RESIDING BETWEEN LANGUAGES; WRITING FICTION IN A SECOND LANGUAGE, A THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL APPROACH

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Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled 'Residing Between Languages; Writing Fiction in a Second Language, a Theoretical and Practical Approach' has not previously been submitted for a degree, nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University. I also certify that the thesis constitutes original research and it has been written by me. I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis. The research presented in this thesis has been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics committee, reference number: HE23NOV2007 – D05556.

Linn Skoglund

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the practice of writing fiction in a second language in relation to the creative processes involved in such writing. In its investigations and analysis the thesis is concerned with international mobility and cross-cultural exchanges, and the concomitant rise of the translingual writer from several perspectives. In presenting the thesis writer's own short stories – written in her second language English – together with reflections on the writing of these stories, and in interviewing writers who write and publish in their second language, and analysing their responses, the thesis is principally concerned with the following interrelated themes: firstly, the extent to which writing fiction in a second language influences creative process, and secondly the writers' experiences and perceptions of the influence of one language on another in their writing.

The thesis argues that both residing and writing between languages has a positive influence on creative process in that this situation of 'in-betweenness' generates conflict in a number of ways. This conflict relates to areas such as cultural and individual identity as well as the sense of one's own identity as a writer, but more significantly these areas of conflict are related to language. The thesis argues that it is this element of conflict for the 'in-between' writer that fuels creativity.

As the interviewees and the thesis writer reside between languages, so does this research reside between disciplines. To understand the premise for this research, as well as to analyse and to interpret its findings, it has been necessary to consult theoretical and disciplinary approaches from fields such as psychology, anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, English and literature studies, and creative writing research. Research on language and creativity in the post-colonial context has been a significant source in the theoretical framing of this project.

The research framework of this project is in line with the 'Iterative Cyclic Web' model of creative and research processes outlined by Hazel Smith and Roger Dean (2009) in the book *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*: the practice of creative writing has led the research, and the research has led back into the practice. This is also reflected in the presentation of the research, so that this thesis is structured and presented accordingly with alternating sections of analytical, reflective, and creative writing.

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Til slutt, dediserer jeg denne avhandlingen til tante Lillian og til onkel Herman. / Finally I dedicate this thesis to my aunt Lillian and my uncle Herman.

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Dedication

The fact that I

am writing to you

in English

already falsifies what I

wanted to tell you.

My subject:

how to explain to you that I

don't belong to English

though I belong nowhere else.

(Pérez Firmat 2003: 295)

1. INTRODUCTION

Gerda Lerner (1997), in her essay 'Living in Translation' from *Why History Matters: Life and Thought*, explains how she came to the English language from German after fleeing Austria just before World War II, and how she struggled to advance to a level where she knew her second language well enough to write and publish in it. She also talks about the sense of loss she feels in not being able to use her mother tongue, and says: 'I envy those who live in the power of their own language, who were not deprived of the immediacy by which creativity

finds its form' (Lerner 1997: 49). This thesis constitutes a response to the questions evoked from Lerner's statement about how closely related creativity is to language. Is a writer less creative in a second language? Is the writer maybe more creative in a second language? Is the creative process different in a second language? Does the writing of fiction in a second language influence the creative process, and if so, how?

I first became interested in this topic when I did my undergraduate degree in the States and studied Creative Writing for the first time. To my surprise I found that I preferred writing in English, my second language, to Norwegian, my first language. In the sixteen years since then I have continued to write in my second language while living eight years at home (in Norway) and eight years in countries where English is the primary language (the US and Australia). This experience and reflections – around my situation, the creative process, and the feeling of writing between two languages – that often materialise in my creative writing, is what led me to, and shaped, my research. In presenting my own short stories – written in my second language English – together with reflections on the writing of these stories, and in interviewing writers who write and publish in their second language and analysing their responses, I am principally concerned with the following interrelated themes:

- The influence of writing fiction in a second language on the creative process, and
- How the writer experiences and perceives the influence of one language on another in their writing.

As my interviewees and I reside between languages so does this research reside between disciplines. To understand the premise for this research, as well as to analyse and to interpret its findings, it has been necessary to consult theoretical approaches from fields such as psychology, anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, and English and literature studies. A more detailed explication of the above mentioned themes will be undertaken in Chapter four by providing a theoretical overview of creativity and language related issues.

My own interest and experience in writing fiction in a second language parallels an increase in international mobility and cross-cultural exchanges, and the concomitant presence of writers who write in a second language, or more than one language. Traditionally our knowledge of issues related to writing fiction in a second language is through individual surveys or studies of a writer's work, or through biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs, or interviews with writers who write in one or more language other than the one considered to be their primary language. Examples of such writers who have been, and who continue to be, studied are Vladimir Nabokov, Samuel Beckett and Joseph Conrad. There are however few works that look at the *general* phenomenon of writing fiction in a second language. Exceptions to this are, for example: Leonard Forster (1970) in *The Poet's Tongues Multilingualism in Literature*, Isabelle de Courtrivron (2003) in *Lives in Translation Bilingual Writers on Identity and Creativity*, as well as Stephen Kellman in *The Translingual Imagination* (2000) and *Switching Languages Translingual Writers Reflect on Their Craft* (2003).

The Poet's Tongues, Multilingualism in Literature is based on a series of lectures Forster gave at the University of Otago in 1968. Forster's goal was to 'offer a sketch – no more – of the different ways poets have used languages other than their own for poetry from the Middle Ages down to our own time' (Foster 1970: 1). In this survey Forster traces the development of loyalty to language and nationality from the earlier centuries until our time, as well as undertaking a more thorough study of the subject matter in works by, for example, Stefan George, R.M. Rilke, James Joyce, and T.S. Eliot.

In *Lives in Translation Bilingual Writers on Creativity and Identity*, de Courtivron (2003) has brought together a number of essays by bilingual writers. Contributors include Ariel Dorfman, Eva Hoffman, and Yoko Tawada. De Courtivron (2003: 1) aims to shed a light on more than just what bilingualism is, what it is like to live in, between, or in 'the overlap of two languages' for a writer. She does not do this through the interpretations of linguists

and/or literary theorists, but through the words of writers who engage with these questions while grappling with 'fundamental issues of identity and creativity' (de Courtivron 2003: 2). De Courtivron (2003) argues that although none of the writers avoid writing about the difficulties they meet and the questions they ask themselves about their identity as a result of moving between languages, they all acknowledge, appreciate, and even celebrate 'the emotional and literary enrichment that being bilingual has brought them' (de Courtivron 2003: 2). *Switching Languages, Translingual Writers Reflect on Their Craft* is an anthology that is quite similar in scope to *Lives in Translation Bilingual Writers on Creativity and Identity* also published in the same year, although it does have a somewhat wider scope. Like de Courtivron (2003), Kellman (2003) has collected essays or excerpts of writing, in addition to two interviews, related to bi- or multilingual writing – what Kellman calls 'translingual' writing. Kellman's aim is to offer insight into the phenomenon of translingual writing while also hoping to find 'suitable language to animate [the] discussion' (Kellman 2003: xviii). The anthology is divided into six sections as a result of the texts being 'organized to reflect a spectrum of responses to translingualism, from affirmation through lamentation to rejection' (Kellman 2003: xviii). The pieces in this anthology span 100 years with contributions from writers such as Salman Rushdie, Ha Jin, Chinua Achebe, Andre Brink, Raja Rao, Gerda Lerner, Assia Djebar, Gloria Anzaldua, and Ilan Stavans. Djebar and Stavans are actually represented in both anthologies. Many of the contributions to these two anthologies will be utilized in the fourth chapter during the discussion on language and in-betweenness.

In *The Translingual Imagination* which preceded his *Switching Languages, Translingual Writers Reflect on Their Craft* by three years, Kellman aims to 'examine the possibilities of writing equally well in two languages, or at least of writing well in an adopted language' (Kellman 2000: x). Kellman provides an in-depth survey of translingual literature followed by analysis of the translingual situation for writers such as Vladimir Nabokov, Samuel Beckett, Eva Hoffman, Louis Begley and John Sayles. Kellman argues that 'colonialism, war,

increased mobility, and the aesthetics of alienation have combined to create a canon of translingual literature' (Kellman 2000: 7). He also claims that many translinguals in the twentieth century do not only want to master two or three languages well enough to write in them, 'theirs is an aspiration to transcend language in general, to be pandictic, to utter everything. Impatient with the imperfections of finite verbal systems, they yearn to pass beyond words, to silence and truth' (Kellman 2000: 16). Kellman then argues that it is because translinguals are not willing to let the structures of any single language control them, and 'precisely because they recognize the power of particular languages[,] that they attempt to transcend them' (Kellman 2000: 24).

These books by Forster (1970), Kellman (2000 & 2003) and de Courtivron (2003), have all been instrumental in shaping my research, and I am – like they are – trying to understand and to find out more about the phenomenon of writing in one or more language other than the language that is considered to be one's primary or first language. What my research does – but that *The Poet's Tongue*, *The Translingual Imagination*, *Lives in Translation, Bilingual Writers on Identity and Creativity*, and *Switching Languages Translingual Writers Reflect on Their Craft*, do not do – is look at this phenomenon with the aim of finding out how the creative process is influenced by writing in a second language. Forster (1970), Kellman (2000 & 2003) and de Courtivron (2003) all touch upon creativity as do the writers quoted and represented in their works, but it is briefly and not with a primary intention to understand creative process in relation to language. My aim is for my research to add to the work of Forster (1970), de Courtivron (2003), Kellman (2000 & 2003), and other researchers engaging with the topic, by expanding and extending the discussion on this topic in arguing that residing – writing – between languages, has a positive influence on the creative process because it generates conflict, and creativity is fuelled by conflict.

In the following section I will explain the approach to, and presentation of, my research.

1.1 Approach, Method and Motive

Within higher education today, and in particular in institutions that offer research degrees with the option of including a creative arts component – such as a novel, a collection of short stories, visual art, musical compositions, or films – as part of a thesis, and where academics are also practising artists, there is an ongoing discussion related to where the creative component or the creative practice fits in with other research. Hazel Smith and Roger Dean (2009), both creative practitioners and researchers, shed light on this discussion in the book *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*. They maintain that both practices can inform each other. Practice led research is where the creative practice generates the research, and research-led practice is where the research fuels the practice. They also propose a model of creative and research processes that they call the 'Iterative Cyclic Web' (Smith & Dean, 2009: 19). The model, 'accommodates practice-led research and research-led practice, creative work and basic research. The structure of the model combines a cycle and several sub-cycles with a web created by many points of entry and transition within the cycle' (Smith & Dean, 2009: 19). Similarities are, as they point out, many with the Deleuzian rhizome (Smith & Dean, 2009: 21). As the circular form of the model indicates there is no one correct path and you can move in any direction back and forth during the process involved: you can shift between practice-led research and research-led practice, and the repetition or 'iteration' of a process can propel you forward in the same direction or lead you in the opposite direction or into new directions (Smith & Dean, 2009: 19-21).

My research and the presentation of it in this thesis have developed very much in line with what Smith and Dean (2009) propose in the 'Iterative Cyclic Web' model. When working on a project like this, where each component is so closely connected one might ask what came first, the practice or the research, and do they push or pull at each other, but I think the answer

is that even though practice or research might have sparked the original idea, practice and research are in fact walking hand in hand trying to get to know each other by simultaneously making room and staking claim. In the case of this research project, there is no doubt that the project was initiated by creative practice – by my writing of fiction in my second language. The practice led to – or at least inspired – the research question of how writing in a second language influences the creative process. However, since the birth of that idea, my research has continually informed my writing as my writing has continually informed my research. This is also reflected in the presentation of the research, and this thesis is structured accordingly with analytical, reflective, and creative writing presented not as separate entities with a part one, two, and three, but together in a format where practice leads towards the research and the research leads to the practice.

When writing a thesis that involves both creative and analytical work, these parts are, as noted above, closely related. For example when researching the notion of existing between languages that many writers who write in their second language are occupied with, I started thinking about language in relation to location and how I sometimes felt that I didn't belong to Norwegian nor to English – and that this was a form of dislocation. Then I realised there is no one word for dislocation in Norwegian, and these thoughts were then incorporated into the short story 'Magpies on Seven Corners'. Similarly, when working on the opening scene in the short story 'Static', where I describe a form of cold and an environment I have only experienced 'in' the Norwegian language and I was struggling to find the words in English that would evoke a believable image, I realised I had to ask my interviewees if the language they wrote in influenced *what* they wrote, and if so how. In other words it often feels difficult separating the creative from the analytical and vice versa. However, when undertaking a PhD research project one still has to identify and relate to the analytical and the creative parts as separate, simply because that is how they are classified in the requirements for a PhD, and the two parts are allocated a percentage value in relation to each other. The Maquarie University,

Department of English website, for example, specifies that for students who are qualified to, and who elect to, include creative work as part of their research project, 'a project containing *up to* 50% creative work may be undertaken' (my emphasis) (Macquarie University 2010). This is measured through word count. So when evaluating if this thesis is structured according to the Macquarie University requirements, one would calculate the division between the analytical and creative part according to word count as approximately 75% of the thesis being analytical while 25% is creative, and therefore in compliance with the requirements. The question then becomes if the number of words is an accurate estimate of the work, because, if I take into account the difference with which I write the analytical parts and the creative parts, as well as how these parts 'interact' with each other, a more accurate division is in my opinion 60% analytical and 40% creative. This is still within the guidelines, but impossible to measure by any examiner or supervisor. Hence, in today's research climate, the current guidelines seem to be the correct path to follow and may be incorporated into Smith and Dean's (2009) model for creative work 'as' and 'and' research.

Brophy (2007) says that writing the creative part of a thesis differs from writing, for example, a novel or a collection of poetry on its own because the creative part of a thesis 'must be developed around a question that arises from a deeply informed position as both creative writer and passionate scholar. The creative work must be one way of tackling a problem or question' (Brophy, 2007: 14). The writing of short stories in my second language for this thesis was undertaken with this in mind, it provided me with one angle – but not the only angle – from which to approach the question of how writing fiction in a second language influences the creative process.

According to Haseman and Mafe 'the practice-led research process is characterised by six conditions' (Haseman & Mafe 2009: 214)

> … practice-led research is a process of inquiry driven by the opportunities, challenges and needs afforded by the creative practitioner / researcher. It is a research strategy specifically designed to investigate the contingencies of practice by seeking to discipline, throughout the duration of the study, the ongoing emergence of problem formulation, methods selection, professional and critical contexts, expressive forms of knowledge representation and finally the benefit of the research to stakeholders (Haseman & Mafe 2009: 217).

These six conditions have been reformulated and developed from a list of five fundamental credibility tests – identification of research problem, method articulation, situating research in relation to other research, reporting of findings and demonstration of significance and making product available for distribution and peer-review – Haseman identified as criteria in establishing if the practice-led research 'conforms to the broad protocols of all research' (Haseman 2007: 4). This research project is not defined only as practice-led research, it is a project where the practice and research mutually influence each other, and that is possibly why some of the difficulties related to the design and the 'doing' of the research in practice-led research projects that Haseman and Mafe (2009) identify in their six conditions were not as pronounced in my research. For example, the research problem was identified and formulated early on in the project while in more 'standard' practice-led research projects Haseman and Mafe (2009) say the problem formulation is likely to be unstable and to be shaped until the practice is finished. However, precisely because this project is reciprocally led by research and practice, identifying the most useful research methods did, as Haseman and Mafe (2009) suggest it would, provide a challenge. As this Approach, Method and Motive section demonstrates, I resolved to approach my research problem from three angles. One angle is as already discussed, through the writing of short stories – the experience of practice itself. The second angle is by utilizing my reflection on this practice, and the third angle is through interviews with writers who write in their second language.

According to Freiman 'creative writing is a conceptual activity for all who do it, and it includes choices, decisions and reflection' (Freiman, 2007: 5). A writer always reflects on his or her writing; it is part of the re-writing. As Freiman says one is 'reading as a writer' and this is 'a backwards-and-forwards movement of construction and reconstruction that occurs unseen and with great rapidity in a conceptual space somewhere between the remembered reading of other exemplary texts and the writing of new ones' (Freiman 2005: 3). This is to some extent a process a writer might not even be fully aware of, and it is a process which is emphasised in the teaching of creative writing. For example, the following is from the unit guide of the course I tutor in at Macquarie University, convened by Marcelle Freiman, *ENGL 201, Creative Writing I: A Practical Introduction*: 'The unit aims to: encourage experimentation and practice in creative writing; increase students' understanding of the process of creative writing; introduce a range of approaches, concepts and skills in writing; develop self-reflexiveness and critical awareness about writing practice' (Macquarie University, 2010: 3). Any course I myself have undertaken as an undergraduate and postgraduate student has also had significant self-reflexive components, in other words approaching this research through reflection wasn't as much a conscious choice as a natural and to some extent automatic process. This form of reading one's own texts, of reflecting, have been important in the writing and re-writing of the short stories for this thesis, and I have chosen to write some of these reflections down and use them as transitional elements between analytical writing and creative writing. However, it is important to note that reflection, or what some classify as autoethnography or reflexive ethnography, has been a constant factor, not only in the creative writing, but in the general development of my argument and the writing of this thesis. According to Frederick Steier reflection is an important part of research, 'and researchers [should be] included in, rather than outside, the body of their own research' (Steier, 1991: 1). As an echo of Freiman's (2005) statement on reading as a writer, Ellis and Bochner who champion the practice of autoethnography say that

> Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition. (Ellis & Bochner 2000: 739).

In my research this is apparent throughout because I am doing/practicing what I am researching and I am not looking to remove myself from the equation. However, where I express my thoughts on the process of developing each story I also utilize theoretical research to explain the reflections. Reflection, however personal, should always be coupled with theory in the process of interpretation, because reflective research as defined by Alvesson and Sköldberg,

> has two basic characteristics: careful interpretation and reflection. …Interpretation comes to the forefront of the research work. This calls for the utmost awareness of the theoretical assumptions, the importance of language and pre-understanding, all of which constitute major determinants of the interpretation. The second element, reflection, turns attention 'inwards' towards the person of the researcher, the relevant research community, society as a whole, intellectual and cultural traditions, and the central importance, as well as the problematic nature of language and narrative (the form of presentation) in the research context' (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009: 9).

According to King and Horrocks, reflexivity is also an important element in qualitative interviews because it 'is itself a highly personal activity that necessitates critical self-reflection' (King & Horrocks 2010: 129). King and Horrocks explain:

> We are required to take account of not only social and political power relations, but also the theoretical orientations that inform our research questions, the methodological approach, the

> choice of interview technique and the analysis. For these reasons, reflexivity, and the critical approach it engenders, has become a central facet of qualitative interviewing' (King & Horrocks 2010: 128).

Paul Dawson (2006) refers to a rich tradition of empirical investigation in relation to the craft of writing, as well as of asking questions of writers about their writing process. 'In fact the interview format, to a certain extent, is another contemporary mode of prefatorial criticism' (Dawson, 2006: 25). Dawson uses as an example *The American Literary Journal, Paris Review*, that started interviewing well established writers about their craft in 1953, and then from 1958 published the interviews in the series of books *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*. These texts, as records of interviews are a valuable archive of writers' reflections on their work and its processes. According to Kvale and Brinkman, 'the interview is based on the conversations of daily life and is a professional conversation; it is an inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee' (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009: 1 - 2). These statements indicate that interviewing writers for this project was a valid approach. I had specific questions related to the creative process and language – such as what language a writer read in who writes in a language other than their primary one; how they would understand creativity; whether their understanding of creativity had changed since they started writing; whether they could describe their creative process, the question of whether they use translation between languages when they write; if syntax and / or vocabulary from one language has influenced the writing in another; who they write for and how they see themselves as writers – that I wanted answered, and I felt it necessary to pose these questions directly to practicing writers.

Identifying the interviewees suitable for this research did not prove to be too difficult, but it was challenging. As I have already stated, I knew that I wanted to find out more about writing in a second language and how that influenced the creative process and the language used, and that I wanted to ask questions directly to practicing writers. This, of course, led to certain

assumptions about the interviewees to be interviewed. Hence, it was determined that the participants had to be practicing and published writers of fiction and/or poetry (though their practice might include other genres as well) who wrote in a language other than what they considered their mother tongue, and who resided either in Australia or Norway. These requirements left me with a limited number of possible participants both in Norway and Australia. I am confident there are more writers in this situation than I have been able to identify, but as I have learned, in the public domain, these writers and their publishers, even their reviewers, rarely mention the fact that they are writing in their second language. The writers I have been able to identify have been through Internet searches and through recommendations from people who know who these writers are. The participants were then contacted through email and post with a cover letter and an information and consent form as per the ethics guidelines of the Macquarie University Ethics Committee. Six participants were approached in each country, four accepted in Norway, while five accepted in Australia. The interviews were undertaken in respectively Norway and Australia.

In resolving to approach my research from these three angles my intention, as I investigate the influence of writing fiction in a second language on the creative process, is that this approach has assisted me in interpreting the relevant data in ways that might be lost to someone who stands outside this experience that is simultaneously so limiting and liberating. And, my aim is to display what Brophy describes as

> … a willingness to work from a question or problem (a flash of intuition) at both creative and scholarly-critical tasks that in their different ways approach this question and in most instances will create a new and strange structure that works for each individual PhD thesis, bringing it together finally as a whole' (Brophy, 2007: 14).

In this introduction I have introduced the topic of this thesis, discussed related research that inspired the topic, and presented my approach when investigating the topic. In structuring the

thesis it has been important to reflect the development of the research – review and subsequent understanding of literature and theoretical underpinnings related to the topic; interviews, analysis and subsequent findings; as well as idea generation and writing of short stories - and how this was approached in a non linear, 'cyclic' way. Therefore the theoretical chapters are 'interrupted' by short stories. Because this research is so multidisciplinary, I have chosen to present the literature and theoretical framing of the research first to provide the context of the research and the theoretical framework for the thesis premise and the ensuing argument in the chapters that follow, and to provide the theoretical context and framework for the extracts from the interviews and the findings presented in the final theoretical chapter. The short stories are presented in pairs, with one story set in Norway and one story set in Australia or the US – in other words an English speaking country. This structuring to include the creative work this way was chosen to highlight the duality of the project as well as to further emphasise the theme of in-betweenness. The stories could easily have been rearranged and ordered in a different way because one story does not need to be read before another, however because it was, as mentioned earlier, important for me that the structure reflects the development of the research, the order of the stories tends to reflect the order in which the stories were written. More importantly the two final stories in the thesis exemplify the topic of in-betweenness more than any of the other stories and therefore they follow the previous theoretical chapter, at the same time leading into the conclusion. Hence, the thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 – 'Static': A short story

Chapter 3 – 'The Tip of My Finger': A short story

Chapter 4 – Creativity and Language: In this chapter I review literature and the theoretical underpinnings of creativity and language. When dealing with creativity I focus specifically on creativity and the creative person, environment and culture in connection with creativity, and

then the creative process. Then, I look closer at language in relation to writing fiction in a second language. I conclude the chapter with a reflection on brain plasticity and how it may influence speaking, thinking, and writing in a second language.

Chapter 5 – 'Agnes': A short story

Chapter 6 – 'Spit Junction': A short story

Chapter 7 – Residing Between Languages: This is where I present my interviewees, the methods I used analysing the interview material, before I present the findings. As a conclusion to the chapter, I reflect on my own sense of the in-between when writing in my second language.

Chapter 8 – 'Magpies on Seven Corners': A short story

Chapter 9 – 'And you, I'll lose twice': A short story

Chapter 10 – 'Conclusion': Here I will return to the initial questions asked and summarise my argument, before I suggest options for taking this research further.

1.2 Practice meets research in reflexivity

In writing this thesis, and in doing this research through interviewing writers and in writing my own short stories, reflecting on my own writing process as a writer writing in her second language became, as mentioned earlier, a natural and integrated part of this project. Of course these reflections were often directly linked to the writing of each short story. However, as the writing and the research were done side by side, and as I delved deeper into the theory about creativity and language that informs this research, I subsequently became concerned with my own responses to some of the interview questions that had emerged as a result of this

theoretical research and the creative writing. Am I aware of a difference in my creative process according to the language I write in? Am I more or less creative in English or in Norwegian? Do I use translation as part of my own writing process? Does my Norwegian influence my English and vice versa, and if so, how? When I write in English, do I write about different things than I would if I was writing in Norwegian? These questions kept coming together with thoughts connected to the short stories, and I have formulated and tied some of these reflections together and present them in this thesis as three different but interrelated sections, with each section located at the end of an analytical chapter as a transition to the short stories. The first reflection with its main focus on memory related to writing in a second language, then, directly follows this general overview and introduction to the reflections; the second reflection focusing on brain plasticity related to thinking and writing in a second language is in Chapter four – Language and Creativity; and the third and final reflection focused on the in-between, is in Chapter seven – Residing Between Languages.

1.3 Reflection 1 - Memory

Toni Morrison (1996), in her essay 'Memory, Creation, and Writing', talks about the significance of memory in creating – in writing. She emphasises that even though what one remembers is over and in the past, to her 'memory is … always fresh' (Morrison 1996: 213), hence memory is an essential tool when creating and evoking characters, scenes and setting. This is also true when writing in a second language. In the short story 'Static' which is set in Norway, my protagonist comes out of the subway in Oslo; it's January and very cold with typical winter weather, and it was important to me to be able to describe this in a believable way, and evoke a feeling that would stay with the reader throughout the story. David Lodge (1992) states that:

> We all know that the weather affects our moods. The novelist is in the happy position of being able to invent whatever weather is appropriate to the mood he or she wants to evoke. Weather is therefore frequently a trigger for the effect John Ruskin called the pathetic fallacy, the projection of human emotions onto phenomena in the natural world. …It is indeed often the occasion of overblown, self-indulgent writing. But used with intelligence and discretion it is a rhetorical device capable of moving and powerful effects, without which fiction would be much the poorer (Lodge 1992: 85).

With this in mind – to find the balance that would allow me to use, but not misuse, the weather in writing the opening scene of 'Static' – I proceeded to try and set the scene based on my memories of winter. Because my own experience of the cold and of snow is mainly from Norway, the language I have used when being in winter is Norwegian, so my concern became how to express this in English in a way where the reader could identify with and believe the character and the surroundings. In Norwegian we have numerous words to describe the different textures of snow, so with one such word I can express that the texture of the snow is perfect to make snow men, build castles, or throw snowballs, and at the same time this one word indicates the dryness, the wetness, and the freshness of the snow, as well as how it would feel landing on your face during a snow fall. Now I had to imagine what it would be like to be cold in English without having access to these words. Morrison, says that 'memory (the deliberate act of remembering) is a form – of willed creation. It is not an effort to find out the way it really was – that is research. The point is to dwell on the way it appeared and why it appeared in that particular way' (Morrison 1996: 213). When one remembers someone or a situation from the past there are not always a lot of details left in the memory, but according to Morrison, the details aren't needed when you are using the memory to evoke a character or a situation. She exemplifies as she remembers a woman named Hannah Peace from her own past, but her memory, says Morrison, is limited and relates only to her name, the colour of her skin, her eyes, and the sense that she seemed friendly, and she used this as basis for one of her fictional characters:

> That's not much, I know: half closed eyes, an absence of hostility, skin powdered like lilac dust. But it was more than enough to evoke a character – in fact, any more detail would have prevented (for me) the emergence of a fictional character at all. What is useful – definitive – is the galaxy of emotion that accompanied the woman as I pursued my memory of her, not the woman herself (Morrison 1996: 214).

This is similar to my experience in the writing of the opening scene in 'Static'. It was about actively remembering – not one specific event or memory, but a series of events, fragments of memories. Months upon months of winters from when I was a child digging snow caves with my sister and father, and then as a teenager going cross country skiing with friends, not far, but far enough that we had deserved the orange, the piece of 'Kvikk Lunsj' chocolate and the thermos of hot chocolate we had in our backpacks, to the more recent winters when I have visited Norway during the Christmas break from university. Before going to Norway on Christmas break, my body has been warmed up by the sun – by the early Australian summer – and then suddenly, after 24 hours travelling by air I am in Norway, in Oslo, and the minus nine degree weather overstimulates my senses. This 'shock' to the system along with the feeling I remember from every year as I was growing up that this winter – any winter – will never end, was something I wanted to convey in my writing. Therefore I had to convert those experiences into one specific experience for one specific character, the action still in Norway, but the writing in English. As seen in the above quotation, when Morrison (1996) talks about remembering Hannah Peace, she emphasises the emotions related to the memory of her and how those emotions were more important than the actual woman herself. This is comparable to remembering winter for me; it is related to the emotions evoked by being in winter – and it was this that was significant in setting the scene in 'Static', not the winter itself, and as an extension of that, finding the right words to express this in English were equally important. At this point I also became aware that I wanted to ask my interviewees if the language they write in influenced what they write.

In starting to write 'The Tip of My Finger', I used memory, or like Morrison (1996) with Hanna Peace, the memory of a person, to develop my story. Quite early in my candidature I thought much about how lucky I was to be in this position to be able to undertake this degree and, to use a clichéd term, to follow my dreams: there was nothing or no one that had in any way protested my choice. For some reason while I was thinking about this, a woman I had worked with when I was a teenager kept popping into my mind. She was a quiet and meek person but also friendly, I liked her and I saw nothing bad in her. Her husband frequently abused her, and she would hide from him by coming to work – in other words *her* possibilities of doing what she wanted were very limited. A few years after I left the job, she died of cancer and I remembered the outrage I felt when the sentiments expressed at the funeral were about what would happen to her 'poor husband who was now all alone'. My initial idea for this story was to write her revenge. Of course, as with all stories and characters, this story and these characters had a will of their own, and the protagonist changed considerably along with the form of revenge I had in mind. There is no longer anything similar between the person I knew and the person I created. However, there was one thing that was constant throughout and that was her name. According to Lodge (1992) 'names are never neutral. They always signify, if it is only ordinariness. …The naming of characters is always an important part of creating them, involving many considerations and hesitations' (Lodge 1992: 37). The Norwegian name of my former colleague meant 'friend' and I was determined to find another name with the same meaning and therefore ended up with the name Ruth. Because the characters in this story are Norwegians living in Australia it was also important to me to stick with names that would be used in Norway, although to secure a flow in English I decided on English versions of the names. I was concerned for a while that the name Ruth made the character seem much older than I actually meant her to be, however it did not feel right to change the name. I tried, but it felt as if I was betraying my former colleague as well as the story, therefore I chose to follow Lodge's (1992) advice, and keep it. Lodge says:

> The invention of the word processor has made it easy to change the name of a character at a late stage of composition, just by touching a few keys, but I would have a strong resistance to doing that to any but the most minor character in my fiction. One may hesitate and agonize about the choice of a name, but once made, it becomes inseparable from the character, and to question it seems to throw the whole project *en abîme*, as the deconstructionists say (Lodge 1992: 37).

As the above has exemplified, there are many scenes, settings and characters throughout my short stories for which memory has been the instigator, and where I have had to challenge myself, and my knowledge of the English language to, not translate, but – in Ashcroft's (2009) words – 'transform' into English what these memories triggered and helped me create. Often these were fragments or little pieces of memory that acted as a starting point for the creative process, just as Morrison says it does for her:

> The pieces (and only the pieces) are what begin the creative process for me. And the process by which the recollections of these pieces coalesce into a part (and knowing the difference between a piece and a part) is creation. Memory, then, no matter how small the piece remembered, demands my respect, my attention, and my trust (Morrison 1996: 214).

One form of memory that I find intriguing is memory that is almost ingrained in our bodies, and that is difficult if not impossible to 'unlearn'. An example of this is how we relate to climate and seasons. For a Norwegian spring starts in April/May while autumn starts in September, and even after a number of years in Australia I still expect the leaves on the trees to change colour in September and to fall off in October, and I think of Semester one as spring semester. This idea that it's not only the language and the culture you have to get used to and that you struggle with when you move to a new country, but that you also need to adjust to the climate and possibly reversed seasons, was used to evoke the mood of the protagonist in the short story 'Spit Junction'.

Like many writers, I continually use memory as a tool in instigating the writing process, and as I have shown above I did find memory particularly useful in evoking certain emotions and experiences that were closely linked to the Norwegian language and transforming them into English. The following two short stories 'Static', set in Norway, and 'The Tip of My Finger', set in Australia, are examples of this. Although, until now, I haven't reflected considerably on why I find memory such a useful tool when writing, I seem to have just accepted it as *a* tool. I can identify with Morrison's (1996) reasoning for why she continues to utilise her memory when writing. Morrison states: 'I depend heavily on the ruse of memory … for two reasons. One, because it ignites some process of invention, and two because I cannot trust the literature and the sociology of other people to help me know the truth of my own cultural sources' (Morrison 1996: 214).

2. STATIC – A SHORT STORY

As I exited the subway, invisible needles threw themselves at my cheeks and my skin felt tight and firm as if it belonged to a twenty-five year old. The cold air crept up into my nose and I could feel shards of ice form. This air would hover like a lid over the city and make it a high pollution day; children would be kept inside and breathing problems were expected; a quiet day at work. No one would leave home unless they had to. There was no snow, but each day the cold, moist weather had left an additional thin layer of ice on buildings, sign posts, and street lights. This made the city look more deserted than it was, as if each building and even each person existed within their own cocoon of ice. I felt the cold had taken over. It knew how to outmanoeuvre my clothing to enter my bloodstream, and then my bones. That's what scared me, that sensation of the cold in control of my bones. I imagined how it would massage the bone and in self-defence the bone would contract, grow thinner and thinner to hide from the frost, until I was held upright by ice cold threads. A gust of wet wind would float in from the Oslo fjord; the bone would mistake it for warmth and shatter like glass. Maybe the warmth of summer would make me feel better.

Centrum Whitegoods was easy to miss. If I hadn't worked there for thirty-five years I would have walked by without a second thought. Nothing stood out. The sign was not one that beckoned customers to come in, but one that blended into the grey brick of the wall. It was there for those who were interested, rather than as an invitation. The windows were plain. We displayed a sample of our products there. Alf had meticulously hand written each price tag. Philips Bar-Fridge or Tefal Toaster printed in black block letters to contrast the green and blue stripes at the top of every tag, the product code in lower case green, and the price in red, the roundness of the large numbers forced as if someone had tried to inflate them with helium.

“Good morning. You’re here early.” I was a little disappointed. Jim, who took over the manager’s position after my husband Edgar died, had arrived before me. I enjoyed our morning ritual. He’d pretend to hide behind the corner while I tried to open the security roller grill. It was wrapped around a horizontal pole above the door, and I had to stand on my toes to reach the handle. I would hang from the handle with both hands, lift my feet with straight legs in front of me, stick my bottom out behind me, thrust my pelvis forward and rock my legs like a child on a swing. Jim enjoyed coming to my rescue to open the gate for me.

“Ella called last night and she wants to stop by today, so there’s lots to do,” Jim said. As he reached towards the security grill’s metal handle I noticed he wore his good shirt, the one with thick maroon stripes. The handle was covered in frost and I knew fifty-five years ago Jim would have been tempted to put his tongue to it, even if it would be stuck like a knife to a wet potato, but not today. Instead he sighed and put his weight behind every crank. The pole turned with a squeak, then the work got heavier, the sound changed, as if someone moved along a concrete floor with chains shackled to their feet. Most days I felt like we were about to enter a dungeon, but today Ella was coming.

“I’ll put on the coffee before Alf gets here and wants to add his Irish cream or vanilla flavours.” I walked past the waffle irons and toasters to reach our percolating Moccamaster.

“Yes, and make it strong.” Jim paused at the end of the counter where he kept his paperwork and left his cake and the lunch his wife made him every day. I never understood why he didn’t just throw the food straight in the bin, as he always did three hours later on his way out to get a hotdog with fried onion and shrimp salad.

* * * *

I was only forty-five minutes into my workday – we hadn’t even opened the shop yet – but if Simon didn’t walk in that door within the next few seconds I might have to

electrocute Jim or Alf: death by toaster or hair dryer. Two grown men argue like that: as if they were dogs wanting to chew on the same bone. They had the same argument every day. How to load the truck; where to deliver first; should they start on the west side or the east side? Didn't the people on the west side - who had more money than anyone else - have the right to receive their merchandise first, didn't they expect it? But they hadn't paid more than anyone else, and what could an angry upper-class fifty-something woman really do to us other than never shop here again? You had to consider the real threat of the people living on the east side, you didn't want Ahmed from the middle-east to be mad at you, you didn't want his wife to be either, after all they were most likely Muslims, just think what they could do to the store. Jim argued the case for the west as streams of sweat ran down his round face and neck, while Alf's fear of the east showed as he intertwined his long fingers and ground his hands together.

My Edgar would not have approved of their arguments when he was running the business. I didn't know who I wanted to die first, Alf or Jim. Jim looked like he might take care of it himself. The vein on his left temple looked ready to burst. I could see it pounding like an echo of his heart, tired but persistent. What happens when a blood vessel bursts? Would the blood spread beneath his skin and turn his face the colour of a rich Merlot, or would that final pound, the one that caused the burst, be so powerful it would rip his parchment skin and we would have to watch him as the carpet saturated with blood? Or would the burst stop him mid-sentence? No more words would come, his psoriasis-ridden hand would stop rubbing against the edge of the counter, and the flakes of skin just forced off his hand would race his body to the floor.

"Sorry I'm late, I overslept." Simon walked in, his cheeks bright red from the cold. The three frozen spikes of hair that stood straight up left no doubt he had gotten out of bed less than fifteen minutes ago and had tried to tame his hair with water.

Apart from his tendency to be late, Simon reminded me of Edgar in his youth. He was sincerely interested in the business and he was the most likely candidate to take over when Jim retired. My hope was that Simon would run it more like Edgar had even though they had never met. My Edgar would have made sure to teach him how to approach a customer with respect and kindness, and that arguing with a customer over how stupid it was to choose an Electrolux washing machine over an AEG, like Jim did yesterday, was not the way to run a business.

We used to be known for our service. Customer service had been everything to Edgar, and this store was his baby, our only child. Today, most of our customers never came back for our service. They came back because of price or habit, and the absence of other stores in the centre of Oslo where you could buy fridges and vacuum cleaners. Jim said no one cared about service anymore and if Edgar were alive he would have been the first to realise that. “You need to move forward, Agnes,” Jim said to me yesterday. “You are stuck in your life with Edgar. It’s been ten years, things change.” Well, they hadn’t really. We had the same interior, the same full-time staff, and the same delivery routines. The only significant change was the lack of service and the new computerized stocktaking and sales system. A system that, when Ella was still working here, made Alf, Ella, Simon and me vie for customers, because at the end of the day we could see who had sold the most - our days seemed three hours shorter. Ella and Simon would not hide their competition and would race each other to the computer midday to see who had the best numbers. Alf and I weren’t as obvious, but I felt good if I was ahead, and I could tell from how he approached the female customers that Alf did too. He would slap his hands together like an excited child, cock his head like any girl does when she wants something from her boyfriend or father, curtsey like a female ballet dancer and then ask how he could be of help, the question always asked with a suggestive and sexual undertone. “Are you maybe in the market for a new washing machine? I hear it does wonders for most marriages. The spin cycle is a whopping 1600, but the vibrations are not more than

acceptable. You should try it. Is your husband a big man? Maybe you are looking for a spin cycle of 2000?" He would flirt with them until they bought whatever he wanted them to buy. Most of them thought he was fun, charming, and harmless like an excited Cocker Spaniel wagging not only his tail but his entire body. They didn't know that this was how he met his first, second, and third wives, and that he was like an unreliable Rottweiler who would charge with no warning.

After a while Jim claimed we wore out the computers and he'd have to make that part of the system password protected. We went back to selling only what we had to. Not long after that Ella decided to leave, and was replaced by June.

Ella worked here for four years and we thought she would stay. She got along well with all of us and Jim liked her better than he should. Once I thought I was an Ella, a person who would move on to bigger and better things, who would develop, travel, learn, and come back to tell enchanted stories about it. I was wrong. I wasn't an Ella, I was a June, someone who wants to go but never does, someone who starts off working part-time, but then falls in love with the person who is meant to take over the store and then stays for his sake. June is the new me. She has such confidence in the fact that she will lead her own life, but I see how she looks at Simon and how he looks at her - he will run this store and she will make the wrong choice.

"Can I please see the best and most expensive hairdryer you have? It's a gift for my wife, she has long black hair." I assumed this grey-haired pudgy customer was informing me he had a younger wife, in fact so young that she didn't have grey hair yet.

"This hairdryer is excellent for someone with longer hair." I showed him the box with the 2000 watts Braun silver. He took the box out of my hands and pulled the hairdryer out to stroke it and test every button as if it were a power tool. I shifted my weight back and forth to wake my feet up and felt the numbness dissipate through my calves and thighs. The cheaper

version of the hairdryer had already jumped out of the shelf and into my hands when he said what they all said after they had left their greasy fingerprints on the product. He thought she would be happier with the simpler version. I gift-wrapped it and didn't even notice that he paid and left as I stared past him out at the empty street and tried to visualise the summer version of the street filled with women in purple or white skirts and men in pink short-sleeved shirts.

A few days ago I heard about a man who jumped into a volcano. They said he wanted to walk to the earth's core. He thought there was a tunnel. He survived. Did he want to survive? I think he wanted to melt. He wanted his body to liquefy like lava. The feet he stood on, white with a blue tint like skim milk, the toes with stiff dark hair - he wanted to watch them turn red, to feel the skin peel, like that off a boiled tomato. Then the heat would move upwards and he would pour into the tunnel to be one with the earth's core. The pain so strong he could do nothing but laugh. My neighbour, Mrs Stanislav, worked with refugees like herself. For twenty years she listened to their stories. Then she stood on the green grass surrounded by pine trees, poured five litres of gasoline over herself and perished in blue and yellow flames.

It was almost midday and we had to start our preparations for Ella's arrival. As with all visits from former colleagues, it was my task to have the bench tops and appliances cleaned and dusted. Alf would vacuum and double-check the window decorations, while Jim would go out and buy pastries.

Not only the dust from the polluted winter air in Oslo settled on our appliances and on the signs designed to sell them, it was also the forty years of dust that had seeped into the perforated ceiling tiles. Particles of dirt were sprinkled onto every fridge and dryer every time a tram thundered by in five minute intervals. The tram is supposed to be silent, and in most parts of Oslo it sneaks up on you like a lion on the hunt, but that's impossible in Storgata. The

buildings are old and on soft ground and have shifted, and the tram tracks are uneven so you can both hear and feel the tram coming. If I close my eyes I can imagine being a character in a Jack London novel alone in frozen North America listening to the wolves howl and the wild horses trampling by in the night.

It wasn't that all dust disappeared when Ella came to visit. It didn't matter how much industrial strength cleaner I put in the water, or rather Jim made me put in the water. Forty years of dust wouldn't leave home even when prompted by chemicals, but I wanted Ella to feel that we wanted her to visit so I did my best to make every toaster shine. The air shifted as the cloth, clasped by my smoke-stained fingers came closer to the Braun toaster, and the dust particles jumped on to that shifting air and lingered there until the cloth had gone, leaving only the smell and oily residue of paint thinners. Then, when Ella opened the door the light changed and so did the dust particles. They went from grey dirt to props in a dance of light. The light fixture's blue fluorescence never seemed strong enough to cut through the dirt and the polluted Oslo air, but there Ella was and all these particles turned golden orange as if they were sources of light themselves. Tiny suns or stars as if the store had its own solar system and their earth was Ella. Every stove turned from grey to white, the stainless steel fridges went from matt to shiny, and the yellow egg cream centre of our pastries grew bigger.

Ella's visit was just like we had expected. She was full of stories from working as a flight attendant for British Airways. In Tanzania she climbed Kilimanjaro, and in La Paz she witnessed how robbers castrated a man for not handing over his mobile phone. The coffee tasted fresh, she was happy to see us, and the afternoon disappeared in laughter. The next day the store seemed brighter, there was less labour in every breath, and the end of the day didn't seem as far away.

It was now four months since Ella's visit, ten years since my Edgar died and five years

since we sold an electric egg cooker. Edgar always wanted the timer set to nine minutes, but I prefer a soft yolk, so now I set it to three minutes. The cold was no longer in control and the last residue of dry winter dust had been washed away with rain. The trees had leaves again and the inhabitants of Oslo reappeared from hibernation. I didn't expect to see Ella back soon. Her half-yearly visits would turn yearly, and then they would stop.

Jim rubbed his hand against the sharpest corner of the counter while he listened to Mrs Olsen. She had been a customer for years, but I had never seen her like this, scared to talk, as if her tongue would fall out if she used it too much. Her voice was different too. She no longer spoke in statements, only questions. It was difficult to dislike her now that her husband didn't tower behind her with his large hand spread across her back as he pushed the words out of her. Today, she stared at a coffee stain on the carpet and seemed embarrassed as she explained how difficult it was for her to reach a lamp that needed new light bulbs. Jim had never said yes to such a request before, but he took one look at the widow's green eyes and brown curls and offered to drive her home and help her at no cost. I could see he imagined himself with her, naked, on her brown leather sofa. He'd want her to keep the purple beanie on, and he'd be careful not to smudge her raspberry lips.

I saw a spider today, small, insignificant, and covered in fine grey hair. It looked old and lonely where it hung two centimetres above the floor. I stepped on it. I don't like spiders but am attracted to their webs, and have always wondered why there is a hole in the middle. Is that to give the prey a fair chance to escape? "It's unlikely that you will escape me, but if you care to try there is a hole just here." For me it has a hypnotic effect, and I suspect the spider's prey, like me, are mesmerised and want to dive into it nose first. Preoccupied with the hole they forget the sticky strings around it, until it is too late.

My castration hadn't been a spectacular one, there was no mess, no blood, no pain, it was a simple choice, the word yes. The pain came later when I realised that this "yes" had

sliced away the life I was supposed to lead. When I said yes to Edgar, that was it. Agnes Westby ceased to exist, and left was Agnes Berg, a being whose personality and choices were cut away. Now Edgar was dead and I was still here, my body filled with uncontrollable heat; a pressure cooker under disguise as a friendly sales person with a lifetime of experience.

No one had moved into Mrs Stanislav's house, and no one had been there since she turned herself into ashes. There was a pine tree and a birch on either side of her driveway and a spider that used to be small had spun its web back and forth and up and down between the trees throughout this spring and early summer. In the morning when drops of dew lingered in the web and the sun turned it into threads of silver and orange, the centre of the web called out to me and all I wanted to do was walk into it, my nose a perfect fit. Would it let me go, or wrap around me and swallow me whole?

3. THE TIP OF MY FINGER – A SHORT STORY

I felt the warm pressure from his hand still fanned out between my shoulder blades. The blanket was down by my feet, but the heat from his hand kept me warm and made me sink into the mattress. I was safe, the hand loved me, protected me, if only for a moment.

The pressure eased and I knew he was awake. He slid his hand down to the small of my back and up again. Would he slide it over to the side and under my arm to cup my breast, or was this the day where he would slide it further up, rest the palm on the base of my skull and press my head into the pillow? I could still feel the imprint of his hand on my cheek and his fist in my stomach.

Grateful that Thor had let me go back to sleep, I decided to make him an omelette. Breakfast was my favourite meal; a time when we were both rested and wanted to move on, not stuck in yesterday's patterns. It was harder than normal to knock the eggs open, so I made a mess as I carried the shells over to the bin. Eggwhite was dripping from my hands and onto the only floor in the house that was not covered with carpet but with shiny oak-effect linoleum.

Our miniature house was like any Surry Hills terrace, wedged in between other equally small and crooked terraces. It had been our home for eighteen months and even with its concrete backyard and cockroaches in every corner, I would miss it when we moved back home. We chose the house because of its kitchen. A Norwegian would never ever put wall to wall carpet in their home since it was considered unhealthy, but we could live with that because of the white "Faktum" IKEA cabinets, the oak worktop that I oiled religiously once a month, and the stainless steel appliances.

I was about to get a paper towel to clean the eggwhite from the floor, when Thor walked into the kitchen and distracted me. I made the omelette and he made coffee with warm milk. He always made the coffee. We stood next to each other, elbows connected, and I felt my body absorb the heat from his as we worked in silence. Ours had become a quiet relationship to avoid words that would make things worse.

People – my friends – used to ask how I could stay with him, someone who allowed himself to act out all of his anger and frustrations, who was more mean to me than good to me, what kept me they would ask. How do you leave the person you love, the person who knows you better than anyone, the person who protected you from bullies in primary school, who let you use his blue bike and taught you how to ride it behind the water-tower, and who gave you your first kiss in the closet at Martin's birthday party in Year 6? To me this is not a difficult question to answer.

We might be different, but sometimes I think we are more similar than it seems and that the difference between us is more in the way we choose to act than in the way we think. I believe this because there is no limit to what I can do to him in my imagination. I often find myself undressing him in my mind. Sometimes my movements are slow and deliberate. For every piece of clothing I remove I take one step back to admire my work of art, to rest my eyes on the few strands of hair on his chest that have turned grey or to study his pointy knees, but most times my mind rips his clothes off, leaving only his socks because it makes him look funny. I do this just as many times as I imagine breaking his fingers one by one – like he broke my arm – taking time to appreciate the sound of bone breaking. It's nothing like a dry and rotten tree branch breaking. The sound of bone is softer, more hollow, and shorter as if someone popped a cork from a wine bottle. It's not easy to break a bone in a healthy person's body. You have to work at it, persevere, and have a mean streak.

"The meeting is Tuesday?" I asked as we waited for the milk to warm. "And you can

help with the packing, right?"

"I've already given you the dates."

From the corner of my eye I could see the milk foam rising, the heat like sugar to yeast, and in ten seconds the milk would escape its confines and be all over my kitchen bench. I dislike the smell of burnt milk.

Three years ago, Thor came home from work as I was making dinner and told me he had been offered a transfer to his company's branch in Sydney. He was as surprised as I was when I said yes without hesitation. I wanted change, but had I just said yes to a move to the other side of the world? Thor's eyes turned a lighter brown. He winked at me, laughed, and reached for a bottle of wine.

"So, you're sure we're going? Do you really want to go, Ruth?"

"Yes, I think I do." I finished slicing the carrots and reached for the chicken and meat cleaver. I started chopping the chicken into pieces as I looked into Thor's eyes to see if he knew I meant it. I did mean it. This was our chance to start a new life, to change our routines, and to meet people who didn't know us. As I realised what this could mean my hands started shaking and the Kobe cleaver slid without effort through the tip of my middle finger and severed it at the root of the nail. For a second or two, I couldn't feel anything. I stared down at the white plastic cutting board and in-between the chicken and carrots, now glazed in blood, was the tip of my finger with the pale-pink nail-polish still fresh and un-chipped two days after I applied it. It's not that it didn't hurt, it did. What was left of the finger pulsated in time with the increasing rate of my heart and it felt as if the knife kept slicing and the finger kept getting shorter and shorter, but it was a different kind of pain. It was self-inflicted and there was no moment in advance to guess how much it would hurt, or to try and calculate how moving my body this or that way would alter the impact.

“Thor.” His name scratched my throat.

He smiled at me, put his large hand over my bleeding hand and closed his fist tight. Then he leaned so close to the cutting board that his nose grazed a piece of carrot and studied the finger-tip. My legs started to tremble and as he squeezed my hand harder, my knees gave in. I found myself kneeling with my arm stretched up as my hand was held hostage on the worktop.

“What did you do sweetie?” He picked up the finger-tip and laughed before he rolled it back and forth between his thumb and index finger. Then he dangled it in front of me like it was a prize he had won, or like a five-year-old dangles a piece of chocolate in front of his younger sister. I could smell the milk I had added to the mushroom sauce burn as my arm became numb and the only thing I could feel was the missing finger-tip.

Three years later my tip-less finger scratched the table top and I could feel his eyes on me. Thor looked at me looking at the milk steamer. He always made the coffee; I wasn’t allowed to. I forced my eyes away from the foam, focused on the *Sydney Morning Herald* in front of me, leaned back, crossed my legs and exhaled, before I lifted my eyes to meet his stare. I should let it go, but I couldn’t. I didn’t want milk all over my kitchen.

"Please."

The table vibrated from the force of his hand and I found my right arm pulled towards him by his tight grip around my wrist, while his left hand rested heavy on my shoulder. The edge of the tabletop dug into my stomach and massaged the bruises from yesterday. Any movement would pop the shoulder out of its socket, just like the other times.

I didn't want to go to the hospital today, I had things to do. Bruises are easy to fix, like any artist you need to know what colours cancel each other out and use the right brush. A shoulder or any other joint out of its socket needs a medical practitioner. I wanted to sort

through our clothes and belongings one item at a time, decide if the milk steamer or the cerise wool blanket would be allowed home with us, pack everything into boxes and mark each box clearly. I wanted to print our names and address letter by letter. All I wanted to focus on was if it was going to Norway with us or not, and I only had ten days to do it. Two more weekends before our return home. Home where I had friends I could stay with if I needed to hide, and a mother that would put ice on any swelling. I wanted to get away from our unrealistic dream of a better life.

Thor's right eyebrow lifted, and even if I stood perfectly still the reflection I saw in his eyes was not me at this moment as I held my breath, but me with my arm jerked hard towards him, accompanied by that hollow sound of a shoulder popping out. Then from a second jerk, I flew up in the air and across the table, first the arm, then the pain, then me. Before I could see the end, the light in his eyes changed, and I knew what would happen.

At that point the steamer sent out a warning hiss, the steel couldn't keep the milk in any longer; the foam rose out of its confines, but instead of exploding in celebration of its freedom, the air that kept it up there collapsed in disappointment and milk trickled down the sides. Thor let my arm go and spun around while he took one long step, almost jumping towards the workbench. He wasn't very elegant and a giggle of released tension escaped my mouth. He touched down on his heel but instead of continuing forward towards the bench, he slipped on the eggwhite I forgot to clean up, and in his effort to recover his body was flung back up into the air, a soccer player doing an overhead kick. At the point when his feet were higher than his body, the back of his head connected with the worktop. I expected a loud reverberating sound, but it was short and soft like an apple falling from a tree and onto grass. Still, it echoed in my mind for months. The worktop didn't stop his flight, although it did twist his body midair. When he landed on the floor it was his head and neck that made the first connection.

Until this moment I had always thought that was how we were different, Thor and I: that I would make sure the finger tip was sewn back on. Until he fell on the kitchen floor I was confident I would act. I would call a doctor and I would never laugh if he hurt himself. I was wrong. All I could do, as his back seemed to sink into the floor and every muscle in his body turned to jelly, was look at the milk drops that had created a milky river mixing with eggwhite along the floor next to him, and I couldn't stop laughing.

* * *

I lifted the spoon and opened my mouth to show Thor that he needed to open his. I steered the spoon into his mouth and tipped it. Most of the food reappeared and ended up in the towel I had tied around his neck like a bib. I used a napkin to wipe the corners of his mouth, the stump of my middle finger stroking his cheek. His eyes were empty. Sometimes I thought I saw recognition and hatred in them. On my lonely days I thought I saw love.

I imagined him lifting his arms, that one hand caressed my cheek while the other drew back to gain momentum before it hit me, but it would never happen again. His hands lay limp like empty snakeskin in his lap.

4. CREATIVITY AND LANGUAGE

4.1 Creativity and the Creative Process

> Creativity is always an act already mapped out, already begun in imitation. Yet creativity can still be approached as a moment of excitement because it holds out the possibility of throwing up the unknown and the unexpected (Brophy 1998: 15).

In his book *Creativity, Psychoanalysis, and Creative Writing*, Kevin Brophy asked 'Who, then, knows *what* creativity is?' and then '*Who* knows what creativity is?' (Brophy 1998: 1-2). This is a clear illustration that the study of what constitutes a creative person, creativity, and the creative process, has a long and diverse history with competing and complementing contributions from several fields and traditions. It makes it difficult, almost unnerving, and maybe a little irresponsible, to settle for any one answer and/or to make any claims that one has found the right answer, the right definition. Therefore, like Brophy (1998: 2), who wasn't looking for 'any final definition or essential truth about creativity,' I am not seeking that 'final definition' or 'essential truth' either, but I am, by sketching an overview of the study of creativity – but at the same time by following some paths more closely than other paths – trying to understand and explain creativity and the creative process in relation to writing fiction in a second language. Much of, but not all, the research I engage with deals with creativity in general terms, but my topic is writers and writing and this has of course informed all my choices.

As mentioned earlier, creativity has been studied in a variety of fields. Although psychology might have more research output for this topic, there are traditions for studying creativity within philosophy, education, anthropology, under the arts umbrella in subject areas like

visual arts, English, music, media, dance, and cultural studies, and in business and management. The literature used for my research is informed by several of these areas, but it also reflects the research output with the field of psychology being the principal informant. I will first look at research related to creativity including the creative person, before I look more closely at the creative process.

4.1.1 Creativity and the creative person

As part of the aesthetic tradition Plato described a poet as 'an airy thing, winged and holy, and he is not able to make poetry until he becomes inspired and goes out of his mind and his intellect is no longer with him' (Plato 1997: 942 (Ion 534b)). This, to me, seems to be echoed in Sigmund Freud's more recent description of a creative person:

> An artist is once more in rudiments an introvert, not far removed from neurosis. He is oppressed by excessively powerful instinctual needs. Consequently, like any other unsatisfied man, he turns away from reality and transfers all his interests, and his life of phantasy, whence the path might lead to neurosis. (Freud 1917, vol. 16: 376)

However, Plato saw an artist as providing weak representations of the 'real' and being over-dependent on 'inspiration' – which for Plato is the realm of feeling – and thus contributing nothing original. And while Freud saw no use for an artist or the artist's trivial occupation, he did claim that an artist might provide an angle and clarity from which to see things that others might not see. According to Kant, the artistic genius has 'a talent for producing that for which no definite rule can be given' (Kant 2007: 137). He claimed that if you are a genius it is a talent you are born with and something that cannot be taught. Kant did emphasise that even if creativity, or genius, cannot be taught, the nurturing of a genius in the search for 'judgement' and 'understanding' is through education (Kant 2007: 148). This note on education is of

course relatable to the contemporary idea that creativity does not exist in a vacuum, it doesn't come from nowhere, and to be creative in any discipline you need to know that discipline. For example, as a writer it is not enough to know how to write, one needs to know what others have written and how to evaluate that writing, and one needs to be able to evaluate one's own writing in relation to other writing, as well as what is required to be published. Tolstoy defined artistic creation 'as such mental activity as brings dimly perceived feelings (or thoughts) to such a degree of clearness that these feelings (or thoughts) are transmitted to other people' (Tolstoy 1930: 51). The function of a novel would then be to transmit and evoke the writer's emotions in the reader, and therefore the writer has a responsibility, both social and moral, to the readers. It is not only about the writer – the creator – but also about the receiver. As an extension of this, Heidegger emphasised the importance of seeing artworks and their creators as part of a whole, a domain, '...the works themselves stand and hang in collections and exhibitions. But are they here in themselves as the works they themselves are, or are they not rather here as objects of the art industry? Works are made available for public and private art appreciation' (Heidegger 1971: 40). This view of the creative person and the creative product as part of a whole, is, as I will show, something which is certainly echoed in contemporary theories of creativity. Although Collingwood claims that all creation can only exist in the imagination, he also emphasises the importance of the relationship between an artist and the community and the responsibility of the artist towards that community (Collingwood 1963).

> The artist's business is to express emotions; and the only emotions he can express are those which he feels, namely his own... If he attaches any importance to the judgement of his audience, it can only be because he thinks that the emotions he has tried to express are emotions not peculiar to himself, but shared by his audience, and that the expression of them he has achieved ... is as valid for the audience as it is for himself. In other words, he

> undertakes his artistic labour not as a personal effort in his own private behalf, but as a public labour on behalf of the community to which he belongs (Collingwood 1963: 314-15).

These are only a few examples that represent versions of how creativity has been presented, often with the creator as someone divine and as a genius, and where creativity very much is an internal and unexplainable process, even where the audience was taken into account. These were selected both to show how the creative person was portrayed through history, but also because many of these theorists emphasised elements of explaining creativity – such as the mysterious quality of the creative process, the question of whether creativity is something we are all born with, and creativity as part of a whole – that is echoed in today's theories of creativity.

We now tend to see creativity more as being available to everyone: the creative person is normal, like you and me, and one cannot easily generalise their personality traits. Although in working with fields related to creative practice such as creative writing one still encounters opinions that are based on these mythological ideas. Freiman, for example, says that:

> 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 (Freiman 2003: 6).

A research project like mine, where I interview writers about their creative process as part of my research method, can hopefully de-mystify the writer's creativity and the writing process further.

According to psychologist Mark Runco 'creativity is a distinct and independent capacity [that] ... plays a role in many things, including problem solving, adaption, learning, [and]

coping, ... but it is clearly distinct from each of them', it is a term that is not easy to define, and this is partly because of 'its diverse expression' (Runco 2007: x & ix). What Runco is referring to here is the fact the we not only use creativity in relation to artistic production, but to everyday tasks like cooking, building something, marketing, solving a problems at work and so on, and this leads to creativity becoming more elusive, but that does not mean that we can't study or analyse creativity. Brophy states, in similar terms, that 'creativity is never simple, … it operates with and through signs that have social, cultural and historical values' (Brophy 1998: 13). He says that creativity 'exists as a history of differences which can never be settled' (Brophy 1998: 2). The fact that there are so many approaches to creativity, can of course be limiting when trying to develop an argument and/or draw conclusions related to the creative process, but these differences, together with the similarities that also exist between these approaches, can provide us with a wide variety of angles to utilize when researching and developing an argument related to creativity and writing fiction in a second language.

The psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi sees creativity as 'an idea or action that is new and valuable,' and to understand and study creativity one has to take into account more than just 'the people who appear to make it happen' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 6 & 23). Although there is no consensus on an identically worded definition, Csikszentmihalyi is not alone in emphasising newness and adding value as the core of creativity. In fact, this seems to be the common thread in many, if not all, contemporary definitions I have encountered. Pope, a Professor of English, when he looks at the history and theory of creativity, defines it 'as the capacity to make, do or become something fresh and valuable with respect to others as well as ourselves' (Pope 2005: xvi). Similarly psychologists Sternberg and Lubart say that 'creativity is the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e., original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e., useful, adaptive concerning task constraints)' (Sternberg & Lubart 1999: 3). Weisberg (2006), who is from the cognitive camp in psychology – cognitive psychologists study mainly mental processes such as thinking, perceiving, remembering and learning – maintain that

novelty is an integral part of creativity, and that the two aspects 'novelty for the person versus novelty for the world' must be separated (Weisberg 2006: 60).

> It follows from this that the creative process or creative thinking comprises the thought process that brings about products that are novel for an individual. A creative product – or an innovation – is one that is novel for an individual, and a creative person is one who produces such products. Creativity is made up of the factors that enable a person to produce creative products (Weisberg 2006: 60).

Like others, Weisberg emphasises that what is produced/created, is not necessarily completely original or new, that all products are based on something else, in fact, he is quite adamant that 'one will never find a creative product for which there are no antecedents' (Weisberg 2006: 53). Brophy also discusses the meaning of newness/novelty in creativity: to write something that is thought of as creative, it has to be new, yes, 'but at the same time it must be a copy, that is a repetition of some formula of beginnings and endings. It must be *recognisably* creative' (Brophy 1998: 11).

> The notion of creativity throws up a number of oppositions which highlight the way its presence shifts under our gaze or slips through our fingers or the way it takes us by surprise despite and because of our maps. Spontaneity or planning, original or copy, art or craft, new or old, uncanny or familiar, play or work, self-expression or chance, Dionysian or Platonic, personal or impersonal, are only some of the oppositions that come into play when we approach a creative task (or approach a task creatively) (Brophy 1998: 11).

Creating something new and original then, does not mean that it is not based on previous knowledge, or that it appears from nowhere, but that we create something new by adding to what we know, we combine our knowledge in a different way, or as a writer, in the words of Grace Paley, 'you write what you don't know about what you know' (quoted in Adams 1991:

28). Adding to this, the anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen refers to the anthropologist Ulf Hannerz's work on 'cultural dynamics and change' (Hylland Eriksen 2003: 223):

> Hannerz has powerfully argued in favour of a view of cultural creativity that is far removed from any Romantic vision of the lone genius inspired by his Muse and the depths of his cultural heritage, … newness appears as a result of recontextualization, mixing and ongoing, always provisional mergers of formerly discrete symbolic realms (Hylland Eriksen 2003: 223).

In returning to Weisberg's (2006) definition of creativity where creative thinking is a process that leads a person to produce something that is new to them and not necessarily to anyone else, one can see that it differs significantly from other definitions in terms of the evaluation of the product and whether the influence of society should be part of a definition of creativity. He disagrees with Csikszentmihalyi, and does not think so much importance should be put on the value of the creative product. When Weisberg (2006) talks about value he is referring to value in the sense of cultural opinion, both positive and negative.

> I would say that the cycle determines whether an innovation comes to be *valued*, and I would restrict the use of the term *creativity* to the individual's production of the innovation in the first place. I make the distinction because I believe that one should separate the creativity of a product from its value, and therefore I will not use value as a criterion for calling something creative (Weisberg 2006: 64).

Weisberg claims that using value when defining creativity is problematic. The value of a product isn't constant, which makes it difficult to know with certainty if a product is creative or not (Weisberg 2006: 64). He also sees 'no reason to believe that the psychological processes involved in producing a positively evaluated innovation are different in any way from those underlying a negatively evaluated one' (Weisberg 2006: 68). In Weisberg's opinion, the value society puts on a creative product does not necessarily evaluate its

creativity, it fluctuates, so to him creativity has more to do with intentionality: 'A novel product intentionally produced by a person is a *creative product*, and the person who produces such a product is a *creative person'* (Weisberg 2006: 70).

The cognitive approach to creativity that Weisberg takes suggests that there is nothing extraordinary about creativity. The thought processes used in producing something creative are the same we use when solving ordinary day to day tasks like composing a new meal from food we have in the cupboard (Weisberg 2006: xi):

> From this perspective, the term *creative thinking* is misleading at least and perhaps a misnomer, because one thinks creatively by using ordinary thinking; one just uses that ordinary thinking to bring about innovations. ...those innovations are based on the ordinary thought processes that we all carry out (Weisberg 2006: 5).

Weisberg doesn't rule out social factors in evaluating creativity, but he does not think it has the same importance as Csikszentmihayli claims:

> … this need to have others look at a product is not, as Csikszentmihalyi believes (1988, 1999), because others' judgement of the value of the work is important in determining whether it is creative. Rather, we need external observers because at this time only external observers can verify that the work is novel (Weisberg 2006: 69).

Many researchers however, agree with Csikszentmihalyi that society plays an important part in an individual's creativity (Runco 2007). The combination of individual and social elements in creativity is emphasised by Freiman:

> Even as we attempt a definition, we should recognise that creativity is a social construction which is determined by the parameters in which it is applied, including the social and cultural context in which the creative person operates: creativity involves both an individual and a social action (Freiman 2003: 4).

In looking outside the disciplines of psychology and creative writing when researching approaches to creativity, I return to anthropologist Hylland Eriksen who points to the fact that creativity as a term has been viewed as problematic in anthropological discourse, mainly because the traditional view of creativity as something related to art and to an individual didn't match well with the 'small-scale traditional societies' anthropology has focused on. Rather a definition encompassing more than the individual has changed that: '…a wider definition of creativity transcending the individual as the well of creation and the arts narrowly defined as its field of expression, has received great attention in mainstream anthropology' (Hylland Eriksen 2003: 223-224).

This acknowledgement of the need for a wider definition of creativity is why Csikszentmihalyi's systems model is considered to be a significant contribution to the study of creativity. However, even though creativity does not exist in a vacuum, and one chooses to see creativity as something that happens within a system, the creative person is an integral part of that system and one must keep in mind the cultural, social and autobiographical contexts of writers' lives as they enact their creativity.

Because I have, as part of my research, interviewed writers about creativity and the creative process, it is also necessary to consider pertinent contemporary creativity research regarding the individual. Csikszentmihalyi claims that within the system, in his systems model – where creativity is explained as an interaction between a culture or domain that has certain rules; a creative person who adds something to this domain; and a field that acknowledges and evaluates what the creative person has added to the domain – 'creativity occurs when a person, using the symbols of a given domain such as music, engineering, business, or mathematics, has a new idea or sees a new pattern, and when this novelty is selected by the appropriate field for inclusion into the relevant domain' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 28).

Csikszentmihalyi goes on to define the creative person as: 'someone whose thoughts or actions change a domain or establish a new domain [and that] we don't need to assume that the creative person is necessarily different from anyone else' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 28). Yet he also argues that the traditional focus on the creative person when trying to understand creativity might not be the right approach: 'For though it is true that behind every new idea or product there is a person, it does not follow that such persons have a single characteristic responsible for the novelty' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 45). In line with his systems model, he adds that we cannot claim that the creative process at all times is initiated by the creative person (Csikszentmihalyi 1997):

> A person who wants to make a creative contribution not only must work within a creative system but must also reproduce that system within his or her mind. The person must learn the rules and the content of the domain, as well as the criteria of selection, the preferences of the field (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 47).

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) is hesitant in discussing deeper personality traits in creative individuals, and claims that the system is too complex, and both the different domains and the different fields are too varied to settle on one type of personality and thereby explain creativity. 'The point is that you cannot assume the mantle of creativity just by assuming a certain personality style' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 56). He does, however, mention one thing that he believes separates the personality of a creative person from someone else, and that is a *complexity* where 'they show tendencies of thought and action that in most people are segregated. These qualities are present in all of us, but usually we are trained to develop only one pole of the dialectic', however, Csikszentmihalyi says, this is where creative people are different (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 57).

Runco also argues that while there is no such thing as a typical creative personality, and that it changes from domain to domain and from person to person, it is possible to provide a list of

‘traits, tendencies, and characteristics’, and he claims that a creative personality will possibly have a combination of these (Runco 2007: 314). He lists: ‘Autonomy, tolerance of ambiguity, flexibility, risk taking or risk tolerance, preference for complexity, intrinsic motivation, openness to experience, psychological androgyny, sensitivity, self-efficacy, playfulness, wide interest and curiosity’ (Runco 2007: 314-315). This list of course underlines the point made by Csikszentmihalyi (1997) related to a creative person’s complexity. Runco (2007) also suggests intentionality is important because a creative person would ‘intentionally invest time and effort in creativity. They choose to fulfil their creative potentials and choose unconventional and original ideas and careers’ (Runco 2007: 314). This is in line with Weisberg (2006), as mentioned earlier, who stressed intentionality in relation to creativity. Weisberg doesn’t talk about creative personality traits as such because he believes creativity is based on ordinary problem solving processes, but he does say that those people who manage to continue to do creative work, do so because they learn and internalise the rules of their field well enough to be able to evaluate the quality of their work themselves (Weisberg 2006: 1). Just as creativity does not exist in a vacuum, neither does the creative person exist in a vacuum. A creative person has to continually relate to the world around, which of course changes and differs depending on elements such as environment and culture.

4.1.2 Creativity, Environment and Culture

Csikszentmihalyi insists that ‘creativity does not happen inside people’s heads, but in the interaction between a person’s thoughts and a sociocultural context. It is a systemic rather than an individual phenomenon’ (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 23). He does not think creativity should be subjective or that the person alone should be able to decide that what they have done is creative:

> All it takes to be creative, then, is an inner assurance that what I think or do is new and valuable. There is nothing wrong with defining creativity this way, as long as we realize that this is not at all what the term was originally supposed to mean – namely, to bring into existence something genuinely new that is valued enough to be added to the culture. If we decide that social confirmation is necessary for something to be called creative, the definition must encompass more that the individual (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 24-25).

When explaining the systems model of creativity, Csikszentmihalyi adds to his definition by saying that you have to look at more than the creative person, because creativity

> results from the interaction of a system composed of three elements: a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the symbolic domain, and a field of experts who recognize and validate the innovation. All three are necessary for a creative idea, product, or discovery to take place (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 6)

In other words, it is not only about the person practicing their craft. For example, for one of my interviewees writing a poem or a short story, it is not enough for them to know how to string sentences together and to write, they also need to know literature, the structures of poetry or short fiction both in order to follow the 'rules' and to be able to break these 'rules'; they need to be able to know good writing is, and they need to have access to the field to have their writing published. They need to interact with a system.

All of my interviewees live and write in a different place and culture to where they grew up. This makes it necessary to look at the influence of place and culture on how creativity can be understood. In other words, does it matter where you are geographically when you create something, and if so, in what way? And also, does the culture you are from and/or the culture you now live in at all influence how you understand and relate to creativity? According to Lubart (1999), we cannot research creativity without taking into consideration the environment one is creative in:

> Creativity does not occur in a vacuum. When we examine a creative person, creative product, or creative process, we often ignore the environmental milieu. We decontextualize creativity. The environment however is always present and can have a profound effect on creative expression. The environment may be involved in stimulating and supporting creativity as well as defining and evaluating it (Lubart 1999: 339).

As Lubart says, it does seem that when creativity is talked about it is often done so in general terms, assuming similar conditions and backgrounds for any creative person, or disregarding conditions and backgrounds completely. However, there is also literature where this is not the case, where the difference in the immediate surrounding and its influence on creativity is emphasised. There are several aspects in which place is important for someone's creativity. Part of this is a person's upbringing and education, the environment one is in when developing one's creativity. There has been significant research done on creativity and development, but for the sake of this research, I want to look beyond a person's upbringing and instead emphasise the *immediate* environment or place of residence of an adult creative person. This does not mean, however, that the interviewee's childhood did not come up in the interviews, nor that memory is insignificant for their creative process and somehow influences their experience of the place they live in now.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1997: 129), in the case of writers, access to the domain of literature and for example the sub domain of poetry, and acceptance by the field – which according to Csikszentmihalyi is 'all the individuals who act as gatekeepers to the domain [and who's] job [it is] to decide whether a new idea or product should be included in the domain' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 28) – *where* one would want to work creatively, as well as 'stimulation of novelty' are three important reasons why the place a person lives is important in relation tho their creativity. For someone writing in their second language and living in a place and culture where they did not grow up, this also means that they have to learn how their chosen domain of literature and the related field functions in their new environment and

how to access the domain and be accepted by the field, because this might be significantly different to their prior place and culture. Also, they would need to understand where there is more likelihood of stimuli or encouragement to be creative. This is not only about where, for example, there are more publishers in general, or publishers that are more likely to be interested in reading and accepting work from someone who has a different language and cultural background. It is also about knowing one's work habits and what environment is conducive to one's work, and these elements don't necessarily match. Csikszentmihalyi says that

> The spatiotemporal context is which creative persons live has consequences that often go unnoticed. The right milieu is important in more ways than one. It can affect the production of novelty as well as its acceptance; therefore, it is not surprising that creative individuals need to gravitate towards centres of vital activity, where their work has the chance of succeeding (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 127).

To be able to 'gravitate towards centres of vital activity' a creative person needs to know where these centres are, and he or she needs to understand how they work and how to access them (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 127). Someone who is new to a country, a place and/or a culture has to re-learn this; they have to adjust the knowledge from their 'old home' to their 'new home'. When this is learned they might realise that where they have ended up might not be the 'right' place according to their chosen domain and field, but it is where they are and they would have to adjust, or rather make the best of it – however, this would create a conflict, conflict which often in turn generates the need for creative solutions. There might be no definite answer to where the best place to develop one's creativity is, and even if the surroundings can influence someone's thoughts and work habits in positive or negative ways, the environment is not the single cause of someone's creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997: 136).

Besides what creativity *is*, the concepts off creativity are also culturally and socially determined. 'Cultures shape creativity through different definitions of creativity, and by channelling creativity into some sectors more than others' (Lubart & Georgsdottir 2004: 23). This statement focuses on the great variety of definitions of creativity across cultures, one of the reasons contributing to the difficulty in defining creativity in any universal way. One culture might value creativity in science more while another value art and this is reflected in for example funding and cultural acknowledgment, a view shared by several researchers (See for example: Sternberg 2006, Lubart 1999, Runco 2007). Yet, according to Sternberg, even if there are great global variations in how creativity is defined, there are certain elements on which there is agreement. Sternberg suggests five generalisations about creativity that informs the researcher's view of creativity when it is viewed in a cross-cultural context: the first one is that 'Creativity involves thinking that is aimed at producing ideas or products that are relatively novel and that are, in some respect, compelling' (Sternberg 2006: 2). He then points to the knowledge and skills one needs to acquire to contribute creatively to a domain. Third and fourth form the belief that creativity can to some degree be both measured and developed. The fifth generalisation concerns the value of creativity and that 'Creativity is not as highly rewarded in practice as it is supposed to be in theory' (Sternberg 2006: 2).

In Sternberg's terms, then, whether you research creativity in Norway, Australia, Mexico, Lebanon or Iran, you generally think of creativity in terms of the thought processes involved in producing/creating something that is new and interesting to the field. What is considered new and interesting is of course different to some extent in all these countries, just as there are other aspects of defining creativity that vary according to culture.

A shift to different cultural approaches to creativity is necessary. Some researchers differentiate between eastern and western definitions of creativity, where the western version values individualism and has a significant focus on the end result of the creative process – the

product – while the eastern version values collectivism and has its main focus on personal fulfilment and the authenticity of the creative experience (Lubart 1999, Lubart & Georgsdottir 2004, Runco 2007). This is of course a generalization and there are significant variations globally. Although it is helpful to try to obtain a general overview with 'big picture' similarities and differences in relation to definitions of and approaches to creativity, for this research, where the interviewees live in Norway and Australia and are originally from Belgium, England, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Mexico, and Albania, it is equally important to note differences between smaller geographical regions and different cultures, because as Simonton notes: 'To some degree, there are as many ways of studying creativity as there are cultural traditions, perhaps as many as there are independent nations' (Simonton 2006: 490).

In Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, research related to creativity has been 'clearly applied and aimed at solving practical problems rather than understanding the phenomenon of creativity' (Preiss & Strasser 2006: 47). This is a reflection on psychological research in general in a region with socio-economic volatility and several challenges related to infrastructure, and where the demand is for 'solutions to practical human problems' (Preiss & Strasser 2006: 46). In the Nordic countries creativity research is quite diverse and has in recent times increased (Smith & Carlsson, 2006: 228). There does not seem to be a typical Nordic way to look at creativity, but that does not mean it is identical to the mainline North-American approach where creative productivity is the emphasis (Smith & Carlsson, 2006: 202). The Nordic creativity researcher is more inclined to look at elements related to social psychology like developmental issues and conditions seen from different angles such as in Csikszentmihalyi's system theory (Smith & Carlsson, 2006). These researchers, then, have 'above all less concern with the eventual utility of the endeavours of creative individuals and more with the basic characteristics of the processes involved, be they socially accepted, interesting, useful, or not' (Smith & Carlsson 2006: 228). In Turkey and Turkish speaking countries creativity is strongly linked to their understanding of fantasy, as something that can

take one beyond what is considered possible. The Turkish word for fantasy originates from the Arabic word for horse, '… in Turkish culture, fantasy could be described as a horse that takes its rider far away beyond the boundaries of the universe' (Oral 2006: 337). Creativity researchers in Turkey see fantasy either as 'the source of creative thinking, [and] the main source of thought' in general or they see fantasy as a tool that makes people 'capable of ignoring the limits set by laws of nature' (Oral, 2006: 337). Hennessey describes how in an attempt to translate a study on creativity she wanted to use in Saudi Arabia, she discovered that the Arabic language does not have a word for creativity.

> While it is possible to express the notion of creativity in Arabic using a series of short phrases, there is no one word that carries this meaning. It would seem that speakers of Arabic have not found the need to coin such a term, while in the Western world, conversation about creativity and its pursuit is commonplace (Hennessey 2004: 218).

This might explain why those I interviewed that had Arabic as their first language, found it more difficult than the other interviewees to explain how they understood creativity.

My interviewees live, as mentioned earlier, in Australia and Norway. The interviewees who live in Australia are from Mexico, Belgium, Lebanon, Iran and Iraq, while those who live in Norway are originally from Britain, Iran, Turkey, and Kosovo. These patterns indicate particular global patterns of migration during the last three decades. Not all of these countries can be considered post-colonial, defined by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin as a term that 'covers all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day' (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2002: 2). However, my interviewees have come to respectively Australia and Norway as immigrants, students or refugees, which means they can all be said to share certain experiences of migration and diaspora related to place, language, and culture – contexts that are considered important in post-colonial research, and that is why I have chosen to utilize post-colonial theory throughout this thesis in relation to creativity, but

more significantly in relation to language. According to Freiman 'postcolonialism, in its political, experiential and discursive struggles for representation and authority, has a striking capacity to generate creativity' (Freiman, 2006: 82). This suggests that the situation my interviewees are in, where they are writing in another language to the one they consider to be their primary language, and where they live and work in a place they are not originally from, is conducive to their creativity. Freiman expands on this when she discusses conditions like 'displacement of language and place; dispossession of language, culture and land; encounters with Western and Eurocentric systems of knowledge and education; and representations of history,' which all characterise postcolonial experience (Freiman 2006: 83). She goes on to say that 'the writing produced within these conditions is both creative and inherently critical in its response (Freiman 2006: 83).

> Being forced to discount one's local language and culture, as in the case of cultures dominated by imperial institutions, or being displaced so that subjectivities are split, even damaged, as a result of forced or voluntary migration or dispossession, creates disruptions that actually promote creative responses to language use, perceptual frameworks and meaning-making through art and story. The response to these conditions is distinctively creative *because* it occurs within contradiction and conflict (Freiman 2006: 83).

This view of creativity as generated within the conflict of simultaneous loss and gain of language and culture underlines the importance of considering the environment in any approach to, and investigation of, creativity.

Simonton claims that despite the differences in approaching creativity world wide, and images of a global framework, that although there is still far to go, 'creativity research across the globe is headed in the same direction' and that the different approaches will combine into a common global theoretical and empirical framework for creativity research in the not too distant future' (Simonton 2006: 495-496). It is hard to say if this is the case when one looks at

the differing views at present time, however, these conflicts between commonalities and differences in understanding creativity are likely to be just as conducive to the general understanding of creativity, as the postcolonial reality pointed out by Freiman (2006) is to generating creativity.

As seen above, creativity cannot be analysed as a separate entity on its own – 'even as we attempt a definition, we should recognise that creativity is a social construction which is determined by the parameters in which it is applied, including the social and cultural context in which the creative person operates' (Freiman 2003: 4). This approach to defining creativity can also assist us in our attempts to situate the creative process, because although, as Freiman concludes, 'we are inclined to recognise creativity as social and individual effect and outcome, [and] its processes remain mysterious to us, difficult to define, outside the parameters of the knowledge disciplines with which we attempt to measure and understand it' (Freiman 2003: 5), a consideration of process is still valuable in coming to an understanding of creativity. This particularly applies to contexts of conflict and change.

4.1.3 Creative Process

This research deals with how writing fiction in a second language influences creative process. According to Runco, 'the creative process is multifaceted, and worse yet for those trying to define it, it is extremely complex. An eclectic approach is necessary' (Runco 2007: x). In other words it is important to consider the creative process in general, but also to look beyond those scientific and cognitive models that tend to seek definitions as part of their discipline frames. Csikszentmihalyi (1997: 78) points out that because domains are very different from one another and therefore have different expectations of their practitioners, it is unlikely that the process a person goes through to invent a new electronic product or to write a collection

of short stories would have many similarities, however, he maintains, one can find some overall commonalities that are of help in understanding the creative process.

Traditionally, in the western world, creative process has been described as occurring in five different stages: 'preparation', 'incubation', 'insight', 'evaluation', and 'elaboration' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 79-80). Csikszentmihalyi claims that it begins with a need to resolve something or to come to an understanding of it:

> the creative process starts with a sense that there is a puzzle somewhere, or a task to be accomplished. Perhaps something is not right, somewhere there is a conflict, a tension, a need to be satisfied. Without such a felt tension that attracts the psychic energy of the person, there is no need for a new response. Therefore, without a stimulus of this sort, the creative process is unlikely to start (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 95).

For a creative writer the preparation stage could be getting an idea for a poem or a story by seeing something, or overhearing something, by setting oneself a task, or by becoming interested in a topic and starting to research it. In the incubation stage 'a creative person senses that on the horizon of his or her expertise there is something that does not fit, some problem that might be worth tackling, [and] the process of creativity usually goes underground for a while' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 98). This is when we might say the idea is simmering in a writer's subconscious, for example trying to find the voice of a character, how to combine a set of words, how to solve a problem with the plot or how to shape the piece. Then some connection in the subconscious leads to insight, and it becomes clear how to best combine those words, or solve the problem. This again is followed by the stage where the writer has to evaluate how valuable this insight is. The final stage of elaboration is, for the writer, revising and rewriting. According to Csikszentmihalyi 'there may be several insights interspersed with periods of incubation, evaluation, and elaboration' and he also emphasises that there is often more time spent and more hard work done in the elaboration stage than in

any other stage (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 79-80).

Malcolm Cowley (1962) in his introduction to *Writers at Work, the Paris Review Interviews*, compares what the interviewees say about their writing process and concludes, as an echo of the five stages model of the creative process, that there appear 'to be four stages in the composition of a story. First comes the germ of the story, then a period of more or less conscious meditation, then the first draft, and finally the revision, which may be simply 'pencil work" – or may lead to writing several drafts and what amounts to a new work' (Cowley 1962: 10). Presented like this, the creative process seems quite rigid and predetermined, and according to Csikszentmihalyi (1997) this is exactly the problem with these kinds of models. If taken 'too literally' the model will lead to a view of the creative process that is deceptive and too simplistic (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 80-83). However, Csikszentmihalyi still thinks the five stages model 'offer[s] a relatively valid and simple way to organise the complexities involved. It is essential to remember that the five stages in reality are not exclusive but typically overlap and recur several times before the process is completed' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 83).

Although these stages do help in understanding different steps in a creative process – and I will discuss elements of these steps, in particular what Csikszentmihaly (1997) calls incubation and Cowley (1962) calls meditation, in more detail later – it is important to note that the creative process is far from inflexible or clear-cut. Any creative person, no matter how problematic he or she finds it to explain how their creative process works, knows that it is not a straightforward trajectory, it moves back and forth, and up and down, it spirals, it skips, and it surprises. Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) philosophy of thought, the model of the rhizome, accommodates the creative process more aptly.

This rhizomatic system suggests that thoughts and ideas, like the rhizomatic root systems of plants, don't follow a set pattern or a set direction: 'the rhizome itself assumes very diverse

forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers. The rhizome includes the best and the worst: potato and couchgrass, or the weed' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 7). This also means that unsuspected connections of thought can and will appear, 'any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 7). As thought is interconnected with creativity, then to be creative is to make new connections with a basis in existing ideas and utilise them in a surprising way, where assumptions of plant structure (eg. roots, stem, trunk) are subverted and take on new different functions: 'to be rhizomorphous is to produce stems and filaments that seem to be roots, or better yet connect with them by penetrating the trunk, but put them to strange new uses' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 15). Hence the creative process, like thought, is never ending, it feeds itself, it changes consistently, it stops and changes direction before it possibly returns to the starting point – but because of the connections made on the way, this is still not the same place. Deleuze and Guattari claim that 'it is a question of a model that is perpetually in construction or collapsing, and of a process that is perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting up again' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 20).

This rhizomatic system of thought and multiplicity has a lot in common with Taoist philosophy, a philosophy that also emphasises multiplicity. According to Coleman the Taoist philosophy uses the term multiplicity as follows: 'Amidst all plurality there is a fundamental unity, for the entire manifold of diversities emanates from and returns to the absolute oneness of Tao' (Coleman 1978: 17). The purpose of art in this tradition is to 'convey formlessness through forms' (Coleman 1978: 144). The seventeenth century Chinese painter Shih-T'ao was strongly influenced by Taoist philosophy, in fact, according to Coleman 'Shih-T'ao's oneness of brushstrokes is a direct application of this unity of multiplicity' (Coleman 1978: 17). In his *Hua-P'u (Treatise on the Philosophy of Painting)* Shih-T'ao talked about a 'one stroke method in the sense of a continuous creative process, whereby forms are produced out of chaos' (Cooper 1997: 66). Shi-T'ao (1978) claimed that this was where everything

originated: ‘The principles of oneness of strokes is such that from no-method method originates; from one method all methods harmonize’ (Shi-T’ao 1978: 115). Even if Shih-T’ao talks about nature as flowing upwards and downwards, and in relation to what one can see, it does not bring to mind an a to z trajectory, but rather one can imagine an organic rhizomatic development of a creative process when reading his words:

> Oneness of strokes embraces all strokes before their differentiation. Myriad brush strokes and ink wash all derive and diminish here. ... A single stroke which identifies with universality can clearly reveal the idea of man and fully penetrate all things. Thus the wrist seizes reality. ... To make either a square or a circle, to make a straight line or a bent line, either upward or downward, left or right, all of these movements are similar to water flowing naturally downward and flames burning upward. They are natural and free from the slightest artificiality. All of these actions possess a lively spirit and their methods are always integrated (Shih-T’ao 1978: 115-116).

In his oneness of brushstrokes, Shih-T’ao (1978) emphasises the importance of not being dictated by old methods in order to remain ‘present’ (as ‘the wrist seizes reality’), and that it is not until an artist/a creative person understands and embraces the oneness of brush strokes, that one can be said to have a method, ‘to have the true method is to be free from obstructions; to have obstructions is to lack the genuine method’ (Shih-T’ao 1978: 117). This means that there is not only one correct path to follow, there are multiple directions to go in when immersed in the creative process – ‘from one method all methods harmonize’ (Shi-T’ao 1978: 115). According to Deleuze and Guattari ‘perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 12). This mirrors the way choices of what paths to follow are made continuously throughout the creative process, sometimes creative practitioners feel like they are in complete control over these choices, while other times they feel like they have no control at all. This uncertainty or lack of control is at the core of our desire to understand the creative

process.

Grenville and Woolfe (1993), in the book *Making Stories, How Ten Australian Novels Were Written*, asked ten Australian writers how some of their novels had been written. Their goal was, through the words and work of these writers, to make the writing/creative process more transparent; to demystify it (Grenville & Woolfe 1993: xiv). Yet, they concluded that this was not possible. From the book it is clear that writers have very differing routines and some activities were undertaken without the writer knowing why or making conscious choices, making transparency difficult. David Ireland for example says that:

> Before I ever wrote anything, back in the 1960's, I was making notes at random, as they occurred to me. I didn't think at all of what they might amount to. They're thoughts I had, things that occurred to me, so I put them down in case they were useful later on in some way I couldn't foresee (Grenville & Woolfe 1993: 126).

As will be apparent in the chapters where I discuss the interviews I have undertaken, many of my interviewees also found it difficult to talk about and explain their creative process. Another writer who struggles with this, even though he does it often as a writer, a creative writing teacher, and researcher of creativity and poetry, is Brophy:

> I am a creative writer. I do it, but I cannot easily talk about it or analyse it more accurately, perhaps, I think I do it – though I might have borrowed some vain emperor's non-existent new clothes – and who could I trust to tell me if I have? I have a recurring dream that I am naked in the most ordinary situations and must act as if I am not naked. For me this exposure (Freud would call it 'exhibitionism') has to do with writing. My helplessness as a naked man in my own dreams comes back to me when I call myself a poet, a writer – a creative writer (Brophy's parenthesis) (Brophy 1998: 187).

One reason for this inability to analyse and explain all elements of the creative process is that some of it (appears to) happen in our subconscious. Freiman says:

> … I do not want to suggest that the learning and writing is entirely a conscious and deliberate one, although there is a constant stream of rational and intuitive decisions and choices in the process of reading/writing. As all writers know, a process comes into play when we engage in writing which 'makes meaning' in spite of conscious deliberations and beyond our conscious plans for our texts (Freiman 2007: 6).

This again refers back to Grenville and Woolfe's (1993) conclusion that due to the variations in how people work and how much of their work is beyond their conscious control, the creative process is still mysterious. Much research surrounding the creative process has been related to just this stage where an idea or a problem is incubated or meditated upon before it leads to insight; how much of it is transparent and how much is in the subconscious.

Some psychoanalytical approaches explain incubation as a stage when a person goes into their subconscious, and there process and make connections not otherwise available to them, and that these connections are based on wanting to understand oneself (Csikszentmihalyi 1997, Runco 2007, & Weisberg 2006). However, Csikszentmihalyi is one of few who rejects the above prevalent psychoanalytical postulation. According to Weisberg, modern theorists, 'have moved closer to resembling the Freudian view in various ways – even if they do not accept all of it – and assume that the unconscious is able to make connections among ideas that conscious processing cannot bring about' (Weisberg 2006: 413). In cognitive theories the subconscious is also significant, but cognitive theorists do not, like theorists from the psychoanalytical camp, assume that there is 'trauma at the centre of the unconscious, seeking resolution through disguised curiosity' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 101). Cognitive theorists instead explain subconscious processing through associative theories where ideas are combined together randomly in the subconscious, and these seemingly random connections may also have previous connections (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 101, Runco 2007: 11). Csikszentmihalyi (1997) therefore does support the idea that there is a form of parallel processing of thought going on during incubation:

> When we think consciously about an issue, our previous training and the effort to arrive at a solution push our ideas in a linear direction, usually along predictable or familiar lines. But intentionality does not work in the subconscious. Free from rational direction, ideas can combine and pursue each other every which way. Because of this freedom, original connections that would be at first rejected by the rational mind have a chance to become established (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 102).

Csikszentmihalyi also says that 'because of its mysterious quality, incubation has often been thought the most creative part of the entire process' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 98).

Cowley (1962) in *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews* found that this process did vary between writers in the interviews he reviewed, as to how much of the meditation (incubation) was a mostly conscious process or not, but in most cases '…the meditation is a mixture of conscious and unconscious elements, as if a cry from the depths of sleep were being heard and revised by the waking mind' (Cowley 1962: 12). However, even though incubation is a process that is happening in our minds and at the same time so far back in our minds that we are unaware of the connections being made until they resurface as insight, these are not connections made out of nothing. Csikszentmihalyi states that 'even though subconscious thinking may not follow rational lines, it still follows patterns that were established during conscious learning. We internalise the knowledge of the domain, the concerns of the field, and they become part of the way our minds are organised' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 102). Grenville and Woolfe (1993) after interviewing ten writers about their writing process, agree that internalised knowledge is important together with several other elements that constitute the creative process:

> *Making Stories* tries to show that what looks like an inevitable development was a complex combination of many things, including technical expertise, thought, great leaps of the imagination, accident, the shifting of the unconscious and the circumstances of the writer's life and psyche at the time. (Grenville & Woolfe 1993: 283)

Freiman (2007), who also emphasises subconscious processing supports this:

> On the page, in language, creativity – as association, connotation and subconscious and conscious creative structuring – transforms into knowledge. We have now created something new. We understand something and know it in a new way, and significantly, coming to this knowledge was done at a subconscious level as we allowed the writing to emerge (Freiman 2007: 6).

Weisberg (2006:588) on the other hand, claims that although there are no other methods available at the time of his study for explaining incubation and illumination, one should be wary of completely accepting unconscious processing as a result of parallel processing, because these assumptions are purely based on accounts made by creative persons about their own creative process and not on any experimental studies. Creative thinking, Weisberg claims, is identical to ordinary thinking and one can 'analyse in a straightforward way the creative thought process – even the creative thought process at the highest levels. In addition, the creative process seems to be highly structured and not very different from the thought processes involved in more mundane activities' (Weisberg 2006: 51). He acknowledges that the thought processes related to artistic creativity might 'be too quick, too fragile, perhaps too emotionally laden, too intuitive or illogical', to be analysed the same way other creative thinking has been, but says that his case study of how Picasso created the painting *Guernica* makes him believe it is possible 'to analyse and capture the thought process underlying artistic creativity' (Weisberg 2006: 36). In this case study, which he did alongside a case study on the discovery of the Double Helix, Weisberg (2006) looked at all the drafts and sketches in addition to the final painting, as well as previous studies of Picasso. Weisberg maintains that he did this because:

> When one tries to analyse how new ideas in art come about, one must go 'underneath' the paintings that hang in museums or are pictured in art books, because a finished painting tells us little about its birth. However, creative works do not come out of nothing: Especially for

> large-scale creative works – for example, scientific theories, symphonies, novels, or large paintings – there are several potential sources of information that can help us understand how the work developed. First, creative thinkers, including painters, often carry out preliminary work, thinking about what they might do before they commit to doing anything; artists often carry out this preliminary thinking by producing *sketches* of various sorts. Obviously, not everything an artist thinks about is put down in sketches, but, at the very least, sketches can give us an estimate of the relationship between the artist's early ideas and the final product (Weisberg 2006: 38).

Weisberg is right in saying that you can learn a lot about how an artist works through looking at notes and drafts etc. in addition to the final product, but as Grenville and Woolfe (1993) discovered, there are also a number of things about the creative person's thought processes and work habits that you don't get from notes, sketches, and drafts; you need to talk directly to the creative person. For example, when they interviewed Thomas Kenneally, Helen Garner, and Jessica Anderson, their presuppositions about the writing process of each of these writers did not match what they found when they talked with them (Grenville & Woolfe 1993). Thomas Kenneally did not work with as clear and conscious a structure and plan as they assumed from looking at a draft and comparing it to the novel (Grenville & Woolfe 1993: 186). Equally, Helen Garner's notebook seemed to be far away from the novel that was the result of those notes (Grenville & Woolfe 1993: 61), and Jessica Anderson's notebooks reveal surprising connections between 'raw research' and passages of creative writing.

> In Jessica Anderson's file at the Mitchell Library, we found a dense archive of historical material she had collected before and during the writing of *The Commandant* – school exercise books filled with names, dates and historical events. Scattered among this raw research were pages of handwritten narrative surprisingly similar to the published version. The juxtaposition of narrative and research were also surprising because to us they did not seem connected to each other – they suggested leaps of imagination we could only guess at (Grenville & Woolfe 1993: 3).

Grenville and Woolfe (1993) also chose to include the only Patrick White manuscript that wasn't destroyed after his death[1] in their book, but unlike Weisberg (2006), they decided against drawing any conclusions about his process based on the manuscript:

> For us, the question of whether to include this was not an easy one to answer. We conjecture that there was an earlier draft, or drafts, but we have now way of knowing. We also cannot know whether this manuscript represents his normal method of work, or whether this book – his last full-length work of fiction – was written in a different way from earlier ones. It is also possible that the edits on this manuscript were tailor-made by Patrick White for Manuscript Appeal. … If this were so, the manuscript would be highly untrustworthy as a clue to his work processes or his thinking… (Grenville & Woolfe 1993: 234).

In other words, in light of their inclusion of interviews, Grenville and Woolfe (1993), find that drafts, notes and the final product do not seem to be enough to use as basis in understanding and explaining the thought processes underlying the creative process. Personal accounts seem to be just as significant even if they are subjective – as well as being conducive to maintaining the mysterious aspect of the creative process. Because, as mentioned earlier, the creative process is not linear, rather it mirrors a rhizome and

> connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature …It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overspills. …When a multiplicity of this kind changes dimension, it necessarily changes in nature as well, undergoes a metamorphosis (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 21).

[1] At the time Grenville and Woolfe (1993) undertook their research, and when *Making Stories* went to print it was thought that other documentation related to Patrick White's work was destroyed, except for the one manuscript Grenville and Woolfe discuss. However, since then a number of letters have been discovered.

4.2 Language and In-betweenness

This research deals with the creative process related to writing fiction in a second language. Therefore it becomes necessary to take a closer look at language and issues related to writing fiction in a second language. However, I do not approach these issues from a perspective of technical linguistics. This is not meant to be a detailed linguistic analysis of the language used by my interviewees and their colleagues, nor is it about how these writers acquired the language or the processes and mechanisms involved in second language acquisition; it is about how they use the language once they have acquired it, or rather how they experience and perceive their usage of it.

As mentioned in the previous section on creativity, post-colonial theory has informed much of this research, and it is particularly when looking at language and writing in a second language that it has been useful. Of course much of the literature on language within post-colonial theory relates to issues concerning the English language, however, I believe, for the purpose of this research where my interviewees are writing either in English or in Norwegian, that the conclusions drawn in relation to English can be applied to a language like Norwegian as well. The interviewees who write in Norwegian relate to the Norwegian language as their 'standard' language, it is the language of their 'centre'. As my research will show, the experience of writing in a second language, of being a translingual writer, has a lot of similarities irrespective of what language one is writing in, and post-colonial approaches help to shed a light upon many of the situations translingual writers encounter.

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, in a post-colonial and transnational context,

> Language … provides the names by which the world may be 'known'. Its system of values – its suppositions, its geography, its concept of history, of difference, its myriad gradations of

> distinction – becomes the system upon which social, economic and political discourses are grounded (Ashcroft, Griffiths &Tiffin 2006: 261).

Ashcroft (2009) points out the peculiarity by which we relate to language. We don't relate to it in the same way as we relate to race or place, it's not just about belonging or feeling at home. We don't just exist within a language, in any context we use it – for example, when speaking, writing, and singing – we use language as a 'tool' to shape our private identity as well as in a 'religious', 'national' and 'cultural' context (Ashcroft 2009: 96-97).

There is a variation of names and categories available to classify the number of languages a person masters and how well they master those different languages. According to Skei (2003), bilingualism is the common term used when someone can speak more than one language. Bilingualism is also used for those who are multilingual and speak more than two languages (Myers-Scotton 2006). A person does not need to completely master two languages to be bilingual and it is rare for a person to 'be equally fluent in two languages' (Myers-Scotton 2006:3). A number of writers from antiquity to present time have written fiction and poetry in more than one language or a language not considered to be their mother tongue, and the above mentioned classifications have also been used when referring to these writers. Kellman, however, refers to this as literary translingualism: 'the phenomenon of authors who write in more than one language, or at least in a language other than their primary one' (Kellman 2000: ix). Kellman separates between 'ambilinguals, who are authors who have written important works in more than one language, and those who have written only in a single language but one other than their native one, the monolingual translinguals' (Kellman 2000:12). Joseph Conrad, Vladimir Nabokov, Samuel Beckett, Ha Jin, Chinua Achebe, Andre Brink, Raja Rao, Gerda Lerner, Eva Hoffman, Milan Kundera, and Ayn Rand are all examples of well known translingual writers from the twentieth century. Studying translingual writers, their work and the language they use hasn't always been 'accepted' as

‘the right thing to do. Chomsky who delineates a traditional and quite prevalent view of language study, states that,

> linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance (Chomsky 1965: 3-4)

All of the earlier mentioned examples of translingual writers, as well as my interviewees, fall outside of this ‘ideal speaker-listener’ category, and they are certainly not part of any ‘homogeneous speech-community’. Because, as Kellman says, ‘… neither language nor the relationship between languages is ever static for an individual speaker. In a sense, every speaker is translingual, moving with if not through languages’ (Kellman 2000: 4).

In post-colonial theory the claim that linguistic study should be about an ‘ideal speaker-listener’ and that only the homogeneous elements of language use should be studied, is rejected:

> Language in post-colonial societies, characterized as it is by complexity, hybridity and constant change, inevitably rejects the assumption of a linguistic structure or code that can be described by the colonial distinction of ‘standard’ and ‘variant’. All language is ‘marginal’, all language emerges out of conflict and struggle. The post-colonial text brings language and meaning to a discursive site in which they are mutually constituted, and at this site the importance of usage is inescapable (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2006: 279).

In other words, it is the language variety, the character, the individualities, the differences, when studying language that are important, not the ‘standard version of the language’ as in Standard English. Kellman agrees with this, and points out that even if a text by a translingual writer is written completely in a second language one can often see ‘traces of their authors’

other tongues' (Kellman 2000: 15). He goes on to say that 'linguistic purity is of course a chimera; English, Korean, and Arabic are each already mongrel, and creolization among existing languages proceeds wherever cultures touch and collide – which is to say, virtually everywhere' (Kellman 2000: 15).

Language use in post-colonial societies, has been instrumental in arguing that the study of language should *include* the language variances and deviations rather than stripping the language of these. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 'worlds exist by means of languages, their horizons extending as far as the processes of neologism, innovation, tropes, and imaginative usage generally will allow the horizons of the language itself to be extended.' (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2002: 43). Labov claims that the reason linguists tend to focus on just 'ideal speaker-listeners' and homogeneity is because the alternative of looking at variances and deviation is considered too difficult so they resolve to put these elements of the language in what Labov calls the 'wastebasket of performance', and he believes this is the wrong path to follow (Labov 1969: 759). Bickerton adds to this when he says that not including performance elements of language like variants and deviations and casting them aside is an attempt to 'absolve the linguistic of any obligation to account for it' (Bickerton 1973: 640). Monoglossic – single language societies, diglossic – societies where many speak two or more languages and polyglossic societies, are the three main linguistic groups included in post-colonial theory's attention to language: 'Polyglossic or 'poly-dialectical' communities occur principally in the Caribbean, where a multitude of dialects interweave to form a generally comprehensible linguistic continuum' (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2002: 38-39). In a later text, Ashcroft expands: 'The political and cultural implications of English language use in the Caribbean produce a variety of English that is so fluid and dynamic – a continuum in fact – that it disrupts our ordinary views of how language works, and forces us to re-think the connection between language and culture' (Ashcroft 2009: 113). As a result of the varieties in languages in for example the above mentioned linguistic groups, Labov (1969) and Bickerton

(1973) both champion a more 'complete' study of language. Bickerton (1973), whose work is based on the study of language use in the polydialectical Caribbean, suggests the metatheory - the creole continuum which Ashcroft mentions - that in addition to its being applied to the language use in the Caribbean, would also cover 'every language situation that is not wholly and indisputably homogeneous – which in effect means every language situation' (Bickerton 1973: 668). For Bickerton, this

> ... metatheory takes linguistic variation as the center rather than the periphery of language study. ... Language is then seen as a dynamic process evolving through space and time; 'leaky' grammars, variants that fit no system, conflicting native-speaker intuitions – all the problems that vexed previous formulations are now seen as the inevitable consequences of spatial or temporal segmentation of what is really a seamless whole (Bickerton 1973: 642-643).

This use of English as explained in the creole continuum, is an example of what Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2002) talk about when they distinguish between a 'Standard English' that is the English of the Empire, and english which is the language English has developed into in post-colonial societies through influences from usage and other languages. 'We need to distinguish between what is proposed as a standard code, English (the language of the erstwhile imperial centre), and the linguistic code, english, which has been transformed and subverted into several distinctive varieties throughout the world' (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2002: 8). This moulding of the language is done through abrogation and appropriation, where the way the 'standard' language is functioning in the 'centre' is rejected, and then, that same language is changed, re-shaped, and adapted through usage and, for example, variant and syntax influences from other languages into a new language that can be used in new ways (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2002).

Appropriation of a language or moving from a 'Standard English' of the 'centre' to an 'english' of the 'margins' in post-colonial terms is similar to what Deleuze and Guattari

(1986) refer to as the deterritorialisation of language – of writers moving from a major literature to a minor literature:

> A minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language. But the first characteristic of minor literature in any case is that in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization. It is literature that produces an active solidarity in spite of scepticism; and if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility... (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 16-17).

Deleuze and Guattari (1986) use Kafka as an example of someone who wrote minor literature. Kafka did not write in his second language, he wrote in German which was his first language, but he grew up in and lived and wrote in Prague where the 'major' language was Czech. Hence, 'the situation of the German language in Czechoslovakia, as a fluid language intermixed with Czech and Yiddish, will allow Kafka the possibility of invention' (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 20). Deleuze and Guattari advocate giving up the dream of becoming part of the major language – the major literature – and instead they suggest to 'create the opposite dream: know how to create a becoming minor' (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 27).

Returning to post-colonial theory, through appropriation, 'the local writer is thus able to represent his or her world to the coloniser (and others) in the metropolitan language, and at the same time, to signal and emphasise a difference from it' (Ashcroft 2009: 175). André Brink echoes this and expands it by saying:

> If I read Stephen Gray's *Local Colour* or J. M. Coetzee's *Dusklands* the fact that both are written in English seems almost coincidental. If I were stopped in the middle of a passage and asked whether I was reading a book in English or Afrikaans I might have to check the text before I could be quite sure. The same goes for, say, an Afrikaans novel by John Miles. And I

> find it even more obvious in much of the poetry written in either language in the country today. The change must, at least to some extent, lie in the language itself. Yet there is nothing "English" about John Miles's Afrikaans and nothing "Afrikaans" about Coetzee's English. … So the major change must have occurred in what *surrounds* the language, in its framework of reference, its patterns of possibilities, semantic or otherwise. And this would imply that both languages have reached a point where they are now fully geared to the realities of Africa…. (Brink 2003: 215).

Evolving a language into what Brink talks about here – where it is not only the structures and the sounds of the language that change, but where we as readers and writers adjust where we allow the language to go and where we allow it to take us, as well as where there are changes in our acceptance in how language is used both by ourselves and by others – is a long process involving elaborate discussions, on subjects like writing in one language rather than another. Rushdie in the essay *Imaginary Homelands*, claims

> Many have referred to the argument about the appropriateness of this language [English] to Indian themes. And I hope all of us share the view that we can't simply use the language in the way the British did; that it needs remaking for our own purposes. Those of us who do use English do so in spite of our ambiguity towards it, or perhaps because of that, perhaps because we can find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real world, struggles between the cultures within ourselves and the influences at work upon our societies. To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free (Rushdie 1991: 17).

Achebe partakes in this discussion on choosing to write in one language over another, but while Rushdie (1991) argues for the use of the English language when talking about 'Indian themes', but an appropriated English language – an english, Achebe also considers the actual decision he had to make when deciding to write in English, and that it wasn't an easy decision. Yet, to him it was the only one he could make:

> The real question is not whether Africans *could* write in English but whether they *ought to*. Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other choice. I have been given this language and I intend to use it (Achebe 2003: 199-200).

There is no doubt, Achebe (2003) says, that an African's English is good enough to be used in creative writing, but similarly to Rushdie (1991) saying that the English language needs to be remade to be used in relation to Indian themes, Achebe does not think African writers should use the English language the same way a native speaker would:

> The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience (Achebe 2003: 198).

From Achebe's words, it is clear that it is the writer's choice how to use the language, and whatever syntactical traces of another language are apparent is also there as a result of the writer making a conscious choice. Kellman (2000) on the other hand seems to see these traces more as accidents:

> …some translingual texts expose the accents that their authors never quite discard. It does not require preternatural perspicacity to spot occasional calques in the writings of some of the most respected translinguals, instances in which the author is thinking in one language but employing the locutions of another. Though the mere existence of translingual literature is a marvel, some of the writing has been done surprisingly well, and a few misplaced adverbs or inappropriate prepositions do not negate the odd fascination of the phenomenon (Kellman 2000: 10-11).

There are many instances where a translingual writer makes mistakes due to the fact that he or she is writing in a second language, but with the close cooperation between writer and editor today it is unlikely that most of these types of mistakes aren't found in the editing process. Consequently, the traces we see of another language in a text are there for a reason, as a result of one language meeting another and the writer wanting to keep it that way. According to Ashcroft,

> The language we speak is very often crucial in establishing who we are. But it need not define the limits to what we can be. In fact, the idea of the *horizon* of a language blurs those limits, because it reveals, yet again, that the limits of speech, what Wittgenstein calls the limits of my world, are a matter for speakers rather than languages (Ashcroft 2009: 96-97).

In other words it shouldn't matter what language you use as a tool, or how many languages you use, it is not the language itself that provides the limitations. In an interview Ha Jin, a writer who is originally from China and whose first language is Chinese but who writes in English after having moved to the States when undertaking his PhD and then settling there, says:

> I want to make the language sound authentic and purposely avoid standard English. Also, this is an opportunity to see how much English can absorb the distortion. In this respect, English is pliantly robust. I believe that to put something new into a language, however tiny the new elements may be, is a way to express one's love for the language, because English has always gotten its vitality from alien sources (Kellman 2003: 83).

Dorfman, a Chilean expatriate writing in Spanish and English, likens the influences made on a major language like English to smuggling and he sees it in political terms of power and resistance:

> The primary factor, I would wager, is the sheer mass of migration, all those bodies and the minds inside those bodies smuggling foreign syntax across the borders under the nose of

> immigration officers and customs officials, penetrating the defences of the nation state, invading the fields and the kitchens and the elementary schools … I believe that languages have themselves also always been maddeningly migrant, borrowing from here and there and everywhere, plundering and bringing home the most beautiful, the strangest, the most exciting objects, learning, taking words out on loan and returning them in a different wonderfully twisted and often funny guise, pawning those words, punning them, stealing them, renting them out, eating them, making love to them and spawning splendidly unrecognizable children (Dorfman 2003: 34-36).

What Dorfman describes here is of course again appropriation of a language and this leads us to the elements of cultural identity and meaning, and how these are linked to language. According to Ashcroft (2009) it is common to consider our cultural identity and our language as so closely linked that one does not exist without the other; that how one understands and expresses the meaning of one's culture and identity is one with the language.

> We tend to believe that our language *is* us – that it inhabits us and we inhabit it. … Language introduces us to an identifiable world, initiates us into a family, providing those most basic concepts – 'me', 'us', 'them'. Language itself identifies us, announces us, even, it seems, defines us, defines the space of being itself (Ashcroft 2009: 95).

This is closely linked to the Saphir-Whorf hypothesis which proposes that the language one speaks influences the way one thinks (Whorf 1952, Kellman 2000). This is however, Ashcroft says, misleading – language does not dictate how one 'sees' the world, nor does it shape someone's ideas; 'to possess a language is to possess a technique, not a "firmly bound system of knowledge" about the world' (Ashcroft 2009: 150). Ashcroft also says that the reason for the misunderstanding 'that language *embodies* cultural meaning rather than represents it' (Ashcroft 2009: 14) comes from people thinking that speaking a language – actually saying or writing the words – is the same as any cultural experience, 'as though the act of speaking were a unique cultural event' (Ashcroft 2009: 3):

> ... language is not simply a repository of cultural contents, but a tool, and often a weapon, which can be employed for various purposes, a tool which is itself part of the cultural experience in which it is used. The meaning achieved through language is a social event negotiated by real people, not a simple function of its structure or grammar or lexicon (Ashcroft 2009: 4).

Ashcroft does, however, emphasise that language isn't a separate entity that exists in a vacuum either, it 'is co-extensive with social reality, not because it causes a certain perception of the world, but because it is inextricable from that perception. Language exists, therefore, neither before the fact nor after the fact but *in the fact'* (Ashcroft 2006: 280).

If cultural meaning was embodied in language only, it would be impossible for a translingual writer to convey their stories which are 'different' to a world audience, and my interviewees would not have been able to publish any of their work. 'If cultural difference can be communicated in a second language then these literatures also lead us to the conclusion that our identity, our subjectivity, is *performed by*, rather than *embodied in* language' (Ashcroft 2009: 103). Practicing writers are aware of this element of perform-activity. This does not, however, mean that writers do not express concerns about writing in or from a different culture and/or language. Rushdie (1991), for example, is very much aware of writing from a different culture or between cultures, and although his first language is English and he is talking about culture, I believe his ideas can be applied to writing from another language or between languages as well. Rushdie explains:

> Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy. If literature is in part the business of finding new angles at which to enter reality, then once again our distance, our long geographical perspective, may provide us with such angles. Or it may be that that is simply what we must think in order to do our work (Rushdie 1991: 15-16).

Yoko Tawada is from Japan, but lives in Germany and she writes in both Japanese and German. When talking about moving from Japan to Germany and questioning what learning a new language would do to her personality, she says:

> When I came to Europe, I carried some burning questions in my travel bag: Will I become another person if I speak another language?
>
> Does a little sea horse look different if it no longer is called "tatsu-no-otoshigo" (the lost child of the dragon) but the "little horse from the sea"?
>
> Will I no longer cook rice but eat it uncooked if there is only one word "rice" for cooked rice (gohan) as well as uncooked rice (kome)? (Tawada 2003: 147)

This discussion on culture, meaning and language, leads us to the topic of translation. It is a misconception that writers who write in a second language translate from their first language as they are writing. A translingual writer can think in both languages simultaneously, yes, but the act of putting one word after another down on paper is done so directly in one language, not via any other language. Ha Jin says that 'when I write, I think in English only, though Chinese will appear from time to time. When characters begin talking at times they speak Chinese, which I have to adapt into English' (Kellman 2003: 82). In other words, a writer's other language(s) will, as discussed earlier, influence the writing, and some writers do use translation as part of their creative process. Sylvia Molloy, for example, explains that she sometimes has problems with beginnings, that starting a new piece of writing can be difficult and to overcome this she 'tricks' herself by starting to write in the 'other' language, the language she does not intend to write the piece in:

> So I start out in that language, which I find easier because it is temporary, irrelevant, in a sense wasteful: It will not last. The ploy, for all its laborious artifice, usually works. After a while, I stop and translate myself into the language the piece will be written in, less threatening now that it has been exposed to the other language preparing its way. The practice of translation,

> forced as it is in this case, eases my entrance into the writing I initially feared. As I see it, it is an exercise in contamination – a most salutary one (Molloy 2003: 77).

According to an interview the *Paris Review* did with T.S. Eliot in 1959, this form of translation that Molloy refers to is similar to what Eliot did when he hadn't been able to write anything for a long time, and was concerned with his ability to write. 'I started writing a few things in French and found that I could… I think that when I was writing in French I didn't take the poems so seriously, and … I wasn't so worried about not being able to write. I did these things as a sort of tour de force to see what I could do' (Eliot 1963: 107). After a while, Eliot was able to return to English and he never felt the need to write in French again.

Ashcroft (2009: 159), distinguishes between 'translation – the movement of text from a source language to a target language – and transformation – the reshaping of text in a target language by the cultural nuance of a source language...', and he emphasises that even though they overlap it is important to acknowledge that translation and transformation are separate. He also points out that in post-colonial translation studies, a translingual's work is often seen as translation. Achebe is quite clear that a translingual's writing is not the same as translation:

> You read quite often nowadays of the problems of the African writer having first to think in his mother tongue and then to translate what he has thought into English. If it were such a simple mechanical process, I would agree that it was pointless – the kind of eccentric pursuit you might expect to see in a modern Academy of Lagado; and such a process could not possibly produce some of the exciting poetry and prose which is already appearing (Achebe 2003: 199).

Ashcroft (2009) agrees that writing in a second language is not the same as translation, and to say it is, is to undermine the original choices made by the writers. 'It fails to recognise that the absence of an 'original' text in the vernacular makes the post-colonial writing in English a

paradigmatic demonstration of the productive instability of language itself. The relationship is that of a continuum rather than a binary' (Ashcroft 2009: 160).

There are, however, many translingual writers who *have* chosen to translate their own work – what Kellman (2000: 33) terms 'autrotranslation – an act of personal reinvention' – for example Samuel Becket, Isak Dinesen, Andrè Brink, and Vladimir Nabokov. Brink did not experience it as pure translation: 'It became purely on the level of the creative process itself, one of the most revealing experiences of my life: not "translating" the work, but rethinking it in the framework of a new language; even more important, perhaps re-feeling it' (Brink 2003: 218). This is similar to Ashcroft's idea that 'language itself is transformative, a space of translation. Translation no longer negotiates between languages, for language is itself the site of ceaseless translation' (Ashcroft 2009: 161). He indicates that this is why post-colonial writing has become so instrumental within translation studies – 'the post-colonial writer faces in two directions, so to speak. The decision ... is not just how to write "between languages", but how to make language perform this "bearing across" (indeed to "bear" this particular "cross") within itself: how to be both "source" and "target"' (Ashcroft 2009: 163). This echoes the assertion that the post-colonial or translingual writer is the first interpreter (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2002). This is exemplified by Santiago when she states:

> Today I have come to accept the fact that those idioms that I had to create are what permit me to express myself in my own manner. When I write in English, I have to translate from the Spanish that stores my memories. When I speak in Spanish, I have to translate from the English that defines my present. And when I write in Spanish, I find myself in the middle of three languages – the Spanish of my childhood, the English of my adulthood, and the Spanglish that crossed from one world to the other just as we crossed from our barrio in Puerto Rico to the neighbourhoods of Brooklyn (Santiago 2003: 133).

Following from this is the sense of in-betweenness that occupies the translingual writer; that he or she is residing between languages, not completely in one or the other, not completely in both, but between. Many writers have tried to understand and explain what this means to them, how they experience it. Sante, for example, says:

> I suppose I am never completely present in any given moment, since different aspects of myself are contained in different rooms of language, and a complicated apparatus of air locks prevents the doors from being flung open all at once. I don't have a house, only this succession of rented rooms. That sometimes makes me feel as though I have no language at all, but it also gives me the advantage of mobility. I can leave, anytime, and not be found (Sante 2003: 160-161).

And Dorfman explains that, 'what I finally arrived at was not the victory of one tongue over the other one but rather a cohabitation, my two languages reaching a truce in order to help the body they were lodged in to survive' (Dorfman 2003: 33).

Yet some writers also see the writing in two different languages as two very different experiences, Ferre explains as a matter of making necessary choices:

> Writing in English is like looking at the world through a different pair of binoculars. It imposes a different mind-set. When I write in Spanish, my sentences are often as convoluted as a Baroque *retablo*. When I write in English, I make my sentences straight and simple, because I want to be precise as well as practical. I feel like Emily Dickinson with a loaded gun in my hand: If I shoot, I must bring down my target. Otherwise, I know I'm going to get shot at (Ferre 2003: 138).

This state of inhabiting two languages can create a sense of instability, and Djebar (2003) questions whether residing between two languages will cause her to lose both.

> Am I committed to being a woman of transition, the writer of passage, to deliver a message on two channels… To cease writing, because the risk of, little by little, no longer speaking *the words of the tribe*, would that mean no longer belonging to any tribe, to any group, without being able in fact to blend two pasts, two treasures (Djebar 2003: 317)?

On the other hand, the sense of exile can generate the advantage of dual perception and understanding. Rushdie argues that the experience of being 'out-of-country' and/or 'out-of-language' what he refers to as being 'elsewhere' although experienced as a loss, might also enable the writer to write 'from a kind of double perspective: because they, we, are at one and the same time insiders and outsiders in this society. This stereoscopic vision is perhaps what we can offer in place of 'whole sight'' (Rushdie 1991: 19).

Residing between languages can be seen as 'always being in the middle' and this concept brings us back to the idea of the rhizome and the rhizome as mirroring the creative process. Deleuze and Guattari describe the rhizome as not having a start or a finish, as always being 'between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 25). This is the advantage of the rhizomic model, particularly as it pertains to both language use in this context and its relation to creative language use – it can go anywhere, in any direction and it can start anew at any point:

> A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, The middle is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed. Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 25).

This explanation of the rhizome as being in the middle, between things, then, doesn't just mirror the workings of the creative process, but following from the discussion on language, it

is also a parallel to the situation of someone who is creative in a second or third language, someone, like my interviewees, who resides – writes – between languages. In other words, although writing in a second language and living between languages is challenging it can also be helpful, inspirational, because, as Deleuze and Guattari (1988: 25) say, between things, in the middle, is where 'things pick up speed', and this in-betweenness provides the writer with conflict, and as has already been mentioned, conflict fuels creativity.

4.3 Reflection 2 – Brain Plasticity

When they write, writers are continuously working through a creative process, and as shown earlier in this chapter, part of any creative process occurs in the subconscious and this is a stage of the process that is difficult to explain. There is an understanding between this writer and her brain that as long as ideas are still generated and stories developed, then I can accept that I might never be able to fully understand the intricacies of my creative process and how the subconscious influences the creation of my stories. However, this doesn't mean I can't try to understand it, but at the moment the more pressing concern for me is to understand what happens in my brain when I think, speak, and write in a second language, and during my research I discovered that this understanding might be found in the plasticity of the human brain.

In the book *The Brain That Changes Itself*, Dr Norman Doidge (2007) who is a psychiatrist and a researcher documents his conversations with several leading researchers in the field of neuroplasticity, while at the same time describing and explaining some of their breakthrough research. The researchers he talked to 'showed that the brain changed its very structure with each different activity it performed, perfecting its circuits so it was better suited to the task at hand. If certain "parts" failed, then other parts could sometimes take over' (Doidge 2007: xv).

This is what's referred to as 'neuroplasticity'. According to Doidge (2007) the 'neuro' comes from the 'neurons' that are 'the nerve cells in our brains and nervous systems', while the plasticity originates in 'plastic' and stands for the 'changeable, malleable, [and] modifiable' (Doidge 2007: xv). Doidge argues that 'the idea that the brain can change its own structure and function through thought and activity is, … the most important alteration in our view of the brain since we first sketched out its basic anatomy and the workings of its basic component, the neuron' (Doidge 2007: xvi). So it seems I have created a way of explaining to myself how my brain works when I speak, think, and write in my second language, or rather what I don't understand about how my brain works. The way I do this is through the analogy of a figure. I call him Mr Browncoat. Although there is no doubt I speak better Norwegian than English, I think my writing in English is better than my writing in Norwegian. I'm not certain, but I think it's about a sound and a rhythm of the language. The first time I completely immersed myself in English was when I was 25 years old and went to college in the US. In Minneapolis and in the English language I found a sound and a rhythm to a language that I never found in Norwegian. A sound and rhythm that seemed right for my stories. I wanted to write more, I wanted to write down the stories that had always inhabited my mind, but rather than being written down (because I didn't like how they sounded) they were moved around in boxes in my mind by a man who let too many stories go. First let me explain the man. When I first went to university to do a preliminary philosophy course, one of my friends went to a series of 'effective study skills' seminars. I chose not to go, but my friend was more than willing to relay the basics to me. She told me that you have to imagine someone, a person, living inside your mind, someone that organises your knowledge and any new information you learn. This person uses filing cabinets and will open and close the right drawers for you when you need him or her to do so. The actual study skills never stayed with me, but I couldn't forget this idea of someone organising my thoughts for me. I think I might have stolen her man, and I don't know if she used the course-instructor's example or her own,

but I fell in love with the idea she presented of a smock clad man inside my head that I could blame any mistakes on. So, I have a man, a thin and hunchbacked man in a light brown smock who organises my stories, my thoughts, and my language, and whom I think facilitates my in-betweenness. But maybe this man, Mr Browncoat, is actually the image of my brain's plasticity.

According to Doidge (2007: xvi), the structure or layout of the brain varies from person to person, and this structure also changes throughout our lives. He goes on to say:

> While the human brain has apparently underestimated itself, neuroplasticity isn't all good news; it renders our brains not only more resourceful but also more vulnerable to outside influences. Neuroplasticity has the power to produce more flexible but also more rigid behaviours – a phenomenon I call "the plastic paradox." Ironically, some of our most stubborn habits and disorders are products of our plasticity. Once a particular plastic change occurs in the brain and becomes well established, it can prevent other changes from occurring (Doidge 2007: xvi).

One of the researchers Doidge (2007) met with was Michael Merzenich who, according to Doidge, claims that exercising the brain can be just as useful as drugs in treating some diseases, that 'plasticity exists from the cradle to the grave; and that radical improvements in cognitive functioning – how we learn, think, perceive, and remember – are possible even in the elderly' (Doidge 2007:46-47). This means that we can, if we follow the rules of brain plasticity, not only increase our knowledge as we learn, but we can also improve the *way* we learn to the point where we learn faster, with more precision and we will be able to retain our knowledge better (Doidge 2007: 47). Doidge claims:

> The brain Merzenich describes is not an inanimate vessel that we fill; rather it is more like a living creature with an appetite, one that can grow and change itself with proper nourishment and exercise. Before Merzenich's work, the brain was seen as a complex machine, having

> unalterable limits on memory, processing speed, and intelligence. Merzenich has shown that each of these assumptions is wrong (Doidge 2007:48).

In his discussion on Merzenich, Doidge, also mentions the Neurosurgeon Dr Penfield whom he credits with mapping where the sensory and motor systems of the human body are linked to the human brain (Doidge 2007: 48). 'One of the great discoveries Penfield made was that sensory and motor brain maps, like geographical maps, are topographical, meaning that areas adjacent to each other on the body's surface are generally adjacent to each other on the brain maps' (Doidge 2007: 49). These maps were, until Merzenich proved otherwise, believed to be static; a person would have the same map for his or her entire life, and the maps were the same from person to person (Doidge 2007: 49). Merzenich was, on the other hand, able to prove that brain maps are, in fact 'neither immutable within a single brain nor universal but vary in their borders and size from person to person. … The shape of our brain maps changes depending upon what we do over the course of our lives' (Doidge 2007: 49). How then, is plasticity of the brain related to speaking, thinking and writing in a second language? What does all this mean for those of us who speak more than one language?

According to Doidge there are 'critical periods' of development and growth in a young person's life when the different areas of the brain are particularly sensitive and plastic:

> Language development, for instance, has a critical period that begins in infancy and ends between eight years and puberty. After this critical period closes, a person's ability to learn a second language without an accent is limited. In fact, second languages learned after the critical period are not processed in the same part of the brain as is the native tongue (Doidge 2007: 52).

This is significant to my understanding of why one of my biggest challenges when I write in English is mastering dialogue. According to Grenville 'dialogue is an artificial construction designed to live on the written page. There's an overlap between speech and dialogue but

they're not the same thing' (Grenville 1990: 101). She goes on to say that 'dialogue is a kind of music: you have to trust your ear and your instinct (Grenville 1990: 103). This is where the source of my problem lies. As Doidge (2007) said, if one learns a second language after the critical period it is very unlikely that one will be able to do so without an accent. How then, can I trust my ear and my instinct to believe that I am hearing the right music? In most of my short stories in this thesis I have purposely limited my use of dialogue for that reason, but when I started generating ideas for 'Magpies on Seven Corners' it became apparent that it would be a story driven significantly by dialogue between two of my characters. I have lived more years in Australia than I have in any other English speaking country; however, even though I have started to use certain Australian idioms and my A's are sounding more Australian, my accent is somewhere between Norwegian and an American English that is shaped by having lived in Minnesota, a state very much influenced by its Scandinavian immigrants. Because I have during my upbringing been more exposed to American English through TV and movies and through my teachers as well as because the US was the first English speaking country I lived in, I trust my instincts better with American English than Australian English, especially when writing dialogue. Also, my ability to convey my characters according to my intentions seemed more likely if I had them speak American English, and that is why I decided to set this story in the US rather than in Australia. It was challenging because I wanted not only to portray, through dialogue, believable characters, but also to be able to explore, in Smith's words, 'the way power relationships can underlie even the most innocuous verbal exchanges' (Smith 2005: 110).

I started learning English when I was ten years old, so my language development was possibly still within the critical period, however the progress towards an advanced level took several years, hence my two languages might be processed in different parts of the brain. Maybe that's why I find Mr Browncoat helpful. I feel that I reside between two languages, and although I do on occasion translate from one language to the other, it's not about

translation when I can't think of a word in English or Norwegian. It's not as easy as just using a dictionary and translating it from Norwegian to English or vice versa. If I lose a word, I lose it in both languages, and I think this is where the feeling of residing between languages is grounded, and as I have already indicated, maybe this is just because the two languages are as Doidge (2007) claims, processed in different parts of the brain. Because he does say that 'if two languages are learned at the same time, during the critical period, both get a foothold. … In a bilingual child all the sounds of its two languages share a single large map, a library of sounds from both languages' (Doidge 2007: 60).

A significant feature of our brain's plasticity is the constant competition between nerves for space and power and as a result the brain is dynamic and works under the principle of '*use it or lose it*' (Doidge 2007: 59). 'If we stop exercising our mental skills, we do not just forget them: the brain map space for those skills is turned over to the skills we practice instead' (Doidge 2007: 59). This competition in the plasticity of adults' brains can, according to Doidge, explain limitations such as difficulties in second language learning (Doidge 2007: 60). These limitations are not, as first thought, due to the critical period being over and the adult brain being too set to change its structure, but rather it is caused by how most people use their first language much more than their second and therefore the first language 'dominates our linguistic map space' (Doidge 2007: 60). This must then also be the reason why people like me and my interviewees who use their second language a lot, feel that we are losing words and knowledge of our first language – the languages are competing with each other. In other words, Mr Browncoat is the second at a duel or rather the diplomat negotiating the space between the languages.

The process of how I find a word if or when I lose it, differs significantly when speaking and writing. If this happens when I'm talking to someone, there will be seconds or rather nanoseconds equal to an eternity of panic inside my mind. Mr Browncoat bends over boxes of yellow mouldy index cards filled with words, and he flashes two cards at a time in no

particular order, or no particular language before he flings them over his shoulders as I reject them. The word I want rarely appears, but something similar usually does, and I'll use that. Thankful he sits down on one of his boxes and wipes his forehead with a grey and black chequered handkerchief before the sweat reaches his bushy eyebrows, while I hope the person I am talking to accepts my substitute word without visible pause or comment and doesn't notice that my eyes are about to pop out of my head. This difficulty in finding words becomes even more pronounced when I'm arguing with someone in English. Maybe my brain map for English will never be as large as the one for Norwegian? I don't know, Doidge (2007) never really answers this question, but if that is the case, it explains why things like arguing with a partner is one of the most difficult things to do in a second language and why the instinct is to use one's first language. This idea around arguing in one's second language is something I utilised in the short story 'Spit Junction'.

If this word loss that I discuss above happens when I write, on the other hand, Mr Browncoat can have his coffee break and I can negotiate the space between the languages myself, because the process of finding it is quite different and is more about rediscovery than anything else. When I write it's about quality, a feel, a sound quality to a word, or as discussed in my first reflection, even the memory of a word, so I write around it. I try to create that feeling I'm after by describing it and then I leave it for however long it takes for the word to reappear; it becomes part of the creative process, the stage Csikszentmihalyi (1997) refers to as the incubation stage – I let the subconscious take over. Usually, when the word reappears it will do so simultaneously in English and Norwegian, although not always, sometimes only in one language and if it's not in the language I need, I will have to accept defeat and trigger my memory by using the dictionary.

5. AGNES – A SHORT STORY

"Could you please pass the gravy, Aunt Agnes?" Anne asked as she was cutting up her son Jacob's potatoes. I picked up the gravy boat I gave Anne for her wedding, but before I stretched across the table to give it to her, I offered to pour some for Arthur who sat next to me. He had filled half his plate with green beans and looked like he was unsure how to fit all the lamb and potatoes he wanted on there too.

Some years after my husband Edgar's death, my niece Anne and her husband Peter started inviting men my age to our weekly family dinners. It took me two or three dinners before I understood what was going on. When I did, it was as uncomfortable for the man who was there, as it was for me. I looked at him as he told me about his big boat and how he would love to take me on a trip out to one of the islands of the inner Oslo fjord. He was nice to me and tried to show me that he liked me, and I wanted to throw my glass of red wine in his face. But it wasn't his fault I wasn't ready. So all I did was shake my head, while I thought of the first time I met Edgar.

I had been buying light bulbs from Centrum Whitegoods. There was a young boy with hair white from the summer sun behind the counter. I was fourteen, and he was maybe a year or two older than me. His nametag said Edgar Berg. In the margins of some of the books I read back then I scribbled Agnes Berg, Agnes and Edgar Berg. I liked it.

Anne did respect my request not to be set up any more, and our dinners stayed family dinners until Arthur was invited for the first time a few weeks ago. It was different with Arthur. He had been friends with my sister Lillian and my brother in law for years and he had been a loyal Centrum Whitegoods customer. I almost felt that I knew him, even if I didn't

know much about him. He didn't have a limp, but he walked with a polished teak cane just like the one I remembered my grandfather had, and you could tell he lived alone because no one had told him to trim his nose hairs. After several family dinners I wanted to know him more.

Now, my instincts told me to offer Arthur more wine and to go into the kitchen to carve more lamb, but I left it to the hosts. I wasn't quite used to being a guest in my own house even two years after Anne and Peter bought it from me. I did miss my house. It wasn't just my home as an adult; it was my childhood home too. For the first ten years after Edgar died, when I still worked, the house and the memories attached to it weren't a problem. I was busy and the few hours I spent at home might have been lonely but there was also some comfort in feeling Edgar's presence. Then, when Centrum Whitegoods was closed and I spent every day at home, the house got bigger, I felt more alone, and every memory of Edgar became stronger.

I could see him as he stood on the ladder on the porch changing the light bulb over the door. He would mutter to himself that he wished his wife would stop slamming the door so he didn't have to change the light bulb as often as this. In the evenings, he sat at his mahogany desk, and his glasses would slide down to the tip of his nose and every five minutes he pushed them back up with his left hand. His right hand punched numbers on the calculator as he checked the Centrum Whitegoods accounts against the budget. When he cleared his throat twice I knew he'd found a number he didn't like. He also cleared his throat when I watched movies on TV with Cary Grant or Tony Curtis. He didn't like it when I looked at other men, not even the make-believe ones.

We spent every day together. We had breakfast together, porridge on the weekdays and egg on the weekends. After breakfast we would catch the subway to work. He was the manager of Centrum Whitegoods, but it felt as if we ran it together. We made our decisions

together. I made dinner every evening at six, and after dinner we went for a walk through the Vigeland Sculpture Park.

He brought me flowers on Fridays. It was never a surprise. He always asked me what kind of flowers I wanted even if he knew the answer was tulips. We wanted to go to Amsterdam in the spring, but decided to wait until we retired. There were so many things we planned to do together when we retired.

Thirteen years ago this Thursday, I sat in one of our two burgundy armchairs looking out the French windows when I heard his soft voice.

"Agnes?"

"Yes." I looked over towards the door where he stood holding on to the door frame. He bit his lip and I wondered why he looked sad.

"I can't lift my legs across the threshold. Can you help me?" He looked down at his feet.

First we tried with him holding on to the doorframe with one hand and then draping his other arm around my shoulders, but he still couldn't lift his legs. Then I knelt down, took hold of one leg at knee height, and tried to lift his leg across. I tried, I really did, but it was as if his feet were one with the floor. "I'm sorry, I can't. What should we do?"

"I'll try to crawl across. I don't understand why this is so difficult today." It took him five minutes to crouch down and get on all fours. He didn't say a word, but looked at me as if to apologise. Then, instead of crawling across the threshold, he lay down on his side facing me, hands together under his left cheek, knees hugging his chest, and he died.

It seemed the right thing to do when Anne and Peter were looking for a house to let them buy our house. This way it was kept in the family and I got to see it every now and

again. Now I wondered why neither I, nor my mother, ever thought about placing the dining room table in front of the large French windows like Anne had.

The garden looked barren. Anne and Peter had removed the China-Roses around the gazebo that Edgar had planted for our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Every tree and every piece of dead grass was covered in frost; it looked like nothing would ever be able to grow there again. We didn't see much snow anymore. When I was a child the garden would be covered in snow and my sister Lillian and I would dig snow-caves to hide in all day long.

"I have a garden much like this," Arthur said. "My favourite part is my tree-house. I didn't have the heart to tear it down after my sons moved out." He leaned across the table and I thought he might have winked at me as if to tell me he knew my secret. "I actually spend some time there, up in the tree, I feel relaxed there."

Jonas and Jacob, Anne and Peter's children, were running around the table on all fours in opposite directions pretending to be reindeer fighting each other.

"Attack!" Jonas screamed and bent his head, ready to charge his younger brother.

"Attack!" Jacob was even louder with a scream only a two and a half year old could produce. I could see my niece was about to explode.

"Boys?" I said. "Why don't we show Arthur our secret hiding place? He has a tree-house, but I think our room is better."

The boys and I led Arthur up the stairs to the storage room next to their parents' bedroom. I pushed on one of the large wooden panels inside the storage room, and it opened as a door. All my blankets and pillows were still there so Arthur and I sat down. The boys had already lost interest and left to play somewhere else.

"This room is great! How long has it been here?" Arthur was looking around the room

and lifted his hand to knock on the pine panelling as if to check the quality.

"My father built it for my sister and me when I was about seven and Lillian was ten. We would spend hours upon hours here." I told him how we would sit next to each other, talk and make up stories; creating different lives, different worlds. "We would bring life to every character in our stories and no one else was allowed into the room. We even slept in here sometimes." I didn't tell him about the summer Edgar and I broke up for two weeks when I thought I had a crush on my brother's best friend. I was wrong, and I wanted Edgar back but didn't know how to tell him. I was seventeen. Then one night I found Edgar in the secret room with a bottle of vodka and a glass of sleeping pills. He said he would take them if I didn't come back to him.

"Do you still come up here?" Arthur asked.

"I still come in here whenever I'm visiting. There is something about this room that gives me peace." I did like Arthur. He didn't look out of place at all. He looked like he was comfortable on my pillows, in my space.

"These pillows and blankets would look great in my tree-house. It's just what the house is missing. I'm not very good with decorating, my wife always took care of it. If it's not too much to ask, maybe you could come and see the tree-house this Sunday afternoon, and bring the blanket and pillows so we can see if something like it would fit?"

I had been married for many years, I was now widowed, I was meant to be an adult. Why, then, did I feel like I was seventeen and was about to break up with someone for this man?

He had built the tree-house thirty-five years ago. It was in a large oak tree that seemed

to have grown around the tree-house. In the summer it would be concealed by leaves. This time of year it was covered in frost and looked like a gingerbread-house. The only thing missing was the multicoloured chocolate roofing. There was a solid retractable ladder leaning against the tree and a platform next to the tree-house where we had to get down on all fours to be able to crawl in through the side hatch. His shoulders touched both sides of the opening as he pushed himself through. There was barely room for two adults. Inside was warmer than I thought it would be. We sat next to each other and the heat from his arm transferred into my body.

"My sons are finished with this place. I'm the only one who's not finished with it. It's like your secret room; it's peaceful. When I'm up here it takes me back to a dream I had as a teenager, where I was in a balloon, looking down at people, floating above everything, and I wouldn't have to take part in the world."

He held my hand. His thumb stroked my thumb, two short quick strokes, then one long slow one, over and over. No one had held my hand like this for fifteen years. Agnes and Arthur, Arthur and Agnes. Our names sounded good together. I didn't mind him holding my hand, me holding his. It felt good, and at first Edgar wasn't there, other than as part of my history.

"Could we maybe spend more time together Agnes?" He didn't look at me when he asked.

"Arthur?" When he looked at me, I squeezed his hand tighter, leaned closer, and kissed him on the mouth. This time I felt as if I was fourteen and had never done this before. He smiled at me, rested his head on the wall, and a deep sigh released from his lungs. He had a Cary Grant nose. The wood in the tree-house creaked, and it sounded as if someone was clearing their throat.

There was a small window in front of us, the only window, and we peered out and up at the sunset. The winter sky looked like it had captured a forest fire and frozen it for preservation. My eyes wandered to where the orange sky met the ground, where the chapel at Western Cemetery was surrounded by rows upon rows of headstones. I could have chosen to look past them at the Vigeland Sculpture Park, but I didn't. I chose to look at the headstones aligned with the chapel and started counting. Twelve rows back and five headstones to the right was where Edgar lay. I couldn't see the tulip etched into his headstone, but I knew it was there.

The strokes from Arthur's thumb started to hurt, as if he was brushing my skin off. I released the fingers interlaced with his. He might belong in this tree-house, but I didn't, not when Edgar was there with us. I shouldn't be looking at Arthur.

Arthur tried to hold on to my hand, and misunderstood when I reached for my blanket. He thought I wanted to embrace him. I shook my head and used all my force to pull the blanket from under his legs. He asked me what was wrong, but I didn't have an answer. I wasn't fourteen or seventeen, still, I wasn't ready. I left him there, in that tree-house. I took my yellow and orange pillows, and my brown blanket, and left.

6. SPIT JUNCTION – A SHORT STORY

The building across the road from the bus stop looked dark and depressed. Instead of its usual light and polished blue it looked almost identical to the dark brown building next door. Moths rested close together on almost every tile. I thought they preferred to hide in dark cool places during the day and fly at night, but the light blue seemed to be preferable to the dark brown. This time of year the moths spent some time in Sydney on their way to cooler climates for the summer. Paul had told me, when we were still talking, that moths are high in fat and protein and that he and a friend had barbecued some last year. He said they were crisp on the outside and soft and juicy on the inside, just like I imagined a cockroach would be.

This morning I thought it was winter. I put on a woollen jersey and my boots before I examined the dark circles under my eyes and realised no amount of concealer would help. Every part of my body was getting ready for winter, and I wanted to sleep until it was over. Then a moth lost in my bathroom reminded me it was spring. I thought it was one of the Bogong moths I had read about in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. It bounced back and forth on my mirror as if it was saying hello to a friend. The copper brown wings were spread out and vibrated, but all I could focus on was the fat larva like body and I saw Paul bite into it. This moth knew it was spring, why didn't I? I knew it was October, and I knew I was in Australia, but it seems my body is so in tune with the Norwegian climate I grew up in that I can't teach it that the seasons are turned.

In less than two months my body was meant to experience the Norwegian winter again, I was supposed to go home for Christmas. My plan had been to show my friends and family that I worked hard and received excellent marks, and to introduce them to my boyfriend Paul. That wasn't going to happen anymore.

I had failed. Four weeks ago Paul broke up with me. He said it was because he felt we were growing apart, but I felt so close to him.

"But I had just separated from my wife when we met, Jen. It probably wasn't meant to last. We don't have as much in common as I thought to begin with." His hand covered my ear and my cheek and even if the touch was soft, it burnt as if he had put his entire body weight behind his hand and slapped me. What he said didn't make sense. I suspected it was more because of my results this semester. "You're a wonderful girl, Jen, but I think we should go our separate ways now before anyone gets hurt." That infuriated me.

"Why are you being such an asshole?" My voice cracked where I didn't want it to – in those places that tell you I'm a girl about to cry. The "such" had almost disappeared in an in-breath and the "asshole" came out as a howl. I wanted to express my emotions with words like he was so good at doing, but I couldn't. It was muscle memory. My vocal cords remembered that this was the point in an argument where I would break down and cry. I could feel my body was about to betray me again as my hip flexors and hamstrings prepared to lift my leg, and in a few seconds I would stomp my feet like I did as a child when I didn't get what I wanted. I should have learnt to override these pathetic memories ingrained in my body. Instead they took over, and I was a passenger as my feet stomped four times before I sat down in his dark blue office chair, my hands covered my face and I sobbed.

I wanted to be an adult like he was and construct an argument that would make him think and remember why it was he liked me to begin with. Back when he thought I was still smart. When he would stroke my arm if I said something he agreed with, something clever. I don't remember how to be clever anymore. I try, I do, but I can't keep up. I think he sucked all the cleverness out of me. I used to think he made me smart, that he cultivated the smartness and that together we created an atmosphere and an air of knowledge that was good. That we would always have those electric arguments that made me feel so alive.

Then our arguments turned personal and language became an issue. I had few problems with English. Of course there were words I didn't know though I coped well in everyday life and in my studies. But arguing with my boyfriend was difficult in my second language; it was also unfair since he had the advantage. The words I wanted to throw at him were all Norwegian and although they meant everything as I sent them off like missiles; they had lost all meaning midway.

When I stared at the moths from across the road they formed a pattern as if they were carefully laid tiles themselves. I had been waiting for a long time now, and wondered if people thought that this was all I ever did; wait for the bus. In a way it was. The bus to Macquarie University, the 140, was scheduled to arrive at the Spit Junction bus stop in a couple of minutes and the thought made me shift my weight back and forth, my body a pendulum with shorter and shorter range for every second until I managed to stop, distribute my weight evenly and concentrate on my breaths. I hoped the bus wasn't delayed today.

I didn't know why I worried about the bus being late because I never caught it anymore. The last three weeks, since about one week after our fight, I hadn't been able to get on the bus at all. I couldn't.

It started on a Thursday. I had dressed in my black jeans and bright pink t-shirt and been extra careful when applying makeup. I wanted Paul to take one look at me and realise he had made the wrong choice. That Thursday the 140 stopped in front of me and I moved along the side of it together with the rest of the line. As I came closer to the doors I kept imagining Paul's face, the look when he saw me in the outfit, how he would first look drawn and then he would smile his crooked smile. That thought put me at the university, inside it, and I saw myself in the computer lab working on an assignment, and the words I produced were words I didn't comprehend. When it was my turn to step into the bus, I couldn't move forward. I took one step back and let the others pass me. I glanced around to see if anyone noticed, but

everyone seemed focused on the bus. I stood there and watched the bus fill up to the point where the driver had to turn people away. There was no more room.

I used to think girls who fell for their distinguished older lecturers were pathetic and that I was too mature and not easily impressed at 26. Then I met Paul. I didn't even notice him to begin with, I knew he lectured in the Sociology department but he wasn't my teacher, I had just seen him around. We used to call him "Mr only good looking on Tuesdays" because he had certain days where he looked great but most of the time he was average.

One day we started talking in the coffee cart line and after that we would stop and chat in the hall and often he would tell me how much he wanted to go to Norway. Each time I felt the space between us get smaller until we were close enough for our arms to touch. The more we talked the better looking he got. After a few weeks he invited me for coffee in his office and we discussed religion. It was the best discussion I ever had. I felt alive and in control. I felt smart. I felt attractive without trying, and it all came naturally when I was around him. He challenged me, he never let me get away with a weak argument and he pushed me until I had a sound comeback. I kept working at it until he was happy, even when all I wanted to do was to say I agreed with him and rest my head on his warm chest.

That first day of not being able to get on the bus I just walked back home again, as if I was walking through a tunnel and that the trees, the buildings and the cars were painted onto the tunnel wall. When I got home I sat down on the stool in the hallway and cried for several hours. Halfway into the second week I stopped crying. I stayed at the bus stop for three hours every day, hoping to be able to move, before I went home and spent the rest of the day watching TV.

The night before I lost my ability to board the bus I had a dream that repeated itself over and over in my mind after I woke up. I should have written the details of the dream down, but I couldn't. That would make it real. What did it mean when you dreamt about a

milk bottle filled with blood, and a yellow desk with a man with no legs behind it? The image was projected onto my wall, I tried to clean it but the cloth was soaked in vomit, my vomit. Why didn't he have any legs? I think he liked me, he was handsome and I wanted to kiss him but his eyes started bleeding. I knew those brown eyes that stared at me from behind the desk, and he knew me. He wanted me but he would never admit it. He thought I was funny, he also thought I was too young, or maybe he thought I was too old. Was that why he had no legs, so he couldn't walk over to me? He wasn't that handsome, really. Maybe it wasn't blood in the milk bottle, maybe it was wine. If I drank the wine I would be ugly, my skin would turn red and blisters would form. I would get cod eyes and wouldn't be able to close them. It was blood, I could taste it. I wasn't ugly after all, but he was. He was ugly when he laughed, just like my old boyfriend Thomas.

My friend Becky told me that if you dream about someone without legs it means they aren't able to make the advancement towards you that you want them to, you have to make the next step. Another interpretation was that you want them handicapped and dependent on you so they can't leave.

The L90 pulled into the bus stop. The back doors opened, large feet in look-a-like Doc Martins shoes attached to thin boy legs stepped out, and as the boy's freckle covered face exited the bus, so did a giant logy from his mouth. It landed 20 centimetres from my shoes. He brushed past me, halted in front of the man standing next to me and flung his arm up so that the middle finger on his right hand vibrated a centimetre from the man's nose. I wondered at what age a boy or a girl would feel strong enough and rebellious enough to not care about the consequences and talk back or even push or hit. I wished I could go back to that age and start over.

A friend of mine once asked me, if I had to choose, would I choose a partner or a child, if I had to? I answered partner. Of course I wanted a lifetime partner, someone to share

everything with, someone to have sex with, someone to argue with, someone who wouldn't leave the house at 18 and never look back. If my friend had asked again today, I wonder if my answer would have been different.

My mother was right. You couldn't change a man; you had to accept him like he was. He had already been shaped by his mother and there was nothing more a partner could do. I wish Paul would have changed for me, into the person I thought he was, just like I wanted Thomas to when I left Norway.

Two and a half years ago when I left Norway, it wasn't because of a dream to see Australia or that I wanted an adventure. I told my mother that I needed to leave Norway for a while to piece myself back together. I needed to feel that I could cope on my own. I also needed to be as far away from Thomas as possible.

I had hoped I would meet someone else, not because I wanted to or was ready to, but to show Thomas that he wasn't that hard to get over. To show him that I had agreed to abort the child he didn't want because I felt the same way, I didn't want his child, I didn't do it because I couldn't say no to him and would do anything to keep him. Even when I found the letter from his other girlfriend two days after the abortion, it took me a week – seven whole days – to realise I had to end it. He wouldn't end it. He would just keep finding ways to hurt me until I broke it off, he was too much of a coward to do it himself.

"This piece of paper is a lie Thomas, it's a fucking lie. What were you thinking? Anyone will do? I'm not just anyone. Do I look like just anyone? Do I feel like just anyone? Well say something, don't look away. Is that a smile? It can't be. After five years I would know if you were that mean, wouldn't I?" My voice had cracked then too and I don't know if he ever heard the last few words. "You did this? What about Sunday breakfasts at The Telegraph? What about us? What about me? How can this be true?"

I wanted to come home to Norway a stronger person than when I left. I wanted them to see how well I had done. That I was strong, and that I had moved on. At the same time it felt wrong to be this far from home now. I didn't know what to do. I couldn't just leave in the middle of the semester and return home as a failure, but unless I managed to get on the bus and go to uni there was nowhere else to go but home to Norway.

Every evening now, before I fell asleep, I visualised what to wear the next morning. If I imagined myself in the charcoal knee-length skirt with the blue and white Massimo Dutti shirt, and I could feel how the skirt folded at the waist if I let my stomach go, and how the shirt bunched together like a used paper tissue under my left armpit, then I knew that was the wrong outfit. I kept trying until I found the right one. I needed to go to uni and resume my studies. I thought that if I knew what to wear when I woke up, I might be able to get on the bus.

I used to be confident when I wrote assignments. I would provide and defend my arguments and if I ever handed in something that wasn't very good I always knew why. Then at some point I started reading through all my assignments with his eyes. I asked myself how Paul would defend this argument and what would he say to me about the way I had constructed it. Of course it was never good enough and the more I looked at my work through his eyes, the worse it got. My grades slipped from HD's to Credits. When I confessed my problem to Paul he said the idea of using his "voice" as an invisible editor seemed to be a sound strategy and the lowering of marks must mean that I was producing work that wasn't good enough. Maybe I had reached my potential.

I wish we could go back a year to when Paul and I would pass each other in the hallway and pretend we hardly knew each other. He would nod, I would smile and look down as if I was awed by his presence, and if he said good morning too I was meant to meet him in his office at noon for some lunch-time sex on his desk or in his office chair.

It took him eight months to stop telling me how smart I was, ten months for me to realise I was no longer smart, and that his smartness didn't rub off anymore. In 11 months my grades started dropping. It took him 15 months to stop telling me I was beautiful, and at 16 months he broke up with me.

Finally, there it was, the 140 bus. I did as I had done every weekday for three weeks now – prepared my body to move forwards. To my surprise the left leg lifted and stepped down two foot lengths in front of me as my body weight shifted and the right leg lifted to follow. I put one foot on the steps of the bus ready to board and go to uni when the driver said "Sorry miss, the bus is full. You have to catch the next one."

"No, I have to get on this bus. Please? If I get off I have to go home. Please?"

"Sorry miss, there's no room." I took a deep breath to control my shaking legs and stepped back off the bus again. I turned around and listened to my pounding heart. The pulse travelled from my heart to my stomach and back up through my throat to my ears where it blocked out all other sounds. Then I started to walk back through my tunnel.

The warm wind grabbed the purple fabric of my summer dress and beat it against my calves like a whip telling me to move faster, to go home. A Bogong moth was right in front of me struggling against the wind wanting to move forward. It was held back as if it was inside a tumble dryer and the air pushed it up and down and back and forth. The moth reminded me of another dream I had this morning. In it Paul changed his mind but by then I had met someone else. His body reacted to the news by cramping, and then his heart stopped. When he fell to the ground a swarm of moths landed on him and covered him. His legs were gone, so were his arms, only parts of his face and torso were visible.

If I left Australia today, my last memory of Sydney before I went home, wouldn't be the white sand at Balmoral beach, or the emerald water at Manly. It would be Paul staring up

at me, the rest of him covered in moths that were attracted to the coolness of his body and that crawled into his nose and mouth to see if it was even cooler there.

7. Residing Between Languages

When investigating the writing of fiction in a second language in relation to the creative process, I have, as outlined in the introductory chapter, been principally concerned with the following interrelated thematic questions:

- The influence of writing fiction in a second language on the creative process, and
- How the writer experiences and perceives the influence of one language on another in their writing.

These themes and the research explicated in the 'Creativity and Language' Chapter was at the forefront of my mind when I designed the questions I asked my interviewees. The questions were subsequently designed to focus on:

- the interviewee's understanding of creativity,
- their creative/writing process,
- if they were aware of a difference in the creative process according to the language they were writing in,
- if they used translation as part of their writing process,
- what languages they read in,
- how they experience the difference in writing in one language on another,
- if one language influences the other when it comes to grammatical structures and/or vocabulary,

- if the language they write in determines what they write, and
- if they have an audience in mind when writing.

In this chapter I present and discuss the themes that emerged from my interviewees' responses to these questions. As noted previously in this thesis, the research problem was clearly formulated early in the research process, leading to specific questions I wanted to ask the interviewees. The specificity of these questions also led to a priori themes, such as creativity and influence of one language on another, emerging even before the onset of data analysis. However, as advised by King and Horrocks, I was careful to 'not identify too many a priori themes as this may lead to a blinkered approach to analysis' (King & Horrocks 2010: 168).

The process of data analysis has been in line with the qualitative approach specifically outlined to analyse qualitative interviews, 'template analysis', where key elements in the text material is coded and re-coded into themes and sub-themes to form an analysis template early on in the process, and where this template is used as a basis for analysis, but at the same time is adjusted and complimented according to the information read, re-read, and analysed (King & Horrocks 2010: 166). The main interview questions were used as a starting point to form a priori themes for the initial template. Then the initial template was used to code the first interview transcript and consequently, as the data of that and subsequent interviews were read, coded, and re-read several times, this template and the codes/themes changed along the way. Not surprisingly, due to the focus of this research, overarching themes in these interviews were creativity and language, and each became a main heading in the template. Within the context of creativity the subject became the writer's understanding and ability to define and describe creativity and their creative process, in addition to identifying similarities or differences to the creative process according to the language they write in. When discussing language the focal point was writing in a second language: deciding and starting to write in a second language, the influence of one language on another language both in

structure and subject matter, as well as use of translation. Consequently sub-headings under creativity became: writing process, and difference in creative/writing process according to language, while sub-headings under language were: writing in a second language, influence of one language on another, translation, and influence of subject matter according to language. Of course other interesting themes became apparent through analysis, but they were found to be somewhat outside the scope of this thesis and have therefore not been included in this account of the material. Still, these related themes do indicate that further research can be derived and developed from this investigation, and this will be discussed in the conclusion to this thesis. The presentation of the material in section 7.2 'Findings' in this chapter will echo the structure of the template used for analysis, but because the themes derived from the analysis of the interview material are so closely connected and interrelated, I found it more useful to present it as an open discussion rather than following a strict template structure. But before I discuss the findings of the interviews I will present each of my interviewees.

7.1 The Writers

7.1.1 Writers in Australia[2]

Nasrin Mahoutchi

> We came to Australia without having a clear picture of where we [were] going. Our son was two years old at that time, and we had in our minds, definitely education, definitely university, definitely English language will be the future (Mahoutchi 2008).

Nasrin Mahoutchi was born in Iran. She was forced to leave Iran during the Iran Iraq war after having spent two years in prison. After a period in Pakistan she came to Australia with her

[2] All the interviews undertaken with the writers that live in Australia were done in English. Some of the quotes have been altered slightly to improve the flow of the quote, in those cases I have indicated, as one would with any quotation, through ellipsis or square brackets that I have either omitted or added words.

husband and child in 1989 because she wanted to go as far away from war as possible. Her first language is Farsi[3], she also learned Turkish as a child, but never knew how to write Turkish. Her second language is English. She has published short stories in English, and continues to contribute to magazines in Farsi. Examples of her publications are the short stories 'Delerium' (2007) and 'Satan Hill' (2005) both published in *Heat*, 'Graffiti' (2004) published in *Southerly*, and 'Truth' (1999) published in *Meanjin*. She believes the very different fiction traditions from the US and Russia that she was exposed to while growing up – despite strict censorship – is what led her to write short fiction, although she does not think of herself as a short story writer only, and she has never wanted to be limited by one genre. I interviewed Nasrin Mahoutchi in Sydney in September of 2008.

Abbas El-Zein

> At the age of 23 I remember walking into the bookshop at the University of Southampton where I was doing a Master in a scientific subject, and I remember walking in and it was the first time that I'd seen names like … Salman Rushdie, and the notion of middle eastern sounding names writing books in English. I know today it's normal, all sorts of nationalities write in English, but back then, which would have been 1986, it was very striking and very intriguing. (El-Zein 2009)

Abbas El-Zein grew up in Lebanon, where his first language was Arabic, but he also learned French from he was very young. He started learning his third language, English, in high school, and went to an English-speaking university. Then, when he was 23 he left Lebanon to do a PhD in applied sciences and engineering in England, and has lived in England, France, and Australia since then. Although he has written in Arabic for some newspapers, most of his writing, and all of his fiction writing has been in English. He has published short stories and a

[3] Farsi is the same language as Persian, but Iranians often use the word Farsi in place of Persian, and because Mahoutchi refers to her first language as Farsi, I have chosen to do the same when I refer to her first language.

novel, *Tell the Running Waters* (2001), set in Lebanon during civil war, as well as a memoir, *Leave to Remain* (2009), about growing up in Beirut. El-Zein was awarded the New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards, Community Relations Commission Award of 2010 for *Leave to Remain*. He is an Associate Professor in environmental engineering at the University of Sydney. I interviewed Abbas El-Zein in Sydney in November of 2009.

Mario Licón Cabrera

> I dedicated the last part of this book [*Yuxtas*] to my dead ones right, my parents, my wife, my brother, my friends … and I wrote those poems at the end because I knew they were going to be quite touching and quite disturbing as well. It was like having a conversation with them, it was very painful in some parts but also comfortable in another way, and being on my own especially at night when it's raining … and when it's windy… I would say [to myself] I hope they don't come all together (Licón Cabrera 2008).

Mario Licón Cabrera came to Australia from Mexico in 1992. He was educated in photography from the ASUC in California, US. In Mexico he worked with photography and with adapting poetry utilizing shadow puppets. This work inspired him to start working on his own poetry. He has published in several genres including poetry and short stories in his first language Spanish and in his second language English. He has had four books of poetry published in Mexico: *Divagavadi* (1981), *Arco de Tiempo* (1985), *Nostos en el Umbral* (1990), and *La Reverberacion de la Ceniza* (2004). He also works as a translator. The first poem he published in Australia was 'Remembering the Angel (for Femin)', and it was published in *Boxite: A Journal of Poetry & Poetics*, in 1997, five years after he arrived. He has since then published a number of poems in English in different publications including a collection of poetry, *Yuxtas* (2007). I interviewed Mario Licón Cabrera in Sydney in October of 2008.

Jamal Al-Hallaq

> I had many collections in Iraq, [but] because we had so hard censorship under [the] Saddam regime, to write or publish something you [can't] do it the establishment or public way. Therefore, we, I say we because we were a group, not just me, we … printed it [ourselves]. You can't imagine how 100 copies made contact with 20 million, really, it was revolutionary movement for us, because in five years we counted 150 collections this way (Al-Hallaq 2008).

Jamal Al-Hallaq grew up in Iraq and his first language is Arabic. He started writing poetry when he was 18 years old, but because of strict censorship most of his publications have been through underground movements. His poetry has been published in other countries and translated into several languages including English. He is the only interviewee who writes in English but has not yet published in English. He came to Australia in 2005. I interviewed Jamal Al-Hallaq in Sydney in September of 2008.

Dominique Hecq

> I would still like to play with all the languages. Obviously I have learned to write a few languages and I like to have a bit of a salad of languages in some of my writing. When you perform it you don't know what language the people in the audience speak, so I think it's quite important, Australia being multicultural, just to keep that up. But you know, it's an odd thing, some people have accused me of being precious or elitist because I flip from one language to another, but it's also fun, I mean, I do it because it's fun. (Hecq 2008)

Dominique Hecq is originally from the French-speaking part of Belgium. She started writing fiction at a very young age. She came to Australia in 1985 after being awarded a scholarship to do a PhD on exile and Australian literature. She says the reason she is still in Australia is because she 'turned into one of the characters [she] was examining'. She does not write

fiction in her first language, but has published fiction and poetry in English. The novel, *The Book of Elsa* from 2000, is so far the only longer work of fiction she has published. However, several of her short stories and poems have appeared in a variety of publications. Some examples of short stories are, 'Phoenix' (2006) which appears in *Famous Reporter*, 'Noisy Blood' (2004), which appears in *Hecate*, and 'Hijacked' (2001) and 'Out of Bounds' (1999) which appear in *Meanjin.* In addition to her poetry being widely published in different magazines, Hecq has written three collections of poetry: *Good Grief: And Other Frivolous Journeys into Spells, Songs and Elegies* (2002), *Couchgrass* (2006), and most recently *Out of Bounds* (2009). She is a Senior Lecturer in Writing at Swinburne University of Technology. I interviewed Dominique Hecq in Melbourne in October of 2008.

7.1.2 Writers in Norway[4]

Annabelle Despard

> I don't feel like I'm part of a Norwegian poetry tradition, … which is strange I guess. The reviews [of my poetry collections] have been very good …, and I have been told I'm very original, but I'm not original at all in the British Anglo-Saxon tradition. I find it strange that no one has pointed out that with that [British] name it's not strange she writes like that. It oozes Plath and other influences, because I don't think I'm that original, I think each image [I produce] is original, but the style is not (Despard 2008).

Annabelle Despard was born during the Second World War to a Norwegian mother and a British father. She grew up in England, and even if her mother was Norwegian she spoke English with Despard. Her mother died when Despard was five and she was sent to Norway to stay with an aunt and uncle for a couple of years before she went back to live with her older

[4] All of the interviews undertaken in Norway were done in Norwegian, so all text from the transcripts, including the direct quotes, has been translated by me. Otherwise I have followed the same guidelines as with the other quotes and indicated with ellipsis and square brackets where I have omitted or added words.

sister in England. She returned to Norway again when she was 19 and has, apart from a one year sabbatical that she spent at the University of York in England, lived in Norway since. She says she has never formally learned to write Norwegian, but that it is something that has come gradually and that is probably why she didn't start to write poetry in Norwegian until she was 50. She has published poetry in Norwegian and English. She is an Associate Professor at the University of Agder. Her collections of Poetry in Norwegian are: *Fisken Tenker Sitt* (1995), *Tyngdekraft* (1997), *Bølgende lang som Amerika* (2001), and *Danseskolen* (2005). I interviewed Annabelle Despard in Kristiansand in January of 2008.

Ismet Januzaj

> How I believe I can be useful as a writer is as an individual, and not necessarily as an ethnic Albanian, but me as an individual from another country who has a history of moving around, of being politically persecuted, [of] living in fear. Many years of my life have been spent not having the chance or the right to take a set course, to live, to know that I can live here. In a way I have been somewhere between heaven and earth, between here and there, nowhere, between existence and non-existence, between the possibility of being deported and jailed and being killed by Serbians, and between living in Norway or not (Januzaj 2008).

Ismet Januzaj is an Albanian originally from Kosovo. He was born in 1963. He has spent the last twenty years in exile, living in England, Germany, Croatia, Sweden, and lastly since October of 1993 in Norway. His first language is Albanian, but he writes in his second language, Norwegian. He has worked as a journalist writing mostly about film. He is educated in as diverse fields as geography and theatre, and he has also taught theatre. At the moment he is working on a novel, he has published poetry in Albanian and in Norwegian and works as an interpreter when he needs to add to his writing income. His collection of poetry in Norwegian is: *Smilets rygg* (2004). I interviewed Ismet Januzaj in Oslo in January of 2008.

Elyas Poorgholam

> When I started writing [in Norwegian] I didn't have a Persian Norwegian dictionary, so I had to use a Persian to French Dictionary, and then French to Norwegian. I don't know French, so it wasn't easy, but I learned a lot. Then I went to a book fair at the university and Universitetsforlaget, [the university publisher] had a stand where they displayed a selection of their books. They had a Persian to Norwegian dictionary, but it was very expensive. When the person at the stand asked if I liked it, I said that yes I did, but I couldn't afford it even if it would help me in my writing. He then said I could have it as a gift since I was a writer (Poorgholam 2008).

Elyas Poorgholam is from Iran, he was born in 1950, and came to Norway in 1990. In his home country he has a degree in drama, and since he came to Norway he received a degree in education. He has for many years worked as a primary school teacher. His first language is Persian[5]. Poorgholam has published short stories and two novels, *Min Far Falo* (2002) and *En ulydig vind* (2004), in Norwegian. I interviewed Elyas Poorgholam in Oslo in January of 2008.

Nefise Øskal Lorentzen

> I moved away from home when I was 14 to study at an American High School in Istanbul. I travelled a lot on buses and boats between Istanbul and Ismir where my mother lived. I think all the people that I met on those ten to twelve hour trips, who told me their stories – the comfort of strangers – together with my travel, created a form of literature in my mind, … and that's why I wanted to write and make documentaries (Øskal Lorentzen 2009).

[5] Contrary to Mahoutchi, Poorgholam refers to his first language as Persian rather than Farsi, and this is again why I have chosen to do the same when referring to his first language.

Nefise Øskal Lorentzen was born in 1964 in Turkey and came to Norway to study media at the University of Oslo, and has lived in Norway since. Her first language is Turkish and she considers English to be her second language while Norwegian is her third. She is a documentary filmmaker and writer. She has published poetry and prose in Norwegian. Her poetry was published in two anthologies: *Ord I Bevegelse* (Kapoor & Salimi eds,1995) and *Stemmer fra et Hus* (Wingård Wolf ed, 1993). Her first novel, *Hvordan skal jeg begynne?*, co-written with Henning Kramer Dahl was published in 2004. I interviewed Nefise Øskal Lorentzen in Oslo in August of 2009.

7.2 The Findings

When discussing what creativity is to them, some interviewees find it difficult to verbalise what they think creativity is, and although there are common denominators in their understanding of creativity, such as referring to concepts like originality, invention, creating and trying something new, as well as role of the subconscious, their reflections on creativity also differ significantly. This is of course not surprising and reflects, as discussed in Chapter Four, creativity researchers' inability to agree on a definition of creativity (Runco 2007, Brophy 1998, Csikszentmihalyi 1997, Sternberg & Lubart 1999), and cultural and national differences in conceptualising and approaching it.

To Mahoutchi creativity is a very subjective issue and is more about what she calls inner space – an urge to express herself – than artistic practice. Al-Hallaq expresses similar sentiments when he talks about writing that comes from the subconscious, writing he calls 'truth writing'. These two explanations are also in line with how Hecq expresses her thoughts on creativity:

> One of my other passions is psychoanalysis, so I think that creativity comes not only from all the fields we encounter in everyday life, but also the hidden part of us, it's like sedimentations,

> parts of your history. I don't know what creativity is, I mean I'm also writing about writing madness and anxiety, and sometimes I think that there is a very fine line and I think that creativity is to allow yourself to be mad. (Hecq 2008)

This brings us back to Freud's thoughts on the creative person or the artist as 'an introvert not far from neurosis' (Freud 1917: 376). In other words the creative person is at the edge of neurosis or state of extremity, just like Hecq indicates, but as Brophy (1998) points out, Freud and the psychoanalytic tradition also talked about the creative person as someone who is like a child playing. This idea of playing or doing something out of the ordinary is what Øskal Lorentzen refers to when she defines creativity as follows:

> I think creativity is to dare to do something in opposites, for example if you invite someone for dinner, dare to serve dessert first, why not? … I don't like it when people say no, and that's not how we do it, I don't want that, I'm a little bit like a child between two and four in that way, a bit rebellious. I believe creativity is to dare to do something you might not get much praise for to begin with. (Øskal Lorentzen 2009)

Januzaj separates between what he thinks he is meant to think creativity is, and what creativity actually is to him. He says he thinks creativity probably is about 'producing something, seeing something new, or creating something' so he feels creativity in the eyes of our society is about product and results, but to him creativity is when he thinks what he is doing might be part of creating something in the future, maybe ten years from now. Despard raises concerns about the use of the word creativity and isn't too happy about using it because it is being used in so many different connections like 'fancy table decorations and such' that its meaning has been lost; 'on the other hand', she says: 'I shouldn't be such a snob because I do get a lot out of baking a cake'. But, to her, like Mahoutchi, creativity is personal and comes from within your mind and your inner self.

Some of the interviewees have never really considered what creativity is, in particular those from language backgrounds such as Arabic, and Persian. This means the question had to be elaborated upon and explained to them in more detail, which again probably shaped and/or compromised their subsequent answers somewhat. As mentioned in Chapter Four in the section on 'Creativity, Environment and Culture', Arabic does not have a word for creativity (Hennessey 2004), while Persian has a phrase that means creativeness, so this might also have influenced their answer or in some instances lack of answer, even if they now use a language where creativity is a much used concept.

Although these reflections on creativity are varied, and the interviewees expressed reservations in their ability to actually define the term, most of them found it much easier to talk about the intricacies of their creative/writing process. One of the interviewees did however, find it difficult to explain and describe her process. When asked if she could describe her creative process, Nasrin Mahoutchi said: 'that's something I can't do at all. I don't know… I think the stories are alive inside me, that's the only answer I can give you.' If one has never been asked questions about one's creative/writing process before, writing might be something one has done without actually reflecting on how it works. If she is asked the question again at a later stage, the answer might be different because the initial question will have triggered awareness that again will lead to reflection around her writing process. That said, Mahoutchi's inability to verbalise her thoughts regarding her creative process does not necessarily mean that she has not reflected upon it, in fact such an answer is understandable, even from someone who is a published writer and who has been steeped in a creative process many times, because the creative process is not one single process or one single thing. Creative process can't be explained as starting at A and ending at Z, or in the case of Norwegian ending at Å; no, a creative process is elusive, it changes consistently, and as Runco says, it is 'multifaceted and extremely complex' (Runco 2007: x). Mahoutchi's statement also echoes Brophy's (1998) statement that although he is a practicing writer,

creative writing teacher, and researcher, he finds it difficult to explain his writing process. Her statement underlines Freiman's point, discussed in the fourth chapter, that significant parts of the writing process happen in our subconscious irrespective of all our planning for a story or a poem, and even though it 'reappears' in a form where it makes sense, it can be experienced as beyond our control. It is precisely when something is difficult to plan and when one does not have complete control that it becomes mysterious and difficult to explain. The other interviewees, however, found it easier to explain and reflect on their creative process.

Annabelle Despard talks about the periods of time when she is not writing, when she is not immersed in the productive part of a creative process – for example, when she is waiting for feedback from a publisher and feels that she can't write until she knows what will happen with her poems – as empty, and she doesn't quite know what to do, what to spend her time on. When she is immersed in creating something on the other hand, she compares it to being in love:

> If I'm working on a collection there is this underlying constant tension, and it's always there 'under' everything because I do a thousand other things as well, but it's just there, it's like being in love, the joy is underneath everything when I'm working – yes, it's a little bit like being in love (Despard 2008).

She says the initial idea for a poem comes to her as 'a spark from somewhere, a thought..., [or] an image', and it feels like a passive part of the process where she is just the recipient. This is often related to physical movement, and this initial idea will come to her when she is going for walks in the forest, or when she is on the train, or even when driving. She sees flashes, and an image will appear, or an idea, or a story, or the idea will come from someone's comment, or something she has read. This compares to the stage in the creative process Csikszentmihalyi (1997) refers to as the preparation stage, and Cowley calls 'the germ of the story' (Cowley 1962:10). This is as mentioned earlier the stage that begins with a need to

resolve something, or to come to an understanding about something and as Csikszentmihalyi (1997) states, it is not likely for a creative process to start *without* such a trigger or stimulus to react to. And, in line with this, Despard says she then has to react to that initial spark and do something actively to develop it further and to create something: 'it's not really creating something [though], because it's a description, a reality, so you are not creating something new other than in the combination of that spark, the combination of two things' (Despard 2008). This idea that it is the combination of two or more already established ideas or concepts that as part of a creative process combine and become something creative, something new, follows Brophy (1998) and Weisberg (2006) who argue in very similar terms that the new in what is creative always can be traced back to something else. Weisberg states that when something new is created, this new or original product always has 'antecedents' in something else that was once new and original (Weisberg 2006: 53). And Brophy, when explaining how something that is considered to be creative and therefore new and original still has to have a trace of something that is no longer new for it to be recognised as creative, uses the creation of original beginnings and endings in writing as an example. He explains that even new and original beginnings and endings 'must be a copy, that is a repetition of some formula of beginnings and endings. It must be recognisably creative' (Brophy 1998: 11).

Øskal Lorentzen always starts a poem by opening a dictionary and randomly choosing some words, then she thinks about these words and suddenly a story appears: 'It's like giving ten Lego blocks to a child and saying: build something, and that's how I work with poetry' (Øskal Lorentzen 2009). Like Despard, Øskal Lorentzen emphasises the active part of the creative process, where one actively engages with an idea and goes back and works on it again and again as a form of continuous re-articulation of a problem. '... you have to wait and [try] again and again, and re-articulate, so ... I work a lot with visualisation. If I'm able to visualise the idea, then I think, yes I can do this, and if anyone doubts [the idea], I just have to insist' (Øskal Lorentzen 2009). Csikszentmihalyi (1997) refers to this as the combined work

of ‘incubation’, ‘insight’, ‘evaluation’ and ‘elaboration’, the final four stages of the creative process, and these stages are by no means rigid or predetermined, but rather interconnected and reiterated as per Øskal Lorentzen’s account here. The combination or meeting of two things that Despard talks about above and the re-articulation and visualisation that Øskal Lorentzen mentions, are also points of conflict in the creative process, points at which the idea can move in any direction and don’t follow any set pattern or set direction, as illustrated by Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) rhizomatic system of thought.

According to Dominique Hecq, her creative process ‘goes through cycles. So there are moments when I’ll write only poetry, moments when I’ll want to write only prose, but of course with the constraints of my life now, it’s mainly short fiction’ (Hecq 2008). When talking about the constraints of her life, she is referring to the juggling of family life and full time academic work with writing, and that this is why she tends to write shorter fiction because she finds it more manageable. Hecq goes on to say that she doesn’t think there are any rules to an actual creative process, but like Despard and Øskal Lorentzen she talks about the initial idea often being an image, and about a problem driving her:

> With poetry, well for the last work I wrote – a sequence of poems on the theme of drought at different levels – what came to my mind was an image, and then the rhythm took over, so I think rhythm is incredibly important when I write poetry. … Usually I have an image or we’ll say it’s a question mark that drives me, you know something that keeps niggling, then there’s an image, and then the rhythm, and the rhythm takes over. With fiction it’s a little bit different. Sometimes it’s a sentence I’ve heard somewhere that I find intriguing or it’s something that has unsettled me, a situation, and then I’ll try and explain why it has that impact on me. I think there is a little bit of the old element of things being – writing being – cathartic, so I’ve got to get it out of my system (Hecq 2008).

El-Zein’s ‘preparation’ stage is also recognised by the fact that he often starts with a sentence without a plan or any knowledge of where it will take him.

> I remember a chapter in *Tell the Running Water* which starts: 'he likes to play games', and I remember it just started with that sentence, I had no idea, just a sentence that was there in my head, and I started building around that sentence. … It was an impulse which I think is conditioned … by where I was living, by the fact that I was steeped in [the English language]. I think it's that impulse, the fascination with the language and the fact that I was then in that environment (El-Zein 2009).

El-Zein says that this is the way he has always written, it is how his creative process works. But, he also thinks this way of working can result in flaws in a novel. He explains how when he heard about writers who knows everything about their characters and the plot before they actually sit down and start writing, he decided to try that to see if it would help make his work more whole, more complete, but found that his creative process did not allow for this form of work:

> The reason why I tried … [it, wasn't] because I was curious about how it worked, although that was part of it, but also because I saw in retrospect … [with *Tell the Running Water*, that there were] … flaws in the novel that are in the plot and in the narrative that I attributed to this process of sitting down and not knowing what's going to happen. I [had] ended up with a bit of patchiness, it was patching things over, because you're starting from here and from there and it's all coalescing into a plot. It's a bit like doing one of those blankets which are made of rags, and so you could see where it [had] been stitched, and I could feel that in the novel (El-Zein 2009).

Of course, as already established, a creative process is unpredictable and many writers start with only a sentence or a vague idea and then sit down and start writing without knowing where the writing might take them. In fact, with its rhizomatic nature, the writing process might take the writer in multiple and opposite directions, and as El-Zein says, sometimes this is traceable in the writing itself. One can follow the trail of 'randomness' created by the creative process. This is something which any writer has to deal with through the writing of

for example a short story or a poem, and as a writer one has to allow the creative process to be a part of the writing, to let it occur even though one might have the framework of a story in mind – one has to balance the work's trajectory and its architecture. Writers manage this through rewriting. One has to rewrite, re-read, revise and revise again to smooth out these stitches that El-Zein is referring to.

The inability to change his creative process that El-Zein talks about above alludes to a creative process being individual, personal, and varied as indicated by Csikszentmihyali (1997), Runco (2007), and Cowley (1962), and although there are some commonalities such as the five stages of 'preparation', 'incubation', 'insight', 'evaluation', and 'elaboration' (Csikszentmihyali 1997 79-80), each creative person and each creative problem is different, and there is no one right way of working other than the one that will enable the creative person to solve the particular problem – the writer to write his or her story. It is also connected to elements of the creative process happening in a person's subconscious and as with Mahoutchi's difficulty in explaining her creative process, this can according to Freiman (2007: 6) be explained as writers not having control over our subconscious and therefore not always being able to follow our plans.

When Poorgholam writes something he does not take a lot of notes, much of his writing happens as he is walking around thinking about stories and characters.

> When I get an idea, I walk around and mull over it. I'm grateful the mobile phones arrived, because sometimes I would walk on the streets mumbling to myself when I was mulling over a character in a novel or a short story and what they would say, and people would turn around and maybe think: poor immigrant, he's gone mad. But now, since the mobile phone arrived and everyone walks around and talks, no one ever turns around anymore and looks at me like I'm mad. (Poorgholam 2008)

Al-Hallaq on the other hand talks about the importance of writing ideas and impulses down because that same idea will never come back to you. 'I remember walking on the road in Baghdad and a poem just appeared, but I had no paper and I found a smoking packet and wrote on it. Because if the poem comes, if you don't write it down you can't get it again, you lose it and when you lose one word from a line it's horrible.' (Al-Hallaq 2008)

When talking about his creative process, Januzaj focuses on how important it is for him to be alone, to be able to write down those ideas that come to him from nowhere, but also, similarly to Al-Hallaq to avoid losing anything, and this is why he often writes the first drafts of his poems in the middle of the night, and then when he has the ideas on paper he is more free to write when there are other people around. He says that when he's alone, he writes 'a form of skeleton, short key words that look like a poem. And, then I work with it later. I have written seventy percent of this book, [*Smilets Rygg*,] at pubs and cafes' (Januzaj 2008).

Licón Cabrera is similar to Poorgholam in his working habits, in that much of the first structure of a poem is in his mind before he writes anything down. Poorgholam does, however, say that when he is ready to start writing things down, to put things on paper, he is, like Al-Hallaq and Januzaj, very concerned with losing important information and this is why he chooses the more laborious way of writing his novels, and writes the first draft in Persian:

> [Writing] is blood and sweat [for me] because I have to go through two processes. First [I write] in Persian until I'm certain I have written everything. The reason I start the novels in Persian is because when you write you can't lose anything and if you stop and have to search and search for words and expressions, you might lose something. When writing Norwegian I have to dig all the time because it doesn't come naturally or automatically [to me], but in Persian the words just appear, words start to flow, but it's rare that I rework it in Persian again because I don't have time. [Then,] when I'm finished I sit down and maybe add something, read it with some friends, and take a break from it before I sit down and start working with the Norwegian. That's when the hard work starts, … because you again have to find words, find

> expressions, the right placement, and sentence structure, because those who are going to edit your language have to understand it to be able to help you (Poorgholam 2008).

For my interviewees, writing in a second language is, of course, about just that – they are practicing writers who write in their second language and they are concerned with this experience. There are however, also other related issues that stand out when they reflect on the topic, such as how and why they made the decision to write in a second language, and the difference between the languages – advantages and disadvantages.

Dominique Hecq remembers when she first started writing in English:

> Well, I loved English ... I was in first year in English, and I was writing poems in English about trees and ... spring, and trying to imitate. ... What I liked about English as opposed to French, I suppose then, was that English was a more material language. It's a bit like using Lego blocks. I don't know if it was because it was foreign to me or because the language itself works differently (Hecq 2008).

For a brief period she wrote in English and French and couldn't quite decide which language to focus on, then circumstances in her life led to a shift away from French. She also talks about the distance writing in a second language creates and the liberation that follows from this:

> It has given me a freedom, for example I can write about autobiographical things because I know that nobody will read them, and I can write about things that are closer to the bone, about things that have troubled me or, you know, yes definitely I would not write about these things in French, I just could not approach them, it would be too dangerous. (Dominique Hecq)

Deciding to write in Norwegian was, according to Januzaj, rooted in a strong need to express himself, and he says he would have had the same need wherever he lived, it had nothing to do with the Norwegian language itself but rather with the need to express oneself in the local

language where one lives: 'I came to Norway when I was 30, so I might not know the words and expressions that children learn in day care or from their mothers, but I know the adult language, or God knows what I know, it varies' (Januzaj 2008). Januzaj explains how he sees himself as a writer in Norway in comparison to Norwegian writers:

> It's not easy for me to write in Norwegian, I have to stand side by side and compete and achieve with those who grew up here. So in a way when I write something and submit it to a publisher I compete with the others, and it's like a one hundred meter hurdles competition, none of the others carry a backpack, but I have a fifty kilo backpack. But, of the eight participants I have to be among the four that proceed to the next level, I have these extra kilos but still I have to achieve. Oh my, maybe it's mission impossible to be a writer, but I write anyway (Januzaj 2008).

When talking about writing in his second language, Al-Hallaq is concerned with using a contemporary version of the language, both when it comes to the words chosen and the themes: 'What's the new, or what's the living subject in this moment, living thinking. How do you write living writing, not dead writing in another language? ... It's a challenge, but I have a good editor' (Al-Hallaq 2008). Al-Hallaq is also very aware that he is in a new situation – in a new culture with eye opening experiences, and this influences not only his writing in English, but also when he writes in Arabic he *has to* express this, and he says it pushes him to write with an open mind.

> I think the [Arabic] language follows me, but in English I think I follow the language. ...I create it in Arabic, and until now [I haven't felt that] in English, but now that I'm writing the play I can feel that my hand is running, and that makes me happy because it means... [the language] has started following me. (Al-Hallaq 2008)

As part of the process of deciding to write fiction in Norwegian Poorgholam had noticed that there was very little contemporary literature from Iran available in Norwegian, but because he had seen one or two publications he decided that Norwegians might be interested in this kind

of literature, that there was a market for it. He then wrote some children's dramas for television that were bought up by the Norwegian Broadcasting Company, and some children's stories that were accepted as part of an anthology, and these experiences led him to realise that he could write in Norway. Then he wanted to publish a novel he had written in Iran for which he had a publishing contract before he left Iran, but that was never published. Because the publisher in Norway did not have access to any translators who could translate at an acceptable level for fiction, Poorgholam had to wait until he felt his own Norwegian language skills were good enough and translate the novel himself:

> So I sat down and translated it with what I would call a very raw Norwegian, and not a very good Norwegian either, I know that. But, luckily the great Norwegian poet Inger Elisabeth Hansen liked it, and helped me work on the language, and that became the novel *Min Far Falo*, and it was received very well in the Norwegian media, very well (Poorgholam 2008).

Poorgholam says he writes in two different ways at the moment. When he is working on a novel he writes the first draft in Persian. This is because a novel is more complex with more characters and intricate plot lines, and as he mentioned earlier because he is concerned about losing important things in the first draft when the ideas are generated. Then he translates the draft into Norwegian and, as part of this second draft, the story might change significantly. However, when he writes short stories or smaller scripts he writes these directly in Norwegian: 'But, of course that requires hard work and I work slower, that I do. Maybe I'm still struggling a bit with grammar, but when it comes to vocabulary I think I'm doing OK, and I'm noticing that my writing flows better, it's getting easier' (Poorgholam 2008).

El-Zein distinguishes between the impulse and the decision to start writing in English. He says the decision was an implicit one, following naturally from spending a certain amount of time every day writing and seeing that it would turn into something bigger, for example a novel: 'I think what's more revealing is probably the impulse, where does the impulse for

writing in English come from?' (El-Zein 2008) El-Zein attributes four different elements to the impulse that led him to write in English. Firstly, he was reading a lot in English, and this reading led to the second element where the reading made him want to try what these other writers were doing. 'There's an element of something I've heard a lot of other writers talk about, which is, you start reading and immediately you feel the urge to mimic, or almost mimic. It's not quite mimicking ... but there's an urge to mimic when you read' (El-Zein 2008). Here he is talking about the influence of other writers on both the choice of writing style as well as the choice of language to write in. Reading something can inspire a writer to write, it can act as a trigger for the creative process. Øskal Lorentzen, similarly talks about a book that inspired her to embrace her second language Norwegian completely and start writing in it too:

> In the beginning I wrote in English, but then I changed to Norwegian because I read Hanne Ørstavik's book *Love*. And I though, wow, this is one of the best books I have ever read, not only the dramaturgy, but the language was so refined, and then I thought: I live in Norway I can understand the language, but I have to read Norwegian and understand Hanne's world, and her way of using words and constructing languages, it's so unique. Then I started to write in Norwegian, because of Hanne Ørstadvik's book. (Øskal Lorentzen 2009)

The third element El-Zein refers to as part of the impulse to write in English was that the English language fascinated him. And finally, the fourth element was the distance in time to the experiences he wanted to integrate into his writing. There was now a distance of five or six years from the time he left Lebanon and he felt a need and an ability to express experiences related to that. He believes a certain amount of time and distance is necessary to be able to express a significant experience, but when that distance is achieved there is an urge to express it through writing. In addition to these four elements that constituted the impulse to write in English, he explains why it was easier for him to decide to write in his third language English rather than in his second language French, and his explanation is very much an echo

of the discussion related to the choice of whether to write in the coloniser's language or not, due to the post colonial context which El-Zein locates within Lebanon:

> Deciding to write in English is a lot less problematic for me than deciding to write in French for example, because of the colonial implications (we had French not English), particularly also with the politics of Lebanon, I mean today it wouldn't matter so much, Lebanon is a bit behind me now, but certainly when I started writing in English those considerations I'm sure were present in my mind. Which is that I would have found it a lot more problematic to write in French, I would have seen it as a colonial concession as a concession to the colonizer. English didn't have that. Obviously it's a bit fake because the reason why I'm here, why I'm writing in English is because of the British Empire and so on, but it didn't have that connection to me. (El-Zein 2008)

From this it seems El-Zein would not have followed the path of such writers as Achebe, had he been in a similar situation. Achebe (2003) said that even if it was a most difficult choice to make, it was, for him, the only one he could make. El-Zein sees the irony in this because as he points out, English is available to him precisely because of the role of the British Empire as a colonising power and consequently the global influence of the English language.

For Anabelle Despard, deciding to write in Norwegian was about accepting that her life and everything she did in her life was in Norway and 'in' the Norwegian language. It was about:

> ...acknowledging that I live in Norway, I am Norwegian, I think in Norwegian, I pay in Norwegian, I have Norwegian children. I guess it was about acknowledging that I could write English in England, but here I mastered the language in writing as well then and had a much better vocabulary, and read a lot more in Norwegian and that had helped significantly. It has to do with what language you master on all levels, .. and it has to be from God, to brushing your teeth, from the completely physical and everyday to the emotional and the abstract. And all of this was in Norwegian for me then so it felt right to write in Norwegian (Despard 2008).

When discussing these reasons for finally deciding to write in Norwegian, Despard also acknowledges that the opportunities for her to publish her work is greater in Norway than in England and that this of course meant she had to write in Norwegian to access the Norwegian market. It is, in her view, easier to get published in Norway than for example in England, especially poetry. She has tried over many years to be published in England, but has found it difficult because of what she says is a lack of interest in poetry. She has had two of her poems published in the subway in London and subsequently in their anthology *Poems of the Underground*. But outside of those it has been easier to get published in Norway. However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, even though she came to Norway as a 19 year old, she didn't start to write in Norwegian until she was 50, and she attributes part of this 'delay' to not feeling like she belonged to the Norwegian literary tradition – that she was too much to the side of it:

> That's another reason why I hesitated so long [before writing in Norwegian]. When I came and started university here in 1963, I had just completed A-levels, and it was great, we read four books. And then you arrive here and listen to Ønskediktet (a segment in a radio program where listeners could request a poem to be read) and you listen to Liv who reads Berglijot and it's so bombastic, and when I went to school [in England] we were in the middle of New Criticism. I hadn't understood that the war stopped all Norwegian modernism, consequently you could have poems that wouldn't have fit in the modernist tradition but that were emotionally important. But that was an important literary critical obstacle to me feeling as part of the Norwegian tradition. (Despard 2008)

Mahoutchi, like Despard, waited a while before she sent anything out for publication, but she attributes her delay to a concern related to having her name on print in the public eye:

> It wasn't any kind of fiction writing in my life till I came to Australia, when I came to Australia I started writing, but it wasn't sent anywhere for publishing for a long time. One of the reasons I didn't send anything earlier, when I reflect and look back, was that I think my

> mind still thought my name being printed was a problem. I didn't want to be associated with anybody or put anybody in danger, but when I passed that buffer time I started to write seriously. (Mahoutchi 2008)

After overcoming these doubts around publication, Mahoutchi started to send out pieces of writing in both English and Farsi, although when she first came to Australia, she did not have access to Farsi:

> When I left Iran it wasn't really time of websites and Internet ... so I came to a country which was quite isolated [from] the language I was used to. So, although I didn't have a ... plan in mind [if] I would stay here or not, ... I was kind of cut off from Farsi. So I didn't really have a choice rather than moving with the other language as fast as I [could]. [There] was also the issue of a reader. I [couldn't] see any future in Farsi for me, ... because there wasn't many .. Iranians here, ... so the possibility to have a reader was in English really. Later when Internet and Internet publishing became more accessible that actually brought my Farsi resources back to me (Mahoutchi 2008).

This lack of access to reading material, lack of access to his first language, is something Poorgholam talks about too. He believes it helped him learn Norwegian faster, because like Mahoutchi, he didn't have a choice.

Øskal Lorentzen also talks about how on the one hand she does not think living in a different culture and speaking a foreign language should be thought of as any hindrance, because 'it can develop and challenge other parts of your brain and suddenly you'll create something you have no idea [where came from], was that me?' (Øskal Lorentzen 2009) In other words it allows a writer to be creative.

> At the same time there's a kind of sadness in living with another language, I miss those small words related for example to love that moves me so much, and I don't have these in Norwegian. Languages like Turkish have so many spiritual words that you don't have in

> Norwegian, but I create new words in Norwegian that I introduce to my friends and now they use them too. I think many immigrant writers have created words in English or French or Norwegian, and they have created new constructions. I don't miss Turkey, but I miss the music and some of the words and the way people communicate, so when I bring it with me to Norway I'm doing something similar to what Siv Jensen (Norwegian right wing politician) calls sneak Islamising, I sneak words and expressions into the language. (Øskal Lorentzen 2009)

This statement about other languages influence on the Norwegian language is, as discussed in Chapter four, similar to Ariel Dorfman's (2003) view on appropriation, where he likens the influence made on a major language like English to smuggling. '…All those bodies and the minds inside those bodies smuggling foreign syntaxes across the borders under the nose of immigration officers and customs officials, penetrating the defence of the nation state, invading the fields and the kitchens and the elementary schools (Dorfman 2003: 34).

Øskal Lorentzen's above statement correlates with what research has shown, and as discussed in an earlier chapter, that when one writes in a second language or in more than one language, it is most likely that vocabulary and syntax from one language will influence the other. This is confirmed by my other interviewees as well, although some are more concerned than others with avoiding such influence and a subsequent change to the language as a result of 'foreign' influence. This is what Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2002) calls appropriation of a language. Annabelle Despard, for example, whose second language is Norwegian, talks about how she has worked for years to stay as true to the Norwegian language as possible. 'I have for 40 years struggled to not use any English words and expressions in the Norwegian language, and suddenly I wake up and everyone – the youth – speak with English words, and here I am trying hard to find a Norwegian synonym, it's wild' (Despard 2008). She does, however, admit that there must be instances when the two languages have influenced each other, but

that primarily there has been an influence of English on the Norwegian language and not as much the other way around:

> What I have thought about sometimes is that I actually write some poems in two languages at the same time, the same poem will involve both languages, and that makes me think about those old planes that have wings on top of each other, the brain operates in two languages and then it's possible that maybe the English syntax has influenced the Norwegian because it has been above or underneath, that I have noticed. (Despard 2008)

Mahoutchi on the other hand, when discussing the influence of one language on another in her writing, emphasises the value of making mistakes. 'I definitely write pershenglish, [but] sometimes, mistakes make magnificent moments. [Once] I was devastated to [realise that I had] described [someone's] eyes and ... said ... beautiful blue ice rather than eyes. The editor saw it was wrong but kept it because it created such a moment in the writing' (Mahoutchi 2008). Licon Cabrera also values the mistake as well as the experimentation, and wishes publishers would allow more of it: 'Sometimes I wish I can leave my Spanish syntaxes in the English syntaxes and I don't think it's a problem, but they say it's not right. Even in Spanish I don't follow the official sentence structure, most of the time I try to break it' (Licon Cabrera 2008). Al-Hallaq agrees that when writing in English his Arabic is definitely spilling over and influencing his English, and so does Poorgholam. 'In the beginning I wrote Persian with Norwegian words, the sentence structure was Persian but the words were Norwegian, but after a while I realised, even when I put the verb after the noun, that it would be too much structured like Persian' (Poorgholam 2008).

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter when discussing the interviewees understanding of creativity, playing with language is important for Øskal Lorentzen, but, sometimes she is stopped in her 'play' by those who read her work:

> I think that when you have a second language, then you should be allowed to play with these words, and that gives you freedom to combine and fool around with the language. When I write, my husband always reads over it and he says: this is so typical, again you are moving around and around, you have to be more precise, what has happened, with who, and when? (Øskal Lorentzen 2009)

She also says that the structure of the Turkish language allows her more freedom to play than Norwegian and English do:

> In Turkish it can take you a very long time to find out if it was a man who did it and when it was done, because the verb comes at the end, and if I talk in third person you would have no idea if it's a man or a woman. In Turkish you can play with the language because the sentence construction is different, but in English and Norwegian you have subject, subject, verb, object, so you know who did what immediately. You can't wait until the end. So when I think in English and Norwegian I have to be more organized, while in Turkish I can disappear into the forest of words. (Øskal Lorentzen 2009)

Januzaj says that one language definitely influences the other, and that he can see traces of his Albanian in his Norwegian, but because he has been away from Kosovo and the Albanian language for so long, the opposite is also true that his Albanian is being affected and transformed by Norwegian. And like Mahoutchi, Licon Cabrera, and Øskal Lorentzen he thinks the mistakes are adding to the language:

> Consequently it's clear that I do struggle with sentence structure, and I will struggle with it for as long as I live, because it is not the same, so when I write in Norwegian I'm not translating, but writing with the vocabulary I have. Still, there are things I think are correct and that I also use when I speak, that turn out to be wrong. It's a little silly, but I would like it if they would let me write in this slightly distorted way. Not that I want Norwegian to be spoken like that in ten or hundred years, that's not what I want, but a form of micro impact. Those of us who come to Norway are like those meteorites who don't burn all the way through the atmosphere,

> but that make a dent, or a little hole, that's maybe what enriches a language, that makes it change or get a few spots, freckles or whatever you want to call it, it's a little sun on the Norwegian language and you might get a little sun burnt. (Januzai 2008)

What Januzaj talks about here and which has been previously alluded to by several of the other interviewees, can be discussed in post-colonial terms of abrogation and appropriation of a language. According to Ashcroft Griffiths and Tiffin (2002) the language is moulded through a rejection of how the 'standard' language functions in the 'centre', then usage and variant and syntax influence from other languages changes, re-shapes, and adapts the language into a new language that can be used in new ways, or like Januzaj says, 'sligtly distorted' ways, leaving a 'micro' impact' on the language. Through appropriation 'the local writer is thus able to represent his her world to the coloniser (and others) in the metropolitan language, and at the same time to signal and emphasise a difference from it' (Ashcroft 2009: 175).

Just like Januzaj thinks his first language Albanian has been transformed because he has been away from it for so long, so does Hecq think her first language French has been influenced by English. Today Dominique Hecq writes mostly in English, and tells of how this has influenced her French: 'I've just written four entries for a dictionary of creative women in French and that was torture for me because I realized how rusty my French has become because it's really anglicized' (Hecq 2008). But in the beginning of her English writing career, she experienced the opposite:

> When I first started sending off poetry for instance, in English, sometimes I got rejection slips and people thought I had translated myself from the French into the English. ... I was using more Latinate words than I am using now, now my ... vocabulary is much more compact I suppose, and much more Anglo-Saxon, ... it's quite incredible. Yes and the syntax I suppose, has also been bared with years of use (Hecq 2008).

Like Øskal Lorentzen pointed out with Norwegian, English, and Turkish, there is, according to El-Zein, a clear difference between writing in Arabic and English, especially in relation to grammatical structure. He says there are several important differences but he focuses on two significant elements in Arabic that makes the writing so different, and these are also elements he loves about the Arabic language:

> One very important distinction, ... is the fact that we don't have singular and plural. We have double, or dual, and the form for dual is very musical, it's beautiful. But the other probably more important aspect [is] that, 'to have' and 'to be' are not verbs in Arabic. A verb has to be an action, so the subject is a doer and the object is a person done to..., so whenever you have to have or to be, and all the shades of that, which is ... to have, to have had, to have become, to have been and all the tenses, ... they're called nominal sentences, so they don't have verbs (El-Zein 2009).

Similarly to the other interviewees, El-Zein believes that one language influences the other, in his case that Arabic influences English and vice versa, and that this can lead to him misunderstanding the meaning of some words:

> The kind of mistake that I do is, I still find that, for example, in *Leave to Remain*, [I'm] talking about one particular massacre that happened in Lebanon where I describe it as scores of people got killed, and a friend of mine said why did you say scores, I thought hundreds got killed, I said, but scores means lots, no he said and it turned out score means tens not hundreds, so this is the kind of mistake. I'm sure I did a lot earlier but I think with time you ... start to clean that up (El-Zein 2009).

The influence of a first language on a second in writing, when one can see traces of another language in the writing, may lead us to question if this is caused by the writer translating from their first language to their second, and although this might occasionally be the case, as discussed in Chapter four, and as became apparent when talking to my interviewees, not many translingual writers use translation as part of their writing process.

Only one of my interviewees uses translation as a significant part of his creative/writing process, and that is, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Elyas Poorgholam, but even he is working towards using less translation in his work. Most of the other interviewees have tried using translation at some point but either found that they can only make limited use of it, or can't use it at all. As indicated by for example Ashcroft (2009: 159) who distinguishes between 'translation' and 'transformation', the interviewees all underline that in most cases it is more about rewriting in another language than translation. Despard, for example, used translation just in the beginning when she started to write in Norwegian, and it was to be able to use the material she already had, and not because she needed to write in English first. Once the material had been translated she started writing directly in Norwegian and has done so since. She does talk about how, when she translated from English to Norwegian, her cultural knowledge in some instances caused her to include explanations in her writing:

> When I started to write about English things in Norwegian I realised that I simplified, and vulgarised, and made it a bit like a tourist thing, made it a bit exotic, it was actually a bit scary. For example, I have written a poem about the cathedral in York in English, but when I translated it to Norwegian I started to explain, the kind of things a translator can't do, but that I as the poet felt that I could. And it turned into a tourist attraction, and I didn't like that (Despard 2008).

Licon Cabrera says that he has used translation for example when he wrote *Yuxtas,* because each poem had to be in both Spanish and English, and when he wrote about Mexico the poem came in Spanish and when he wrote about Australia it would come in English. Similarly, Januzaj has translated one of the poems in *Smilets Rygg* from Albanian, and he spent much time working on it, going back and forth but he couldn't translate it directly. 'Along the way it has developed and changed, and now it may be fifty percent a different poem, a new poem that I have adapted for the Norwegian reader. When one writes a sentence [in two different languages] there is rarely anything that is the same, therefore I think translation is too

difficult' (Januzaj 2008). As long as she doesn't have to, Øskal Lorentzen stays away from translation. 'I'm a terrible translator. I'm not loyal, that's one thing I like about literature, it has no loyalty, I think differently in Turkish and in Norwegian' (Øskal Lorentzen 2009).

Mahoutchi says the same, and has concluded that she is a very bad translator of her own work: 'I can translate other people's work but not my own. I have to do something different in English' (Mahoutchi 2008). This is similar to how Al-Hallaq thinks about translation, that if the original idea, the inspiration comes to him in English, if his creative process is in English he does not know how to translate it:

> Writing is feeling you know, and when your feeling comes in English, you write in English, when come in Arabic, you write in Arabic, so translation it doesn't work. For that I always talk to my translator: this is for you to translate to Arabic, not for me, my feeling was in English (Al-Hallaq 2008).

Translation is not something El-Zein uses a lot either. In fact, he tries to limit his use of translation significantly. When he has translated something it has not been a whole piece of writing, it has been place and street names, but he says he prefers to use the Arabic names even when the text is English because the setting of his books have been middle eastern and then it has felt more authentic too keep the local names. Hecq on the other hand, has never used translation from French to English as part of her creative process: 'No, I translate myself back into French, not the other way around. I translate other people's work from the French into English' (Hecq 2008).

Although most of them do not employ translation as a frequently used tool in their writing, when writing fiction or poetry in their second language most of my interviewees acknowledge that the subject matter of what they write is influenced by the language they write in. The language doesn't limit the world they present, it might shape it somewhat and lead them in surprising directions, but it doesn't dictate their ability to engage with any material. As

discussed in Chapter four, cultural meaning is not embedded in a particular language (Ashcroft 2009). 'The language we speak is very often crucial in establishing who we are. But it need not define the limits to what we can be. In fact, the idea of the horizon of a language blurs those limits because it reveals yet again, that the limits of speech, what Wittgenstein calls the limits of my world, are a matter for speakers rather than languages' (Ashcroft 2009: 96-97). The language one speaks does not influence the way one thinks as proposed by the Saphir-Whorf hypothesis (Whorf 1952). Language does not dictate how one 'sees' the world, nor does it shape someone's ideas: 'to possess a language is to possess a technique, not a firmly bound system of knowledge about the world' (Ashcroft 2009: 150).

Licon Cabrera, for example agrees that the language he writes in influences what he writes, but he is careful to note that the influence is more in the sound of the language than the topic chosen, the sounds, rhythms and structures of one language shapes his poems:

> English is not determining my point of view of poetry. But I like the way I can create let's say two different poems, I mean one poem can be very different, not by the meanings but by the sounds, and also the structure, seeing as the syntaxes can be slightly different and also when I translate my own poems, I don't really translate them, I try to get a little bit a part ... from what I'm saying [in the other version] so it can sound very different (Licon Cabrera 2008).

When writing in her second language Mahoutchi is very aware of how English influences what she writes about, and attributes this influence to limitations in her vocabulary. She does however underline that it does not in any way cause her to switch language, but that there are at times what she calls moments of struggle, devastation and conflict, when she can't find the right words to express what she wants or when she realised she has used the wrong word or expression and has to go back a step or two, or start over. Of course this source of conflict when struggling with her second language can also fuel her creativity. Øskal Lorentsen also refers to a form of struggle when she talks about her thoughts going in different directions

depending on the language she writes in, and that this again can greatly influence what she writes:

> My collection of poems I wrote in English initially, but it was a funded project and they wanted the writer to write in their first language, so they told me I had to work on these poems in Turkish. I tried to translate and rewrite them in Turkish, but I couldn't, because when I think in Turkish I think about completely different things, and also I work a lot with image connotations and sound, and suddenly the sounds didn't fit anymore. I have rewritten them in Turkish but they turned out to be completely different poems with different endings, in one there's death in the other life. (Øskal Lorentzen 2009)

Januzai in particular believes that the cultural orientation in which he writes is influenced by the language he writes in. He wishes he could write Norwegian in a more ethnically Albanian way, and thinks he would be of more use to the Norwegian society then, but he finds it very difficult, in particular because he has been away from his country and his language for so long and he is starting to forget.

El-Zein is confident the language one writes in influences what one writes about and underlines how much the idea of who you are writing for, you audience, is part of this influence:

> It would be great if you could escape it, but you can't escape the fact that the language that you write in determines the kind of audience that you have in mind. ...When I'm writing I would have in mind two kinds of audiences, almost subconsciously..., it is conscious but just under the surface of consciousness, and there's on the one hand somebody living in Leichardt maybe or in Neutral Bay who knows nothing about the middle east, but who is intelligent enough and who reads books obviously and is interested in [my topic]. That already determines a kind of audience, but at the same time I also have in mind a lot the Lebanese or Arabic expatriates who know a lot about the middle east, shares a lot of my experiences, ...and that effects the writing ... because you have to make decisions a lot of the time, do I explain

> this or not, I'm talking about ... something in the Middle East. What do I assume people know? I think all of these things are bound up with the language that you are writing in and they come up much more [because I'm writing in English]. If I was writing in Arabic I just wouldn't think about that, simply because the number of people who can speak Arabic and don't know the Middle East is small (El-Zein 2009).

This illuminates how migrant writers, with different cultural and/or language backgrounds, through their writing and the subject matter of their writing, not only directs the writing towards a certain audience, but also leads the reader in a certain direction. Although Poorgholam agrees with El-Zein that when writing in his second language it influences the subject matter of what he writes about, he does not think it limits his possible readers in any way. Of course the fact that Norwegian is the language he writes in limits the initial readership significantly, but I believe Poorgholam here means that any writing can be translated to any language and thereby allow for a world audience:

> I think any writer in any country writes for the whole world. For example when Ibsen wrote about Nora I don't think he wrote for only Norwegians, you can see that *A Doll's House* and *An Enemy of the People* has been and still is put on all over the world. If you write what people want or find room for in their hearts, then you have written for the whole world, it doesn't matter where you sit and where you write. I want a world audience. (Poorgholam 2008)

I have discussed my interviewees understanding of creativity and their creative process as well as aspects related to how they experience writing in a second language, hence it is time to bring creativity and language together to discuss a key question for this study – whether the interviewees experience similarities or differences in creative process when writing in different languages. The majority of my interviewees believe that there is a clear difference in the writing process depending on the language they write in, and they acknowledge the sense of freedom they feel when writing in their second language. Although they identify

limitations connected to their ability to master their second language, such as their vocabulary and knowledge of the grammatical structures, there are other forms of historical and cultural limitations imposed by their first language that they are, to their appreciation, free from in their second language.

Both Poorgholam and Mahoutchi talk about the historical and cultural traditions that influence their writing in their first language. Poorgholam notes how a language can shape his fictional characters and indicates with this how particular language creates particular worlds:

> Yes there is a difference, because when you write in Persian you enter the Persian world, you are surrounded by traditions, concepts, expressions, everything becomes Persian to you. When you write in Norwegian, everything is different, you use mostly Norwegian traditions as examples, and even some of the characters though they are Iranian become more Norwegian, it might not be right, but it's the way it is because language dominates and you are captured by the language. (Poorgholam 2008)

Mahoutchi agrees with this, but is also very aware of the freedom writing in English allows her:

> ... Coming from my culture... [I have] this mega narrative poetry on my shoulder and when I write in English that's not there, and that's so good because I am me and... I can think anything and I can take myself anywhere I want to take myself, and I can make any mistake I want to. It's really... refreshing. I'm kind of... freeing myself of that historical mega narrative on my shoulders. But in Farsi... it's just like my eyes change, my mind changes because there are so many historical moments and... fables. ...Even writing modern stories in Farsi it still influences you, but when you write in English it's not there. ...It's a binary of presence and absence; in Farsi I start from presence but when I write in English I start from absence, that one creates this way, this one creates that way. (Mahoutchi 2008)

It is clear from this that Mahoutchi's use of her second language also facilitates her creativity, and this is often the case for other writers.

Writing in English also leads to some concerns for El-Zein and he talks about how he sometimes feels like an impostor when he chooses to write in English, because someone who has this language as their mother tongue is more likely to find better words and more correct sentence structure than he does. These concerns are, however, outweighed by the liberation of writing in a second language:

> I think [it] is very important, ... that liberating sense of writing in another language. There's a lot of politics with your own language, things that you feel your own culture and language don't allow you to say, or ask you not to talk about, ... and so writing in another language, [although it] is not [necessarily] ... deliberate, [it] certainly it's a by-product that you go in and say look I'm writing in another language there's a lot more things I can talk about, and I can talk about things differently, and that's liberating (El-Zein 2008).

El-Zein also revels in the joy of discovering new words and how this is also a form of liberation because these words provide opportunities not available in ones first language:

> The other side of ... [reading and writing in another language is] the discovery element, I love that. You'd be reading or writing something, you'd be looking for a word or you come across a word, and it's a word you've never come across before and it's fantastic, it's wonderful, and it's much more likely to happen to you if you're writing in a language that is not your own, and I love that. (El-Zein 2008)

Both Licón Cabrera and Januzaj say that there is clearly a difference in the creative process according to what language they write in, and like Poorgholam and Mahoutchi they talk about the historical and cultural limitations directing the writing in the first language versus the freedom provided by the second language. Januzaj also talks about how those freedoms awarded by the second language, the freedom from cultural and historical limitations, can also

become limitation which is imposed by the second language. This is exemplified by him earlier when he talked about having to perform at the same level as someone who is writing in their first language while at the same time not having the cultural and historical background related to that language. Al-Hallaq agrees with this and claims that the most significant difference in the writing process is the lack of confidence – the insecurities related to not knowing everything about a language and the culture in which it is used. 'When I write in Arabic, I really have no fear of anything, but in English I have to ask if it has been written before, but I don't have to ask that in Arabic, I know' (Al-Hallaq 2008).

Although Despard does not think that there is any difference in the actual creative process when writing in Norwegian or English, she points to the fact that 'the result is very different'. 'But it's a long time since I wrote in English now, so I don't know, but I think [the creative process] was the same' (Despard 2008). Similarly, El-Zein does not believe there is a fundamental difference in the writing process according to the language he writes in, but that the creative process might be influenced by the fact that there is a difference in his relationship to the two languages. He also points out that he writes fiction in English, and not in Arabic, so he can't be certain that there are no differences to his creative process in the two languages. He does however, underline that he is still very aware of the fact that it is his second language he is writing in and not his first, and that he believes writing in English slows the writing process down somewhat.

The in-betweenness of the writer who writes in a second language or more than one language is apparent in most of the interviewees' accounts at some point or another in the interviews, but it is brought up in the following by Øskal Lorentzen. As she has mentioned earlier, she also emphasises the opportunities to play with words – with language, which writing in a second language allows her. And, she mentions the freedom created by writing in a second language, how this freedom is not only there because she as a writer doesn't know the rules; it is also, she says, that the people around her attribute her actions to her culture and her first

language, so even if she breaks the rules in Norwegian, the community allows it, because it assumes she is portraying typical Turkish traits:

> I almost feel like I have no language, I have no personality. When I think and write in English I think a lot about the sounds and the words, and you can in a way play with them, and they can have double meaning. And then when I work with Norwegian, again I'm in another setting when I play with the words. I think that in Turkish I'm more serious. Because in Turkish I know the structure, in Turkish I know that dinner is served in a particular way, and when I change this structure I am seen as a rebel, and I'm not meant to do that, so I have to express myself matter-of-factly and so on, but living in another culture provides me with a lot of freedom. Whatever I do people think it's how Turkish people do it, so I'm not seen as a rebel, and that gives me freedom. When you are an immigrant you have freedom to interpret and play, you can do what you want. (Øskal Lorentzen 2009)

This writing between languages is transgressive and allows the writer and the writing to push boundaries of cognition while at the same time freeing inhibitions. Mahoutchi also remarks on this. Dominique Hecq has not written fiction in French in a long time, and therefore she was unable to draw any conclusions as to whether her creative process would be different if she also wrote in French. She did however, indicate that writing in her second language provided her with a 'felt' distance that she didn't believe the French language would provide her with, and that this feeling of distance probably points to her writing process being different if she did write in both languages. She feels that English acts as a form of 'buffer' and this too refers to the transgressive element of writing in a second language – her inhibitions are freed. It is this point of both conflict and liberation when engaging with the creative process as a writer in a second language that fuels creativity.

7.3 Reflection 3 – The In-between

The fact that the 'main' title of this thesis is 'Residing Between Languages' indicates how central the concept of the in-between is to writers who write in a second language, and also to writers like, for example, Siri Hustvedt (2006) who writes in her first language English, but has been exposed enough to her second language Norwegian to recognise the feeling of the in-between. Hustvedt (2006) grew up in the US, her mother was Norwegian and her father American. She travelled to Norway several times during her upbringing. This is how she introduces the topic of in-between:

> My father once asked me if I knew where yonder was. I said I thought *yonder* was another word for *there*. He smiled and said, "No, yonder is between here and there." This little story has stayed with me for years as an example of linguistic magic: It identified a new space – a middle region that was neither here nor there – a place that simply didn't exist for me until it was given a name (Hustvedt 2006: 1).

I discuss in-betweenness in Chapter four where I look at the theoretical underpinnings to creativity and language, and again earlier in this chapter during the discussion of the topics that emerged from the interviews I undertook in Australia and in Norway. Even though in-betweenness already has been covered extensively in this thesis I will reflect further on how issues related to my own sense of in-betweenness has contributed to the writing and re-writing of the short stories written for this thesis.

Sometimes I feel as if I am floating between two languages, and that I have chosen one of those languages, English, to write in because I feel it facilitates my writing better than Norwegian, even if English is not the language I master better 'on paper'. When I write in English my writing is influenced by Norwegian and vice versa. As indicated earlier in this thesis, I feel at home in both languages and as if I belong to neither; that I reside *between*

languages. When Hustvedt (2006) extrapolates further on the word 'yonder', she thinks of it as

> ...one of those wonderful words I later discovered linguists call "shifters" – words distinct from others because they are animated by the speaker and move accordingly. In linguistic terms this means that you can never really find yourself *yonder*. Once you arrive at yonder tree, it becomes *here* and recedes forever into that imaginary horizon. Words that wobble attract me. The fact that *here* and *there* slide and slip depending on where I am is somehow poignant, revealing both the tenuous relation between words and things and the miraculous flexibility of language (Hustvedt 2006: 1-2).

This close-up of the word 'yonder' illuminates the experience of being in-between languages, because even though I might feel as if I am caught in the in-between, it is not a vacuum, there is still movement a sense of dynamism; I am still moving between languages, learning, changing and creating, and maybe even more so precisely because I am in-between. However, I have access to two languages, but I will never possess them completely, I will always be in-between, or as Luc Sante puts it: 'I can cross the border between English and French, although I can't straddle it' (Sante 2003: 147). Some writers on the other hand, like Santiago, do at times experience the in-between as a vacuum: 'Many times, in conversations with friends or relatives, I have found myself in limbo between Spanish and English, wanting to say something that I, caught up in a frustrating linguistic void, could not express' (Santiago 2003: 131). No matter how one experiences the in-between, it does – through being in the middle where, as discussed in chapter four, things 'pick up speed' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 25) – provide conflict from which creativity can be generated. Because the middle, the between, is fluid and can take the creative process in many different directions as illustrated by the rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari 1988), the nature and source of conflict changes continuously. It can be based on issues as different as not finding the right word, to questioning choice of language, to feeling deprived because one has been removed or has

been forced to leave one's home country and one's first language. Santiago, who is from Puerto Rico exemplifies this when she says:

> Yet I often regret having left my island, my people, my language. And this regret at times takes the form of anger, resentment over the fact that I did not choose to come to the United States. They carried me off against my will. However, it is this childish anger that nourishes my writing. It makes me face the empty page and fill it with words that try to understand and explain to others what it is to live in two worlds, one North American and the other Puerto Rican. It is this anger that engages my soul and guides my fingers, pointing their way among the smiles and laughs that are so specific in English and that in Spanish are two words that require support by expressing, at times, not the pleasure but the sadness behind them. Doleful smile. Anguished laugh. Words between teeth. And it is that anger that makes it possible for me to pardon who I am (Santiago 2003: 134).

My reflections related to the in-between, the conflict it creates, how it is different from being stuck, and how my experience would change if residing between languages actually made me feel immobilised – as if I was caught in a vacuum, has materialised in many different ways in my short stories. For the story 'Spit Junction', for example, where the character is forever waiting for a bus, the idea came to me as I myself was waiting for the bus. Several days in a row the bus I would normally take was, due to road work on Military Road in Neutral Bay, delayed for an hour or more, and because there are only two buses that go from that stop directly to Macquarie University I had to wait. I saw the same people come and go during that daily hour of waiting over several days, and I thought: what if they think this is all I do; wait for the bus. What if I was the girl that couldn't move forward or backward, but was stuck in-between at a bus stop? Jen, the protagonist in 'Spit Junction', became that girl. Similarly, the thought that it is an eternal balance to keep up my knowledge and my skills in both languages started the generation of ideas for another story. Sometimes I feel as if I have no language and that I can't develop my knowledge further in any of the languages. Then for a brief moment I

would think that maybe the only way to improve in one language is to give up the other language, so I would have to try my best to forget Norwegian, or English. Would I be able to, would the language let me? Then I thought: what if this was the case with my emotions? What if I was unable to mature and to learn from past relationships, what if I was so 'stuck' in past relationships that I couldn't develop or start new ones? What if I didn't want to? These musings led to the story 'Agnes'.

When I was researching how this notion of existing between languages occupies so many writers who write in a second language, I started to think about language in relation to location, and again, how I sometimes feel that I don't belong to Norwegian or English. Was this a form of dislocation? Then I realised there is no *one* word for dislocation in Norwegian, there are four words for dislocation and they can only be used in relation to bodily dislocation as in the sense of a dislocated shoulder, not a whole person. Subsequently these thoughts were incorporated into the story I was writing at the time: 'Magpies on Seven Corners'. The initial idea for this story however, came from shopping. When I go shopping I often find other people's shopping lists in shopping baskets or trolleys, or even on the floor, and sometimes I take a quick look at them to see what's on the lists. When I'm in Australia I speak, think, dream, and write in English, but my shopping lists are for some reason always written in my first language Norwegian. Although I have tried to understand it, I still don't know why I write them in Norwegian, but the idea that someone could find my shopping list if I lost it and then try to interpret it, sparked the idea for this short story. According to Lodge (1992) lists can be very useful in fiction:

> On the face of it, a mere catalogue of discrete items would seem to be out of place in a story focused on character and action. But fictional prose is wonderfully omnivorous, capable of assimilating all kinds of nonfictional discourse – letters, diaries, depositions, even lists – and adapting them to its own purposes. Sometimes the list is reproduced in its own characteristically vertical form, contrasting with the surrounding discourse (Lodge 1992: 62).

I decided to use the shopping list not only as a thread throughout 'Magpies on Seven Corners', but also to present an actual list at the beginning as a contrast to the rest of the story in line with what Lodge (1992) suggests in the above quote.

In 2007/2008, when I went to Norway for six weeks to undertake the interviews with my interviewees, I also spent time trying to re-draft and edit some of my short stories. This presented a new angle to the in-between, because I was no longer writing in English in a country where I was otherwise also steeped in English, instead I was writing in English while being surrounded by Norwegian. To begin with I didn't take much notice, because the two languages co-existed perfectly, similar to Hustvedt's experience when she went to Norway for a year during high school:

> I returned to Norway in 1972 and attended gymnasium in Bergen for a year. That time my family was not with me, I lived with my aunt and uncle outside the city and took the bus to school. Sometime during the initial weeks of my stay, I had a dream. I cannot remember its content, but the dream took place in Norwegian with English subtitles. I will always think of that dream as limbo. Its cinematic code expressed precisely my place between two cultures and two languages (Hustvedt 2006: 3).

Then, after I had been in Norway approximately ten to twelve days, the Norwegian had – as discussed in 'Reflection 2' where I talk about competitive brain plasticity – reclaimed some of its space in my brain, and I was not only speaking Norwegian, I was also thinking and dreaming in Norwegian. This is where revision of my writing became a new experience. In a much more pronounced way, I became aware of and started questioning my actual process of writing – of putting words down on paper. It felt as if I was the actor in a movie and the action had been slowed down to help me understand, but the slow motion had the opposite effect; rather than making me confident that I was doing the right thing, it made me more insecure. It made me look at words I had chosen like I had never seen them before, which is related to what Hustvedt describes in the following:

> Every once in a while, I find myself staring long and hard at a word I've written, a word like *than*, and I wonder what in heaven's name it means and if I have spelled it correctly. At moments like this I come face-to-face with the utterly arbitrary and mysterious character of language. The sign or, as semioticians would have it, the signifier, the inscribed letters t-h-a-n, seems to float away from meaning and sits there on the page in front of me stark naked and absurd (Hustvedt 2006: 165).

This extreme close-up of almost every word I had written made it difficult to let go and keep re-writing or to write anything new. It was as if I became more aware of the fact that I was writing in another language than the one I grew up with. I started to question every word and every syntactical construction, and soon it all started to look and sound like Norwenglish.

That subsequently made me question the choice I had made to write in English. I was afraid someone would catch me doing this, betraying my own language, my first language – and not very well either. According to Ferré, when one moves between languages, one has to be careful not to get lost in the words:

> Sensory experiences are related to words, and while in one language a word can bring a dead person to life, in another that person will remain forever defunct. In traversing linguistic borders, there is a real danger of finding yourself stranded in the connecting labyrinths of words, of losing contact with the springs of the unconscious from which ideas flow (Ferré 2003: 138).

This was exactly what I felt, I was lost, I could see each letter that constituted a word, but I couldn't understand the meaning of the words that constituted the sentence. Ilan Stavans says: 'A polyglot … has as many loyalties as homes. Spanish is my right eye, English my left; Yiddish my background and Hebrew my conscience. …Each of the four represents a different set of spectacles (near-sight, bifocal, night-reading, etc) through which the universe is seen' (Stavans 2003: 114). I don't have as many spectacles as Stavans but it seemed the prescriptions for the two I had were wrong, my vision was all blurry, and I had to re-focus

several times. This period of slow motion and extreme close-up lasted several weeks and my brain didn't seem to adjust completely to the reversal of language use and I couldn't write as normal again until I returned to Australia. I guess my real concern here is if I decide to move back to Norway, will I be able to write in English? I don't know the answer to that, but this question brings me to another element of the in-between that has concerned me, namely the sense of loss and want that writing in-between can evoke.

One's second language, as discussed in 'Reflection 2', infringes on the brain power of one's first language (Doidge 2007), and this might lead to feeling as if one has lost, if not the language itself, then at least one's ability to master the first language completely. During the last year of writing my thesis, I have lost an uncle and an aunt both of whom I was very close to. My uncle died of cancer, and my aunt died when her body shut down as a result of her frontal lobe dementia. I think being away from home and not being able to go to their funerals or to be with my family, in one way magnified the sense of loss – not only the loss of two people I cared about but also the loss, or absence, of my first language – because during that time I felt a strong urge to speak Norwegian, though my opportunities were limited since my friends in Australia all speak English. My way of dealing with this loss was to write and reflect further on this and related topics. The short story 'And you, I'll lose twice' is a result of these reflections. I have mentioned earlier in this thesis and in this reflection how residing and writing between languages at times can make a writer feel like he or she has no language and sometimes even no personality, 'And you, I'll lose twice', was written with my aunt Lillian in mind, who didn't reside between languages where a sense of conflict would inspire her to create and write, instead she lost both her personality and the one language she had completely.

8. MAGPIES ON SEVEN CORNERS – A SHORT STORY

Tamponger

1 kg poteter

1 fedd hvitløk

1 lammelår

1 bunt fersk rosmarin

1 pk servietter

3 -4 sjalottløk

6 gulerøtter

Sopp

Sukkererter

2 flasker rødvin

2 flasker hvitvin

Vodka

Gin

5pk smertestillende

"What does it mean?" Chad looked from the round and neat blue words on the list he had found outside their door to Doug. Doug was running his index finger under every word as

if to make sure he got the real meaning.

"Does this look like English to you?"

"No."

"Then why do you think I would understand it?"

"Well, you did take German in high school."

"So did you dude, we skipped those classes together remember. Besides I don't think this is German." Doug leaned over the list and looked closer at the circles with lines through them, he wondered what they would sound like when spoken out loud.

Chad had pushed aside the pieces of hose and matchsticks they used when smoking, and sat down on the windowsill, no longer interested in the list. "Hey there's a dude hanging from a rope across the road."

"What! Is he dead?"

"No man, he's washing windows. Actually he's talking to someone on his phone."

"That's not interesting."

"Maybe not, but you're on to something. That would be the best way to kill yourself, just make a noose, put it around your neck and bungy off a fourteen floor building. That rush will be the last thing you feel."

"You're sick. I want to understand this list, Chad. There's something going on here, there has to be a reason why we found it. Come on, I need your help. I get that there's alcohol involved, but what does the rest mean? Who do you think it belongs to?"

"I don't know, and I don't care, it looks like a shopping list. That's less interesting

than the window cleaner."

"You can tell a lot about a person from their shopping list. I saw a show once; I think it was on Discovery, where they said a shopping list is like a fingerprint of someone's personality. It's not only what people put on their list but it's in what order they put it, what kind of paper they use, what type of pen and so on. I bet we could even find out if it's a man or a woman just from the items on this list."

"Duh, that list might not be in English or German but it's quite clear it's a chick's list."

"Why? Are you pretending to know everything again?"

"Look at the first word, it's pretty international, looks a lot like tampons to me."

"Ok, so we've established it's a woman." Doug was a bit pissed off he wasn't the one who picked up on that. It was the first word on the list, and he was meant to be the smart one.

"I think she's gorgeous."

"Yeah, she looks sweet."

"No, Lauren's gorgeous. Wait till you see her in real life."

I tried not to look at him when he said this, while I put on my 'I'm cool and have no problem being just friends with you' face. I didn't want him to know how hurt I was because he had already made his decision. We were getting a divorce. The separation period wasn't for us to work out our differences after all; it was for him to find someone new. Apparently we had grown apart, and I knew this as well as he did. How cool would I have to be? Would I

have to discuss body shape and cleavage as well? She was gorgeous, and maybe 22, I was not. A 16-year-old's dress wouldn't fit me like a glove.

I kept my distance all night, I laughed in all the right places and his friends still liked me. He made roast chicken with lemon peel under the skin. It was juicy and if it had been the day before I would have wanted more, but now I just wanted to vomit on him. Can you choke someone with lemon peel? If you accidently push it down someone's throat, is it murder? If only my thoughts would shut up. They're not making any sense. Maybe my mind is breaking into little pieces and will flow out of my ears one thought at the time and then scatter across the alley behind Cafe Havana like a field of dandelions. I'm going to have to dig them up before winter.

I wanted to go home, all the way home to Norway. I wanted to sit in my sister's kitchen and drink tea. I still do. She knows me, I could speak my own language, but I wouldn't have to say anything, she'd know. Right then his balcony looked nice, but I couldn't go out there. The minute I was alone I would start crying, and you can't just sob and think that will change anything. Instead, I stayed. I told jokes, people laughed, and I got angrier and angrier. He isn't that good looking really, his nose is too big. Why did he find someone new first? I wanted it to be me. If only I'd known we were looking.

I shouldn't have had that last drink. I should have just said "no". He said there was nothing wrong with me, I was a sweet juicy apple, but he preferred oranges. What a stupid thing to say. I'm not an apple, I'm a mango; everybody likes mangoes. So I had another drink, and as I was about to leave I received a text message from my friend Liz, she wondered how I was doing. I looked up from the message, not looking at him, not at anyone, and I said: "That was my booty call, I have to go." I think I can recover from this night, but can I recover from making up a lover? She might be 22 but I'm the one behaving like a 22-year-old. Something had changed.

“Dude, she’s baking bread again.” Doug looked over at Chad who after making a small mountain of the ash on the floor, now was forming a pattern with his fingernail clippings on their cardboard lounge table. It looked like a leaf, a dirty fingernail leaf. Chad was staring at it like he’d never seen something so beautiful before. “Hello, say something. Can’t you smell that?”

“Hmm. I could be an artist, I just need my talent to hibernate a bit longer. What is that smell? Man, I’m hungry.”

“That’s what I’ve been saying. Let’s go over and see if she’ll give us some? Come on, you’re the one she likes. I tried last week but she looked through the peephole and didn’t even open the door.” While he talked Doug balanced on the back legs of his chair and Chad knew it was only a matter of seconds before it would tip too far and crash to the floor. Depending on the angle he would either land in the pile of newspapers, subscription courtesy of Chad’s mum who thought knowing the news would make them both want to graduate, or he would hit the speakers and cut his head open. It would be the twelfth time to the emergency room, eight stitches every time.

“Are you any closer to finding out who wrote the list?” When Doug answered a question he always leaned forward so Chad hoped his question would prevent another head opening event. He’d much rather have some warm bread with melting butter and maybe some Virginia ham than take Doug to the emergency room. Doug didn’t answer, instead he shook his head, which was not a great idea when balancing on a chair; he landed on the newspapers.

This is my location, I am located right here in my living room on Seven Corners in Minneapolis, sitting on a chair covered in grey felt, leaning over a beige desk with old coffee spills. Am I mislocated here, or maybe dislocated? In Norwegian dislocated is four words: *gått ut av ledd*. But that's only when you refer to a joint, like a knee or a shoulder. A person can't be dislocated in Norwegian; you can in English.

I feel different, new, but it's hard to navigate, like I have a pile of hot coals in front of me and I don't know how to get past them. But, if I manage to get through I'll be happy, still dislocated, but happy. Not happy like they are in the movies; normal happy, but I want to be angry too. I don't shout enough.

Sometimes I wish I was a magpie sitting high up on a thin rotten branch of a tree, defying gravity. Then when I saw someone I didn't like, maybe because their hair colour was annoying, or they had ugly shoes, or their name was Lauren, I could just release my gripping claws, and let myself fall, like a light piece of paper, making no sound. As I was less than two inches above her head I'd flap my wings, open my beak and close it again around a chunk of her blond hair. Then, I would take off with all my wing strength, and leave her with a bald spot. That would make me happy.

"There was a blinding light and then my mind went blank. I mean completely blank. I couldn't even remember my name."

"Your name is Doug and no one feels like that after falling on their ass. Besides if you had hit your head, the helmet would have protected you. Why did you play ice hockey

anyway? You've never been interested in sport."

"I've always been interested I just never had the opportunity. I spent my childhood in Live Oaks Florida, you know this, you were there; not a whole lot of ice available. It was my dream dude." Doug gave Chad a look he hoped resembled a disappointed five-year-old's.

"Doesn't Todd Anderson play on the hockey team? You fuckwit, you just wanted to get to know him so he could introduce you to his sister."

"I'm serious dude. I think my spine was shoved up into my brain. I can't think anymore and my eyes are acting weird. I can only see a narrow square; my eyes have window shutters, purple window shutters that probably came from IKEA."

"Oh stop it and fess up! Wouldn't it have been easier to buy a lot of blueberry muffins? Jessica Anderson works in the food court."

"She does? But I've never seen her there."

"Well you would if you went to the food court at breakfast time."

"I have to start eating breakfast now too?"

"Dude, get it together. By the way, I think I found out what language that list you keep obsessing about is. There's this dude in my chemistry class who's Norwegian, and when I wrote down some of the words I could remember, he said it was either Norwegian or Danish. So I brought home two dictionaries, one Danish/English and one Norwegian/English, from the library."

"You went to the library?"

"Get over it. Anyway, they're on the couch if you want to find out." Chad didn't want to admit that he was curious too, so he sat on the window sill and pretended to look at people

walking in and out of Cafe Havana while he waited for Doug to figure out what language it was and what the words meant. Doug was quiet for about ten minutes before he put both hands up in the air, and shouted "Norwegian!" Then he leant over the note and the dictionary again for a very long time, making little notes with a chewed up pencil that should have been thrown out. Chad had almost fallen asleep with his left cheek pressed against the window when Doug stood up and walked across the room.

"This woman is making herself a final meal, like they do on death row."

"Really, how do you know?"

"I've read the list now, and it's not pretty. Believe me, those items spell out 'sad, lonely, end of the road, there is nothing else to do but to end this'." Doug showed the translated list to Chad.

"That's so sad man. But lamb, if I was gonna top myself I'd have my mum make a complete Thanksgiving dinner and I'd eat the whole dish of sweet potatoes and marshmallows myself. Lamb is so pedestrian."

"So pedestrian? What's wrong with you?"

"I don't know. I'm hungry." They both stopped and looked at each other before they started to walk towards the door.

"Do you smell that?" Doug said.

"Yes. I love that smell, I love it when she bakes bread."

"Bread! She bakes her own bread. She is the only one in this building who doesn't order take out. It's her list. It's Miss Tasty's list."

Chad would never admit it to Doug, but he thought Miss Tasty was hot. How could

someone so hot want to kill themselves, it just didn't make any sense. Doug said it was because she was lonely, and from Norway. There were a lot of suicides in Scandinavia. He also said he thought they should try and find her some friends.

"Maybe we could set her up with your dad?" Doug said. "He's desperate enough I think."

"What? My dad's too old, he's fifty-four."

"So? I think she should be happy someone's taking her out. Miss Tasty could become your stepmom."

"But she's maybe thirty-two, and she doesn't look that bad.

"You have a thing for older women Chadster? Didn't know that about you. She does have a sweet ass, I'll give you that."

"Forget about it Doug, I think you're wrong, she doesn't seem suicidal."

"Have you ever met someone suicidal before? I'm telling you that shopping list is a cry for help."

"How so?" Chad looked at his friend and wondered if he should take the drugs away from him or recommend more.

"Well these are clearly ingredients to her last meal, she's roasting lamb and a lot of it. She's planning to eat like never before. You've seen her, she doesn't eat that much. And that many painkillers combined with vodka and gin but no tonic water, there's only one explanation." Doug handed the list to Chad.

"Are you sure you translated all the words correctly? Actually, I don't care: I'm going over there."

“It’s been two days, get over it man.” Doug had had enough of Chad’s sulking.

“But I think I have a chance. I mean, she wouldn’t have left the door to her bedroom open like that if she didn’t mean anything by it would she?”

“Man, you’re like a chick, interpreting someone’s every move and seeing things that aren’t there.”

“But Doug, that IKEA bed was speaking to me, and so was she. If you hadn’t walked in like some idiot asking for some of her fresh bread, I’m sure I would have had her on her backside in no time. Did you notice she had coloured her hair?”

“Chad, you’ve lost touch with reality. I need you to focus. I don’t care how hot you think she is, she doesn’t want you, and she’s not well. She’s planning to kill herself for fuck’s sake.”

“You don’t know that.”

“Yes I do, and so do you.” Doug waved the shopping list in front of Chad’s face to prove his point. The once so white piece of paper hadn’t been able to resist the change in environment and had surrendered to the handling by Doug’s greasy fingers and turned grey. Chad looked at the sexy round letters that formed each word on the list and thought about undressing her. Then he noticed that some of the letters in the word vodka were smudged by mustard, and he felt anger stirring in his stomach. It was big, like a cannon ball, and it hurt. He imagined how he would throw it up and on its way out of his mouth it would take the shape of a bullet and hit Doug between his eyes right on his pink birthmark. But, before it hit, it would make its way through Doug’s long fringe and fill the apartment with the smell of burning hair.

I would like to be a magpie in springtime. They're allowed to do anything then. We excuse them because it's nesting season. If a magpie loses control during spring we all understand and it wouldn't occur to us to question her actions. When I welcomed that crimson veil resting under my eyelids, and let it drop, no one understood. When I stopped folding his t-shirts and instead let out a scream that reached everyone no telephone needed, and then got the scissors from the third drawer and cut every piece of clothing he had into mulch, no one understood. They still don't.

A magpie can sail up in the air above us, allow the gusts of wind to propel her forward and choose if she wants to dive down and be part of this world. I have no choice. I have to be adult about it, sit across from them at the dinner table, and try not to think about how much he loves that her corn coloured hair just covers her nipples. Her eyes are bright and shiny, the white clear, probably from using 'clear eyes'. If I was a magpie, I could take out her eyes with my beak and no one would wonder why. Magpies love everything shiny.

My instinct is to make salmon with ginger, garlic, and spring onions served with mashed potatoes, but I always made that on our special occasions. I need something to cover the sweet smell from my neighbours. I should roast a lamb. Why did I invite him and his new girl friend to dinner? Why pretend I have moved on if I haven't? Maybe I should invite my neighbours too; they have paid me a lot of attention lately. If only Chad was 15 years older. Maybe I should stop caring about details like that.

"What is that?"

"Lemonade on weet-bix."

"Dude, that's just gross." Doug looked as if Chad had said he ate pigeon poo with rat piss on top.

"Well, we didn't have any milk or sugar, so I thought liquid sugar would solve the problem. It's not bad, a little soggy, but sweet."

"Man, why would you eat that when we have leftover pizza?" Doug sat down on the floor next to Chad and extracted last night's pizza box from under the couch. "Are you trying to lose weight? That won't change anything you know. She's not gonna like you just because your abs are visible, and she's just as likely to top herself." He took one more look at Chad's breakfast before he swallowed a slice of Pepperoni Heaven in two bites.

"Oh, shut up! I'm just tired of pizza. Can we talk about something else?" Chad didn't like the knot that formed in his stomach whenever Doug mentioned a possible suicide, and he wasn't about to tell him that he had seen some of the contents of the shopping list on her kitchen worktop last night. That would just make Doug more convinced he was right. She was the prettiest woman Chad had ever seen. And he was quite confident she liked him too. She had been so honest and direct with him. They sat at the top of the staircase, he on the steps and she leaning on her open door. He told her how worried he was that he had chosen the wrong major, she listened and offered suggestions. Then she told him how she often missed home, and that she was thinking about moving back. She missed her family and speaking her own language. "But I've lived my entire adult life in Minneapolis, I don't know how to be independent in Norway, the Norwegian in me is a child." There was no light in her eyes when she said that, and Chad wanted to kiss her, but was too scared to. When she had to go inside to answer a phone call she thought was from her mum, she leaned over and stroked his cheek

before saying good night.

This decision is too hard to make. I don't know if I should stay or if I should leave; go home. He just let me go, dropped me like an old teapot with a cracked lid. I'm broken and if I move back home now I might leave the handle or the spout behind. If I do leave a piece behind, I want to make sure it's not in his possession; he might share it with her. I don't want to start over again though; I've done it too many times before. At least here I know who my enemies are and how to avoid them. When she wears her witch costume for Halloween, I wonder if she puts on a fake nose, she doesn't need to. That's another thing I need to add to my list: lollies for trick or treating kids.

Chad's pillow felt soft and a little moist, he must have been drooling again. He wanted to sleep more, but the annoying sound wouldn't stop. It couldn't be his alarm because he never set it.

"Chad, Chad, wake up."

Chad never realised how irritating his name sounded. This was how it must be like to be a dad with some irritating little dude chanting, 'dad, dad, wake up'. He turned his face away from the sound and his cheek landed in the same moist spot.

"Dude, I was gonna have that for breakfast, it's only two days old. Wake up you idiot, you're sleeping on the pizza."

Now Doug sounded like a dad, and he was not impressed, but Chad didn't care, his pillow smelt like tomato, mushroom, and garlic and he could almost taste the cheese. There was no way he was waking up from this dream.

"Get out Chad."

"Why?"

"How am I gonna fit anything in this trolley if you sit in it?" Doug looked at Chad and couldn't understand how his six foot, five inches long friend had managed to fold his body into a sitting position.

"This store is too big. I don't want to walk, I want to go back to sleep. Just pile the stuff on top of me. What are we buying anyway, can't be much, we don't have any money."

"We need potatoes and some cut, tobacco's too expensive, so I was thinking tea?" Doug tried to push the trolley towards the vegetables. "You need to limit the weed intake man. You're too damn heavy."

"Ha, ha very funny. You can't gain weight from weed."

"I know that, but those late night brownies aren't doing you any favours."

"Shut up and push, you need the exercise." Chad leaned his head over the edge of the trolley and thought heavy thoughts. He couldn't remember ever being this uncomfortable, but this was getting Doug back for not letting him sleep. "Do you want to stop by Blockbuster on the way home?"

"We can't, we owe too much in late fees. We need money for that and for food. My parents have cut me off for the rest of the month; do you think you'll have any luck?"

“Well, my dad gave me five hundred bucks for food the other day, but I used that to pay Chris for the dope. I guess I can ask my mum, luckily she and dad don’t talk anymore.”

After half an hour deliberating over which tea and in the end deciding on a Lipton, Doug’s hand stopped mid air with the packet of tea in his hand and stared right ahead at the sleep inducing teas.

“These teas help you sleep, they help, that’s what we have to do too Chad. We have to help her; we have to save her, that’s why we found the list.”

“How are we gonna do that?”

“I don’t know, but we’ll think of something.”

It’s a little scary, but I think I’m through. I might be ready to move on. I’ve tasted all the layers. I took my time with my seductive sugar-coated lolly, but it didn’t last long enough. I licked the sugar off. The centre surprised me; it was explosive pepper that made so much damage it took months to heal. But I swallowed it, the acid in my stomach broke it down, it’s gone. I can look at you now and see that your nose is too big, and you are ugly when you laugh.

It wasn’t destiny. I don’t believe in destiny, I do believe in stupidity, my own stupidity. Am I through, am I really? I look out the window and see the fjord, the mountains reflect in the fjord, the seagulls circle a boat, and I can hear their calls. Then the persistent sound of Cafe Havanna’s air conditioner dissolves the mirage and my view is replaced by bricks, yellow and rust coloured bricks that I can touch if I reach my arm out the window. I want to see something other than those bricks, but not an image that is stored in my mind. I

want something new, something I haven't seen before. I am through; it is over.

I will roast the lamb, and then it will be over.

"It smells weird in here. What's that smell?" Chad stood up and went to open the window. They had been sitting across from each other on the floor for two hours not able to come up with any way to interfere with her plan.

"Oh, no! That's lamb. Today is the day; she is making her meal. Come on man, we have to go over there."

"And say what?"

"I don't care, you're the one with the crush, don't you want to save her?"

"Of course I do, but I'm scared now. What if we walk over there and start talking to her, she invites us for dinner, but it's too late? What if we think we can save her but she has already taken the pills? What if she looks alive but is really dead?"

Doug had opened the door and as they were standing there deciding, they heard someone knock on her door. They looked at each other before they both stuck their heads out and looked across the hall. A tall man with his hand on the ass of a woman with long blond hair was standing outside her door. Then, Miss Tasty opened her door and said, "I'm glad you could make it, come on in." Although her wide smile didn't reach her eyes, Chad thought she looked fantastic in that bright pink dress.

Half an hour later Doug was still shaking his head. "I was so sure there was a reason we found this list, but it turns out it's just a list, nothing special about it."

“I know.” Chad tried to hold back his smile; he didn’t want Doug to know just how happy he was. “Well, I guess there’s no point in keeping this anymore.” He lifted the shopping list, now part of a joint, and reached for a match.

9. AND YOU, I'LL LOSE TWICE – A SHORT STORY

That's why Agnes felt guilty. She should have known sooner. She shouldn't have been mad at Lillian. She was her sister and her best friend, she was meant to know if Lillian was healthy or sick; she was meant to know her.

Lillian didn't want to look at Agnes, she stared out the window instead, at the Oslo fjord and the cruise ship Stena Saga as it floated by Oscarsborg Fortress. It looked like a toy boat that was put into a puddle, but was too big for it. Lillian was probably the only one in this building that looked at the view, everyone else had their chair turned towards the door. They looked for visitors. Lillian never did. Agnes hoped it was because she knew her family would be there for her.

The room smelled like wet towels. The nurses tried to air the room several times a day, but Lillian would close the window again. When she first moved in she said the draught hurt her neck.

Someone had placed the journal on top of the book shelf. Agnes dragged the armchair from next to Lillian's bed and over to the shelf, but when she stood on it, her feet sunk into the soft seat and she had to balance on the armrests to be able to reach the journal and take it down. She dragged the chair back again before she sat down to read.

May 25

Hi mum,

We were here today but you slept for two hours. You probably needed the rest. Your sleep seemed very peaceful; maybe you could feel our presence. We bought you a new journal. The

one I'm writing in now. Hope you like the bright blue cover. Your favourite colour is still blue right? See you Sunday.

Anne, Peter, Jonas and Jacob

May 29

Hi Lillian,

You and I laughed a lot watching Tom and Jerry today. Your laughter is the same, even if your face isn't. I can't wait to come back on Saturday.

Agnes

PS: Does anyone know why she has a bruise on her chin and a cut on her upper lip?

Agnes Berg

May 30

The old journal was full and I couldn't reach you at home. The patient fell out of her bed on Tuesday. She has been checked by doctor, and is fine. No concussion.

Nurse Hanson

They are red and they smell nice but I'm not supposed to touch the green parts they hurt

Agnes gave me colours but I couldn't draw them

Tomorrow Oscar is teaching me how to get the things that swim in the fjord out of the water

Lillian my name is

June 3

Lillian needs new pyjamas and her slippers are almost worn out. She's had a good day today, wanted to go for a walk. She didn't want to use her walker, but held on to my arm and walked for ten minutes in the garden.

Nurse Pia

June 6

Hi mum,

Pete and I had a fight today. He thinks it would be better for you to stay here over the summer holidays, and that we should go up north to visit his parents. I am not leaving you here. We will have more fights, but I'm not leaving.

I wish I could talk to you about it.

Aunt Agnes, is too distracted with everything that is happening with Uncle Oscar. I don't want to worry her.

I don't even remember Uncle Oscar. I knew you had a brother, but is he older or younger than you?

Anne

I want to go home with mum she was here today

Agnes brought me cake that tasted like chocolate and I let Oscar eat it all

Oscar is here every day

My name is Lillian

June 12

I need to tell you something Lillian, about Oscar, but I don't know how I can make you understand.

Agnes

June 12

Patient refused blood pressure medication, became agitated, sedation necessary.

Nurse Hanson

Agnes read those entries from twelve weeks ago over and over again. No matter how many times she read it, the entries Lillian had made in the new journal didn't multiply, there were still only two. The nurses told her Lillian still studied the pages of all the journals but they didn't know if she was reading or not. Now she sat across from Agnes in their grandmother's old rocking-chair, arms crossed in front of her, and her mouth moved. She was

chewing on nothing.

Agnes wondered why she always chewed even when there was nothing in her mouth. Was it so she wouldn't forget how to? Her teeth didn't clank together, but her jaw moved around and around without stopping. Even when she talked she kept chewing. Maybe it wasn't so difficult when the only words she used were yes and no. She answered on an in-breath as if she wanted to capture the words and savour them.

Lillian wasn't looking out the window anymore, she was looking at Agnes.

I wish you wouldn't look at me like that, like I'm keeping important information from you, as if I know how to access your brain but won't tell you. I don't know how to any more. I know you haven't gone, but right now it feels like you have; that you have disappeared. Even if your body is here, your mind is gone.

It was a gradual disappearance, as if she was looking for the year she liked best. Lillian's mind travelled through time in several stages to the year she was ten and Agnes was seven. Agnes liked it when Lillian was ten because then she knew where she was and could pretend to go there with her. Lillian wasn't ten anymore; there had been a change, and it wasn't only in her mind. Her face looked empty of expression as if the muscles had released and were no longer attached to the bone, a tent without its poles.

She was somewhere else, a place where Agnes couldn't reach her, where no one could. Agnes had hoped Lillian would stay ten, but the doctors said that was unlikely even if she had stayed ten for five years. She would regress into a stage where she wouldn't even remember how to feed or clothe herself. One by one her bodily functions would close down,

and one day she would drown when her lungs filled with water, but not yet.

Maybe Oscar could have reached her. Lillian had a soft spot for him from they were very young, she was the big sister, and he was the baby boy and could talk her into almost anything. Lillian did what their parents told her to, she followed their rules. She followed her own moral compass like no one else Agnes knew, except when it came to Oscar. If Agnes suggested taking a short cut across someone's back yard she said no, but when Oscar wanted to steal apples from their neighbours, she agreed. Her stomach hurt for several days after that. Not because of the apples she ate, but because of what she had done, she had stolen something. Oscar asked her to, he said he needed her help because he wasn't tall enough. He just looked at her and winked and she couldn't resist. But when their neighbour caught them, he hid behind the hedge with a bucket of apples and left Lillian and Agnes to explain and apologise. When things like that happened Oscar would always have an explanation as to why he left them in trouble, and unlike Agnes, Lillian would understand and accept his reasoning. As usual Oscar wasn't here, he was in Florida, and he had left Agnes to deal with this.

You didn't care that he was selfish, did you? You accepted that as a part of who he was. You didn't even judge him when he snaffled up the easel mum had left you and took it with him to the US. He said he didn't think anyone would use it and that he had forgotten that mum wanted you to have it.

"But Lillian, he doesn't even paint, he's just going to have it in his living room or in his garage for all we know. You would use it, it's yours. Come on, make him send it back."

"No Agnes, he wouldn't do this if it wasn't necessary. Maybe he needs it to feel close to us. We are doing fine, we don't need it. At least it's in the family. We're here together, we

have our families. He's on the other side of the world, alone."

It was Thursday again and Agnes had dinner with Lillian at the home. Today she was excited about the raspberry jelly, and she took Agnes' cup too. She turned the cups upside down, emptied the jellies onto her tray, and lined them up next to each other. Then she took both their spoons and used them as drumsticks. She stared at the jelly as it vibrated when she hit it, waited until it stopped, and hit it again. She fell asleep with her chin on the plate and jelly pieces all over her face. This was why all the patients had to sit in a wheelchair during dinner, so that they could be wheeled straight to bed.

Oct 12

Lillian's blood sugar levels are high, and have been over several weeks. We need to control her intake of sugar. It would be better if visitors stopped bringing her chocolate. We will let you know when we have it under control and you can start bringing her chocolate again. When permitted, please bring small servings at the time, no more whole boxes, she will eat all immediately.

Nurse Hanson

Their father had a journal in their grandmother's room when she was in the nursing home, and they all wrote in it. That's why Agnes suggested they put one in Lillian's room too. Their grandmother liked attention and intrigue so in her case it was to make sure everyone got necessary messages, and it made it harder for her to make up stories. They never had that problem with Lillian, but it was a useful tool to communicate with the nursing home staff, and to know who had visited and when they had been there. But most of all Agnes

hoped it would be useful for Lillian. If she forgot what had happened she could just open the book and read about it. They couldn't know if she understood what they wrote, but they hoped.

Lillian used to draw in their grandmother's book, Lilac flowers. She didn't draw in her own book, but at first she had cut pictures and stories about celebrities out of gossip magazines and glued them into the book, she said they were her family. She even wrote in it herself; stories about going on walks, picking daisies for mum, receiving flowers from dad. It was so good to know she could still write, but it was sad to know that none of the accounts were true, and the stories about their mother and father hadn't been true for decades. Still, Agnes missed those stories like she missed the games they played. They didn't play with dolls, they played with words.

I can't forget the Larsens, the family you made up when we were ten. They had a live-in grandmother with dementia who used to stand in their garden in the middle of the night and sing "O Sole Mio", and she almost burned their house down twice remember? The first time, she was drying paper towels on the stove, and the next time, she wanted to have a fireplace in her bedroom. We both thought those stories were so funny. I don't anymore.

Agnes was mad at Lillian for such a long time, they all were until they realised something was wrong. It just wasn't her. She would never say or do those things. A healthy Lillian wouldn't wear a white blouse she had spilt on three days in a row, she wouldn't call her daughter a whore when she had coffee with a friend from college. Agnes could never have imagined Lillian loudly describe sexual acts she wanted to do to the bus driver while on a shopping trip to Sweden. Lillian would care if her husband got cancer, she would care when

he was no longer a part of her life. But more than anything she wouldn't be able to tell her own brother to go to hell.

Oct 25

Lillian, my Lillian,

It looked like you recognised me today, and you almost smiled. I hadn't seen it for so long, but I recognised that promise of a smile. You've had a good day haven't you? You still haven't written anything in the journal, but the nurses told me you still study it, so I will try to tell you more news about Oscar through the book. That is what I have decided. But not today, because we are going for a walk as soon as Anne, Peter and the boys get here.

Agnes

"Do you want to go for a walk with us Lillian?"

"No"

"Do you want to go for a walk with someone else?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Yes."

"OK, take hold of my arm and let's go."

She didn't want to hold on to Agnes, or Anne, or Peter, instead she grabbed her walker

and shuffled after it leaving little pieces of foam from the soles of her worn slippers on the floor. As they entered the corridor, she had one hand on her walker and leaned the other on the wall as if letting go of the wall would cause her to fall. She kept her distance from the others and went into the common room where another patient was celebrating his birthday with his family. There was a cake in the centre of the coffee table. Lillian sat down and helped herself. She didn't move fast, and they all knew where she was headed, but they didn't stop her. Maybe they felt rejected or maybe it was just nice to see her being so goal oriented. She wanted that chocolate cake. Then she took two pieces of cake, put them on two plates, waved the boys over, and gave one to each of her grandsons. Agnes could see the tears on Anne's cheek and took her hand.

When she had finished her cake, Lillian struggled to get out of the chair and finally accepted help from Agnes so she could stand up. Again she refused an arm to lean on, took hold of her walker, and shuffled back along the corridor and into her room where she went straight to bed and fell asleep. When Anne and Peter left, Agnes sat down in the rocking chair next to her bed to see if she could write what she needed in the journal, but it took her three more visits to be able to put pen to paper.

Nov 3

Lillian,

I didn't know how to tell you this, what I'm here to tell you today. Oscar is sick, Lillian, he is very sick. I wanted to talk to you about it. I wanted you to understand it. I haven't been able to think about anything else for a long time. Would you understand it if I told you, or could I write it down in the journal? Do you understand what you read? I thought maybe there was a way I could show you that would make you understand. There is an artist called Bas Jan

Ader, who disappeared in 1975. He was going to sail across the Atlantic from Cape Cod to the Netherlands. He called the project "In search of the miraculous." His boat was found on the Irish coast, but he is still missing. You would have loved the irony of that.

They have an exhibition of his work at the Oslo Museum of Contemporary Art. There is one installation from 1971, the year Anne started school, where a film is projected onto a large white wall (you know the wall in the Queen Maud Auditorium where you wished they would have an Edward Munch exhibit). For three and a half minutes it's zoomed in on the artist's face and he is crying, just crying. He looks like I feel when I see you. It is called "I am too sad to tell you." If I took you there and showed that to you, would you understand? If I cried would you understand? I don't want to cry. I'm sad, but not for the reasons I'm meant to be. I think you would be sad if you could. You were much closer to him than I was, than I am. You must have seen a different Oscar than I did, one I'm still not sure ever existed.

Agnes

Agnes didn't like to think about loss, but being in this situation forced her to. How could she explain that she was sad for her sister, but she wouldn't grieve her brother?

Nov 15

Lillian,

They called me from the hospital in Orlando yesterday. I think goodbyes have to be said, Lillian, I don't think he will make it through this. For a moment, or longer, I wished we could

trade places. I could be you and you could be me so that you could say good bye. Because he is in Florida he can't come here, and we can't arrange for you to see him. I don't need to say good bye. He has been out of my life for so long, I don't even like him. I know that upsets you, or it used to, when I say I don't like my own brother, but I don't, he is not a kind man. The fact that he is sick doesn't change that. Still, you are here, and I'm outside and I have to deal with his illness. They keep calling me to update me. But I don't want to know how the cancer has eaten away at his lungs, that they are black and small and that he is barely able to take up enough oxygen. I do want you to know this though, I want you to understand. Do you remember Oscar, Lillian? Do you remember how you looked up to him no matter what?

Agnes

I wish I could remind you of something Oscar did, a single unforgiving act that would make it all clear, a story that would make you angry and that would make you understand me, but still forgive him because, as a big sister, you always did.

There was no such story. There were just a series of small injustices to Agnes, to Lillian, to his children, to their parents, that built up like a mound of crawling ants. Ants that would bite, nasty little bites with no poison or purpose, they did it just because they could, and so did he. There is of course the story Agnes decided never to tell her, so she couldn't remind Lillian of that. Sometimes Agnes wanted to tell Anne about how her uncle stole half of Lillian's inheritance after their parents died. She should have told her then, but didn't. Instead she covered the loss with parts of her own inheritance and let him get away with it. Lillian wouldn't understand that now, and Agnes didn't think she should burden Anne with what her uncle and she did to her mother.

Nov 20

Lillian,

I've lost a father, a mother; I've lost a husband; and you I'll lose twice. You have seen me grieve, how I deal with loss, but do you remember? Will explaining how I felt help you understand? I don't think I need to. We all grieve in different ways, and if you understood you would grieve in your own way. But my problem is how to make you understand that because I won't grieve for Oscar, it's so important that you do.

Agnes

Nov 20

Patient refused blood pressure medication, became agitated, sedation necessary.

Nurse Hanson

Agnes wished Anne could be there with her to talk to Lillian, but she had gone up north with Peter to celebrate his mothers seventieth birthday. Agnes had to do this alone.

Lillian was lying on her bed looking up at the ceiling, chewing. The smell of wet towels was suffocating, but as soon as Agnes opened the window, Lillian shook her head and repeated the word "no" over and over, so she closed it again. She tried the balcony door instead but the same thing happened. Oscar's things had been sent over a couple of weeks ago and among them Agnes found their mother's easel. She brought it in to Lillian hoping she would recognise it. But she didn't like it in her room; she kept moving it onto the balcony, and after the fifth time Agnes stopped bringing it back in again. It was still there, and now it

was covered in a thin layer of snow. In a few hours it would disappear.

"Oscar died, Lillian." Agnes sat down next to her on the bed and stroked her hair. She didn't turn away. Agnes cupped her soft cheek and it felt as if Lillian leaned in to her hand. "They are flying his ashes home tomorrow." Lillian pushed her hand away like it was burning her cheek, stretched her arm towards the night table, and turned on the CD player. She liked to listen to Elvis. The sounds of Jailhouse Rock filled the room.

10. CONCLUSION

In the introduction to this thesis I referred to Gerda Lerner (1997:49) who in her reflections on writing in her second language discusses how, in her view, it is in the closeness to one's first language that creativity is articulated, and that she felt envy toward people who were not absent from their first language and the power of that language. Her claim evoked questions about how closely related creativity is to language: Is a writer less creative in a second language? Is the writer maybe more creative in a second language? Is the creative process different in a second language? Does writing in a second language influence the creative process, and if so how? The aim has been for this thesis to constitute a response to these questions.

As a means of exploring these questions I examine the discourse related to creativity and the creative process as well as language and in-betweenness, and I analyse the responses of my interviewees. These explorations lead to an understanding of the creative process as varied and rhizomatic in its multiple forms, it is connected to our ways of thinking, of responding to experience, and in particular to conflicts that can arise for the writer in the experience of being in-between languages. My research has shown that our understanding of creative process is not universal but rather depends on both individual and cultural contexts. However, as mentioned above, important generators of creativity are different types of conflict related to identity, culture and language. It is in this way that language and in-betweenness plays a significant role in this equation. My research has found that traditionally Eurocentric studies of language, studies in the discipline of linguistics, has not included the variants and deviations in the language. The idea of variance and deviation is re-framed in the context of post-colonial studies in terms of abrogation and appropriation of language (Ashcroft 2009), and although writers who write in their second language make mistakes – like any writer does

– it is clear that the traces we see of another language in a text – are there because it is the writer's intention of choice to have them there. However, a writer who writes and resides between languages is forever aware of the possibilities of these traces or 'errors' and for the practicing writer, as opposed to the theorist, this feeling of being between languages is complex: it creates conflict – for as Deleuze and Guattari says, it is in the middle where 'things pick up speed' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 25).

As I am writing this conclusion, Ouyang Yu's second novel *The English Class*, which was published in August of this year, has just been reviewed in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. A significant element of this novel is according to Pierce (2010) how Yu, in portraying the members of a class learning English at a university in China, 'depicts their struggle to move between, and to think in two languages'. At the same time Kevin Brophy's book *Patterns of Creativity: Investigations into the sources and methods of creativity* published in 2009, is about to be launched at the Australian Association of Writing Programs' (AAWP) upcoming conference in Melbourne (AAWP 2010). Through a series of essays Brophy argues

> that consciousness must be managed in new ways if the deeper sources of creativity are to be exploited, that much of what we learn in education is learned without consciousness being involved, that a writer must read against the usual flow of understanding if their own writing is to be distinctive, intelligent and original, [and] that writing is itself a particular kind of communication importantly different to speech. [He also argues] that the metaphor is not merely a poetic device but is central to the way human thought proceeds (Brophy 2009: 10).

According to Freiman 'it is as poet, scholar and writer that he [Brophy] so thoughtfully engages with further questions about creativity and the arts and about the role of consciousness in creativity and learning in his latest book' (Freiman 2010: 1). Freiman goes on to say that 'this book offers a great deal to those involved in the creative arts as researchers and creative practitioners, whether they are poets or not' (Freiman 2010: 7). These two recent publications, *The English Class* (2010) by Ouyang Yu that is concerned with language and in-

betweenness and *Patterns of Creativity: Investigations into the sources and methods of creativity* (2009) by Brophy which is concerned with creativity and creative process, reiterate the relevance of this thesis' topic of how writing fiction and/or poetry in a second language influences creative process and how it is so much a part of our increasingly transnational cultures and literatures. By arguing that residing and writing between languages is conducive to the creative process of writers in these contexts and through approaching my research in a way where practice and research have continuously informed each other, my aim was to extend and expand the current scholarly discussion related to writing in a second language, and subsequently related discussions on creativity and on transnational literatures. In addition to contributing to the debate I believe this research indicates the need for further research to be undertaken on this and related topics and I hope my project will dialogue with further work in the areas of cross-cultural creativity and language studies.

On reflecting on the framework of the research, and of its limitations, it is possible that group interviews could have encouraged further reflection and discussion from the participants of this study that would have added to the research and generated additional themes for analysis. However, the interviews were done in a one-on-one setting with contact only between the interviewer and the interviewees, the main reason being that this is a PhD research project with a strict timeline and limited funding. In other words the geographical spread of participants both from country to country and within the two countries, and perceived logistical and financial difficulties in getting them together influenced the decision against this form of interviews early on in the project. Undertaking group interviews might however be a recommended approach for a possible follow-up study, not because it would in any way alter the main argument that in-betweenness is conducive to creative process, but because additional themes generated in such a setting could emphasise and demonstrate the validity of the argument. Of course it is impossible to know the outcome of such an interview, but if I imagine a setting in which all my nine interviewees were sitting around a table talking about

writing – about being creative – in their second language, I can see the conversations taking very different directions and covering multiple topics. I believe the cultural differences, and similarities, would be an overarching theme that they would constantly come back to, and when they have the opportunity to take cues from each other and compare experiences face to face a deeper understanding can be the result. These are some examples of other topics that could be discussed in depth: Hecq and Øskal Lorentzen I can see finding mutual ground in their interest in playing with languages, with words as if they were Lego blocks. A setting like this, where she is surrounded by writers in similar situations, might help Mahoutchi finding words to express her creative process. Poorgholam says he writes the first drafts of longer pieces of work in his first language Persian because he feels lack of fluency might lead him to lose words and ideas, and I can see the discussion between these writers turning to level of fluency in one's second language and how and if that influences whether or not translation is used as part of the creative process. Finally I can imagine a discussion about relating and adapting to their domain of fiction or poetry in a new setting as well as the field or the 'gatekeepers' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997:28) that allow them access to the domains. They would discuss how the domain and the field differs both from their home country, and where they are now, but also how it differs between Australia and Norway, as well as how relating to a new domain and a different field in any way influences their creative process. Such a discussion would add more knowledge to our understanding of the culturally and socially determined elements that are in play for someone who is creative – who writes – not only in their second language but in a different culture.

The scope of this research has been the writers' own experience and perceptions of writing in a second language related to creative process, however, to take this study beyond the writer's perceptions of their practice and creativity and to see if a similar conclusion can be drawn, leads to the question of whether further work done by others in analysing the texts produced by writers of fiction and/or poetry in their second language would match the writers'

perceptions of what happens in their writing? Because reading is an individual act where a reader also brings his or her own perceptions and experiences, such a study would pose problems, and it would be difficult if not impossible to discern writers' own ideas about their creativity and issues with in-betweenness from a textual approach. I do however, believe that such a study could be undertaken through a linguistic approach where the tools and knowledge to compare and analyse texts in this way are readily available

Residing and writing between languages has a positive influence on creative process because the in-between context generates conflict in particular in areas related to language. As shown in this thesis, it is precisely this element of conflict in language use that fuels creativity for the in-between writer. This statement not only adds to our understanding of how creative process can work, in particular when engaging with more than one language, and it also provides a point of departure for further examination of these elements. Research on language and creativity is vast and varied, still there is much to consider and in our investigation we must be willing to, in Hustvedt's words, go 'yonder' (Hustvedt 2006: 1), we must allow ourselves to take on the form of rhizomes, to go back and forth, up and down, to start over and to take off in completely new directions; to have no start or finish – in other words to be between and in the middle, or 'intermezzo' as Deleuze and Guattari (1988: 25) say.

Dedication

The fact that I

am writing to you

in English

already falsifies what I

wanted to tell you.

My subject:

how to explain to you that I

don’t belong to English

though I belong nowhere else.

(Pérez Firmat 2003: 295)

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APPENDIX 1

Main Interview-Questions in English:

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your background?

    a. How about language background?

2. Can you tell me about when you started to write?

3. What was the process related to deciding to write in English?

4. What language do you mostly read in, and did you read much literature in English when you started to write in English?

5. What is creativity to you?

    a. Has your understanding of creativity changed since you started to write, and if so how?

6. Can you describe your creative process?

    a. Can you give me a step by step description of how you write a novel/short story/poem?

b. Have you noticed any variation in the creative process depending on what language you write in?

7. Do you use, or have you used translation from your first language as part of your writing process in English?

8. Can you compare writing a sentence in English with writing a sentence in your first language?

    a. Do syntax and/or vocabulary from your first language influence how you read and/or write in English, and if so can you describe how?

9. Does the language you write in influence what you write, and if so how?

10. When you write do you have in mind who it is you are writing for?

11. Is there a political aspect to your choice of language to write in?

12. Do you have anything to add?

Main Interview-Questions in Norwegian:

1. Kan du fortelle meg litt om bakgrunnen din?

    a. Hva med språklig bakgrunn?

2. Kan du fortelle meg om når du begynte å skrive?

3. Hvordan var prosessen rundt det å bestemme seg for å skrive på norsk?

4. Hvilke språk leser du mest på, og leste du mye norsk litteratur når du begynte å skrive på norsk?

5. Hva er kreativitet for deg?

    a. Har din forståelse av kreativitet endret seg siden du begynte å skrive, og i så fall hvordan?

6. Kan du beskrive din kreative prosess?

    a. Kan du gi meg en steg for steg beskrivelse av hvordan du skriver en roman/et dikt?
    b. Har du registrert noen variasjon i den kreative prosessen din avhengig av hvilket språk du skriver på?

7. Bruker du, eller har du brukt oversettelse fra ditt morsmål som en del av det å skrive på norsk?

8. Kan du sammenligne det å skrive en setning på norsk med det å skrive en setning på morsmålet ditt?

    a. Har syntaks og/eller vokabular fra ditt morsmål påvirket hvordan du leser og/eller skriver på norsk, og kan du i så fall beskrive hvordan?

9. Har det språket du skriver på noen innvirkning på hva du skriver, og i så fall hvordan?

10. Når du skriver har du noen tanker om hvem det er du skriver for?

11. Er det noe politisk aspekt ved ditt valg av språk når du skriver?

12. Er det noe du gjerne vil legge til?