desire each other, even though the having of children radically refigures desire in the couple; it's that their erotic connection, in the moments of enacted desire, excludes the children. In the family, of whatever configuration, what cannot be hidden is the fact that two people's pleasure in each other is always someone else's exclusion. That in our pleasure, whatever else we are doing, we are frustrating someone; and this is one of the things that makes our pleasure-seeking so difficult, so guilty, so confounding. Couples, of whatever kind, can be partners in crime. Once they have children they are the criminals.

Most people feel far worse about betraying their children than about betraying their partner. And children can be used far more effectively for the policing of desire than partners; at its most extreme it is as though the thing we can't do to our children is live our desire outside the family. Given that we can't always live our desire that intensely inside the family, it might seem sometimes as though a strange sacrifice is being made. In so far as we have become the animals who have to choose between having children or having sex we have made a terrible pact that must be to everyone's detriment, particularly the children's. It casts them as both the objects and the saboteurs of their parents' desire. This could make someone at once both a critic of the family and unable to conceive of anything better.

☆ CLASS

On Not Making It Up: The Varieties of Creative Experience

> The one thing which we seek with insatiable desire is to forget ourselves, to be surprised out of our propriety, to lose our sempiternal memory, and to do something without knowing how or why . . . Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm. The way of life is wonderful: it is by abandonment.
>
> Emerson, 'Circles'

I

The Varieties of Religious Experience is a quite different proposition from the varieties of religious belief. By concentrating on experience rather than belief William James was asking himself, in his remarkable book: what happens, what does it feel like, to have a religious experience? And what is it about these experiences that makes us want to call them religious rather than, say, political or artistic? What James puts his modern pragmatic faith in – at least what he prefers to put his faith in – are people's descriptions rather than their explanations. Or, rather, James is interested in how people's descriptions of what happens are entangled with explanations. The title of his book makes us wonder, which comes first: the cart or the horse? Are people's experiences the consequences of their beliefs, or vice versa? Are beliefs foisted on experiences

or constitutive of them? Or is belief, as Wittgenstein asked, an experience? These, James acknowledges at the outset, have traditionally been questions for theologians and philosophers, and more recently – James was writing in 1902 – for anthropologists. And James confesses that he is none of these things. He is, he says, that relatively new professional thing, a psychologist. As a psychologist, he writes, 'the natural thing for me would be to invite you to a descriptive survey of [those] religious propensities'. Psychology, he suggests, is a kind of secular protestantism. It craves the singular account. 'If the enquiry be psychological,' he writes, 'not religious institutions but rather religious feelings and religious impulses must be its subject, and I must confine myself to those more developed subjective phenomena recorded in literature produced by articulate and fully self-conscious men in works of piety and autobiography.' It is as though, James intimates, institutions formalize (as belief) what individuals can't help but informalize (as experience).

That there were *varieties* of religious experience, and that we needed to take the variety of experience as seriously as the variety (or otherwise) of belief; and that the way through to this was a 'descriptive survey of religious propensities', of feelings and impulses and the 'more developed subjective phenomena recorded in literature produced by the articulate'; all this – which smacks for us of the varieties of creative experience – was a pretext, among other things, for James to develop a theory about theories. That is, a theory about why our theories matter. And theories matter for James according to their use. They are not destinations, they are our means of transport. For James the question about a belief is not whether it is true but, rather, how would my life be better if I believed it? So a belief can never be an idol or a fetish (or a resting-place),

it can only be a tool or an instrument (we don't believe in violins, we play them). Our experiences may seem more various than our beliefs; but beliefs are things we use to get ourselves certain experiences. The only thing that matters for James about our theories is that they have consequences. He wants to know not how we have come by our theories, but where they can take us.

What we believe about God – like what we believe about the differences between the sexes, or about creativity – will above all affect what James calls our conduct. 'Every difference,' he writes in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*,

> must make a difference, every theoretical difference somewhere issue in a practical difference, and the best method for discussing points of theory is to begin by ascertaining what practical difference would result from one alternative or the other being true. What is the particular truth in question known as? In what facts does it result? What is its cash-value in terms of particular experience?

What is creative about theory-making is that it creates consequences; our theories 'somewhere issue in a practical difference'; 'somewhere' because there isn't always a simple causal connection in play. However subtly, however difficult to discern, what we believe issues in what we do. Our theories are compasses, if not maps.

All this has been a roundabout way of saying that, from James's point of view, our theories about creativity are somewhere of a piece with our experience of creativity. What we believe about creativity affects our creative conduct. And if so-called creativity implies a creator then histories of religious experience must inform our modern ideas about creativity. If, for example, at its crudest, it is part of our post-romantic

legacy to think of artistic work as akin to divine creation, and also to sometimes think of artists as mad, does that mean that we have a theory that the Judeo-Christian God was mad, or mad to create the world? Or mad to create the world like this?

What we believe – wittingly or unwittingly, consciously or unconsciously – creators and creativity are like will, as James puts it, result in certain facts, buy us certain experiences. When he asks of any particular truth, 'What is its cash-value in terms of particular experience?' he is asking us to imagine what this particular truth, this particular belief, can buy us, what experiences it can provide us with. If I believe that, at least potentially, I have something inside me called creativity; whether I describe it as a gift, or a skill; whether I think of it as coming from God or my childhood or my genes; if it feels somehow akin to sexual desire or is robotic; whether it is automatic, like a machine, or inspired, like grace. Each assumed likeness takes me down a different path. If writing poetry is a skill, like carpentry, or a game, like tennis, then I must practise regularly; if it is a gift, an epiphany, I must learn to wait, if not actually prepare my waiting, so that I am sufficiently receptive at the given moment, should it occur. James asks us to be attentive to these differences. Our truths are not out there, like new planets, waiting for us to discover them; they are made by us (and for us) like uniforms. In the service of our needs, they equip us for our particular tasks. James's pragmatism, in short, is itself a theory of creativity, among the varieties of creative experience.

The truth of your beliefs is what they can do for you, James says. Truth is the name you will give to whatever turns out to have been good to believe. So what then, James obviously prompts us to wonder, is good to believe about what we call – perhaps for want of a better word – creativity? And that

means, in this context, what are the consequences of our beliefs about creative experience, and what do these useful beliefs reveal about what we want? If there really are varieties of creative experience then we can't hope – or shouldn't want – to come up with some essential definition that covers all our examples. Our wants can be as various, as idiosyncratic, as the facts resulting from our beliefs. And yet there is an emblematic dilemma that often turns up when modern people begin to discuss what modern people call creativity. Though it comes, as we shall see, in various forms, the dilemma itself can be simply stated: is creativity the imposition of something or the discovery of something? Is the creative act an assertion or a disclosure? We talk of people discovering the laws of nature, but not discovering poems in the language. We talk of someone making up a story, but not, at least not in the same way, making up how the brain works. It is as though there are things that are always already there which we may or may not find; and there are things which we make, which we put there, and by doing so we add something to the world that wasn't previously there. Gravity was always there, but the *Mona Lisa* wasn't. And yet, of course, we think of both so-called artists and scientists as creative. Are we making additions to the world as we find it, or are we revealing more and more of what's already there?

There is always a temptation to think too deeply about things. Indeed, William James is keen to keep us practical, to stop us being waylaid by our own profundity. But without being unduly portentous it is worth noting the recurrence of this particular dilemma in what are otherwise quite disparate modern writers. Denis Donoghue, in *Thieves of Fire*, used Adrian Stokes's distinction between carving and modelling to illustrate what he called the Promethean imagination; which,

he says, 'starts with an incorrigible sense of its own power, and seeks in nature only the means of its own fulfilment'. 'In carving,' he writes,

> the artist assumes that the block of stone contains within itself the form invented for it by nature; the artist's desire is merely to liberate that form, to disclose its hidden face . . . In modelling, on the other hand, the artist gives the stone his own truth, or what he insists is his own truth; the truth of the stone as a different truth is not acknowledged.

The great American critic R. P. Blackmur makes, in a similar spirit, a distinction between the erotic and the sacramental poet who, respectively, foist themselves upon their objects in an act of virtual ravishment or indeed cannibalism, or reveal and revere an object by definition other than themselves. When the poet Charles Tomlinson praises Marianne Moore in *American Essays* it is to this issue that he refers: 'In an age when major poets such as Eliot and Yeats have treated nature with an imperiousness that, at times, recalls their symbolist forebears, Miss Moore is ready to accord to objects and to animals a life of their own.' When he celebrates George Oppen for having 'his mind on what he is making and not on the coruscations of self-presentation', a similar point is being made. In one kind of creative experience the artist uses his art to elaborate, to expose, to fashion himself. In the other kind of experience the animating intention of the artist is to reveal something other, something separate, something aside or apart from the self; not, in Tomlinson's word, to 'fuse' with the object, but to differentiate it. The sacramental poet, the carver, forgets himself; the erotic poet, the Promethean, the modeller, endorses himself. In one version the self is the

instrument, in the other it is the obstacle. In one version the so-called self is privileged, in the other versions something beyond the self is revealed. At one extreme of this strange dualistic vision there is the cult of personality, the artist as the emperor of egotism; and at the other extreme there is a cult of the object, of a world whose virtue and substance resides in the fact that it resists manipulation. Creative experience is either self-promotion or self-surrender. The moral and aesthetic question becomes: do I value something because I can make it mine, or because I can't? Whether we are talking about the individual's relationship with God, or the relationship between parents and children, or between lovers or friends, or simply our involvement with the so-called external world, the creative experience, whatever else it is, is our sorting out our making from our finding. In the language of psychology, this would mean wondering about the difference between perception and projection.

It would be tedious to catalogue the modern instances of this essential perplexity. When, for example, the political philosopher Jerry Cohen wanted to illustrate a point in his recent Gifford Lectures about utopian socialists, he suggested that they 'prescribe a new form to reality. Contrast midwives, who deliver the form that develops within reality' ('If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're So Rich?'). Put like this the gender distinction seems most vivid; but the familiar thing is once again at stake. Prescription of something new, or facilitation of something there already, and ready to happen. 'The artist,' according to Adrian Stokes in his *Critical Writings*, 'has seized upon a pose and almost painted the object out.' Whereas the artist as midwife allows the object its own shape. Like all such contrasts the differences blur in the middle. When Ted Hughes writes about a pike the poem is at once startlingly real

and has Ted Hughes written all over it. But the distinction I have been labouring over catches something of our sense of what selves might be like; and particularly creative selves, reminiscent as they often are of earlier representations of deities. There is the imperial (and imperious) self who colonizes the world, or replaces the world with a world of his own: the artist who makes the world in his own image. And then there is the self as midwife, creating the optimal conditions for something other than the self to come to life; the artist as servant of a process. For the imperial self, the world needs to be improved. For the midwife self, the world needs to be seen as it is.

This way of categorizing the varieties of creative experience is clearly more applicable to some arts than to others. It doesn't, for example, tell us very much about music. And it seems to make slightly more sense of the visual arts than the verbal arts. But it is most instructively confounding, I think, when it is applied to one thing that psychoanalysis as a treatment has in common with at least some of the literary arts; that is, the narration of personal history. What if the creative experience is the telling of a life story, or the writing of an autobiography? What if the object to be creatively transformed is what we quaintly call the past? For Rousseau, for Wordsworth, for Freud – indeed for William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* – to tell one's life stories was a paradigmatic creative experience. It was the creative experience that accounted for one's creative experience. But is the patient in psychoanalysis, or the romantic (and post-romantic) autobiographer, a carver or a modeller? A Promethean or a midwife? What would it be, in other words, to tell the story of one's life but not to make it up? An autobiography without a self in it, or a self without a past in it, would seem like a contradiction

in terms. We couldn't help but wonder whose life story it was. Unless, that is, the past has a life of its own that the self – or what we call the self – can get in the way of. What Freud is saying, as we shall see, is that the past does have a kind of life of its own inside us; and that what he calls the ego is always trying to make it a life of our own. The ego is a modeller, the part of ourselves that imposes form and meaning on our lives. But the past – our desire, and our memory that is of desire – insists, like a carver, on liberating its own forms. It keeps releasing versions of itself, called repetitions, and quite unexpected, expectant desires. It keeps disrupting our plans. We break our resolutions. The ego is a utopian, but the past keeps giving birth to itself. What Freud calls the return of the repressed, we might call the carver's triumph over the modeller. Prometheus enflamed.

If, for some people now, God is neither the source of nor the model for our creative experience; and if, for some people, the rumoured death of God prefigured the death of the subject, of the self as agent, then the whole notion of creativity – of creators and their creations – looses its moorings. There is no privileged analogy, no model, no agreement about origins or aims. Just as William James asked, what makes people want to call an experience religious? We might want to ask now what is it about an experience that makes us want to call it creative? And, of course, the antonyms in play make a difference, affect the cash value of our experience; secular is not the same as destructive. Towards the end of his life – as a kind of theoretical valediction, an elegy for one world war and a foreshadowing of another – Freud described the individual as a war between creative and destructive forces; as constituted by this conflict between what he called, in his own mythology, Eros and Thanatos. But psychoanalysis, from its inception,

was always a story about the varieties of destructive experience. And the first word in psychoanalysis for destructive experience was 'trauma'. The second word was 'instinct'.

II

In a sense, the issue of trauma can be stated quite simply: is a life interrupted by events, or are the interruptions the life? Do we, as organisms, have an aim, a teleology, a true life story from which we can be deflected, or is what we call a life – and the telling of a life story – a series of more or less productive and satisfying adaptations and transformations of what happens to happen? Just as acorns become oak trees people could be described as having essential selves, organic destinies, which are either distorted or realized – depending on one's point of view – in the haphazard of circumstance. We are, alas, back in the world of carvers and modellers; of midwives and Prometheans. If what we call the self is already there it just has to be delivered; optimal conditions must be created for its birth and development. Events are assessed according to whether they nurture or thwart this intimate, innate, unfolding form. Events like wars, epidemics, economic slumps can be the ultimate bad luck, the ultimate affront to this self. Indeed, the problem of having such a self – of having such a preferred life story – is that it can be sabotaged. If you are very lucky – and with this kind of self you have to be very lucky, for you are prone to bitterness and disappointment, to not having been given a chance (your chance) – the world will be your midwife. But the onus, so to speak, is on the midwife. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that the project depends upon the midwife.

For the Promethean, of course, circumstances are there to be used; contingent events – and the not so contingent event

of who is in charge – are the point not the problem. They are, indeed, an opportunity – the only opportunity available – to make the self. Whatever happens to be there is potentially material to fashion the self with; any occasion that presents itself is an opportunity to make the self in performance. The only thing the Promethean has to complain about is how the world resists him: how recalcitrant the medium can be in which he needs to exhibit himself. The Promethean makes himself by persuading others of the value of the self he is making. The Promethean self hopes he can be threatened, or at least challenged; the midwived self hopes he can go on growing. The Promethean self thrives on trauma; for the midwived self trauma is dismaying.

The midwived self is prone to feel that the world has let him down; the Promethean self is prone to feel that he has let himself down (the depressed are disappointed Prometheans). I could go on, though the distinction, clearly, is not endlessly resilient, or endlessly fascinating. But what it does show, I think, is a modern conceptual configuration – a field of terms – that we can use to describe so-called creative experience. A surrender, a yielding, a giving oneself up (or over) to something not exactly (or remotely) oneself; or an imposition, a foisting, a fashioning of something of one's own. 'It is the difference,' Richard Rorty writes in *Consequences of Pragmatism*, in another context, 'between regarding truth, goodness and beauty as eternal objects which we try to locate and reveal, and regarding them as artefacts whose fundamental design we often have to alter.' Each of these two versions involves us in telling a different kind of story about the self; about its gifts and talents, its purposes and functions, its presence and absence. There are muddles to be had here, as well as perplexities to be considered. It is not clear, for example, in these

terms whether what we call our selves are the obstacle to or the instrument of creativity; whether what we call creative experience is the unmaking or the making of the self.

What Freud adds to the conversation (apart from a change of terms: he drops the self and uses the word 'ego' for the way we want to represent ourselves to ourselves and others) is a question about therapy, about life aims. Is the aim of psychoanalysis to strengthen the ego or to weaken it? Should we be strengthening our characters, or putting a stop to them? Is Prometheanism the problem or the solution? What Freud uses psychoanalysis to describe is what might be called an alternative to egotism; and this is both a new variety of creative experience and a new story about creative experience itself. Freud invents a technique which reveals – despite his wish to use it as a cure for symptoms – what happens, what turns up, when a person chooses to relinquish his egotism, his sense of himself as a, as *the*, creator. When, that is to say, he says whatever comes into his mind in the presence of another person; when he free associates. What is said (and thought and felt) when the person who he thinks of as himself stops thinking about making it up?

What Freud hears, as he listens to his patients – as he listens to himself listening to his patients – is the prodigal vagrancy of modern human appetite. Or, to put it another way, he discovered – even though he resisted the discovery – that there was no such thing as a normal sexual life: no such thing as a normal life story. Freud, in other words, makes us wonder: what would a theory of creativity be if it was a theory of appetite? And what if our appetite, essentially, is for appetite regained? So the paradoxical aim of creativity was to keep creativity alive, just as the point of appetite is to sustain it. There was the creativity of telling one's life story, and the

creativity of whatever it was that hampered, that paused, that interrupted the telling of a life story. But the life story itself – whatever else it was – was for Freud a memory of desire. To speak is to remind oneself, to re-create what it is one wants and fears.

Freud can't work out whether the psychoanalyst, not to mention the patient's ego, should be carving or modelling. And this is partly because what is deemed to be there to carve or model is not stone, it is personal history; it is instinctual life, and the strange logic of its unconscious representation. What Freud calls the unconscious is not analogous to the material the sculptor uses; in fact, it is not clear what, if anything, it is analogous to. And therefore it is not clear whether it makes sense, from a psychoanalytic point of view, to think of a person (or a patient) as the artist of his own life. What, exactly, are the materials that he is going to transform? Is the past or our desires – in whatever form they are assumed to be alive inside us – akin to an artistic medium, and therefore available for us to transform? What, if anything, is creative about ourselves; and what or who is doing the creating?

Whatever our analogy for the storage, for the accumulation of past experience – the archive, the museum, the tomb – and however we imagine the instinctual desire inside us – as drives or energies or wild animals – the only way through which the life inside us of which we are unconscious can make itself known is through bodily movement and language. There may not be palpable or observable selves inside us to be carved and modelled, but words can be spoken. The psychoanalyst shows the so-called patient how he stops himself speaking, and what he feels he must not say. In prescribing the method of free association the analyst encourages the patient to become a carver rather than a modeller of his speech flow. The modeller,

we may remember Denis Donoghue wrote, 'gives the stone his own truth, or what he insists is his own truth'; whereas the carver 'assumes that the block of stone contains within itself the form invented for it by nature; the artist's desire is merely to liberate that form'. The analyst's desire, one can say, is to liberate the form, the unconscious logic of desire, contained with the patient's words. 'The fundamental technical rule of this procedure of "free association",' Freud writes in his 'Two Encyclopaedia Articles' of 1923,

> has been . . . maintained in psychoanalytic work. The treatment is begun by the patient being required to put himself in the position of an attentive and dispassionate self-observer, merely to read off all the time the surface of his consciousness, and on the one hand to make a duty of the most complete honesty while on the other hand not to hold back any idea from communication, even if (1) he feels that it is too disagreeable or if (2) he judges that it is nonsensical or (3) too unimportant or (4) irrelevant to what is being looked for. It is uniformly found that precisely those ideas which provoke these last-mentioned reactions are of particular value in discovering the forgotten material.

If the patient makes 'a duty of the most complete honesty', in the way Freud prescribes, what will come through? What, in Donoghue's words, will be 'liberated' or 'disclosed' will be 'the forgotten material'. If you free associate, Freud says, if you speak freely, what you are speaking about, unbeknown to yourself, is the past. Honesty is simply memory; truth-telling is remembering what it is you want. What the patient is resistant to, what has made the patient a modeller, a Promethean rather than a carver or a midwife, is this horror of the past.

'When conscious purposive ideas are abandoned,' Freud writes in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 'concealed purposive ideas assume control of the current of ideas.' Something else is liberated, something else called 'concealed purposive ideas' takes over; as though there are hidden counter-intentions awaiting their chance. And yet what Freud describes is a kind of creative struggle; a battle, as it were, between two artists. If we look at the patient's criteria for excluding ideas, for not speaking, they are rather like the standards a writer might use in revising his work; if the words are disagreeable, nonsensical, unimportant or irrelevant they are taken out. The writer, as Promethean modeller, is a master of relevance, a maker of his own preferred sense. He lives by his own criteria, whether or not he is ever able or willing to articulate them. For someone – a carver-analyst, or a carver version of himself – to suggest that he should abandon his way of doing things would be a form of character assassination. What, after all, the ego as Promethean modeller might wonder, would he be abandoning himself to? And to what end? Is there something else, something better, that the Promethean, by being a Promethean, has been warding off, which would give him a better life? Is creative experience a warding off or a surrendering; or, as Freud intimates, an essential and irresolvable conflict between the two? But there is, we can see, a version of creativity that is essentially a conflict between two kinds of creative experience: between two kinds of creative selves. Freud seems to believe that our life has a life of its own – has lives of its own – going on inside us. And that when the patient who is suffering from his own Prometheanism (his infernal self-fashioning) meets the analyst as midwife, as carver, something vital will be liberated; and that is called, variously, the repressed, 'the forgotten material', the memory that is desire.

What is creative, Freud intimates – though this would not necessarily be his word – is the sustaining of the relationship between these two figures, these two versions of oneself. There is the creativity, the inventiveness of defence and resistance; Harold Bloom, and Lionel Trilling before him, refer to the Freudian defences as poetical tropes. And one of the more insidious implications here is that we are at our most creative in the ways in which we frustrate ourselves. That creative experience is the art of turning renunciation into its own kind of pleasure. And then there is the creativity involved in releasing or disclosing or acknowledging – it is difficult to know what the right word is here – whatever is disowned or estranged within ourselves. Or, indeed, what is quite other to ourselves as we know them; whatever has been hitherto out of reach of the human (the non-human human environment). And all this creative struggle that is deemed to be going on both within the individual and between the analyst and the patient has a simple aim: to prevent the future from being merely a repetition of the sufferings of the past. To make the future unheard of. It is creative to produce variations on a theme or to change the theme.

And yet it is clear in this modern, secular, virtually Darwinian story of creativity – that is to say, a story about creativity that is a story about appetite, pleasure-seeking and psychic survival – that there is a tension between conservation and renovation. The rebel, Sartre says in his book on Baudelaire, 'is careful to preserve the abuses from which he suffers so that he can go on rebelling against them'. The revolutionary changes the world. The rebel, in other words, is the person who fears the future. What is creative about the rebel, one might say, are the ways he finds to keep the world the same so that he can go on rebelling against it. If you hate change

you have to be clever at conservation. Sartre pits the nostalgia of the rebel – his passion for repetition, for sameness – against the innovation, the improvisation of the revolutionary. There is the making new, and there is the keeping fresh.

The point about a God is that he always already exists; the point about a secular future as an object of desire is that it doesn't. It is as though – when we think about the varieties of creative experience – either everything is already here and all we have to do is find it and let it be as it is; or that the point about what is already here is that it is here to be transformed into something else that has never been here before. William James, as a pragmatist, would favour the second view; Freud as a psychoanalyst hovers between them, sensing that if there is a mind it can't make up its mind. And especially not about this. It is the conflict between conservation and improvisation, between the rebel and the revolutionary, that bewitches him ('given the divergent temporality', Arnold Davidson remarks in *The Emergence of Sexuality* of the emergence of new concepts and the formation of new mentalities, 'it is no surprise that Freud's mental habits never quite caught up with his conceptual articulations'). And it is perhaps the creative and peculiarly modern creative experience of autobiography that bring these particular issues into striking relief. Is the autobiographer – and the autobiographer that is the psychoanalytic patient – a rebel or a revolutionary in Sartre's terms; a carver or a modeller in Stokes's terms? Is the autobiographer – which is a virtual synonym now for the middle-class person – making it up; which means making something new that never previously existed? And if that is what she is doing why does it matter, why should anyone be cross?

III

The psychoanalytic patient as autobiographer is an unusual kind of artist; he is, as he free associates, an artist without standards. The artfulness of the writer is her selection of words; consciously or unconsciously some words are considered to be better than others. Knowingly or not, the creative experience of writing is a series of decisions. Freud defines his patient by requiring something specific of him; that he will become, as it were, the anti-artist of his own life; he will abrogate, in so far as he is able, the choice of words. He must speak as though none of his words are any better than any others; none are more accurate, or more truthful, or more melodious. He must speak as though he is someone who doesn't yet know which of his words are valuable, and in which ways they are valuable. He must become like a medium for the language inside his body. He is not being encouraged to speak as though he didn't know how to speak, but as though he didn't know how to mean what he said, or when he said what he meant. The experience, at its starkest, is of speaking as though one's language had no meaning. Or, rather, that one's language had concealed or indeterminate meanings (like pretending one was bilingual in one's own language). In so far as the patient resists, as he must, saying whatever comes into his mind he is conserving himself; maintaining the status quo of who he wants to be. He tries – against the odds, so to speak – to narrow the range of what he has to say; to stay within orbit of what makes sense to him. He wants to be a recognizable kind of person, primarily to himself. And he can do this, Freud intimates, only if he is sufficiently ingenious, sufficiently artful, one could say, in censoring himself. Rebelling against his own nature – his other nature – this is the creative experience of

keeping oneself safe. This is a modelling of the material, the selecting of words, that, one imagines, keeps one acceptable, indeed lovable, to certain others. This account is me as I would prefer to be seen; so anything new, anything surprising, anything at all disruptive, has to meet my already existing criteria of what my self should sound like. And this, one could say, is the bind for the modern poet who has found what we call his or her voice; that having found the voice it then has to be imitated. One has to sound, one should sound, like oneself (the poet of the future may fear sounding like himself). The modeller, the rebel, wants to discover a style, an idiom, a personal voice. He wants to be recognizable, even if no one, including himself, understands what they recognize. The creative experience here is of not being thrown too far off balance; of not loosing one's moorings in the world of shared interests and consensual pleasures. The autobiographer – the psychoanalytic patient as oral autobiographer – may sound eccentric, but we will be able to locate the centre that he is off. We will be able, in short, to call him a person, a character; an extraordinary individual compared with all the ordinary individuals we reassuringly think that we know.

The patient speaks: the analyst helps him recognize and understand his resistances to speaking; and, ideally, the patient can speak a little more freely. This is Freud's more or less traditional account of creative experience, redescribed and adapted for a therapeutic setting. The post-romantic image of the struggling artist – emotionally tormented and economically deprived – becomes the neurotic patient struck dumb, or struck banal, by his forbidden (incestuous) desires. In this version creative experience is a creative overcoming.

The patient may not be able to make sense of what he is saying but it is hoped that the analyst can. The patient free

* this is the original LINK btwn PSYA & PE

associates not exactly to or at a listener but in the presence of one. There is, that is to say, a modeller somewhere in the room; someone who can make some sense of the verbal proceedings. And yet it might be equally plausible to say that the analyst is a carver and that the patient is the modeller. The patient keeps imposing himself on his own words (keeps performing his egotistical sublime); and the analyst, through analysis, tries to get his own censorious ego/super-ego out of the way so he can speak without impediment; release the words banked up, waiting inside him. But it's clearly more complicated than this; especially if what is there deemed to be seeking some kind of release is unconscious memory and desire. After all, what would it be for all this pastness (in whatever form), all this forbidden desire, to come through? It is, of course, at moments like this that people start using words like 'floodgates' and 'barbarism'; and, indeed, 'family values'. So perhaps it would be better to say that the analyst is helping the patient to be a better modeller, more satisfyingly selective. The patient might become a less restrictive guardian of his vocabulary; he may, at least to some extent, be able to tell people what he seemed to want from them, and be prepared to take the consequences of such desire as he has. But if the analyst helps him with his modelling; frees him, not necessarily to be less censorious, but to be more able to evaluate for himself his own censoriousness, and to see what it is worth to him; then the question arises – when it comes to talking or writing, when it comes to words, when it comes to autobiography – what would it be to be a carver? Is there a life story waiting to be told, awaiting the conditions for disclosure? Can we assume, to adapt Denis Donoghue's words, 'that the person contains within herself a life story invented for her by nature; so the artist's (the analyst's) desire is merely to liberate that

story, to disclose its hidden face'? If one's life story, or the life stories that constitute one's life story, are like this – if the analogy with sculpture holds – then, if the carver has done her work, nothing will have been made up. For the carver there is a true story to be told; the creative experience is this struggle for accuracy, for sentences that correspond to what happened. If the autobiographer told us at the outset that she was aiming not to tell the truth we would wonder what she was up to; we would wonder what to call what she was doing.

'This,' Rousseau begins his *Confessions*, 'is the only portrait of a man, painted exactly according to nature and in all its truth, that exists and will probably ever exist'; it is, he writes, 'the only sure monument to my character that has not been disfigured by my enemies'. If this is the 'only' portrait that is strictly mimetic – 'painted exactly according to nature and in all its truth' – it is clear that Rousseau is the first person ever to have told the truth about himself; that there is a truth to be told about oneself, and if one is sufficiently honest it can be told. Enemies, he intimates, are those people who disfigure this truth. That is how you recognize an enemy: he distorts your account; he defaces your monument to yourself.

In this creative experience there is a creator, and he knows what he is doing. Like a God he seems to know where he stands in relation to himself and his creation. 'I have told the truth,' Rousseau concludes his *Confessions*, in a flourish of barely concealed righteous indignation,

> If anyone knows things that are contrary to what I have just set out, should they be proved a thousand times over, he knows lies and deceits, and if he refuses to explore and to clarify them with me while I am alive, he loves neither justice nor truth. As for me, I

hereby declare publicly and without fear: that anyone who, without even having read my writings, examines with his own eyes my nature, my character, my morals, my inclinations, my pleasures, my habits, and can think me a dishonourable man, is himself a man who ought to be choked.

There is, perhaps, a certain bravado in this provocation, a certain amount of self-doubt to be dealt with if sceptics of his account ought to be killed. Correspondence theories of truth can bring with them murderous forms of self-assurance. Is such honesty in itself honourable, or is it the truthfulness of his account that has disclosed just how honourable Rousseau has really been in his life? Rousseau's insistence, one could say portentously, suggests, at least to our more modern ears, that there was a crisis about truth-telling in the air. And a crisis about the nature of the self.

Freud was to redescribe honour as part of the tyranny of self-love; and to redescribe those who are utterly convinced of their own truthfulness as paranoiacs. Rousseau, as we can see, is a man utterly dependent on his enemies for his self-definition. It is of course glib and therefore silly to talk in this kind of reductive shorthand about issues of such (historical) complexity. But it is worth noting some of the ambiguities – the potential for a certain kind of arrogance – in the carver's attitude. In cherishing his truthfulness, in simply delivering his truth in all its apparent integrity and which he could not, by definition, have made up, he renders himself curiously unassailable. He apparently abrogates his egotism only to produce something wholly self-sufficient. We may remember Charles Tomlinson praising Marianne Moore over Yeats and Eliot because she was 'ready to accord to objects and to animals a life of their own'. Rousseau is ready here to accord

to his life story a life of its own. What would it be to criticize such integrity; after such honesty, what forgiveness?

The variety of creative experience that Freud adds – and that Sartre elaborates on in his distinction between the rebel and the revolutionary – is that the autobiographer is always a modeller, always a Promethean; is always inventive and self-inventive in his account of himself. And, indeed, may be at his most Promethean, at his most imposing, when he claims to be telling the truth. That we are not, to put it as crudely as possible, trying to get it right, but trying and trying not to get what we want. Truth is the rhetorical compliment we give to our desires to persuade people of the value of gratifying them. The truth-teller, the autobiographer as truth-teller, wants something, wants everything from the people he addresses. This is what the psychoanalyst asks herself; what is the patient wanting, unbeknown to himself, in this telling? What unconscious drama of satisfactions is being staged? The paradox, in other words, of the autobiographer, at least from a Freudian point of view, is that he is always looking forward. 'Psychoanalysis,' Lacan wrote in the *Écrits*, 'is a question of recollection . . . in which conjectures about the past are balanced against promises of the future.' But the future, of course, can promise only what we make it promise. Left to itself the future has nothing to offer. We have to make up the future until we get there.

We are allowed, it seems, to make up the future, because that is all we can do with it; but we are not supposed to make up the past. And yet, as I have said, there is a paradox about that peculiarly modern form of creative experience called autobiography. Since the past, our personal history, has already happened it must always be there awaiting our discovery of it; the lost tribe of oneself is there to be found. And

yet the autobiographical account is something new, has never existed before. And, each time you tell it, it will be different. To write or speak one's life story is an experiment that cannot be replicated; it is antithetical to our most rudimentary notions of science because no one else can try telling your autobiography to see if it's true. And even if a biographer can verify or falsify elements of one's life story, it remains true that, for whatever reason, one has chosen to remember, to tell things in a certain way. What might more traditionally, for example, be called lying, Freud would call wanting; the form one's wanting has had to take, in the circumstances. In Freud's view, by talking about the past we are talking about what we want; so talking about the past is one of the best ways we have of talking about the future. When people talk or write about the past we can also describe them as fashioning a future for themselves. Indeed, from a pragmatist point of view, what we call the past is just one of the tools we have for solving our present problems – for getting us from here to there, wherever we want there to be. So it would be part of this modern variety of creative experience called autobiography to wonder what we think we are getting when we are getting it right. We might have to avoid what Wilde famously called falling into careless habits of accuracy (the secular fall of mimesis).

Whether we are making something new or reconstructing something that, in some sense, already exists, can be a useful question in relation to many of the arts. When a poet writes a sonnet, when a concerto is composed – when any kind of artist observes any kind of traditional formal constraint – she is being, as it were, a benign rebel. In Sartre's sense, she keeps the sonnet the same even through her innovations. There is still a world of sonnets. A rebellious autobiographer would be writing (or speaking) something discernibly autobiographical;

it may be 'fictionalized', chronology may be disfigured, but we would recognize what we think of as a person telling us something about what we think of as a life. And in terms of so-called content, the rebellious autobiographer would perhaps be keeping himself the same by sustaining his grievances and admirations; he would be at his most self-assured in his criticism and his praise of himself and others. But a revolutionary autobiographer would change the world. Or, rather, a revolutionary autobiography – if there could be such a thing – would be a radical transformation of the self. Presumably it would be such a transformation that the word 'self' would become redundant. Where once we had described a person, say, we would now be describing drifts of attention. As though what was being censored in internal censorship were alternatives to being a person, a character as traditionally conceived.

Clearly, apocalyptic thinking is nostalgia at its very worst. But if we were to come to no hard and fast conclusions as to what we thought people were like; indeed, began to see the wish to come to such conclusions as in itself a problem; if we could more freely associate with (and to) our own words we may begin to see how the idea of a creator can be the obstacle to the varieties of creative experience. A creator is only ever a rebel. And by that I simply mean that a creator always knows when he has got it right, or has got it as right as he can get it. He may not know how or why he knows – he may not be able to articulate his criteria of rightness – but at a certain point choices will be made. In other words his creation may be new, but his criteria are not. They pre-exist his final creation. The part of the self that is, however intuitively, making decisions in the ongoing work of creation, has standards; and, whatever their provenance, they pre-date the finished work. So when Freud proposes that, as a therapeutic measure, a

person should abrogate that judgemental voicing of the self he calls the ego (or the ego/super-ego), he is suggesting that the past exists inside us in its most stultifying form, as judgement itself. As though somebody or something inside us always already knows what it is good (and bad) for us to think and feel and say.

What is most striking about the carver and the modeller, the rebel and the revolutionary, is that, as accounts of creative experience, each of them is committed to an idea of agency; of an abiding and insistent purposive project; of somebody who already knows something. Depending on which kind of artist we are we have either a Promethean or a midwife, a rebellious or a revolutionary homunculus inside us. The midwife believes that, given a chance, the other will give birth; the Promethean believes that, chance or no chance, he will, as far as he can, give birth to himself. In these varieties of creative experience, we have to choose between a religion of self and a religion of otherness. We have to choose between two quite different kinds of creator. Both of whom must have some sense of when they have got it right, when it is as good as they can make it; and of when it is finished. But what would it be – what kind of creative experience would it be – to ablate such continual assessment of what we have learned to call the self; to assume a more assured vagrancy. We have already judged what a person not sitting in judgement on herself would look like. Perhaps that is a judgement too far. 'The way of life is wonderful,' Emerson wrote: 'it is by abandonment.'

Time Pieces

> . . . the critic must resist all the time the temptation to write as if the discussable things were the most important ones.
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> Christopher Ricks, *Poems and Critics*

I

Memory is often described as both the object and the instrument of our desire. The capacity to remember, indeed a good memory, is something that we want. As a form of access to the past, to information, and for keeping us successful liars, a good memory makes us more efficient, productive and better problem-solvers, which means better pleasure-seekers. But modern memory, at least in what we might call for shorthand the Freud/Proust version, is also essentially of desire, our recalling of what it is we want. And desire is something that can be forgotten and needs to be remembered because it is at worst forbidden, and at best riddled with conflict. We want memories, and memories remind us of what we want. It is clear, in other words, that what we most want is to want, and that what we are most terrorized by is loss or absence of desire. Memory, at least in its modern versions, has been recruited as the best way we have of talking about the problem that desiring has become.

One of the more obvious things that distinguishes us from