# The Artist and the Outer World

Joyce McDougall

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If the soul within is more real than the outer world, as you, philosopher, pretend Why then is it the outer world that is offered to me as the model of reality?

—Fernando Pessoa

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# The Artist and the Outer World

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For many years I have been attempting to capture a glimpse into the mysterious origins of creative expression, through exploring the impact upon myself of certain creative works, as well as studying the creative process and its inhibitions in my analysands. Whether the medium be writing, painting, sculpture, music, the performing arts, scientific and intellectual creativity, or innovation in the worlds of politics, business, or industrial invention, there is an enigmatic dimension to creative activity that evades our comprehension.

Freud himself searched constantly for the secrets of creativity. In his essay on creative writers and day dreaming (1908), he asks: "From what sources does that strange being [the creative writer] draw his material?" He replies that a creative writer behaves like a child at play in that he creates a world of his own. Freud states that "(the child) creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously . . . (and) invests with large amounts of emotion." However, Freud goes on to say, "as people grow up they cease to play (and furthermore the adult) knows that he is expected not to go on playing or phantasying any longer." Later in the same essay he proclaims, "we may lay it down that a happy person never phantasies, only an unsatisfied one." This somewhat critical attitude to fantasy life in adulthood appears throughout Freud's writings, as though fantasies—and even the enjoyment of contemplating creative works— were a guilty' preoccupation.

The analytic world had to wait for D. W. Winnicott to convey a more optimistic view of fantasy, play, and creativity. Winnicott's designation of the "intermediate area of experiencing," in which both the

inner world and the outer world participate, is a fertile concept for probing the perplexities of the creative process—as well as elucidating the question of creative and intellectual inhibitions. As Winnicott (1971) defines it: "(the area of transitional space) widens out into that of play, of artistic creativity and appreciation, of religious feeling and of dreaming." Although both Freud and Winnicott advance the notion that the creative individual is playing, this must not be taken to mean that creative activity is carefree. On the contrary, creative and innovative activity is linked with considerable violence and frequently arouses intense experiences of anguish and guilt. The resistance to allowing oneself to work is a common experience to the creative artist, and my analysands have shown me that this is most acutely experienced when they feel particularly inspired by a pristine vision, invention, or idea that is clamoring for expression.

It was not until Melanie Klein (1945) began considering art as a reflection of the earliest relations between infant and mother that new light was thrown upon the inner world of the creative being. She emphasized, perhaps more clearly than any other psychoanalytic writer, the dimension of violent emotion in the primal substratum of the human psyche. This concept has interested me because years of observation and reflection have led me to perceive that violence is an essential element in creative production. Apart from the force and intensity of the creative urge in itself, innovators are violent beings to the extent that they exercise their power to impose on the external world their thoughts, their images, their dreams or their nightmares.

It is not incomprehensible that a quota of anxiety and psychic conflict so often accompanies the act of creating, but we must also remember that creative people tend to seek psychoanalytic help at times when their productivity is endangered or even paralyzed. Thus we are presented with a privileged insight into not only the factors that contribute to creative activity hut also those that lie behind the sudden failure to create.

However, before taking into consideration the symptoms and inhibitions that are liable to arise when conflicts in the inner universe of creative individuals are projected onto the outer world, I should like to comment on the popular myth of the creator as unsuccessful and having a reputation for emotional instability' and perverse or psychotic potentialities. In fact, the lives of many famous creators are as varied in history and psychological structure as are those of the average banker, butcher, plumber, or politician.

Many of them have led rather ordinary bourgeois existences. Some have been devoted parents. Others have combined their creative work with successful activities in other fields. Rubens was named ambassador, Matisse began his professional life as a lawyer, Chekhov was a doctor, Claudel was a diplomat, Mussorgsky was a lieutenant, to mention only a few.

It is also worthy of note that the majority of creative artists, in whatever field, are astonishingly productive. It took years to catalogue Mozart's compositions. Rubens painted thousands of pictures. By the age of sixteen Toulouse-Lautrec had completed fifty paintings and three hundred drawings. Van Gogh's production, even during his most serious psychological illness, would fill a small museum. Euripides wrote ninety- two plays. Donizetti composed sixty-three operas. Thomas Edison patented more than a thousand inventions.

With regard to those creators who have manifested psychotic, perverse, or psychopathic behavior, the part of the personality which allowed them to create, and to keep on creating, must be considered as the *healthy* part! We might envisage the internal universe of the creative individual as something like a volcano. The live volcano conceals within its depths continual heat and churning energy and will send out sparks, rocks, and flames at appropriate moments, but a prolonged blockage would precipitate an explosion.

One of my analysands, who became a renowned painter, wrote the following lines to me in a long letter, after the end of her analysis, summing up what she had learned:

> The profound primordial drives that surge up in me can become powerful enough to cause discomfort; the constant buildup of tension has to be put outside me into the outer world in order to restore some feeling of harmony inside. It is creation but it is fired by feelings of destruction. When I cannot paint I become the target of my own violent aggression.
>
> I understand so well the frustration of my dear friend [A] who says he hates his paintings because "they never depict the painting I have in my mind." Then there is [B] who every so often destroys every painting he still has in his studio. Is this what Freud called the "death instinct"?

It is possible that the drive to self-destructiveness is always in action during any creative process and, once the work is set in motion, becomes part of the movement that brings fragmentation and structure together. This recalls Modell's concept of the two selves (chapter 3).

Patients often encounter feelings of depression, self-hatred, anger, and frustration, leading to a wish to destroy the work in progress. At this point such patients may resemble the persons with personality disorders described by Shapiro in chapter 1. Here the outer world may play a beneficial role or, on the contrary, reflect back to the creator everything that he or she most fears. Creative personalities in psychotherapy or analysis rarely present as the neurotic patients whom Shapiro suggests have a stable psychic structure—an inner frame, so to speak—whereas artists (in all fields) are more likely to "crash against boundaries," as Shapiro puts it. They then tend toward the externalization he describes, in which "the third" becomes the public that receives the full force of the projective identification that is at work. Here I find enlightening Shapiro's concept of utilizing the "external managerial frame" (which the public becomes, in a sense, for the innovator and creator), in that public rejection or other hard realities that come to the fore can be used to interpret the extent to which this "third" is an unconscious repetition of familiar family patterns of the past.

## ASPECTS OF THE CREATIVE ACT

Before dealing with certain fundamental aspects of the creative process observed in clinical work, I should like to emphasize that psychoanalysis does not claim to hold the key to explicating artistic creativity; on the contrary, therapists hope that artists and their created works will draw us closer to *discovering* the key to human nature.

Clinical considerations have led me to the overall impression that creativity, while its specifics will always elude us, springs originally from the erogenic body and the way in which its drives are represented and its somatic functions structured by the caretakers of infancy. In attempting to follow the complex links among the creator, the created work, and the public, four fundamental aspects seem to form part of the background to any creative thought or act. Two of these concern the creator's relation to the *external world,* namely (1) the struggle with the medium of expression and (2) the nature of the individual's relationship to the imagined public for whom the created product is intended. The other two factors pertain to the *internal world*, namely (3) the role of pregenital sexuality (including oral, anal, and phallic drives) and (4) the importance of the unconscious bisexual wishes of infancy and the nature of their integration into the psychic structure.

My analysands have taught me that each of these four factors may he experienced as a form of *transgression,* and are likely, therefore, to arouse psychic conflict and inhibit productivity. Production may continue, but at tremendous cost in terms of panic anxiety, profound depression, or other forms of psychic suffering. Schafer's description (chapter 2) of the "secret transgressors" who are terrorized by the thought of being discovered is intriguing in this regard. In many ways artistic personalities also frequently deal with "fragmented selves and objects" and seek a sense of individuality and cohesion through their created works or inventions. At the same time they display themselves as "conspicuous individualists" in Schafer's sense.

Let us look first at the artist in relation to the outer world before considering transactions in the world of psychic reality.

## THE EXTERNAL WORLD

### The Creator and the Medium

Underlying the struggle of every creative person with his or her chosen medium of expression is always a fantasy of fusion, or confusion, with the medium itself. This gives rise to contradictory feelings; the creator wishes at the same time to caress the medium of expression and to attack it in the effort to master it. Such conflicts are clearly observable among painters and sculptors, who will often destroy the work they are trying to create. Musicians frequently complain that they love their music but hate their instruments as much as they love them. Creative people in industry also show remarkable ambivalence toward their field.

I am reminded in this latter context of a talented engineer who achieved worldwide fame with his industrial innovation only to destroy the empire he had created, some fifteen years later, through a series of unwitting errors. At that point he sought analysis and was then able to discover that the crash had occurred when his financial success outstripped that of any member of his family for generations. The medium, whether paint, marble, words, the voice, the body, a musical instrument, or a social or political institution, will present itself as an ally as well as an enemy. The medium of creative expression has to be "tamed" so that the creator can impose upon it his or her will. This imposition must also obey two

imperatives: it must translate the creator's inner vision but at the same time must carry7 the conviction that the chosen medium has the power to transmit to the external world the message, vision, or new concept in question.

**The Innovator and the Public**

The relation between the creative personality and the anonymous public is a love affair that bristles with hazards. The public to whom the message is directed is originally internal, composed of significant objects from the past which may be experienced as hostile or supportive. An unconscious battle must often be waged with this internal world before the work can be achieved. But the work still may not be considered worthy of being displayed. Not only do artists seek to impose upon the public their inner image but also they must be convinced that their creation has value, and that it is desired and appreciated by the public for whom it is intended. Creators and innovators frequently feel they must struggle with the external world for their right to display the most intimate expressions of their inner universe. Modell's reflection in chapter 3 on the "paradox of the private self and the social self' is evocative with regard to my own clinical work, particularly in the context of the artist and the outer world. A writer whom I shall quote later filled to the letter Modell's description of "the wish to be known and understood" counterbalanced by "the fear of being found and controlled."

The first question regarding severe blockage of the creative process concerns the nature of the fantasies that are projected onto the outer world: is it perceived as welcoming, admiring, desirous of receiving the creative offer or, on the contrary, as critical, rejecting, and persecutory? Such projections may be decisive with regard to permitting or refusing the "publication" of one's creative work, scientific research, or new invention. I find that I too often make remarks "out of the blue" (similar to those in the session quoted by Modell) in which both I and my analysand appear to be using projective and introjective identificatory processes. Recall that Bion considered communication through projective identification as a primitive or prototypic form of thinking.

## THE INTERNAL WORLD

With regard to the inner world, I should like to review the importance of the pregenital and

bisexual drives constantly revealed on the psychoanalytic stage and the extent to which these may prevent the artist's creative work from reaching the external world.

**Pregenital Erotism and Archaic Sexual Impulses**

The libidinal foundation of all creative expression is invariably infiltrated with pregenital impulses and archaic aspects of sexuality in which erotism and aggression, love and hate, are indistinguishable one from the other. The importance and richness of pregenital sexuality involves the five senses, as well as all bodily functions. However, certain senses, as well as certain zones and somatic functions, are frequently experienced unconsciously as forbidden sources of pleasure or as potentially dangerous acts and sensations.

To take into one's body and mind impressions received through any of the senses is in itself a creative act in any individual. The artist, in whatever field, is inevitably inspired by the external world, and once the impressions, perceptions, emotions, and thoughts thus garnered are incorporated mentally, their impact fertilizes the inner world of the creative mind. However, this perpetual movement between the two worlds may be experienced unconsciously as an orally devouring or destructive act.

A portrait painter comes to mind in regard to the repressed violence of oral impulses. This analysand, in spite of a strange abstract technique which had earned him a certain reputation, usually succeeded in capturing a likeness, but he would occasionally ruin portraits that were highly invested for him. We came to realize, after two years' analytic work, that in an omnipotent childlike manner, he held himself responsible for his mother's partially paralyzed face. We uncovered the fantasy that he was responsible for this paralysis. He was remembered as a greedy, demanding infant, difficult to feed and difficult to soothe, and it slowly became clear to both of us that he lived in terror of the explosive child within who had orally attacked and devoured his mother with his mouth and his eyes. In a sense he had spent his life trying, in magical ways, to repair this catastrophic damage. Reassurance from the family, explaining how his mother had come to suffer her affliction, did nothing to dispel the unconscious belief in his guilt. His portraits were explosive attacks upon the visual world, yet at the same time reparative in restoring a striking likeness to the individual portrayed.

A similar unconscious drama was revealed to me during the analysis of a plastic surgeon who claimed that his mother was an unusually ugly woman. On the few occasions when his professional work was not impeccably successful we were able to understand that he believed he had rendered his mother ugly and that any patient who reminded him of his mother made him excessively anxious. Yet he was able to invest, by means of a highly original surgical invention, the same violence that he had experienced in his early relationship with his mother. "I cut to cure," he announced. We were able to deconstruct this phrase and to understand that, through cutting, he satisfied different pregenital drives while at the same time making reparation for the fantasized damage of which he believed himself to be the author.

In the manner in which taking in from the environment may be feared as an orally destructive act, the activity of giving something of oneself to the outside world may in turn be experienced unconsciously as an act of defecation and therefore an agent of potential humiliation or destruction.

The first "creation" the infant offers to the external world is the fecal object, with all the erotic and aggressive meaning that is invariably associated with anal activity and fecal fantasy. This unconscious libidinal source plays a vital role for creative people in every domain. But the fantasies involved add an element of ambiguity in that fecal production is invariably experienced as referring to two distinct representations: on the one hand, it is something of great value, a gift offered to the world with love; on the other, it is a weapon, intended to attack and dominate the significant objects of the outer world. The unconscious nature of anal erotic and anal aggressive investments in the act of creation is, understandably, an important determinant with regard to the capacity—or incapacity—to continue producing, and to display one's productions to the world. When Schafer speaks of "orgasm being experienced by the extreme conformist as an anal explosion," this metaphor in my clinical experience could also apply to the "creative orgasm" and, depending on the unconscious fantasies associated, may just as readily lead to severe inhibition of one's production.

In a similar vein the pleasure and excitement felt in the act of putting forth and rendering public one's production is also liable to be equated with exhibiting one's body or masturbating in public. Hanna Segal (1957) recounts the case of a musician who responded aggressively when she attempted to analyze his total inhibition with regard to playing in public. He told her that she was simply encouraging

him to masturbate in front of the whole world. In her discussion of this episode Segal points out that the confusion of playing a musical instrument with a masturbatory act is not a true symbol but merely a "symbolic equivalent" in which internal and external reality are not distinguished from each other.

With regard to the bisexual wishes of infancy, posited by Freud as a universal given, observation of young children confirms that they tend to identify with both parents as well as desiring the privileges and magic powers of each for themselves. These omnipotent powers are usually symbolized by the parents' sexual organs. To the extent that both masculine and feminine wishes are well integrated and accepted, we all have the potentiality of being creative, through sublimating, so to speak, the impossible wish to be both sexes, and to create children with both parents. This may then permit us to produce parthenogenetic "infants" in the form of innovative works.

The three clinical vignettes that follow contain situations in which pregenital and bisexual wishes played a cardinal role in stimulating, as well as paralyzing, the creative process. It is my hope that these analytic fragments will throw further light on the inner universe of the creative individual as well as highlight unconscious reasons that inhibit the capacity to create or to offer one's creation to the public.

## PREGENITAL EROTISM AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Cristina, a sculptor from South America, was one of my first analytic patients. She sought help many years ago during her art studies in Paris because she had reached a point of complete paralysis in her artistic production. She explained to me that although she dreamed of creating monumental sculptures, she was only able to make very small constructions; these, it turned out, were invariably sculpted in a fragile medium and were frequently chipped or broken—often by Cristina herself. She spoke also of marital problems, as well as her fear that she was not a good mother to her two children (as though they too might be fragile and easily broken). Cristina also mentioned that she was incapable of showing her work publicly in spite of the encouragement of friends, among whom were a couple of gallery owners. The very thought of such an exhibition filled her with anxiety, induced insomnia, and brought her work to a complete halt.

The analysis was conducted four times a week and lasted six years. Cristina spent many sessions

recalling her anguish concerning her body and its functions. This included lengthy exploration of intense masturbation guilt, stemming from childhood memories in which she had been severely chastised by her mother; she recalled being told that her autoerotic activity would not only send Cristina to hell but would kill her mother. These memories led to our uncovering a hitherto unconscious fantasy that her own hands were imbued with destructive power, and that to exhibit her sculptures publicly would bring about her mother's death. In the first two years of our work together Cristina began to make larger pieces and to experiment with working in metal. She finally plucked up courage to enter a competition destined to promote young artists in all media. By coincidence, the theme of the competition for that year was "The Hand." Cristina constructed, in dark-colored material, a large effigy of her own hand. It was a strange and fascinating piece of work with something of the air of a prehistoric monster about it. "My sculpture has been chosen for exhibition," she announced one day and added, "Everyone will see it; and I've even sent my parents an invitation! My 'thing' will be displayed before the whole world and for once they will have to be proud of me." In the days that followed, she herself was able to put into words the belief that her "thing" was not only a symbolic reassurance of her bodily integrity but also announced the affirmation of sex and her right to feminine erotic pleasure.

In the years that passed since our analytic work terminated, I frequently received news from Cristina, and catalogues giving details of public showings of her work in Europe and abroad. A couple of years ago she called to say she was back in France for some time and needed an urgent appointment. She was once again suffering from massive anxiety which prevented her from sleeping and also from working. This outburst of panic had occurred on the opening night of an important exhibition of her work, large sculptures in stone and cement in quite a new style. We arranged that she would come once a week for several months.

In her first session she said: "I worked on the pieces for this show for over a year, and with a totally unusual feeling of freedom and pleasure which, as you know, is quite rare for me. There's always an anxious undercurrent just before a major exhibition but this time I wasn't aware of the slightest trace of panic. After the first night the publicity director remarked that my sculpts were unlike my former work, he said they were 'less austere' and also he noticed I had used a new technique that was, he said, 'quite unexpected of me.' I went home in a state of extreme anguish and collapse, such as I haven't known for years. For the last three weeks I've not been able to work, nor to sleep."

The following week I encouraged Cristina to tell me more about the new sculptures. "Well, there *is* something unusual about the present work. Not only did I truly enjoy creating it but I also added some decorative detail which would have been unthinkable for me, even two years ago. Now I'm filled with panic as soon as I enter my Paris atelier. I can't even think about work nor touch the piece I was working on."

In the week that followed, my curiosity, as well as my affectionate interest, led me to visit the exhibition, where I gazed upon the impressive pieces, overwhelming in their size and shape, but also highlighted with intriguing surface detail. I thought to myself how far Cristina's work had progressed from the timid little clay shapes of many years ago—and the extent to which it had also far surpassed the dramatic *Hand* which had been her breakthrough to the public.

In the sessions that followed, we recapitulated our discoveries of the past: the threat of death associated with masturbation, followed by an early memory from the age of three when her parents had gone away for a week, leaving her in the care of the maid. During this time she collected her feces and put them in a cardboard box in a cupboard in her bedroom. These were discovered by the maid, who scolded her severely and subsequently informed the parents of her crime. In a sense these had been Cristina's very first sculptures, in which she clung to her earliest gift to the outside world, presumably to stave off a feeling of loss and abandonment. There was an even earlier evocation in which Cristina remembered distinctly being carried naked by her nanny in front of a group of visitors. The nanny opened Cristina's legs and in a voice of disgust called everyone's attention to the fact that Cristina was urinating. This spectacle was greeted with loud laughter. Cristina thinks she was between a year and eighteen months of age. She had many times recaptured the feeling of urinating with pleasure only to be followed immediately by an intolerable sense of humiliation and public exposure.

During the session that followed this recapitulation, Cristina explained, for the first time, that the "decorative detail" with which she had adorned her recent sculptures had been added, after the initial casting, *by hand.* This new element led to a total re-evaluation of her exhibition, in which she recognized that history was repeating itself. Shortly before returning to her country she said, "I'm beginning to wonder if the extreme austerity that has always been the hallmark of my work was intended to mask my sexuality, and in fact to deny all sensuous body pleasure. My body functions have always made me feel

anxious and guilty; and any sensuous feelings were invariably obscurely terrifying. Is it pleasure that is forbidden? The orgasm that must be denied at no matter what cost?"

I had observed during the initial period of our work together that when Cristina had begun to make ever larger sculptures and to use hard materials, this change coincided with the phase in which she could express verbally her feelings of rage toward the internal parents. The photographs she brought me of her work appeared at this time to incorporate and transmit some of this violent emotion. But with the return of her terror that her hands were murderous and liable to kill, the creative violence disappeared and the old inhibitions came back in force.

In this second period of analysis she was able to recall, for the first time, conversations in which her mother had given evidence of her personal rejection of sexual sensations and bodily pleasure of every kind. This led her to say, "My mother, whom I always believed to be a monster, has now became simply a psychologically sick, elderly lady." Following this crucial insight, in which Cristina was able to recognize a current of understanding and tenderness toward her mother, she began once again to create.

Whatever traumatic features from the past may have been reactivated in this sensitive artist, Cristina's anguish about her latest exhibition disappeared; within weeks she had signed a contract for a showing of the same work in another city and was anticipating the opening night with delight.

A further example of similar conflict but in another medium, was provided by Tamara, a violinist who was highly esteemed by the conservatory where she had been a prize-winning pupil (name and identifying details have been changed). Tamara suffered paralyzing anxiety when expected to perform in front of others; she would sometimes at the last minute cancel invitations to play at private musical evenings with friends or at concerts given by the pupils of the conservatory. After many months of research on her part as well as mine, in which we attempted to reconstruct the unconscious scenario that was being played out before every anticipated performance, she was able to capture the following fantasy: "I fool the world. My playing is far from the perfection I demand of myself, and people think I'm more talented than I really am. I scratch my instrument and instead of beauty' all that comes out is excrement; as a musician I'm nothing but shit." Through recollections of shame and anguish attached to defecation during an encopretic period in infancy, Tamara came to understand that behind her terror of

playing in public was not only the fear that she would exhibit what she believed to be an ugly and sexless body but that, behind the wish to give something valuable and beautiful to the public, there was a contrary desire: to drown the whole world with murderous feces. The extent to which she had projected onto her public the image of an angry, critical, and anally controlling mother was clearly revealed.

These insights enabled her to explore the feeling that she both loved and hated her musical instrument. Some months later she dreamed that she was reaching for her violin and her hands gave out light, which in turn illuminated the violin. In her associations she said with surprise, "You know, I've never realized that my violin is part of my own body- Even its shape is feminine!" When she was, for the first time in her memory, able to permit herself to love and caress her body, she at last felt free to contemplate exhibiting this extension of her bodily self to the outer world and began to anticipate that one day she might, with unambivalent affection, offer her musical gifts to the public. A year after the termination of her analysis she sent me two tickets for a concert in which she gave a most moving performance.

## BISEXUALITY AND CREATIVITY

With regard to the role of primary bisexual drives in the creative process, it has always seemed to me that the pleasure experienced in intellectual and artistic achievements is infused with considerable narcissistic and homosexual fantasy; in such production, the individual is both man and woman at the same time. Perhaps all creative acts may be conceptualized as a fusion of the masculine and feminine elements in our psychic structure. Furthermore, clinical experience has taught me that conflicts over either of the two poles of homosexual libido—the wish to take over the mother's creative power as well as the father's fertile penis—may create serious inhibition or even total sterility in the capacity to put forth symbolic children in the form of intellectual and artistic creations. In the same vein, events that threaten to overthrow the delicate balance of bisexual fantasies in the unconscious mind may also precipitate inhibition of intellectual, scientific, and artistic capacities. From these notions it follows that any traumatic disturbance in somatic functioning, or any event that affects the sense of bodily integrity, can have a potentially profound influence on creative productivity.

A final analytic fragment highlights the role of bisexual wishes and the intimate link between the

pregenital psychosexual body and creative expression, particularly when punishment for unconscious fantasies, impregnated with sexual and generative content, is projected onto the public.

A writer whom I shall call Benedicte originally sought help because her writing was completely blocked. As our work proceeded Benedicte uncovered two hitherto unconscious scenarios: that she must not create because her mother would take over or destroy anything she produced and the slow realization that her father (who had died when she was less than a year and a half old) had been the mainstay of her creativity but was felt to be forbidden as a figure of love. As she came to accept both her masculine and feminine identifications and the need to ensure for herself both parental functions, she began to write again. The first novel she produced (during our third year of analytic work) was chosen for a national television show devoted to promoting new young writers. When asked by someone on the panel how she explained the esoteric nature of her novel she replied: "It's because it's a story written by a child."

Three years later when her writing block seemed to have vanished entirely, Benedicte had to undergo an ovariectomy. Following this surgical operation she found herself, once again, unable to write, and feeling mutilated and as desperate as she had been six years earlier. A short extract from our analytic work a month after the operation illustrates the way in which the act of creation may be experienced as a dangerous transgression in that one has "stolen" the parents' generative powers. Benedicte said, "No one must know about my operation. It's another hideous secret like my father's death." Her mother had hidden the fact that the father was dead, telling the little girl, whenever she asked for her father, that he was "in the hospital." Benedicte discovered the truth by accident when she was five years old.

She goes on to make a link between her surgery and her father's operation for rectal cancer. A childlike part of her holds her mother responsible for his death, and through this bodily and deathlike link, she comes to reveal an unconscious fantasy that her mother is also responsible for her recent ovariectomy. In her associations it becomes clear that this aspect of the internalized mother is now fantasized as having attacked her sexuality and destroyed her capacity to bear children.

Benedicte is equally concerned in this session about two novels to which she cannot "give birth" at the present time. The title of one of them, "Which Crime for Which Criminal?" has led me to a number of

free-floating hypotheses with regard to the nature of Benedicte's "crime." My first query was whether Benedicte, in typically childlike and megalomaniac fashion, unconsciously believed that she was responsible for having destroyed the parents' possibility of ever making another baby. This seemed a valid hypothesis in view of the fact that she was an only child and that her father had died when she was eighteen months old. As a result it may well be the small "criminal" Benedicte who believed that she no longer has the right to produce either books or babies.

After a long pause Benedicte recalls to mind a former lover, Adam, with whom she had once imagined she might have a baby. She continues: "They showed me the X-rays of my two ovaries. I have a fantasy that in one there was Adam's son and in the other his daughter. They had to be taken away from me of course!" I asked if these were the twin dolls that Benedicte had been given for her fifth birthday. One had been dressed as a boy and the other as a girl, and she played exclusively with the boy. One day her mother declared the dolls had to go to "the hospital," and when they came back, both were both girls. Such memories contributed to Benedicte's internal image of her mother as castrating and dangerous. "Yes! The twin dolls!" Benedicte said. "You know, she never wanted a daughter. All she ever wanted was a girl *doll!*"

Whatever her mother's pathology may have been, there is certainly an element of projection throughout the session, in that it is the *girl* who tends to imagine getting inside her mother's body and taking away all her feminine treasures: the babies, the father, and his penis. This common fantasy is now transformed in Benedicte's mind into the avenging mother who has destroyed Benedicte's ovaries so that she may not bear Adam's babies. When I point this out she says, "Yes, I can see that—but there's another problem, too. I'm afraid that if I put forth all my daydreams and book-children there'll be nothing left. I'll be completely emptied out."

Here is a further elaboration of the identical fantasy: that her creativity' has been destroyed by the internalized mother-image, but with this difference—the metaphor now suggests a primitive fantasy of fecal loss. Benedicte has often recalled with irritation her mother's endless concern over bowel-functioning, which resulted in Benedicte's constantly receiving enemas. Her fantasy that there will be "nothing left" if she allows all her stories to come out suggests that it is no longer a question of her right to sexual and childbearing fulfillments but a *regressive* version of these, a fantasy of being emptied fecally

by the anxious mother of childhood. She once again fears the loss of all her precious contents. In her reprojection of this unconscious fantasy, it is now the public that will empty her of her inner treasures.

The many dimensions that the anonymous public may represent for a writer are apparent. If Benedicte's books are unconsciously equated with children or feces, it is not surprising to discover that her public is felt to incorporate the most negative aspects of her representation of her mother—the one who will destroy all her inner contents.

Benedicte continues: "If I've started this last book the way I started my life, then of course I don't want my construction to stand. It has to fall down. *I'm not supposed to create!* Like the way I had to lose my ovaries. When it comes to giving birth then I have to abort. Am I being my own mother when she destroyed the first piece of writing I ever did? Must I destroy to fulfill my destiny?" Benedicte's associations indicate that her inability to create anything at the present moment is again due to her projection of destructive impulses onto the internal mother. She then says, "It's true that I'm holding back most of my 'contents.' I needed my father to protect me from her. And I know now that my writing springs from his presence in me. But my mother tried to get everything out of me as though all I had, all I was, belonged to her, not to me. So I'd die rather than give birth, or produce anything—for her!" After a long pause, she adds: "I torture myself with the idea that this present novel, the constipated one, won't be up to everybody's expectations. And I can't stand another rejection slip." We catch a final glimpse of the immense importance of public recognition as a factor in convincing creative people that they are *absolved* for their fantasized transgressions and pregenital erotism.

## CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

In the four situations outlined in this chapter—the struggle with the medium of expression; the struggle with projections upon the public; the force of pregenital drives; and the importance of psychic bisexuality—we are actually dealing with four versions of the primal scene, any or all of which may be a source of fertility, or of sterility'. In addition to their libidinal attraction and the violent affect associated with each situation, the scenes are also experienced as forbidden or fraught with danger, either for the individual or for an anonymous other. There is probably no creative activity that is not unconsciously experienced as an act of transgression: one has dared to play alone through one's chosen medium of

expression in order to fulfill secret libidinal, aggressive, and narcissistic aims; one has dared to display the resulting product to the outer world; one has dared to exploit pregenital sexuality with all its attendant ambivalence; and, finally, one has dared to steal the parents' generative organs and powers in order to make one's own creative offspring.

We can therefore appreciate that elements of humiliation, anger, and rage are of vital importance to creative production—as vital as are the elements of love and passion. It is understandable also that creative individuals are constantly subject to sudden disturbance or breakdown in their productivity when certain traumatic memories and primitive emotions from the past threaten to resurface and expose them to the "vengeance" of the external world. To conclude, the very traumas most closely associated with the psychosexual organization of the body-representation, as reflected by the significant objects of the past, are themselves at the origin not only of neurotic symptoms and inhibitions but of creativity itself.

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