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Introduction: Making it New: Finding contemporary meanings for creativity

Creativity is one of the important catchwords of the early 21st century. It is invoked by government, industry, and the academy, positioned as the motive force for economic and technological innovation, and widely claimed in the literature of business and organisational management as an explicatory concept and a key ingredient for success. It can be surprising to artists in all the many forms and modes of practice that a word we had long seen as ‘ours’ has so thoroughly and promiscuously slipped from our grasp. However, there is knowledge in all those other disciplines and domains that is potentially of value to creative writers, performing artists and plastic artists, as well as all our cousins in allied art forms.

Of course the obverse is also true: the long history of creative practice and exploration that is found in the art world has the capacity to inform and energise creative thought and discourse in those areas of human engagement that lie outside the domain of art and artistic practice. We—the editors of this Special Issue of *TEXT*—made an argument along these lines to the Australian Research Council (ARC), who responded by awarding us a Discovery Project grant to test our ideas through extensive fieldwork in the international Anglophone community of poets. Three of the papers included here (Biggs; Brophy; Webb and Carroll) elucidate aspects of the findings of that project: ‘Understanding creative excellence: A case study in poetry’ (DP130100402).

Details of the ARC project are set out in Kevin Brophy’s paper, so we will not repeat them here. We were, however, intrigued by the accounts offered by the 76 poets in our study, grateful for the generosity and openness with which they addressed themselves to the research conversations which produced the body of material this project has generated, and grateful too for the energetic responses provided by the writing and cultural studies academic communities when we have presented early findings from the project.

Now we present the perspectives of a number of other scholars alongside our own contributions. We directly approached all the writers represented in this collection of essays, and invited them to write on the topic of creativity from their own perspective. They responded with rich and highly varied essays that draw into conversation discourses from science, philosophy, creative writing, literary studies, health science, journalism, and cultural theory.

As noted in many of the papers included herein, creativity is the cause and result of many combined factors. The creativity present in this Special Issue is due to both the hard work of all the contributors, and to their work meeting the opportunity provided by *TEXT*’s tradition and its dedicated team. *TEXT*’s long record of influencing and growing the field of creativity knowledge and creative practice cannot go unnoted. This Special Issue is an addition to the prominent archive of previous editions of *TEXT* that investigate creativity. Of particular note is *TEXT* Special Issue Number 13 (2012) edited by Nigel McLoughlin and Donna Lee Brien, titled *Creativity: Cognitive, social and cultural perspectives*. The work in this current Special Issue is an extension of the *TEXT* tradition in shaping debates of the creativity field. In keeping with *TEXT*’s steadfastness to publishing non-traditional scholarly form, this Special Issue includes scholarly, fusion, and poetic labours.

Rob Pope has been publishing on creativity for some decades, and this essay expands on his well established thinking. His essay provides a vibrant and poetic play with language and concepts. Poet and scholar Katharine Coles' lyric essay takes us from the woods and wilds of her Utah home through global cities, laying out ways of seeing and traversing the world. Pointing to the generative nature of walking, its capacity to spark creative thought, and compel attention, she evokes the possibility of opening doors to the strange and the new. Astrid Lorange reads the contemporary lyric in relation to the uncomfortable affiliation between discourses of creativity and global neoliberalism, with its articulation of 'freedom', and creativity as entrepreneurship. Claudia Rankine's work offers, she argues, a different way of understanding creativity, and a re-invigoration of the lyric. Antonia Pont develops an argument about the future-orientation of practice, drawing on references to poetry and the quotidian, and finding in the stability of habit and the focus of intentional practicing valuable opportunities to court innovation, invention, and creative modalities.

Emily Potter shifts the focus from creativity qua creative practice, to creative agency, in her essay's explication of climate change and environmental concerns in the contemporary era. Through a reading of Astley's novel *Drylands*, she attends to what she terms 'the liveliness of things', in a reminder of the role that literary fiction can have in enunciating the creative potency of the material world. James Ursell presents an extensive review of the literature on creativity, starting with the early days of the contemporary focus on the topic, and running through to more recent publications in philosophy, psychology, physiology and business studies. It is an instructive reminder of just how entrenched is the curiosity about creativity in the human sciences, and how central creativity is to being human. For Matthew Ricketson, creativity is something of a conundrum, being apparently inappropriate for journalism (that domain of writing committed to the presentation of facts). However, he demonstrates, creative imagination is the motive force in the difference between recording and discovering facts, and thus is central to the production of fresh news stories, predicated on original investigation. Drawing on a lifetime in health science, David Waters presents a strong argument for the nexus between creative modes of expression and professional innovations. Positing the value of neologisms, precision in language, and an attitude directed toward 'linguistic readiness', he shows the centrality of language to science, and indeed to creative excellence in any field.

Poet, philosopher and artist Sarah Rice performs, as much as argues, her contribution, drawing together ancient and very contemporary scholars and creative practitioners to explore the affordances of materiality and material thinking in any project that aims to generate creative excellence and novel ways of seeing, doing and making. Kevin Brophy provides a detailed introduction to the ARC-funded project that led to this Special Issue, and in addition extends his work on creativity through an exploration of the relation of time to the creative moment or insight. Drawing on earlier arguments constructed by Koestler, Simonton and Bergson, he explicates the role of duration and accretion, and the many categories of time associated with creative potential. Like Brophy, Jen Webb and Monica Carroll draw on the data from that ARC-funded project to discuss one aspect of the findings: the importance of community engagement and personal networks in the lives and work of highly productive, highly reputed poets. Dominique Hecq and Christine Hill likewise take up the issue of collaboration as a creative generator, but add to it the concept of collaboration-as-exchange: not simply participation as part of a community, but a conscious give and take between particular members of that community. Cathy Hope, Paul Hetherington and Bethaney Turner turn their attention to play as a catalyst for creativity. Using as a case study a playful poetic group and their practice, the essay explores play and its affordances, and explicates its

characteristics—sanctuary, ambiguity, openness, pleasure—that together comprise its creative charge. Using the form of the interview as a way to interrogate his own ideas, and introducing his ‘scale of creativity’, Michael Biggs shifts to and fro between creative and academic modes of creative practice, and of seeing/understanding, to discuss the perceptual frameworks—the ways of knowing—employed in those different domains, and their relation to the concept of creativity.

Poetry, and the practice of poets, were the touchstones of our ARC project; it was through the working context, biographical conditions, and poetic practice of poets that we sought insight into the nature of excellence in creativity. For this reason, it is apt to include, in this Special Issue, a range of poetic expressions from poets. Some of the poets published here are respondents to our ARC project; these include Rob Pretty and Dr Robyn Rowland AO. Other poetic works in this Special Issue are from contributors who have also included a scholarly essay, among these are Kevin Brophy, Monica Carroll, Paul Hetherington and Jen Webb. Sarah Rice is both a respondent to our ARC project as well as a contributor to this Special Issue through poetic essay. Poems from the late Dr Sandra Burr are included as celebration of her role in, and recognition of, her invaluable contributions towards the success of our ARC project.

Thanks to reviewers, thanks to *TEXT* and its Special Issue editors, first Donna Lee Brien who approved this collection in late 2015, and then Dallas Baker and Ross Watkins who have managed it to completion. Thanks to the reviewers who responded with insight, critical judgement and an openness to thought—and often with very short turn-around times—to the collection of essays. And above all, thanks to all the contributors who have provided answers to the question of how to approach the concept of creativity, and make it new. Each contribution expands and deepens our understanding of creativity. The scholarly papers contribute to a range of key cross-disciplinary fields including creativity and language, creativity and play, creativity and collaboration, creativity and time, and creativity and the self. The poems return us to the inexhaustible evidence of the centrality of creative accomplishment and meaning. We hope this Special Issue will stand as both an example of creativity, and a consequential contribution to ongoing debates in the creativity field.