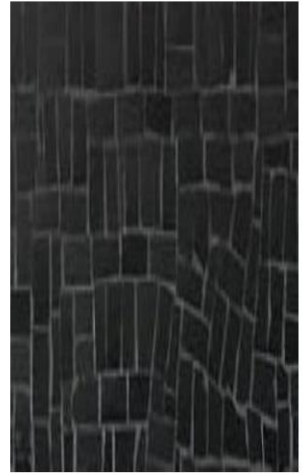


PLAGIARISM

THE MOSAIC OF IGNORANCE



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CREATIVITY

chapter one

Due to a common misconception that unless you are a published novelist, you cannot be considered a ‘*real*’ writer, novice authors often find it difficult to convince either their nearest and dearest or, indeed, themselves that their desire to write should be taken seriously. However, even the most famous authors had to start somewhere, so don’t be put off by outside pressures.

Like creativity in any field - *cooking, painting, gardening, or web design* - creativity in writing involves the making of something new or the reinventing of something old. Being creative means causing something unique to come into existence and being original. It’s seeing something in a different way and putting your own special stamp on it. The power of creativity is within each one of us. The challenge is to open yourself up to it - *to approach your subject in a new and interesting way.*

Writing creatively isn’t easy. It takes nerve and determination; but just about everyone has fears about doing it: from famous, bestselling authors to *out-and-out* beginners. How do they overcome these fears? They sit down and write. They write every day. They write when the last thing they feel like doing is writing. They write as well as they can and they keep on going. They acknowledge their fears but they don’t let fear stop them. Once they see that they can sit down and write, and live to write another day, their fears generally subside and come to have less of a hold on them.

Sometimes we write to survive, perhaps to gain some sense of control during turbulent times. Sometimes we write to remember, perhaps to cope with life transitions that always involve loss. Sometimes we write for discovery, perhaps inspired by person or place and seeking to grow. Sometimes we just write.

Art has the power to help people understand themselves, each other and their world better; yet this creative use of the imagination, is a magical quality which marks us out as different from most other creatures. Creativity is a process of learning; it can deeply affect self and worldviews because it is attained through experience, exploration and expression rather than instruction.

Art allows a safe revisiting of that place of revulsion. It has been compared to a rollercoaster ride. We ride a rollercoaster in order to be terrified, and yet none of us would willingly step on a rollercoaster knowing it to be unsafe. But art, writing, music...allows us to revisit painful times whilst knowing that the seatbelt is secure around us, rigorous safety checks have been passed, and we are going to walk away from the memory intact.

The place of writing in therapeutic, educational and personal growth capacities has received significant attention in the expressive arts therapies, most notably poetry therapy, which focuses on language, symbol and story. Creative and focused writing has also received attention as a therapeutic agent in a number of clinical theories, particularly narrative, humanistic and cognitive-behavioural approaches to practice. Beyond professional capacities, survivors of community tragedies have often turned to writing and art as an emotional release, a way of connecting with each other, and honouring the memory of deceased loved ones.

Therapeutic creative writing offers personal, explorative and expressive processes, similar to creative writing's first stages. Patients, clients, tutees and students are offered guidance and inspiration by a clinician, facilitator or creative writer, and support in choosing a subject and form. Each writer works according to his own interests, concerns, wants and needs. Authority and control always reside with writers, to reread, share with appropriate others or not, store unread, or possibly destroy therapeutically. The emphasis is on a process of satisfaction and interest to writers, and possibly a few close individuals.

Writers have probably always known the deeply healing power of writing, certainly since the ancient Greek poet **Sappho**. But they have kept the secret until recently. Now it is increasingly used in mainstream and complementary healthcare, medicine and therapy. Writing is powerful communication: perhaps even more so than speech, as it does not disappear on the breath. Every utterance is communication between interlocutors. But no one initially listens to writing except the quiet accepting page, which creates a record.

The etymological roots of the word '*record*' are '*re*', meaning again, and '*cord*', meaning heart thus, recording is getting closer to what is in the heart. The writer is their own first reader, their own primary interlocutor. So writing, in the first instance, is a private communication with the heart of the self. Strenuous but not thought-engaging exercise such as digging or solitary walking can induce a similar mental state.

Writing uses subtle, deeply human modes of communication such as narrative, detailed accurate description, experimenting with point of view, image (*particularly metaphor*) and, particularly in the case of poetry, rhythm and repetition. Breaking the skin of life-giving clear well-water, creative explorative and expressive writing can communicate psychological, social, cultural and spiritual truths. This insight can be achieved appropriately and gently when people give themselves permission to explore experience and express feelings, memories and knowledge through writing.

Expressive and explorative writing is really a process of deep listening, attending to some of the many aspects of the self habitually blanketed during waking lives. Some of these aspects we ignore at our peril. People who write for the first time with a trusted facilitator say things like ‘*it unlocked something I didn’t know was there*’.

You’re not listening to yourself as you write. No, while writing, the page offers no judgment at all. But there is a future interlocutor: writing with a white pen on white paper would not have the same effect. You listen to yourself after you write, rereading. Writing creates tangible footprints which can, and probably will be followed, but it postpones interlocution. There is no immediate reaction of *head-nodding*, smiling, frowning or grimacing, no immediate response of questions, affirmation, shouts or screams. The process of gaining insight is three-staged: first the dash onto the page, then rereading to the self, then the sometimes emotional reading and sharing with a carefully chosen other (*or others*). Writers have authority: nobody else is in control, though it takes a long time, or even never, to realise this.

Writing provides simple, quiet, private, focused, recorded forms of reflection, of paying proper attention to one’s own self. We know, remember and feel far more than we realise: humans are fabulously complex beings. Yet much of this is stored inaccessibly, especially at times of great need, thus writing can encourage our closed internal doors to slip ajar. Material on the other side of these doors is sensitive and vulnerable; care is needed over appropriate ethical boundaries and principles. As such, any issue can potentially be shared relatively fearlessly with a piece of paper because it will never get bored, angry, distressed or shocked, and its potential impeccable memory is impersonal. I say ‘*potential*’ as writing can be ripped up, burned, flushed away: creating it will have helped without rereading. Writing can be read and reflected upon, perhaps developed, redrafted, perhaps later shared with a trusted confidential other, or group. Writing’s privacy makes it qualitatively different from conversation, which will be remembered idiosyncratically: interlocutors cannot be asked to forget what they have heard. Writing can be a private communication first with paper and then with the self: these pieces are not really for anyone else other than yourself; it’s a way of talking to the universe. This privacy can enable exploration of areas unknown prior to writing (*examination of troublesome emotions, memories or sticky issues perhaps*): the darkest depths and enlightening peaks. We can only open our hearts to those we utterly trust, such as the accepting page.

Most of our energy goes into upholding our own importance. This is most obvious in our endless worry about the presentation of the self, about whether

or not we are admired or liked or acknowledged. If we are capable of losing some of that importance, two extraordinary things would happen to us. One, we would free our energy from trying to maintain the illusory idea of our grandeur; and, two, we would provide ourselves with enough energy to catch a glimpse of the actual grandeur of the universe and remind us we have an abundance of love and power to give.

The process is physical: the body writes, sometimes as if without the cognisance of the mind. Not so strange when you recall the '*word was made flesh*', not speech; writing is different from speech and the point is to express the written.

Expressive, explorative, reflective creative writing needs boldness based on trust in the process, and respect for the *writer-self*; our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You playing will not help the world; we are all meant to shine and as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same; our self-perception determines our behaviour. If we think we're magnificent creatures with an infinite abundance of love and power to give, then we tend to behave that way, and the energy we radiate reflects those thoughts no matter what we do.

Humans are narrative-making creatures; creating stories is our way of making sense of things. Illness, bereavement and loss can disrupt understanding of life, its hitherto habitual story. People naturally wish to recount personal troubles, doing so with little encouragement; writing can get this off the chest to a reliable audience. People seem to gain benefit from writing the exact story of their illness and its repercussions and we must agree that writing uses words, our everyday communicating medium. Requiring only basic literacy skills, paper and pencil, writing is simple and cheap. A stumbling block can be negative memories of spelling, grammar and construction taught with an authoritarian *confidence-destroying* red pen; yet starting to write is enjoyable, with initial unassuming steps. We write one word at a time, seeing where it leads. Key to success is perceiving it as flexible, versatile, straightforward, enjoyable and private. And with no purpose other than personal exploration and expression.

Willingness to explore beliefs, actions, values and identity is respect for personal integrity. Writing can give confidence that we have something vital to communicate, and can say it well, enhanced by knowing it is only for us to

read, at least initially: there is no teacher-reader waiting to correct. We therefore communicate respectfully with ourselves, tackling inevitable hopes, fears, hesitations. We are fully responsible for everything we write and our response to it, even when facilitated. We have full authority over our writing at every stage, including rereading to ourselves and possibly sharing with confidential, trusted readers.

Every piece of writing, no matter its style or format - *poem, short story, travel article, science fiction novel* - takes hard work and time to go from notion to concept to reality. Creativity gets the ball rolling, and then careful crafting enables you to produce a finished work that expresses clearly, dramatically, accurately, and with originality the story you want to tell. The seven steps of the writing process - *getting ideas, planning, researching, organizing, drafting, editing, and evaluating* - will take you from thinking about writing to producing a satisfying work of art. Keep in mind, though, that writing is usually not an **A-B-C** process. Most likely you'll find that you zigzag through the different steps on your way to creating a finished piece.

At every step along the way, and in every line and paragraph you write, you'll be making decisions that will affect the final outcome. These decisions will involve asking yourself a lot of questions: *Would my character say this? How can I be sure this date is correct? This word isn't quite right - what would be a better one? Is this scene really necessary?* You'll also find that it can be difficult to keep going. At times you may have to coax, tease, or drag those thoughts and words from your imagination onto the page.

Every piece of writing begins with the generation of an exciting idea, it's what sends you racing to your desk and sets your fingers racing across the keyboard. So what is your idea going to be? What story will you tell?

Story ideas are everywhere, but you need to find one that truly interests you and that's worth writing about; there is no right or wrong way to look for an idea. Different authors use different methods, some spontaneous, some very methodical. There are probably as many approaches as there are creative writers. There are also many, many sources. Be open to everything. Don't disregard anything. You'll discover what works best for you by trying lots of approaches and investigating many different possibilities. And you'll probably discover that you come up with so many good ideas that you have dozens to choose from, and dozens to store away for future projects.

Some authors will tell you: "*Write about what you know.*" Others say: "*Write about what you don't know*" because sticking to what you know can be limiting

and keeps you from learning. Whether you choose to search for your work's foundation in familiar terrain or decide to walk on unknown ground, there are plenty of sources that can stimulate your imagination and start you on the road to that great idea.

Important to remember is that a piece of writing can have several goals, but it's a good idea to have one in mind when you are writing. Your goal may be to teach a skill, share an important experience, explore a specific topic or relationship, write a bedtime story that will soothe a restless child, argue a point, critique the plot of a movie, thank a policeman for helping you in a crisis, or any number of other aims. It's a good idea to write your purpose down and pin it up as a reminder to stay on track.

One of the first rules to remember is that writers write. You should write something every day, even if all you do with the finished piece is tear it up and throw it away. Writing something, anything, every day will enable you to build up the discipline and commitment required to ensure that you can produce a complete manuscript in whatever genre you choose.

PLAGIARISM

chapter two

Plagiarism is a slippery subject because, while almost everyone agrees on what it is, few agree on where it is to be found. Even a minimal definition such as '*unacknowledged copying for undeserved profit*' encounters potential exceptions at every turn. Aphorisms such as immature writers imitate, mature writers steal or copying one book is plagiarism, copying many is research are evidence that plagiarism is, above all, a matter of opinion, and, as such, it will usually be found to exist - *or not to exist* - where the most influential opinions claim it to be, or not. Plagiarism arises less significantly from the intentions of authors than from the judgments of readers.

The history of plagiarism is tentacular, involving not only concepts of copyright and intellectual property, but also questions of authorship, authority, originality, and imitation, which, taken together, imply more or less the entire development of Western literary history. Add to this incomplete list the pertinent historical and cultural dimensions, and the progress of plagiarism might easily be seen to coincide with that of Western aesthetics.

What has become clear to me through reflecting on some of these historical moments is that, despite shifts in aesthetic norms, plagiarism is a very old and almost continuous phenomenon whose description remains surprisingly stable over time. What is constantly in flux are the kinds of textual practices that count as belonging to the category. This claim in favour of the historical consistency of plagiarism may strike some as anachronistic.

The question, for example, of whether or not Shakespeare was a '*plagiarist*' inevitably elicits a negative response, for which the standard explanation - *beyond that of his genius* - is that plagiarism didn't exist in his time, which is a corollary of the argument that 'everybody did it': in other words, what we might call plagiarism was, in those days, the conventional way to write theatre. The well-established fact of the collaborative nature of Renaissance theatre is not at issue here: the question that interests me is not whether Shakespeare 'plagiarized,' but whether he, or any of his contemporaries, could have plagiarized, or been seen to have done so, in terms of the aesthetic and market conditions in which they worked.

The commonly held belief that not only did Shakespeare not plagiarize, but, as a sixteenth-century playwright, he could not have, fails to take into consideration the fact that accusations of plagiarism did exist, and that Shakespeare's contemporaries, and some very worthy ones, were apparently moved to accuse him and each other of the crime. The question becomes, then, not whether Shakespeare plagiarized, but what presuppositions are involved when accusations of plagiarism during the **English Renaissance** were made.

If it is clear, today, that Shakespeare did not plagiarize, it is so only partly because we attempt to apply to his method not our own aesthetic and legal standards, but those that dominated in the sixteenth century. For, in many ways, Shakespeare's method is remarkably similar to some contemporary ones: Kathy Acker is also not a plagiarist by our standards, although her practice is clearly described, both by herself and by literary critics, as 'plagiaristic.' In some quite anachronistic way, Shakespeare and Acker encounter each other in terms of a contemporary aesthetics where, imbued with the ethos of intertextuality, literature is seen to be by nature repetition, and true originality impossible. In a post-humanist, postmodern, post-authorial world, where not only the singularity of authorship, but the originating potential of individual subjectivity, has been much contested; where authors have only recently been resurrected from the limbo to which poststructuralism consigned them; and where technological progress seems to threaten the very foundations of intellectual property law, even the possibility of plagiarism seems fraught with presuppositions about the originality, ownership, and authorship of discourse that are no longer universally shared within the same interpretive community.

Plagiarism clearly does exist, both today and as a trans-historical constant of the discursive field we have come to call literature. But if the fact of the existence of plagiarism is self-evident, the nature of its existence is not: the question is, then - *What is plagiarism?*

The intellect always contains within itself the power of its own renewal; reason does endure autonomous of the social order; persuasion compels, and argument changes minds. So the present corruption of intellect and its principal institutions cannot continue for very long. Some books are written for the pleasure or the zest of it. Other books are written as a painful duty, because there is something that needs to be said - *and because other people have better sense than to say it.*

Plagiarism is skyrocketing through cyberspace, where within seconds, with the push of a few buttons, students and scholars and novelists and hacks can cut and paste sections from disparate sources that once would have taken months if not years to collect.

What do students understand when they hear the term "plagiarism"? Is it the same thing that is understood by faculty? By writers in general? How firm are the standards? What is the relationship between plagiarism and cheating? Is plagiarism bad? What should we do about it?

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, plagiarism means (1) “*the action or practice of plagiarizing; the wrongful appropriation or purloining, and publication as one’s own, of the ideas, or the expression of the ideas (literary, artistic, musical, mechanical, etc.) of another*” or (2) “*a purloined idea, design, passage, or work.*” This dictionary traces the first appearance of the word in English to 1621, when Bishop R. Montague wrote, “*Were you afraid to be challenged for plagiarisme?*” The term has Latin roots (*plagiarus* meaning “*plunderer,*” from *plagium*, “*hunting net,*” from *plaga*, “*net*”); according to Webster’s, the English word was originally “*plagiary.*”

Even within the dictionary definition - *wrongfully using another’s words or ideas and publishing them as one’s own* - plagiarism includes several not necessarily related actions. One definition suggests a moral, ethical, or technical violation. The other (“*purloined*”) points, essentially, to a crime. But dictionary definitions can take us only so far. Words are used in a variety of ways; natural language as used in society is always fuzzy. The first point to make, then, in understanding plagiarism is that it involves a range of behaviour. How bad each instance is, depends on what kind of plagiarism we are talking about.

Mention plagiarism, and certain writers’ names are bound to come up. The public appears fascinated by plagiarism, a sin for which only some of the prominent are likely to be singled out and even fewer punished. Let’s recall a few of the most notorious cases.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. not only was a minister and a civil rights activist but also had earned a doctorate in theology at Boston University. In 1988, while working on annotating his papers, researchers were disheartened to realize that substantial amounts of his writing revealed pervasive plagiarism. Since King was not alive to answer the charges, the question was essentially one of how history should regard his legacy. In general, it seems to have been agreed that he had gone on to lead a life of great importance despite his significant and lifelong tendency to use others’ words without crediting them.

Some people responded with anger at King’s professors at Crozer Theological Seminary and Boston University, where his dissertation included significant verbatim copying from Paul Tillich and other prominent theologians and philosophers. They claimed that the professors were racist for not having held a capable young black man to a higher standard. Some excused his plagiarism as a common practice in African American discourse. Others condemned his plagiarism but retained a high regard for his character, focusing on the effects of his activism (*that is, they judged him by historical standards as an activist*

rather than by publication standards as a scholar). Still others excoriated his defenders as softheaded liberal affirmative action apologists.

Whether exculpated or vilified, King was either a uniquely gifted employer of an African American tendency toward intertextuality or a fraud who deserved neither his fame nor even his doctoral degree. Racism! Oversimplification! Literal-minded legalism! Whatever the accusation, the case remains highly charged.

Although writing about “*our cheating culture*,” and pointing to sudden alarming statistics in support, is an effective strategy for selling books and raising excitement, the truth of the matter is that all cultures experience some degree of cheating, lying, deception, corruption, and plagiarism; good writers often improve the writing they plagiarize. The practice “*is confusing because we don’t know whom it hurts*.” Readers may even benefit from the plagiarists’ selection of wonderful prose.

However, many novices struggle to figure out exactly how to incorporate others’ work into their own, whether in quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing, echoing, or engaging in other forms of conscious and unconscious incorporation.

In some cultures, copying is considered a mark of respect for the original author. Chinese consider copying, not as a disreputable or dishonest activity, but as the traditional way for the individual to learn and gain mastery of a field. In China, students are taught that to become better writers they need to memorize and imitate the language and style of heralded past masters; such appreciation for the achievements of a long cultural tradition is supposed to help them become more creative, too. And it is not just students who are imbued with such ideas. Many of their professors (...) practice plagiarism in the belief that emulation of experts in their fields is the way to advance in their careers’.

Literary discourse is a linguistic act in the sense that it entails presuppositions on the part of readers about the communicative intentions of the producer of discourse. These intentions can be minimal (*‘the author intended to write a novel’*) or fairly powerful (*‘the author intended to use a story of a man and a whale as an allegory for the human condition’*). In the case of plagiarism, the consequences are evident: first, the perceived presence of plagiarism will be interpreted as an authorial intention to plagiarize; second, the intention to plagiarize will subsequently be seen as an intention that the plagiarism produce specific effects, normally of an illegitimate kind.

In literary discourse, the role of the receiver in constructing meaning and intentionality is crucial, since the intentions of the producer are normally not available for verification (*or may be considered irrelevant*). The act of reception is, however, inevitably accompanied by a postulate concerning the production of discourse, specifically that at its origin is an author-subject motivated by communicative intentions for which the discourse is the evidence. The construction of meaning on the part of the reader is also often accompanied by a presupposition that the meaning discovered or received was in fact intended by the producer; the receiver might also attribute to the author intentions of an aesthetic or ideological nature, presuppositions derived either from prior knowledge or from textual evidence.

Of course, plagiarism has never been the only criterion used to discriminate between good and bad literary art. Its value lies, however, in its exemplarity or excessiveness. In the contemporary period - *except for contexts in which hate literature, pornography, and sedition constitute discursive crimes* - literary theft remains one of the worst possible crimes in a domain that, largely restricted to the symbolic, has a tenuous relationship to the 'real' world in which crimes are normally committed and punished. It will be necessary to divide the field of plagiarism into two distinct realms: the first depends on the symbolic or aesthetic value of a discourse, and the second is governed by its market value, today circumscribed by law.

As plagiarism is judged by its effects, the wide variety of consequences it can entail points to the fact that instances of plagiarism, either across history or in any given context, are not always considered to be examples of the same phenomenon. The gravity of the plagiarism problem depends on the structure of the ethical, aesthetic, institutional, legal, or economic contexts in which the alleged act has occurred, as well as on the status of the suspected perpetrator and victim. Its consequences are similarly various.

Hitherto, while plagiarism may be seen to be always a 'problem,' dealt with in different ways by different institutions and individuals; its widely various consequences should be a sufficient indication that the real problem with plagiarism is, in fact, deciding what kind of problem it is.

If plagiarism is necessarily deemed to be an infraction, the realm in which it is historically most consistently located is that of the ethical, rather than the legal or aesthetic. While the terms according to which plagiarism is seen to be an infraction of ethical codes are themselves various, two fundamental features can be distilled from definitions and discussions of plagiarism throughout history. Primarily, plagiarism is unethical because it contravenes the

fundamental right to the exclusive enjoyment of and control over one's property, either real or symbolic - *that is, it is a form of theft*- and, second, it is a misrepresentation of one's self in situations where the justified expectations of others entail honesty and authenticity; in other words, it is a form of fraud.

This definition of plagiarism is immediately problematic in that it presupposes the existence of the two values it appears to contravene: theft entails a notion of intellectual property; fraud, a notion of authenticity (*sometimes confusingly called 'originality'*), which is based on the assumption of a necessary and unique causal relation between an author and a work. An obvious difficulty with this definition is that notions of intellectual property and of the originality entailed by authorship are often seen to be modern, that is, eighteenth-century attributes, leading to the common belief that 'plagiarism' did not exist in pre-copyright eras such as *Antiquity* and the *Renaissance*. However, concepts of ownership and of authenticity clearly pre-date the copyright legislation that sets out to regulate them, and they form the basis for the continuing existence of plagiarism since the beginning of recorded history in the West. One of the effects of the history of plagiarism is to modify our understanding of this development, and to show that, far from being a modern invention, the proprietary relationship between authors and the fruits of their labour and/or genius - *namely, glory, immortality, fame* - is an ancient one, and it is to this relationship that accusations and complaints of plagiarism throughout history point.

The ubiquitous nature of plagiarism, and its occasional ability to produce great literature, often lead to an irreducible ambiguity in the expression of what is, and what is not, properly called plagiarism. Yet, authorship and plagiarism are incompatible terms: authors don't plagiarize. This might seem counter-intuitive to us today, for it may seem more reasonable to suspect that it is especially authors who plagiarize. The distinction between authors and plagiarists will be seen to be tautological and purely semantic: 'true authors' cannot plagiarize; plagiarists are not 'true authors.' This restrictive tautology turns on a simple syllogism that excludes, as a first principle, 'plagiarism' as an attribute of authorship such that any apparent act of copying on the part of an 'author' must not be plagiarism. If the *transhistorical* constants of authorship are pertinent to a discussion of plagiarism, it is primarily because the construction of the plagiarist as non-author is predicated on the presumption of definable criteria for authorship. If the plagiarist is a 'failed author,' what are the functions of authorship that the plagiarist fails to fulfil?

The structuralist and poststructuralist revolution of the **1960** and **1970s** in France substituted the notion of *scripteur* for *auteur*, and of *écriture* or *texte* for

oeuvre, divesting the biographical author of the claim to authority, and returning to language to reassert the Heideggerian principle that '*die Sprache spricht*': *'it is language which speaks, not the author'*.

Speeches and books were assigned real authors, other than mythical or important religious figures, only when the author became subject to punishment and to the extent that his discourse was considered transgressive; writing was originally an act fraught with the risks of heresy, blasphemy, and illegality. The codification of discourse as property transformed the '*transgressive properties always intrinsic to the act of writing*' such that they became the 'forceful imperative of literature' - *a compensatory revival of the 'danger of writing which, on another side, had been conferred the benefits of property'*

The structuralist revolution notwithstanding, and despite the fact that author and writer, *auteur* and *ecrivain*, have come to have overlapping or identical contemporary meanings, a long tradition, not entirely devoid of contemporary pertinence, has reserved a rather exalted position for the author, preserved in the expression 'authorship.' Despite the perhaps premature announcement of the author's death, not all of the attributes of authorship have disappeared and, moreover, contemporary literary theory as well as common usage still assume the existence of authors and apply to them certain attributes that, although ancient in origin, continue to be relatively stable into the present.

A 'true' author is always original, even if he is copying. This seems to have been profoundly true since the origin of letters, and continues to be believed, or at least expressed, perhaps unintentionally, today.

Apparent from this explanation is that the author is a 'great man,' a 'man of genius,' an 'original,' a 'master'; a plagiarist, on the other hand, is a 'mediocre.' What distinguishes the two, therefore, is not primarily a textual product, but a personal attribute in which great art - *or its opposite* - originates. Not only does authorship presuppose a causal relation between the originator and the work, but the work itself must demonstrate a kind of spiritual mimesis by which it emulates the life and soul of the poet: great men produce great works, and these works, in turn, guarantee that their authors were great - *this is the logic of authority*. Such a spiritual mimesis between the author and the work may be the most important traditional attribute of authorship that has been lost in the twentieth century, although it still surfaces in isolated instances, notably in plagiarism cases.

While contemporary notions of plagiarism are largely defined by questions of private property, the continuing belief that 'great authors don't plagiarize' is an

index of the survival of the condition of authority with which authors are invested. True authorship is incompatible with plagiarism because authors are by nature - *that is, ancient tradition* - not only originary, but sincere, that is, authentic. 'Original' authors can't plagiarize, not because they don't copy, but because their signature functions in a *tautologous* structure similar to that of medieval traditions of authority: since *auctores* authored truth, anomalies discovered in the work of an authoritative author were seen as evidence of a lack of authenticity of the text or as a corruption in the manuscript. Expurgation is no longer a legitimate solution to the discovery of embarrassing lapses on the part of true authors; however, an equally simple and effective expedient has been found: since the true author doesn't plagiarize, his plagiarisms are truly original.

MOSAIC

chapter three

Since artistic production has, historically, been more intimately related to concepts of imitation than to originality, 'copying' refers to the negative forms of imitation that are termed plagiarism. While imitation in art, either of nature or of other models, is never in itself condemnable, the products of imitation may suffer criticism if proper processes of production are not observed. When imitation falls from the merely bad into plagiarism, it is normally because of the presupposition of covertness, entailing the presumption of fraud. Now behind this presumption, whether in the legal or aesthetic domains, are criteria for distinguishing between identity and difference. The 'copy' implies identity: reiteration, transcription, reproduction; its processes are mechanistic; its results devoid of aesthetic value, 'artistry,' or 'genius.' Imitation, on the other hand, implies difference, and while this difference in itself does not constitute aesthetic value, it situates the product of imitation in a contiguous relation with the 'original' or 'model': imitations solicit comparison with their models, beside which they coexist and with respect to which their aesthetic value can be judged as servile, derivative, inspired, or original. 'Copies,' on the contrary, repress their models: they exist in a paradigmatic relationship of potential substitution to their originals.

In the plastic arts, the fundamental criterion for distinguishing between an original and a copy - *in the event of the elusive 'perfect' copy* - is that of authenticity: is this canvas the very one to which the artist applied his brush or not?

Degrees of identity and difference are both the criteria used to distinguish between copying and imitation and those on which the identification of plagiarism stumbles. Various defined as *'unacknowledged borrowing'* and 'copying,' plagiarism is clearly present in the second case, which is condemnable on its own because of the relationship of identity involved, while 'borrowing' needs to be qualified by the presumption of covertness to be judged illegitimate. In fact, 'copying' implies covertness, because of the relationship of identity, and therefore of the potential for substitution of the copy for the 'original.' The accusation of plagiarism presupposes not imitation, but copying; the existence of a copy presents the potential for a mistaken identity, the erroneous or unethical substitution of one discourse for another. And mistaken identity, in the realm of intellectual production, is a crime against the relation of authenticity subsisting between the author and the work.

Classical and medieval notions of authorship are pertinent to a history of plagiarism for what they reveal about the stability of attributes of authorship over the course of history. In brief, authors originate truth; their discourse is authoritative in that it expresses truth; and this intimate relationship between

author and discourse is the condition of authenticity guaranteeing authorship. The tautological nature of this *triumvirate* is evident: what is less obvious is its continuing power in modern conceptions of authorship.

While classical rhetoric did not formally recognize 'originality' as an aesthetic criterion, an investigation of the rules governing 'good imitation' reveals the negative form of the practice that, today, would count as plagiarism - *and that in fact did so during classical antiquity*. Classical rhetoric prescribing modes of proper imitation is very clear about the evils of copying and about the work of transformation required to shift the imitation from servility to inspiration, the second being found in the happy union between genius and learning. In Latin and subsequently Renaissance rhetoric, the term *inventio* refers to the 'fable' or story, and literally means not invention, but the discovery of something already there, such as a traditional myth or legend. The treatment of the story - *dispositio* - and its stylistic expression - *elocutio* - were the areas in which the natural genius of the author, nourished by his study of the great masters, could enter into rivalry with them in the spirit of transformation with an eye to improvement on the originals.

Christian antiquity inherited two different sorts of authority from the classical past: that of *authoritas* - dependent on the authoritative person - and *authenticitas* - the impersonal authority of discursive tradition which is derived from the classical *sententiae* - received discursive formulations that, independently of authorship, embody immediately apparent or provable truths. The patristic quotation conflated these two notions: the biblical texts and the Church fathers were *authoritates* because of their participation in universal truth and the totality of the Logos: if the identity of the author guaranteed his authority, the truth embodied in words guaranteed the superfluity of recourse to the name of the author. The tautologous interdependence of the two authorizing principles - *that of personal and discursive authority* - is still operative today, and certainly was in the eighteenth century. The two criteria for the *actor* were, first, that his writing contain 'intrinsic worth,' that is, both truth (*theological*) and wisdom (*secular*) in conformity with Christian doctrine, rendering it worthy of belief and imitation. In addition, the authoritative text must be a 'genuine production of a named auctor' - *in other words, it must be authentic*. The identity of the author and the authoritative nature of his text were intimately interdependent: The thinking we are investigating seems to be circular: the work of an *actor* was a book worth reading; a book worth reading had to be the work of an *actor*; thus no modern writer could decently be called an *actor* in a period when men saw themselves as dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants, that is the "*ancients*".

If no contemporary writer could aspire to the position of *auctor*, he could, however, fulfil a variety of other functions, notably those of *scriptor* and *compilator*, thereby adding nothing of his own to the text, and that of commentator, whose role was limited to explaining the authoritative texts, a function often performed by scribes in the margins of the texts they were copying. Even full-scale exegetes were commentators, not authors, and secular writers of romance and legend such as Jean de Meun and Chaucer claimed for themselves the role of compiler or 'rehearser' of others' stories.

The medieval and Renaissance periods, however, in trying to reconcile the authority of the *auctor* and that of his text as the proper object of imitation, generated many of the rhetorical quarrels that would propel the literary arts up to the Romantic revolution. In order to trace the development from the aesthetics of imitation to those of modern 'originality,' it is necessary to distinguish clearly between the spirit of rules for imitation and their practice. From ancient to neoclassical times, the ideal object of imitation was the same as that pursued by the 'originals' themselves, that is, 'nature,' which meant not textual, but rather something like 'spiritual' mimesis. To be original is not to be "*textuel*," which [...] means that one cannot imitate one's *auctores* simply by following their texts word by word; rather, to imitate an *auctor* requires that one take words into one's own hand, thus to weave them (*or to reweave them*) according to one's own sense, design, wisdom, or grasp of the hiddenness of meanings. To imitate an *auctor* means precisely the imitation of authority rather than of a text.

Authorship is therefore intimately linked with the authority invested in the person of the *auctor*, repository of truth and wisdom, and entails the notion of authenticity - *the author is the originator of the work* - as well as a form of originality - the *auctores* were original men. Even as writers evolved, from scribes, compilers, and commentators, to authors in their own right, they continued to invest authority in the *auctoritas* of the ancients, distinguishing between the original source of truth and their own transcribing voice.

But clearly not all authoritative discourse is authored. The capacity of repetition to infuse anonymous discourse with the authority of eternal truth makes some truths available to everyone; repetition is the means by which non authors - *scribes, imitators, compilers* - participate in eternal truth by facilitating its transmission. But the author has the ability to originate and 'sign' truth: great authors don't plagiarize because 'authorship' is precisely that capacity to originate or discover truth, to authorize it as truth rather than simply to transmit previously discovered truth. Plagiarism, in this sense, is a kind of authoritative fraud - *by usurping either a public discourse, available to all, or the discourse*

of a proper authority, one claims a personal status to which one is not entitled. It is frequently remarked, quite appropriately, that 'plagiarism' did not exist in the Middle Ages - *and this is due to the logic of authority: discourse was either internally authorized by its continual repetition* - as general and common knowledge it could only be repeated, not appropriated - or authorized by its source, or *auctor*, and available sources were restricted to a few ancient or Christian names. It is less the logic of property than the force of authority that made plagiarism impossible, or at least unlikely, in the **Middle Ages**.

Originality is most easily expressed for medieval and Renaissance aesthetics as being the condition of authority - *auctoritas* - embodied in the ancient authors who were 'original' in the sense of being prior and, consequently, in having first said whatever was worth saying, as well as having formulated the best ways of saying it. For succeeding ages, 'originality' was a feature restricted to *auctores* and the function of the post-classical writer was to imitate this 'originality'. For Renaissance arts, the classical *auctores* had imitated 'nature' directly, and, in so doing, expressed their own authoritative natures.

Imitation, as opposed to scholastic copying, was the result of this historicization by which the Renaissance attempted to establish and reconstruct its continuity with former times, a project that implied, at the same time, the distance between the two periods. It is also a period that sees the birth of the notion of 'literature,' and its simultaneous devaluation as a repository of truth, this function being subsequently taken up by other realms such as philosophy, history, and science. The ancients slowly lose their divine infallibility and become men susceptible to error, especially as a result of their pre-Christian and pre-scientific place in history. Not only did the individual author fall into the realm of historical contingency, at a remove from any timeless or fixed standard of truth, but, by obtaining a cultural autonomy from systems of authorized truth, literature gave up its right to be authoritative.

Plagiarism appears to be the equivalent in the sixteenth century of the flouting of the classical rules of good imitation: dishonesty and a lack of talent combined to attract to the usurper of another bird's plumes the accusation of fraud and of attempting to profit from another's property. The development of theories of genius and originality throughout the eighteenth century entailed an explicit reversal of previous theories of imitation and of the legitimacy of influence. The shift from a poetics of imitation to a *valorization* of originality is exemplified by the loss of the connotation of 'discovery' in the term 'invention,' which came to commonly mean a kind of ex nihilo creation. Yet, from the time [throughout the eighteenth century] that aesthetic theories put into question the theory of imitation and, consequently, that it is recognized that the poet can find

his subject within himself, the term "invention" (*in its etymological and rhetorical meanings*) is no longer sufficient, and gradually the term "creation" will gain in use until finally replacing that of "invention." The new aesthetics emphasized individual authorship, where authority was invested in the personality, genius, history, and expression of the poet.

One notable instance of an accusation of plagiarism in mid-eighteenth century England was the charge against Milton made by William Lauder, who was quickly exposed by John Douglas as having committed forgery. Lauder had produced two pamphlets, the first documenting Milton's imitation of the ancients, and the second, his modern sources, in which he charged Milton with being an '*unlicenced Plagiary*.' Douglas exposed the forgery by showing that Lauder had simply falsified the evidence and had interpolated lines from Hog's contemporary Latin translation of Milton into the texts that he then cited as 'sources' for Douglas.

Lauder was eventually persuaded to make a confession by Samuel Johnson, who had been sufficiently taken in by Lauder's claims to have produced a preface and postscript to his text. The brief controversy is interesting primarily for the terms used in the course of the accusation and defence. First, the charge of unacknowledged borrowings from moderns, as opposed to ancients, was deemed sufficiently dangerous (*not perhaps by Johnson, but by Douglas*) to warrant serious investigation. The revelation of the forgery by Douglas's painstaking tracking down of (*false*) sources did not diminish the gravity of the charge that Lauder was making against Milton. Douglas's denunciation of the fraud is accompanied by a defence in which he expresses some pertinent opinions on the matters of plagiarism and imitation. Although Douglas is able to show that Lauder's claims are largely false, when he cannot lay his hands on a particular source text, he has frequent recourse to the '*great authors don't plagiarize*' defence: even if the charges were true, he reasons, an advocate for Milton might '*yet be able to defend the genius and poetic talents of his favourite author to advantage, that he may grant that he did borrow and yet show that this ought not to detract from his fame; in a word, that he may allow the truth of Lauder's charge, and yet deny the consequences he seems to draw from it*'.

Had Milton borrowed in the way Lauder charges, he would have done no more than Virgil. Douglas goes on to make the distinction between genius and originality, imitation and plagiarism: '*For as one may be what is called an original writer, and yet have no pretensions to genius, so another may make use of the labours of others in such a manner as to satisfy the world of his own abilities. There may be such a thing as an original work without invention, and*

a writer may be an imitator of others without plagiarism. A great genius looks upon himself as having a right to convert to his own use, and in order to furnish out a more perfect entertainment, whatever has been already prepared and made ready.

The books a man reads, unavoidably give him a turn of thinking correspondent to them, and the sentiments he meets with there insensibly become his own; so that, in expressing his own ideas, he naturally runs into imitations of his favourite authors.

The three founding principles of authorship - authority, authenticity, and originality - can still be seen to be operative, even in this age of '*postauthorship*.' In the judicial realm, authenticity and originality are corollary values: originality is the necessary quality of the authentic product of the person (*author*) having produced the work. And the relative authority of contesting authors may still influence the ability of the court to find in favour of the victim, who is usually the lesser of two lights. In the aesthetic field, originality and authenticity coexist as two parallel but possibly independent values: the virtue of novelty and the virtue of authentic self-expression may coincide, or may be generic indicators, applied in different contexts.

The author is alive and well in contemporary aesthetics, as well as in contemporary literary theory and criticism, surviving as a network of functions that, if one abstracts the historically brief - *and illusory* - moment of the *Romantic fetishization of 'original genius,'* are not remarkably different from those traditionally attributed to authorship. At one end of the literary-historical-spectrum, the existence of accusations of plagiarism guarantees the presence of the 'author' during those benighted historical times for which contemporary literary history has proposed his not-yet being. At the other end of the same spectrum, the real death of the author would entail the disappearance of plagiarism that is posited on individual authorship and a proprietary relationship over one's discursive productions. That this death has not yet occurred is a matter of daily experience. But the disappearance of plagiarism is precisely what is predicated, in a contestatory mode, by certain postmodern practices of appropriation that verge on, or intentionally enact '*plagiarism*.' The transgressive nature of these practices, and their brushes with legal sanctions for copyright infringement, are sufficient indication that the '*dead author*' is a very circumscribed kind of author who is limited to the biographical individual taken to be an interpretive authority for uncovering the true meaning of the text. The theoretical impact of this limited death notwithstanding, the reality of contemporary accusations of plagiarism attests to the durability of the attributes

of the author: especially to the authority, authenticity, and originality that define authorship both as a privilege and as a trans -historical function.

Over the past few centuries, man has created a new and immense property. In this property, everything emanates from man; he alone has created the ink, he has created the paper; the printed thought comes from him, everything is from him. It is a value which depends only on itself, an anthropomorphic value, for an author pours into it his life and his soul and his nights. And it is precisely the rights to this property that are being contested! This is what will lead to the disinheritance of families without indemnity. The law is full of protections for one's gold and one's land, for furnishings acquired by material or commercial work; there are eleven hundred articles in the code for these properties, but there is not one which concerns, in the capriciousness of its transmissions and stipulations, the property created by intellectual work.

Plagiarism without profit - *or without the perception of it* - is hardly conceivable. It is only when repetition results in advantages to the author that suspicions of fraud become plausible. Thus, while authorial intentions may be indeterminable from textual evidence, they may be deduced from the effects or consequences of the alleged act: a profitable 'borrowing' will easily be shifted to the category of theft.

LITERATURE DETECTIVES

chapter four

Two contrasting cultural narratives exist, therefore, to explain literary creation. One is a hallowed vision of creation as generation - which we might call creation - the other a more pragmatic account of creation as rearrangement, which we might call *inventio*. The former conventionally connotes some brief, noumenal moment of afflatus or inspiration, while the latter has the tang of the atelier about it. *Creatio* is associated with the artist, *inventio* with the artisan. *Creatio* exalts the individual author to the highest level, *inventio* abstracts the author into language, and erodes his or her powers of agency and intention. Generally speaking, attitudes to originality and plagiarism have moved between these poles in a dialectical fashion. That is to say, a period in which *creatio* has been valued has usually been followed by a swing back towards *inventio*.

The representation of literary creativity as origination *ex nihilo*, forged in the first decades of the century, was challenged by models which envisaged creativity as a function of the selection and recombination of pre-existing words and concepts. The account of the autonomous creator was also disputed, and a counter theory was proposed of the writer as an assimilator and transformer; an individual who possessed and practised the ability to extract and recombine.

In any given era, *literary-critical* ideas - such as those of *originality and plagiarism* - are most obviously manifested in the literary-critical discourse of that era. It would be possible to describe a coherent outline for the history of these ideas with reference only to periodical articles, forewords, prefaces, lectures, and other such critical documents produced in the decades under discussion.

What the nineteenth-century texts have in common is that they all in some way call their readers' attention to their own unoriginality. Instead of seeking to conceal, deny, or abolish the very notion of a precursor or precursors, they perform a narrative of their origins. All tip the wink that they are in some way begotten, by devising ways of gently nudging, or sometimes of forcefully shoving, their provenance to the fore. All possess, it might be said, a historical self-consciousness: by acknowledging that they have come from somewhere, and not out of *nowhere*, they flag up their involvement in the chaotic textual process of history.

Originality and plagiarism are in many ways the invisible men of literary history. That is to say, they do not exist in any positive or objective sense, accompanied by textual features which would allow us to recognize them in the same way that we may be able to recognize a lyric poem, a sonnet, or even, tenuously, a novel. Attempts to describe plagiarism *transhistorically*, for

example, found itself consistently thwarted by inconsistency - *one person's plagiarism is discovered to be another's originality*.

Plagiarism and originality are judgements, and as such are determined by a wide variety of extra-textual criteria that constitute the aesthetic, institutional, and cultural contexts of production and reception of the work. Because they are both evaluative or adjudicative categories, they exist only in description. They are always argued over and discussed by analogy with other cultural narratives (*psychological, for instance, or anthropological, imperial, philological, or ethical*). Consequently, close attention to the way originality and plagiarism are described - *the analogies which are used to explain, defend, or attack them as ideas* - is essential to any attempt to understand how attitudes towards these ideas might exist or be altering at a given time.

Plagiarism is both an ethical infringement, and an aesthetic one. Objections to it have tended to be either that it contravenes writerly honour code, or that as a compositional practice it does not result in good art. Embedded in the etymology of plagiarism, however, is the suggestion that it is also a civic crime - *plagiarism comes from the Latin plagiarius, meaning a slave-napper or kidnapper* - and although it has never been a legal infraction, plagiarism has always carried this stigma of criminality with it. It was this implication of illegality which possibly contributed to the ubiquitous references to the plagiarism hunters as 'literary detectives'.

Among the most revealing indices of the early to mid-century veneration of originality is the evolution of the '*plagiarism hunter*'; a species of literary journalist which specialized in tracking down allusions, borrowings, and derivations, and then in listing these examples in an article as an arraignment of an author's originality. The goal of the plagiarism hunter was thus to elucidate the provenance of the literary object, rather than the synchronic qualities of its literary merit, and in this respect his rise can be seen as a tributary of the rise of antiquarianism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which in its literary form was dedicated to exhuming sources and influences for canonical art works.

The ubiquity of the plagiarism hunter can plausibly be attributed to two principal factors. The first is socio-cultural: the rapid expansion of periodical journalism in Britain over the nineteenth century. This boom, from around 300 periodical titles in 1800 to around 6,000 in 1900, was stimulated by technological improvements (*the invention of stereotyping, the paper-making machine, lithography, and photography from the 1840s onwards*), and social adjustments (*the revocation of the paper tax and rising literacy rates*), and it

provided a forum and a living wage for increasing numbers of literary hacks. The second explanation for the proliferation of plagiarism hunters is an ideological one; that the intellectual climate in Britain was predisposed to welcome a form of literary journalism the *raison d'être* of which was the veneration of originality and the denigration of literary resemblance. These minor critics wrote from, and justified themselves by, a conviction that literary resemblance militated against literary excellence. They sought to legislate and adjudicate the proprietorial relationships between texts: as their writing makes clear, they perceived themselves as the guardians who patrolled the unstable boundary between legitimate and illegitimate literary resemblance.

For much of the nineteenth century in Britain, the plagiarism hunter thrived, buoyed up in public opinion by the high rating of literary originality. In its closing three decades, however, a counter-movement concerning originality and plagiarism emerged, which contested the aesthetic and ethical logic of the plagiarism hunter, and which, to adapt a phrase from Groom, sought to neutralize '*the tedious and incessant critical alarm in the word plagiarism*'. The backlash which occurred against plagiarism hunters was part of a more widespread literary critical antagonism towards the hyper-valuation of originality. During the 1860s, and in increasing numbers in the 1870s and onwards, a new kind of article started to appear in British and American periodicals. These articles were either defences of plagiarism or, less commonly, an attack on the notion of pure origination, and their intention was to rebuff prevailing attitudes towards plagiarism and originality. The authors of these significant articles - *the comparative mythologist and poet Andrew Lang, the novelist and journalist E. F. Benson, and the writers Brander Matthews and Edward Wright among them* - sought to destigmatize literary repetition: to argue that those types of writing which were often denounced as plagiaristic were actually nothing more than the inescapable, and often the beneficial, effects of literary influence.

The most usual motive attributed to plagiarism hunters was that they were jealous of the authors whom they accused of plagiarism. Indeed, the most penetrating objection to the work of the literary detective was that his behaviour had a fatal contradiction built into it. So often did he insist upon the importance of originality that his insistence became, with every utterance, further in contradiction of its own sustaining premise. The plagiarism hunters themselves became thoughtlessly repetitive: *critics whose one piteous parrot-cry is for originality*.

In seeking to silence the critical alarm which had previously been inherent in the word 'plagiarism', the plagiarism apologists sought also to create aesthetic

and ethical space for literary works which exploited the creative possibilities of intertextuality. They did not wholly deny the possibility of genius, but, crucially, they did seek to redefine the author's genial power as the ability to assimilate and to transform rather than spontaneously to produce. They replaced authorial inspiration with something ostensibly less glamorous: the capacity to gather, combine, and improve. So it was that, in their writings, they represented the author as a jeweller, or a flower-arranger, or a tailor. Authors, like these other professionals, derived their materials from the external world and then coordinated them: *they did not weave their web from their own bowels*. No idea was truly original in the sense of being created for the first time, they maintained: *everything was recycled*.

The logical strategy most frequently used by these apologists was to demonstrate how certain indisputably great and 'original' writers had made use of the work of others. They revealed the poems and plays of these canonical authors - *Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Milton, Gray, Bunyan, and, later, Tennyson* - to be sites of derivation, where allusions, imitations, translations, repetitions, and quotations rubbed shoulders with supposedly more original phrases. In this way, the project and practices of the plagiarism hunters, who had tracked down so many of these intertextualities, were deployed to argue against originality.

Research into the textual background of Shakespeare's plays had shown him not to be - *as Pope had claimed* - 'independent of prior models - a *complete original*', but instead a writer who was heavily indebted to earlier sources. So many canonical authors were shown to have made use of the words of others that it was possible for the apologists to argue that resemblance and repetition were not inimical but essential to great literature. Once originality had been shown to be a function of reuse, the notion of 'plagiarism' lost its sting, or at least its stigma. At their most ambitious, the apologists tried to reconceptualise the entire history of literature as a history of borrowing and lending, rather than one of autonomous geniuses.

In one sense the literature of the world may be described as a series of thefts. *Tradition, the essence of art, is but a chain which binds lender and borrower together... In truth, the first step to originality is a knowledge of other men's masterpieces... since knowledge of others is necessary to originality, it follows that all men must, in their moments, be plagiarists. For no man, sensitive enough to write, is insensitive to influences.*

As human effluence could be used to fertilize healthy crops and the clinker from coal fires used to build houses, it was argued analogically by these

apologists, so could literary effluence - *the verbal outpourings of others* - valuably and productively become literary influence.

The possibility of literary originality, and therefore of literary plagiarism, depends upon the assumption of the possibility of property in language. The possibility of property in language depends in turn upon the possibility of drawing a boundary around the individual mind; of delimiting what originates from inside that mind, and therefore belongs to it, and what does not. Language is, in terms of artistic media, the paradigmatic public domain, and for it to become attributable to an individual - *for it to be privatized* - it must somehow bear the unique stamp of its producer.

Language belongs essentially to the community by whom and for whom it is called into existence. In like manner, thought belongs essentially to humanity. [A man's] thoughts are only partly his own; they are also the thoughts of others. Individual experiences being limited and individual spontaneity feeble, we are strengthened and enriched by assimilating the experiences of others. We regard our personality as a simple definite whole; as a plain, palpable, individual thing, which can be seen going about the streets or sitting indoors at home, which lasts us our lifetime, but in truth this 'we', which looks so simple and definite, is a nebulous and indefinable aggregation of many component parts which war not a little among themselves, our perception of our existence at all being perhaps due to this very clash of warfare.

Every man is an inlet to the same, and to all of the same. He that is once admitted to the right of reason is made a freeman of the whole estate. What Plato has thought, he may think; what a saint has felt, he may feel; what at any time has befallen any man, he can understand. Who hath access to this universal mind, is a party to all that is or can be done, for this is the only and sovereign agent...of the universal mind each individual man is one more incarnation. All its properties consist in him.

GENIUS

chapter five

We all have experienced the surprise at how different a street looks when we turn around and see it from another point of view. Most of history walks in one direction. Some geniuses have enabled us to turn around and look the other way, backwards or sideways. Leonardo, for example, noted how the so-called vanishing point toward which furrows in a ploughed field appear to converge seems to move with us as we walk beside the field. The genius not only alters our viewpoint, but also pulls our perspective into line with his or hers.

Through some magnificent act of insight, intuition, inspiration, brain wave, conviction, whatever we might call it, the genius sees or senses something from a different perspective. Their new perspective provides a view that ultimately proves so compelling that we can never see things in quite the same way again. What they see is often a bigger picture than we can readily grasp. And they can do this because they sense how the parts fit into the whole, the deeper harmonic resonance of things that may seem on the surface to be unrelated.

Originally conceived as an external guardian spirit, the notion of genius (*from the root genare, "to generate, or beget"*) evolved by the Renaissance to represent an innate talent, or special kind of *in-built* virtue in a specific area of accomplishment. Some argue, however, that the notion of individual genius is fundamentally flawed, nothing more than a construct of the Romantic era of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Romantics themselves captured the notion that there is something beyond reason in the supreme achievements of those who transcended the limitations that beset even their ablest contemporaries. Through the history of genius there runs a persistent strain, picked up by Shakespeare, that to be transformingly great you might, perhaps, need to be a bit mad.

There is a sense in which resorting to metaphors of the transcendent is inevitable in talking about genius. This might just be a matter of cliché. But I don't think so. Understanding genius requires awareness of context, cultural milieu, history, and more, yet the individual component remains. We still can't define it directly, pin it down by verbal formula. But, we can recognize it when we see or sense it (*even though it may take centuries to do so*), and can gain a grip on its elusive quality through creative imagination.

In 1451, in the Italian seaport of Genoa, a new mother saw it in the eyes of her firstborn child, unaware that the scintillating power of the 100 billion neurons in his brain would one day redefine the shape of the planet on which she lived. Decades later, the wife of a prosperous Polish merchant saw it in the eyes of her baby, though she would never have dared to predict that the connections his adult mind would eventually make would effectively reorder the universe.

Three centuries and an ocean away, a woman of land and privilege didn't know that what she saw in the eyes of her child was the dawn of the capacity to grasp and synthesize the essence of Classical, Renaissance, and Enlightenment thinking - *and reinvent the notion of personal liberty for centuries to come*. You were born with the potential for genius. We all were; just ask any mother.

Even if you have yet to revolutionize anyone's ideas about the planet or its inhabitants, you came into the world with the same spark of genius beheld so long ago by the mothers of Christopher Columbus, Nicolaus Copernicus, and Thomas Jefferson. By its very design, the human brain harbours vast potential for memory, learning, and creativity. Yours does too - *far more than you may think*. The 100-billion-neuron tally is a simple fact of human physiology, according to the great neurologist Sir Charles Sherrington, who described the human brain as "*an enchanted loom*" ready to weave a unique tapestry of creative self-expression.

But its power can be as elusive as it is awesome, and can be unlocked only with the knowledge of how to develop that potential, and put those hundreds of billions of fact-learning, connection-building neurons to work in the most effective, creative ways possible. It's far from automatic. We must learn to make the most of what we have - *even if that requires us to accept on faith the premise that we have more than we're already using*.

Fortunately, we don't have to do it alone. History has produced enough intellectual giants to convince anyone of the potential power of the human brain. Familiar to all of us, their discoveries and innovations have shaped the world in which we live. But as indebted as we are to them for the fruits of their mental labour, we can also turn to the most revolutionary minds in history for guidance and inspiration on how to use our brains to realize our own unique gifts. For just as they have shown us the way in geography, astronomy, and government, these great minds can also show us the way to our own full potential. We needn't aspire to the same incomparable heights to learn from their accomplishments; after all, they've already done their work. But who among us doesn't have to restructure our universe, redefine our world, or renegotiate our relationships with others on an almost daily basis? Indeed, such are the dynamics by which our individuality is developed and expressed.

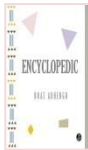
In a world that drives us down toward a lowest common denominator of taste, thought, and feeling, we all need all the help we can get in manifesting the best in ourselves. Think about it: your brain is the most powerful learning and creative problem-solving system in the world. But most of us know less about how our brains work than we do about our cars. Of course, cars come with

instruction manuals and brains don't; even in school, most of us spend more time studying history, mathematics, literature, and other subjects than trying to understand and apply the most important subject of all, learning how to learn.

Imagine unleashing your creativity by enjoying the benefits of the mental play that helped inspire the theory of relativity. Or evaluating your business climate with the combination of keen observation and an open mind that yielded the theory of evolution. Or navigating your life path with the same love of knowledge and truth that spawned all of Western philosophy.

It is my ultimate hope that this book has inspired a new culture of reading, to include appetites of writing without fear that creativity is becoming monopolised; no, be your own genius and explore the purpose that God has called you to envision.

Also by Boaz Adhengo



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Mr. Boaz Adhengo is President to Creative Arts Society of Kenya, a leadership coach, business for arts consultant and a cultural policy strategist. Having published forty five books, he manages the Adhengo Boaz & Associates consulting group and is co-founder of the Buruburu Basketball Ministry, Inc.

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