PSYCHOLOGY OF CREATIVITY

PROCESSES AND PRODUCTIONS
CREATORS AND CREATIONS

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CHAPTER ONE: HOW DOES CREATIVITY HAPPEN?

CREATIVITY DEFINED

Creativity involves the discovery of that which is novel. It is seen as an activity resulting from the ordinary thought processes of ordinary individuals that happens when someone does something new that is also practical, generative, or influential (Weisberg 1986, Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). There are three levels of creativity. The first involves that which is appropriate and useful. It solves problems of an everyday nature. The second level involves that which is generative. Under this level, solutions extend beyond the original situation and lead to other ideas that then serve as a springboard. The third level involves that which is influential and changes its field entirely. An influential solution expands the field and alters the way people view the field, listen to it, think about it, react to it, and create new work within that field (Stokes, 2006).

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1996), “In order to understand creativity one must enlarge the conception of what the process is.” However, by doing just this and focusing on the social and cultural context of one’s creativity, one will find that creativity becomes even less definable and must be taken into consideration based on each circumstance and context.

Weisberg (1986) explains that creativity and its processes and products are rooted in the experience of the individual, her/his work, and the work of others. The processes and steps taken to achieve creativity are enhanced by small steps that accumulate due to these experiences rather than large random leaps. It cannot be achieved if individuals are simply encouraged to break away from past experiences and attempt to ignore them.

CREATIVITY MODELED

There are three models which attempt to explain creativity. The most well known of the three I will call “Outside-the-Box Thinking.” It refers to a different or unconventional form of thinking or thinking from a new perspective. It is sometimes described as a process of lateral thought. In order to accomplish “outside-the-box thinking” one must look further and think not of obvious solutions, but rather, to think beyond them. Much of the variability in this model focuses on the persons themselves. There are three main models that fall within this category: Psychodynamic Models, Psychometric Models, and Personality Models.

In contrast, “Inside-the-Box Thinking” focuses more on the creative process, which is assumed to be involved problem solving. “Inside-the-Box” means that one can only problem solve within the context of one’s expertise. There are two main models that fall within this category: Systems Models and Problem-Solving Models.

The third model focuses on what falls between the “inside-the-box” and “outside-the-box” models. It focuses both on the person and process. It depends both on training and expertise as well as the field in which the individual is working.
I. Outside-the-Box Models

Outside-the-Box Models are based on stereotyped, clichéd, and unconscious thoughts. Examples of these models are described below.

A. “Psychodynamic Out-the-Box Models” are those in which creativity results from processes of which the creator is unaware. It generally applies to non-verbal, visual, and/or manual skills that do not involve conscious thought otherwise known as skills in one’s implicit memory. The Greeks believed that creativity flows out unconsciously and effortlessly from humans.

The Emotional Unconscious from which creativity stems is thought to come from one of three sources, the Muses, dreams, and/or madness. Weisberg (1986) analyzes the first two. The Greeks believed that the inspiration and creativity was divinely blessed upon mankind by the mythological nine Muses. The muse would breathe the idea into the artist: Writers such as Homer would begin their literary works of art with phrases such as “Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story.” This concept promotes the idea that creativity comes from outside oneself. It is also temporary and not a chronic state of being. Similar ideas were promoted in later generations in various forms. In Renaissance art, paintings of Mary being told that she would bear the son of God the Redeemer, always include a dove and a shower of gold. It was as though the dove brought inspiration. This notion of creativity is quite a contrast to the idea of creativity as a derivative of madness that will be discussed later. Under these circumstances, creativity is an honored gift and not an effect of illness.

Weisberg also discusses the idea of “The ‘Aha!’ Myth,” the moment when all the pieces suddenly click into place and the solution becomes clear. He compares this with the idea of the Muses and “messenger of the gods” view is that creativity and creative ideas are provided by the Muses. As an example, Weisberg describes a follower of this belief, the mathematician Martin Gardner, who believes that creativity can come from doing nothing except being ready to receive this “aha!” moment.

Dreams are also believed to be a source of creativity. According to Weisberg, dreams are unconscious thought processes that contribute to creativity, inspiring creators when they are awake. During this period of unconsciousness, some believe that the brain discovers the correct combination of ideas in order to solve the problem on which one is working. This can occur through spreading activation – the concept that during REM sleep cycle, the brain is able to relate various pieces of knowledge in one’s mind due to neural reactions that are triggered and become part of a dream. An example of someone who made the claim of creativity coming to him in a dream is Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who asserted that his poem was relayed to him in a dream. However, there are a number of problems with this theory of creativity. Any reports of creativity due to dreams are after-the-fact subjective accounts. They may be skewed and distorted, both purposely and otherwise, and therefore may not be relied upon as being accurate. Additionally, one cannot dream of something that does not yet exist for dreams can only relay information that is already in one’s mind.

Madness is another subject that is often used to describe the source of creativity. The creativity-madness link was established over 2,000 years ago when the people believed that ideas were
“breathed” into mankind. During this time, madness was considered a means of inspiration and illumination rather than of sickness.

Today, the icon of the “mad genius” is a popular romanticized concept that “helps demystify” geniuses. However, this icon can also serve to stigmatize geniuses and affect them to an extent that is not fully understood. For example, if one is affected by a disorder, one may deny oneself treatment out of fear that it will “diminish their gift.” Judith Schlesinger argues that much of the material available on madness, creativity, and the “mad genius” has led both scientists and the public to believe in the creativity-madness link. She bemoans the unfortunate implications of this link to the perception of creativity and the credibility of general psychological research. She focuses on two psychiatrists, Nancy Andreasen and Arnold Ludwig, and one psychologist, Kay Redfield Jamison, whose work on these subjects has been significantly influential in the field but not sufficiently analyzed and critiqued. She demonstrates how the work of these three professionals has helped perpetuate some of the problems mentioned above especially because there are too few professionals who speak up against their conclusions (Schlesinger, 2009).

Andreasen’s landmark study began in 1972 and was published in 1987. The study looked at the rate of mental illness in writers and their families with those of non-writers. Using “unspecified criteria of her own design” she found that 80% of writers had mood disorders compared to 30% of non-writers. n=30, 27 men, mean age 37, presumably almost all Caucasian. In regards to this study, Schlesinger emphasizes the different biases that are in the study and seriously questions the claim that Andreasen’s study is accurate and scientific.

Jamison’s study called “Manic-Depressive Illness and Creativity” was first published in 1995. Even when it was published again eleven years later, no changes had been made or challenges raised. Schlesinger argues that this is evidence that her work has been taken as fact when there are clearly serious issues with it that have not been resolved. In 1989, Jamison published a study based on interviews with 47 English writers and artists and claimed that they had “an exceptionally high rate of affective illness, especially bipolar.” Schlesinger claims that before the study began, Jamison already assumed that there was something different about creative people. This is made clear in the analysis. Schlesinger also discusses the issues with Jamison’s book Touched with Fire and the details that are assumed about creative people who are no longer alive.

Ludwig attempted to sift through the lives of 1,004 famous people for “common seeds of their eminence” in his study. Schlesinger discusses a number of problems with the study including the fact that bibliographical information used may have been biased or skewed as well as the nature of restrictions regarding who was chosen to be included in the study. Additionally, since biographical information was used, no interviews were conducted or observations noted.

Through her study, Schlesinger demonstrates that various professionals can claim that their theories are correct. Their status and the number of papers they have published seem to convince the general population that they are correct which often prevents others from criticizing them. In conclusion, according to Schlesinger, the romanticized idea of the mad genius and the stigma that disorders such as depression and bipolar disorder are sources of creativity need to be removed from the forefront of the psychology of creativity.
Stokes expands on Schlesinger’s study arguing that it is possible that hypomanics are the most creative because their experiences are different from most. Positive moods are likely to make one expansive while negative moods make one focus on one item. Different mood levels and their frequency can possibly affect their creativity.

In contrast to the emotional unconscious theories of creativity, there are cognitive unconscious theories of creativity based on the work of Koestler, Mednick, and the Gestaltists.

Koestler’s “Bisociation Model” is a combination of two theories. The first is Poincare’s view that in incubation, ideas are combined that were “activated” during earlier conscious work. The second includes Freud’s theories and analysis of the conscious. Koestler’s assumption is that solving a problem involves combining thoughts and creative problem solving to arrive at novel solutions. By establishing connections and combining these two ideas that were previously unrelated, one may be able to solve one’s problem. This happens after one has been working on a problem for a great deal of time. Only after intense mental work will the problem “ripen” enough to enable the bisociative connection to be made. For example, Gutenberg invented the printing press by combining the idea of a wine press with that of the great force needed to press letters onto a piece of paper. Koestler also emphasizes the importance of dreams because in dreams the conscious is no longer in control and one is able to make connections that one would not usually make (Weisberg, 1986).

Mednick’s theory of “Remote Association” defines the creative thinking process as the forming of associative elements into new combinations which either meet specified requirements or are in some way useful. The more mutually remote the elements of the new combination are, the more creative the process or solution is. Solutions can be achieved through serendipity (by accident or chance or simply seeing something and being inspired), similarity (of stimuli) and/or mediation (bringing all elements together). Those individuals without the “requisite elements in his response repertoire” will not be able to combine them and reach the correct solution. Mednick’s study on the subject finds that “the greater number of associations that an individual has to the requisite elements of a problem, the greater the probability of his reaching a creative solution.” For example, when given the word “table” and asked to name items associated with it, one who says “chair” is less creative and is likely to have fewer responses overall. One who says something less familiar like “wood” is likely to have more responses overall (Mednick, 1962).

The Gestaltists’ theory is that of “Spontaneous Restructuring,” the beliefs that “creative thinking, of productive thinking…, entailed going beyond one’s past experience to work out each new problem as an independent experience.” By removing all previous connections that have been made in one’s mind (reproductive thought), successful or otherwise, one is more likely to find novel solutions (productive thought). Kohler conducted experiments to see if novel solutions would “click” and become apparent even if the subjects, in this case animals, had never before seen the tools that would help them complete a task. Sometimes a solution cannot be found regardless of whether one has tried to solve the same problem before. Every individual’s reasoning processes are different. In the experiments of the Gestaltists, subjects probably already had some experience solving similar problems, like using a stick to knock at food that one cannot reach by hand, and/or using various skills that they could use in different circumstances to solve.
a new problem like using a pair of scissors to cut a piece of paper to form a shape without folding it (Weisberg, 1986).

B. “Psychometric Out-of-the-Box Models” are those that assume that specific aspects of creativity can be measured and/or trained. Examples of these models are described below.

One example of this model is Guilford’s “Divergent Thinking” that “theorized that individuals differ in how sensitive they are to problems present in a given area of investigation.” An example of this is two people who may look at an issue and only one may even realize that there is a problem. Guilford tests this by asking people to think of common items and telling them to try to come up with as many ways of using the item as possible. He hypothesized that some people are simply more “fluent” in coming up with answers than others. Since creativity is assumed to be involved in approaching a problem from a new direction, this seems to imply a certain “flexibility of thought.” This is called divergent or lateral thinking. It depends on one’s ability to respond to a problem with numerous ideas, usually atypical ones. However, flexibility in one domain does not always or even usually transfer to another. Fluency only relates to how many different objects a person can think of in a single domain (Weisberg, 1986).

A second example of this model is Osborn’s brainstorming theory which claims that there is a need for “A specific set of rules to be used in order to foster creative thought.” Osborn believes that all people are possible of creative thought and advocates that brainstorming be used in order to establish an open and non-critical environment in which people can express as many views/solutions as possible that are as wild as need be and which can be worked on by a group without fear of criticism or judgment. It offers maximization of possibilities.

However, according to studies that have been conducted on brainstorming, it does not appear to be more helpful than traditional methods of reaching solutions. Studies found that working in a group is less effective than working alone and that the quality of the solutions is lower. They also found that a lack of criticism may mean that more ideas are produced but many of these ideas are useless and not productive. In a group that carefully judges and analyzes the solutions, there are fewer solutions found over all but percentage wise, more of the ideas are good and worthwhile. In fact, the highest percentage of good ideas seems to come from the non-brainstorming analytical group though the percentage is only slightly higher than the percentage of good solutions found by the brainstorming group.

To summarize, while the interest in brainstorming grew from the idea that divergent thinking is important in creativity, this may not be the case. Fresh viewpoints are needed to find solutions but fresh does not mean that no one has thought of it, only that the person trying to solve the problem has not thought of it (Weisberg, 1986).

C. “Personality Out-of-the-Box Models” are those that focus on individual predispositions. Personality is defined as characteristics ways in which an individual behaves.
Neural Plasticity is a subject in neuroscience that suggests that the brain develops neural connections in response to environmental stimulation. This is critical for the processing of information. Garlick argues that scientists must try to integrate this newer idea with the long standing idea that genes determine intelligence. For example the rate at which humans adapt to their environment may be based on genes but the environment itself also plays a very significant role in various intellectual abilities. Neural plasticity may even account for why children develop differently. According to this theory, children’s brains will develop differently based on the different associative networks they build due to their environment and elements to which they are exposed. Their brains’ will be more responsive to what they focused on early in life and on what they continue to focus (Garlick, 2003).

Weisberg’s “Genius Model” is also a personality model. In the hopes of increasing creativity there are those who look for specific characteristics of geniuses. These characteristics could be measured in children from a young age and developed as they grow. They could even possibly be taught to humans throughout their lives. A number of assumptions are made in regards to geniuses. For example, they possess certain characteristics, related to creativity, and that genius is permanent. Some scientists try to prove these assumptions but are ultimately unable to do so. According to Weisberg, no unique personality characteristics are related to genius at least in architecture, the field analyzed in the study Weisberg critiques. Success seems to be due to an artist’s willingness to conform to the desires and interests of the general field. Even geniuses like Leonardo da Vinci make mistakes and are incorrect sometimes so any assumptions based on the nature of geniuses would be faulty at best. Results are specific to the individual and her/his environment. The paradox of the artist who becomes famous and is considered a genius decades after his or her death must also be taken into consideration.

In conclusion, Weisberg argues that geniuses do not necessarily possess the same characteristics, that psychological characteristics may not be related to creative work, creativity is not constantly exhibited, and that genius is a characteristic that a “society bestows upon an individual in response to his or her work” (Weisberg, 1986).

**II. Inside-the-Box Models**

“Inside-the-box Models” are based on the idea that creativity as a process can be explained only inside a domain and area of expertise.

Csikezentmihalyi’s Systems Model (1990) is comprised of three interrelated parts. The first is the domain. The domain is all that is encompassed within a particular subject. It is any “symbolic system that has a set of rules of presenting thought and action.” It preserves that which has been deemed desirable and rejects that which is not. The individual/person is the second part. It is the creative creator. The individual has assimilated so well to the constraints of domain” that the individual has reached the point that s/he can be considered able to contribute to the expansion of the domain. The field is the third part and is composed of individuals who are the most knowledgeable of the domain and serve as a type of gate keeper to it. Overall, the creative process takes place outside the person, in the interaction between the three parts. The individual’s function is to provide variations in the domain. The social environment helps
facilitate the expression of one’s creativity while serving as an essential part of creativity (pg. 200-6).

The relationship between these three parts goes as follows. The domain is the source of information that is provided to the person. The person then produces a variation on the domain or on part of the domain. This variation is assessed by the field and then either accepted and incorporated into the domain or rejected from it. Csikszentmihalyi compares the relationship to the three aspects of the evolutionary process – variation, selection, and transmission (Figure 1.1).

![Diagram](image)

Figure 1.1
Problem Solving Models (Figure 1.2) are those that begin with an initial state, end in the goals state or solution, and have a problem space inbetween. These terms will be defined as this section continues and are depicted in the chart below. (Stokes, 2006, Weisberg, 1986).

![Diagram](image)

Figure 1.2
Stokes defines a “problem space” as a representation of the problem. It has an initial state, a goal state, and a set of operations (if… then…) that are applied in order to move from the initial state to the goal state, and a criterion for knowing when the goal/solution is reached (Stokes, 2006).
Problems can either be well-structured or ill-structured. In well-structured problem, the problem space is already specified. One knows the goal state and the steps in the search space are relatively clear (Stokes, 2006). Weisberg defines this kind of problem as one in which the characteristics of the solution are specifically laid out from the beginning so that the problem solver knows what criteria the solution must meet. He gives the examples of a tic-tac-toe board (Weisberg, 1986).

In contrast, an ill-structured problem is one that is incompletely specified. It is a problem in which the detailed specifications of the goal/solution are unknown and/or not part of the problem itself (Stokes, -Book). The problem solvers must determine the criteria themselves in order to work their way through the search space. An example of this is the candle problem in which one is given a candle, a box of matches, and a box of thumbtacks and asked to fix a lit candle on a wall in a way so that candle wax will not drip on the table below. In circumstances such as these, the process of retrieving information can often serve as that which sets the criteria for the solving of the problem (Weisberg, 1986).

There are three models that work to apply structure to the notion of the problem space: Weisberg’s incremental model, Reitman’s constraints model, and Stokes’ constraints model. The role of expertise is another model that falls into this category.

Weisberg’s incremental model (1986) assumes that creative acts are firmly rooted in the work of others as well as in their own previous work. Creative products are developed through modifications and elaborations of other works. Weisberg applies the incremental model to the arts and sciences to show how it applies to both. This is similar to Mednick’s notion of serendipity. Creative works are not necessarily leaps of insight. Rather, they are often the result of all the steps that occur through the incremental process especially after one has been dealing with a subject for a significant period of time. The double-helix structure of DNA was discovered this way. This tends to be the case because experts are more capable of picking out what will be most useful in helping them find a solution. On the other hand, novices tend not to know when a solution is generative and may therefore not continue in the most productive direction.

The steps in the problem solving process in which creativity is possible depend on the given personality type which may or may not facilitate creative achievement in relation to a specific field. Even though an individual is basing his/her work on the work of another or even her/his previous work, as long the work possesses some pertinent variations, then creativity is involved. In the problem solving process, one must first retrieve information from which one is going to base one’s work and then modify it in one’s own way. If a problem is ill-defined then the individual must also be creative enough to realize there is a problem and then find the most appropriate way of dealing with it. One must also retain the motivation to continue to struggle with a complex problem.

Reitman’s constraint model (1965) advocates that the attributes that define the description may be viewed as constraints on the problem solving and the problem-solving process. Every time the original problem is changed, new constraints are added to the problem and must be considered during problem-solving. An open constraint is one that develops as problem-solving
proceeds when parts of a problem have not been specified and the search space is open. With each new specification made, other constraints are closed. An example of this type of model is the composition of a fugue in which a chosen theme restricts other themes from entering the fugue and the key restricts which notes within the theme can be played.

Stokes’ constraint model (2006) focuses on four specific constraints – domain, cognition, variability, and talent. The domain includes the learning and acquisition of skills that takes place within itself. The criteria of a domain are based on goal, subject, and task constraints. Creativity often begins when an expert makes variations on the domain. The cognitive constraint includes the physiological limitations on how many items one’s brain can process at one time. In this constraint, implicit memory is most useful when an action comes so effortlessly and naturally to the expert. But even for experts, implicit memory can be a constraint. For example, musicians know when composing a piece based on cycle of fifths when a certain note is wrong because it will simply not fit into the piece. The variability constraints determine how differently something must/should be done. High variability means that one is more likely to produce original and different ideas rather than traditional or repetitive ones. There is also habitual or learned variability that indicate that abilities differ by person and by domain. Talents, the fourth constraint, are genetic. One either has them or one does not. If one does, one can be more or less talented. Talents both “promote and preclude interest and skill acquisition in different domains.” Possessing a talent does not guarantee creativity but it works well as a starting point from which creativity can develop since one may be more inclined to pursue the type of knowledge related to the field in which one is talented.

Overall, constraints help structure the solution path by limiting (precluding) and directing (promoting) searches in the problem space (Stokes, 2006). Working to gain a greater understanding of constraints one can obtain a comprehensive analysis of the domain in which one is interested but also of one’s own work and creations.

Expertise is critical in order to achieve influential creativity. Ericcson defines expert performance as what occurs after passing through the “cognitive” and “associative” phases. At this point, individuals can generate performance virtually automatically with minimal effort and “counteract automaticity by developing increasingly complex mental presentations to attain higher levels of control of their performance and will therefore remain within the ‘cognitive’ and ‘associative’ phases...’ most domains of expertise require that experts be able to exhibit superior performance for presented representative situations” and a greater control over their performance. It takes approximately ten years of experience in the domain to become an expert and as elite performance ability continues to improve beyond the age of physical maturation it can take up to 20-30 years for an individual to produce their best work. There is also evidence that the highest levels of performance are not necessarily stable and can continue to increase over time due to training and practice. Additionally, expertise is specific to its domain. An expert is an expert in her/his field and is not likely to become an expert in a different field unless he/she performs the requisite work necessary to become an expert in that field (Ericsson, 1996, pg. 685-690).

“Deliberate Practice” is concentrated practicing for the sake of improving one’s ability and expertise. Experts practice to master specific pre-determined goals that will purposefully enhance
their expertise. The main assumption of deliberate practice is that expert performance is gradually acquired and that effective improvement of performance “requires the opportunity to find suitable training tasks that the performer can master sequentially – typically the design of training tasks and monitoring of the attained performance is done by teacher or coach.” By continuously and consciously attempting to accomplish new and more challenging tasks in one’s field of expertise one can slowly become an expert in this field (pg. 690-6).

III. The Inbetween Models

Wallas’ **Four Step Model** falls in-between Outside- and Inside-the-Box Models. The first step is preparation which happens inside oneself and involves one’s expertise. The second step is incubation which occurs outside oneself and is based on experiences. The third step is insight, which also occurs outside and involves finding connections. The fourth and final step is verification. It occurs outside and involves seeing if one’s creation works.

There are number of problems that Weisberg mentions, mainly the difficulties in separating these four stages. Problems are constantly being worked on. Individuals are often editing and changing their work which can make it impossible to differentiate between the stages (Weisberg, 1986).

**Interactions with the field** are also critical to creativity. According to Abuhamdeh and Csikszentmihalyi (2004) specific traits associated with an artistic personality depend on the characteristics of both the domain of the art and the field of art.

Within the field of art there is the **domain** (area) of expertise which trains the individual to become an expert. There is the individual who makes her/his own **variations** to the field through his/her work. And there are those in the **field**, such as the gallery owners, art historians, and other artists, and the gatekeepers who can think/accept the variations, if they believe that the new work should fit within the domain. Depending on the variations, the field may determine that the artist’s work has reached an influential level and has enlarged the domain. In contrast, the field can choose to reject the proposed changes of the individual.

The domain of art is represented in a two dimensional chart. The horizontal axis is “representational” vs. “abstract” and the vertical axis is “linear” vs. “painterly”. Representational refers to a clear external reference, imitation, and/or structure already imposed. Abstract refers to a work with little to no object referent and no clear challenge or goal in which one creates one’s own structural limits. Linear refers to a controlled figure. Painterly refers to a loose and undefined form that focuses on the materials themselves.

There are certain personality implications that determine the kinds of traits best suited for the creation of art that are dependent on the kind of art that is being created. According to past studies, “rational-cognitive styles” were associated with representational art and “irrational cognitive styles” were associated with abstract styles. Artists with “lower cognitive defense and controls” tended to be more painterly and those “more rigid in their psychological defenses” paint in a more linear style (Figure 1.3). It also takes a certain type of personality to succeed in the field. One has to like or at least be comfortable with the art that is popular at the time. One must also know the history of the field. One must determine how one’s art fits into the domain in
the correct period of time. One must know how to best sell oneself to the domain. These criteria are what will determine how the art is received. In order to succeed, people may also choose play into myths, such as madness, that make them appear more creative.

Figure 1.3 “The domain of modern and contemporary painting can be described by two continuous dimensions, representational-abstract and linear-painterly. Examples of artists and styles for each of the quadrants are given”
(Csikszentmihalyi, 2004, pg 34)
CHAPTER TWO:
CREATIVITY AND CONSTRAINTS IN ART
Relating the Systems Model & Constraints Model

INTRODUCTION

The constraint model can be applied to any field such as art or literature. By analyzing subjects in regards to their constraint models, one can break down the various fields to learn how they originated. In order to determine the constraints that an individual worked with or against, one must determine the constraints of the domain, the goal, the subject, and the task. Additionally, one can also use the systems model in order to break down the domains and personal history, neural plasticity, and interests of an artist. For example, in the field of art within the last century, one can use these two models to trace the development and shift in constraints from the American School to Abstract Expressionism.

MOVING AWAY FROM THE REPRESENTATIONAL

During the decades before World War I, with the growing availability of photography, artists began developing new ways of readapting traditional art. Photography was taking the place of portraits and other general representational and linear art. Artists like Alexander Calder, Pablo Picasso, and Georges Braque started to use their knowledge of art, interests, and personal experiences to redefine art which can be explained using the system and constraints models.

Alexander Calder

Alexander Calder was an American sculptor and artist who lived from 1898-1976. He was most famous for inventing the mobile. In addition to mobile and stabile sculpture, Calder also created paintings, lithographs, toys, tapestry, jewelry and household objects. In order to better understand his art, one may look at it through the lens of the system and constraint model which will be outlined below.

In regards to the systems model, the first domain that must be considered is that of sculpture with modern materials and abstract art. Calder was inspired by movement in space and began using air as a component in his art. He also began moving away from representational art and towards abstract art. He drew from the work of Rodenke whose art hung from walls. He drew from Moldego’s kinetic art as well as Tatlin’s use of materials in space and Gonzalez’s use of iron to outline sculpture is a cubist way of embracing the space. The second domain is engineering, also with modern materials. Since Calder was trained as an engineer, he knew how to touch and use the materials to adapt wire, sculpture, and kinetic art into suspended works of art. In this domain, Calder drew from Mondrian’s use of primary colors and abstract shapes and from Miro’s biomorphic shapes and wandering, wavy, and whimsical lines (Schneckenburger, Ruhrberg, Honnef, & Fricke, 2000).
As for his personal influences on his own art, one must look to his interests, his neural plasticity, his expertise, and his constraint choice. As mentioned in the previous chapter, neural plasticity is the ability of the human brain to change and adapt as a result of one's experience. The brain is malleable and flexible so that it may more easily incorporate new information. As Calder’s father and grandfather were well-known sculptors and his mother was a professional painter, Calder was encouraged to pursue his interest in art from a young age. Growing up in this type of environment and exploring his ability in art from a young age is likely to have expanded Calder’s neural plasticity. This would have been helpful to him throughout his life. In regards to expertise, which takes approximately ten years to reach according to Ericsson (Ericsson, 1996), the artistic genius is thought to move an audience emotionally due to extraordinary sensitivity and openness to emotion (Weisberg, 1986). Expertise can be affected by neural plasticity in regards to the rate it takes to achieve expertise. This and the fact that Calder had been active in expanding his own knowledge and abilities in art from a very young age speaks to his expertise. Interests of an artist are also critical in explaining his/her art methods. Calder’s interests in the solar system and circus imagery helped define his art through careful yet whimsical use of space as a factor and material. Lastly, his constraint choices were instrumental in structuring his work. As discussed in the description of the domain, Calder clearly incorporated the correct amount of the work of other, as well as his own work, into his final version of the art he created (Weisberg, 1986).

The constraint model, based on Stokes studies on the subject, focuses on the source constraints of the material, which includes the domains and serves as a starting pointing upon which the artist can build and construct her/his work. It includes both the work of others and the artist’s own original work. The model also focuses on subject constraints, task constraints and working methods, and goal constraints.

Table 2.1: A Constraint Model of Calder’s Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Preclude</th>
<th>Promote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Source** | • Traditional still-life and materials like bronze and iron | • Wire sculpture and kinetic art, modern sculpture, surrealism, late constructivism  
• Mondrian’s work encouraged him to turn his art into a series of moving and suspended objects  
  • Magnelli’s dynamic contours  
  • Miro’s leafy forms  
• Circus themes, mechanical birds, engineering (Schneckenburger, M., Ruhrberg, K., Honnef, K., & Fricke, 2000, pg 472-3) |
| **Goal** | • Static more traditional works.  
  • Works of art such as Mondrian’s still colored blocks on white walls.  
  • Art/sculpture that takes | • Sculpture. Eventually only steel could be adapted to achieve a lightness, malleability, and compositional flexibility. Calder’s sculptures were “witty and whimsical [with] lines drawn in the air, unaware of the experiments being carried out in the same field.” (pg. 472) |
up space. The stationary, sameness, and stability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Representational portraits, symmetry and order  
  • Realism  
  • Seriousness (Schneckenburger, M., Ruhrberg, K., Honnef, K., & Fricke, 2000, pg. 473) | • Paint  
  • Fixed structures.  
  • Heavy and more traditional materials like iron and bronze  
  • Drawing on paper and traditional representation |
| • “Energetic motion and organic curves” (pg. 473)  
  “wind-generated movement” as though they were abstract birds (Weisberg, 1986, pg. 112).  
  • By the 1930’s, Calder started creating more abstract and less representational art.  
  • Mobility. It changes the configuration. Mobility and mutability. This makes his art simpler and simpler. | • Steel, iron, and wire. Calder began by using hand cranks and then electric motors to structure his art, as he did with his fish in a bowl and mechanical birds.  
  • Calder eventually decided to let his art hang and “the breath of air became the element of change” from which he created the mobile (Weisberg, 1986, pg. 112).  
  • Lightness of material.  
  • Drawing in space  
  • Abstract and cartoons. |

**Braque and Picasso**

Braque and Picasso also drastically changed their domains through their work with cubism and collage. Based on a systems model of their work, there were two domains that must be taken into account when analyzing their work. The first domain has two parts. The first was representational painting and the degree to which artwork imitates an external reference (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2004, pg. 34). The second was cubism which attempted to convey multiple perceptions of a single object simultaneously on a single canvas. Collage evolved from cubism (Weisberg, 1986, pg. 113). It was built on one of Cezanne’s approaches to the multiple viewpoints within the same painting but even though the viewpoints are of the same
object/s they are not necessarily recognizable as the same object/s (Stokes, 2006, pg. 48). The second domain, at least for Braque, was interior decorating. He was able to use his experiences in the field of interior decorating to paint realistic versions of marble and wood (Weisberg, 1986, pg. 113).

Table 2.2: A Constraint Model of Braque’s and Picasso’s Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Preclude</th>
<th>Promote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>• Representational painting with a single viewpoint (straight ahead), intact object (an apple), local color (red), and depth (shaded on one side). (Stokes, 2009, Article pg. 176)</td>
<td>• Painting what they know from various points of view, fragmented objects (an apple morphed into multiple parts), monochromatic (browns), patterned (parts arranged rhythmically, and flat (non-illusionistic shading). (Stokes, 2009, Article pg. 176)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>• Realism</td>
<td>• Cubism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Interior Decorating (at least for Braque).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>• Multiple people and/or items</td>
<td>• Limited number of objects such as a guitar or glasses • Simple viewpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>• Pure paint</td>
<td>• They took objects they found and included them in their art rather than making them themselves. • Post-industrial techniques. Weisberg calls it the use of “non-art material.” (Weisberg, 1986, pg. 114)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HOPPER AND AMERICAN SCENE PAINTING

After the shock and horror of World War I and World War II, realistic movements such as Dadaism and Surrealism began to form and evolve. Some also developed a stylized realism that was considered to be art with a social conscience such as Otto Dix and Max Beckman. Their art was realistic but not flattering, with an upsetting and disturbing sense that often embraced realistic mythological imagery.

In contrast to these movements, artists in America formed a new art movement, a new domain, called American Scene Painting. This movement developed out of a desire to convey a sense of nationalism and romanticism in depictions of everyday American life. From this movement, three schools of American realism were founded including the Ashcan School, the Precisionist School, and the Regionalist School. The Ashcan School, led by Robert Henri, focused on urban areas, crowds of people, and movement. It introduced a new style of painting with loose,
impressionistic brushwork with a new subject matter, namely modern life. The Precisionist School, pioneered by artists such as Charles Demuth and Charles Sheeler, covered industrial areas with a modern geometric, yet realistic perspective that is cold and linear. The Regionalist School depicted rural and farm areas in order to create an uplifting atmosphere. Often painting murals, the Regionalists created larger than life images that were simplified through the use of many rounded shapes.

These schools directed a great deal of the progression in American art but there were a number of artists who diverged from the domain of American Scene Painting by transformed it into their own personal perspectives on American life. One of the more significant of these artists was Edward Hopper, a classical painter who used classical realism to depict a haunting loneliness of the seemingly perfect American life. While Hopper studied and learned from painters in the Ashcan School, and precluded the influences of Picasso and Matisse as they did, he rejected the romanticism with which they portrayed American life. He also rejected the perspectives on industry and hard edged lines of the Precisionists who dealt with abstract architectural geometries. Additionally, he precluded the impressionistic techniques of long sweeping brush strokes used to portray light and an absence of concrete line both in architecture scenery, avoiding photographic truth, commotion, and the traditional American realism. He did, however, draw from the domain of illustration and the technique of etching by Martin Lewis, a great printmaker famous for his scenes of New York life (Haskell & Nichola, 2010).

From a young age, Hopper’s parents encouraged him to pursue his interest in art. They supplied him with the necessary materials to study and work. By his teens he was working in pen-and-ink, charcoal, watercolor, and oil, mainly drawing from nature (Levin, 1984). It was his experiences with art from this young age and his interests in Paris, solemnity, light, and the various aspects of the impressionist and realism school from which he drew, that paved the way for Hopper to create the art that he did and made him so successful during the 1930’s – 1940’s in New York.

Table 2.3: A Constraint Model of Hopper’s Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Preclude</th>
<th>Promote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Source   | • Ashcan School painters with whom Hopper studied and from whom he learned.  
• The Precisionists dealt with abstract architectural geometries during the 1920’s. Hopper rejected their perspectives on industry and hard edged lines.  
• Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse | • American Scene painting, depicting urban and rural life in the 1930’s.  
• Edgar Degas                                                                  |
| Goal     | • Photographic Truth  
• The “traditional American Realism”                                        | • Insight into the human condition in its simplicity and solemnity. “Seemingly bland vignette imbued with an understated dramatic
- Emphasize on the solitude of man
- Monument silence
- “Psychological,” “abstract,” or “personal” realism, all of which are subjective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Natural scenes, usually those that involve vibrant and contrasting colors and soft light</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dynamic interactions of human beings</td>
<td>• Paintings one’s feeling and impressions of a scene. Relying on light and fluid lines to portray the artists objective rather than details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Romanticism of modern industrial life</td>
<td>• Cold, light, and linear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Refined themes, aristocratic scenes and people and entertainment</td>
<td>• Crowed and chaotic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Commotion</td>
<td>• Pure abstraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Modern techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Impressionistic techniques: Long sweeping brush strokes used to portray light and an absence of concrete line (both in architecture scenery)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Formal geometries and light effects (Precisionism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More lines, more shapes, more defined especially in relation to the Ashcan School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One point linear perspective with a single viewpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Painterly, all about the paint, especially through the depiction of the trees and grass, but simple with limited values and pallet such as dark, light, or in-between.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Classical techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Capture the interaction between the light and abstract diagonal planes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emphasizing the light just as much if not more than the focal point of the painting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Urban scenes with industrial structures and rural areas during the day and at night like Demuth and Sheeler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Bleached sunlight which creates a deliberate shadow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Individuals and individual situations isolated in a larger space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Isolation itself – subjective, dramatic, lonely, and uncomfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mainly images of mainstream American life but often infused with influences from his three trips to Paris.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM**

Abstract Expressionism is a term applied to a movement in American painting that flourished in the 1940s and 1950s, sometimes referred to as the New York School or as Action Painting. It was the first American visual art form to attain international status, acceptance, and influence. The main differences between abstract expressionism and realism is that abstract expressionism shows pictorial armature, expresses personal emotion, uses a wall-size canvas, and uses symbolic color. Over time this term has come to designate the paintings and sculptures of artists such as Jackson Pollock, Barnett Newman, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko, Ad Reinhardt, Lee Krasner, and David Smith.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Preclude</th>
<th>Promote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Source** | • American Scene Painting (e.g. the Whitney Show)  
• The Ashcan school of painting: loose, impressionistic brushwork, focus on modern life  
• National style and environment  
• Realism with no perspective of cubism. | • First coined in relation to the work of Vasily Kandinsky in 1929  
• The term is generally used to describe the generation of artists active in New York from the 1940’s |
| **Goal** | • Insight into the shared human condition in its simplicity and solemnity. “Seemingly bland vignette imbued with an understated dramatic force” (exhibit) (Expressing the human condition: Especially its simplicity and solemnity.) | • Expressing concern with the various degrees of abstraction used to convey strong emotional or expressive content  
• Paint as the subject itself |
| **Subject** | • Hopper: shared emotions, specifically scenes of other people’s loneliness  
• Demuth and Sheeler: Urban scenes with industrial structures and rural areas during the day and at night.  
• Bleached sunlight which creates a deliberate shadow  
• Landscapes and small town life | • Barnett Newman: Unbroken fields of color  
• Willem de Kooning: violent handling of the figure  
• A common sense of moral purpose and alienation from American society  
• A profound sense of self and an urgency to show it  
• Transformation: Of themselves and after, society  
• Attention to the physicality and immediacy of |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Small</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• More lines, more shapes, more defined especially in relation to The Ashcan School (The Ashcan School: the lack of excess, specifically in the use of shapes, lines, and definition.)</td>
<td>• Automatic Drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A window perspective</td>
<td>• Abstract Expressionists resist definition as a cohesive style. (The communication of strong emotion and/or expression: The movement as a whole resisted being defined as a cohesive style. While the works are mainly linked by this theme other factors included location and the varying degrees of abstraction.) Inventing a new form of art that expressed the urge to recreate their society after the devastating events of WWII.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Two dimensional with layering</td>
<td>• The shared belief (even though they came from diverse backgrounds and had a few disparaging viewpoints) that they had witnessed the collapse of civilization in their supposedly&quot;cultured&quot;society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Express truth and perspective</td>
<td>• Their art allowed them to express themselves and for them to provide a soul and voice to their work with the essential quality of being an artist. (Their art was mainly about self expression and providing a soul and a voice to work. They investigated what it truly meant to be an artist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Planned drawings that are sketched out beforehand</td>
<td>• Thinking and talking - it was a social, bonding, and exploratory experience, a movement that involved thinking together. It was a transformation from contemporary being and some exclusive circle to something that interested almost everyone. It was an artistic form of communication and a social experience that involved collaboration. It had no interest in being exclusive or only being applicable to the select few.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Large canvas and large areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The sculptures of David Smith and Ibram Lassaw, as well as the photography of Aaron Siskind and the painting of Mark Tobey.</td>
<td>• Seeing what happens when the brush hits the canvas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The doodle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three Abstract Expressionist Painters: de Kooning, Rothko, and Reinhardt

"Flesh is the reason oil paint was invented." - Willem de Kooning

De Kooning was an American artist, born in the Netherlands, who lived from 1904-1997. He abandons the traditional idea of the painting being a window and instead treats the canvas as if it were a two dimensional plane. He emphasized complex figure ground ambiguity. Background figures would overlap other figures causing them to appear in the foreground, which in turn might be overlapped by dripping lines of paint, thus positioning the area into the background.

Many of De Kooning’s most famous paintings were of women, often drawing upon female archetypes -from a Paleolithic fertility goddess to a 1950’s pinup girl. His painting Woman, I featured a woman with a threatening stare and ferocious grin that are heightened by de Kooning's aggressive brushwork, frantic paint application, and intense color palette. Combining voluptuousness and menace, Woman, I reflects the age–old cultural ambivalence between reverence for and fear of the power of the feminine. This painting took De Kooning an unusually long amount of time to complete as he conducted numerous preliminary studies and repainted the canvas several times before eventually arriving at this hulking, wild-eyed figure of a woman.

In regards to surface tensions in Woman, I, De Kooning once said, “I like a nice, juicy, greasy surface.” He enjoyed playing with surface tension over illusionistic depth. Through surface tension, he is able to manipulate the heft of the women he paints in order to make them appear flattened out, as though pressed up against the surface of the painting.

Woman, I - Willem de Kooning 1950-52
Oil on canvas, 6' 3 7/8" x 58" (www.moma.org)
“Often, towards nightfall, there’s a feeling in the air of mystery, threat, frustration—all of these at once. I would like my paintings to have the quality of such moments.” - Mark Rothko

Mark Rothko was another Abstract Expressionist painter who lived from 1903-1970. After immigrating to American from what is now Latvia, Rothko initially worked with a bright color palette, using traditional Renaissance influences. But from 1957 on, he mainly painted with shadowy, nocturnal hues using layers of rich purples, maroons, and browns that created a sense of atmospheric depth in paintings such as No. 16 (Red, Brown, and Black). In No. 16, Rothko layered paint on a large canvas to create a set of three elongated rectangular blocks of color, one above the other, upon a luminous purple field.

Rothko hoped that these compositional strategies would invite visual and emotional contemplation on the part of the viewer, creating the conditions for silence and reflection. The abandoning of traditional Renaissance three point perspective allowed Rothko to make the canvas appear flat. This, his lack of subject matter and dramatic tones, allowed for his audience to have a deeply personal and emotional response.

He explained his methods as follows, "We favor the simple expression of the complex thought. We are for the large shape because it has the impact of the unequivocal. We wish to reassert the picture plane. We are for flat forms because they destroy illusion and reveal truth." While simplistic, Rothko attempted to use scale and simplicity to communicate complex ideas. "I'm interested only in expressing basic human emotions,” he said. “Tragedy, ecstasy, doom, and so on … and the fact that people break down and cry when confronted with my pictures shows that I communicate those basic human emotions.”
At the Edge of Visibility

Ad Reinhardt was a third Abstract Expressionist American who lived from 1913-1967. Reinhardt felt that he was finely attuned to the subtle differences in black. When initially observing his artwork, it appears as a simple stark canvas. However, through a prolonged study of his art work, one can find numerous subtle nuances. Later in life, Reinhardt focused solely on square, black paintings. Reinhardt’s black paintings are related more to the Chinese conception of light and dark than that of western art. They are intentionally enigmatic and resist interpretation offering new ideas as to the subject matter and the way one traditionally thinks about art.

His paintings followed this format. A square canvas, approximately five feet wide, five feet high, as high as a man, as wide as a man’s outstretched arms that is trisected. There was one horizontal form negating one vertical form with three dark non-contrasting colors. His brushstrokes were brushed out so as to appear removed and replaced with a flat, hand, painted surface, which does not reflect its surroundings—a pure, abstract, non-objective, timeless, spaceless, changeless, disinterested painting. Overall, they depict objects that are self-conscious, ideal, transcendent, aware of no thing but art.

His painting, Abstract Painting, appears entirely black at first but it actually is composed of an almost imperceptible grid of nine squares distinguished by subtle variations in color. Close examination reveals a red hue in the squares at its four corners, blue at the top and bottom of its vertical axis, and hints of green across its horizontal center. It contains three distinct shades of black, which become visible only after prolonged looking. Reinhardt was intensely sensitive to such subtle variations. He explained, “There is a black which is old and a black which is fresh. Lustrous black and dull black, black in sunlight and black in shadow.” “There is a black which is old and a black which is fresh. Lustrous black and dull black, black in sunlight and black in shadow.”

Abstract Painting - Ad Reinhardt 1963
Oil on canvas, 60 x 60" (www.moma.org)
Modifications of Movement

De Kooning’s diverse work ranged between faces that are basically realistically painted on abstract backgrounds and figures and shapes that are becoming more and more distorted through the years, where the expressive strength, especially due to the surface tension of the painting, becomes the main issue in his paintings of woman.

Rothko’s movement towards abstraction was enhanced by adapting the Surrealist practice of “automatic” drawing. This was designed to harness the creative powers of the unconscious mind, a practice that other artists during the 1940’s were beginning to adopt.

Reinhardt based his art on the idea that less is more. His paintings are a stark contrast to the dramatic gesturalism characteristic of many Abstract Expressionist paintings in that unlike many of his contemporaries, such as de Kooning or Motherwell, Reinhardt worked with a limited palette, applied matte pigments in smooth, even strokes, and reduced the composition to an easily repeatable grid. He believed that art was free. He took the tendency in modern art toward abstraction and simplification to the extreme. He was committed to an aesthetic purism that refused any references to the outside world.
Chapter Three: Creativity and Constraints in Writing

SHARED CONSTRAINTS

_Flower & Hayes_  
Three Constraints

The acts of writing and dynamics of composing involve juggling a number of simultaneous constraints. Strategic planning allows the writer to reduce ‘cognitive strain’ being made on the conscious attention. One should not view writing and composing as a series of discrete stages or steps that add up to a finished product. The dynamics of this process can be expounded upon by the three main constraints of writing: Knowledge, written speech, and the rhetorical problem. While knowledge is technically a resource and not a constraint, it becomes a constraint on the process when it is not in an acceptable form. For example, when confronting a new or complex issue, writers must develop their unorganized ideas and memories into an integrated notion of what they are going to write. Written speech is then used to express the knowledge one has integrated using the linguistic conventions of written prose. Lastly, the rhetorical problems arrive during the final task of writing when writers must conform their writing to the structures posed by their purpose in writing, their sense of the audience, and their projected selves or imagined role. “This means that writers must adapt both knowledge and written speech to solving this rhetorical problem” (Flower & Hayes, 1980).

_Antonia Byatt_  
Mimesis, Metaphor, and Patterning

Antonia Byatt uses mimesis, metaphor, and patterning as the three main task constraints in her writing in order to beautifully develop the flavors of her text. This is especially evident in her _Sugar and Other Stories_, a book composed of a number of short stories from various perspectives. It is full of autobiographical information that describes her Yorkshire childhood and familial relationships.

Mimesis is a critical term that aims at the truth about things and uses words to describe them (Stokes, 2006). It encompasses imitation, representation, mimicry, receptivity, a similarity or resembling, and an expressive presentation of the self.

As Stokes describes, “Byatt’s scaffolding is metaphoric... metaphor enlarges on mimesis.” Even the title of her book, _Sugar_ (1992), introduces the metaphor to her readers as she recalls her mother’s sugar-coated lies and her father’s candy business (Stokes, 2006). The sugar paves the path for the continuation of the story and it builds upon itself and structures itself.

Byatt uses repeating patterns of major and minor motifs that produce a variety of enhancements in the texts. Patterns provide a series of metonymies. Patterning works incredibly well when an author intertwines two or more interrelated stories in a single book as it allow the author to move forward with each story while still being able to return to the same themes and motifs described.
earlier.

In “Sugar,” Byatt speaks directly to the audience using the first person. She writes,

“\textit{This event was a stories event, already lived over and over, imagination and hope, in the invented future. The real thing, the true moment, is as inaccessible as any point along that frantic leap. More things come back as I write... After things have happened, when we have taken a breath and a look, we begin to know what they are and were, we begin to tell them to ourselves.}”

\textit{Sugar, pg. 248}

Byatt is very personal in her writing, telling a story that is very much like a memoir. It is organized with a specific flow and well thought out with each character described in a particular way in a particular form. Whenever new information or characters are introduced, which happens constantly, they all fall perfectly into the structure Byatt provides. The all-knowing narrator has specific knowledge that she presents that tells a story that serves to derive meaning from the past. This can only be accomplished by explicating source material.

In contrast, “Rose Colored Teacups” is a story with much less interaction with the audience. In this story, the scene is set, all the players are already present, and all unfolds exactly as Byatt planned. For example, Byatt introduces her character Veronica with the words, “Veronica had to resist seeing it as she had always known it” (\textit{Sugar, pg. 33}) after which the rest of the scene unfolds. There is also no outright definition of the narrator, only clues given based on tone of voice and tense shed light on who is speaking and when. There is also a great precision, focus detail, and adjectives used in order to describe the objects in the story. She portrays another character as, “sugar-petticoated, smooth-skinned, eye-lined and passionate, staring at the shards of pink lustre teacups in a road-delivered teacheest” (\textit{Sugar, pg. 36}). This is especially noticeable in “Rose Coloured Teacups” because it is focused on objects rather than people as is the case with “Sugar.”

\textit{Annie Dillard}

\textit{Plain and Fine Prose}

Another task constraint in traditional and established writing is a continuum of styles than range from \textit{plain prose} and \textit{fine or fancy prose}. On this continuum, fine modernist prose works as a painted sphere while plain prose serves as a clear windowpane. Fancy prose is most similar to “poetry” while plain prose is most similar to “science.” Prose can also fall inbetween these two categories. However, Annie Dillard’s prose, as evident in her personal non-fictional stories \textit{An American Childhood} and \textit{The Writing Life} is clearly plain prose. Her style is more American - plain yet captivating. The individual words she uses seem fairly plain on their own but in her own way, Dillard makes each a link in the chain of her story. In contrast, Byatt’s prose would be considered fancy. Byatt uses much more flowery and ornate language in her descriptions which is more common among British authors. She truly uses language as a “display,” rather than the “lamp” of plain prose as Dillard explains, through which she expresses her thoughts (pg. 121-2). She also plays with tempo as a way of distinguishing different settings in her writing.
As a whole, plain prose focuses on narrative and more mimetic ways of writing that presents a more humble perspective on text. It instructs the reader to look at the world rather than just the writing and it is careful to respect the reader while doing so. It includes a good deal of blank space that is not easy to deal with. It has been the prose of choice for authors such as Chekov, Hemingway, Borges, Sherwood, Anderson, Horgan, Morris, Green, Robbe-Grillet, and Kundera. As Dillard describes, “Plain prose represents literature’s new morality. It honors each thing one by one, without metaphor” (Dillard, 1982, pg. 116). It serves as a lamp for literature, not a display. It was initially Flaubert who came up a new idea that prose did not need to be elaborate. Instead, it should be short, clean, and

“In sparing use of adjectives and adverbs; it avoids relative clauses and fancy punctuation; it forswears exotic lexicon and attention-getting verbs... it eschews splendid metaphor and cultured allusions... [In] plain writing – objects themselves... invite inspection and flaunt their simplicity.”

-Dillard, 1982, pg. 116-7

On the other hand, fancy prose is profoundly aware of itself and calls attention to itself. It has been used by authors like Robert Burton, Sir Thomas Browne, Samuel Johnson, Tomas De Quincy, Thomas Macalay, Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Ruskin, William James, and Sir James Frazer. Dillard believes that fine writing in fictional prose came into its own only with Modernists such as James, Proust, Faulkner, Beckett, Woolf, Kafka, and Joyce. Traditional fine writing is like painterly painting or painterly prose.

“It raids the world for material to build sentences. It fabricates a semi-opaque weft of language... it traffics in parallel structures and repetitions; it indulges in assonance and alliteration.”

-Dillard, 1982, pg. 104-5

Sentences in fine prose may be long and heavily punctuated with an enormously wide lexicon. It has elaborate and powerful imagery with complexity and grandeur.

CONSTRAINTS AND MEMORY

Memory and nostalgia are two themes that are explored throughout the works of each of Byatt and Dillard but also in those of Italo Calvino, and Milan Kundera. They write about the experiences of their lives as they have been affected by these emotions. They recreate these experiences in a way that touches the hearts of their readers and brings the readers closer to these authors. Whether through personal stories, memoirs, or creative works of fiction, these authors convey the themes of memory and nostalgia honestly and rawly as a basis for their literary works.

Before proceeding any further with these four authors, it is important to outline their individual forms of prose and the formats of their writing that will serve as a basis for any further analysis on them and their work. Similarly to Dillard, Kundera uses plain prose but he applies it to a
novel. Similarly to Byatt, Calvino uses fine prose. But what distinguishes Kundera and Calvino from Byatt and Dillard is that Kundera and Calvino created their own novel format for their writing while Byatt and Dillard adhered to more established forms of writing. Explanations for how they accomplished this will be provided in greater detail through this section of the chapter.

In order to understand a great deal more about these captivating authors, one can return to the method, introduced in the first chapter, of constraints model analysis through the use of constraints models, each of which is presented below.

**Byatt**

In order to compose Byatt’s constraint model, one must consider a number of her literary creations in order to understand the process by which she chose her constraints and to determine whether she followed them thoroughly. After writing, *The Virgin in the Garden*, Byatt decided to preclude much of what she promoted in that book in one of her later books *Still Life*. In many ways *Still Life* was written as a response to *Virgin in the Garden*. However, this did not work out as Byatt had originally planned. *Sugar and Other Stories* is another book of Byatt’s that will help complete the constraint model. It is composed of a number of short stories from various perspectives full of autobiographical information that describes her childhood and family relationships (Table 3.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraint</th>
<th>Preclude</th>
<th>Promote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Source** | • *The Virgin in the Garden*  
• Virginia Woolf’s idea that “memory operates in a random manner”  
• Flaubert’s sparseness (Byatt, 1993, pg. 50) | • T.S. Elliot (a response to his work), Keats, Shakespeare, Coleridge, Murdock, James, and their use of imagery, sensibility, and poetic language.  
• Proust’s defense of Flaubert, Van Gogh and his yellow chair. Flaubert would describe actions, not just words and basic descriptions, otherwise known as mimesis. He would discuss how characters felt not simply their attributes.  
• Van Gogh: Mimesis as a form of representation in painting which can be transferred to literature. The chair that Van Gogh painted was also a metaphor because all people have chairs of their own but a single chair is a representation of its owner.  
• Browning’s way of telling and retelling and making and remaking. Byatt tries to preclude repetition but it happens naturally.  
• Her own life, childhood, and family. | |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Preclude</th>
<th>Promote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Un-dissociated paradise | • Creative imagery, poetic language, passion, the ruling metaphor / the metaphor of metamorphosis, florid – in which flowers are used to describe a whole array of items, idea that words are literally things.  
• Birth and death as plainly as possible, written as Byatt’s father was dying, a modern dissociated world, the thing as itself. | |
The idea of what it means to be truthful
- Language itself
- Fiction vs. Truth
- The past: where nothing happens, all is perfect and pretty, and full liberties can be taken with the text vs. The future: abrupt language, where actions are sharp, short, and fragmented.
- Death and destruction vs. Resurrection

### Task
- **Analogy**

- Cross-referencing rich literary traditions within her own work.
- Demythologize the novel and describe the demythologizing of the Church in the novel, use geometric and physical descriptions, “abused and despised adjectives,” “small metaphors” -names that stand for the relation of words to things.” For example: the specific names of different types of grasses
- Byatt tries to preclude metaphor but does not succeed. Metaphor describes the past and mimesis denotes break in the present.
- Minimal use of quotations.
- Structure becomes truth.
- Geometric structure and patterning: metaphor, between metaphor and mimesis, and tenses.

### Goal
- **Analogy**
- **Moral imperative**
- **Aesthetic imperative**

- The myth of the “dissociation of sensibility” and the nostalgia for a paradis perdu where “language and things were naturally and indissolubly linked or… fused.”

- Very bare, plain, and down to earth writing, continuity.
- The idea that “order is more interesting than the idea of random… that accuracy of description is possible and valuable. That words denote things - mimesis.” Metaphor is represented by sugar and exemplified by her mother while mimesis is represented by death and exemplified by her father.

(Byatt, 1993, pg. 3-4)

Byatt’s constraint model can be illuminated by various examples that can be found in her writing. In her story Sugar, her sources are clearly her own past, her Quaker childhood household, and her interest in the problems of the relations between truth, lies, and fiction of her life. She draws from Proust’s idea that it was possible for a “text to be supremely mimetic” and “true to life” (Dillard, 1993, pg. 248), and focuses on form, formation, and perception. She also draws inspiration from Van Gogh, Amsterdam, and Norse mythology.

As for subject constraints, Byatt portrays a lifelike yet imagined sequence of events where fiction meets lies. She describes defiance and certain truths that are purposefully portrayed. She outlines cross-generations themes, storytelling themes, truth and honesty vs. embellishment and “sugar-
coating,” covering ugliness through a simultaneously rose-colored and matter-of-fact method of storytelling about her mother’s storytelling, her father’s and grandparents’ lives, and those of her aunts and uncles. She does this while precluding her writing from becoming “overtly fictive about fictiveness.” Meanwhile, certain truths are purposefully omitted.

Byatt’s task constraints creates a self-consciously reality about her own time and culture. In Sugar, Byatt develops a formal element for thinking about the nature of truth in writing. She uses a “sugar” coating that relies on hard truth but embellishes it so that it becomes more interesting and desirable to the audience. This is most apparent in the last page of Sugar when Byatt writes, “My mother’s accounts of my grandmother’s selflessness were like pearls or like sugar-coat pills, grit and bitterness polished into roundness by comedy and my mother’s worked-upon understanding of my grandmother’s real meaning” (Sugar, pg. 292).

The ruling metaphor of Sugar is sugar itself. The metaphor is not so much about the events that happen but her perception of them and the specific way she recalls the details. By showing how truth functions in narrative, Byatt is able to accomplish her goals. This is summarized in one prominent sentence in her story, “My mother had respect for truth, but she was not a truthful woman… she lied in small matters, to tidy up embarrassments, and in larger matters, to avoid unpalatable truths. She lied floridly and beautifully… to make a story better” (pg. 215).

Byatt’s story Rose-Coloured Teacup provides another outlook on her constraint model as it follows the same constraints but in a very different way. Her sources are still her past experiences mainly with her mother, her children, and others of a previous generation. Her subject constraints in this story are primarily object based and contain the perceptions of these objects. She writes, “The past has been made into the past discontinuous from the present” (pg. 37) and history is more cyclical with generational gaps. She relates to history finding similarities with objects that have been passed through the generations. She focuses on how younger generations, first herself then her daughter, view and treat these objects. Byatt accomplishes this by telling her story through a specific object and time because each object has a specific connotation for each generation. And she accomplishes her goal by closing the distance in the relationship between herself and her daughter based on her own experiences with her mother.

**Calvino**

Italo Calvino is an author who “discuses the value of visibility and outlines two sources of imaginative inspiration” (Calvino, 1986, pg. 101). He draws on his fond memories of his childhood and his hometown Venice. In his novel Invisible Cities, Calvino chronicles the extended visit of Marco Polo to China and his time at the court of the Khan beginning in 1275 B.C. During this time Polo tells stories of his journeys to various cities of the empire. Yet similarities begin to develop over the course of the book as they all lead back to Venice.

As a way to clarify his methods, a constraint model is assembled below with examples from the book to explain Calvino’s thought process (Table 3.2).
Table 3.2: A Constraint Model of Calvino’s Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraint</th>
<th>Preclude</th>
<th>Promote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>• Dante’s idea that inspiration is divinely given</td>
<td>• “Processes…certainly go beyond our intentions and our control, acquiring – with respect to the individual – a kind of transcendence.” This process does not only apply to “poets and novelists.” It involves a sort of contact with “earthly (rather than divine) transmitters,” “time regained in feelings that reemerges from time lost,” and/or “epiphanies” (Calvino, 1986, pg. 101). For example, Douglas Hofstadter’s <em>Godel, Escher, Bach.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A cluttered mind filled with unfiltered and unorganized images</td>
<td>• Starobinski’s idea that imagination is an instrument of knowledge verses the renaissance and neo-Platonists idea of imagination as a communication with the world soul where one looks beyond oneself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “I preferred to ignore the written lines” (Calvino, 1986, pg. 106)</td>
<td>• Additionally, Calvino recognizes that imagination is a “repertory of what is potential, what is hypothetical, of what does not exist and has never existed, and perhaps will never exist but might have existed” (pg. 104) meaning one has access to things one has not personally addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Calvino a product of an “intermediate period” (pg. 105-6) of colored illustrations, books, weekly magazines, toy etc… that had an effect on his life. Before Calvino had even learned to read, the images in these literary works were the source for much of his initial inspiration for his illustrations of episodes and variants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• His love of painting and the images captured within.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Literature of Renaissance, the Baroque, and the Romantic age, stories from Hoffman, Chamisso, Arnim, Eichendorff, Potocki, Gogol, Nerval, Cautier, Hawthorne, Poe, Dickens, Turgenev, Leskov, Stevenson, Kipling, Wells, and Henry James. They all paint pictures with words and long sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Calvino also drew from Beckett who started from scratch while writing, breaking from the traditional forms of writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>• Narrative as an explanation of an extraordinary event (rather than the order of things).</td>
<td>• The images and their sequence, mysterious figures “of the tarot,” (pg. 106) and interpreting the same figure in a different way each time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The interpretations of painting in Venice, saints of Venice, as well as the city itself. Calvino combines that which he already knows about Venice with the descriptions and depictions of others. He constructs cities that are like dreams in which everything conceals something else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Constraints of imagination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                 | • Calvino eventually stops using words and begins to use
gestures to express himself and his stories. These gestures pick up the meaning of words and they, like words, can be ambiguous.

**Task**

- He does not believe in a simple “aha!” moment. He sets up his ideas so that the “aha!” comes as a result of careful planning.
- Calvino looked back on own writing “especially at the part that has to do with ‘fantastic’ narrative writing” (pg. 102), there was always a visual image at the source of all of his stories.
- Calvino first formed an image that is somehow charged with meaning. Once the image is clear, he began developing the story and letting the images themselves develop their own “implicit potentialities” from the stories within themselves. Around each image, others come into being, forming a field of analogies, symmetries and confrontations. By this time, the images are conceptual, not only visual and the intent is deliberate. Now order and sense must be given to the development of the story through the analysis of the meanings’ of the images and determining their compatibility. Simultaneously, the writing must acquire a greater importance and become what really matters. Eventually, the word is what guides the story “towards the most felicitous verbal expression and the visual imagination has no choice but to tag along” (pg. 102-3).
- Calvino believes that the mind works according to “a process of association of images that is the quickest way to link and to choose between the infinite forms of the possible and the impossible” (pg. 104) and follows this process.
- For Calvino, “The main thing in a narrative… [is] the order of things that this extraordinary event produces in itself and around itself; the pattern, the symmetry, the network of images deposited around it, as in the formation of a crystal” (pg. 73).

**Goal**

- *Fantastique*: The idea, French, that involves are reading playing a part in a game, jumping into the “emotional flood of the text” (pg. 71-72).
- For the writing to be what really matters, “first as a search for an equivalent of the visual image, then as a coherent development of the initial stylistic direction” (pg. 103).
- Calvino aims at “uniting the spontaneous generation of images and the intentionality of discursive thought” (pg. 106).
- Literary imagination: “Direct observation of the real world, phantasmic and oneiric transfiguration, the figurative world as it is transmitted by culture at its various levels, and a process of abstraction, condensation, and interiorization of sense experience, a matter of prime importance to both the visualization and the verbalization of thought” (pg. 107).
- The Italian idea of fantasia and fantastico: that implies a detachment and “acceptance of a different logic based on
An example of Calvino’s source constraint is his use of memory. His source is his experience with Venice, his beloved city. But, Calvino also uses the memory of others in his work. He expands and expounds others’ paintings and descriptions of Venice to more profoundly express his own feelings for this city.

Calvino’s subject constraints involve interpreting the same thing in different ways. In chapters Thin Cities 1 and Thin Cities 2, rising cities are portrayed. In the first, there is a lot of upward and rising imagery. But by the second, their situation is reevaluated and a new solution sought. Calvino uses the cues of the titles of chapters to investigate the same idea and it transpires over the course of the novel. By the end of the novel, Kublai Khan begins to realize that all the cities Marco Polo describes are similar and have a great deal in common.

Examples of Calvino’s task constraints can be found in his strategic placement of his chapters (Table 2). They are ordered as themes that descend and lead up to Polo’s conversations with Kublai. The patterns of the chapters, their titles, and numbers are carefully planned and specifically the first thing the reader sees in the table of contents. He boldly states his intentions by labeling them at the beginning of the book. In his chapters “Cities and Signs,” Marco Polo tells Kublai Khan how an object, or a city in his case, must “never be confused with the words that describe it. And yet between the one and the other there is a connection” (Calvino, 1992, pg. 61).

Calvino’s goal was to construct a novel in which Marco Polo tells his tales like Scheherazade’s, endless and intriguing. They all vary and appear to explore the great depths of the world but in fact, they all lead back to one image – Venice. He creates a pattern and symmetry that consists only of a face and an obverse, like a sheet of paper, with a figure on either side, which can neither be separated nor look at each other” (pg. 105).

Overall, Calvino seeks to show the relevance of classic art and literature. He claims that society is built upon the past and needs to constantly go and look into the past, especially for inspiration, in the creation of new things. He argues that the past also has a voice of its own, “the hooded brothers, after death, will perform the same job in the other Eusapia… The dead make innovations in their city; not many, but surely the fruit of sober reflection, not passing whims” (pg. 109-110).

**Kundera**

Milan Kundera brilliantly merges his themes and characters together in order to form his novels. He highlights the complexity of existence in the modern world and poses existential questions with a carefully moderated tempo and continuity. For example Kundera constructs his novel
Ignorance (1992) by carefully playing out specific themes throughout its entirety. Stylistically, Kundera created short chapters that allow him to jump succinctly yet ambiguously from theme to theme as well as from character to character. While the themes are set up in the beginning of the book and develop through the book, the characters develop at their own pace and at different points throughout the book. The chapters tell their stories, separate stories which are eventually linked by the end of the book.

The most significant themes explored in Ignorance are memory and nostalgia. Kundera uses the term to describe the knowledge of past suffering, suffering caused by unappeased wanting to return. But the term is more complex than this. It is deeply concerned with memory and longing but also with ignorance, ignorance of that in which one no longer is in possession. All of the main characters in this novel deal with nostalgia on some level. The protagonist Irena attempts to be anti-nostalgia as she wants to live in the present and even the future yet she yearns for her homeland. The second protagonist Josef is nostalgic because he maintains a sense of the past in the present. This makes him unable to share his nostalgia with Irena and keeps him from sharing his experiences with others. He simply does not have room for them. Milada is nostalgic for romance and for a life that will never be fulfilled in the manner she desires. Milada is nostalgic for romance and a life no longer possible. Additionally the Greek figure of Odysseus is referenced throughout the book as longing for his homeland Ithaca. He faces issues of journeying vs. returning and homecoming as do many of Kundera’s characters who long for their homelands and years past.

Examples of these themes are deeply embedded in each chapter. In the first chapter, Irena is described as having “dropped her resistance: she was captivated by images suddenly welling up from books read long ago, from films, from her own memory, and maybe from her ancestral memory” (Kundera, 2002, pg. 4). In the second chapter, Kundera offers a variety of definitions of nostalgia that attempt to explain how various cultures interpret the word and its meaning based on the words in their languages that have similar meanings. These definitions set the stage for the remainder of the novel. In chapter four, Irena focuses on the dreams she experienced for a period of time after her emigration. They are as though “she was afflicted simultaneously with an uncontrollable nostalgia and another, completely opposite, experience: landscapes from her country kept appearing to her by day” (pg. 16). In chapter nine, Kundera writes that “For memory to function well, it needs constant practice: if recollections are not evoked again and again, in conversations with friends, they go.” This applies to Irena and Odysseus since they “are inevitably stricken with amnesia. The stronger their nostalgia, the emptier of recollections it becomes” (pg. 33). This happens with Josef as well who faces the same problem later on in the book for he does not recall when they meet again. Josef describes himself first as “such from nostalgic insufficiency” and then as “suffering from masochistic distortion of memory.” This happens later on in the book as he looks though his effects and high-school diary, thinking of his wife who had passed away some years ago. He thinks about how he “had lost the habit of keeping his past in mind. But the past was there, waiting for him, watching him” (pg. 90).

Alongside memory and nostalgia lies the theme of ignorance itself, intertwined with memory and nostalgia. It is a theme throughout but specifically mentioned in specific places. In chapter eleven, Kundera brings up the idea of amputating and stitching up memory from the past to the present. In this book, the emigrants, Irena and Josef, both deal with family and/or friends who seem to disregard the aspects of Irena’s and Josef’s lives in which they were not a part. Kundera
claims that “An irreparable mistake [is] committed at the age of ignorance” (pg. 43). This statement is ironic due to the fact that there is always a great deal about which one may be ignorant, as are these characters, even in their middle age. For example, Irena is ignorant, at least at first, of Josef’s ignorance of her. She believed that the memory of their meeting was as impressionable for him as it was for her. Josef meanwhile is ignorant about most of his life before he moved to Denmark, such as what is in his diary and about Irena. He only recalls more recent memories. Even though he does not remember Irena, they have a sort of kindred spirit. As émigrés, they shared experiences, both abroad and back in their homeland. Irena’s mother, one who should be aware of her daughter’s feelings is in fact completely ignorant of them. Gustav, Irena’s lover, is the only character that appears to not be nostalgic with no particular interest in his past or future. He is simply content, ignorant of drama and conflict.

Alongside his various definitions of nostalgia, Kundera explains that there are mathematical problems in nostalgia and memory. The mathematical paradox of nostalgia is “that it is the most powerful in early youth, when the volume of the life gone by is quite small” (pg. 77). The mathematical paradox of memory is that “the fundamental given is the ratio between the amount of time in the lived life and the amount of time from that life that is stored in memory.” While the ratio has never been calculated and most likely cannot be, Kundera writes that memory must only be able to retain a tiny fraction of our life experiences. It is also an essential part of the human experience (pg. 122-3). This idea is discussed later when Kundera breaks down the average 80 years of a person’s life and how it is structured. He writes that if a person were to live much longer, they would not be part of the human race because their perception of life would be entirely different. It even changes the idea of memory and nostalgia because if one’s life were so long, they would not need to form the attachments to something that would make them feel nostalgic. Additionally, people have selective memories as a precursor to ignorance and their ignorance can be a voluntary and/or willing action that they participate in or an involuntary action. These are all parts of the human experience that would be experienced in an entirely different way if a person lived for much longer than 80 years.

In order to help clarify Kundera’s style and themes, a constraints model has been assembled (Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3: A Constraint Model of Kundera’s Work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraint</th>
<th>Preclude</th>
<th>Promote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>• Anything usual or stereotypical</td>
<td>• Oneiric narrative: Imagination that is freed from reason and “concern for verisimilitude, ventures into landscapes inaccessible to rational thought. The dream is only the model for the sort of imagination that I consider the greatest discovery of modern art.” (Kundera, 1988, pg. 80-81). • Franz Kafka “whose novels are that seamless fusion of dream and reality” (pg. 81) Kundera bring in dream imagination through polyphonic confrontation. • Musical influences: Throughout Kundera’s writings he mentions musical influences explaining that he was “more strongly drawn to music than to literature” until he was twenty five years old (pg. 89-96). For example, Kundera drew from the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
styles of Chopin and his sonata, Beethoven, Schoenberg, and Leos Janacek who’s “will to divest was the start of his rebellion.” His imperative was of “harsh juxtaposition instead of transitions, repetition instead of variation, and always head straight for the heart of thing” (pg. 72-3). Kundera worked to apply these, those of polyphony, and the equality for voices to the novel (72-5).

- Literary influences: Dostoyevsky’s rich intellectual universe and Diderot’s philosophy and fiction.

| Subject | • Kundera uses words to define memory and its limits
- Dreams: They are the “only model for the sort of imagination that I consider the greatest discovery of modern art” (pg. 81-83). They can be brought into the novel and a theme in and of itself.

| Task | • The way philosophers think/process their thoughts
- Kundera blends the novel and essay, often using dreams to explain certain sequences. He will use first person narrative and invite the reader into his world to sit and think with him.
- One method that Kundera claims to preclude, but is not necessarily successful at doing so is: presenting a character, describing a milieu, bringing the action into a historical situation, and filling the time in the characters’ lives with superfluous episodes. Each shift of scene calls for new exposition, description, and explanation.
- Kundera also likes to occasionally intervene directly as the author, in which case, the tone is crucial.
- Kundera constructs his novels on two dimensions. The first by composing the story and the second by developing the themes that are worked out “steadily within and by the story” (pg. 83). Each character is lit at a different intensity and in a different way.
- According to Kundera, the novel should be broken down into “parts, parts into chapters, chapters into paragraphs – the book’s articulation – I want to be utterly clear.” Each part is complete in and of itself. “Each is characterized by its own narrative mode… Each has its own perspective… [and] length” Chapters are their own small contained entity. Each part is like a musical movement. The chapters are measures, each with their own tempo and a “shift in tempo also implies a shift in emotional atmosphere” (pg. 87).

| Goal | • “All great words (precisely because they are great) contain something unachieved” (pg. 71).
- “My own imperative is ‘Janacekian:’ to rid the novel of the automatism of novelistic technique, of novelistic verbalism; to
make it dense” (pg. 73).

- “Density of Imagination” which was a goal of Kafka’s. However, since it would be “ridiculous to imitate him” Kundera feels the same “desire to bring dream – dream imagination – into the novel. My own way of doing it is not by a ‘fusion of dream and reality’ but by polyphonic confrontation.” The oneiric narrative is part of the counterpoint (pg. 81).
- When the “coherence of the whole” is created solely by the unity of a few themes. “The novel is a mediation on existence as seen through the medium of imaginary character” (82-3).
- Kundera believes that the novel should be based primarily on certain fundamental words. In his novel Ignorance, the fundamental word is “nostalgia.”
- “To bring together extreme gravity of the question and the extreme lightness of the form – that has always been my ambition” (pg. 95).

**Dillard**

Dillard analyses her own source, subject, and task constraints in her story, *The Writing Life* (Table 3.4).

### 3.4: A Constraint Model Dillard’s Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraint</th>
<th>Preclude</th>
<th>Promote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Source     | - Commercial instruction, new landscape  
- Modernist tendencies like those of Nabokov  
- Crank Narration | - The authors Dillard mentions in regards to plain prose in *Fine Writing* and even certain authors who write fine prose.  
- Dillard’s own life and experiences and well as those writers and other individuals she admires.  
- The idea that “The page will teach you to write.” (Dillard, 1982, pg. 59) |
| Subject    |          | - Life and everyday experience and writing.  
- What is most meaningful to the author and what they may be able to express more uniquely than others. |
| Task       |          | - Aim for the chopping block (discussed in greater depth below) |
• Shape the vision of the projected “work of art.” It does not start as a miraculous thing and much is still unknown and uncertain. The various aspects form a set of mental relationships or a “coherent series of formal possibilities.” “Then the writing begins. “Words lead to other words and down the garden path. One adjust the paints’ values and hues not to the world, not to the vision, but to the rest of the paint.” (pg. 56-7)

• Dillard wrote that “The work itself is not the vision itself… it is rather a simulacrum and a replacement.” What is important is its relationship to the vision. (pg. 58)
  • Adapting oneself to the context of the paint box.
  • Dillard also warns against hoarding good material and recommends using writing as it comes to its creator.

In addition to these constraints, Dillard focuses on the importance of revision as a critical part of the writing process. According to her, revision is completely necessary. Dillard explains that writing follows an unknown path. Throughout the journey, the writing itself will take the writer to new unexpected places that do not necessarily work with what was written earlier on. Dillard compares it to mining, wood carving, hammering the walls of a house and surgery in circumstances when changes and adaptations that must be made in order to improve the outcome. In writing, certain important sentences need to remain in order to lay the ground work but the rest should be re-worked.

However, there are difficulties involved in revision. Revision can make an author feel as though they are throwing away their precious work. One’s work develops a certain familiar rhythm and pace that eventually appears necessary. Removing it can make the work seem incomplete, at least at first. There is also a sense of relief that the writer feels when s/he first writes down words and composes sentences. This relief also can be felt whenever these words are reread. If the words are changed, this same relief may not be felt.

It takes a great deal of courage to throw away one’s own hard work. It engages all of one’s intelligence and a certain necessary quality. One initial or natural progression in one’s work can be the most perfect version and any revision may lead it in the wrong direction. However, one also cannot continuously edit. One has to write enough before the editing process can even begin. And thus begin the difficulties and disadvantages of editing.

But the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. It perfects the writing and progresses the writing. According to Dillard, the writer has to “secure each sentence before building on it.” It “fashions a form… any careful word may suggest a route” (Dillard, 1990, pg 15). The process of revision does a tremendous amount for the entirety of the writing. Dillard adds that fiction writers sometimes find that their characters have run away with themselves. This is part of why regular review and revision of one’s writing is critical. In her view, “the more literary the book – the more purely verbal, crafted sentence by sentence, the more imaginative, reasoned, and deep – the more likely people are to read it” (pg. 19).
Like revision, Dillard compares the domain of writing to a number of other processes. She focuses on the method of chopping wood as it related to writing. “You cannot do the job cleanly unless you treat the wood as the transparent means to an end” (pg. 43). Writing is also similar to painting in that “A painter covers it tracks” (pg. 5-6). Dillard writes that painters work from the ground up by layering their works. Some layers are retained but some are removed so that new layers can be added. This corresponds to her idea of the editing process. She explains that writers work from left to right regarding work that must be removed and placed to the left while the improved writing and additions move to the right. Both painting and writing eventually harden towards the end. Additionally, Dillard believes that,

“Words lead to other words and down the garden path. You adjust the paint’s values and hues not to the world, not to the vision, but to the rest of the paint. The materials are stubborn and rigid; push is always coming to shove.”

-The Writing Life, pg. 56-7

Amos Oz – עמוס עוז

Extended Analysis

“Once in a while it is worth turning on the light to clarify what is going on...”
(The Guardian, Feb. 14th 2009)

Amos became a household name in Israel nearly forty years ago. Born May 4th 1939 as Amos Klausner, Oz changed his name at the age of fourteen when he moved from Jerusalem, the city of his birth, to a communal labor facility called Kibbutz Hulda. As a child Oz describes himself as “not so much a child [but] as a bundle of self-righteous arguments, a little chauvinist dressed up as a peace-lover, a sanctimonious, honey-tongued nationalist, a nine-year-old Zionist propagandist” (The Guardian, Feb. 14th 2009).

While much has changed since then, writing has been the one constant in his life. As a young adult he studied philosophy and Hebrew literature at the Hebrew University. He wrote his first novel Jackals Howl (1965) at the age of twenty four. Since then Oz has written eighteen books in Hebrew, and about 450 articles and essays translated into 45 languages including Arabic and Chinese.

Oz’s most well known literary work and the main focus of the portion of this chapter is his memoir, A Tale of Love and Darkness (2005). It is one of the biggest-selling literary works in Israeli history. In the memoir, Oz depicts his youth in the context of the turbulent time in which he lived. He observes and analyzes the fault lines in the state that grew up alongside him, often filtered through his parents’ perspectives and stories both skewed in their own way. Looking back on his life, he recalls his revisionist Zionist father and loving mother who suffered from depression and suicide when Oz was 12. Oz’s father worked as a librarian, never able to obtain a more prestigious job even though he was overqualified for professorships yet denied them “because Jerusalem contained so many more scholars than students” (The Guardian, Feb. 14th 2009). His parents worked to shape his outlook and perspective on life and literature but Oz uses
the memoir to express his own memories and point of view on himself to reflect on his family, his home, and the political circumstances in the Middle East.

In describing his work, Newsweek report Joanna Chen writes that, “[Oz portrays] historical events while emphasizing the individual and for personal exploration of the tragic conflict between two nations…He has always been at the forefront of the Israeli struggle for identity and a staunch advocate of a two-state solution” (Newsweek, Feb. 14, 2008). This serves as a succinct summary of one of Oz’s main goals as a writer throughout his career, from My Michael (1968), to A Tale of Love and Darkness (2005), and onward. He tries to imagine how the Palestinians felt during the formation of the State of Israel and the years following Israeli independence and acknowledges the original sin of Israel as she strove to survive.

But Oz’s literary works also serve as an argument for the history of Zionism as a historical necessity for the creation of the State of Israel and its people. In the late 1930’s and throughout the 1940’s, the nation was faced with the threat of extinction and did all she could to survive. Through Zionism, the nation transformed itself and consolidated herself with the help of the formation of the Hebrew language and physical strength her people developed as they built up the land around them.

Systems Model

As defined in chapter one, Csikezentmihalyi’s Systems Model (1990) is comprised of three interrelated parts. The first is the domain, any “symbolic system that has a set of rules of presenting thought and action.” The second is the individual/person, the creative creator. The third is the field, a group composed of individuals who are the most knowledgeable of the domain and serve as a type of gate keeper to it (pg. 200-6). In order to best understand the creative process of Amos Oz’s writing, it is worthwhile expanding on his background and influences through the systems model that will help enhance our understanding of the Oz constraint model that will follow (Table 3.5).

Domain

In his literary career, Oz has worked with a surprising number of domains, the most significant of which is literature. As an author, this is to be expected but it is the extent to which he has included other domains in his writing that is impressive. For this reason, I have chosen to use the constraint model to expound on the domain of literature (Table 3.5) and the systems model to focus on the other various domains.

Journalism is a domain that has visibly affected Oz’s writing. Similarly to the methods of Mark Twain, he always focuses on that which is current, present, or relevant as inspiration for his writing. Initially, he published stories in weekend supplements and quarterly magazines but as his career continued, he quickly took to writing analytical articles and editorials. Most of his activism took the form of editorial writing for papers like Davar, Yediot Achronot, and occasionally Ha’aretz. Yet Oz acknowledges the limitations in journalism. In order to explain his
conclusion he “In my political articles, I think of my audience as Edith Bunker. I can never convince Archie Bunker. He is beyond me” (The New Yorker, Nov. 8, 2004).

Politics is another domain for Oz. As evident by his writing, Oz has been acutely aware of the political situation around him and the Israel-Palestinian conflict since his birth. In 1978, he founded Shalom Achshav, a grassroots non-governmental organization in Israel with the aim of promoting the need for achieving peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. He was even hand-picked as one of three possible successors to Shimon Peres, President of Israel. Oz refused the position claiming,

“Ever since I was a little boy, I’ve been running this country in my head, and I do this today... but this doesn’t mean I can be Prime Minister. I know one or two things that Shimon doesn’t, but I have a physical disability: I cannot pronounce the words ‘No comment.’ How can I be a politician?”

-The New Yorker, Nov. 8, 2004

History and the larger historical story is also a critical domain in Oz’s writing. The narrator of A Tale of Love and Darkness (2005) is that of a young boy observing history as it transpired outside his window and listening to the broadcasts, speeches, and rumors all around him. This is how Oz has lived his entire life.

Lastly, Oz has extensive experience in the Israeli military. After undergoing his training he served in the Six Day and Yom Kippur wars and remained in the Israeli reserves for a number of years. This becomes evident in his writing through the detail of items such as weapons, tanks, and ammunition, especially in reference to the war games he remembers playing with chess pieces as a child.

**Individual**

Oz has had a fascination with books and literature throughout his entire life. From the sixteen languages his parents read and the nine they spoke, Oz was born into a life surrounded by literary geniuses, intellectuals, and worldly books, all of which analyzed Zionism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. For these and other reasons, I must conclude that he has astonishingly extensive neural plasticity. Both of these subjects will be discussed in greater detail throughout the constraint model (Table 3.5).

As for Oz’s interests, his primary loves were books. Oz writes that as a child he hoped to “grow up to be a book. Not a writer but a book. And that was from fear” (A Tale of Love and Darkness, 2005, pg. 287). He once said in an interview,

“There was fear when I was a little boy. People would say, enjoy every day, because not every child grows up to be a person. This was probably their way of telling me about the Holocaust or the frame of Jewish history. Not every child grows up. I know the Israelis become tiresome when they say that the whole world is against us, but back in the forties this was pretty much the case. I
wanted to become a book, not a man. The house was full of books written by dead men, and I thought a book may survive.”

- The Guardian, Feb. 14th 2009

Field

The main gatekeepers of these various domains are Israeli Critics, of all kinds, and there are many, beginning in the 1960’s. One of his main critics was Kibbutz Hulda, his home for over thirty years. When he first began to write seriously, the Kibbutz gave him one day to write each week. After he published his world renowned novel My Michael (1968), they granted him three days to write each week. It was during this time that the international community became critiques of his work as well. With his growing success, by the 1980’s he was eventually given four days each week to write.

Constraint Model

Table 3.5: Constraint Model of Oz’s Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraint</th>
<th>Preclude</th>
<th>Promote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>❖ Pure imagination&lt;br&gt;❖ Anything he has not been able to get his hands on&lt;br&gt;❖ Edward Albee’s Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf</td>
<td>❖ His own life, memories, nostalgia, history, family, home, and his own childhood desire to become a book c. 1940’s Jerusalem.&lt;br&gt;❖ Conversations and memory reconstructions with relatives and other literary figures and intellectuals.&lt;br&gt;❖ Chekhov&lt;br&gt;❖ Kafka&lt;br&gt;❖ Tolstoy, Donne, Gogol, Melville, Faulkner, Dickens&lt;br&gt;❖ Chaim Nachman Bialik, Yosef Chaim Brenner, Micha Berdichevsky, and later S.Y. Agnon.&lt;br&gt;❖ Old Testament (Tanach)&lt;br&gt;❖ Mark Twain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>❖ Religion, as a personal belief system&lt;br&gt;❖ Everlasting happiness</td>
<td>❖ See Source: Literature, politics, and voices of the dead that won’t go away&lt;br&gt;❖ Jerusalem&lt;br&gt;❖ The reality of family life and its implications.&lt;br&gt;❖ Language and communication – mainly but not only in Hebrew&lt;br&gt;❖ Contrasting the image of old helpless Yid to the new Hebrew man and the Israeli Psyche.&lt;br&gt;❖ History and its affect of on the individual.&lt;br&gt;❖ Loss&lt;br&gt;❖ Memory&lt;br&gt;❖ Balance of routine and fantasy life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While the constraint model (Table 3.5) provides a significant amount of information, there is still a great deal of detail that must be added.

Source

Amos Oz’s sources are similar to Byatt’s, Calvino’s, Kundera’s, and Dillard’s. He draws from his own life, memories, nostalgia, history, family, home, excavation of his origin, and childhood desires, in Oz’s case his desire to become a book. Most similar to Dillard, Oz portrays things that were hidden from him from which he forms his own opinion and perspective. He describes his father’s love affairs, his mother’s tortured inner life, and his own versions of memories of which his parents have a different version. He also includes conversations and memory reconstructions with relatives and other literary figures and intellectuals.

Chehkov is probably one of Oz’s most important source constraints. Oz strives toward a Chekhovian compassion for his characters. He has said that

“Chekhov is very close to my heart, perhaps the closest. He makes me laugh and cry, sometimes at the same time, which is what I tried to do in A Tale of Love and Darkness: ‘to erase the line between tragedy and comedy. I no longer believe that tragedy and comedy are two different planets. They are just two different windows from which we can view the same landscape of our lives.’”
–Newsweek, Feb. 14, 2008

Oz also draws on the work of Tolstoy and Kafka. In his novel Fima (1993), Oz’s protagonist, named Fima, is presented as Tolstoyan in a Chekhov World. In the first chapter, Fima awakes from a troubling dream just as Gregor Samsa awakes from bad dreams of his own in Kafka’s Metamorphosis (1915). Fima also projects the sense, as Gregor Samsa did, that it is less awful to wake up and deal with the consequence of one’s existence, even when one considers the transformation both Fima and Samsa endured, than to never wake again.
Another major source constraint of Oz’s is S.Y. Agnon. Even though in later years Oz endeavored to separate himself from Agnon and “his dense, ornamented, sometimes Philistine language, measured rhythms, a certain midrashic self-satisfactory, beat of Yiddish tunes, juicy ripples of Hasidic tales” *(A Tale of Love and Darkness, 2005, pg 72)* he found that he could not. He believes that Agnon’s spirit will resonate within him forever.

Oz also draws inspiration from Mark Twain. He said that,

“I was... the Tom Sawyer of Huckleberry Finn of history. To me it was like
sailing alone on a raft on the Mississippi River, except it was a river made
of books and words and stories and historical tales and secrets and separations”
-Newsweek, Feb. 14, 2008

*Subject*

Many of the sources in Table 3.5 self-explanatory such as literature and politics and some, such as Jerusalem, require discussion. Jerusalem is as much a character as some of the individuals. She plays as crucial a role as a protagonist in some of Oz’s books. This becomes especially relevant when after reading a few of his books one realizes that the majority of his work take place within one square mile of the home in which he grew up.

Additionally, Oz will often reference the contrasting the images of old and helpless Yid to the new Hebrew man and masculine Israeli Psyche. This contrast becomes especially relevant when he describes his life on the Kibbutz – his failure as a laborer and his desire to write. It is also referenced in regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There was so much pride in the nascent nation. In a sense, it is a way of writing about the devastating effect of Zionism on the minds of Israelis who cannot acknowledge what Zionism did to others because it did so much good for themselves.

Oz is also able to interweave a number of subject constraints together. He believes that history and its effect on the individual, the balance of routine and fantasy life, loss, and memory can all become apparent simultaneously in one’s daily life. History seems to assault the characters and wreak havoc on a desire for tranquility. In Oz’s world, they have no choice in the matter since war and ethnic tension are constants. Memoires and nostalgia for the members of this new nation are overwhelming and the sense of loss continuously endures. All around he hears the sorrow of the loss of European culture that had rejected Jews. Everyone missed something – places, language, culture, people. For most people, Israel served as a refugee camp where loneliness spread into each nook of the cramped atmosphere.

*Task*

Oz, like Dillard, enhances his writing through the use of plain prose and a natural, orderly, and fluent patterning of repetitions. He creates warm lyrical prose with remarkable technical control often playing with foreshadowing, linking details from various stories through entire literary works. He composes his writing through associations that he weaves together as though in a loom. Yet there is a nearly obsessive order to his work. He forms orderly sentences, structures orderly bookshelves, and depicts orderly soldierly rituals.
There is also a careful medium to Oz’s work. In an interview on BBC radio in 2004, Oz explained, “I hear some voices inside my head, voices of characters, voices of people… eventually, if they stay with me for long enough, I become familiar with them… but it always begins with an assembly of voices.” For example, the medium in My Michael (1968) was the presence of a woman, Hannah, telling him her story. To Oz, she appeared as alive as any and stayed with him like a companion for over two years. It was struggle, powerful, and often overwhelming task he would not now try to repeat.

Another critical task throughout all of his works is the development of language and etymology. Language is incredibly important to him. Similarly to Kundera, he defines words, names, places, and different forms of memory. He discusses how fortunate he feels to be able to write in Hebrew. For Oz, modern Hebrew is like Elizabethan English. He loves that he can combine Hebrew words to form prose and connections between words in the same way an instrument combines notes to make a melody. In this way, he also works to blur the line between prose and poetry, calling them two different instruments with which he plays the same tune.

One final task of Oz’s is the way in which he plays with ones senses through his descriptions. In regards to an old family he writes that he had, “A full dense body smell, like the taste of chicken soup on a winter day” (A Tale of Love and Darkness, 2005, pg. 35). In regards to his 3rd grade teacher he writes my favorite passage of the entire book:

“At noon I would come home from school lie down on my bed and imagine how just she and I - I loved the colour of her voice and the smell of her smile and the rustle of her dresses... in my dreams I hugged her and she kissed me almost on my forehead”

- pg.277

**Goal**

Oz does not tend to outwardly state his goals. He prefers to let his writing speak for itself. In his own way he uses realism to creatively develop his experimental verse, epistolary narrative, and meditations on family especially through the sections of A Tale of Love and Darkness (2005) that tell the stories of his family in Eastern Europe some of which are told from the first person perspectives.

Additionally, over the years, Oz has come to realize that through his use of realism, there is a universal and accessible quality to his work. He says he has found that “there is something universal in the provincial. My books are very local, but in a strange way I find that the more local, parochial and provincial, the more universal literature can be” (Newsweek, Feb. 14, 2008).

Oz also believes that through writing, one can use memories as building materials for the future. He argues that this should be a goal for all, especially in relation to particular traumatic memories that serve as a lesson in how to treat other people. Oz is acutely aware of the significance of this goal. After the murder of George Khoury, a Palestinian-Israeli student who was shot and killed by Palestinian terrorists who had mistaken him for a Jew, Oz approached the Khoury and asked if they would be willing to translate A Tale of Love and Darkness (2005). The
family agreed, hoping that together they would be able to do their part to serenely express their desires for peace.

While there is not a great deal that Oz specifically claims to preclude, he does mention his great distaste at hearing his writing called fiction. He claims that,

“Fiction is a lie. Fiction: “I don’t like to be described as an author of fiction. Fiction is a lie. James Joyce took the trouble, if I am not mistaken, to measure the precise distance from Bloom’s basement entrance to the street above. In ‘Ulysses’ it is exact, and yet it is called fiction. But when a journalist writes, ‘a cloud of uncertainly hovers...’ – this is called fact!””

-The New Yorker, Nov. 8, 2004

Oz treats his writing in the same way as Joyce does in regards to accuracy. Oz draws on his personal history, national history, nostalgia, and linguistics as he constructs his writing. But to him, there are no fallacies involved. Additionally, Oz never used success, at least not financial success as a goal. It was not until he was 46 and moved to Arad that he had any private property, or even a checkbook. A condition of living on a Kibbutz was that everything was communal, everything was for the good of the Kibbutz. All members relinquished their possessions to the Kibbutz, worked for the Kibbutz, and were therefore sustained by the Kibbutz. Any success Oz achieved was willingly passed on to the Kibbutz for the benefit of the Kibbutz and all who lived there.

CONSTRAINTS AND MEMOIRS

As a way to better understand the writing styles of these four authors, one can work to embody their style in one’s own work. In order to demonstrate this, I wrote a memoir, a “snapshot-in-words” as described by Stokes, which I then rewrote in four different styles, those of Byatt, Calvino, Kundera, and Dillard. I chose not to write a memoir is Oz’s style. Upon my analysis and reflections on Oz’s work, I realized that my original memoir was unintentionally written in a similar style to Oz’s. Since reading his novels, I have attempted to replicate the emotion that I experienced while reading his works in my own works. I believe that I subconsciously wrote as though I was writing through Oz embodying his constraints.
Every time I hear thunder, I am reminded of one particular moment. A single pang of thunder brings me back to a late hour of one Friday night over five years ago. It must have been in September. I had just concluded my first week of classes of 11th grade in Hod Hasharon and to celebrate, my entire class travelled south to a small town called Netivot, a sister city of our own Philadelphia. We were going to be spending that Friday night right outside of the town in a neighborhood called Kibbutz Tza’ad.

I do not remember much of the rest of that day. I know that my best friend Sarah and I were taken on a tour of the Kibbutz by the family that was to be hosting us that night. I remember my surprise at the radiance of the Kibbutz. Even with the desert heat, she was in bloom, full of foliage and flowers, a maze of bright glistening colors reflecting off of each other under the sun’s hot gaze.

That evening Sarah and I were well fed by the family before adjourning to the room we were going to share. Deep into the night we simultaneously awoke, confused and disoriented. As it takes a great deal of audio and physical force to wake Sarah, my mind raced to discover what had just occurred. There it was again, the sound of crashing thunder. I lay in bed, waiting for lightening or drops of rain on the window sill. None came. I began to think that maybe there was a storm far away. Perhaps, I had closed my eyes at just the wrong moment and missed the flash. But wait, why would there be rain, let alone a thunderstorm, in the dessert during the dry season? I could not make any sense of it. The noise suddenly struck again, harsher this time. I threw my sheets over my head, hoping to ignore it and return to my slumber.

As Sarah and I sat down at the table for lunch, we were suddenly bombarded by rapidly spoken Hebrew. We were able to glean some sense of what happened from snippets of conversation buzzing about the room. Qassam rockets had exploded somewhere outside of the Kibbutz.

Thunder does not scare me. Well, maybe a little. Possibly more so since September 2005 but I honestly cannot be sure. It induces the slightest sense of uncertainty. I quickly recover.

Thunder reminds me of one night.
Revised Works

Byatt

Byatt shows us that metaphor “can connect, clarify, and create memories” (Stokes, 28). In that vain, I have attempted to use metaphor to do just that. Yet while Byatt worked to preclude mimesis, I have worked to knead it into my writing and include it purposefully.

Memoir

Every time I hear thunder, I am reminded of one particular moment. A single pang, clap, or crack of thunder brings me back to a late hour of one Friday night over five years ago.

That was how my mother would always begin this story although the veracity of the rest of the details has at one point or another come into question. She would tell of the night she spent in the outskirts of the Israeli desert in a neighborhood called Kibbutz Tza‘ad. She always described her surprise at the radiance of the Kibbutz in full bloom, miraculously surviving the desert heat. Field marigolds, umbrella plants, irises, and the like highlighted the golden Earth. They glistened under a dazzling blue sky somehow surviving the heat.

My mother would tell of how that evening, she and her friend Sarah were fed decently enough before being left alone in their room. Deep into the night they simultaneously awoke, confused and disoriented. My mother would always laugh as she spoke of how much audio and physical force it took to wake Sarah. During those few months, it had become my mother’s most unpleasant task to wake Sarah up each morning. This left Sarah quite angry with my mother, at least until she had had her morning’s coffee. A good shot of espresso usually did the trick. In hindsight, my mother claimed it was ludicrous that her fear at that initial moment was not due to the cacophony but rather that Sarah might be angry that my mother woke her up.

She would usually brush off her still apparent frustration with her good friend and continue by reminding us of the thunder. She would startle us replicating the sounds of the thunder and raise her voice dramatically, demonstrating the second crash that vibrated just outside her window. At this moment a rare glimpse of fear that could not be completely hidden escaped from her eyes. Attempting to recover quickly, she would tell us how she waited for some evidence of the thunder, be it precipitation or ribbon beams of light. None came. Maybe she had simply missed the flash but there was no rain. Nor was it at all likely that there would be a thunderstorm in the desert during the dry season. She could not make sense of it. When she described the noise suddenly striking again, harsher this time, she would vigorously throw her hands over her head, replicating her involuntary motions from that night, hoping to ignore it and return to her slumber.

When they sat at the table the next day, Sarah and my mother were suddenly bombarded by rapidly spoken Hebrew. The fact that she had forgotten most of her Hebrew is a fact that she unsuccessfully tries to hide. But from the commotion, she captured a single unforgettable portion of the conversation. Qassam rockets had exploded somewhere outside of the Kibbutz.

Thunder does not scare me, my mother says as she frowns. It just reminds me of one night.
Calvino

Calvino’s writing is beautifully visual and nostalgic. Even while following a specific format, Calvino embellishes the form by drawing on memory and desire and expounding on both by expanding one’s network and drawing from outside traditional domains. This is what I have tried to accomplish below.

Memoir

It was our own mythological journey. We traveled through time, covering decades, even centuries in a single week. Ein Gedi, Nahal David, Mt. Gilboa, Netivot, Mt. Megiddo, Mt. Karmel, Tel Gezer, and this was only the beginning. We travelled through time as though we were a part of it, interacting with the Earth and reviving the memories that she subtly revealed to us with every passing moment. Each footprint creased her flesh, welcoming us into her world.

The first week of our journey ended one Friday afternoon with a celebratory journey to the desert’s shores of Kibbutz Tza’ad. The merriment commenced with a tour of our newly discovered location by our recently acquainted hosts. Sarah, my long time friend, and I marveled at the surroundings, astounded by the radiance of the Kibbutz. Field marigolds, umbrella plants, irises, and the like highlighted the golden Earth under a glistening sky. She was full of foliage and flowers, a maze of bright glistening colors reflecting off of each other under the sun’s hot gaze. In full bloom, she miraculously managed to survive the desert heat. We could only wonder if we would fare as well.

We hastily settled into our room that night, welcoming the few oncoming hours of rest that we could finally receive. Our travels were quickly teaching us to adapt to our surroundings as they were going to transform regularly over the next few months. Exhausted we collapsed simultaneously only to be woken in what felt like moments later. Our senses were useless at that moment, leaving us confused and disoriented, unable to conceive of where we were or why we were awake. My ears must have recovered before the rest of my body, shuttering and shaking at the sound of crashing thunder as it threatened us with its proximity. Still motionless, I waited, for some sign, miraculous or otherwise, of what had just occurred. Lightening or drops of rain on the window sill would have sufficed but none came. My mind raced as my sense of order escaped me. The noise suddenly struck again, harsher this time. I strove to provide some protection for myself from the intruder outside, creating a fort for myself with faded sheets and blankets.

We woke with perspiration on our foreheads. The sun, as it seemed, could not resist dispersing her light and heat entirely through our window. We could feel the thick cover of dew that had grounded itself to the grass overnight slowly loosening its grip fearing the subjugation of the desert heat. As it rose, we descended, preparing ourselves for a meal that our bodies were not prepared to accept. Amidst the various whirling combination of the aleph-bet, we deciphered the code, learning that Qassam rockets had exploded somewhere outside of the Kibbutz.

Thunder roars like a lioness protecting her cubs, like a river claiming her territory. They are proud and threatening, claiming omniscience, preying on the trepidation of others. I faced none of these on that night for I knew not what I faced, not until the next time I heard that sound.
Kundera

Kundera’s writing finds a fascinating way of comparing memory and nostalgia with ignorance, remembering with forgetting. He fashions his writing in a way that molds memory and ignorance on two opposite sides of the same coin. Both can help a one gain strength and resolve but both can also dissolve one’s determination and fortitude. Yet both are necessary. It is the will of individual that will lay the groundwork for how both will play out. This memoir is the path that I took when faced with memory and ignorance.

Memoir

I had no urge to return to the Kibbutz. I came close, once, living an hour away from her borders one summer in Ashdod. I had longed to return to the country, to repeat every single step of my previous journey, from my trek across the snowy peaks to the feel of the sand between my toes while the luscious ocean water clenched my body, caressing my shoulders. In the six months I spent there, the country had quickly become my home and comrade. The soil and cedars has embraced me just as warmly as the people. The idea of returning to The States was chilling whereas the idea of staying served as an affectionate blanket, warming me and encouraging me to stay put. But I did leave. I had to. I did not need my parents to reiterate the critical significance of my return though they would anyway. I was well aware of their reasoning as though it was recorded and on repeat in my mind. But I yearned for the small portion of land that had so tenderly adopted me.

When I did return years later and found myself in Ashdod, I could not help but remember the last time I had travelled this far south. I felt as though a generation had passed. From a highly structured tightly supervised overseas semester of education and travel to an independent unaccompanied venture of volunteering, more had occurred than my memory would allow me to remember. In a sense, I was finally experienced and prepared for whatever might occur. Yet, from the first day, I found myself sourly leaning towards arrogance and anger, staring at the foreigners living with me who assumed they were invincible and unfathomable. They only thought they were prepared. For them, explosions and bombings were the problems of other people, problems of the past. There was no reason to fret or fear hostility. This fear of the uncontrollable desecration of the earth’s flesh does not exist for the modern industrial man. It is the subject of media stories and fictional settings, not that of a girl’s memory from some years prior. A memory of crashing and crushing, destruction and disruption. A memory of havoc reigning those it has claimed as loyal subjects.

All of this rushed through my mind as I lay in bed on this my first night in Ashdod. I caught hold of my breath as it all attempted to escape my body in one gasp. Carefully and considerately, I pushed the memories back down, reassuring myself that the terror of a night long ago was just that before rolling over and falling asleep.
Dillard uses rhythm, mimesis, and plain prose to provide her readers with the enthralling tale of her childhood. As she recalls her life, she is able to group memories into organized yet naturally flowing categories that guide the readers while captivate them in her story and language. In this memoir I worked to structure my own experiences to follow at similar rhythm that is brutally honest and straightforward.

Memoir

I was sixteen and I was adventurous. I was independent and ferociously proud of it. I was abroad, the adjective not the noun as there has previously been some confusion. I was ready to venture out and canvass the Earth. I was alive, abusing my senses by commanding them to absorb each and every aspect of that which surrounded me as I embarked on this new stage of my life.

Not even the news that Qassam rockets had exploded somewhere outside of the Kibbutz in which I was staying one night could stop me. Nor could the memories of my breath suddenly escaping my body through a single gasp of perplexity and puzzlement perturb me. My escapade had only just begun and I would not permit those few disorienting and discouraging nocturnal hours to restrict my ability to continue my expedition.

As earth shattering as the rockets were to the ground below, I strove to persevere. I would dismiss the incident and recommence my studies and my travels for the next five months. But it was not as though these memories were easy to relinquish. As a refugee seeking shelter and sanctuary within a house of worship, I sought to delve deeper into my mind frantically searching for aid and answers as to why such events took place. The memories of that terror stricken night would arrogantly insist on accompanying me, following me, as though they were just as curious as I to make sense of night, not realizing the burden they placed on my well being. No sufficient explanation was ever provided and so the memories have never completely left my side. They have however dimmed, their luminosity fleeting, as I built up resistance and carried on with my life.
Bibliography


