Introduction

This book examines the radical thinking and experimentation creative writers have undertaken in the last 250 years, but particularly what they have achieved in the 20th and early 21st centuries. While it focuses on literary writing, it is not about literary theorists, literary critics, literary academics or their thinking. It is about writers and their motivations, their striving and frustration, problems they were challenged by and ways they overcame them. It concentrates on prose – on fiction particularly – although much that is radical in the history of writing has been done by poets; playwrights and screenwriters have contributed too. I am committed to fiction here because its history is now notably implicated in the changes occurring to writing in the digital age, for instance in the emergence of the app novel. Poets were quick to embrace the digital sphere in the 1990s, but the shift of fiction to digital platforms takes with it a far greater readership, and a far larger portion of publishing enterprise.

My aim in this book is to show that the transformative possibilities of the digital age have not been a sudden surprise to prose writing. Experimental writers were not ambushed by hypertext or hypermedia; in fact, they rehearsed them for more than a century without knowing what the new forms would be called, or what they would really look like. The technological turn that finally catered for their revolutionary ideas was never certain. Even so, poets and novelists – by looking across at other art forms, by attempting to escape the strictures of the printed page, by seeking ways of incorporating more of the senses (visual, aural, tactile) more immediately into reading – posited a new kind of writing whose time has now come. By seeking to encompass the verbal, visual and aural arts, radical writing set itself up for the hypermedia age.

It can be observed that in critical writing generally the word 'radical' refers to particular types of politics – left-wing or right-wing but mostly the former – and the kinds of writing that come from those viewpoints. In talking about the arts, the word 'radical' is almost always used in conjunction with references to the 'avant-garde', which is itself a highly contested term, even though

its meaning as 'those who are experimental forerunners' is reasonably clear. While the term avant-garde continues to be debated (Which techniques does it cover? Which arts practitioners does it apply to?), I have sought to claim the adjective 'radical' and take it away from its merely supportive and often redundant role, as in 'the radical avant-garde', to give it a real meaning. In this book I use the term *radical* in a specific way: to refer to the kind of writing that is done when the writer has – explicitly – innovation in mind.

For me, the Radical occurs when a writer sets out to defy convention and write in such a way that the accepted processes of writing and reading are called into question. The radical writer has the intention of reaching an audience by means that are different from the norm, that involve more of the physical senses in the reading (a more bodily involvement in the reading), or an intellectual understanding that the work is to be read differently in order to gain a fuller experience at a psychological or emotional level. The radical intention of the writer tends to announce itself quickly: the words are not set out on the page in the conventional fashion; typography is upset by concrete effects; visual images are entwined among or break into the text; the pages of the book don't work normally; the book has become something else entirely – a box of papers, a panoramic map, a soft cloth, and so on. Whatever the radical intention, the writer is keen to contact the reader by means other than those by which mainstream publishing (in her/his time) has typically communicated with its audience.

Several digital media theorists and critics have already visited the territory I step into. The most influential of these are George P. Landow (1992, revised 1997, 2006), Janet H. Murray (1997), Espen J. Aarseth (1997), J. Yellowlees Douglas (2000), Jay David Bolter (2001, revised 2011) and N. Katherine Hayles (2008). Each takes their own view of the migration of print into digital media, and each looks to the literary past for forerunners to writing in the computer age. But none of them, to my mind, really takes on the viewpoint of the writer. Although they address in some detail questions about authorship, it is authorship theorized by Derrida in particular, with Barthes, Foucault and game theory also contributing. Although highly useful for viewing the overall shape of the remediation process and changes to technological production, these perspectives treat texts mainly as disembodied phenomena and as works for readers rather than products deriving from writers' motivation. Also, they tend to look at history and its advances/problems in terms of hypertext rather than the more exciting hypermedia, which is, I believe, the form the radical writers of previous centuries were grasping for, even though they could not anticipate its shape or nature. Landow and those following have interrogated particularly the way text works in new media settings as opposed to on the printed page, but while

they observe that reading *multiply* instead of reading *linearly* is key to developments, they are less interested in reading and writing *multimodally*.

In this book my commitment is especially to the viewpoint of the writer. I examine writing process in the digital age and make a trace back through print literature to see how writers themselves sought to escape the print medium. I believe that the anticipation and striving among experimental writers for a composite medium that allowed text, visuals and audio was so strong, it is a great pity for us now that writers like Laurence Sterne or Guillaume Apollinaire did not have hypermedia to work with. Without knowing how the computer would work or what its outputs would look like, they pioneered changes to writing that the digital age has opened up to all and made mainstream.

The awareness, among early 20th-century writers, of future technological change can be gauged from Paul Valéry's observations. In 1928 he wrote:

> For the last twenty years neither matter nor space nor time has been what it was from time immemorial. We must expect great innovations to transform the entire technique of the arts, thereby affecting artistic invention itself and perhaps even bringing about an amazing change in our very notion of art. (Valéry, 1964: 225)

He described technological advances and consequent changes to creative product making in terms we recognize easily almost 100 years later:

> At first, no doubt, only the reproduction and transmission of works of art will be affected. It will be possible to send anywhere or to re-create anywhere a system of sensations, or more precisely a system of stimuli, provoked by some object or event in any given place. Works of art will acquire a kind of ubiquity. We shall only have to summon them and there they will be, either in their living actuality or restored from the past. They will not merely exist in themselves but will exist wherever someone with a certain apparatus happens to be. A work of art will cease to be anything more than a kind of source or point of origin whose benefits will be available – and quite fully so – wherever we wish. Just as water, gas, and electricity are brought into our houses from far off to satisfy our needs in response to a minimal effort, so we shall be supplied with visual or auditory images, which will appear and disappear at a simple movement of the hand, hardly more than a sign. Just as we are accustomed, if not enslaved, to the various forms of energy that pour into our homes, we shall find it perfectly natural to receive the ultrarapid variations or oscillations that our sense organs gather in and integrate to form all we know. I do not know

> whether a philosopher has ever dreamed of a company engaged in the home delivery of Sensory Reality. (Valéry, 1964: 225–226)

This essay, 'The Conquest of Ubiquity', and others in which Valéry made similar predictions ('Hypothesis', 1929; 'The Idea of Art', 1935) were published and republished in French and in translation in Europe, England and America in the 1920s and 1930s by journals as well read as *The Commonweal* and the *Yale Review*. Walter Benjamin used this essay as the starting point for his influential 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936). Whereas Benjamin's insights brought into focus the effects on experiencing works of art mass produced by printing press or camera, Valéry's vision was bolder. The 'sensory reality' apparatus he foresaw, which would produce 'visual or auditory images … at a simple movement of the hand', suggested a technology well beyond mechanical mass reproduction – in fact, something much more like the digital. Valéry wrote in 'The Idea of Art':

> Already the inventions of photography and cinematography are transforming our notion of the plastic arts. It is by no means impossible that the extremely minute analysis of sensations which certain means of observation or recording (such as the cathode-ray oscillograph) seem to foreshadow, will lead to methods of playing on the senses compared to which even music, even electronic music, will seem mechanically complicated and obsolete in its aims. (Valéry, 1964: 79)

Noting that recorded music events could already be reproduced across the globe, Valery said in 1928:

> We are still far from having controlled visual phenomena to the same degree. Color and relief are still rather resistant. A sunset on the Pacific, a Titian in Madrid cannot yet be enjoyed in our living room with the same force of illusion as a symphony. (Valéry, 1964: 227)

But the point is that Valéry was already thinking about such things, and talking about them. His ideas provide a fertile context in which to study the Radical impulse in writers (and artists and musicians) in the 20th century – an impulse which was a precursor to the digital age.

Why Trace the Radical?

For writers in the 21st century the ground has shifted – or, to put it less disturbingly – the horizon has broadened. The processes of writing and

publishing have changed fundamentally since 1990. Touchpads and screens replaced pens and paper. Apples replaced Olivettis. Cut and paste barely recalls the use of scissors and glue. Writer and Editor are programs as well as people. Authors now contribute significantly to their own publicity and marketing. Self-publishing – once derided (at least in the academy) as *vanity* – has become respectable.... The list of differences goes on. Websites and books about keeping calm and staying published are available for paper-based writers not coping with change in the digital age (e.g. Masson, 2014). Technology has pressured writers to adapt not only to changes in their environment and working methods, but also to the kinds of outputs they must create for new platforms and consequently the nature of the writing they must do. As more paperless publishing occurs, more writing of different kinds is required. The app novel, potentially a mainstream publishing format, requires more than text-only writing skills and knowledge.

Behind these ongoing changes lurks a longer history of writing once considered outlaw but which now has come into its own. Essentially it is the kind of print-based writing that utilized more than just the densely printed page to get its messages across, appealing simultaneously to more visual, auditory or tactile responses than those involved in alphabetic reading alone. This rich but sidelined history is traced back through the work of writers who saw themselves as experimenters, who in the main disqualified themselves from mass popular acclaim and political approval, and who were dubbed 'the avant-garde'. For writers today faced with the need to understand how to write for new multimodal platforms, much can be gained from engaging with this history.

For teachers of English and creative writing the ground has shifted too. Fiction and poetry can no longer be siloized as text-only art forms. In the 20th century academic literary discourse operated as if critics knew how to explain to writers what they (the writers) were doing and what they (the writers) had achieved in their writing. It is not too extreme to say that, in the academic view, writers were the benighted subjects of uncritical inspiration, not capable of analyzing the substance and significance of the work they contributed to the literature. Academic critical analysis claimed to provide the enlightening rule of understanding and governance for the literature. The assumptions behind this academic paternalism paralleled colonialist attitudes prevalent in the first half of the century and earlier. The academy's English departments saw themselves as centres of interpretative power and distributors of reading knowledge; writers were the third-world plantation workers merely (but actually) producing the primary material. English departments resisted the highly experimental (what we might now call the multimodal) in favour of the traditional because the text and the printing press were Eng Lit's powerbase, defining its domain among the arts. English

departments recognized 'experimental' fiction and poetry only when those experiments remained within the bounds of the textual. Writers who played with structure – e.g. Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner – became the darlings of English courses, while those who played with more than structure – e.g. Sterne, B.S. Johnson, William H. Gass – barely made it onto reading lists.

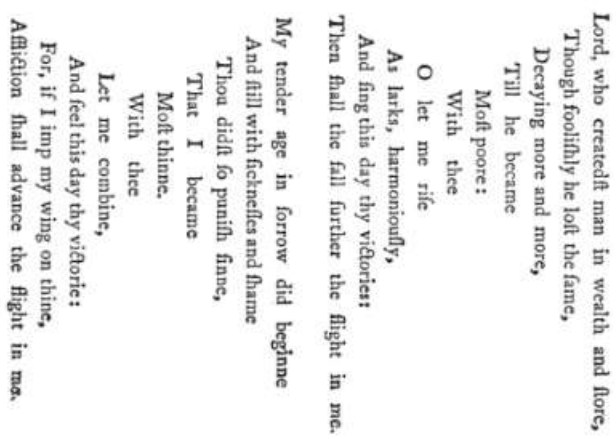
It is important that English departments expand their vision, especially since so many of them now provide a home for creative writing courses. The teaching of creative writing in the future will involve a broader range and different types of writing products. New platforms like the iPad already offer new forms of poetry and novel publication with the potential to increase their production capacities and markets. In this context, teachers will need to teach differently and to be familiar with the history of radical experimentation, because what we have considered for a long time to be 'radical' is fast becoming mainstream. The change from paper to digital is undeniable; it continues apace. To understand what is going on in this era of remediation, the tracing of the radical in the past can give us insights – ways of explaining and finding guidance – for crossing to a new kind of teaching.

Progenitors

Many writers have contributed to the development of radical ideas in writing. Some incorporated the occasional experimental element into an occasional work; others devoted their entire writing lives to innovation. In English poetry and fiction, George Herbert (1593–1633) and Laurence Sterne (1713–1768) among others (see Higgins, 1987) rehearsed key elements of radical modernist writing. Following Greek, Roman and medieval examples, Herbert in 'Easter Wings' (1633) prefigured concrete poetry movements by arranging his poem on the page with text and visuals working together – an early example of a multimodal poem (Figure I.1).

Herbert's poem involved a collage-ing of ideas and processes radical for any era in the English language, although traceable by scholarship back to the Ancient Greek bucolic poets (Figure I.2).

The idea that words on the page might also work as pictures on the page was considered a diversion for 17th-century readers. As Higgins points out, 'pattern poetry' was criticized by literary elites in the 16th and 17th centuries (Higgins, 1987: 14). But also this kind of poetry addressed poetic technical problems – of having the rhythms, rhymes and line lengths of the poem comply not with conventional literary models, but with a plan that involved thinking about the surface of the page, bringing the fact of the page to the reader's foreground, and making the poem readable there on the surface as



Lord, who createdſt man in wealth and ſtore,
Though foolifhly he loſt the ſame,
Decaying more and more,
Till he became
Moſt poore:
With thee
O let me riſe
As larks, harmoniouſly,
And ſing this day thy victories:
Then ſhall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in ſorrow did beginne
And ſtill with ſickneſſes and ſhame
Thou didſt ſo puniſh ſinne,
That I became
Moſt thinne.
With thee
Let me combine,
And feel this day thy victorie:
For, if I imp my wing on thine,
Affliction ſhall advance the flight in me.

Figure I.1 George Herbert, open page, 'Easter Wings', 1633
Source: Ferguson *et al.* (1996: 331).

well as 'beyond' in the conventional manner. Herbert's work utilized the capacities of the relatively new (150-year-old) printing press to produce poetic effects which ironically challenged the governing processes inherent in printing. Insisting that the type must be unconventionally manipulated, and that new logic be applied to layout, Herbert called on a greater energy and imagination in the printery. Avant-garde movements almost 300 years later would take up these radical ideas with gusto.

Laurence Sterne's famous 1761 drawing of his plotlines – 'the four lines I moved in through my first, second, third, and fourth volumes' of *Tristram Shandy* (Sterne, 1940: 474) – and his inclusion of them in the pages of the novel, pre-date sophisticated literary experiments of recent times (Figure I.3).

Here Sterne, like Herbert, utilizes and also challenges the capacities of the printing press. He plays in a radical fashion with text, visuals and exegetical ideas about the practice of novel writing. Pages of *Tristram Shandy* where text and image are collaged together look like screen captures from simple modern-day hypermedia, yet they are 250 years old. Sterne defied practice in his time by fooling with printing, and his novel was popular in spite of (or because of) its experimentation. But the strategies he pioneered are now seriously applicable. The resurgence of interest in Sterne in the computer age (a graphic novel version of *Tristram Shandy* in 1996, an experimental film in 2005, an entirely renovated, updated printing of the novel in 2010)

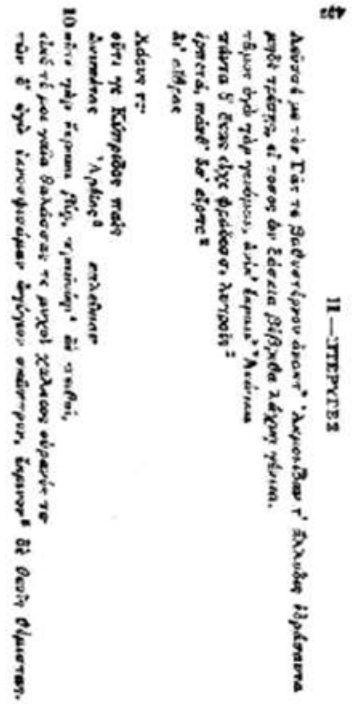


Figure I.2 Simias of Rhodes, 'The Wings', *c.* 300 BC
Source: Simias of Rhodes (2011).

indicates how a work once thought 'impossible' in many ways now has relevance for its teasing apart of creative processes (see Rowson, 1996; Sterne, 2010; Winterbottom, 2005).

In the 20th century we can take three points – 1914, 1951 and 1995 – to discover an ongoing focus for radical experimentation in writing. In 1918, Guillaume Apollinaire wrote:

> Typographical artifices worked out with great audacity have the advantage of bringing to life a visual lyricism which was always unknown before our age. These artifices can still go much further and achieve the synthesis of the arts, of music, painting and literature. (Apollinaire, 1971: 228)

Figure I.3 Laurence Sterne, pp. 152 and 153 of Vol. 6 of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, 7th edn, printed for J. Dodsley and dated 1768
Source: Sterne (2000).

While he ignored the long (and admittedly obscure) history of pattern poetry (described by Higgins, *passim*), Apollinaire referred to works like his own newly forged calligrammes, where typographical design and layout incorporated on the page the spatial elements of painting and photography along with the textual elements of verse and prose (Figure I.4). Within the term 'visual lyricism' he brought together multiple senses, art forms and ways of reading/interpreting which had been mainly held apart by the unsophisticated technologies available to artists, musicians and writers, and by art form categorizations imposed by culture. He foresaw that there could be a page (a site of 'typographical artifices') where music, painting and literature co-existed. His vision of 'a future synthesis of the arts' was uncannily consistent with the possibilities of the computer screen.

Speaking of Robert Delaunay in 1914, Apollinaire said: 'he contrasted the simultaneous with the successive and saw the former as the new element in all the modern arts: the plastic arts, literature, music, and so on' (Apollinaire, 2008a: 648). Apollinaire described 'painted poems' which did not involve

Figure I.4 *Left*, Guillaume Apollinaire, 'Poem from 9th February, 1915 (Recognize yourself)', in *Poèmes à Lou* (1955); *right*, photograph of Louise de Coligny-Chatillon whom Apollinaire met in 1914
Source: Wikimedia Commons. See http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guillaume_Apollinaire_-_Calligramme_-_Po%C3%A8me_du_9_f%C3%A9vrier_1915_-_Reconnais-toi.png and http://www.weblettres.net/blogs/article.php?w=MonplaisirLett&e_id=7015.

'dramatic simultanism' as in theatrical performance by simultaneous voices, but a 'printed simultanism' (Apollinaire, 2008a: 648) where the writer 'at the centre of life ... records the ambient lyricism' (Apollinaire, 2008a: 646) and 'synchronize[s] the mind and letter' of the work to give it 'the gift of ubiquity' (Apollinaire, 2008a: 647). Writing in Apollinaire's magazine *Les Soirées de Paris* in 1914, Gabriel Arbouin defended Apollinaire's calligrammes by saying they were texts which no longer obeyed 'grammatical logic', but rather 'an ideographic logic' (Arbouin, 2008: 652). He called this kind of writing, based in a visual order rather than a narrative order, a 'Revolution: because our intelligence must habituate itself to understand synthetico-ideographically rather than analytico-discursively' (Arbouin, 2008: 653).

Jump now to Northrop Frye writing in 1951:

> Literature seems to be intermediate between music and painting: its words form patterns which approach a musical sequence of sounds at one

> of its boundaries, and form patterns which approach the hieroglyphic or pictorial image at the other. The attempt to get as near to these boundaries as possible form the main body of what is called experimental writing. (Frye, 2006: 128)

Frye brought together two perceptions: first, the changeless notion that 'some arts move in time, like music; others are presented in space, like painting' (Frye, 2006: 128) and second, the half-century-old idea that experimental writing tried to break down the separation of the spatial and the temporal in art forms. Experimental writing has often been characterized as seeking to escape the static nature of the page and the strictures of chronological/linear reading practice. Forming a large part of the experimental endeavour of the 20th century, writers strove to animate the text with concrete typographical effects or by breaking apart the glued-together elements of the book itself. Ways to 'hear' the text on the page via synaesthetic means with words made to look as they sounded also occupied the attention of experimenters. Frye identified the main thrust of writing experimentation to be the pushing of the boundaries of writing itself, which seemed to have potential well beyond its page-bound, text-imposed dimensions.

Jump again to Richard Kostelanetz writing in 1995:

> *Intermedia* ... is an encompassing term referring to the new art forms which were invented by disjunctively marrying the materials and concepts of one traditional genre with another or others (in contrast to opera where the media consciously complement) or by integrating art itself with something previously considered nonartistic ...
>
> In literature, out of the melding of language with design came what is called *visual poetry* or *word-imagery*, where the enhancing coherence of words is pictorial (rather than syntactical), while *sound poetry* or *text-sound art* comes from inventively integrating musical values with initially verbal material. Since the possibilities of literary intermedia have scarcely been explored, it is reasonable to suspect that this may be the single greatest esthetic invention for our time – the sole contemporary peer of cubism and collage. (Kostelanetz, 1995: 93, 95)

Reviewing experimental practice of the 20th century in the context where the computer screen was already widespread and hypertext literature had begun to be recognized, Kostelanetz tied the multimodal 'possibilities of literary intermedia' back to 'cubism and collage', where the pioneering experiments of Apollinaire, Delaunay and others took place. The 20th century had

come full circle. The quest to broaden writing's domain – in other words, to bring textual, visual and auditory art forms together – was on the verge of realization.

Multimodality

Flight Paths, a collaborative web novel by Kate Pullinger and Chris Joseph, is an example of multimodal fiction (Pullinger & Joseph, 2012). As an impressive but relatively simple example of digital literature, it shows the potential of the hypermedia novel form. I find as I read this work, with its strong integration of text, images and soundtrack, that I begin to interpret the visuals as text – to accept that the images are replacing paragraphs of setting and description, so I process them in that way. Similarly, I know the music soundtrack is about atmosphere and emotion, and I interpret it as replacing a textual commentary on the characters' situations and feelings. I change, expand and re-interpret these different modes or channels of meaning, into a hybrid narrative 'reading'. I'm not watching film or listening to music; I'm reading the combination of text, image and sound *as text*.

The use of several modes at once – several sites or channels of meaning simultaneously – enriches the reading experience, but also one needs to know *how* to read in this way. Our current monomodal literacy (that employed in the reading of traditional text novels, for example) does not cope well with multimodal inputs: we get confused, we feel overloaded, we think we can't focus on so many strands at once. We complain that the novel cannot be multimodal – that it's just too hard to read. Of course, the actual structure of the paper book – held in linear order by the spine – and our devotion to it, is part of the problem here. But we read films successfully, and they involve at least two sites or channels of meaning – the visual and the auditory. And television advertisements, like computer screens, encourage us to read images and text together, and even add a soundtrack to help (not hinder) us in doing it.

To learn about multimodal reading we can turn to Gunther Kress and others such as Gregory L. Ulmer (2002) and Jan Rune Holmevik (2012) (the latter call their version of hypermedia literacy *electracy*). In Kress's analysis of multimodality, the way we read has changed due to our exposure to screen-driven culture. We now interact with diverse incoming channels to produce 'a rich orchestration of meaning' (Kress, 2011: 05.05). Not only is the visual more pervasive in communication, but also we are much more accepting of the idea that visual and written (or spoken) texts will operate in unison. Perhaps it started with our recognition that – at the

simplest level – gestures and facial expressions accompany speech as part of the message. But with the proliferation of screens to be read, especially TV advertisements and websites, we are now required to master multimodal reading in order to know about our world. Kress talks about finding meaning 'where it is' (Kress, 2011: 05.18). In other words, we read and understand by synthesizing the variety of input modes that come in to us: by selecting, arranging and interpreting what we find most salient amongst the variety of incoming channels we form our reading, our created 'text'.

In the book *Multimodality*, Kress begins his argument with a simple comparison between street signs (Kress, 2010: 1–4). The first sign, prominently attached to a wall at a set of London traffic lights, gives directions for drivers to get from there to a supermarket, directions which are complex because of access via one-way streets and an obscure entry point to the car park. He explains that the information transmitted in the sign – which uses text, image and colour to clarify its message – is nuanced to operate multimodally because the sign would not work as text alone, or as image alone. Text and image together create the whole communication successfully.

But Kress shows another figure – an official sign explaining temporary parking arrangements during the European soccer championships in Salzburg in 2008. It is a printed poster attached to a blackboard-style A-frame, set on the footpath beside a busy road. This sign is typical of publications by official cultures which valorize the written text: 'Bureaucracy assumes that as long as something has been announced in writing it has been communicated and the rest will look after itself …' (Kress, 2010: 2). The power of laws and tradition allows the Salzburg Traffic Office to rely on a non-sign, a single-mode communication. Kress's concern here is to demonstrate how limited the text-only format really is.

In *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, Kress and Theo van Leeuwen describe the process by which multimodal texts are read (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 175ff.). They start with the compositional principles used in visual texts – placement, salience and framing – which produce (by meaningful contrast, emphasis, tonal value, etc.) the 'reading paths' within a visual work:

> These three principles of composition apply not just to single pictures … they apply also to composite visuals, visuals which combine text and image and, perhaps, other graphic elements, be it on a page or on a television or computer screen. In the analysis of composite or *multimodal* texts (and any text whose meanings are realized through more than one semiotic code is multimodal), the question arises whether the products of the

> various modes should be analysed separately or in an integrated way; whether the meanings of the whole should be treated as the sum of the meanings of the parts, or whether the parts should be looked upon as interacting with and affecting one another. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 177)

Kress and van Leeuwen pursue the latter path, defining the *image + text* relationship in a *multimodal text* not as a picture illustrating the verbal text, 'thereby treating the verbal text as prior and more important', nor as separate visual and verbal texts with entirely discrete elements:

> We seek to be able to look at the whole page as an *integrated* text. Our insistence on drawing comparisons between language and visual communication stems from this objective. We seek to break down the disciplinary boundaries between the study of language and the study of images, and we seek, as much as possible, to use compatible language, and compatible terminology to speak about both, for in actual communication the two, and indeed many others, come together to form integrated texts. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 177)

The logic of integration in a multimodal text lies in its use of overarching codes: these being the mode of spatial composition, and the mode of temporal composition. The former 'operates in texts in which all elements are spatially co-present – for example, paintings, streetscapes, magazine pages' and, one should add, the pages of fiction and poetry. The latter 'operates in texts which unfold over time – for example, speech, music, dance ...'. Some types of multimodal text utilize both, for example film and television, although the mode of temporal composition 'will usually be the dominant integrative principle in these cases' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 177).

Walter J. Ong has pointed out that in the 16th century, in the early days of printing, the printed page was read with its multimodal elements integrated differently:

> All text involves sight and sound. But whereas we feel reading as a visual activity cueing in sounds for us, the early age of print still felt it as primarily a listening process, simply set in motion by sight. If you felt yourself as reader to be listening to words, what difference did it make if the visible text went its own visually aesthetic way? It will be recalled that pre-print manuscripts commonly ran words together or kept spaces between them minimal. (Ong, 2012: 119)

Visual elements (e.g. images) residual from illuminated manuscripts were also present in the early printed text. Ultimately, however, print changed the way we viewed the page:

> Print situates words in space more relentlessly than writing [by hand] ever did. Writing moves words from the sound world to a world of visual space, but print locks words into position in this space. Control of position is everything in print. (Ong, 2012: 119)

The visual material available on the printed page eventually declined to the 'densely printed page' in which 'reading is linear and textual integration achieved by linguistic means (conjunctions, cohesive ties, etc.). In books of this kind it seems that the page has ceased to be a significant textual unit' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 178). But the 20th century saw a resurgence of the visual possibilities of the printed page in advertising, the mass media, children's books, comics, technical journals, etc. and especially under the influence of TV and computer screens. On these pages:

> verbal text becomes just one of the elements integrated by information value, salience and framing, and reading is not necessarily linear, wholly or in part, but may go from centre to margin, or in circular fashion, or vertically, etc. ... In the case of magazine pages and the pages of modern computer screens, each successive page may have a different reading path. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 178–179)

The history of multimodality significantly involves the page as contested cultural space:

> It should be noted, of course, that the layout of the densely printed page is still visual, still carries an overall cultural significance, as an image of progress ... [Until the late 19th century] [l]ayout was not encouraged here, because it undermined the power of the densely printed page as, literally, the realization of the most literary and literate semiotic mode. The genres of the densely printed page, then, manifest the cultural capital ('high' cultural forms) controlled by the intellectual and artistic wing of the middle class. ... If we are to understand the way in which vital text-producing institutions like the media, education and children's literature make sense of the world and participate in the development of new forms of social stratification, a theory of language is no longer sufficient and must be complemented by theories which can make the principles of the new visual literacy explicit, and describe, for instance, the

> role of layout in the process of social semiosis that takes place on the pages of the texts produced by these institutions. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 178–179)

In this book I use Kress and van Leeuwen's ideas not only to examine what is happening to creative writing in the 21st century, but also to tease apart the precursor experiments undertaken by writers in groups such as the Cubists, Dadaists, Surrealists and Oulipo in the 20th century. By applying the concepts of multimodality, I seek a unifying thread through the motivations of experimental writers who sought to refashion language, the page and the book to make literature work more effectively at representing human experience.

Creative Writing and the Radical

Creative Writing and the Radical presents a history of radical change in creative writing processes and seeks to initiate new ideas about the teaching and learning of creative writing in the current climate, where the book is going digital *fast* and readership is migrating en masse from paper to electronic page. *Creative Writing and the Radical* assesses avant-garde movements of the past – the precursors to hypertext and hypermedia – showing how experimental writers, well before the digital age, explored the possibilities of textual forms freed from the strictures of the paper page and the codex form. As a knowledge resource, this book suggests that the history of radical experimentation forms a context for learning and teaching the kind of creative writing needed for the multimodal future of literature.

In Chapter 1 ('The Concept of the Radical in Writing'), the term *radical* is discussed with particular reference to its use in this book to identify a set of practices that have been considered 'on the fringes' of literary writing in the past, but which have now entered the mainstream of literary print and electronic publishing. The focus is radical writing practice in the 20th century, but earlier experiments in the 18th and 19th centuries are also considered. Attempts by writers to involve a full range of bodily senses, along with the key concept of *collage*, are examined as early investigations of the possibilities of multimodality.

Chapter 2 ('The Radical in the 20th Century') identifies sites of experimentation and examines prominent experimental movements: Cubism, Dadaism, Surrealism and the American Radicals of the later 20th century. Writers in these groups sought to refract, rearrange and recombine the

written text utilizing concepts and practices from other areas of the arts. The visual arts were most influential, but music and performance also played a part in radicalizing writing and introducing writers to new modes of presentation and publishing.

The next three chapters provide a more detailed account of radical experimentation in specific aspects of writing in the 20th century and the influence these had on early 21st-century publishing. Each chapter considers a broad range of writers from Europe, the UK and America and focuses on publications which pioneered ground-breaking methods. Chapter 3 deals with language experimentation, using the Oulipo group's employment of constraining and combinatory devices as starting point. Chapter 4 outlines innovative uses of the space of the page and a reworking of the possibilities of the book as codex. This chapter also considers different approaches to authorship from the writer's point of view, especially collaborative writing experiments. Chapter 5 covers attempts by writers to escape from predictable narrative structures and to introduce elements from the visual and aural arts.

While radical experimentation occupied the fringes of mainstream adult literature in the 20th century, this was not so for children's literature. Chapter 6 ('Experiments in Writing for Children') begins with an account of the value of play in children's learning and continues with an examination of experiments which combined text with visuals and sound. It also looks at current experiments with the book for young people.

The final two chapters speculate upon the future of publishing and writing, and make predictions based on strong trends, both digital and on paper, in the last 20 years. Chapter 7 ('Fiction and the Future') traces the impact of new technologies on fiction, including new app and web literary works, alongside the influence of hypermedia on mainstream paper publishing. Chapter 8 ('Teaching and Learning the New Creative Writing') posits the significant shifts creative writing teachers and their departments will likely make to prepare their students for the brave new world of 21st-century publishing.