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Influence and Originality in the Creative Writing Process

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Sussex

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

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I owe my deepest debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Celia Hunt, for her patience, understanding, and insight during the course of this research. I would also like to thank all the members of the Creative Writing Subject Research Group at the University of Sussex for their feedback during our shared discussions and for their continued support. I'm immensely grateful to all those who volunteered and contributed to the qualitative research and more generally to all my students who have supported and shown an interest in this project. I'd like to extend my particular thanks to Damian White, Dave Longbridge, Julie Wood, Julian Broughton, Christopher McHugh, Kate Hickman, Rex Wilkinson and Catherine Casolani for their interest and thoughtful engagement with the topics covered in this research and I would like to acknowledge all the support I have had from members of staff at the Centre for Continuing Education and all the creative writing tutors on the Certificate in Creative Writing.

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UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

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THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN EDUCATION

INFLUENCE AND ORIGINALITY IN THE CREATIVE WRITING PROCESS

SUMMARY

Using an approach that distinguishes between the epistemologies of critical theory and creative practice, this study investigates notions of originality and influence in literary theory and considers their applicability to the teaching of creative writing and creative writing practice. It argues that current paradigms offer limited and contradictory explanations of these phenomena and makes the case that, through the assimilation of recent philosophical and scientific perspectives into a framework of socially-situated theory, a fresh approach can be developed that acknowledges the embodied experience of the writing process.

The study consists of two main research areas: qualitative and literary/theoretical. The literary/theoretical research falls into two strands of enquiry that are closely linked and run parallel to each other throughout the thesis. One strand is concerned with the need to find an ontological structure for creative writing that accommodates practical and theoretical approaches and provides a conceptual framework that allows issues of originality and influence to be seen from both inside the writing process and from an external theoretical perspective. The second strand, evolving within the former, analyses notions of originality and influence historically and more specifically within romanticism and the socially situated theory of Mikhail Bakhtin.

The qualitative research was designed to offer a practical and experiential set of findings that could be used to guide the theoretical research. In this research project, using a phenomenological methodology, a group of part-time adult creative writing students (14 participants) were asked to reflect on their perception and experience of originality and influence in the writing process.

Their responses were returned in the form of questionnaires and the findings were collated into fourteen key themes.

The theoretical research contextualizes the study within debates with student writers in writing workshop sessions about issues of influence and originality in critical peer review. After a discussion of the pedagogic and theoretical issues that these debates generated, including an analysis of the impact of romanticism on contemporary notions of creativity and a survey of developments in pedagogic theory in creative writing, the literary/theoretical research goes on to explore notions of originality and influence in the work of Bakhtin and romanticism in greater detail. It develops a critique of Bakhtin's socially-situated theory of creativity and argues that this is due to a weakness in the ontological premises of Bakhtin's conceptual framework. Moving to a study of romanticism it proposes that Bakhtin's socially-situated theory fails to fully understand or assimilate embodied emotionality into its ontology and that the embodied emotionality in romanticism, when seen through a more contemporary paradigm of embodied realism reveals the shortcomings in socially-situated theory.

The final section on embodied realism and the impact of neuroscience on studies of the body and emotionality argues for a fresh ontological perspective, which would resolve the paradoxical nature of the relationship between an epistemic, socially constructed view of reality and a more biologically determined notion of human nature.

In the discussion of key findings and in the conclusion to the research the thesis shows how, by adopting the ontological perspective of embodied realism and incorporating it into socially-situated theory, new perspectives on originality, influence and creativity can be developed that fully integrate epistemologies of theory and practice, and offer a grounded theoretical position from which to construct a viable pedagogy for creative writing. Finally, the thesis offers ideas for further research and discusses ways in which this combined approach can be applied to teaching practice, offering examples of exercises developed during the course of the study and covered by the main topics of research.

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Preface

Background:

I began teaching creative writing in the early 1990s after completing an MA in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia and taught the subject in adult education classes before starting work in Higher Education as a part-time tutor in 1996.

I realised, early in my teaching career, that creative writing required a different pedagogic approach to traditional academic subjects in that it is weighted more towards an understanding of creative process than to the transfer of knowledge. This insight led me to the realisation that, regardless of my own abilities as a writer, if I was going to teach creative writing successfully, I needed to have a clear and coherent idea of how fictional texts are constructed.

This posed a challenge, as, on the face of it, creative writing is a highly idiosyncratic activity, with different writers advocating different creative approaches in their work. As I developed a greater understanding of the creative process through my teaching, I began to sense that the approaches of different writers could be absorbed into a commonality; a more general framework within which it was possible to conceptualize the creative process and incorporate its many diverse interpretations.

In 2001, I was offered a permanent post in the HE institution I then worked for and took on a convening role on its first-year level undergraduate Certificate in Creative Writing.

Working in a university environment and participating more regularly in discussions about the role of theory in creative writing pedagogy encouraged me to adopt a more theoretical approach to my teaching. My post-graduate academic study had focused on the history of Modernism in which there had been little theoretical focus, so in my efforts to find ways of thinking about creativity, I began to draw on the critical theory I had been taught as an undergraduate in the late 1970s.

In 2002 and 2003, two incidents occurred whilst I was running creative writing workshops that eventually became the catalyst for this study. A small number of students, about four in each year group, questioned the validity of critically discussing their work within the group, suggesting it led to their writing being influenced by the opinions of others and to a subsequent loss of originality. My attempt to understand the situation through structuralist and poststructuralist theory led me away from what appeared to be common-sense arguments to a series of intellectual dead-ends. I was left frustrated and disappointed at my inability to connect with my students' arguments from a theoretical perspective.

The incidents of 2002 and 2003 did not re-occur but I found myself increasingly pre-occupied with notions of influence and originality in the creative process and I began to shape them into a series of research questions that, with subsequent revisions, became the aims of my doctoral research:

1. What is influence? To what aspect of the writing process does it apply? How does it manifest itself within the writing process? What is the difference between influence and intertextuality? Is influence consciously appropriated, or does it enter the writing process by some other means? To what extent does it determine the writing process? To what extent does influence impede originality?
2. What is originality? Is it an aspect, or a result, of the writing process? What are the historical antecedents of the notion of originality? Can it be located within individual works? Is it accessible to study?
3. To what extent are the arguments I am evolving and the conclusions they appear to be suggesting, at variance with current interpretations of influence and originality within critical and theoretical discourse? What areas of critical and theoretical discourse share the greatest resonance with my findings?
4. How important are these concepts to our understanding of the writing process?

These questions have become central to the methodological ambition of this study: to compare developing writers' understanding of notions of originality and influence with the way these ideas have been constructed within the academic community and to discuss the implications of my findings for creative writing pedagogy.

This process is itself contained within the more personal narrative of this study: to develop a conceptual framework through which I can confidently approach the task of understanding the creative process, ensure the coherence and validity of my findings and, in the light of these findings, offer alternative interpretations of influence and originality and a theoretical paradigm for the teaching of creative writing.

Overview:

I had no idea of the scale of the ontological challenge I had set myself at the beginning of this research. As a writer and teacher, I was looking for a way of thinking about the writing process that would allow me to combine practical and theoretical approaches to the subject. Prior to submitting my research proposal, I had originally envisaged the study would focus on the relationship between plagiarism and originality and incorporate a large creative component that I would use to triangulate the academic and qualitative research. But, influenced by the events that occurred in my teaching practice, the focus shifted away from plagiarism with its more legal and literary associations, towards an increasing interest in the role of influence and originality in the creative process. I also found that in my attempt to connect practice to theory and to find an approach that could be grounded in practical experience, I had to challenge the philosophical paradigms I encountered in my research. This became a central preoccupation of the study and in order to create the time and space I needed to understand the philosophical contexts I was working in, I eventually cut the creative element altogether. The paradigmatic research required a large amount of interdisciplinary reading and a central challenge in structuring the study became one of representing and balancing the evolving ontological positions with the investigation, guided by the qualitative research, into originality and influence.

This is very much a process-led study; a story in a sense of the struggle to find a way of thinking about the creative process, from an initial feeling, or sense of how things ought to be, to a more or less realised, sustainable and evolving philosophical position. It is written chronologically and its broad scope has meant that, at times, I have had to sacrifice a detailed and comprehensive approach for a summary of key points essential to the study's interior ontological narrative. I am conscious of these omissions, but the over-riding priority of this study was to find my feet as a researcher and to establish a position from which I could re-visit some of these areas in future research in the knowledge that by having made them make sense to me, I could offer a clearer explanation of them to others.

In Chapter 1, I describe the background and the educational and institutional context to the study in which I offer a detailed analysis of the problems I encountered in responding to student criticisms of the workshopping process. I also outline the changes in the structure of the Certificate in Creative Writing that offered an opportunity for qualitative research.

In Chapter 2, I locate the ongoing research into originality and influence in a conflict of values between romantic attitudes to creativity and Bakhtin's socially-situated theory. In an investigation of pedagogic debates in creative writing I identify my own position with that of socially-situated theory and I critique attempts in the work of Barthes, Genette and Bloom to explain influence and originality.

In Chapter 3, I provide a more detailed overview of the ontological and epistemological developments within the study.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I introduce the qualitative research, explain the methodology used in the survey and present my findings.

In Chapter 6, using the key themes from my qualitative research as a guide, I investigate notions of influence and originality in Bakhtin's socially situated theory and offer a critique of his conceptualisation of individual creativity. I return to a consideration of individuality, emotionality and creativity in romantic

theory and examine historical notions of influence and originality. Finally, with reference to relevant findings in contemporary neuro-science, I argue that embodied realism offers a paradigm that allows us to see creativity as an embodied process that collapses the dualism of traditional thinking in the humanities and incorporates the socially-situated aspects of Bakhtinian theory into a framework that offers a viable working relationship between practice and theory.

In Chapters 7 and 8, I compare my literary/theoretical findings with my qualitative research and offer a redefinition of notions of originality and influence that whilst aligning themselves with socially-situated theory, provide us with a deeper understanding of these concepts both in relation to the creative process and to literature as a whole. I also discuss the implications of this research for creative writing pedagogy, suggest further areas of research and offer examples of how this approach can be used to develop practical teaching assignments that will enhance the developing writer's awareness of the socially-situated and embodied nature of creativity.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1) Educational context to the study

In the summer of 2005 I set out to explore notions of influence and originality within the writing process. I had become interested in this area of study whilst teaching creative writing to adult students on the part-time Certificate in Creative Writing (CCW) in the university where I worked.

The programme, initially a one-year, now a two-year course of study, has developed over the seventeen years of its existence into a successful and established programme and a number of its writers have gone on to publication and success in national awards and competitions. Today, it features amongst its alumni, Booker prize shortlisted authors and popular historical thriller writers¹.

In 2005 the CCW was a popular one-year, part-time, undergraduate, adult education programme, attracting adult writers, many of whom were looking for an extended programme of study to further develop their writing skills. In line with the access policies of continuing education nationally, the programme was open to students with varying degrees of educational experience. When I began teaching on the programme I found this diversity both an asset and a challenge: an asset in that it was easier to develop a supportive culture within the groups as the wide variety of educational backgrounds made them less internally competitive, and a challenge, as many of the writers had different expectations of the programme and as adult learners were less inclined to accept unquestioningly the pedagogic approaches I was using in my teaching.

1.2) The writing workshop and student criticisms of critical peer review

Since its inception in 1996 the CCW had been taught over a single academic year in which students were required in the second and final course to participate in a series of writing workshops. The format for the writing workshop was a three-hour session in which the creative writing of three students,

¹ Indra Sinha's novel 'Animal's People' was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2007. C.J. Sansom and Robyn Young are now established historical novelists.

previously circulated, read and annotated, was discussed in turn for a period of up to forty-five minutes.²

The version of the writing workshop I had developed on the CCW was not the traditional American MFA workshop model, in which, following on from the tenets of New Criticism, the writer is required to remain silent whilst their work is being discussed, but was designed to allow the writer, with the support of the tutor, to participate freely in the critical discussion. It was designed to be both a critical and supportive space that emphasised the recursive nature of the writing process, allowed discussion to range freely over different aspects of the text and gave students an opportunity to consider and assess how well they had applied the writing techniques and insights into the writing process they had been taught on the programme. Many of the students, though they had discussed readings of each other's work, had not experienced such a prepared and comprehensive critique and some found the transition to the critical culture of the writing workshop a difficult one to make.

In 2002 and 2003, two years prior to putting in my research proposal, three or four students in each of the year groups that I taught, had found it difficult to work within the workshop system and to accept a critical peer review.

Their objections had fallen roughly into two areas.³ The most extreme response came from one or two students in each year who questioned the legitimacy of criticism, claiming it was implicitly an act of valorisation. They argued that critical discussion was essentially divergent; a subjective response to a subjective act and that the attempt to privilege one interpretation over another on the basis of critical objectivity was a sham. Students who took this position tended to be confused by contradictory readings or interpretations of their work and argued that re-drafting in response to critical feedback would somehow destroy its

² Within creative writing as a taught practice, the efficacy of the writing workshop as a pedagogic tool has become the focus of intense debate. (Though it is still used widely on many writing programmes at undergraduate and MA level). A full discussion of this issue would take some time and distract from the central focus of this thesis. To follow the argument in more depth, see: Wandor (2008, pp. 120 -131), Donnelly (2012, pp. 71-128) and Kearns (2009, pp. 790-807).

³ For the sake of the intellectual coherence of this paper, whilst giving careful consideration to students' original arguments, I have described these responses in more theoretical terms than they were originally given.

original 'purity' and coherence. Their work made sense to them. They had been excited by the experience of producing it and associated the work strongly with that experience. If other people didn't understand it, then they just didn't 'get it'. Furthermore, they remained unconvinced by the argument proposed by Hume (2005) that there was such a thing as a standard of taste that could be achieved consensually through an educated sensitivity towards the experience of the 'common sentiments of mankind' expressed in art, claiming that a consensus was just as likely to shift from one group to another, in the same way that interpretations shifted from individual to individual.

Allied to this group were those whose reservations were based more on the principle of hegemony: these students were suspicious that the critical processes of workshopping would result in a 'house style'; that their work would be unduly influenced and that this conformity would be imposed on the majority through the course tutor and the more critical voices within the group. They were sceptical of the value of drafting and re-drafting, were worried about losing their 'voice' (their ability to express themselves), and appeared unduly concerned that in opening up their work to evaluation and comparison with other texts it would cease to be theirs: that by allowing it to be influenced it would lose its originality.

I was puzzled by these responses. In previous years, though there may have been some initial anxiety voiced by one or two students, once the group had settled into the process they had responded positively to the workshops. I had never up to that point experienced such a sustained objection to the notion of the writing workshop and I became increasingly frustrated by my inability to put what I felt should have been a compelling case for its benefits across to my students.

The argument against the legitimacy of criticism challenged my conception of what it was to be a creative writing tutor and although I was convinced that at some fundamental level it was wrong, I could not construct an effective counter argument using my graduate and postgraduate understanding of literary theory. In fact, the more I tried to construct a theoretical defence of what I was doing,

the more I felt I was falling into an uncomfortable collusion with the very criticisms that were being made.

1.3) Responding to student issues

Much of the literary theory I had been using in my teaching practice was based on my reading of New Criticism, structuralism and poststructuralism, critical frameworks I had been taught whilst studying for a degree in English and Philosophy at the University of Sussex in the early 1980s⁴. I was using aspects of these theories, for example: the distinction between the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic made by Barthes (1968) and the structuralist schema of narrative developed by Propp (1928) to identify the constituents and structure of prose fiction and encourage students to make closer readings of their written work. Barthes' work certainly had an application on this basis, but I was conscious that on a more fundamental level, poststructuralism was promoting a way of thinking about texts that in many ways supported the arguments my students were making against the workshopping process. As with New Criticism, in its emphasis on interpretation and its insistence that the intention of the writer was not a legitimate concern of critical study (Wimsatt, 1946), much of the literary theory that I was drawing from attempted to separate the text from any historical or individual context. I was sympathetic to the idea that texts were essentially polysemic, that the mind, intention and motives of the writer were inaccessible in the reading process and that making sense of the text was an activity that took place in the mind of the reader. But, if everybody was free to construct their own meaning of a text, then how could one reading be any more accurate than another? I was familiar with Wimsatt and Beardsley's 'Intentional Fallacy' (ibid, 1946) and Roland Barthes' 'Structural Analysis of Narrative' (1977) and although both appeared on the surface to be offering methods of narrative interpretation which freed the reader from traditional notions of literary exegesis, I was uncomfortable with their insistence that the text be seen as separate from the individual context of its author, especially as in the writing workshops I was working with writers whose main preoccupation was with whether or not they had communicated their ideas effectively to their audience.

⁴ Although I had taken an MA in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia the contextual studies had focused on Modernism and hadn't extended to Post-modernist theory.

Despite my misgivings it was difficult for me to frame my thoughts outside of the theories I had subscribed to as an undergraduate. Theoretically, I found to my frustration that my students' criticisms made sense even though there appeared to be something partial about the argument we were engaged in. Intuitively, I felt something regressive about the idea that all interpretations were of equal value. It was as if the working realities of writing had got lost in a receding argument that disappeared into abstraction and relativism.

I was further concerned by the claim, that some students had made quite unequivocally, that critical discussion would have a negative influence on their developing writing style. The implication was clear: influence had a lasting if not permanent effect and would deny them access to their own unique voice. I had become aware of this criticism, often repeated in the debates that rumbled around the edges of creative writing teaching practice, that writing programmes churned out particular types of writers. The accusation had been levelled against the creative writing programme at the University of East Anglia where I had taken my MA.⁵

I was, I felt, sufficiently conscious of these criticisms to have built safeguards against them into my teaching. One of my working rules with my writing groups was that we should, as much as possible, refrain from making value judgments about the content of each other's work and should not appropriate or 're-write' it. But teaching required that the meanings of words, especially technical terms applied to prose construction, needed to be at least relatively fixed in order to communicate them and I was concerned that on a subtler ideological level this could be constructing ways of interpreting style and influencing its development. I was also conscious that my role as a tutor, whether I liked it or not, meant that my students invested a certain amount of authority in my opinions. On a practical level I felt I had done as much as I could to mitigate against the

⁵ These criticisms are still being made to this day. Here is one of the most recent. 'There is a UEA style. A kind of twee verbosity and giggling obscurantism. People see it's a style that sells. They copy it. I remember an editor telling me that she was struck by the uniformity of the submissions she received from UEA students on a particular module, who had all tailored their fiction to the style of the module tutor.' <http://maxdunbar.wordpress.com/>

possibility of over-influencing my students' work and consoled myself with the notion that, after all, a healthy learning environment was premised on the idea that we would all be influencing and interanimating each other's work. I found myself though, doubting this common-sense approach as soon as I began to think about it from an ideological point of view. Once again, my theoretical understanding of the situation seemed to concur with the opinions of students who were opposed to the notion of the writing workshop. From my reading of post-structuralist theory I was aware of Derrida's notion of the 'transcendental signified' (1998) and Barthes' notion of Doxa (1975), both of which argued convincingly that any movement towards enforcing the stability of the signifier resulted in a particular ideologised meaning. It was difficult, I concluded, within the framework of my own thinking to deny the validity of my students' arguments.

Finally, there were the issues of influence and originality. These two key terms more than any others, seemed to articulate the main areas of discontent with the workshopping process. According to my reading of post-structuralist theory and in particular, Gerard Genette's, 'Structuralism and Literary Criticism' - in which, referring to the work of Claude Levi-Strauss, Genette described the writer as a 'bricoleur' (1997) - writers created new structures and new narratives by re-arranging the elements of pre-existing works. Although I was aware that influence occurred in the interpersonal and social sphere, I believed that in the arts and literature in particular, it was more accurately represented by bricolage and intertextuality and I had assimilated this distinction into my teaching practice. The problem for me was that if I accepted that all art was influenced intertextually and none of it was truly original how could I begin to understand my students' argument that for work to be original it had to be free from external influence?

1.4) Acknowledging the theoretical weakness of my response

Taking stock, I realised that if I was going to make sense of these issues, the first thing I needed to do was acknowledge the paradoxical and contradictory nature of my own position.

In my teaching practice I was working to a model that suggested that seeking a consensus in critical judgement was a valid way of understanding both the intentions of a writer and the degree to which they had been successful in putting their ideas into a narrative form; that some form of influence between texts was an inevitable outcome of interaction and discussion and that, far from being the passive recipients of transcendental signifieds, most people, most of the time, realised that the social exchange of opinions and ideas used a rhetoric of persuasion and required an active, individual response. My understanding of literary theory, on the other hand, encouraged me to believe that interpretation was relative and validated solely on the individual reader's response and that, apart from being the space within which the writing was generated, the writer's aims or aspirations in writing the piece were of little or no consequence.

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 of 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 (Barthes, 1987, p. 148).

This quote from Barthes' 'The Death of the Author', in its disregard for the 'felt' and lived life of the author and its dismissal of any notion of authorial intentionality, summed up for me the disparity between my understanding of my teaching practice and my understanding of literary theory.

I realised that I had retained a poststructuralist notion of influence and originality and that even though I was beginning to question poststructuralist attitudes towards authorial agency, my thinking about influence in the writing process was still strongly intertextual. I wasn't sure where I stood on originality. I felt the word was often used inaccurately in its description of qualities of 'newness' and 'uniqueness', and I recognised the poststructuralist argument that within capitalism, the idea of the artist as the creator of an original work was used to fix and commoditise the value of objects and artefacts: to suggest that their 'uniqueness' enhanced their value (ibid, 1987, p. 143). The poststructuralist theory I had engaged with denied the possibility of originality and argued

instead that what made a text different from another text was the way it re-assembled the myriad possibilities of the inter-text. I was attracted by the politics of this argument whilst at the same time perplexed by it. How could change actually come about given these conditions? Was originality a chimera? Was it really just the combination of a number of pre-existing elements taken from an almost infinitely complex background? My students certainly didn't think so. Originality was something they valued highly within the work itself.

In making their criticisms of the writing workshops on the CCW my students had posed a number of questions that I clearly hadn't been able to adequately answer. I was also conscious of my own culpability. In my enthusiasm to find ways of opening up and exploring the creative process, I had made use of literary theory without fully understanding the philosophical paradigms with which it was associated. It was quite possible that this had created the confusion in my own thinking that I had communicated to my students. This, I realised in retrospect, could have exacerbated any insecurities that students may have already had about the writing workshop groups. And finally, of course, there was the possibility that they were right and that my approach to teaching was fundamentally flawed and needed to be revised.

Whilst developing my research proposal, I continued to consider the points they had raised and began to read more widely in literary theory, in the history and theory of art and in creativity theory. I focused in my reading on notions of originality, influence and creativity, accumulating material and ideas that I planned to use in later stages of my research. I also began reading Morson and Emerson's (1990) introduction to the socially-situated theory of Mikhail Bakhtin. As my reading progressed, I began to realise that in adopting and adapting the ideas of literary theory I had become locked into a particular theoretical perspective and that there were other approaches I could take towards the issues raised in my discussions with my students over the workshopping process.

In my initial reading of Bakhtin (ibid, 1990, pp. 45-46) I encountered a model of change that correlated strongly with the interpretation of the history and development of literary technique and style⁶ that I was developing in my wider reading. This model, that had similarities with evolutionary theory, suggested stylistic and formal changes in literature came about through small, incremental changes over time and that although it was theoretically tempting to identify an originary moment or event, this was actually historically inaccurate. This idea was appealing in that it supported the notion of change whilst denying the possibility of a totally 'unique' occurrence in the ideologically charged sense that Barthes was critiquing in his work.

I was also interested in a point made by Boden (2003) in her discussion of creativity where she distinguishes between personal creativity (P-creativity) and (H-creativity) the historical and social recognition of the contribution that an individual's creativity could make to society. I had realised that in making it possible for us to think of an experience as being original within the life of an individual, but not necessarily within the history of a society or culture, she had offered a way of thinking about originality as an experience as opposed to a quality of objects or events.

Both these ideas, Bakhtin's notion of the incremental changes of real historical time and Boden's suggestion that originality could be an aspect of individual experience, located issues of originality and influence in the individual and in the temporal world and offered me fresh insights into the feelings and the viewpoint of my workshop students.

These insights, along with others that I will discuss in the later stages of my conceptual frameworks, suggested to me that the literary theory I had been utilising in my thinking could at best offer only partial explanations; often coherent and insightful on a theoretical and critical level, but ultimately, separate from the practices and experiences of the real world. There seemed to

⁶ Abbs and Richardson (1990) point out that although James Joyce had been credited with the development of Interior Monologue in *Ulysses* there were many other writers in Paris at the time in which Joyce was working who were writing in a similar style, amongst them was the French writer, Dujardin.

be a fundamental opposition between the 'top down' thinking of literary theory and my own 'bottom up' experience of teaching and writing.

There were clearly a number of important areas to be addressed in moving my research forward. I would need to re-visit the literary theory I had been using in my teaching, to review my interpretation and understanding of it and to further explore the ontological and epistemological assumptions behind it. I would also need to investigate and develop my understanding of alternative approaches that could offer fresh insights into notions of originality and influence and allow me to construct a more viable conceptual framework for my teaching practice. There was also the important issue of my own professional responsibility. I needed to find a way of getting closer to an understanding of what had motivated my students to raise the points they had and to give further thought to how their expectations of the CCW could be different from my own. I also needed to assess the credibility of the teaching strategies I was using to ensure they were appropriate within the educational context in which I was using them.

I decided therefore to break the pedagogic aspect of the next stage of my research down into two parts. I would make an immediate assessment of what I considered to have caused my students to disengage from the workshopping process then, after that, I would check the legitimacy of this approach against prevailing attitudes towards teaching in a survey of teaching methodologies in pedagogic debates in creative writing.

1.5) The Problem of Interiorisation

When I sat down and reviewed my teaching practice I decided that the issues that had come up around the writing workshops, although extreme, were consistent with problems that I had encountered before and that I had identified as 'interiorisation'. Interiorisation was the term I had given to the tendency students had to underestimate or resist the effort required to separate their own stories sufficiently from the internal process of their creation and to allow them to exist separately in their own right in the public domain.

On a technical level the problem manifested itself as an inability to fully materialise a story in language in such a way that the reader could gain a coherent reading of it. Typically, students forgot to incorporate important plot points or backstory, or delivered the story in an opaque (to the reader) self-referential style, or failed to clearly foreground symbolic content. These issues were the result, as far as I could see, of students filling out the gaps in plot and storyline and supplying the emotional charge to symbolic content in their own interior reading of their own narratives and not structuring them in a way that made them apparent to the external reader. Bakhtin (1990, pp. 96-97), in 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', in his discussion of the aesthetics of the relationship between the author and the work, identifies this problem as the importance of objectifying the artistic image, of distancing the work from oneself in order to create artistic form and to be able to work that form effectively. It is this process of distancing that Hunt and Sampson (2006) refer to in their discussion of the creative process in writing as the need to develop reflexivity within the self; to be able to draw on one's own 'felt' embodied experience for imaginative inspiration whilst at the same time being able to separate oneself from the emotional source of the work in order to render it in a form that allows the reader full access to it.

As Hunt (2001) points out, in the context of teaching creative writing, the issue of distance often manifests itself in two different ways. Writers can distance themselves from themselves in the writing process, which results in writing that lacks the qualities of 'felt' experience, or they can distance themselves from the reader, which results in the problems that I had identified as 'interiorisation'.

My experience, corroborated by Hunt and Sampson (2006, p. 6), was that most of the technical problems caused by interiorisation could be resolved through discussion and re-drafting, but the students who had resisted the opportunity to discuss their work in the workshop sessions appeared to have taken up a position of extreme interiorisation. These students had rejected the idea that the work had to be constructed with the reader in mind. They were protective about the first draft and apprehensive that any further work would obliterate its

meaning for them and destroy the connection the text gave them to the experience of writing it.

Students who responded in this way tended to be those who, I felt, were the most anxious and insecure about their work⁷. The resistance to writing and re-drafting with the reader in mind appeared to be a defensive strategy: a reactively expedient course of action as opposed to a consciously considered one. When I discussed this issue with them, they usually acknowledged that they wanted other people to understand and enjoy their work but felt that by re-drafting they were distancing both themselves and the reader from the purity of the original draft. If I pointed out that they would still have an original draft, that they could keep this separate from any further revisions, whilst acknowledging my point, they tended to maintain their original positions. There seemed to me something deeply irrational about this approach. It suggested that the materiality of the text, be it first draft or tenth draft, was a red herring; that what they were actually anxious of losing was the experience of writing the piece in the first place. I received a similar response from the writers who I considered to be writing the most imaginatively. When I talked to them individually and suggested that re-drafting in the light of feedback from other writers in the group, regardless of their level of ability, was a useful way of gauging how well they had constructed their narratives, and that, anyway, they were not obliged to accept criticism, they still felt uneasy, maintaining that whether they accepted the criticism or not, the whole process of peer review would somehow irrevocably obscure or pollute their relationship with their initial output.

My overwhelming sense was that whilst enjoying and appreciating the parts of the programme that encouraged them to be creative and imaginative, some of the students were finding it difficult to accept that if they were going to shape their work into coherent narratives, that could be recognised as such in the public domain, they needed to develop their critical and editing skills. I was encouraged by the validation of my approach in Hunt and Sampson's work and believed that my task, as a tutor, was not that I needed to focus my teaching

⁷ This was not an indicator of ability as a number of students who I felt were capable of writing to a high standard fell into this category.

strategies on stimulating creativity, as the majority of my students were motivated and committed and clearly found the opportunity to express themselves imaginatively, intensely satisfying, but that I needed to encourage them to see writing as a social act, a recursive crafting and production of a text, disciplined by constraints, projected outwards into the social world and conscious of the intertextuality of literature.

Chapter 2. Conceptual Frameworks, Phase 1: Locating the Theoretical Parameters of the Study

2.1) Pedagogical and theoretical debates in creative writing in Higher Education

Following on from my decision to further research the issues that had evolved out of the writing workshops on the CCW and to review my teaching practice in relation to wider discourses in creative writing, I began a survey of teaching strategies in creative writing pedagogy. The books and articles I drew on for my research were written by English, American and Australian academics and writers in English-speaking countries where creative writing had established itself in the HE curriculum.

I discovered that during the 1980s and 1990s theorists and teachers of creative writing had attempted to assimilate what has now become known as postmodernist theory¹ into creative writing practice. Early work in this area critiqued creative writing through the lens of particular postmodernist methodologies. In the early 1990's Lynn (1990, pp. 258-267) and Bishop and Olstrom (1994) advocated an approach that took a single piece of student generated creative writing and applied a number of different theoretical perspectives to it: Marxist, poststructuralist, formalist etc. The problem with this strategy, it seemed to me, was that it was straightforward literary criticism that denied the recursive nature of creative writing, offered little scope for the discussion of process and through the application of theory tended to separate the text from the author.

In an implicit critique of New Criticism, Porter, working within the framework of poststructuralism, reinforced the insignificance of the author's relationship to the text:

¹ I use the term here in the same manner as Slingerland (2010, pp. 14-15) to describe the 'isms' of late twentieth century theory, including structuralism and poststructuralism and other related theories that assume that humans are fundamentally linguistically and culturally determined.

The text is not an autonomous or unified object but a set of relations with other texts ... The traditional notion of the text as the single work of a given author, and even the very notions of author and reader, are simply convenient fictions for domesticating discourse (1986, p. 35).

Porter's work acknowledged the dangers of linguistic determinism in the intertextual model and attempted to explain it by arguing that languages of social discourse were a constraint but not a determinant on an author's individual freedom and creativity, 'We are free insofar as we do what we can to encounter and learn new codes ... and to expand our semiotic potential' (ibid, p. 41). However, in emphasizing intertextuality over social discourse and in distancing the author from the production of the text, he appeared to be defending poststructuralism from the very criticisms that I was beginning to make of it.

In the papers and books written after the millennium there was a marked shift towards an acknowledgement of production and process, with a clear emphasis given to the importance of seeing creative writing as a socially situated activity. Mayers criticised the privileging of interpretation over production and called for the study of creative writing to be situated within institutional, political, social and economic contexts (2005, p. 34). Dawson argued that Higher Education had moved into a post-theory period and that creative writing should embrace a sociological poetics which would require: '... a recognition that aesthetic or craft-based decisions of a writer are always the result (consciously or otherwise) of ideological or political choice' (2005, p. 211). Kroll aligned herself with Dawson, arguing that with the end of theory, creative writing should play an important role in the academies reconnecting with the public sphere. Kroll was particularly interested in the challenges to the writer's identity in the post-theory academy, claiming that: 'Authors have moved beyond the invisibility of postmodernism to re-align themselves with pre-modern conceptions of authorship' (2004, p. 100).

Boulter, in her argument for a re-evaluation of traditional theory in the light of the need to find adequate criteria for assessing creative writing at HE level, argued that the question of literary value was one of the key issues that literary

theory sidestepped. Allying herself with the recognition that we were in a post-theory period, she claimed:

the question of literary value has a new academic immediacy. And it's just possible that such a reinvigorated debate will expose the way in which literary theory might well have thrown out the baby with the bathwater (2004, p. 135).

I was encouraged in my reading by the emphasis writers were giving to process and production over interpretation and the repeated calls for a more socially-situated theory of writing that would re-connect the work being done in the universities to the public sphere and reassured by their determination to find fresh perspectives on such issues as literary value, aesthetics and creativity. Another important theme in this work was the increasing questioning of postmodernist theory that had dominated intellectual and theoretical discussion in the arts and humanities in the forty years up to the millennium.

In, 'Dangerous Dreaming: Myths of Creativity', based in part on a reading of Walter Benjamin's fragment, 'Breakfast Room' from 'One Way Street and Other Writings' (1979), Marcelle Freiman (2004) explored the contrasting notions of creativity that existed both inside and outside the academy and analysed what she considered to be the underlying assumptions used in their construction.

Benjamin, Freiman pointed out, used the parable of the dreamer who tries to tell the story of their dream before breakfast as a way of emphasising the need to materialise interiorised visions and feelings into language and social discourse, of translating the dream into a narrative form in order for it to exist in the world. The dreamer in Benjamin's story fails to take in the real world (symbolised by eating breakfast) and so stays 'in the sway of the dream', unable to make the unconscious conscious. Freiman summarised her interpretation of Benjamin's piece:

The challenge then, for teachers of creative writing, is to ensure that the dream is made conscious – that learning occurs, and that students learn to recognise the (social) contextual implications of their writing: the effect of their writing upon their readers; the amount of control and

responsibility that they have for what they say. In other words, that they should recognise the materiality of the texts they produce (2004, p. 24).

In the final section of her paper, with reference to Foucault, Freiman emphasizes the materiality of the text further, linking materiality strongly with notions of language and discourse and arguing that language is the medium through which the world is known: '... the world is not simply 'there' to be talked about, rather, it is through discourse itself that the world is brought into being' (ibid, p. 25).

However, having made a clear distinction between 'dream' and discourse throughout the paper, to underline the importance of developing a pedagogical approach that favours the locating of writing in the social domain, Freiman concludes her argument by reminding us of the need to acknowledge and find space for individual creativity:

It is part of our responsibility as educators to foster self-awareness and critical discourse in relation to society. Yet, simultaneously, we should ensure that opportunities exist for the time and freedom required for creative processes (ibid, p. 26).

I was struck by the parallels between the conclusions Freiman drew from Benjamin's work and my own notion of interiorisation. There appeared to be clear support in her paper and in the work of other academics and theorists I had read (e.g. Dawson, Mayers, Kroll et al.) for the strategies and approaches I had adopted in my own teaching practice. There was a further significant point that I took from my reading of this paper, which was that although Benjamin and Freiman both demanded the social context of writing be recognised, neither of them denied or dismissed the validity of the dream.

It took me a while to realise the full significance of this point, but the more I thought about it, the more I began to understand how my own thinking, in my attempt to persuade my students of the need to locate their work in the social discourse of writing, was itself in danger of overlooking the importance their own individual experience of the creative process. In constructing an argument that would counter the points they had raised I was close to denying the validity of

their experience. I might not have agreed with their interpretation of it, but I had to acknowledge the role of individual subjectivity and imaginative experience in the creative process - of the significance of the Freiman and Benjamin's notion of the 'dream'.

If I was going to understand what was motivating them, I also had to understand the complexity of my own position, and that, I was beginning to realise, was far more compromised by my knowledge of literary theory than I had originally suspected. Theories of intertextuality in poststructuralism were causing me to deny the significance of the role of the individual in the creative process. It was as if, despite the evidence of my own writing practice, I was falling into the trap that I suspected Porter (1986) had fallen into, of giving too much authority to a body of theory and not trusting in my own experience and observations: in thinking from theory instead of thinking from practice.

In the light of these reflections I decided I needed to go beyond my original aim of considering what had motivated my students' objections to the writing workshops in the context of the CCW as a writing programme and give further thought to how their arguments suggested they experienced the writing process and to the possible notions of originality and influence that could be derived from them.

2.2) The Influence of Romanticism

How could I best characterise the position of the students who objected to the workshop experience? At the core of their argument appeared to be the belief that art exists beyond the reach of qualitative judgement and emanated from an imaginative realm deep within the individual. This emphasis on the individual author and on the author's fragile and transient relationship with their work and their experience of writing it, along with an insistence that the work found its final form in its first draft, bore many similarities with the popular conception of the Romantic author.

Romanticism had long been associated with inspired artistic expression that located the creative process deep within the individual and insisted that the work must be allowed to find its own form - in this way becoming the most

genuine declaration possible of the author's thoughts and feelings. It emphasised inspiration over labour, originality over influence and the individual over the social.

Abrams (1953, p. 23), in describing the development of Romantic theories of art, identifies the publication of Wordsworth's 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads' (1800) as the period in which the increasing philosophical and political emphasis on the notion of the individual during the eighteenth century prompted a shift away from the valorisation of art in terms of adherence to formal rules and its effect on its audience to a new criterion of judgement based on whether or not it was sincere and genuine and matched the intention, the feelings and the actual state of mind of the poet during composition.

Dawson (2005, p. 27) supports this position, arguing additionally that the acknowledgement of the creative power of the individual had led to a debate on the notion of original genius as opposed to imitative talent and that, as a result, the grounds for critical evaluation had shifted from an adherence to formal rules to the capacity for originality. This emphasis on the individual's subjective process of composition along with the rejection of traditional forms of evaluation was very close to my notion of interiorisation. It also explained my students' response to peer appraisal: that any critical response was due to the fact the work had not found its proper audience or that it had been misinterpreted; that the form and content of the work required no justification; that there was a clear association with the work and the experience of writing it, and that any tampering, criticism or re-writing, would destroy its original purity, its coherence and its relationship to its author.

Dawson's work helped me to identify the strong correlation in romantic aesthetics between individuality and originality and on reading McFarland's study of romantic theories of the imagination (1985), I was struck by the central paradox that becomes the leitmotif of his argument, that: 'The conception of originality is constantly and unavoidably involved in paradox ... It stems from ... the ineradicably conflicting claims of our social natures on the one hand and our individual natures on the other' (ibid, p 31). McFarland argues in his book that

romantic egotism drove the notion of originality deep into the individual psyche. This further confirmed my sense that there was something fundamentally Romantic in the position my students had taken towards the writing workshops. It also emphasised a distinction I had made in my own thinking but clearly hadn't given enough consideration to, namely the apparently irresolvable contradictions for the writer between the subjectivity of creative practice and much of the discourse of critical theory. During the development of my doctoral proposal I was becoming increasingly aware of these tensions and through reading McFarland's work I was beginning to realise there could well be corresponding tensions between definitions of originality and influence if you considered them from either an individual or social perspective.

I was now convinced that I had established a clear link between the attitudes of my students and Romantic ideas of literary production and reception. My next task was to show that it was not coincidental but causal.

Further reading of Dawson (2005, p. 50) and Wandor (2004, p. 36) revealed that both these writers had traced the development and influence of Romantic theories of art through progressive educational theory into expression theory and expressivist pedagogy in contemporary teaching practice. Not only had Romanticism survived in educational and literary ideology, it had been perpetuated and reconstructed throughout subsequent social and cultural history. McGann's argument in 'The Romantic Ideology' (1983) was that the idea of romantic originality and artistic autonomy, although a counterfeit, persisted as a potent myth in contemporary society. According to McGann, '[The myth of Romanticism] continues as one of the most important shibboleths of our culture, especially - and naturally - at its higher levels' (1983, p. 9).

One possible explanation of the tension between course expectations and student expectations on the CCW was that, outside the forensic theoretical enquiries of the academies, the myth of Romanticism had embedded itself into European and American popular culture. Stephen King, writing of his experiences of student writing classes in the late 1960s described them as a place where:

would-be poets were living in a dewy Tolkien-tinged world, catching poems out of the ether. It was pretty much unanimous: serious art came from out there. The fact that the writer would be unable to talk about 'the mechanics of creation' was not important ... if pressed the poet might have said that there were no mechanics, only that seminal spurt of feeling (2000, p 42).

The impact of these attitudes in the creative writing classroom was well summarised in Leahy:

When talent is considered natural, when inspiration is the source of creativity, when recursive practices are ignored, expression in creative writing depreciates to a romantic model in which students main concern is the self-esteem generated through inspiration (2005, p 61).

There is a clear similarity here between Leahy's summary and the process I identified as interiorisation in my creative writing students.

2.3) Originality and influence in the intertextual theories of Barthes, Genette and Bloom

2.3.1 Intertextuality: an introduction

I decided to re-visit the theory that I had become familiar with as an undergraduate. These areas included New Criticism, formalism, structuralism and poststructuralism, though the work that had influenced me most had been the intertextual theories of Barthes, Genette and Bloom. My intention was to focus on the way these theorists addressed notions of influence and originality and explore the ways in which their attitudes to these ideas revealed their underlying ontological positions.

When I began reading I was immediately struck by the fact that I was now considering them from a historical perspective. When I had studied them as an undergraduate their ideas had increased legitimacy in that they were very much part of the way people spoke to each other about literature, certainly in a campus environment, where the notion of intertextuality had accrued so much

ideological status. Now, with the benefit of hindsight I could adopt a more critical approach and see how this particular period in twentieth century European history (the sixties) was a pivotal point in time when many traditional orthodoxies were being vigorously rejected and new solutions sought. Much of the work of early poststructuralist thinkers like Kristeva and Barthes can be better understood in this historical context as a rejection of traditional forms of biographical literary study and exegesis, and of the authority of the author and its accompanying notions of influence and originality, a period characterised by Alfaro as a 'struggle against the bourgeois ideology of the autonomy of individual consciousness and the self-contained meaning of texts' (1996, p. 275).

Irwin (2004) offers a useful historical critique of the work of Kristeva and Barthes and the development of the term 'intertextuality', identifying it as a re-writing of the historical notion of influence in relation to the political and economic context of France in the 1960s. There isn't time here for a detailed exploration of the complex evolution of the idea of intertextuality in the work of Saussure, Bakhtin, Kristeva and Barthes², though some form of description is necessary as the idea of intertextuality is key to an understanding of notions of influence and originality in the work of the three writers I have selected.

Many commentators including Clayton & Rothstein (1991), Irwin (2004) and Alfaro (1996) suggest that the theory of intertextuality moves beyond the New Critical principle of textual autonomy and insists that a text can no longer be seen as an independent self-sufficient whole that functions as a closed system, but needs to be understood through its relationship to other texts. Intertextuality demands that texts are seen as 'differential and historical, as traces and tracings of otherness, since they are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures' (Alfaro, 1996, p. 268).

This is clearly a metaphorical projection of the systemic model of language in structural linguistics onto literature, in which books, or 'texts', as the

² Irwin (2004, p 227-229) provides a useful summary.

poststructuralists liked to call them replace words (signifiers) in a system of structurally related signifiers that have no fixed meanings (signifieds). This shift from the Bakhtinian emphasis on 'word' as 'utterance', to 'word' as 'text', according to Clayton & Rothstein (1991, p. 19) allowed Kristeva (1980, p. 65) to identify the unstable relationship between the signifier and the signified in structural linguistics with Bakhtin's conception of the "literary word" as '*an intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings'. Clayton and Rothstein offer a number of other quotes from Kristeva as helpful in pointing towards a definition of intertextuality, including, 'any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another' (ibid, 1980, p. 66). In the final distillation we are left with a notion of intertextuality as a term covering all intersubjectivity, which suggests that all texts, social texts, cultural texts and literary texts, are made up of quotations from other pre-existing texts. Everything has become text.

Clayton and Rothstein (1991) point out that this assimilation of social and cultural activity into the notion of 'text' remains an area of vagueness in Kristeva's work, as she does not explain how the social text is absorbed into the literary text. This shift away from the socially-situated theory of Bakhtin into the theoretical world of structural linguistics is a politically motivated shift away from the social and creative authority of the individual author. Friedman (1991, p. 150) points out that talking exclusively about 'texts' allows poststructuralist theorists like Kristeva and Barthes, to refer to the text as 'it' and that in this process – of referring to the subjective agency that performs the action as the anonymous 'it' – they are seeking to deny the significance of the individual. Durey (1991) concurs, arguing that Kristeva shifts the vitality of the writer to the text itself and in this way obviates any need to refer to an author.

As I became more familiar with intertextual theory I realised why I had found it so difficult to consider notions of influence and originality from a writer's point of view, whilst still referring to the poststructuralist model of intertextuality in my teaching practice. The literary theory that I had been taught as an undergraduate either ignored the problematic topic of subjective agency in the

writing process, steered around it, or attempted to eradicate it altogether. I had realised that New Criticism's stubborn focus on the text and the structuring devices of language had been partially designed to avoid any regression into traditional 'biographical' criticism, which tended to peter out in irresolvable arguments about undiscoverable facts. Structuralism, on the other hand, the other dominant force in the shaping of postmodernism, had appropriated the rigidly theoretical paradigm of linguistics in an attempt to build a platform that could deliver a coherent system and resolvable conclusions. In both these areas of theory the writing subject was best characterised as a gap or an absence.

In 'The Death and Return of the Author', Sean Burke (1992) argues that poststructuralism began at the point where Barthes, Foucault and Derrida, in their attempt to impose structuralist linguistic theory on all phenomena, realised that the issue of the subject (the individual) could not be sidelined as it had been in formalism, New Criticism and structuralism, but had to be completely written out of the intellectual picture and replaced by language itself. With the development of the poststructuralist project, according to Burke:

An era of theory is underway in which language is "the destroyer of all subject" – the author of literary studies, the transcendental subject of philosophies of consciousness, the subject of political theory, psychoanalysis and anthropology (1992, p.14).

Within this world in which human agency is replaced by linguistic determinism, the unconscious is structured like language and the individual mind tricks itself into the egotistical assumption that it is self-directed, it is difficult to conceptualize any sense of originality or influence that focuses on individual creativity.

2.3.2 Roland Barthes

The French theorist, Roland Barthes, developed a highly idiosyncratic approach to questions of originality and influence in his literary theorising. In 'The Death of the Author' he sought to dissolve the writer in the writing process into a web of intertextual influence, thereby denying the possibility of originality in any form:

We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single theological meaning but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture... His (the writer's) only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others... Did he wish to express himself, he ought at least to know that the 'inner thing' he thinks to 'translate' is itself only a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely... (1978, p.146)

Barthes, in closing down the possibility of the author originating meaning, is forced to explain both origination and meaning through his interpretation of Kristeva's theory of intertextuality; an intertextuality that, as has already been indicated, in his and most other Post-structuralist writings, has a tendency to gravitate away from the concrete actions of people in the real world towards the abstract and purely literary. Writers, according to Barthes, make texts out of the shards of existing texts; they are "bricoleurs", not originators.

As Friedman points out:

Origin, filiation, author, sources and influence occupy one position in Barthes's binary; absence of origin or filiation, anonymity, scriptor, and intertextuality constitute the valorised pole (1991, p. 151).

Both origination and influence are denied the scriptor in Barthes's new vision of *écriture* (writing) and the problem, for Barthes, becomes one of explaining change and evolution within particular linguistic systems and, on the level of the subject, an individual's ability to generate new and original language. In Sade, Fourier Loyola (1977b), in a peculiarly romantic gesture, Barthes ascribes this ability to a gifted few, who, through falling back into monastic aestheticism, driven by their desire for more subtle levels of categorisation, are able to extract language from their own consciousness (because, for Barthes, language is consciousness), and through this process offer it to the world. He calls these enliveners of the intertextual, *Logothetes*, or founders of language.

Nowhere in his writing does Barthes explain the exact mechanics of the process by which new and original meaning is extracted or discovered in consciousness. The closer he gets to a disclosure, the more opaque his

language becomes and we are left with little more than this quote from Writing Degree Zero in which Barthes describes the 'self-sufficient language' of the logothete as having its roots in:

the depths of the author's personal and secret mythology, that subnature of human expression where the first coition of words and things takes place, where once and for all the great verbal themes of his existence come to be installed (1967, p. 16).

In this unworldly vision of language there can be no such thing as originality because language pre-exists us and is only there to be re-assembled, or at best discovered, never originated. With the denial of the originating power of the author, any other possible interpretations of originality that could reside in the author or in the act of writing are denied.

Influence is ubiquitous. Language speaks through us. All a writer can do is open himself or herself up to language and play playfully with what has been written before. The author, in Barthes's new nomenclature, is replaced by the 'scriptor', a scribe of language, a person incapable of imposing any stable meaning onto a text; a text that they do not create so much as assemble.

Barthes constantly warned against the orthodox approaches of literary exegesis. In *From Work to Text* he reminds the reader that:

The intertextual in which every text is held ... is not to be confused with some origin of the text: to try to find the 'sources', the 'influences' of a work, is to fall in with the myth of filiation; the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable and yet *already read*: they are quotations without inverted commas (1987, p. 160).

The idea that meaning is originated in authorial consciousness and that influences can be traced back through genealogical descent from author to author was anathema to Barthes. Meaning was generated through language and the writer was merely the vehicle of language. Thus the play of language in intertextuality was too complex a phenomenon to satisfactorily trace literary influence, or to settle on any kind of definitive or consensual interpretation.

In order to develop a locus of coherence in a model of literature that threatened to radically destabilise the notion of meaning and interpretation and in a further attempt to distance himself from the idea of individual, subjective agency in the writing process, Barthes embraced the notion of the reader: arguing that it was only the reader who was capable of drawing together the infinite threads of a narrative into a coherent whole. In 'A Structural Analysis of Narratives' (1977c), Barthes appeared to be refocusing attention on meaning but this was not in the pursuit of a conclusive or shared interpretation. Barthes made it clear that within the intertextual world of narrative, there could be no such thing as consensual interpretations there could only be individual interpretation, an interpretation that drew together the text at the very moment that it 'explodes and disperses', because, as he points out in *A Textual Analysis: Poe's 'Valdemar'* (1988) 'the text is open to infinity: no reader, no subject, no science can arrest the text' (ibid. p. 151).

Barthes' determination to develop the structuralist association of language with consciousness into a paradigm for literary study; of opting for 'langue' over the Saussurean 'parole', led him to deny subjective agency in the writing process and replace human creativity with the notion of intertextuality as the play of language in the mind of the modern 'scriptor'. Although he had managed to dissolve influence into the determining play of language on consciousness, Barthes found himself within an ontology premised on the notion of linguistic determinism that had sacrificed causality for a structural system of language and was unable to explain how language re-originates and changes. Having explained away the notion of originality he was forced to reinvent it in his theory of the *Logothetes*.

Barthes work constitutes the high tide of poststructuralist thinking; its most extreme evocation, and many of the theorists that followed attempted to row back from its more exposed positions arguing against the relativising dominion of intertextuality over theories of influence or calling for more emphasis on the historically material in order to explain origination and social change.

2.3.3 Genette and Transtextuality

In 'Structuralism and Literary Theory', Gerard Genette discusses the notion of 'bricolage' elaborated by the structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss:

In a now classic chapter of *La Pensée Sauvage*, Claude Lévi-Strauss defines mythical thought as 'a kind of intellectual bricolage'. The nature of bricolage is to make use of materials and tools that, unlike those of the engineer, for example, were not intended for the task in hand. The rule of bricolage is 'always to make do with whatever is available' and to use in a new structure the remains of previous constructions or destructions (1997a, p. 1).

Genette argues that the notion of bricolage is analogous to the work of the structuralist literary critic and argues that although the process of production of a text is unpredictable and irretrievable because in the 'parole' of production the writer is largely unaware of the 'langue'³ they are working with, the critic understands the system of signs used in the construction of narrative and is able to show the work's relationship, through its themes, motifs, images, quotations and references, to pre-existing works. In this way, whilst maintaining the poststructuralist position against traditional literary exegesis, Genette is able to refer a text back to a system of literature that allowed it to come into being, offer a purposeful role to critical commentary and produce a means of tracing textual influence that is unavailable in the more unstable and motile theories of poststructuralist intertextuality.

As Alfaro (1996. p 280) points out by doing this Genette was attempting to delimit the poststructuralist intertextuality of Barthes - as many critics had found it difficult to apply Barthes's work to the practical analysis of texts. In order to sharpen the focus of intertextuality, Genette leaves aside the political and philosophical interest of earlier poststructuralism and concentrates purely on the literary. But, like Barthes, having denied access to subjective agency, he is forced to find an explanation of how texts are originated within intertextual processes. In order to develop the necessary causality for change and

³ Langue and parole are terms coined by Ferdinand de Saussure to differentiate between two aspects of language: language (langue) and speech (parole). According to Saussure, langue describes the abstract, systematic rules of a language system and parole, describes its instantiation in the speech, in concrete language and speech acts.

origination within his critical framework, he re-introduces the notion of text-to-text influence through his concept of transtextuality (1997b), arguing that only a limited number of texts can be the antecedents of any particular text.

In promoting transtextuality over intertextuality, he argues that the notion of intertextuality introduced by Kristeva was an inadequate and misleading term, redefining it within his own critical taxonomy to mean the presence of one text in another as a result of plagiarism, quotation or allusion – ironically returning it to something approximating the notion of influence.

It would be impossible to give a full account of Genette's critical methodology and taxonomy here, but the main framework that he developed (ibid, 1997b) consisted of five sub-categories of transtextuality which in brief summary are:

- 1) Intertextuality – relations of allusion and plagiarism
- 2) Paratextuality – relations within the body of the text
- 3) Metatextuality – relations of commentary between texts
- 4) Architextuality -- categories of genre within and between texts
- 5) Hypertextuality – the relation between the 'latecomer' text (hypertext) and the 'precursor' text (hypotext).

Having established a theoretical field in which issues of influence and origination are subsumed into a reduced model of intertextuality, Genette spent his career attempting a complete classification of the sub-categories of his theory of transtextuality⁴. In 'Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method' (1983), using a structuralist paradigm, he argued that the only knowledge we can have and therefore the only knowledge we can use to produce and interpret texts is derived from the recurrent patterns and similarities in structure between a text and its antecedents.

⁴ This work is spread over a large number of books and articles. The three main works of theory that attempt to subsume these various studies of narrative discourse into the coherent framework of transtextuality are 'The Architext: an introduction', 'Palimpsests: literature in the second degree' and 'Paratexts: thresholds of interpretation'.

Genette's thinking is premised on the structuralist notion that literature, 'like any other activity of the mind, is based on conventions of which, with some exceptions, it is not aware of' (Allen, 2000, p. 97). Although it is possible to discern a slight weakening of emphasis on linguistic determinism here, it is clear that this ontological stance underpins his theoretical position. A number of epistemological issues arise as a result.

Leaving aside those concerning subjective agency and the creative process, it is clear that there are questions that Genette's theory leaves unanswered in relation to the text and the critic. How much knowledge of the literary tradition does the critic require in order to properly implement a structuralist poetics? How are the antecedent texts selected? Do they select themselves? There are issues around the subjectivity of the critic that go unanswered here. There are also problems around readership. As Allen points out, readers do not read texts in relation to a literary tradition, though critics do:

It might be argued here that Genette's project, grounded on the assertion that a structuralist poetics must uncover the transtextual nature of texts, cannot perhaps quite so easily retreat to the apparently commonsensical argument that texts have a dual existence: as autonomous texts and intertexts (ibid, 2000, p. 112).

As Genette himself is forced to accept (Alfaro, 1996), the latecomer text (hypertext) gains from the extent to which the reader is aware of the precursor text (hypotext). There is one final, crucial epistemological point here and that is that readers read texts for other reasons than for the kinds of knowledge made available through the rationalised system of structuralist poetics. This imaginative and emotional relationship with a narrative was an aspect of literature that Genette, despite, but more likely because of, his comprehensive categorising of structural relationships, was unable to capture. Booth (1991) criticises this abstract and over-theoretical approach in Genette's work:

Reading him, one would hardly suspect that the reading experience of even the most sophisticated readers usually includes emotions like hope and fear, desire for happiness and the intense anxiety produced by some

sorts of dramatic irony. His work is almost completely confined to knowing, to cognition, to formal contemplation of ideas and structures (1991. p. 439).

It is clear that although Genette genuflects towards parole and individual subjective agency, his gesture is ultimately an empty one. His focus is almost exclusively on the structural relations in and between texts. Though he may have created a working space for the critic and the study of narrative discourse in poststructuralist theory, in taking writing out of time, he has continued the postmodernist tradition of atomising the reader's relationship with the text. In his theorising he avoided the complexity of authorial creativity within the parole of language and of the reader's physical and emotional experience of the text, and in doing so removed himself ontologically from a position in which he could offer any truly coherent explanation of originality and influence in the writing process.

2.3.4 Bloom's Anxiety of Influence

Bloom, in the 'Anxiety of Influence' (1973) offers a theory of creative practice that introduces an element of subjective agency and appears to locate the writer back into the flow of historical time, though on closer inspection it becomes clear that despite his rejection of postmodernism, the coherence of his theory relies heavily on the notion of intertextuality.

As Scholes (1974, p. 266) points out, when Bloom writes that, 'Poems rise not so much in response to a present time ... but in response to other poems' (1973, p. 99), he is making a particularly formalist assumption. Clayton and Rothstein (1991, p. 9) also refer to the intertextual resonance of, 'the meaning of a poem can only be another poem' (1973, p. 95), and go on to suggest that the non-referential and de-limited nature of the literary text in Bloom is common to many theories of intertextuality. It would appear that Bloom's methodology aligns him, ironically, with the intertextuality of structuralist writers like Genette, whilst the determining influence of language in poststructuralism seems to have been replaced in Bloom by the determining influence of literature.

In a heavily poeticised, often mythopoeic prose, that self-consciously reveals the influence of both Nietzsche and Freud on his work, Bloom, in *The Anxiety of Influence*, argues that all 'strong' poets are locked into a dyadic relationship with a precursor poet in an attempt to overthrow them. As a result of this creative entrapment all attempts at poetic expression are simultaneously both acts of imitation and disguise for:

nothing is got for nothing, and self-appropriation involves the immense anxieties of indebtedness, for what strong maker desires the realisation that he has failed to create himself? (1973, p. 5).

In his six revisionary ratios Bloom (*ibid*, pp.14-15) sets out to explain how, over a period of time, in all their creative output, a poet is locked into a conflict with one significant precursor poet and that to survive, the poet has finally to absorb the influence of the precursor⁵. In order to free themselves and achieve 'self-appropriation' they must endure a period of struggle in which they must disguise their obsession with their precursor until they are in a position to finally destroy them (metaphorically). This is the anxiety of influence. The pathological context for this struggle is both Oedipal and Dionysian:

Most poets – like most men – suffer some version of the family romance as they struggle to find their most advantageous relation to their precursor and their Muse. The strong poet – like the Hegelian great man – is both hero of poetic history and victim of it (*ibid*, p. 62).

The poet is locked into an Oedipal conflict (the family romance) with a father figure (precursor) in order to possess his mother (his muse). He is unable to sublimate these (Dionysian) desires as he is motivated by an over-riding imperative for immortality: to be the influencing voice for the generation of poets that will follow. Although on the face of it the psychological mechanisms appear to locate this process in the complex narrative of the poet's life, Bloom makes a clear distinction, presumably to avoid the ultimately indefinable nature of autobiographical study:

⁵ In the first edition of *The Anxiety of Influence*, Bloom addresses himself solely to the subject of poetry.

Poetic influence ... is necessarily the study of the life cycle of the poet-as-poet (ibid, p. 7).

This distinction allows Bloom to segregate the purely dyadic intertextual relationships located within poetic texts from the irresolvable particularities of human life. Having established a system for himself he sets about constructing a methodology, which he sets out in the revisionary ratios:

The six revisionary movements that I will trace in the strong poet's life-cycle could as well be more ... I have kept them to six, because these seem to be minimal and essential to my understanding of how one poet deviates from the other (ibid, pp. 10-11).

Armed with this knowledge, according to Bloom, the reader or critic can now trace, through the psychological turbulences in the text itself, the influences of the precursor poet that the poet is anxiously trying to disguise.

If we begin to question this methodology in terms of its identification of originality and influence, we soon run into problems. It is clear that Bloom is advocating that poetic texts be read as attempts to survive the influence of other texts. He offers, as a way of establishing a reading, a number of strategies based on Freudian concepts in which the wishes and desires of the conscious or unconscious mind are in conflict with each other. This is obviously not a rational mechanism based on an empirical premis, but a subjective opinion of the critic. As Schwaber (1973. p. 88) points out: why has Bloom decided that only the masculinised aggression in Freudian Oedipal theory can count as the correct approach to a literary theory of poetry? And, how and why does a poet choose a particular predecessor? Schwaber argues that in not answering these questions Bloom is genetically meddling with literary history and playing God.

Whilst maintaining a non-referential stance, Bloom has reduced intertextual relations to a one-on-one transtextuality. It is quite possible to argue, especially in a contemporary context where far larger numbers of different texts are being produced which have not been selected and valorised through the canon, that there could be any number of precursor texts. The problem leads to a number

of awkwardnesses in Bloom's argument and he is forced on occasion, particularly in his consideration of Wallace Stevens, who emphatically rejected the notion of influence, to invert statements by other writers in order to make them fit his own themes. According to Bloom, Stevens denied being influenced by other writers because on a subconscious level he was trying to suppress this truth from himself (1973, p. 7). This is too convenient an argument. By prescribing a gendered, psychologised, Oedipal model to the creative process, Bloom is creating a reductive methodology that is predisposed to reveal his chosen outcomes. Where it doesn't, as in the case of Shakespeare⁶ or the history of women's writing⁷ the subjectivity of his thinking is exposed.

If we trace patterns of influence and originality back further in time and up to the period of the Renaissance we find a very different set of psychological dynamics characterising the imaginative composition of texts. Angelescu, (1968), argues that the imitation of models had been a cardinal point in ancient classical literary theory. The imitator would not attempt to disguise the precursor text; in fact the assumption was that the reader would readily identify it and that this would lend authority to the text. The art was in the imitator's ability to perform more brilliantly than his model. This appears to be evidenced in the very casual way in which Elizabethan writers utilised the plots of other writers. This process was not considered to be one in which guilt and associated contractions of anxiety forced the writer to bury influence beneath the surface of the text, but one in which plots, sub-plots and themes were there for the taking. There was no question of plagiarism or insincerity. Influence was respected. The emphasis was a positive one: on the writer putting the mark of their own personality on the material they borrowed.

This conceptualisation of the process of influence and originality offers us an image of the creative writer, which, although as 'individual' as the perception of

⁶ In the 1973 edition of *The Anxiety of Influence* Bloom argues that: 'Shakespeare belongs to the giant age before the flood, before the anxiety of influence became central to poetic consciousness' (Bloom, H. 1973.p 11), but he makes no attempt to explain how the anxiety of influence came about, presumably as this would have led him out of the tailored constraints of his psychological mechanism into a consideration of social and historical factors.

⁷ See Gilbert and Gubar, (1979), who point out that Bloom's Oedipal theory is embedded in patriarchal discourses and that his attempts to explain poetic creativity in a poetic tradition almost completely dominated by male poets fails to explain the experience and the motivation of women writers.

writers in the Romantic period, is far less troubled and conflicted than Bloom's Freudian and Nietzschean vision. Durey (1991) accuses Bloom of viewing intertextuality in a consistently negative light and of failing to acknowledge that influence could actually play an active and positive role in literary creativity.

In the Introduction to *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973, pp. 5-16) Bloom talks about the gathering burden of the past on the writer and of the accumulating pressure of what has already been written. His vision is a tragic and bleak one. In his defence, Bloom does not deny the subjectivity of his argument, claiming in an elliptical stance that, ironically, identifies him with a humanist argument that pre-dates postmodernism, that literary criticism is essentially elitist. Bloom's judgments are based on a considerable and well-researched knowledge of his subject area and it would be impossible to refute the breadth of his reading, but it is all too possible to conclude that his argument, with its over-determined emphasis on the transtextual, text-to-text psychological relationship between writers, is partial, and fails to fully explain the social and historical origins of poetry.

It could be argued that Bloom's theory fails to address the notion of originality on all levels, from the work's own historical provenance to the idea of originality in the writing process. It is easy to read Bloom's construction of originality as being the poetic equivalent of a mirage, in that a text may look and feel original in its style and content, but that this is really only an elaborate act of disguise:

For Bloom, poets employ the central figures of previous poetry but they transform, redirect, reinterpret those already written figures in new ways and hence generate the illusion that their poetry is not influenced by, and not therefore a misreading of, the precursor poem (Allen, 2000, p. 135).

In his interpretation and critique of Bloom's work, Allen emphasises the notion that Bloom's theory suggests poets can only repeat the precursor's achievements and that as a result - a point that Bloom himself makes - poetry is in an inevitable decline (1973, p. 10). But, there is an ambiguity here, and one that Bloom doesn't explore, possibly because of his determination that poetry

and his way of reading poetry should exist in an intertextual context. Bloom insists that:

Poems rise, not so much in response to a present time ... but in response to other poems (ibid, p. 99).

But at other points in his elaboration of the six revisionary ratios Bloom describes poetry as a:

breaking forth into a freshening that yet repeats his precursor's achievements (ibid, p. 78).

And in the Introduction to *The Anxiety of Influence*, Bloom in his discussion of Wallace Stevens insists:

Poetic influence need not make poets less original; as often it makes them more original, though not therefore necessarily better (ibid, p. 7).

Although there is a strong sense that poetry is born in a backwards glance, that it always repeats the past and can never escape from this anxiety, there is also a sense in words like 'freshening', in Bloom's own statements and in Allen's acknowledgement that poetry reinterprets already written figures in new ways, that there is something approaching originality in poetry. But what that is, as I have already pointed out, Bloom does not make clear.

The notion of originality is unresolved in Bloom's work. Everything gives way to a source of influence (identified by Bloom himself) and to the anxiety that it generates, and although his polemic at times hints and suggests at some form of originality in this process, he is ultimately constrained in exploring the idea by his unwillingness to consider individual creativity within a broader social and cultural context.

2.4) A summary of the Bakhtinian conceptual framework

I began reading Bakhtin's work in the early stages of my doctoral research. Although I found it complex and philosophically challenging - it took me a number of years until I could fully appreciate it as a system of thought – I

immediately recognised its value as a guide to the literary and creative process. But perhaps more significantly than that, for me, in locating the author at the centre of this process, it offered a perspective from which, as a writer, I could understand the practice of writing. Bakhtin offered me a conceptual framework in which I could begin the process of relocating my ideas within a socially-situated theory of literary creativity, at a time when I was becoming increasingly frustrated by postmodernism's⁸ inability to offer me ways of conceptualising my experience as a writer.

What I found so refreshing about Bakhtin's work was its 'bottom up' approach. After years of attempting to interpolate 'top down' theory into the practice of teaching and writing, I could now work with an approach that located the author at the centre of the text:

There is no unitary language or style in the novel. But at the same time there does exist a centre of language (a verbal, ideological centre) for the novel. The author cannot be found at any one of the novel's language levels; he is to be found at the centre of organisation where all levels intersect (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 48-49).

Not only is the writer once more creatively connected to the text in Bakhtin's work, but Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole* (2011), which had been stood on its head by linguistic structuralism, is turned back the right way up. Within the Bakhtinian paradigm, language and literature evolved from speech, from *parole*; the sophisticated structures of texts, literary and non-literary are built from utterances, they are not the instantiations of an abstract system of *langue* (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 262). This apparently simple insight had a profound impact on me and on the subsequent development of my research, as I began to realise the different ways in which I had been acculturated into the belief that the mind had an a priori authority over experience.

Related to this was Bakhtin's insistence that the novel's significance as an artform was due to its power to render human experience in language (1981, p. 84-85). This was something that as a writer I instinctively recognised and

⁸ See this chapter: Footnote 1.

understood. I had felt for some time that a great failing of literary theory had been its inability to explain or even discuss the quality of the literary experience itself. Bakhtin's work, in its willingness to discuss and explore artistic thinking, offered me the opportunity to develop my thinking in these areas.

I also found Bakhtin's focus on the novel and novelistic prose particularly appropriate to teaching creative writing in both the novel and short story form. I was looking for insights and ideas that would help me articulate the deeper and more subtle levels of narrative construction and illuminate parts of the writing process that I was intuitively aware of but lacked the ability to conceptualize and discuss. Bakhtin provided me with a number of ways of thinking about narrative and the experience of narrative that I developed and used in my teaching practice⁹. As I continued to read his books and broaden my understanding of his work, his ideas became increasingly central to both my teaching and my ongoing research.

Bakhtin's work is complex and diverse and requires a familiarity with a number of key concepts before a reader can establish a clear overview of his dynamic philosophical system and understand how it incorporates its various branches of linguistic, metalinguistic, literary, ethical, aesthetic and philosophical enquiry into a unified whole. Before I go on to discuss the ontological impact of Bakhtin's work and its relevance to an exploration of notions of influence and originality in the creative process, it will be necessary to briefly summarise these key features.

Dialogism, or the dialogic, is Bakhtin's term for his particular interpretation of human-to-human communication: one in which the meaning of any utterance, text or action is made unique and acquires meaning through the historically specific event of participating in it. All dialogic interactions, when seen in their historically specific contexts, are immensely complicated and involve the constant nuancing of meaning, both linguistically and metalinguistically (1984, pp. 181-185). Although a level of meaning is always capable of being extracted

⁹ I will discuss some of these approaches in more detail in the conclusion to this thesis.

from a dialogic situation, nothing can ever be said conclusively, therefore, for Bakhtin, all meaning is essentially 'unfinalizable' and all events are open to the future (ibid, p. 166). We must therefore realise that all ongoing life, even when cyclical and repetitive, is essentially dialogic. But, because of the individual and social tendency to reduce complexity to fixed sets of rules and patterns of behaviour we often forget the essentially dialogic nature of human experience and rely too heavily on prescribed abstract formulations when making judgments about ourselves and about the behaviour of others. Bakhtin's term for this tendency is 'monologization'¹⁰.

The social and ideological cast of the language being used further complicates the dialogic encounter. Bakhtin's theory of 'heteroglossia' (1981, pp. 301-331) maintains that a culture's posited unitary language is in constant dialogic tension with a myriad of subordinate languages from which it is constituted. The languages of heteroglossia reflect the different ideologies of different demographic strata and groupings and exert a constant destabilising effect on the unitary language. Bakhtin uses the term to describe anything from the ideological structures of professional or scientific communities to the languages and outlooks of families and individuals. Any individual can be located within a number of fields of heteroglossia of different longevity, scope and ideological status¹¹.

It must be clear by now that Bakhtin was much more than a literary theorist. His literary theorising is based on a particular conception of language as live, unfinalizable, dialogic interaction and his account of literature is embedded in an ethical and philosophical system. In acknowledging the role of subjective agency in the writing process; in refusing to separate the life from the work; in emphasising events and the context of communication in all its particularity and complexity against the transcribed abstractions of linguistics and of over-theorised discourse, he set himself a number of serious intellectual and

¹⁰ For further reading see 'Dialogue', pages 49 – 62, in Morson & Emerson (1990).

¹¹ For a brief introduction to Heteroglossia see pp. 139 – 145 in Morson & Emerson (1990).

philosophical challenges. His writings, taken as a whole, are an attempt to generate a unified framework in which the complicated and paradoxical relationship between the fluid and unfinalizable nature of existence and our existential need for fixity and certainty are fashioned into a dynamic philosophy.

Bakhtin's realm of the dialogic - of social and linguistic experience, characterised by the notions of dialogue, monologization and heteroglossia - is set within a dynamic and fluid continuum in which the notion of change within time becomes complicated and polyvalent. This dynamic aspect of Bakhtin's thinking can be challenging as he employs a number of different polarities within a self-consciously unsystematic but related framework of ideas, to express the fluidity and motility of his thought. His mode of conceptualising makes it difficult at times to grasp his ideas but the temptation to establish a determinate position or to fall into the fallacy that these are contradictory tendencies and to favour one position over the other, needs to be resisted. Bakhtin, though he may appear at times to do so, is not judging one over the other: the monologic over the unfinalizable, or poetry over prose, for that matter. He is simply trying to build fluidity and change into his thinking, to ensure that his conceptualisations do not congeal into monologic theory, do not attempt to have the final, conclusive word; that they remain, ultimately, unfinalizable and dialogic.

Recognisable within these inter-penetrating and multi-levelled fields of fluid relationships are two main polarities in which it is possible to collapse all the others: the centripetal and the centrifugal (1981, pp. 272 - 273). Centripetal forces are the cohering, unitary and integrating forces within a language or culture – Bakhtin identifies them with the 'official' forces that tend towards monologization but are never as unified as they claim to be. Centrifugal forces, on the other hand, which challenge and offer alternatives to any prevailing orthodoxy, are divergent and disorderly. They identify the areas of existence that sit outside the known or the theoretised, or are simply chaotic – the 'unofficial' forces. These counterposing forces are manifested through heteroglossia in language and affect the shape and form of cultural and linguistic experience. They are the irresolvable polarities within which

ideological meaning struggles to find form, is posited, achieves a fixed or relative 'truth', then over time loses its coherence and hegemonic status. For Bakhtin no single utterance or word is ever completely determinate in meaning. Language may aspire to determinacy, may achieve something approaching it for a period of time, may achieve enough centripetal power to reify meaning against the centrifugal and dialogising forces¹², but will ultimately always be 'becoming', always be open to change, to being interpreted in new ways.

Change appears to be a fundamental ontological dynamic in Bakhtin's thinking. Between the polarities of the centripetal and the centrifugal; between the fixed and the fluid, within the particularities of individual lives and the more general stratifications of heteroglossia, and in the world that is external to all that is socially constructed, change is being effected by human and natural agencies, sometimes so languidly as to suggest inertia, at other times suddenly and cataclysmically, always denying the spoken or written words attempts to establish ultimate, conclusive dominion.

Within the socially constructed world, through a concentration of centripetal forces, dominant languages and ideologies in culture manage to cohere the myriad languages of heteroglossia that stratify them, but this is always an unstable and tension filled relationship. These languages of heteroglossia, whilst diverging from the unitary language of a culture are themselves subject to centripetal and centrifugal forces and appear to become more complex and open to change as they become more particular to the internal dialogics of active, creative individuals. As Bakhtin himself states:

Unitary language constitutes the expression of the historical processes of linguistic unification and centralisation, an expression of the centripetal forces of language. A unitary language is not something given (dan) but is always in essence posited (zadan) – and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia ... A common unitary language is a system of linguistic norms. But these norms do not constitute an abstract imperative; they are rather the generative forces of linguistic life, forces that struggle to overcome the heteroglossia of language, forces that unite and centralize verbal-ideological thought,

¹² Bakhtin used a number of different words, including 'monologization', 'finalisation', 'transcription' and 'rhythmicizing', depending on what aspects of human activity he is discussing, to describe this process.

creating within a heteroglot national language the firm stable linguistic nucleus of an officially recognised literary language, or else defending an already formed language from the pressure of growing heteroglossia (1981, p. 270 - 271).

2.4.1 Bakhtin and the Novel

In his concluding remarks in 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel' (1981) in a summary of his discussion of the novel's ability to represent time and space as the living canvas of experience in the mind of the reader, Bakhtin states:

In literature and art itself, temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another, and always coloured by emotions and values. Abstract thought can, of course, think time and space as separate entities and conceive them as things apart from the emotions and values that attach to them. But living, artistic perception ... makes no such divisions and permits no such segmentation (1981, p. 243).

This tension between artistic thought and abstract thought is a fundamental constant in Bakhtin's work and explains why the novel was the absolute locus of his thinking. The novel's articulation of lived, unfinalizable experience was, for Bakhtin, the ultimate expression of human wisdom and the human condition. It was the discourse through which artistic thought merged abstract discourse and embodied human experience into one open, dialogized form.

Bakhtin's wider philosophical vision, although a unity of thought in its own right, could not have existed separately to his fascination and intellectual absorption in the novel and its evolution as a form. His philosophical system grew out of his attempts to understand the relationship between fictional discourse and the individual, culture and society.

If Bakhtin's work is read chronologically one can see that there is a constant synergistic relationship between his reflections on novelistic form and style and the development of his psychological, linguistic and philosophical enquiries. It is clear that he intended his writings as a whole, to offer, not a set of discrete

ideas, but as full an explanation possible of the novel, its development as a form and the world of human consciousness and experience that it expressed.

For Bakhtin, the novel had, through its historical evolution, achieved a level of dialogic intensity that other forms of discourse are unable to match:

The phenomenon of internal dialogization, as we have said, is present to a greater or lesser extent in all the realms of the life of the word. But if in extra-artistic prose (everyday, rhetorical, scholarly) dialogization usually stands apart, crystallizes into a special kind of act of its own and runs its course in ordinary dialogue or in other, compositionally clearly marked forms for mixing and problemicizing with the discourse of another – then in *artistic* prose, and especially in the novel, this dialogization penetrates from within the very way in which the word conceives its object and its means for expressing itself, reformulating the semantics and syntactical structure of discourse. Here dialogic inter-orientation becomes, as it were, an event of discourse itself, animating from within and dramatizing discourse in all its aspects (1981, p. 284).

Here Bakhtin is emphasizing and articulating the richness of dialogue in the novel; its ability, within its own heightened dialogic context, to transcend itself as a system of language and to see the world in its own particular way.

Bakhtin believed that the novel and more specifically, the polyphonic novel¹³ – the novel in its most contemporary form – was capable of capturing and achieving, through its aesthetic style, the ultimate expression of life as it is lived, in all its ethical complexity, historical particularity, creative potential, linguistic diversity and ultimate unfinalizability (1984, pp. 6 – 8). In his studies of the history of the novel he argues that it has developed out of historically existing genres of writing in antiquity into an evolved form, a style of styles, that far exceeds the expressive potential it had achieved in the past:

From the very beginning the novel was structured not in the distanced image of the absolute past but in the zone of contact with inconclusive present-day reality. At its core lay personal experience and free creative imagination ... From the very beginning, then, the novel was made of different clay than the other already completed genres; it is a different breed, and with it and in it is born the future of all literature. Once it came

¹³ Polyphonic means 'many voiced'. I will be offering a full definition of the polyphonic novel in chapter 6

into being, it could never be merely one genre among others, and it could not erect rules for interrelating with others in peaceful and harmonious co-existence. In the presence of the novel, all other genres somehow have a different resonance (1981, p. 39).

It would be a major task to adequately summarise Bakhtin's writings on the novel in their entirety. I have gone into the level of detail I have here because it is impossible to simplify or reduce the complexity of his ideas without running the risk of misrepresenting them, or failing to see his work as an integrated and complex whole (as many commentators in the West have done). I am also conscious of the need to frame the impending discussions of influence and originality within a wider vision of Bakhtin's work.

2.5) Conclusions: the development of the Special Author Study and the opportunity for qualitative research

The initial stage of research into the four areas covered in this chapter (outlined in Section 1.5) had been designed to establish the credibility of further research, to check and consolidate my arguments and to ensure that my original conjectures were well supported.

Having completed the research, I felt confident that my initial anxieties, that the postmodernist theory I had become familiar with as an undergraduate would not provide a theoretical platform from which to successfully consider notions of influence and originality in the creative process, were well founded. My research into creative writing pedagogy had convinced me that I needed to develop strategies that would encourage my students to objectify their writing and to locate it within the social domain¹⁴ and my reading of Bakhtin had provided me with a theoretical framework that I was confident would allow me to gain the perspective necessary to achieve this.

¹⁴ For a more recent discussion of the need to locate creative writing in social practice see Wandor (2008), in which Wandor argues for the development of a materialist practice in creative writing pedagogy, to counter what she considers to be the prevailing orthodoxy of romantic and psychotherapeutic approaches.

My identification of 'interiorisation'¹⁵ with romantic attitudes towards creativity had persuaded me that an important parameter for my research existed between romanticism and socially situated theory and that it would be within the scope of their relationship that I should conduct further research into influence and originality. I was conscious of Freiman's (2004) insistence on the importance of the 'dream'; of acknowledging the role of the individual creative imagination and I was aware that the adoption of a Bakhtinian socially-situated approach, especially given Bakhtin's tendency to be critical of romantic attitudes in literature, could affect my interpretation of future research findings in romantic theory. I decided therefore that I would undertake a qualitative research study into writers' experience of influence and originality in their own writing process and use the findings as a critical framework in interpreting further literary theoretical research into notions of influence and originality in the work of Bakhtin and romantic theories of creativity.

As I continued with my research I began to develop and implement teaching strategies designed to encourage students to consider models of the writing process that emphasised social context and contemporaneity, and that recognised ways in which influence could be seen as material for further creative production¹⁶. I was having some success with this when a new opportunity arose: the decision was made to turn the Certificate in Creative Writing from a one-year into a two-year programme of study. I had been successful in applying for the post of joint-convenor and found myself in a good position to contribute to the development of the new second year courses on the programme. In the discussions that followed I argued for a new course design that would emphasize socially-situated and transtextual¹⁷ aspects of learning. The rationale behind this was to identify the first year of the programme as a period in which students were encouraged to explore their own individual creativity; to follow Freiman's (2004) suggestion that the dream must

¹⁵ What Hunt and Sampson (2006) had identified as the need for writers to distance themselves from the creative and emotional source of their work.

¹⁶ I will offer more detail on these teaching strategies when I discuss the impact of my research and my research findings on my pedagogic practice in the conclusion to this thesis.

¹⁷ By 'transtextual' I am adapting Genette's delimited conception of intertextuality: of a relationship between a precursor text, and within the context of creative writing, of a text in production.

be made 'real', whilst preparing them to acknowledge the intertextual and social contexts of creativity and criticism in the second year.

The result was the 'Special Author Study' in which students were asked to select a writer whose work they admired and through a series of creative interventions, explore the style and technique of that writer. These exercises ranged from stylistic imitation to using the precursor text as a springboard for further creative elaborations¹⁸.

Whilst I was developing the Special Author Study, I realised that it could offer an excellent opportunity as a field for qualitative research. As I began to consider the scope of the qualitative research and to draft questionnaires¹⁹ I re-wrote my initial research questions²⁰. I then made a thorough search of research activity in creative writing in England, America and Australia to ensure that my projected field of study was not already being covered. I searched the National Association of Writers in Education directory of doctoral theses, the American Writers and Writing Program lists, the Australasian Digital Theses Program, EThOS and Google Scholar. None of these searches identified doctoral studies in the area that I am working in.

¹⁸ Supporting documents outlining the content of the Special Author Study can be found in the appendix (p. 286).

¹⁹ The approach and development of the qualitative research is discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

²⁰ See the Preface to this thesis.

Chapter 3. Ontology and Epistemology

3.1) The Research Strategy

My initial plan, when I first began work on this study, was to submit alongside the research, a section of a novel. The novel, the story of a young, ambitious architect who is accused by a former student of plagiarising his ideas on the eve of scooping a major architectural prize, was intended to explore the themes of influence and originality. The novel is still in progress, but at quite an early stage I began to feel that the anticipated synergy between the two projects was not happening. I had hoped that the fiction would suggest directions for the theoretical research, but had found instead, that I was feeling constrained in my creative work by my research. I attempted to find some mechanism whereby I could bridge the two pieces of work together, but in the end decided it would be best to focus on the theoretical work first, then once I had absorbed and concluded my research, turn back to the fiction.

This was, I'm convinced, the right decision. It has allowed me to focus on developing an ontological framework within which I can consider questions of influence and originality whilst coming to a greater understanding of the relationship between theory and practice both in my teaching and my own creative work. On an academic level, it has provided me with an opportunity to pursue my interest in Bakhtin's work and through my qualitative research, to contribute to current debates in creative writing pedagogy, especially considerations of which theoretical and ontological paradigms it should associate with, and ultimately, the part it could play as a subject area in the broader area of literary studies in Higher Education.

I decided at an early stage to develop a research strategy that would allow me to explore what I saw as the problematic relationship between theory and writing practice; to look for approaches that could explain both mine and my students' experience whilst allowing me to understand the historical, theoretical and aesthetic background to the pedagogic issues that had come up in my teaching. I was determined that the research process should be open-ended and led by the data and that it should record the ways in which my ontological

position was being relocated by my evolving argument, rather than being built around a pre-determined point of view. I knew that this would pose philosophical as well as structural problems for my thesis, but as I had begun the process by rejecting the philosophical assumptions underlying poststructuralism, I had no other option than to acknowledge Keats's (1928) notion of negative capability and embrace the uncertainties of my project.

3.2) The Challenge of the Scope of the Research

In retrospect, looking back now over the research project, managing this approach has at times been challenging. My initial reading developed into a complex web of research incorporating philosophy, literature, creative writing pedagogy, aesthetics, philosophy of art, contemporary and historical critical theory, creativity theory, evolutionary theory, evolutionary psychology and neuro-science. The width of reading required and the need to familiarize myself with the key conceptual categories of these different disciplines in order to translate them into the broad stream of my developing argument was demanding of both time and intellectual energy. I was also concerned, given the scope of the study, to ensure that it maintained its focus. This proved to be a challenge given that the initial motivation to carry out the research suggested that whilst considering notions of influence and originality in the creative process, I would also be searching for an ontological paradigm within which to frame them.

3.3) Shifting Paradigms: from strong social constructivism to Bakhtin's socially-situated theory.

My analysis of theories of intertextuality had led me to the conclusion that as a paradigm, poststructuralism was unable to provide me with a framework in which to consider the creative process from a writer's point of view. I could acknowledge that the determination of theorists like Kristeva (1980) and Barthes (1978) to disenfranchise the writer was both a politically motivated act, addressed at what they saw as the unnecessary status afforded to the author, and an attempt to expose the ways in which bourgeois society constructed and maintained an ideological hegemony.

As much as I sympathised with this approach, I felt the arguments used to support this position were partial and distorted. A comparison with Bakhtin's notion of monologism in the centrifugal/centripetal dynamic of ideological power, a theory that didn't deracinate authorial creativity, suggested that their political point could have been made without recourse to the extremity of their argument.

The problem seemed to lie within the early formulations of intertextuality itself. Both Durey (1991) and Dentith (1995) have accused Kristeva (1980), who was familiar with Bakhtin's work, of ripping the notion of authorial agency out of the social context in which Bakhtin had placed it and then claiming that meaning is produced purely as a result of textual relations entirely disconnected from their actual historical location.

This had annulled the ideological authority of the author but had created a vacuum of passivity around the idea of subjective agency that had created the space for a strong linguistic determinism. As Wandor has subsequently pointed out (2008, pp. 160-165), Bakhtinian theory shows that the poststructuralist assessment of authorial power was over-determined. Bakhtin's notion of dialogue suggests that the creator and receiver, the writer and the reader, and the author and their characters are all constantly and actively engaged in the dialogic production of meaning.

What had made it possible for poststructuralist theorists to assume this level of linguistic determinism in support of their political arguments? I realised that to understand the ontological foundations of poststructuralist thought I needed to reveal the philosophical logic that had allowed writers like Barthes to substantiate this radical position. Burke (1992) had already suggested that the intention of the poststructuralists was to replace human subjectivity with linguistic determinism and in *Reconstructing The Author* (1995, p. xvii), he suggests further that Barthes's ultimate philosophical ambition was to replace the notion of God, the final all-inclusive category in philosophical thought, with the notion of 'language'.

As Cunningham (2001, pp. 18-22) has pointed out this aspiration of poststructuralism's to place language at the centre of the humanities ontological framework stemmed from Ferdinand de Saussure's failure to adequately emphasise the importance of 'parole' in the distinction between langue and parole in the course of lectures, *Cours de Linguistic Générale*, that he gave in the years leading up to the First World War. Saussure's systemic theory of langue became the blueprint in the second half of the twentieth century for theoretical models of society, consciousness and literature. When combined with the Standard Social Science Model – a model offered by Barkow, Cosmides, & Tooby (1992) as a summary of paradigms in the social sciences that had evolved out of behaviourism in the first half of the twentieth century - it developed into the overarching ontological model in the humanities that Slingerland (2010, p. 75) has identified as strong social constructivism.

According to Slingerland, strong social constructivism has been endemic in the humanities throughout the postmodern period¹ and is a paradigm in which humans are characterised as:

fundamentally linguistic-cultural beings, combined with the belief that our experience of the world is therefore mediated by language or culture *all the way down*. On this model, we have no direct cognitive access to reality, and things in the world are meaningful to us only through the filter of linguistically or visually mediated cultural preconceptions (2010, p. 78).

In addition to this emphasis on language and culture as controlling consciousness, strong social constructivism also encompasses a 'blank slate' view of human nature, epitomised in the work of the anthropologist Clifford Geertz who has argued that 'there is no such thing as human nature independent of culture' (1973. p 49). The 'blank slate' view of human nature suggests that there is nothing in our biological make-up that is significant enough to have any lasting impact on the cultural discourses in which humans are socialised.

¹ Slingerland uses the term postmodernism as a radial category including postmodernist literary theory, Geertzian sociology, Boasian anthropology, Whorfian linguistics, existentialism, Rortian neo-pragmatism and the sociology of Latour and Bourdieu.

This distinction between the cultural and the biological is reinforced in Western humanist thought in the tradition of Cartesian dualism, in Descartes' conclusion that the essence of thought is utterly distinct from the essence of the body:

It is certain that this I (that is to say, my soul by which I am what I am), is entirely and absolutely distinct from my body and can exist without it (1970. *Meditations*, 190).

The notion of dualism has encouraged the distinction between matter and mind and the assumption that it is the role of the humanities to study the activities of the mind whilst science with its positivistic and objectivist ontologies and epistemologies deals with the deterministic laws of the physical world. This may seem like a sensible philosophical division of labour, but in the arts, and especially in literature it has created an almost unbridgeable gap between the actual physical process of writing and the valorising and understanding of that work.

The shift away from the objectivism of the Enlightenment in the twentieth century is often portrayed as a renunciation of correspondence theories of truth and with it the notion of universal and transcendental laws. This critique of strong objectivism has begged questions of traditional epistemological assumptions, revealed the complexity of man-made systems of thought, and offered new insights into the ideological construction of knowledge and the hegemonic relations between discourses. All these things have been of immense value, but the key claim in strong social constructivism that an individual's perception of the world is determined by language and culture and that there is no such thing as a pure, empirical fact, has meant that it is impossible to locate knowledge outside this system which can prove or disprove knowledge held within it. As Slingerland has pointed out, within strong social constructivism there remains a strong tendency towards relativism (2010, p. 18).

Having investigated the underlying ontologies of poststructuralism and explored on a more general level the paradigms at work behind literary theory and the

humanities in the twentieth century, I was convinced that Bakhtin's work would provide me with an ontological position that would preserve the notion of the social world as ideologically constructed, avoid relativism, and importantly, allow me to explore influence and originality and the creative process from both an objective and subjective point of view. Up to this point though, I had not fully explored the philosophical foundations of Bakhtin's conceptual framework and decided that this would need to be the next stage in the study. I felt confident, in my initial reading of his work, that a Bakhtinian paradigm would allow me to properly frame my initial research questions, but I felt it was important to compare the ways in which his ideas differed from poststructuralism, to give myself a clearer sense of how well Bakhtin's conceptual framework allowed me to draw together practice and theory into a unified approach.

3.4) Bakhtin's socially-situated theory

On first reading Bakhtin I had considered him to be a social constructivist in the same sense I had applied the word to the poststructuralist and postmodernist theory that had influenced my thinking in the early part of my career. His work shared with Barthes' critique of French bourgeois culture (1978) an awareness of the power of ideology and hegemony whilst his distinction between centripetal and centrifugal forces in language and culture, in many ways paralleled Barthes work on doxa/paradoxa (1977) and myth (1972). Bakhtin expresses his concerns about the reification of language in myth in *Discourse in the Novel*:

But language too is under the power of images of the sort that dominate mythological thinking, and these fetter the free movement of its intentions and thus make it more difficult for language categories to achieve a wider application and greater flexibility ... they limit the word's potential for greater expressiveness (1981, p 369).

These clear overlaps with poststructuralist theory, coupled with the centrality of language to his thinking, had initially convinced me that Bakhtin was a social constructivist, albeit a more socially-situated one, with a clear sense of a linguistically and socially constructed reality. This assumption had been thrown into question by more recent investigation into the ontological assumptions

behind poststructuralism and my realisation that poststructuralism actually represented a strong social constructivism. I now realised that although there were similarities there were also major points of difference between Bakhtinian and poststructuralist positions.

As I read more of Bakhtin's earlier writings and began to understand the philosophical foundations on which they were built, I realised that his ideas had often been misunderstood or adapted by postmodernist theorists² because of the ease with which such notions as dialogism and heteroglossia could be interpreted to suit the philosophical tenets of social constructivism. Bakhtin's emphasis on: intentionality, creativity, individual freedom, events and 'unfinalizability' suggested, increasingly to me, an active notion of human agency that existed, at least partially, outside the ontological enclosure of strong social constructivism with its indifference to individuality (Barthes, 1978) and (Foucault, 1977) and its more passive conception of human subjectivity as being determined by language and ideology.

The distinction that Bakhtin makes in his earlier philosophical writings³ between the notion of our embodied interaction with our physical environment and the ideological influence of monologic modes of thinking, offers us, within his overall philosophical framework, a way of accessing empirical and experiential truths in the real world that are significantly different in their epistemological character to the relativism of strong social constructivism. For in strong social constructivism, because of its rational idealism, there is no mechanism for verifying one person's truth above another's, neither is there the possibility of escaping the mediating influence of language in our perception of the external world.

I do not want to enter here into a wider discussion of the notion of truth as a philosophical concept as this would distract too much from my intention of providing a background for a discussion of originality and influence in Bakhtin's

² A good example of a theorist whose reading of Bakhtin is clearly mediated through a social constructivist ontology is Nancy Glazener's 'Dialogic Subversion: Bakhtin, the novel and Gertrude Stein' in Hirschkop (1989).

³ Evident in early work: 'Towards a Philosophy of the Act' (1993) and 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity' (1990) and, despite his increasing preoccupation with language and literature, traceable through the later period of the development of his ideas in the distinction within his theories of genre between heteroglossia and the chronotope.

work; I am focusing on it to the extent that it highlights a difference in philosophical approach between Bakhtin and strong social constructivism in relation to notions of the truth and the validity of experience.

Bakhtin's realisation that the dialogic offered a conception of truth that could be arrived at through interaction with others within the context of an event or action allowed him to develop his notion of 'polyphonic'⁴ truth, in which truth is arrived at through shared experience (1984, pp 80 - 83). The idea of polyphonic truth offered further proof that Bakhtin's ontological framework, whilst accommodating the ideological construction of social reality, extended beyond it to allow for verification of truth claims in the real world of experience.

But fundamental to this stance, and adding another complicating element to it is Bakhtin's insistence that within the notion of the dialogic the context is constantly changing and that the rate of this change will affect our ability to formulate accurate shared truths. Bakhtin was highly critical of the assumed authority of moral systems, which he saw as monologic, partial, abstracted and imposed, from above, on the events they passed judgment on (1984, p. 93). For Bakhtin, 'truths' were insights into the workings of the world. They emanated directly from experience (1993, pp. 93 -112) were ultimately unfinalizable and were accessible through dialogic interaction and the exercise of wisdom gained through experience⁵:

The dialogic means of seeking truth is counterposed to official monologism, which pretends to *possess a ready-made truth*, and it is also counterposed to the naïve self-confidence of those people who think that they know something, that is, who think that they possess certain truths. Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born *between people* collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction (1984, p. 110).

⁴ Polyphony is the term Bakhtin gives to a style of writing he claims Dostoevsky perfected in his great novels, principally *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. Although he never explicitly defines it, it is considered by most commentators to be characterised by a dialogic sense of the truth and a re-positioning of the author that allows for truly dialogic relationships to develop between the author and the characters in the writing process.

⁵ This didn't preclude the possibility of their becoming enduring truths; truths that could become central to a particular ideology and which held over a period of time. The significant issue here for Bakhtin is that they were not monologic; that they didn't assume an authority they didn't have, and were not regarded as finalised, natural and unquestionable.

Bakhtin's criticism here is clearly directed against both the assumed authority of monologic ideology and theoreticians who through the manipulation of structures and systems abstracted from their 'live' context arrive at formulations that they claim to be true. Bakhtin's critique of theoretism and monologism (ibid, pp. 79-80) serves to underline the essential epistemological point that although systems of language may attempt to condition our perception of reality, our experience of the real world is one in which we engage with the unfinalizable, unique and unpredictable nature of events and actively interpret them, and that this process, that draws on our physical involvement in events themselves, is one that is not entirely mediated by language.

This notion of a shared, collectively realised truth had clear applications to the teaching of creative writing and I could see immediately how these insights could be applied to those writing students who were anxious that their work might be influenced by critical discussion. By promoting the idea of pragmatic, shared truths arrived at within the physical context of critical discussion, I could utilise Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic to reassure them that the criticisms were not conclusive and permanent, nor that they were bound to accept them. By acknowledging activity and contestation at the heart of the dialogic process, Bakhtin reveals how we are not trapped by, or locked into, monologic structures of meaning that are either true or not true. There was also a refreshing empiricism in his insistence that dialogic interaction was also, importantly, a physical activity – that it contained an extralinguistic (or metalinguistic) dimension (ibid, p. 183) and that therefore, meaning was arrived at from outside language as well as from within it.

One of the reasons why I may have failed at first to notice the empiricism and the acknowledgement of a sphere of experience outside of language that located Bakhtin's philosophy ontologically in the physical world, is that Bakhtin does not over-emphasise this aspect of his thought – it often appears to be an assumed 'given' in his writings – and if his work is read piecemeal, it is easily overlooked. Another possible explanation could be that, for most of his life, certainly from the mid to latter periods in his career, he was preoccupied with language, the complexities of linguistic interaction and the ways in which it has

influenced and continues to influence our sense of identity and our perception of the world. This emphasis on language could be seen as obscuring the ontological foundations that underpin Bakhtin's work and may well have led to the misreading of important Bakhtinian notions - especially his writings on polyphony and carnival⁶ - by theorists already steeped in theories of language with quite different ontological precedents.

But, as can be seen from the extract below, if Bakhtin doesn't over-emphasise this ontological connection with physical experience, he does periodically remind his readers that he makes a distinction between the world of experience and the world-shaping ideology of language and that this relationship cannot be reduced, assimilated or ignored by theory; that although there is reciprocity, they are essentially separate dimensions:

Dialogic relationships are absolutely impossible without logical relationships or relationships orientated toward a referential object (Bakhtin is talking here about language), but they are not reducible to them, and they have their own specific character ... As we have already said, logical and semantically referential relationships, in order to become dialogic, must be embodied, that is, they must enter into another sphere of existence: they must become discourse⁷, that is, an utterance, and receive an author, that is, a creator of the given utterance whose position it expresses (1984, p. 184).

Dentith in a discussion of Bakhtin's ideas in relation to contemporary criticism, sums up this distinction between the strong social constructivism of poststructuralist and postmodernist theory and the recognition, implicit in Bakhtin's writing that the context for dialogic interaction is in our embodied experience in the real world:

While it is certainly the case that we cannot talk about the world without using an evaluatively charged word, a word that carries with it a whole social history, that does not mean that we cannot talk about the world. Nor does it mean that reference to the world is no more than an illusory

⁶ See Morson & Emerson (1990, pp. 231- 234 and 469).

⁷ It is interesting to note here that Bakhtin's use of the term 'discourse' is at variance with the tendency in poststructuralism to use it to imply an intertextual or intratextual relationship. For Bakhtin, 'discourse' is essentially concrete and social, not abstracted, textualised and disconnected from its historical and temporal location in the world.

support to the internal dynamic of our speech, which would be an extreme, but typical poststructuralist position (1995, p. 93).

Bakhtin was highly critical of the distinction made by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure⁸ between 'langue' (the abstracted system of language) and 'parole' (the individual speech act), a distinction that he claimed, in its endorsement of the utterance as an 'instantiation' of the linguistic system, had led to both formalism and poststructuralism's drift towards 'theoretism'; a position in which an over-emphasis on an abstracted model of language (langue) obscured the creativity and complexity of language as it was actually spoken or voiced in novelistic prose (1986, p. 123).

Shepherd, in a discussion of the relationship of the reader to the text in Bakhtin's work (1989, p. 139 -140) supports Bakhtin's argument that the dialogic establishes a relationship between embodied experience and language that flows from the ground up, from context to text; utterance to language, parole to langue, and makes the further point that, if this is the case, then the relationship between a text and its reader, (and therefore by extension its author), is 'crucially not intertextual, but external to the enclosure of the text'. So, the primary influence on the interpretation of meaning is the historically specific context and not the timeless intertextual dimension argued for by many poststructuralist theorists.

Bakhtin, himself, makes this point in *Towards a Philosophy of the Act*, though his target here is more linguistic structuralism than poststructuralism:

'We cannot break out into the world of events from within the theoretical world. One must start with the act itself, and not with theoretical transcription (1993, p. 97).

It is clear from the evidence from Bakhtin's writings and from supporting arguments, that despite the emphasis on language and literature in his work on

⁸ See, Saussure (2011).

genre⁹ and heteroglossia, his thinking is not founded on a strong social constructivist ontology but in a social constructivism that is located in the world of physical experience and allows individuals, through dialogic interaction between themselves and physical interaction with their environment to actively challenge and transcend the monologizing structures of ideology.

The realisation that there was a difference between the ontology that underpinned the literary theory I had subscribed to as an undergraduate and the more subtle and complex philosophical principles behind Bakhtin's work allowed me to unpick much of what I had understood through literary theory up to that point and formulate fresh perspectives and arguments within my teaching practice.

These insights reinstated the importance of the individual as an active agent in the creative process whilst highlighting the importance of 'messy' and unfinalizable experience. I came to the conclusion that modern literary theory, in its preoccupation with structuralism and its quest for academic objectivity, had abstracted out of the complex and unfinalizable field of parole into partial, intertextualised theoretism. The final irony of modern literary theory appears to be that in its attempt to achieve status for itself as an intellectual discipline and to move beyond the irresolvable disputes of traditional exegesis and biographical criticism, it had, through strong social constructivism, introduced a rampant relativism that undermined the truth claims of its various theoretical positions.

My deepening understanding of Bakhtin's work opened up new areas of thinking, encouraging me to re-evaluate my conceptual frameworks and to draw them together into a more coherent system of thought. The relationship between embodied experience and abstract cognition that Bakhtin identifies and focuses on in his earlier writings (1993 and 1990) interested me deeply. It allowed me to see a way out of the notion of a linguistically constructed

⁹ Bakhtin's idea of 'genre' can best be described as 'form-shaping ideology' – a specific kind of creative activity embodying a specific sense of experience. Bakhtin developed the notion of genre extensively both in relation to literature and to speech genres. For an introduction to Bakhtinian notions of genre see, Morson & Emerson (1990, pp. 271 – 305).

consciousness that had so influenced my thinking when I had been working within structuralist and poststructuralist paradigms. The insights offered by Bakhtin's concept of dialogue were enabling me to explore and consider the role of the embodied and physical context in the formation of ideological thought. This distinction that he had opened up between them, along with his insistence that any study of language and linguistically related phenomena needed to be based on an empirical study of spoken language, offered me new ways of thinking about the relationship between practice and theory. Dialogue allowed me to re-assess notions of influence and originality, to de-construct what I now realised was a false dichotomy between relativism and intentionality and to begin to construct a theoretical argument that made sense of the notion of a shared, social, consensual truth.

These insights reinforced my critique of poststructuralist theory and further validated the moves I had made within my teaching practice towards a more socially-situated approach. I was confident that working within a Bakhtinian paradigm would give me an opportunity, by allowing me to think outside the restrictions of intertextual approaches, to reconsider the nature of originality and influence in the creative process and to resolve the issues I had first addressed in discussions with my writing students. The Bakhtinian socially-situated framework offered me a coherent framework that I could use to consider both the social and the individual aspects of the creative process. My aim was to continue to develop a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the Bakhtinian paradigm and to compare the findings from my qualitative research with notions of influence and originality in Bakhtin's work.

Chapter 4. Methodology

4.1) Research Questions

At the beginning of the next stage of research I reviewed the original research aims I had written up as part of my doctoral proposal. In the light of my developing research, especially my interest in the philosophical ideas underpinning different approaches in literary theory, I felt the focus of my study had shifted and that my initial research questions needed to be revisited and revised. I returned to them, re-considered them and having re-written them felt I had a more accurate representation of the aims and focus of my evolving study¹.

1. What is influence? To what aspect of the writing process does it apply? How does it manifest itself within the writing process? What is the difference between influence and intertextuality? Is influence consciously appropriated, or does it enter the writing process by some other means? To what extent does it determine the writing process? To what extent does influence impede originality?
2. What is originality? Is it an aspect, or a result, of the writing process? What are the historical antecedents of the notion of originality? Can it be located within individual works? Is it accessible to study?
3. To what extent are the arguments I am evolving and the conclusions they appear to be suggesting, at variance with current interpretations of influence and originality within critical and theoretical discourse? What areas of critical and theoretical discourse share the greatest resonance with my findings?
4. How important are these concepts to our understanding of the writing process?

As I reflected further on my developing research, I began to appreciate that within my revised research questions, questions 3 & 4 were framing the study in relation to wider pedagogic and literary discourses and to practical applications outside of the theoretical context. I decided to write these out as an additional set of questions to reflect this broadening of the focus of my research:

¹ The revised research questions shown on this page are the same as those given in the Preface.

1. How does an understanding of originality and influence considered from within the writing process compare with the way these ideas have been constructed by the academic community?
2. What are the implications of the answers to this question for our understanding of what these concepts mean?
3. What are the implications of my findings for the teaching of creative writing?

These three additional questions, developing out of an increasing preoccupation with the tensions existing between the artistic practice of creative writing and academic theory, were to prove important in helping me shape the future direction of my research and my qualitative research design.

4.2) Research Design and Methodology.

4.2.1) The qualitative research study within the context of my ongoing research.

In the early stages of my research I had envisaged the qualitative research component of the study as sitting alongside a large body of creative writing, a reflective journal on my own writing process and literary research into influence and originality². I had originally conceived of it as a small-scale research study designed to reveal writers' attitudes to influence and originality that I could triangulate with the exploration of these ideas in my own fiction, a reflective writer's diary and wider literature research. As my thinking evolved and I became increasingly preoccupied with the problem of finding an ontological solution to the issues around influence and originality raised by my writing students, I realised I needed to cut the creative component to make space within the thesis for a further exploration of the philosophical tensions between practice and theory. In order to create this space and at the same time maintain the importance of my qualitative research as a means of critiquing existing theories of influence and originality, I needed to focus my qualitative research tightly around my core research questions.

² See the beginning of Chapter 3.1

My intention in the qualitative research was to elicit responses from writers about the nature and role of influence and originality in the creative writing process. I was convinced of the importance and the relevance of these potential findings to my study, as I needed a strong counterweight to the theoretical arguments of my literature research, especially as I was now beginning to frame my research between practical and theoretical approaches and socially-situated and romantic paradigms.

I was aware that removing my own creative writing as a component of the study meant that the opportunity of considering my research questions from the standpoint of my writing practice had been reduced. This had initially felt like a loss, but I realised this more practice-based approach within the study could be adequately represented in the qualitative research and that entering into a reflective dialogue with the opinions and ideas of other writers would allow me to continue to consider issues from a practice-based perspective. I was also aware that the critiquing of theoretical positions within my literature research came from within the field of theoretical discourse and that few, if any, creative practitioners were actively seeking a dialogue with theoretical arguments in relation to influence and originality. This, for me, reinforced the importance of the qualitative research as an important contribution to my ongoing research. Furthermore, an opportunity to reflect on the attitudes of developing writers to the nature of influence and originality would allow me to consider their experience as learners and would contribute towards my aim of developing a conceptual framework for the teaching of creative writing.

4.2.2) Selecting the qualitative research field

After completing the initial research to support my doctoral proposal and whilst developing my conceptual frameworks (see Chapter 2), I began to consider the design of my qualitative research study. In the previous year, whilst developing the new courses that were to form the second year of the Certificate in Creative Writing³ it had occurred to me that the Special Author study would make a good field of study for further research into notions of originality and influence. The

³ See end of section 2.5.

new two-year structure of the programme had been designed to encourage students, in their first year, to explore and develop their creativity by drawing on their own emotional and autobiographical resources – the part of the creative process Freiman (2004) had referred to as the ‘dream’ – and, in the second year, to recognise its socially situated aspect and to consider the relationship of their work to the work of other writers, to the genres and traditions of literature and to notions of contemporaneity and audience.

The Special Author study would require students to make a number of creative interventions into the work of a published writer of their choice in order to gain insights into style and technique. These creative interventions would entail some form of textual ‘fusing’, or ‘cutting through’ or ‘building out of’ a prose extract from the work of their selected author. For example, students might insert one of their own characters into the opening of a chapter by their selected author and working within the style and conventions of the text, adapt it to the personality of their character, or they might use a scene as a template, building their own characters into a pre-written scene, adapting their own writing to the pace and narrative architecture of the selected author’s text, or they might re-write one of their own scenes in the style of their selected author. There were no prescribed approaches and students were encouraged to develop their own forms of creative intervention. The only stipulation was that they worked closely and creatively with a pre-existing text. A further element of the course were case studies in literary ‘plagiarism’, in which students read and discussed examples of narratives that exhibited a clear relationship with a precursor text – one of the suggested case studies for the Special Author course focused on the accusations of plagiarism made against Katherine Mansfield⁴. The pedagogic intention here was that through practical work and discussion, students would be drawn into a closer relationship with the ideas, themes and prose styles of pre-existing texts and encouraged to explore the creative synergy between what has been written in the past and writing in the present. It is important to emphasise that this work was essentially practical in nature. It was emphatically

⁴ Elisabeth Schneider was one of the first to point out the obvious similarities between Chekhov’s ‘Sleepyhead’ and Katherine Mansfield’s ‘The Girl who was Tired’, first published in Mansfield’s collection of short stories ‘In a German Pension’. See Elisabeth Schneider, *Modern Languages Notes*, Vol 50. No 6, (June 1935) pp 364-397

not a transtextual exercise in the structures of narrative in the idiom of Genette's intertextual approach (1992), but an opportunity for writers to consider their own creativity in close proximity to the creativity of other writers. There were no theoretical texts prescribed though students were encouraged to write reflexively about the Special Author study in their writers' journals as part of the assessment for the course.

On the face of it the Special Author study provided an excellent, naturally arising context for the consideration of the nature and the role of influence and originality within creative writing. Students, through their proximity to the areas of the creative process that my research was focusing on would be sensitised to my research aims and research questions and importantly, because of the practice-based approach to the course, would not be being taught academic theory on influence and originality⁵. This meant that whilst they were encouraged to reflect on the process through their writer's journal, they were not being asked to consider it through a particular conceptual framework, but to consider and evaluate their relationship to these ideas in their own words and through their own experience. Of course, this didn't mean their observations were 'ideology free'. My reading of Bakhtin had reminded me of the extent to which all our attempts to explain human experience are mediated by ideology through the process of heteroglossia. But, what it did mean, and I felt this was important to my research, was that these ideological influences would be representative of a much wider cultural discourse around creativity than would be the case if they were prompted to respond to taught theory.

The case for the Special Author course as a field for qualitative study appeared to be very strong, but as I continued to consider its suitability, I became increasingly aware of further ideological issues that could affect the field of research. Dunne, Pryor and Yates (2005, p. 12) point out that social research needs to take into account, not only the immediate action and the personal involvement of the researcher in the research field, but also the wider

⁵ The Special Author study was essentially experiential learning and although it was framed within a wider pedagogical strategy of encouraging students in their second year to think in terms of the socially-situated nature of their work, there was no required reading of literary theory.

ideological contexts that radiate out from the locus of the research. Whilst I had given this some consideration in relation to the wider influence of culture on my potential research group, reading literature on qualitative research methodology was making me conscious of the ideological complexity of the Special Author as a field, especially in relation to ways in which the formal, institutional context of the university could affect my attitude and the perception of my students towards the aims of my research. I will discuss these issues in greater depth and the ways in which a consideration of them influenced the overall design and the methods employed in the research in later sections in this chapter.

4.2.3) Ontological and epistemological approaches to qualitative research

I was confident that the Special Author study would draw students into a fresh consideration of the role of influence and the nature of originality in the writing process and could potentially be a rich source of opinions and ideas I could analyse for emerging themes. I felt, epistemologically, that as they were being encouraged to consider these ideas from within their own writing process, their opinions and ideas were less likely to be influenced by their immediate context: their tutors and their peers. I knew it would be impossible to cut out all influence and that I needed to acknowledge this in my methodological approach, but I wanted to restrict immediate external influences as much as possible. On a phenomenological level, I wanted to focus on the students' own individual responses: to know how notions of influence and originality manifested themselves within the individual writing practice of each student who participated in the study, how they thought and felt about these experiences and how these considerations impacted on their notion of what it was to be a writer. I was hoping to draw inferences from these findings that would suggest essential functions or qualities of these ideas that I could use to guide my theoretical research.

During my research into conceptual frameworks in Chapter 2, I had begun to frame the debate around originality and influence within the relationship between romanticism and socially situated theory. Both of these approaches appeared to engage with notions of intentionality, agency and individual creativity. Although I was at that point in my research exploring the ontological

structures of a Bakhtinian, socially-situated approach, I felt I needed an analytic framework for the qualitative research that was capable of representing the more romantic attitudes towards influence and originality displayed by my writing students. I had only just begun a close examination of Bakhtin's work and was not confident I had sufficient critical understanding of it to use it as paradigm for my qualitative research. I was also conscious that the restructuring of the Certificate in Creative Writing had emphasised both 'the dream' and 'making the dream real'⁶ and wanted to find a paradigm for my research that could acknowledge both the notion of 'inspiration' and the notion of 'making' within the creative process.

I decided to use interpretive phenomenology (IPA) as a tool for analysis. As Smith and Osborn (2003) have pointed out, the aim of IPA is to explore the way in which research participants make sense of phenomena, events, experiences and states within their own personal and social world. The approach is phenomenological in that it does not seek to produce an objective statement or predictive conclusion but focuses on the phenomena under question as experienced within the 'life world' of the research participant. This meant that participants would be encouraged to express the full range of their physiological, emotional and intellectual responses to the phenomena in question and to make their responses in their own individual manner and style. The rationale behind this is, that in IPA, the researcher is attempting to get as close to the participants' actual experience as possible, to make a deeper and more interpretive analysis (Smith, Flower, & Larkin, 2009, p. 11).

This emphasis on the researcher making sense of the lived personal experience of the research participant, as has been pointed out by Barbour (2007), distinguishes IPA from descriptive analysis which has its roots in Husserlian phenomenology and associates it more closely with the more existential variant of phenomenology advocated by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. Both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty criticised Husserl's method of phenomenological reduction, a process by which the object of

⁶ See Freiman on Walter Benjamin in Section 2.1

phenomenological investigation is bracketed off from culture, background and history, through an act of will, in order to reveal its universal essence as it presents itself to consciousness. Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty argued that we can never bracket ourselves off from experience because we always see the world from our own subjective position and that therefore all we can do is offer an interpretation (Smith, Flower, & Larkin, 2009, pp. 16 - 19). Having introduced the hermeneutic turn into phenomenology, Heidegger focused in his work on the idea that consciousness itself is inseparable from our active participation in the world - our Being-in-the-world – whilst Merleau-Ponty argued that it is our actual embodiment that brings to us our experience of the world through the ‘a priori’ structure of our perceptual experience (1964, pp. 23-27).

The interpretive nature of IPA and its philosophical antecedents in the work of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty appeared to be a good ‘fit’ with the ontological framework I was developing through my reading of Bakhtin. The notion of the individual as an active agent who was both participating in and interpreting the world around them, resonated strongly with Bakhtin’s notion of the dialogic and the importance of context in shaping meaning in dialogue⁷. Although Bakhtin would have argued that there are phenomena in the natural world that are less subject to change than in the socio/cultural, he would have agreed with Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty that it is impossible to bracket off experience from its social and historical context and that, epistemologically therefore, knowledge is something that is negotiated through dialogue⁸. I was clear in my mind that this was the epistemological approach I would need to adopt in my qualitative research: that I would be entering into a dialogic relationship with my research field and the data I collected from it and that in this process I would be endeavouring to draw out common themes I could use to put together a convincing account of the phenomena I was trying to describe.

4.2.4) Reflexivity

Pursuing this approach, as opposed to one based on a more positivistic paradigm, as Mason (1996, p 177) points out, would require an

⁷ See section 2.4 for an explanation of Bakhtin’s theory of the dialogic.

⁸ See the discussion of Bakhtin’s notion of polyphonic truth in section 3.4.

acknowledgement of the complicated relationship of the researcher to the research field, along with a commitment to constant reflexivity to ensure the study's findings were supported by an argument that was coherent, credible and conscious of the dialogic complexity of the research. As Dunne, Pryor and Yates have said:

... the researcher who abandons the comforts of positivism ... must recognize that the task of investigating the complexity of the social requires the development of rigorous and coherent frameworks (2005, p. 23).

Reflexivity is the mode of thinking that acknowledges the complexity of our attempts to understand social phenomena. Dunne, Pryor and Yates suggest that implicit in accepting the need for reflexivity is an acknowledgement that although we can construct knowledge about the world: knowledge does not objectively exist in it (as is suggested by positivist paradigms). The construction of knowledge therefore becomes a negotiation within our own subjectivity (our prior understandings of a topic) and between external subjectivities (represented by other people's opinions and institutional, social and cultural ideology) (ibid. p, 22). This is very similar to Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia within the ongoing dialogic event. In social research this requires the researcher to acknowledge that there is not one answer or solution to a research question but that an effective understanding can only be reached through constant reflection on the inter-subjective nature of research.

Adopting IPA as a method of qualitative research and data analysis had further increased my awareness of the complexity of the interpretive process. Not only did I, as a researcher, need to be aware of the contextual and ideological factors influencing the research, but also, as Smith and Osborn (2003) have pointed out, working with research participants required a 'double hermeneutic' (two levels of interpretation) as the researcher is trying to make sense, through the collected data, of the way the participants are trying to make sense of the phenomena being considered. As Braun and Clarke (2006) have shown, the IPA researcher plays an active role in the research and without this interpretive

activity on the second level of the hermeneutic much of the rich material in the data may not be fully recoverable.

Researching methodological and paradigmatic approaches to research had made me aware of the importance of reflexivity in my research, especially in relation to my interpretation of the responses to the questions I was hoping to draw from the research group. I needed to be aware of the way my own pre-formulated ideas influenced my interpretation of their responses and I also needed to consider the influences that might have affected them whilst they were answering my questions. This second level of the hermeneutic posed a considerable challenge, although I felt that outside the possible cultural influences I had already considered⁹, my particular relationship to the research field as a practising writer, who was also grappling with the same problems, would aid my understanding of the way they were considering these problems within their own writing practice.

I was conscious that the problem of reflexivity needed to be considered not only on a theoretical level, but also on a practical one. I needed to sensitise myself to the notion of reflexivity, to understand it as a working process and to consider the best ways of utilising it within my research. Gadamer talks about the need for researchers to be open and conscious of their own bias and to hold it aside in order to allow the text to present its own 'truth':

This openness always includes our situating the other meaning in relation to the whole of our own meanings or ourselves in relation to it... This kind of sensitivity involves neither "neutrality" with respect to content nor the extinction of one's self, but the foregrounding and appropriation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings (1975, pp.268-269).

All IPA researchers agree that subjectivity is inevitable, that without being a subject in an inter-subjective field, the kind of data available through IPA would be unavailable:

⁹ See section 2.2

Nothing can be accomplished without subjectivity, so its elimination is not the solution. Rather how the subject is present is what matters, and objectivity itself is an achievement of subjectivity (Giorgi, 1994, p.205).

I was very conscious of Giorgi's words as I was preparing and planning my qualitative research. They resonated strongly with my reading of Bakhtin and I focused on the phrase 'how the subject is present is what matters' as a way of considering how I could develop and practice reflexivity within my research. I began to build up a short section of notes on what Finlay (2008) and others have more recently described as the 'phenomenological attitude'. In these notes I wrote down a list of inter-subjective skills I would need to develop to generate a more reflexive awareness within the research process. I came up with a list that included critical self-awareness, acknowledging influence, transparency, open attitude and disciplined naiveté.

Many of these phrases suggested that far from trying to deny influence or bias, what a researcher needed to do was to recognise it and to see the relationship with the research group as a reciprocal one, a dialogic environment, where although the voices were not necessarily 'live', the data was challenging the researcher's assumptions in the process of analysis. This position is supported by Halling et al. (2006) who argue that researchers need to come to an awareness of their existing beliefs and that within the research process, they need to examine them and question them in the light of new evidence. Wertz (2005) is also helpful here in highlighting how shifting from a 1st person relationship with the data in thinking and interacting with it on the page to a 3rd person relationship in writing it up and considering it, can create reflexive distance that can enable fresh ideas.

4.2.5) Insider Research

A further factor that concerned me - directly related to notions of bias, influence and reflexivity - was that I was working professionally inside the field of research. Furthermore, in advocating the particular structure of the second year of the programme, I had invested a certain amount of my own credibility in it.

Reflecting on the nature of my relationship to the research and to the research field, I became increasingly aware of the tensions between my role as a convenor of the programme and as a researcher.

As a convenor and tutor on the Certificate in Creative Writing I was responsible for quality assurance and assessment. This meant that if students had a complaint to make about their experience on the programme, I would be directly involved in resolving the issue. In my capacity as an assessment coordinator I was responsible for assuring appropriate standards of marking across the different seminar groups and for making the case in Exam Board meetings for borderline students and for issues around individual progression on the programme. I also wrote references for students who were hoping to progress beyond the programme into other areas of HE. These were roles I took seriously and to which I dedicated a large amount of professional integrity, but nonetheless they were also roles that I had grown accustomed to. I had worked hard to develop an informal and open relationship with my students but in so doing, I realised, I was no longer fully aware of the way I was perceived by students in my role as the convenor of the programme and as a representative of the institution I worked for. I was, whether I liked it or not, an authority figure, representing the university as an institution, and in a position of power both within the immediate context of the programme and in the subject I taught. I needed to acknowledge, as Usher has suggested:

... the place of power, discourse and text, that which in a sense goes 'beyond' the personal (1996, p.35).

Given my particular position in relation to my field of research my judgments were likely to be affected by both my personal involvement and my professional and intellectual predispositions, whilst my understanding of the way students responded to the research was complicated by their perception of me. I was in a position in which I could easily influence participant response, not only through communication and interaction with students during the research phase but also as a representative of an institutional programme of assessment.

Through my work on reflexivity, I was aware that a consideration of influence would be a necessary part of the study. The question for me was how far did I allow this influence to become part of the study and at what point would it begin to seriously affect participant response. It was possible students could see the research as an evaluation of the new courses on the certificate, or that they would feel they were being personally assessed in some way, or, because they were working in such close proximity to other writers' work, they would see the research as a covert investigation into plagiarism. I wanted to avoid imposing institutional influence on the research group as much as I could and was anxious that students would misinterpret the motivations for the research study and that this could adversely affect both take-up and response.

Blaikie has pointed out that interpretivists are interested in the perceptions of people; of seeing the phenomena from the 'insider view', as opposed to imposing an 'outsider view' (2000, p. 115). I wanted to reduce outsider views and institutional influence as much as possible in order to best access the individual meanings that students gave to the phenomena my research was focusing on. Given the potential for me to influence the research group with 'outsider views', I realised I needed to give serious consideration to the way I interacted and communicated with students during the research period. I was conscious that in locating myself pedagogically within socially situated theories of creative writing I was opening myself up to particular ideological interpretations of the research and its outcomes. I was also conscious that I was looking to recruit a set of research participants whose knowledge of the theoretical debate was, on the whole, less developed than mine. This in itself created great scope for influencing participant response. I would need to acknowledge these factors and hold them in mind whilst formulating the research and interpreting the data, otherwise my own preoccupations and preconceptions would affect my ability to be reflexive and self-critical. There remained a further issue of ownership in my professional responsibility for the Special Author course and personal investment in the success of the programme and I was aware of the importance of not being distracted from my research aims into a valorisation of the course and the particular teaching strategies used in it.

Taking all these things into consideration, particularly the tensions between what I was attempting to do as an interpretivist researcher and my role as convenor, tutor and representative of the academic institution in which the research was taking place, the extent to which I could potentially influence participant response needed to be carefully considered in my research design. In this particular context the traditional relationship between researcher and participants had become problematic. Usually, the researcher is the outsider who exists temporarily within the field of research, which belongs to the participants. Here, it could be argued, the participants were passing through the field of research, which belonged to the researcher, or on a more social and ideological level, the institution that the researcher represented. Ownership, power and authority were clearly factors that would complicate the methodological approach I took within the research. To reduce the significant potential of influence either from myself or from the participants' perception of themselves as needing to conform to expectations within an institutional setting required a research design that would distance them from the institutional context and my role in it.

4.2.6) Research Design

I had initially considered carrying out the research through interviews or through an Action Learning Set but had been concerned that these methods would have made it difficult for students, most of who were working full-time, had busy family lives and were attending the university in the evenings, to find time to contribute to the research. I was also concerned that if I was to develop either of these options, as I had no training in facilitating Action Learning Sets or conducting interviews, the qualitative research aspect of my overall research would require more time and textual space than I had planned. Besides these pragmatic considerations there were other more important factors. If I were to conduct interviews it would be potentially with students I was teaching, in my capacity as the programme convenor, about an area of knowledge that they would assume I had greater knowledge of than they had. The possibility of them showing deference, of seeking to give the responses they felt were required, or of being inhibited by the formal context of these methods, I felt, was high. Given that my aim in adopting IPA in the qualitative research had been to

create a context in which the research participants could articulate their own personal and individual understanding of the nature of influence and originality in a situation that was as free from interpersonal, ideological or conceptual influence as possible, I decided that in the particular context of my research, interviews or Action Learning Sets were not the most appropriate methods to apply.

After further consideration, having discounted these two approaches, I decided to use postal questionnaires with open questions as my method of data collection. In this way, through utilising the naturally arising focus of the Special Author study to sensitise participants to issues of influence and originality in the creative process, I could generate the tightly focused research I had planned for my overall study. I was aware that interpretivist approaches tended to be associated with interviews and more immersive techniques of data collection and that questionnaires were often associated with quantitative methodologies and was concerned my approach would be considered unorthodox, but I was re-assured when I read in Mason that textually based methods could be used in interpretivist methodologies, as long as the researcher's aims remained focused on the task of ascertaining how people constituted individual or collective meanings (2002, p. 56). The notion of textually based methods, I reasoned, although it appeared primarily to be referring to pre-existing print based texts, could also be applied to texts created within the field of research.

In line with my decision to reduce the level of influence my position and role within the programme might have on participants in the research group, I decided to withdraw from teaching on the new second-year of the programme. This meant that although students knew me as a programme convenor, none of them would have worked with me in the past or would have been taught by me during the duration of the research project. I realised also that the creative writing tutors teaching the Special Author groups would be in a position to influence the way students engaged with the research. I didn't want tutors with an allegiance to the course or to myself to encourage students to respond positively to the research or to discuss my research aims with them. To reduce the extent to which this was likely to happen I decided not to give prior

information about the research to tutors or to ask them to 'flag it up' to students. I was aware that influence could not be cut out altogether and that tutors or the students themselves might instigate discussions around the themes and ideas I was asking the participants to focus on, but I wanted to ensure that these discussions were as naturally arising as possible and were not seen as part of a planned and imposed research agenda.

Whilst I was satisfied that using questionnaires was compatible with my research aims, I was conscious that there were also shortcomings with this method. Limiting the intersubjectivity of the researcher/participant relationship, as Dunne, Pryor and Yates have suggested (2005, p. 46) means the researcher cannot observe non-verbal cues from the participant and alter questions to clarify misunderstandings or pursue interesting responses. This weakening of the potential for dialogic interaction can lead to a diminution in the richness of the data, though interestingly, as Denscombe has pointed out (1998, p.220), the 'thick descriptions' that can be achieved through qualitative interviewing methods, although they reveal the complexities of an individual's relationship with a particular set of ideas or issues within a social context, can by their very complexity make it more difficult to generalise and develop common themes from the findings (ibid, p.221). Mason appears to support this argument in her discussion of ways in which data can be turned into evidence to support the findings of a qualitative research project. In her discussion of the broad concepts of generalisability and reliability, she states:

Generalizability involves the extent to which you can make some form of wider claim on the basis of your research and analysis, rather than simply stating that your analysis is entirely idiosyncratic and particular (Mason, 2002, p. 39).

Given that I was hoping to discover generalisable themes and patterns in the responses to my research questionnaires that I could use in further considering the role of influence and originality in the writing process and that I saw these findings as contributing to the development of a conceptual framework for the teaching of creative writing, I felt justified in developing a method that didn't sit within a more conventional qualitative approach. Furthermore, the current

methodology did not deny me the possibility of future research, either in the same institution or on parallel programmes in HE, using either questionnaires or interviews, to test the validity of my findings in an educational context. I could also use it as a basis for further research into influence and originality using in-depth interviews with established and published writers that would allow me to pursue my research topic outside of an educational and pedagogic context.

There remained the issue of adequately justifying my methodology and my findings. Given the particular nature of my research and that I was using a method of data collection that was often associated with quantitative research, I felt it was important in the methodology section to discuss the criteria that I would be using to support the epistemological legitimacy of my research.

The importance of reflexivity to this research has already been highlighted in the consideration of my dual roles of both researcher and convenor within the research group and my determination to reduce the amount of influence that could be brought to bear within the social sphere of the research, by distancing myself, through my chosen method of data collection from situations where my role as convenor could influence the answers given to questions asked in the research. Despite my adopting this particular methodological position, I am conscious, as Dunne, Pryor and Young (2005, pp. 22-24) point out that all research activity is invasive and that all attempts to claim knowledge from social research must accept its negotiated, value-laden and interactive nature. As Bakhtin makes clear, all claims to social knowledge are posited: they are constituted out of active, on-going participation in heteroglossia, but as he also points out, this does not deny their shared, temporal, socially-constituted legitimacy¹⁰. As a researcher therefore, as Denscombe points out, the analysis of qualitative data, if it is to make claims to producing socially useful knowledge, calls for a reflexive account by the researcher of the researcher's impact on the research, in both its design and analysis (2000, p. 240).

¹⁰ See section 3.4

As Mason (2007, p. 187) points out, conventional measures of validity, generalisability and reliability derived from scientific methodologies where standardised sets of measurements are applied are inconsistent with qualitative research approaches that acknowledge the dialogic nature of the research process. As Dunne, Prior and Yates argue (2005, p. 21) this does not legitimise a relativistic approach in qualitative methodology because our understanding of ourselves and our activities as social agents - so clearly expressed in Bakhtin – is derived from, within and through our social interaction. Qualitative research, even though it does not have recourse to the 'objective' methods of scientific methodologies still needs to find ways of justifying its methods and conclusions. Denscombe (2000, pp. 212 -213) discusses the problem of reliability and replicability and argues that in qualitative research, because of the unrepeatable particularity of the research field, the criteria of reliability needs to be replaced by:

- 1) An explicit account of the aims of the research and its basic premises; a clear explanation of how the research was undertaken and the reasoning behind key decisions made during the research.

In terms of the notion of validity, Denscombe offers a number of ways in which checks can be made. Particularly germane to my research is the need to make sure that conclusions are:

- 2) Internally consistent and do justice to the complexity of the phenomena under investigation; the recognition of the influence of the researcher on the research; the appropriateness of the selection of the research group and the method of data collection to the aims of the research and the extent to which the findings and conclusions are considered in relation to existing arguments in the area.

Yardley (2000, pp 215 – 228) offers a similar taxonomy for ensuring the quality of qualitative research. She argues that a good qualitative research study should exhibit:

- 1) Sensitivity to context: the level of a researcher's sensitivity to the socio-cultural milieu in which the study is situated, to existing literature in the field and to the data collected.

- 2) Commitment and rigour: the degree of attentiveness to the position of the participant during data collection and analysis.
- 3) Transparency and coherence: the extent to which the report makes the thinking and decisions made during the research process accessible to its audience, the ethical and structural integrity of the argument and the level of hermeneutic sensibility displayed.
- 4) Impact and importance: whether the conclusions offer the reader something interesting, important or useful.

There is clearly a significant overlap in these two sets of criteria. I intend to use them as a guide in planning and writing up my research to ensure the right level of reflexivity, coherence and rigour in my methodological approach in this chapter and the analysis and findings in the next.

4.2.7) Research Methods

I was planning to draw my research participants from part-time adult education students on the second year of the Certificate in Creative Writing. This programme was offered within the adult education department in the HE institution where I worked. The programme was taught at first and second year undergraduate level, with students submitting work for assessment at the end of each term. There were four different seminar groups, two that ran in the evening and two in the morning. All four groups were focused on prose writing, with students writing novels, short stories and autobiographies. The profile for this particular community was varied and the age range extended from students in their early twenties to the mid-seventies. A large proportion of students in the evening classes were employed and it was in these groups that we had the largest percentage of men. The morning groups had a large proportion of women, either young mothers, women who had free time now their children were older, and women who had retired. The ratio of women to men was about 7:1. The motivations and abilities of the student groups were varied: a number of older students were interested in writing as a leisure activity, whilst some of the younger writers, especially in the evening groups were ambitious and keen to get work published. Despite the mix of ages and backgrounds the groups were coherent, supportive and committed to their writing.

Dunne, Pryor and Yates, in their consideration of interviews and questionnaires as research methods emphasise the point that although most manuals on research (including theirs) identify interviews with qualitative research and questionnaires with quantitative research approaches, this is a misleading and unhelpful distinction. They point out that 'it is possible to conduct an interview with an oral questionnaire' and that as research methods interviews are not exclusively qualitative, nor are questionnaires exclusively quantitative (2005, p. 41). Furthermore, there are other important factors that a researcher needs to consider that can affect the choice of research method, including the researcher's concept of the social, their relationship to the research community and the way the data is to be utilised in the research report (ibid, p. 51). Smith, Flowers and Larkin have also suggested that in IPA research postal questionnaires can share many of the advantages of interviewing (2009, p. 57). Given these considerations and given the particular conditions of my research that I have already laid out, I felt reassured and supported in my decision to use questionnaires in my research.

I decided I would use a two-stage postal questionnaire that would be built up entirely around open questions. It was important to use 'open' questions as opposed to the 'closed' or 'structured' questions more typically associated with questionnaires because as Denscombe points out 'the information gathered by way of the responses is more likely to reflect the full richness and complexity of the views held by the respondent' (2000, p. 101). I felt this approach had clear parallels with an oral questionnaire (provided that follow-up questions weren't seen as part of this process) and that given that the students were already sensitised to the topic through their Special Author study, it would allow them time to consider their responses whilst reducing the influence that my presence in an interview situation might have on their answers to the questions. They would receive one questionnaire just after the Special Author course had begun and a second after the course had ended. This would allow them to revisit and reconsider their initial responses at the beginning of the course, to see how their thinking had developed over the period between the two questionnaires. This, I felt, would make participation in the research group more useful and more of an attractive proposition to research participants. The questionnaire

would be the least intrusive form for collecting data as students would be able to fill it in individually in their own time and would be given a generous deadline for its return. The time for reflection that the questionnaire offered was designed to allow students to reflect and consider their responses to the questions that would form my data and in this sense accommodated itself well as a research method using IPA as a basis for research.

Further research into the use of questionnaires in research design in Denscombe (2000), Hill, Thompson and Williams (1997) and Munn and Drever (1999) confirmed that there were particular advantages in using them as a method of data collection in my research. In conclusion:

- 1) Participants would have plenty of time to consider and respond to the questions and they could do this within their own personal space outside of the context of the university.
- 2) They would be free to express their views – which could be positive or negative - without any interpersonal influence from an interviewer and would be able to refer to their writer's journals in this process.
- 3) The questionnaire would not need too lengthy an introduction or explanation as they would be familiar with the ideas they were being asked to respond to through their coursework.
- 4) Responding to the questionnaire could be seen as a way of developing their reflexivity around their coursework and so stimulate motivation amongst individual participants, whilst an assurance that they would not be identified in the research report and research findings would encourage students, especially those lacking in confidence, to be more open and honest in their responses.
- 5) The questionnaires could be collected, filled in and responded to without direct contact between the researcher and the participants.

After putting together the participating research group¹¹ I began to draw up an initial draft questionnaire designed to 'sensitise' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) the participants to the research aims and to gain a set of data that reflected their thoughts and feelings at the beginning of the course.

¹¹ See section 4.2.6 on Ethics and Insider Positioning

The challenge in drawing up the questionnaire, I realised, was one of finding a way of giving the participants the problems I had been grappling with in a standardised form in a way they could understand, relate to and respond to. After drawing up an extensive list of questions based on my initial research aims I decided that some of them would be more suitable for the second questionnaire and that I needed to think carefully about the relationship between the two questionnaires and about their function at the two points of research collection that I had identified. With this in mind I wrote a rationale for the first questionnaire.

I decided that questions should:

1. Promote participation and ownership by encouraging members of the research group to articulate their feelings about the close study of another writer on the Special Author course.
2. Invite participants to begin a definition of originality and influence that they could re-consider, broaden and deepen in the second questionnaire.
3. Encourage participants to begin to explore the conflicts and tensions between these two key terms in relationship to their own creative writing.

Having finished the rationale I set about writing an initial draft of the questionnaire. My intention was to replicate the interview approach in the questionnaire as much as possible. As Smith, Flowers and Larkin point out, 'most interviews move between sequences that are primarily narrative or descriptive, and those where the participant is more analytic or evaluative' (2009, p. 59). As the descriptive aspect had to a great extent already been provided for in the Special Author study and the initial letters of contact with the research group, this allowed me to focus more on the evaluative and analytic. Using both the rationale and my research questions as a focus, I adapted Mason's guide to planning and preparation for qualitative interviewing (2007, pp. 69 – 71). First, I sketched out an overall structure for the questionnaire using the rationale as a guide. The first three questions were designed to prompt more evaluative and personal responses, whilst the following questions were designed to problematise and prompt reflection on the nature of influence and originality. I edited and sequenced the questions, ensuring that although

the participants were being encouraged to reflect on the nature of the concepts they were being questioned about, they weren't being led towards a particular response to one of the final questions through its predication on answers to earlier ones (Denscombe, 2000, p. 100). I settled on seven open questions. Following the guidelines in Denscombe (*ibid*, pp, 98 – 99), I checked that the questions were not 'leading' questions, in that they were prompting the respondent to give answers that I might have been unconsciously anticipating in the questions. I then screened them for jargon, appropriate levels of abstraction, semantic differentials, presumption, leading questions, unintended ambiguity and clarity of meaning. In order for the last three questions not to invite 'yes' or 'no' answers it was necessary to turn them into two part questions that encouraged the participant to expand on their ideas in the response. Although, given the level of motivation I was anticipating in the respondents, I wasn't expecting negative responses; I felt it was important to cover all possibilities. The final set of questions for the first questionnaire is written below.

1. How do you feel about making such a close study of another writer on the Special Author course?
2. What do you hope to achieve through this study?
3. What do you think is the difference between being influenced by another writer and actually plagiarising their work?
4. We talk of writers as being 'original' or 'highly individual'. How would you define and differentiate these two terms?
5. Is it possible to be truly original? Please explain why you agree or disagree with this statement.
6. Are you ever anxious that your own work could become less original if you opened yourself up to being influenced by another writer? Please expand.
7. Do you think we learn to become writers by 're-writing' the work of writers that we greatly admire? Could this happen without us realising it?

I needed to pilot the questionnaire before sending it out. After considering piloting it on a first year group of students on the programme, I dismissed the idea as I knew the two different year groups met socially in the café in the

school and I didn't want my research group to have prior knowledge of the questionnaire. For the same reason I dismissed the idea of asking tutors who would be teaching second year groups to give me feedback on it. Although this meant that I did not formally pilot the questionnaires, I did ask teaching colleagues within the school who weren't teaching on the programme to read it and give me feedback on it. I also sent a copy to my supervisor for critical feedback. I made one or two small changes in the light of positive feedback and after having received the consent forms¹² from participants sent out Questionnaire One at the beginning of October.

I prepared a second questionnaire in December, using the same method as I had for the first questionnaire. This questionnaire asked them to reflect on the effect of the course on their development as writers and to give further consideration to issues of influence and originality in their work. The rationale for the second questionnaire was:

1. to identify any change in attitude or thinking to the questions posed in the first questionnaire
2. to encourage students to refer to evidence in their own creative writing when answering questions
3. to allow students the opportunity of developing their thinking about the relationship between influence and individuation in the writing process
4. to pose questions that may lead to new insights and ways of thinking about the relationship between influence and originality

After submitting the draft of this second questionnaire to my supervisor for critical review and asking a number of teaching colleagues to informally check it, Questionnaire Two was sent out to participants in February. The questions are listed below.

1. Do you feel more anxious or less anxious about the development of your own writing now that you have finished your Special Author study? Please describe and give some examples, if you can, of how you now feel about your work.

¹² See section 4.2.6 on Ethics and Insider Positioning

2. Has your writing style changed as a result of the work you've done for your Special Author study. If so, how?
3. Should a writer be aware of how their own work in progress relates to, or shares similarities with other stories? And why?
4. How do you use your knowledge of other texts (novels, short stories, plays etc) in your own writing practice?
5. What do you think originality is?
6. Has the work you have done for the Special Author project made you think again about the nature of originality?
7. What do you consider to be original about your own work and how do you intend to go about protecting and nurturing that originality?
8. What do you think is the effect on a developing writer of a) a lot of exposure to the work of other writers, and b) a little?

I was confident that these questionnaires had been carefully conceived and thoroughly checked at the time, though when I look back at them in retrospect, although I'm still convinced they were well constructed, I'm conscious of the difficulty of putting together questions that are not in some way 'leading'. All language and speech, in a Bakhtinian, dialogic sense, anticipates its response in its utterance. Particular questions; question seven in questionnaire two, for example could arguably be leading in the sense that it uses two connotative verbs 'protecting' and 'nurturing' to describe a relationship to originality. This reinforces the argument that all language at some level attempts to affect the position of the 'other' and underlines the importance and need for reflexivity at all levels in the research process. I might, if I had given proper consideration to it, found a better way of piloting the questionnaires than asking teaching colleagues who were already well disposed towards me, to read through them. Although I remain convinced it is ultimately impossible to ask value-free questions, this might have identified any unconscious attempts to influence participant response on my part.

4.2.8) Ethics

Although ethical considerations were implicit in my decisions to use particular research methods to limit the amount of institutional influence on the research group (discussed in the previous sections on reflexivity and insider positioning), my ethical responsibility towards participants - a double duty of care given my dual role of both researcher and convenor - requires me to be more explicit about this process and to explain how I maintained ethical practice throughout the research period.

Denscombe identifies three questions that can be used as a guideline to ongoing ethical evaluation of research:

- 1) Can I avoid any deception or misrepresentation in my dealings with the research subjects?
- 2) Will the identities and the interests of those involved be protected?
- 3) Can I guarantee the confidentiality of the information given to me during the research? (2000, p. 5)

Mason points out that confidentiality is a complex issue as once the research has been published or made available to the public, confidentiality can, in some cases not be assured (2007, pp. 201 – 202). A possible solution to this problem would be to acknowledge that confidentiality is something that the researcher needs to guarantee 'during the period of the research'. Smith, Flowers and Larkin discuss responsibility in terms of avoidance of 'harm'; the notion of 'harm' being extended to cover the psychological sensitivity of the information that the researcher is asking the participant to reveal. They also extend this notion of harm, beyond Denscombe's identification of deception, to cover exploitation and 'putting undue pressure on participants' (2009, p. 53). These are both useful reflections on Denscombe's guidelines.

In my own research, key ethical considerations were that I didn't deceive, misrepresent or put undue pressure on research participants. These ethical considerations, for the reasons already given, directly affected my decisions to withdraw from teaching on the Special Author course during the period of

research and to conduct the research through questionnaires as opposed to interviews.

Part of my ethical responsibility was to ensure that students could make an informed judgment before deciding to participate in the research and that in this process and at all other times during the research they were not being pressurised to conform to the underlying values and pedagogical approaches of the course. I have already identified the lengths to which I went to ensure the research topic was closely associated with the students' own writing practice and to remove as many of the external institutional, conceptual and pedagogic pressures as I could and I'm confident that this important ethical issue has been effectively addressed in my methodology. Whether it has still had some effect on the findings is virtually impossible to say, as there will always be external influences on the participants that the researcher cannot detect, though I would argue that through my particular methodological approach with its emphasis on reflexivity, these external influences have been taken into consideration or kept to a minimum and should not significantly effect the trustworthiness of the research findings.

In order to ensure that potential research participants were properly informed as to the nature of the research I contacted all 53 of the second year students from the five cohorts of the programme with an invitation to participate. I had opted for a self-selecting research group as I felt this would be the least intrusive and least engineered option. After having satisfied myself that I had read sufficient theoretical literature on ethics in qualitative research, I checked the Economic and Social Research Councils, Ethics Guide Book¹³ and took note of their guidelines for research. Having checked the research ethics guidelines for the university I was teaching in and established that I would not need to put in a submission for ethical review, I sent out an open letter of invitation that I had carefully screened to ensure there were no references to my conceptual frameworks or core beliefs in any description of the research. This letter, following the ESRC guidelines:

¹³ www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk

- 1) Informed students about the methods and the topic of the research.
- 2) Emphasised the fact that in agreeing to participate they would not be penalised or assessed in any way.
- 3) Reassured them that their confidentiality and anonymity would be respected and made it clear that they could opt out of the research group at any time without needing to give a reason or justify their withdrawal.
- 4) Identified the value of participating in the research and that the aim of the research was to gain a greater insight into teaching practices that would benefit students in the future.
- 5) Explained that the research would contribute to doctoral research and that it wasn't commissioned by an outside body.

If students were interested in participating they were asked to tear off and sign a slip at the bottom the letter and return it in an envelope provided. I received fourteen positive responses and wrote to all the respondents thanking them for agreeing to participate in the research, emphasising that the research was interested in their own reflections on their own writing practice, explaining the function of the consent form in clarifying that participants have a clear understanding of issues of confidentiality and their rights within the research and attaching a consent form. In the consent form I reiterated that students were free to withdraw at any time and that I would be the only person who would be processing their responses to the questionnaires.

There was a wide age range within the group, which is typical of a cross-section of adult education students. Two of the participants were teaching in Higher Education and a number of them had already gained degrees. They were all motivated by the desire to write and most of them were working on novels or collections of short stories they were hoping to get published. Two of the students were working on autobiographies. I had not taught any of the students in the research group, though I had been in contact with them in my capacity as programme convenor. I made it clear to the group that I was available if they felt they needed or wanted to discuss any aspect of the study but I didn't make any formal arrangements to meet them on a one-to-one basis.

Having spent some time considering my ethical responsibility to the research group there remained one final ethical issue that needed to be addressed and that was my own motivation to carry out the research and the potential impact it could have on both the research process and my interpretation of its findings. Mason points out that 'qualitative research should be conducted as a *moral practice*, and with regard to its political context' (2007. p, 8). Expanding on the idea of moral practice, she argues that part of the ethical approach to research must include a consideration of the researcher's own moral and ethical motivation. This was a difficult but engaging question. My personal motivation had initially been to solve a problem, which on consideration had become not just a pedagogic issue, but also a philosophical one. It was not an attempt to establish myself in an academic career. As a writer and a teacher of creative writing I had no real desire to become an academic. Neither was it an opportunity to validate the development of the two-year course structure on the programme. It had crossed my mind at one point that this might have been an unconscious motivation in choosing the Special Author as a field of research, but I had realised that the success or failure of the Special Author as a course design was separate to my research and would be decided by qualitative reviews within my department of student satisfaction over a much wider time frame. I felt clear in my own mind that I was using the opportunity to research to develop a greater understanding of the creative process so that I could teach it more effectively and contribute in some way to debates around the teaching of creative writing in HE. This located me within my research in an interesting way. I was attempting to develop a conceptual framework that brought together both theory and practice and for me, particularly at the stage where I was working on the qualitative research, this was still an evolving and fluid process. I wasn't attempting to test or prove the value of a particular paradigm in my research, but to use the findings from my research to find ways of bridging the gap between theory and practice. This relative neutrality, I felt, made it less likely that I would be tempted, either consciously or unconsciously, to distort the data to fit a particular paradigmatic approach.

4.2.9) Methods of data analysis

When I turned to the task of analysing the data, I realised that as I had no prior experience of using IPA as a method of qualitative analysis, I would need to establish a clear set of guidelines to take me through this process. I was conscious that this stage of the research would demand sustained and reflexive thinking and although I could rely on the support of my supervisor, the central decisions would be mine. I decided therefore to follow the guidelines for first time qualitative researchers in Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, pp. 79 – 117) and was reassured by their insistence that analysis needed to be tailored to methodology and that researchers should be encouraged to be innovative in their approach. I knew that I would need to adapt the interview based approach of IPA to my particular methodology and that a case study approach would not be appropriate to a data gathering process which, for the ethical and methodological reasons already given, had been based on questionnaires. Although I would not have access to the data available through direct interaction with the participants, after researching modes of analysis in IPA I was confident that I could adapt this analytical framework to my purposes.

IPA, working with a group of fourteen participants, appeared to be a good mode of analysis for the type and quality of the data I had collected. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) suggest a sample size of six participants (based on an interview method) would be sufficient for a good IPA study (*ibid*), whilst Malim, Birch and Wadely (1992) warn against the dangers inherent in too small a research group, as the amount of rich material generated can make it difficult to draw out themes from impressionistic and subjective responses. Reid, Flowers and Larkin (2005) have pointed out that commonalities across participant responses can be helpful in developing themes that may have wider implications than had been written into an original set of research aims. Working with fourteen participants, given the sharp focus of the topics that were being researched through the questionnaires, I reasoned, could offer plenty of scope for the exploration of emerging themes.

Below, are the stages I followed in my analysis, adapting the IPA guidelines I have already mentioned in Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009):

1) Phase 1: Reading and re-reading

In this initial phase I put each individual participant's two questionnaires together, typed them up, took their names off and identified each one alphabetically using the first fourteen letters of the alphabet. The reason for this was that as I was exploring, primarily, a set of opinions and ideas around a particular topic and not a psychological narrative in relation to a life event, I didn't want to get distracted in the process into an over-consideration of the latter. My main focus on the second level of the hermeneutic were the social and cultural ideological influences on the participants, though I was aware this was not something that could or should be contained or bracketed off from individual psychology altogether. On a more practical level it offered a high degree of anonymity to each participant.

The main aim of the first reading, in line with my adopted guidelines, was to familiarise myself with an individual response to the questionnaires and to absorb their content. On the first reading I didn't make any notes, but in subsequent readings as I began to develop a sense of the character and the overall structure of a response, I began to make a few notes, reflecting on emotional tone, levels of articulation in language, idiosyncratic and repeated words and phrases and levels of confidence in discussing the topics. In this sense these initial readings became a process of familiarising myself in a general sense with the individual character and attitude of a participant. I suppressed any desire to make judgments in this process as I felt this might have distanced me from the potential complexity of the material.

2) Phase 2: Initial Noting

Once I felt familiar with a set of responses I began the process of identifying what I felt were the key areas of concern for each individual. Smith, Flowers and Larkin suggest breaking down this phase of analysis into:

- a) Descriptive comments: in which the analyst describes the structure and tone of the participant's thoughts.
- b) Linguistic comments: in which the analyst considers the implications of the language used by the participant.

c) Conceptual comments: in which the analyst begins to focus on the participant's understanding of the topics they are discussing.

On close consideration of the notes I had made in phase 1, I came to the conclusion that I had already made a large number of descriptive comments and focused in phase 2 on a linguistic and conceptual reading of individual responses. This immediately began to present me with interesting and unanticipated avenues of enquiry.

Smith, Flowers and Larkin (ibid, p. 88) identify metaphor¹⁴ in language as a powerful mechanism for analysis and Brocki and Wearden (2006) argue that a deeper and richer reading of data can result from a more interpretive approach of going beyond the 'standard thematic analysis' to explore aspects of language such as quotation and metaphor in responses from participants. Studying and categorising the metaphors used became an important element in my analysis, allowing me to move between linguistic and descriptive levels through to a broader conceptual understanding of individual responses and on to an identification of emerging themes in the cross sectional analysis of all participant responses.

My conceptual analysis, grounded in my familiarity with individual participant responses, generated an emerging insight into the way participants understood the nature of influence and originality within the writing process. I began to ask critical questions of the data and discovered that their understanding of these ideas was not as coherent as I had anticipated, with comparisons of individual participants' responses to different questions in the questionnaires revealing contradictions, conflicts and tensions within their thinking. I also become increasingly aware of the changes in their thinking between the two questionnaires. Smith, Flowers and Larkin emphasise that at this stage the analyst is still trying to make sense of the way the participant is making sense of

¹⁴ There is an interesting link here between my developing interest in metaphor, sparked by my identification of it in the qualitative analysis and my eventual development of a conceptual framework that draws together Bakhtinian socially-situated theory with the more contemporary philosophy of embodied realism, though at this point in my research I had not as yet encountered the work of Lakoff and Johnson and other embodied realist philosophers.

the topic under consideration and that conceptual interpretations of data often draw on the analyst's experiential and professional knowledge (ibid, p. 89). I have mentioned already that I felt my knowledge of the topics and my own writing practice would help me to understand participant responses but I hadn't realised what it would also offer in the process of analysis. As a writer I was familiar with the use and the function of metaphor in fiction and was familiar with the process of constructing metaphor, which through description of character and through character dialogue, revealed further and hidden aspects of character. I was also familiar with a process of characterisation called the 'fallible narrator' in which a fictional character, through their narration reveals more of themselves to their audience, through unintentional disclosure, than they had intended. There appear to be clear parallels here. Both are dealing with subjectivity. In fiction as a writer you are actually creating a subjective position. Interestingly in my qualitative analysis I appeared to be reversing this process in order to analyse the subjectivity of participant response.

3) Phase 3: Developing emergent themes

In this stage of analysis I began to move away from my transcripts of the questionnaires to a more considered study of the notes I had developed during the analysis. For each individual response I began to note connections, patterns and themes within the responses. These fell initially into two dominant categories around notions of influence and originality and within these overall categories I began to cluster notes around particular nodes, for example 'Metaphor', 'Originality as personal experience' etc. Smith, Flowers and Larkin have characterised this particular stage as one in which there is a shift from the subjectivity of the participant to that of the analyst and that whilst the analysis is still grounded in the participant response, the process becomes more of a collaborative effort (ibid. p, 92). I took great care in this part of the process to allow the emerging themes to develop out of my understanding of participant response and not to impose my own theoretical formulations on the findings.

Phase 4) Cross sectional analysis of themes and analyst constructed typologies:

In phase 4, having worked through each individual response, I began to map connections across the responses, identifying groupings around particular nodes, checking their consistency across the responses, refining and occasionally re-defining categories, identifying convergence and divergence between individual responses and at different levels within categories. For example, responses may appear to differ on an idiosyncratic level but then converge on a higher level within a category (ibid. p, 101). This was a long process I returned to a number of times, reviewing the decisions I had made around categories until I felt able to distil them into a final analyst-constructed typology that most succinctly represented the key themes that had emerged across the individual responses.

Chapter 5. Findings from Qualitative Research

5.1) Cross-Sectional Analysis of Key Themes

There are a number of strands that can be drawn on from my data analysis that can be woven into common themes across the broader spectrum of responses. Some of these, like the findings on originality and influence, form complex patterns that require further teasing out in order to focus on different aspects of a particular theme. As my relationship with the data has developed I have been struck by the way a number of initially tentative insights have broadened out into deeper seams within the material itself. I have become more conscious of the data offered by linguistic tropes; especially the role of metaphor, analogy and image in conveying the connotative responses of members of the research group to issues thrown up by questions in the questionnaires and of providing them with a way of describing, through their own felt process of writing, concepts and ideas that have already been captured by theory. I have also become more acutely aware of the social context within which these responses are situated.

When I began this research I was conscious of the institutional context in which it was taking place and took great care to free respondents, as far as I could, from any bias towards the programme or the institution that I felt might act as a constraint. I hadn't given a lot of conscious thought - or maybe it was just that I hadn't felt it - to the degree to which the respondents would be struggling to frame within, or articulate their arguments and ideas in opposition to, strong social narratives that can themselves constitute an epistemological base to thinking within shared culture and language. This became more and more apparent as my familiarity with the data increased.

Finally, I was struck, thinking outside the immediate social context and taking a more historical perspective, by the way the notion of time affects our reading of the phenomena at the heart of this research study. I don't mean time in a strict chronological sense: I mean time in terms of flow and process. Many of the responses appeared conscious, on one level, of the processual nature of creative writing; a sense that things are never quite what they are because they

are always changing. This acknowledgement of the flow of time, which seems in many ways fundamental to a proper understanding of process, makes it very difficult for writers to establish a point or make an argument against theoretical formulations and systems of thought, that by their very nature, ignore it.

My findings from the analysis of the research data fall roughly into three separate areas: originality, influence and social/historical context. I will deal with each of these in turn and consider one or two participant responses in more detail before offering a thematic summary of the research findings.

5.2) Research Group Responses to Questions on the Nature of Originality in the Writing Process

By far the most diverse set of responses within the key areas of research for this project came up around the notion of originality. Nearly all the participants offered different responses to the two sets of stimulus questions on the two questionnaires. There was a marked difference in the definitions and responses given to the questions about originality in the First Questionnaire to the answers given in the Second Questionnaire. In the First Questionnaire respondents were not initially encouraged to define originality in terms of their own work and the set of stimulus questions prompted them to consider what was original in the work of other writers (q4/Q1 and q5/Q1). In the Second Questionnaire they were given an opportunity to define originality and to reflect on it in relation to their own writing. The difference in the responses may to some extent be due to the fact that they had been prompted to think about the notion of originality in the First Questionnaire and would have had time to refine and re-consider their initial thoughts. Another factor that may have affected this diversity of response is that the Second Questionnaire was filled in after they had finished the Special Author course, had made creative interventions into the work of another writer, reflected individually on this process and discussed it amongst themselves.

Taken as a whole, the diversity of responses to the notion of originality displayed in these findings would suggest that, within this group of participating writers at least, certain aspects of the term are contested and that the meaning of the word, as it is currently used, may not be as fixed as we tend to assume.

5.2.1 The first questionnaire: responses to questions on originality

In the First Questionnaire participants were given a set of stimulus questions designed to complicate the notion of originality and to prompt reflection on its possible meaning. They were also asked to consider it in relation to influence:

q4) We talk about writers as being 'original' or 'highly individual'. How would you define and differentiate these two terms?

q5) Is it possible to be truly original? Please explain why you agree or disagree with this statement.

q6) Are you ever anxious that your own work could become less original if you opened yourself up to being influenced by another writer? Please expand.

In response to the request (q4/Q1) to define and differentiate the two terms 'original' and 'highly individual', the majority of respondents chose to define 'original' in terms of newness or significant difference: 'Original' - a new idea or way of writing' (Dq4/Q1): 'one whose writing you consider to be new' (Fq4/Q1): 'Original implies a completely new way of writing or interpreting either in terms of style or subject matter.' (Hq4/Q1): 'Original' - sounds like 'new', 'ground-breaking' (Lq4/Q1).

It is interesting to note the definitions supplied from the Oxford English Dictionary by Person J: 'O.E.D: **Original**: created directly and personally by a particular writer, not an imitation. Inventive and unusual. **Individual**: Single, separate. Having a striking or unusual character, original. Put like this there doesn't seem to be much between them ...' (Jq4/Q1).

The clearly synonymous nature of these two definitions is not lost on Person J. There is a clear sense that it has not been lost on other participants either, whose responses suggested that 'original' implied a strong degree of difference from existing work, but not a radical break: 'original - new, not a copy' (Cq4/Q1): 'Original' is telling a new story or an old story in a new way' (Eq4/Q1): 'An original writer has a well recognised style or approach that is in some way significantly different to all others' (Aq4/Q1).

The emphasis overall in this category is clearly on an association with 'new', (even though the O.E.D. offers a definition that is closer to what the respondents identified as 'highly individual'). This would suggest that the respondents' initial definition of what is original in the work of other writers associates the term with a distinctive change in style or genre, or a radically new and unprecedented idea or notion; the thinking of a new thought; of breaking new ground. However, as has been shown, there is a drift away from this association with the completely 'new' towards a more mediated position in which the term refers to a degree of 'newness'.

However, in the more subjectively considered responses, respondents appeared to be better able to associate with the notion of 'highly individual': 'I'm an individual writer with a recognised style.' (Aq4/Q1): 'Being highly individual is your own interpretation of a given situation or story.' (Fq4/Q1): 'Highly individual - putting his/her own slant on what already exists' (Cq4/Q1). Two respondents individualised it even further: 'Individual means the writer has their own voice.' (Gq4/Q1): 'Highly individual - I would say this is more to do with having a strong sense of where you are going and feeling it from within. (Mq4/Q1).

There were also some divergent responses to this question. Two respondents suggested that the notion of a writer being 'original' was impracticable: 'It's hard - impossible? - to be totally original I think.' (Gq4/Q1): 'Original - I don't really think there is anything you can call original. I think you could take any piece of writing and compare it to something and I don't see anything wrong with that.' (Mq4/Q1).

When asked in q5/Q1 to further refine their thinking about originality with the question: Is it possible to be truly original? Please explain why you agree or disagree with this statement; respondents tended to moderate the responses given to q4/Q1: 'There's a freshness about originality and independent thought but it's all been done before, surely?' (Bq5/Q1): 'think I would agree with Mark Twain on this one - only Adam can be sure he was original - the rest of us have our own 'angle', some more interesting/insightful than others.' (Cq5/Q1): 'I don't agree that any written work can possibly be truly original now. You can't be

absolutely sure the same piece of work has not been written before, somewhere else in the world.’ (Fq5/Q1): ‘There are only a few basic stories, and a limited number of styles. Within this writers can be highly individual but I would not call this original.’ (Gq5/Q1): ‘If you asked is it possible to be original? I would say yes it is but ‘truly original’ that something has been created in a vacuum - and this would not be possible.’ (Hq5/Q1): ‘Very very difficult. The range of reading available to all of us is remarkable.’ (Kq5/Q1): ‘Not really - everything is linked’ (Lq5/Q1).

The range of responses here is interesting. Most of the respondents seemed quite happy to define ‘original’ as ‘new’, but had problems with the idea of then applying this notion of originality to the process of creative writing.

There appears to be a recognition that time and history are important factors militating against the possibility of work being original; that ‘original’ in the sense of being the first to write a particular story or contemplate a particular idea, is no longer a practicable concept for writers. ‘Freshness’ (Bq5/Q1) is associated with originality – a word that radically alters the meaning of original; that taints it with temporality. The phrase, ‘only Adam can be sure he was original - the rest of us have our own ‘angle’ (Cq5/Q1), reinforces the idea that everything that can be achieved, has been, and that all we have in its place is our own unique perspective on events.

In other responses, the notion of originality is not surrendered, but is more positively assimilated into the notion of contemporaneity: ‘I think it is possible to be original both in terms of content and style. Our way of living changes and people encourage this, giving writers opportunity to explore ‘original’ ideas and themes.’ (Eq5/Q1). Or, it is clearly linked to the notion of the originality and uniqueness of individual lives: ‘Yes, it’s possible to be truly original in that each person is an original creation - the problem comes with finding your own voice that gives this inner being an outlet. If this can be expressed then a truly original work can be created.’ (Jq5/Q1); ‘you can’t help but be truly original if it comes straight from the heart.’ (Mq5/Q1).

What appears to be happening in this last set of responses is a movement away from a notion of originality as 'original' or 'new' work. Most of the respondents identifying this as something outside and anterior to themselves, existing within the historical canons of literature and conferred upon individuals by external communities; 'whether or not one IS truly original ... requires agreement between different points of view.' (Aq5/Q1), towards a re-conceptualisation of originality as a reflection of the unique perspective of the individual writer in time.

5.2.2 The second questionnaire: responses to questions on originality

In the Second Questionnaire respondents were asked a further series of questions designed to encourage them to reflect again on the idea of originality and to consider it more specifically in relation to their own writing. These questions were:

q5) What do you think originality is?

q6) Has the work you have done for the Special Author project made you think again about the nature of originality?

q7) What do you consider to be original about your own work and how do you intend to go about protecting and nurturing that originality?

The movement away from the notion of 'newness' in the First Questionnaire becomes a strong consensus around the idea of originality as individuated experience in the responses to the Second Questionnaire. In response to q5/Q2 and q7/Q2 a strong theme emerges: 'I think it's their elusive thing - the voice, the authentic viewpoint of the artist' (Aq5/Q2): 'My own work is original in the sense that only I know what my friends and I did between 1939 and 1945 ... What I write about ... must always come from my life's experiences and they are in my head' (Bq7/Q2): 'I think my voice is original because I am a 'one-off' as are all human beings' (Cq7/Q2): 'No one else knows what's inside my head' (Dq7/Q2): 'Originality in a writing sense is finding a way which the writer believes to be his/her own (?) way of telling a story based on their own view of human beings and the way they react in the world today or may react in the future' (Eq5/Q2).

Is this shift to a more personal understanding of originality due to an increasing confidence in themselves as individual creators? The notion of originality 'in a writing sense' is made clear here, as is the challenge implicit in this 'writerly' sense of originality of finding a way of telling a story populated with fictional characters that is imbued with the writer's personal experience. 'The fact that it is about my family, I think, makes it original' (Fq7/Q2): 'poured from an original mind' (Gq5/Q2): 'unique experience in life' (Kq5/Q2): 'to actually come at a subject from a different perspective' (Lq5/Q2): 'Having the drive to write what you know only you can' (Mq5/Q2).

To suggest that originality in literature is located within an individual writer's experience of life and that all a writer has to do is write about them, is, as has been suggested, overly simplistic and a number of responses go on to stress the difficulty that writers face in accessing their own experience and translating it into fiction without compromising its authenticity. This is a challenge that requires both technical skills and high levels of determination and integrity. One of the participants described originality as: 'Something that hasn't been attempted before. Fearlessness' (Dq5/Q2). Fearlessness here, within the overall context of Person D's other responses would seem to suggest the courage to write without self-censorship, without allowing the fear of others' judgements to repress or alter the original intention of the writing. Person H identifies something similar when she defines originality as being partly the ability to: 'free oneself in expressing an original viewpoint on life' (Hq5/Q2). Person J reflects similar sentiments in answer to this question: 'Independence. I.e. not being dependent on other people's ideas. Finding one's own voice and developing it with strength and confidence' (Jq5/Q2). Person M emphasises this reliance on the writer's character when she argues that: 'Having the drive to write what you know only you can is originality ...' (Mq5/Q2). This emphasis on drive, fearlessness and independence suggests that writing originally is on one level a question of integrity and resolve.

Other writers refer to the writer's challenge in using their own lived experience as the material for fiction in terms of 'finding your voice'. This is a problematic phrase that has become something of a cliché in popular 'method' books on

creative writing where it is used to suggest a 'magic key' that will unlock unlimited talent. A key that can be 'found', and following the connotations of the verb, simply 'picked up'. Person E's response to q7/Q2 belies the inadequacy of this notion: 'I believe I can develop an original way of writing ... over a period of time. The task will be never ending as my writing skills develop' (Eq7/Q2). Person E's response again suggests the processual and evolving nature of an individual's engagement with creative writing, emphasising the inadequacy of phrases that imply an 'instant fix', but the phrase does feature quite highly in participants' attempts to explain the difficulty in being original. Originality is: 'Finding one's own voice and developing it with strength and confidence' (Jq5/Q2). Person H also uses the phrase whilst underlining what she considers to be its inadequacy: 'Originality is difficult to define but is to some extent about finding and developing one's own voice ... sounds very corny - Rites of Passage etc.' (Hq5/Q2).

Hunt (2006) explores the notion of 'voice', revealing the hidden complexity of this frequently misunderstood term. She argues that, on one level, it is about confidence and recognising one's right to speak and be heard, whilst on a more psychodynamic level, 'voice' suggests the ability to open up to a felt, bodily sense of self and to recognise oneself as 'a self-in-process between language and the body' (Hunt, 2006. p. 36). This is an interesting and useful insight that ties in with the responses to questions on originality that emphasise the difficulty of accessing personal experience and using it to imbue one's writing. It also reinforces the suggestion, made by a number of participants, that originality has got something to do with the individual's awareness of their unique location in time; that it is about connecting language with the physical flow of experience. On a theoretical level this undervaluing of the notion of 'voice' within the discourse of creative writing suggests that the inadequacy of the term is due, in part, to the difficulty that writers have in finding a common language - most of which has been coined by the critical community - to articulate and define a creative process that is processual, constantly changing, and doesn't appear to be fixed.

5.2.3 A consideration of emerging themes around the notion of originality

I have already suggested that the emerging themes from the data analysis appear to point towards a definition of originality that locates it outside of two of the currently accepted meanings of the word, namely: the original material artefact or a completely new phenomenon (idea, thought, technique, storyline etc.). This new 'writerly' definition suggests that originality, in addition to what has been suggested by the data analysis so far, exists within time and is subject to it. And that a piece of writing, if properly reflecting the integrity of a writer drawing from their own lived experience, can be read as original by the audience of its time and could well develop its sense of originality in the process of being written. How exactly this sense of originality develops in the work through the interaction of the writer's active imagination with the memory of their lived experiences and how this is interpreted as originality by its readers is not a subject dealt with in the scope of these two questionnaires, but the responses do appear to suggest that this is the area of the writing process to which the notion of originality can be usefully applied and seen to function.

One of the most interesting observations to have developed out of the reading of the returned questionnaires and an argument in support of the interpretation just given has been the tracing of organic metaphors in the responses. Most of the responses are literal but where metaphor and analogy is used they tend to describe either 'tool' or 'organic' objects and properties. Although 'tool' metaphors tend to be used to describe the basic techniques of sentence construction and the manipulating of language to dramatic effect, organic metaphors are used throughout the responses to develop definitions of originality and to explain the process by which writers absorb the general outlines, character types and the more generic aspects of narratives. The word 'fresh' occurs a number of times in responses to the notion of originality: 'In terms of writing, I think it's a fresh way of describing something' (Cq5/Q2); 'I don't think my style has changed, but I do appreciate the importance of finding fresh ways to describe details' (Cq2/Q2); 'There's a freshness about originality and independent thought but it's all been done before, surely?' (Bq5/Q1); 'With writing it is a question of making all the ideas fresh and original ...' (Hq3/Q1).

The use of the word 'fresh' suggests a move towards ripeness; a sense that a piece of writing is of and for its time.

Further metaphors related to cooking, eating, absorbing and growing can be found in other responses: '... letting someone's character or phrase bubble away in the subconscious for perhaps months ...' (Jq3/Q1): 'It's a bit like baking a cake. No two cakes are exactly the same. You might take an ingredient from here and there and what comes out will always be a cake. But imagine baking a cake without ever having tasted one?' (Mq6/Q1). Person M has offered this analogy to explain the relationship between originality ('no two cakes are exactly the same') and influence ('imagine baking a cake without ever having tasted one?'). Implicit in this description is the idea that a cake is made to be consumed whilst it is fresh and that originality and influence are inevitable consequences of a similar process.

'... everything has roots, even though it might grow as a GM crop' (Dq5/Q1) is an extended metaphor used to explain the idea that writing can be different and similar at the same time. Roots suggest contact with nutrition and the lived life of the writer; the GM metaphor, our tendency to write within generic forms and traditions.

Other related metaphors include: 'I would like my own writing to improve, to develop and grow' (Aq2/Q1); 'ground-breaking' (Lq4/Q1), and '... striking on an idea ...' (Mq5/Q2), suggest digging for and preparing ground for growth. 'Poured from an original mind' (Gq5/Q2) and '... styles to feed off of ...' (Mq8/Q2) extend the metaphorical field in relation to food and the production of food.

Person L uses the word 'osmosis' twice in her responses to describe the process by which writers are subliminally influenced by other writers that they have read; '... we are all influenced by other writers by a process of osmosis' (Lq6/Q1), 'It is all such a process of osmosis that it is hard to pin point one particular author that would have played a significant part in the development of my style.' (Lq4/Q2). And she uses another similar term in describing the same

process later in her response; ‘... it is really important for new writers to read as much as possible, not just to ingest some of the style, but just because the act of reading helps to improve vocabulary, sparks off ideas and connections ...’ (Lq8/Q2). The word ‘ingest’ (to absorb), is used in the same sense as osmosis in the two previous quotes and reinforces the idea of a incremental, unconscious absorption of influence.

One final quote from Person C is worth considering here: ‘I think my voice is original because I am a ‘one off’ as are all human beings. The way to protect it is to sift the good advice from the not so good, to learn as much about technique as I can and to write consistently - even when it’s tough. I also have discovered that when editing my work I need to be careful not to squeeze the juice out of it’ (Cq7/Q2). Sifting and squeezing are verbs that again refer to the preparation of food and connect to the suggestion, already established, that originality could be linked to the notion of ripeness in time. Originality is located by C in the voice of the writer [I take voice here to mean the ability to articulate the lived experience through an ability to move between felt, bodily sense and language – see (Hunt & Sampson, 2006) and (Nicholls, 2006)] not in the ability to come up with an idea or formal device that has never been seen or heard of before. When she talks about being careful not to ‘squeeze the juice out of it’ in the editing process this notion of ripeness is further enhanced and would suggest that there is a danger when applying the conventions of editing within a genre that the essence of the work may be sacrificed to some externally recognised notion of style.

This tension between the material of the work, mined from the lived experience of the writer and the shaping of that material within the structuring devices of narrative, genre and style recurs frequently in the responses to questions about influence and the role of influence in the creative process. Interestingly, C, in response to (q6/Q1), in which she is asked to consider the effect that another writer in a position of influence over her own work might have, says ‘... when I sit down to write it’s my own words, in their own order that comes out. I am an admirer of the ‘putting together of words’ rather than plot, so I’m likely to steal ideas and I don’t remember sentences in exact detail so am not likely to

construct my own work as a clone of something else' (Cq6/Q1). C makes an interesting point here which suggests that, in her thoughts about her own work, she may have resolved an issue that other writers refer to. By making a distinction between the working of words onto and on the page, that are, as she says, 'my own words', reflecting her own lived experience and from 'plot' which comes from an external source (she 'steals' ideas), she is able to separate out elements of the writing process that originate from her, and those that are derived from her intertextual relationship with the work of other writers. The point that she makes about not being able to remember sentences in exact detail suggests a level of complexity and unconscious activity to this part of the process that differentiates it from the more detached, conscious considerations of story management, dramatic technique, thematic development and plot.

5.3) Research Group Responses to Questions on Influence in the Writing Process

Although there is a strong sense amongst respondents that elements of genre and tradition, on all levels from writing technique to themes and characterisation, are there to be shared and if properly utilised can enhance the originality of one's work, there is some uncertainty across individual responses as to how this happens and to what extent writers should be aware of this process or the extent to which they should guard against over-exposing their own creative process to the influence of other writers. This could be articulated as an uncertainty about the relationship between influence and originality in the writing process. It could also suggest that for individual writers this relationship is a constantly fluctuating one contingent on their own psychologies and working practices. If there is some uncertainty as to how the relationship between originality and influence is managed in the writing process there does seem to be more clarity on what constitutes originality and influence for the creative writer. However, few of the participants in the research process seemed able or willing to explain exactly how they occur.

Although some responses, as has already been mentioned, make use of organic metaphors to describe the process of assimilation of broader narrative

categories, more often 'tool' metaphors are used in relation to particular aspects of technique learnt from the work of other writers.

Questions seeking information on the effect of influence on the individual often prompt cautious and guarded responses, but it was interesting to note the level of responses (even though respondents were not asked specifically to comment on this) that suggest the sphere of influence on the writer is far greater than is suggested by the theories of intertextuality of Barthes, Genette and Bloom that I critiqued in Conceptual Frameworks 1. In these responses influence appears to have an unconscious aspect as well as a conscious one and is often considered to be an instinctive and unconscious phenomenon, something that is captured through the body's memories of its interaction with its physical or social environment as well as through its experience of the 'body' of other texts.

In the questions on influence, participants were not specifically asked to define influence in the stimulus questions, but instead were asked a series of questions over the two questionnaires designed to gauge their response to the notion of influence in relation to their own writing process. I have therefore decided to analyse both questionnaires together so that I can draw together emerging themes more easily. The questions were¹:

First Questionnaire.

q1) How do you feel about making a close study of another writer on the Special Author course?

q3) What do you think is the difference between being influenced by another writer and actually plagiarising their work?

q6) Are you ever anxious that your own work could become less original if you opened yourself up to being influenced by another writer? Please expand.

q7) Do you think we learn to become better writers by 're-writing' the work of writers that we greatly admire? Could this happen without our realising it?

¹ A number of questions were designed to relate these considerations to the Special Author study that they were either about to begin in the first questionnaire or had just finished in the second.

Second Questionnaire.

q1) Do you feel more anxious or less anxious about the development of your own writing now that you have finished your Special Author study? Please describe and give some examples, if you can, of how you now feel about your work.

q2) Has your writing style changed as a result of the work you've done for your Special Author study? If so, how?

q3) Should a writer be aware of how their own work in progress relates to, or shares similarities with other stories? And why?

q4) How do you use your knowledge of other texts (novels, short stories, plays, etc) in your own writing practice?

q8) What do you think is the effect on a developing writer of a) a lot of exposure to the work of other writers, and b) a little?

Less than half the participants offered unprompted definitions of influence, and these came mainly as a response to q3/Q1: 'being influenced by another writer is more a compliment to the author. It's a way of saying you admire the author's style, voice etc. and you adopt it, or draw on it, to create your own 'individual' work' (Dq4/Q1); 'Being influenced is gaining a better understanding of how another writer deals with various aspects of story telling and consciously or subconsciously using that understanding in his own work' (Eq3/Q1); '... to be influenced by another writer is to try to emulate only the style of their work' (Fq3/Q1); 'I would say 'being influenced by' is taking on board a writer's expertise and using it to better your own writing' (Mq3/Q1).

The first thing to notice here is how the passive connotations of to 'be influenced by', which suggests a process in which a writer's work is affected, largely subconsciously, by its relationship to a precursor text or texts, usually by another writer, becomes a much more active process. The writer being influenced; adopts; draws on; gains a better understanding of; tries to emulate, and learns to expand their use of techniques. This is the language of active learning: of identifying what you want in another writer's work and appropriating it. Person E does acknowledge that influence can be subconscious as well as conscious, but when he does he refers to the 'various aspects of storytelling' and, as we have seen, responses have already suggested that many aspects of narrative are likely to be communicated subconsciously in the reading process.

The majority of participants when they talk about technique or expertise use the language of appropriation. Tool and tool related metaphors and analogies are frequently used in response to questions which ask students about the role of influence and - implicit within this term - stylistic traditions and conventions within particular genres: 'Gaining a better understanding of how [name of author] uses the tools of writing in his work' (Eq2/Q1); 'Knowledge of other texts should be used as a tool to provide depth to one's own writing and to give it more dimensions' (Jq3/Q2); 'I think the Special Author project is a useful tool - the great masters learned their craft by legitimately copying, and many painters will say 'after' - whoever and it is acknowledged/accepted' (Lq7/Q1); '... we can understand a great deal about techniques which can underpin our own writing' (Hq7/Q1); 'I can see how other authors/scriptwriters put a novel/script etc. together. From this I can see what works and what doesn't' (Dq4/Q2). Some participants gave specific examples of methods they had developed to explore and understand techniques used by other writers: "Templating" a piece I admire gives me huge insights into how I can make a piece of writing better' (Gq7/Q1); '... when reading I note tactics I think clever I.e. mixing direct and indirect speech; having characters walk through a crowd meeting characters that progress the story ...' (Gq4/Q2).

In both sets of responses mentioned so far in this section is the suggestion that actively seeking to be influenced by another writer, especially on the level of technical dexterity is a mark of respect; a 'compliment' (Dq4/Q1) to 'the great masters' (Lq7/Q1). Person L makes a clear reference to the Renaissance model of apprenticeship in the master's studio. This is in direct contrast to interpretations of Romantic theory that argue technique is instinctive to writers of refined sensibility and innate genius. What is interesting is that the notion of originality presented in these responses owes much to Romanticism whilst attempts to describe the process of influence seem closer to the Renaissance model. Other references to masters and the notion of tradition include: 'A student learns much from a master and reading a published author's work is a great way to do this' (Dq1/Q1); 'To be influenced, I guess is to pay homage' (Lq3/Q1). The notion of respect is strong in this set of responses, but in most is balanced by a more utilitarian approach to tradition as the place where

technique and skills are available to the developing writer in a site of communal ownership: 'In many ways the effect on a developing writer of having a lot of exposure to the work of other writers means it is possible to collect helpful hints and tips on how to make your work better' (Fq8/Q2).

'Making the work better' means deepening its sense of originality: 'By studying the techniques of another writer who produces an original voice I hope to learn how to expand my use of techniques to make my own work more instinctively my own' (Gq6/Q1).

The tension here appears to be in managing this inherited set of conventions and techniques within one's own creative process to articulate the narratives of human life out of one's own lived experience. This tension appears to be focusing on the need to find a balance, or a fluid relationship between one's own embodied, felt sense of experience and the expressive structures through which they can be articulated. In addition to this, the number of responses that referred metaphorically to the notion of freshness, process and production suggest that there is both an individual and a social dimension to originality: that it is about sensing the 'ripeness' of an idea and of: 'telling a new story or an old story in a new way' (Eq4/Q1) so that it can be appreciated by an audience as being original.

Some of the respondents in responding to the question which asked whether writers should be aware of how their work related to or shared similarities with other work, identified a tension in balancing the amount of influence a writer exposes themselves to against the 'space' required for individual creativity: 'Yes a writer should be aware as we could be re-inventing the wheel - work should become richer for the knowledge of similar styles and work - at the same time this could be restrictive and cramp the creative process (Hq3/Q2); 'By immersing myself in another style and approach (which must be old to be recognised as good) I may be less likely to develop an original style of my own' (Aq6/Q1); '... too much comparison can hamper creativity and put extra stress on the whole process' (Cq3/Q2); '... I think it is easy to get too much into the mood of a book and slip something too similar in subconsciously' (Mq3/Q2);

'They should be aware ... as subconsciously they could be copying other's work and failing to develop their own creativity' (Eq3/Q2).

Two subsidiary tensions are identified here. One is the possibility that subconsciously a writer could be recalling previously written narrative and incorporating it into their own without realising it. The anxiety here seems to be that this would restrict or hamper their ability to draw on their own lived experience as material for their work and that this would lead to a weakening; a cramping of the creative process. The second is the problem of comparison. Too much comparison and too prolonged an exploration of another writer's work, both stylistically and thematically, can have a damaging effect on a writer's confidence. The issue of contemporaneity is also identified by Person A as an additional point of tension in that the establishment of a canon, following critical discussion within the critical communities, means that work adjudged to be good is often not written in a contemporary style.

There is a further interesting tension in this group of responses that suggests that too much absorption in self-conscious, critical assessment of other literary work can encroach on the 'space' of writing and inhibit creativity. This has already been commented on by researchers in the field of pedagogic theory in creative writing (Freiman, 2004), but it is nevertheless, an important point. If creative writing, as a subject area, is to acknowledge the role that theory and critical reading can play in encouraging reflexivity in developing writers it needs to offer ways of conceptualising the creative process that do not pack that creative space with fixed theoretical models and extensive critical knowledge. In this sense literary criticism is not the friend of creative writing. What appears to be being suggested in the responses here, is that writers need a framework – in the architectural or skeletal sense of the word – in which they can develop an understanding of both the internal and external sources of the creative process, but that framework must allow them to articulate their own individual process; it must give them space to make that process their own. Any theoretical approach that tells them what to do and how to do it – as so many of the critical approaches in literary theory do – will be of very little value to a student writer and may even have a detrimental effect on their development.

Two participants reported that after having finished the Special Author study they felt more anxious about their work: 'I feel more anxious because studying another (author) in more depth has made me understand how much I need to know and read' (Hq1/Q2); 'I actually feel more anxious about my work now. I think this is because as I progress I can view my work more objectively and can see it clearer with all its inherent faults' (Jq1/Q2).

Despite the acknowledgement that the relationship between influence and individual creativity needs to be carefully monitored, the majority of participants attested to the importance of reading other writers' work and the crucial role that influence plays in stimulating new work.

Many of the responses emphasise the importance of exposing oneself as a writer to the influence of other writers: 'I think it is really important for new writers to read as much as possible, not just to ingest some of the style, but because the act of reading helps to improve vocabulary, sparks off ideas and connections, makes one want to enquire into new avenues ...' (Lq8/Q2); 'I think it is important to be widely read and much of it should be specific to the genre I want to write in and should also be current' (Cq3/Q2). Other responses in this category are (Bq4/Q2, Cq8/Q2, Dq4/Q2, Dq8/Q2, Eq2/Q2, Gq8/Q2, Fq8/Q2, Jq4/Q2, Jq8/Q2, Mq8/Q2).

Person L's response has a strongly dialogic tone. She ends her response to (Lq8/Q2) by saying; 'What a dull and opinionated book if the writer was not interested in what other people had to say!' Person C's comment that much of the reading should be current anticipates the problem pointed up by Person A: that much of what has been judged as 'good' by the critical community is often no longer contemporary once a critical consensus over a particular writer has been established.

Participants also emphasised the importance of reading in order to understand not only technique but to be aware of other writers working within a similar genre; to identify current themes, to notice points of similarity with their own work and to modify and develop their themes accordingly; '... so much is

involved in writing a novel - planning, re-writes etc... it's a case of whether we ignore the similarities (with other writers' work) or stretch ourselves to find something 'new'(Cq7/Q1). The utilitarian approach shown in the attitude to developing technique through the study of other writers' work extends also to themes and 'ideas'. 'As we say in the theatre if the idea is good 'steal it' (Hq3/Q1): 'A writer ought to be aware of networks of stories and how their work integrates into them. I think this is common sense - writers are operating in a market place and ought to have a good knowledge of it' (Jq3/Q2).²

As with the notion of originality a number of respondents referred to temporal aspects of influence: '... one's work is constantly changing. I guess if we adhered to the influence of one writer for too long we may become restricted but for a term or so - I don't see this as being a problem' (Hq6/Q1); 'Whilst on a steep learning curve one is extra vulnerable to the various influences of other writers but I would hope in time to develop my own writing' (Eq6/Q1). This is interesting as the notion of influence is often seen as fixed and enduring in time within the lifespan of a writer, by both theorists within the academic and critical communities (Bloom, 1973) and amongst student writers but these comments appear to refute this. A number of respondents in this survey see the 'influence' at work on their own writing as: transient; coming from a variety of points of origin; relating to different levels of textual construction and not as a passive one-way exchange, especially in the development of writing technique; this is often an active seeking out of examples available in the work of other writers. These points of origin are not solely confined to texts. There is clear indication that influence is exerted by their immediate community of practice as well as through other areas of activity in individual lives: 'All artists are influenced by everything' (Hq3/Q1); '... we build on all experiences and with art and literature we encounter - the richer our knowledge of the world and art the richer our writing should become - the more we have to offer' (Hq6/Q2); 'I feel that writing classes may over influence writers' (Kq6/Q1); 'Protecting. I'm not going to show

² There is an opportunity here for a discussion of writerly and critical approaches to reading texts, but the focus of the present study does not afford the time or space to pursue it. For further reading in this area see Smith (1983, pp. 558-567).

too many people my work in progress. I'm going to write it, edit it and try to get it published as quickly as possible' (Dq7/Q2).

With the two noted exceptions (Persons H and J) all the participants responded positively to the questions on the second questionnaire (q1/Q2, q2/Q2) that asked them to comment on the experience of the Special Author study. Person J, although anxious, hopes that her powers of description have improved as a result of focusing on this aspect of her chosen writer in the Special Author study. One notable example is the case of Person D who in response to the first questionnaire exhibits the highest level of anxiety of the participants at the beginning of the course: 'I hope to learn a lot about my writing, and to move from fear to freedom; to gain the confidence to experiment and explore and forget about conventional and established ideas' (Dq1/Q1). The references to confidence and to forgetting clearly emphasise the gap the student writer feels exists between the state of fear and the state of freedom. She uses the word 'master' twice in her responses to q1/Q1 and q2/Q1 and refers to herself as 'student'. She also displays a lack of coherence, or a possible displacement of her own point of view, in her response to the request to differentiate between the two terms 'original' and 'highly individual': 'Original - a new idea or way of writing. Something acceptable. 'Highly individual' - Not afraid to experiment and explore. Moves away from established ideas and conventions. Something to be slightly wary of. Uncertainty' (Dq4/Q1). There is much here that is contradictory. She appears to be suggesting that 'highly individual' is a term that is more in accord with her original notion of a movement from 'fear to freedom' than 'original' is, but she then goes on to imply that this is something to be slightly wary of. If this does signify a higher than usual level of anxiety at the beginning of the course, by the end of it her description of her experience is emphatic and clear: 'I'm much happier about my work. I feel much less anxious about the development of my own work. I'm no longer worried about sticking to established rules and conventions' (Dq1/Q2); 'I am writing freely again without worry' (Dq2/Q2).

It is satisfying to note that the anxieties exhibited by students on the programme before the introduction of the second year of study and the Special Author

course are beginning to be resolved. Having said that, there are indications in these findings that even though anxiety and tension around influence is being reduced, there is still further work that could be done in this area.

When asked the question q2/Q2: 'Has your writing style changed as a result of the work you've done for your Special Author study. If so, how?' a large number of students responded by initially denying that they had been influenced but then proceeded to identify aspects of their writing style that had improved or changed. A typical example of this kind of response (seven in all of the participant group) is the one given by Person G: 'No I don't think so. But I have new ideas for structure and creating effects in my writing from analysis of how someone else does it' (Gq2/Q2). There are a number of possible interpretations of the denial/acknowledgement pattern of these responses. It could be that through the Special Author study they had begun to distinguish – though not fully articulate – the difference between the notion of influence as a threat to their own individuality and influence as a means of acquiring an understanding of form, style and technique. These responses also suggest that participants don't see the change in their work as change as such, but more of an enhancing and deepening (a word that has been used by respondents to describe the process of influence) of their own developing style. This would be in accord with the sense coming from these responses that writers draw from a shared pool of technique and tradition that determines writing style at the same time as determining conventions governing reading and that no sense of ownership is ultimately attributable to them. Another possible interpretation is that writers, although conscious that they are developing their work out of the work of others, do not want to admit to it due to the negative connotations of copying and lack of originality that would be implied if they did. This final consideration may well suggest a secondary, contextual tension around the immediate consideration of influence and originality in the writing process. One not to do with the psychological workings of the creative process so much as with the status that society in general places on originality in art and on literature in particular.

5.4) Summary of the cross-sectional analysis of themes and analyst constructed typologies

I have been struck during the analysis of this data by the different perspectives on originality and influence, and on the idea of literature, that has emerged from the process based approach of the research participants as against the theoretical and critical interpretations of the poststructuralist theory investigated in Conceptual Frameworks 1. The strong social constructivism of much postmodernist literary theory, as has been previously discussed, tends to use the text as a point of origin for its own theoretical elaborations and does not concern itself with the all too human and subjective processes that created it. This tendency of theory to use literature as a way of thinking about theory, offers a refracted and partial account of the literary process and it is difficult to imagine how, despite its claims, it can offer anywhere near a full account of what literature actually is and why it is so important to us.

Having analysed and considered the findings from the qualitative research, I'm more convinced than I was before, that we will only begin to understand the function and significance of fiction when we find a way of considering it as being, simultaneously, both subjective practice and theoretically objectifiable.

At present the theoretical thinking within creative writing pedagogy, especially at university level, relies too heavily on post-modernist theory. This means that if writers turn to literary theory for explanations and insights into their creative practice they are more likely to encounter a product of theory than an explanation of process, leaving little space for creativity or for the kind of reflexivity that Hunt and Sampson (Hunt & Sampson, 2006) recommend in their discussion of voice.

It is clear, from the participant responses in the data analysis, that in both the case of originality and influence, writers' perceptions of these processes are less confined than those developed within postmodernist literary theory. There seems to have been an attempt by theorists in the twentieth century, like Barthes, Genette and Bloom to restrict the notion of influence, to lock it into the concept of intertextuality in order to corral the parameters of research within

textual activity. Influence is seen as being something that can be traced through texts. It appears fixed and enduring. This may make possible a systematic approach that offers the promise of coherent knowledge, but the critical inconsistency of its methodologies, whilst keeping the wheels of theory turning, betray the partial nature of its theorisations.

Bakhtin appears to offer a fresh perspective. His determination that literature should be understood from the ground up; as evolving from the spoken word and the dialogic interactions of people whose own language is layered in heteroglossia; acknowledges subjective agency and the influence of context. The Bakhtinian paradigm appears to have avoided the partial nature of postmodernist theory and to have located literature and the creative process within a far more developed and sustainable philosophical framework.

In comparison to the work of Barthes, Genette and Bloom, the notion of influence that comes across in the data seems far more realistic. Influence as taking what you need from a shared tradition is a far more active notion than that suggested by critical theory. Its sense of its transitory and myriad nature is clear in these responses. Influence comes and goes, it is picked up and put down, considered and rejected, assimilated unconsciously as well as consciously, and its effect is often brief. It is also located within a sphere of influence which includes things other than texts: communities of practice; the shape and activities of a life and when it is considered in terms of textual filiation, is seen in terms of a firmament of influence as opposed to the abiding influence of one text or writer upon another.

Likewise, originality appears to be a much looser concept as defined by participant response. It has less to do with the idea of difference for difference's sake, of the original in the sense of something unprecedented and completely new, of striving to achieve something in writing that has never been done before and more to do with re-energising and re-vitalising narrative with the lived and unique experience of the writer.

There is a strong sense, after fifty years of postmodernist theory, despite the presence of creative writing within the HE curriculum, of a gulf between the professional writing community and the academy. Bradbury (1971) identified the dangers of unbridled scholasticism and argued that the literary theory developing in structuralism and poststructuralism would inevitably attempt to supplant literature itself and establish theory as the primary mode of literature. This point has been echoed in more recent work that has critiqued the development of theoretical approaches to the study of literature (Burke, 1992).

Writers, as Webb and Brien (2008) point out, compared to the loud interpretive voices of criticism and theory, seem mute. What they have to say, they say in their work. The concepts and the language of literary evaluation belong to postmodernist theory and as Wandor (2008) has argued, most of the available reference texts on method for writers are 'weak, patronising and infantilising'.

There is a strong sense that student writers in the research group are confused by the language available to them to describe their creative process. This seems particularly evident when they attempt to describe what originality means, either tending to fall back on language they feel has not got the appropriate rigour and consistency and carries with it a sense of being under-valued and clichéd: 'Originality is ... developing one's own voice through practice and technique and practice to free oneself in expressing an original viewpoint on life etc. - sounds very corny - rites of passage etc.' (Hq5/Q2); or, as has been identified earlier, using metaphor and analogy to express flowing, temporal processes; or in two instances, rejecting the whole notion of originality itself: 'I don't consider my work to be original at all! ... I don't really see how anyone can be original anymore.' (Lq7/Q2); 'I really don't think anything can be truly original anymore - it is almost an impossible concept nowadays ... It is almost not worth the candle to be too hung up on whether one is being original or not - to me the originality is what the reader takes away with them from your writing' (Lq5/Q2).

Although some frustration is evident in the inadequacy, or the particular ideological tilt of language, there is a strong sense that writers see themselves as actively engaged in a dialogue with other writers whose influence they draw

on. Person M in her set of responses replaces the notion of 'original' with that of 'highly individual' as she finds 'original' inadequate in expressing her understanding of originality: 'Original - I don't really think there is anything you can call original. I think you could take any piece of writing and compare it to something and I don't see anything wrong with that. Highly Individual - I would say this is more to do with having a strong sense of where you are going and feeling it from within. I think you can still have strong influences and be highly individual. In fact, I think you need them in order to be' (Mq4/Q1).

This is an interesting response. In M's view writing is so interconnected that you can find a point of comparison in almost anything. In replacing it with the notion of the highly individual, she gestures to the idea of originality suggested by other participants with the phrases, 'still have strong influences' and 'feeling it from within'. The second of these two phrases suggests an emotional depth to the lived experience that writers draw from in their writing and the first is a clearly dialogic interpretation of the notion of influence; one in which strong influences and a 'strong sense of where you are going' create the strongly individual writer. M goes on to say: 'you can't help but be truly original if it comes straight from the heart, I would just prefer to define it as individuality rather than originality' (Mq5/Q4). Again, here, the notion of originality is translated as individuality and linked to the emotions through the image of the heart. In a response to a question about the effect of influence on originality M reinforces the point she has made that the individual (and the individual is synonymous with originality) is shaped by their dialogic relationship with influence: 'I think it essential to be influenced. It helps you to learn which direction you are coming from yourself.' (Mq6/Q1). She follows this assertion with the metaphor of the cake that has already been discussed and then, in response to a question about the subconscious influence of published writers on developing writers, writes: 'I think it can happen without realising it. And if it does happen, it would be such a great melting pot of admired writers that came out, I don't think the final product would show it' (Mq7/Q2).

The suggestion here is that the process of assimilating influence as a developing writer is far more complex than Bloom's Freudian based theories of

literary filiation suggest, and that these multifarious influences would be so blended into the work as to make them unrecognisable. M's responses, with their foregrounding of the role of strong influences seem to me to be instinctively Bakhtinian whilst at the same time laying stress on the importance of the emotional and lived life of the writer in the creation of the 'original' aspect of the text.

5.5) Applying Key themes to Conceptual Frameworks, Phase 2

Much has been said about notions of influence and originality in the writing process in these responses and although I'm now aware, more clearly than before, of the way in which the questionnaires have defined the possible set of responses, there are still a number of significant themes in this analysis that can be used to guide the development of my research. In the next phase, Chapter 6, I will use them as a critical framework in investigating Bakhtin's theoretical writings on influence and originality.

In terms of influence, I will attempt to determine the extent to which Bakhtin's work verifies or contradicts responses in the data, especially the suggestion that influence is more pervasive than theories of intertextuality admit. I will also use his work to further consider the relationships between influence and originality in the creative process, between genre, tradition, and the individual writer and between history and contemporary culture. As well as following up the findings from my qualitative research on influence, I will also use my discussion of Bakhtin's work to further my own understanding of the nature, role and function of influence and attempt to find further explanations and justifications to participant responses in the questionnaire.

I will also use the framework of Bakhtin's writings on creativity and the creative process to investigate alternative notions of originality that were articulated in the qualitative research, especially those that link the idea of 'newness' with organic metaphors suggestive of renewal, freshness and the re-telling or recycling of old stories. I will explore the relationships between creativity and originality, and influence and originality, and try to identify where and how originality can be located in the creative process. I will also discuss the extent to

which, within Bakhtin's socially-situated model of creativity, there is space for individual creativity and individual experience and will explore the relationship between individuality and originality.

I have chosen to locate the next phase of research in Bakhtin's work because the structure of his conceptual framework allows me to move freely from considerations of practice to considerations of theory without feeling that there is an unbridgeable gulf between the two or that one of these two areas lacks coherent structure.

5.6) Summary of Key Themes

Below is a summary of the key themes to have come out of the qualitative research. It is interesting to note the extent to which they respond to my research aims, especially those articulated in the first two research questions set out at the beginning of Chapter 4. I have therefore written these two questions in to make it easier for the reader to see the ways in which the qualitative research has begun to suggest answers to these questions.

5.6.1) What is influence?

Original Research Question:

1. What is influence? To what aspect of the writing process does it apply? How does it manifest itself within the writing process? What is the difference between influence and intertextuality? Is influence consciously appropriated, or does it enter the writing process by some other means? To what extent does it determine the writing process? To what extent does influence impede originality?

Summary of responses to questions on the nature and the role of influence in the qualitative research:

- 1) Conscious and unconscious influence: influence is assimilated through the body as well as consciously through the mind.
- 2) The sphere of influence: influence goes beyond the intertextual. Different forms of influence work at different levels in textual production.
- 3) Influence and tradition: genre and tradition are a critical resource for writers. Reading is important.

4) Metaphors for influence: the use of 'tool' metaphors to describe the acquisition of technique and craft.

5) Influence in time: Influence is not lasting, can fade with time or can be fleeting.

6) Managing influence: there is a tension between influence and creativity and the 'space' for creative production needs to be carefully maintained.

7) Influence and contemporaneity: stories have all been told before, therefore narratives, to some extent, are a re-cycling of stories for contemporary audiences.

5.6.2) What is originality?

Original research question:

1. What is originality? Is it an aspect, or a result, of the writing process? What are the historical antecedents of the notion of originality? Can it be located within individual works? Is it accessible to study?

Summary of responses to questions on the nature and the role of originality in the qualitative research:

- 1) Fixed and fluid notions of originality: responses suggest that originality means something different when seen in terms of the creative process.
- 2) Originality and individuality: originality is closely related to the unique position of the individual writer in time.
- 3) Making the work original: originality is about finding a way of imbuing your writing with your own personal experience. Originality is a quality of writing.
- 4) Originality is about finding your voice: moving freely between the felt, embodied sense of personal experience and linguistic consciousness.
- 5) Metaphors for originality: the use of 'organic' metaphors to express the emotional and embodied sense of originality.
- 6) The impossibility of 'newness': all narratives have precedents in earlier narratives.
- 7) Originality and content: originality is related to content: influence to form.

Chapter 6. Conceptual Frameworks, Phase 2

Having arrived through the qualitative research at a set of responses to the first two questions laid out in my research aims, in this chapter I will turn my attention to the aims identified in question 3, namely, ‘to what extent are the arguments I am evolving and the conclusions they appear to be suggesting, at variance with current interpretations of influence and originality within critical and theoretical discourse?’ In chapter 6, I will ask this question of the socially-situated theory of Mikhail Bakhtin. In chapter 7, I will use it to address romantic theories of literature. In the subsequent sections of this thesis I will develop a response to the last two questions articulated in the research aims: ‘What areas of critical and theoretical discourse share the greatest resonance with my findings?’ and ‘How important are these concepts to our understanding of the writing process?’

6.1) Bakhtin on Influence

As Durey has pointed out (1991), Kristeva’s adaptation (1980, p. 69) of Bakhtin’s notion of intertextuality as dialogue *between* writers *through* texts generated enormous interest and established intertextuality as an area of study. In her research into published texts and bibliographies of intertextual theory, Durey (1991, p. 629-630) cites the work of Bruce (1983) who published a glossary of intertextual theorists that, by his own admission, was not comprehensive, but numbered 339 different theorists. In this phenomenal surge of interest in the seventies and the eighties, despite his influence on Kristeva’s early work, Bakhtin’s ideas were largely overlooked. Durey argues that during this period all the main literary theoretical positions had incorporated some form of intertextual theory and could be broken down into two sub-groups: the structuralists, semioticians, poststructuralists and deconstructionists who ignored the writing subject, and the psychoanalysts and hermeneutic theorists who in their fascination with the writer, ignored the text.

This lack of interest in the writing subject and in the creative process in literature has made it difficult, in this section of the thesis, to discover critical commentary that relates to, or is relevant to, my particular approach to influence and originality in Bakhtin’s work. A large number of theorists have assimilated

Bakhtin's ideas into strong social constructivist frameworks, but this approach is usually either one of piecemeal appropriation, or interpretation, or theoretical and philosophical commentary. It is possible to argue, as Durey (1991, p. 616) has done, that much of this work constitutes a form of theoretism that Bakhtin would have himself personally abhorred. As I am attempting to consider notions of originality and influence from the ground up, from the more open-ended practice of writing itself, I have come to the conclusion that referencing this work to theory that is only tangentially connected to my focus and has a particular philosophical and ideological agenda will damage the integrity of what I am trying to do. I have therefore decided only to refer to theoretical commentary when it is appropriate and to use the key themes of my qualitative analysis as a set of critical insights with which to probe Bakhtin's thinking.

In his exploration of language, creativity and the novel Bakhtin offers a number of insights into the nature of influence. These observations range across the broad spectrum of human discourse, from the prosaic to the aesthetic and reveal the effect of influence in the socially-situated context of spoken utterances as well as in the genres of fiction that have shaped literary form over historical time. The holistic and dynamic nature of his thinking makes it difficult to isolate concepts within the overall body of his work. I have tried to remain conscious of the complex interconnectivity of his work, though at times this has proved challenging, especially when taking an incremental approach to a particular area of study.

Bakhtin was clearly aware of this problem of interconnectedness especially in relationship to intertextual studies. In his chapter 'Characteristics of Genre' (1984), in a discussion of traditional approaches to the study of influence in literature, he makes it clear that whilst his own particular interest was on the wider influence of the 'generic tradition itself', he still believed there was some value in the study of the influence of one individual writer on another (1984, p. 159).

But, of course, within Bakhtin's overall ontology any attempt to impose a systematised and over theoretical approach to the study of influence, or to

formulate a conclusive theory about the relationship between one text and another, would indicate a limited understanding of the full and complex nature of the influences at work on a writer and constitute a drift towards theoretism. And this is the key to understanding Bakhtin's approach: for him, the study of influence in literature requires a wider lens, one that allows us to see the sources of influence in both social discourse and literary tradition. We can isolate these sources and consider the different ways in which influence works, but at the end of the day, they are so widespread and in such a complex and dialogic relationship with each other that influence as a whole, taken in relation to any particular work, is ultimately unfinalizable.

Throughout his work Bakhtin stressed an essential point: that all literary discourse had its origins in the commonality of social discourse and that our ability to communicate ideas and emotions in literature could not be separated from the physical medium of language and the intentions of the participants using that language:

It is necessary to come to terms with discourse as a reified, 'typical', but at the same time intentional phenomenon ... we must learn how to develop a sensitivity to the brute materiality, the typicality, that is the essential attribute not only of actions, gestures and separate words and expressions, but the basic ingredient as well in terms of points of view, in how the world is seen and felt, ways that are organically part and parcel with the language that expresses them (1981, p. 367).

In Bakhtin's work, creativity is not something that is imposed, top down, on language through trope and artistic form by singular artistic imaginations, as poetic and literary theory would imply; it arises out of the physicality of language itself. Artistic content, form and style are derived from the potential implicit in the most prosaic of linguistic exchanges. Narrative structure, addressivity¹, point of view and dramatic tension are all elaborations on the essential creative structuring of the dialogic event that allows meaning to be shaped using the resources of both physical and verbal interaction.

¹ A characteristically Bakhtinian notion: initially linked to the ethical notion that all utterances carry responsibility, in Bakhtin's later work it also carried the suggestion that all utterances conceal a presumed or hidden agenda.

But, in Bakhtin, the construction of meaning within a live event is further complicated by the fact that these events take place in time; and time is not a consistent and objective dimension, it is a fluid and constantly changing one that draws the past into the present whilst opening the present to the future. This effect of time opens up the present to the influence of the past and this influence can best be described as the way that the past meanings of words, stratified in heteroglossia, bear down on the meanings of words in live dialogic events, engendering dialogic creativity in the individual in their attempt to harness the meanings of words to their own intentions whilst holding the moment open to future possibilities. Bakhtin describes the complexity of this process in his essay, *Discourse in the Novel*:

Indeed, any concrete discourse (utterance) finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist – or, on the contrary, by the ‘light’ of alien words that have already been spoken about it. It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents ... and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile (1981, p. 276).

Bakhtin (1986) developed a set of oppositional terms to conceptualise the dynamic relationship between domains of fixed or partially finalised meaning and the open-ended flow of unfinalizable dialogic creativity: ‘dan’ (the given) and ‘sozdan’ (the created). The given represents everything that influences us in shaping an utterance, it includes within the dialogic context of the utterance the languages of heteroglossia that stratify our sense of self: the culturally dominant ideology, the myriad other languages and ideologies with which we associate and are associated with and the centripetal and centrifugal forces at work within them, our personal history, our emotional lives and our intentions and motivations. All these elements are present in us in the dialogic event. But, the important distinction that Bakhtin is making here between ‘dan’ and ‘sozdan’ is that an utterance or action is never just the product of what is given (‘dan’). In the dialogic event there is no codified transmission of fixed meaning:

It (the dialogic event) always creates something that never existed before, something absolutely new and unrepeatable ... What is given is completely transformed in what is created (1986, pp. 119 - 120).

Bakhtin's emphasis on the open-ended and creative nature of dialogic interaction suggests strongly that as individuals we strive to adapt influence to our own purposes. If influence, as Bakhtin suggests, is essential to creativity, then any argument that attempts to limit or negate the effect of influence is denying creative potential.

It is clear that Bakhtin's notion of influence, as being an essential part of all dialogic interaction, creates a field of influence on the individual author that includes the social, cultural and personal. This interpretation of the sphere of influence on a writer corresponds with responses to the qualitative research that suggest that influence is an unfinalizable field: that, in the words of one respondent, 'everything influences everything else'. However, Bakhtin's emphasis on the importance of literary tradition (1981 and 1984) is also acknowledged in the number of responses that highlighted tradition as a critical shared resource constituting an area of significant dialogic creativity for the writer. The importance of reading formed a consistent and repeated response, especially within the genres relating to the respondents own work, not only for conventions of style and genre but also to increase their awareness of what was being published in the area they were working in.

Bakhtin's insistence on the active role of the participant in dialogic interaction and the inevitable making of new meaning within a dynamic continuum of change, presented a very different model to the more deterministic notions of influence that had, I suspected, informed my students' initial anxieties around the sharing and critiquing of work. Implicit in many of the responses to the research questions was the notion of writing as an active, making process. This was in stark contrast to the anxieties of influence in romanticism and the more objectified position of structuralist and poststructuralist literary theory that in its attempts to impose theoretical systems premised on strong social constructivism tended to portray the human subject as a passive recipient of influence.

It is important not to over-simplify, but on one level, in their revelation of the distorted nature of the world as seen through the lens of strong social constructivism, the idea of the ubiquity of influence and the dynamic nature of the writing subject, are worth pausing to consider. The reality, as Bakhtin points out (1981, pp. 270-271), is more complex than anything that can be offered by a monologic theory. Our involvement in dialogic processes is always characterised by struggle. Within the opposing dynamic of the centrifugal and the centripetal, old and fixed constructions of meaning are being constantly tested and we are always looking for creative alternatives. This may well explain why it is possible to see influence within a socially-situated framework as a source of creativity, whilst acknowledging romantic anxieties about the determining factors of social constructivism. This last point is clearly evidenced in the research responses, which emphasised the importance of holding open the creative space by managing the tension between influence and creativity.

6.1.1) Dialogic Influence in the Novel

Having established the dialogic nature of communication in the parole of language, Bakhtin went on to apply these principles to literature, particularly the novel:

The dialogic orientation of a word among other words ... creates new and significant artistic potential in discourse, creates the potential for a distinctive art of prose, which has found its fullest and deepest expression in the novel (1981, p. 275).

Bakhtin explores the novel as dialogic discourse and sees it as being shaped out of interacting and interanimating voices. Within the double-voiced language of prose – a language that self-consciously reveals its relationship to literary form and style – the basic impulse of the novel is to dialogize heteroglossia: to put language in contention with language.

For Bakhtin, characters and narrators within novels represent the viewpoints of languages that reveal different ways of being in the world. In a process that he calls 'hybridisation' (ibid, p. 366) these languages are consciously drawn into contestation with each other by the author and in their interanimation, influence

the meaning and the interpretation of the text. It is important to remember here that Bakhtin, when he talks about voice, or language, or the image in language, of a character, is not talking about an abstract idea, but a physical voice characterised by tone and timbre, intonation, volume, and idiomatic mannerisms. In the process of hybridisation, characters are constructed from elements of heteroglossia and represented as voices within the text. In the pressurised dialogic processes of narrative construction, these voices, in challenging each other, spill over into the space of other voices, particularly the authorial narrator's voice². In this way, Bakhtin identifies a stratum of interanimating fluidity within the text that transcends the actual physical representations of character in description and dialogue. He calls these areas of linguistic and ideological contention 'character zones' (ibid, p. 316) and suggests that that they could be used as a means of exploring style and theme in the novel through a study of voice.

This notion of voice as influence that permeates the material boundaries of characters and narrators, reveals a messier, more fluid world – the 'open' world of Bakhtin's ontology – in which as writers and as social consciousnesses, we are liminally positioned, constantly absorbing the influence of others whilst being influenced ourselves. Again, it is important to remember that this influence is not purely linguistic and semantic. Bakhtin's notion of voice and utterance also relates strongly to the notion of 'voice' I discussed earlier: the voice of felt, embodied experience; a voice that not only carries heteroglossia but is also indivisibly connected, in its tonality and metalanguage, to our physical experience in the world.

In the subtle workings of influence that Bakhtin exposes, in an almost complete reversal of the structuralist models of narrative, we see the forces of parole at work in literature. These insights, although complex and at times difficult to grasp, concur with the responses in the qualitative research that suggest that different forms of influence are at work at different levels of textual production. It is possible to see here the langue of narrative structure balanced against the

² For an excellent explication of character zones see Lodge (1990) for an analysis of voice in Katherine Mansfield's short story 'The Fly'.

parole of voice; the conscious assimilation of form balanced against the complex and often unconsciously assimilated 'living impulse' of the word.

Renfrew (1998, p. 132) appears to concur with this position when he argues that, seen through Bakhtinian theory, the novel is both an actualised speech act and an organised system of representations of diverse 'types' of speech. Robbins (1993, p. 225) in his discussion of realism and representation also suggests that in contrast to Barthes's lack of engagement with the representation of the social world, Bakhtin's realism and emphasis on methods of representation is part and parcel of his epistemological analysis of the socially-situated subject.

6.1.2) Dialogic influence and 'great time'

In 'A Response to Questions from the Novy Mir Editorial Staff', written towards the end of his career, Bakhtin (1986) reiterates his warnings against the dangers of reductive theoretism in formalist and structuralist approaches to literature and emphasises the importance for the humanities of embracing a complex 'open unity' of cultural, ethical and philosophical thought. In order to achieve a working understanding³ of the ultimately unfinalizable nature of social phenomena it is important not to systematise thinking, to reduce it to a particular system of thought or constrict it within the boundaries of an epoch. Bakhtin argues that the study of literature must take into account the total context of an entire culture:

In our enthusiasm for specification we have ignored questions of the interdependence and interconnection of various areas of culture; we have frequently forgotten that the boundaries of these areas are not absolute, that in various epochs they have been drawn in various ways; and we have not taken into account that the most intense and productive life of culture takes place on the boundaries of its individual areas and not in places where these areas have become enclosed in their own specificity (1986, p. 5).

³ It is through the dialogised discourses within a society, according to Bakhtin, that we reach working understandings of the world around us. These are the 'polyphonic truths', the pragmatic truths that in the overall 'open unity' of Bakhtin's philosophical vision apply both to cultural experience and to our knowledge of the physical world and replace the transcendental truths of monologic authority.

Bakhtin is here reminding the reader that academic theoretism in its desire for forensic objectivity often focuses on a specific area and ignores the wider context, imposing false origins on fields of study and creating intellectual boundaries that allow researchers to concentrate on isolated phenomena whilst ignoring the dialogic interaction and vitality that surround and animate the designated subject. This methodological approach fails to take account of the synchronic depth and diachronic breadth of social phenomena. Bakhtin argues that in ignoring the foundational role that parole plays in literary activity, structuralist and formalist approaches became desiccated, systematised and rigid, and imposed 'top down', unable to recognise the origin of literary forms in the prosaic exchanges of human experience or to explain the changes in these forms against the backdrop of human history. Not only that, but, according to Bakhtin (1981, pp. 260-275), in seeking the essence of literature in an abstracted system of language, they created critical theory that is inadequate to the task of understanding the complexity of the modern novel. A task that can only be achieved through a return to Bakhtin's socially-situated empiricism and an understanding of the novel as a form whose language, devices and complex layers of meaning have grown out of the rich texture of prosaic life and whose content is drawn from the author's dialogic relationship with 'powerful deep currents of culture' (1986, p. 5). Bakhtin is at pains to emphasise the fact that these currents of influence are both epochal and historical:

If it is impossible to study literature apart from an epoch's entire culture, it is even more fatal to encapsulate a literary phenomenon in the single epoch of its creation, in its own contemporaneity, so to speak. We usually strive to explain a writer and his work precisely through his own time and the most recent past (usually within the epoch, as we understand it). We are afraid to remove ourselves in time from the phenomenon under investigation. Yet the artwork extends its roots into the distant past. Great literary works are prepared for by centuries, and in the epoch of their creation it is merely a matter of picking the fruit that is ripe after a lengthy and complex process of maturation (1986, p. 6.).⁴

⁴ I was struck, in the quotation above, by the developing metaphor of the tree. There was something clear and economical about this image, as if the complexity of his ideas suited the use of this organic metaphor to express them. The image emphasizes literature's connectivity with the deep past, whilst maturation and ripeness capture the twin ideas of historical development, relevance and impact in a way that would be difficult to express theoretically. It carries with it a strong sense of a constantly connecting, constantly evolving form that enters into an intense and vital dialogic relationship with the present. Although Bakhtin is talking about the development of genre there are strong resonances with the organic images of ripeness that were used in the qualitative research to describe the notion of originality.

Great literary works draw on the influence of the past and Bakhtin is here clearly encouraging the literary researchers of his time to struggle with the complexity and breadth of social and cultural experience. He is urging them not to give into the easy temptations of theoretism, but to deliver insights that make sense, not just within systematised theory, but also within the broad sweep of human experience.

To add to the complexity of this approach, Sandywell (1998, p. 204) points out that Bakhtin's notion of the diachronic effect of influence also includes the notion of hidden influence, as great literary works, having broken free from the critical context of their own epochs and having established themselves canonically in 'great time', can reveal potential meanings that were not recognised by their own audiences during the epoch of their production.

Again, we see how Bakhtin's work emphasises the complexity of the influence of the past on the present. With each connection made through language to another text - whether it intersects the text at ninety degrees or from a deeper angle in the past - comes another way of seeing the world, loaded with potential knowledge to enrich the process of hybridisation.

In its ability to offer writers access to historical narratives of human experience and to the forms that offer different ways of both being *in* and *seeing* the world, the notion of 'great time' reinforces the importance that respondents to the qualitative research put on the need for writers to actively develop their reading and suggests that this should extend to classic and canonical texts. Outside of the parameters of the qualitative research, it also suggests, in its diachronic logic, an opportunity of extending our knowledge of literature itself to considerations of its evolution, its function and its significance to us as a human activity.

6.1.3) Genre and the Chronotope

Two of the key concepts that Bakhtin develops in his study of literary creativity and its history as a form are genre and the chronotope. Although Bakhtin's conceptualization of genre has similarities with the taxonomic use of the term in literary studies, it differs in important ways. When set against the open unity of Bakhtin's conceptual framework it becomes closely associated with the dynamic vitality of ideology and with different ways of seeing the world.

Genre, for Bakhtin, is not just a way of classifying forms of art but a way of identifying the culturally and socially constructed images (or templates) of the world that we use to shape our vision and understanding of reality. Following on from his argument that literary form has evolved from the speech act itself, Bakhtin identifies a continuum of increasingly sophisticated genres: from basic speech genres to literary genres (1986, p. 60-70.). In all these genres we rely on unformalised cognitive content to locate us within a particular context in order to focus on our dialogic interaction within that event (ibid, p. 78). These frames are remembered and 'congeal' within a culture into genres (ibid, p. 165). They range from the simplest of formal social interactions to the genres of the novel: the genre of literature that Bakhtin believed offered the most accurate representation of human experience and the deepest expression of human wisdom.

This sense that 'we speak in diverse genres without suspecting they exist' (ibid, p. 178) and that we use them automatically 'in varying degrees of awareness and detachment' (ibid, p. 89) is interesting in that it implies that language is assimilated and used on an unconscious level as well as a conscious one. The idea that we use literary genres in this way, that we absorb them through repetitive use and familiarity and apply them instinctively, suggests they do not need to be consciously appropriated. If this is the case it would suggest that we memorise them physically in some way and absorb their influence for further use.

These literary genres that have evolved out of speech genres, have accumulated wisdom and meaning over centuries and can carry historical ways

of conceptualizing human experience into the present: not in abstracted forms of knowledge but in the actual consciousness of different periods of history (1981, pp. 1 - 6). They are the generalisable resources of past events, the 'given' with which, in our dialogic relationship with history, we can fashion our perception of the present. According to Bakhtin, these forms of artistic thinking (1981, pp. 84-85), which allow us access to a specific kind of creative activity embodying a specific sense of physical experience (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 283), assimilate time and space into larger generic representations that can remain consistent over long spans of social history. They can exist over 'great time', as has the genre of the 'action' story, coexisting with other historic and developing forms of artistic thinking, or they can fade into the shadows until a coming epoch realizes their expressive potential. New genres do not cancel out the old and form over long periods as they are assimilated into heteroglossia and re-worked in the process of novelistic hybridisation – a process Bakhtin calls 're-accentuation' (1986, p. 89).

Because genre *is* artistic thinking, it is cognized in a different manner to abstract thought. Writers do not need to apply themselves to learning genres. The forms and conventions of the genre are carried within the artistic thinking of the text. This means that writers can be generically influenced through their reading and imaginative participation in a particular style and genre of text. Understanding genre requires only that a writer be alive and open to the way texts, or just fragments of texts, shape and describe human experience (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 157). In this way writers can develop an understanding of genre through a process Bakhtin calls 'generic contact'. This has important ramifications for the study of influence within literary theory. In his study of Dostoevsky (1984), Bakhtin argues that Dostoevsky was himself influenced by genres he barely knew and that there was little evidence that he had read. Critics, Bakhtin argues, can search in vain through historical and biographical records for influences on writers that although evident in their writing, are not evidenced in their history. As Bakhtin points out:

A genre possesses its own organic logic which can to a certain extent be understood and creatively assimilated on the basis of a few generic

models, even fragments ... For this reason it is important to know the possible generic sources of a given author, the literary and generic atmosphere in which his creative work was realized. The more complete and concrete our knowledge of an artist's *generic contacts*, the deeper can we penetrate the peculiar features of his generic form and the more correctly can we understand the interrelationship, within it, of tradition and innovation (ibid 1984, p. 157).

Here we see Bakhtin applying the same thinking to literary genre as he did to speech genre, only in this instance, the idea of artistic thinking has been introduced as an explanation, whereas before, in speech genre, Bakhtin did not dwell on the means by which the genre was assimilated beyond the assumption that it happened automatically. Both these explanations reinforce the responses in the key themes of the qualitative research that suggest that influence is subtle, complex, and works on an unconscious as well as conscious level. What are we to make of this? My sense is that Bakhtin's emphasis on parole, on the way meaning is shaped out of physical actions and the context of its event as well as the pure semantics of language, suggests that the body and the unconscious may have a more important role in the creative process than his writings imply.

In the previous quote from his book on Dostoevsky, Bakhtin infers that an understanding of generic contact can lead to an understanding, within the work of a particular writer, of the relationship between 'tradition and innovation'. Tradition and innovation can be read here as synonyms for influence and originality. It is clear that Bakhtin sees the relationship between the two as creative and dialogic and that he identifies it as the locus within genre in which the creative transformations he describes as re-accentuation take place. This approach offers similar insights into the creative process as those expressed in T.S. Eliot's 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1997), especially in its emphasis on the writer's contact with tradition over and above those of direct individual experience. Eliot's approach though, is heavy on knowledge and on a continual referencing, or 'glancing' back through the text to its precursors in the great canonical traditions. Bakhtin's approach on the other hand appears more pragmatic, less reverential, and more in line with the responses to the qualitative research from respondents who were enthusiastic about what could

be taken and utilised from existing genres. There is not time here, unfortunately, to examine the differences and similarities between Bakhtin and Eliot's theories of creativity, but there does appear, in Bakhtin's approach, to be an acknowledgment, in his emphasis on parole, of the importance of the physical form of language in writing, and along with it a sense that the art of writing does not necessarily benefit from the academic study of texts but requires a more writerly approach, one that encourages the writer to make contact with what Bakhtin called 'the form-shaping ideology' of genre .

If genre serves to define ways, developed in literature, that can explain the experience of 'being' in the world, then the chronotope realises 'the living impulse' of genre. Chronotopes are the congealed elements that Bakhtin identified as speech genres, imported into literature. They are the means by which the ideas of genre are made real; the means by which genre is given the form of the most immediate reality, emphasizing the physicality and the concreteness of artistic thinking within the eidetic narrative:

All the novel's abstract elements – philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect – gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood, permitting the imaging power of art to do its work. Such is the representational power of the chronotope (1981, p. 250).

Bakhtin took the term chronotope from Einstein's Theory of Relativity and in its application to literature he retains Einstein's notion of the inseparability of space and time. Bakhtin was clearly conscious of what was 'given' in this scientific concept as the chronotope weaves time and space, like the warp and weft of a canvas, into the living fabric upon which the events of fiction can be played. The chronotope, Bakhtin points out in his analysis of the representation of time and space in historical genres (*ibid*, pp. 86-242), is not a constant. Different genres weave time and space together in different ways and the nature of these space/time contexts affect the possible events and actions that take place in them. For example, the way that time and space elide to create the possibilities of plot in a novel by Austen or George Eliot are very different from those that would govern the action in an expressionist novel by Kubin or Kafka. And it is

within these differing chronotopes that the events of fiction are shaped and rendered as real physical experience in artistic thinking.

In the different genres of the novel certain chronotopes have accrued and 'congealed' into what Bakhtin calls chronotopic motifs (ibid, p. 243). These are the characters, locations, situations and events that we associate with traditional genres, but this doesn't reduce Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope to a conventional taxonomy of genre. His insistence on the 'living impulse' of the chronotope allows us to see it as part of the artistic thinking of the creative process; as part of the 'given' of genre that brings its influence to bear on the text as it is 'created'.

There is a subtlety and insight in the breadth of Bakhtin's approach to genre and the chronotope that makes much late twentieth century critical assessment look impoverished and partial. Not only does he emphasise the 'living impulse' of chronotopes and their ability to create imagined worlds in which chronotopic motifs become distillations of human experience, but he also reveals how this process is inextricably linked to our vision of our own humanity, to ways in which we can share our understanding of what it is to 'be' in the world.

6.1.4) Summary of discussion of qualitative research findings on influence in relation to Bakhtin's conceptual framework

In this section, I am returning to the initial question articulated in my research aims: What is influence?⁵. In line with my stated intentions at the beginning of this chapter, I will summarise the extent to which participant responses to the qualitative research agree or are at variance with the notion of influence within Bakhtin's socially-situated conceptual framework.

There is a clear correspondence in Bakhtin's work with notions of influence that emerged from the qualitative research project. The responses to the two questionnaires map onto Bakhtin's various accounts of influence in the creative process, with Bakhtin's more detailed exploration offering further insight into the

⁵ For the full question and the Research Aims, see the beginning of the Methodology section in Chapter 4.

areas identified by the research group. The identification of conscious and unconscious influence; the role of the body in unconscious influence (seen in the emphasis on instinct and feeling and the use of words like 'ingest', 'absorb' and 'osmosis' to describe the assimilation of influence); the complexity of influence and the importance of influence (both as a body of accumulated knowledge and of form) and finally the significance of influence as the 'given' in the process of dialogic creativity, all fall into the framework of Bakhtin's socially-situated theory. The insights into these areas provided by his work afford a number of opportunities for practical exercises and discussion⁶, whilst the notion of influence as both a constraint and tool for further creativity, as seen in Bakhtin's work on influence over 'great time', the 'form-shaping ideology' of genre and artistic thinking in the chronotope, offer fresh and interesting perspectives on the managing of influence in the creative process.

6.1.5) Influence, creativity and the novelistic self

Having explored the social sources of influence within culture and the traditions of genre and acknowledged the significance of this influence on the writer, I was interested in pursuing the effect of influence on the level of the individual. Research group responses had suggested that the concept of voice (Hunt & Sampson, 2006) and emotional reflexivity in relation to personal experience were important factors in considering notions of influence and originality in the creative process. Bakhtin, I realised, even though he talks about voice when he discusses character zones and the hybridisation of assimilated heteroglossia in the novel, does not fully explore the individual reflexivity of the author, but characterises him/her more as the dialogising process at the heart of the novel. I decided therefore to explore what Morson and Emerson (1990, pp. 216 - 223) have called Bakhtin's theory of the 'novelistic' self, to see to what extent this model of the self can help explain the influences at work on the individual writer.

In the novelistic self, Bakhtin takes the dynamic model of the interanimating 'voices' inherent in heteroglossia and manifested in the novel, and develops it

⁶ I will discuss ways in which Bakhtin's ideas can be put to good use in practical exercises with developing writers in Chapter 8.

into a model of the self. At the heart of this model, the dialogic process is used as a means of explaining individual consciousness.

Bakhtin begins this process by making a distinction between two concepts he calls 'authoritative discourse' and 'internally persuasive discourse' (1981, p. 342). Authoritative discourse represents fixed, monologic, inherited and unquestionable discourses; discourses that demand unconditional allegiance, whereas internally persuasive discourse is associated with discourses that allow for creativity, experimentation and discrimination. Bakhtin claims:

The struggle and dialogic interrelationship of these categories of ideological discourse are what usually determine the history of an individual ideological consciousness (ibid, p. 242).

This is a struggle 'for hegemony among various verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values' (ibid, p. 346) within the individual self.

The relationship between authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse is not a balanced, 1:1 relationship. Bakhtin makes it clear that although authoritative discourse is capable of significant influence over the individual, especially in the early stages of the development of the self, it is best characterised as remote, imposed and indissoluble and does not necessarily manifest itself in the immediate, experiential zone of physical and emotional contact. It is 'transmitted' – Bakhtin chooses the verb carefully (ibid, p. 344) – through the institutionalised ideological discourses of moral, ethical, political authority and he characterises it further as a 'dead language', 'hard edged' and solid.

Internally Persuasive Discourse is characterised by the notion of assimilation⁷. Assimilation involves taking the word that is 'half ours and half someone else's' and weaving it into 'one's own word' (ibid, p. 345). This is clearly an extension of the dialogic process into individual consciousness, allowing the individual to respond to the influence of others' voices within a shared language.

⁷ Assimilation is Bakhtin's general term for the processes by which the speech of others comes to play a role in our own inner speech.

Bakhtin makes a clear distinction between these two forms of ideological influence, emphasising internally persuasive discourse's dominant role in the processual experience of the self and its intensely dialogic nature.

As I was reading and absorbing these ideas, I became concerned at the extent to which they were premised on Bakhtin's notion of dialogic creativity. I had understood Bakhtin's theory of dialogue as arguing that in order for creativity and unfinalizability to be intrinsic to the dialogic event and in order for meaning to be derived from it, there needed to be an encounter with an 'other', not just a disembodied 'voice', but an embodied experience in a contextualised event. This all made sense within Bakhtin's socially-situated paradigm in which our interactions in the physical world created a stabilising context for the relational, ideologically contested, world of linguistic meaning, but his insistence that creativity and unfinalizability were dependent on an objective, physical context meant it was difficult to transfer these notions to the interior monologue of individual consciousness.

Bakhtin's definitions of creativity and unfinalizability were consistent with a view that identified language with consciousness and situated language in relational and physical exchange. Where they appeared problematic and inconsistent were in their attempts to explain the mechanisms of creativity as existing purely in external dialogic processes and in importing this process, through internally persuasive dialogue, into the physically context-less space of human consciousness.

Bakhtin reveals that he is aware of this internal inconsistency in his thinking in relation to embodied consciousness and dialogic creativity when he concludes a general discussion of literary language's historical struggle with forms of authoritative discourse, with these words:

All this has been studied by psychology, but not from the point of view of its verbal formulation in possible inner monologues of developing human beings, the monologue that lasts a whole life. What confronts us is the complex problem presented by forms capable of expressing such a (dialogised) monologue (1981, p. 345).

What Bakhtin appears to be recognising here is the essential contradiction in his dialogic theory of creativity⁸. If it is the case that creativity is generated through a dialogic encounter with reified language in the physical form of the 'other', how is it possible to have dialogue within the monologue of individual consciousness?

Bakhtin responds to the problem he has posed himself in a number of ways. He begins by outlining the 'evolution of an individual consciousness' in which 'consciousness awakens to independent ideological life precisely in a world of alien discourses surrounding it' (ibid, p. 345). The language Bakhtin uses here is telling: individual consciousness *evolves* out of discourse and is *awakened to life* through it; the implication being that individual consciousness - Bakhtin favours the phrase 'ideological life' - is reliant on social discourse for its existence. Bakhtin's assumption appears to be that if it were not for the absorption of social discourse into internally persuasive discourse there would be very little consciousness. The problem is that Bakhtin fails to say how much or how little or of what kind or quality this residual, remaining consciousness might be. He is also clearly committing himself to a model of consciousness that is predominantly social and linguistic. In its emphasis on consciousness evolving alongside the development of language it was reminiscent of the 'blank slate' concept of consciousness in the Standard Social Science Model.

I was beginning to realise that this position in relation to language and consciousness was symptomatic of Bakhtin's social constructivism: that although he accurately locates ideological consciousness in social interaction, he is forced, because of the particular point of view that social constructivism offers, to explain consciousness through language. Not only was he forced to explain consciousness through language; he was also forced, through his own emphasis on heteroglossia, to explain creativity through dialogic encounter.

⁸ David Lodge (1990, pp 87-99) shows that he too is aware of this problem in Bakhtin's work, though he tends to see it as a logical contradiction between monologic and polyphonic modes of discourse and not as a more fundamental problem of creativity.

Bakhtin's most forensic insight into the nature of internally persuasive discourse comes in the following description:

The semantic structure of an internally persuasive discourse is *not finite*, it is *open*; in each of the new contexts that dialogise it, this discourse is able to reveal even newer *ways to mean* (1981, p. 346).

Bakhtin states boldly here that the semantic structure is open; but he doesn't say *how* it opens, or how it closes around meaning without the actual physical encounter and the dialogic participation of the 'other'. There is no discussion, or suggestion that there could be conceptual mechanisms below the semantic surface of language that could enable this process. Everything is conceptualised on the level of language and the creative process in this section is described (metaphorically) as a galvanising, stimulating, re-cycling word event (ibid, pp. 345-346).

In the second part of his response to the complex problem of a dialogised monologue, Bakhtin attempts to smuggle the notion of the dialogic encounter into internally persuasive discourse by suggesting that the process of assimilation (the way in which 'one's own word' becomes tightly interwoven with the word of the 'other') replicates the actual dialogic encounter itself: that thought is always in some way 'voiced'. He develops this line of argument further, fusing it with the notion of voice, speech and physical context when he suggests that 'the internally persuasive word easily becomes an object of representation' (ibid, p. 347). In a move towards imaginative representation that validates Morson and Emerson's description of this later theory of self as the 'novelistic' self (Morson & Emerson, 1990), Bakhtin argues that internally persuasive discourses can be 'fundamentally and organically fused with the image of a speaking person' (ibid, p. 347). This link with the essence of fictional character⁹ - which is surely what the image of a speaking person is - allows Bakhtin to draw clear parallels between internally persuasive discourse and the novel, to suggest that thought, despite some higher levels of abstraction, is

⁹ It is interesting to note that Bakhtin does not explore the possibility that internally persuasive discourse could also be represented symbolically or metaphorically.

essentially novelistic, and to further reinforce its conceptualisation in terms of voice, heteroglossia and the dialogising context of the story.

In my research into internally persuasive discourse, I felt I had uncovered an area of significant complexity in Bakhtin's thought. I had initially been attracted to his work because of its active model of human agency¹⁰, but I had realised that there had been a shift, between the early and middle stages of his career, towards the notion of creativity as being increasingly located in dialogic exchange.

Although this socially-situated theory allowed him to explain human agency and creativity in terms of his social and relational model of self, morality and unfinalizability and had offered a number of useful insights into the social, cultural and linguistic influences at work on a writer, I was beginning to question whether it was capable of maintaining the more physically experiential approach to creativity he had been attempting to articulate in his earlier writings.

On a phenomenological level Bakhtin's writings continued to offer insights into the fictional process and there still appeared to be the space within its socially-situated theory to accommodate his conceptualisations of voice, hybridisation, genre and the chronotope, but I was beginning to sense, in its increasing emphasis on linguistic consciousness, that his thinking lacked a deeper stratum. It was as if its forensic focus on the conscious level of language and the writing process was denying him the ability to push down through the textual surface to explore the role that the unconscious and the body could be playing in creativity.

I had noticed that in his account of internally persuasive discourse, when Bakhtin talked specifically about the influence of one writer on another (1981, p. 347), he described it in terms of the imitation of an 'other's' voice, not in the tense, emotionally-heightened sense that Bloom (1973) had done, but in a more abstract sense, as a further 'creative development'. As Bakhtin's theories began

¹⁰ See, Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity, in Bakhtin, M. (1990).

to enter into a closer orbit around the linguistic concepts of dialogue and heteroglossia there appeared to be less discussion of the reification of language in his work and I was left wondering whether this aspect of his conceptual framework was now largely assumed, or whether it was being ignored.

I was also becoming aware that there was little or no discussion of felt experience in Bakhtin's work and no attempt to explain how the emotional life of an individual could impact on his conceptualisation of the 'voiced' self. This was in marked contrast to the responses to the qualitative research that suggested influence on an individual writer was felt on an emotional and unconscious level as well as consciously through language.

The notion of voice also felt constrained in Bakhtin's work. There was little sense of the notion of voice as a form of reflexivity: as a fluid movement between the felt experience of the body and language (Hunt & Sampson, 2006) and little sense of language being used to articulate feeling. Reflexivity within Bakhtin's work seemed to be limited to the hybridisation of heteroglossia within the text, or to the dialogic interaction with voiced ideology in internally persuasive discourse.

I hadn't anticipated this outcome when I had begun researching Bakhtin's theory of internally persuasive discourse and now that I had considered it, I wasn't quite sure how to respond. My conclusions had led me to question the validity of Bakhtin's theory of dialogic creativity and I was now beginning to doubt its viability as a model of the creative process.

In the light of these conclusions I decided that I would need to carefully structure the next section on originality. I didn't want to complicate a comparison of my qualitative research findings on originality by incorporating it into an ongoing critique of Bakhtin's theory of creativity. I decided therefore that having explored Bakhtin's ideas in relation to influence (the given), I would now discuss the areas of Bakhtin's work that related to notions of originality (the created). I would then discuss these areas in relation to the key themes of my qualitative research. Having done that I would summarise my findings, discuss

my ongoing critique of Bakhtin's work and decide on the next stage of the research.

6.1.6) Locating notions of originality in the Bakhtinian paradigm

Originality is not a term Bakhtin uses often in his writings. In fact the whole notion of originality – as it has so far been defined within this study as a material or abstract phenomenon, unique and new, unprecedented and *sui generis* – would appear antithetical to Bakhtin's philosophical vision. There are, of course, other definitions of originality other than this more contemporary perception of the word and I will list them here briefly¹¹ in order to clarify and identify the notion of originality I will be pursuing in Bakhtin's work.

Walter Benjamin, in his political distinction between originals and reproductions, identified originality with the authenticity of an original artwork (2008), and Raymond Williams (1985) associated it with three other definitions: a beginning or source, a force or person from which subsequent conditions have arisen, and an original or distinctive person. Pope (2005) points to the strong association between originality and creativity, in that originality is seen as a product of the creative process, and reveals a number of different ways in which researchers in creativity theory have developed their own idiosyncratic definitions of the word. The responses from my qualitative research demonstrated a similar awareness of heteroglossia in their suggestion that the meaning of originality changes when seen from either a critical perspective or a creative one. I will focus in this following section on trying to understand the notion of originality that emerges from within the Bakhtinian conceptual framework.

It is a measure of Bakhtin's broader philosophical ambitions that, when originality is reconceived within a paradigm that emphasises the relationship between the 'given' and the 'created', the meaning of the word shifts away from traditional definitions that suggest unprecedented and unique qualities and is re-located, in relation to the past and the future, within a field of constant ongoing dialogic interaction.

¹¹ A more thorough survey of historical definitions of originality and influence will follow in the section on Romanticism.

In order to fully appreciate how Bakhtin reconfigures notions of originality within the dialogic I felt it was important to understand the significance of it within his philosophical framework. For Bakhtin, it is only in the flow of dialogic interaction that there can be real creativity. In these dialogised contexts, through the interanimation of heteroglossia, the given can become the created and new meaning, which is never completely new, can be added to what Bakhtin called the on-going 'world symposium' of the dialogic (1984, p. 293).

Global on-going dialogue *is*, for Bakhtin, the field of creativity. It is inevitable, real and universal to all social consciousness. It grows out of the need to respond to the immediate local environment and is characterised by Bakhtin as work: work to create new meaning and work to create the physical and metaphysical structures of the social world. In his essay on Goethe (1986, pp. 25–53.), Bakhtin praises the way Goethe appreciates the creativity of 'man the builder' and reveals his awareness of the ways in which human creativity has affected the physical chronotopes of the real world as it draws the past into the present. Bakhtin claims that Goethe, in his understanding of the way creativity is reflected in processes of time, has revealed 'a material, creative historic necessity' (1986, p. 39.) and he goes on to distil this phrase further into the notion of 'creative necessity'.

The idea of 'creative necessity' is vital to an understanding of Bakhtin's notion of creativity. As a phrase it reinforces the necessity of labour and the application of effort in the creative process and is a clear rejection of romantic notions of creativity that he reveals his opposition to in his critical distinction between poetry and the novel (1981, pp. 284-288).

Another important idea that Bakhtin takes from his reading of Goethe is Goethe's appreciation of the 'fullness of time':

The main features of this visualization [in Goethe's travel writing] are the merging of time (past with present), the fullness and clarity of the visibility of the time in space, the inseparability of the time of an event from the specific place of its occurrence (*Localität und Geschichte*), the visible essential connection of time (present and past), the creative and active

nature of time (of the past in the present and of the present itself), the necessity that penetrates time and links time with space and different times with one another, and, finally, on the basis of the necessity that pervades localized time, the inclusion of the future, crowning the fullness of time in Goethe's images (1986, pp. 41 – 42.)

It is clear here, in this chronotopic reading of Goethe, that Bakhtin sees in his writing the affirmation of his belief that creativity and time work together to make possible the constant transition from the prescribed past into the open and unpredictable future through the creative and transforming present. Furthermore, that the fact that the past, the present and the future, coexist within the present moment, creates 'the fullness of time'. Bakhtin is here reinforcing his conviction that creativity takes place in the live event of the present, that engaging in dialogic creativity is a way of being in the present as it opens up to the future and that one way of understanding originality in Bakhtinian terms is as the experience of being in time.

The 'fullness of time' has further important implications for Bakhtin's thinking, as it is in the constant opening up of time into the future that Bakhtin locates the notion of unfinalizability. Unfinalizability is not just a marker of the open potential of the present; it is also a key component of Bakhtin's ethical argument, as, with freedom comes responsibility, because in an unfinalizable world there are no fixed moral absolutes whereby an individual can chart their course into an unpredictable future. In this ethical argument, Bakhtin links our moral lives to unfinalizability and dialogic interaction. The corollary to this is that, in the wider philosophical framework of Bakhtin's ideas, anything that isolates an individual from the flow of dialogic interaction, compromises their sense of ethical responsibility and encourages fixed and monologic modes of thought. Bakhtin's awareness of this issue can be seen clearly in his antipathy to notions of epistemological self-sufficiency: the idea of a separate single consciousness. It also explains why Bakhtin developed an image of the self as liminal, existing on the edge of the body and the edge of culture:

To be means to communicate ... A person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary (1984, p. 287)

It is important for Bakhtin that the tendency towards self-containment, to social separation that he associates with static and habitual ways of thinking are properly challenged by the dialogic – hence his determination, in internally persuasive discourse, to show how internal thoughts are broken up and challenged by other voices in individual consciousness. Bakhtin appeared to be highly mistrustful of ways of conceptualising the self as discrete and self-contained and emphasised the relationally dependent nature of human self-consciousness.

Within Bakhtin's philosophical vision, it is hard to see how the necessity of the creative process could be assured (how the 'given' could be transformed into the 'created') without the need to re-orientate and adjust to the voice of the 'other'. Without the creative, galvanising voice of the 'other' it would be all too easy for the 'given' to remain the 'given': for the subject to remain passive, closed or monologic.

What Bakhtin has effectively done, within the parameters of his own philosophical thinking, is to shift notions of originality away from positions associated with self-containment, inspiration and the uniqueness of original ideas, towards a view of originality that sees it in terms of process, change and social interaction: from the 'original' implied by originality to the process of 'origination'. In Bakhtin's writings originality becomes more closely associated with creative work and the creative process, with the 'genuinely new' of experience in time and with creation within the dialogic encounter. This can clearly be seen in his appreciation of the way Goethe sees creativity as work or labour and with Goethe's notion of 'the fullness of time' that Bakhtin felt expressed so succinctly the way in which the 'given' and the 'created' are brought together in the dialogic event as the past and the future of the present moment.

6.1.7) Originality in the novel: polyphony and surplus

If Bakhtin was going to show how literature could be truly dialogic and assimilate dialogic creativity into literary creativity, he needed to show how, in its representation of character, it could replicate the 'other' in the live dialogic

event. The theory of polyphony developed in the 'Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics' (1984) allowed him to resolve the opposition between life and art that had developed out of his early writings:

When a human being is in art, he is not in life, and conversely. There is no unity between them and no inner interpretation within the unity of an individual person (1990, p. 1).

Bakhtin was eager to find a way in which he could unify the aesthetic world and the world of experience and introduce ethical notions of unfinalizability into what, at that time, he conceived of as the monologic world of the novel: a world that he believed, in its promotion of a contained and separate individualism and individual truth, worked against the core principles of his relational ontological vision.

Monologic writing, for Bakhtin, in denying the creativity of the 'other', reduced characters in fiction to fixed, pre-determined schemas, whilst polyphony, based on his interpretation of Dostoevsky's work, suggested a new genre of literature, a genre that was essentially unfinalizable, that recognised the creative and indeterminate nature of character and that embraced the socially constituted self.

To understand the polyphonic nature of Dostoevsky's writings, according to Bakhtin, required a radical re-evaluation of the writer's work. In 'Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics', Bakhtin went to great lengths to refute previous interpretations of Dostoevsky's novels and to re-conceive him as a dialogic thinker (1984, pp. 5-46). He emphasised the openness of Dostoevsky's fictional designs, his opposition to deterministic psychology and his 'creative understanding' of his characters, praising the few critics who appreciated the anti-monologic nature of Dostoevsky's thought, as having:

the correct understanding of Dostoevsky's 'psychologism', as a mode for visualising, objectively and realistically, a contradictory collective of other people's psyches (1984, p. 37).

Bakhtin identifies key scenes in 'Crime and Punishment' and 'The Brothers Karamazov' in which Dostoevsky:

constantly and severely criticised mechanistic psychology, both its pragmatic lines based on the concepts of natural law and utility, and even more its physiological line, which reduced psychology to physiology (ibid, pp. 61- 62).

Bakhtin is clearly pointing up his antipathy here, to what he saw as the tendency of the psychological discourses of his time, which were predominantly Freudian and Pavlovian, to represent the human psyche as separated, self-contained and determined by unconscious or physiological drives, and in doing so was attempting to justify and promote his own view of the human psyche as essentially collective and dialogic.

In order to move away from monologically framed conceptions of fictional character; polyphonic writing required a change in the relationship between character and author¹². Bakhtin achieves this by re-working the notion of 'surplus' he had developed in his earlier writings (1990). 'Surplus' had been depicted by Bakhtin in its initial literary application, as the amount of knowledge, information and control an author has over his or her characters (the 'finalising image'). Because characters are created, authors have a much greater surplus over them than people they would know in their daily lives. The monologic author uses this surplus to ensure that the truths represented by finalized characters are the author's truths. The polyphonic author renounces their surplus and turns the creative process into one that recreates the real dialogic event in which unfinalized others (characters) exist on the same plane as the author/speaker and are treated as equals. This, Bakhtin insists, includes the author as the narrating voice or character. By shifting the authorial narrator away from their monologic position as the controlling centre of the narrative, Dostoevsky deconstructs 'that authorial world with its points of view and

¹² By referring to the author and not the narrator (although the narrator is implicit in Bakhtin's reference to the author), Bakhtin is emphasising the importance of the creative agency of the author over more theoretical ways of considering literature that deal only with narrators and characters thereby distancing the text from its socially-situated provenance and the complexity of the creative process that produced it.

finalizing definitions (which presuppose), a fixed external position, a fixed authorial field of vision.' (1984. p. 52):

Thus the new artistic position of the author with regard to the hero in Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel is a fully realised and thoroughly consistent dialogic position, one that affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability and indeterminacy of the hero. For the author the hero is not 'he' and not 'I' but a fully valid 'thou', that is, another and other autonomous 'I' (ibid, p. 63).

The author's task is to create the events in which characters can reveal themselves through dialogic interaction and this revelation creates the open-ended story structure of the novel. In this way, the story in the polyphonic novel evolves out of the real time of its writing; 'the story as a whole - takes place not in the past, but right now, that is, in the real present of the creative process' (ibid, p. 63).

Bakhtin discusses Dostoevsky's creative process and his particularly sensitive approach to characterisation. He also praises Dostoevsky for his 'extraordinary gift for hearing the dialogue of his epoch' and for the fact that he took his ideas from life; that he used ideas that were 'already living or entering life as idea-forces'¹³.

Most importantly though, for Bakhtin, certainly in terms of artistic sensitivity, is Dostoevsky's ability to see the potential of any dialogic encounter he created and to understand 'what unexpected directions (an idea) would take in its further development and transformation'. It was this ability, above all, to realise the potential of the conflicting dialogic encounters he created, that for Bakhtin, marked Dostoevsky out as the final ripening of the polyphonic style:

Dostoevsky placed the idea on the borderline of dialogically intersecting consciousness. He brought together worldviews, which in real life were absolutely estranged to each other and forced them to quarrel. He extended, as it were, these distantly separated ideas by means of a dotted line to the point of their dialogic intersection. In so doing he

¹³ It is impossible to do justice to them detail of Bakhtin's argument here. For further reading on the issue of contemporaneity in Dostoevsky see 'The Idea in Dostoevsky' (Bakhtin, 1984, pp. 78-100).

anticipated future dialogic encounters between ideas which in his time were still dissociated (ibid, p. 91).

Bakhtin's description of Dostoevsky's writing process suggests a particular kind of dialogic reflexivity. Dostoevsky's voice would appear to be located in his sensitive engagement with other voices and his openness to a dialogic encounter with the ideas of his time. In this sense it would appear to have strong similarities with the idea of originality as a quality of writing and of writing coming from personal experience, but there is a sense in Bakhtin's reading of Dostoevsky, and in Dostoevsky's writing itself that the notion of reflexivity and voice is too heavily invested in the dialogic. The emphasis is almost relentlessly on the dialogic and on the way it 'provokes' and 'teases' characters into unanticipated responses that generate the ongoing, unpredictable flow of the narrative. Everything else in the novel is of secondary importance. Plot and structure are relegated to a 'procrustean bed' and the descriptive and chronotopic elements are seen as purely functional enhancing contexts:

Dostoevsky does not labor over objectified images of people ... he does not seek expressive, graphic, finalizing words, authorial words – what he seeks above all are words *for the hero* (ibid, p. 39).

The emphasis on establishing the hero as a dialogic 'other' diminishes the importance of other aspects of story structure. The more Bakhtin goes into detail in the Dostoevsky book the more difficult it becomes to identify exactly what renouncing authorial surplus means and the more difficult it is to understand its consequences in terms of narrative structure. It is hard to imagine the kind of objective realism that Bakhtin appears to be aspiring to - and that he associates with Dostoevsky's work – as being able to hold any clear narrative shape. Bakhtin talks about the openness of the polyphonic plot (ibid, p. 105) but he is forced to concede that in actuality Dostoevsky's novels do have conventional endings and he postpones any detailed study of this problem:

We do in fact observe in Dostoevsky's novels a unique conflict between the internal open-endedness of the characters and the dialogue, and the *external* (in most cases compositional and thematic) *completedness* of

every individual novel. We cannot go deeply into this problem here (ibid, p. 39).

It is difficult not to conclude that Bakhtin's notion of polyphony was influenced in equal part by both philosophical desire and anxiety. Desire, because Bakhtin was determined to find ways of conceptualizing human experience, both in fiction and within the individual self, that did not abstract it from the unfinalizable event of life itself. And anxiety, evidenced in his philosophical concern (1981, p. 292), that separated from relational activity, from contact with heteroglossia and from an awareness of dialogism, the notion of consciousness and human behaviour was susceptible to causal systems of thought within the human sciences, like psychology, that denied the possibility of unfinalizability, freedom and ethical responsibility.

Bakhtin's development of the idea of polyphony allowed him to import into literature a theory of creativity that reflected his belief in the liminal, relational and dialogic nature of the self. In it he found a way of explaining linguistic consciousness, in the work that followed on internally persuasive discourse, as dialogic, open and unfinalizable.

6.1.8) Originality, polyphonic truth, character and potential

As I continued my research into Bakhtin's work I found it increasingly difficult to understand how the theory of creativity developed in polyphony could integrate the levels of embodiment implicit in Bakhtin's earlier theorising in 'Towards a Philosophy of the Act' (1993) and 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity' (1990). There appeared to be an assumption in his work that the body had a role in the creative process, but as he developed a more linguistic approach to his thinking, I sensed a grey area developing between the idea of the liminal self and the body proper that wasn't being properly acknowledged, addressed or explained in his work.

In his theory of polyphony Bakhtin argues that by re-positioning the author in the writing process Dostoevsky had created a new genre, a 'form-shaping ideology' that offered a different notion of truth: a polyphonic truth.

It is quite possible to imagine and postulate a unified truth that requires a plurality of consciousnesses ... one that is, so to speak, by its very nature full of event potential and is born at a point of contact among various consciousnesses. The monologic way of perceiving cognition and truth is only one of the possible ways. It arises only where consciousness is placed above existence (1984, p. 81).

The emphasis is on truth as the collective sharing of experience, but what Bakhtin is doing here, in the context of polyphony, is suggesting that this notion of a unified polyphonic truth also applies to literature. I felt that I could understand this concept on a phenomenological level. I could certainly relate to what Bakhtin was saying in terms of my own reading and writing process, but there seemed to be a flaw in his argument in that he was taking an idea, grounded in experiential interaction with 'others' in the real world and importing it into the human mind and into imagined interactions that were physically separate from the real world. How can we replicate the exterior experience to this degree in the human mind? How could we re-create embodied encounters in the imagination? If consciousness has to be shared for it to recognise a unified truth, then a unified truth must logically be inaccessible to individual consciousness. As Bakhtin's philosophical thinking took more of a linguistic turn there was increasingly less emphasis and less attempt to explain the ways in which unconscious and embodied processes, which were clearly implied, contributed to the creative process.

I wasn't persuaded that either artistic creativity or polyphonic truth had been sufficiently explained by the importing of the dialogic into individual consciousness and although I was beginning to develop a stronger sense of the tensions in Bakhtin's argument, I could not as yet put together a coherent critique or counter proposal. The problem I had opened up remained open. Not only that, but it was also becoming an impediment to my understanding of notions of originality in Bakhtin's work. If originality was linked to creativity and I couldn't understand or resolve my problems with Bakhtin's theory of creativity then understanding originality through his conceptual framework was going to be difficult.

Despite these reservations I was convinced that the problem could be somehow resolved within Bakhtin's overall conceptual framework: that it wasn't necessarily a weakness in his argument so much as a lack of depth in his ontological and epistemological assumptions, and mindful of this central difficulty, I decided to continue with my research into originality in his work. There were still a number of concepts and ideas related to polyphony that I felt needed to be considered and I decided to investigate these before relating them to the key themes of my qualitative research and the broader themes of my thesis.

In chapter three of his book on Dostoevsky, Bakhtin expands on polyphony's relationship to the 'idea', by which he means the topic, theme or themes that arise out of the dialogic interaction of characters within the writing process. Bakhtin talks about Dostoevsky's 'positioning of the idea' and it is important to note that this positioning requires us not only to identify the 'idea' as being dialogised by the differing perspectives of the voices within a polyphonic text, but also significantly that the idea is now located in space and time:

the idea is inter-individual and inter-subjective – the realm of its existence is not individual consciousness but dialogic communion between consciousnesses. The idea is a live event, played out at the point of dialogic meeting between two or several consciousnesses (1984, p. 88).

For Bakhtin, the idea in fiction is a 'live event'. It is not a monologic 'thought'. The distinction here is significant. If it is extracted from the dialogic event, the idea becomes a thought, an abstraction; separable from the body that carries it. It loses the qualities of lived experience and the further it is disassociated from the interanimations of heteroglossia, the more it becomes fixed, monologic and impermeable to change.

Within Dostoevsky's fiction, according to Bakhtin, the idea is not separable from the individual who possesses it. The abstract and ideological is subsumed into the unfinalizable and ongoing event of the personality in the experience of an individual's existence in time. Therefore, within polyphonic writing: 'The truth

about the world ... is inseparable from the truth of the personality¹⁴ (ibid, p. 78). Bakhtin explains that in this way the wider discourses of the world are fused with the prosaic preoccupations of character and are drawn into contact with direct experience. As a result, 'lofty ideological thinking becomes passionate and intimately linked with personality' (ibid, p. 78):

This merging of the hero's discourse about himself with his ideological discourse about the world greatly increases the direct signifying power of a self-utterance, strengthens its internal resistance to all sorts of external finalization. The idea helps self-consciousness assert its sovereignty in Dostoevsky's artistic world, and helps it triumph over all fixed, stable, neutral images (ibid, p. 79).

The implication here is that the openness and fluidity of the direct experience of embodiment and the embodied self (although Bakhtin doesn't state it as such), strengthens the individual's ability to resist fixed forms of thinking whilst reinforcing the validity and significance of their own words¹⁵. So, one of the ways in which originality can be understood in Bakhtin's work, is in the degree to which the 'ideas' (or the thematic preoccupations of a narrative) are worked through the personality of its characters and dialogised by it.

It is clear from Bakhtin's arguments that he believed monologic thinking inhibits originality, because originality – the ability of the author to remain open to the potentiality of the dialogic encounter - is less likely to be found in the personality of the monologic author or in the characters they create. The ideological fixity of the monologic author means they are not open to the 'surprisingness' of character and do not treat them as integral wholes. As a result of this inability to utilise the originality and potential offered in this way, authors become reliant on fixed forms and are unable to turn the 'given' into the 'created'.

In order to explain how the dialogic relationship between the characters (personalities) in a novel could work within the 'fullness of time' to create an

¹⁴ Bakhtin used the term 'personality' to describe Dostoevsky's characters because he believed it gave a clearer indication of the potential and surprisingness of polyphonic characterisation over the over-constructed monologic character.

¹⁵ Once again it is interesting to note the degree to which the emphasis is on language and discourse in Bakhtin's thinking. Bakhtin doesn't address the role and significance of the body and the emotions in the notion of personality.

immediate sense of polyphonic truth and to escape the possibility of that truth itself becoming fixed, Bakhtin developed the notion of potential: an idea that can only be fully understood if seen within the context of genre.

The idea of 'potential' is one of Bakhtin's more enigmatic concepts. It can be loosely defined as 'semantic depths' or 'depth of meaning' and is used to describe the ability of the 'non-coincidental'¹⁶ character (1984, p. 59) to offer unanticipated possibilities for the development of the dialogic encounter in the novel and on a more general level, to explain the ability of literature to offer unintended and unexpected dialogic opportunities in future historical situations. In terms of the novel, it characterises the form's ability to always mean more than it appears to. Nowhere is the term fully, or exhaustively explained in Bakhtin's work.

Its relationship with other dynamic concepts like unfinalizability is clear: potential represents the unfinalizability of meaning. It emphasises what can be 'created' out of the hidden depths of the 'given' and is used to describe the way human experience and wisdom is accumulated and carried by literature and exists, often in a latent or hidden form, in great novels and plays. The historical precedents of this wisdom are often lost to a contemporary audience, who tend to interpret the action and events of a narrative through the eyes of their own epoch, but critics can play an important role in liberating and revealing this hidden potential (1986, p.7). Also, writers who are alive to the artistic value of potential can sense it in their generic contact with character and in dialogic situations, can recognise its connection with the literature of the past, utilising it to create further potential in their own writing. Bakhtin says of Dostoevsky:

As an artist, Dostoevsky uncovered in the image of a given idea not only the historically actual features available in the prototype ... but also its *potentialities* (1984, p. 91).

According to Bakhtin, characters and the dialogue, ideas and actions that emanate from them, are the fundamental sources of potential in fiction. But,

¹⁶ Bakhtin uses the term 'non-coincidence' to emphasise the vitality, the flow and the unsettled nature of both human and literary personality

without an awareness of genre's ability to create a potentialising context for their characters, authors are reduced to using it as a template for their own time and will create work that will neither draw from the past nor offer anything to the future. In Bakhtin's words:

the work cannot live in future centuries without having somehow absorbed past centuries as well. If it had belonged entirely to today (that is, were a product only of its own time) and not a continuation of the past or essentially related to the past, it could not live in the future. Everything that belongs only to the present dies along with the present (1986, p. 4).

Genre, in the enormous richness of its resources; in its myriad ways of seeing the world and in its capacity to offer form and structure to the events and situations in which its characters interact, contains unfinalizable wisdom that cannot be reduced to a set of propositions or an abstract summary. It carries within it the accumulated experiences of a culture; experiences, as Bakhtin points out in relationship to Shakespeare, that can be traced far back over 'great time':

The semantic treasures Shakespeare embedded in his works were created and collected through the centuries and even millennia: they lay hidden in the language, and not only in the literary language, but also in those strata of the popular language that before Shakespeare's time had not entered literature, in the diverse genres and forms of speech communication, in the forms of a mighty national culture (primarily carnival forms) that were shaped through millennia, in theater-spectacle genres (mystery plays, farces, and so forth), in plots whose roots go back to prehistoric antiquity, and, finally, in forms of thinking (1986, p. 5).

Bakhtin is here clearly emphasising how the speech genres, literary genres and proto-literary genres that carry the 'semantic treasures', or potential, that we appreciate in Shakespeare's works had themselves lain hidden in the various strata of the language before Shakespeare used them to potentialise his own work. Interestingly, Bakhtin traces them back beyond recorded history to what he calls simply 'forms of thinking'. Good writers, Bakhtin argues consistently throughout a number of texts (1984, 1981 and 1986), realise the value of genre and harness its potential so their work resonates with the wisdom and experience contained in the historical past. They realise this potential through

character in a way that makes their work mean far more than it appears to mean and opens it up to the future, creating even further potential for meaning and interpretation.

In Bakhtin's view the primary concern of the writer is to release potential, to create an openness in the writing that is, over and above the immediate preoccupations of creating a narrative within the constraints of genre, pure potential for meaning. This pure potential for meaning is analogous to the unfinalizability of lived human experience and within the context of narrative is capable of being heightened, further increasing the possibilities for potential meaning. This sense of the potential richness of the text guides the work in its creative formation just as much as the writer's preoccupation with the developing plot and storyline and the chronotopes of genre.

What a genre does, according to Bakhtin, is to create the possibility for particular types of action within its form-shaping ideology. Within these 'given' situations, the writer works, through their relationship with character, to create new and potential meaning. Genre provides a level of stability and determinacy to the ongoing realisation of the narrative without determining the actions of character. Genre is not a finalised system. It does not exhaustively specify or determine what is created within its form. It lends form and structure to the development of character, acting as a form of template: a 'given' space in which the potential of character can be 'created'. And, it is within character that the notion of creativity and potential seems to be ultimately located in Bakhtin's work. I have already discussed the emphasis that Bakhtin, in his earlier writings, puts on the relationship between 'author and hero', or writer and character, and throughout his work, especially after he developed the concept of heteroglossia, there is a clear sense that potential is realised in the dialogic relationship between author and character, in the opportunities for action provided by genre. For Bakhtin, genres are the 'image of man' and characterisation is the central creative dynamic within them.

6.1.9) Discussion of qualitative research findings on originality in relation to Bakhtin's conceptual framework

In this section, I am returning to the initial question articulated in my research aims: What is originality?¹⁷. In line with my stated intentions at the beginning of this chapter, I will summarise the extent to which participant responses to the qualitative research agree or are at variance with the notion of originality within Bakhtin's socially-situated conceptual framework.

There are some interesting areas of convergence and divergence in relation to Bakhtinian theory in the responses from the qualitative research to questions on originality. I will focus, initially on the convergent themes.

Bakhtin's concepts of 'creative necessity' and the 'fullness of time' that he developed through his reading of Goethe are reflected in the research responses that emphasised originality as being closely related to the unique position of the individual writer in time. In the process of writing, that respondents saw very much as a work of 'creative necessity' in which they seek to imbue their work with their own individual experience, there is a strong sense of the 'fullness of time'; of the flow of the creative process in which the 'given' becomes 'the created' through the re-imagining of experience.

There was a strong sense also that originality in writing was not about consciously generating new form, new 'ways of seeing the world', as this, as many responses pointed out, had 'been done before'. Originality, certainly for these developing writers, was about finding ways of making their writing 'fresh' and of finding a voice that would allow them to 'feel it from within' and to speak 'from the heart'. The focus here seems very much on creating content and not on creating form. Form would appear to be something that is utilised or taken, not something that is consciously created. This may have something to do with the fact that the writers in this survey were relatively inexperienced, but what is interesting here is the emphasis on content. The notion of voice that came through in the survey was one that identified the need to articulate felt

¹⁷ For the full question and the Research Aims, see the beginning of the Methodology section in Chapter 4.

experience, to find a way of expressing physical and emotional experience. Bakhtin's notion of voice is quite different to this. The dialogue in Bakhtin is between characters; it is liminal, and socially interactive, whereas the dialogue suggested by voice in the research responses is a dialogue between the languaged self of the writer and their embodied and emotional experience.

There is no emphasis, in the research responses, on character as being the locus of creativity, as there is in Bakhtin. No direct questions were asked about character in the research survey, so it is difficult to know how they would have responded if they had been asked directly, but the number of responses that emphasised the importance of articulating felt experience would suggest that even though they might have concurred with Bakhtin's suggestion that characters need to be treated as integral wholes, they probably would not have identified the relationship between the writer and the character as the central creative focus in fiction.

Bakhtin's discussion of 'idea' in relation to character is interesting in its recognition of thematic elements in narrative; that fiction is brought to life not just by the full expression of personality, but that it is also related to the zeitgeist, to the ideological environment of a character, to what he described as 'hearing the dialogue of the epoch'. This is something that respondents showed an awareness of in their suggestion that historical and social change gave writers the opportunity to explore emerging themes and ideas. In this sense of the social awareness of the writer, originality does seem to be linked to Bakhtin's more socially-situated approach.

There are some further interesting convergences around the notion of potential and the relationship between the 'given' and the 'created'. Responses to the qualitative research showed little interest in how students' work could offer potential meaning in the future, but there appeared to be a strong focus on the ways in which the past, both in terms of literary and individual experience was re-originated within the writing process. The wealth of metaphor that characterised the fictional process as a re-cycling harvest in which ideas (over the 'fullness of time') are made ripe for their time within conscious and

unconscious processes was a key theme emerging from the data. Bakhtin too, I had noticed (1986, p.6) in his 'Response to a Question from the Novy Mir Editorial Staff' had used similar imagery (organic images are uncommon in Bakhtin) to describe the influence of the literature of the past on the literature of the present as: picking the fruit of a tree, whose roots extend into the distant past. Bakhtin clearly had a greater critical and intellectual understanding of the history of literature than the developing writers who had responded to my research questionnaires, but I felt, despite the difference in focus around notions of creativity, that in this sense of originality as re-originating human experience, there was a mutual acknowledgment of an essential function of literature and creativity.

6.1.10) Summary of the critique of Bakhtin's dialogic theory of creativity

Bakhtin's explanation of the creative function of character in the novel appears to be similar to that of 'voice' or 'utterance' in internally persuasive discourse. In Bakhtin's work, character becomes the means by which creativity – the creativity of externally situated linguistic dialogism – is smuggled into the novel. Once I had realised this I felt I could, at last, mount a coherent critique of polyphony.

Throughout the Dostoevsky book Bakhtin constantly reminds his reader that the creative spark that animates and drives the writing forward is located in the dialogue between its author and its characters. It is in the tension between these exchanges that creativity occurs. These interanimating voices are the location of change within the developing narrative. The voice of the author (or narrator), the creator and mediator of the narrative, is characterised as, the location of a dialogue between the author and their characters, '... the potential for such dialogue', Bakhtin reminds us, 'is one of the fundamental privileges of novelistic prose' (1981, p. 320).

Bakhtin's focus on creativity, character, language, voice and realism is revealing. It clearly suggests that Bakhtin is working to achieve a replication of the dynamics of real, social dialogue in the internal space of fiction. But to

suggest, as Bakhtin appears to be doing, that the creativity that brings a narrative to life in the imagination of its reader or writer, comes solely through the dialogue between characters and authors, is to deny the subtlety and sophistication of the human imagination. Characters clearly are central to the structure of fiction, but to infer that character and voice, in its creation of potential, is the sole creative dimension of literature, puts too much emphasis on one single aspect of a complex imaginative process. Bakhtin places so much emphasis on language and linguistic interaction – an argument that I was initially drawn to because of the critique of theoretism that Bakhtin evolved out of it – that there appears to be neither the space to describe, nor the desire to recognize other ways in which an individual consciousness can be creative.

Why is this? I have already mentioned a number of factors that could have contributed to the dominance of dialogic creativity as a model of creativity in Bakhtin's work: his opposition to theoretism and monologic modes of thought being one of them, but there are others, and it is to the evolution of his thinking and his attempts to draw the study of literature into his wider philosophical speculations that we must look to find answers to this question. I will now attempt to draw these different arguments - already discussed in relation to particular aspects of Bakhtin's thought – together, to show how they create a narrative of developing ideas that made the dependence on dialogic creativity and the rejection of the role and significance of the body inevitable in Bakhtin's thinking.

Bakhtin's earliest philosophical works had been concerned with questions of ethics. As Hirschkop (1989, pp. 13 -15.) points out, Europe in the early decades of the twentieth century was preoccupied with the notion of legitimacy, or what Bakhtin called 'oughtness'. In, 'Towards a Philosophy of the Act (1993), Bakhtin set out to show how responsibility is a natural consequence of our relationship with others in the world. In an initial argument that focused on the moral imperatives of Kant (ibid, pp. 81 - 85) Bakhtin established his lifelong antipathy to theoretism (ibid, p. 110), when he argued that Western intellectual thought had created the ethical dilemma of responsibility through its insistence in viewing the meaning and content of an act or action as separate from the

experience of carrying it out. This, he argued, had resulted in monologic and generalised systems of ethics being developed that were imposed on individual acts, denying the importance of the real ethical choices that emanated from the particularity of the experience itself. Alongside this argument he offered a model of the self that was relationally dependent and non-deterministic and that in the uniqueness of its own individual experience of life in time, was, as a result of this freedom, responsible for its actions (ibid, p. 112).

In a subsequent work, 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', he developed his explanation of the relationally dependent but non-determined nature of the self through his notion of surplus (1990, pp. 24-25). By using the surplus that we have of others – defined by Bakhtin as our objective, visualising image of them – we fix, or finalise them, but even whilst we aesthetically finalise them, we are non-coincident with ourselves. We use the finalising image of others to generate the aesthetic act within ourselves, to achieve a coherent sense of self, but this can never be fully achieved because we are, in our radical singularity, unfinalizable. Surplus is something that is bequeathed on others but cannot be applied to the self except through the finalising image bequeathed by others.

Bakhtin went to great lengths to emphasise the wholeness of our physical experience with the other, the body of the other, as the carrier of the self as part of this development of the relational self. The fact that we see them objectively, recognizing their immediate individuality, allows them to finalise us and avoids any drift into relativism. Equally importantly for Bakhtin, his emphasis on the body, not as a biological entity, but as a surface, an experientially perceived exterior, allowed him avoid having to consider it as being either scientifically or psychologically determined (ibid, p. 27-28).

An acknowledgement of psychological determinism, or any other kind of determinism, would have rendered Bakhtin's ethical argument invalid. He was therefore drawn to models of consciousness that avoided Freudian notions of the sub-conscious and instead promoted the idea of a complex

consciousness¹⁸. By emphasising his notion of the self as a social construct, a complex entity that is developed through its relational interaction with others, Bakhtin shifted it into a liminal location on the very boundary of the physical and the social. In this way he sought to dissolve the distinction between the individual and society.

This shift away from the body allowed him to construct a social self, but one that was increasingly dependent on its social manifestation, on language and on dialogic interaction for an explanation of its interiority. The idea of consciousness as inner speech can be seen as a result of this displacement. It is also a further proof of Bakhtin's reliance on a model of creativity that is premised on the notion of social interaction and that suggests that creativity is reliant on a finalising image bestowed by others.

In Bakhtin's model the other bestows form: the inner life reacts to it. The problem with this model was that it was difficult to apply to literature. In the dialogic activity of real life the bestowal of form is reciprocal, in the novel this is patently not the case. In order to compensate for this, in 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity' (1990), Bakhtin developed the ideas of 'integrity' and 'wholeness', concepts that were designed to promote the idea of a character as a 'living whole', to encourage authors to see their characters as radical singularities and to see them neither as determined or undetermined. But the problem for Bakhtin was that this was an imperative, not an argument. In order for Bakhtin's notion of the author/character relationship to be consistent with his idea of dialogic creativity all participants in the aesthetic act needed to be treated as being able to create something new and to react to the 'form-shaping' response of each other. Creativity, according to the principles that Bakhtin had established in his wider philosophical writing, could not exist in any other way.

Polyphony, as I have shown, was Bakhtin's attempt to find a solution to this problem. It allowed him to keep the meta-philosophical structures of his thinking

¹⁸ See, Voloshinov (1986).

around writing intact. Polyphony allowed Bakhtin to fully integrate freedom, responsibility and unfinalizability into his theory of literary creativity. Psychological and physical determinism had been avoided through the emphasis on dialogic interaction, character and potential. Monologic modes of thinking had given way to polyphony and polyphonic truth.

But, as I have shown, polyphony relies on importing dialogic creativity into the mind, resulting in a theory of creativity that can only partially explain the process of literary composition and fails to explore ways in which the imagination can create dialogic creativity within itself without relying on the interaction between author and character. As a theory, polyphony locks creativity and potential into character, voice and dialogue. It also, in its reluctance to acknowledge any form of determinism, disassociates itself from the body in its increasing preoccupation with the linguistic and semiotic interaction of social exchange.

Bakhtin's conceptual framework offers a wealth of conceptual insights into literature and the creative process. As a dynamic paradigm for the study of literature, in its breadth and complexity, it is a valuable tool for reflection and analysis. Its emphasis on the empirical and the experiential exposes the tendency towards theoretism in the humanities and encourages thinking that is open to the fluidity of lived experience. But despite the downward pressure it exerts on the ontological structures of social constructivism, it stops at the body.

In my initial rejection of structuralism and poststructuralism, I had identified a need for a paradigmatic approach to the study of creative writing and literature that would incorporate both practice and theory. Bakhtin's work offers an outline for a conceptual framework that could achieve this, but I had realised, through my investigation into his work, that he was over-committed philosophically and ideologically to a linguistically mediated liminalism, and although an outline of the body was visible in his schema it had not been properly incorporated into the design.

In order to further explore the role of the body and felt experience in creativity, influence and originality, I decided I would need to turn back to romantic

theories of creativity, the area that I had originally rejected in favour of Bakhtin's socially-situated theory. I reasoned that if I could not achieve an understanding of the role of the body in the creative process through Bakhtin's work, I might find a way to link felt experience back to socially-situated theory through romanticism.

6.2) Romantic Notions of Influence and Originality

According to Jonathan Bate (2000), the defining characteristic of romanticism is that:

Romanticism begins with strong feeling rather than rational thought. In many ways it's a reaction against the rationalism that dominated philosophical thought in the eighteenth century.

This view is corroborated by both Moscovici (2007) and Robinson (2007) and in addition is linked to contemporary notions of expression in art. During the Romantic period, according to Moscovici:

Literature and poetry become above all else an expression of human emotion, and that emotion connects the modern self to the artistic medium of self-expression (2007, p. 51).

Robinson agrees, whilst suggesting further, that the term has been used to describe a number of different, sometimes conflicting, approaches to art in the twentieth century. This, she argues, has resulted in a breaking apart of the core ideas of expression and has resulted, outside of the specific taxonomies of art, in a weakened apprehension and application of the term in popular culture (2007, pp. 256-257). It is in the popular conception of self-expression, according to Robinson, that the idea of expression is at its most reductive. Within this context art is seen as simply the expression of individual emotion or feeling, prioritised, through a misunderstanding of romantic notions of creativity, into the idea that emotionality in art transcends structural considerations, and that notions of spontaneity and inspiration are more important to the creative process than the drafting and revising of work within literary conventions of form and style (ibid, p. 233).

This crude contemporary interpretation of romanticism¹⁹ - a far cry from Bakhtinian notions of 'creative necessity' and dialogic creativity - has clear links with the feelings articulated by my writing students in their initial criticism of the workshopping process.

But whilst these arguments and the re-consideration of influence and originality that they provoked were the basis of my initial motivation to doctoral research and were also a factor in considering the possible cultural influences on the research group when I was planning my qualitative research, they were not reflected in the majority of responses to the qualitative study

The key themes from the qualitative research reveal a more nuanced approach: and whilst the romantic emphasis on emotion and individuality is reflected in the responses to questions on originality, the response is more balanced in relation to notions of influence, where most respondents emphasise the importance of structure, discipline, genre and tradition over the simplified notion of art as self-expression.

By the end of section 6.1 my investigation into originality and influence in Bakhtin's work had become problematised by Bakhtin's theory of dialogic creativity and I realised I would need to look elsewhere for an approach that would offer an embodied understanding of creativity into the social/linguistic perspective of Bakhtin.

To find out whether this was possible, whether it was just a question of balancing the two approaches or whether there were other more subtle processes at work, I decided, having used the key themes derived from my findings to critique Bakhtin's notions of originality and influence, I would use them to consider romantic notions of originality, influence and creativity.

¹⁹ See McGann, section 2.2

As a preamble to this work, I will first contextualise romanticism in the wider historical debate around notions of originality and influence in the history of literature. My aim here is to reveal the ways these ideas have been conceptualised in the past and to compare them with current interpretations in contemporary usage. This will allow me to identify possible social and cultural determinants; to emphasise the historical motility of these ideas and to further explore the tensions in the relationship between romanticism and Bakhtin's socially-situated dialogism.

My intention is to draw on the key findings of my qualitative research to develop a deeper understanding of romantic notions of creativity that will allow me to re-consider and re-conceptualize notions of creativity more generally. I will then utilize these insights in an attempt to incorporate a more embodied approach to creativity into Bakhtin's conceptual framework. I will then return to the issue of originality within socially-situated theory, attempt a more grounded and embodied interpretation of it and discuss these findings in relation to notions of influence and originality in the creative process and to the key themes of my qualitative research. Finally, in my conclusion, I will look at the implication of this research for creative writing pedagogy and the wider study of literature and offer practical examples of how it can be utilised in teaching practice.

6.2.1) Originality and influence: historical debates

When I began to research the history of influence and originality, I discovered that they had long been used as a way of framing discussions around creativity in art and literature. According to Angelescu (1968), debates about the relationship between influence and originality can be dated back to Roman culture and the writings of Horace and Quintilian. These early writers interpreted the creative process as an act of imitation and discussions of influence and originality focused on the notion of 'imitatio' that had earlier been defined by the Greeks. The predominant model of imitatio in Roman culture had been derived

from Plato²⁰ and identified creativity as an activity in which the writer takes a pre-existing text and, whilst recognising its authority, copies its deeper form in an attempt to surpass the literary achievement of the original (1968, pp. 8-14). This was the dominant model until the late Renaissance when the rediscovery of Greek philosophy after the medieval period led to the adoption of a more Aristotelian model of *imitatio*²¹, one in which the emphasis switched from the copying of deep form to the re-cycling of existing forms and structures and which has led to the contemporary notion of creativity as bricolage (Pope, 2005, p. 13).

Imitatio, as a model of the creative process, in its close relationship to the precursor text, has parallels with poststructuralist notions of intertextuality, although these earlier models, whilst emphasising the role and function of influence, sit within very different ontological traditions. There is very little sense of Bloom's anxiety of influence affecting the transtextual relationships of texts to preceding texts, especially in the periods where the more Platonic form of *imitatio* prevailed. Though, in Elizabethan drama, where research (Muir, 1977), (Angelescu, 1968) and (Abrams, 1953) has revealed a clear link between many of the plays written and the historical precedents they drew their source material from (whilst playwrights were keen to stamp their own personalities on their work), there does seem to be a stronger link with Genette's more transtextual interpretations of intertextuality.

All in all there is little evidence to suggest that these earlier models of the creative process, with their emphasis on influence, are applicable to the modern era. Respondents to the qualitative research, when asked to respond to questions on the extent and the manner of the influences that they felt in their own writing practice suggested that a large percentage of it was probably unconscious, or at least not consciously achieved or attained – a finding that, as

²⁰ This is a necessary simplification of Plato's entire writings on art and creativity, but I hope to have summarised the way it was essentially received and understood.

²¹ Again, it has been necessary to summarise Aristotle. Pope (2005, p. 37) has suggested that the Aristotelian model is based on the notion of creativity as being the creation of something out of the chaos of the universe, what Aristotle called *Plenum*, or 'Fullness'.

has been suggested, appears to support Bakhtin's notion of generic contact – or that they felt there were numerous influences from different sources, not necessarily literary, at work at different levels within their writing. Despite the fact that within the Special Author study they had selected a particular writer whose style and technique they were being encouraged to creatively explore and absorb, there was little sense that they felt they were imitating or writing out of another writer's work. Two responses suggested that the influences that were at work were too myriad to identify because that was the condition of modernity. This points to an obvious, though important fact that with the development of printing technology the relationship to precursor texts for writers is now quantitatively and culturally a very different one to that which existed in the sixteenth century.

Throughout his account of the history of imitatio, Angelescu hints at a dynamic balance between individual expression and influence. Although the role of influence was at times prescriptive, the debates around the notion of imitatio appear to have focused on the extent to which the individual could exercise their own creativity in their re-working of existing models. Angelescu traces a history in which the energy of individualism although sometimes restrained by the Platonic model of influence, as in the early renaissance and the later neo-classical period, at other times is unleashed, as in the Elizabethan theatre and later in romanticism. Shakespeare and his contemporaries, according to Angelescu:

were often greatly concerned with putting the mark of their own personality on the material they borrowed. Therefore, originality in the Renaissance is closely associated with what Irving Babbitt called individualism (1968. p. 34).

Angelescu argues further that the rise of 'individualism' continued throughout the neo-classical period and that despite its apparent mistrust of the imaginative faculty, a number of ideas that are now associated with romanticism, like the

sublime, genius and the creative imagination, were important points of debate within literature during this time (ibid, p. 63).

Pope, who has a slightly different perspective from Angelescu, views this period from the point of view of theories of creation, rather than imitation. He argues that prior to the eighteenth century there had been a slow shift away from the religious belief that only God was capable of being creative and that all art had to be seen as an imitation of the infinite plan, until during the rational empiricism of the Enlightenment, it was acknowledged that matter could be created out of matter in scientific experiment. This led, according to Pope, to the notion of creation as a 'current act as opposed to a past fact' and made possible the idea of the individual creator during the romantic period (2005, pp. 37-38).

Williams adds further support to this notion of a shift from the infinite authority of God to the rise of the creative individual in this period. In his studies of cultural and intellectual history he has shown that outside of the area of religious ideology in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, in most areas of science and philosophy, the importance of the individual human being as the initial and primary existence from which laws and forms of society were derived, was gradually established (1977, pp. 45-53).

Interestingly, Jonathan Ree (2003) has suggested that the notion of originality, far from being a recent historical development, can be traced back beyond Plato and beyond the history of the debates around imitatio, to the root meaning of the word in the Greek language: to act according to one's nature. According to Greek culture, to act according to one's nature is to act according to human nature as all individuals share the same universal nature.

There is an interesting tension here between the notion of the rise of individualism and individual self-expression - an idea that has become central to discussions around influence and originality to the present day - and the notion

of originality as a return to the origin, to a shared universal human experience. Ree's suggestion that originality could signify a return to an origin or to something that transcends the notion of individuality seems paradoxical in the light of an increasing emphasis on individuality, whilst at the same time it resonates with my own developing thesis on originality, taken from Bakhtin's work, of originality as a process in which writers connect, through a more embodied experience of the writing process, with the rich seams of human experience stored in language. Responses to the qualitative research that suggest that originality could be associated with the re-cycling of stories of human experience, re-written for the present through the unique perspective of an individual writer's location in time, also support this idea, as do the metaphors around 'freshness' in responses to questions on originality, that are linked to notions of harvesting from the seeds of the past. It is difficult though to link these ideas to a shared and embodied sense of human nature within a Bakhtinian paradigm.

To summarise the arguments so far: although there are conflicting opinions as to when individualism and other ideas associated with romanticism developed historically, there appears to be agreement that by the 1750s (the publication of Young's 'Conjectures on Original Composition' in 1759 is often cited as a key date), the notion of individuality had become closely linked with the idea of originality. Though, if seen from an even longer historical perspective, in an acknowledgement of Ree's point, the idea of individualism is complicated by the suggestion that originality, far from being the concentration of individuality within the creative process, could well lead to the opposite: to the expression of all that is universal in human nature.

As the influence of *imitatio* as a model of creativity waned during the Enlightenment, the argument for individual creativity strengthened. This sense of creativity identified initially with the notion of '*inventio*' as the ability to display wit, craft and skill in formal inventiveness developed into the idea that the writer creates something out of nothing. This development can be seen most clearly in the debates around the role of the creative imagination and natural genius (Abrams, 1953. p 21) and in the renewed interest in emotion in art in the re-

cycling of the Longinian notion of the sublime in the work of the writer John Dennis towards the end of the seventeenth century (ibid, pp. 72 - 77). This shift towards the notion of creativity as the ability to create 'ex-nihilo' found its apotheosis a hundred years later in Wordsworth and his theory of poetry as 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' (2005, p. 291). Wordsworth's poetry was not a return to the inspired singing of the Homeric epic poet (the Greek *aoidos*), neither was the poet acting as a channel for a universal demiurge, but it could claim to be 'ex-nihilo' because it did not draw from resources external to the poet and was free from any literary association with imitatio. Its source was the invisible source of emotion within the poet himself. In the words of John Stuart Mill, poetry had become 'the natural fruit of solitude and meditation' and 'feeling confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude' (1976, pp. 12-13). Mill's description of romantic poetry emphasises the associations already made with emotionality, individuality and the body. His writings along with the work of Hazlitt and Hunt did much to promote and mythologize the notion of romantic originality in the nineteenth century (MacFarlane, 2007, p. 39).

Millen explores the historical influences that led romanticism into its fascination with the emotions and the individual imagination. She identifies the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century as the most important socio-economic factor to shape romanticism and argues that the romantics' reaction to the development of mechanical forms of mass production significantly influenced the formation of their notion of originality (2010, p. 93). The romantics saw industrialisation as a process in which the soulless products of mechanical reproduction threatened to overwhelm society and the advent of mechanical reproduction – a form of materialised imitatio – was seen as a direct threat to the notion of originality. This led to the process of mechanical imitation being derided as unoriginal and dishonest and original creative work being considered as genuine and authentic. In this way a new value judgement was created for art: bad art was seen as mechanical and repetitious, good art avoided mechanical restriction and its forms and structures were determined by the sentiment and feeling that impelled it.

In their anxiety that industrialisation would destroy individuality, the romantics championed originality, offering a turning inwards and away from industrialisation into individual, emotional experience, self-discovery and a pantheistic transcendental experience of nature. In opposition to mechanical regularity they celebrated organic form and poetry and art as a search for essential human experience (ibid, p. 94).

If their acquisition of originality was robust, their rejection of imitation was just as strong. The romantics were obsessively concerned with the original, both in terms of content and the form of their writing. This led to an intense concern for imitation that saw the development of what MacFarlane has described as a culture of plagiarism hunting, in which critics sifted through new work in order to find any impurities or traces of allusion or influence from previous works (2007, p. 41). Along with this obsession with the unoriginality of imitation came an increasing sense of the burden of the past, which crippled the creativity of some of the greatest romantic writers, like Coleridge, who acknowledged in his own writing how the difficulty of finding new and original subjects to write about had turned him away from poetry to criticism and philosophy. McFarland described this anxiety of imitation as a sense of an 'exponentially increasing deluge of culture' (1985, p. 8).

6.2.2) Romantic notions of creativity and originality

The idea that romantic poetry is fundamentally about the expression of individual emotion may sound like a statement of the obvious after having read these historical arguments, but its significance to this study is in the degree to which it emphasises the gap between Bakhtin's conception of prose in the novel and the definitions of poetry we find in romanticism. Although Bakhtin does mention emotionality in his writings²², he doesn't discuss it in depth and it often appears as an afterthought, increasingly so as his career progresses and he becomes more and more reliant on language as the glue with which to hold his

²² Bakhtin touches on the emotional lives of characters in his discussion of polyphony and in his critique of moral law argues that our emotional relationships are deeper and stronger than any external, legal judgement on them might be.

ideas together. One gets the sense with Bakhtin that the emphasis on linguistic social interaction and the liminal positioning of the self creates a void where there should be an interior physiological and emotional sense of self, as if the Bakhtinian self is painted on the inside face of an eggshell. With this image in mind it becomes easier to understand his indisposition towards poetry. Explanations for the position that Bakhtin took in relation to poetry have already been offered, but it is worth mentioning in this context and in relation to romanticism, what was achieved by his lack of regard for these interior and emotional drivers of creativity. The shifting of the centre of gravity from poetry to prose required an enormous effort, given the hegemony of poetics in literary aesthetics. There were many academics and theorists in the twentieth century who had insisted, as Pechey points out (1989, p. 71), that it was only through the poetic elements contained in a novel and the aesthetic experience associated with them that the novel could be seen as art. Those voices are few and far between now. Bakhtin's work has shown that the art of the novel, in its ability to capture the rapidly evolving complexity of social experience has developed forms, structures and processes that extend beyond the definitions of the poetic aesthetic. Yet embodied emotional expression remains a problem for anyone who is going to take Bakhtin's work seriously and to see it for what it is: an attempt at a grounded and empirical study of literature and creativity that locates it within the dynamic complexity of real lived experience. Embodiment in Bakhtin appears as the merest of sketches on the large and otherwise complete canvas of his literary and philosophical writings and leaves many of his philosophical aspirations only half fulfilled.

McFarland expresses these tensions that I have outlined above between the Bakhtinian paradigm and romanticism, as a paradox within which he frames his study of originality and the imagination in romanticism:

We cannot think of man except by invoking simultaneously the opposed categories of individual and society (1985, p. 1).

The pivotal point of this paradox for a study of originality, McFarland argues, is that:

when man is freed from everything that is not wholly himself, what remains as the actual substance of his being is man in general, mankind, which lives in him and everyone else (ibid, p.1)

McFarland does not attempt to resolve the paradox between the individual and society, but uses it to explore the tensions within romantic notions of originality, arguing that romanticism, or at least the debates that have developed around it, in their emphasis on originality, individuality, genius and the rejection of influence, represent one of the most extreme evocations of originality in literary history. Millen supports this position, pointing out that the notion of individual freedom from cultural influence was fundamental to the romantic ideal of originality (2010, p. 96).

McFarland (1985) concurs with Angelescu (1965) and Abrams (1953) that earlier writers were also concerned with notions of originality and agrees with MacFarlane (2007) and Millen (2010) that what distinguishes the romantics from their predecessors is the intensity of their insistence on originality. But like Ree (2003), MacFarland also suggests that the notion of originality has become confused with the idea of 'origins', though he doesn't suggest, as Ree does, that this could lead us to the Greek notion of shared human nature. McFarland sees in it the influence of Rousseau²³ on romantic thinking, which would imply more of a sense of a return to childhood and to Nature. He reminds us of Wordsworth's notion of the child as the 'best philosopher', because a child still has the ability to feel at one with Nature – with their origin (1985, p. 88).

It is in Wordsworth that the link between originality, poetic production and the individual poet is most strongly drawn in romantic writing and criticism. Hazlitt called Wordsworth:

²³ Although Wordsworth may not have read Rousseau, Rousseau's ideas were extremely influential in shaping romantic thinking and would have been available to Wordsworth through the writings of William Godwin (Belsey, 2003, March 20th).

the most original poet now living ... His poetry is not external but internal; it does not depend upon tradition, or story, or old song (1998, p. 309)

Hazlitt, MacFarland reminds us, wrote of Wordsworth that, '... his mind is coeval with the primary source of things', and Bate, in a discussion of Tintern Abbey, suggests that what Wordsworth is telling the reader in that poem is that they are at their most original and most human and their feelings are at their most vibrant and intense when they are experiencing the animating spirit of nature (Bate, 2000).

And I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean, and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things
 (Wordsworth, 1798)

But the important point to make here is that Wordsworth didn't write his poetry in Nature; most of his poetry was written after the experiences described. In Wordsworth's Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads*, he writes:

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-action, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins (2005, p. 291).

What Wordsworth is describing here is a process that is different from an emotional response in one's immediate environment. This is the emotion of anteriority: the ability of the body, through an act of the mind, to reconstitute an emotion. This is an intensely physical and embodied experience, one in which the mind, in considering its own pre-linguistic, emotional past, can create a sense of the original experience by generating a similar quality of feeling and, as Wordsworth succeeded in doing, expressing it in language.

It was Coleridge, the most philosophical of the romantic poets, who attempted in the 'Biographia Literaria' (1817) to explain this process in more detail and to link it to contemporary philosophical thought. As McFarland explains in his analysis of Coleridge's theory of the imagination, Coleridge drew his inspiration from German romanticism and philosophy and in particular Kant's response to the spiritual scepticism of empiricism, to form the view that the imagination, an a priori phenomenon, was a necessary ingredient of perception (1985, pp. 94-95). Coleridge fashioned Kant's distinction between abstract thought and sense stimuli into the two aspects of the Secondary Imagination: Fancy, which connected sense and understanding and the Secondary Imagination, which connected reason and understanding.

According to Coleridge, The Secondary Imagination is the faculty that locates and holds together all experience, from the most prosaic to the most numinous. In it thought and feeling combine metaphorically and creatively. The Fancy is connected to sense perception and functions in a more combinative way. It is through the oscillation of these two faculties, the Fancy and the Secondary Imagination, that unity, or access to the Primary Imagination is made possible²⁴. The Primary Imagination is constantly equated with the soul, and for Coleridge, it was both the mystical answer to the spiritual degradation of life in the newly industrialized world and the source of everything that was original in the world.

The Imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all

²⁴ Coleridge is inconsistent in his representation of the Primary Imagination, sometimes conceiving it as a transcendent space into which the mind enters and at other times as being the active, blending and fusing power of consciousness.

human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify ... FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites (1817, p. 378).

6.2.3) A comparison of romantic and Bakhtinian notions of creativity

It is worth pausing for a moment at this point to make some comparisons between the romantic notion of creativity as conceived in the work of Wordsworth and Coleridge and creativity within a Bakhtinian paradigm. Wordsworth and Coleridge's attempts to conceptualize creativity can be placed in the gap of embodied emotional experience in Bakhtin's work. I'm not advocating this as a serious theoretical solution to the problem of embodied creativity in Bakhtin, as MacFarland points out that there are many philosophical problems and internal contradictions in Coleridge's argument (1985, pp. 114 - 118), but it does offer some theoretical explanation where there is a distinct absence. Nowhere in Bakhtin's exploration of the process of semiosis in poetry and prose does he acknowledge and attempt to explain the pre-linguistic or emotional content of the artistic image (1981, pp. 296 - 333)²⁵. Bakhtin's anxiety around the role of the body makes it impossible for him to consider linguistic creativity in terms of the body's emotional past and the body's ability to generate emotion. His thinking is always orientated towards language. Where he does acknowledge emotionality, he can point to it, but he cannot explain it. The romantic emphasis on poetry and emotion, especially in its embodied and pre-linguistic form is anathema to Bakhtin.

Furthermore, Bakhtin conceptualises creativity as a conscious activity, whereas Coleridge and Wordsworth believed it required imaginative processes that took place below the reach of the conscious mind.

²⁵ This will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

Bakhtin's rejection of the conscious, unconscious split in Freudian psychology made it extremely difficult for him to countenance the idea that the brain could also be working on a level beneath conscious awareness²⁶. Acknowledging this would have required an acceptance that the development of meaning in the semiotic process could be influenced by the unconscious and this, in registering the possibility of psychological determinism, would have threatened his metaphilosophical emphasis in his moral philosophy on responsibility and freedom.

At the same time as these radical differences, there are clear links between Coleridge's conceptualization of the Secondary Imagination and Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope (1981). Coleridge stresses the poet's ability through the sensuality and physicality of Fancy within the Secondary Imagination to make 'a present reality', one created by the body and within the body. Bakhtin in his work on the chronotope emphasises its importance in making the world of the fiction appear real to the imagination, but he avoids, or is unable to offer an explanation of how this is achieved.

The emotional intensity and intellectual control deemed necessary to achieve the unconscious activity required to access what Coleridge had described as the Primary Imagination led, despite early romanticism's attempts to democratize emotional sensibility, to the idea of romantic genius. Wordsworth's claim that the 'spirit of life' was more active in the poet than in other men and Shelley's declaration of the heightened sensibility of the natural poet indicate this drift in romantic thinking towards the elitist position that although all men were capable of deep feeling, only poets could access the divine.

J.S. Mill, one of the English philosophers who championed the romantic imagination in the nineteenth century argued that to extract the truth through the imagination was an act of originality – and that required genius (1833) and (1989, pp. 65 - 66). In the years following the initial popularity of Wordsworth

²⁶ Bakhtin had been strongly influenced by the work of the Russian linguist Valentin Volosinov (1986) who had, like Bakhtin, rejected Freudianism and, in his theory of psychology, had argued that the notion of the conscious/unconscious split created a false partition within what was actually a single complex consciousness that was almost entirely linguistic and could be understood as 'inner speech'.

and Coleridge's poetry, the quality of genius was linked increasingly to the romantic conception of the individual through: originality, mental endowment, transcendental power and superior sensibility.

Originality, the ability to originate the sublime, required genius to achieve it, and genius was regarded by Coleridge as an unconscious quality. Increasingly, originality became seen as an innate poetic gift that only a select number of people possessed. As Millen (2010, p. 91) points out, this notion of poetic skill as natural talent asserted the romantic association of originality with individuality.

Another important element of genius is the ability to break out of the forms and structures of rational thought attributed to the Fancy. Genius is identified with the ability of the emotional power of the imagination to transcend traditional forms and conventions of poetry and to re-fashion them in the unconscious: as Bate (2000) puts it, to let 'feeling define form'.

This belief, further promulgated by writers and commentators like Hazlitt, Lamb and Hunt in the nineteenth century, that emotionality and unconscious processes were the fundamental characteristics of artistic expression became part of the romantic ideology that, as Robinson (2007) points out, fed into the different forms of expressivism that have influenced popular conceptions of creativity today.

Robinson (ibid, pp. 254 - 257) suggests that though the romantic notion of artistic genius would strike most people today as elitist and out of touch with modern, democratised ideas of individuality, one of the elements of romantic thinking that is still prevalent, especially in popular culture, is the idea that art is primarily about the expression of feeling and that the way this expression is achieved is through the unconscious workings of the imagination. There are clear parallels here with the perception of the creative process exhibited by my students who rejected the idea of workshopping their work. Even though they were writing short pieces of prose and not poetry, their idea of the creative process appears to have been influenced by this popular notion of romantic

creativity. Their desire to protect their work from external influence and to preserve it in its original 'inspired' state led them to take the position that conventions of form were secondary to the original emotional expression of the writing, and their association of the work's originality with their own individuality increased the likelihood that any criticism of it was seen as a personal criticism of themselves as the writer.

This view of the creative process, which focuses on the writers' embodied emotional relationship with their own writing – on 'writing before breakfast' – in its 'interiorisation', fails to acknowledge that for something to be art it must be recognised as art in a process that requires it to enter into a dialogic relationship with its readers. Therefore, regardless of whether it is poetry or prose, it needs to be shaped beforehand in anticipation of this interaction and this requires the recognition that genre, form and considerations of style have developed in order to enable this process.

The value of a socially-situated framework for literature that incorporates both the individual and the social, and practice and theory is clear here in establishing that outside of our own embodied emotional response to experience we also exist in a social context and, as McFarland pointed out, any drift towards either polarity of the individual/social paradox will result in a distorted perception of the creative process. The extreme emphasis on individuality and emotionality in romanticism leant itself to a poetic form and an aesthetic that foregrounded ideas like genius and inspiration. It could be equally argued that Bakhtin's development of polyphony, in its emphasis on social heteroglossia, a socially constituted sense of self and creative necessity, marked an opposite extreme in the form of prose. It is also interesting to note that both romantic poetry and polyphony have seriously challenged the structures and conventions of their respective forms.

The responses to the data analysis appear to offer a more mediated position. Although in the key themes that came out of the research, originality is closely associated with individuality, this interpretation of individuality, which emphasises the unique position of the writer in time, does not attempt to seal

artistic experience off from the social and historical context. Neither does it relocate the individual to the liminal position we find in Bakhtin's writings. The response of the findings offer a more balanced representation of the individual writer as needing to be conscious of contemporaneity and the social situatedness of their work, whilst remaining aware that the only way they can write about it authentically is through their own emotional and embodied sense of experience.

Another interpretation of originality coming through in the data is not originality as 'newness', or difference, or inner personal experience, but originality as a marker of the quality of the writing that is achieved in the writing process and that this is achieved through the development of a reflexive voice capable of translating embodied imagery into linguistic imagery and vice versa.

6.2.4) Influence in romantic and Bakhtinian thought

It is in influence and the role of influence that the data is clearly at odds with romantic notions of creativity. Although one or two respondents were occasionally wary and uncertain about the extent of conscious and unconscious influence on their work, the majority of respondents felt that an ex-nihilo creativity was impossible and that influence needed to be seen in terms of both content (the ingredients - organic metaphors) and form (the means - tool metaphors) as the material by which their work could be made original through the development of reflexivity in the writing process. Implicit in this response is the acknowledgement that reflexivity itself required a commitment to both individual and social experience. This, as has been discussed, is paradigmatically closer - but only just - to a Bakhtinian socially-situated framework (accepting the physical and emotional deficit in his thinking) than the romantic position. The emphasis in the data on the importance of genre and tradition is further evidence that writers saw these influences as crucial in the development of a strong technical command of the medium and to successfully locating their work in the public domain.

It is difficult to conceive of creativity that doesn't involve a dialogic relationship between the past and the present, either on a conscious or unconscious level. In the juxtaposition between Bakhtinian notions of influence that are clearly reflected in the data and the romantic rejection of social and cultural influence, one can see the extent to which romanticism identified itself with emotional expression. Influence in a social, cultural, ideological sense is irrelevant to romantic conceptions of creativity. If the intention of romantic art is to express a pure, transcendental experience, then this turning away from ideological concerns towards pre-linguistic, embodied and emotional experience almost demands the exclusion of most external forms of influence and relies on the memory of individual, embodied emotionality. In their rejection of influence the romantics were not just signalling their antipathy to the ideology of the Industrial Revolution or to eighteenth century poetic convention, they were revealing their interest in the emotionality of physical experience - the area of Bakhtin's thinking that is so unresolved.

6.2.5) The cultural and ideological impact of romanticism on notions of influence and originality

It is possible to trace romantic attitudes towards originality and influence and related notions of individuality and creativity, through to the present time. I would like to conclude this section by looking at the development of these ideas over the last two hundred years. This will ensure that the conclusions of my research are not just set against the educational debates around the influence of romanticism (see section 2.2 above) but are also seen against a wider, historically contextualised background of contemporary interpretations of these ideas.

Debates concerning the impact and influence of romanticism are ongoing and complicated by historical interpretation and mythopoeia. These myths did not originate from the romantics themselves but crystallised afterwards, notably during the 1820s and 1830s when influential writers like William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt summarised and interpreted what they saw as being the main doctrines of romanticism (MacFarlane, 2007, p. 35). It was during this period

that the notion of the individual genius; the poet as a uniquely gifted individual capable of achieving the intellectual freedom demanded by intense emotional experience, began to develop. Hunt and his contemporaries were clearly complicit in this, referring to Byron and his contemporaries as 'the chosen few' (1828, p 362). The notion implicit in the idea of the romantic genius, that emotionality is a stronger force than reason, despite Wordsworth's argument for the benign influence of Nature, has led to the accusation against the romantics of solipsism and egotism by twentieth century writers (Babbitt, 2012). Furthermore the link between the creative imagination and emotionality has revealed a dark side to romanticism in the drug addictions of both De Quincey and Coleridge and a suggestion that the quest for originality in romantic ideology led to a lack of emotional restraint and a disregard for morality (Bate, 2000). These criticisms: that the emotions and the imagination could so easily overthrow the rational mind, make it easier to understand Bakhtin's reservations about romanticism, especially as the moral and ethical aspects of his philosophical thought were grounded on the idea that individual freedom demands responsible action.

There is another line of argument leading out from the idea of individual genius and the cult of originality that is probably more relevant to contemporary definitions of originality and influence: and that is the strong association between romanticism and art in the marketplace. Pope (2005) argues, that with the growing independence of art from patronage, the rise of the individual as central to philosophical, legal and political thinking in Europe and the development of technology for the mass production of texts, an increasingly complex and accessible market for texts developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This market allowed writers to make a living independent of sponsorship. In order to preserve the commercial exchange value of their work and to protect it from plagiarism notions of individual genius and originality were written into copyright law.

Woodmansee suggests that our modern concept of authorship is:

the result of a quite radical reconceptualisation of the creative process that culminated less than 200 years ago in the heroic self-representation of the romantic poets. As they saw it, genuine authorship is 'originary' in the sense that it results, not in a variation, an imitation or an adaptation, but in an utterly new, unique - in a word, 'original' - work, which accordingly may be said to be the property of its creator and to merit the law's protection as such (1994, pp. 2 - 3).

Woodmansee implies in her interpretation of history that there was no misrepresentation of romantic ideas and that these claims for originality stemmed from the leading romantic writers themselves. Macfarlane agrees with Woodmansee as to the centrality of the notion of originality in modern copyright:

'The mutually defining triumvirate of genius, originality and creativity underpins both Anglo-American copyright law and the European 'Droit d'auteur': for a work to be protected under copyright, one of the things it has to prove is its 'originality' (2007, p. 3).

But Macfarlane goes on to emphasise that romantic notions of originality developed out of the work of writers writing about romanticism and links the 'obsession' with originality to the rise of industrial society and commodity culture and the need to distinguish works of art from objects of mechanical production. Pope (2005, p. 40) argues that by the end of the nineteenth century, as capitalism sought to gain more control over the market in art, this attempt was seen to have failed and that the aestheticism of the fin de siècle was a further attempt to differentiate original work from imitative genres by creating a clear distinction between high art and low art. This attempt also failed and by the middle of the twentieth century the idea of originality had been appropriated by capitalism and the aesthetic distinction between low and high art had been lost, allowing artists to sell any art as 'original' as long as they had established themselves, individually, as a 'brand' within the market place.

Freiman makes the case that not only has the notion of originality been collapsed into the notion of the author or artist as individual, but the very myth of romanticism itself has been appropriated by market-based ideology:

The idea of the writer as individual, creating original works of genius through a mystical and a-social process, which is essentially solitary and which can be dangerously destructive or even mad, has been extracted and distilled from the study of literature and literary criticism. More than an accurate reading of literary history, this distillation reveals the assumptions of a culture that marginalizes the practice of art and creativity while at the same time it appropriates them, as distilled myth, for capital (2004. p 12).

Pope (2005) and Freiman (2004) have pointed out that capitalism has continued to appropriate artistic value, mythologizing the romantic perception of the artist, cementing the relationship between the notion of genius and the individual author and using the notion of originality to commoditise and to raise the market value of art.

As a result of the social, cultural, legal, philosophical and economic dynamics that have been discussed in this section, the 'originality' of a work of art has become increasingly determined by economic factors and overlaid with definitions derived from romanticism. The originality of a work of art is not seen in the relationship between the 'given' and the 'created', or as Ree (2003) has suggested in its representation - harking back to Greek notions of origination - of shared notions of human nature, but in its uniqueness and 'newness' outside of any dialogic relationship with tradition and genre. The association with individuality taken from romantic notions of originality has further reinforced the connection between originality and the individual author, or has been used to highlight the difference of particular attributes of an author from other authors.

No matter which way the notion of originality is considered from a contemporary perspective the term appears to point to difference and distinctiveness either as an individual accomplishment or in terms of the form or content of a work. As a consequence of this concentration on originality as 'newness' the idea of influence is seen as originality's antithesis and loaded with negative

connotations, with concepts like 'influenced' and 'derivative' employed as critical, pejorative terms. This extreme difference, which appears paradoxical when considered in the light of the creative process, would explain the uncertainty and caution in the answers respondents gave when asked to define these terms in the qualitative research or to talk about the relationship of influence to originality.

6.3) Influence, Originality and Embodied Realism

In the early stages of my research in Phase 1 (sections 2.2 and 2.3) I had rejected the strong social constructivist approach of structuralist and poststructuralist theory. My principal reason for this was that I was finding it in many ways as philosophically restricted and problematic as the romantic attitudes to influence and originality that I was trying to use it to critique.

When I started reading Bakhtin I became convinced that socially-situated theory could provide me with the ontological framework I required to resolve the pedagogic issues I had experienced with romanticism and shed new light on the meaning of originality and influence within the writing process.

In Phase 2 (sections 6.1 and 6.2) the key findings from my qualitative research offered me an important set of guidelines for a critical investigation of Bakhtinian and Romantic notions of influence and originality. I had no idea at the time that this approach would lead to such a detailed critique of Bakhtin's work and would mark such an important turning point in my research. But, as I pushed beyond his work on influence, I realised the prominence Bakhtin had given to the conscious and the outward-facing aspects of consciousness in positioning the individual self on the border of social interaction had emphasised the socially-situated over the interior workings of the body and this encouraged me to question his thinking around individual creativity.

Bakhtin's theory of creativity, I began to suspect, could not explain individual, embodied creativity because it was located within conscious linguistic activity and was modelled on interaction involving the dialogising voices of others within a concrete, experiential context. Once I discovered this flaw in Bakhtin's work on internally persuasive discourse, I followed it through into his descriptions of the creative process itself. My critical analysis of his work on polyphony, potential and the artistic image further revealed the weaknesses in his attitude towards embodied creativity and exposed the related bias in his work towards prose and dialogism.

By this point in my research I had realised that although much of Bakhtin's work, especially his socially situated theories of literature and literary creativity, could help to explain the role of influence in a writer's creative process, and although his notion of consciousness as inner speech appeared on the level of day to day activity to be phenomenologically accurate, there was a dimension missing in terms of his explanation of the individual's relationship to their own embodied creativity. This meant that although Bakhtin maps out in his theories of genre and potential the relationship between the individual writer, contemporaneity and the past and future, he only offers a half-realised picture; one in which it is difficult to see the rich seam of physical, embodied history underneath the workings of dialogised heteroglossia. This made it difficult, beyond the immediate and obvious notion of the individual's uniqueness in time, to fully grasp or understand the contribution that embodiment could make to the idea of artistic originality within a Bakhtinian paradigm.

My work on romanticism reinforced this conviction. Romanticism's emphasis on the individual, on imagination, on emotion and on a poetic modality that works through the body and the body's past experiences, offered a clear contrast to Bakhtin's dialogic thinking with its emphasis on language, character and heteroglossia. The unconscious processes associated with romantic creativity, when compared to Bakhtin's conscious, dialogic conceptualisation of it, suggested that creativity could exist at other levels besides those identified in his work. What I felt I needed to do next in my research was to push down deeper into the physicality of the body itself²⁷.

The challenge, therefore, was to find an ontological position, compatible with Bakhtin's conceptual framework that would allow for a more material approach towards understanding the role of the body and its emotions in consciousness and creativity. I was conscious that in doing this, I would, once more, become unsure of my ontological footing, but I was determined not to return to the theoretism that dominated poststructuralist and postmodernist theory, and to

²⁷ I realised that this was unlikely to prove as difficult a proposition as it had been for Bakhtin as many of the intellectual constraints that had influenced his thinking no longer applied in the twenty first century.

pursue my original goal of finding a way of conceptualising the writing process that allowed me to move between the physical reality of practice and theoretical reflection.

6.3.1) The apparent paradox of mind/body dualism

I had thought initially that the empiricism I had detected in Bakhtin's earlier social constructivism, would be enough of a ledge on which to build an ontological platform, but I realised, as I gained a greater insight into the development of his ideas, that he had moved away from this initial philosophical position in his later work and had become increasingly drawn to language and social constructivism in his attempts to resolve what for him had become the complicated problem of the body.

I came to the conclusion that what was required was an approach that was simultaneously both social constructivist and embodied and could show that these positions only appeared paradoxical if literature was regarded solely through the essentially dualist paradigm of the humanities.

According to Slingerland (2010, pp. 2 - 4) this mind/body dualism within the humanities has led to the assumption that the world of human experience can only be understood as a product of the mind and that, as a consequence of this distinction, these two concepts and their related entailments have fallen into positions of perpetual opposition between the determinable (the body) and the indeterminable (the mind).

The apparent paradox, identified by MacFarland (1985) in his discussion of romanticism between the individual and the social, which is clearly evident in the tensions already discussed within McFarland and Bakhtin's work, is an example of the irresolvable nature of these oppositional entailments. The paradox that MacFarland identified is essentially an ontological one. In adopting a Cartesian approach that attempts to understand experience through the mind, theoretical approaches towards literature have lost sight of the fact that literature is also a physical and embodied experience, both in the writing and in the reading. By attempting to 'fix' unfinalizable interpretations, literary theory

has increasingly slipped into theoretism. The mind/body dualism in the humanities, with a few exceptions²⁸, has predominated and its ontological orientation encourages the adoption of a 'mindful', linear, 'single track' approach, whereas consciousness, as suggested by neuro-science, is 'layered' experience (Bassett & Gazzaniga, 2011).

A proper appreciation of how creativity works in literature requires an understanding of its location on the cusp between two different ontological approaches, the ontology of the body, which is largely covered by the sciences and the ontology of the mind, which for many years has been considered to be the sole intellectual territory of the humanities.

Creative thought, which is an essential component of creative writing and the reading of literature, is a layered activity, it is a 'doubling' in that it replicates, through the body and the imagination, both our somatic experience and our reflective understanding; it is both linguistic and pre-linguistic, conscious and unconscious.

This supposition is supported by Koestler (1978), who refers to an incident in which Albert Einstein was asked, in 1945, to respond to a question on creativity as part of a research programme by Hadamard (1949) into conceptual approaches to scientific problem solving. Einstein's response emphasises the importance of combinatory play in his creative approach. Koestler quotes from Einstein's transcript:

The words or the language as they are written or spoken, do not seem to play any role in my mechanism of thought. The physical entities that seem to serve as elements in thought are certain signs and more or less clear images which can be voluntarily produced or combined ... this combinatory play seems to be the essential feature in productive thought (1978, p. 171).

²⁸ A full discussion of this issue would extend far beyond the immediate focus of this dissertation and the work of a number of writers like Merleau-Ponty, Heidigger and Cixous would need to be discussed. Slingerland ((2010) argues that their speculations on the role of the body in literature are being questioned and in many areas superseded by the findings of contemporary neuroscience.

Abbs (1989) also refers to Einstein's response to Hadamard's research in his discussion of creativity in the arts. In an interpretation that has strong resonances with Kantian and Coleridgean interpretations of creativity, Abbs suggests that in Einstein's response:

it can be seen that creativity may involve a continuous movement between primary associative ideation and secondary conceptual elaboration inside a particular tradition and symbolic form (1989, p. 10).

Other writers who have more recently argued for an understanding of the creative process as a doubling or merging of embodied and intellectual modes of cognition include: Maltby (2009), who in his work on poetic creativity, argues that poetry corresponds to a bi-logic structure, which utilizes 'the simultaneous use of symmetric and asymmetric thinking'²⁹ (ibid, p. 141) and Nicholls (2006), who refers to Gendlin's³⁰ argument that we can distinguish between 'experiential' and 'logical and objective' modes of thought, and move back and forth between them (ibid, p. 28). Hunt (2013) refers to recent work by McGilchrist (2009) that suggests a close link between reflexivity (the ability to move between experiential and linguistic modes of thought) and activity in the right and left hemispheres in the brain that:

give rise to two different ways of seeing the world: the right rendering a holistic, bodily and largely unconscious engagement with the world, and the left a narrowly focused, fragmenting, analytic, and largely conscious engagement with what it receives from the right (2013, pp. 140-141).

Although there may be some discrepancies between the models of creative thought that are being suggested here, for example: in the degree of simultaneity between modes of thought, or the application of the model, or in the way it is located in relation to time and social context, there is clear congruity in the central principle that consciousness exists in the interplay of different modalities that can be characterised as either embodied or linguistic.

²⁹ Maltby is here quoting the work of Ignacio Matte Blanco (1975).

³⁰ Nicholls draws from the work of Eugene Gendlin (1962, 1997).

In the light of this research I realised that in order to develop a layered model of the writing process that properly reflected the key themes of my qualitative research and that fully utilized the contrasting perspectives of embodied practice and conceptualising theory, I needed to work within a paradigmatic structure that provided a framework for understanding both the embodied and the socially-situated aspects of the creative process.

6.3.2) Emotion and artistic thinking: the work of Robinson and Damasio

Robinson (2007) explores the role of emotion in literature and the arts. Drawing on a wide range of research in philosophy, psychology and neuro-science, she critiques the widely accepted view, known as ‘cognitive’ or ‘judgement’ theory that emotional responses within the body are caused by conscious acts of mental cognition. This argument that emotions are triggered by thought, can be clearly linked to humanistic dualism in its assumption that any relationship between the mind and the body is to be characterised as a top down approach in which the conscious mind holds executive authority – a position that also has similarities with Bakhtin’s insistence that the mind can be characterised as conscious complexity, a position that actually enhances the notion of executive authority.

Turning to the work of the social psychologist Robert Zajonc (1980) and the neurophysiologist Joseph LeDoux (1999), Robinson shows that although there may be some form of cognitive evaluation in the emotional process, Zajonc’s developmental research shows that emotional ‘affect’ can also occur without any prior cognitive appraisal (1984). As a result of Zajonc’s findings, Robinson distinguishes between conscious and deliberative emotionality, which she refers to as ‘cognitive appraisals’ and ‘affective appraisals’, and argues that ‘affective appraisals’ are triggered unconsciously and automatically within the body and concludes that both are capable of evoking an emotional state (2007, p. 53).

LeDoux’s neuro-physiological research has revealed the complicated nature of emotional processes within the body and he has argued, contrary to the assumptions of judgement theorists, that emotion is not a unitary phenomenon

that responds to cognitive appraisals, but that the body contains a number of emotion systems. These emotion systems have evolved in all living organisms to reveal the experience of their interaction with their environments. LeDoux has shown that there are separate neural pathways that transmit sensory inputs to the 'affective' systems in the amygdala (located in the limbic system, the emotional centre of the brain) without first transmitting them to the 'cognitive' system located in the hippocampus. The body, according to LeDoux, in its muscular and sensorimotor responses to chemical signals generated by affective or cognitive appraisals also plays an important physiological role in the emotions, without which 'feelings' and cognitive appraisals cannot generate the full emotional experience.

Generalising from LeDoux's results, Robinson argues that for an emotional process to develop into a full emotional experience within an individual person, all three of these elements (an affective appraisal, a cognitive appraisal and a physiological response) need to be present (*ibid*, p. 54). Furthermore there is no linear causality that prioritises one element as a cause of the others. An affective appraisal that is generated within the body in direct relation to experience will generate a physiological response, which will result in a cognitive appraisal in which the conscious mind seeks to discriminate and classify the emotion. Likewise, a cognitive appraisal, in which an individual person consciously imagines or brings a thought or image into their mind that contains emotional content, is capable of triggering an affective appraisal and a physiological response.

Robinson is concerned in her book with revealing the ways in which, in literature and art, the emotions and the body play a significant role in artistic experience and in identifying how, through the experience of art, cognitive appraisal can generate emotional experience. It is important to note here that she is not simply suggesting that a cognitive appraisal will result in an affective appraisal - which would leave intact the notion of the mind as the controlling centre of consciousness - as it is clear from her work that merely thinking about emotional things, if there is no corresponding physiological change, does not constitute an emotion. Robinson's argument is that even in the experience of

literature, which is carried by language and traditionally considered to be the most cognitive of the art forms, the emotions and the body play an important role. Furthermore, this role is far greater than has been previously assumed and that given the complex, holistic and interactive nature of the relationship between cognition and emotionality, it is ultimately impossible to completely separate them (ibid, p. 59). This is a view supported by the work of the neurologist and neuroscientist Antonio Damasio. Damasio argues that emotions and feelings are enmeshed in the same neural networks that govern cognition and advances the argument, based on case studies of neurological conditions, that the emotions play an important role in the cognitive process and that patients suffering from certain neurological conditions linked to emotional processing exhibit a decline in their ability to reason effectively (1994, p. 78).

Damasio (2000) lends further support to Robinson's suggestion that human consciousness involves a constant over-lapping of affective and cognitive appraisals and his work offers further refinements to Robinson's interpretation of LeDoux's work. Damasio explains that the neural activity that generates feelings or emotions³¹ occurs as a consequence of two types of biological change within the body (the 'body loop' and the 'as if body loop'): one related to the body state and the other to the cognitive state of the organism. In the 'body loop' biological changes in the body's landscape can be stimulated by either chemical messages conveyed via the bloodstream or electrochemical messages conveyed via nerve pathways, which are subsequently represented in the somatosensory structures of the central nervous system within the brain (ibid, p. 281). This process is more or less equivalent to Robinson's account of the 'affective appraisal'.

The 'as if body loop' represents body-related changes in sensory body maps within the pre-frontal cortices of the brain without generating the consequent changes in the body's landscape. In the 'as if body loop' the body feels as if it is experiencing a physiological response, but as Damasio points out, this

³¹ As Damasio (1994) points out, the distinction between emotions and feelings is more complex than is often observed, with a number of varieties of feelings being subtle variations of the more universal emotional states.

particular mechanism ‘bypasses the body proper, partially or entirely’ (ibid, p. 281)³². Damasio’s explanation for this is that bypassing the actual physical responses of the body that communicate the emotion to others and accelerate the responses within the body, in some situations, saves time and energy. The emotional state is still felt by the individual but is not necessarily revealed in visceral and musculo-skeletal responses to the stimuli. Damasio goes on to suggest that the ‘as if body loop’ can produce a variety of different effects on the emotional state of the body, from extremely intense to partial and fleeting. ‘As if body loops’, he continues, are not only important for the motivation of prosaic activities and life tasks but also for a class of initially cognitive processes that Damasio designates as ‘internal simulation’ (ibid, p. 281). He goes on to suggest that in internal simulation, the emotional intensity of the ‘as if body loop’ can be reduced or amplified, as neurally generated images have high levels of plasticity and can be cognitively modified within related areas of the visual cortex in processes that alter the emotional (electromagnetic) charge of the image and, furthermore, that these modifications could also be related to interactions between language and memory in the process of translating feelings into semantic units (ibid, p. 294). Damasio cites the work of James McHaugh (1989), who has shown through experiments in both rats and humans, that the recall of facts is enhanced by the presence of emotional stimulation in the learning process and suggests that:

if you are told two stories of comparable length that have a comparable number of facts, differing only because in one of them the facts have a high emotional content, you will remember far more from the emotional story than from the other (ibid, 2000. p. 294).

As Robinson points out (2007) and as evidenced in the work of writers like Damasio, recent developments in neuroscience are beginning to reveal the physical mechanisms of emotionality and cognition. This is an active, fluid and complex area of research with science frequently undermining or adding further layers of complexity to conclusions about the nature of the conscious mind

³² As well as suggesting that the ‘as if body loop’ may have some impact on the body’s chemical profile, viscera and muscular/skeletal structure, Damasio also suggests that both mechanisms, the ‘body loop’ and the ‘as if body loop’, are capable of combining (2000. p. 283). This would suggest a physiological response, close to the description of an affective appraisal given by Robinson.

drawn from the findings of psychologists and researchers. Despite the obvious difficulties of dealing with a human organ as complex as the brain³³, a broad consensus of informed opinion, amongst whom Damasio is a leading voice, suggests that within the complex cross-modularity of brain functioning, emotion and cognition are synergistically linked and that it is impossible to completely separate them. Damasio's work has been drawn on by a number of writers and researchers seeking to draw closer links between embodied emotionality and the creative process, including Nicholls (2006) and Henderson (2012). Henderson argues that the study of emotions should be made more central to creative writing pedagogy and to the teaching of creativity, and in his work offers practical guidelines for building 'emotion theory' into a pedagogical approach.

As Robinson points out, contrary to the suggestion by 'judgement' theorists that emotions are triggered by cognition, there is now substantial scientific evidence to show that the affective can determine the cognitive³⁴ (2007, p. 59). Furthermore, as Damasio's work has shown, acts of cognition can generate emotion and when this process is consciously manipulated through language, the emotional effect can be amplified.

6.3.3) Damasio: core and extended consciousness

Not only has the division between the mind and the body and between emotion and reason been called into question by the mapping of the neurological architecture of the brain, traditional dualist thinking within the humanities has been further challenged by theoretical and scientific thinking on the evolution of consciousness. Both LeDoux (1999) and Damasio (2012) have argued that emotion systems are found in all forms of life and have adapted through evolution to particular types of important interactions between organisms and their environments. LeDoux has suggested that, in humans, different emotion systems have evolved to deal with different life tasks and, given that these

³³ Rose (1998) has pointed out that the brain contains more potential synaptic connections than there are particles in the universe.

³⁴ Robinson draws on further work by Schachter and Singer (1962) to support this assertion.

survival tasks are common to all human cultures, that this explains the universality of basic emotions³⁵.

Damasio's (2000) evolutionary argument is that consciousness began with a fleeting, emotional impulse of an organism's interaction with its environment and that over millions of years, evolved out of the ability to process neural images, allowing it to go beyond the simple, moment to moment maintenance of homeostasis to the point where it could re-present the images of its experience back to itself as memory. This ability to link homeostatic data suggests that the processing of neural images early in evolution led to a natural preverbal occurrence of short narrative sequences in core consciousness in which there was a syntactical equivalence to motorsensory capability and that this extremely crude form of internalised storytelling may well have been the evolutionary forerunner to modern forms of narrative:

Telling stories, in the sense of registering what happens in the form of brain maps, is probably a brain obsession and probably begins relatively early both in terms of evolution and in terms of the complexity of the neural structures required to make narratives. Telling stories precedes language, since it is a condition for language (ibid. pp. 188 -189).

Importantly, evolution, for Damasio is not a process of developing out of prior states of consciousness, of moving from a simple somatic consciousness to one characterised by memory and rational cognition, but of accumulating and containing them within an evolved consciousness. Damasio distinguishes between 'core' consciousness and 'extended' consciousness, emphasising that in more evolved species like humans, both areas synergistically interact.

Our autobiographical, memoried sense of self arises in extended consciousness and, in providing us with a consistent sense of our own subjectivity, allows us to act on our own thought processes. Damasio is careful not to make too simple a distinction between core and extended consciousness, but, in humans, locates cognition and language within the autobiographical self.

³⁵ Damasio (2000, p. 50) has identified the basic emotions as: anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise. This is an identical list to that of Ekman's (1992, pp. 550-553).

Core consciousness, on the other hand, is the body's instinctive interaction with its environment in the immediate present. Because it is physiologically based, we are not necessarily conscious of its operation, but, in its physical reaction to environmental changes, it stores motorsensory and emotional data (ibid, pp. 174-175). This means that when we recall an object or an event, our memory is accompanied by traces of emotional and physical experience that 'flow like shadows' alongside linguistic thought (ibid, p. 171).

In attempting this summary of Damasio's work, I'm conscious I may have under-represented its complexity and subtlety, but I felt it important to give this brief overview because of the important support, alongside Robinson's arguments, that it provides for my argument for an approach towards the teaching of creative writing that allows it to be seen as a layered representation of both the somatic experience of the world and our consciously rational and linguistic interaction with it. Damasio, himself, in a reference to William James that is reminiscent of Bakhtin's distinction between the processual self and the relational self, suggests that:

The organisation of consciousness resolves the apparent paradox identified by William James – that the self in our stream of consciousness changes continuously as it moves forward in time, even as we retain a sense that the self remains the same while our existence continues (ibid, p. 217).

Damasio's distinction between core and extended consciousness lends scientific weight to the suggestion that the sophisticated narratives of fiction may have developed out of the shorter instinctive 'body loop' and 'as if body loop' narratives of consciousness. It also supports the argument that I have been developing in this thesis that fiction is capable of recreating emotional and somatic aspects of 'lived' experience in the fictional experience itself and that the traditional dualism of the humanities, with its emphasis on understanding, has overlooked this important part of the creative experience. Damasio's work, especially his distinction between core and extended consciousness, has

reinforced my conviction that the fictional process is a layered one in which both these areas of consciousness are simultaneously represented.

In addition to this, the notion of core consciousness, in suggesting ways in which the body and the emotions could play an important role in the part of the fictional process that Bakhtin describes as the area of fiction where the world is recognised and made real, offered me further insights in my critique of Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope. At the same time the notion that storytelling has evolved out of the crude syntactical linking of neural images in homeostasis to the linguistically manipulated, dialogising plotlines of the contemporary novel suggested a clear link between extended consciousness (the autobiographical self) and Bakhtin's work.

6.3.4) The embodied evolution of consciousness and narrative

In further elaborations on the distinction between core and extended consciousness Damasio comments on their relation to genetics:

Core consciousness is part of the standard equipment of complex organisms such as we are; it is put in place by the genome with little help from early environment. Perhaps culture can modify it to some extent but probably not by much. Extended consciousness is also laid out by the genome, but culture can significantly influence its development in the individual (ibid, p. 200).

The equating of core consciousness with a high degree of biological fixity and extended consciousness with plasticity and modification has some interesting implications for a more embodied sense of originality within the creative process. It also offers a material and scientific context, outside of the constraints of the humanities, in which to consider it. I had always considered Bakhtin's concept of the potential meaning in genred and historical texts to be too weighted towards character and the dialogic and felt that if a link between the body and emotionality and the past could be substantiated that this would provide a good counterbalance to his more social constructivist perspective.

Bakhtin, in his 'Response to a question from the Novy Mir editorial staff' (1986), written towards the end of his career, had talked about the rich stores of

meaning waiting to be unlocked in the dialogic encounter with historical texts, but his analysis of genre and tradition, with the exception of his philosophically compromised work on Rabelais, tended to emphasise form over content. My research in romanticism had suggested that an engagement with emotionality in the writing process could lead to an increased sense of shared human experience through experience generated within the body. I had come to the conclusion that the re-originating of embodied and emotional experience may be an aspect of originality that has been overlooked by a culture dominated by social constructivism. I was aware of Ree's (2003) interpretation of the Greek sense of originality as meaning 'originating from shared human nature' and felt that what I needed to substantiate my argument for an embodied notion of originality was to show that there was a link between embodied experience and human nature.

The implication of Damasio's ideas for the top-down Cartesian thinking of the humanities is clear. Beyond the sourcing of literature in linguistic interaction is a vast evolutionary sweep of time in which narrative and consciousness has developed out of the body's increasing awareness of its own interactions with its internal and external environments. Damasio's evolutionary argument is yet another strong case against the linguistic determinism of social constructivism; as Damasio makes clear in his work, the philosophical requirement that consciousness be dependent on the presence of language leaves no room for core consciousness. His argument that conscious reasoning and rationality has evolved over evolutionary time out of the automatic emotional system made me realise that I had not reached the bottom of the ontological paradigm between practice and theory in Bakhtin's socially situated theory, but that I had to go deeper still, into an understanding of how narrative, language and creativity had evolved out of the body.

6.3.5) Embodied realism

A secondary, but no less important argument that Damasio (1994) makes in his work is that the physical body provided the frames of reference within which the mind evolved and that therefore the structure and capacity of the brain, from qualitative experience to abstract mathematics, has been determined by the

mechanical constraints, capabilities and needs of the body. Damasio (2000) maintains that tracing this argument for the body's influence on the structures of the brain back into the evolutionary past suggests that it is possible to see narrative and structures of language not only as a metaphorical projection of consciousness, but also as a projection of the body itself (ibid, p. 189).

Johnson³⁶ (2008) has argued for a non-dualistic account of mind, an acknowledgement of the role of emotion in thought and a recognition of the embodied nature of human meaning. He has described his work as:

An embodied view of meaning [that] looks for the origins and structures of meaning in the organic activities of embodied creatures in interaction with their changing environments. It sees meaning and all higher functioning as growing out of and shaped by our abilities to perceive things, manipulate objects, move our bodies in space, and evaluate our situation. Its principle of continuity is that the 'higher' develops from the 'lower', without introducing from the outside any new metaphysical kinds (2008, p.11).

This is clearly a development of a number of points already made by Damasio, but whilst Damasio's work is focused on the neurophysiological, embodied realism explores more broadly the ways language and conceptualising processes have developed out of embodiment.

Johnson argues that it is the projection of structures and dimensions of embodied meaning that make it possible to think propositionally and he warns that any attempt to create an over-intellectualised propositional system that is separated from embodied experience; to adopt a 'top down' posture, will require a host of problematic assumptions that will ultimately destabilise ungrounded theory. On first reading Johnson, I was struck by the applicability of these remarks to my doubts about the philosophical coherence of poststructuralism that had initiated my search for an ontology that would allow me to integrate creative practice and theory. I felt that in embodied realism I had discovered a conceptual framework capable of bridging the ontological divide between the

³⁶ Johnson's work is associated with a group of American academics and philosophers working in areas that include cognitive linguistics, psychology, physiology, neuroscience, literature and philosophy who trace their research into the embodiment of mind back to the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and John Dewey. Their collective work is often referred to as embodied cognition or embodied realism. I will use the term embodied realism in this study.

body's capacity for experience and the understanding and intentionality of the mind. I was also conscious that it offered an insightful, albeit ironic perspective on Bakhtin's work, in as much as it supported Bakhtin's own critique of theoretism, whilst at the same time critiquing it for failing to understand the ontological relevance of the body.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) take issue with the broad sweep of the Western philosophical tradition, particularly objectivism and metaphysical realism, and including modern analytical philosophy and postmodernism. They argue that the epistemological assumptions of these traditions are misconceived either in their reliance on a priori modes of thinking or in their presumption that propositional theory can be used to understand the human mind and its relationship with the world. They call for a radical change to an epistemology based on the notion of reason as a disembodied, rational, transcendent phenomenon and maintain that:

The mind is not merely embodied, but embodied in such a way that our conceptual systems draw largely upon the commonalities of our bodies and the environments we live in. The result is that much of a person's conceptual system is either universal or widespread across languages and cultures (1999, p. 9).

Having asserted the universal aspects of human experience, they are equally insistent on the historically contingent location of the individual, especially within a social and cultural milieu. This marrying of the universal with the uniqueness of individual embodied experience is only possible within an ontological paradigm that is premised on the evolutionary inseparability of the mind and the body. The problem with 'top down' dualistic thinking is that in separating the mind from the body it is impossible to connect with experience except through the objectivist projection of a metaphysical reality or through the subjective relativism characterised by social constructivism.

The ontological position of embodied realism is supported by participant responses to the qualitative research which emphasise the uniqueness of the individual and their location in time whilst acknowledging the commonality and

the limitations of literary themes, or as in the case of the 'cake' metaphor used by one of the respondents: a common shared stock of ingredients which 'bake' a different cake every time they are combined.

The argument for embodied realism draws on converging evidence from a range of research areas including neuroscience, physiology and cognitive linguistics. Lakoff and Johnson (*ibid*, 1999) contend that the rational inferences of cognitive thought and the detailed structures and cognitive capacity of our brains have developed through evolution and experience out of the same neural architecture used in perception and sensorimotor activity.

They point out that colour concepts are not internal representations of what actually exists in the real world, but they arise out of our body's relationship with the world and the evolutionary advantage that accrued from being able to see a narrow section of the electromagnetic spectrum in a particular way (*ibid*, p. 23). This, they point out, means that colour cannot be explained through metaphysical realism or social constructivism but has to be seen as a function of our bodies interacting with the physical world: as a set of neural mechanisms that give rise to concepts of colour³⁷.

On a more phenomenological level our concepts of spatial-relations and more abstract concepts like time, containment and motion have evolved out of the sensorimotor mechanisms of the body. The fact that we see an object as being 'in', or 'on', or 'above' or 'behind' another object is a result of a metaphorical projection of our body's interaction with the space around it. Lakoff and Johnson point out that these facts of neural and phenomenological embodiment feel counter-intuitive at first because they are the result of ongoing and unceasing automatic and unconscious mental activity and the conscious mind is focused on the cognitive extrapolations of these embodied concepts in our mental and physical interaction with the world (*ibid*, pp. 30-35).

³⁷ Lakoff and Johnson draw on the work of Berlin and Kay (1969) in this discussion.

Importantly, this embodied interaction with the world is linked to what Lakoff and Johnson (drawing on the work of Mervis and Rosch³⁸ and others) describe as Basic Level Categories (ibid, pp. 26-28). According to Mervis and Rosch, mental concepts within the brain are organised into a chain of superordinate categories, from the most abstract and general ideas to the increasingly microscopic and specific. On this chain there is a level of category that reflects the highest level of our physical interaction with the world. These are the Basic Level Categories. They are characterised by a single mental image that can represent an entire category or type of object or action. For example it is possible to hold a mental image of a chair, bed or table in the mind, but not a mental image of furniture. These images represent the highest level of concepts with which we physically interact with the world and the level at which most of our empirical knowledge is organised.

Basic level categorisations are the common currency of imagistic thought and the source of our most stable knowledge of the world. Our neural structures are optimally tuned to them because evolution has not required us to rely on categories above or below this level for our survival.

Gallese and Lakoff (2005) argue that thinking about and visualising concrete concepts of basic level categories activates many of the same sensorimotor neural clusters that would be activated if a person was actually physically interacting with that object:

A central tenet of embodied cognition is that concrete concepts (concepts for objects, events and actions) are processed using sensorimotor areas of the brain. Embodied realism denies that conceptualisation is carried on only in highly specialised brain regions that are physically and functionally separate from areas responsible for perception and motor movements. Therefore, thinking using a concrete concept involves activating many of the same sensorimotor neural clusters that would be activated in actually perceiving something, manipulating an object, or moving one's body (2005, p. 468).

³⁸ Mervis, C and Rosch, E. Categorisation of Natural Objects. *Annual Review of Psychology* 32. 1981. pp. 89 -115.

The conceptual and experimental research taking place in the area of embodied realism supports Damasio's distinction between core and extended consciousness and his contention that memory triggers neural activity in brain sites eliciting physical and emotional responses in cognition. It also goes a step further in suggesting that this activity is probably at its strongest when basic level categories are being conceptualised and that this phenomenon is not limited to memory alone but is also operative in imaginative thought.

Johnson (2008) hypothesises that the sensorimotor neural circuitry may also be active in abstract reasoning via the process of metaphorical mapping structures that he developed with Lakoff (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). He gives an example of an abstract concept: 'understanding' being metaphorically mapped onto the basic level category 'grasping', as in 'grasping an idea' meaning to 'understand an idea', and suggests that new evidence from neuroimaging studies of normal adults has provided some evidence that indicates that this is the case (ibid, pp. 165-166)³⁹.

Rohrer's (2005) neuroimaging study mapped brain activity in response to both literal and metaphorical uses of the word 'hand' in sentence structures. For example: 'She handed me the apple' and 'She handed me the theory'. These responses were then checked against the mapping for a tactile hand stroking action. The neuronal mapping for the sentential conditions were seen to sit within the same areas of activity within the primary and secondary somatomotor cortex as the mappings recorded for the tactile conditions (Johnson, 2008, p. 168).

Although there may not as yet be enough scientific evidence to conclusively prove Johnson's supposition that both abstract as well as concrete conceptualisations can be located in neural activity that clearly links sensorimotor activity with cognition, Johnson is confident that future scientific research will support his hypothesis.

³⁹ Tim Rohrer. Understanding through the Body: fMRI and ERP Studies of Metaphorical and Literal Language. Paper presented at the Seventh International Cognitive Linguistics Association conference. Santa Barbara. California. 2005.

It is interesting to note that the metaphoric mappings into more abstract thought utilise the mapping of basic level categories into abstract contexts. It may well be the case that once these links to basic level categories within patterns of abstract cognition have been broken, i.e. once the level of abstraction is such that there is no participation of basic level categories in the cognitive process, neural activity relating to sensorimotor pathways in the brain may substantially reduce or cease. There is, to date, no evidence to support this idea but it is possible that from a neurological position this may explain why abstract, propositional thought has become associated with a disembodied perspective. It may also explain the difference between artistic and abstract thought, although I don't believe there is an identifiable point of separation between the two, and like Johnson, I'm inclined to believe that abstract and philosophical thought is reliant on the metaphorical mapping of basic level categories onto abstract concepts.

The work of Damasio and the embodied realists, Johnson and Lakoff, along with other important research in neuroscience and cognition has offered valuable theoretical and scientific evidence to support the contention that the physical body and the emotions play a crucial role in the creative writing process. My research into this area has been invaluable in extending the ontological breadth of my understanding of originality, influence and the creative process beyond the insights offered by the Bakhtinian paradigm. Embodied realism fills the gap in Bakhtin's conceptual framework that I had identified through my research as the space of the body. It does this without contradicting or denying the relevance of socially-situated theory⁴⁰. Putting Bakhtin's approach together with embodied realism has enabled me to see beyond my own phenomenological awareness of the writing process, to re-conceptualize it and to identify physical and cultural factors bearing on it that I had previously only felt intuitively within the writing process. It has equipped me with the insights I needed to understand how the traditional dualism of the humanities is collapsed in the creative process and through my increasing realisation of the role of the body in art to move away from the inadequate theoretism of much

⁴⁰ Developing a more coherent ontological relationship between socially-situated theory and embodied realism will be an important area of post-doctoral research.

critical theory and to realise my desire (or is that too physical a word?) to find a position from which I can properly relate theory to practice.

I am conscious that there are still further areas of research in neuroscience and embodied realism that could contribute to this discussion: I'm thinking of Damasio's work on somatic markers as a possible contribution to the way the emotionality of the body influences the creative process and Turner's (1996) research into the metaphorical projection of sensorimotor activity in the body to explain how grammar and language developed out of instinctive bodily narratives. A discussion of the role of the body in literary creativity could expand to cover many areas of developing research and would need to include the significant contributions of feminist theory to this debate (Nicholls, 2006, pp. 12-13) but the role of the body in creative writing is just one aspect of this study and, having established its importance to my work, I need to re-establish my focus on my own research aims, on the ways this research can be used to support an understanding of originality and influence in the creative process and on the ways in which a conceptual framework that blends Bakhtinian theory with embodied realism can offer a viable and useful model for the teaching of creative writing.

6.3.6) Embodiment, emotionality and the text

Both Robinson (2007) and Boyd (2009) see the emotional aspect of the text as crucial in reflecting the felt quality of human experience. For Robinson, who is discussing the engagement with literature in an educational context, it provides both a sentimental education and a way of experiencing an embodied response to the moral and thematic preoccupations of the narrative (2007, p. 155). Boyd agrees (2009, pp. 288 - 289) that one of the functions of narrative is to allow individuals to test and evaluate their moral position in this way but in arguing from the perspective of evolutionary biology and anthropology, he broadens the scope of the discussion to include the function of embodied narrative in consciousness and suggests that memory has adapted through evolution to imaginatively recombine and re-assemble elements of memory. Referring to the work of Damasio (1994) and quoting the work of Schachter and Addis (2007), Boyd argues that this has allowed us to 'simulate' and 'pre-experience' events

that have never occurred previously in the exact form in which we imagine them:

imaging the future recruits most of the same brain areas as recalling the past, especially the hippocampus and pre-frontal, media temporal and parietal regions to provide a form of “life simulator” that allows us to test options without the risk of trying them in real life (Schacter & Addis, 2007, p. 778).

This ability to simulate experience in narrative allows us, on both an individual and a collective level, to compare our experience of life with our understanding of it, which in the context of our social existence, requires us to assess the values and morality of our actions in relation to the values of the past and the present. It also allows us, on an individual level, to plan and predict responses to our behaviour and on a collective level to predict changes that may be required in the future.

6.3.7) Evolution and human nature

In an argument that is out of step with contemporary criticism’s obscuring of both the individual and the universal, Boyd (ibid, 2009) claims that narrative has played an important evolutionary role in shaping individual consciousness and in recording and perpetuating our shared human nature. He argues from the premises of the contemporary findings of neuro-science and embodied realism that the biologically constructed world that is universal amongst all human beings constitutes this shared human nature and that the development of narrative in consciousness has allowed us to develop our capacity to see situations, characters and events from other perspectives and to spread pro-social values through the experience that our shared human nature has made possible (ibid, pp. 13-30).

McEwan (2005), with reference to the work of Charles Darwin, expands on Boyd’s proposal that human nature is the inevitable result of the human species shared biological apparatus of perception and cognition. McEwan refers to Darwin’s book, ‘The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals’ and explains

how in the book Darwin set himself the task of answering the question as to whether or not the expressions signalled by changes in the muscular set of the face were learned or innate. Darwin came to the conclusion that 'the expressions of emotion are products of evolution and therefore universal'. McEwan adds a caveat:

We should be clear about what is implied by the universal expressions of emotion. The eating of a snail or a piece of cheddar cheese may give rise to delight in one culture and disgust in another. But disgust, regardless of the cause, has a universal expression ... expression and physiology are products of evolution. But emotions, are also of course, shaped by culture. Our ways of managing our emotions, our attitudes to them, and the way we describe them are learned and differ from culture to culture. Still, behind the notion of a commonly held stock of emotion lies that of universal human nature. And, until fairly recently, and through much of the twentieth century, this was a reviled notion (2005, p. 10).

McEwan here reveals what he believes in Darwin's work is evidence of a universal human nature whilst at the same time hinting at a resolution to the anxieties around materialistic determinism that exist in social constructivist thinking (as identified in the work of Bakhtin). In order to fully understand the importance of McEwan's comments to this study we need to briefly explore the arguments around a contemporary, emerging concept of human nature, based in large part on the scientific and theoretical areas of research already discussed and on its impact on the historical dualism between the humanities and science.

Carroll (2005) outlines the historical debates in Darwinian psychology and argues that in the recent combining of life-history analysis with the concept of behavioural systems, contemporary researchers have created a credible alternative to the opposing notions of fitness maximisation and adaptation execution (ibid, p. 84). In essence, this argument suggests that human evolution has been as dependent on physiological similarity and cultural collectivism as it has on any innate drive towards natural selection. This, he claims, has allowed for the development of a coherent consensus within the discipline around the notion of human nature. Carroll outlines the new paradigm

of human nature as consisting of common human universals: of common biological predispositions such as basic emotional responses; perceptual, emotional, physiological and cognitive mechanisms and certain behavioural systems as well as:

an understanding of how the specifically human patterns of life-history – of birth, development, reproduction and death – respond with flexible but integrated strategies to the wide range of physical and cultural conditions in which it is possible for people to subsist (2005, p. 77).

What Carroll is claiming here is that human nature represents our shared embodied natures that can be recognised in the universality of the human life cycle. If we are looking for examples of the way human nature is extantiated in the human life cycle, clearly the most obvious places to look are in the narratives of human life. As Bakhtin himself pointed out, our greatest store of human wisdom and experience is literature and as E.O. Wilson (2005) reminds us:

Human nature is the inherited regularities of sensory and mental development that animate and channel the acquisition of culture (2005, p. vii).

Dissanayake (1992), has made a similar case for understanding art in evolutionary terms, arguing that it should be recognised as a species wide adaptation associated with biologically significant activities and she uses case study evidence to argue that narrative plays an important role in cultural transmission through its ability to make an audience or reader feel and respond to the storyline as if they had actually witnessed the events themselves.

There appears to be a developing argument here, supported by evidence from neuro-science, that cultural artefacts and particularly literature, play an important role in the transmission of the universals of shared human nature through culture, but it is not itself a position that is universally accepted. Wilson, D (2005) identifies the main opposition to the evolutionary argument as coming

from the position of social constructivism⁴¹ and he argues that instead of remaining as two opposed positions both sides have much to learn from each other.

It would appear that now the scientific evidence that has been eroding traditional dualistic assumptions in the humanities is accumulating, it is becoming harder for systems of thought built on this paradigm to offer theoretical solutions to the world as we now know it. It would also appear, in the extension of evolutionary theory into open-ended, non-genetic evolutionary processes that scientific thought needs to accommodate the deepness and richness of cultural variety. At the heart of this apparently new problem is a very old one, the traditional antipathy between a view of the world reliant on the notion of the free-will of the subjective mind and one pre-occupied with determinism, prediction and objective matter. Science, in its exploration of subjectivity, cannot now retreat into genetic determinism and the humanities can no longer retreat into dualism. Both must acknowledge that they are contradictory yet inclusive forces working on the individual.

Dawkins (1976) makes the point that even though our bodies are created out of a genetic blueprint, this blueprint does not determine our behaviour in our interactions with our external environment. Free will is an emergent property based on the need to make decisions around one's own survival. Genes are not capable of such immediate response. Their function is to code for proteins over much larger stretches of evolutionary time.

As McEwan has put it:

One might think of literature as encoding both our cultural and genetic inheritance. Each of these two elements, genes and culture, have had a reciprocal shaping effect, for primates we are intensely social creatures,

⁴¹ There is neither the time nor space within this study to dwell on the complexity of this debate. Wilson identifies the positions most fiercely opposed to evolutionary psychology as social constructivism, postmodernism and deconstructionism. These positions, he argues, make the case for cultural relativism against what they claim to be the determinism of evolutionary approaches to cultural behaviour (Wilson, 2005, p. 20). I would also like to add to this list the humanist philosopher Charles Taylor (1989) who has argued against what he considers to be the 'reductionist' tendencies of the sociobiological approach.

and our social environment has exerted over time a powerful adaptive pressure (2005. p. 11).

Wilson, D (2005) in considering the possible overlaps between social constructivism and evolutionary psychology comes to much the same conclusion as McEwan when he suggests that information crucial to our biological survival is stored in the genome and transmitted with 'high fidelity' over long reaches of time. When he asks himself what could carry non-genetic information important to our survival over time that can be measured in generations, with the same quality, he concludes that it is 'stories that have these genelike qualities' (ibid, p. 29).

6.3.8) Summary

It has been my intention in this section to explore the new perspectives on human experience and subjectivity offered by neuro-science and embodied realism and following on from the work done by Slingerland (2010), Wilson (1999) and Boyd (2006), to argue that the mind/body distinction within the humanities is a false dichotomy. I have tried to show how, within the physiology of the body and within the wider framework of human cultural activity; neuroscience, embodied realism and evolutionary psychology offer approaches to the study of narrative that can offer fresh insights into both the fictional process and the role of literature in society. In widening this framework whilst simultaneously pointing up a greater specificity of scientific detail, I wanted to highlight what I consider to be the relatively narrow and confined history of social constructivism. I realise that in offering such an overview I have had to simplify many of the key debates, but I felt it necessary to offer at least a credible sketch of the whole area; to move from the material and specific beginnings of narrative in consciousness to the role of narrative in human evolution, to frame the discussion of originality that will follow in the next chapter.

The idea of the writing and reading process as being one in which we can transcend our sense of our immediate, individual particularity and connect through the text to some wider experience of humanity, or as in romantic poetry,

to the sublime, or to Nature itself, is widespread in literature. As McEwan points out:

At its best, literature is universal, illuminating human nature at precisely the point at which it is most parochial and specific (2005, p.6).

McKee (1999) argues that the journey the reader takes when following a character in a work of fiction, is through the discriminated surface of the text, the particulars of character and the specifics of their social situation, through the arc of the character's narrative into the sharing of a universal predicament that itself connects to the history of human experience.

There is a clear sense here of the drawing together of the various threads of my research: of the collapsing or transcending of individual experience into a more universal appreciation of the human situation through the working of poetic and fictional modalities in the creative process; of the gene-like ability of fiction to communicate experience across generations; of a clearer realisation, derived through a greater understanding of the role that the body plays in the creative process, along with a justification of Bakhtin's insistence that the novel constitutes our greatest form of philosophy.

I'm not suggesting that our ability to think artistically has priority and precedence over science and other areas of intellectual thought, but I am making an argument for the importance of art, and particularly literature, in our understanding of what it is to be human. Literature, both poetry and prose (whose relationship, when considered from the point of view of the creative process, can also be seen to be falsely dichotomous), offers us the ability to physically simulate the experience of being in the world whilst simultaneously reflecting on that experience. The reflexivity that Hunt and Sampson (2006) have described as the ability to move fluidly between embodied and linguistic consciousness and that drives the 'doubling', or bi-logical process (Maltby 2009), is the key dynamic within a conceptual framework that can unite both theory and practice.

Now that I have discovered in embodied realism and evolutionary psychology an ontological framework, based on the universality of the body, that can offer greater insight into both dialogic thought and dialogic history within a Bakhtinian framework, I will return briefly to the work of Bakhtin. In the final discussion of my research, I will show how, by applying embodied realism to Bakhtin's concepts of the chronotope and the semiosis of the sign in artistic thinking, we can develop a more coherent understanding of the biological workings of the chronotope and resolve the problem of the individuated monologue in Bakhtin's dialogic theory. I will then offer a final discussion of notions of influence and originality in the creative process in the light of the findings of my qualitative research and the subsequent re-framing of the Bakhtinian paradigm.

Chapter 7. Final Discussion and Conclusion of Conceptual and Qualitative Research

In this chapter I will conclude the critique of dialogic creativity that developed out of the application of the key themes of my qualitative research into notions of originality in Bakhtin's work. I will show how a Bakhtinian framework grounded in embodied realism can resolve the apparent contradictions between the individual and the social, and between practice and theory and can offer a clearer understanding of the nature of influence and originality in literature than is currently available in critical and theoretical discourse. In the final two sections I will return to my original research aims in which I asked the questions, 'What is influence?' and 'What is originality?' and show how my theoretical and empirical research offers a more coherent and useful understanding of these terms.

7.1) Introduction

Renfrew (2006, pp. 131-135) makes the point that after the linguistic turn in which he developed the concepts of dialogue and heteroglossia, a split focus developed in Bakhtin's work. This can be seen, Renfrew suggests, in the constant alternating between subjects related to language and consciousness (1981, 1984) and his earlier philosophical preoccupations with embodiment and ethics (1990, 1993). Renfrew argues that Bakhtin's work on the chronotope (1981) and on Rabelais (2009) were part of an ongoing attempt to incorporate the body into his wider philosophical paradigm. Emerson agrees, suggesting that the problem of embodiment, individual consciousness and individual creativity dogged Bakhtin for the rest of his career. She points out that in his final notes, 'with a certain fatal weariness' (1988, p. 513) Bakhtin remarks, 'Are there genres of pure self-expression ... do there exist genres without an addressee?' (1986, p. 153). We can see from this remark that Bakhtin never resolved the conflict between the dialogic creativity of genre and individual monologic creativity.

I want to show, in this section, how through the application of approaches that have become associated with embodied realism, we can begin to resolve problems in two key areas of Bakhtin's work, the chronotope and the artistic image.

I am conscious that some research in neuroscience and cognitive studies is beginning to utilise Bakhtinian theory¹ and that an embodied realist approach could contribute significantly to these debates. My intention here, however, is not to be drawn into the deeper areas of intellectual and scientific debate in neuroscience, but to offer a conceptual framework that will be of use to writers and teachers of creative writing in promoting reflection and reflexivity on practice. With this goal in mind I need to find a balance between providing the theoretical arguments to support my position, whilst focusing on how these ideas can be rendered in such a way that they will be of use to practitioners and teachers in the creative writing process.

Abbs (1989) offers a useful model of the creative process. He suggests that creativity can best be understood within a 'complex network set up by the four major terms: conscious and unconscious, tradition and innovation' (ibid, p. 4). The conscious and unconscious are represented by a vertical axis and tradition and innovation by a horizontal. The vertical axis represents the combinatory play of different forms of thought already discussed in reference to Einstein² and reveals the two-way traffic between, at the bottom, imagery and structures of thought that form in the unconscious, associated with embodiment, symbolism and dream, and at the top, the consciously structured thought of linguistic consciousness. This simple model of creative reflexivity has some drawbacks in that it diagrammatically separates the body from the conscious mind and has limited ability to represent the emotional content of thought. It does, however, offer an effective spine on which to hang a larger and more complex body of

¹ See Keunen (Keunen, B. (2000). Bakhtin, Genre Formation and the Cognitive Turn: chronotopes as memory schemata. *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 2 (2)).

² See section 6.3

theory when mapped onto the ideas of Damasio and Robinson that have been incorporated, in the work of Johnson (2008), into embodied realism.

The horizontal axis completes Abbs's model of creativity. Its twin poles of tradition and innovation can be seen to represent the essential notions of the 'given' and 'created' into which all of Bakhtin's historical and chronological considerations of genre, form and meaning can be collapsed³.

If we now take Abbs's dynamic model and apply it to Bakhtin's conceptual framework it becomes immediately clear that what is missing, or rapidly diminishes after having descended below the horizontal axis, is an acknowledgement of the significant role of the unconscious and of pre-conceptual and auto-symbolic modes of thought. Creativity is explained predominantly within the upper half of the model, above the horizontal axis in the zone of social dialogic interaction. The area below the horizontal axis, an area that Abbs associates with dream states, emotional and embodied memory, and fluidity and plasticity of imagery and metaphor is the area, sometimes hinted at by Bakhtin⁴, that can be explained through embodied realism.

7.2) The chronotope⁵ and embodied realism

At the beginning of his book-length essay 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel' (1981) Bakhtin offers a characteristically brief definition of his subject:

In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history (ibid, p. 84).

³ This simple model in its necessary incompleteness avoids the attempt at theoretical completion that characterises larger more complex models and holds the framework open to its own unfinalizability.

⁴ For example, Bakhtin's assertion that generic contact can be an unconscious process.

⁵ See section 2.4 and 6.1.3 for previous descriptions and discussion of the chronotope.

As is often the case with Bakhtin, the materiality of what he is describing is assumed whilst he pursues his attempt to categorise the forces at play. Here, the materialisation of the chronotope is rendered metaphorically in terms of embodiment and the myriad questions surrounding the notion of the 'artistically visible'; the 'how', 'what' and 'why' questions are disregarded as he focuses in the rest of his essay on the more formal aspects of the chronotope and the evolution of these forms through literary history.

In the chronotope Bakhtin is attempting to explain how the experience of the text is made possible. He is identifying it as the interaction of time and space as it is represented and experienced through the body, but because he denies himself access to the body's interior, to its biological materiality, in his attempt to capture the essence of the concept, he is constantly turning outwards, spinning off into the ever-increasing particularity of actual experience. As a result, as can be seen in his dogged pursuit of the chronotope of the meeting (1981, pp. 97-99), the boundaries of his categories often dissolve, in much the same way as they do in his work on voice and character zones. This is not necessarily a criticism. It can be read as a reinforcement of unfinalizability; of Bakhtin's insistence that lived experience must finally be understood as an incommensurable whole. But it can also be seen as part of a general tendency in Bakhtin to look outwards for explanations as opposed to inwards.

Although Bakhtin's radical reconceptualisation of the text allows us, as Keunen points out, to study chronotopic constructions as:

catalysts for the creation of mental worlds and offers the opportunity to study the archetypal operations of the imagination (2001, p. 420),

there is also a clear sense, as Pechey observes, that the chronotope is 'concerned with fiction's relationship to the reality it describes' (1998, p. 175). Renfrew concurs, and in addition points out that 'form must already be brought into being in the process of embodiment before it becomes categorised as a literary phenomenon' (2006, p. 130).

The question of how form is visually and chronotopically brought into being in the imagination is scientifically a 'hard' question, but one that is being addressed by embodied realism in a number of ways that can shed light on the role of the body in the imaginative composition and reception of creative writing. Lakoff and Johnson, in their work on sensorimotor and spatial relations concepts in primary metaphor (1999, pp. 30-59), supported by the cognitive research of Narayanan (1997) and Regier (1995) have argued convincingly that concepts of space and time are unconscious metaphorical projections of the body's interaction with its physical environment.

Where Bakhtin is more successful in revealing the workings of the chronotope is within the parameters of narrative itself. Having finished his historical study of the forms of time and chronotopes within literature he asks the question:

What is the significance of all these chronotopes? What is most obvious is their meaning for *narrative*. They are the organising centres for the fundamental narrative events of the novel. The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative (1981, p. 250).

The image of knots on a piece of string is a strong metaphor for the way a writer intensifies the experience of a narrative at certain key moments. It locates the chronotope in the chronological flow of the narrative, in the horizontal axis of Abbs's model, at the point where the vertical cuts across it and where the chronotope is experienced most acutely and where the body's involvement in the recreation of the text is at its most heightened.

Bakhtin's notion of chronotopic 'knots' within the flow of a narrative suggests a gravitation towards certain key events or moments within a story which bears a strong equivalence to what Carroll (see above in section 6.3.7) has identified as points of intense experience within the 'human patterns of life history' (2005, p. 77). These are key moments in the life of an individual that are almost universally shared across human existence due to the biological and physical

characteristics of the human body. They are characterised as particular types of experience within the time/space continuum. These chronotopes can become particularised to the experience, for example: graveyards, or bedside scenes, with death, as is found in particular genres where the chronotope congeals into a chronotopic motif. Bakhtin suggests the beginning of a typology but does not attempt a comprehensive classification. He mentions, within human experience: separation, loss, discovery, marriage, death, return, the sexual act and meetings, and in relation to spatial motifs: the road, parlours and salons, thresholds and the castle of the Gothic novel.

On a number of occasions Bakhtin emphasises the emotional and value-laden nature of the chronotope (ibid, p. 248 & p. 243) but his primary focus is on its relationship with form and genre in literature and human history. Consequently, he fails to explain how the chronotope can generate such intensity of feeling that, as a series of 'knots' in the chronology of a narrative, it can shape the entire meaning of a story (ibid, p. 250).

It is only through a consideration of the role of the body in artistic thinking that we can begin to comprehend the true value of the chronotope. For it is the body that generates the vitality of the writing and denies its reduction into summary or paraphrase, allowing us to feel and experience the chronotope as a qualitative whole (ibid, p. 250). The work of Damasio, Robinson and Lakoff and Johnson (see section 6.3 above) has shown that the body is capable of creating an interior simulation of external reality. The extent to which it can do this and exactly how it does it is still a difficult problem for science and neuroscience, but Damasio's work has shown that through the 'as if body loop' our bodies can respond emotionally and physiologically to cognitive stimuli and that these stimuli can be manipulated and amplified through language (2000, pp. 280-283).

Reading is an embodied process in which our bodies engage with the text below the level of linguistic awareness. When we read a passage of prose

fiction, as Johnson points out, ‘we do not so much think as we read ... so much as feel and experience the qualitative whole that pervades and unifies the scene’ (2008, p. 224). Basic-level categories (see section 6.3.5 above), the ‘concrete’, visual language of fiction, if used effectively by a writer can enhance the body’s visceral and musculoskeletal response to the text, and because they work at a level of cognition below and anterior to the conscious linguistic level, they can guide, manipulate and enhance the direction and intensity of the action. For example: consider the difference between ‘grasping’ an idea and ‘comprehending’ it.

Johnson (ibid, p. 66) refers to Damasio’s claim that emotions are the principal means by which we become aware of changes in our body state. Drawing on the scientific evidence of Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1991), whose work has shown that emotions are also generated within the body in ‘enactions’⁶ with its external environment Johnson argues that the physical environment our emotions respond to is not only internal but is external as well: ‘that emotions are both subjective and objective at the same time’ (2008, p. 67):

In short, emotions are both in us and in the world at the same time. They are, in fact, one of the most pervasive ways that we are continually in touch with our environment (ibid, p. 67).

These findings correlate with Robinson’s work on the emotions and Damasio’s theory of simulation within the ‘as if body loop’ (see section 6.3.2 above) and offer further evidence that the body’s responsiveness to the chronotopic environment of the text is musculoskeletal, motorsensory and emotional. The body’s response to the text is not consciously processed, but meaningful nonetheless. Rising up through the chronotope, it allows the reader or writer, as one of the respondents to the qualitative research put it, to ‘feel it from within’. Embodied realism reinforces the significance of the embodied reading of fictional narrative. This is a valuable insight that can be used when working with developing writers who often offer emotional interpretations of action or gesture

⁶ Varela et al. use the term ‘enactions’ to emphasise the transactional nature of the organism-environment relationship: we act upon and we are acted upon.

that are at odds with the feelings and meanings generated within the embodied reading of the text. For example in the use of exclamation marks that suggest a more extreme reaction to an event than is indicated by action and gesture within the immediate scene.

The spatial and temporal dimensionality of the chronotope can also generate affective change through the text. The eidetic image is a consistent feature of both dream and fiction. Within the creative and reflexive process of composition within fiction, the moving canvas of the chronotope can be structured to create particular effects within the body of the reader. Johnson (ibid) in a discussion of the impact of line and shape in visual art quotes the work of Arnheim (1969, 1954) in which Arnheim argues that 'perception starts with the grasping of striking structural features' (1954, p. 34 quoted in Johnson). Johnson refers to Arnheim's argument that triangles are not abstract concepts that the mind consciously imposes onto experience, but that they are part of the way the body structures perception in the unconscious. Johnson (2008, pp. 224-234) also refers to Poffenberger (Poffenberger & Barrows, 1924) and Barrows' study (1924) in which five hundred subjects were asked to link adjectives describing various moods and feelings to different shaped lines. The findings were consistent: saw-tooth lines were associated with agitation and nervousness, gentle arabesques with sensuality and tactility (See also Ramachandran 1999, pp. 15-51 and 2003, Chapters 3 & 4). These findings could equally be applied to the construction of chronotopic sequences in fiction where the spatial dimensions of the image, or the context of the action, can be used to amplify dramatic impact. Likewise, with temporal sequences, time can be intensified or attenuated in order to enhance the affective effect of the text at unconscious levels of reading. For example, using description and detail to focus in on a point in time.

Bakhtin was aware of the effect of these spatial and temporal characteristics of the chronotope, as can be seen in his description of the 'threshold' chronotope and its use in Dostoevsky's novels (1981, p. 248), but he did not attempt,

because of his objections to psychologism and psychological determinism (see Section 6.1.10 above), to offer an explanation of how these effects were recognised within the body and consciousness. Embodied realism offers a fresh approach to understanding these conceptual processes that does not fall back on the psychologism that Bakhtin rejected in his broader philosophical thinking.

Some recent work has explored an embodied realist approach to literary studies, see Turner (1996), and Johnson (2008) has included chapters on its application across the arts. Henderson (2012) explores emotions and refers to Damasio's work in his performance-based approach to character development in creative writing pedagogy. Apart from this work, though I am increasingly convinced of embodied realism's ontological and epistemological value to the teaching of creative writing, I have not discovered a sustained attempt to apply its ideas to creative writing pedagogy.

Embodied realism can help us reveal to developing writers the role that the body plays in the composition and reception of literature. It allows writers and teachers to conceptualise and explore the writing process in greater detail and to develop practical work and guided discussion that emphasise the importance of the process of reflexivity in creating a unified and embodied experience in fictional composition. Furthermore, it offers an aesthetics that is grounded in the physicality of being in the world and that links science to art without compromising individual freedom, or denying the ideological and linguistically constructed nature of social experience.

7.3) The problem of individual embodied creativity in Bakhtin

One major remaining impediment to amalgamating an embodied realist approach to Bakhtinian theory is the issue of creativity. An embodied realist approach needs to resolve the problematic nature of Bakhtin's dialogic theory of creativity, revealing where it works effectively and where it creates false dichotomies between dialogic and monologic modes of thought.

My argument has been that an appreciation of the role of the body and the unconscious in individual creativity within the Bakhtinian paradigm was constrained by Bakhtin's belief that creativity could only be stimulated through dialogic interaction with heteroglossia, either in the live event of social interaction or in internally persuasive discourse. Despite the strength of his conceptual framework to offer insights into the socially situated and 'form-shaping ideology' of literature and the complexity of human experience within the 'fullness of time', his emphasis on social dialogism locked him into a philosophical commitment that obscured an even deeper dialogic, one that has its most profound articulation in Damasio's distinction between core consciousness and autobiographical (extended) consciousness (2000, pp. 174-175). This lacuna in Bakhtin's philosophical vision can be seen clearly in Abbs's model of creativity, which I identified earlier as a useful schema in conceptualising how an embodied realist and Bakhtinian approach could work together. Looking at Abbs's model it is clear that what is lacking in Bakhtin's work is an ability to harness unconscious and embodied levels of individual creativity, located on the bottom half of the vertical axis, into a dynamic and reflexive model of the creative process.

Bakhtin's theory of dialogic creativity left him with the problem of how to explain creativity in all the areas of human experience that are not dialogic. Within Bakhtinian theory these areas are represented by the monologic. This notion of the monologic is a complex area in Bakhtin's thinking, associated with fixed ideology, as in authoritarian discourse, as well as areas of human experience that are separate from the unfinalizable flow of dialogic interaction. Anything that sits within the shell of the body, beneath the surface of Bakhtin's liminal self, that does not hear or respond to the voices of the outside world, tends to fall into the category of the monologic. Bakhtin is always looking outwards, out towards the dialogic for his explanations of the vitality of human experience and literature.

This distinction between the outer and the inner is represented in its most extreme, problematic and complex state in Bakhtin's characterisation of poetic and prosaic modalities of thought. In his work on Dostoevsky (1984) he championed the new polyphonic novel in the ideological contemporaneity of its dialogic interaction and the democratic franchise it offered its characters, but poetry, for Bakhtin, with its preoccupation with internal sensations, emotion and the felt qualities of experience was more difficult to aesthetically assimilate.

In the next section, through an analysis of Bakhtin's writings on the semiosis of the poetic image and the prose image I will demonstrate how and why Bakhtin's theory of dialogic creativity fails to offer a full explanation of the creative process and in so doing will show how a more complete model of creativity represents these two modalities, not in opposition, but working together synergistically in the creative process⁷. In this way I hope to draw the two initially conflicting parameters of my study, romantic theories of creativity and socially-situated theory together into a coherent conceptual framework that, having established its ontological roots in the body, works upwards, uniting socially-situated theory with experiential practice.

7.4) The semiosis of the artistic image

In 'Discourse in the Novel', Bakhtin attempts to explain the semiotic process in which words become artistic images in literature. He gives two examples. The first is an image of novelistic prose, the second an image of poetic prose (1981, pp. 277-278).

The word, in novelistic prose, according to Bakhtin, as it moves towards the object it intends to describe, passes through a space of light and shadow that represents the forces of social and ideological thought already attached to that

⁷ I am conscious, as already noted, that in developing this synergistic model of creativity, I am working in an area in which there has been previous research and discussion, especially in the work of Hunt (2013) and additionally in Maltby (2009) and Nicholls's (2006) studies of their own individual creativity. Reading their work has given me confidence in my own insights and helped in structuring my conclusions. My aims though, have been quite different to theirs. Whilst they are exploring the developmental and therapeutic effects of creative writing, in my research, in reading, understanding and critiquing Bakhtin's work I have been seeking to create a conceptual framework for use in creative writing pedagogy within which I can offer fresh interpretations of originality and influence within the creative process.

object. This is in essence the 'given'; the words that the word remembers, that have been generated through previous dialogic interaction. The word is saturated, 'over-populated', by these 'living dialogic threads'. If the author is successful in their dialogic struggle to impose their own meaning on the word, heteroglossia is re-organised within the word and it becomes 'the created', an artistic image in which, 'the social atmosphere of the word, the atmosphere that surrounds the object, makes the facets of the image sparkle' (ibid, p. 277).

Bakhtin then goes on to describe a very different process for the poetic image. In the poetic image (the image as trope), the word ignores the play of heteroglossia around the object and 'plunges into the inexhaustible wealth and contradictory multiplicity of the object itself'. As a result of avoiding the live dialogic threads between it and the object, the word, according to Bakhtin, assumes a 'virginal' state, unburdened by past meanings. In its naivety, it presumes there is nothing beyond its own meaning and the word and 'forgets that its object has its own history of contradictory acts of verbal recognition, as well as that of heteroglossia that is always present in such acts of recognition' (ibid, p. 278).

The distinction that Bakhtin makes here between the semiosis of the prose image and the poetic image in artistic thinking appears contradictory. If creativity depends on the 'given' being turned into the 'created', then, according to Bakhtin's theory of creativity, poetry is not creative. In this conceptualisation of the poetic image there is no struggle, the poetic image just arrives after the word has simply 'plunged' into the object it is attempting to describe.

The constant conflict in Bakhtin's work, between romantic notions of inspiration and the notion of 'creative necessity', surfaces in this juxtaposition of the prose and poetic image. For Bakhtin, the poetic image has no connection with ideological life and cannot be vitalised by contact with heteroglossia because it is formed separately within the individual. Therefore, Bakhtin is bound by his own logic and his commitment to the idea of consciousness as inner speech, to

identify poetry with a separate, unified, monologic voice. Poetry and prose are in this way, locked into an irresolvable opposition, one that Bakhtin was clearly uncomfortable with but could not resolve⁸.

Returning to a more embodied notion of creativity that encompasses both unconscious and linguistic processes offers a way of conceptualising the creative process that isn't prone to the internal contradictions and the sense of disembodiment that threatens the coherence of Bakhtin's dialogic approach. If Bakhtin's conceptualisation of the semiosis of the artistic image is reconsidered as both an embodied and a socially-situated event, then his description of how an artistic image comes into being can be radically re-assessed. Taking the line of the vertical axis in Abbs's model as a skeletal structure representing a continuum between embodied and unconscious conceptual processes at its lowest point and conscious embodied processes at the highest point above the horizontal axis, the semiosis of the artistic image can now be seen as a more dynamic and fluid process, beginning with a 'given' of unconscious and embodied processes and working incrementally up the vertical axis to a 'given' of conscious embodied processes. This changes the notion of the Bakhtinian 'given', the dialogising influence, to include emotional and embodied influence in the determination of the artistic image as well as allowing for purely unconscious influence in this process. Not only that but the incrementalism of the model emphasises that any attempt to shape the meaning of an artistic image will involve processes that are more or less conscious.

The complexity of the creative event is such that any attempt to model it will be reductive, but this general model, encouraged by the work of Abbs (1989) and Hunt (2013) serves well to point up the inadequacy of the emphasis on purely linguistic and ideological influence in Bakhtin's model of dialogic creativity. It also highlights and helps to resolve the paradoxical nature of the poetic versus the prosaic and the monologic versus the dialogic in Bakhtin's thinking. As Johnson points out, seen from an embodied realist perspective, the argument

⁸ See the argument around the poetic image in literature (1981, pp. 285-300) in which Bakhtin constantly shifts his position and nuances his argument in relation to the semiotics of the poetic image.

that poetry is intrinsically different from prose collapses into a recognition that in their formal relationship they are infinitely variable modalities of what is essentially the same process (2008, p. 224). Experiencing the text is to both feel it and think it, separating it out and emphasising linguistic forms of consciousness in the creative process, as Bakhtin does, even though this wasn't his philosophical intention, is to invite dualism.

Likewise, the apparent disparity between the monologic and the dialogic can be seen from an embodied realist perspective, as an attempt to separate out the individual from the social, to assert that the autobiographical self has philosophical and temporal precedence over core consciousness; to fall into the Kantian fallacy of the mind's a priori existence over the body. Pechey (2001), in a discussion of the problem of the poetic in Bakhtin's thinking, comes at this point from a slightly different angle:

if from within a sense of the ubiquity of the dialogical we are enabled to 'see' or 'hear' monologism for what it is and does, if we are freed from the mystification of its naturalness – then it is also true that a dialogised heteroglossia as it were *needs* the moment of individuation whose hypostasis generates the monological (2001, p. 68).

Pechey clearly realises the significance of the monologic in relation to the dialogic and infers an equal status to both. He goes on to point out that even though all the voices in a novel are 'world views', these ideologies can only make themselves heard as individual voices. Poetry, he argues offers a counter-truth to that of the novel. Without the shaping force of the monologic - a single, uninterrupted, voice – there would be cacophony and the novel within this turbulent soundscape would become incoherent (ibid, p. 69).

It is now clear that these contradictions in Bakhtin's thinking emerged as a result of his inability to fully acknowledge the role of the body in the creative process and that, as important a concept as it is, too much emphasis is put on social dialogism in the Bakhtinian paradigm. This makes it difficult to fully conceptualize the dynamic relationship between different levels of

consciousness in Bakhtin's work and although he acknowledges the reifying character of the chronotope, the synergy between embodied emotionality and linguistic cognition is not fully and effectively evoked.

Reflexivity characterises the embodied mind's experience of its environment and, as Johnson (2008) has pointed out, we experience the text in a similar way to the way we experience the world - through the internal simulation of external experience. This is an experience of doubling or simultaneity, of both feeling and thinking at the same time, or as Maltby describes it: a bi-logical process in which patterns of identity and means of differentiation, stimulated in conscious and more or less unconscious processes within the embodied mind, merge and emerge (2009, pp, 141-142).

The dialogic model of creativity sits comfortably within this process. It is easy to imagine the interaction with the 'other' stimulating a response. The problem for Bakhtin was that outside the dialogic flow of live or simulated experience, he could not envisage how a separate and self-contained monologue or conceptual process could be dialogically creative. An embodied realist approach reveals how the unfinalizable interaction with the 'other' in the outward facing dialogicism of Bakhtinian theory is mirrored in the interrelationship between the sensation of 'felt' experience and the ability to symbolically express this qualitative experience in language. Drawing closely on the work of Gendlin (1992, 1997), Johnson describes how, within the flow of meaning making in writing, embodied forms of cognition constantly influence the conceptualising power of thought, as Johnson puts it: 'You have meaning, or are caught up in meaning, before you actually experience meaning reflectively' (2008, p. 79). Johnson characterises this process as a tension filled emergent space in which words are considered and rejected or selected depending on the extent to which they match the feelings they evoke. This description is similar in many ways to Bakhtin's description of the semiosis of the poetic image, only here, in Johnson's embodied articulation of the quest for meaning, the 'given' is embodied as well as ideological. The emergent flow of the process and its

inconclusiveness matches Bakhtin's emphasis on openness and unfinalizability, whilst Gendlin's warning against succumbing to the illusion that linguistic concepts are fixed, immutable structures is reflected in Bakhtin's exhortations against fixed and monologic thinking. Likewise, the simultaneous reciprocity of Bakhtinian dialogue is paralleled in Gendlin's insistence that feeling and thought are 'two dimensions of a single ongoing activity of meaning-making' (ibid, p. 82). Furthermore, as Johnson points out, Gendlin stresses that the feeling of the body is quite precise; only carefully chosen words or phrases are capable of carrying its meaning forwards. Metaphors, symbols and images can be seen as attempts to find structures that offer a finer-tuned, more nuanced meaning than those available in more idiomatic language⁹.

To return to Bakhtin's intractable problem with the notion of the dialogic monologue that Emerson referred to at the beginning of this chapter, it would appear that Bakhtin was asking himself the wrong question. To posit a purely relational ontology, to ask 'do there exist genres without an addressee?' is to deny the innate dialogic relationship that exists between embodied and linguistic forms of cognition within the body. The body/mind, in an embodied realist sense of 2=1, of constantly reversing polarities, responds to itself, is its own 'other', its own addressee.

7.5) From the original research questions to an Embodied Bakhtinian framework

I began this research study by setting down my research aims in four basic questions:

1. What is influence? To what aspect of the writing process does it apply? How does it manifest itself within the writing process? What is the difference between influence and intertextuality? Is influence consciously appropriated, or does it enter the writing process by some other means?

⁹ There is an interesting resonance here, in Gendlin's underlining of the precision of physical and embodied experience, with Bakhtin's emphasis on metalanguage in the dialogic interaction with the 'other', a strong sense of the clarity of meaning, as it is understood by the body, in comparison with the vagueness and ambiguity of language.

To what extent does it determine the writing process? To what extent does influence impede originality?

2. What is originality? Is it an aspect, or a result, of the writing process? What are the historical antecedents of the notion of originality? Can it be located within individual works? Is it accessible to study?
3. To what extent are the arguments I am evolving and the conclusions they appear to be suggesting, at variance with current interpretations of influence and originality within critical and theoretical discourse? What areas of critical and theoretical discourse share the greatest resonance with my findings?
4. How important are these concepts to our understanding of the writing process?

The first two research questions were prompted by issues that arose directly from my teaching practice when I had found myself unable to respond effectively to criticisms of the writing workshops from students who complained that they led to their work being unduly influenced by others; to a loss of originality and a sense that their own creativity was being stifled. I was convinced at the time that this attitude masked individual anxieties around audience receptivity and that by adopting it students were denying themselves an understanding of the complexity of writing for other people, but in trying to address their arguments I discovered that the strong social constructivist position I had acquired studying structuralist and poststructuralist theory as an undergraduate was, in many ways, as restricted and problematic as the romantic attitudes I believed I was taking issue with.

In critically reviewing these initial theoretical assumptions I realised that if I was going to respond effectively to issues around the nature of influence and originality in the creative process I needed to resolve the problem of my own ontological position. I was determined in this process to find a conceptual framework that would have a practical value for my students and would create a strong synergy between theory and practice that allowed for both critical reflection on the text and increased reflexivity within the creative process. Questions three and four of my research aims developed out of this growing commitment during my research.

In the thesis so far I have laid out the slow evolution of a conceptual framework that is alive to both the experience of creativity and to an understanding of the architecture and the traditions of narrative. In this section I will summarise the findings of my research on the core issues of influence and originality that prompted the research and show how, by developing an embodied, socially-situated framework, I have been able to resolve the initial theoretical impasse. Then in Chapter 9, after my concluding remarks and reflections on the research process, I will address the last two research questions and focus on the ways in which an embodied, socially-situated framework can contribute to the development of creative writing as a subject area in HE and on a more practical level, offer new approaches to course design and teaching and learning practices within creative writing pedagogy.

7.5.1) What is Influence?

My study of influence in Bakhtin's work suggested a strong correlation between participant responses to the research questionnaires and Bakhtinian theory (see Section 6.1.4). This research confirmed that influence, far from the iterative bricolage of intertextual theory, is an essential part of creativity that functions on all levels of the process, from the writer's choice of individual words to the development of the themes and genres of literature. It is both consciously and unconsciously appropriated and applied, is itself subject to the influence of time and, in the important role it plays in the historical development of prose narrative and the aesthetics of prose construction, it offers writers, in their dialogic relationship with tradition, a means of developing new ways of seeing the world.

Bakhtin's work, although it offers a broader philosophical and literary vision than the qualitative research, accommodates the pragmatic notions of influence offered in the responses to the questionnaires. The predominant mode of influence identified by the research participants was characterised as a conscious appropriation of the architectonics of narrative from existing literature in which traditions of genre were identified as a crucial resource. Tool

metaphors were frequently used to describe a process in which texts were accessed in order to utilise their specific 'structure', 'architecture', 'templates' and 'form'. Two of the respondents likened the process to working as an apprentice to a master craftsman in a Renaissance artist's studio (see section 5.2 above). Influence was situated in the relationship between an individual's work in progress and existing texts. There was an acknowledgement that it needed to be carefully managed, as a preoccupation with form and style could lead to the creative process becoming 'stuck' and to problems of individual voice, but essentially influence was seen as a source, not a determinant, of craft, technique and form.

What also emerged from the data and proved invaluable to my research was the acknowledgement that influence was also an embodied process. A number of responses stressed the pervasiveness and the complex and layered nature of influence; that it involved both conscious and what were referred to as 'subconscious' processes and that its effects ebbed and flowed through time. Respondents also suggested that there were different types of influence: the influence of personal experience (including the influence of narratives, both personal and social) and the influence of form from the traditions and genres of literature. Though they made this distinction it was clear that in both these areas influence was both socio-cultural and embodied.

I had noticed that whilst there was often a confidence and clarity in responses that discussed the more conscious appropriation of architectonic influence, when respondents discussed influence on a less linguistically conscious, embodied level, their answers to questions tended to be more generalised and metaphorical. I became increasingly aware that the ideological context in which the research study and the questionnaire had been constructed would itself have influenced the way notions of influence would have been articulated and conceptualised. This realisation, along with the emphasis on embodiment and emotionality in my qualitative research and Bakhtin's own acknowledgement of embodiment in his early writings (Bakhtin, 1990) in addition to the suggestion of

an embodied 'creative assimilation' in his work on generic contact (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 157), encouraged me to question the extent to which his socially-situated theory had broken with the dualism embedded in Western cultural and intellectual thought.

As I developed my critique of Bakhtin's theory of dialogic creativity and extended my research into romantic theories of creativity and embodied realism I became increasingly convinced that Slingerland was right in his contention that social constructivism has failed to acknowledge the ontological importance of the body (Slingerland, 2010). Embodied realism has allowed me to understand, through the work of Johnson (2008), Gendlin (1997), Damasio (2000) et al, how fully the body is involved in the creative process and how deeply and richly it influences it.

This has clear implications for the teaching of creative writing. If the arguments of the theorists, scientists and researchers discussed in this research are correct – and their argument is a compelling one – then we live in a culture that is inhibited by its own ideological assumptions from understanding the role of the body in consciousness and therefore in art. A conceptual approach to creative writing pedagogy that can acknowledge the importance of socially-situated theory whilst foregrounding and revealing the role of the body in the creative writing process can help give writers the language and the confidence to develop a deeper, more reflexive understanding of their own artistic practice.

7.5.2) What is Originality?

If the idea of influence is reasonably accessible within the Bakhtinian paradigm, the notion of originality is a more complex concept to grasp. This is partly due to Bakhtin's identification of originality, in opposition to romanticism, with the ongoing originality of individual experience, which tends to distract from the notion of originality as a quality in art. When I began to study Bakhtin, I had assumed that concepts like surprisingness and potential (see section 6.1.8 above) would offer me a perspective on the creative process from which to

develop insights into originality but, guided by my qualitative research, I realised that although they could provide a partial explanation, they were too rooted in the dialogic, in linguistic and social interaction, to explain it at a deeper, embodied level.

The findings of my qualitative research had persuaded me that any attempt to redefine originality from within the creative process needed to go beyond an acknowledgment of the subjectivity of individual experience, as Bakhtin's work had done, to explore the tensions in his work between the dialogic, linguistic and ideological, and the relational, embodied and material. I was prompted and guided in this process predominantly by the data that came out of the second questionnaire in the research study. In retrospect I can now understand the full value of using two questionnaires in the study: one at the beginning of the Special Author study and one at the end. This not only gave students an opportunity to reflect on notions of originality and influence after consciously exploring them in their own writing process, it also allowed them to see these terms as sites of ideological contestation. What was interesting in the data, in a strongly Bakhtinian sense, was that as a result of ideological hegemony and the centripetal fixing of meaning within current ideological constructions of influence and originality, respondents were relying increasingly on metaphor to express their evolving understanding of originality and influence in the creative process.

I was particularly struck by the organic and biological metaphors used to describe originality, especially the notion of 'freshness', which was used repeatedly along with metaphors of process: 'harvesting', 'growing', 'digging', and 'cooking' to describe originality. These metaphors suggested that at least half of the research respondents saw their writing process as analogous to the planting and nurturing of seeds and to cultivating and harvesting a product when it is fresh and ripe. These metaphors clearly link the creative process itself with biological processes. They are cyclical and in their emphasis on the qualitative and nurturing aspects of creativity - of tending for the 'given' growing out of the soil of embodied forms of cognition and consciously creating the

optimum environment for these ideas and feelings to flourish - they resonate strongly with notions of reflexivity¹⁰. The cyclical aspect of the imagery was reinforced by responses that drew attention to the notion of contemporaneity; to the idea that as society evolved and changed, the stock of stories needed to be adapted to be 'of and for its time' and that this process offered writers the 'opportunity to explore original ideas and themes'.

I was drawn to this notion of originality as a process of re-cycling and renewal. The suggestion of a transition from the 'given' to the 'created' in the 'fullness of time' appeared compatible with Bakhtin's wider philosophical and literary vision, but once I began to explore the complex problem of creativity in Bakhtin, I realised there was little or no explication of the embodied processes that had formed such strong themes in the qualitative research findings. In his complicated and problematic distinction between poetry and prose, as I have argued already (see section 7.4 above), although Bakhtin provides a 'given' for the prose image in its rich history of heteroglossia, his description of the 'given' for the poetic image admits of no history, and offers instead only the 'contradictory multiplicity' (1981a, p. 278) of the word itself. Setting aside the problem of the poetry/prose distinction, there is no possibility of reflexivity between the body (poetry) and languaged consciousness (prose) here, because the body is simply not admitted.

Similar problems are encountered in other areas of Bakhtin's work where the theorising and the arguments presented appear to squeeze out the richer possibilities of Bakhtin's wider philosophical vision. The notion of potential (see section 6.1.8 above), a concept that in its emphasis on the potential meaning stored in the image created in the dialogic event appears to have some connection with the idea of originality, appears on closer scrutiny to be itself

¹⁰ I began to look out for organic metaphors in my reading and research and was surprised by the lack of them in Bakhtin's work and the quantity of them in theories of creativity in romanticism, especially in Edward Young's 'Conjectures on Original Composition' (1759). This suggested to me that there was a greater awareness of full, embodied reflexivity in romantic theory than in Bakhtin's work. The only extended organic metaphor in Bakhtin's work that I am aware of is the one he used in one of his last published pieces 'Response to a Question from the Novy Mir Editorial Staff' (1986a), in which he likens a great novel to a ripe fruit on a tree that has its roots deep in the past (see Section 6.1.2 Footnote 4).

disembodied and circumscribed by the dialogic. Potential in Bakhtin is closely associated with dialogic interaction and character, with their 'ideas' (see section 6.1.8 above), their language and the different ways of seeing the world that they offer. Again, this is clearly shown in the semiosis of the artistic image, as only the prose word, the dialogic image (as opposed to the monologic image of poetry), is capable of transforming the 'given' of its rich heteroglot history into potential meaning for the future.

Taking a more embodied approach to Bakhtin allows us to resolve these problematic dichotomies in the Bakhtinian paradigm and to reconstitute it in a way that offers fresh perspectives on originality in literature by merging it with the more embodied notion of originality suggested in the qualitative research. Originality can then be seen to incorporate both a dialogic and embodied aspect and to exist in the flow of time. Embodied realism, through the universally shared experience of embodiment in our essential human nature, connects human history within a time-span that extends back beyond Bakhtin's 'great time' into evolutionary history. Within the present epoch, human experience, in its historical, chronotopic forms, is dialogised into the concerns of contemporary society. This re-origination of human experience in the language of the day carries within it what Bakhtin called the 'powerful deep currents of culture' (*ibid*, p. 3) and contains potential meaning for the future.

When seen from an embodied Bakhtinian perspective, from within the writing process, the notion of originality reveals itself in a different light. Originality is a quality of the writing process. It is the extent to which a work of literature recreates the embodied experience of being in the 'fullness of time' - a time in which the past is present and the future is open. This location of originality as a quality within a text, linking it to the text's expression of 'felt' experience and the universality of human nature, identifies originality as a concept that is accessible to study and avoids the Cartesian complexities of abstract theoretical definitions that emphasise 'newness' and 'difference'.

7.5.3) Applying these findings to the initial critique of the creative writing workshop and critical peer review

It is clear now, looking back in retrospect that the principal reason romanticism or poststructuralist theory cannot properly explain the nature and the role of influence within the creative process is that they both in their own way suppress the notion of the dialogic that is so essential to the Bakhtinian socially-situated framework. Romanticism, in fetishising originality and the original genius, inflated its value to the extent that the acknowledgement of any influence in the creative process or detection of it in a printed text denied its validity as art. True creativity required the artist to form the work hermetically within himself or herself. As a result influence had no role within the creative process. Poststructuralism, in its fetishising of structural linguistics and its adherence to the notion that language *is* consciousness, abstracted language out of its spoken context, so that influence became a purely textual phenomenon; a consideration of intertextual relationships. Whilst poststructuralism shifted the notion of influence away from the body and from the body's immediate interaction with the world, romanticism sealed it into the body and argued that external influence destroyed the purity of original thought. In doing so both of these frameworks denied influence its role in the creative process.

Identifying influence within an embodied socially-situated framework allows us to understand its role in the creative process, and put together a theoretically convincing argument against the criticisms made by students of the writing workshops. If influence is seen as part of the dialogic process – and within an embodied approach this would be a process that works within as well as below the level of language in visually imagined metaphor – then it must be recognised as essential to the creative process itself. Influence is unavoidable as it is the reactive nature of both core and extended consciousness. It cannot be bracketed out of the writing process as it works on a continuum between conscious linguistic levels of thought (from critical awareness to the appropriation of genre and form through tradition) and subconscious levels (emotion and memory of individual past experience). It is subject to time and its

effect is not permanent but transient. It is a source of form, not a determiner of form and needs to be actively engaged with; assimilated and transformed or rejected.

To return to the suggestions made by students that the writing workshops inhibited creativity and stifled originality, an embodied socially-situated approach, allows us to make the theoretically supported argument that a writer's work will lose its sense of originality if the writer fails to engage with influence. Originality represents not just a quality of the writing process but a strength in the writing. As a quality it reveals the extent to which a work of literature has transformed literary and experiential influence (the 'given') into a narrative that is both about the irreducible particularity of its time and, through our shared embodiment, the universality of human experience. In terms of strength it represents the extent to which the writer, through artistic reflexivity, which is the dialogic of the embodied, socially-situated framework, has transformed the material they are working with into a fictional experience that is read by the body as well as the mind.

Chapter 8. Concluding Remarks and Reflections on Process

8.1) The contribution this research makes to knowledge in the subject area and plans for further research

No work is truly original in that it comes out of nowhere. I am deeply grateful to everyone whose work has informed this research. It has become a dialogue with ideas in a truly embodied Bakhtinian sense, so much so that in the process of dredging intuitions and instincts up and into the light of conceptual consciousness, it is hard to tell where my reading and research has confirmed what I felt I already knew about creative writing and the creative process and where it has offered fresh and surprising insights. There are clearly areas of the research: Bakhtin, Damasio and Johnson's work particularly, that have given me access to knowledge and science I had been completely unaware of, and there are others, more closely related to me through overlapping fields of research: Hunt, Abbs, Maltby and Nichols, whose work has helped me to conceptualise or confirm my own developing arguments and long held intuitions about the creative process in creative writing.

In terms of the immediate outcomes of my qualitative research, my critique of Bakhtin's theory of creativity, I would argue, is a coherent analysis of the weaknesses and the strengths of the dialogic model of creativity. I am conscious that in using the findings of a qualitative research project as a critical guide to this inquiry I have adopted an unorthodox approach, but as I have explained, this was necessitated by the lack of relevant academic study into Bakhtin's theory of creativity.¹

The work on originality and influence in the creative process, that led inevitably to my consideration of Bakhtinian notions of creativity, has been an important focus throughout this research and I am pleased that following my critique of Bakhtin and my incorporating of a more embodied realist approach into his

¹ The only other work that I have come across to date in this area is by Haynes: Haynes, D. (2013). *Bakhtin Reframed*. I B Tauris & Co Ltd. Haynes, D. (2008). *Bakhtin and the Visual Arts*. Cambridge University Press, but this work contextualises Bakhtin within the visual arts, offers little analysis and is largely summary and historical in its approach.

conceptual framework I have been able to articulate a richer interpretation of these ideas that connect them to the broader arc of human experience both chronologically and within individual experience.

What else has this long and fruitful dialogue achieved? It has achieved an outcome, wholly unanticipated when I began the thesis, of bringing together, in a process that Slingerland has identified as ‘vertical integration’ (2010, p. 9), science and the aesthetics of creativity and socially-situated practice. This conceptual framework fulfils my professional ambition of establishing a viable relationship between practice and theory in creative writing. It offers a ‘bottom-up’ model for thinking about creative writing teaching that is ontologically grounded in science and that avoids the extremes of romantic expressivism and strong social constructivism. In its anti-dualist approach it provides not only the ontological and epistemological basis for teaching creative writing, but also for the teaching of teachers of creative writing. It can also make a significant contribution to pedagogic debates on the teaching and theorising of creative writing and, along with recent work published in America and Australia (see Turner 1996, Johnson, 2008 and Boyd 2009), the future direction of literary studies in HE².

To my knowledge no other work is being done to establish a similar conceptual approach in creative writing pedagogy. During my research I have been using my findings and conclusions to shape my teaching practice. Alongside any further academic research I will continue to refine and test my conceptual approach within my professional work and to explore, as a long-term goal, the possibility of writing a theoretical and practical guide for writers and teachers of creative writing that develops an embodied, socially-situated approach.

² In July 2012, I gave a paper at the Teaching Post Millennial Literature Symposium at Brighton University titled: As Dead as a Dodo? Darwin, Neuroscience and Literary Theory.

8.2) Limitations

I have already talked at length in the Methodology chapter about the complexity of my relationship to the field in my empirical research. I was conscious at the time of the problems involved and, in order to be as transparent as possible, attempted to show how rigorously reflective I had been in developing a research design that would fit the aims and the context of the ongoing research project. Having said that, I am conscious in retrospect of procedures that could have been improved on. The issue of properly piloting the questionnaires was one that caused problems in terms of my position as an insider researcher as I didn't want the questions to be 'leaked' to students on the programme. I could possibly have resolved this problem by contacting a writers' group outside the university and asking them to pilot the questionnaire. The two-stage questionnaire, I realise now, also allowed me the opportunity to read the responses to the first questionnaire before drafting the second. This would have meant I could have followed up any questions that had not been properly understood by the research participants or that appeared to be suggesting a particular avenue of questioning that might be useful. As a development of the questionnaire method, it would have taken me a little closer to the interviewing process itself where follow-up questions can be asked in the interview and it may have resulted in richer data. Although this may well have been the case and there remains the possibility that I could have further nuanced questions in the second questionnaire, I felt the method applied was adequate, as my pre-existing knowledge of the content and structure of the Special Author study allowed me to anticipate the evolution of the participants' thinking in relation to the research topics. I have to accept that the interview method would have inevitably offered up different data to questionnaires, but, given that I was looking for emerging themes from the data that I could use in further research and I wasn't looking for a smaller quantity of rich, subjective data, within the parameters of my study the questionnaire data was sufficient.

My dual roles within the research field as both convenor and researcher also posed potential problems during the research period. I was conscious when

reading the responses to the questionnaire during the initial reading and 'absorbing' phase of analysis that the emotional tone of some of the responses was more energised and positive than others and that I was beginning to form an image of these participants as being more helpful than others. This emotional response, I realised, could well have been exacerbated by my sense of ownership of the programme and may have resulted in my regarding some responses as reflecting a more positive attitude to the programme itself. This may have affected the amount of significance or weighting I gave to these responses. The fact that I was conscious of this interaction at the time hopefully mitigated against this tendency on the second level of the hermeneutic to like or dislike a person through the way they responded to a question. This problem could have been compounded if I had made contact, or research participants had made contact with me, during the research period. I had let participants know that I was available should they wish to talk to me about the research, but none had. I was conscious of this as a potential problem because of my decision to distance myself from participants lest my role as convenor and academic assessor influenced their response to the research questionnaires. During the research I had focused on ways of avoiding my unduly influencing them and hadn't fully considered that they could also have influenced me. This interaction of subjectivities is, of course, why qualitative research is such a difficult area and why reflexivity needs to be such a fundamental part of the process.

My increasing awareness of the way that embodied and social aspects of interaction, like gender and status, can influence other people on an unconscious level may well have been itself influenced by my increasing interest in the role of the body in art and creativity and in thinking in general. This brings me to my final point in relation to what I now perceive as the limitations of my research. I have already mentioned that the questions I constructed for the questionnaire were created within the ideological parameters of a culture that has been accused of failing to recognise the importance of embodiment in consciousness and creativity. Now that I have arrived through

my research at a paradigm that recognises its significance, I can see how the questionnaires I developed in my research could have been written more effectively to draw out responses on the role of embodiment and its role in writing practice, in creativity and in shaping our notions of influence and originality in the writing process. Now I have arrived at the end of this particular journey and can see the thing I was trying to see, I am in a position to research it more effectively. This could well take the form, in future research, of an interview-led study with published writers into the embodied nature of writing, creativity, originality and influence.

8.3) Reflections on process

On a personal level, in terms of my ability to conceptualize creativity and creative writing as an embodied process and to understand the evolutionary and social significance of literature, this research has been a deeply enriching experience. It has also had a considerable impact on the way I now approach and continue to develop my teaching practice. I am convinced that the conceptual reach of my understanding is now far greater than it was before I began this process and that my students have benefited from my ability to describe and explain the subtlety, complexity and the fluid and paradoxical nature of the creative process.

I am conscious though, that given my determination to keep the research as open-ended as possible, the structure and internal coherence of this thesis, on an academic level, may appear slightly unconventional. I had originally intended to submit a large portion of creative writing as part of the thesis, but I found it difficult to bridge my creative work – the story of an architect accused of plagiarism – with my theoretical and qualitative research. In retrospect, I'm convinced that dropping the creative component was the right decision. I was developing an interest in Bakhtin's work at the time and it soon became clear that his writings offered far more scope for intellectual research. Understanding Bakhtin became a central preoccupation of my research until I discovered the flaw in his thinking that led me to embodied realism. Each stage led to another

and each separate area of research required extensive reading to understand the concepts at sufficient depth. I feel that by allowing myself to be led by my research I have made things hard for myself and possibly hard for my readers. It would have been far easier if I had settled on an ontological framework and focused on a particular subject. This didn't happen and couldn't have happened, given that my starting point was to pull up the floorboards on which I was standing. I have tried, in my defence, to be as honest and open in my approach as I can and hope this compensates for what may be perceived by some as a lack of a secure ontological focus.

Chapter 9. Implications for Theory and Practice within Creative Writing Pedagogy

9.1) Why an embodied Bakhtinian approach in creative writing is important.

Whilst working on this thesis I have been attempting to conceptualise and understand what I have always instinctively felt: that writing or reading fiction is as much an act of embodied consciousness as an act of intellectual cognition. Fiction and poetry reveal the ways different levels of consciousness, both embodied and cognitive, work together simultaneously to mirror direct experience. As in all the arts, but more particularly in creative literature, this is an experience of *embodied* consciousness. It is of course a simulation, made possible through our evolved sense of narrative and made dramatic and memorable through our ability to consciously manipulate and exaggerate stories as we elaborate them. Nevertheless, in this process, we have developed a means of recreating a sense of embodied experience whilst simultaneously reflecting on it. This process occurs *in* the body-mind and is not solely *of* the mind. We have discovered, through advances in science, that the world of the body and the world of thought are not separate dimensions; we are not ghosts in a machine, or homunculi within our own bodies (images that aptly describe the epistemological myth of post-Cartesian culture), but we are somehow, in a way that is confounding to western consciousness, both subjective at the core and objectified within the world of experience. This confusing and paradoxical lack of separation between the realm of the senses and the realm of the mind is the result of a philosophical and ontological failure to grasp the fundamental interconnectivity between what Damasio has identified as ‘core’ consciousness and ‘extended’ consciousness. These are large philosophical claims and a lot flows from them. They offer us new insights and ways of understanding the function and the processes of art, and specifically for this study, creative writing.

The journey between my initial instinctive feelings about the writing process, the realisation that there needed to be a way of re-conceptualising the relationship between practice and theory, and a conceptual understanding of how it could

actually happen, has been a long one. During that time the number of creative writing programmes at graduate and undergraduate level in England has steadily increased. According to Foden (2011), there are now over ten thousand units, modules and courses on creative writing being taught in Higher Education with ninety-four universities offering postgraduate degrees. Julia Bell (Hancock, 2008) has suggested that creative writing has now taken over from European critical theory as the dominant subject in English Literature departments. This is a challenging claim and one that would be contested by many academics, but it points up some interesting tensions. If critical theory really is in decline, in the increasingly competitive market-orientated environment of HE, what is going to provide the intellectual and theoretical backbone for English and its new cohort, creative writing, however it is to be defined as a subject area in the future?

At the moment English academics, anxious of the impact of creative writing on the subject area, are emphasising the core values of literary studies: of the importance of contextualising creative writing within the traditions of literature and criticism (see Royle quoted in Hancock, 2008). The more utilitarian amongst them, with an eye to the market, are keen to sell the idea of creative writing as a vocational training that offers students transferable writing skills, increased employability, enhanced creativity etc. within a burgeoning global communications market. There are also a large number of creative writing academics, conscious of the new found status of creative writing within the academy, who are seeking an accommodation with theoretical approaches to develop more space for reflection between theory and practice. Donnelly (2012, p. 148) argues that creative writing teachers often fail to recognise the theories that underpin writing practice and calls for the development of a robust and legitimate academic discipline of creative writing studies. Wandor (2008, p. 128) criticises what she sees as the 'ideological confusion' of the romantic/therapy axis in creative writing teaching and argues for the development of a more symbiotic relation with English literary studies (*ibid*, p. 220). Boulter (2007, p. 2) maintains that a critical-creative approach can enrich creative work, whilst Dawson (2005, p. 208), who like Wandor, acknowledges the important

contribution of Bakhtin's socially-situated theory to creative writing pedagogy, believes the subject should pay more attention to the socio-political content of the creative work it produces.

These are strong and coherent arguments. But in their desire to find a *raison d'être* for creative writing in HE and to find a pedagogic solution to the current situation, there are some fundamental problems they fail to address. Creative production is a different process to knowledge production. If there is going to be a fruitful dialogue between practice and theory we need to establish a position that recognises this. The process that Freiman described as digesting the 'dream' through the body and putting it into words to be told and discussed after breakfast (2004) is a process of both embodiment and language. Focusing on the aesthetics of the creative process and the embodied experience of making fiction, of putting felt bodily experience into words is quite a different process to valorising, theorising and critiquing a product. Any prejudice towards a particular polarity of this continuum will result in either the uncomfortable imposition of 'didactic' theory onto the creative process, or the complete relinquishing of form in sloppy and meaningless expressivism. We have to find ways of bringing together theory and practice: two concepts (approaches) that often appear as binary opposites. If we don't do this we are in danger of being overpowered by the academic vision, what Webb and Brien have called 'the objectifying and universalising perspective associated with the academy' (2008, p. 2).

An embodied Bakhtinian framework allows us to acknowledge both the difference and the mutuality of the theoretical and practical approaches. It creates an ontological balance between the embodied aesthetics of the creative process and the quest in the Humanities for conceptual knowledge and understanding of subjective experience. The problem with the pedagogic proposals on the role of creative writing being offered at present is not that they are not challenging, but that they are not challenging enough. They imply an accommodation, a rapprochement with what Slingerland (2010) has identified as the innate dualism of the Humanist paradigm: an approach that suggests the

world is constructed solely from ideologically and linguistically mediated experience. If it fails to push for a paradigm shift in thinking that acknowledges the significance of the body within the creative process, attempts to create a coherent aesthetic framework within creative writing pedagogy are likely to be engulfed or dismissed by the next literary critical theory that gains fashionable and intellectual currency.

An embodied socially-situated framework, in its embracing of science, may be a bitter pill for many creative writing academics embedded in social constructivist ontologies, but as I have already argued, there is a clear acknowledgement of the role of culture and ideology in this approach and anxieties around determinism and reductivism need to be allayed. As Slingerland has pointed out:

the recognition that a large part of the environment in which humans find themselves embodied is itself a human creation has focused attention on how cultural differences in embodied experience effect thought, as well as how cultural forms are created and transmitted by cognitively limited organisms (ibid, p. 13).

If it is capable of acknowledging the dialogic relationship between our embodied experience and the socially-situated nature of consciousness and identity, creative writing, as an art form and as a discourse that straddles these two ontological realms, could make important contributions to other areas of research in creativity and consciousness studies, both in the area of embodied consciousness and in our understanding of the extended or autobiographical self.

On a wider, cultural level, outside the confines of the academy, in the written arts and in creative writing teaching within the community, an appreciation of the embodied and socially-situated dimensions of creative writing could help to dispel the remnants of romanticism in popular culture that have been used by its dominant economic ideology to 'marginalise[s] the practice of art and creativity, whilst at the same time appropriating them as distilled myth, for capital'

(Freiman, 2004, p 12). In so doing, it could encourage the democratisation of creativity and affirm the importance of art as a form of embodied reflexivity.

9.2) Practical applications of an embodied socially-situated framework to the teaching of creative writing

In her discussion of the teaching of literature, Robinson (2007, p. 134) makes the case that critical evaluations of literary work tend to emphasise the cognitive aspects of the text in discussions of structure, meaning and form and fail to recognise ways in which it is also a physiological and emotional experience. Now, using the concepts and ideas derived from recent research in neuroscience and cognitive linguistics we can begin to understand how emotional and physical experience is built into literature. Writing short stories and novels is clearly an elaborate and complex process, which requires the conscious selection, organisation and shaping of 'felt' elements into a dramatised and coherent form. Being able to talk about the way fiction recreates our emotional and embodied experience of the world, requires us to explore how, through the imagination, external experience is replicated in the body. In the area of creative writing, adopting an embodied, socially-situated approach enables us to do this.

An embodied socially-situated approach provides us with pedagogic tools which can be used to encourage developing writers to explore, analyse and conceptualise the creative process as it is elaborated within the body. Drawing on the work of thinkers like Gendlin (1962), Johnson (2008) and the embodied realists allows creative writing tutors to reveal the synergies between felt bodily experience and language and to further encourage creative reflexivity within the writing process (Hunt 2006). Deepening and broadening Bakhtinian insights into the creative process through a more embodied approach to his work allows us to use the living canvas of the chronotope to understand the way the eidetic images of narrative speak to both the universality of human nature and the particularity of our socio-historical condition. In these ways and in others, the creative process can be revealed to writers in a way that previous conceptual approaches have failed to acknowledge.

Adopting an embodied socially-situated approach does not require the dismantling and re-building of the English and Creative Writing subject areas. It is not demanding a new way of writing, or reading, or of engaging with literature. To anticipate that a new conceptual framework must generate completely new critical and theoretical discourses and a new pedagogy and strategies for practical work is to assume, fallaciously, the primacy of theory that imposes 'top down' constraints onto the study and creation of literature (see my criticism of Lynn (1990) and Bishop and Olstrom (1994), in section 2.1). An embodied socially-situated approach, by shifting the ontological paradigms away from the linguistically orientated discourses of literary theory seeks to offer a deeper and broader understanding of literature and the writing process. In so doing it is not attempting to displace cultural theory, but is arguing that to remain valid, these discourses need to be seen in relation to a different set of philosophical premisses. In many ways it is a question of shifting the balance, or creating a balance where one has not existed previously. Our experience of literature as an art form has been distorted by the pre-eminence in western culture of language as a mode of communication and the mind as a means of understanding the world. Literature, if you like, has become the victim of its own success, too closely associated with what Damasio has identified as 'extended consciousness' (2000). (Imagine for a moment how different the world would be if humans communicated musically or through the projection of visual images). An embodied socially-situated framework, in seeking a rapprochement with science, with a degree of determinism and with the body and embodied consciousness, is seeking to replace current 'top down' modes of thinking with an acknowledgement of the essential 'bottom up' nature of the process and to ensure that philosophical and intellectual theorising in the arts and particularly in creative writing takes account of our physical embodiment.

There are, of course, issues around the extent to which science, neuroscience, evolutionary psychology and philosophy can or should be taught in its raw state on a creative writing programme. It clearly has a place in HE institutions and particularly on creative writing teacher training programmes where students are

required to consciously theorise the link between practice and theory, but even on courses where the focus is more heavily weighted to practice, although the reading of theoretical texts may be kept to a minimum, the teaching still needs to be informed by an embodied socially-situated approach. The main pedagogic reason for this is that an awareness of the creative process and an ability to work with it, either consciously or intuitively, is an important prerequisite skill in creative writing. An embodied socially-situated approach would ensure that both writers - who often develop a highly idiosyncratic and intuitive understanding of process - as well as academics - who may not have any first-hand experiential understanding of the embodied nature of the creative process - would have access to a conceptual framework that, without weakening what they already have to offer, would enable them to communicate and teach embodied processes effectively.

Within teaching practice, whether they are academics or practising writers, teachers need to have an essential understanding of the conceptual framework of the embodied socially-situated approach. They need to be able to move reflexively in their teaching from considerations of the aesthetics of process to the valorising of the 'posited' product; from an embodied approach to a socially-situated one. This has always been recognised in the visual arts and music where the physical process is more externalised and apparent. It is equally true, though often unfortunately not recognised, in creative writing.

As I have already suggested, an embodied socially-situated approach is not prescriptive. Subjectivity and individuality are highly valued in the arts and the development of an individual style is contingent on a writer being able to come to their own understanding of their own creative process. It is important that any framework for conceptualising the artistic process and artistic thinking respects the essential subjectivity of art. Whilst opening up the creative process for discussion and exploration it must allow developing writers the freedom to interpret those processes within their own personal schema.

9.2.1) Applying an embodied socially-situated framework within a creative writing programme

I have tried to develop this ethos in the Creative Writing Programme (CWP)³ that I am currently the director of. The CWP is still structured in much the same way as the Certificate in Creative Writing (see sections 1.1, 4.1 and 4.4) as the emphasis on individual creativity in the first year leading to a more socially-situated approach in the second is very much in accord with the pedagogic rationale of an embodied socially-situated framework. This particular learning pathway allows us in the first term to focus on the subjectivity and creativity of the student writers: to pay particular attention to the relationship between language and felt experience, to the uses of metaphor and to the engagement of the body in the writing process. Through initial exercises on character, writers explore character in action before moving on to narrative viewpoint and explorations of narrative structure within micro-scenes at the end of the first year. In the beginning of the second year the emphasis shifts away from subjectivity towards a wider understanding of structure with students turning their attention to the ways in which the dynamics of narrative are designed with the reader in mind. This immersion in the dialogic context of narrative is intended to draw the attention of writers to the socially-situated nature of the writing process, to the need to draw together all the aspects of the writing into an embodied and cognitive experience in which the reader is guided towards the story's intended meaning. One small, but significant change to the structure of the old Certificate in Creative Writing has been moving the Special Author study to the beginning of the final term of the programme. This has allowed us to consider the wider relationship of writing to genre and literary tradition (whilst focusing on the development of individual style) during the part of the programme where writers are asked to think about their own work and their aspirations for it in relation to society and the social institutions of publishing.

³ The CWP is a two-year non-accredited programme that has evolved out of the Certificate in Creative Writing (CCW). It is now no longer taught within the university where it was originally established but is run as a private business. There are currently 74 students on its two-year programme and a further 33 on advanced courses for writers who have finished the two-year programme.

The writing workshops that stimulated the debate that launched this thesis then follow after the Special Author study in the final ten weeks of the programme.

It is impossible to capture the entirety of the two-year process in such a short summary: it is included here to give a pedagogic rationale for programme and course structure within an embodied socially-situated approach to teaching creative writing. Within this overall structure – which is clearly delineated within the programme rationale - tutors select their own reading lists and develop their own practical work and writing exercises. Although tutors are free to use whatever material they feel is relevant and works best for their own individual approach, there is a strong emphasis on a collective commitment to the principles of an embodied socially-situated framework. Teaching strategies, assessment criteria and learning outcomes for the courses are discussed in regular tutor meetings and there is a tutor forum on the programme website where tutors can discuss and support each other's teaching. Practical work and writing exercises are viewed as a collective resource and all tutors are free to access each other's web pages on the programme website and use or adapt the material there. All these exercises, nuanced and developed within their particular contexts, become the responsibility of the tutors who apply them. What is important is that they make sense within the overall conceptual framework of an embodied socially situated approach to teaching creative writing, that they are not predicated in partial theoretism, that they are consistent and coherent and that they make space for reflection and reflexivity⁴.

9.2.2) Examples of the application of an embodied socially-situated framework within my own teaching practice

Whilst directing the Creative Writing Programme I have been reviewing and nuancing my own teaching strategies in line with an embodied socially-situated approach. What follows are some examples of how my teaching reflects this conceptual framework. I will look firstly at the work on embodied writing and reflexivity that student writers undertake in the first few weeks of their first year

⁴ For an excellent example of a conceptual framework applied to the teaching of creative life writing see Hunt (2013).

and then I will discuss teaching approaches towards the Special Author Study in which the emphasis is on a more socially-situated approach.

The CWP still draws from a similar cross section of the community to the Certificate in Creative Writing⁵; though now the programme is located in a city centre off the university campus there are more young professionals within the student profile. Most developing writers⁶ when they join the programme share a particular set of assumptions about how fiction is written, in which little or no distinction is made between the language they use in other areas of their lives and the language of creative prose. Their written work can be characterised as either loose and conversational or abstract and formal, reflecting the modes of language used either inside or outside of their working environment. Those who have read extensively often exhibit a raw literary quality in their writing, imaginative and quirky, but unaware of the discipline required to make what they have written accessible to readers other than themselves. There is a tendency to assume that what is required to write is simply to find a subjective viewpoint through which familiar modes of conversational or written language can be used as a medium of self-expression. The result is an approach to narration that is dominated by a subjective point of view and a mode of writing that has been identified by Booth (1991, p. 8) as ‘telling’⁷. There is nothing wrong with this approach per se; ‘telling’ and the conscious, cognitive layers of the fictional process play an important role in fiction writing. (In fact, an issue in creative writing pedagogy has been the insistence from some quarters that writers should ‘show’ and not ‘tell’⁸). The problem is one of habituation: that developing writers fail to appreciate the extent to which language is embodied and the importance of representing the objective physical world as well as the subjectivity of human perspective in their work.

⁵ See Section 4.2.7.

⁶ Now that the CWP is established outside HE and is being run privately, we find it more appropriate to refer to individuals as writers as opposed to students.

⁷ A mode of narration associated with the authority of a narrating voice (the storyteller) who in mediating between the reader and the events of a story, distances them from the ‘reality’ of the story itself.

⁸ This over-emphasis on ‘showing’ as Yorke (2013, pp. 111 - 119) points out is largely as a result of the impact of film and film theory on prose fiction.

Once again it is a question of correcting an imbalance. An embodied socially-situated approach focuses initially on making writers conscious that fiction also works on an unconscious and embodied level. This is not in an attempt to assert the importance of one over the other, but to enable writers to realise the value of both 'telling' *and* 'showing'. In order to do this an embodied approach seeks first, through exercises and practical work, to make writers aware of unconscious embodied levels in the writing process, so that, as Hunt (2013, pp. 141-143) has pointed out, after they have learned to use language effectively at this level, the knowledge and skill they have gained is, over time, re-assimilated into instinctive practice.

Over the first few weeks of the programme, through practical exercises and discussion, writers are introduced to basic word categories: nouns, verbs and adjectives, not as units of grammar, but as aspects of fictional composition. These word categories are discussed in terms of their eidetic power and resonance, their function within narrative and their concrete or abstract qualities. The work on concrete qualities and levels of connotation within language is designed to draw writers into a consideration of the relationship between language and the body and the ways in which words and phrases can be used to stimulate an embodied response within the reader and enhance their sense of the verisimilitude of the text as a physically experienced 'reality'. Writing exercises are developed from this work in which writers are encouraged to explore the effects of too much abstraction or too much concrete detail in prose. In sharing and discussing this work with others they are asked to try to express their responses not only in terms of what they thought but also how the writing affected them physically and emotionally. The intention here is to encourage writers not only to be aware of the embodied nature of writing as they write, but also to articulate feelings that help to develop their instinctive responses to a text.

A further exercise is used to encourage discussion of the notion of Basic Level Categories and primary metaphor⁹, taken from Lakoff and Johnson's work (1999). In this exercise writers are given a number of sentences and asked to re-write them in more detail by lengthening them in any way they like, or to shorten them by collapsing categories together. An example sentence might be: 'The houses in the street all had trees in their gardens'. Amongst a possible range of responses might be a contracted sentence, like: 'The street was urban and leafy', or a more extended sentence like: 'Through a screen of newly planted trees, he glimpsed neat, timber clad properties set back from the road'. These response sentences can be discussed extensively in terms of the use of concrete and abstract language, metaphor and synecdoche, connotation and denotation, active and passive modes, sequencing of action and point of view etc. and lead to a further discussion of Basic Level Categories (the level at which language generates a clear visual image and the possibility of imagined interaction with what is being described).

As Boyd (2009) points out, in constructing imagined narrative, writers tend to imagine the gist of a scene rather than the details. Basic Level Categories can be used to discuss the level at which developing writers tend to conceptualize scenes and events and to encourage writing that develops appropriate levels of detail and avoids unnecessary abstraction. Understanding how they can use language that optimises the visual, emotional and physiological mechanisms of the body can help writers understand how to convey the emotional and the abstract through concrete detail, enhance verisimilitude, anchor meanings within the shared embodiment of the text and draw the reader into a closer proximity with the chronotope, character zones and the dramatic action of the story. An awareness of techniques that utilise our somatosensory and connotative relationship to language can enhance the dramatic richness and complexity between the emotional and cognitive aspects of the storyline and

⁹ Care is obviously required in translating the cognitive theory of embodied realism into concepts and ideas that can be grasped by writing students at the level that they need to make sense of them in their writing practice, but this is not difficult to frame within a discussion of the role of the body and the imagination in creative writing.

can be used both in the creation and evolution of character and the reader's understanding of it.

Another exercise given to writers in the early part of the programme is an adaptation of an exercise suggested by Gardner (1991). This exercise is designed to focus on the different ways in which the emotional content of a scene can be communicated. Writers are given a situation to write about. For example: A woman leaves the graveyard where she just buried her odious and intolerant husband. In the first instance the writers are asked to invent a character who tells the reader what he or she (i.e. the character) is feeling. After this short writing task has been completed the scene is re-written, but this time the character is not allowed to tell the reader what they feel or why they feel it, and the writer must find a way of expressing this emotional content through the character's description of their immediate physical environment.

Writers generally find the first part of this exercise the easiest in terms of imagining the material. They write a lot and quite quickly, though they often admit in discussions afterwards to not being particularly happy with what they've produced, to having written too much and to having found it difficult to stay focused on the action. Readings of the written work often reveal long digressions, language that appears to be outside the character zone of the invented character and an over-reliance on abstract nouns and noun phrases that don't express emotion so much as label or summarise it. The second part of the exercise appears to be far more challenging with writers often writing little and revising what they are writing as they write. Despite this they are usually pleased with the results, feeling that it is sharper, more focused and less contrived (despite the amount of revision). Reading and sharing of the work leads to discussion around the suggestive and connotative power of colour, shape, texture and space, the importance of working an image until it is clearly wrought in the imagination, the physical effect of pace, alliteration and musicality in prose and the ways in which pure description of the physical characteristics of a scene can carry such a strong emotional charge. There is

usually a consensus that although less has been written, what has been achieved has established a sense of reality in the writing that had been more difficult to achieve from a more subjective perspective. In the third stage of this exercise, writers are asked to take what they consider to be the most effective sections of the two pieces and amalgamate them into one finished piece of writing.

One of the purposes of this exercise is to show writers that characters are subjective voices within an objective world and that without the objectification of being located and grounded within the world of the fiction, they often have an air of unreality about them. The elephant in the room is that, of course, this is all fiction, fictional characters are fictitious, but in order to convince your reader that your characters and the world they exist in is real, a writer must use language that is capable of stimulating a physiological and emotional response within the body of the reader. This exercise is a useful vehicle for discussing the generation of emotional affect in fiction and can lead to further discussion on the relationship between the body and language in relation to reflexivity in creative writing (Hunt & Sampson, 2006), metaphor, simile and creativity.

Despite the apparent disparity in levels of knowledge between the simplicity of these exercises and the concepts of neuroscience and philosophy that underpin embodied realism, once a basis for discussion is established, guided by the tutor's understanding of the conceptual framework, writers soon begin to appreciate the importance of the relationship between the body and language in fictional composition. What is so surprising about this initial focus on embodiment in the writing process is the degree to which they had not, prior to taking the programme, appreciated its significance and are themselves surprised by what they are learning.

Having established the importance of the body and the way in which embodied and cognitive levels of consciousness work together to create the experience of the fictional process and having identified the body as the space in which the

subjectivity of the mind and the objectivity of the physical world interact, the teaching focus in the second half of the first term switches to characterisation. Writers work on a series of character sketches leading out of the Gardner exercise that encourage them to 'realise' their characters within the objective space within which they are described. This initial locus, a convergence of subjective point of view and the objectivity of the physical world within the embodied 'presence' of character, is enlarged in the following two courses (there are two courses per year on the CWP). In the second course of the programme writers focus on modes of narration, writing full scenes and short stories in which they explore ways in which tense and narratorial point of view affect the subjective and objective dynamics of their writing.

In the second year the programme develops a more socially-situated approach in which writers are introduced to the work of contemporary authors on fictional structure: for example, Vogler (2007), Campbell (1993) and Booker (2004). Within a Bakhtinian approach, supported by embodied realist theory, traditional story structure is discussed. Links are drawn between Bakhtinian notions of the chronotope, narrative theory and the argument in evolutionary psychology¹⁰ that identifies narrative and narrative structure with the recording and transmission of experiential truths of human existence and human nature. In line with an embodied realist approach writers are invited to consider the extent to which traditional and contemporary models of narrative structure have evolved as projections of individual embodied experience. Particular turning points within traditional narrative structure are identified, for example: 'crossing the threshold', or 'meeting the mentor' (Vogler, 2007, p. 19) and writers are asked to reflect on the ways these particular chronotopic events connect with their own and their readers' life experiences.

In further work related to Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, students are given writing exercises that require them to consider the ways in which the frame of time and space around a scene can be used to develop the dramatic

¹⁰ See Section 6.3.7.

tension inherent in it. These exercises can take the form of short dialogue templates in which students are given five or six lines of apparently unrelated dialogue and asked to write a short dramatic scene that through a careful consideration of chronotopic factors links the dialogue together meaningfully. Or, they will be asked to describe the same event in different locations, for example one character accusing another of having lied to them in a cinema, then at a party; or they will be required to start with a particular chronotope (three survivors in a lifeboat, a family stuck in a lift, two people lost in a wood at night) and write a scene into it. Again, these exercises are followed up with discussions of the way form is utilised to carry meaning and potential within fiction, reinforcing the point that meaning is not just a function of character and voice, but is also conveyed through the way time and space are brought together as form. This discussion is often extended to cover chronotopic motifs and structural metaphor within narrative.

As well as narrative structure, the relationship between contemporary writing, genre and tradition is also discussed. In a number of practical exercises writers draw from early story cycles¹¹ and examine the themes of some of the earliest recorded stories. After discussing them as a group and working towards a shared consensual interpretation they are then asked to consider how the theme and the plot of the original story could be re-originated and to re-write it as a contemporary piece of writing. This exercise requires them to acknowledge the particular cultural and historical perspective the original text takes towards its subject, to isolate its more universal themes and then to find a modern idiom that best represents these ideas to a modern readership. It offers an insight into Bakhtinian notions of genre and form as historical 'ways of seeing' the world whilst emphasising a more embodied approach in the distinction between cultural relativism and universal themes. Furthermore, it introduces the notion of contemporaneity to them as writers: that although many of the themes and chronotopic motifs of fiction have already been established, one of the tasks of

¹¹ Stories for these exercises have been drawn from various sources including 'The Milesian Tales', 'The Odyssey' and 'The Arabian Nights'.

a writer in entering into dialogue with tradition and with that which is 'given', is to recycle, reconsider and re-originate narratives of human experience.

The anticipated learning outcomes for these exercises are that writers will recognise that the influence of embodiment extends out beyond the immediate preoccupations of the creative writing process itself to incorporate, through the form and structure of narrative, the essentially shared nature of human experience. As McEwan put it:

At its best, literature is universal, illuminating human nature at precisely the point at which it is most parochial and specific (2005, p 6).

Finally, the Special Author Study, which had been my first attempt within the structure of the CWP to find a pedagogic solution to the issues that had stimulated the writing of this thesis, still forms an important part of the second year programme. During the last five years as I have slowly re-structured the CWP around an evolving embodied socially-situated framework I have come to realise the importance and significance of this part of the course and it has been moved into the final term just before the final ten weeks of writing workshops.

After much of the emphasis in earlier parts of the course has been on the ability of writing to re-originate embodied experience in the reader, the function of the Special Author Study is to generate an increased awareness of notions of influence and tradition in literature and to reinforce the socially-situated aspects of the writing process. In this part of the course writers are encouraged, through practical work, to turn outwards towards the existing body of published writing, to see the historical and current traditions of literature in Bakhtinian terms as the 'given', as form, style and thematic content that can be freely utilised and dialogised into their own writing processes.

In the Special Author Study writers make a creative and stylistic study of an author of their choice (see section 4.1 and Appendix) and in this process their

own writing is brought into close proximity with the work of a published author. Before commencing this work there are preliminary readings and discussions of other published writers' attempts to emulate the work of writers they admire. Examples of Chekhov's re-writing of Maupassant's short stories, first noted in O'Connor (1963) and Mansfield's re-writing of Chekhov (Schneider, 1935) are used, along with other examples from the genre of the novel, including Rhys's (1996) re-working of Charlotte Brontë's 'Jane Eyre' (1847). These examples, all from writers considered to have strong individual styles help to dispel any residual anxieties amongst writers that too close an association with another writer's work will lead to a weakening of their own personal style and offer opportunities to discuss a more embodied socially-situated approach to the idea of influence.

After the preliminary reading writers are given a number of practical tasks that require them to emulate the style of other published authors: re-writing an extract in the style of another author, or inserting one their own characters from their own work into the opening paragraphs of a story or chapter written by another author. These exercises work well as platforms for discussing influence, style, technique and the importance of close and reflexive reading of the work of other writers. In the Special Author Study itself, writers choose an extract (scene or chapter) from their chosen author and make a creative intervention into the text; finding a way of writing into, out of, or through the precursor text in such a way that their own writing is drawn into the fabric of the writing, into its stylistic structure and techniques. Encouraging writers to make this kind of intervention within a learning environment supported by an embodied socially-situated framework has not resulted in a negative or antagonistic reaction towards the experience. In fact the opposite has been the case, with writers claiming that the exercise and the approach on the programme has not only alleviated their anxieties around influence, but has made them feel stronger and more secure in their ownership of their own work whilst offering them a clear sense of how they can further develop their writing practice after they have finished the programme.

Within the current structure of the CWP – one which is still evolving as my understanding of the implications of an embodied socially-situated approach broaden and deepen - I am confident that I have established a strong, coherent, pedagogical base for teaching creative writing. I no longer have difficulty in explaining the effects or the nature of influence and originality to students in writing workshops, though with the new structure and approach within the programme I no longer appear to have any need to do so. The conceptual framework I have developed has enabled me to draw together both practice and theory and to resolve the problems of critical theory I initially found so challenging. What appeared to be complex and contradictory issues around influence, originality and the creative process I can now see as being the result of theoretism: an attempt to impose partial solutions on the basis of philosophical misunderstanding. Of course, I'm conscious that things can change. Adaptations and refinements might well be required, but I remain convinced that if creative writing is to develop a conceptual framework that will allow it to understand itself as both a process and a product an approach that acknowledges the ontological unity of the body-mind is essential.

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Special Author Study.

Some suggestions for Creative Interventions:

1. You could re-write an existing story in your own style. In your notes you would compare styles and discuss the effect that your way of telling the story has on the story.
 2. You could write a story in the style of another writer. Your notes would consider the difficulties and problems you had in bringing the story to life.
 3. You could change an event within a story and re-write it from there. In your notes you could discuss your intention in making the change and any difficulties you had in seamlessly stitching one story to another.
 4. You could change the narrative viewpoint in a story – tell it from a different character's point of view. You may want to make that narrator more modern, more ironic, more involved in the action etc. Again, in your notes you would discuss your intention and discuss the stylistic differences between your work and the original.
 5. You could change the genre or the form of the story. For example turning a piece of realism into magic realism or re-writing it as a radio script. This could require some serious re-working in the action and the level of symbolism in your story.
 6. You could change the settings and locations of a story, modernising it or historicizing it. Looking at the impact of this on style and moral content.
 7. You could extend the text before or after the scenes depicted or add additional scenes to it. This would require careful attention to stylistic detail and a consideration of the relationship of the new scene(s) to the story as a whole. You could also tell a story that cuts through and bisects an existing one.
 8. You could take characters out of existing stories and place them in new ones or take your own characters and place them at the beginning of an existing story and see where they take the action.
 9. Take an episode in the writer's life and explore it in a story that also explores and utilises the writer's style.
 10. Take one of your own stories or a chapter of a novel that you are working on and write it in the style of the writer you are exploring.
- (Think of a creative intervention of your own to add to this list.)

Remember, this is an opportunity to explore ways of writing stories. Keep the presentation focused on one story, chapter or character. If you're working on a novel you may need to provide a synopsis. In the presentations I'd like us to be able to refer to the original work and your re-working, so we will need copies to read before the session. Please bear this in mind.

Presentations will be 20 – 30 minutes in length – including general discussion.