

Correspondence

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Creativity

SIR: Post (1996) has contributed distinctively to the debate over possible association of verbal creativity with psychological morbidity. However, it is too simplistic to classify and subdivide writers according to the literary vehicle (poetry, prose or play) which they have chosen as their predominant mode and then associate a (theoretical) psychological timbre to this choice (as with Post's notion of 'greater inner turmoil and neural hyperactivity' (p. 554) in prose writers and playwrights than in poets).

For example, Thomas Hardy (whom Post accurately classifies as a 'poet, also prose writer' (p. 546)) considered himself to be, first and foremost, a poet. It was his difficulty in establishing himself in this medium (and making a decent living) that led him to publish prose, but he continued to regard poetry as his literary touchstone. One then must ask, did he write his novels as a poet (i.e. using less inner turmoil and neural hyperactivity) or would the extent of his neural functioning shift according to his choice of literary mode? Does this imply that he is a less worthy prosewriter than others? Will insightful literary criticism henceforth require an understanding of cerebral neurophysiology?

POST, F. (1996) Verbal creativity, depression and alcoholism. An investigation of one hundred American and British writers. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 168, 545–555.

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SIR: In the discussion of his very interesting finding that affective disorders and alcoholism are less frequent in the poets in his study, in comparison with novelists and playwrights, Post (1996) attributes this solely to the nature and intensity of their emotional imagination, and misses the opportunity to mention possible cultural factors. As it is usually much harder to earn a living from poetry than from novels or plays, poets are more likely in the modern world to hold down regular jobs. As most offices, seminar rooms and lecture theatres are not furnished with a bar, heavy drinking, the favoured form of self-medication of many writers, becomes difficult, at least from 9 to 5. They also have the chance to meet other people and escape the enforced solitude of writing. On the other hand, the loneliness of the long-distance writer squats heavily on the hunched shoulders of novelists and playwrights, whose work often demands seclusion and sustained effort over months or years. Poets can complete a poem over a few evenings, as Philip Larkin did after his day job at the Hull University Library.

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'Audible thoughts' and 'speech defects' in schizophrenia

SIR: As a former assistant in Burghölzli, Zürich, not of Eugen Bleuler but of his son Manfred, I may be entitled to some remarks on behalf of the German words Dr Szasz quoted in his article. As he quoted, the term *Gedankenlautwerden* will be used when a patient states that his thinking has become audible – audible to the patient himself as if spoken by someone else – audible too (in the patients opinion) to persons close to him. Needless to say,