

CONDITIONS THAT DERAILED THE TRUE SELF DURING CREATIVE WORK

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Abstract

This paper examines the underlying psychodynamics of the phenomenon I have called self-derailing. Artists at work experience a special distress when they seem to be going through the motions without a real engagement with the work or themselves. They complain of a feeling of having lost it or of having gone "off the track". The views on creativity that D.W. Winnicott and Hanna Segal have proposed are discussed and compared as they apply to the understanding of two clinical cases.

In describing transitional phenomena and its repercussions Winnicott has elucidated an important phase of the creative process itself and the kind of blurred boundaries with the work in progress that is necessary for a flow of exchange with it that will allow the emergence of something new. Segal is concerned with the fate and maturity of the work itself and what it demands from the artist and his or her psychological state of development. She deals with the issue of maturity and authenticity of the finished work, an issue that concerns the artist throughout the process. In both clinical cases described here, unconscious omnipotent fantasies were used during work in progress as a defense against not knowing and against envy. As these fantasies took hold in these patients, a temporary self-derailment and the ensuing distress occurred. As a result of dream work one of these patients was able to abandon these fantasies and find her own voice. The other regained a sense of herself on her own by remembering earlier work in the consulting room.

When referring to ongoing work artists often complain that they have lost it, gone "off the track" and that what they are doing now is not getting them in touch with something experienced as their true self. This is similar to the experience patients or their analysts have in those "not so good" sessions. We all seem to have a capacity to recognize both intellectually and emotionally what is true about ourselves. By the nature of their work, creative people seem to search more actively for those moments of true contact with the work and with themselves.

This paper is built around the work with two patients, Karen and Judith, who have complained of this experience of derailment. I will be describing in some detail two of Karen's dreams and the analytic work done with them in relationship to her writing. I will then discuss a situation of a test taken by the other patient, Judith, where she experienced a derailment from what she knew but was able to regain her memory on her own.

Along with ^{Freud}Maslow (1954), May (1975), Rogers (1980) and other humanistic psychologists, Winnicott considers creativity as an integral part of a healthy personality. For him, people in contact with their true self are capable of creativity, or rather, what he calls creative living. Creativity is not measured by an artistic product but by the experience of life as meaningful and worth living. In turn, what makes life worth living is a capacity for true contact between self and other, between inside and outside where each affects the other. I believe that contact both with what is true about oneself and with external reality are not only necessary but indispensable at those times when creativity is at work.

In Playing and Reality (1971) Winnicott equates the true self with the capacity to play and to create. For him the creative impulse...is present as much in the moment to moment living of a backward child who is enjoying breathing as in the inspiration of an architect who suddenly knows what it is that he wishes to construct...(1971, p69)". He seems to feel that deviation from the true self occurs very early and that when a false self organization is developed, it is very difficult for the person to recapture his or her true self, and with it, the capacity for creativity and creative living. Lacan (1977) takes a similar view of development. On the other hand, art critics often raise the issue of authenticity, of who is and who is not a true artist. Some of them link the artist's true self to that of

true experience. For example, writing on American women artists, Eleanor Munro (1979) argues that "...the successful artist is one who, among other things, finds by lick, labor, instinct or whatever, a form and image to reflect in power the original sensory experiences that were received by the innocent mind. And by contrast, a failed or weak artist is ..one for whom, among other things, the way back is lost or confused, and the reflecting image a counterfeit one or mechanically imitative" (p.24)

We could now ask, Is the true self expressed in the work or is it found in the work? Winnicott expresses doubts about artists who create in order to find their true self in the work. This is no different, he feels, than people who try to find out about themselves from acquiring false knowledge from the views others have of them. But this is not a fair comparison. The work is, after all, the artist's creation and, in fact, artists have no choice but to face in the work disowned parts of themselves that have been projected into it. Many accidental happenings in the work are the result of such projections (Safan-Gerard, 1982). Winnicott seems to take an either-or position in which, only when an artist is working well is he or she his or her true self. I believe that rather than being an idyllic non-conflictual entity, the true self is often implicated in conflict or psychic pain. The true self manifests itself in the search, not only when the artist is working well, but when he or she struggles to regain contact with him or herself. Winnicott himself seems to contradict his ideal view of the true self and true creativity when, commenting on one of his interpretations to a poet, he suggests that "...she exists in the searching rather than in finding or being found (1971, p 63)."

According to Winnicott (1971), one of the aims of an analysis is to provide the environmental requirement for the emergence of the patient's true self, a requirement the patient lacked as an infant. The analyst creates a potential space where patients can allow themselves to experience a non-purposive state and..."a sort of ticking over of the unintegrated personality" (p. 55). This potential space or room for exploration is similar to the one that the artist creates while engaging the work. According to Winnicott, the true self is born out of this formless state and providing the room for this state in a therapy session is ultimately more therapeutic than an interpretation of the content of a patient's associations. His view of the analyst's function reminds us of Bion's notion of container-contained (1962) in which the analyst, like the

mother, receives the patient's projections without necessarily returning them transformed into an interpretation. The patient's formless experience Winnicott talks about has its counterpart in Bion's beta elements, experiences that cannot be thought about, be stored in memory or repressed. Winnicott values the patient's return to an experience of nonsense, undifferentiation and chaos, one that language cannot adequately convey, as the path to give birth or recapture one's true self. For him, "organized nonsense is already a defense, just as organized chaos is a denial of chaos (1971, p. 56)."

The value of Winnicott's ideas is in his having corrected a stereotypical view of a creator with a vision, a creator who knows, who merely applies or translates that vision into the work. His notion of transitional state beautifully depicts the simultaneous connection to one's internal world and to that happening out there in the work. The artist does not know what is going to happen and yet trusts that out of that contact between something internal and something in the work, that acting out of that formless state, something of value is to be had. At times the artist becomes a cooperative guide in attempting to control the accidental. A good illustration of this kind of exchange with the work is embodied in a remark made by Helen Frankenthaler, a New York based artist, about "Guiding Red", a thirty two foot canvas, her largest: "I was guiding the red and the red was guiding me (Munrow, 1979, p.218)", which conveys the sense of mutuality in the interactions with the work. But how are we to apply Winnicott's notion of a dependable environment to the understanding of self-derailment? Can the work in progress be undependable? I am certain that many times the work in front of us seems to betray us and feels undependable. But if this is the case, wouldn't this be the result of the artist projecting some aspect of the self onto the work? In the case of the artist it is hard to conceive of the page or the canvas as a dependable environment that is capable of a containing function, although in a "good enough" relationship with the work, the page, the canvas, can be experienced by the artist as a receiving "womb" (Ehrenzweig, 1953). Again, if this were the case, the work in progress would be once more the target of the artist's projections, albeit a benign one. The argument begins to get sticky and Winnicott fails to help us here. One of the problems with his view is that it implies that only those artists who had a "good enough" mother, one that allowed an illusion of omnipotence, will be able to

project this mother into the work and be able to enter into a pleasurable exchange with it. He does not examine the nature of the patient's anxieties about entering into the transitional space with the work, an issue Milner (1957) elaborates on, and which I will discuss later.

Given Winnicott's notions, how can we account for a temporary self-derailment during creative work? It would seem that such a departure would have to mean the adoption of or the return to a false self, one based on public acceptance and recognition, or one that is based on one's own ego ideal. If this is so, there has to be a trigger that causes this shift away from what is true about oneself. Let us explore a different view. Following the work of Melanie Klein, (1929, 1930), Hanna Segal (1957) has suggested that the true artist has to achieve a separation from the object, the work, and that a work of art is ultimately the result of mourning the loss of the object. In other words, that the artist has to reach the depressive position where the work is experienced as separate from the self. Her work on symbolization is born out of this notion. The capacity to symbolize arises out of the need to bridge the gap between the person and the object which is no longer experienced as fused with oneself.

Although it is true that the artist has to be able to allow the work a life of its own, it is not so clear that this always happens. Can Segal's view help us understand how artists lose contact with their true self during the work? Could we say that they are not their true self when in the paranoid-schizoid position, where aspects of themselves are projected into the work and they are therefore confused with it? Are they perhaps their true self only when mourning the loss of the object and have to come to perceive the work and themselves as separate? And do we get a better answer as to what is this true self? Segal's view does address the issue of the mature artist and the mature piece of art, one that contains and eventually integrate conflicts, as opposed to a piece that is merely a screen for the artist's projections. The latter work would tend to be self-indulgent and lack the depth characteristic of mature work. Even though Segal does not specifically address the issue that concerns us here, her ideas help explain some of the dynamics that contribute to self-derailment.

Approaches like Winnicott's, which emphasize fusion and interpenetration between the artist and the work and those like Segal's, which emphasize separation, seem to be slanting the portrayal of the artist at work in one direction or another, giving a one-sided approach that is not untrue but somewhat misleading. In her book Symbolization and Creativity, Susan Deri (1984), a Hungarian trained analyst who practiced in Los Angeles, adds an element to the process of symbol formation as described by Segal that brings it close to Winnicott's ideas. For Deri, it is the interpenetration of self and object that gives the person the feeling of being truly alive and this feeling is lost with separation. However, the emerging symbol reestablishes the connection between oneself and the object and restores the aliveness of the contact. The symbol is the link that keeps the flame from flickering or dying. Deri believes that artists are genetically endowed with far more than the usual capacity for symbol formation.

Out of my contact with many artists at work and out of my own explorations as I paint, I want to propose that the work in progress is experienced by the artist as an object with which he or she interacts, much as if it were another person that can respond back. In an earlier paper (1978) I examined certain blocks to creativity as communication problems between the artist and the work in progress. In a subsequent paper (1983 a), I compared the communication between the artist and the work to that of the analyst and patient, equating the patient with the canvas. At times the artist merges with the work in what feels like a mystic experience and at other times seems to be half-way between, neither totally in his or herself nor in the work, while still at other times he or she can serve the work as a completely separate object. These states of fusion with the work, the transitional state of contacting it out there and at the same time contacting the internal world, and the complete separation from it alternate throughout all phases of the work. An artist who has a good relationship to the work moves very easily from one state to the other, without overvaluing or judging these states. Of course the state of fusion with the work is where the ecstasy is, and most artists prefer this state of surrender to that of painful editing when they have to be detached from it, but they cannot control when these states occur. Allowing the work to have a life of its own is necessary in the later stages of its development because it is only then that the artist can connect the different parts of it, perceive it as a whole, and do the

necessary editing of what is not to be part of it, something many artists have trouble doing (Safán-Gerard, 1984). This "distancing" oneself from the work is also necessary for true aesthetic appreciation but, again, I believe distancing it is as important as the state of fusion or confusion with the work. As far as the artist at work is concerned, it would be nice to assume complete separation from the work at least once the piece is finished but at times artists continue to relate to their work in these different ways long after it is finished.

I would like to suggest now that no matter how much or how many neurotic or psychotic processes are deployed at the time, the true artist somehow "knows" that the truth is being avoided, which leads to a special kind of despair. However, this despair is what ultimately allows artists to stay in the struggle to find the truth, bring it forth, transform it and reach some form of new integration in the work and in the self. As to what this truth is, I believe that it is not anything like a template of one's past experience, or one's character structure, or a core of innate dispositions, although one would like to think that there is something like that, something solid aching for outward expression. Instead, what constitute the truth is something much more elusive and fleeting: needs, fears, sense of loss, our helplessness and dependency (Safán-Gerard, 1985). I believe that what we do to get away from these feelings and its painful manifestations is what derails the artist from his or her truth, and therefore, from their true self. This is true, of course, of everyone but the artist at work becomes more acutely aware of inauthenticity. After all, there is none to blame for his or her troubles; there is no escape from one's own creation. In a sense artists have fewer alternatives for escaping the pain of self-derailment; if they are aware of the loss of their own truth they have no choice but to strive to get back in touch with it. My main point here is that the experience of painful feelings of need and vulnerability as they happen is what keeps the artist connected to his or her internal world. Manic defenses and omnipotent fantasies that help us avoid these painful feelings will soon enough lead the artist astray. Let us turn now to the two cases.

Karen is a talented 30 year old actress who has recently started writing short stories. Her father is a writer of considerable prestige and she has been an avid reader since she was a little girl. Her husband is also a committed writer and is beginning to receive recognition, which at times

she resents. She enjoys her new identity as a writer where her intelligence is appreciated, something harder for her to find in auditions for movie roles. She thinks her father would like her to write and this creates much conflict in her because she would like to defy his authority by not writing and by continuing instead to work as an actress. Karen has been in analytic psychotherapy with me for three years and during this time we have examined her anxiety at auditions, at dealing with agents, and her procrastination with writing, all in the context of her conflicts with her parents, husband and with me in the transference. She often makes reference to my paintings, several of which hang in my consulting room, and is in awe at my capacity to remember events in her life and dreams she has forgotten. At a time when she was troubled by her husband's wish to have a baby, something she was not ready to consider she dreamt that she was at a party in a large, fancy house, where a famous actress was sitting with a baby and she, the actress, looked very beautiful. The actress's husband, sitting in a corner, was a pathetic man. He had undergone some plastic surgery in order to measure up to his wife but all the wires showed in his face and it looked like it would heal that way. Karen was sorry for him. He probably looked better before the surgery. She clearly identified with the husband who cannot live up to his wife's talent, beauty and generativity. The actress, who probably stands for me or her mother, had everything Karen wants. Karen is the husband who is trying to mold and improve himself but makes things worse. At the time Karen was writing a short story and complained that she was getting "off the track" with it. The more she worked on it, the worse it got and she could not bring back to it the good features it had had at the beginning.

I interpreted that she was clearly trying to perform some kind of plastic surgery on her story so that it would read like the husband's or the father's writing that she admired. She wanted so much to be there already, giving birth to a baby, a short story, that she did not appreciate the baby part of her just learning at her own pace from more experienced writers. She was in such pain with the envy of what they had, what I had, that she tried to imitate and steal from us, forcing something in an unnatural way with the result that the wires showed. To have less than what we had made her feel small and defective, as though we were all born with unequal endowments. At some infantile level of mind she was forgetting that we were older and had had to learn from somebody else, just as she was doing now. Her comment was that it was probably hard for the

husband in the dream, homely looking, to be married to someone so beautiful, successful, and to top it off, with a baby! She also laughed at her having turned the tables on her own husband so that in her dream it was he the one who was defective rather than the wife.

Six months later Karen complained again of her procrastinating with her writing. She had taken her husband's advice and the piece had become rather formal. Now she was stripping from it what did not belong to her but she was not sure whether the changes were better. She kept retyping it, over and over, because her husband had taken the computer to his office, something she resented. They hadn't bought one "for the house" yet. She then recounted the following dream: She is in a large room with several people. Women are allowed to wear moustaches and she looked at herself in the mirror pleasantly surprised at her nice moustache. Someone then said she would look so much better without it and Karen got very excited with the idea of showing her own face. She went to a mirror and started shaving it off, suddenly remembering that she was still shooting a movie! If she shaved the moustache off, she would be spoiling the continuity of the movie. She would have to leave one side on at least and then make sure she showed only that side of her face during the shooting. She tells me that her husband used to have a mustache and that her father has always had one. I suggest that her dream again shows the dilemma between stealing what is good in daddy and her husband or stripping herself from those possessions to discover her own voice. I stated, "You get excited at the thought of how you yourself look, but stop half-way just as you do with the article. Is what you take from your father, your husband or me in the sessions a "put on"? Why is that it hasn't become a part of yourself?" I remind her at this point how in previous sessions she had stated how much she hates to have to take from me, and how her adolescent anorexia was the result of hating the idea of needing anything from anyone. The anorexia, real or mental, may be the result of her wish to already have what she needs, and her determination not to take from anyone. However, I suggest that something very different seems to have happened and continues to happen outside of her awareness: when she recognizes that we have something she wants, she simply takes possession of us with what we have. I further interpreted, "...This is probably why in the dream you stop shaving the moustache. You seem to be afraid that in taking off the moustache someone's continuity will be spoiled, someone will be "shot". You are protecting our lives out of your love and concern

for us so it is hard to shave off the whole moustache to show your own face, to find your own voice. I think that this is why it is so hard to edit your article: you have to leave something of ours in it to protect us from your own wish to destroy us out of envy of what we have. Then you end up with two faces: your own and the one with the mustache. It is better to have your own "for the shooting" because it won't damage anyone. Can you afford to let go of the rest of the moustache? What would happen to us?"

One could analyze this dream simply as a penis envy dream, in that Karen may be expressing a fear that, as a woman, she doesn't have what it takes to create. Even though this may be true - in her despair with her acting or her writing she sometimes complains that she is "just a housewife" - I believe the dream expresses more broadly an issue of identity and how unconscious fantasies of possession of what is good - both in the father, the mother, and later on in admired others - interfere with creativity. Karen hates her own needs, her dependency on others to satisfy these needs. In order to create she has to believe she has it all; in the dream she gets very excited at showing her own face. She oscillates from this omnipotent state to the sense that she is "just a fake". And she is afraid of finding out who she is because it gets mixed up with her unconscious attacks on those she loves and admires. She has often expressed her deep appreciation for certain special qualities in her favorite writers. I believe it is important to point out that it is Karen's appreciation and recognition of the goodness in others or in their work that stops her from discovering her own voice. It is the wish to preserve this goodness against her own envious attacks that is now stopping her, not the attacks themselves.

Let us now turn to another example of derailing. Judith is a very talented woman in her thirties who, starting as a secretary, became, in a short time, an indispensable member of a new venture capital company. Most of the analytic work has had to do with Judith's conflicts with her immediate boss who is, according to her, brilliant. Even though she is highly respected by him and others in the company, she is in constant fear of being found out in her ignorance - she compares herself with others who have had more training and feels lacking. The wish to be an equal partner with her boss and with me has reawakened memories of her relationship with her very accomplished mother, who died when Judith was eighteen years old. As a child she was always amazed at her mother's knowledge of

foreign languages and her use of English. Judith developed an early affinity for science and math and a true dislike and inability to write which has plagued her for years. The fact is that her bosses and others have remarked on how good and clear her English really is but she procrastinates and tortures herself each time she has an assignment that involves writing.

Recently Judith has gone back to graduate school and has done extremely well, except on tests that involve essay writing. She complains in the sessions about having to write those essays long hand. "When I write at the computer, I can create complex sentences and I feel my capacities but when I am there with a pen in my hand I become a five year old, I can't think! And even my handwriting is stupid, like that of a child, I hate it!" The underlying dynamics of this writing problem has come up many times when she has talked about her husband's success and her envy of him. This envy shows up indirectly in her coldness toward him or in the lack of empathy for his situation at work, especially of his successes. He also writes reports very easily, with almost no editing, which doesn't make things better for Judith. This invidious comparison has come up also in relation to members of a therapy group of which she is a participant, and in relation to me.

By now, she still would rather write at the computer but long hand essay writing is no longer such a problem. However, she had to take an important test recently for which she was very well prepared and the problem reappeared. According to her, she could not deal as well with the third part of the test because she wasted time at the beginning trying to recover from her anxiety. As she began to write, she became concerned with style and form rather than with what she wanted to convey. She was clearly trying to be her mother again. She had tried to snap out of that state by asking herself, "What do I want to say? Fact, facts, facts! Forget about style!" As she tried to recapture in the session what had triggered her old fear of writing she remembered having been disturbed by the noise made by a student who was sitting to her right. He had begun to write almost immediately and the noise of the pencil on his paper was amplified in her mind. "How could he write so quickly?", she asked herself. "Didn't he need to think about what he would say for at least a couple of minutes? How could he know so much?" Judith could see that this admiration and her envy of his knowledge - just like with her mother - had encouraged a

fantasy of possession. Rather than showing what she knew about those three subjects, she became all knowing and, consistent with the omnipotent fantasy, had to work at having her writing "look" good, which shifted her away from the task. The understanding of how these omnipotent fantasies can affect what she does enabled her to relinquish her omnipotence. This allowed her to remember what she herself knew for the test.

Both Karen and Judith experienced distress at not being able to be true to themselves. While Karen seemed unable to find her own voice in her story, Judith could not articulate what she knew in the essay test. They both perceived their work as lacking or as inadequate. Karen thought of her story as stiff, stilted, formal, and untrue to her own feelings, whereas Judith thought her writing was stupid and childish. Some projection of unwanted parts of themselves were being put into the work, although this was more clearly the case with Judith, who was trying to disown her infantile, inadequate self (present in her writing, which she then hated). Their inability to think clearly or to apply what they themselves knew is evidence of their difficulty in separating properly from the work since this would involve taking back the projections made into it. Once the work contains the projection of what is unacceptable about oneself, the wish is to avoid it in order to retain an acceptable self-view, and to avoid the pain of conflicting wishes. The work then becomes persecutory in that it is a constant reminder of what is unwanted. This can explain the avoidance and procrastination Karen complained about, and Judith's reluctance to write long-hand. Facing what one has done in the work is tantamount to having to deal with these projections.

I suggested earlier that the temporary derailment from the true self during creative work has to have a trigger. Both Karen and Judith had such a trigger in the invidious comparison with an idealized other who was thought to have all the skills or to know everything. In Karen's case, it was her frequent comparison with her father's and husband's skills as experienced writers, while Judith's envy had been triggered by the student sitting next to her who, like her mother, seemed to know so much. The "cure" to the pain of envy became, in both cases, an omnipotent fantasy of taking possession of the other and their goodies. The illusion of knowing can protect us not only from feelings of need and inadequacy but from

other feelings such as depression and paranoia (Mason, 1983). As a result of this illusion, however, Karen found herself with a piece of writing that didn't reflect her, and Judith found herself trying to work on the style of her writing so that it would fit that of the idealized fellow student and, at a deeper level, that of her mother. Both Karen and Judith were aware that they were "off the track", that what they had in front of them did not reflect them but was rather a false self, which created much distress. Both tried to get back to themselves. Karen could not resolve the dilemma while at work but produced dreams that could be understood and utilized. Judith had to shake herself out of her omnipotent fantasy to be able to remember what she knew and write about that. She could apply what she had learned from other sessions, where we had examined similar impasses and their dynamics. Most important in their understanding of such dynamics was to have experienced all of these feelings in the transference: the envy of me and my knowledge, the unconscious attacks on me and my husband, with the ensuing paranoia and anxiety about my well-being, which led to the omnipotent solution of taking possession of me and my knowledge. But this solution would eventually leave them with the feeling of not having a self of their own.

All of this would seem to indicate that omnipotent fantasies are the culprit in self-derailment. But is it so? It seems that just as we might need a certain amount of anxiety or a certain amount of innate aggression in order to create, we may need a certain amount of omnipotence. How else can one explain the willingness of the artist to face a blank canvas and have the confidence that he or she can make something out of that? Is there such a thing as "good" omnipotence? We have to start by distinguishing between omnipotence, the feeling of controlling the other, and omniscience, the feeling of limitless knowing. Both are aspects of infantile narcissism but omniscience is the most damaging to creativity because it deadens our capacity to experience something new and limits our curiosity. Details that make the difference are glossed over and one stops being affected by one's surroundings. Moreover, omniscience interferes with our capacity to think. In his "Formulations on the two principles of mental functioning" Freud (1911) related the emergence of thought to the loss of omnipotence, the experience of frustration, and the move away from the pleasure principle to the reality principle. Along similar lines, in his theory of thinking which is, in a sense, a theory of creativity, Bion (1967) claims that thought is born in the gap between self

and object, a notion common to much of the writing on symbol formation. True thinking is impossible when one is in the grip of an omnipotent fantasy since there is no such gap, no awareness of the object as separate. The person controls the object by possession and incorporation into the self or by entering the object and becoming, in fantasy, part of it. On the other hand omniscience, feeling all-knowing, requires that others play the part of the self that does not know. Eigen expresses this well when he states: "To be sure, omniscience may be an empty pretension. But an omniscience-inflated subject fills himself with a sense of infinite privilege and foists his personality on others instead of suffering limits in the struggle to know (1986, p 321)." In other words, one engages in omniscient fantasy by putting into others the infantile part of one's personality that does not know. In the presence of someone who believes himself or herself to be omniscient, we have the sense of being reduced to ignorance and incompetence when we unwittingly take in his or her projections.

Karen and Judith engaged in a process of incorporation and possession of the all-knowing other and, for a while, must have experienced the manic high of having in them their desired qualities. For a time, they acted on this magical belief by trying to fit their writing style to their models so that the writing would look skilled, experienced, mature, but both woke up to realize that what they had put on the page in front of them did not truly represent them. Both of them had trouble with the unformed, undifferentiated state of not-knowing and if this state, which implies humility rather than power, is not present, creativity is stifled. This state of not knowing is the opposite of omniscience and yet there is a kind of "good" or benign omnipotence in the surrender to this undifferentiated state, a sense of being in an exquisite at-onement with the work and with the world. This relates to Winnicott's transitional experience and the artist in this state seems to flow with the work in a wonderful exchange that feels powerful and magical. When artists are "on a roll" they will do anything to sustain the contact with the work; Karen had such an experience when she worked for eleven hours straight on her story. She was able to do this, however, only after her unacceptable envy and hatred of her husband, father, and me, were acknowledged. Both Karen's and Judith's infantile feelings became more acceptable and, we have to assume, were reintrojected, becoming a part of their sense of themselves. This was possible once they were able to recognize their omnipotent

fantasies as something themselves had created; they could now think about such fantasies in relation to the rest of their minds and were, at least temporarily, no longer controlled by them (Segal, 1981). This must have taken place during our sessions and Karen seems to have been able to hold onto this awareness, at least for a while after the work with the second dream. This allowed her to be less frightened about entering into a dialogue with the work in which she did not know from moment to moment what was going to happen. Only from this unformed experience would she find her true self and create a story that ultimately fed her. As I have suggested elsewhere (Safán-Gerard, 1978), an artist's ultimate goal is not only to express him or herself but to receive something from the work.

Winnicott favored the benign omnipotence we have referred to. The origin of omnipotence lies, for him, in the mother's optimum responsiveness to the infant's need, which gives the infant the illusion that the world outside is his or her creation. Winnicott asserts that this illusion is essential for one's future enjoyment of life. Whereas frustration may teach an infant to adapt to reality, the experience of fulfilment and love of reality results from the infant's belief that it is he or she who has created it. Winnicott believes that an infant who has experienced this omnipotence in the form of primary illusion will be more capable later on to deal with the absence of a gratifying mother. Klein and Segal would agree with him but would attribute the infant's good feelings and his or her capacity to deal with frustration to the internalization of a good, gratifying mother. They would also agree that in the first months of life omnipotence, as well as other defenses such as splitting, idealization, or denial, are necessary because of the limited capacity of the ego to bear acute anxiety. However, if later on one continues to resort to omnipotent fantasies as a defense against various anxieties, these will become obstacles to one's development, and certainly an obstacle to creativity. As Mrs. Klein states, in normal development "...omnipotence decreases as the infant gradually gains a greater confidence both in his objects and in his reparative powers" (1952, p.75) In most of their writings, Klein and Segal seem to pay attention to the dysfunctional aspects of omnipotence and its vicissitudes in later life. Neither deals with the experience of the transitional space that Winnicott is concerned with, which makes the task of comparing their views difficult. On the other hand, Winnicott seems to value one important phase in the creative process and what happens to the artist while in it; he is not concerned with the product of it, the work

itself. Klein and Segal in particular seem to be dealing with a different phase, the later stages of the creative process, and with the fate of the work itself. Segal's emphasis lies in what is required of the artist for the work to have a life of its own. Each of these phases has its own vicissitudes. As I indicated earlier, Winnicott's and Segal's views complement each other, and together they provide a more complete picture of the creative process.

As for the conditions necessary to enter into a free exchange with work in progress, it is not at all easy to sink into undifferentiation when one's inner world is too structured and one is dissociated from aspects of oneself. In her book, On Not Being Able to Paint, Marion Milner (1957) writes about her own difficulties in surrendering to such unformed experience. She realized, for example, that "...the effort needed in order to see the edges of objects as they really look stirred a dim fear, a fear of what might happen if one let go of one's mental hold on the outline which kept everything separate and in its place (p.16)." She saw people's insistence upon the outline as "...a fear of losing all sense of separating boundaries; particularly the boundaries between the tangible realities of the external world and the imaginative realities of the inner world of feeling and idea; in fact, a fear of being mad (p.17)." Milner adds, "...perhaps this is one reason why new experiments in painting can arouse such fierce opposition and anger. People must surely be afraid, without knowing it, that their hold upon reason and sanity is precarious...(p17)." Just as the artist who allows himself or herself to delve into this transitional space, analysts and patients can capitalize on the possibilities inherent in undifferentiation and unformed experience in the consulting room. Massud Khan (1974) suggests such possibilities when he states, "My work guides me to infer that most withdrawn states in life and regressive states in analysis carry the potentiality of a reaching out toward the self-experience that has become dissociated in the person...(p.304)." Omnipotent defenses against anxiety and psychic pain will stand in the way of the self-enriching mutuality with the work that ultimately enriches the work.

We have seen how in Karen and Judith omnipotence is a defense against infantile envy and hostility, and against the anxiety generated by this envy. Omnipotent fantasies can also be a defense against dependency and the fear of loss of one's objects. "If I am she, I have her knowledge and

power and I don't have to need her, share her, or lose her". This is another reason why Karen and Judith took possession of their parents, husband, and me. In such an omnipotent state their work could go so far but it ultimately wasn't their work and they experienced the despair of having been derailed from their true self. In addition, entering the transitional space with the work eventually leads to a separation from it and any sense of the work as being separate, just as with a significant other, will stir anxiety and an infantile fear for one's survival. It became clear to Milner during her experiments that "...if painting is concerned with the feelings conveyed by space, then it must also have to do with problems of being a separate body in a world of other bodies which occupy different bits of space; in fact, it must be deeply concerned with ideas of distance and separation, of having and losing (p.11, 12)." The anxieties that can get stirred up while painting are no different than those stirred up while writing, composing, or working with a patient. One has to be willing to know nothing and to admit that one has little control over what happens to the work as a result of one's exchanges with it. The contact with our true self means being aware of contradictory aspects of ourself, some that we like as well as some we despise. It also means that we will be experiencing the loss of our great ideals for the work at every turn and that we will be needing the good thing in the work and for the work all the time. Being hungry and with no assurance as to whether the work will ever feed us, satisfy us, is quite hard and yet there is no escape from that. The image of those masters, those teachers, those accomplished peers, will always be hovering over the artist's head but he or she has to resist any temptation to become them through omnipotent fantasy. Not easy indeed. And how can they muster such courage? This is the curse and blessing our artist patients have to live with and it is a challenge and a privilege to play a part in their relentless search for the truth in the work and in themselves.

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