or three days later he rang back and he said, ‘the managing director of William Heinemann is in Australia and they’re looking for manuscripts. They’re starting this new thing called teenage fiction.’ He said, ‘would your book fit that category?’ and I said, ‘actually, yes’. And he said ‘well, he’ll come and see you’ and I said, ‘yeah, pig’s bum’. Two or three days later this gentleman came into school... He took the manuscript and I never thought I’d see him again. Two days later he rang back and said ‘the girl on my flight back to Melbourne, we read the whole book together and we loved it. We’re giving you a contract to publish it in Australia and in England’ (Crew 21/8/06).

Not all of the writers in this study were able to connect directly with a publisher or editor. Rather, some used other people’s insider knowledge of the industry as a point of access to the field and eventual publication. These field members were often in a better position to match a writer and their work with the appropriate publisher than the unpublished writer themselves. Jonathan Harlen credits the publication of his first novel to a friend who is also a published and well-known writer in New Zealand.

He and I met up in Sydney while he was over here and I showed him fifty pages of it. And he said, ‘look, the former head of Hodder Staughton in New Zealand has just become head of Hodder Staughton in Australia and I really think he would like this. So I’ll just give him a call and see if he’d be interested in reading it’. So he, in that way, kind of opened the door to the first 50 pages being read and on the basis of that it was accepted (Harlen 11/9/06).

As in other industries, networking has become an increasingly important tool for writers, particularly those seeking publication for the first time. As shown here, interactions with the field through networking may both directly and indirectly lead to publication, with some contacts providing access to a publisher while others offer insider knowledge on points of access. Given the increasing visibility of industry professionals at events like writers' festivals, panels and workshops described earlier, a study of writers who have sought out and gained publication in the past five years may show that networking has already overtaken unsolicited manuscripts as the most successful method of accessing the field.

5.1.4 Work

Rather than a single encounter with a field member or other more immediate methods of accessing the field, three of the writers in this study used a much slower approach to gain attention. These writers gradually built a reputation for themselves as a writer or worked their way from shorter formats to novel publication with a publishing house.

Sheer perseverance, generally, but I developed a name, a reputation for myself by being active in a number of writers' organisations (Horsfield 26/9/06).

I worked my way up from the fanzines, to semi-prozines, to magazines paying pro rates for short stories; then, when I had enough of a reputation in Australia, I jumped to novel publishing for HarperCollins Australia (but also with a local small press). From there, I secured a US agent and began making sales in the US. This process took about eight years (Williams 4/9/06).

This gradual exposure to the field inevitably increases the writer's knowledge of the way the field works but also acts as a sound foundation of writing practice. Though the criteria for selection can vary between mediums, having a proven publishing record in any format may make a writer more notable than an unpublished colleague. As shown earlier, publishing house Scribe will only accept unsolicited manuscripts from authors with a publishing history. In these cases, a body of published works not only provides the field with an indicator of a writer's skill but also their proven ability to function within the industry.

5.1.5 Competitions

Like building a body of work, competitions also provide a training ground for writing. Although many of the literary and genre writers interviewed had submitted manuscripts to

writing competitions, only three had their first novel published as a direct result of its entry in a competition. Competitions for unpublished manuscripts such as *The Australian/Vogel* Award (Allen & Unwin), HarperCollins Varuna Award for Manuscript Development, ABC Fiction Award (ABC Books) and David Unaipon Award for Unpublished Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Writers (UQP) each have a panel of judges associated with the publishing industry, whether these are editors, publishers, critics or established writers. As such, they provide a variety of opportunities for accessing the field, whether as a direct consequence of winning, being shortlisted or commended or coming to the attention of a judge. Anna Jacobs' first novel was published by Random House after it won "second prize of \$10,000 in the Random House/New Idea Australian Fiction Prize in 1991 and won me publication of my novel, which was much more important to me. There were over 800 entries" (Jacobs 23/8/06). Stephen Gray's first novel, *Lungfish*, won the Jessie Litchfield Award (for a piece of fiction about life in the Northern Territory). "That was published by the Northern Territory uni press and I guess the fact that it'd won that award was influential in then deciding to publish it" (Gray 18/8/06). In 2000, he won *The Australian/Vogel* Literary Award and subsequent publication for *The Artist is a Thief*.

For others, like Catherine Padmore, being short-listed or commended in these competitions can also gain the attention of the field. "Allen & Unwin offered me a contract for my novel after it was short-listed in *The Australian/Vogel* competition" (Padmore 9/11/06). This outcome is supported by Tess Brady (2002; 2006) who conducted a case-study of the Vogel award analysing Allen & Unwin's records associated with its judging and administration. Brady found a preliminary 'long short list' of manuscripts was produced during the judging process but generally not made public.

Getting onto this list is important for a young writer, as Allen & Unwin often sends out those works to readers for publication appraisal. Such appraisal is parallel to, and not part of, the judging process, and it explains why some manuscripts that are not in the final publicised short list still receive publication by Allen & Unwin. More recently, writers on the long short list have been invited to a manuscript workshop at the University of Canberra organised by the university's director of writing, Ron Miller (Brady, 2006, p. 163).

Not only do some entrants benefit from a win or commendation, but they may also gain access to additional industry 'readers' who have the power to publish their manuscripts. The

complexity of publication resulting from entering the Vogel award is further highlighted when it is seen in combination with other methods of accessing the field.

5.1.6 *Combination of methods*

Although the figures on accessing the field in the preceding sections show the primary method by which their first novel was ultimately published, most writers used several methods of accessing the field to varying degrees of success. Both of the cases below have been categorised as networking for the primary means of achieving publication, but the use of competitions, agents and work are noteworthy in getting to that point.

I wrote my novel *Zigzag Street* in 1995, but it missed out completely in the Vogel competition (for published manuscripts by writers under 35) and Allen & Unwin (the publishers who select three or four Vogel entries each year for publication) decided not to publish it. But my short story book had got me an agent and a few commissions to write short stories. It had also led to me being included in the 'young writers' night-time event at the Brisbane Writers' Festival. My agent told me there was a publisher from Transworld who would be going along, and they were planning to set up an Australian fiction list. I was told to pick my best live story and create an impression. I gave it my best shot, and the publisher came up to me the next day and asked if she could read my novel manuscript. She published it the following year (Earls in Perkins, 2007b, online).

It was the most unlikely conjuncture of things, of circumstances... I started off with historical novels, sent off to publishers and getting them back again. I did this for four years. I just kept sending them around and I decided to put a novel in for the Vogel prize. It got short-listed, not because it was a particularly good novel but because I could write. Then Hilary McPhee who ran a publishing company with Di Gribble called McPhee Gribble rang me up and said, 'come and talk to us' and I broke the land-speed record getting to their house. She said, 'don't write historical novels, we particularly want a detective story', which was very astute of her... I first said yes some nanoseconds after she finished the question then went out there with a two book contract thinking 'I've just agreed to write two detective stories and I've got no idea how to do it' (Greenwood 6/11/06).

As these stories show, accessing the field at multiple points of contact may provide a writer with the best opportunity of having their first fiction book published. Whether they built a body of work through competitions and publishing in other formats or whether they knowingly or unknowingly positioned themselves in a way to encounter field members, it is

clear that access to and the attention of the field is required in some form if a writer wishes to publish a fiction novel.

The experiences of the writers in this study have shown that each of these categories has been a successful method for accessing a field of Australian fiction industry professionals and experts. This does not necessarily mean, however, that these methods will function in the same way at present or in the future. As seen in the past decade the visibility of field members may continue to grow but could become more limited if industry professionals are flooded with more novelty than they can manage; the remaining publishing houses that accept unsolicited manuscripts could eliminate this method altogether or their success could reopen other companies to these submissions; awards and competitions may rise and fall; and opportunities for publishing in other formats may change over time. Despite these uncertainties, it can be argued that, like the domain, the field frames what is possible with a domain but also provides opportunities for these 'possibles' to occur (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 235). Without a field and a corresponding social system of support and reasonable access, Australian fiction writing and publishing would not be possible. It can be argued that the functional relationships between writers and various aspects of the field not only represent that world in action but also serve to reproduce and transform it. Primary among the relationships to be explored in the sections that follow are those that most directly affect the writer and their work, largely those interactions or engagement with publishers and editors, agents, media and critics, audiences, the government and other institutions that support long-term or continuing careers in writing.

5.2 Publishing companies as field

As seen above, there are many points of interaction between writers and the field. Perhaps the most significant relationship for both literary and genre writers is that with the publishing company and its representatives. In terms of publishing, the writer-publisher relationship may originate in any of the ways mentioned above. Once a manuscript is delivered and accepted, however, the publication process generally follows the same procedures, regardless of whether the publishing company was reactive or proactive in acquiring it (see, for example, the process described in Brown, 2003; Smart, 2007; Thompson, 2005). A manuscript typically begins the publication process in the editorial department both in terms of acquisition and

negotiation as well as refinement of the work itself. Once the manuscript is structurally refined it is then copy-edited for corrections and the text made ready for production. The production department (whether in house or out-sourced to freelancers) set the type, design the cover, print and bind the book, while the marketing department arrange its promotion. At each stage, individuals (including the writer) make decisions that affect the structure, the content, the look, the appeal and the overall value of the work; the larger the publishing company the more hands it is likely a manuscript will pass through before it becomes a book. Overseeing this network of actors is the publisher. In describing her former role as a publisher, Sophie Cunningham explains the various types of interaction during the publication process.

So I would be involved in making a decision about what book to publish. That'd be reading a manuscript, deciding to publish it, then taking it to a publishing meeting and saying, 'I really want to publish this book' and having to get the permission of the people in the company to do that and then there would be administrative contractual things about getting that happening. Then there would be meetings with the author about what work might be needed and at that point an editor as well as me as the publisher of the book, sometimes I would be editor then as well or sometimes another person from McPhee Gribble would come and be part of that meeting and they'd start talking about what work needed to be done and then there was the book covers to be designed. Either I or the editor would have meetings with the designer and talk about what kind of look we wanted and then we'd have to run most covers past people at Penguin or, later, Allen & Unwin. Then there'd also be a series of meetings with marketing and publicity about how a book should be marketed or publicised and those kinds of things (Cunningham 28/8/06).

As we can see here, the publisher's role is a complex one, influencing the creative system at several points in the highly social process of fiction publication. According to John B. Thompson (2005), this complex role can be broken into six primary functions: gatekeeping and acting as cultural intermediaries; financial investment and risk-taking; content development; quality control; management and coordination; and sales and marketing (2005, pp. 24-6). Such functions place the publisher in a position of key decision-making within the system of fiction publishing.

Under the over-arching umbrella of the publisher, who in turn must answer to publishing directors, company directors or boards of management, it would be easy to assume that such a

structured network of decision-makers would hamper an individual writer's creativity. Such a position is perpetuated in debates that focus on a supposed conflict between a commercial industry and creativity (as outlined in Negus, 1995; Negus & Pickering, 2004). The role publishers and publishing industry professionals play in creativity, however, is not merely a structural or restrictive one. Rather, like Giddens' concept of structuration, the industry can be seen to provide both boundaries and opportunities for creativity to occur, a process individual writers can only partially control.

Giddens (1979; Giddens & Pierson, 1998) saw individuals as at least partially responsible for their own actions, exerting their free will or right to choose within the context of the various social and cultural structures surrounding them. Highlighted here is what Giddens describes as the duality of structure, where action is both enabled and constrained by social structures that are themselves created and reproduced by social action. It is possible to see this duality of structure in the relationship between the publishing industry and the writers, "upon whose copyrights the whole edifice rests" (McPhee, 2002, p. 284). In this sense, individual writers are able to exert some measure of free will within the confines of the commercial publishing industry and in doing so both reproduce and transform that industry with their actions. This emphasis on the interdependence of structure and agency culminated in Giddens' conception of the term 'structuration', which conceptualised structures such as the publishing industry, not as "a barrier to action, but as essentially involved in its production" (1979, p. 49). Rather than an opposition of commerce and creativity, commercial structures can be seen to constrain at the exact same time that they enable and provide opportunities for creative practice, regardless of writing genre.

As seen here, commercial institutions such as those within the publishing industry are not all powerful structures, dictating terms of creativity to individual writers. In some circumstances a writer's capital may outweigh that of the publishing company in various decision making process (Negus & Pickering, 2004; Thompson, 2005). Several of the writers in this study describe occasions where they have used their reputations or symbolic capital to veto or negotiate with editorial decisions.

I've twice, only twice in my whole career since 1988, demanded, I've said, 'okay, I'll buy my book back; give it back to me, I'm not going to have it. What you want to do to my book is so outrageous, here's your advance, give me my book back'. In one case they did give me

my book back and I sold it to someone else and it went ahead without any changes and became a notable child's book. In the other one they said, 'oh well in that case I see what you mean, yes, duh' (Greenwood 6/11/06).

In these cases, the threat of losing a writer (and their accumulated capital) to another publishing company gives that writer considerable bargaining power. While this does not indicate a writer may have complete control over their manuscript during the publication process, it does show that in some circumstances an individual writer is able to exert his or her freewill and make choices within that structure.

Just as individual writers maintain some control of their work within those commercial structures, so too do industry professionals have differing levels of power and influence when making decisions about a writer's manuscript. As publishing director of HarperCollins Australia, for example, Shona Martyn is a key-decision maker who oversees all areas of a book's production as well as broader industry connections. With 20 years experience as a journalist and magazine editor and more than a decade in publishing, Martyn would possess, in Bourdieu's terms, a superior amount of cultural, economic and symbolic capital, and as such, be in a better position of control than those working beneath her in the organisation's hierarchy. Martyn, however, feels there are others within the publishing organisation that more directly influence a writer's manuscript. "I make some contribution but members of my team who are closer to the everyday publication process contribute more" (S. Martyn 10/10/06). For most of the writers interviewed, it is the editor who they work with closely and who most directly influences their work. Despite some disclaimers to the contrary, editors generally contribute significantly to the creative process and, in many ways, may assure success on both a financial and creative level.

5.2.1 The influence of the editor

The role of the editor in Australian fiction publishing is a varied and complex one. In some companies the term 'editor' is attached to several positions including commissioning editors (or publishers), managing editors (in supervising or coordinating capacities) or production editors (in charge of layout and liaising with a printer). Here, the term is applied to those who act as 'manuscript editors' (Poland, 2007a, fn 5), whether they undertake this function as part of a larger role or operate in a dedicated position. These editors deal directly with a manuscript, performing the crucial role of shaping the writer's text at structural and/or surface

levels. Rather than rewriting a manuscript, however, the editor's role is ideally one of 'midwifery', assisting the writer in polishing and perfecting the work before it is communicated to a reader. Janet Mackenzie argues editors must understand and share in "the author's purpose in order to make the best possible publication. As we have said, your aim is not to alter the view or change the scene but make it clearer and closer. You are not a critic but the author's ally and assistant, coaching and coaxing her, enlarging her vision and saving her from her pitfalls" (2004, p. 40). These clarifying and reflective functions of the editorial process are seen in descriptions provided by both literary and genre writers.

They didn't influence the work as such but were instrumental in bringing out the hidden aspects of the work – things I knew but hadn't made available to the reader. They also protected me from my tics – for example, using the word 'rough' on almost every page (Padmore 9/11/06).

They think deeply and perceptively about my work, providing almost an extra mind that helps me get the best out of what I was trying to do. They come up with things I haven't thought of, not so much in the plot, but in the other vital areas of story crafting (Maloney 20/8/06).

They offer suggestions/requests for structural and line edits and although they don't influence *what* I write, they do pick up on better ways to write it (Curtis 21/3/07).

For many of the writers, the editor ideally acts as a midwife for their work, providing support and advice and using their experience to ease them through the experience of publication. Despite these disclaimers to the contrary, whether they derive from a belief in Romantic conceptions of creativity as an individual experience or from perceptions of the writing process as a solitary activity, it is clear that editors do contribute to and influence the creative process.

Like some other areas of the writing and publishing process, it is possible to see Bourdieu's notions of conflict within the editorial field in terms of gender disparity. Descriptions of midwifery and nurturing are representative of editing being typecast as 'women's work'. Although she taps into a largely stereotypical distinction, Elizabeth Weiss argues patience, meticulousness, sensitivity to an author's intentions and the ability to juggle tasks "are typically feminine skills, and it is no wonder that editing is often seen to be women's work" (Weiss, 1995, online). Describing the changing role of women in publishing in the 1970s, Jim

Hart reflects that “women were more likely to be found in nurturing editorial roles which, it was assumed, would benefit from their natural maternal instincts, neat housekeeping and attention to detail” (Hart, 2006, p. 54). Women comprise two-thirds of the publishing industry in general and nine out of every 10 editors more specifically. Although more women are also reaching the upper ranks of the publishing profession, men still dominate senior management and key decision-making positions (Brown, 2003; Brown & White, 2005/2006; Mackenzie, 2004). Louise Poland has researched such gender disparities in the Australian publishing workforce and their impact on the publishing process and the books that result (Poland, 2002, 2007b). While this conflict does not directly engage writers, it is clear that gender disparities in editing could have run-on effects for their work.

As seen in the previous chapter, the field’s influence on the work may occur during the later stages of the writing process with regular or even daily interaction with an editor. For other writers, the editorial process is seen as a discrete stage occurring once their draft manuscript is complete, readying the manuscript for publication according to their publishing house’s own measurements not only for clarity and quality but also for style and presentation. However it is viewed, all of the writers in this study have had an editor work on their manuscript. Despite publishing industry etiquette that suggests an editor’s work should be invisible and the details of the editorial process private (Heyward, 1996; Negus & Pickering, 2004), it is clear that each manuscript was altered in some way during this process. Most of the writers in this study viewed this influence as improving their work. “I know they can really improve a manuscript, there’s no doubt about that. A good editor has changed the work of nearly every good writer” (Dale 21/8/06).

In some instances, writers have reported an editor helping to improve their writing skills and processes rather than the manuscript itself. For Kate Constable being edited “has been wonderful for helping my skills and I think I write much better now than I did when I was first published. Or at least I have a better idea of my faults” (Constable 25/11/06). Similarly Peter Doyle believes he learned more general writing skills “by being edited by a good fiction editor (especially editing my second novel) than from any single other source” (Doyle 14/11/06). Fiona McIntosh picked up more specific skills during the editing of her fourth book. “All of my editors are active and I am very comfortable to listen to their advice and take it. I trust them. One in particular in Australia was influential in *Myrren’s Gift* – she taught me some tips I’ve never forgotten and continue to put into practice in all my work”

(McIntosh 4/10/06). In these cases, interactions with editors have given writers a better idea of the field's criteria for judgement, allowing them to improve future work accordingly. While it is possible that each published writer has undergone a similar process of familiarisation with the field that accumulates over time, most writers in this study saw the influence of an editor as occurring during the interactive editing process of the current manuscript.

Of the 36 writers who were asked or answered questions on the editorial process, 31 saw editors as influential in the development of their manuscript towards publication, making judgements that were then considered by the writer or implemented directly. As in Dale's case, most saw the editor as making vital improvements, though at varying levels. For Ian Irvine, these improvements are less structural and more general. "They rarely shape the work much overall because I usually get the structure and tone pretty right, but their detailed criticisms are vital in improving the work" (Irvine 18/7/06). James Maloney's editors have worked at a structural level, improving but not changing 'the core' of the work. "Most of the editors I have worked with have made some overall structural suggestions, requiring the expansion of some passages, the deletion of others, the re-writing of others still. None of this has seriously changed the core of any of my stories. It has always produced a better story" (Maloney 20/8/06). In Deborah Abela's experience, some editors have been less influential working only at a cosmetic level. Others, however, have dramatically altered her manuscripts. "Some have been crucially influential in that, at the end of the editorial process, the work is completely reshaped" (Abela 18/10/06).

Taken one step further, Abela and eighteen of these writers state that, depending on the individual and their editing style, an editor's contributions to their work could be considered creative. "The good ones, absolutely. They guide you to the real potential in an idea that you may never have seen" (Abela 18/10/06). As seen here, the editor's function moves beyond the critical, some more active than others in contributing ideas rather than simply pointing out problems or places where improvements can be made. "Most of my editors have been supremely creative in suggesting alternatives for things that they thought detracted from the overall push of the story" (Gardner 31/8/06). In such cases not only does the field pass judgement on a work but also actively contributes to the creative process.

Extreme examples of an editor's creative contribution to the writer's manuscript can be found in the relationships T.S. Eliot and Raymond Carver had with various editors who significantly cut, reshaped and added to their original works. In Eliot's case, the release of an annotated version of 'The Waste Land' (Eliot, 1971), showed how his wife Vivien and colleague Ezra Pound had edited the poem, cutting almost half of the original lines, moving others and changing the tone of the piece. For Raymond Carver the influence of his editor Gordon Lish extended far beyond deletion and restructuring. Although the story was well known in the industry for several decades, journalist D.T. Max (1998) and a series of Carver's letters published in *The New Yorker* (Carver, 2007), revealed Lish may not have been exaggerating when he described the work as more his than Carver's.²⁶ Comparisons with original manuscripts show Lish cut up to 70% of some stories, changed endings, and largely constructed what had come to be known as Carver's signature style. Correspondence at the time reveals both Carver's fragile state of mind and deep concern over such aggressive editing.

I don't want to sound melodramatic here, but I've come back from the grave here to start writing stories once more... But I haven't written a word since I gave you the collection, waiting for your reaction, that reaction means so much to me. Now, I'm afraid, mortally afraid, I feel it, that if the book were to be published as it is in its present edited form, I may never write another story, that's how closely, God Forbid, some of those stories are to my sense of regaining my health and mental well-being (Carver, 2007, online).

While none of the writers in this study had experienced similar levels of interference, their editorial experiences were not always positive. Like the relationship between Lish and Carver, different personalities, expectations and requirements have left some writers with mixed feelings about the value of the editorial process.

For most writers, the relationship with their editors is built on trust. In a few cases, writers have been allowed to work with editors of their own choosing, usually those with whom they had an established rapport.

²⁶ Similar claims are made in Australian fiction publishing. During a casual conversation with me at the 2006 Byron Bay Writers' Festival, an acclaimed literary writer said editors had "written" the novels of a popular Australian writer.

That's Helen Chamberlain. That's the one who I've been with for twenty years and we are best friends. There's no question about that... But I trust her and we know each other so well, when stuff comes up, it's over the phone, she's in Melbourne, if her response is 'hmmm', I know it's terrible. If the silence is longer than a micron I know it's wrong. She's always right. So I've been very fortunate (Crew 21/8/06).

When my agent organised the contract for me we organised to have a freelance editor assigned to do my work, the same one who had worked on that fantasy short story because she's been really good and that story went on to win an international award, so I already knew I could work with her and knew she was really good (Cusack 20/8/06).

With most writers having a new editor assigned with different books or publishing houses, however, they must negotiate new relationships with each project and each individual involved.

I've found that every editor is different and also my relationship with every editor is different. I've published with a number of different publishing houses so I've worked with a number of different editors. Some editors are pushy and I don't mind because I like their ideas and some editors take too much of a back seat and I do mind, but sometimes they're pushy and I do mind or they take a back seat and I don't mind, so it depends on the project... So it all depends on the editor and the relationship you have with them and with the people you work with under critique (Wilkins 1/9/06).

Like Wilkins, many of the writers have experienced both positive and negative relationships. Although he had experienced positive editorial relationships, Scot Gardner says he has also "been mismatched with two editors, and both times it was with people who had vastly different understandings of contemporary youth culture to my own. They were painful edits but I still took most of their suggestions on board" (Gardner 31/8/06). James Maloney asked for a particularly intrusive editor to be removed from his project. "While we were working on a long book, she began to shove me aside and take on the role that I felt was properly the author's" (Maloney 20/8/06).

Some writers have noted a growing dissatisfaction with the editorial process, reflected in a shift from deeper structural towards solely cosmetic editing of text, previously undertaken by a copy editor (a trend also seen in Brown, 2003; Brown & White, 2005/2006; Poland, 2007a).

I'd like it to be more, to tell you the truth. I'd actually like an editor who did that kind of stuff but I just don't think publishing companies have the resources to do that any more, to actually put in that amount of time. Usually when they take a manuscript it has to be 90 to 95 per cent there otherwise, you know, it's 'thanks, come back when you've done another version' or it's 'thanks but no thanks'. They tend not to do the really grass-roots type stuff, it just tends to be the line-editing, at least that's what it's been in my experience (Armanno 24/8/06).

As business increases, editors are given more responsibilities and less time to dedicate to nurturing writers and structural level editing of their work.

Most editors are too busy these days. I should imagine some good [manuscripts] never get published because the editors do not have time any more to work on the copy with authors (I. Martyn 10/10/06).

Most don't seem to have much time. They're really pushing it to get everything done – most seem to take work home with them (at no extra pay). Publishers should really look after their editors a bit more, and not hit them with impossible workloads (Collins 15/8/06).

It is ironic given editorial aims to be invisible,²⁷ that editorial staff are often the first victims when budgets must be cut. Here, disparate views on the nature and value of the editorial process have led to fewer than 24% per cent of manuscript editors employed in-house (Brown & White, 2005/2006). Rather, editorial work is freelanced, and given time and budgetary constraints, generally limited to copy editing. As such, changes in the industry are also seeing changes in the roles played by various members of the field of Australian fiction writing. Although it is not clear whether it is cause or effect, what has normally been considered the work of the manuscript editor is now being undertaken prior to submission by a writer's agent. How the agent interacts with both the publishing company and the individual writer has changed dramatically over the last twenty years, expanding on the agent's traditional functions.

²⁷ "Good editors work extremely hard to hide every trace of their work... Try it another way: we only notice editors when their work is sloppy" (Heyward, 1996, p. 10).

5.3 Agent as field

Seventy-five percent of the writers interviewed were represented by an agent or several agents in key locations in Australian and overseas.²⁸ The variety of roles agents play and their value in the industry can be seen in the reasons these writers gave for seeking out such representation. As discussed earlier, some of these agents were sought to increase a writer's chances of publication. "I needed an agent to get my book published as I was the rejection queen" (Gervay 3/10/06). Other writers, like Catherine Padmore, acquired their agents based on the advice of colleagues with experience in being published. "I began working with my agent when I was offered a contract by Allen & Unwin, as most of the published authors I knew recommended it" (Padmore 9/11/06). Also taking the advice of an experienced colleague, James Maloney contracted with an agent to expand his writing career.

Fours years after first publication, when still teaching full-time, I saw that my hobby and passion might become my profession and in order to maximise the chances of this, I felt I needed the advice and guidance of an agent. A colleague suggested his agent who took me on. At first she seemed to do little for me and my wife wanted me to end the connection, but I saw myself as in for the long haul and as I continued to produce books and gain recognition, my agent has proved invaluable (Maloney 20/8/06).

When offered a contract for her second book, Janet Woods contacted an agent she had met in London twelve years previously. "Because I lived in Australia and he lived and worked in London, where my books were set I thought he'd know the markets better than I. He was also experienced with contracts" (Woods 21/7/06). Like Woods, many of the writers signed with agents to have them negotiate contracts, translating the 'legalese' of various business documents. "I had had four books published and a publisher who wanted more. I had no desire to read another contract and so began to search for someone who would read and negotiate with them for me" (Abela 18/10/06).

This contractual work is seen as one of the traditional realms of the agent, advising on and negotiating deals, drafting and overseeing contract details and reaching agreements on

²⁸ In Throsby and Hollister's (2003) survey of artist work, only 25% of writers used an agent or manager for some or all of the promotion of their work. It should be noted, however, that 'writer' in this survey also includes non-fiction writers and those who write for stage, screen, radio and new media (2003, p. 122).

international and translation rights. Amanda Hampson saw the value of having an agent to negotiate on her behalf after a bad experience dealing with a contract on her own.

When I had my first contract I signed it after I had barely read it because I was so happy to have a contract. One of the second ones, I was concerned about it and basically I was screwed over. So when I got this one from Penguin, the toughest contract that I had read, I thought 'I just don't want to deal with this anymore'. I don't know anything about contracts (Hampson 29/8/06).

Emily Maguire was contacted by several agents at a time when she had also been “placed under enormous pressure by my publishers on various matters to do with foreign sales and felt way out of my depth” (Maguire 14/8/06). For Ian Irvine, this role is a vital one allowing the writer to concentrate on other aspects of writing and being published instead of business. “You can't be the nice writer and the tough negotiator to your editor at the same time” (Irvine 18/7/06).

In addition to the contractual role, money from advances, royalties and other sources is also largely handled by the agent, who takes their agreed percentage and then forwards the remaining payments to the writer. Although this function is rarely discussed, several writers mention this as a negative aspect of the writer/agent relationship. Sandy Curtis, for example, was reluctant to sign with an agent “as I already had the contracts and wondered why I should pay commission to someone who had done nothing to earn it” (Curtis 21/3/07). Gary Crew fired his agent after a disagreement on the commission on a particular contract “where a small advance came from a tiny publisher in Indonesia. That was an on-sell of a novel. The advance was two hundred dollars and this person took twenty, her ten percent, and I sacked her” (Crew 21/8/06). Similar criticism shows agents in conflict over money not only with writers but also the publishing industry in general. Indeed, agents are sometimes seen as “unnecessary parasites on a system that worked perfectly well without them” (Flanagan, 2007, p. 140). Flanagan goes on to elaborate, however, that agents are not alone in receiving such criticism.

There is much truth in this, as there was much truth in exactly the same criticism when it was hurled at publishers by booksellers and printers in the eighteenth century, a time when publishers were coming to the fore as a powerful force in the book world. And, like publishers in the eighteenth century, whether we like them or not, agents are here, they are flourishing, and their role is going to grow more, rather than less, important (ibid).

As suggested here, an agent's traditional business manager role has expanded, moving from contractual and financial matters into guiding a writer's choices.

The second component of the agent's traditional role is strategic, advising on appropriate projects and markets, using their knowledge of the industry to facilitate a writer's access and acceptance in those areas. Here, agents provide writers with information about current publishing and sales trends, opportunities and the best means of attracting the attention of a publisher. Several of the writers interviewed had their career path shaped by the guidance provided by their agents about particular projects, genres and publishers.

He helps me choose between possible projects and, by netting me more money than I could get on my own, enables me to pursue the work I would like to do (Williams 4/9/06).

My agent makes little or no editorial comment beyond whether it is up to standard. She has influenced *what* I write, however, by suggesting I try adventure stories for different publishers which I have enjoyed and which have sold well. She encouraged me when I thought I would have a go at fantasy and humorous [Young Adult books]. She has advised me against other changes in direction, for example, when I thought I would write some film scripts based on my earlier work. I didn't go ahead and now feel she was right (Maloney 20/8/06).

They do not influence my writing so much as my strategy, i.e. which book to write next, and where to send it (Forsyth 17/10/06).

The counsel provided by these agents is often based on years of experience inside the publishing industry. Mary Cunnane, for example, had twenty years of publishing experience in New York before moving to Australia where publishing professionals suggested she become an agent.

But I thought that I couldn't be an agent in Australia without having some idea of how the book publishing industry worked from the inside so I took a temporary job for just under a year as the non-fiction publisher at Transworld. I was filling in for someone who was on maternity leave and that was very useful and after eight or nine months or whatever it was, I thought 'okay, I'll start an agency' (Cunnane 4/12/06).

Using this insider knowledge of market trends, publishing houses and particular editors and publishers, agents are able to match their writer's work with the most suitable people and companies for publication. Here, agents directly engage with selling their client's work.

This sales function is the third traditional role of the agent, who submits or pitches manuscripts to publishers on the writer's behalf. Rather than the writer sending unsolicited manuscripts to every company, agents submit to those people in the industry who are most likely to be interested in publishing that particular work, genre or format. The writers interviewed had mixed experiences with agents submitting their works. Both Kate Forsyth and Isolde Martyn had their agents sell their books at auction, this sales technique getting them a better deal for their work. Nick Earls was taken on by Fiona Inglis at Curtis Brown, who believed she could sell the manuscript of what later became *After January*. "So through Curtis Brown in Sydney, I got an agent at Curtis Brown in London, who responded to *Zigzag Street*, sold it over there to a UK publisher. It won an award there. The foreign rights people there then sold it in German. Then again through my agent in Sydney, I got an agent in New York who sold a couple of books there" (Earls 4/8/06). For Venero Armanno, however, this sales aspect was minimal, suggesting only one instance when an agent provided an opportunity for publication. "My first book was published and when I had a second manuscript the agent I had at the time sent it to a publisher who she thought would be interested in it and they were. So I guess she opened those doors and she was able to access publishing houses that I wouldn't have, just because nobody knew who I was" (Armanno 24/8/06). Like Armanno, Paul Collins felt his agents were not very active in submitting and selling his work to various publishers.

I've tried a few over the years. The only one to sell anything for me was a German agent who sold a story, and an American agent who sold two of the three *Earthborn Wars* books for Tor in the US. Others have been a complete waste of time. Agents seem to be good with contracts, but not particularly good at submitting authors' work. Sometimes I wonder whether my [manuscripts] have ever been sent out, or if they were submitted twice, then ditched because they didn't sell (Collins 15/8/06).

Despite these negative experiences with an agent's sales capabilities, this dissatisfaction does not appear to reflect most publishers increasingly relying on agents as a filter and source of manuscripts. Although largely maintaining the three traditional functions described above,

agents have expanded and added to their role both in their relationship with the writer as well as their importance to publishing houses.

With many agents previously employed in key industry positions, it is perhaps unsurprising that agents are increasingly taking on (or over) commissioning/ acquisitions and editorial/ nurturing roles that have traditionally been considered the work of the editor and publisher (Brown, 2003; Callaghan, 2007; Mackenzie, 2004; Murray, 2007). In her study on commissioning editors, Brown (2003) noted that these internal and external industry positions overlap in several ways including: “in initially taking on authors and their work; in the discussion and development of ideas and manuscripts with the author; as a ‘first reader’ of an author’s work in providing editorial and publishing advice; and offering encouragement and support to the author” (Brown, 2003, p. 145). While many of the writers in this study maintain a business manager-style relationship with their agents, one largely based on contracts, publishing advice and sales, their agents do perform editorial services if needed.

My agent does provide feedback on my writing if asked, but he is primarily a business manager (Maguire 14/8/06).

Unless I ask for his advice, he rarely offers an opinion (Woods 21/7/06).

Fine-tunes some of my novels to current market trends – eg, shorter length (McMullen 9/10/06).

My agent will give editorial comment at times, but generally not (Gervay 3/10/06).

Here, the agent/writer relationship expands into editorial or nurturing type roles based on the writer’s needs and expectations. If these functions are performed by others or not required by the writer, interaction largely focuses on the three traditional roles of the agent.

Several writers in this study have experienced less traditional arrangements with their agents, expanding into editorial and nurturing relationships. In these cases, the writers are able to call on agents to help in the development of ideas, editing of structure and content as well as personal and professional support. Carmel Bird describes her agent not just as the first person to read her manuscripts but also as a friend.

Fran will read it and make some very intelligent and critical and telling and important comments and I then can sit down with her and respond to them. I value her judgement very, very highly. When I've done the things we've discussed in response to her reading, I give it back to her and then she starts to sell it... Miracles can happen and people can sell books to publishers without agents, and maybe there are people who can rely on angelic intervention, but having an agent seems to me to be important. Fran is also an incredibly valuable friend and reader (Bird in Phelan, 2005, p. 50).

Kim Wilkins and Louise Cusack describe close and productive relationships with their agent, Selwa Anthony.

I can't speak for other agents, but my agent does [influence my writing], to a certain degree. I'm really close to her and she loves to talk about ideas for stories and suggestions and stuff like that. She's not pushy, she'd never tell me what to write but she's always open and listening and she's always open and listening to what publishers say (Wilkins 1/9/06).

She might give me feedback. Recently she looked at the opening of the mermaid book, which I'm sort of working on the structural edit of, and she made a comment that this thing didn't seem terribly realistic because the brother should have been more upset, blah, blah, blah, because his mother's dead, whatever. So she will make those kinds of editorial comments, get it sorted before it goes off to the publisher, but not creative input in 'I think you should change the world you've set this in' and those sorts of big picture things (Cusack 30/8/06).

Here, it is possible to see Anthony acting as a sounding board and brainstorming partner for ideas, selecting appropriate material, offering editorial advice and providing encouragement and support, all roles previously performed by editors and publishers.²⁹

Anthony is not unique in providing additional services to her writers. Many are able to offer editorial advice and services based on their knowledge of publishing houses and what may be considered both valuable and appropriate to their editors or publishers. Mary Cunnane says she works "intensively" with her writers at an editorial level. "I very, very much enjoy, and that's probably because I was a publisher and an editor for twenty years, the editorial aspects,

²⁹ Anthony takes these supportive and encouraging relationships with her writers a step further, holding "yearly seminars for my authors, by invitation only, and we have the SASSY awards - Selwa's Author Success Stories of the Year - with little black statues that are similar to my logo" (Anthony, 2002, p. 3). As part of her 'Australian Voices in Print' program, she also organised the Popular Australian Readers' and Writers' Festival, which includes many of her clients as presenters and panellists. Not only do these events publicise her writers' work, they provide opportunities to develop friendships, mentoring relationships and support networks amongst the writers themselves. "It's like a family" (ibid.).

that and being able to call up someone and say ‘your first novel has been taken up by a publisher’. There’s a lot of pleasure in that” (Cunnane 4/12/06). Deborah Callaghan of Callaghan Literary Management also works at an editorial level with her clients. “I read manuscripts progressively and offer guidance and encouragement. A writer sometimes feels isolated and vulnerable, but cannot be on the phone to their publisher all the time. That’s where I come in” (Callaghan, 2007, pp. 40-1). Despite what may be seen to be incursions into the territory of the editor and publisher, agents are seen more and more as a valuable and often powerful element in the publishing industry, establishing their own territory not only in editorial and supporting roles but also as decision-makers and arbiters of taste.

As the evidence above shows, agents are considerably more active than a simple gatekeeping role suggests. They are not limited to accepting and rejecting ideas and manuscripts but are engaged in a series of negotiations with writers, editors, publishers and other industry players. In this sense, agents can be seen as intermediaries who make decisions and take actions that can affect a writer and their work in the different ways described above. Acting as intermediaries primarily between writers and publishing companies, agents exert a certain amount of cultural authority as shapers of taste. Just as editors and publishers are valued for their ability to predict what will be valued (“You see, Hilary [McPhee] had an amazing ability to keep her finger on the pulse. She knew what was going to be popular” (Greenwood 6/11/06)), so too do agents forecast or even shape the publishing and bookselling zeitgeist. Selwa Anthony, for example, began promoting and selling Australian popular fiction manuscripts at a time when very little was being published. “For every publisher that started in popular fiction, I can show you one of their first authors that I gave them... We’ve got a popular fiction list now that is as good as anywhere in the world” (Anthony in Phelan, 2005, p. 23). With an established reputation, agents such as Anthony, Fiona Inglis and Mary Cunnane are able to influence cultural tastes and trends through their mediation between writers and publishing companies, a position of importance within the field that is legitimated and reproduced by those houses that have positioned themselves to increasingly rely on agents to supply new works. By accepting manuscripts suggested by agents, publishers in turn help to build that agent’s reputation and create a dependence on those who are able to use their own knowledge and taste to consistently predict which manuscripts will make successful books.

The line between an agent's professional and personal taste is a thin one, with many relying on a 'feel' for what will become successful derived from experience and knowledge of the industry as well as subjective likes and dislikes. Inglis and Cunnane describe this sense as a 'gut instinct' and an 'eye' respectively.

You have to go on gut instinct, but experience is always very useful in making a decision. I trained in publishing for many years, in sales and then in editorial. I learned what made a book 'work' in the marketplace, and how to make it the best possible product. Of course, there are still no guarantees (Inglis 28/11/06).

A few decades in publishing and you have, you have to have an eye, you develop an eye for quality of writing, you understand and have a sense of the market, you understand pretty quickly whether something is sellable or not. You have to have a sense of your own personal taste (Cunnane 4/12/06).

This blurring of personal taste and professional knowledge and experience has created a working *habitus*, described by Johnson as "a 'feel for the game', a 'practical sense' (*sens pratique*) that inclines agents to act and react in specific situations in a manner that is not always calculated and is not simply a question of conscious obedience to rules. Rather it is a set of dispositions which generates practices and perceptions" (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993a, p. 5). This *habitus* allows these agents to build relationships and reputations within the publishing industry. Agents, however, are not the only members of the field that rely on this both personal and professional feel for their work. Brown's (2003) study shows commissioning editors and publishers develop a similar working *habitus* for selecting and working with a manuscript. Editors, publishers and agents each utilise this *habitus* to make critical judgements about a writer's work that affect its production and eventual reception by an audience. As members of the field, their decisions represent early moments of social validation that are crucial in determining whether a fiction book may be considered creative. Although they generally interact with a manuscript after (or in the last phases of) production, critics and other media workers also represent an important point of social validation in the dynamic system of Australian fiction writing.

5.4 Critics and the media as field

Following on from the physical production of a book, critics and other media workers often represent another gauntlet of social judgement a writer must pass through to be considered creative. For many domains, the media plays an influential role that can feed back into the production process, not only in partially controlling the flow of new information to the audience but also as a site for social validation that may affect audience perceptions, sales and other means of support. In the theatrical domain, for example, poor newspaper reviews for a play have led to extensive revisions, dramatically shortened runs or even closure (Biggsby & Wilmeth, 2000; Booth, 1991). In the domain of popular music, radio programmes and programming (and increasingly television and music videos) have been influential in shaping audience tastes and increasing demand for particular artists and songs (P. McIntyre, 2004). In both these cases the choices and opinions of critics and media operatives form a crucial part of the dissemination, viewing or understanding of particular works. The impact of criticism and media exposure on Australian fiction and its writers is less clear. Tight-knit (often exclusionary) networks of critics and media workers and decreasing space for reviews in mainstream media have many of the writers in this study questioning the importance of criticism in their domain. Primary among these concerns is how and why particular books are chosen to be reviewed.

In his longitudinal study of a variety of British newspapers' literary editors, James Curran (2000) found the selection and treatment of books for review were influenced by the complex social network of the literary community. "Its core is made up of writers, publishers, literary agents and literary journalists, who are bound together by social ties based on friendship, sexual partnership, work, educational background, club membership or neighbourhood" (Curran, 2000, p. 230). Given Australia's more concentrated publishing and media industries, it is unsurprising that similarly complex social relationships are also apparent in its community as well as the review pages of its newspapers, magazines and journals. The relationships of critic Peter Craven, for example, have been identified as an example of one such network.

Winner of the Pascall Prize for Criticism, Craven met Michael Heyward while studying at Melbourne University. Together they founded and edited the now-defunct literary magazine *Scriptsi*. With Heyward now co-owner and publisher of Text Publishing, Cassandra Pybus

finds it “a very curious situation, much remarked upon in literary circles, that Craven manages to review every book published by Text, as well as puff them unrestrainedly in his newspaper column. Much more often than not he declares the book to be remarkably good” (Pybus in ABR, 2000, p. 26). In addition to this, while editing the *Best Australian Short Stories* anthologies, Craven twice published work by his otherwise unpublished friend Colin Oehring, whom he also nominated for a mentorship with Nobel laureate Toni Morrison (Knox, 2004; Wyndham, 2002). Although it is not clear to what degree these situations can be explained by Australia’s small literary community or put down to intentional influence, Mark Davis (1997) used Craven as just one example of Australia’s ‘cultural elite’, a group of arts and media commentators who set the cultural and intellectual agenda with commentary that reinforces current standards and strictly polices new ideas.³⁰

This view of critics like Craven as calculating arbiters of culture is not one shared by the writers in this study. For them, the shaping of taste through positive and negative reviews has less effect on their work (or the perception of their work) than having work excluded or omitted from media attention.

A bad review is at least as good as or even better than a good one. I generally subscribe to the view that as long as you’re being reviewed, you’re alive (Crew 21/8/07).

Any mention of your book is good exposure... A good review makes the author feel good and will generate a few sales. But a bad one can do the same (Woods 21/7/06).

The one slightly negative review that I had was in *The Australian*. I was sort of flattered to even be reviewed by *The Australian*; it’s not easy to get reviewed. So I was thinking to get it reviewed full stop, that is a validation (Hampson 29/8/06).

Here, any cultural ‘elitism’ manifests not as written opinion but as an absence of opinion at all. The writers in this study have described this apparent deficit of mainstream media attention, in the form of articles, interviews or reviews on Australian fiction writers and their work, in three ways: firstly, a decline in review space; secondly, a preference for international writers; and thirdly, an overemphasis on non-fiction and a bias towards literary and popular

³⁰ Craven defended his position in a review of Davis’s *Gangland*, arguing “it is sometimes the case that in the real, as opposed to the academic, world, people say exactly what they think for no better reason than they think it” (Craven, 1997).

fiction. A survey of the mainstream media's book coverage over a four-week period shows each of these reasons to be true to different degrees (see figure 2).³¹

At a national level, Australian fiction represented 13% of total review output for the month. State-based newspapers averaged marginally less than their national counterparts at 12%. The coverage of Australian fiction writers and their work in feature articles or interviews was slightly higher at 14% in the national papers and magazines and 17% in state-based papers. Overall, Australian fiction represented 12% of total reviews and 15% of total features written. For many writers and industry professionals, these figures show a decline in mainstream media coverage of Australian fiction specifically and books in general over time. "The Sydney Morning Herald's Spectrum section looks more and more anorexic every week" (Ivor Indyk in ABR, 2000, p. 28).

Publication	Book-related Features	Features (Aust fiction)	Book Reviews	Reviews (fiction)	Reviews (Aust fiction)
National Newspapers and Magazines					
The Weekend Australian	21	3	66	18	4
Australian Literary Review	6	1 (includes 4 Aust fiction works)	12	5	2
Australian Book Review			26	4	2
Good Reading	9	1	56 (including 4 reader reviews)	44	11 (4 YA, 4 children's)
State-based Newspapers					
Canberra Times	19	3	63	25	7
Sydney Morning Herald	7	1	66	35	6
Courier Mail			48	23	6 (2 on <i>His Illegal Self</i>)
The Age	16	3	88	29	9
West Australian			23	11	4
Total	78	12	448	194	51

Figure 2: Survey of book coverage in mainstream media (February 2008)

³¹ This survey of mainstream media was conducted by the researcher over February 2008, involving examination of hardcopy and online versions of newspapers and magazines. Where these resources were unavailable, supplemental information was gathered from *Media Extra* (Thorpe Bowker, 2008), an electronic guide listing those books mentioned/reviewed in various Australian media. Information gathered from these sources was then cross-referenced to ascertain fiction/non-fiction and Australian/non-Australian status. The media were chosen to reflect both a national and state based perspective. One newspaper was chosen from each of five states (NSW, QLD, VIC, ACT and WA) based not on overall circulation but on the largest coverage given to books.

In most cases, media coverage of books is subject to similar pressures as other areas of journalism, where economic rationalisation and boosting profits means fewer experienced specialists, tighter deadlines and budgets and a shrinking amount of space to cover a large array of writers and works (ABR, 2000; Flanagan, 2007). Interestingly, this is not true across journalism as a whole with Australian media coverage of sport, for example, rising steadily as space for the arts decreases. Whether this reflects broader trends in society remains to be seen. Such a contrast shows book sections are not only subject to journalism's pressures, but also to its values. Curran (2000) argues that, of the news values journalists and editors apply to the selection of stories (and consequently of books to review), the journalistic axiom 'people are more interesting than things' may account for the dominance of non-fiction books (particularly biography). In these cases journalists are able to expand their articles and reviews to discuss not only the work at hand but also the personal, social and cultural contexts and opinions of its writer or subject. "With speculative fiction, it's one of the harder genres to publicise and to get interviews with because normally with interviews there's some angle the interviewer can talk to you about, but when the book's not even set on our planet, it's different and puts them off" (Cusack 30/8/06).

News values that favour reporting on well-known people over those who are not also apply. This means Australian fiction must also compete for media attention with international writers who are given celebrity-like coverage.

Local papers and media are much more interested in giving support it seems to overseas writers than local ones (Pakeman 24/7/06).

Better media coverage of local writers would be helpful. On any given weekend the major papers' review pages are skewed towards international writers (Maguire 14/8/06).

Agent Mary Cunnane says it is often difficult for her Australian fiction clients to compete for space with 'big-name' writers. She says journalists and literary editors will rarely choose to devote already limited space to Australian works when an international writer is visiting the country or has released a new work.

If there's a novel by Phillip Roth or Margaret Atwood or someone of that stature, they're going to get a lot of the review section. A double page or full page spread in one of the review sections may mean one

or two reviews of Australian books won't get printed. Should readers be deprived of those big name books? Probably not, but I guess overall one would wish for more space for Australian books (Cunnane 4/12/06).

For Carmel Bird, a preference for international writers is symptomatic of a greater cultural cringe within Australia, where you still have to 'make it' overseas in order to be recognised here.

Again this is an historical thing, and maybe there will never be a solution; maybe we will always be the poor cousin at the arse end of the world. Peter Carey and Lily Brett have devised a marvellous personal solution – they live in New York but still identify as Australian writers. This gives them international credibility, particularly in Australia (which still tugs the forelock to the powers in faraway places) (Bird 19/7/06).

Although this cultural cringe can be seen throughout the history of book publishing in Australia, it is unclear whether this same sentiment can be applied to the media. Rather than expressing a cultural cringe, media operatives may simply be following long established news-values that privilege people over objects and names that are well-known to the greatest number of people over unknowns. This does not, however, negate the fact that a large number of Australian fiction writers, particularly those published for the first time, will not have their work reviewed in this country's mainstream media.

Opportunities for mainstream media coverage are even more limited for writers in genre categories such as science fiction or fantasy and even those writing for child or young adult audiences. These writers are faced not only with a bias for well-known international writers but also for those producing literary or (to a lesser extent) popular fiction.

My fiction is considered 'genre', so is rarely seriously reviewed. But it all helps (Doyle 14/11/06).

If genre books were given more attention in Australia, it would make my life far easier (Pennicott 4/10/06).

Review opportunities are so very limited for children's writing (Constable 25/11/06).

Not much reviewing of kids' books in the mass media (except Harry Potter) (Horsfield 26/9/06).

Given their general exclusion from mainstream media, it is perhaps unsurprising that it is writers in science fiction and fantasy genres who take advantage of or create alternative or online media. "The speculative fiction community are all online. It's all about web presence" (Cusack 30/8/06). Genre or writer inspired online communities as well specialist magazines (with online and traditional delivery) appear to offer the most support to local writers.

Aurealis magazine publishes only Australian authors. We split reviews into science fiction/horror/small press (historically written by Bill Congreve and now by Keith Stevenson) and fantasy reviews (written by Kate Forsyth)... For issue 40 Kate wrote 6241 words. Keith wrote 5279 words (he did include a small piece on the new Gollancz modern SF classics series, which included a Greg Egan's title). Issue 40 ran to 118 pages. The reviews ran: SF pp. 94-106; fantasy pp. 107-117 (Mayne, 2008).

As mentioned earlier, some of this exclusion from mainstream media may be attributed to journalistic values and pressures to write stories and reviews in particular ways to interest newspaper readers. In this case, however, many of the writers in this study perceive an intentional bias.

I think there's a lot of snobbery towards genre writers. It is virtually impossible to be even reviewed in mainstream media when you write genre... I think journalists, reviewers, etc, have to recognise that writing fantastical fiction is just as deserving and worthy as say crime fiction (which is taken a lot more seriously) (Pennicott 4/10/06).

Writers of popular fiction don't get reviewed by major newspapers, which are very arty-tarty and cater for minority readers only. If we did, they'd rip us apart because we write to entertain. I've had wonderful reviews though from the US Booklist, the prestigious library review journal (Jacobs 23/4/06).

I would say it has a pretty positive national profile, hampered as the media is by its emphasis on particular authors, particular genres, particular issues, etc. Our bestselling authors don't write mainstream or realist fiction, and it would be nice to see them celebrated more often (Williams 4/9/06).

What may be called the literary community like the reviewers, book councils, universities and so on, really do only favour Australian literary fiction, whereas Australian readers are reading something quite different, obviously, that's why we keep getting these articles about the death of literary fiction and sad sales of literary fiction... So Australian fiction has a good national profile amongst its readers but I think the Australian literary community, you know, that sort of review culture and so on, hasn't quite caught on that that's where the core stuff is happening in Australian fiction (Wilkins 1/9/06).

Distinctions between genres based on ideas of high and low art, however, are often arbitrary with books such as *Great Expectations*, *Frankenstein*, *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Lion, The Witch and Wardrobe* inhabiting multiple categories or achieving literary success over time. For Curran (2000), this bias for literary works as well as a more general exclusion of genre works from media coverage show media operatives working in the area often possess quite contradictory and conflicting values. "Many literary editors despise formula novels, yet publish reviews which follow journalistic formulae. They disdain market values in fiction, yet compete in the market place. Their first love is generally literature, yet they allocate more space to biography" (2000, p. 226).

Considering these seemingly contradictory values as well as a general exclusion from mainstream media, it is unsurprising that some of the writers in this study question the role or value of journalists and critics in the creative process. For many of the writers, the role a critic plays is limited in usefulness. For Emily Maguire, "reviewers play a very small role. Only a small percentage of readers read, trust and remember reviews. Word of mouth and a public profile have been far more important to the perception of my work" (Maguire 14/8/06). Paul Collins believes good reviews do not necessarily affect his book sales although "it's nice to read good reviews, and lousy to read bad reviews. But I doubt my readers will say, 'I'm not reading that because I've read a bad review of it'" (Collins 15/8/06). Although he believes they can generally be useful, Nick Earls says there are several problems with the way Australian fiction books are reviewed. Primary among those "is a mismatch between reviewers and books where literary editors who have a lot of time pressures can sometimes find themselves giving books to people who are just not that book's natural reader and so it doesn't get a fair hearing" (Earls 4/8/06). Regardless of these flaws in the current system of reviewing, it is clear from these comments that the writers in this study believe critics do play some small role as members of the field of Australian fiction writing.

For the most part, the writers in this study found critics and their reviews were useful largely in terms of exposure to an audience. As well as word of mouth or bookshop browsing, reviews can alert a potential reader or buyer that a writer has released a new work.

They create an awareness that the work actually exists, which is important (Redhead 23/4/06).

From a writer's point of view, in a pragmatic sense, book reviews are a way of telling people the book exists. If they work out well they might lure a few readers to it (Earls 4/8/06).

Reviewing can let readers know about a book... It is good to have some pages of newspapers devoted to reviews, etc, as this keeps the literary culture visible (Bird 19/7/06).

In this role of making works 'visible', reviews are able to alert people not only to its existence but also to its plot or who the book's most appropriate audience may be (particularly when dealing with works for children and young adults). Beyond this bulletin-board function, most writers in this study do not believe reviewing directly affects the creative process. Rather it merely acts as one of several conduits to the reader. However, closer examination of writer responses as well as the appropriation of review material reveals critics may have a more important role to play as field members with their influence reaching back into the production process.

Although just over half of the writers in this study did not believe critics or their reviews influenced their writing, several writers have gone on to describe effects that contradict those statements. In his advice to other writers, Venero Armanno reveals both positive and negatives reviews can influence the writer during the drafting of a subsequent manuscript. "In general reviews have been really good but a writer really has to learn to not take any notice because if you take notice of your good reviews, you start to subconsciously working towards those. If you take notice of the bad reviews, sometimes you start avoiding the things that make you unique" (Armanno 24/8/06). Although Armanno appears to consider this a negative influence, the effects of reviewing were not always perceived to hinder the writer in their work. A negative review on her first published novel challenged Amanda Hampson to do better with her next one.

I found it quite exhilarating to be criticised. Sounds a bit contradictory, but I thought ‘yeah, okay, I think I can do better’. He felt the past narrative should have been a book of its own. It was a mixed review, you’d have to say, but I felt I could lift my game, get to another level (Hampson 29/8/06).

James Maloney also felt this potential for a review to motivate a writer to perform better. “Reviewers are part of the quality control in literature. If you don’t write well enough to get a mostly favourable response from them, you will struggle to keep getting published, so they are a stimulus for writing well” (Maloney 20/8/06).

This idea of critics as ‘quality control’ is an important one in explaining why many writers seek out and highly value mainstream and alternative reviews. Despite concerns about mutually beneficial networks, exclusion and bias in Australian fiction criticism as well as their belief that critics do not play an important role in their work, most writers will attempt to have their work reviewed in some format. Further, when asked what they thought may be done to improve the national profile of Australian fiction, providing more space or opportunities for criticism and review was the most common suggestion from the writers and other industry professionals interviewed for this study.

Needs more outlets for review and discussion, e.g. on TV (Edwards 22/8/06).

Bookshops, publishers and especially reviewers could focus more on home grown talent rather than giving precious review space to overseas books (Collins 15/8/06).

I think that more space for books would be good. I think it would be good if *The Australian* and the Fairfax papers had a daily book review column and it wasn’t just on weekends. That would be five more reviews a week and that’s important (Cunnane 4/12/06).

Given these comments, although the system of criticism may be less than ideal, for these writers it remains an important site for exposure, feedback and social validation.

This value is indicated largely in the review quotes used in further promotional material, on the front and back cover of the current book or in subsequent works. By reproducing reviews,

publishers and writers indicate that value should be placed on that critic's opinion. Ian Irvine describes this seemingly paradoxical nature of criticism.

To significantly bump sales up, you need reviews and articles in a good cross-section of the media, and that's unlikely before you've sold a truckload of books. One average-sized review in a big city paper might sell twenty or thirty books – a hundred if you're lucky. Besides, most people who read popular fiction don't read reviews. And don't expect to get glowing reviews – they're very rare. Don't get too upset about the stinkers, either. Ignore them and use the good ones – quotes on book covers do make a difference (Irvine, 2005).

Readers encounter these truncated reviews in the form of book blurbs while browsing in either a bookshop or library, connecting the critic or his institution or publication more closely with that of the physical object than if they had read the entire review in a newspaper. The value connotations associated with this name may then act as a confirmation of the reader's interest or even as seal of approval for purchase.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1988), this trust in the opinions of critics to either inform or confirm our own opinions is true of almost all creative endeavours.

If we think about it, the reason we believe that Leonardo or Einstein was creative is that we have read that that is the case, we have been told it is true; our opinions about who is creative and why ultimately are based on faith. We have faith in the domains of art and science, and we trust the judgement of the field (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 327).

From this position, although it remains unclear to what degree a newspaper or magazine review may influence sales of Australian fiction,³² what is clear is that critics and other media operatives have some influence or importance in the social validation of Australian fiction writing. Although such findings may dispel commonly held assumptions on critics and their work, like other intermediaries in the system of Australian fiction writing they can influence the exposure and discussion of a work, a buyer's purchase and the way the publishing company promotes and presents a book as well as the continued writing practices of the individual writer.

³² No figures are available for Australia. However, one British survey (cited in Curran, 2000) found 24% of book buyers were influenced in their decision by a review.

5.5 Readers as field

Sawyer (2006) argues that while intermediaries like editors, agents and critics play a necessary role in evaluating and selecting creative works, “the ultimate test for a creative work is whether or not it’s accepted by a broad audience” (2006, pp. 126-7). As the generally accepted audience of fiction writing, readers (with their widely varying degrees of knowledge, experience or expertise) constitute yet another point of social validation for Australian fiction writers. Some writers believe the reader is a more significant point of judgement or validation than the process of criticism and review. “It’s for the readers and they’re the judges and they put their money where their approval is” (Jacobs 23/8/06). Like that of reviewers, however, the influence of readers on both the writer and other components of the system of Australian fiction writing involves a complex network of relationships, actions and understandings. These include sales, fan mail and feedback, interaction in person or online, the nature of active and productive audiences as well as the writer’s own reading habits and ideas about their audience.

Perhaps the most seemingly direct influence of readers on writers occurs during the planning, drafting and editing process with their understanding of a potential or known audience. With these ideas about readers, stories can be crafted and shaped to appeal to or to be understood by particular groups of people. When asked whether they worked with an audience or reader in mind, approximately a third of the writers interviewed said they did, describing the desire to firstly attract and then to maintain a reader’s interest in their work. “I do keep the reader close. How might I tempt this mysterious entity into the story and ensure he or she continues reading?” (Padmore 9/11/06). A large number of these responses were from writers who had produced books specifically aimed at children or young adults. Here, they write considering their work’s appeal to these audiences as well as age-appropriate themes and language.

I have the story in mind, the characters and the plot. I do, however, sometimes simplify my language in the editing process when I know I’m writing for a younger age group, and certainly when I’m planning a book I know what audience I expect will read it (Forsyth 28/8/06).

When I come to write the historical fiction, I try a little bit to think where this is interesting to me, would this be interesting to a fourteen... these historical fictions are aimed at 10-14 year olds (Tucker 17/8/06).

Definitely an audience of teenagers... So I do think of the teenager and I try not to think of the teenage girl. I try to also have enough interest in there for boys to read it though I doubt they will unless it's part of the curriculum (Wilcock 8/5/06).

Here, general perceptions of audience and what is considered age appropriate are drawn from the writer's own experience in childhood or raising children or may even be derived from specific guidelines made by the publisher or booksellers.³³

For those writing for adults or what may be considered a general audience, conceptions of their readers varies from general ideas about a mass audience to a known reader/ship. Peter Doyle, for example, writes with one specific person in mind, shaping his work according to what he knows of that real or imagined reader's preferences. "I imagine usually a single reader – an editor, my wife, my daughter, my ex-brickie friend, a scholar somewhere who I think might read the finished thing. I find it very helpful to imagine an actual reader" (Doyle 14/11/06). In contrast, Sean Mullen aims his work at both known and unknown groups of readers. "I put my existing audience first, but always try to leave scope for a wider audience to try my work" (McMullen 9/10/06). For other writers, ideas about their audience come directly from the readers themselves in the shape of fan mail or other forms of correspondence. "As my stories are written *for* people to read, of course I bear readers in mind. I encourage readers to contact me and learn a great deal from their emails/letters. I get hundreds a year" (Jacobs 23/8/06).

Correspondence or interaction with an audience not only gives the writers an idea about their readers but can explicitly affect the work with the feedback given. This is particularly apparent for those writing a succession of fiction works based on the same or similar settings, characters or themes. One of the first writers to publish in a serialised format as well as to make personal contact with his audience, Charles Dickens used reader feedback to reshape his original story outline or to emphasise increasingly popular characters (Ackroyd, 1990; Hayward, 1997). As discussed in the previous chapter, Deborah Abela used her fan mail in a similar way for idea generation during the writing process with her young readers "suggesting gadgets or sometimes the letters have a theme that comes through that the kids really want

³³ In 2006, Scholastic Australia pulled John Dale's children's thriller *Army of the Pure* (a book they had commissioned) because booksellers had concerns about its antagonists belonging to a Muslim extremist group (Waldren & Minus, 2006). Although several books with Islamic terrorist characters were published around the same time, this was not felt to be appropriate material for younger readers.

addressed, e.g. ‘When will the lead characters kiss?’” (Abela 10/10/06). This feedback from the audience is similar to Abela’s experience writing for children’s television. “Kids would email seconds after the show had gone off air and tell me what they thought about it. It was instant feedback and we always took it very seriously. They were the audience after all” (Abela 29/8/06).

For many writers, the internet allows for almost instantaneous feedback or interaction with their readers at any stage of the writing process, pre- or post-publication. Thirty-six of the forty writers interviewed had publicly available websites, all of which included email addresses, contact/feedback forms or blogs, forums and bulletin boards with comment facilities. These sites and the accompanying communication tools allow the writers themselves to take either a proactive or reactive approach to their readers, whether soliciting responses to posed questions and writing samples or in responding themselves to questions or feedback. “I stay in touch with hundreds of readers around the world and make myself very available to the fantasy audience via email... I run a busy bulletin board and make myself available to all members several times a day to answer questions, discuss writing and so on” (McIntosh 4/10/06). With these websites giving readers and writers greater access to each other, writers are better able to conceive of their audience, tapping into demographic information and their likes and dislikes or more specifically gauging their reactions to characters, settings and storylines. Fantasy writer Cecilia Dart-Thornton (2007), for example, published an additional chapter to her *Bitterbynde* trilogy on her website after readers expressed dissatisfaction with its original ending. This kind of audience input into the creative process is common across many media forms including television (Jenkins, 2006b), radio (Adams & Massey, 1995) and, more recently, computer and console gaming (Banks, 2002).

The internet, however, is not just a site for writers to gain feedback or to interact with their readers. Readers have taken this form of communication and created opportunities to be productive themselves, reshaping the system of Australian fiction writing with their own writing or through the meanings they produce and share with other readers. Personal, book or genre related websites offer readers access not only to the writer of a book but also to other readers. Discussions amongst readers form interpretive communities (Radway, 1984) that discuss, argue and analyse stories, characters and other book details. The Kate Forsyth discussion forums at *sffworld.com* and *labyrinth.net.au*, for example, include several discussions with Forsyth herself on writing, publishing and working with small children as

well as hundreds of ‘threads’ where readers explore issues such as character relationships, possible mistakes in the books, feminist themes, clarifications on the magic system and the possibility of more books in a series. Where previously reading and any associated fandom was seen as isolated and passive, the activity of readers within these blogs and forums shows they are active not only in terms of making meaning and interpreting the works but also in sharing and arguing those opinions with others.

This conception of the audience as active, interpretive communities aligns with communication and media theories such as the encoding/decoding model proposed by Stuart Hall (1980) and applied to television audiences by David Morley (1980). Individual audience members do not necessarily passively consume Australian fiction books. Rather, at the level of making meaning, these individuals may and do take preferred, negotiated or oppositional readings of those texts. While audiences have some boundaries placed on the meaning they can ‘decode’ from texts, it is misleading to assume that they automatically understand and accept the writer’s intended ‘encoded’ messages as predicted in one-way transmission or hypodermic models of communication (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). Nick Earls, for example, found some foreign readers had different conceptions to his own of the setting in his works. “When [*Zigzag Street*] first came out in Europe, I remember getting this email from someone in Sweden going ‘this Brisbane sounds so exotic, people live in houses up on sticks’ and I think that was the first time in history someone had put the words Brisbane and exotic in the same sentence” (Earls 4/8/06). Taking readers’ internet activity into account, it is possible to see all three types of meaning being expressed and argued within emails and the chats, blogs and forums associated with these online interpretive communities. This activity explicitly shows them to be consumers as well as, to some extent, co-producers of the text.

Taking this a step further, not only can readers be seen as productive in the meaning they make from existing texts but the internet has seen a prolific amount of audience produced texts based on those understandings. Fans of various books, films, television programmes and songs take characters, themes, settings and storylines from existing texts and either rework or add elements to those works to create new texts either for private consumption or not-for-profit dissemination amongst fan communities. Fans of particular writers or novels most often produce short-stories referred to as fan fiction (or fanfic), although larger formats are not uncommon. Despite a drastic increase since the advent of the internet, fan fiction is not a new phenomenon. Carolyn Sigler (1998; 1997), for example, has collected and analysed fan

fiction produced by women in the 1800s in response to Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books. According to leading fan fiction and productive audience theorist Henry Jenkins (1992; 2006a; 2006b), the most prolific category of fan fiction, based on the television series *Star Trek* and its four subsequent spin-off series, developed in the 1960s also prior to the widespread use of computers in the home and workplace. It appears that, at least since the 19th Century, just as writers have produced works by asking 'what if?', so too have readers taken those texts and asked 'what next?' to add new layers of meaning the writer never intended in the original text.

Although the bulk of publicly available fan fiction is based on popular fantasy and science-fiction texts from the United States and United Kingdom, Australian fiction writing has also been used for many fan fiction works. In the largest online collection of fan fiction stories, *fanfiction.net*, stories have been written based on works by Australian writers Isobelle Carmody, Emily Rodda, Matthew Reilly, Traci Harding, Juliet Marillier and Garth Nix, as well as Kate Constable and Sean Williams, who were both interviewed for this research. Although it is not clear how much engagement these particular writers have with the fan fiction derived from their works,³⁴ these forms of amateur writing have led to professional publication and, to some extent, reshaped the domain of Australian fiction writing. Given the view of writers as critical readers themselves in Chapter 3, it is unsurprising that they may then be considered members of the field alongside more general readers.

Although generally derided as the product of low-brow culture and treated with "benign neglect" by those institutions whose copyright has been breached (Jenkins, 2006b, p. 43), some works that can be considered fan fiction have moved from the realm of non-commercial or amateur works to professional publications. Several Australian writers and publishing companies, for example, have used the popularity of fan fiction to produce commercial texts based on 'shared worlds'. For *The Lost Shimmaron* and *Quentaris* series and the *New Ceres* internet magazine (Nahrung, 2007b), one or more writers have invented science-fiction or fantasy worlds with varying levels of back-story, characters and events. These and other writers then use this common information to produce original short stories or novels. Each new story or book adds more detail to the common pool from which the next writers may

³⁴ Contemporary writers have had different reactions to work produced by fans and displayed on the internet. Some writers have appreciated fan efforts and activities while others have reacted like Anne Rice, who feels distress and anger over imitation stories (Razer, 2004).

draw on. In the case of *New Ceres*, there is also “a world-building wiki that subscribers can play with, and provision for people to write ‘fan fiction’ within the world” (Roberts in Nahrung, 2007b, p. 18).

In a similar way, writers have also explicitly drawn on shared information from the domain of existing texts, writing authorised sequels, prequels or different versions of well-known works. The popular *Star Wars* movies, for example, have spawned a range of authorised (and occasionally fan written) books, Sean Williams contributing three *New Jedi Order: Force Heretic* books as well as the stand-alone novel *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed*. Despite stereotypes to the contrary, this type of re-imagining is also common outside of the science fiction and fantasy genres with many commercially available sequels or ‘continuing adventures’ of classic works such as *War and Peace*, *Peter Pan*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Anna Karenina*, *Jane Eyre* and *Huckleberry Finn*. In 2006, Australian literary writer Geraldine Brooks won the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for a re-telling of Louisa M. Alcott’s *Little Women* in her novel *March*.

In some circumstances, this type of direct re-imagining or what Henry Jenkins describes as ‘cultural poaching’ (1992; 2006a; 2006b) can be seen as an extension of a child’s natural desire to imitate adult behaviour (Piaget, 1945; Tomasello, Kruger, & Ratner, 1993; Vygotsky, 1962). Kim Wilkins, for example, describes her early attempts at writing as drawing heavily on texts she read as a child. “It was not unusual for me as a child to finish a story I really liked and then sort of start writing a sequel, which I didn’t get very far into. I had no idea of intellectual property or anything like that. To me the stories, the reading and the writing urge were kind of the same” (Wilkins 1/9/06). As with other forms of cultural learning, imitation or emulation is often explicitly encouraged in order to learn and master the domain of writing. It is common practice in writing classes offered in primary, secondary, tertiary and other forms of adult education, for example, to give exercises where students are asked to imitate the ‘voice’ of a given author or the style of a fragment of work (DeCristofaro, 2001; Morley, 2007). While many of these imitations are never seen outside the classroom or are hidden in the bottom drawer, it is clear that explicit emulation of a writer’s work or style is both an accepted form of learning as well as a popular form of both amateur and professional writing.

Rather than directly emulating voice or style, many writers can point to the more subtle influences other writers or works have on aspects of their own writing. Dave Lockett, for example, noted that several writers affected his writing in different ways. “Jack Vance, for colour. Ursula Le Guin. If I practise really hard for the next nine hundred years, I think I might be able to write a sentence that's about as perfect as her average sentence. JRR Tolkien, for scope, for power, for sheer bloody majesty” (Lockett 22/7/06). Gary Crew believed his intense reading of Patrick White’s works influenced his writing in some way but “that doesn’t mean that I could ever write like him... stylistically, though, for his lucidity and succinct language, for the use of sustained metaphor, for addressing the colonial landscape” (Crew 21/8/06). Venero Armanno could not point to a single writer with a similar style, but like Crew and Lockett saw influences in particular aspects of his writing.

I think F. Scott Fitzgerald, probably wouldn’t know it by reading my books, but F. Scott Fitzgerald for the types of things that he did. Hemingway, for different things, I’m not a big Hemingway fan. I’m probably more of a fan of people like Raymond Carver, Paul Auster. I really love a Cuban American writer by the name of Oscar Hijuelos, Hiruki Murakami, John Updike, Dom Delillo. I’m reading a book by Irène Némirovsky at the moment called *Suite Française*, which makes me see a lot of things about her writing that I like in other writers and that I’d like to have as part of my own writing (Armanno 24/8/06).

As seen here and explored in more depth in Chapter 3, writers are often critical readers themselves, drawing on both specific books and the domain or field of works in general in order to increase their knowledge and skills and then produce their own texts. In this way, analysis or absorption of aspects of another writer’s style or technique helps to develop the individual’s own. “All the great writers I have read have had some role in what and how I write. As I said before, we are engaged in a vast conversation; I listen and I contribute” (Bird 19/7/06).

With their reading increasing knowledge of the domain as well as their domain relevant skills, it may be argued that writers occupy a strange position where their own audience participation, fandom or admiration of works also qualifies them to act as a member of a field of readers. This may explain why, unlike those who consider a larger known or unknown audience while writing, the remaining writers in this study work with themselves in mind, writing the sort of book they themselves would be attracted to or admire as a reader. Bird

describes this as writing for her “ideal reader self” (Bird 19/7/06), a phrase that could also apply to others in this study.

Basically I write the kind of stories I’d like to read (if I hadn’t written them myself) (Irvine 18/7/06).

I write to entertain myself and hope someone else likes it (Morrissey 26/9/06).

It’s me and what I think is good. I write for me, and even with the children’s books, which are sold to children, they are written for me. I honestly believe that’s the only way. What are children? There’s no such thing, categorically, as a child audience, they’re all so different, so they’re for me (Crew 21/8/06).

I write the kind of books I enjoy reading (Constable 25/11/06).

By writing for their ideal reader self, these writers are using a similar process to those who wrote with a specific person or audience in mind. In both situations, stories are crafted to appeal to or be understood by particular readers; as readers and fans themselves, writers are able to use their own tastes and preferences as a model of their ideal audience member. This image of the writer as reader further reveals the complexity of audience engagement with and influence on Australian fiction writing. Simplifying some of this complexity, Sawyer (2006) categorised the audience according to individual members’ knowledge of the domain and level of engagement with the text. He identified these ‘nested audiences’ as intermediaries such as editors, agents and critics who operate in the centre of the field moving out to connoisseurs, then amateurs and, finally, the general public (2006, p. 127). At each stage these audience members are evaluating or judging whether a work may be considered creative. As seen here, while the intermediaries at the centre of the field may be considered among the most influential in this process, the remaining groups can also influence writers and the writing process both directly and indirectly.

As shown above writers may be considered connoisseurs although this category also includes others who are most knowledgeable on the domain and are generally in a position to influence opinion on a work such as academics, booksellers or even a number of largely independent but increasingly professional bloggers (Gillieron & Kilgarriff, 2007). Australia’s most well-known literary blogger is Perry Middlemiss, whose weblog *Matilda* has had more than

220,000 visitors since late 2005 and who also writes and hosts websites on Australian literature, writers and several literary prizes. In some instances fans may also be considered connoisseurs, especially those who focus their attention on a single writer or work and, in Bourdieu's (1993a) terms, collect not only cultural capital (knowledge and competencies) but also symbolic capital both material (autographs and other memorabilia) and non-material (acknowledged fan status or prestige). As well as being connoisseurs, fans may also span the two remaining categories Sawyer (2006) uses, that of amateurs and the general public.

Amateur audiences for Australian fiction not only include those who produce fan fiction but also those readers who have attempted writing in some form. Although not as knowledgeable or as practiced as connoisseurs amateurs are far from an insignificant group. The 2007 Survey of Work in Selected Culture and Leisure Activities (ABS, 2007) shows 606,500 people engaged in some form of writing, 356,900 of whom were involved in writing as a hobby activity only. The amateur category of audience can also include those who have been exposed to some form of creative writing education but have not pursued writing as a professional activity. These readers have some level of domain knowledge as well as a general understanding of the writing process from their own practice, although not to the extent of connoisseurs and intermediaries, but are more likely than the general reader to participate in book-related discussions and activities such as posting to a writer's forum online, book groups or attending writers' festivals.

Like the amateur reader/writer, it is difficult to gauge the influence of the general audience on Australian fiction writing. One of the only ways to measure the judgement of general readers is in terms of book sales. This method is not without its problems, however, given that books are generally judged once they have been read. "Readers, once they've decided to buy a book decide for themselves what they might think in terms of quality, genre, etc, once they've read it" (Williams 4/9/06). Unlike a cultural form like music or visual arts where audience members can generally experience a song or painting before paying money for them, books largely require an initial financial outlay by the reader based on visual appeal of the cover, the rear cover blurb, word-of-mouth or reviews before they themselves make their own judgement. In many cases, books may be borrowed from libraries or other sources but this does not guarantee that a purchase will then be made.

Despite this, sales are often used as “a key measure of success” (Sawyer, 2006, p. 130) with intermediaries in the publishing industry using sales figures, whether their own or those provided by companies/programs such as *Bookscan*, to make decisions on the acquisition and publication of future works by that writer or others writing in a similar style or genre. While books are not judged creative on sales figures alone, publishing is a commercial industry with economic imperatives to maintain or increase profits.³⁵ “We can’t just buy books because we like them. We are a business and we need to be convinced that people will want to spend money on them” (S. Martyn 10/10/06). In many cases, lower than expected sales figures often prevent the publication of that writer’s next book. “Publishers want to see sales in terms of ‘okay, your first book must be a success, you must sell so many thousand copies’. The next one they say ‘sorry, you didn’t sell enough with that first one, goodbye’” (Fisher 6/10/06). As such, if readers do not purchase books, it is less likely that a writer will be able to remain an active part of the system of Australian fiction writing without further support.

As seen throughout this chapter, writers interact with members of the field in multiple and complex ways. At each point of interaction, whether with publishers, editors, agents, critics or readers, judgements are made that can be seen to affect writers, their work or their future careers. Here, the field can be seen both as an industry, providing opportunities for publication, and as a gatekeeper, preventing either stagnation or a flood of novelty in the domain of Australian fiction writing. Building on these two roles, the field can also be seen as a network of support that enables the writing and publication of Australian fiction works to continue by encouraging the production of new works and ideas and sustaining those who are already part of the creative system. Through the provision of opportunities, rewards and financial resources, then, Australian governments and a range of other institutions may also be considered members of the field of Australian fiction writing.

5.6 The field as a network of support

Although resources and rewards are not the only motivation to pursue creative activities, their provision is often an important component of an individual writer’s ability to produce new books. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1999) “a field is likely to stagnate if it cannot provide

³⁵ Although publishing companies such as Fremantle Arts Centre Press are run as not-for-profit organisations and are supported by government funds, profits from sales are needed to make up for funding shortfalls and to continue publication (Laurie, 2005).

either financial or status rewards to its practitioners” (1999, p. 325). Resources and rewards are generally provided by the institutions who publish, promote and sell a writer’s work as a simple commercial transaction like any other goods and services.

The most common forms of financial ‘reward’ or payment are the advances and royalties paid by the writer’s publisher. Advances vary depending on how well the publisher thinks a book will sell, essentially ‘advancing’ the writer a percentage of predicted earnings from book sales. If a book does not sell as expected, the publisher has gambled and lost, having already paid for the editing, design, printing, promotion, sales and distribution of the work. If a book does sell as predicted or better, no money is paid to the writer until the advance has been earned back. Once it has, the writer receives royalties or a contracted percentage of the price for each book sold. In Australia royalty rates are generally set at 10% rising to 12.5% once the book has sold above a certain threshold.³⁶ On top of this, writers may also be paid a percentage of foreign rights for overseas sales. By far the largest providers of content in the Australian publishing industry, writers were paid \$77.8 million dollars in royalties and fees in the 2003/04 period or just under 5% of the publishing industry’s total income.³⁷

For many Australian writers, including the majority of those in this study, financial returns from publishers are insufficient to live on, averaging \$20,400 (median \$4,800) in income derived solely from the creative work.³⁸ When asked if it was possible for an Australian fiction writer to support themselves financially with writing alone, the writers in this study overwhelmingly responded that while it was possible, it was not probable. Of the 34 writers who were asked or answered the question, only eight responded that they did not believe it was possible without other income. The remaining 26 qualified their positive responses suggesting relatively few writers could achieve financial independence on their creative work alone.

³⁶ These figures are under question as some publishing companies are reducing the royalty rate to 7% for reprint runs. This is, in effect, lowering the royalty rate for books that sell over the predicted amount (E. Hall & Kennedy, 2006). Despite this, royalty rates are still several percentage points higher in Australia than the US and UK (6-8% or 8-10% above the threshold). This may be compensation for Australia’s relatively small book market or reflect the level of competition in these overseas markets.

³⁷ In an industry with a total income of \$1.56 billion in the 2003/04 period (ABS, 2005b), including \$152.1 million dollars in gross profit before taxes, writers were paid \$77.8 million (or 5% of total income) in royalties and other fees.

³⁸ As explained in Throsby and Hollister (2003), the median figure may be a more appropriate gauge of writer income as an average (or mean) “may be strongly affected by outliers, that is, extreme values which happen to be thrown up within a particular sample. For example, although the incomes of the majority of artists are relatively low, a few enjoy very high earnings; our sample contains several artists who earned incomes above \$200,000 in 2000-01, and observations such as these have a significant effect in raising the mean results” (2003, p. 44). In contrast, the median income “divides the distribution in half; that is, 50 per cent of artists have incomes below the median and 50 per cent have incomes above the median” (2003, p. 45).

It's rare, but it's possible (Luckett 22/7/06).

Several of my writing associates do so. The norm, however, is to have a day job and write in your spare time (Pennicott 4/10/06).

There are only a handful who can (Redhead 23/8/06).

Yes, it's possible, but the odds are against. I know it's possible because I know a bunch of people do it. I think it's not easy to do that necessarily on Australian sales alone (Earls 4/8/06).

Of these writers only six (18%) said they could support themselves on income derived solely from their creative works. Besides these cases, many writers in this study relied on supplementary sources of income such as alternate employment or the forms of support provided directly and indirectly by various levels of government. "Creative writers will almost always need the support of a patron, either the state, the government, a rich spouse, an inheritance, whatever" (Britton 6/7/06).

The role of the government in funding creativity in the Arts has long been contested, divided primarily along the lines of cultural versus economic value (see arguments in Beardsley, 1982; T. Bennett & Carter, 2001; Coslovich, 2004; Feinberg, 1994; Netzer, 1978). In terms of economic value, Canoy, van der Ploeg and van Ours (2006), for example, argue in 'The Economics of Books' that the publishing industry and market is able to deal with its own problems and requires little government intervention apart from the promotion of reading and literacy. As seen above, however, current market conditions in the Australian publishing industry show writers are often the losers in commercial equations of cultural production. In contrast, arguments in support of cultural funding show creativity is not just an important economic resource but a valuable and intrinsic component of national culture, identity and meaning, social cohesion and development, education and technological innovation (Nagel, 1985; UNESCO, 1998).

This cultural value has been recognised not just at the national level but on a global scale with Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and UNESCO's (1998) subsequent interpretation of that article into an action plan that encourages the formation of cultural policies that protect each country's current and future cultural heritage. While the primary

concern here is in the recognition and protection of the cultural value of creative works, economic value is by no means ignored.

In a statement issued for World Book and Copyright Day on April 23, 2008, UNESCO's Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura described the duality of the role books in particular play in both economic and cultural terms.

Books contribute to shaping and maintaining the educational, cultural and economic fabric of our societies, and play multiple and fundamental roles in it. These works of the mind protected by copyright, which enrich the intangible heritage of humanity, are also merchandise, a duality that has been highlighted and analysed on many occasions. Books are thus the pivot in a vast chain of income generating activities and professions, and an important component of economic development (Matsuura, 2008, p. 1).

This duality of economic and cultural importance of cultural works in general and books specifically means control and support does not reside solely with commercial industries and institutions. As seen in the figures above, "Arts as commerce cannot pay its way completely" (Latham, 2004, p. 53). Indeed, \$14.7 million of the Australian publishing industry's total 2003/04 income was sourced from direct or indirect government support (ABS, 2005b). Even if the industry rejected those funds and provided writers with enough income to support themselves financially, governments still have a responsibility or duty to provide all citizens with access to cultural life, artefacts and events as well as to encourage creativity and innovation to ensure that cultural life remains current and relevant. It is with these responsibilities in mind that the Australian government at both a state and federal level has shaped cultural legislation, policy, plans and funding schemes.

The most important forms of government support for writers stem from two pieces of legislation: the Copyright Act 1968 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2007) and the Australia Council Act 1975 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001). While the direct effects of the Australia Council Act will be described in detail shortly, the Copyright Act can only be considered an indirect means of financial support from the government. Based on current copyright law,³⁹ the non-profit and non-governmental collecting agency, Copyright Agency

³⁹ Modern copyright is derived the English Statute of Anne, passed in 1710 to regulate the book trade. As Rose (1994) argues, this statute was not intended to apply to writers but was rather concerned with books as property and their legal proprietors, such as booksellers. It was not until the legal case *Pope v Curl* that a writer's intellectual property rights to the

Limited (CAL), licences the copying or reproduction of a writer's work to institutions, collects licence fees and distributes that money to rights holders (CAL, 2008). Although most Australian fiction writers receive little to no CAL payments unless their works are used, for example, as set texts in education institutions and are then likely to be copied, unclaimed fees and fees below fifty dollars are accumulated in a trust fund, 1% of which (around \$1 million) is allocated to a cultural fund that provides support to writers in several ways.

According to CAL (2008), this cultural fund provides \$100,000 for the Professional Development Fund and Publisher's Career Development Fund, which offer writers and publishers a maximum of \$5000 to attend conferences, festivals, courses and other training programs. In 2007/08, funds were also allocated to projects, initiatives and programs such as the Sydney Writers' Festival Publishing Industry Program (\$25,000); Centre for Youth Literature (\$30,000 over three years); May Gibbs Children's Literature Trust (\$50,000 over three years); Sydney PEN Voices Lecture series (\$120,700 over two years); Watermark Literary Fellowship (\$6,000); Macquarie University Writer in Residence Program (\$7,086); Children's Book Council Conference (\$13,961); Melbourne Emerging Writers' (\$15,715); Children's Literature in the Centre Festival (\$20,000); The NT Writers' Centre Wordstorm Festival (\$26,450); Readings Bookshops Writer Event Series (\$20,000). CAL also sponsors the prestigious Miles Franklin Literary Award, recently providing additional funds for 2006 winner Roger McDonald to tour regional areas in NSW and Victoria. After the success of this program, further funds were allocated to include short-listed writers and extend the tour to all Australian states and territories from 2007 through to 2009 (CAL, 2008). Whether offering direct financial assistance to writers or not, these funds, programs and prizes all help to enhance writer careers by providing not only further economic but also creative opportunities for those who are already a part of the system of Australian fiction writing.

In a similar way, the Australia Council Act 1975 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001), has allowed the government to provide a range of support to writers and the system of Australian fiction writing. This legislation allowed for the establishment of a council that promotes, fosters, funds and provides access to various Australian art forms. Within the Australia Council, the Literature Board receives and administers its portion of government funding

work within a book were recognised. Now considered a universal human right, copyright can be described as an individual's "right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author" (Article 27-II, United Nations, 1948). A writer's copyright is infringed if a person reproduces a substantial part or the whole of their work without permission.

(\$8.2 million in 2005/06, \$7.8 million in 2006/07) (Australia Council, 2006, 2007a).⁴⁰ Like CAL, the Literature Board funds individuals, institutions and programs through a series of grants. According to the Australia Council's (2008) 2006/07 grants recipient list, writers were awarded a total of \$2,421,796 in New Work grants (broken into emerging, developing and established writer categories), international residencies, fellowships and emeritus awards. In the same period, the Australia Council provided \$4,605,525 in funds for organisations and various programs and initiatives that indirectly support writers as well as the infrastructure of the system of Australian fiction writing. This includes funds for: key organisations including writers' centres and the Australian Society of Authors (ASA); Australian and international publishers to subsidise new titles, the reprinting of classic works and translation into other languages; market development grants to send publishers to international book fairs; Australian and international organisations to defray the costs for writers to attend and participate in festivals and other promotional activities; literary magazines and the *Australian Literary Review*; the Visiting International Publishers (VIP) program, the Big Book Club/Little Book Club of South Australia and the Books Alive campaign.⁴¹

The arts bodies of the Australian states and territories provide similar types of funding to support writers and the infrastructure of the system of Australian fiction writing, generally with more focus on programs and services in regional areas than is possible with federal funding. In 2005/06, Arts NSW, for example, administered funding for individuals including the NSW Premier's literary awards as well as the Writers' Fellowship and AsiaLink Residency program. It also provides: funds for the running costs and programs of the NSW, Northern Rivers, New England, Hunter, Broken Hill, Central West, South Coast and Wagga Wagga writers' centres; subsidies for the subscription and running costs of literary magazines *Southerly* and *Heat*; funding for writing research through the University of Western Sydney; and triennial funding of the Sydney Writers' Festival. Although each state has differing levels and ways of administering arts and cultural funding in their own areas, similar types of grants and programs can be seen across the country. Some states, however, have introduced initiatives not seen elsewhere such as the Queensland Writers' Showcase (through the state's

⁴⁰ The amount of funding provided to the Literature Board of the Australia Council is in no way commensurate with the income the government derives from GST on book sales. "It earns 10 per cent of the more than \$750 million a year we spend at the cash register on Australian books (excluding educational books), almost certainly more than Australian writers earn in royalties" (Heyward, 2007, p. 14).

⁴¹ A part of federal government's four year Book Industry Assistance Package to help alleviate the impact of introducing GST on books, the Books Alive program has come under fire for using government funds to promote international books as well as promoting books that may already be considered bestsellers (ASA, 2005).

Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry), which saw two of the writers in this study present their own and other writers' work in the United States.

The *48 Shades of Brown* film deal came about through that where I was going to the US when the book came out there and I said, 'I'm finishing up in LA, why don't I do an event where I pitch a dozen QLD novels to LA film people and see if anything comes of it?' and in six weeks they actually made it all happen and I pitched it and several people got interested and I got a movie out of it. From two showcases in New York since then, I think four people have been picked up by agents or publishers. So they're doing significant things in a turning-it-into-a-job sense, rather than in a writing-the-next-book sense. I think that kind of initiative is really good, but that gets beyond just grants funding writing (Earls 4/8/06).

This year I was invited to present the Queensland Writers' Showcase, which is something the Queensland government does each year where they send over books by Queensland authors to be presented at a special showcase for American agents and publishers and so they were doing speculative fiction this year and I was asked to be the presenter... That was really, really important to me because out of that trip I got a New York agent, which I'm hoping will sell my books into the States (Cusack 30/8/06).

Although it does not directly fund the writing of particular books, this initiative provides Queensland writers in particular with opportunities for international contacts and sales that could add to their writing income and help them remain a viable part of the system of Australian fiction. For writers like Earls and Cusack, this kind of support may be more beneficial than direct funding by providing the potential for earnings beyond a one-off payment.

In a similar way, local and state level funding of libraries indirectly provides potential for income for writers. In 2005/06, the NSW and local governments provided \$24.8 million and \$259 million respectively for public library services. As well as benefiting from the library's acquisition of their work and fees generated from visiting writer programs, writers may also earn additional income from library patrons borrowing their books. After successful campaigns by the Australian Society of Authors, the federal government legislated and set up lending right schemes that compensate writers for loss of potential sales because their books are available to be borrowed and read for free in libraries. The Public Lending Right (PLR) scheme, which applies to public libraries, and the Education Lending Right (ELR) scheme,

which is for libraries in educational institutions, provide payments for each copy of the book held and, like CAL payments, are made to both the writer and the publisher of the work.

In 2006/07, PLR payments were made to 8866 registered ‘book creators’ and publishers, paid \$1.47 and 36.75 cents respectively per copy of each eligible book (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008c).⁴² As with royalties, the effect of PLR/ELR payments on a writer’s income varies dramatically. In general, books that are bestsellers in bookshops are also popular in public libraries, often leading branches to carry multiple copies of the same book to meet reader demand. Sean McMullen said he knew “roughly two dozen Australian writers who support themselves from their writing. One couple paid off a \$330,000 mortgage in five years, and neither had any form of government grants other than PLR/ELR” (McMullen 9/10/06). Sandy Curtis, on the other hand, said she appreciated the small PLR payments she received. “Not only is the annual cheque welcome but the report gives an idea of how the books are going. Libraries are very important” (Pakeman 24/7/06). In many cases, PLR and ELR payments add to a writer’s income but are not sufficient to negate the need for other sources of income. For Scot Gardner, royalties, ELR and PLR payments as well as fees for newspapers and journal articles constitute “about half my yearly income. The other half is generated through speaking engagements at school and festivals” (Gardner 31/8/06).

Almost all of the writers in this study take advantage of a broad spectrum of income opportunities, many of which are provided directly or through institutions and organisations funded by local, state and federal government.

The proliferation of festivals and paid speaking engagements has brought writers a way to supplement royalties and yet remain in their identity as writers. Lending Right payments help. This makes it possible to cobble together a decent living with little need for a full or part-time job outside writing (Maloney 20/8/06).

I can’t [support myself] if I didn’t do textbooks, test papers and school/library workshops, otherwise I do quite well (Horsfield 26/9/06).

⁴² The ELR, by comparison, starts at \$1 for each of the first 50 books but drops in increments down to 9.2512 cents for each book over 50,000 copies (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008c).

I've been full-time for about eight years now. My income is supplemented by school, library and festival talks and workshops (Collins 15/8/06).

Having another job is necessary for me – but I am lucky in that I get to work in a field I love where writing is part of the job description and I get to talk about books and writing with enthusiastic students! (Padmore 9/11/06).

While I was a full-time writer, in those twelve years, most of the way I could support myself was through a bit of part-time work, government grants and, you know, income from advances on novels and stuff like that. But you know what advances are like; they're so small it's ridiculous. If it hadn't been for the Australia Council or Arts Queensland, there's no way I could have been a full-time writer (Armano 24/8/06).

These and many of the writers in this study are able to remain an active part of the system of Australian fiction writing by supplementing their primary writing income with various combinations of non-fiction and short form writing, teaching, speaking engagements and appearances and grants, fellowships and residencies.

Nineteen of the 40 writers in this study had been awarded some form of direct financial support from the government or a private organisation including grants, fellowships and residencies. Kim Wilkins was awarded an Australia Council grant for established writers in 2001 and an Art Queensland grant for new work in 2005, allowing her the time and partial financial security to write. "I had a two year grant from the Literature Board and my three best books came out of it. I was so grateful for that opportunity" (Wilkins 1/9/06). Deborah Abela received an Australia Council grant for developing writers in 2004 "to help me financially while I was writing a novel that needed a lot of time to complete and that I hoped would push me further as a writer" (Abela 18/10/06). Carmel Bird has received nine Australia Council grants, travel grants from Arts Victoria and been Writer in Residence at a number of Australian universities, describing this support as "a life-saver" (Bird 19/7/06). An Australia Council grant of \$25,000 allowed Stephen Gray to cut back on teaching in order to write. "It just meant financially there was some sort of weight behind what I was doing rather than going completely out on a limb" (Gray 18/8/06). Jonathan Harlen received a Category A Fellowship from the Australia Council in 1996 that "gave me a year's breathing space to finish off some other projects that set me up. If that hadn't happened I would have had to take

a permanent teaching job or go back and do a law degree. I wouldn't have been able to give writing my best shot" (Harlen 11/9/06).⁴³

While almost half of the writers in this study (45%) received grants or stipends of some kind and many suggest there should be more of this type of funding for writers, the administration of state and national grants systems have been criticised for a lack of clarity in the application and judging process, a tendency towards cronyism and a failure to align funds with current standards of living. Anna Jacobs and John Dale have both been on state government selection committees but see different problems with the funding system.

I was on the State Funding Committee for writers' grants once and I was sickened by money wasted on piddling poets and lazy amateur writers with no checks to see how they used the money and what the outcomes were. As a taxpayer, I get very angry at my money being wasted (Jacobs 23/8/06).

I'm actually a chair of the selection committee for the NSW Writer's Fellowship. That's twenty thousand dollars and there's only one of them, one a year. There must be fifty writers, many of whom are well known, who've put in for that. That amount fifteen years ago was the same amount, so it hasn't been indexed for fifteen years. I don't think many people can live on twenty thousand dollars a year, for one year in Australia (Dale 21/8/06).

From the other side of the selection process, writers feel the application and selection processes are often biased towards particular types of writers or are judged on criteria other than the quality of the writing or its potential when completed.

I applied for a Literature Board grant after my first book came out when I was in financial straits. I believe the decision was I had a commercial book which had received a lot of attention and I'd been on

⁴³ The eligibility and judging criteria as well as the monetary value of grants, fellowships and residencies are often to subject to change. At present, the Australia Council (2009) offers "highly accomplished literary writers" fellowships of \$50,000 per year for two years, while "developing" writers can apply for grants worth \$15,000, \$25,000, or \$40,000 for one year and "established" writers may apply for grants of \$30,000 or \$50,000 per year for up to two years. Grants for "emerging" writers are now administered by the Australian Society of Authors. Criteria for eligibility in these categories relies on the number of previously published literary works, literary merit or writing ability, "creative substance" and, in the case of literature fellowships, "substantial critical recognition and demonstrated contribution to Australian literature" (Australia Council, 2009). Government funding in these forms provides financial support for writers during the writing process. Fiction prizes and awards, such as the Miles Franklin, various state premiers' award and the Prime Minister's Prize for Fiction, may also offer financial support. As discussed earlier, prizes for unpublished fiction can also be seen as a means of selling a manuscript to a publisher.

TV and therefore must be rich and didn't need help (Morrissey 26/9/06).

The same people always seem to get them, and the system does favour people who are good at writing grant applications (not me, obviously!). But put that down to sour grapes (Constable 25/11/06).

The writing world is largely divided between people who are lousy writers who are good at applying for grants and good writers who are too busy writing to run massive campaigns to get grants. There are occasional exceptions to the above, but they are not common. If there was more support, I think it would result in more writers of limited talent becoming highly skilled at getting grants (McMullen 9/10/06).

Of the 21 writers who had not been awarded grants or other direct funding, several said they did not even apply, often for the same reasons given above. "I can't be bothered waiting. I just get on and support myself and fund my own travel for the books. The red tape is too distracting and I wonder whether it's based on need or who you know and how well you put together your submission" (McIntosh 4/10/06).

Unlike grants funding, other forms of writer's income generally take time away from core Australian fiction writing activities. Additional income may be earned from other forms of writing including newspaper, magazine and journal articles, short stories and even educational material like the textbooks and test-papers produced by Alan Horsfield, but just like writing a fiction novel, each piece requires various amounts of time for preparation, research, drafting, editing and contact with field members. Those writers who teach at primary, secondary and tertiary institutions as well as those who give workshops must spend time in both preparing and presenting class materials as well as marking assessable items. The income that such work provides can allow an individual to continue writing, but a balance must be achieved between time spent on each activity and the subsequent rewards. Alan Tucker, for example, teaches part time at a secondary school.

I earn the same amount of money each year from what I give up. I give up one and a half days of teaching for the department a week and earn the same money... but to earn that same money from my writing I have to write Thursday afternoons and Fridays as well as Saturdays and Sundays and all through my holidays. So I'd be doing three or four times as many hours to earn the same amount of money (Tucker 17/8/06).

In some cases, additional employment such as teaching has benefits for a writer beyond that of financial support. Kate Constable believes “it’s good for writers to be out in the world part-time, anyway” (Constable 25/11/06). In a similar way, Gary Crew suggested he accepted a position at the University of the Sunshine Coast because “I thought that it was good to get out of my tracksuit and pyjamas and to have a shower and go out”. On a more serious note, Crew found that his new position allowed him to “take risks, it allows me to experiment with writing and if that fails it doesn’t matter because I’ve got a day job” (Crew 21/8/06).

For the writers in this research teaching can be either full/part-time salaried positions in a single institution or sessional visits to primary, secondary and tertiary institutions and writers’ centres.⁴⁴ Some of the writers in this study, particularly those who write for children and young adults, may spend weeks or months at a time on a circuit of festival visits and speaking engagements. Scot Gardner, for example, blogs about this ‘life on the road’.

This time of the year is frenetic for school-visiting writer-types like myself, especially in Victoria (Oz). Some of us visit three schools in a day for a number of weeks. It starts to hurt after a while and the world starts to blur and you get sick of the sound of your own voice. I both hate and love losing myself in it (S. Gardner, 2007).

Despite keeping writers away from their writing for short or long periods of time, appearances and speaking engagements can also be seen to have benefits for the writers other than additional income support. Nick Earls, for example, uses the time spent on the road to cogitate ideas and storylines.

Now I realise that the time when I can’t write because of other parts of the job, I can still think and that the writing is about the thinking as much as it is the typing part. That’s what I had to learn so that I can still feel that I’m making progress with something even when I’m in another hemisphere than my laptop (Earls 4/8/06).

⁴⁴ The Australian Society of Authors (2008) recommends maximum time durations for teaching sessions and a minimum rate of pay. For primary and secondary school visits, a writer should be earning \$250 (max. 1 hour) for a single school session, with the duration shortened to 45 mins for multiple sessions. A writer could then charge \$350 (max. 1.5 hours) for half a school day, \$500 for a whole school day (max. 3 hours) or a discounted rate for a whole week’s visit. Rates for tertiary institutions and writers’ festivals are the same for speaking engagements at literary festivals and other public appearances. Here, writers can earn \$880 for a whole day (max. 6 hours), \$485 for a half day (max. 3 hours) or \$300 per session (max. 1 hour). The ASA also recommends writers charge for any travel expenses incurred in order to speak at these events and institutions, including accommodation, meals, subsidies for use of the writer’s own car and an allowance for travel time (ASA, 2008).

For Scot Gardner, speaking at schools and festivals provides a means to an end. “Everywhere I talk I’m exposing new readers to my work and developing my public profile. In time, I envisage I’ll cut back on the touring and write more. Right now, I’m paying my dues” (Gardner 31/8/06). In this sense, speaking engagements, teaching and public appearances allow the writer to connect with the audience. This connection may give them a clearer image of their target readers and allow them to focus their writing as well as increase their reputation and book sales, benefiting the writer in terms of their income as well as their own writing and allowing the writer to remain an active part of the system of Australian fiction writing.

As can be seen here, many of the writers in this study increase their involvement in the system of Australian fiction writing over the duration of their careers and not just to improve their income. Rather, sustained book sales, media coverage and reputations mean many move beyond the role of the individual within that system and become active members of the field. As shown earlier, some writers may also act as audience members, using their expertise and domain knowledge to judge their own and other people’s work. Writers such as Scot Gardner, Carmel Bird and Gary Crew have also become teachers and mentors, imparting that expertise and knowledge to new writers as they themselves learned from mentoring, writing classes and workshops. Some, like Anna Jacobs and John Dale are called upon to judge and administer support to their peers by acting on committees and panels for awards and funding bodies. Others take on management and other chief roles in advisory boards and writers’ organisations. Libby Gleeson and Hazel Edwards, for example, serve on the Committee of Management for the Australian Society of Authors and Sean Williams is the current chair of the South Australian Writers’ Centre. In these positions, the writers in this study are able to secure and administer funding and influence and make decisions that affect how individuals are able to learn, practice and continue writing, thereby maintaining or changing the system for new writers.

Overall, the field of Australian fiction writing can be seen as providing judgement on the individual’s work as well as support that provides writers with the time and financial resources to produce new works. In terms of judgement, intermediaries such as editors and agents make judgements that affect the writing and publication of a work; critics and audience opinions can affect current and future works. In terms of support, the clear cultural and economic importance of writing in general means the field is closely tied to the broader social system and, in Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997a; 1999) terms, is able to channel resources towards

individuals and institutions within that system. These forms of support and judgement provide further evidence that Australian fiction writing is systemic, involving complex networks of workers, intermediaries and institutions beyond that of the individual writer. Without these networks in place to both judge and support, writers would not be able to become a part of the system, produce works that may then be considered creative or to sustain a career in writing. In an iterative and evolving cycle, these networks can also be seen to provide a form of self-renewal that means new individuals can continue to become a part of the system of Australian fiction writing.

Not only do we seek to preserve our heritage and tradition, we cultivate them. We preserve the things that make us what we are and cultivate the means of reaching what we can be (Commonwealth of Australia, 1994).

6.0 Implications of a systemic view of Australian fiction writing

Each individual writer brings their own unique combination of traits, experiences and skills to their work and engagement with fellow writers, the publishing industry, agents and readers. Each work bears the stamp of the writer's individuality as well as the effects of the writer's unique interactions and contestations with the domain and field. This explains how writers with the same publisher or agent may focus on different genres, writers of the same genre may focus on different audiences or even how writers working with the same publisher, genre and audience can still produce different stories.

Yet as we have seen throughout this thesis, there are similarities to be found in the story of how Australian fiction books are created. Patterns have emerged in the complex interactions each individual writer undertakes with the social and cultural framework in which they write. In the next section, '6.1 Answering the questions of Australian fiction writing', these patterns will be summarised, providing some answers for the fundamental questions asked in the introduction. Why do writers write? How do they learn to write? What processes do they use? What influence does the publishing industry have on a writer's work? Who or what else can affect Australian fiction writing? After this summary, '6.2 Broader implications for creativity and creativity research' will highlight the implications of those findings: that the people who produce creative works are not isolated during that process; that they are both constrained and enabled by the social and cultural contexts they work in; and that any research which ignores any of these components cannot give an adequate explanation or description of creativity. Following this, '6.3 Research and policy directions' will provide policy directions for various institutions and levels of government that have the potential to improve the dynamic system of creativity in Australian fiction writing. These potential policy directions also point to future research that would supplement or add additional depth to the overall depiction of Australian fiction writing given throughout this thesis and summarised here.

6.1 Answering the questions of Australian fiction writing

Writers write books because they love it and cannot think of anything else they'd rather do. For most of the writers in this study, this love of writing stemmed from an early engagement with storytelling, reading and writing, mediated and encouraged by their parents, relatives and teachers. For several others, this love affair started later in life, after an engagement with a specific set of books. Whenever or however this desire to write was acquired, this deeply rooted love often drew them back to the keyboard or the notebook and kept them there, sustaining them during the writing process even when it was difficult. The pleasure they derived from these experiences, however, was not the only motivation these writers felt to keep writing. Many writers suggested outside factors also motivated them to write. These extrinsic motivators included positive feedback from publishers or fans, rewards such as royalties or prizes, or even simple deadlines.

The success of the books – going to #1 regularly, winning a fan base, impressing overseas publishers, earning new and more valuable contracts - is highly motivating for me. I find it very rewarding to use my imagination to touch other people's lives. There's nothing so satisfying as receiving the regular emails from readers to tell me they haven't done any housekeeping, they haven't fed the family, they haven't been able to sleep for reading my stories (McIntosh 4/10/06).

These outside factors contributed to their overall love of writing, deepening their enjoyment of the writing process and the personal satisfaction they felt from being published, sold and read.

Writers learn to write through further engagement with books as well as formal and informal training with the symbol system and field of Australian fiction writing. Overwhelmingly, the writers in this study believed reading was one of the most important tools for learning how to write. Reading the works of those who had already mastered the domain of writing not only familiarised them with what has come before but also helped to develop their own ideas about style, technique, character, rhythm and genre conventions and their own feel for what 'works' and what doesn't. In some cases, they were able to learn these elements of writing more directly from mentors and peers or in creative writing courses and workshops. These writers also learned and then mastered the skills and knowledge necessary for writing through their

continued writing practice, constantly developing their skills and knowledge even after publication. For many, the act of publication itself as well as communication of their works to the reader made them better writers, the feedback they received from editors or readers often alerting them to aspects of their writing that functioned well and those that could be improved in future projects.

The process used in writing is composed of a number of phases including idea generation, research, development, drafting and editing. During idea generation, the writers gathered and processed information from direct observation and experience, secondary sources such as newspapers or books and interaction with publishers, agents and readers. Using their knowledge and experience with writing, the writers either consciously or subconsciously evaluated this information to determine what could be used as or in a story.

I mull it over in my mind then start writing it. False starts are common. If I get nothing but false starts, then there's something wrong, and I shelve it. But if the idea is any good, sooner or later I hit the true line. It feels right, and then I'm off (Lockett 22/7/06).

During the research and development phases, the writers evaluated further, gaining a familiarity with ideas and how they can be used in the story. During drafting, the accumulated knowledge, skills and preliminary ideas were deployed as the story was crafted. Familiarity with writing techniques and specific content often allowed the writers to work intuitively, some functioning in a subconscious or uncontrolled state, but always backed by conscious evaluation of what they had written. During the editing phase, the writers supplemented their own evaluation with that of others, using the judgement of friends, family or fellow writers to rewrite subsequent drafts. In terms of the overall writing process, these phases did not always proceed consecutively but sometimes occurred out of sequence, overlapped or even happened concurrently. In many cases, the process was an iterative one, with a final draft manuscript the product of multiple cycles through these phases prior to submission for publication.

As the primary framework for publication, the publishing industry had its own effects. Not only did it control the physical design, layout and printing processes of production but its editorial touch could be felt on nearly every page of a manuscript, affecting not just that work but also the writers themselves, their careers and their future projects. During the writing process, the spectre of the publishing industry sometimes loomed large: deadlines added

pressure to deliver a finished manuscript; editors and publishers influenced directly with ideas or feedback on the developing draft or indirectly as the people who controlled the standard of judgement a writer had to work to meet.

I have almost daily contact with my editor as I write (Morrissey 26/9/06).

I'm on the fifth full draft of [*Hannah's Ghosts*] now, probably the last before I show it to the publishers. And after they've seen it there will probably be two or three more drafts incorporating their suggestions/criticisms (Constable 25/11/06).

After the draft manuscript was been delivered, editors further shaped elements of the story such as structure, plot, characters, point of view or language. The publishing industry also acted a network of support that took chances on a new work by an unknown writer, paid advances and royalties, contracted further manuscripts, promoted works to boost book sales and sponsored competitions, workshops and other writing related events to encourage new writers. Overall, the publishing industry can be seen as a critical site of judgement for writers, often the primary determinant of what constitutes a creative work in the domain of Australian fiction as well as which works may be added to or alter the shape of creativity within that domain.

Agents, critics, fans and the government also had a big effect on writers, the way they worked and whether their books were considered creative. Even though it doesn't seem logical that a work can be affected after it has been produced and published, these interactions affected reception of the work as well as future work and publication. Just as editors and publisher are in some sense seen as arbiters of creativity, so too do agents increasingly present a site of judgement and selection prior to a book's publication. As well as dealing with contracts and payments, agents shaped many writer's careers and their work by evaluating which manuscripts worked, what needed to be changed to increase the chances of acceptance into the domain and which publishers to send them to be judged further. Post publication, critics shaped some writers' future work by giving criticism that challenged the writer to improve and limited the flow of information to potential readers. The readers themselves can be seen to have influenced writers and their work both actively and passively. Writers, for instance, used their conceptions of readers as a passive audience with shared preferences to shape their work as they wrote. More directly, readers bought books, interpreted works in their own ways, gave

feedback and produced hybrid texts, all actions that had the potential to affect Australian fiction writing. Australian governments and other institutions also had an influential role to play by providing a support network of grants, competitions, employment, laws, schemes, schools, libraries, centres and festivals. This institutional support encouraged individuals to write and helped to sustain their careers once writers added a creative work to the domain of Australian fiction writing.

6.2 Broader implications for creativity and creative research

As shown throughout the previous section, this research has provided substantial corroboration for the systems model of creativity, which provides a theoretical grounding for how creative works are produced and then accepted into the cultural domain. In parts, Bourdieu's ideas on *habitus* and struggles within the field have also been used to elaborate on some of the more complex interactions within the systems model. In combining these ideas, this research has worked towards providing a rational basis for a process that is often seen as mystical and unexplainable. By presenting evidence of creativity as the result of a complex system of interaction between the individual, field and domain rather than divine inspiration (as suggested by Rudyard Kipling and Ray Bradbury in Kipling & Pinney, 1991; Zdenek, 1983) or individual genius (as presented in Goethe, [1774] 1990; Kant, 1952), this research has several implications that have often been obscured by creative myths or simply ignored not just in studies on Australian fiction writing but also of creativity more generally.

Firstly, *individuals do not create in isolation*. In Chapter 2 we saw many approaches to creativity that focused solely on an individual creator from concepts of genius to psychological studies of personality, mental processes and brain-mapping. However, there has been a gradual evolution towards creativity studies that removed individual creators from the vacuum of focused analysis or the laboratory setting and placed them back into the social and cultural milieus they work within. Studies of motivation by Amabile (1996; 1998), for instance, tested the effects of external factors such as feedback or rewards. Biographical studies by psychologists such as Simonton (1988b; 1999; 2003) tracked the effects of social environments from personal interactions within families to schooling, group work and national economic status or civil conflict. Sociologists like Becker (1982) examined the structures and support networks that aided an individual creator's work. What these and other

such research showed is the increasing awareness that individuals are not solely responsible for a creative work and that a fuller understanding of creativity can be gained by investigating multiple rather than single elements.

Using the systems model as the high point of this movement from individualistic notions of creativity to systemic approaches, this research found that, although some parts of the writing process appear to be physically isolated, individual writers are constantly interacting with social and cultural factors that shape themselves and their work in many different ways. As they developed an interest in writing, learned how to write, produced a manuscript, interacted with industry professionals and communicated with readers, the writers in this study drew multiple times and, in some ways, constantly on a rich body of cultural knowledge and social networks of judgement and support.

When these individuals were developing their interest in writing, they were guided largely by their interactions with family members who engaged them with stories, read to them or exposed them to the knowledge stored in books or entire libraries. Some had their interest developed by teachers who provided rare creative writing activities and then encouraged the work that resulted from them. Others developed their interest in writing through their interaction with specific cultural artefacts, whether a single book, the work of a particular writer or a genre of writing. Rather than the predictive factors proposed by Kohányi (2005a) and Piirto (2002), it was these social and cultural interactions that drew the writers in this study to the domain of writing. Without them, they may never have developed the interest that led them to attempt, and succeed at, writing a full-length work of Australian fiction.

In learning how to write, the individuals in this study were taught or learned the English language as well as the alphabetical symbol system necessary for comprehending and producing the written word, some within the family unit and others in a formal education system. Through the literacy structures already in place in schools, they were immersed in the domain of writing, absorbing and internalising many of its symbols, rules and procedures throughout childhood until their use became instinctive or automatic. Diverging from ideas put forward by Dacey and Lennon (1998) and Amabile (1996), traditional education systems did not diminish creativity but generally provided the writers in this study with a solid foundation of skills and knowledge for creativity in later life. Once they were able to read, these individuals were exposed to more works of the domain as well as, in an abstract way,

the writers who produced them. Some experienced more direct social interaction with published writers who acted as personal mentors or taught creative writing classes. Almost all of the writers interviewed continued this learning process by taking advantage of opportunities for writing practice provided by, magazines, journals, competitions and the repeated submission and rejection of draft manuscripts. Without the skills and knowledge of the domain that they acquired through social and cultural interactions like these, the writers in this study would be unable to produce a manuscript that could be recognised as a work of Australian fiction let alone as a creative contribution to that domain.

The writing process is marked by multiple social and cultural interactions. The writers in this study drew constantly on the world around them for the ideas used in their work. Ideas for plot, for characters, for dialogue, settings and action sequences came not only from their own memories and experiences but also from the books they read and the suggestions they receive from readers and members of the field. Research on these ideas had the writers accessing cultural artefacts across a range of domains beyond Australian fiction. In some cases, they observed or interviewed relevant experts in order to better develop the content of their work. While drafting, few writers could afford the luxury of complete isolation. Instead the writing process was typically scheduled around the flow of family life, and often interrupted for exercise, meals, rest or socialising. Writers were most social during the editing process, relying on industry professionals, other writers, friends, family and even fans to act as critical readers on early drafts. Without these interactions to compound or build on the knowledge and skills acquired earlier, the writers in this study would be unable to draft a manuscript that would then be accepted by a publishing company.

Contrary to arguments put forward by Weisberg (2006), judgement of the quality or value of a writers' work proved to be a significant part of the creative process. Prior to sending a manuscript to a publishing company, many of the writers in this study interacted with an agent who judged whether their work was acceptable for publication and advised them on any changes necessary to make the manuscript appeal to particular publishers. Sent to a publishing company through their agents or as an unsolicited work, their manuscripts were assessed by publishers or commissioning editors on its publication and sales potential. Once their work was accepted, writers engaged with editors to improve the story or text further before publication. Unless self-publishing, all writers must interact with publishing industry professionals if they want to be published. While waiting for publication, many of the writers

relied upon the support of social and cultural institutions, taking on writing work for magazines or newspapers, touring schools or festivals or surviving on grants and fellowships. Until they have an established career, many writers seek out either employment or subsidy from the government or other institutional sources in order to continue writing. Without some form of engagement with this support and judgement of the field, the writers in this study cannot remain a part of the system of Australian fiction writing nor have their works considered creative.

Once they passed initial judgement by the agents and the publishing industry, the writers and their work were subject to further appraisal through their interactions with critics and readers. While they didn't believe the interaction was important, each writer had their work submitted for review and competed for the attention of literary critics. For some this indirect interaction through the media was a way of receiving feedback to improve on future writing as well as the means to draw readers to their work. The writers in this study interacted with readers in a number of direct and indirect ways. For the most part, writers engaged with readers through their books in a complex process of communication and negotiating meaning. Readers, however, also undertook other forms of interaction with the writer, such as attending festival events and readings, emailing feedback or suggestions directly or posting to discussion groups to engage with online fan communities. Their judgement on the writer's work was largely felt in the numbers of books bought, borrowed, recommended or passed on to other readers. Without these direct and indirect interactions with readers, both the communication and the creative process would be incomplete and writers would be less likely to remain a part of the system of Australian fiction writing.

What these social and cultural interactions make clear is that the individual cannot be ascribed as the sole originator or contributor of a creative work. Without a body of knowledge and networks of judgements and support to draw on, they would not be able to become a part of the system, produce creative works or sustain a career in writing. While this does not imply that individuals are somehow unimportant to the creative process, they cannot be considered in isolation from the social and cultural contexts in which they work. Rather, each component has a necessary role in the story of how Australian fiction books are created. Creativity arises not from isolation but from the multiple and complex interactions of the individual, the domain and the field within the system of Australian fiction writing.

Secondly, *individuals are not completely unbounded in the creative process*. As we have just seen, the social and cultural contexts of writing can affect and influence writers and their works. As these contexts in which writers work are necessary for creativity to occur, this research shows that they both constrain and enable writing by providing boundaries for what is possible or acceptable as well as ideas, skills and knowledge. Such a notion displaces the individual from its previously central role in theories of creativity but does not replace complete free will (as put forward by Descartes, 1984; Kane, 1996; Schopenhauer, 1995) with complete determination (as put forward by de Saussure, 1989; Levi-Strauss, 1967; Marx, 1977). Rather, like the systems model, freedom and determination are interrelated, interacting in complex ways that give individuals degrees of freedom relative to the structures that surround them.

From this position, which is similar to ideas put forward by Bourdieu (1993a; 1996) and Giddens (1979), the social and cultural contexts within which individual writers work give them the ability to make choices and act in ways that can either reinforce or potentially change those structures. While they may make choices and act in ways that alter or extend them, a writer could not and need not entirely break free of social and cultural structures as they provide the conditions for creativity to occur, if it is to occur at all. This position takes further several of the propositions put forward in the literature of Australian fiction writing as outlined in Chapter 1. Rather than seeing social structures as solely negative or restrictive of women's writing, multicultural writing or indigenous writing, they can be viewed as enabling creativity by both initiating a thriving literary counterattack from those who were marginalised as well as providing (albeit limited) opportunities for publication within the existing industry framework.

Structures are not only external to the individual but can be seen to act internally as well. As seen in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, writers all have individual genetics, traits and experiences that guide their choices and actions, corresponding to Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* as a "system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks" (1977, p. 95). With these socially and culturally formed dispositions, individuals are not only predisposed to act in certain ways but are given the capacity to perform, produce or achieve in particular areas. In this sense, particular

combinations of dispositions or *habitus* inclined the individuals in this study to write and write well.

We don't come out of nothing. Every writer is programmed by their previous experience, everything they've read, and I've read everything or almost everything. They're programmed by their own background, their own society, their own languages, their own everything and it's unique because everybody's own experience is different (Greenwood 6/11/06).

As described by Greenwood, the structures that constrain and enable Australian fiction writing are not universal. Each individual writer is predisposed to make decisions and act in ways that are unique to their own *habitus*, leading them to choose and engage with particular forms, genres and styles of writing as well as the specific individuals and institutions that support their work and judge if it is to be published and considered creative. Because they actively chose some of these social and cultural contexts, the writers in this study can be seen to have exercised some control over which structures or boundaries they would work within.

The accumulated and always expanding domain of Australian fiction writing delineates what is possible within the area of production or how far a writer may push the boundaries without breaking them entirely. Within that domain, picture books, chapter books for children and young adults and adult novels each have their own set of rules and procedures of what is acceptable in terms of word length, content and language. These limits, however, do not completely predetermine how a book is written or what it is about but rather they provide a framework that guides production. A picture book, for instance, is commonly 32 pages long, with somewhere between 200 and 1,500 words and at least one illustration per double page spread. Picture books are generally aimed at children and as such require expressive pictures and a simple vocabulary to engage young readers, but they can cover a broad spectrum of themes or content. Libby Gleeson's picture books encompass a range of story ideas from a bear imprisoned in a medieval circus to a child's best friend moving away.

In providing a framework of 'possibles', the domain also acts as the site where writers and readers are able to access the rules and conventions needed to produce, understand, compare or evaluate works. Although this applies equally to all books within the domain of Australian fiction, it can be seen most explicitly in the work of genre writers such as Kerry Greenwood, Peter Doyle and Leigh Redhead. According to the conventions of crime writing, readers who

pick up one of their books know before they even open the front cover that the protagonist will solve the crime by the final page.

Don't make it too easy for your hero and make sure they solve the crime and get themselves out of the terrible trouble you've put them in through their own skill and ingenuity. No cavalry riding in to save them at the last minute (Redhead in Allen & Unwin, 2007)

This does not imply that the content or style of crime writing is formulaic and therefore lacking in originality. Rather the rules and conventions of genre and fiction writing more generally act as a structural framework that enables original work. "There's room in crime fiction to say almost anything you want" (Greenwood 6/11/06). If all crime writing structures were abandoned, a book would be unrecognisable as a work of crime fiction and could not be judged as creative.

While the structures of Australian fiction writing do limit to a certain extent the form, style and content of a book, they can be seen to allow writers more freedom than the structures of other domains. The relative freedom of the Australian fiction domain and its boundaries can be seen, for example, in comparison to the domain of non-fiction. While Australian fiction has been subject to censorship in the past, anti-terror legislation governing censorship and sedition have recently been exercised on non-fiction material (Lynch & Williams, 2006; Moorhouse, 2006b), with Australian fiction able to explore these issues in works such as Andrew McGahan's *Underground* and Richard Flanagan's *The Accidental Terrorist*. Although John Dale's children's thriller *Army of the Pure* was pulled from publication because it dealt with similar issues, this can be seen not as a limitation of the domain itself but of commercial constraints within the structure of the field, particularly in the publishing industry.

When the writers in this study chose to write fiction books, they submitted themselves and their writing to the largely commercial structures of the Australian (and international) publishing industry. For the most part, the field members that work on their manuscripts do so with commercial imperatives in mind, answering to company directors, boards of management and share holders and relying on consistent profit margins for their own employment. From this perspective, decisions made about acquisition, editing, design and promotion can all be seen to be restrictive in that they are made to primarily maximise sales.

“We can’t just buy books because we like them. We are a business and we need to be convinced that people will want to spend money on them” (S. Martyn 10/10/06). This does not mean, however, that commercial and creative imperatives are mutually exclusive. If this were the case, publishing companies would be unwilling to take risks on previously unpublished writers or on manuscripts that pushed the boundaries of a domain further than before. Rather, the structure of the field generally supports such risks and often shoulders the financial burden when such ventures fail. Like other complex systems, the publishing industry requires profit to sustain itself but uses its surplus to expand or enhance its functions. In this way, the field of Australian fiction writing can be seen to both constrain and enable writers by emphasising profit but also by giving writers opportunities to publish their work and room to experiment with form, style and content.

As with the domain, the level of free will the individual writer is able to exert within the structures of the field is largely relative. The industry, for example, relies on writers to provide the material from which they generate profits but, given the sheer numbers of writers wanting to be published, individual writers are not always in a position to make decisions that may affect the structure of that industry. While it may not be an equal relationship, what this interdependence shows is that the structures of the publishing industry are not purely restrictive. Rather, like the domain of Australian fiction writing, they can be seen to provide both boundaries and opportunities for creativity to occur, constraining and enabling writers and their work.

Thirdly, any study of individual writers and their processes that ignores these vital contextual components does not provide an adequate understanding of creativity in Australian fiction writing. Rather than viewing the entire process from conception to consumption as a continuing series of interactions between individuals, socially located and constituted fields and culture generated through a body of works, the majority of the literature and research has tended to isolate or focus on single components of Australian fiction writing or creativity more generally. The literature on Australian fiction, for example, is rich with studies of thematic content or the effect of a specific social or cultural influence on the writer and their work (see for example Carr, 1994; Hergenhan, 1993; Modjeska, 1984; Scheckter, 1998). While these studies may provide some evidence or understanding of a specific object of inquiry, they often do so in a way that masks the importance of other crucial factors.

Those who study creativity rarely look outside their own school of thought for competing or complementary views. Within the broad discipline of psychology, for example, there are a number of unrelated studies trying to examine similar phenomena. As outlined in Chapter 2, cognitive psychologists attempt to discover the mental processes used in creative thought; computational psychologists create computer models of mental processes to simulate creativity; cognitive neuroscientists use imaging technology to view brain functioning during creative thought; social psychologists explore the dynamics of group creativity; developmental psychologists test the impact of social factors on children's creativity; other psychologists conduct biographical studies to uncover which events or environmental factors produce eminent creators or attempt to isolate the traits that make up the creative personality using psychometric tests. Although most of these approaches are valid within their own academic frameworks and are generally supported by the evidence collected, what they reveal individually are one-dimensional views of creativity.

When viewed in totality, these studies reveal that an interdisciplinary or multi-componential approach is necessary to get a picture of how creativity functions in the real world on both the macro and micro level. As we can see from the kinds of studies listed above, individuals are complex and multi-faceted beings even when looked at in isolation. Individuals, however, do not create the works for which they are known under laboratory conditions such as those used in creativity studies by Guilford (1954), Janiger (1960), Hayes and Flower (1986) or Martindale (1999). Rather, they are produced within the contexts of particular periods of history, particular sets of cultures and particular social groups and institutions. Writers who produced work in Australia in the last thirty years, for instance, were not acting within the same contexts as Australian writers around the time of Federation or contemporary writers in India or Germany.⁴⁵ In order to account for these contexts, studies of creativity must move beyond individual psychology to include the kinds of social and cultural concerns normally seen in history, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies.

Equally problematic as the inclination to focus on individual psychology, however, is the tendency within studies of Australian fiction writing, as outlined in Chapter 1, to explore social and cultural contexts to the exclusion of personal factors. Two recent overviews of Australian writing, *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia 1946-2005* (Munro &

⁴⁵ Australia's Federation in 1901 saw six British colonies (New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania) unified as the Commonwealth of Australia.

Sheahan-Bright, 2006) and *Making Books: Contemporary Australian Publishing* (Carter & Galligan, 2007), provide comprehensive accounts of creative output within a particular time frame of Australia's unique social and cultural history. They explain the influence of factors such as creative writing classes and writers' festivals as well as the impact of concentrated ownership and new technologies. However, the focus on particular events, environments, groups and institutions left no room to explore how each individual writer's unique biography and psychology could affect their interactions with those contexts.

Using the systems model of creativity, which has been tested in other domains of creative activity, this research provides the first study of individuals and social and cultural contexts and how they interact to produce creative works of Australian fiction writing. In doing so it provides a rationalist explanation for cultural production or creativity that accounts for the individual's role without denying the function played by stores of knowledge such as culture and broader social groups and contexts. Studies that focus on single components in isolation from other influential and necessary elements may lead to valid and verifiable outcomes but do not provide an adequate understanding for how creativity occurs or how it may be pursued or improved.

6.3 Research and policy directions

From a broader perspective, the study of creativity within a particular culture or society is a valuable one. The Australian federal government acknowledges this in its national research goals and priorities (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008a), which emphasise the need to understand how creativity functions and how it may be improved in order to become an innovative society. "Promoting an innovation culture and economy requires research with a focus on developing and fostering human talent, societal and cultural values favourable to creativity and innovation, and structures and processes for encouraging and managing innovation" (2008a, online). While this research priority is largely geared towards developing new technologies to encourage growth of Australian industries, the same principles apply to the expansion of cultural industries such as writing, already a billion dollar industry (ABS, 2005b) that earns the government approximately \$75 million from GST on book sales alone (Heyward, 2007). Here, as in other areas, there is the potential to improve creativity through

understanding its individual, social and cultural conditions and to provide opportunities to strengthen or improve Australia's cultural life.

Australian writing is an important part of that cultural life, comprised of all the stories we tell ourselves and the world at large. Problematic here is that the books we read, the books our children read, are affected by a system few have questioned. The exact state of the system of Australian fiction writing as a whole is difficult to assess, spanning hundreds of institutions, thousands of artefacts and potentially millions of people. What can be said about the system is largely contradictory: Australian governments have given almost universal access to works of Australian fiction through its education and library institutions but have not always encouraged anyone to read them; the publishing industry makes money but very little of that filters through to the writers who produce the products they sell; more and more individuals are becoming writers but few can sustain a writing career. Although the system still functions at present despite these contradictions, each by itself has the potential to gradually erode the current system, leaving only a flimsy framework for Australian fiction writing that could fail to provide opportunities for new or existing writers.

The exploration of writing, its origins and its influence in this research has allowed me to give an approximate view of how the system functions at present. However, it also points to areas where the system can be strengthened or developed for the next generations of writers and readers. As we will see, each of the components of the systems model of creativity, the domain, the field and the individual, can be the potential site for such improvements. The interconnected nature of the model means changes made in one area are likely to affect the system as a whole. In this way, even minor improvements could promote growth of the industry, encourage and sustain writers and deliver creative works of Australian fiction to Australian readers. The suggestions for change that follow are varied, ranging from ideas that would be easy for individuals to implement to others that would require change at an institutional or national level. In some cases, these are suggested by the writers themselves; in others, they represent a logical extension of the research into the current system.

Potential changes at the domain level of Australian fiction writing largely revolve around increasing the public's exposure to it, both in childhood and as adults. Increasing exposure to works of Australian fiction would not only increase sales for booksellers and publishers and

royalties for writers but also encourage the reading of our own fiction in an environment where non-fiction and international fiction currently dominate.

As a nation, we spend a lot of time bagging our writers as mediocre compared to OS writers. Yet we also look to them to define our national identity and explore our national consciousness (Maloney 20/8/06).

Several programs are in place to encourage reading in general. The Indigenous Literacy Project, for example, is a partnership between the Fred Hollows Foundation, the Australian Booksellers Association and the Australian Publishers Association that supplies and purchases books and culturally appropriate literacy resources for schools, libraries and other institutions in remote communities. With illiteracy or low literacy in these communities “consistently linked to poor health, social and economic outcomes” (Indigenous Literacy Project, 2008, online), we can see the vital role reading in general plays individual and social development. That literacy in such communities is more likely to be sought and attained if it is culturally appropriate and linked to their own communities or their own experience shows the importance of exposing both children and adults to more works of Australian fiction.

Some state governments have recognised the need to increase the amount of Australian content taught in Australian schools at present. In May 2008, for example, NSW Minister for Education and Training John Della Bosca announced a plan to change the current syllabi to include: regular reading and extended studies of Australian novels and poems from K-6; the compulsory study of two pieces of Australian literature in 7-8 and 9-10; and an Australian literature module in Year 11 English Extension classes (NSW Board of Studies, 2008). Similar changes to English syllabi in the remaining states and territories would dramatically increase childhood exposure to works of Australian fiction, which Della Bosca argues would give students “a sense of identity, insight into our diverse culture, historical contexts and our unique place in the world” and “ensure that all students experience the wisdom, knowledge and talent of our authors” (Della Bosca in NSW Board of Studies, 2008, online).

The Australian government also funds Books Alive, a federally funded month-long program that aims to instil the public with a love of reading in general (Books Alive, 2008). Working with writers, booksellers, publishers and the media, the program includes writer tours and reader events, a guide of 50 recommended books, advertising and a promotional offer that

gives readers a free book by a selected Australian writer when they purchase any of the 50 recommended texts. However, while the program gives away more than 200,000 copies of this free Australian work, not all of the 50 recommended books are Australian. In 2008, federal funding for Books Alive helped to promote best-selling international works such as JK Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Anthony Kiedis' biography *Scar Tissue*, and Ian Rankin's *Exit Music*. Problematic here are the competing aims to promote both reading in general and works by Australian writers. The balance of Australian and international works has been re-evaluated in recent years with the 2008 Books Alive guide promoting far more Australian works than the first guide released in 2003.

As several of the writers in this study argue, programs such as Books Alive should be encouraged because they help to connect the public with Australian fiction works they may not have otherwise been aware of.

There can always be more done to promote Australian books and writing. More festivals, promotional tours like Books Alive and bookshop/publisher sponsored events that bring books and authors into the mainstream (Abela 15/11/06).

Reading programs and writers' festivals, however, do more than just expose the public to Australian fiction books and their writers. Amanda Hampson argues they are useful in engaging readers, not just in a single work but in Australian fiction in general.

I think things like the Books Alive program are good. I think Australian writers need to get out more amongst the public and get them more involved in the work. Writers' festivals have been hugely successful. I think involving people is part of it. People feel involved in sport, no matter how fat and unhealthy they are, they feel involved in their teams. I really think that writers could do more of that (Hampson 29/8/06).

As Della Bosca stated earlier, this engagement with Australian fiction is important because it helps to foster identity with Australia's cultural life. As such, a balance needs to be struck in our schools and federally funded programs between encouraging reading in general, studying classic works by international writers and supporting our own cultural products and producers. The writers in this study argue such a balance also needs to be found in Australia's media.

As seen in the previous chapter, when the writers and industry professionals were asked what they thought may improve the national profile of Australian fiction, the most common answer was that more space or opportunities for criticism and review were needed.

Bookshops, publishers and especially reviewers could focus more on home grown talent rather than giving precious review space to overseas books (Collins 15/8/06).

As few editors have the power to expand the overall size of the newspaper, giving more space to Australian fiction writing would generally mean taking it from coverage of other areas, whether it is non-fiction or international fiction; other cultural forms such as music, art or film; or even other supplements such as sport, business or property. Such cuts would be highly unlikely to occur given the advertising revenue each of those sections generates and the general aim of newspaper to provide its readership with reporting that covers all its diverse interests.

A potential solution, then, may be for governments or other institutions to increase financial support or incentives for mainstream publications that publish reviews or other articles dedicated to Australian fiction within existing cultural sections. Current funding in this area is directed towards the monthly newspaper supplement *Australian Literary Review* (ALR), which, as the survey in Chapter 5 shows, offers minimal attention to Australian fiction. In addition to ALR, which is separate from the main body of cultural reporting, additional funding could pay for more regular coverage or to expand existing sections.

I think that more space for books would be good. I think it would be good if *The Australian* and the Fairfax papers had a daily book review column and it wasn't just on weekends. That would be five more reviews a week and that's important (Cunnane 4/12/06).

Subsidisation for such coverage may come from grants from state or federal arts bodies or institutions such as Copyright Agency Limited. An increase in book review space would also provide further opportunities for advertising by the publishing industry, which would ultimately benefit from greater exposure to the book-buying public.

Further research into the feasibility of such subsidisation or the effectiveness of reading programs is needed. A new survey on the overall success of the Books Alive program, for

example, could be compared with AC Nielson's 2001 survey of national reading, buying and borrowing habits (AC Nielson, 2001) and MillwardBrown's 2007 consumer research on the program (Australia Council, 2007b). With current government funding for the program to run out in 2009, such a comparison would be useful in determining if further funding is appropriate by quantifying the long term effects on reading and book buying overall as well as specific effects relating to Australian fiction. If the program's long term effectiveness was minimal, further research would also be needed to determine new strategies for raising reading levels and consumer awareness of available books.

Potential changes at the level of the field move away from encouraging the public to read and buy more Australian fiction towards support for writers and the industry. Primary among these is a reconsideration of how the government currently funds the arts, particularly for individual writers. As outlined in the previous chapter, for example, the Australia Council (2008) awarded a total of \$2,421,796 in New Work grants (broken into emerging, developing and established writer categories), international residencies, fellowships and emeritus awards in the 2006/2007 period. Given primarily to writers of literary works as well as some children's and non-fiction writers, such funding largely ignores writers of popular or genre fiction who may also require additional financial support for their writing.⁴⁶ Such inequities need to be addressed, whether by increasing funding overall, allowing for greater diversity in current funding allocation or a re-examination of current selection criteria.

Outside of individual grants, the government also has the potential to ease the economic burden of a writing career and promote career longevity by implementing a tax incentive scheme for cultural workers. The current tax system already recognises the unique economic conditions of cultural workers who may struggle for years with little income and then experience a spike in earnings from the sale of a work. Under provisions for special professionals, income is averaged over four years (Australian Taxation Office, 2008). Although this overly complex tax scheme is of benefit to writers, the government could foster a stronger arts community by providing more than minimal tax relief for its cultural workers. In Ireland, for example, resident writers, composers and artists were exempt from tax on earnings from the sale of their work (but not related employment such as appearances and

⁴⁶ Those against funding popular and genre writing may argue that such works are not valuable contributions to Australian culture. However, this argument ignores the multiple cases throughout history where books labelled popular or genre writing at the time of publication (as, for example, were the works of writers such as Dickens and Austen) have later been reclassified as classic or literary works.

teaching) (Republic of Ireland, 2006).⁴⁷ In 2006, the Irish tax exemption scheme was capped at €250,000, in order to prevent wealthy artists using the country as a tax haven. A similar capped scheme would improve the living and working conditions of many Australian writers. Setting the tax-free threshold for creative earnings at \$50,000, for example, would (based on income figures in Throsby & Hollister, 2003) leave 85% of Australian writers tax-free, while still taxing those who earn larger amounts. While earning enough to live off their writing alone would still be impossible for many individuals, such a scheme could act as an incentive for them to persevere with a writing career.

What also needs to be considered here, however, is that improving writing and writers' conditions will be of benefit only as long as the industry is capable of supporting the production of new books.

The other problem is that there's absolutely no point in funding writers if there's nowhere for their books to be published. I think it's possible that there needs to be more funding of kind of literary novels and difficult novels where publishers are, in a sense, forced to do more sophisticated publishing, I think in some ways that would help the industry more than just giving individuals grants (Cunningham 28/8/06).

One response to this issue would be to boost funding for financial incentives to publishing companies that produce books by Australian writers. At present, the Australia Council offers registered publishers subsidies of \$4000 per title for up to seven titles for new works and up to \$4000 per title to reprint classic works. Increasing current funding by just \$20,000, for example, could subsidise the publication of five new or classic works. Raising the number of titles publishers may apply to have subsidised from seven to eight titles could also increase publication of Australian fiction writing.

Another response is to establish cultural quotas in publishing similar to those the government has already established in broadcast media. The *Australian Content Standard 2005* for television, for example, requires a minimum yearly total of 55% Australian programming between 6am and midnight with sub-quotas to ensure the quality of adult drama, children's programs and documentaries (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2008). It is

⁴⁷ Tax incentives are not new to Australian culture industries. A variety of tax exemptions and deductions have been used to boost investment in the Australian film industry (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008b; Screen Australia, 2008).

reasonable that the same justification for structural protections in broadcasting could be applied to publishing, which is also vulnerable to the importation of rival international products. Combined with the subsidies mentioned above, cultural quotas could guarantee publishing opportunities remain available even with market or company pressure to import international titles.

A further response would be the establishment of government-funded not-for-profit publishing houses like Fremantle Arts Centre Press (now Fremantle Press). Fremantle Press was set up in 1975 with a \$15,000 grant from the West Australian government and a focus on publishing Western Australian work (Laurie, 2005, p. 15). Although government funding was reduced in 1996, the press serves as a model for the potential of a non-profit publisher with a state or national focus, publishing now significant Australian works such as A.B. Facey's *A Fortunate Life* and Sally Morgan's *My Place*. Guaranteed income from the government would allow a non-profit publisher to take risks that commercial companies could not afford to take including giving new writers room to practice and mature with 'apprentice' novels or encouraging writing that may have limited appeal or little chance of generating a profit but is significant or innovative in terms of content or technique.

Further research is needed to investigate if such ideas would be suitable or successful in the system of Australian fiction writing. A feasibility analysis, with collaboration with various levels of government, arts funding bodies, cultural policy professionals and economists, would help determine the economic, legal, cultural and social implications of such changes not only for Australian fiction writing specifically but for the other cultural industries and the public more generally. Such an analysis would include surveys of public and professional opinion as well as more in-depth study of the effects of similar schemes or programs in other industries or countries.

Research could also be undertaken into ways to sustain a career in writing. A longitudinal study on the careers of those who undertook creative writing classes with industry components compared with those who undertook traditional creative writing classes, for instance, could confirm if knowledge of the market and industry can improve a writer's chances for publication or for sustaining a career in writing. As discussed in Chapter 3, such a study would need to take into account the motivation of those who undertake such courses, focusing only on those who intend to pursue a creative writing career.

Further research is also needed into individual factors that may increase or decrease a writer's chances of succeeding. Traditional psychological testing of individuals has thus far been unable to account for why some individuals are able to sustain creativity across a lifetime and others are not. A research approach that incorporates traditional testing along with social or cultural investigation may yield more definite results. An interdisciplinary study of writers based on the systems model, for instance, could incorporate traditional physiological measures and neurological and cognitive testing in its investigation of the individual component. In conjunction with the interviews, case histories and other data collection methods used here, such an approach would add further insight to the current study. Given the breadth of such research, an initial pilot study of two or three writers would help determine which measurements, tests and interview questions would yield the clearest results and streamline the research process to reduce the amount of time required of participants.

Overall, comparative studies with other cultural industries or even other creative fields would help to assess how creativity differs across domains. The similarities and differences between writers and multimedia artists or between writers and scientists in nanotechnology or quantum computing, for example, could tell us whether improvements to creativity can be made with a single over-arching strategy or must be designed on a case by case (or domain by domain) basis. Such comparisons could also be used to further test the usefulness of the systems model as a means of generating a more comprehensive and rational understanding of creativity and to meet the Australian government's research goals to encourage scientific and technological breakthroughs and promote an innovation culture and economy.

6.4 Conclusion

Given the evidence provided in this research, we can see that the story of how Australian fiction books are created today and how they will be created in the future is both rich and complex. It shows that every individual has their own distinct combination of psychology, biology and biography which gives them the desire and ability to be creative and leads them to engage with particular creative practices in unique ways. What the writers in this study have in common, however, is that they have all succeeded at producing creative works where many others have tried and failed. This research shows that these writers' success wasn't entirely of their own making. Few writers, for instance, were in a position to choose which

society they grew up in or the cultural artefacts they were exposed to as children, who the experts were within their field of practice or whether those experts or the general public would accept or value the work they produced. Their success depended instead on a variety of social and cultural factors over which they had very little control.

In providing evidence of social and cultural effects on the production of Australian fiction books, this study adds to a growing body of research that moves beyond individual or traditional notions of creativity. While notions of creative individuals as the inspired artist or the genius are still popular today (see for example the overview of genius in J. Epstein, 2007; or Henry Miller's ideas on the 'celestial recording room' in H. Miller & Moore, 1939), they hinder attempts to investigate who may be considered creative, how creativity occurs or how it may be improved. To aid understanding, this research gives further evidence for the systems model of creativity as a rational explanation of an individual's actions and decisions as well as the structural conditions that both enable and constrain their participation and success in particular creative activities. In this way, the systems model provides a comprehensive means of delineating and understanding processes that have until recently been viewed as mystical or unexplainable.

By giving evidence of a rational explanation of creativity more generally, this research reveals more of the story of how Australian fiction books are created. Firstly, it tells us that they are not created out of nothing as some notions of creativity would have us believe. Rather, they are products generated by individuals who have made decisions and acted within social and cultural structures that have provided them with the capabilities, resources and opportunities to do so. Secondly, it tells us that while the products that result from this process are original, they do not break entirely from what has come before them. If they did not bear some semblance to previous works, there would be no way to recognise them as Australian fiction books. Finally, it tells us that these books must be judged by individuals and institutions other than their writers to be valuable variations on previous works, if they are to be considered creative. They are only added to the cultural store of Australian fiction writing once they have been subject to various forms of social judgement. From these individual, social and cultural factors, we can see evidence of a system at work in Australian fiction writing where Australian fiction books arise not just from what an individual writes but from their multiple and complex interactions with and within the social and cultural frameworks they inhabit.

Appendix 1: Biographies of Writers

Deborah Abela. Fiction: children (12 novels). Notable works include *Max Remy Superspy* series and *Jasper Zammit (Soccer Legend)* series. Previous employment includes writing and producing television programmes (Network Ten). Completed a Bachelor of Communications (UTS). www.maxremy.com.au

Venero Armanno. Fiction: literary (8 novels), children (3 illustrated books), short stories (1 collection plus single publications). Notable works include *Firehead* (2007); *The Volcano* (2001); *Candle Life* (2006). Currently Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at University of Queensland. Completed a Bachelor of Arts (UQ); Diploma in Scriptwriting (AFTRS); Masters in Creative Writing (QUT); PhD in Creative Writing (QUT). Recipient, Queensland Premier's Literary Award for Best Fiction (2002). Runner up, *Aurealis* Best Science Fiction and Horror Award (1996); Steele Rudd Award for best short story collection (1993). Shortlisted, *Courier Mail's* Book of the Year (2002); Queensland Premier's Literary Award for Best Fiction (2000).

Carmel Bird. Fiction: literary (5 novels), crime (2 novels), comic (1 novel), young adult (1 novel), children (1 picture book), short stories (5 collections plus single publications). Non-fiction: writing guides (3 book length manuals) plus others. Editor of fiction and non-fiction anthologies, journals and magazines. Notable works include *The Bluebird Café* (1990); *Not Now Jack – I'm Writing a Novel* (1994); *The White Garden* (1995); *Red Shoes* (1998); *Cape Grimm* (2004); Current and previous employment includes residencies and teaching in creative writing at numerous schools, colleges and universities around Australia. Completed a Bachelor of Arts (Tasmania); Diploma of Education (Tasmania); Diplome de Langue (Paris); Licentiate of the London College of Music. Recipient, Philip Hodgins Memorial Medal (2001). Shortlisted, Miles Franklin Award (1991, 1996, 1999). www.carmelbird.com

Paul Collins. Fiction: science fiction and fantasy (3 novels), children (65 novels), young adult (6 novels), short stories (2 collections plus single publications). Non-fiction: writing industry guide (1), children's reference (26). Editor of fiction anthologies and magazines. Notable works include the *Quentaris Chronicles* and *The Earthborn Wars* series. Previous employment includes publishing and editing science fiction and fantasy magazines and books. He currently operates his own publishing company (Ford Street Publishing). Recipient, William Atheling Award (1999); *Aurealis* Convenors' Award (2001); inaugural Peter McNamara Award for lifetime achievement in Science Fiction (2002). Shortlisted, *Aurealis* Convenors' Award (1999); Clayton's Award (2000). Named, Children's Book Council Notable Book (2000, 2004). www.paulcollins.com.au

Kate Constable. Fiction: science fiction and fantasy (4 novels), young adult (1 novel), short stories (single publications). Notable works include the *Chanters of Tremaris* trilogy. Completed a Bachelor of Arts/Law (Melbourne). Recipient, Children's Book Council of Australia Notable Book for Older Readers (2008). Runner-up, HQ Short Story Competition (1996). Shortlisted, *Aurealis* Best Young Adult Novel (2007). www.kateconstable.com

Gary Crew. Fiction: children and young adult (24 novels plus 21 picture books), short stories (1 collection plus single publications). Notable works include *Strange Objects*, *Angel's Gate* and *The Watertower*. Completed a Bachelor of Arts in literature and history (UQ), Master of

Arts (UQ) and a Doctorate of Creative Arts (Sunshine Coast). Previously Head of English at two high schools. Currently Associate Professor in Creative Writing, editor of Lothian's After Dark series of *Macabre Tales* and Chair of the Queensland Writers' Centre. Recipient, Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year for Older Readers (1991, 1994); Alan Marshall Prize for Children's Literature (1991); NSW Premier's Award (1991); National Children's Book of the Year (1994); Australian Children's Book of the Year (1994); Australian Children's Picture Book of the Year (1995); Bilby Children's Choice Award (1995); Ned Kelly Award for Crime Writing (1996); *Aurealis* Award for Speculative Fiction (2004); Royal Zoological Society Whitley Award (2004); Wilderness Award for Environmental Writing (2004). Shortlisted, Edgar Allen Poe Mystery Fiction Award (1992, 1995); Australian Children's Picture Book of the Year (1993, 2000); WA Premier's Award (1997). <http://home.gil.com.au/~cbcqld/crew/crew.htm>

Sophie Cunningham. Fiction: literary (2 novels). Non-fiction: journalism (features, reviews and columns). Notable works include *Geography* (2004); *Bird* (2008). Previous work includes editor at McPhee Gribble/Penguin and publisher for McPhee Gribble/Penguin and Allen & Unwin. Current work includes journalism and editing literary journal *Meanjin*. Completed a Bachelor of Arts (Monash). Currently completing Masters in Creative Writing (Monash). Shortlisted, Commonwealth Writers' Prize Best First Book in the SE Asia & South Pacific Region (2004). www.sophiecunningham.com

Sandy Curtis. Fiction: crime/romance (5 novels), romance (3 novels), short stories (single publications). Notable works include *The Marriage Merger* (1996); *Dance with the Devil* (2001). Runner up, Emma Darcy Award (1997). Shortlisted, Romance Writers of Australia Romantic Book of the Year Award. www.sandycurtis.com

Louise Cusack. Fiction: Science Fiction and Fantasy (3 novels), novella (1 published in anthology), short stories (single publications). Notable works include the *Shadow Through Time* trilogy. Current and previous employment includes residencies, writing workshops, mentoring and manuscript assessment services. Currently completing Masters in Creative Writing (QUT). Recipient, International PRISM Short Story Award (2001). www.louisecusack.com

John Dale. Fiction: crime (3 novels). Non-fiction: general (3 books, 2 book chapters plus single publications), on writing (1 book chapter). Notable works include *Dark Angel* (1995); *Huckstepp: A Dangerous Life* (2000); *Wildlife* (2004). Currently Associate Professor in Writing and Cultural Studies at University of Technology, Sydney. Completed Doctorate of Creative Arts (UTS). Recipient, Chancellor's Award (1999); Ned Kelly Crime Writing Award for best first novel (1995). www.johndale.net

Peter Doyle. Fiction: crime (3 novels). Non-fiction: general (3 books plus single publications), journalism (features, reviews and columns). Notable works include *Get Rich Quick* (1996); *Amaze Your Friends* (1998); *The Devil's Jump* (2001). Currently Lecturer in Print Media Production at Macquarie University and curator of Sydney's Justice and Police Museum. Completed Bachelor of Arts (Communications) (UTS); PhD in Media and Mass Communications (Macquarie). Recipient, Ned Kelly Award for Best First Crime Novel (1997); Ned Kelly Award for Best Crime Novel (1999); Association of Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC) award for Best Research in Record Labels and General History (2006); National Trust/Energy Australia Heritage Award in the Interpretation and Presentation, Corporate and Government division (2006).

Nick Earls. Fiction: popular fiction (6 novels), young adult (5 novels), short stories (2 collections plus single publications). Notable works include *Zigzag Street* (1996); *After January* (1996); *48 Shades of Brown* (2004). Completed Bachelor of Medicine and a Bachelor of Surgery (Honours) (UQ). Recipient, 3M Talking Book of the Year Award Young People's category (1996); CBE/ International Youth Library Munich Notable Book (1997); Betty Trask Award (1998), Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year for Older Readers (2000); Queensland Writers Centre inaugural 'Johnno' Award (2001); Centenary Medal (2003); University of Queensland Alumnus of the Year (2006). Runner up, Steele Rudd Australian Short Story Award (1993). Shortlisted, Talking Book of the Year Award (1997); Queensland Premier's Awards for Export Excellence (1999); Fairlight Talking Book Award (2000). www.nickearls.com

Hazel Edwards. Fiction: children (43 books plus 26 picture books), young adult (10 novels), crime (1 novel), short stories (17 in anthologies plus single publications), drama scripts (22 published). Non-fiction: on writing (5 books), general (10 books), children (10 books), education (29 books), journalism (features and columns). Notable works include *There's a Hippopotamus on Our Roof Eating Cake* (1980), *Antarctic Writer on Ice* (2002) and *Fake ID* (2002). Currently an Australian Society of Authors' Committee of Management member (education and children's publishing portfolios). Completed Bachelor of Arts (Monash) and a Masters of Education (Monash). Recipient, ABPA Book Design Award (1981); Bronze Medal Book Design Leipzig 1982; Metropolitan Fire Brigade Community Award (1990); Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition (ANARE) Writer (2000/2001); Curriculum Innovation Excellence Visual Storytelling Project (2005); Somerset Ambassador of Literature QLD (2005); Premier's Reading Challenge Victoria, South Australia and NSW (2005/2006); National Literacy and Numeracy Champion (2006). Named, Youth Literature's Top 150; ABC's Most Popular Titles of all Time. www.hazeledwards.com

Kate Forsyth. Fiction: science fiction & fantasy (9 novels), literary (1 novel), children (9 novels plus 1 picture book), young adult (1 novel), short stories (single publications). Non-fiction: journalism (features and reviews). Poetry: (1 collection plus single publications). Notable works include *The Witches of Eileanan* series, *The Chain of Charms* series and *The Starthorn Tree* (2002). Previous and current employment includes journalism and conducting writing workshops. Completed Bachelor of Arts in Literature (Macquarie) and a Masters of Arts in Writing (UWS). Shortlisted, *Aurealis* Award for Best Australian Fantasy Novel (1997, 1999); Western Australian Children's Choice Awards (2004); One Book One Brisbane campaign (2005). Named, *Locus Magazine* Best First Novels (1998). www.kateforsyth.com.au

Scot Gardner. Fiction: young adults (7 novels). Non-fiction: general (1 book). Notable works include *One Dead Seagull* (200?), *Burning Eddy* (200?) and *The Other Madonna* (200?). Previous employment as a counsellor and youth worker for disadvantaged teenagers, established *Footy, Beer and Girls* programs for high-risk middle-school boys in Victoria and participated in the State Library of Victoria's Writers on the Road Program (2005). Currently speaks and conducts writing workshops in Victorian schools. Shortlisted, Children's Book Council Book of the Year for Older Readers (2003, 2004); NSW Premier's Awards Ethel Turner Prize (2004). www.scotgardner.com

Susanne Gervay. Fiction: young adult (4 novels), children (4 novels), short stories (single publications). Non-fiction: journalism (features), on writing (single publications). Notable works include *I am Jack* (2000), *Butterflies* (2001) and *The Cave* (2002). Currently on the

Board of the NSW Writers' Centre and co-head of the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators Australia & New Zealand (SCBWI). Completed a Bachelor of Arts (Sydney), Diploma of Education (Advanced College of Education Victoria), Masters of Education (NSW) and a Masters of Arts (UTS). Recipient, Australian National University short story award (1996); The Society of Women Writers Short Story Award 1999; The Society of Women Writers Biennial Book Award (2003, 2005); Lady Cutler Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature (2007). Shortlisted, Children's Literature Prize for Peace (1996); International Board on Books for Young People's Outstanding Youth Literature on Disability (2001); Western Australian Children's Choice Award (2001, 2003). Named, Children's Book Council Notable Book (2001, 2005). www.sgervay.com

Libby Gleeson. Fiction: children (10 Novels, 12 picture books), young adult (5 novels), short stories (single publications). Non-fiction: on writing (2 books plus single publications). Notable works include *I am Susannah* (1987), *Dodger* (1990), *The Great Bear* (1999) and *Amy and Louis* (2006). Previously chair of Australian Society of Authors (1999-2001), served on Sydney Writers' Festival and Copyright Agency Limited boards. Currently an Australian Society of Authors' Committee of Management member. Completed Bachelor of Arts in history (Honours) (Sydney) and Diploma of Education. Recipient, International Board of Books for Young People Award (1991); Children's Literature Peace Prize (1992), Children's Book Council Picture Book Category (1992); Prime Minister's Multicultural Awards in Picture Book Category (1992); Lady Cutler Award for Services to Children's Literature (1997); Children's Book Council Fiction for Younger Readers Book of the Year (1997), Picture Book of the Year (2002); Young Australian Readers Award (2002); Bologna Ragazzi Award in Fiction for Infants Category (2000); Children's Book Council Early Childhood Books Award (2007). Shortlisted, NSW Premier's Literary Awards (1985, 2000, 2004); Victorian Premier's Awards (1988); South Australian Literary Awards (1985); Prime Minister's Multicultural Awards Picture Book Category (1993); Children's Book Council Fiction for Older Readers (1994), Fiction for Younger Readers (1998), Picture Books (2000), Early Childhood Book of the Year (2004). www.libbygleeson.com.au

Posie Graeme-Evans. Fiction: historical (3 novels). Notable works include *The Innocent* (2002), *The Exiled* (2003) and *The Beloved* (2005). Current and previous employment as an editor, scriptwriter, producer and director in film and television, creator and executive producer of *Hi-5* and *McLeod's Daughter* television programmes. Recipient, Screen Producers Association Australian Independent Producer of the Year (2002); TV Week/Logie Awards Most Popular Drama Series (2004, 2005), Most Popular Australian Program (2004). Shortlisted, Australian Film Institute Best Television Drama Series (2004, 2006). Named, Variety Magazine's 20 Significant International Women in Film and Television (2002). www.posiegraameevans.com

Kerry Greenwood. Fiction: crime (20 novels), science fiction & fantasy (4 novels), historical (3 novels), literary (1 novel), young adults (8 novel), children (4 novels) short stories (1 collection plus single publications). Non-fiction: general (3 books). Notable works include the *Phryne Fisher* series and the *Corinna Chapman* series. Currently and previously a locum solicitor for Victorian Legal Aid. Completed a Bachelor of Arts/Law (Melbourne). Recipient, *Aurealis* Awards for Excellence in Australian Speculative Fiction Best Novel Young Adult Division (1996); Ned Kelly Awards for Crime Writing Lifetime Contribution (2003); Davitt Award Best Young Fiction Book (2002), Readers' Choice Award (2006, 2007). Shortlisted, Ned Kelly Awards for Crime Writing, Best Novel (2005, 2005); New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards, Patricia Wrightson Prize for Children's Books (2006). Named, Davitt Award

Best Adult Novel (2003), Best Young Fiction Book (2003); Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award Younger Readers (2002). www.phrynefisher.com

Stephen Gray. Fiction: literary (2 novels). Non-fiction: law (1 book plus single publications). Notable works include *Lungfish* (1999) and *The Artist is a Thief* (2001). Currently and previously a law lecturer at various universities specialising in copyright and indigenous culture. Completed Bachelor of Arts/Law (Honours) (Monash) and Masters of Laws (Melbourne). Recipient, Jessie Litchfield Award for Literature (1999), *Australian/ Vogel Literary Award* (2000).

Amanda Hampson. Fiction: literary (2 novels). Non-fiction: general (2 books), journalism (features and general). Notable works include *Battles with the Baby Gods: Stories of Hope* (1997), *The Olive Sisters* (2005) and *Two for the Road* (2008). Current and previous employment as a professional writer for various newspaper and magazines. Shortlisted, Victorian Premier's Literary Awards Grollo Ruzzene Foundation Prize for Writing about Italians in Australia (2006). www.amandahampson.com

Jonathan Harlen. Fiction: literary (1 novel), children (13 novels), young adults (6 novels). Non-fiction: general (1 book). Notable works include *The Lion and the Lamb* (1992), *The Crescent Moon* (1998) and *The Cockroach War* (2004). Previous employment as a sports instructor and radio comedian. Currently runs writing workshops for primary and high school students.

Alan Horsfield. Fiction: children (25 novels and picture books), short stories (single publications). Non-fiction: education (29 text books and testing manuals), on writing (single publications). Notable works include *The Rats of Wolfe Island* (2002), *Dr awkward* (2002) and *Cadaver Dog* (2004). Previously a teacher at primary and secondary schools in Australia and Papua New Guinea, English and mathematics research officer at University of NSW, president and development officer of NSW Children's Book Council and judge of NSW Premier's Literary Awards. Currently conducts writing workshops for young people and produces exam papers and textbooks for primary and secondary students. <http://alanhorsfield.com>

Ian Irvine. Fiction: eco-thriller (3 novels), science fiction & fantasy (10 novels), young adult (2 novels). Notable works include the *View from the Mirror* quartet, the *War of Echoes* quartet and the *Runcible Jones* series. Previously employed developing Australia's national guidelines for the protection of oceanic environments. Completed a Bachelor of Science and a PhD in Marine Science (Sydney). Shortlisted, *Aurealis Award* for Best Fantasy Novel (1998), Best Science Fiction Novel (2003). Named, Sydney Morning Herald's Best Books (1998); *The Australian's* Best of Summer Reading (2000); WHSmith Fresh Talent Promotion (2000); Locus magazine Recommended Reading (2001); Sciencefiction.com's Best of 2001. www.ian-irvine.com

Anna Jacobs. Fiction: romance (37 novels), science fiction and fantasy (5 novels), short stories (single publications). Non-fiction: on writing (2 books plus single publications), education (9 textbooks). Notable works include *Persons of Rank* (1992), the *Music Hall* series and the *Kershaw Sisters* series. Completed a Bachelor of General Studies (Leeds) and a Masters of Business. Recipient, Random House/*New Idea* Australian Fiction Prize (1991); Romance Writers of Australia Romantic Book of the Year (2006); Shortlisted, Romance

Writers of Australia Romantic Book of the Year (2000, 2001, 2007, 2007).
www.annajacobs.com

Dave Luckett. Fiction: children (11 novels), young adult (2 novels), short stories (single publications). Non-fiction: general (3 books). Notable works include *The Patternmaker* (1994), *Tenabran Trilogy* series, and *Rhianna Chronicles* series. Previously employed as a federal public servant and teacher at secondary schools in Western Australia. Completed a diploma in education (Teachers College of Western Australia) and a Bachelor of Arts (Western Australia). Recipient, Aurealis Award Best Fantasy Novel (1998); WA Sci-Fi Awards Tin Duck Award (1999). Shortlisted, *Aurealis* Young Adult Short Story (1996), Best Young Adult Book (1998), Division B Fantasy Best Novel (1999), Young Adult Best Novel (1999), Children's Novel, Eight to Twelve Years (2002), Best Children's Book Long Fiction (2003); *Ditmar* William Atheling Jnr Award for Criticism or Review (1987), Best Short Fiction (1995), Best Novel (2000); Children's Book Council Notable Book Older Readers (1999); WA Premier's Award (1999, 2001).

Emily Maguire. Fiction: literary (2 novels). Non-fiction: general (1 book), journalism (essays, features and reviews). Notable works include *Taming the Beast* (2004), *The Gospel According to Luke* (2006) and *Princesses and Pornstars: Sex, Power, Identity* (2008). Currently teaches English and writing. Completed Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Arts (New England). Shortlisted, Dylan Thomas Prize for Young Writers (2006). Named, Kathleen Mitchell Award for Young Writers Special Commendation (2006, 2008).
<http://emilymaguire.typepad.com>

James Maloney. Fiction: children (20 Novels), young adult (11 Novels). Notable works include the *Gracey* series, *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* (1997) and *Touch Me* (2001). Previously employed as a secondary school teacher and librarian. Completed diplomas in teacher librarianship and computer education (Griffith). Recipient, Children's Book Council Book of the Year (1996, 1997); UNESCO Prize for Children's and Young People's Literature in the Service of Tolerance and Peace (2001); Children's Peace Literature Award (2001); Victorian premier's Literary Award (2001); National Children's Literature Award (2002); Centenary of Federation Medal for service to Australian society and literature (2003). Shortlisted, Children's Book Council Older Readers (2001). Named, Children's Book Council Honour Book (1994, 1995). www.jamesmaloney.com.au

Isolde Martyn. Fiction: historical/romance (4 novels). Notable works include *The Maiden and the Unicorn* (1998), *The Knight and the Rose* (1999) and *Fleur-de-lis* (2004). Previously employed as a university history tutor, archivist and senior book editor. Completed Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in history (Exeter, UK). Recipient, Romance Writers of Australia Romantic Novel of the Year (1999, 2001); Romance Writers of America Best First Novel (2000). Shortlisted, Romance Writers of Australia Romantic Novel of the Year (2003, 2005).
www.isoldemartyn.com

Fiona McIntosh. Fiction: science fiction and fantasy (9 novels), young adult (4 novels), crime (1 novel). Non-fiction: journalism (features). Notable works include *The Quickening* and *Percheron* series. Previously created, managed and wrote for a travel magazine. Currently conducts a fantasy book club and writing workshops. Named, IMPAC Dublin Award longlist (2007). www.fionamcintosh.com

Sean McMullen. Fiction: science fiction and fantasy (10 novels), young adults (2 novel), short stories (2 collections plus single publications). Non-fiction: on writing (book chapters and single publications). Notable works include the *Moonworlds* and *Greatwinter* series. Completed Bachelor and Masters Degrees (Melbourne), Diploma of Computer Science (Latrobe) and a PhD in Creative Writing (Melbourne). Recipient, Ditmar Awards William Atheling Jr. Award for Criticism (1992, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2000); Australian Science Fiction Award (1996); Ditmar Awards Best Australian Long Fiction (1996); *Aurealis* Awards Best Novel (1998, 1999, 2001), Best Short Story (2003); *Analog* Reader's Award best Novelette (2002); Nova Fantastyka Reader's Award Best Foreign Story (2003). Named, *Locus* Recommended Reading (1992, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004); *Eidolon* Best of the Year List (1998). www.seanmcmullen.net.au

Di Morrissey. Fiction: popular fiction (15 novels), children (1 novel), short stories (single publications). Non-fiction: journalism (broadcast and single publications). Notable works include *Heart of the Dreaming* (1991), *The Bay* (2001) and *Monsoon* (2007). Previously employed as a journalist and television host. Named, Australia's top-selling female novelist. www.dimorrissey.com

Catherine Padmore. Fiction: literary (1 novel), short stories (single publications). Non-fiction: academic (book chapter and single publications). Notable works include *Sibyl's Cave* (2004). Currently a lecturer in writing and literary studies at LaTrobe University. Completed a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) (LaTrobe) and a PhD (Deakin). Shortlisted, *The Australian/Vogel* Literary Award (2001); Commonwealth Writers' Prize Best First Book (2005). www.catherinepadmore.com

Louise Pakeman. Fiction: romance (8 novels and 2 novellas), short stories (single publications). Non-fiction: journalism (features and columns). Notable works include *Stepping Stones* (2001), *The Pumpkin Shell* (2001) and *Change of Skies* (2004). Previously worked as a freelance journalist. www.louisepakeman.com

Josephine Pennicott. Fiction: science fiction and fantasy (3 novels), short stories (single publications). Notable works include *Circle of Nine* (2001), *Bride of the Stone* (2003) and *A Fire in the Shell* (2004). Completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts (NSW). Previously a nurse, housemaid and life-drawing model. Recipient, Sisters in Crime Australia Scarlet Stiletto (2001), Kerry Greenwood Domestic Malice Prize (2003, 2004). Shortlisted, *Aurealis* Awards Best Horror Novel (2005). Named, *The Year's Best Fantasy & Horror* Best Debut Novels (2001). www.josephinepennicott.com

Leigh Redhead. Fiction: crime (3 novels), short stories (single publications). Notable works include *Peepshow* (2004), *Rubdown* (2005) and *Cherry Pie* (2007). Previously employed as an exotic dancer, masseuse and apprentice chef. Completed a Bachelor of Arts in communications and a Masters in Creative Writing (UQ). Recipient, Northern Rivers Writers' Centre Mentorship Program (2003); *Sydney Morning Herald's* Best Young Australian Novelists (2005); Davitt Awards Readers' Choice Award (2006). www.leighredhead.com

Alan Tucker. Fiction: children (2 novels). Non-fiction: children's history and information (4 books and picture books). Notable works include *Too Many Captain Cooks* (1994), *Iron in the Blood* (2002) and *The Bombing of Darwin: The Diary of Tom Taylor* (2002). Currently an artist/illustrator and employed by the South Australian education department writing teaching and instruction manuals for distance education. Recipient, Children's Book Council Eve

Pownall Award (2003); NSW Premier's Awards Young Peoples History Prize (2003). Shortlisted, Australian Awards for Excellence in Educational Publishing Secondary Single Book (1998); Children's Book Council Eve Pownall Award (1999); NSW Premier's History Awards Children's Section (1999); Young Australian Best Young Book Award Fiction for Older Readers (2004). www.alantucker.net

Lizzie Wilcock. Fiction: young adult (2 novels). Notable works include *Losing It* (2004) and *GriEve* (2007). Currently employed as a primary school teacher. Shortlisted, Victorian Premier's Literary Award Young Adult Fiction (2006), NSW Premier's Literary Award Ethel Turner Prize for Young People's Literature (2008).

Kim Wilkins. Fiction: horror (7 novels), young adult (6 novels), children (5 novels), general (1 novel). Non-fiction: academic (single publications). Notable works include *The Infernal* (1997), *The Resurrectionists* (2000) and *Giants of the Frost* (2004). Completed a Bachelor of Arts (Honours), Masters of Arts and Doctorate of Philosophy (UQ). Currently lectures at the University of Queensland. Recipient, Aurealis Award (1997, 2000, 2001); UQ University Medal for academic achievement (1998); SASSY Award for Popular Fiction (1998, 2004); Varuna Writers' Centre Fellowship (2001). Nominated, James Tiptree Jnr Memorial Prize (2000); British SF Association Award (2001, 2002); Aurealis Award (2003, 2004, 2006); Davitt Award for Crime Fiction (2003); Peter McNamara Award for Achievement in SF (2004). www.kimwilkins.com

Sean Williams. Fiction: science fiction and fantasy (27 novels), short stories (3 collections plus single publications) Notable works include *The Resurrected Man* (1998), the *Books of the Change* series and the *Force Heretic* series (in collaboration with Shane Dix). Completed a Bachelor of Economics and a Masters in creative writing (Adelaide). Previously Chair of the South Australian Writers' Centre, assessor for the Arts SA Literature Board and judge of the international Writers of the Future Contest. Recipient, *Aurealis* Best SF Novel (1996, 2001), Best Horror Short (1996, 1999), Best Fantasy Novel (2002, 2004), Best SF Short (2006); Ditmar Best Long Fiction (1998), Best Collected Work (2000), Best Novel (2001, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2007). Nominated, *Aurealis* Best SF Novel (1995, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007), Best Fantasy Novel (2001); Ditmar Best Long Fiction (1996, 1997), Best Novel (2002, 2003); McNamara Award (2002, 2003); SA Great Literature Award (1999); Philip K Dick Award 2007. www.seanwilliams.com

Janet Woods. Fiction: contemporary and historical romance (20 novels), short stories (single publications). Notable works include *Daughter of Darkness* (2001), *A Handful of Ashes* (2004), *Edge of Regret* (2008). Recipient, Bronze Quill Award for Short Story Writing; Random House/Woman's Day unpublished manuscript contest (1996). <http://members.iinet.net.au/~woods/>

Appendix 2: Interview questions for writers

Form and Publishing

1. Firstly, what answer do you give on forms that ask for your occupation? For example, author, writer, novelist, poet, artist, teacher.
2. What was the first piece of writing you had published?
 - a. How did that feel?
3. How did the publication of your first novel come about?
4. Has the publishing of any particular piece had a major effect on your life?
5. How do you explain your/its success?
6. What advice would you give to a young person starting out in writing?
 - a. Is that how you did it? If not, how is your current perspective different from the way you started?

Interest in Writing

1. Could you explain how you developed an interest in writing?
 - a. Is/Was this interest encouraged or fostered by anyone? Who?
2. How much access did you have to writing resources, techniques or knowledge when you first became interested in writing?
3. What has kept you involved for so long?
4. Have there been points when you became less intensely involved/ interested? Can you describe a time that stands out?
5. What aspects of your work do you find most rewarding or most satisfying? For example, the challenge, recognition, money, competition, fulfilled dream.
 - a. Why?

School and Training

1. Were you interested in books and reading before or during school?
 - a. What types of books were you interested in?
2. Do you think reading is a factor in learning how to write fiction?
 - a. Are there any books you would recommend for an aspiring author to read?
3. Did your schooling play a role in learning to write fiction? If so, how?
4. Were you taught the tools of fiction writing in school? For example, spelling, grammar, dramatic or writing structure, genre, character creation and development.

5. Were there any teachers (good or bad) that hindered or helped you to develop your writing skills? Describe their role.

6. Can you remember any of the books you studied in school?

a. In hindsight, would you consider this type of study to be helpful or not to your writing ability? Were these more or less useful to you than a straight out lesson in grammar and spelling?

b. What books would you have added to or taken out of a school curriculum?

7. Has any piece of writing had a major effect on your life?

8. How have you developed your writing skills outside primary and secondary schooling? For example, university, TAFE, workshops, internet, reading.

Writing Practices

1. Do you have a regular work schedule?

a. If so, how did it develop?

b. If not, how do you decide when to write?

2. What's a typical day like?

a. Is this a flexible or strict schedule?

b. What factors might change the shape of the day?

3. Can you describe your working methods?

a. Do you prefer to work in a solitary or busy environment?

b. Are there any aspects of your work you're fussy about?

c. Are there any circumstances under which you feel most productive?

4. Do you have the audience/ the reader/ the publisher in mind while you're writing?

5. Overall, how is the way you go about your work different now from the way you worked when you started writing?

a. Are there any changes in the way you think and feel about it?

6. Have you ever suffered writer's block?

a. If so, how did you 'cure' it?

7. Do you work on more than one project at a time?

8. In terms of your work, how far do you plan into the future?

Ideas and Decision Making

1. Where do the ideas for your work generally come from? For example, reading, family, your own previous work, life experience.

2. Do you think about work during leisure time?

3. Have you ever had a useful idea while doing an unrelated task such as walking or dreaming?
 - b. Did you use the idea?

4. Is there any process you use to decide whether an idea is good or bad?

5. How do you go about developing an idea/project?
 - a. Do you write rough drafts? Outlines?

6. Do you conduct any research before you start to write?
 - a. What is your process for researching? Is this factored into your regular schedule?
 - b. What kind of resources do you use?
 - c. Does this process continue as you write?

7. Can you describe how you make decisions regarding areas such as language, characterisation, dialogue and plot while you're writing? For example, is this process automatic, intuitive, rational or one of elimination?
 - a. How did this process develop?

8. At present, what task or challenge do you see as the most important for you?
 - a. Is that what takes up most of your time and energy? If not, what does?

9. What is your definition of creativity?
 - a. Do you consider your work creative?
 - b. What do you see as the creative aspects of your work?

Professional Support

1. Have you ever used a professional manuscript assessor?
 - a. If yes, did they influence your writing in any way?

2. Do you have an agent?
 - a. If yes, at what stage in your career did you get them? How? Why?
 - b. Do they influence your writing in any way?

3. How active are your editors in shaping or influencing your work?
 - a. Would you consider their contributions to your work creative?

4. Have you ever used any other professional services for your writing? Please describe.

5. Have you ever received financial support (such as grants or stipends) from government or private organisations in order to aid your writing?
 - a. Do you feel there is enough support for writers in Australia?

6. Has your work been reviewed in the media or other formats?
 - a. If yes, was the criticism positive/ useful/ negative/ cruel?
 - b. Do you feel reviewers play a role in the public perception of your work?
 - c. Do you feel they contribute to the creative process?

7. Do you feel an author's identity/ public image is important for success?

Peer Support

1. Do you ever talk shop with other writers about your work? For example, share ideas, swap stories, critique each others' work?
 - a. How did you meet these other writers?
2. Have your peers been particularly influential in shaping your personal and/or professional life?
3. Are there any writers (alive or dead) you can point to as having influenced your work?
4. Have you ever pursued a mentor type relationship with another writer in either a mentor or student role?
 - a. If yes, was this relationship a beneficial experience?

Personal Support

1. Has there been a significant person (or persons) in your life who has (positively or negatively) influenced or stimulated your thinking and attitudes about your work?
 - a. What did you learn from them?
 - b. How did they influence your work and/or attitudes?
2. How do you balance your private life with your writing?
3. Of the things you have done in life, of what are you most proud?
4. What personal traits do you think you have that have helped you in your work?
5. How have your spouse and/or children influenced your goals and career?
6. Has your family or cultural background influenced your writing?
 - a. If yes, how so?

General Questions

1. Do you feel Australian writing has a positive national profile?
 - a. If no, what more could be done to improve the writing industry locally?
2. Do you feel Australian writing has a positive international profile?
 - a. If no, what more could be done to improve the profile of Australian writing internationally?
3. Is it possible for Australian fiction writers to support themselves financially with writing alone?
4. When or how does fiction become literature?

Appendix 3: Interview questions for industry professionals

The lists below indicate a range of general questions as well as those tailored for specific interviewees.

General (editors/publishers/agents)

Interest in Writing

1. Did you have an interest in writing before you entered the writing industry?
2. Could you explain how you developed an interest in writing? Is/Was this interest encouraged or fostered by anyone? Who?
3. What has kept you interested in this time?
4. How much access did you have to writing resources, techniques or knowledge at that time? (easy to access, rare)
5. Were you interested in books and reading before or during school? What types of books were you interested in?
6. Have you ever written yourself?
7. Has any piece of writing had a major effect on your life?
8. How did you get into this aspect of the writing industry?
9. How long have you been in the industry? In your current position?
10. Have you ever pursued a mentor type relationship with someone in the industry? (in either mentor or student role)

Daily Work

1. What types of fiction do you deal with on a regular basis? (genre, novels, short stories, poetry)
2. How do authors get access to you and your services?
3. How many other people do they pass through before they get to you?
4. How do you collect/ hear of manuscripts? Are there any programs in place with other organisations?
5. Are there different collection methods for different types of fiction?
6. Do you accept unsolicited manuscripts? a. How big is the slush-pile?
7. Do you write rejection letters to unsuccessful authors? Does this include feedback?

8. What is a typical day like? Is this a flexible or strict schedule? Everyday tasks?
9. Do you work on more than one project at a time?
10. What aspects of your work do you find most rewarding or most satisfying? Why? (challenge, meaning, satisfaction, recognition, money).
11. What personal traits do you think you have that have helped you in your work?

Criteria and Training

1. What selection criteria do you use in selecting a manuscript or collection?
2. Are these criteria officially noted somewhere or is it an innate subjective judgement?
3. How did you learn to make these judgements? (any official training, education, experience)
4. Can you describe how you make decisions while you're writing? (automatic, intuitive, elimination, rational).
5. How important is rationality or intuition in your work?
6. Do you have an audience or reader in mind when you work?
7. What do you consider a successful book?
8. Is there any formula or stages a writer could follow to guarantee a successful book both during and after writing? Is each case unique?
9. What is the most successful genre in Australia?
10. What is the most successful genre for Australian writers in Australia?
11. What is the most successful genre for Australian writers internationally?
12. When does a work of fiction become literature? Is there a difference?
13. Considering your role/ relationship with the author, do you believe you make a significant contribution to the manuscript/collection/ work of the author?
14. How would you define creativity?
15. Would you consider your contribution creative?

Professional Opinion

1. Do you think reading is a factor in learning how to write fiction or to write well?
2. Do you think schooling in Australia plays a role in learning to write fiction? If so, how?

3. Do you think university, TAFE and writers' centre workshops and courses are useful in learning how to write fiction?
4. Do you think interaction with other writers is helpful in the fiction writing process?
5. Do you feel reviewers or the media play a role in the public perception of fiction books?
6. How important is the writer's public image to the success of a book?
7. Do you feel there is enough support for writers in Australia (from the government, the public, publishers and agents)? If no, what more could be done to improve the writing industry locally?
8. Do you feel Australian writing has a positive international profile? If no, what more could be done to improve the profile of Australian writing internationally?
9. Is it possible for Australian fiction writers to support themselves financially with writing alone?

General (extra questions for teachers/workshop leaders)

1. What types of classes or workshops do you run? Are these for specific genres or age groups, for example?
2. How do authors get access to you and your services?
3. What is a typical class or workshop like? Is this a flexible or strict schedule?
4. What aspects of your work do you find most rewarding or most satisfying? Why? (challenge, meaning, satisfaction, recognition, money).
5. What personal traits do you think you have that have helped you in your work?

Specific (extra questions for the director of Australian Society of Authors)

1. The ASA acts as a kind of union for Australian fiction writers? Have the IR laws had any effect on the ASA or its members?
2. What ASA services are used most often by your members?
3. The ASA offers mentorships with established writers, how important is interaction with other writers in the fiction writing process?
4. You talk about the realities of the publishing industry in your article in TEXT. Is it possible for Australian fiction writers to support themselves financially with writing alone? What percentage of ASA members would be full-time writers?
5. What do you consider a successful book? Sales, money, prizes?

6. What is the most successful genre in Australia? For Australian writers in Australia? For Australian writers internationally?

7. After religious and political content was banned at a poetry reading in Wollongong, how much influence could the revised sedition laws have on fiction writing in Australia? Is fiction any defence?

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