

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper introduces an unplanned discovery by an experienced psychoanalyst and clinical researcher that allows observational access to the initial phase of the artistic creative process in the artist's repressed unconscious. It begins with an outline of the unusual investigative context in which the find materialized. It then discusses the interest various groups have had in what takes place in the defended depths of the human mind when it is issuing the derivatives that become art pieces. An examination of the methodological problems that stand in the way of admittance to the responsible area is then provided. And a series of personal experiences that unexpectedly merged with certain aspects of the author's professional life to break the impasse is described.

A new method of data collection to which the encounter led is discussed, and a detailed example of its application is provided.

## **PART I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

*“discovery is not discovery unless it comes as a surprise”*

John Polanyi, 2004  
Scientist, Nobel Laureate  
University of Toronto

The author is a trained physician and psychiatrist who carried a fascination with the beauty of the scientific discovery process applied in medical research to a career in psychoanalysis. From the beginning of his analytic training in 1968, and during several years of subsequent clinical practice and research, it was a dominant force directing him. He did not initially grasp that it was taking him on a course different from that of his colleagues, and upon realizing that such was the case he was too committed to turn back. He had defined and standardized the viable concepts in Freud's Metapsychology Theory (e.g. *"ego"*, *"defense"*) in concrete terms. He had also developed a means for testing old and new metapsychological principles (e.g. *"symptoms are compromise formations of defense and drive"*) by prediction in the clinical situation. And a reliable method of formulation that employed the clinician's objective perceptions and conscious, cognitive-emotional processes began to emerge from the work.

At that point in his experience, having had what institutional psychoanalysis was forced to accept as the usual "incomplete" personal (training) analysis, he was curious to know what was left in himself and why. He thus applied his new method to himself and the results were astonishing. As he systematically dismantled previously-unidentified "defense systems"<sup>1</sup> during daily and often nightly "sessions", he was led to the bedrocks of childhood turmoils that were continuing to fuel a variety of severe character and symptom-neurotic symptoms. He was also directed to discover what had to be done to free himself of them for good. And at the half-way mark of a self analysis that developed into an eleven-year adventure, the opportunity cited in his abstract came to light.

Without warning, his work with symptoms introduced him to the roots of a self organization that had been separately engaged in a serious artistic-creative activity at his mind's surface for the previous thirteen years. Key lines from earlier-written poems began to appear in integrated form in the flow of his free-associative efforts. They were barely noticeable at first, but they became an unmistakable presence in time and he was much informed about what was driving him to produce art.

### **RESEARCH INTEREST AND METHODOLOGICAL FRUSTRATION**

Psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, analytically-interested academics and lay people have puzzled over the mental origins of the artist's creations for years. They have reasonably assumed that artworks are products of a part of mind outside awareness and inaccessible to direct observation by the artist's self-observing self. All four groups have also accepted that the creative process belongs in their scientific domains, and their theorists have long been attempting to unravel its mysteries.

Two of the groups have had an additional and particularly vital interest in the subject. Psychoanalysts and psychiatrists need to know all they can about the repressed unconscious in order to help their patients undo life-sapping symptoms that can grow to immensely-threatening proportions. With huge gaps in their knowledge, and indications that the artistic process is both derived from that place and able to powerfully influence them, they have made repeated efforts to investigate it. But they still have no way of scientifically developing and testing<sup>2</sup> logical hypotheses to explain the origins of artistic-creative material that frequently appears in clinical situations. Thus they have

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<sup>1</sup> This is the term for complex metapsychological entities in which defenses are but one part.

<sup>2</sup> The reference is to testing hypotheses for their predictive capabilities or otherwise.

no theory that allows such material to be formulated and used when provided by people (artists and non-artists) who have come to treatment to undo painful symptoms.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of such widespread desire to know the structure-processes<sup>4</sup> responsible for art at source level, attempts at satisfaction have regularly been blocked by research problems that have seemed insurmountable.

### **The Artist's Contribution to Discovery Has Been Limited**

If art emerges from the repressed unconscious<sup>5</sup> as is believed, the artist could not be expected to help with a solution to the problems. That part of the mind is, by definition, unknowable without extensive work on layered defense systems lying over conflicted self organizations that are buried deep in the psyche. He/she<sup>6</sup> would need to be much-motivated by unrelenting, painful symptoms and undertake a lengthy, frightening process of assisted self work to discover what is there. And this author knows of no artist analysts who have pursued such an endeavour. When artists seek analytic treatment, they either stop upon obtaining enough relief from symptoms unrelated to their art or do so after dismantling a barrier to their creative efforts. But in most cases they avoid the clinical situation completely (or at least do not seriously consider it), even when symptoms are severe. And when asked about the origins of their creations they are unable to answer, as the following examples illustrate.

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<sup>3</sup> Although this paper was written in 1987, to this author's knowledge the latter two points remain true to the day of this writing in January, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> When one examines mental events using a body of defined metapsychological concepts and tested principles, one finds that they are underpinned and determined by *structures* that are in flux and undergoing *processes*. One does not therefore study or describe them in one dimension or the other but in both simultaneously - hence the term "structure-processes".

<sup>5</sup> As the author's exploratory experience in this area has been limited to work with the "repressed" (or "Freudian") unconscious, he does not assume that art cannot emerge from what has been called the "broad (nonrepressed) unconscious" in which the repressed part resides. There is much to say that it does not, but the issue must be settled by research designs that have not been available in the clinical situations in which he has toiled.

<sup>6</sup> To avoid the clumsiness inherent in the repeated expressions "he/she", "him/her", etc., the term "he(she)" will be used in sections to indicate that the anonymous researcher may be of either gender. It will then be followed by "he" or "him" alone.

**Robertson Davies, novelist (1987, p. M1 – newspaper)**

“I get a great many letters and many of them are from students who ask bluntly, ‘Where do you get your ideas from?’ The answer, which they are reluctant to believe, is that I do not ‘get’ ideas; ideas get me. I do not invent plots; they arise in my mind, beginning usually with some mental picture that will not go away.”

**Doris Lessing, novelist (1988, p.C8)**

“I hated writing it. I was sweating blood. I was very glad when it was done. It was an upsetting thing to write. Obviously, it goes very deep into me somewhere.”

**Sharon Thesen, poet (Kirchhoff, 1989)**

“[My poems generally begin] with a mood, or an idea, or a line. The rest rushes in quickly once the first line is done. It’s like scraping away layer after layer until the poem is revealed.”

**Roo Borson, poet (Kirchhoff, 1989)**

“I wait until something demands to be written down. An image might bother me for years, for instance. ... It's all very mysterious. Determining what a poem is, is like feeling in the dark.”

**Fred Astaire, dance choreographer (Shepard, 1987)**

“you may go days getting nothing but exhaustion. This search for what you want is like tracking something that doesn't want to be tracked.”

## **Analysts Have Also Failed in Their Efforts to Explain Roots**

The psychoanalyst, **J. E. Mack** (1971), captured the sense of helpless frustration that the artistic creative process visits on the curious when they are led to explore it. In a discussion of Greenacre's 1955 study of Swift and Carroll (p.152) he said:

“Yet the book leaves us most dissatisfied precisely in the area where our interest is keenest, namely in the relationship between the artists' inner lives and their creative works. ... We thirst for a deeper

understanding of the ego processes whereby the elements of conflict are given new dimensions and new life in the work.”

And **D. M. Kaplan**, also a psychoanalyst (1988), pointed out that the mysteries of the phenomenon have preoccupied psychoanalysts from the time the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society was formed, yet their codes have not been broken. In the following remarks he vividly describes how every theoretical idea in psychoanalysis has been used to examine art, and how its roots have remained impervious to investigative effort:

(p.280) “... every aspect of psychoanalytic thought has been applied at one or another moment to an explication of art, but not surprisingly, what is of current concern to technical psychoanalysis is always poised to be applied to art.”

(p.288) “... while psychoanalysis unpacks certain psychological possibilities of art in an exhaustive application of interests and calculations of theory, in the same process art reflects the limitations of this endeavour because art [has always been] something other than the fit subject of clinical psychoanalysis.”

In the second passage, Kaplan begins to speak to the nature of the methodological problem that has stymied analytic curiosity. He says that art (not the artist) is “*something other than the fit subject of clinical analysis*”, and there is something to be said for that statement. If the artistic-creative process operates in the repressed unconscious and it is to be opened to direct view, some artists will have to analytically proceed to that place with a clinician/researcher in tow or go there themselves and tell their tales after. But while many artists suffer from "character", "symptom-neurotic" and sometimes "psychotic" symptoms, the state of being an artist has never been regarded as a disease, and none have ever set about getting cured of it. It is, in fact, regularly considered to be an effective, though mysterious, medicament for many common ailments of living, including psychological symptoms.

## **Scholars Cite Constructive Effects but Reasons Elude Discovery**

The English Literature professor, **Andrew Brink** (1977, 1982), has explored the self-constructive aspect of the artistic process (1982, p.6). He said, for example:

“psychobiographical evidence from much creativity in poetry, and the other arts, supports [the] view of

imagination as a restorative force which comes into play when other means of balancing the ego through good interpersonal relations have failed or proved inadequate.”

### **And Artists Speak in a Similar Vein**

#### **Susan Musgrave, poet (Musgrave, 1990)**

“Writing, for a great number of people, has a therapeutic effect. It's never a total cure - much happens in life from which there is no recovery - but if you stay drunk on writing, reality will never completely destroy you.”

#### **Harold Town, visual artist (Fulford, 1990)**

“I can't remember a time in my life not made more satisfying and complete by drawing.”

#### **Jean-Claude Lauzon, film-maker (writer and director of the film, "Leolo") (Scott, 1990)**

“If I wasn't creative, I would be crazy. I always wanted to be a creative person; ... Now that I am creative, I am a very happy person.”

## **THE MOST COMMON RESEARCH METHOD: ITS DESIGN PROBLEMS AND A FRAGMENT OF THEIR HISTORY**

The most conventional investigative design used by theorists in this area directs the researcher to create an explanatory bridge between the artist's known (often published) biographical material and his(her) works of art using current psychoanalytic theories, a method that has several serious drawbacks. There are undetected problems of logic at its inception stage, and its subsequent phases rest on premises that do not withstand conceptual examination. Its adherents may bring astute intuition to bear on their subject, but they are ultimately required to bypass unchecked inferential steps as they proceed from observational data to what must ultimately become speculative conclusions.

The various general analytic theories employed in such efforts are an immediate source of the difficulty. They are usually collections of untested hypotheses that have become emotionally attractive to their adherents (see

King and Steiner, 1991, p.2). Another problem is that the theories are treated as if they were complete. And when such obstacles go unrecognized, ideas are pressed on phenomena that they do not fit. An expectedly complex, constructive part of the artist's mind is clumsily reduced, and the muses that inhabit it do not respond well to blundering force. They do not answer queries directed at depths until interest is shown in why they must carry out their work behind defenses.

In some cases, as well, the problem is a peculiar impatience in the theorists, and this is particularly true of analytic researchers. Unlike many scientists of the physical world, they are prone to proceeding with investigations without methodological studies, logically-developed research designs, multiple reasoned hypotheses, criteria of proof, and an understanding of the eventual importance of a theory's predictive capability. The physicists, Cockcroft and Walton (Ronan, 1982) had to wait for the invention of powerful magnets before they could split the atom in 1932, and they waited. Analysts, however, tend to ignore the gap between their goal and the adequacy of their instruments, and they lose track of a promising sequence of initial considerations. In other words, they miss: (1) developing a phenomenological definition of the puzzle, (2) establishing the limits of current theories for understanding its surface; (3) determining the materials and method required to scientifically study that surface; (4) setting depths concerns aside until they have thoroughly examined the initial presentations of the subject.

The effects of the omission of such steps stand out when the "*bridge bio and artistic creation with existing theory*" approach is scrutinized in detail. Those who use it are forced to work without the raw material they need. They have none from artists who are analytically delving into the place where their art has been, or is being, generated. They are therefore required to use its derivatives (the core parts of the creations), bypass the "surface-depths" issue<sup>7</sup>, speculate about roots from which there is no possibility of acquiring informative material, and generate dubious hypotheses that have no chance of being scientifically tested for validity.

### **A Major Missing Middle Part - The Repression Defense**

At the "**creation**" end of the "collected data" spectrum, there are: (1) the structures, processes and contents that lie under the studied work of art; (2) what has allowed the "derivative" that forms the nucleus of the art piece to come out of repression to the artist's surface; (3) why the self organization

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<sup>7</sup> Because the analytic general theories still have no basic and applied theories of such, and research into the subject has been stalled.

there has been motivated to elaborate and expand it; (4) why it wants to present the end-product to an audience of strangers. And when the data problem is parsed in such a way, one of its four parts stands out. The “repression” phenomenon, with all of its ill-understood features in analytic practice, becomes a necessary focus of a scientific clinical research before promising studies of the sources of art can be attempted. A close look at the analytic literature reveals that there is really very little known about it. That there *is* such an entity is not difficult to demonstrate, and that it is one of several types of defense is equally demonstrable. But from that point on, investigators need to undertake projects that can answer a number of still-outstanding questions.

For example, what are the *motivators* of that defense? From whom and/or what does it protect? Why is that *particular* defense prominent in the creative situation when there are many other possibilities that could be available? What particular conditions allow the derivatives that become either parapraxes or art pieces to emerge from it? What must be done to remove the necessity of the defense and release what it is protecting? And what is the particular developmental situation that has led to the formation of *that* defense in the first place?

Then turning to the “**biography**” end of the data spectrum, one is met with a variety of problems, prominent among which is that of separating facts from fictions with little opportunity to do so. No autobiographers or biographer’s subjects at this time in the history of human social development could publicly tell, “the whole truth” of the *external* (conscious) lives they have lived or are living. Internal object standards backed by threats must be met, and selves must embellish and diminish to prevent dangers. And efforts to explore the depths of *inner* (unconscious) lives would be fraught with even greater difficulties. A halt would be called as the periphery of the repressed unconscious was approached. Beyond awareness, operative transferences carrying threats of terrorizing proportions would attach to prospective audiences, and surface selves would feel like the dizzied defendants of Kafka witness stands. At root levels, the perils of discovered perjuries would pale in the face of fears, and realities would be vigorously disconnected (repressed) from access.

Then, finally, and adding to such difficulties, there would be the fact that the *biographers* would be operating with their own repressed mind parts<sup>8</sup>. As they interviewed their subjects and processed their material, they would be

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<sup>8</sup> In all of the author’s many years of social life outside the clinical situation, he has never encountered anyone who escaped the developmental years without some neurotic symptoms, and, as the deepest sources of symptoms are in the repressed unconscious, this statement is warranted.

partially directed by internal objects that forbade asking some questions and hearing the responses to others.

### **Freud's Role in the Development of this Troubled Mode of Inquiry**

Freud encouraged the analytic trend to attempt solution of the theoretical problems of artistic creation prematurely when he refused to wait for promising scientific methods and the development of his general theory before trying to answer them. Some of his correspondence even displays a mind-set that would have been a complete barrier to discovery in the area, as a 1909 letter to Jung indicates.

In it, directed by a conquering, militaristic attitude towards art's unknowns, and armed with untested, grossly incomplete theories, he tackled his subject in a manner that would have driven living artists and their muses out of any latent interest in participating in his study. He wrote (McGuire, 1974, p.255):

"I am glad you share my belief that we must conquer the whole field of mythology. Thus far we have only two pioneers: Abraham and Rank. We need men for more far-reaching campaigns. Such men are so rare. We must also take hold of biography. I have had an inspiration since my return. The riddle of Leonardo da Vinci's character has suddenly become clear to me. That would be the first step in the realm of biography. But the material concerning L. is so sparse that I despair of demonstrating my conviction intelligibly to others. I have ordered an Italian work on his youth and am now waiting eagerly for it. In the meantime I will reveal the secret to you. Do you remember my remarks in the 'Sexual Theories of Children'... to the effect that children's first premises in this sphere were bound to fail and that this first failure could have a paralysing effect upon them? Read the passage over; at the time I did not take it as seriously as I do now. Well the great Leonardo was such a man; at an early age he converted his sexuality into an urge for knowledge and from then on the inability to finish anything he undertook became a pattern to which he had to conform in all his ventures; he was sexually inactive or homosexual. Not so long ago I came across

his image and likeness (without his genius) in a neurotic.”

### Discussion

Freud's theory of Leonardo is a product of projected derivatives from an unanalyzed “self” organization<sup>9</sup> that is skewing his effort off any realistic goals.

“We must conquer ... [by] ... far-reaching campaigns”

To say that *human beings are as they think and speak and write, intentional or otherwise*, is a verifiable fact<sup>10</sup>, and this statement has come from a self under intense pressure from a problem motive that has it spellbound. It is also a self with no choice. It “must” find an explanation that will bring the subject to heel by force, that is, begin a “campaign” and “conqueror” it.

“I have had an inspiration”

“[It] suddenly became clear to me”

These expressions are the products of an artist-like unconscious. They do not reflect the mental processes of a scientist. They are the symptomatic products of unconscious substances that are being processed by unconscious mechanisms.

“But the material ... is so sparse that I despair demonstrating my convictions intelligibly”

“I have ordered an Italian work ... and am now eagerly waiting for it”

Here, the scientist’s scientific goals have been subverted by unobserved unruly mental innards. He has developed “*convictions*” about the truth of an idea that emerged with a suddenness from the under-realms of his mind. He has also done so without methods capable of testing the reliability of its source and the predictive ability of the conclusion. A symptomatic process is

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<sup>9</sup> The “self” here is defined as “ego and drive” but not the objects of the “superego-ego ideal structure”.

<sup>10</sup> The formulation method to which the author earlier referred, has made it clear that our spontaneous words indicate the true workings of our surface and/or our buried depths to a degree far more extensive than has ever been suspected. Using the method in the clinical situation, he has collected and recorded hundreds (perhaps even thousands) of illustrations of the phenomenon.

impelling him to find proof for a dubious hypothesis in biographical material that he has not yet seen.

## **THE REQUIREMENTS OF A VIABLE METHOD**

### **NARROWING TO THE MAIN SOURCES OF THE DIFFICULTY**

#### **1. The Inaccessibility of Essential Data to Date**

It is clear then, that would-be scientific researchers have not yet discovered or devised a method of collecting the observational data essential to their purpose. In existing studies, concrete material that reveals the artist's unconscious mental operations is usually almost completely lacking. The only parts of it available are the surface fragments (derivatives that become parts of the art works) of the buried phenomenon (creative process) that is to be explored. Even if a means for identifying their significance were discovered, the repressed whole from which they were derived would remain incomprehensible.

And the only other sources of data that could contribute to the goal are heavily edited biographical works far from even the “working surface”<sup>11</sup> of the repressed unconscious.

**Silverman and Will**, in their 1986 study of Sylvia Plath, acknowledged this fact. They said (p.127),

“We cannot, from the surface content of Sylvia Plath's poetry, read off what took place within her unconscious the way one can travel from the expressions of an analysand on the couch ... And so little is known about her early life that there is room only for speculation.”

So some means of obtaining direct access to the repressed part of the artist's mind during the process of creation is needed.

#### **2. No Control of Variables in the Researcher's Unconscious**

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<sup>11</sup> That is, small, derivative pieces from a repressed whole content that are partly accessible to self observation and self exploration, and capable of being communicated to others.

The second problem highlighted by the above discussion is that of reducing or eliminating the investigator's subjectivity when he(she) attempts to apply scientific principles to any data that new methods might allow him to collect. He is open to uncontrollable influences from his conflicted unconscious at several points.

First there is his motive for undertaking the study. Why would one push for knowledge of the unknown without an initial review of the difficulties and an analysis of what would be needed to correct them? And if one discovered that there was as yet no means of doing so, why would one proceed?

It is logical to think that if motives of the problem type were analytically uncovered in the would-be theorist, they would be symptoms of unsolved internal conflict. And any answers they generated would be ones that suited a still-inaccessible, troubled self's need for answers that served as defenses. And were the researcher to proceed in spite of such conditions, he would be more like an unwitting analysand having a bad start to an unsuspected self analysis<sup>12</sup> than the scientist he was seeking to be.

Thus someone who has had the reasons and means to free himself of symptoms by a capable analytic process and who has sufficiently done so, is needed.

## **THE CORE ELEMENTS OF A METHODOLOGICAL SOLUTION**

### **A: In General**

The methodologist with a chance of success will want an analysand with a purpose and a clinician with a theory that enables the former to travel to the bedrocks of his(her) repressed unconscious and take his helper with him. And if his assessment of the possibility of meeting the latter need indicates that no such practitioner and theory exist, he will set his interest in the artistic process aside and turn to study those barriers. As his curiosity takes hold of why no analyses are ever complete and why they leave analysands with still-operative transferences to current figures, he will be guided by the scientific method. He will note that it has never been a cornerstone of traditional analytic efforts to

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<sup>12</sup> All consultees, at the beginning of consultations and for a long time into treatment, have unrecognized transferences that attach to and transform perceptions of the consultant and the analytic situational elements. If they are not systematically identified and addressed at once, they generate mistaken beliefs that defeat established goals, and the problem is compounded to a point from which there is no return (see "Glover Effect", Anderson 1982, 2013).

discover and think about how that situation can be changed. And as he does so he will be directed by the following considerations:

- A scientific study of the depths of the repressed unconscious at this point in time requires an analytic clinical situation.
- Studies of the unexplained phenomena of the analytic domain suffer from a lack of definition of the phenomena to be examined.
- Researches need to focus on one such entity at a time.
- Each entity must be subjected to a series of procedures that include objective observations, the development of logical multiple hypotheses, tests for predictive capability<sup>13</sup> and criteria of proof.

### **B: In Particular**

Because the major puzzles of the artistic domain<sup>14</sup> are believed to be tied to the “repressed unconscious”, the methodologist will need to start his design project with an assessment of what is implied about the contents, structures and processes of that part of the mind. He(she) will consider that:

- they are, by definition, unknowable to the subject him(her)self without an extensive analysis and a dismantling of layered defense systems, in each of

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<sup>13</sup> The psychoanalytic profession holds to many beliefs that have never been scientifically developed and that do not hold up to scientific testing. As late as 1999, this author encountered striking examples of the unchecked subjectivity that runs rampant in the discipline when two anonymous editors of a journal sent written responses to a first outline paper on the MF Method. Although the report pointed to how formulative hypotheses could be tested by prediction, one person categorically stated that such a procedure was impossible. [That experience, among others, left the author wondering why the so-called "peer review" method was still allowed to determine the information that psychoanalysis circulates. It is badly in need of replacement with an approach rooted in objective observation and bias-free cognitive assessment. It would make a good project for a Ph.D. research.]

<sup>14</sup> That is, such things as: the *substances* from which the work has been created; the *processes* by which it has been produced; the *revisions* that the original has undergone; the *purposes for which it has been communicated*; the *viewer/reader/listener's responses* that it has engendered; the *critical minds to which it has been subjected*; and the *responses that the artist has had to positive and negative criticisms*. (Norman Holland, in his 1975 book “The Dynamics of Reader Response”, inspired this separation of the components of the art experience for exploratory purposes.)

which there are defenses of the self inhibiting type, one of which is “repression”

- the defenses have developed to protect the psyche from a significant danger that cannot be prevented by other means
- the danger situation is set in motion by the threat of an involuntary return of memories involving unsolved conflicts with problem caretaker objects during the early developmental years
- the experience of dangerous objects has been repeated by way of an unwitting operation of the transference mechanism and transferences to a series of subsequent objects including the consultant up to the time of starting the study.

He will also remind himself that *only the subject* can undo his *defense systems* and allow what is unconscious to become conscious. He will also understand that *he* can only be apprised of what has been revealed when his subject is freed by the analysis to tell him what he has discovered.<sup>15</sup>

## **THE FEATURES OF A SUITABLE ARTIST SUBJECT AND THE PROBLEMS OF FINDING ONE**

If an *artist* is to delve into his deepest depths and carry out such works of introspection and communication, he(she) must see an opportunity for a *very* important self gain. His drive must be strong enough to overcome the natural inclination to avoid the painful affect of “anxiety”, and, beyond that, the threatening emotions released when the sources of the anxiety emerge into consciousness.<sup>16</sup> In places where his deep self organizations are in jeopardy, the affects released can involve extreme losses of an esteem that is essential to being able to live in ordinary, daily ways. And if he aims to reach and dismantle the conflicts in the very roots of his repressed unconscious where the loss can be complete, his motivation might have to be stronger than an aversion to experiencing an end to his will to live.

It is a possibility that the structure-processes responsible for artistic creativity could be operating from such depths. They might also prove to be protections from sinking further into them. They could be at the edge of the

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<sup>15</sup> The author has scientifically tested all of the “basic theory” points of this section extensively.

<sup>16</sup> The M.F. definition of “anxiety” allows for the predictions that: major unrepellable dangers accompanied by unrelievable fears lie under the symptom; they will be released to direct experience when motives for the repression defense have been identified and dismantled.

“bottomless pit” that human beings so often fear, and that place might be the ultimate source of the greatest dangers that are attributed to “the human condition”. In it could lie “dreads and terrors”, “living deaths”, “fates worse than death”, “annihilation” states, and so on. And without knowing what he is doing, he might be defensively driven to stop his self work and return to his art at the first hint of the dangers. His art might even have been allowing him to usefully tap them in the form of his creations without being pulled in<sup>17</sup>.

There certainly are existential ills of humanity involving devastations of self and others that have never been analytically explored at source. And if the artist's depths *do* contain such states it would be understandable that, failing a stronger reason to do otherwise, he would keep them at bay. It is also likely that even worse dangers exist under the conditions here cited. That human beings can imagine them is clear from the words they use to signify them. And what can be imagined must have origins, current locations and properties. The reference here is to such expressions as, “coming apart at the seams”, “coming unglued” and “falling apart”. The terms remind one of Kohut's “fragmentation” states (1971, p.4-8) and of the fact that he was more than sceptical about the idea of someone voluntarily undertaking to experience them. He said (1984, p.8-9):

“ ... I cannot imagine that an individual would submit himself to the dissolution of defensive structures that have protected him for a lifetime and voluntarily accept the unspeakable anxieties accompanying what must seem to him to be the task of facing a prepsychological state that had remained chaotic ... “

While one might question the assumption that fragmentation is a condition that antedates the subject's psychology (i.e. is “prepsychological”), there need be no question about the rest of what Kohut has said. And when all of the above possibilities are considered, the problem of finding a symptom-suffering artist with the required motivation becomes a major one to solve if a window into the artist's mind during the act of creation is to be opened.

### **Where the Methodologist Might Look - With Reservations**

Upon raising this question, one is led immediately to the person who is suffering from severe character, or character-and-symptom neuroses and seeks an analytic treatment for them. But would he(he) want to pursue it to the

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<sup>17</sup> A good friend of the author's once described such a phenomenon well when he said that perhaps Picasso's art could be explained by his having “a hole in his ego”.

ultimate end? That question is difficult to answer because the analytic profession has never been able to provide analysands with the theoretical tools to do so.

If, however, such instruments did exist, would that person want to go beyond a point at which his presenting symptoms were much relieved? And if he were an artist who was enabled to proceed that far, could there be conditions that might lead him to tamper with the possibility that his creative process was rooted in conflicts that, upon being undone, undid *it*?

Works of art share some of the features of neurotic symptoms, but they are not painful and the artist does not seek relief from the process that produces them. He enjoys the act of creation and its results, and it is common for him to fear that an analysis will take the pleasure from him. If his creativity is “working” for him (as artists say), he might avoid the analytic process even if relief from his symptoms required it. And failing that possibility, he might well stop when his progress warned against meddling with the only solution his mind had once found for a pain-ridden state it believed to be incurable.

### **The Features of an Ideal Subject**

When the above factors are considered, the person willing to collaborate in a treatment-research project of the required kind takes on the surface appearance of a strange creature. He(she) would be willing to chance the loss of a touted, pleasurable behaviour and activate protracted states of suffering that the behaviour was relieving.

If his mental state were compared to a physical condition, it would be like a healed-over, but still-infected, physical wound that made him interesting to others with still-running sores. And as he lay on a gurney of his own making, plumped up with self-created pillows, he would undo his cicatrix, see its festering roots for the first time, and expose unexpected horrors to his unsuspecting admirers<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Years after this passage was written, the author came across a strikingly similar and wonderfully-described analogy in the book “More Writers and Company” by Eleanor Wachtel (1996). In an interview with Kazuo Ishiguro (who won the Booker Prize for “The Remains of the Day”), that author said (p.33), *“For some time, like a lot of people, I’ve been wondering why people like writers do what they do, because it is a rather odd thing to do, to keep locking yourself up in a room and writing; it’s a bit antisocial and a bit weird. .... I came to a kind of conclusion that what all these people had in common was that they were slightly unbalanced. .... at some fundamental level, their lives*

## And Searching for the Ideal Researcher

To solve the problems of the researcher's subjectivity, the methodologist would first seek someone whose investigative drives could be brought to consciousness. He(she) would then look for a motivational system driven by curiosity rather than ambition or other motives unsuitable to the task. And as the requirements of subject and data-collection method lead to the clinical situation only, he would search for such qualities in an analytic clinician. If the practitioner-researcher of the project's design were likened to a bicycle built for two, the "research rider" would happily accept being led by the "analyst driver". No analyst seeking permanent relief from symptoms would collaborate in an exploration and exposure of his(her) deepest self if such a "seating arrangement" were reversed. Just one small sign of such would set his defense self in flight and the endeavour would be over (even if it staggered on for a while before coming to a formal end).

After that, the methodologist would look for someone with treatment and research motives free of defense needs. He would therefore seek an analysed clinician who had reached the bedrocks of significantly-serious symptoms and the repressed unconscious from which they had formed. The internal conflicts that produce major emotional problems lie at levels that are depth-proportional to the extent and intensity of the symptoms they issue. And given the types of symptoms from which many artists suffer, the investigator might have to follow his subject to the places where, as Lionel Trilling put it, (Silverman and Will, 1986, p.100):

"the demonic forces and inchoate terrors that reside in everyone [dwell]"

And, when all such requirements are considered, it becomes clear that the clinician-researcher of the proposed project will first have to break new grounds of theory development and apply his discoveries to himself before any thought of succeeding with the project can be entertained. He will have to test existing psychoanalytic theories by scientific means and select the parts that can be validated, then *"follow (the new) knowledge like a sinking star beyond the utmost bounds of (current) human thought"*<sup>19</sup>. That is, he will have to return to analysis on his own and clear his depths from fears if he is to follow his

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*have been built on something that got broken way back ..... some kind of wound that will never heal was received early on. And this business of locking yourself up in a room and trying to write novels for week after week has to do with mucking about with this wound, it seemed to me. You know at some level you can never heal these things, you can never fix these things, but a lot of this activity is nevertheless about caressing this wound."*

<sup>19</sup> From Alfred Tennyson's "Ulysses"

analysand to fundamental truths and not abort the trip with theoretical rationalizations.

### **And Other Difficulties to be Overcome**

The first of these would be familiar to all researchers who seek to use the clinical situation as their source of observed data, and that would be to find a method of recording on-the-spot material that did not interfere with the treatment process.

A further problem would be to reassess the commonly-held belief that "*all human beings are psychotic in their cores*" and understand it to be an untested assumption. Does "core" refer to the self organization in the deepest part of the repressed unconscious? If so, and if no analysis has ever been complete, and if no one has ever been able to go there, how can such a claim be made? And then there is the question of what is meant by "psychotic".

The sources of such notions are often lost to history, and later generations have no way of knowing what to make of them. But if an artist is to discover that his(her) art originates in such a place, it would be important to relieve him of the idea that certain disaster awaited him before he ventured towards it (because it won't).

## **PART II**

### **THE EVOLUTION OF A METHOD**

#### **A: A SELF ANALYSIS THAT LED TO ITS DISCOVERY**

The author met with his promising research approach to the artistic process in 1985 while following a protracted sequence of intense, absorbing professional interests, central to which was an unusual self analysis that he extensively described in this website's download, "Self Analysis" and partially recounted in a 1992 journal paper. When first drafts of the experience were presented at meetings and conferences, some respondents had difficulty with the sweep of his analytic process and cast disbeliefs upon parts of it. He knew that the concerns were invalid, but the questions they posed were more than his surprised self could answer at the time. And because the reader's grasp of the significance of this study will depend on an acceptance of the authenticity

of events leading up to it, I will have the author speak for himself and attest to their validity from this point on. He will review the course of the self work and recount when and how the artistic-creative phenomenon entered his process. And all questions will be answered to the best of his current (2015) knowledge.

## **The Beginnings**

Thirty-three years ago, during analytic training, I began to develop what was unknown to me at the time to be a new method for formulating presented clinical analytic material. I subjected the metapsychological theories of psychoanalysis to scientific tests, and used those that survived to develop a consciously-applicable formulative technique that relied on objective observations. I called the approach the "Metapsychological Formulation Method", and when it proved to be testable, immensely accurate and effective the traditional techniques of formulation<sup>20</sup> fell by the wayside.

As I thought about the psychic structures and substructures identified in clinical work with analysands and examined the principles that determined their shifting configurations, I also found a way to relieve the clinician's mind of remembering and containing all of its thought processes as I worked. Without a plan to do so, I began to automatically and effortlessly write the associative material from the couch in small script while listening to it. Then my subjective experiences and formulative processes began to enter the writings as well, and soon all of the internal and external complexities of the clinical situation were being recorded on the spot.

After that development, I was led to question and investigate two particular pieces of existing technical theory.

One claimed that symptomatic acts in the analyst during sessions could be used to formulate the analysand's material (Jacobs, 1973), and using the self as a subject I devised a method for testing the idea. I then found that there was no specific connection between the analysand's stimulus and the analyst's symptomatic responses in the material examined. My symptomatic acts led away from my analysands to memories of recent social encounters in which a lack of the healthy aggressive-drive forms needed for effective defense had featured.

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<sup>20</sup> These will be well-known to the reader. They are those that employ the analyst's unconscious, "free-floating attention", countertransference and empathy as the *primary* means for understanding the material that presents in clinical sessions.

The other was the idea that the analyst's work drives were "sublimated", and my curiosity was stirred by a paper (Thomson, 1980) in which the author had become very frustrated by an analysand's presented material (e.g. p.196). The report revealed that at least one analyst practised with drives tied to vital self needs, for they exhibited none of the "muted gentility" suggested by the terms "sublimated" and "neutralized".<sup>21</sup> I then examined my own drives more closely, and found that they, too, were of a raw, basic and apparently unanalyzed nature. My clinical self was seeking to satisfy needs that realistically belonged somewhere, but they were far from appropriate in the service role that I had accepted, and curiosity drew me into the Self Analysis described in the previous download.

## **Self Analysis: A Snowball on a Hill Descending**

### **And A Poem to Describe It**

#### **Humpty Time for Him**

Curiosity pricked him  
and he had to  
do it

fall  
from his wall

slide  
to one side  
of the fence that he sat  
on

drop  
from his hobby  
horse

just to  
feel what it was  
like to come apart at the  
seams

The experiences described so far, made me wonder how my training analysis could have ended with such problems unsolved. They also directed me to try my developing new clinical theory on myself. I read the major papers

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<sup>21</sup> Thomson reported on the actual needs involved in his work in a 1993 paper.

on the subject, and everyone agreed that it was difficult. They also indicated that if it worked at all it was never finished, and that made me *more* curious.<sup>22</sup>

I used the partially-developed "M.F." method to dissect and isolate the surfaces and layers of innocuous-appearing phenomena defined as symptomatic. I then delineated the defense components (complex "defense systems") of the surface layers and the motivations for defenses they contained. And as I associated to the material collected, I started to experience alarming developments. The process systematically dissolved the need for a succession of stratified defenses in a manner that the common technical theories (with no Surface-Layers component) would not have permitted, and my surprising undersides pressed for expression.

It was clear that the depth material being released from *those* defenses had remained active and very threatening, and its drive and affect elements soon became "bound"<sup>23</sup> again by new and more-severe symptoms. I had enjoyed a good cigar for years, but I lost all interest in smoking and developed insomnia. The sleeplessness was mild and occasional at the start, but it worsened with continued work and took on features of the Manic-Depressive (currently "Bipolar) version of the symptom. Sometimes I did not sleep at all, and after a period of subclinical, manic-energized optimism, a slowly-releasing depression with recurring suicidal thoughts took hold.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Material in the Depths of the Self**

As I proceeded further, the subjective experiences frightened me enormously. They were products of the dreaded "total-object-loss" experience, something laid down in infancy, and something that my personal analysis had

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<sup>22</sup> My venture into systematic self work came after my training analysis ended in late 1978, and the self analysis papers to which I have referred here were only those written prior that point in time. I did, however, maintain an interest in the subsequent experiences of others, and saw that nothing changed. As late as 1993, the book by Barron, included with the Self Analysis download, continued to illustrate the many problems encountered by professionals who tried to take their conflicted selves to deeper levels and failed.

<sup>23</sup> This concept and the research context in which it features, require considerable expansion to make them fully understandable, and that is much more than can be offered in this paper. The term itself, however, is explanatory to a degree that hopefully will suffice for now.

<sup>24</sup> And all of that was a big surprise, for I had entered the training analysis with much less-serious symptoms to the fore, and after nine years of the traditional several sessions a week, the treatment had appeared successful.

not unearthed. And to get at what was producing them I had to adapt to living with intense affective states while going about my daily life. I was, however, able to do so, and the experience alerted me to the unsuspected and unused strength in the ego of an adult's observing self. When mine was called upon to do so, it roamed the depths of my still-conflicted selves<sup>25</sup> and met everyday responsibilities to boot. And it impressed me with the fact that such multiple functioning was possible. I had not been at all certain that such would be the case.

The material that came from my depths was entirely fascinating. In the sixth year of ten years of concentrated self work (that started with the appearance of an unusual symptom (*a huge hive in the "snuff box"*<sup>26</sup> *of the right hand the day after the training analysis ended*), I was startled as my associations moved from the ideational to the visual sphere. I saw what appeared to be two eyes with no other features and called them "eye-faces". Then came vestibular sensations, "mouth-selves" (images of the self's face dominated by large mouths with teeth) and scenes of mouth-self assertions on breasts.

The breast images were not connected with the eye-faces at first, but the object's face and (one) breast eventually came together with no connecting body parts, and I named them "Breast-faces". Then, later still, the faces had mouths and they scowled.

Throughout such developments there were scenes of blood, carnage and rage, profound desolations, an object-less world, and frightening fantasies with sensations of body-mind fragmentation. In them, parts of the "body self" could be visualized as flying out from a centre of cohesion while the "I" observing them remained together (see the phenomenon in an art piece - Addendum B, part of the short story, "An Afternoon").

The method then went on to release fantasies of Catatonic Stupors (as encountered during my General Psychiatry career) that repeated and repeated before moving to parts of the subjective phenomena common to the other Schizophrenias in their more disorganized forms. The experiences were only taking place in *parts* of the total self, and I was able to carry on living my

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<sup>25</sup> My references to "selves" (in the plural) is not to the so-called Multiple Personality Disorder. That there are at least four main self organizations (Conflicted Real, Social, Relatively Unconflicted Real, and Observing), one of which has two subparts (Social = Defense and Adaptive), is evident from observations in everyday life. For example, two of the four are illustrated by the statement, "*Now why did I say that!*" In it, a speaker self is genuinely puzzled by something another self has said.

<sup>26</sup> The dorsal area of the hand between the thumb and first finger in which snuff was placed and inhaled.

family, social and professional lives as they unfolded. But being a pioneer when I was in the midst of them, there were times when I was not certain that the proverbial “glue” would hold.

### **The Process Comes To an End and Its Record Is Preserved**

After several years of such gruelling but very interesting daily effort, the core of my tangled and turmoiled beginnings emerged to direct view, and when I did what proved necessary with what I saw, my symptoms fell away for good. Then, as the self method had involved the writing method that captured the entire process on the spot, I preserved my “worksheets”<sup>27</sup> (some 5000-plus in number to that point) for future use. In addition to the record's value as a unique account of a “completed” analysis, and one carried out by the subject himself, it contains notations that bear on still-unexplained theoretical areas of the analytic domain. It is also an unusually-detailed account that could be made available for various third-party uses if the occasions for such were to arise.

## **B: THE CREATIVE PROCESS EMERGES FROM THE MIX**

### **1972: A Poet Self Steps Out of the Self's Depths**

In the third year of my personal (training) analysis (in 1972), I was seized with, and surprised by, an impulse to write poetry. The nuclei of poems pushed themselves up from my depths and into my consciousness while I watched like a befuddled bystander. And I was more their scribe and polisher of style than their author.

The *intensity* of the drive was striking. I wrote at once when it asserted itself, and I never knew what my mysterious muse would cast up until he/she/it did so. Then I was soon living the life of a local poet.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> 8 ½ x11 sheets on a clipboard dated and filed in sequence daily.

<sup>28</sup> It was logically suggestable that my three-year-old training analysis had released the talent and content, but subsequent insight that I will cite pointed elsewhere. It was not until that analysis was over (Jan 1979) and defense systems not analysed fell to my self work, that I became *fully conscious* (of never *unconscious*) unwitting countertransferences and mistaken theories that had limited the treatment and resulted in an ending not initiated by me. Then the complexities of related puzzle during it began to unravel. Knowing I was a poet, he had asked to see the poems, but *I never did show them!* It was only

I successfully submitted some poems to Poetry Canada Review and was much encouraged by the editor. I went to workshops and readings and developed many friendships with poets of professional bent and calibre. It was revealing to observe that people (including me) seemed interested in having partially-intimate relationships by reading each other's works. There was an atmosphere of genuine respect, courtesy, and friendship, and the poetry life was a pleasant contrast to the rough-and-tumble of my clinical and institutional experiences. I did some public readings, gave talks to school classes, had my work assessed by an interested writer-in-residence, and wrote hundreds of poems on match covers or whatever else was at hand.

And after eighteen years of my double life, I received a happy shock.

### **1985: An Unusual Phenomenon Is Observed**

When what was to become the second half of my self analysis was getting underway, I watched as elements from the creative part of my poet existence began making spontaneous appearances in my "sessions".

To that point, the poetry had simply been a source of personal pleasure unconnected to my journey to the place of "inchoate terrors". Then in the midst of some dreadful and protracted upheavals produced by that trip, the key lines from early poems started coming into my free-associative stream in verbatim form. They were subtle presences at first, but when the phenomenon became unmistakable and took on a distinctive pattern, the scientist in me was stirred. And when it became a regular occurrence, I heard opportunity knocking with a new research design.

### **The Poet Comes Increasingly Under the Scientist's Scrutiny**

At the start of such observations, it was only my curiosity that had been piqued. But when I then saw the signs of a regular, latent interval between the writing of the poems and their self-analytic appearances, the rest of me was pulled into its deliberations. And after a review of relevant notations in my self

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after the researches that led to this paper opened a door to the unconscious sources of the Artistic Creative Process (and I was therefore encouraged to continue studies of it), that a viable hypothesis to explain the phenomenon came to light.

records revealed that the interval was almost *two years to the day* in the cases examined, I became excited.

The finding suggested that when an artist dismantled the repression defense that was closing his(her) observational access to the root sources of his art, the unconscious operations of his creative process would be opened to view.

### **A Hypothesis Is Developed**

The above observations and considerations then led to the following hypothesis:

I had been systematically dismantling the defense systems and defenses through which the derivatives that had become poems had emerged two years earlier. And the core lines around which I had developed my poems were entering my free-associative stream in the contexts of the once-repressed contents and processes that had issued them.

### **The Reasonings that Supported It**

Several thoughts entered into the evolution of the above idea.

For one, the lines from the poems flowed without pause as integral pieces of the conflicted self-and-objects material being released to observation. They were obvious parts of its contents and structure-processes, and they could not have readily been so had they not emerged from the area of initially-inaccessible unconscious life that the self analysis was reaching.

They also placed the anonymous, mysterious figures and situations of the poems in very personal contexts. As the self work progressed and the condensations that had been poems expanded contextually, the figures involved became those of the author's early self and identifiable original objects. In the image-and-ideational situations revealed, the "poem-figure/poet-self" was threatened with a loss of those objects while being unable to appeal to possible others for assistance. Defense considerations of the most vital kinds were forcing it to inhibit direct expressions of despair and enter into circumspect attempts to communicate in the form of coded (poetic) messages to strangers. The material was also speaking to why the identities of the poem objects could not be known and exposed in the poems, and why the poet was writing for journal readers far removed from connection to those figures.

The above experiences also made an interesting hypothesis-supportive connection to my work with analysands. Long before the above findings had emerged to view, I had been observing that many people developed what I called “parallel images” as they applied the M.F. method in their self explorations. The images came in inner experiential streams that ran alongside but outside the material that their observing selves were noting and expressing. They did not come to their attention for long periods, and upon finally doing so they did not get mentioned at once. And it was a long time still before they were described in detail.

Here is an example of the phenomenon:

“For days now, while I have been talking, I have been building a structure across your ceiling. It’s quite a complex project. There is a ladder leading up to it on the side of that beam ... I’ve been watching it all for a while but I haven’t said anything about it.”

It then took several months of mutual effort with successions of layered “transferences-of-defense”<sup>29</sup> before the material that identified the source of the image began coming to light as follows:

“I see the image of an infant up there. I know it’s me but I don’t want to let you know that. You’ll mock the “me” that I describe.”

### **New Facets of the Poetry Phenomenon Continue to Unfold**

In time, the latent interval I had observed shortened to one year, then six months, one month, one day, and one hour, and I watched the process with the raptness of a movie buff drawn into an unfamiliar plot.

The “movie”, however, was one of the serialized kind. It whetted my appetite and left me waiting for a next chapter that never advertised its coming. I had to sate my interest at unexpected moments before being led into new twists in the plot. And Hitchcock had nothing on my unconscious when it came to presenting ingenious surprises. To learn something substantial about the makings of my own art, I had to let go of the desire to know where I was heading and accept being led there.

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<sup>29</sup> i.e. transferences from objects that issue standards backed by threats that force the self to inhibit its expression of what they do not want to hear.

Then came a spotting of the nuclei for new poems in the analytic material of the moment. Freed associations had poetic qualities and I used them to compose poems on the spot.

And in a further development, whole lines of free association came in poetic forms (due to the *condensation* factor involved in the development of unconscious memories and the artistic creative process), and I wrote them down as such.

### **Other Dimensions of the Artistic Process Come to the Fore**

As my poetry life, the self analysis, and the developing research continued, my curiosity turned to art critics, their psychological makeups, the nature of their criticisms and the permeability of the artist's psyche to them. My own poems were regularly subjected to criticisms in workshops and I used my experiences to explore their effects. I was also able to observe the outward behaviours of the internal processes in critics, along with the effects of their critiques on those criticized, and the scenes were sometimes dramatic.

Although the meetings were usually friendly and pleasant, I was once taken aback when one member blew up in anger on hearing a poem by another who immediately fled from the room and never came back.

I then became interested in what drove authors to revise their poems, and my own mind was a good source of data in that area.

The unconscious determinants of the use of rhymes and rhythms, decisions about line breaks and the use of archaic language also came into my self analysis, and it was interesting to note that the sound properties of poems were the last to arise and the last to have light thrown upon them. Norman Holland's article on the mnemonic rhyme, "Thirty days hath September" was published in the *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* (1986) during this period of my studies and I spent an afternoon with the questions he posed. I was quickly led from contents to cadence and metre elements, and on to childhood experiences in which voice sounds had featured over ideas. And when the self analysis ended, leaving me with only the mortar rounds and Uzzi bursts of real life's outrageous fortunes with which to contend, questions about rhythms remained. It appeared that those features of poems were determined at very deep levels.

Theories of reader response also became interesting for a while, and I examined questions that they raised in the artistic material of analysts. It was abundant when I attended to it. Spontaneous lines from published poets

and allusions to other art forms came in free-associated contexts, and I made an interesting observation that contributed to my understanding of the appeal that art works have for audiences. Studies of the operative transferences revealed that a self was being incorporated for neurotic purpose by a character-symptomatic caretaker object, and that there was no *other* object that was willing or able to help it. Then a long-remembered writer or other artist would come to its partial rescue. A few words like “*Truth stands on a high hill*” (John Donne) would stimulate its flagging spirit, drum up courage or lift it from despair. And sometimes they helped by simply offering the company of someone obviously personally familiar with its plight.

I was also able to join in explorations of the creative processes in analysands with unsuspected artistic ability once their assisted self work released it.

### **New Artistic Developments in the Analyst**

As all of the above experiences were taking their natural courses, I began to encounter new developments in the artistic side of myself.

During the last part of the self analysis, and rearing its sudden, unexpected head from the primordial psychic forests in which the artistic creative urge appears to reside, came a desire to paint. I had been a man of verbal-ideational and intellectual bent with no training in the visual arts, but I was taken over by a huge will that had me feverishly buying equipment and painting, as is interestingly said, “to save my soul”.

I observed, as an unconscious, coordinated set of directives and operations of great complexity had their way, and a Christmas-present oil painting (Appendix A: “The Face Behind the Face Behind the Face”) for my wife took shape. I could neither explain what it was nor why I produced it for a gift, but after a very long while its sources appeared in the self work and the answers became clear.

Then as time went on, I was visited by a short story muse and mightily aroused. I wrote a piece (Appendix B: “An Afternoon”) of some twenty-five hundred words, proceeding without forethought and unable to stop during short breaks in a clinical day of the usual hectic sort. And I was much interested in the content of the story when it was finished. It had evidently formed from subjective experiences lying at a deep level. Personal events from years ago had been changed and deepened far beyond my conscious experiences of them. I had actually had an episode of vertigo during my personal analysis and drawn upon it in my narrative, but as the character in

my tale was spinning to the floor, he saw his internal organs flung across the room. And it was only in the last phase of the self analysis that terror-laden fragmentation states linked with the story and explained it.

I then wrote a series of short stories or character sketches over a period of about five months before the drive fell to the analytic work. It was replaced, briefly, by an interest in drama that led to a one-act play and surges of ideas for novels, but neither effort flourished.

I also developed a great curiosity about the psychology of music towards the end of the work, and certain aspects of the music experience have continued to stir my curiosity to this day.

### **A Lull That Seemed Forever and a Shift of Interest**

Eventually all of the above creative drives quieted and became sporadic. I had periodic impulses to paint or write, but the drives were weak and I rarely acted upon them.

### **Then Art Moves To Science**

As the self work continued to progress and a further succession of defense systems fell away, there was a shift of emphasis from art to the origins of the intense drives that had propelled me to a career in clinical research. But what I was beginning to discover, though very interesting, was taken over by another development that captured my attention and held it.

### **The Artistic Urge Returns**

To my total amazement, I was once more seized by a strong artistic drive - to sculpt in wood!

One summer while on holiday, I began to toy with a block of poplar and a simple chisel, having in mind to create a figure of a ballet dancer for my wife. But as I started into the project, my eyes were directed to seeing a part of the shape of a strange head. I then felt all of the old intensities of artistic desire coming back, and hands followed eyes as I carved the rest of the day without eating.

When the piece was finished, it was a bust of a very distressed infant with the imprints of a bitten breast at its back (Appendix C: “What Did I Do?”), something that became a source of curiosity for several months. Then the analysis added another element to my muse mystery as it took me around another turn.

I kept the figure in my office and studied it at intervals. Then one day, as I was once again perusing its features, I felt a sudden urge to throw it through a plate-glass window. Oh what a new puzzle was cast in that moment! And what a new mind source there was to discover!

But more about that at a later time.

### **Then Art Recedes in Importance Again**

I continued to have a strong desire to carve for a while, and with the exception of a few panels (Appendix D: “The Twisted Woman and the Blue Boy”) it was mostly heads. The faces were my main passion, and though they were all significantly different they shared the same feature of not being pretty or benign. My family dubbed them “ugly heads” and friends called them “tortured” (Appendix E: “Heironymus – What Did I Do Now?”). And as people observed the intensity of my drive to carve them they joked about my leaving clinical work to “set up a head shop”.

Then once again the drive settled down and seemed to disappear.

### **And Science Alternates with Art**

Just when I was thinking I would carve no more, and after I had moved from art to an intensified period of scientific research, some unexpected scientific setbacks led to a further unexpected experience.

Analytic presentations of the M.F. researches that excited me were encountering antagonism, indifference and disinterest from colleagues, and there were many negative misperceptions of both me and my work. I was then again seized by the drive to sculpt, and a new head (Appendix F: “Coming Out of the Spin”) unlike those that had come before took shape. It still had most of the evocative qualities of the older efforts, but I gradually came to realize there were differences. And they were heralding the end of my analysis and a freedom from symptoms at last.

## **Humour Rules What Is Left of the Art**

After all of that, there was an alternation of "scientific-enthusiasm-dampened-by colleagues" and "artistic-fervour-resumed" for a while. And as the symptom material of the self sessions dried up, a humorous trend appeared in my much-weakened artistic impulses. The poetry drive disappeared completely, and, though the desire to sculpt persisted, I rarely took up tools to sate it. And on the few occasions when I did so, it was to create gifts for friends (some of them artists) who had requested them (e.g. Appendix G: "Theo and Willy on Vacation").

### **C: THE ADVANTAGES OF THIS METHOD**

The research approach described has much to commend it. It could be duplicated by those who have artistic capabilities, are curious enough to suffer in the interest of plumbing their deepest psychological depths, have a reliable theoretical means to do so, and are more invested in knowing and changing their insides than preserving their art. (The latter is a key point, of course.)

As I allowed my experience to carry me along, I participated on several planes of mind function at once. I was the technical analyst-clinician, the experiencing subject of the self analysis, the creator of artworks, and the observing, synthesizing, researching scientist in one person, with all of my parts functioning simultaneously. There were times when I felt like a one-man band with too many instruments, but the strain was tempered by my research conditions. Obtaining permission was simple, and confidentiality was never a problem. No research committees called halt on the way to my grail, and when it appeared it was a sight to remember.

## **Part III**

### **THE DATA-COLLECTION PHASE OF THE METHOD IN OPERATION**

#### **POEM ROOTS REVEALED BY SELF ANALYSIS**

I have selected one poem that emerged in the self analysis at intervals after it was written. It was one of many, and, in the pursuit of good science, I

chose it at random. I then tracked its appearances in the self work over a period of one year.

The piece originally came to me as the image of a man who intruded himself into an old woodland scene that entered my mind while watching TV in bed one September night in 1985. The scene was in the form of a clear, recurring memory from twenty-three years before. In it, I was waiting for my companions on a remote, backwoods logging road after a day hunting deer in Northern Ontario. The sky was overcast. There had been rain. The woods were silent. The air was still. And I was intrigued by the crystal clear purity of some water droplets on a string of wire fence enshrouded with fallen leaves.

Into this picture, the imagined man appeared. He stood before me in a frozen posture and stared with a passively-pleading look. As he did so, he quietly cried. His jacket was of red wool, and I turned to peruse it before looking back to his face. As I examined his eyes, they cracked, in jagged cracks that widened as I looked, and there was nothing to see inside. As I continued to look, clouds began to form and break in the emptiness, and a poem came. It had a particular shape that I changed the next day.

### **I Met a Man in the Fall Woods**

His tears  
slipped down in droplets  
over his red wool coat.

They glistened to the rocks  
and covered the dark leaves,  
and ran in trickles under twigs,  
and flowed off through the fall woods.

He looked at me  
from pale blue eyes  
that cracked as I watched,  
like ice  
breaking up  
in spring.

I could see inside.  
There was an emptiness there.

Clouds formed  
and swirled  
and broke  
there.

## **The Poem as It Appeared Later and At Intervals in the Self Analysis**

The following eight verbatim excerpts from the self notes illustrate how the poem emerged in analytic contexts in the year after its creation.<sup>30</sup> It was written at a point when the latent interval between conception and appearances had shortened considerably.

Some sections have lead-ins and square-bracketed comments to put the material in a readable context. Round-bracketed segments are parts of the original record. Stimulus words reminding me of the poem are bolded, and actual parts of the poem are quoted, bolded and italicized. One segment that does not contain a poem reference is included to provide a contextual bridge.

### **Two Weeks Later**

As I start my session, I make a slip with the date and associate to it:

“September, '38 - 1938 - the year before the war.  
Father goes away and scares the shit out of me. I wish  
I was back there. I'd have a year to adjust. It was so  
sudden, a loss of all objects. (My mother was  
physically present, but unknown to me had been 'lost'  
as a viable object for a long time.)”

The poem appears after two pages of analysis:

“... the Catatonia fantasies of earlier. But I had the  
father and did not have to withdraw all motility to  
satisfy Mother and keep her, under the spectre of  
repeat loss of her and loss of food as in earlier oral  
phase and fragmentation. I can see 'me' (slip for 'my')  
[I then leave the 'my' and associate to 'me'] split and  
crack and fragment. [I then think of my first short  
story six months before and have the following line  
come into the free associative flow] ***I met a man in  
the fall woods. There was emptiness there.*** [and it  
arouses this line of thought] **behind his cracked eyes**

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<sup>30</sup> In my illustration, I have concentrated on describing the pertinent *observational* material that the self analysis cast up. I have made no attempt to recount the processes of formulation and intervention that allowed the material to come to consciousness.

= nil had gone in behind his eyes? or had leaked out =  
the object is gone internally? When gone? How?"

and after more pages of work

"This throws me back on the awful experience = I feel a shock of great fear. I see self as just eyes face? hair standing up, like a ball. No arms or legs. I am helpless. I now see I have teeth which are sharp. I've bitten the breast to hold on to it in a natural way" <sup>31</sup>

then more associations including images and

"I don't see mouth anymore - I reject my own mouth that caused all the pain ... I fear growth of any aggression potential - mouth, teeth, arms, legs If I don't, I become the grown up hunter, hunting the 'dear' in the '**Fall Woods**' ... I feel '**empty**', of the nice warm feeling that comes with seeing i.e. taking in the image of the positive mother smiling"

After much more work, I see myself repeatedly in a state of stuporous depression in relation to a loss of objects. Many questions are raised about why the infant has such a response to an objectless condition:

### **One Week Later**

In a state of horrible affective distress:

"being cared for by a single internal object is just hanging by a thread ... There is a terrible feeling of '**emptiness**'.

[And an image appears and I describe it. I do so in the manner of someone reflecting upon his own observation and its significance.] 'Whenever I think of this feeling I see the *poor* '**man of the Fall Woods**'. I

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<sup>31</sup> The "awful experience" was one of extreme, protracted, early-childhood trauma that had been released from repression and analytically processed at an earlier period in the self work. It became chronic because the events that produced it occurred at a time when understanding by the experiencing self was impossible and no assistance from adults was available.

see his abdomen and chest and his pleading, '**his tears**'."

### One Week Later

During a period of analysis accompanied by the most awful and unrelenting affects:

"My head feels under strain. I imagine it split in pieces [an image] All the parts crack [and, a line from my very first poem thirteen years before<sup>32</sup>] 'like **ice** underfoot' " (and I think of '**The Man in the Fall Woods**') "My head = my mind = each part will function separately. I think of psychosis."

### After Another Week

"I feel rather weird. Anxiety. I see self when ready to die, extremely frightened."

### Two Months Later

After a steadily-increasing deepening of the unconscious level to one of the most distressing and frightening places:

"I feel very very bad. No hope. I close my eyes. '**There was an emptiness there.**' I feel much like crying. I can a bit. But the idea is there - there's no one to cry to."

[I think of two lines from a poem that my daughter wrote several years ago when she was about five]

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<sup>32</sup> i.e. **Hey, pen! What's this?** Ah, you lovely sun! / I'm tired this morning, / and it's nice to have you light this room / and warm my hands and knees, / as I wait for my first patient. Someone inside, now, / like the cold blue light of your winter days, / lights not, warms not. / They leave me / to the chilling sounds of ice / crackling underfoot. They are on their sometimes trek / to equatorial lands / I presume.

“The Brd sINgs / and noBdy knoS.”

“(As I remember the lines, I feel touched, and have watery eyes. I recall that I was sitting reading the evening paper after work when she wrote her poem and presented it to me with great excitement. I remember being most impressed and wondering where on earth she had gotten it from in herself. I wonder, in the present, if it was possible that I looked low. Could the five-year-old have had empathic capacities for reading [what was lying behind the responsible mask of] the adult? I don't expect to find the answer to my question, but I conclude, at least, that I had tucked the poem away as a resource, one that would come to me quite spontaneously when I entered a ‘loveless (internal) world’ years later.)

### **Six Months Later**

Before the poem's next appearance, the analysis shows a deepening to its very roots. There is much intermingling of several other poems with the personal material in the process of free association. Many bits of music come into the work, and a great deal of scientific discovery takes place. I experience enormous pain, but the encounter is still an unrelentingly curious one, and very exciting:

“(I am on holiday on my sailboat. It is a beautiful day, but defenses, once released, ‘do not a pretty picture make’. I am, in a part of my mind, in a place of very ‘deep weeds’)

“ ... the self has ‘exploded’ = fragmented - Mother is gone. I can feel fragmentation of body - see images of it- split **‘like ice breaking up in spring’** Idea of body breaking in jagged parts and the parts moving away outwards and swirling, tumbling”

### **In two months**

The poem makes another appearance, and a little more of it is revealed:

“(The father object is gone, and I am ‘trapped’ in a house with two other objects, both of whom hate me and) “there is a sense of **emptiness** to the world”

“(The familiar word reminds me of the poem, and I think about the rest of it) **'There is an emptiness there'** - I can't feel nice feelings for people. Obsessional fear shoot "Y" [a sib] by accident. The rain fell - I sit and cry and cry. Clouds swirl - Cloud's Hill, (The reference is to the name of T. E. Lawrence's cottage in Dorset England which I had visited twenty years before.) Lawrence Lonely lived and died forsaken - feelings Lawrence alone in rain, his music Dreams, distracted I want to cry, cr, cry - why can't somebody love me! want to know me as I am, like me.”

### One Month Later

After a period in which the fragmentation experience has filled the pages of the analytic work, the line “*There was an emptiness there.*” comes directly into the free associations. The following is a small part of what turned out to be a rather amazing session in which the poem featured throughout.

The material is stimulated by a difficult referral. Signs indicate that the patient will attempt to use me inappropriately and that his efforts will be supported by great amounts of aggression:

“I can see myself and feel myself in my **hunting jacket** with stark, frightened, **crying eyes** - somewhat with a blind looking at someone in an appeal. Also incomprehension about what's happening to me. I have this big hole I am empty of heart and guts = I got no spirit, capacity to stand up to aggressors. I 'se' [a slip,

to which I associate.] 'SE' = Z's car model = Mother's car model = 'Special Edition'. I got a special edition introject. I see Mother angry face curled up inside = she's no body, nothing = she thinks she's nobody and she's sore afraid and I've got responsibility for her. She's like a kid - worse than not even born. And I gotta take care of her = watch out I don't embarrass her or she'll rage at me - eat me up. Destroy me ... “ <sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> This material takes me back to the poem and to a particularly interesting metapsychological and artistic-process aspect of it. Much of the man in the poem is me, but one part of him is my mother. My eyes are brown but his are

There was repression at work, as evident in the slip, and I turned to look at the motives for the defense:

"It's a problem to tell someone about Mother, cause that would cause the whole thing [i.e. embarrass her]. So I stand mute (**the man in the poem**), making an appeal of the body and face. Hope someone will hold me, comfort. "There, there", without me having to speak."

## PART IV

### REFLECTIONS ON THE ANALYSIS AND THE ART EIGHTEEN YEARS LATER

As I finish preparing this paper for publication, it is late in December, 2004, and I am seventy-two. I am still in practice and I teach and write about

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blue like my mother's. And this context from which the poem has sprung has one area in which I am in part my mother without actually being so. That is, she is inside me in the form of an internalized object but she is not my self. The material therefore hints at the type of depth-unconscious content that becomes **condensed [See Note following]** to produce the derivatives that emerge to consciousness as central parts of art pieces.

**[Note:** Apart from its inferable role in the creation of art, **the 'condensation' phenomenon** mentioned earlier, is a regular feature in clinical work at large. My research with transferences has shown that it is not, as Freud said, the effect of a "primary process thinking" that takes place in the repressed unconscious. When analysts associate to the parts of condensed material, there is often no sign of the resistance that could be expected if the repression defense were in operation. And whether that defense is present, or not, the roots of the phenomenon remain the same. A self is found to be skipping the intermediate parts of a sequence of interactive, problem-solving efforts with a problem object that it has consciously written off as useless to repeat. At a time of symptom genesis, it made the assessment and decision by cognitive means, and the beginning and end of the exchange became all that mattered. It then functioned with the learned principle, "*this object stimulus results in this object-determined ending, and there is no point to trying to change the outcome*". For example, "*mother wants, I provide*" is a condensation of the start and finish of what was once a chain of interactions in which the child first refused, then complained, etc.]

analytic science.

With regards to the self analysis, I have been free of my original symptoms since it ended in 1990. There was a short period ten years later when a cardiac symptom of unknown cause captured my interest, and I noted timing correlations with an external stimulus and some symptomatic acts on the body. I stopped the acts to force their roots to consciousness, and the intense affects associated with previously-analyzed and well-processed childhood traumata were revived in dreams. Then, after a most peculiar experience of being happy and free during the day but embroiled in old conflicts at night, the self work dismantled the behaviour at source.<sup>34</sup> The cardiac problem (later diagnosed as “atrial fibrillation”) remained, and, though medical research has suggested (but not proven) a physical origin for the condition, I am left wondering. During my studies of it, I was regularly able to accurately predict its onset when a particular external event that set the symptomatic acts in operation was about to be experienced.

As to the artistic experience, it is five years since my last carvings (“Willy” and “Theo”) were created. And I have not written a poem for several years. I continue to have passing interests in painting and sculpture but they have been supplanted by a modest desire to finish writing my account of the M.F. Theory. There are signs of a still-active drive to create art in my depths, and indications that it may awaken at some later time in a muted form. I can also tell that, if it does, it will be abstract heads and faces that I make, for I can call a variety of them to mind when settling into an idle, reflective state.

When all is considered, I am very grateful for the opportunities offered by my unplanned career. My memories of the turmoil aroused by the self work pale beside those of the excitements that accompanied discoveries. And the one that has meant the most has been that of a genuine scientific theory of the psychoanalytic clinical situation. It has opened doors to so many areas of unexplained mental phenomena in and out of the clinical situation.

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<sup>34</sup> The techniques of purposely stopping an action identified as symptomatic and enduring the affects released, are essential to getting access to its roots. A symptom is, by (tested) definition, a “compromise formation of defense and drive” in which: (a) an object threat is at the “working surface”; (b) a self with no “effective defenses” is in the first layer; (c) and a feared form of the aggressive drive contained by defenses of the “anticipate-and-prevent” type is in layer #2. As the host counters the automatic operation of a symptomatic behaviour, he(she) arouses the fears that an original problem object induced, and as he works to liberate his serviceable aggressive drive defenses from enforced encapsulations of the suppression and repression types, he must see a good reason for experiencing and enduring dreads and terrors for a while.

I am also thankful for the unsuspected artistic talents that the theory released. My muses, without telling me, provided wonderful and enjoyable outlets for an object-strangled soul that I was trying to free without knowing what it was. And when I indicated my preference for a centre of self (i.e. soul) to which I could directly relate, over one that sent secret appeals to which I could not directly respond, I was appreciative when they expressed their complete understanding.

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**Appendix A**



**The Face Behind the Face Behind the Face**

## Appendix B

### An Afternoon

The man was forty. He had lived in Toronto all his life. For the past fifteen years, he had been an editor of scholarly critiques of modern literature in a large, private institution near the University of Toronto, his Alma Mater. It was his usual routine to get off the Avenue road bus at Bloor Street at 12:45 p.m. And he did so on the day of this recounting.

He walked with an undetermined and distracted step on that grey, spring afternoon in March. His thoughts had gone to blue skies and old memories of peaceful times, for he was a little flat at this time of his existence. The excitement of his work had dwindled, and he had difficult political struggles to face as he had become a senior partner in his company.

According to an ingrained habit, he lingered along Philosopher's Walk on the way to Hart House where he took his coffee. Then he headed to his little office in a charming, old publishing complex near the north campus.

As he entered the room, he was drawn to a bust, an ancient thing that he had bought in Crete and that he liked to look at. It was of an unknown person by an unknown artist from an unrecorded era, but it was obviously very old. It had highlights from some polished metal that came up when he dusted it, as he did with regularity once a week.

As he looked at the relic this time, however, a flash of light played briefly across his eyes from the high cheekbone of the fierce face. And at that moment, a strange experience was let loose within him.

He took two steps to his desk to put his briefcase down, and began to spin. The room exploded off to his left in a swirl, as he lurched onto the floor to his right. He felt a surge of rasping tightness that started in his

bowels and rushed up to his throat as if to fly out. He then watched, astonished, as his stomach left his mouth and poured its contents independently, in the corner of the room. His heart was leaping and driving its way out of his chest, and, in a moment, he could see it, as if he were watching a surgery. It gleamed and shone brightly, and impressed itself into his eyes. In another moment he could feel it, crowding its way into his eye-popped face. He sought his two hands frantically, in an effort to wrench it back.

But they would not move.

Soon there was a calm. He felt himself all over and he was still there. His skin and limbs gave reassuring sensations. He ended where he had always thought he was, and he was relieved to find that he was not part of his surround. But he was cold and sweating, and very puzzled.

He lay quietly, moving nothing but his eyes, as he looked cautiously and reflectively about the room. At first he feared to stir, but then he did not want to. Something of an inward stillness led him to stay motionless and take in moments of time that he had never been given before. At least that was how it seemed. ....etc.

**Appendix C**



**What Did I Do?**

**Appendix D**



**The Twisted Woman and the Blue Boy**

**Appendix E**

**Heironymus – “What Did I Do Now?”**

**Appendix F**



**Coming Out of the Spin**

**Appendix G****Theo and Willy on Vacation**

## **SUMMARY**

The clinical-psychoanalytic methodological problem of gaining direct access to the unconscious processes and substances of the artist's mind during acts of creation is defined and examined.

A psychoanalyst/researcher/poet's experience of an unexpected series of events that led to the discovery of a unique new method is then reported. They included: (1) the development of a conscious, cognitive, testable, scientific method of clinical formulation; (2) its application in a startling self-analytic examination of the belief "no analysis is ever complete"; (3) the observation that lines from previously-written poems began to come into the free-associative stream with a regular latent interval of two years; (4) the tracking of a randomly-selected poem in detailed self-analytic process notes over a period of one year; (5) the development of the hypothesis that the analysis of defense systems was releasing unconscious sources of earlier-written poems; (6) the observation that the latent interval shortened until poems came during the free-associative process; (7) annotated observations of analytic material bearing on the artist's: permeability to literary criticism, motives for revision, purposes of communications, etc; (8) the unintended analytic undoing of powerful poetic drive; (9) successive emergences of drives to: paint, write short stories and plays, sculpt abstract heads in wood; (10) alternations of sculpting and scientific drives; (11) the ending of self analysis with total, permanent results; (12) the unanticipated disappearance of all artistic drives with the exception of the sculpting, the drive for which became much muted..

The data-collection phase of the method is then illustrated by describing the appearances the above-mentioned (#4) poem made in repressed-unconscious contexts that were released by the self work.