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Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

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Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor: **Debbie Vaughn** (College of Charleston)
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Column Editor's Note: *What is creativity? How do individuals get the "creative spark?" What actions embody creativity? What achievements show evidence of the creative process? ATG newcomer Steven Profit examines Creativity Theories and Themes: Research, Development, and Practice, a book that covers the major theoretical approaches to creativity.*

In his commentary, Steven notes that he is "always pleased to find convergences between interesting texts currently on my reading table." Likewise, I am always amazed that the connections that can be made between books highlighted in Monographic Musings. For example, the fruits of creativity can be readily seen in Elizabeth Sinkler Coxe's Tales from the Grand Tour, 1890-1910, reviewed by veteran ATG critic Phillip Powell. Coxe's letters, journals, and illustrations eloquently and artistically describe her extensive and exotic travels during the turn of the 20th century.

Many thanks to Steven and Phillip, and happy reading, everyone! — DV

LeClerq, Anne Sinkler Whaley, ed. Elizabeth Sinkler Coxe's Tales from the Grand Tour, 1890-1910. Columbia, SC: U. of South Carolina P, 2006. 1570036330 (10); 9781570036330 (13). 200 pages. \$34.95.

Reviewed by **Phillip Powell** (Reference Librarian,
College of Charleston) <powellp@cofc.edu>

As a throwback to a more genteel and relaxed time, this book chronicles **Lizzie** (as she was familiarly known) **Coxe's** travels with her son **Eckley** and various **Wharton** and **Sinkler** relatives. **Ms. LeClerq** skillfully blends letters and journals written during their various travels dating, as the title indicates, between 1890 and 1910. What makes the reading more complete are numerous footnotes **LeClerq** adds including extensive quotes from travel and guide books of the period.

Born and reared in antebellum rural South Carolina, **Elizabeth Sinkler** married **Brinton Coxe**, a member of the Pennsylvania family heavily involved in coal mining. Upon marriage, **Elizabeth** moved to Pennsylvania; she became a mother; and she was widowed three years after her wedding. Even though she maintained very close ties to her South Carolina family, **Elizabeth Sinkler Coxe** remained in Pennsylvania. Despite her early widowhood, she married into an extraordinarily prosperous and prominent family. It was because of this wealth that **Elizabeth Coxe** was able to embark on her incredible travels.

While, in modern society, we demand immediate gratification, **Lizzie** and her companions traveled at a pace where they were allowed to appreciate everything they saw in detail at a level to which we are not accustomed. The letters and journals are beautifully and descriptively written. Oftentimes, drawings were included. They describe in vivid colorful wording scenes that **LeClerq** herself recreated following her ancestor's travels while researching and compiling this book. In one letter, one traveler even admitted she was running out of adjectives! Trips were measured in weeks and months rather than hours and days. It is in their travel writings the reader is treated to such keen observations. They traveled by boat, train, camel, and donkey. These were people who chose destinations that even today are considered to be for the more adventurous.

Eckley Coxe, Lizzie's son, was a scholar in Egyptian archaeology in connection with the **University of Pennsylvania Museum** at a time when much excavation was being done. These trips took him and his mother to remote regions of Egypt and the Sudan soon after it became safe for foreign visitors. There was a certain expectation for creature comforts, but many locales were primitive by today's standards. Yet, in

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Samuel Palmer (1805–1881)

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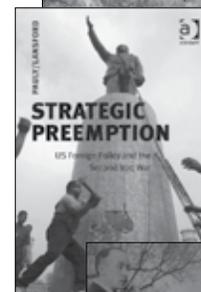
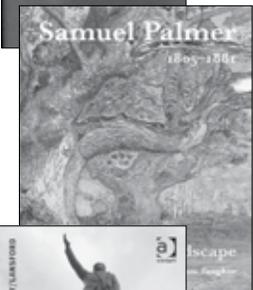
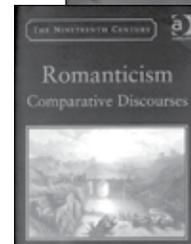
While Spring and Summer Sang

Thomas Beecham and the Music
of Frederick Delius
Lyndon Jenkins
December 2005. 214 pages
978 0 7546 0721 2. Hardback. \$89.95
Winner – 2006 **Association for Recorded Sound
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the larger cities, they lodged and dined in considerable opulence. This reviewer was struck at how often they referred to **Cook's** for their travel needs when it was just a cliché in the reviewer's mind — giving the **Cook's Tour**.

With the advent of the First World War,

these trips ended. Mother and son died within three years of each other before 1920. It appears, though, **Elizabeth Sinkler** knew the value of personal writings along with many other members of her family. It is a book that shows a bit of the Gilded Age with a South Carolina flavor.



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 insurmountable 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.

Runco, Mark A. *Creativity Theories and Themes: Research, Development, and Practice*. Boston: Academic Press, 2007. 0126024006 (10); 9780126024005 (13). 504 pages. \$74.95.

Reviewed by **Steven Profit** (Reference Librarian, College of Charleston)
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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's* 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

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) <mliibert@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 newsweeklies, two newspapers, a magazine about dogs, several pertaining to the arts, others that were related to their pro-

fessional 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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