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Creativity: Between Chaos and Order or My Life as a Messy Text--A Case Study and a Challenge

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Abstract

Creativity is neither something learned by applying a formula nor is it the unfettered, chaotic product of a genius. Instead, creativity should be viewed as an individualized process that helps the creator find order within chaos (or vice versa). This essay explores my creative process involved in producing what anthropologist George Marcus calls a “messy text.” My messy text, an online folk art brochure, is not just an example of a case study of performance practices in culture; it is itself a performance of criticism that implicates the critical ethnographer in the “writing” process.

Keywords: creativity, critical ethnography, performance, fandom, mystory, autoethnography

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"Creativity makes a leap, then looks to see where it is."
Mason Cooley (Andrews, Biggs, & Seidel, 1991, p. 58)

"Creativity seems to emerge from multiple experiences, coupled with a well•supported development of personal resources, including a sense of freedom to venture beyond the known."
Loris Malaguzzi (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1993, p. 44).

To create is to "bring into or cause to come into existence; make; originate" (Williams, 1979, p. 211). By this definition, all scholarly endeavors are creative acts. The theme of this special issue of the *American Communication Journal*, however, is about more than the "mere" act of making things. It is concerned with the ways that communication scholars envision themselves as creative individuals, either vocationally or avocationally. Each "author" in this issue was selected, I suspect, not because we were "more creative" than other people, but because our submissions represent a variety of outlets for creativity among communication scholars. I, like the others, submitted my creative product (in my case, an online, folk•art brochure about my experiences studying the performances of shopping at Graceland Plaza) before being asked to write a scholarly essay contextualizing the piece within the theme of creativity.

The request for a scholarly companion piece presupposes that the creative products that we (communication scholars) produce are not scholarly in and of themselves. In some instances, that may be true. But for me, I find most often that my creative product IS my scholarship. Whether I compile a script, enact a performance

art installation, or construct a fragmented review of a performance (Heaton, 1998), I do as Cooley suggests above-- I take a leap and then look around to see what I've gotten myself into. Although my scholarship takes many forms (screenplays; non•linear narratives; and combinations of video, sound, and movement pieces), initially my research resembles a puzzle, a collage of images and texts that do not seem to go together. I appear to have gotten into a mess, which is exactly where I had hoped to be. For me, creativity is a messy process that leads to the creation of "messy texts" (Marcus, 1994).

The brochure following this essay is such a messy text. In order to prepare you, for the messiness of it all, I will provide you with my working definition of creativity. Next, I will discuss the concept of "messy texts," including a brief historical overview of how such expressive forms of scholarship developed. Third, I will explain how and why I wrote a messy text. Finally, I will challenge you to write a messy text of your own.

A Messy Process

When first asked to write about my creative process, I was unsure what to say. From my perspective, creativity is just something that's always been a part of my life. Ever since I first drew cartoon heads in the margins of our family Bible and performed Carol Burnett's opening monologue from her show verbatim for my sister and cousins at age three, I have been labeled "creative"-- a label that often means "no prom date for you; sorry." (Until I reached adolescence I had no idea of the bad rep creative people receive because we are often seen as kooks.) Infrequent name calling aside, I always embraced and welcomed the label. Teachers and family members encouraged it. Friends were attracted to it. I felt appreciated despite my perceived "kookiness" because some people valued my creative innovations and willingness to view things from multiple perspectives.

This willingness to innovate is alluded to in self•growth guru Gail Sheehy's book Pathfinders (1981). She suggests that we should think of creativity as a four-part process: 1) Preparation, 2) Incubation, 3) Immersion & Illumination, and 4) Revision. Although interesting, Sheehy's description of the creative process does not really capture the essence of my own creative process. So I shopped around for other versions. I finally found one that provided the flexibility I needed. Franklin Baer, a public health physician fascinated with the topic of creativity has created an interactive web page that can help anyone create her/his own personalized creativity process (http://manageyourcreativity.com/). For the purposes of this essay, I went to the site and created my own process, an acronym using the letters of the word **CREATE**:

Collect•• gather information from a variety of sources

Reflect -- generate many ideas, questions, responses to the information

Embrace-- select which idea(s) to focus on and expand

Amend-- work with an idea until it begins to take shape

Toil-- become obsessed with a project until it is complete

Exhibit-- find a venue for displaying the creative product.

These verbs come closest to describing how the creative process works for me. It may work differently for you.

Thinking of creativity as a process, even a messy one, allows me to see that creativity is not about chaos, unbridled expressions of emotion or thought; it's about figuring out creative ways to: work within systems that are already in place; get the creative product seen; have a breakthrough; show others that even within a seemingly airtight system, there is room for change. And room for fun. I am convinced that there is even room for creatively messy texts in scholarly journals. Scholars no longer need to keep their creativity a secret or separate from their scholarly pursuits.

As an artist, I see my performance of writing as a game. I always ask myself how I can use my creative abilities and still remain true to the information I want to share from my research. One lesson I've learned from my exposure to performance is that form often dictates content. I am therefore often concerned that the form of my research expresses my experience in the field. For example, the field experience for the case study that follows this essay was so exciting and fun that I knew that I would have to really put my creative energies to the test to devise an artistic, yet scholarly way to present my findings. I also knew that my written evocation of the performance would not look much like other scholarly articles because when I looked at all that I had accumulated in my field experience, at first, as usual, all I saw was a mess•••fragments, quotations, images, sounds, movements, and artifacts. And rather than try to clean up the mess, I decided to take "the leap" and work with it to forge a "messy text" (Marcus, 1994).

What IS a messy text?

My messy text is situated within the growing interdisciplinary discourse surrounding ethnographic representation. As Marcus notes, we are now in the age of "messy texts." Post•ethnographic texts are marked by "an open•endedness, an incompleteness, and an uncertainty about how to draw a text/analysis to a close" (Marcus, 1994, p. 567). Furthermore, "such open•endedness often marks a concern with an ethics of dialogue and partial knowledge that a work is incomplete without critical, and differently positioned, responses to it by its (one hopes) varied readers" (Marcus, 1994, p. 567). However, although messy texts are subjective accounts of experience, they go beyond experiential epistemology when they "attempt to reflexively map multiple discourses that occur in a given social space. . . . they are always multivoiced, and no given interpretation is privileged" (Denzin, 1997, p. xvii). By experimenting with forms of writing that question and expand the generic boundaries of ethnography, the "new writers" of ethnography discover "there are other ways of knowing, other ways of feeling our way into the experiences of self and other" (Denzin, 1997, p. xviii) that perform rather than represent the world.

Performance Studies scholar Ron Pelias often writes messy texts. One example of his messy ethnographic work is "Confessions of an Apprehensive Performer" (Pelias, 1997). In this piece, the author evokes the experience of being apprehensive through a series of narrative and poetic episodes.

Pelias is not alone in his interest in creating messy texts within a scholarly context. Another example is "Ifa and Me: A Divination of Ethnography" (Meyer & Bede•Fagbamila, 1997). Meyer (the ethnographer) and Bede•Fagbamila (the Ifa diviner) co-constructed the written text of the ethnography by performing Ifa rituals that instructed them how to put the pieces together. The resulting ethnography is readable, multivoiced, and intersubjective without taking the form of a "traditional" or "neatly" written representation of a culture.

Much of the current post•ethnographic work is performance•based (Ellis & Bochner, 1992; Jackson, 1993; McCall & Becker, 1990; Meyer & Bede•Fagbamila, 1997; Stucky, 1993; Ulmer, 1989; Welker & Goodall, 1997). An especially performative example of a messy text is "Performing Osun without Bodies: Documenting the Osun Festival in Print" (Jones, 1997), in which "[r]eaders will engage with the text in whatever ways suit them" (p. 72), including reading, looking, scanning, skimming or skipping pages of the text altogether. Jones creates an interactive messy text that the reader performs as s/he encounters the text.

Why make a messy text?

My text, though messy, is not without order. Nor does it exist in a vacuum, apart from a history••an academic legacy•• of messy textuality. Messy texts, like messy children, may come from very clean and traditional ancestors. Traditional ethnographies take many forms, such as structural, symbolic, organizational, and interpretive (Jacobson, 1991) that entail fieldwork, participant/observation activities, in•depth interviews with "key informants," and specific, verifiable evidence to support empirical claims about "thick descriptions" of the "Other." Although these methods of constructing ethnographic texts are still useful (Marcus, 1994, p.565) and used by all types of ethnographers, they do have some theoretical shortcomings associated with them that have resulted in what Lincoln and Denzin refer to as ethnography's

"fifth moment" (1994, p. 576). By tracing the evolution of these five moments, I hope to show how messy texts have evolved from "cleaner" ancestors.

Ethnography's first moment, "the Traditional Period," lasted from the early 1900s until World War II and was characterized by ethnographies written by "objective" social scientists who sought to reliably represent the object of their studies, usually some foreign, "primitive" "Other" in a scientific, "rhetoric•free," written text (Denzin, 1997, p. 16).

The second moment, "the Modernist Phase," which began roughly at the end of World War II and flourished until the 1970s, is still present in many ethnographies. It was/is characterized by "rigorous, qualitative studies of important social processes, including deviance, and social control in the classroom and society" (Denzin, 1997, p. 17).

Ethnography's third moment, "Blurred Genres," lasted from 1970-1986. This moment was led by the work of Geertz (1973; 1983) who "suggested that all anthropological writings were interpretations of interpretations" (Denzin, 1997, p. 17). Furthermore, "the observer had no privileged voice in the interpretations that were written. The central task of theory was to make sense out of a local situation" (Denzin, 1997, p. 17).

Until the end of this third moment the ethnographer was still not explicitly or critically implicated in the ethnographic text itself, even when s/he practiced self• reflection in situ and in fieldnotes. However, since the mid•1980s, many areas of study in academe have experienced a series of crises of representation including: the conflation of writing theory and writing culture (Clough, 1994); the global, postcolonial focus that accompanies multinational economic systems (Appadurai, 1993); the challenge of writing ethnographies in a world already represented ethnographically (Tyler, 1986); the realization that the writer "can no longer presume to be able to present an objective, non•contested account of the other's experiences" (Denzin, 1997); the implications of gender on discourse (Spivak, 1990); the acknowledgment of the moral function of ethnographic writing; and the increased pluralism involved in doing qualitative research (Denzin, 1997).

According to Lincoln and Denzin (1994), the next moments of ethnography address these concerns to some extent. The fourth moment was a response to the "crisis of representation" during which scholars asked "Who is the Other? Can we ever hope to speak authentically of the experience of the Other, or an Other? And if not, how do we create a social science that includes the Other?" (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994, p. 577). During this time, ethnographers produced texts that considered race, gender, class, and the ethnographer's role in the construction of the written representation of a culture as vital issues of inquiry.

At present, according to Lincoln and Denzin (1994), ethnography is in its fifth moment and quickly moving into its sixth. This moment is characterized by how ethnographers respond to the problems associated with the previous moments, such as: issues of textual authority and validity, who has the right to speak for whom, an ethnographic text's ability to accurately portray the world (verisimilitude), and the political implications of assuming responsibility for one's ideologically embedded account of culture, within a contemporary, multinational, postmodern world context. In Dorst's (1989) conceptualization, the postmodern world context "abolishes a conceptual distinction traditional ethnography relies upon, . . . the distinction between the site of ethnographic experience/observation and the site of ethnographic writing" (p. 2). Since cultures, through mass marketing, tourism, and advertising, already generate ethnographic texts about themselves, and since individuals constantly practice self•documentation on such a grand scale, ethnographers must content themselves with writing post•ethnographies.

Post•ethnographies become critical ethnographies when they are self•reflexive, evaluative, and take into account the researcher's role in performing the writing of the ethnography. According to Dorst (1989), the post•ethnographer has two positions to fill:

> a position of collector/transcriber/collageist, and a position of rhetorician/reader••in other words, the dual role of re•citer/re•siter, one who "tells over again" and thereby

> "relocates" the already inscribed citations by inserting them into a new context, in effect rewriting them (p. 206).

So the post•ethnographer should write in such a way that the "historicity or 'writenness' of the post •ethnographic text" (Dorst, 1989, p. 207) is foregrounded and the fragments that comprise the text visibly and artificially displayed. Additionally, when fulfilling the role of critical reader, s/he should "unpack the rhetorical strategies, to read critically the auto•ethnographic souvenirs and identify the suppressed mechanisms through which they produce their effects" (Dorst, 1989, p. 207).

The forms of writing post•ethnographies are as varied as the cultures they (re)present: autoethnography, which involves the ethnographer implicating him/herself into the writing to such an extent that s/he receives as much focus as the larger context of the study (Ellis, 1996; Fiske, 1990; Hayano, 1979; 1982); confessional tale, which features the ethnographer's autobiographical account of fieldwork written in first person (Van Maanen, 1988); impressionist tale, which is "not about what usually happens but about what rarely happens" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 102) during the fieldwork experience and thus "is a representational means of cracking open the culture and the fieldworker's way of knowing it so that both can be jointly examined. . . . The epistemological aim is then to braid the knower with the known" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 102); surrealist ethnography, which takes impressionist tales to the next level of abstraction from a traditional realist by making use of collage and is evocative rather than grounded in a realistic representation of lived experience (Clifford, 1988; Meyer & Bede•Fagbamila, 1997); critical ethnographies (Ellis, 1994, 1996; Goodall, 1991; McCall & Becker, 1990; Trinh, 1991; Trujillo, 1993), which "attempt to uncover the power relations which influence how various people, including researchers, interpret culture" (Trujillo, 1993, p. 449), and are "committed to unveiling the political stakes that anchor cultural practices" (Conquergood, 1989, p. 179). Whichever type an ethnographer selects, they all may result in messy texts.

As this brief overview of the evolution of messy texts shows, I had a rich heritage of ethnographic styles I could use to write my own messy text. To remain true to my creative process (CREATE), I Embraced the pieces that best fit my project. For me, the best fit combined the nonlinear aspects of what Ulmer (1989) refers to as a "mystory" and the highly personal aspects of what Fiske (1990) calls "autoethnography."

In *Teletheory: Grammatology in the Age of Television*, Ulmer (1989) discusses mystory as "an alternative way to represent research, involving a kind of thinking that is more 'euretic' (concerned with invention and making) than hermeneutic" (p. xi). For Ulmer, the mystory is a nonlinear combination of fragments from "three levels of discourse: personal (autobiography), popular (community stories, oral history or popular culture), [and] expert (disciplines of knowledge)" (1989, p. 209). "One rationale for writing this manipulative way, selecting and combining a montage text out of the archive of personal, popular, and specialized material," writes Ulmer, "is that in the age of Artificial Intelligence, we are learning the lesson of the integration of artificial and living memory" (1989, pp. 210•211). Another rationale, which Ulmer does not mention, is that writing an ethnography in this manner foregrounds the constructedness with which the ethnographer assembles the ethnographic representation of a performance. The writer's power relation to the object of study is implicated in the writing, rather than disguised as objective observation.

My style of writing also incorporates "autoethnography" (Fiske, 1990). Fiske uses the three levels of discourse mentioned by Ulmer, personal, professional, and popular, in his discussion of writing an autoethnography. When Fiske "attempted through theoretically structured introspection to study [his] own responses" (1990, p. 85) to a media text, he focused on "the interdiscourse between social discourses in the text and those through which [he] made sense of [him] 'self', [his] social relations, and [his] social experience" (p. 85). He further notes that:

> [t]hese discourses worked not only to circulate meanings but also to constitute 'me' as both a social agent in the reproduction and regeneration of those meanings, and also as the social agency through which they circulated. . . my first investigation, then, was of myself, not as an individual, but as a site and as an instance of reading, as an agent of culture in process. . . because the process by which I produced it was a structured instance of culture in practice (Fiske, 1990, pp. 85•86).

These observations led Fiske to propose autoethnography as a way of representing/writing about a personal experience in an academic discourse, which appealed to me as a creative person and as a scholar.

How did I make a messy text?

In the case study that follows this essay, I examine the performances of fans (people who interact with each other because of their love for Elvis) and funs (people who do not like Elvis, but still choose to focus on Elvis as the source of their interactions) that take place in the shopping area across the street from Graceland during International Elvis Tribute Week. Additionally, I detail how these performances, as instances of play, serve as the agency to enact power relations between and within fan and fun cultures. I examine the role of shopping in the construction of identities for fans and funs as well as examine how consumers read objects/texts. Furthermore, I examine how shopping reifies power relations between and within fan and fun cultures.

My representation of the shopping performances in Graceland Plaza is an autoethnography in that, like Fiske:

> I have to be able to move in and out of my domestic environment, I have to be able to bring different distancing discourses to bear upon my experience, to make that experience both private and public, to account for it as both a specific cultural practice and as a systemic instance. Environments can be observed and interpreted up to a point from the outside, but they can only be experienced from the inside, and an autoethnography may be able to offer both perspectives (1990, p. 89).

Since, to a certain extent, the souvenirs themselves serve as autoethnographic texts (Dorst, 1989), my job as critical/post•ethnographer is to assemble these preexistent autoethnographic texts, my own experiences of the shopping performance, and scholarly discourse about shopping, souvenirs, and tourist practices into a collage and then read them critically to expose the rhetorical strategies operating within the performance. My collages take the form of a brochure, a textual genre that makes use of collage principles.

The word "brochure" comes from the French word "brocher," meaning, "to stitch, or weave together" (Williams, 1979, p. 115). A brochure weaves information and fragments of other texts together in the form of a coherent, easily readable document, but it often denies the linear connections of narrative by leaving the fragments visible. Brochures are institutionally produced messy texts that follow a nonlinear logic of discourse rather than a linear logic of narrative. Moreover, brochures are written with an "institutional voice," that works stylistically and rhetorically to simultaneously draw the reader into the text and remain detached; the brochure seems almost "authorless."

In one sense, the experience shopping at Graceland Plaza was like reading a brochure. Since the performance of shopping at Graceland Plaza featured the "official" merchandise and images of Elvis displayed in a well•ordered, highly structured, but not necessarily linear way, I read it as an "official" brochure. Also, the actual souvenirs displayed supported a view of Elvis promoted by Elvis Presley Enterprises.

Besides representing my reading of Graceland Plaza, I use the brochure as a metaphor for my style of writing. I weave together fragments from actual brochures, fan letters, performances of shopping, catalogue descriptions of souvenirs, my field notes, interviews with fans and funs, and other autoethnographic texts to create my own brochure for Graceland Plaza. I attempt, as much as possible, to simulate the written discourse of an official brochure: page layout, photographs, a variety of font sizes and types, columns.

I implicate myself in the performance when I feature my role/voice as critical ethnographer and thus attempt to "create noise, the parasitic static that may, even while it enables the system to function, open up space inside the system to disrupt it" (HopKins, 1995, p. 235). I create "static" by using the form of ethnographic representation favored by Elvis Presley Enterprises, the brochure, as my mode of critique of the corporate material culture system. My writing style takes up HopKins's challenge to "consciously perform the

resistance" (1995, p. 235) by:

> intentionally exaggerating the performance of resistance [to] create a surplus of noise, of static. This static may be subversive, may create a rupture in the center of the system by exposing the oppositions on which the system depends for its existence (HopKins, 1995, p. 235).

I expose "the oppositions on which the system depends" when I critique not only the relationships within and between fan and fun cultures but also when I construct my brochure of fragmented personal, public, and professional discourse.

Why should you make a messy text, too?

I enjoyed writing my messy text. I view it as a simultaneous performance of scholarly work and folk•art play. Although it was difficult to construct, I am pleased with the final product. As a scholar, I was looking for a way to write nonlinear arguments about nonlinear experiences into the linear form of an article. I tried to represent and experience the difference between linear ways of making academic arguments and nonlinear ways of experiencing the world. Many feminist critics have expressed a similar frustration with a privileged, masculinist view of analytical discourse that moves from claim to warrants to grounds to conclusion at the exclusion of other ways of thinking about and experiencing the world. In my written representation of the performance of shopping, I often attempted to use a curvilinear and fragmented style of writing to express curvilinear and fragmented ideas and experiences. The result of this effort is my own messy text.

Before you decide whether or not to create your own messy text, I feel I must point out some of the advantages to writing a messy text, as well as a few disadvantages. One advantage that makes writing a messy post•ethnography worthwhile is that, given the recent crises of representation and legitimation (Denzin, 1997), a post•ethnography results in a more "dialogic" (Conquergood, 1985) performance than a traditional ethnography. The ethnographer is not solely responsible for the effect of the finished product. S/he writes/assembles his/her written evocation of a culture in a particular instance of enactment, an instance that, from a postmodern perspective, cannot be "realistically" and "truthfully" "represented" in a fixed text, but must be co•constructed and performed when engaged by the reader/audience. Unfortunately, this process also creates the first disadvantage: the reader is required to do more work, to be more active in the construction of the performance than s/he would when reading a traditional ethnography. So fair warning. If you read my brochure, be prepared to get messy.

A second advantage of a messy text is the blurring between fact and fiction in the written text. The writer, as collageist/collector (Dorst, 1989) of preexisting ethnographic texts generated by the culture itself, seeks to achieve a written evocation of something that is political, ideological, and subjective by nature, the:

> glimpses and slices of the culture in action. Any given practice that is studied is significant because it is an instance of a cultural practice that happened in a particular time and place. This practice cannot be generalized to other practices; its importance lies in the fact that it instantiates a cultural practice, a cultural performance (story telling), and a set of shifting, conflictual cultural meanings. (Denzin, 1997, p. 8)

A messy post-ethnography does not, however, allow the writer to make positivist truth claims about the culture, and may seem less "scientific," "scholarly," or "truthful" than a traditional ethnography. Although others might not agree, I do not view this as a disadvantage.

Based on my experience constructing this messy text, my brochure, I would like to challenge other writers to try to construct their own. I enjoyed the challenge myself•• the challenge of operating within the generic constraints of the brochure. It provided the order for the chaos of fragments. As an ethnographer I had to deal with the structural, formal, generic, and aesthetic conventions associated with the genre. My creativity was challenged when I had to figure out how to assemble the various fragments I had collected, what photos

to include, which hyperlinks to add, what backgrounds would "enhance" the pictures and experiences on a given page.

As scholars, we expect the arduous challenge that comes with rigorous study. I suggest that scholars take up another challenge••the challenge to have fun. As Denzin (1997) notes, "We should not take ourselves too seriously. We should have fun doing what we are doing" (p. 25). Too often scholarly writing assumes a form that is not only uninteresting to read but often ideologically oppressive. Writers who experiment with new and different ways of (re)presenting scholarly discourse might not only find increased readership but also find ways to "get the word out" to a broader, less academically privileged audience than they traditionally reach. If the goal of research is to improve the world in some way by increasing knowledge or to affect a change in the real lives of non•academics, then writing traditional, jargon•filled, theoretically dense analyses will not help scholars accomplish this goal. I am not saying that fragmented, fun•but•not •necessarily•easy•to•read, popular•genre•inspired writing will accomplish the goal either. It may make things worse. But any attempt to make the "results" or process of scholarship more accessible to a general reader is a risk worth taking for it might lead us in the right direction••even if it gets a bit messy.

For me, there is no separation already••as a teacher, performer, director, performance artist, screenwriter, collageist, academic, son, cat•owner, scholar, citizen, I find that I HAVE to be creative••my life is a messy text. I **CREATE** to create. But this creative process need not be a solo enterprise; I also find that I enjoy creating with others.

One of my greatest joys as a professor is helping my students realize their own creative potentials. In my introductory level performance class, the phrase I hear most often from my students during workshops is, “But I’m not very creative.” I try to get each person to see that everyone has his or her own creative process; sometimes it begins with a seed of an idea. The perceived lack of creativity is usually a lack of confidence in one’s creative potential. This lack of confidence could be caused by many factors: disconfirming responses in the past; not enough experiential learning opportunities; cultural attitudes towards creativity/creative people, etc. However, one of the most debilitating factors for people who lack experience and confidence is social comparison— comparing one’s own creativity to others. When this is the case, I point out that the creative process often takes place within and for the individual; only when the creative product is shared with an audience should issues of evaluation by others be considered. If I create something for myself, the only evaluative criteria I have to keep in mind are the goals and boundaries I set for myself. If I am preparing something to be shared with others, then I take into account the context of the shared event, who will receive/view my creative product, what constraints are placed on me by the occasion, place, equipment, etc. But even then I do not compare my creative process or product to others, because each instance of creativity may be different. If I can get my students to accept this perspective, they usually relax enough to experiment with their own creativity.

When I am in the position to evaluate others creative products, I employ a method endorsed by Ron Pelias when he states, “Justifying one’s judgements demands careful argument. Critics take on the obligation to present a case for their views. To claim that what they saw (description) was good (evaluation) begs the question of why they value what they do” (1992, p. 154). Since I cannot know what was in someone’s mind when s/he created something, I must describe what I saw/read/heard, then identify what cultural or aesthetic values I used to interpret the creative product. Only then, when my own interpretive lens is identified, would I offer an evaluation. And, since I also value dialogue with the creative person, I have to allow my evaluations to change as my experience with a specific creative product or person changes.

I challenge you to construct your own process for achieving creativity. You don't have to use my process. Your process may be different; perhaps you **ELVIS**:

Explore

Lasso

Verbalize

Improve

Stay Steadfast.

Or perhaps you **CHEESE**:

Collect

Hypothesize

Embrace

Edit

Stay Steadfast

Exhibit.

But whatever your personal creative process is, whether you write messy texts or a cleaner version, whether you create for yourself only or for an audience, whether you create alone or in collaboration, you won't be creative unless you leap first, and look later.

Brochure

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