CHAOS AND CONTROL

A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Unfolding Creative Minds

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CHAPTER ONE

Chaos and control in the creative process

A book on creativity should pay special tribute to the life force that lies at the root of any creative act. Thus the reader may be surprised that this first chapter begins with the seminal role of destructiveness in creativity, a recurring theme in the various chapters of this book.

The tumult and chaos of one of Beethoven's surviving sketches plunges us into an empathic turmoil. Trying to sort through the messy surface, erasures and frantically crossed out notes one cannot avoid feeling the composer's anguish and frustration as he struggled in his search, not knowing yet what he was looking for. This is one of Beethoven's surviving sketches from the finale of his only opera *Fidelio* (Figure 1.1), for which he wrote four overtures, before settling on the last one. These sketches, most beautiful on their own, constitute the basis for an understanding of his creative process and its ongoing destructiveness, an understanding that can be extended beyond Beethoven to represent the basis of the creative process in most fields.

At a certain stage during creative work destruction becomes as necessary as the ensuing reconstruction and control of its elements. From my photographic documentation of abstract paintings in progress, I have often been struck by the alternation of chaos and control.

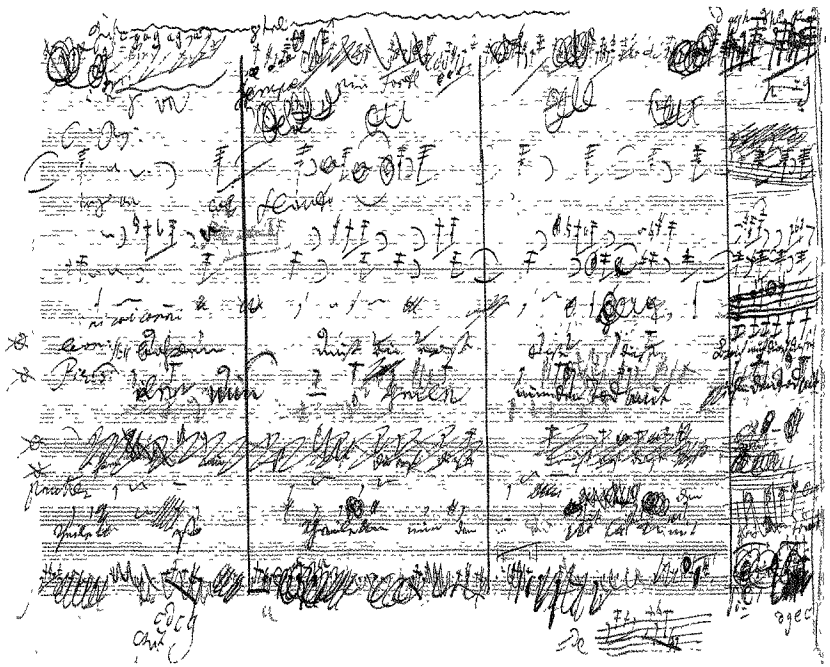

Figure 1.1. Beethoven's musical sketch for the sixth and three following measures before the trumpet signal in his *Fidelio* Opera, second act of the vocal quartet No. 15 *Er sterbe*, 1805. Photo credit: bpk Bildagentur/ Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Germany/Art Resource, NY.

The destruction of the painting structure represented by a chaotic image is typically followed by an organised image indicating that its elements are now under control. The destruction the artist engages in is a response to something not working out in the work when things seem to go awry. Such destruction restores the dialogue with the work in progress whereby the artist regains control. This sense of control arises once the artist is satisfied with the changes made and the dialogue with the work is restored.

Composer Lucky Choi says, "Destruction of my 'child' does not always come easy. There is often no alternative when I instinctively know when I have reached a dead end or I have gone down the wrong path. I somehow sense that I have lost communications with the work's voice. What doesn't work for this work may be saved and modified for another piece some day." In a similar vein, gifted composer Jane

Brockman writes, "I am struck by the efficiency of Nature's cycles. This is true of composing also. Nothing is wasted. Vast quantities of musical detritus must be jettisoned to nourish the life of a new work."

An exception can be made of Maurice Ravel's *La Valse*, originally conceived as a ballet. Several times throughout the piece he engages in the destruction and reconstruction of its main theme. The audience's pleasure is in their participation in Ravel's cycles of creation and destruction with the waltz ending in a total collapse, but still under the composer's control. As Jane Brockman suggests, "Perhaps we so enjoy it because we have all witnessed the creative cycle in nature where new life arises and is nurtured by the decomposition and destruction of old life".

Destruction of work in progress may have different sources. Sometimes the artist is unhappy about a painting in progress and, in anger or hate towards what is in it, ruthlessly destroys parts of it or the whole painting. Much anguish is stirred up when destroying a painting in what may have represented hours of loving involvement with it. After such destruction, a leap of faith moves the artist to engage in a renewed effort to create something of value again. At other times, out of an ongoing dialogue with work in progress, artists believe they are merely "responding" to the painting that seems to be asking them to do something different. There are many feelings involved in these chaotic situations, and I write about my own attempts to bring them under control in Chapter Thirteen, "Love and hate in the creative process," Chapter Fourteen, "Destructiveness and reparation: A retrospective," and Chapter Fifteen, "From mistake to mistake: The creative process in four large paintings".

The role of destruction in creativity was introduced to psychoanalysis in 1912 by Viennese psychoanalyst Sabina Spielrein, an early participant of the psychoanalytic movement, whose visionary contribution has long been forgotten. Her theoretical paper entitled "Destructiveness as the cause of coming into being" not only discusses Jung, Freud, and the ideas of other early psychoanalysts, but also Nietzsche, Wagner, as well as Christian, Jewish and Asian mythology. She was invited to become part of Freud's Vienna group of disciples after presenting this paper at one of their Wednesday meetings. According to Spielrein, we all have the desire to maintain our present condition, as well as the desire for transformation. The artist enjoys his "sublimated product" when he creates the "typical" instead of the "individual". She concludes her paper claiming that "the purely personal can never be understood by others" (p. 164).

While experimenting with free drawings, British analyst and artist Marion Milner (discussed further in Chapter Ten) found that in the drawings that were satisfying to her "there had been this experiencing of a dialogue relationship between thought and the bit of the external world represented by the marks made on the paper" (1950, pp. 115–116). According to Milner, a dialogue between the artist and the work is essential to creativity. If the artist experiences the painting as a mere extension of herself, such dialogue with the work is not possible. We could then call the artistic process "narcissistic", because the work is done "to" the painting, and not "with" the painting. If, instead, the painting becomes "the other"—having desires and demands of its own—there can be a transcendence of the preoccupation with the self. We can then engage in a true creative act, experiencing ourselves at the service of the work. It is at this point that the communication between the artist and the work begins—the artwork now has a life of its own and the creator can interact with it. This is also the case with writers who enter into a dialogue with their characters, but at times even experience their characters as taking over their creation.

The painting having a life of its own can involve not only the artist, but also the model. Writer James Lord (1965) posed eighteen times for a portrait made by his friend Alberto Giacometti and wrote a portrait of the artist at work:

> An exceptional intimacy developed in the almost supernatural atmosphere of give and take that is inherent in the acts of posing and painting. The reciprocity at times seems almost unbearable. There is an identification between the model and the artist via the painting that gradually seems to become an independent, autonomous entity served by them both, each in his own way and oddly enough, equally. (Lord, 1965, p. 23)

James Lord recounts that, while sitting for Giacometti's portrait, he would ask him to take a break for lunch. Giacometti would refuse—he didn't want to stop at a time when the portrait was not going well. Two hours later, a quite hungry James Lord would ask again to take a break and have something to eat, but Giacometti would again refuse, claiming that he shouldn't stop now that the painting was going well!

Regarding writing, Joan Rivière, an early contributor to psychoanalysis, described how Freud exhorted her to write about a psychoanalytic idea that had occurred to her and he said:

"Write it, write it, put it down in black and white ... Get it out, produce it, make something of it—outside you, that is; give it an existence independently of you" (Rivière, 1958, p. 146). This is not unlike what happens in painting. There is a need to put on the painting all we have, to see it, to discover it, to find out what it is, to do something with it, to give it life. Much of what is put on the canvas at these times is voluntary, but some elements are experienced as accidental and reacted to as "messy" or "bad" (Ehrenzweig, 1967; Safán-Gerard, 1982). These are generally projections of split-off parts of the self that find their way into the work. Hopefully, in the course of creative work, these bad and messy accidents can become understood, appreciated, and integrated into the work (this is further elaborated in Chapter Three, "The role of the accident" and Chapter Fifteen, "From mistake to mistake").

During the act of destruction of aspects of the work, the artist is concerned that there might not be anything worthwhile left after the attack. In his account, writer James Lord was dismayed at Giacometti's continual destruction of the work in search of some elusive quality. He had to learn to trust Giacometti's judgement that such destruction was necessary (Lord, 1965). Analyst Hanna Segal quoted the painter Elstir, in Marcel Proust, who said, "it is only by renouncing that one can recreate what one loves" (Segal, 1981, p. 190). Like Beethoven and Giacometti, the artist has the courage to destroy because he trusts that he can ultimately make it right, and that the work will survive. At these moments, all the artist has is the courage to destroy in hopes that the creation survives. The sense of otherness of what is created goes together with our realisation that it will survive our destructive attacks (Winnicott, 1971). The move from chaos to control that underlies the creation of art is not limited to the artistic form, be it music, painting, or other. It is also intrinsic to psychoanalysis. Chaos and control comprise the essence of creativity in both.

The artist needs to work through the elicited chaos in the work so that he can eventually achieve a measure of control. This is the aim of artistic creation. Likewise, the psychoanalyst has to respond to, sort out, and offer some understanding about the chaotic memories and feelings the patient may be experiencing. While the focus is on the patient, the

creativity of the analyst is at stake because she has to respond to the content of the session and the feelings and expectations of the patient. While noticing her own feelings in response to the session in progress, she offers the patient an interpretation with care and concern. Such is the outcome of the creative work of the analyst. Art and psychoanalysis: two paths to creativity through destruction that engage the richness and wisdom of one's inner life.

CHAPTER TWO

Talent and creativity

Quite often in my career as a psychoanalyst and visual artist, I had felt alone in the pursuit of understanding the creative process, its dysfunctions, and in finding ways to help creative patients in their quests for internal freedom. I had heard about Dr Jerome Oremland's work on creativity and was honoured to be the discussant on his talk entitled "Talent and creativity" at the Los Angeles Institute of Psychoanalytic Studies (LAISPS) on March 29, 1981. Finally, I was in good company, enjoying his lecture in spite of his classical orientation. My psychoanalytic training had not yet begun, but I was already gravitating towards the progressive ideas of Melanie Klein and Wilfred Bion.

In my discussion, I was somewhat critical of the way Dr Oremland dealt with a couple of cases. To my surprise, in his response, he agreed with my criticism, stating that he had seen these patients over twenty years earlier and that he would not deal with them the same way now. He harboured no resentment about this and he later invited me to lecture on creativity in San Francisco, which led to a consolidation of our friendship. Having lost contact for several years, I had the pleasure of visiting Jerome in Sausalito, California in 2014. After a delightful lunch by the water, he invited me to his home to see again his impressive

collection of Renaissance and Contemporary art. In our conversation, I mentioned the present book project, for which I was compiling my writings on creativity. He expressed great interest and was full of encouragement noting that, finally, the author of such a book would be an analyst *and* an artist.

Sadly, Dr Oremland died on February 19, 2016, so I was unable to gain his insight and commentary. With immense gratitude for his encouragement, support, and friendship, as well as his contribution to our understanding of creativity, I dedicate this chapter to his memory.

Prototypical studies on creativity since Freud have been based on the content of the artwork, rather than the process of making it, which has given these studies a psychopathological flavour. This was later modified by Mary Gedo, viewing "art as autobiography" (1980), by John Gedo, recognising "creativity as an alternative to loving" (1983), and by Jerome Oremland describing "creativity as meta-autobiography" (2014). Their contributions to the understanding of the creative process are unparalleled.

I have recently reread John Gedo's *Portraits of the Artist: Psychoanalysis of Creativity and its Vicissitudes* (1983). According to his own experience, the key to the psychology of men of genius is the underestimation that typifies their formative years. This leads to their "demonic efforts to create and to their fragile sense of worth" (p. 99). Concerning women artists, his impression was that "in our society, parents tend to be less tolerant of the eccentricities of their gifted daughters than of their gifted sons" (p. 99). I believe that this was true in my case. My mother revealed to me her embarrassment when I, at age three or four, would read out loud the advertisements posted in buses we were riding. She was afraid, she told me, that other passengers would think that her daughter was a freak. Later, in my adolescence, she was very critical of my hours of listening to contemporary music and told doctors that she was convinced that the dissonant music was the source of my chronic migraines.

Dr Gedo's chapter five is particularly interesting; he describes in detail the work with a male homosexual patient who believed he had made a grave error in giving up his musical ambitions. Dr Gedo felt free from the constraints of being an analyst and suggested to the patient that it might not be too late. He writes, "Consequently, at an appropriate moment, I told him that he would forever be tortured by these doubts and regrets unless he obtained a reliable estimate, even at this late date, of the actual extent of his musical talent". Challenged by this idea, the patient eventually resumed piano practice and submitted himself to a

series of auditions before judges of progressively greater stature. Their verdicts were entirely consistent: the patient possessed "musicality" of the highest order, but his piano technique was too deficient to be remedied without years of concentrated effort. In other words, the patient was essentially correct in judging that he had missed his "true vocation" (p. 76). I was personally touched by this story, as I still regret not pursuing music as my primary occupation (more on this in Chapter Nine).

Dr Gedo ends his account of the treatment of this patient, "Although the analysis had proceeded reasonably well to his point, the patient had overcome neither his dissatisfaction with his wife nor his occasional homosexual activities—the latter becoming increasingly concentrated during periods when our work was for some reason temporarily interrupted. We were therefore completely unprepared for one of the consequences of his new routine of several hours of piano practice: never again did he feel the need for sexual relations with men!" (p. 76).

Biases of the analyst

Jerome Oremland reminds us that Greenacre (1957), Erikson (1959), Kris (1952) and others have concluded that creative people possess a special kind of mental functioning that is not necessarily neurotic and/or narcissistic. This shift in emphasis is not typically reflected in the work of clinicians. Today, artists are still perceived as "difficult", narcissistic patients who elicit strong countertransference reactions in the analyst.

First, as Dr Oremland suggests, the creative patient is usually not involved with the analyst in the intense way other patients are involved. The analyst is only one person among many in a patient's life, and certainly less important to the patient than his own artistic work. This is often difficult for the analyst to handle. The patient will tend to be perceived as distant and self-preoccupied, and the analyst might interpret accordingly.

Also, the analyst may envy the patient's creativity as many analysts, at some point in their careers, experience a strong desire to produce something out of themselves, rather than always being in the helping role. My colleagues reveal that they often experience a sense of being drained, depleted of energy, with a strong need to "nourish" their own lives. If the analyst is doing creative work, he is less likely to resent the creativity of his patients. As is always the case, envy is often not perceived internally as such unless one is on the couch being analysed. This envy may be translated into a dislike for the patient, with

accompanying justification. We know that analysis is most successful when the patient's envy of the analyst is recognised and interpreted. This also applies to the analyst's envy of the patient.

Another problem in therapy occurs when the analyst's lack of understanding of the patient's work results in countertransference reactions. If the analyst feels unable to aesthetically respond to the patient's work—and the patient wants to share it—she might not know if her own lack of response is due to sheer ignorance or her envy of the patient's creativity. It is indeed rare to find an analyst who is comfortable with her own ignorance in art matters. Recently, an analyst friend remarked to me, "This patient of mine has had very good reviews so the work must be good, but I don't understand it at all. All I can do well is analyse. If the patient provides me with his associations, I can work with them." On the other hand, another analyst friend, himself a respected psychoanalytic writer, would not allow a patient to bring into a session a piece of sculpture for which she had won an award. As per an analytic formula, he saw her request as "acting out", limiting himself to question and interpret her need to bring in the work. This created a sustained crisis between the two, as the patient felt betrayed. The analyst's denial of the patient's need to bring the work in may have stemmed, at least in part, from his avoiding a situation in which his lack of understanding would become evident to him and the patient. His omnipotence would have been challenged and *he* might have felt narcissistically injured. The analyst's fear of reacting to the patient's work is not mere fantasy: creative patients *are* often disappointed to find out how little their analyst knows about that which is so vital to them.

At one time, I believed that an artist's fear that his creative abilities would be in danger once he started analysis was due to his own lack of understanding of the creative process. Any tampering with the unconscious could stop its mysterious development. By talking with analysts who work with creative people, and as an artist myself, I realise now that a "prejudiced" analyst could indeed cause distress or harm.

Creativity and talent

In his paper, Dr Oremland distinguishes between creativity and talent: creativity having to do with originality and talent being a highly developed skill. Pure unadulterated creativity would be at one end of the spectrum and exceptional skill at the other. This distinction enables him

to discriminate between truly creative acts and what he calls "compromised creativity", which involves the embellishment of someone else's product, or highly skilled derivative work. I am troubled by this distinction because of its implications for analysis. How many analysts have the depth of artistic knowledge to characterise a patient's work? Is the analyst in the position to decide which type of activity characterises the patient's work at any given time?

In the world of music one would be hard put to find a young composer who did not adopt the style of an older master. For example, J. S. Bach imitated the work of Buxtehude. Young Mozart emulated the work of many composers, especially Haydn. Young Beethoven was influenced by the work of Mozart and Haydn. Schubert and Schumann emulated the work of Beethoven. Brahms emulated the work of Schuman. Chopin emulated the work of John Field. Mahler, Richard Strauss and Arnold Schoenberg emulated the work of Wagner. Perhaps these composers were able to reach mastery precisely because they began by imitating great masters who came before them.

Every creative person has periods of untethered creativity and other periods of difficulty that lead to compromised, derivative work. However, we may find out years later that even those moments of cutting loose and going to the edge were influenced by cultural forces operating from within. One wonders then, is there anything truly original?

The only answer we can give is "yes". The imponderables—the way the colour is applied, the line work, the empty spaces, the shading, and the proportions—these elements are unique to the artist. However, we are immersed in the cultural pool we live in. We know that every discovery in art, as in science, is built on earlier discoveries and turns out to be a synthesis of elements that already exist. We are all trapped by the myth that there is true creativity that comes from nowhere. Recognised artists often hide the sources of their inspiration, since, if they were to reveal them, their work would be seen as derivative—the greatest sin of all!

The confusion in psychoanalysis regarding the origins and psychodynamics of creativity stems from the fact that most psychoanalytic studies of creativity are of artistic content rather than of the artist's process. Mary Gedo's (1980) view of art as biography supports this idea. Other pioneers in the study of the creative process are Gilbert Rose's (1980) psychoanalytic dissections of the aesthetic experience, John Gedo's (1983) view of creativity as an alternative to loving, and

Dr Oremland's ideas regarding art as a form of object relatedness (Oremland, 1981, 1984, 1997).

We need to free ourselves from regarding interpersonal relatedness as the highest order of functioning. Impersonal and personal object relationships are more enmeshed with each other than portrayed in traditional psychoanalytic theory. Some years ago, while working with artists in a group, I was struck by their ability to apply what they were learning from their own creative process to the world of close relationships.

There is a constant pull we all feel towards the familiar, those things or people that are known. The "new" creates discomfort and anxiety. In any given piece of work we experience this oscillation between the new, or what Dr Oremland calls true creativity, and the familiar, akin to what he calls embellishment. Some years ago, after listening to Schoenberg, Stockhausen, and Alban Berg in a class on contemporary music, our lecturer would play a bit of Mozart at the end. He jokingly called this "detoxification time" as if the "new" had become toxic or too anxiety-producing and we needed to be grounded by the familiar before leaving class.

Working on a painting, I move very clearly back and forth on this continuum of the new and the familiar. Sometimes when I'm not sure where I'm going, I will focus on a small segment, getting lost in it, embellishing it, detailing it as though it had nothing to do with the rest. At a certain point, my need for the familiar seems satisfied and I can look at the whole again to see what the "worked" part does to the rest of the painting. Sometimes my small segment doesn't fit at all and I might end up having to destroy it—two hours of work! But thinking that way could get me into trouble. My time is not important, the painting is! And the two hours of work were necessary to allow me to get back to the "new" with my anxiety level considerably reduced.

Another example: I used to work with watercolours and although they dry faster than oils and acrylics, they did not dry fast enough for my impatience. Unfinished pieces with problems I could not resolve were kept in a pile in my studio. Sometime later I went through the pile and noticed a little painting that seemed too familiar to me, even boring. I had worked it like a tapestry so there was detail all over. At the time, I was also working on large-size paper or canvas with bold, wide, sweeping brushstrokes, wet on wet. This little unfinished painting felt tied, finicky, almost like a prison, and I was tempted to throw it away, but in my quest to challenge myself to work things out in spite of the difficulties, I didn't. I very seldom throw away anything. I could not change this particular painting. It demanded detailed work and it had to be finished in the spirit with which it had begun. One day, I picked it up and, almost with gratitude, finished it just the way I had to. I am sure that my change from boredom and annoyance to liking and excitement had to do with the fact that the new work I was doing at that time was becoming toxic in the sense of Schoenberg or Berg—too new, too ungrounded. Perhaps then going back to this familiar painting represented a relief.

These personal examples have their counterpart in the research on architects, writers, and painters by Barron, McKinnon and others at UC Berkeley in the 1960s. Their research showed that tolerance for ambiguity is a feature that characterised creative people in all fields. If ambiguity and the new produce anxiety in most people, the greater tolerance of these conditions by creative people may mean either that they tolerate anxiety better or perhaps they have come to accept and deal with it in ways other than making negative inferences about the work or themselves. The anxious, less creative person may conclude that there is something wrong with himself, or that he is not good at the task at hand, whereas the artist will reduce anxiety by seeking the familiar without negative inferences. Experimental research on familiarity and liking shows that familiar visual figures have an anxiety reducing potential. Under a condition of high anxiety, subjects relate more to familiar stimuli rather than to that which is unfamiliar.

Clinical material

Any interpretation that attacks the creative act, however derivative the art might be, will have a negative effect on all creative activity. If it is hard for the analyst to discriminate between derivative and authentic creativity, it is even harder for the patient, who will start questioning *all* of his motives. Dr Oremland wonders, "It is the link to the unique rather than the usual that makes creativity suspect; Is it originality or is it insanity? This doubt may be shared by artists as they struggle with the sense of aloneness of true exploration" (Oremland, 1984, p. 254).

Dr Oremland's main point through the discussion of his cases is that talent may defend against creativity. He also talks about the crucial importance of how these abilities are first greeted. A painter friend of mine told me recently that he was neglected as a young boy. Unlike

many potential artists who are discouraged by parents or teachers, no one ever bothered to tell him he could not paint, so he did! In this case the patient didn't have to fight or overcome the opinions or judgements of others.

Dr Oremland had a musician patient who complained that his head was "filled with the tunes of others," which he saw as a case of compromised creativity. Even though we artists experience the muse and the ideas as coming from somewhere else, they are in part the product of what we have taken in, and that is no minor achievement. However, being exposed to a lot of music does not necessarily make a musician, just as being in contact with nature does not inspire many people to paint. Creative people have a capacity to *use* the object: take it in, digest it, and incorporate it. A major accomplishment for that musician was, in fact, filling himself with the tunes of others. To interpret that as compromised creativity might have had a paralysing effect.

In the case of the poet, another patient of Dr Oremland's, it was the full mourning for a mother with whom there was an intense hostile bond that allowed her to start writing again. Like the musician, she was dealing with the experience of need/anger/destructiveness towards the primary object. In both instances, spontaneous creative action emerged only out of the full experience. I am impressed anew each time at the paralysing effect of an emotion not fully experienced. The paradox is that the more the patient wants to create and move out of this state, the less he can. The more he gives in to what *is*—the figure—the more movement. This moment "happens" spontaneously from nowhere, like the musician's first original tunes coming to him or the unselfconscious writing of the poet. For music, poetry, and ideas to emerge, one has to leave the door open. This indicates that perceptual openness works like long-term memory—you ask yourself a question to be answered later. The answer comes very much like the tunes to the musician or the poetry to the poet.

Some people have the capacity to take in, but they require what they take in to stay there, locked in, filling up emptiness. The creative person takes it in, but lets it out in an unselfconscious way. Gifted psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott (1971) wrote about a "transitional space" where this can happen: the space that is neither inside nor outside us. Staying in that space longer and more fully constitutes the aim of every creative person. It is a selfless state, and yet in it one has the best possible sense of oneself. The practice of psychotherapy or analysis can have

that quality, especially when one works with creative people who are not fearful of losing their boundaries in the process. The analyst can help the patient remain in this transitional space by encouraging him or her to slow down their thinking.

I was impressed with the beautiful account of the few interactions Dr Oremland had with a woman painter. He told her that he thought her symptoms (puckered mouth and indistinct speech) represented a fear of speaking for herself. As in the other two cases, I see the fear of speaking for herself as also having to do with the awareness of her own infantile needs, anger, and destructiveness. This case is a marvellous example of psychoanalytic psychotherapy working most parsimoniously. An apparently superficial interpretation revealed the acute sensitivity of Dr Oremland to his patient's situation. Also, he made full use of his power as an authority figure to permit her to separate from the old man in himself and have her own life. When the patient said later, "I am very grateful to you. I have thought of calling you several times but there really was no reason to," she was actually saying that there was no reason to connect and live through someone else.

In her book, *On Not Being Able to Paint*, Marion Milner points out that reversals are the earmark of the creative process. She is referring to perceptual experiments on figure-ground reversals whereby the subject focuses on an image that contains another image underneath it. The second image only becomes apparent when the subject relaxes his attention on the first one. I have used actual instances of perceptual figure-ground reversals in my teaching about the creative process to illustrate the kind of full immersion in the figure that is required in order for a reversal to take place. Frustrated students have told me that, as they decide to give up the task, the flip occurs and they realise that there is no volition involved—just a state of relaxed attention.

Dr Oremland also discussed a thirteen-year-old musician whose real dedication to the cello he questioned, since the boy longed to be with friends and to be normal. The boy's concern with the cello was in conflict with his need for a normal childhood with friends. Dr Oremland claims that it was easy for him to recognise that the cello represented hanging on to his mother, control of the big instrument of his father, but most of all a male companion he could control rather than fear. The patient appeared to have accepted his analyst's interpretation as reality. He later became a teacher and helped young students. His obvious sensitivity to young adolescents, especially to those not accepted by

eers, makes me think that he had also identified with the analyst, who ad helped him in a similarly sensitive way. The boy's primary interest as to teach and help children, not necessarily in music. Could it be that e came to regard the cello and the music the way Dr Oremland interreted it during the analysis? What would have happened if, instead pointing out to his neurotic over-determined interest in the cello, the alyst had validated the conflicts between playing the cello and his ed to be with peers? What if the analyst never questioned his interest the cello and concentrated solely on what the patient was bringing to the therapy situation? Perhaps the patient would have decided to come a teacher anyway, but then we would know that it was *his* decion, not the analyst's.

I have had artist patients who have told me how their analysts actively scouraged them from pursuing their craft, suggesting that their ambins were "unrealistic". Most analysts are subtler than that, of course, t in many ways convey their suspiciousness of artistic involvement d point to loneliness and isolation as a necessary price. I strongly feel at if an interest is not genuine and backed by creative potential, it will op out of the patient's life as he becomes aware of his ongoing experices. There is no telling either for the patient or the analyst what's in background waiting to be revealed. The cellist, whom Dr Oremland garded as neither talented nor creative, may have identified with analyst and his values, and thus relegated other possibilities to the kground. The only reason that leads me to believe that Dr Oremland y have been right is that a true artist would have fought, sooner or er becoming one of those "difficult patients" who might even drop of therapy.

A songwriter patient of mine consulted me because of his conflict ween the relationship to his music and to his five-year-long relaship with a woman. He was not sure if his two-year long creative ck was due to the fact that he could not hold two relationships at the ne time. He also did not want to blame the woman for what might strictly his difficulty. This is not an unusual case. Artists are often n between an interpersonal relationship and the relationship to their rk in a way similar to a married person trying to sustain an affair. difference is that the artist does not know for sure which one is "spouse"—the solid one—and which one is the affair. They often plain about their inability to maintain both or to give the best of nselves to each. Dr Oremland believes that a person who cannot

accept ambivalence as part of a relationship cannot truly love, while a person who has trouble accepting change in the self or in the work at hand is unable to create. He points out that if we accurately understand the true structure of the complaint about an artist's difficulty with his or her art, therapy can also help with these. I agree that in the psychoanalytic literature there is precious little attention paid to work and to the understanding of dysfunctional work.

The therapy of the creative person

Psychotherapy and analysis make use of the transference—the patient's reactions to the analyst happening right there in the office. The hope is that understanding of the transference will help clarify the patient's distortions and misperceptions of significant others. This is always important. Perhaps Dr Oremland's (1997) most significant contribution is his view of the analyst as patron who shields, supports and most importantly never competes with the art. He concludes that, "the patron is the unsung hero in creativity" (p. 128).

I fully agree that the analyst has to identify with the artist's ambitions. We can characterise an ideal analyst as one who is able to tolerate ambiguity, a quality of the creative person. There are three factors that can greatly improve the patient's capacity to tolerate ambiguity and change. The analyst can model such tolerance by not allowing herself or the patient to prematurely jump to conclusions. In other words, the analyst can encourage the examination of *all* the aspects of a problem without necessarily reaching a conclusion. And the analyst can encourage the patient to become comfortable leaving the door open to new information or interpretation. For example, my songwriter patient wanted to understand certain feelings about me and his reactions to something I had said in the previous session. At the time, I noticed his discomfort with not reaching a clear understanding. I suggested that we leave it alone, like an unfinished song that will be picked up later. This was an experience he could relate to—he had known how to wait at times and it had served him well. It was a little messy, but it was all right to leave it open and unfinished.

In a session with another patient, a writer, he complained at some point that he was annoyed at not being able to follow what I was saying and asked me to repeat. I suggested that instead of trying to be a good listener, he should follow the distracting thought and we followed it

all the way, fantasies and all. It was certainly much more important for him to go into this self-discovery than to be on the receiving end of my wisdom. His problems with his writing were clearly related to his need to control the outcome, not allowing in the distracting material. He has observed that the less he has tried to control the outcome, the more interesting the material becomes—something he is learning right in the therapy hour. In these two cases, the problem has to do with excessive control, and the therapeutic process can be used to admit increasing doses of chaos into the patient's thinking. In other cases, the problem is not lack of free expression, but the inability to exercise judgement of what is produced. The patient goes from one thing to the other without understanding how they might connect. In this instance, once again, the therapist has to help the patient slow down the process to understand the implications of what he is saying.

Dr Oremland suggests that individuals with unusual abilities present a considerable diagnostic problem. Attempting to differentiate between true creativity and talent does not seem as useful to me as it is to determine whether the patient's thinking suffers from excessive control or a lack of discrimination and judgement. The analyst can see evidence of these dysfunctional cognitive styles in the way the patient thinks in the therapy hour. The patient can be coached into experimenting with different ways of dealing with her own material in the session. For me, this kind of intervention is as valuable as an interpretation. Patients learn that anxiety is a natural reaction to unresolved, messy chaos. And if they begin to allow themselves to stay in that chaos a little longer each time, they will have their eyes open to the conflicts that are going on. An interpretation, even if ripe, can be filed away as insight and leave the patient unprepared to face the next bit of chaos in her life or work. Instead of being the source of insight, I see the analyst as the reassuring presence of someone who intensely values what the patient is after, and who will help the patient think more freely and fully. The solutions will be applicable not only to life problems, but also artistic problems.

Dr Oremland raises some important issues, which can be translated to the analyst's work. For example, more analysts should be fearful of destroying the creativity in their patients. Wouldn't it be nice to know that analysts are aware of the power they have regarding their patients' creativity? Valuing and expressing creativity in their own lives will give analysts the ability to generously foster it in their patients.

CHAPTER THREE

The role of the accident in the creative act

When the artist gets deeply involved with the work in progress things inevitably happen that seem out of his control. At times, these "accidents" in the work are welcome and at other times they act back on the person as though they were projections of unwanted parts of the self that have come to haunt him. In other words, the accident may be perceived by the artist as an opportunity to take the work beyond convention or personal limitations or it may be perceived as a disruption that interrupts the work in progress. These different perceptions and reactions to the accident occur not only in art, but also in other life pursuits as well as in psychotherapy. Accidents can be experienced as challenges, opportunities for unforeseen change for the better, or as disruptions and interruptions—annoying events that block us from what we intended to do. The accident seems to require a temporary surrender of a sense of control and a relaxing of our sense of direction, which tends to induce anxiety.

I would like to examine more closely what happens between the person and the work in the face of an accident, but will first examine how artists in the past dealt with them. Has the generally positive attitude that most contemporary artists seem to have towards accidents always existed? Art historian H. W. Janson has surveyed the history