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Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

Debbie Vaughn
College of Charleston, vaughnd@cofc.edu

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three chapters of the book: those written under the influence of the First World War, those written before 1920, and those written after 1920. When it comes to reading, give me a book and I will_devour it. When it comes to review reading, give me a book as well — giving the book to a reviewer can be a cliche方面的.The devil is in the details.


Reviewed by Steven Profit (Reference Librarian, College of Charleston) <profits@cofc.edu>

Creativity is a trait much treasured, and Mark Runco's Creativity Theories and Themes: Research, Development, and Practice is a trove of the scholarship in the field of creative studies.

Runco is Professor of Child and Adolescent Studies at California State University, Fullerton. He is the author of many works on creativity and is also the founder and editor of Creativity Research Journal.

The first nine of the book's eleven chapters cover the major theoretical approaches to creativity — behavioral, clinical, cognitive, developmental, economic, educational, evolutionary, historical, organizational, personality, and social. This breadth of perspectives presented is matched by the depth of the material under examination. Runco's bibliography is extensive and informs a text that both explores the classical literature in the field and offers fresh insights from the most recent research; several studies cited were in press at the time of Creativity Theories and Themes' publication.

In Chapter Ten, Runco surveys an array of investigations into methods of enhancing creativity and fulfilling creative potential. The closing chapter focuses on differentiating creativity from other human traits such as intelligence, innovation, and adaptability while showing how creativity is related to each of these and others. Throughout the book, tables and shaded boxes of text help illustrate concepts with additional information about research studies on various subtopics.

While reviewing this book I was reading Understanding Power, a collection of Noam Chomsky’s public talks and Q&A sessions held in different places from 1989 to 1999. At one point Chomsky discusses classical liberalism, noting that it “focused on the right of people to control their own work, and the need for free creative work under your own control.” I became interested in discovering if Runco’s book touches upon this idea. In the chapter on historical approaches to creativity, I found it in the brief boxed section about Gandhi and his development of the principal of passive resistance to colonial rule. Gandhi's principle was the opposite of armed struggle movements that were growing out of the violence of the World War years and an irrevocable challenge to English authority. In Chapter Eight’s section entitled “Stop Rules, Conventions, and Cultural Inhibitions,” it is approached in Runco’s discussion of research that examines the tensions between individuals’ desires to do creative work and their society’s means of rewarding, punishing, or ignoring/tolerating their work. In the chapter covering enhancement, it is illustrated in a section about contrarianism and how individuals can develop space for creative work and gain control over that work by not limiting themselves to conventional means and values. I’m always pleased to find convergences between interesting texts currently on my reading table.

Although intended primarily as a textbook, librarians nonetheless will find Creativity Theories and Themes a great asset when helping their patrons get a grasp on this rich literature. With its clean writing style and abundant references, Creativity will assist students new to the subject and more seasoned scholars wanting to delve deeper. Both will be able to access the many concepts and wide-ranging scholarship that make up the interdisciplinary field of creative studies.

Mark Runco has given the academic community a powerful tool for understanding the diverse and evolving views on human creativity.

Reviewer’s Note: The author of this review consulted the following sources: Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble.com, and the Elsevier Academic Press book catalog online.

The Devil Is In The Details

by Mary Ann Liebert (President and CEO, Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., publishers, 140 Huguenot Street, New Rochelle, NY 10801; Phone: 914-740-2122) <mliebert@liebertpub.com> www.liebertpub.com www.genengnews.com www.westchesterwag.com

I spend a great deal of my time online, looking at specific sites for specific information. Once I have hit upon a comprehensive site, I am then frequently seduced by the links — I liken it to the Yellow-Brick Road, and, like a robot, off I go. Too frequently, this journey loads my brain with much more than I want to know and certainly much more than I may need to know about the subject at hand. The Web's search capabilities are addictive.

When it comes to reading, give me a book or magazine. My bedside table is piled with novels, biographies, mysteries, and some how-to books. Some books soothe the soul, other fire my imagination.

The reading habit began when I was a little girl. My favorite uncle joined us for dinner at least twice a week, and never arrived without a book or two. I devoured over 60 Bobbsey Twins books and the entire Nancy Drew and Dana Girls mysteries; the former prompted an ongoing interest in twin studies, and the latter may have had some impact on my interest in investigative journalism. The Pollyanna books, again the whole series, had a strong effect on my ability to usually find something positive in most situations, and I will defend her to anyone who thinks she was just a cockeyed optimist. I was inspired by Heidi, wept with Dickens, and was captivated by Little Women.

Every room in our home was filled with books. Additionally, my parents subscribed to at least two weeklies, two newspapers, a magazine about dogs, several pertaining to the arts, others that were related to their professional activities, and at least one concerned with national politics. National Geographic was highly esteemed, and we saved all the issues for years.

My own subscriptions began with Jack and Jill and Scholastic, and when I was in my teens, my friends and I devoured our issues of Seventeen, which ushered in a subscription habit that has only increased.

Flipping through the pages, my eye is frequently caught by something that I might not have considered of particular interest. It may, in fact, be a page facing an article I intend to read that intrigues me and puts my creative thinking into drive gear. In fact, it is often the topics in which I don’t have a specific interest that end up being most valuable.

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