

Re-visioning J.'s Case: Four Themes
Within His Art Therapy

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ABSTRACT

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Prompted by an uneasy feeling engendered by further reflection upon my first version, and the idea that case material always remains open to another observation, this thesis re-presents the art therapy of an eight-year-old boy. J.'s is a long term case within which his art and art making process have seemed to foster his identity experience and to contribute to an imaginative integration of unconscious material.

A sample of his art is presented within four image themes which are understood within the framework of object relations and Jungian theory. This presentation is intended to value the primacy of J.'s art in art therapy and to acknowledge the way his images were reworked within the art therapy context ...

"Know thyself" means also to know thy particular images, holding them in an interior void, close and familiar, without doing anything to them or for them. It is an inactive imagination and sometimes this is enough, for as we put events inside to carry and hold and digest, space is created to contain them.

JAMES HILLMAN in "RE-VISIONING PSYCHOLOGY"

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INTRODUCTION

Re-visioning,¹ a term borrowed from Hillman, requires looking again. I originally wrote J.'s case study in a conventional form and was left with a lingering uneasiness. Within this, certain questions and ideas drew me back to his case material; this in turn led me to a different, less linear form of presentation. This is my attempt at re-visioning J.'s case material.

The leading question within this visual metaphor was not to seek to understand why art therapy had worked for J., but what it was essentially about. I felt I had failed to respond to this question within the more conventional version of his case. I also felt I required a new version of what his art therapy was in order to help me to evaluate this experience which has lasted for a long time and been through many phases. At the time of writing, I have been working with this boy for four and a half years.

The shape and movement of my inquiry resulted in a very specific choice of material for presentation. Intending to value the primacy of J.'s art within his art therapy, I have decided to present it within four image themes. These themes have been chosen as four differing yet related perspectives. I have tried to show the way in which the images themselves, rather than their interpretation, seemed to determine the course

¹Hillman, J. (1975), Re-visioning psychology. New York: Harper and Row.

of J.'s therapy, and further to show the way his images were about reworking particular themes.

A "what" question within a therapeutic encounter also requires some manner of presenting and understanding what has changed or may have healed for him. The particular theoretical frameworks to which I have referred are Kleinian and Jungian. As each image theme is presented, it is considered in the context of these theories.

In concentrating upon the imagery itself and the themes that recur, much that took place within the art therapy has been omitted. In particular I have not attempted to trace the inevitable transference and countertransference dynamics which have been present throughout my work with J. However, I have addressed this issue briefly in several footnotes and within Appendix B. It has become clear to me that the abundant material from this one case could be re-visioned many times from different perspectives.

THEME ONE: SNAKES

Snakes have appeared both frequently and significantly within J.'s art. Some snakes are discovered alone in a picture. J. would, at times, call them by name. Other snakes might not be addressed as directly, seeming more to contribute a "snakey" quality to other features in an image.

Who or what are J.'s snakes? Although it is often important to discover if an image has a basis in the real life of a child, it is more in keeping with the way in which I work to say that my interest is in the phenomenology of the snake as it appears within J.'s pictures. His snakes then are invested with a sense of reality -- within which J. may encounter or identify with them. This gives J.'s snakes a kind of autonomy of their own. He can be in it while never having to be it. This view assumes that art therapy works towards fully experiencing an image. The snakes J. draws or paints are not him and yet are him: they're not just snakes and yet there are moments when that is all they are. It is important that the distinction is not made. If it were, his snakes and the meaning and value they have for him would probably then be lost or trivialized.

The first painting I wish to discuss was made very early in J.'s art therapy. It was not until I reviewed J.'s art that I noticed in this painting the beginning of an image theme that J. reworked in various ways for a three-year

period. In my perception, the painting in Figure 1 was made with an intensity, silence, and carefulness of manner that differed from the other paintings J. made that day. When noticing this about his investment, I was attending to the idea that J. may have been doing something particularly important.

This painting began with a long, spiral-shaped, inward moving line in red and black. This was then overpainted with white. The green shape in the center painted next, had something to do with J. drawing a face on the end of his spiral. The eyes and mouth are wide open.

There is something about the painting and the way it was painted that suggests the possibility of it being archetypal in nature. While painting, as I have already mentioned, J. seemed intent and extremely invested in his work. There was also a sense that he was in turn attracted by the painted form as well; staying with it, painting over some of it, and then adding the face.² J. left his painting without a word spoken.

The form J. painted that day resembles the more universal

²This kind of interest or attractiveness is considered to be an essential feature of the way in which the archetype is experienced. Being entirely unconscious contents, archetypes energetically exert an attractive force upon a child's mind and embed themselves as personally felt experience that have meaning and value. Often when a child is captured by something in his picture-making a link to an archetypal root may be assumed. Jung referred to this property of archetypal images as numinosity.

symbol of the uroboros. This mythical snake, that eats its own tail, is distinguished by Jungians as a symbol of the original condition of unconsciousness out of which a child's conscious personality develops.³ It can also be a symbol for narcissistic self-absorption.⁴ All symbolic language must be kept within this kind of paradox. This requires that one look closer at the image to get a sense of what it may mean that is both deeper and more diversified.

J.'s painting includes some particular features that suggest how he has personally symbolized this snake. By painting over the red and black snake with white, he has given his snake a covering of some kind. J.'s snake also actually fails to meet its own tail. There is a green shape contained within it instead.

The child is born into a primary relationship. This relationship between mother and child is symbolized as a uroboric phase for the child. It is "an existence in a unitary reality, because there is as yet no polarization of inner and outer, subject and object, ego and self."⁵ In time the child gradually moves outward from this original existence

³A description of this development is found in Neumann, E. (1954), The origins and history of consciousness, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 5-38, 275-293.

⁴Schwartz-Salant, N. (1982), Narcissism and character transformation, Toronto: Inner City, p. 181.

⁵E. Neumann. (1966), Narcissism, normal self-formation and the primary relationship to the mother, Spring, p. 83.

in the round beginning to differentiate a subject -- an experiencing I, distinct from mother and other objects in the world. This is understood as the development of a conscious system with the child's psyche.

This process of development occurs as psychic and physical boundaries are experienced within the interpersonal mother/child relationship. This relationship is personal in that the real mother interacts with her child, and archetypal in that this original unity is a condition of unconsciousness for the child; the mother also being the original relation to the Self.⁶

Any serious disturbance in this primary relationship, from an actual experience with the real mother, or from an intrapsychic archetypal experience of her, may cause a child to turn back or away from this more natural unfolding movement.

J.'s painted snake, suggestive of this uroboric condition,

⁶Self, when it appears capitalized in this paper, refers to the Jungian conception of the word. For Jungians, the individual psyche is not just a product of personal experience. It also has an archetypal dimension. This archetypal aspect of psyche has a structuring principle which unifies the various archetypal contents, and is referred to as the Self. This Self has a characteristic phenomenology and is associated with such themes as wholeness, totality, protective structures capable of bringing order out of chaos, and the central source of life energy. The original psychic state in a child is an existence within the Self. One is born into its totality. The Self as an inner structuring dynamic stands behind the ego as it emerges. As a child's conscious personality forms, a vital connecting link with the Self is maintained. This link is assumed to lend integrity and resiliency to the ego.

In the initial condition, the Self is experienced within the child's relation to the mother. As the child develops, he detaches himself from this primary experience and moves on through other dynamically determined archetypal themes.

can be understood to acknowledge some disturbance in the unfolding movement. Jungians also contribute the idea that a child who experiences a disturbance in the primary relationship, (which is essentially a disturbance both in Self experience and healthy ego development) an "amalgam of, autonomous elements, a false uroboros"⁷ may remain and impede further psychic development. This false uroboros:

contains the drive and seeds of personality [this seems suggested by J.'s green shape] but has a defensive shell [like the covering over with white paint], ... that denies needs rather than, ... has them readily met [the snake's mouth does not meet the green shape].⁸

Required to correct this intrapsychic situation are containing experiences within which the child is safe to begin to unfold and experience the differentiation previously denied within the original primary relationship. It is assumed that, "the energy of the unconscious process is contained within a work of art produced by a child. The child then in turn reacts to the energy that the product contains."⁹ J. was provided with a situation in art therapy to begin what appears

⁷Schwartz-Salant, N. (1982), Narcissism and character transformation, p. 66.

⁸Ibid., p. 48.

⁹Sullwold, E. (1982), Treatment of children in analytical psychology. In Murray Stein (Ed.), Jungian analysis, Boulder: Shambala, p. 250.

to be a process of differentiation.

The paintings in Figures 2 and 3 are examples of several paintings J. made during an eight-month period after his first snake painting. Both of these pictures include a shape similar to his original one, yet it appears in a more outward and unfolding manner. Differentiation, in the sense of there being an inner and outer process of establishing and affirming distinctions, begins to take form as a child sorts experience out in terms of opposites. In these paintings J. has chosen the contrasting colors of red and blue, seeming to give a sense of the tension inherent in this sorting process. After several years of art therapy J. asked me if I remembered that his favorite colors were red and blue.

At times when J. appeared to have less energy available, or times when he seemed stuck, we would play the scribble game.¹⁰ The drawing in Figure 4 is a scribble I made to which J. has added the scribbled lines, the face, the tongue, the voice, and the name. J. appeared both fearful and fascinated by this drawing. When naming it and giving it a voice, it was as if he had responded to the form of the scribbled lines with a task of his own -- to give what previously had simply been a shape unfolding within his paintings an identity. This is conscious work. It implies a sense of boundary between J. and this "snake" something within his experience. It further

¹⁰ This is an adaptation of Winnicott's scribble drawing technique. This technique is described in Winnicott, D. W. (1971), Therapeutic consultations in child psychiatry, London: Hogarth.

suggests the possibility of relationship, imaginal dialogue, and exchange between J. and the now identified form.

J.'s snake points to how the "child's ego can be nurtured by its connection to the archetypal world."¹¹ What began in appearance as a false uroboros has seemed receptive to J.'s painted green fragment of potential. This potential appears to have assisted him in unfolding his form, and has now lent itself to more conscious and imaginative experience. The snake became a visual figure that we both would acknowledge. On many occasions a snake would be included in a picture. J. would often turn to me and report, "there's the snake." I would nod to this and say, "yes, there it is." Nothing further was required as J. was simply asking for it to be acknowledged in whatever pose it took.

J. did the drawing in blue marker in Figure 5 many months later. He began this picture with a sense that he wasn't sure what he was going to draw. However, as this form took shape his interest was engaged. He became more involved with what he was doing. J. whispered when finished, "it was a picture of a friendly snake." This seems a rather clear and direct statement about a new aspect to his Self experience.

The snakes, as they appeared in the above paintings and drawings, disappeared from art therapy about a month later. I don't know where they went but have a sense that they are

¹¹ Sullwold, E. (1982), Treatment of children in analytical psychology, p. 243.

being shared for within J.'s imagination. There was also a lot of other work going on. It is probable that some of that work had something of the snake in it as well.

At about the three-and-a-half-year mark in art therapy, J. did the drawings in Figures 6 and 7, one after the other. These pictures were in J.'s description, "all about roads." In the first drawing the road has a sign to indicate where it starts and where it ends. Signposts point out "how far it is to go," and "danger spots" where the road bends. Why do I include this picture in with the snakes?

When considering the painting in Figure 1 as a uroboros, my concern for J. was whether he would find the safety to be able to move out from his inner condition of containment. To succeed in this would mean that he would be on a path to affirm his own identity within himself and the world. J.'s road seems to carry a sense of what that path may be like for him, with a start and an end. The danger suggests the danger intrinsic to his journey, and the mileage signs may be what keep J. at his task by lending him a sense of perspective. This drawing suggests the snake re-imagined and reworked into a form now more consistent with J.'s inner experience.

Another version of the road is included in Figure 7. This crayon drawing appears to include a more complex road, consisting of many loops and curvy lines. J. has indicated a starting point and an ending point at the three purple arrows. Two of these arrows point off the page, while the other points at a green circular area. J. used his finger to trace over

his loops and curves. When he reached the end he moved into the green circle. Taking a blue crayon, he made a dot from which four arrows point outwards. J. explained, "you can go there but you can't get lost -- there are arrows out."

Revisiting J.'s painting in Figure 1, this last drawing appears to include the same visual elements: the curvy line ending in a green central shape. What has altered is that now a kind of understanding exists about the image; a consciousness that acknowledges the movement of J.'s line (did he not trace it?), as well as the idea that one can't get lost in this center. There is a danger from some children that they may become "lost in the archetypal world,"¹² thus never developing their own egos. In this drawing, J. seems to have portrayed an imaginal position wherein this possibility might be avoided.

The inner task for J. was getting out of his uroboric experience of containment. In the art presented in this theme, his painting activity seemed to involve him in a process of differentiation with the snake being an inner source of energy for this. J. was then able to consciously acknowledge the snakes within the imagination of his art. The snake fully participated in his imagery and also became "as if" a friend.

It is probable that snakes have participated in J.'s imagery in ways other than what I have described. Two other

¹²Sullwold, E. (1982), Treatment of children in analytical psychology, p. 243.

aspects of the snake suggest further ways of understanding what it may mean in J.'s art. Separation from the mother requires a struggle. In early childhood this struggle is, "victory over the mother, frequently taking the form of actual entry into her i.e. incest."¹³ This incest is archetypal. It is understood as "an active incest, i.e. the conscious exposure ... to the dangerous influence of the feminine."¹⁴ The snake is frequently understood as a symbol of the phallus. J.'s archetypal struggle with the mother may also be suggested by his snakes. As they have unfolded and been identified in his art therapy, a consciousness of his requirement to expose himself to the mother seems portrayed. His entry into her is insured against danger since J. has clarified that he "can't get lost there."

The snake is also understood as a symbol of the energy of the unconscious. It represents an inner serpent which, when activated, may be brought into a relation to consciousness. This energy may be used creatively and have a healing effect upon the personality. This dynamic healing aspect of the snake suggests the value of the symbol in J.'s pictures. By including it so frequently in his art, its energy and healing aspect may have assisted J. in his psychological development.

¹³Neumann, E. (1954), The origins and history of consciousness, p. 154.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 156.

THEME TWO: A BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE

This theme includes the art J. made while his interest and imagination were engaged with the figures and forms he situated in outer space, a place where he visually imagined and participated in conflict.

"The journey of childhood is full of hazardous obstacles, hindrances and heroic requirements."¹⁵ For all children, the primary task of childhood is development of the ego and an independent personality. As I have stated, this occurs as a movement from an original unity with mother to a sense of oneself and other objects¹⁶ in the world. It is not an easy task. It is made difficult by the assumption that a child's newly forming ego lacks the resiliency to at times bear the powerful energies of the unconscious, or overcome the difficulties of the actual circumstances in the outer world.

What happens when this resiliency is lacking? At least

¹⁵Sullwold, E. (1982), Treatment of children in analytical psychology, p. 235.

¹⁶Objects refer to persons or things in a child's world that he experiences in some meaningful way.

Each child's world is comprised of inner events and outer events. These events are not only what occurs as the child relates to real people and things, i.e. outer objects in his world. They also occur in relationships with inner figures and objects derived from the phantasies, imaginative activities, and archetypal experience of his intrapsychic world.

For a concise description of object relations theory, as developed by Melanie Klein and D. W. Winnicott, see Appendix A. This appendix also suggests a possible link between objects and archetypes in the child's experience.

two possibilities exist. For a child overwhelmed from within, the assumption is that a problem within the primary unity has occurred. There may be an invasion of archetypal material that the child is unable to assimilate consciously. If the unity has failed to provide a secure and trusting container for the child's archetypal experience, the child develops with a sense of insecurity and mistrust of himself as an individual and of the world in general. A child may also live within a real environment that is unstable or inconsistent. This kind of real environment would fail to provide the support a child needs to discover and explore his sense of himself and the world he finds around him. In both of the above circumstances, the child's inner experience is likely to be fearful and anxious while their conscious relationship to the world is quite negative. Children with such difficulties often become aggressive, demanding, or despairing in their responses to life. J. has had difficulty in both his inner and outer experience, and it is probable that his ego lacks this feature of resiliency. He is the only son of an unmarried woman who reports that she abandoned J. several times during his infancy. During the time I have known J., his mother has left him twice. There are obvious implications then for an insecure mother/child relationship. J.'s mother also reports having her own psychological difficulties. These are due to a complicated life situation and to problems in her own childhood, which she describes primarily in terms of deprivation, neglect, and abuse. This leaves J. in a literally precarious situation in

which the likelihood of abandonment is always present. J. has no known father, and only a description of his actual father as someone who was "a loser, a drinker, a cripple."¹⁷

What may happen to a child who receives this kind of mothering, and virtually no fathering? In simple terms the child is left to himself. Such children inevitably lack in eros, the loving aspect of their being, and frequently become controllers. They experience life in terms of domination and being dominated. They become "do-it-yourself"¹⁸ mothers and fathers; omnipotent, critical, pseudo-independent and angered by it all.

J. was a particularly difficult child to get to know in a personal way. This would often leave me confused, frustrated, and angry at times. In the early months of art therapy, when J. would paint or draw prolifically, I often felt more in touch with his pictures than with him.¹⁹

One drawing from that time is included in Figure 8. What appears here is a black figure within a box-like form. Surrounding this is a confusion of red and green lines. J. has

¹⁷These are J.'s mother's own words and words that I have heard J. use on the occasions when he would tell me about his father.

¹⁸A more ample description of this is found in Lederman, R. (1981), The robot personality in narcissistic disorder, Journal of Analytical Psychology, V. 26, 329-344.

¹⁹This may further be considered within the context of the initial phase of the transference/countertransference relationship within J.'s art therapy. See Appendix B for an overview of this aspect of the therapeutic work.

also included a snake. What strikes me in this picture is the box, as the form which holds the figure, and the snake's tail as well. When reading about children who suffer early disturbances that often result in what is clinically described as a narcissistic character structure, I came across the following:

The structures defining the narcissistic character defend, ... against depression and suffering. Clinically speaking, they represent a withdrawal from fear and depression, but a withdrawal that can have a tactical advantage, as if the personality went on 'hold', awaiting the right relationships or experiences through which to unfold.²⁰

A sense of this defence and holding is portrayed in J.'s picture.

After eight months of art therapy, there was a compelling moment when J. "got the idea" to make a planet. This planet is included in Figure 9. J. constructed it from boards, nails and string. He drew dots and small figures onto it, designating these as "good guys" and "bad guys." It took several hours of play before the "bad guys got caught."

This planet was very important to J. in my perception. It was as if he'd created territory of his own; a place where his imagined adventures could be practiced and lived out. The bad guys retaliated several times and almost won, and once the bad guys were confused with the good guys and the situation of

²⁰ Schwartz-Salant, N. (1982), Narcissism and character transformation, p. 134.

the planet got all mixed up for him.²¹ It was sufficient at that time for J. to involve his imagination in an effort to ensure that the bad guys got caught.

A year later J. asked if he might see his "old planet." When he looked at it, it appeared to confuse him. To remedy this, he removed the string and nails and placed cardboard over it. J. painted it evenly: one half black, one half blue. This is included in Figure 10. The new planet was "easy" in J.'s description. "The bad guys are there" (black); "the good guys are here" (blue). The values distinguished clearly by color were meaningful for J. It was similar to the beginning of a process of sorting life out on a primary, yet essential, level. It was as if the planet was him; having good things and bad things inside, meeting good things and bad things outside.²²

²¹Melanie Klein's model of development considers that ordering a child's experience begins when phantasy activity directs itself to part objects. The child relates to these part objects by splitting. For the child, this means that object experience is divided: part-objects are loved while contributing to an inner feeling of well-being and part-objects are hated while contributing to an inner feeling of being threatened or attacked.

According to Klein, this process is linked to organization of the child's ego. In J.'s planet, a suggestion of this process appears in his narrative account of the good guys and bad guys.

²²The succeeding "depressive" position of development in Klein's model occurs as the child's ego organizes itself sufficiently enough to experience and relate to objects as whole. Objects are then loving and hating, good and bad in relation to the child's own psychic autonomy. At this ego position, a child begins as well to experience more affective relationships to objects.

I have often wondered about the kind of emotional sense J. has of his father. I have an intuition that many of the pictures he makes about outer space have something to do with this. Lacking a real father and probably living with a feeling that he was rejected by him, outer space just might be a landscape within which to find out something about being fathered.²³ My sense about this is informed by the link J. made to the Star Wars series of films. This story is primarily about a youth who searches the galaxies for his unknown father. In the end the father turns out to be Darth Vader, the ignominious source of the dark and evil powers of the universe.

J.'s interest in this series was similar to many children his age. And yet, as he began to draw pictures inspired by Star Wars, this interest was brought into a specific and

²³"The presence of a person does not depend only on his visibility," Hillman, J. (1981), The thought of the heart, p. 2. J. does not have a real father whom he may know. He does not even bear his father's name. This does not deny J. from an experience of father, since one aspect of father is archetypal. The father, in his archetypal relation, is the provider of a sense of expectation for the son. His positive image is to be the one who carries the caring authority that lends order and structure to a family. On a psychic level, he corresponds to consciousness as opposed to the more maternal implications of the unconscious. The father may be represented symbolically as heaven, light, thunderbolts, weapons, or within the collective aspect of hunting and war.

In J.'s situation, where his initial experience of father was rejecting, a relationship to the positive image is hampered. A negative father image may then preoccupy him with the probability of him identifying with it. The negative image is frequently experienced as domination, iron will, or a need to prove oneself in the world by always winning. If there is no layer of personal experience within which to mediate the father image, the negative configuration tends to overpower.

therapeutic orientation. His art provided a container for the limitless environment of outer space which J. filled with battles, romance, and suspense. Outer space also represents inner space in a deep perspective. This reflects the paradox within J.'s symbolic landscape, and the manner in which children in situations such as his can find a haven in the archetypal world. There, they may identify with the heroes or shadows that inhabit it, in order to escape the necessary struggle to develop and survive in the personal world.

The drawing in Figure 11 was made at a time when J. was quite overwhelmed by these movies. In art therapy his drawings were narratives of these films embellished by his imagination. In this drawing the green and black shape is a "good guy," the pink is Princess Leah, the black grid are "bad guys." The dots around this picture are the areas where the action between these figures occurred. Princess Leah figured significantly in this story, helping the good guys fight the bad.

This kind of story making points to the manner in which personification²⁴ works for J. in art therapy. In certain other pictures, Princess Leah gets frightened, lost or trapped.

²⁴Personification is a natural process in the symbolic and imaginative mind of a child (or adult). Characters in movies, like the example of Princess Leah, capture an aspect of J.'s own experience for him. In his drawings, and particularly when he draws her actively into a story picture, J. personifies his own experience in her imagined form and activity. She, in a sense, carries his experience for him. She is then able to move him in a way that he himself may be consciously unable to at that time. See Personifying or imagining things in Hillman, J. (1975), Re-visioning psychology, New York: Harper and Row, pp. 1-55.

Luke Skywalker, another personification, usually appears to find her and free her. By personifying visual figures to enact these experiences of being attacked, lost, or frightened, J. is both distanced and protected from having to acknowledge them as his own. Nevertheless, he is able to experience the affect they represent.

Personification is a spontaneous and natural event. A problem begins to exist if the distancing and protectiveness that personification implies begins to break down. J. is easily overwhelmed. When this occurs in art therapy he tends to identify with his drawn figures. The drawing in Figure 12 is an illustration of this tendency. In this picture of the Return of the Jedi, a round blue shape, a black box, and many red "starfighters" are included. J. seemed carried away by this drawing; uncertain about what might have been going on in it. His only certainty was of the blue form, Darth Vader, but there was no clarity as to whether he was attacking, or being attacked. The distance was not there for J. It was as if he was Darth Vader; both destroyer and destroyed. This entanglement with the figure in his picture suggests how magnetic this negative father image might have been for him. A lack of distinct boundaries may cause a child's consciousness to be flooded with archetypal material. The danger in this situation is that the child may then begin to identify with the archetype.

Figure 13 is a drawing J. made in response to my suggestion that he draw and name the things he knew in outer space.

This task followed the picture described above. "You can give a child information about reality without restructuring his fantasy."²⁵ In this picture J. has included five identified shapes. The sixth form he described as "all the others," in a way that suggests a more remote or distant experience of the "other": i.e. potentially destructive material.

A short time after J. was drawing the roads presented in the snake theme, he became interested in drawing games. Figure 14 includes the Return of the Jedi game, as it was invented by J. Players move along the red dotted line from a designated start to the end. Along the way there are signs: "now you're fine," "continue," "come here," "you're being attacked," "pass the bad guys' team," and "in a few minutes you'll be at base." In his game, J. seems to have mapped out a movement and direction that acknowledges support, the possibility of danger, and a sense that if the player stays with it he'll make it safely to the end. The rather metaphoric quality in J.'s game indicates that J. may have been beginning to experience a more positive father image, since it is the positive father who's caring authority image lends order and structure to the child's discovery of the world.

Figure 15 is one of the last appearances of the Star Wars figures in J.'s art work. This picture was originally intended to be a battle between the blue figure, Luke Skywalker,

²⁵Watkins, M. (1981), Six approaches to the image in art therapy, Spring, 1981, p. 114.

and the red one, Darth Vader. It altered in the course of its making. J. drew a half circle around the figure and then used his hands to smear the colors. The perception I had was that the figures were engaged in mutually affecting each other, rather than attempting to destroy. This is consistent with the final outcome of the Star Wars films, when Darth Vader gives up his evil powers and acknowledges and reaccepts the good force from his son. By including the arch shape, J.'s figures now appear grounded and therefore subject to the world of time, feeling, and gravity. Perhaps, J.'s inner father had now been, at least partly, redeemed.

In this theme, what began in outer space has now returned to earth. With personification, imagination, narrative, and metaphor J.'s art making was lent psychological weight and energy. This, in turn, belongs to J. to help him develop psychologically. It may serve to strengthen his personal identity.

THEME THREE: MIRRORS OR WATER

This theme will include only a few paintings and drawings selected from a rather large body of similar work. I feel that this work remains as a definite presence within the art work J. made during art therapy. This theme has two titles, linked together by a somewhat hesitant "or." Reflected in this, is a sense of the uncertainty, the pausing, and the questioning that have occurred for me in attempting to bring this particular material to light. This series of pictures has a quality of elusiveness for me, yet this has not kept me from participating in them. The continuity of my relationship with J. has then never been broken by my own difficulty in attempting an understanding.

I am naturally experienced as the source and provider of the art materials J. uses. This has not always been easy. At times, he freely uses very large amounts of material without apparent restraint, in short periods of time. At others, my range of supplies seems lacking in something that he considers he absolutely must have. These situations tend to work themselves into his art-making.²⁶

An example of this occurs in the picture I now wish to discuss. Figure 16 is a painting J. did using every color,

²⁶The use of and response to art materials by the client, in addition to their provision by the art therapist, are considered relevant to the transference/countertransference aspect of the work. Refer to Appendix B.

and all of the available paint. The painting as it appears here is the result of over-painting layer upon layer of paint. As shapes became distinguished they were painted over (one can see a part of a blue sun which still remains). J.'s final gesture, from a then muddy brush, was the spiral-like line.

When attempting to use all of the colors and all of the paint, what might J. have been doing? J. appears to have been painting very many pictures in just this one. This is an interesting way of working. As one image emerged it was then quickly lost to the one that followed. Nothing in particular appears to remain of any of them despite the paradox that each still lives within the final product.

J. also had a kind of personal ritual he enacted when finishing up with these paintings. He took his brushes, paint, and water containers to the sink. He would then turn on the water and wash the brushes and paint containers; fascinated by the way the colors would mix together as they went down the drain. Following this, the containers would be filled up with the tap water and slowly poured away.

This water ritual seemed to make J.'s paintings an even greater secret, adding to them a final dimension of

dissolution.²⁷ It was as if the entire process held within it the character of a solemn ceremonial act, the meaning of which no one else but J. could know. Any trace left was carefully washed away. When considering, "how essential and effective private rituals may be for the psychic equilibrium of an individual child,"²⁸ what J. might have been doing in his paintings and with his ritual suggests an arcane yet psychologically purposeful activity.

Since this ritual occurred within a therapeutic environment, there is an implication that, although simple, spontaneous, and natural in appearance, it reflects a deeper, more significant source. Some of the other work J. was doing in art therapy seemed connected to the development of a more integral ego. This, as stated, involves considerable conscious work. As a new ego experience is established within the therapeutic process, the Self is also more successfully

²⁷ Alchemy attempts to express fundamental principles that are true for both the outer world of matter and the inner world of psyche. Both are assumed to stem from the same source and behave according to the same principles.

Dissolution is one aspect of the circular sequence of life and pattern of the psyche. It refers to the manner in which the inner world becomes fluid so that parts of the personality can be gently taken apart. The potential then exists for coagulation: for putting the personality together again in a new shape.

²⁸ Stewart, Louis H. (1982), Sandplay and Jungian analysis in Murray Stein (Ed.), Jungian analysis, p. 204.

constellated.²⁹ His therapy may thus be understood to represent a returning event.³⁰ This return to the primary relationship engenders development of the ego and a more positive relation to the Self through the ego.

In attempting to search out the significance of the primary relationship, i.e. the relationship of the child to the mother, we come against the central problems of child psychology which have to do with the interrelationship of ego development and the development of the total personality.³¹

²⁹Edinger, E. (1972), Ego and archetype, New York: Penguin. This book examines the progressive evolution of the ego-Self relation in psychological development, considering that the connection between the two centers is vital to psychic health. Edinger describes two processes that contribute to the ego's emergence from the Self in childhood. Inflation is the ego's state of identification with the Self (ego-Self union), while alienation is the ego's disidentification (ego-Self separation). A connecting link between the ego and Self is maintained throughout this process. This link is referred to as the ego-Self axis. It gives foundation, structure, and security to the ego and also provides energy, interest, meaning, and purpose to the psyche as a whole.

As a new ego experience was being affirmed in J.'s art therapy, a healthier link to his Self was also being generated. A vital relation between these two centers was being positively formed.

³⁰Returning event refers to the regressive aspect within J.'s art therapy. Within the therapeutic process, it is formulated as "regression in the service of the ego." See Kris, E. (1952), Psychoanalytic explorations in art, New York: International Universities Press.

³¹Neumann, E. (1966), Narcissism, normal self-formation and the primary relationship to the mother, p. 83.

To return to J.'s painting as a representation of his psychodynamic development, it includes a significant event -- an experience of chaos. It is thus an experience of mother as the Mother³²; J.'s earth and ground, the chaos from which J. himself comes to "matter." The idea here is that, for J., chaos matters.

This way of looking sees chaos and forms as co-present: within the chaos there are inherent forms. Each moment of chaos has shapes within it, and each form or shape embodies a specific chaos.³³

This might be a way to understand J.'s painting experience in this instance. It is also a way to consider the question of why J. made so many such paintings. It is as if, within art making, J. is containing and nurturing the experience of chaos in order that the form inherent in it is cared for as well.

The form must also be acknowledged, because it matters as well. The painting in Figure 17 was made in a similar manner to the former one. What differs is that a more definitive shape appears in addition to a distinct impression of circular movement. J.'s color also seems to be more precise. This circular shape and movement suggests a more active containing form than his previous painting. This may be a different

³²This capitalization refers to mother in her archetypal realm. Here, she lives within J.'s own Self, i.e. within his archetypal mother experience.

³³Berry, Patricia. (1982), Echo's subtle body. Dallas: Spring, p. 25.

experience of chaos, therefore, a different experience of Mother. It hints at the idea that at that time in art therapy, something else about Mother mattered. Could it be that he was beginning to recognize in Her (as chaos), Her form? The significance of this, is that Her form is also a recognition of the form and forming within his own Self.

J. also had a different kind of water ritual at that time. The plastic containers were collected at the end of his session. Filling them with water, and putting them one inside the other, he would then try to take them out one at a time. He was careful to try and not spill any water. When successful, J. would report that "something's been born."

The connection of this water ritual with the circular activity of J.'s paintings suggests a movement of birthing and containing. This is an alteration from his previous movement of hiding within and washing away. For J., the meaning of his activity is located within the phenomena itself. The psychological alteration, however, suggests a more dynamic relationship between ego (as birth) and Self (as container).

Three drawings are included in Figures 18, 19 and 20. They were made at various times throughout the late first and early second years of art therapy. J. would often be drawing some other kind of picture and appear frustrated by something he was doing. Taking another piece of paper, he would draw circular scribbles like these; completing them with the word "there!" They would be set aside as J. would return to his other work. These pictures appeared to be pauses in J.'s

work; representative of the chaos out of which his other images were being formed. By taking the time to make these circular gestures on paper, J. seemed to be remembering and re-connecting to a more primary movement in his experience. By using the simple word "there," he is also consciously acknowledging his own Self reflection.

In childhood, it is the mother who reflects a child's psychic reality. This process is described as mirroring:

For the child, the ego and Self have not separated, and when it demands, "Look at me," the me is special. It is the quality of the child's Self that is being exhibited, the essence that it's emerging ego must gradually reflect. If a child's exhibitionism is properly mirrored, that is if it feels really seen and listened to, then a healthy ego-Self relationship can begin to form.³⁴

Some children have a quite different experience. If the disorder and anxiety, which quite naturally occurs as the child's consciousness emerges, is not sensitively responded to by the mother, this child's experience is of not being seen or heard. The mother, in this situation, frequently lacks the sense of her own identity which would enable her to mirror her child's identity as it emerges. Lacking this, her sensitivity might be directed towards her own needs: such as whether her

³⁴Schwartz-Salant, N. (1982), Narcissism and character transformation, p. 47.

child likes her or how her child adds or detracts from her own self esteem. The child would then lack the inner ground for personal development, since the mother is also, "the first carrier of the archetypal Self image, the central source of order in the personality."³⁵ Any further development for the child would, then, be seriously blocked.

Psychologically, the assumption in a developmental blockage is that a potential for healthy development still remains within the child. It is, "as if the personality went on 'hold', awaiting the right relationships or experiences through which to unfold."³⁶ This holding idea was addressed in the previous chapter, while the initial chapter described the process of unfolding. This chapter addresses the idea that the art making and the intimacy of J.'s relationship to it, in the kind of work presented here, was a source for his healing. "Any creative task is hindered by the absence of an external, mirroring presence along the way."³⁷ This kind of art work seemed to be a mirror for J., sensitive and caring to his Self discovery as well as providing a healing and renewing source of energy for his own development.

The final three pictures in this theme are included in Figures 21, 22 and 23. These began in a similar

³⁵Ibid., p. 46.

³⁶Ibid., p. 134.

³⁷Ibid., p. 46.

way to the three previous ones I have described. They were, however, drawn on what J. referred to as "secret paper." (It was actually a thin, onion-skin paper). These drawings would then be immersed in water as J. would describe, "this makes them born." For J., it seems he considers that his pictures can be born. "The image can reveal that which is being experienced but which often cannot yet be grasped or translated into words."³⁸ These drawings seem to acknowledge J.'s present being-in-the-world experience. The paper itself now carries his secret, while the water emphasizes that what he draws upon it is living -- is born. Art making itself is now acknowledged as being able to bear his secret. This very special sense of himself is being created with and in his art, as emotion and experience form within it. The water, like the effect it had upon these drawings, ensures that J. is moved by his image. For J., something of value now mattered.

I have had difficulty putting words into the silence that was so essential to this series of pictures. What underlies my words is an unspoken assumption. In this series of work, J. seems to have been discovering for himself a way of being an artist: of being intimately related to his own experience within the art making process. From my perspective as an art therapist, this is a feature of my work that I may secretly hope for -- perhaps my secret is shared by J.

³⁸Watkins, M. (1984), Waking dreams. Dallas: Spring, p. 53.

THEME FOUR: BATTLES IN INNER SPACE

In the previous theme I included the idea that J.'s art therapy may have had the psychological value of a returning event. This chapter's theme details this idea by taking a closer look at the event itself -- at an aspect of it that J. appears to have used as the subject matter of some of his art. The aspect I refer to is J.'s experience of mother in his inner world.

Dynamic psychologists agree with each other in postulating the existence of an inner realm of the psyche; but disagree as to its contents, structure, and formation. Where Melanie Klein describes 'internal objects', Jung sees 'archetypes'.³⁹

These differences in theory may be sidestepped to some extent in art therapy. It is the presentation and phenomenology of the inner world as it is understood from a picture that is of primary interest and not its specific terminology. What I may choose and borrow as an appropriate theoretical understanding must, therefore, remain true to the picture itself.

Inner worlds, per se, are impossible to know or understand in a complete way. The inner world is subjective and its roots are primarily unconscious. There is a consciousness of this subjectivity; however and this brings it into a relation with the outer world. There may also be a natural

³⁹Storr, Anthony (1972), The dynamics of creation, New York: Penguin, p. 192.

and human need to bridge the gap between the inner and outer world in order that one's subjectivity is affirmed. This need to bridge is frequently at the source of many creative endeavors.

By distinguishing some of J.'s art making as a returning event, I assume this return to be a potentially prospective and creative endeavor. He is returning to his own subjective place where his art may serve him as a useful and personal tool to build his bridge. "There is always something unsatisfactory and even dangerous in possessing an inner world which is utterly unconnected to the outer world."⁴⁰ For children, this is particularly true since the task of childhood is essentially one in which each child establishes and affirms a personal subjectivity within the larger world. If some situation impedes or disturbs this affirmation, the inner world and the outer world may be experienced as separate and unconnected. An authentic experience of affirmation never comes.

What is the subject matter of J.'s subjectivity? This series of paintings and drawings suggest that one important aspect of it is about mother: about her unseen inner reality for J. Mother as psychic material is as real and has as much influence as the physical real mother. While J. may not be able to change his real mother, he is able to dialogue with, and perhaps alter her intrapsychic image. This is how art

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 221.

may serve him. As her image is reworked, he alters his own subjectivity in relation to her. This is what I understand this series to be about. I write about this now because I wish to establish before I present his art, the idea that this work was never manipulated. By this, I mean that a direct relationship to the real mother was never addressed. If I had made this kind of interpretation, I believe that I would have endangered the way in which her subjectivity within J. was being attended to. This, in turn, might have ruined an essential aspect of his art therapy.

Who is mother, subjectively speaking? Although derived to some extent from a child's interaction with the real mother, mother is also a figure who interacts within the child's unconscious activity. The child's phantasies are about her, as are his archetypally toned mother experiences. She is the child's mother within: the inner mother and the mother in his image. She is the impersonal mother, making herself known as the child's own mothering, and as the way mother matters for him. She belongs to him and lives within him.

The inner mother is not always kind, gentle, and loving. If she were, then mother wouldn't be so significant. Mother can also internally reject, anger, frustrate, or seduce her child. This is what makes him love her and hate her in different ways. This also gives him his own feeling of independence, since he then experiences his dependence on her, his fear of being rejected by her, his seduction by her, his desire to destroy her, or his wish to be free from her. Each

child's autonomy and independence is then closely linked to the inner mother.

The painting in Figure 24 is similar in appearance to the first presented in the previous theme. It was painted in a very different manner. J. initially painted a large green sun. He stopped for a moment, seeming either to re-consider what he had painted, or to think about what he might do next. He then began to paint around the sun with grey, getting quite caught up with this activity. More and more paint was put on his brush, after which J. seemed to attack his painting. The completed work is a mass of muddy greys. The broad brush strokes of his activity still remain visible.

What kind of inner situation is this, and what aspect of his returning event? In response to the latter question, this painting suggests the natural beginning of a regression. A return to the chaos I have described before. This painting suggests a different kind of tolerance for the inner situation. Whereas in the art making presented within the former theme, J. seemed able to let the art contain and nurture this chaos, in this painting the activity of seeming to attack it suggests that he has taken some definite action about the chaos. Whatever was in this inner situation, J. had to attempt to destroy it.

In Kleinian theory, frustrating inner objects are experienced as persecutors. To defend against the fear of such persecution, the child may attempt to destroy the object in phantasy. This phantasy activity, in turn, contributes to the

child's inner experience of identity: "I do this to that which might harm me."

J.'s painted green sun does not appear to be something that could harm him. And yet, within his art making he seemed to experience it this way. What tends to support this idea was that J. would often express a fear at that time that he would get hurt if paint got on him. The medium itself was, then, also a part of the way his phantasy was experienced.

The painting in Figure 25 was made about a year later. As in the previous painting, this one began with a sun. This time it was a red sun enclosed within a circle. From my perspective, J.'s attack on this painting appeared more calculated. In the end this sun's form remains more visible. What has altered was that the central area of the sun was blackened. J. was much less afraid of paint at that time.

The initial phantasy activity of infancy is considered by Kleinians to begin to order a child's experience. One feature of this phantasy is that it divides or splits experience into relations with good objects and bad objects. With a gradual building up of good inner experiences, the child is less threatened by his bad inner objects. This tolerance seems suggested by this second painting.

Why J. painted the sun's center black interests me. What is this blackened sun in his inner world? Figure 26 is a drawing J. made which also includes a dark sun. It is a brown one with black rays. This sun is drawn on a baseline and is surrounded in red. Again, J. appeared to attack this form,

yet never really touched the sun itself. He ensured this by using another piece of paper on which to complete his attack. In this picture the dark sun remained intact, ascending on a horizon.

The sun is typically thought of as being a source of warmth and light. It is also associated with growth and daylight, suggesting the idea of development and consciousness. A darkened sun is of a different sort, providing no observable warmth or light. Yet it may represent the night time sun, where growth occurs in a different place and manner than we typically understand. This would be like an innerworld sun. The sun that lights J.'s particular returning event, an eclipse of consciousness, an original or primary sun, and a darkened experience of mother.

What may darken the mother? One distinct feature of the inner world is "the sharp division of images of persons into good and bad, black and white, heroes and villains, saints and devils."⁴¹ This division occurs quite naturally in a child's experience of Mother, since "the 'archetype of the maternal', ... is pregnant with all aspects and variations in which 'motherliness' can manifest itself."⁴² The archetypal good mother is the provider of psychic nourishment and of a safe and containing inner situation. The archetypal bad mother is

⁴¹Storr, Anthony. (1972), *The dynamics of creation*, p. 221.

⁴²Jacobi, Jolande. (1959), Complex, archetype, symbol, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 107.

her close companion. It is she who, "fortifies the spirit often by means of adversity."⁴³ She betrays the child yet this "is precisely what is needed to enable the child to break away."⁴⁴ The darker side of mother requires that the child be a hero at an appropriate time, in order that he not remain only with her kind of loving.

When the ego is no longer prepared to remain at the stage of the "strugglers," who are dominated by their fear of the Great Mother, it must conquer the fear that once protected it and do the very thing of which it is most afraid. It must expose itself to the annihilating force of the uroboric Mother Dragon without letting itself be destroyed.⁴⁵

I assume J. made the drawing in Figure 27 at a time when it was psychologically appropriate and possible for him to begin to defend himself against his dark, inner mother. This drawing includes what J. has identified as a "cannon." It bears a close resemblance to the previous one if looked at together. In this one, however, a symbol has been employed to replace the phantasy. While the emotional experience included in these pictures may be similar for J., the attacking implied by the cannon functions differently within him. This is due

⁴³Chetwynd, Tom. (1982), A dictionary of symbols, New York: Granada, p. 271.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 271.

⁴⁵Neumann, E. (1954), The origins and history of consciousness, p. 318.

to the inner process of symbol formation. Whereas J.'s former picture may have represented an inner situation struggling with the darkened sun, this one includes a tool known to the outer world that has the possibility of assisting him in a transition from his inner situation. "A living symbol expresses something that is not fully conscious, not yet able to become fully conscious."⁴⁶ J.'s cannon suggests a living symbol of a different kind of relationship to the dark mother. To remain with her would have been to remain with her adversity. His new relationship requires becoming a hero with his own potential to overcome her, since "the nature of the hero is to take literally the mother's negativity."⁴⁷ This is essential for him to become consciously separated from her.

There is an active element of defence against the unconscious and against the danger of being overpowered by it. This negative activity is apparent whenever we meet with the symbolism of knives, swords, weapons.⁴⁸

Figure 28 is a pastel drawing which includes a red and blue "teepee," a "fire," and a "man with a gun." J. described the man as "fierce and vigorous." This man "shoots at the teepee," because, in J.'s very precise words, "it must be done."

⁴⁶Dallet, Janet. (1982), Active imagination in practice, in Murray Stein (Ed.), Jungian analysis, p. 174.

⁴⁷Berry, Patricia. (1982), Echo's subtle body, p. 13.

⁴⁸Neumann, E. (1954), The origins and history of consciousness, p. 317.

"The hero is equipped with special weapons, ... these refer to inner gifts, latent powers within the psyche, which are needed for the battle with the unconscious."⁴⁹ In the description of his picture, J.'s necessary yet oppositional activity is acknowledged as something which must be done. The man has a weapon to enact his feat, and is fierce and vigorous in his confrontation with the task. The pretending within the picture itself changes J.'s phantasy to imagination. It may then have the effect of changing his ego relationship to his inner and outer worlds.

The fire to the left of the teepee seems important to the image as well. Does it belong to the teepee, to the man, or, in some way, to both? Fire may be acknowledged as a "symbol of transformation"⁵⁰; a symbol of the energy and dynamic movement of the unconscious which, like fire, transforms one substance into something else.⁵¹ The fire in this picture may symbolize the energy that generates movement itself -- the movement away from mother and the movement back to her. As the hero is prepared to affirm himself with his act he, in turn, re-affirms a new relationship to the Mother.

⁴⁹Chetwynd, T. (1982), A dictionary of symbols, p. 200.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 287.

⁵¹Fire is the third in the fourfold sequence of alchemical work, the others being: air, earth and water. It symbolizes the process of relating the unconscious with conscious parts. Fire is closely associated with water as that which germinates the new seed of the new Self.

Figure 29 seems to re-imagine the hero's problem. This picture, again in red and blue, began with J. drawing a fire truck moving left along his baseline. Lights and sirens were then made to appear as if lit and sounding. Two towers to the extreme left were drawn as the truck's destination.

"The prime task of consciousness with respect to the overmenacing tendencies of the unconscious consists mainly in keeping its distance, in consolidating and defending its position, i.e. in strengthening the stability of the ego."⁵² The hero's problem is made difficult by the idea that he can cause trouble for himself, inwardly and outwardly, if he is too active or destructive when attempting his feat. His special weapons may get out of hand.

In his former drawing, J. seems to have imagined his task yet not the dilemma within it. Who would J. be if he destroyed his inner mother? A concern for this seems expressed in this picture. She is on fire. J. seems to imagine his task more lovingly by being the truck that is required to put her fire out. He imaginatively affirms an aspect of his own identity -- I am the fire truck. He may also be re-affirming his relationship to her, since the fire truck has no function without a fire to put out. J. titled his picture "the fire station." This seems to clarify the relationship. If it is the fire station (the home of the fire truck) which is ablaze,

⁵²Neumann, E. (1954), The origins and history of consciousness, p. 315.

the truck's vested interest would be to use its water⁵³ supply to put it out.

The inner mother has two important roles in the child's development: she holds and she feeds. The real mother functions in these roles, but her care is for the physical child. It is the child's inner mother who supplies the archetypal experience of being held and nourished. Her psychic containment and nourishment provide for the child's emerging ego while maintaining a vital relation to the Self.

Each child's relation to the inner mother is expressed in various ways. In J.'s art therapy, mother seems to have been expressed as a nurturing chaos, a dark inner sun, a good guy, a bad guy, as water "making things born" and as a burning fire.⁵⁴ Two further expressions of mother occur in the following five pictures. These seem to specifically focus on her holding and feeding aspects.

The drawing in Figure 30 was entitled "Angry," when J. made it during one of his initial art therapy sessions. Included here are two figures enclosed by a red line. The right figure is a large face with long hair and an open mouth.

⁵³Here, the close link between fire and water is acknowledged. In symbolic terms the idea expressed by their association in J.'s drawing may be that as the hero affirms himself, i.e. becomes more conscious, a new relationship to the unconscious Self (as mother) is also being generated.

⁵⁴The less linear presentation of J.'s case material at this point requires an acknowledgement that the "burning fire" representation of mother refers as well to the issue of sexual abuse by the real mother. This issue will be addressed elsewhere in this paper.

It seems to be looking at the left figure whose face acknowledges this by looking back. The smaller figure's body, however, appears as if it is trying to run away. When J. entitled his picture "Angry," he drew a black line from the small figure's foot over and around the face, and then up towards the top of the enclosing space.

What is the figure so angry about? It seems appropriate to consider that he might be attempting to get out but he can't. He's angry, then, because he's stuck.

During the phase when consciousness begins to turn to self-consciousness, that is to recognize and discriminate itself as a separate, individual ego, the maternal uroboros overshadows it like a dark and tragic fate. Feelings of transitoriness, and mortality, impotence and isolation, now color the ego's picture of the uroboros.⁵⁵

Being stuck is being locked in despite the desire to get out. Being stuck is feeling held too tight, too close, too bound. It is both a constriction of consciousness and an anxious relation to the Self. Archetypally, J.'s "Anger" suggests imprisonment rather than containment. J's small figure is chained at the foot, locked in, and facing her.

J. made the scribble in Figure 31. I, then, elaborated it into what I described to him as a mother holding her

⁵⁵Neumann, E. (1954), The origins and history of consciousness, p. 45.

baby.⁵⁶ J. seemed very anxious about my picture and had to change it. He colored in the mother's eyes and gave her red lips. He made scribbles down her arms as he insisted, "it's not like that (meaning the way I had drawn it) it's like this!"

This mother not only has something troubling in her arms that makes her holding uncertain, but she also appears to be quite seductive. It may be this seductiveness -- this "leading in" -- which serves to keep the child held. The unconscious is quite attractive, and J. is a child who seems easily led in. These two drawings suggest the imprisonment and seductiveness of J.'s holding experience. By drawing pictures of this experience it is, then, less inside him. This making an image of it may permit him to further discover and explore a way out.

The painting in Figure 32, done early in art therapy, is about J.'s fear of fire. The red and black elongated shape was identified by him as a "fire engine." Above this is a mixture of muddy colors J. painted as he told me how afraid he was of fire. It was difficult for me to know what he was talking about as his story was quite confusing. My assumption that this was the telling of an inner experience was affirmed when J. asked if I could help him paint a "ground" underneath. It was as if he was unable to make the inner/outer distinction himself, and was asking me to support his attempt to bring his

⁵⁶My drawing portrays my attempt to mirror J. in art therapy. Having been denied a positive holding and mirroring experience in his original relationship, my image was intended to provide a visual representation of mirroring for him within the safe and regressive aspect of his art therapy. See Appendix B.

fear into the outer world of his painting.

A similar theme seems included in the drawing of Figure 33. This is a drawing of J.'s favorite food, spaghetti. The way in which J. has drawn this food suggests that it might be difficult to get into his mouth, and also somewhat indigestible. When understood as psychic nourishment, it is as if mother's food, like the fire in the previous painting, is something to be feared, not swallowed. This kind of feeding excludes the idea of nourishment, digestion, and transformation. J.'s feeding experience seems portrayed as hot, feared, and chaotic.

A long time later, J. did the picture in Figure 34. He spent a considerable amount of time with this drawing, appearing serious and intent about what he wanted it to be like. It was described as a "video game." In the center is a hill which has a ghost-face⁵⁷ and a Pacman inside. These are repeated on top (outside) of the hill. The blue side frame includes the ghost face, while the red includes Pacman. When describing how this game is played J. said: "Up here is the mother Pacman and the boy Pacman. He eats it up and spits it out."

J. appears to have imaginatively organized three distinct yet related expressions of his mother experience within this one drawing. The first is expressed as union where the mother and son Pacman are contained within the hill. The second is expressed as the game where the boy Pacman spits out what he's

⁵⁷This form does appear in the real Pacman game. J. has altered it according to his own imaginative requirement.

eaten.⁵⁸ The third is expressed as separation, since the mother and son Pacman are in their own frames.

For Pacman to win this game, he is required to spit "it" out. It may be too hot, too indigestible, too seductive, or too imprisoning. In J.'s drawing Pacman is spitting "it" out. It seems he knows that it won't stay put inside him. Outwardly, he knows that this is what is needed to play and win the game.

A child's body is both a physical and psychological boundary between what's inside and what's outside. Similar to his psyche, it must be sensitively and caringly responded to by mother. The child's body responds to the physical kind of mothering care it is given. It is also responsive to the inner mothering it receives.

The painting in Figure 35 was made on a day when J. appeared more anxious than I had ever seen him before. It began with a round shape, which was painted over and over again. The rest of the painting was completed more hastily. J. said it was "boy-me."

What is curious, is that this figure was painted horizontally, in contrast to the more characteristic vertical presentation young children tend to use. This painting concentrates primarily on the head. What may have been a body (two blue lines) was denied in a way. It was filled in (with red) outside, rather than inside its form. What was this

⁵⁸This is actually a reversal of what the real Pacman does. Again, J. has imaginatively altered the game to meet his inner requirement.

denial that makes the head so full?

It is known that J. sleeps with his mother. This may account for the horizontal pose. She also had sexually abused him. This abuse exploits his real body, suggesting why it was that he has had to deny it in his painting. The emphasis on the head further suggests his anxiety about the abuse, and the way it psychologically works around and around within him. The complexity of incest is that it is a perversely circular mess.

J. is only a child, and an only child. He loves and needs his mother. When she abused him she abused both his body and his love and need for her. Abuse tends to become a secret between a mother and child -- a kind of shared fantasy where they may both believe it is some kind of love. This secret is one which is not easily shared.

My responsibility in this issue was to find a time, a place, and an opportunity where it would be safe for J. to share his secret. There was a lot of resistance before J. was able to draw the picture in Figure 36. This drawing was done in response to my suggestion that J. draw a boy and a girl. It began with a baseline. The boy is standing on the ground to the left, with many lines extending from his genitals. As if floating in the sky to the left is a "woman." J. was extremely anxious and had a lot of difficulty drawing her. He drew her genitals several times, then he rubbed them out. J. included a heart between the figures to complete his picture.

Other professionals who are involved with J. and his mother were informed of this drawing. It was an issue that

they had active concerns about, as well. Because J. was able to feel safe enough to draw this picture, the exclusiveness of his secret had been shared. Appropriate measures were taken to ensure J.'s safety.

The sharing of the secret does not necessarily ruin the fantasy. The only way in which this could be done would be for J. to separate from the complexity of mother, and from her fantasy which he had to play such an important part in.

"Frequently, when it is time to start leaving the mother in a psychic sense, children will dream of their personal mothers as terrible witches -- this compels a certain distancing that might not otherwise occur."⁵⁹ J. came to his session one day and told me that he had had a dream about a witch. This is J.'s account of the dream: "The witch comes at night and then I can't move. She's like this (J. stretched his arms out): It's power and it's terrible. I can get caught and I can't get away."

I suggested that it might be "alright" to make a picture of her. Figure 37 is J.'s first painting of his dream witch. She is the central black figure with the outstretched arms. The green is her power. She faces the brewing pot to her left. To her right, and behind her, is J.; a figure with hair standing on end. J. completed his painting with a blue arch over the scene in a way that suggests how, by painting her, he

⁵⁷Hall, N. (1980), The moon and the virgin, New York: Harper and Row, p. 136.

has brought her into his world.

The witch became a distinct figure within several of J.'s pictures. J. thought out loud, during one session, that he should make her a house. Figure 38 is one of the drafts J. made before making a three dimensional version. The idea of reverencing the witch enough to build her a home of her own may be understood as an inner process of embodying her psychological importance to him. It is she, and her kind of power, that can help him to leave his own mother.

The witch also appears in Figure 39. Here, she is portrayed standing upright with a smiling face. Her green power seems concentrated in her arms, which appear to be pushing out against the paper's edge. Did she no longer want to be in a picture? Perhaps she was pushing away because part of her inner task had been done.

This is more clearly established in Figure 40. J. considered that the witch might need a "new house." Her house is now a castle and there are bats and ghosts "to be her friends." There are also tombstones and coffins on her property and a sign on the pathway which reads "danger up ahead." J. invested a lot of energy and imagination in this picture. J. has returned his dream witch to her own dream world in the imaginal situation of this picture. He has left her in the company of other kinds of otherworld phenomena. J. seems to have rewarded her well for the inner assistance she may have given him.

The final three drawings are interesting and perplexing.

What interests me is that there are only three of them in all of J.'s work. What perplexes me is that I have never had a clear perspective on what they may mean.

This illusive-ness is expressed within the pictures themselves. Figure 41 is the first one, made about one month after his individual art therapy began. Included in it is an orange and green female shape with many scribbles surrounding her. After seeming to finish this drawing, J. went back and colored over it with white chalk.

Figure 42 is this figure's second appearance. This was made during J.'s first session after a one-month holiday break. Again, she is surrounded in scribbles.

Figure 43 is the third, made a year later and also following a vacation break. It not only includes her form, but a face with three eyes who appears to be looking at her.

Whatever has healed for J. in art therapy has occurred from his own art making process. While most verbal forms of therapy generally effect the healing within the containing relationship of the patient and therapist, art therapy effects its healing with the image and within the image relationship that occurs. It is, then, a more self-directed, self-generated, and active process for the client.

There is a difference between mothering and nursing:

A "mothering" attitude expects something -- growth, a personal fate to emerge, specialness. Caring and hoping flow together. There is an obsession with how things will turn out A nurse, on the other hand,

is less personally related. A nurse nourishes the child that is sick or helpless A nursing attitude accepts the child as it is, in it's weakness, and does not spiderlike spin fantasies around it that can immobilize or make hazy the vision of the child.⁶⁰

The nurse's caring, although distant, is special. J.'s distanced female figure might be his nurse. An inner art therapy nurse, who nurses his image by always caring about and accepting what he makes. Her caring and acceptance may then work to keep his vision clear, so that it is his own hopes that are affirmed and worked towards.

In J.'s final drawing, the nurse is acknowledged by a face with three eyes. "As image and experience interpenetrate the image is not discarded but becomes an eye through which one perceives and senses."⁶¹ Perhaps the nurse has cared enough for J. in her special way, to let this eye develop.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 79.

⁶¹ Watkins, M. (1981), Six approaches to the image in art therapy, Spring, p. 117.

CONCLUSION

It is difficult to write a conclusion to work that is still going on. As I complete my writing I am, however, left with a few loose ends that might like to be tied up.

My understanding of J.'s art therapy may never be complete, nor would I necessarily want it to be. As mentioned in the introduction, his case is abundant with material which could be re-visioned from other perspectives. Perhaps there will be a time when J.'s case will be re-visioned again.

This re-vision resulted from a lingering uneasiness. I am not left with that feeling this time. It is curious, in retrospect, to acknowledge that J. has never let me feel that what we have done together has helped him at all. And yet, my experience of this is perhaps what has kept me open to an interest and understanding of what was deeper and more significant in his work with me.

Four years is a long time, especially in the life of a child. The depth of J.'s work might never have occurred in a shorter amount of time. His art and art making have had the time to unfold naturally. It has been a slow process of change. J.'s own healing has occurred accordingly yet he is by no means healed of all that troubles and impedes him. At the time of writing, J. has come a certain way with me and there is a mutual sense that it is time to part.

Paradoxically, it takes a lot of strength to let go yet

separation is necessary for something new to emerge. Now that J. seems to be terminating his art therapy with me, he is working on a "new planet, which he has named the "death planet." J. is working very seriously to see if it might be possible for the "good guys" and "bad guys" to find a way in which they might live together there. J. is also making a book, which he has titled "The Book of Art by J." It is a scrapbook of sorts, and in it he is placing some of the paintings and drawings he has made in art therapy that he feels he wants to take with him ~~when he goes. When that time comes, J. will leave with his~~ book and I, too, will say goodbye.

Working with J. has influenced the way I function as an art therapist. It has been difficult to evaluate this predominantly intuitive process and yet the effort to do so has, I believe, enriched my own psychology.

APPENDIX A

Object relations theory is a contemporary school of psychoanalysis. This theory was originally developed by Melanie Klein. Klein considered that the child's intrapsychic system is comprised of objects; these having particular characteristics, i.e. good/bad, part/whole, inner/outer. Such characteristics were assumed to result from real experience and from unconscious phantasy activity within the child. Klein's particular emphasis was on the latter.

In Klein's view, object relations were considered to be the primary contribution in a child's identity formation.

Object relations theory was developed further by D. W. Winnicott. He shifted the perspective onto both the effect of the quality of the actual mother/child relationship and the capacity of the child to creatively use objects to foster development. The object relations model of child development differs from the Jungian model. Recent writers, however, have suggested that a possible link might be made between the inner object and the archetype in their actual phenomenology.

In object relations theory, a child experiences varying strengths and kinds of affective object relations. The child also organizes his inner objects narratively, personifies them and creatively uses them to foster identity experience. Object relations bear meaning, interest and imaginative possibilities for a child. In Jungian theory, the child

personally experiences the archetypal. Archetypal thematic configurations are expressed personally and creatively within each child's "I," and frequently unfold narratively, imaginatively or in personifications. The archetype resembles an inner object source of meaning and interest in the development of the child's conscious experience. Both inner objects and the archetype are understood as form and image given to unconscious processes.

In the art therapy situation, where a child makes images about subjects which have interest and meaning, this conceptual link may have value for the manner in which we view the child's art making process. This link provides an informed understanding how art making can serve to foster a child's identity experience, as well give form and image to a child's unconscious processes.

APPENDIX B

Transference and countertransference are psychological terms for actual experiences within a therapeutic relationship. Transference refers to those of the client; countertransference to those of the therapist. These experiences are understood to derive from more primary unconscious needs of and responses to the unfolding of the therapeutic encounter.

In the first few months of art therapy, when J. would draw or paint prolifically, I experienced confusion, frustration and anger. This illustrates the nature of a countertransference response to my inner idealized need to be a good art therapist. I was feeling denied, this by the profusion of J.'s art making in addition to my experience of a lack of real contact with him through his pictures. This countertransference leads to a consideration of J.'s transference experience. My feeling of not being connected to him suggested that J., himself, might have experienced something like this in his own life. His need was to begin to attempt to fill up his previously denied feelings of unconnectedness by making picture after picture with me.

In art therapy, the therapist "provides" art materials which the client "uses." The dynamic of this provision/use process resembles the mother/child relationship. This dynamic has moved through many expressions during my work with J. In general, however, he has tended towards an ample use of

materials. The understanding of this in terms of his transference relates to the envy, fear, and inner emptiness experiences that resulted from deprivation within his primary relationship and that now needed attention. My recognition of this aspect of his transference was not interpreted to him but something which he lived through within his art making.

Since these aspects of the therapeutic relationship derive primarily from unconscious sources, they may be understood archetypally. In the course of art therapy J.'s need for a positive mother image was presented as he worked through aspects of his early and intense frustrations experienced from her negative configuration. J.'s need was to place me, at times, into this more positive role. I have attempted to acknowledge this in a joint drawing to which I have included the image of what I described to him as a mother holding a baby. This representation of my understanding of his transference was in response to J.'s own need to be psychically held and, thus, in relationship with the Good Mother.

The recognition and eventual working through of the transference and the sensitive awareness of countertransferences responses are complex dynamics within each therapeutic relationship.

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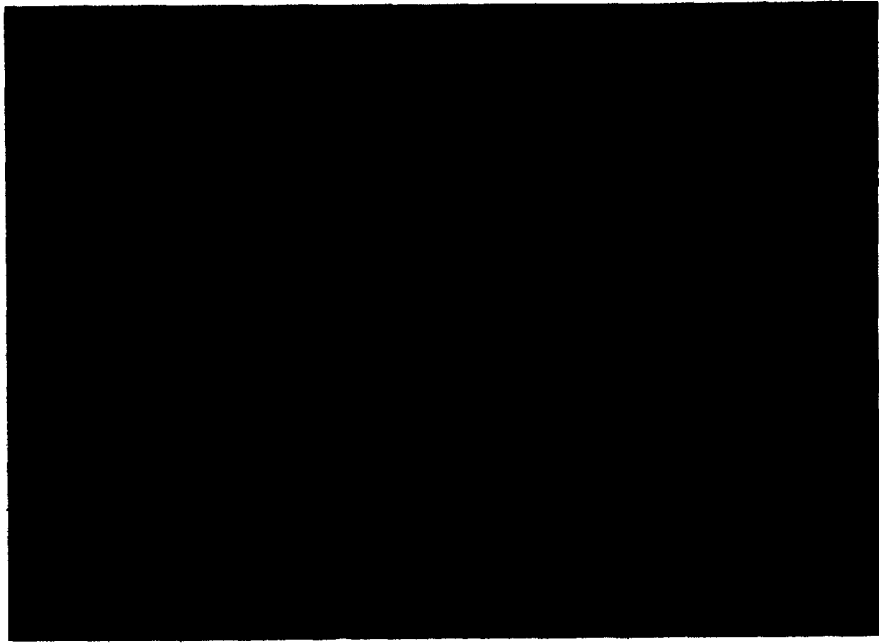


Figure 1. Uroboros



Figure 2. Unfolding



Figure 3. Differentiation

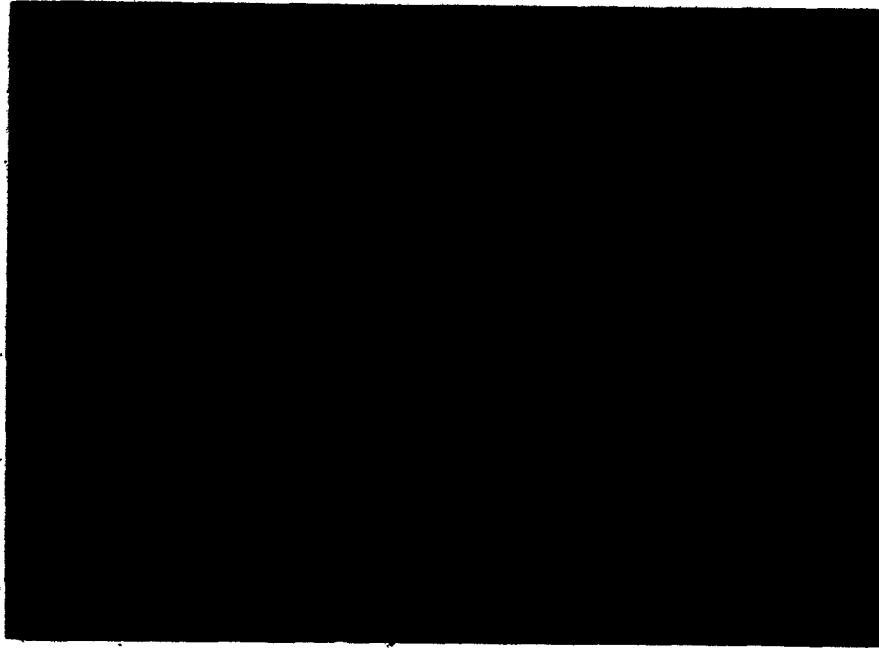


Figure 4. "Snake"

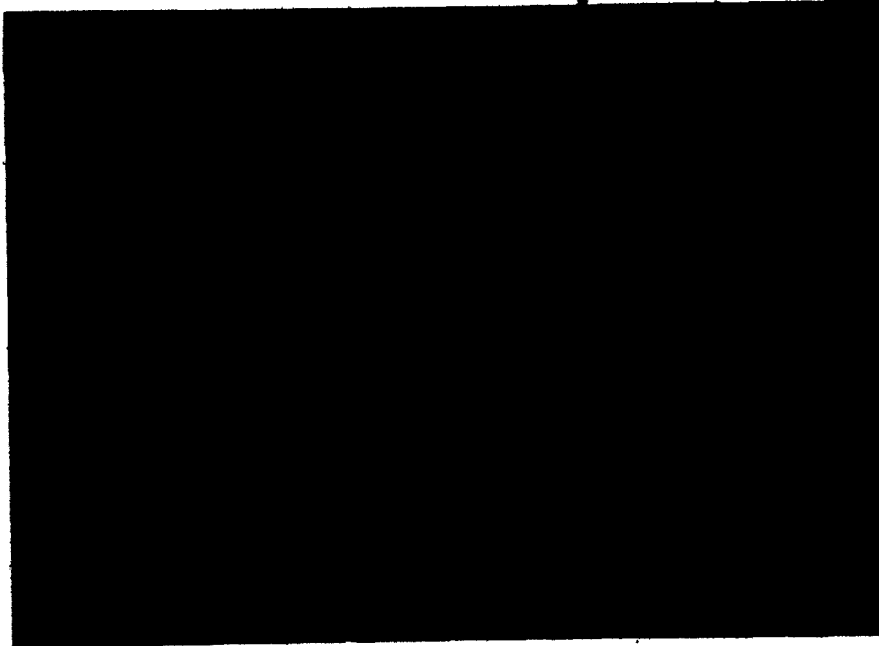


Figure 5. "The Friendly Snake"



Figure 6. A Road: A path towards identity



Figure 7. Uroboros reimagined

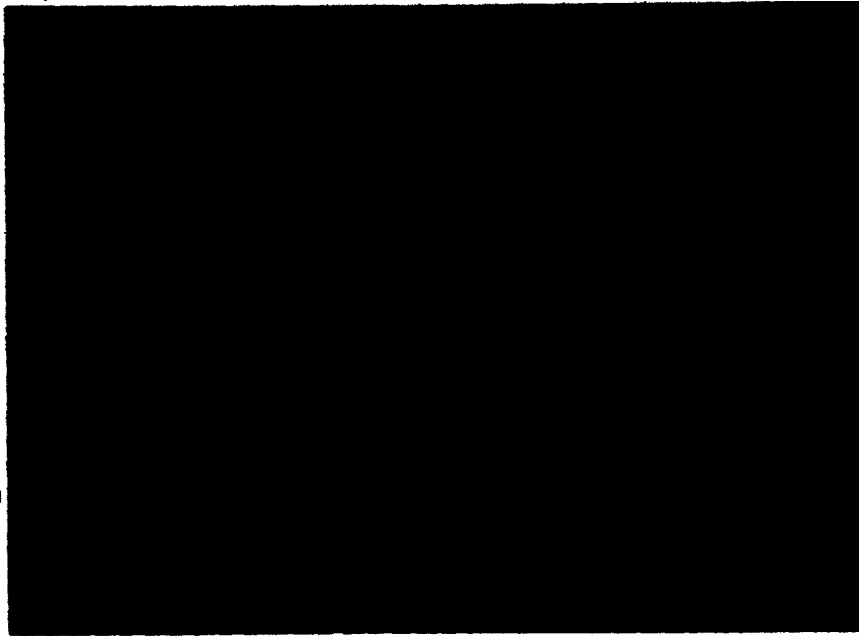


Figure 8. Defense and holding



Figure 9. "Planet" where "good guys"
fight "bad guys"



Figure 10. Planet revisited a year later



Figure 11. Personification

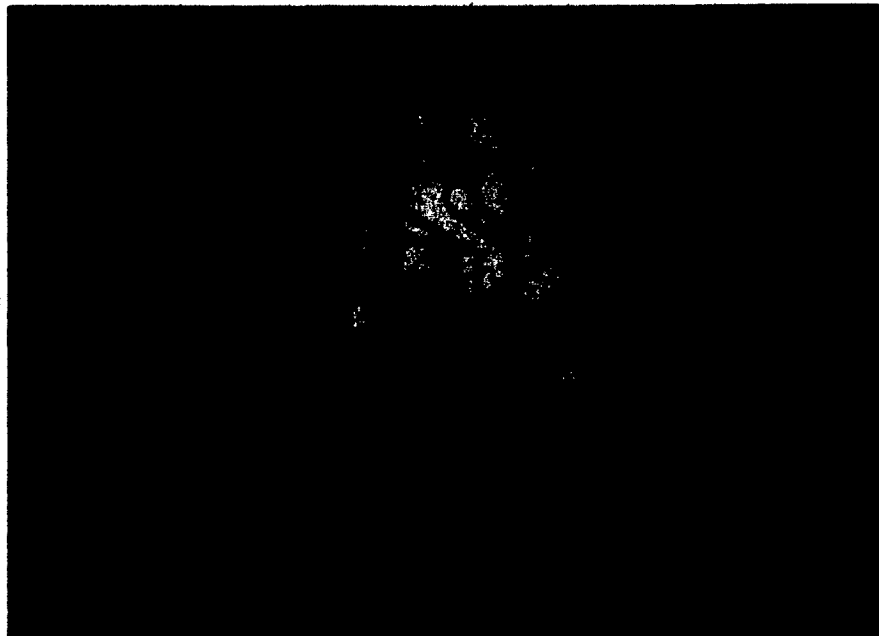


Figure 12. Possibility of identification

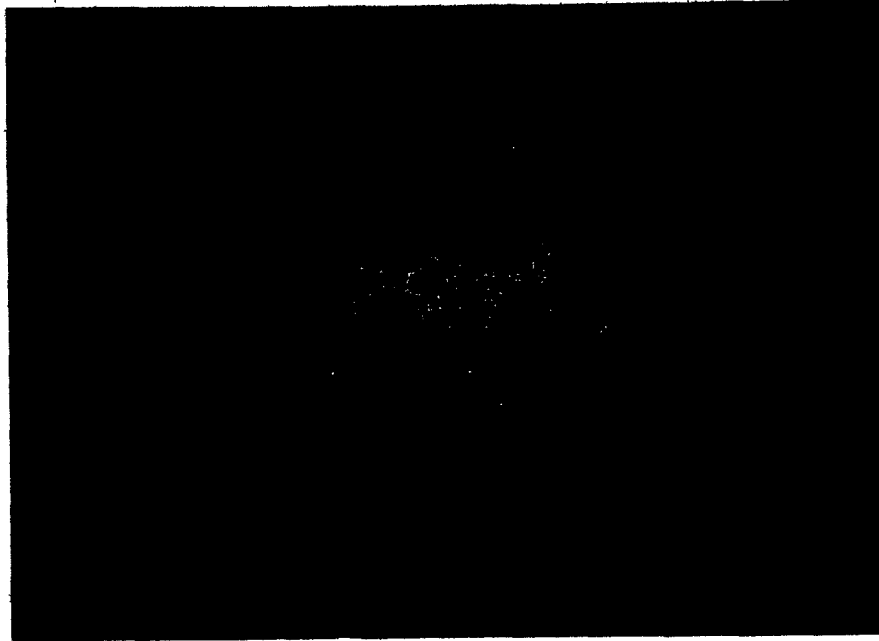


Figure 13. A task at distancing

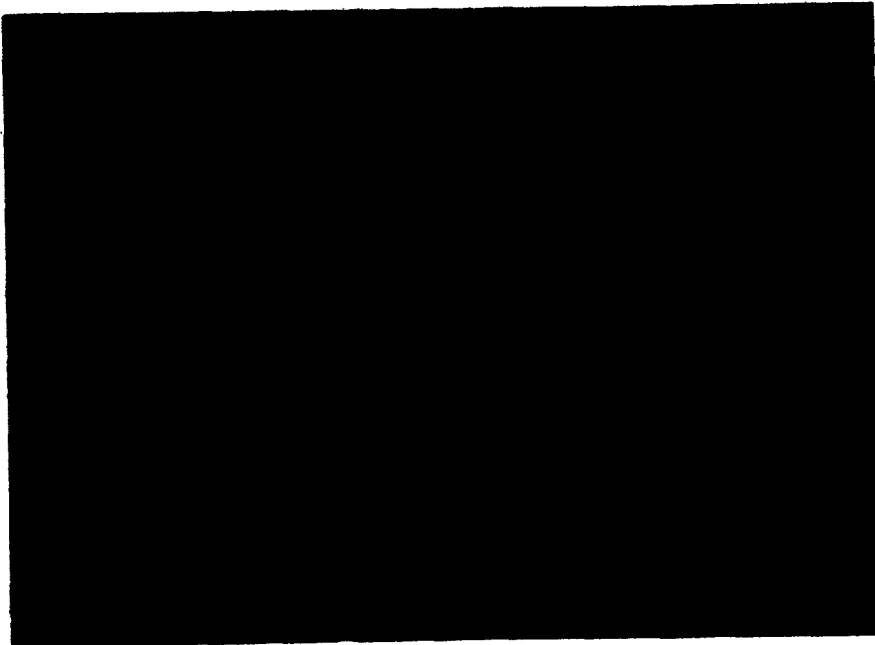


Figure 14. Order and structure to
discovery of world

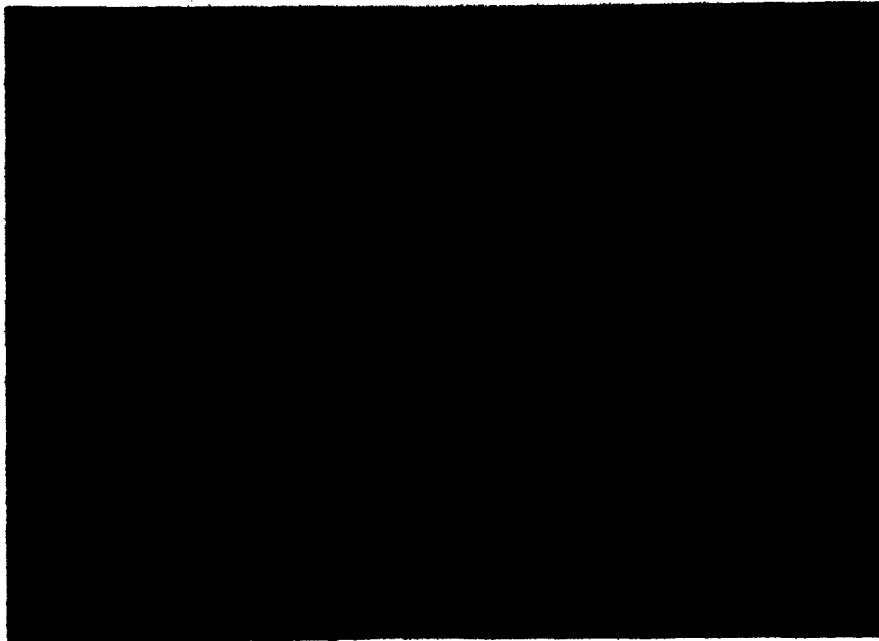


Figure 15. Redeeming the father

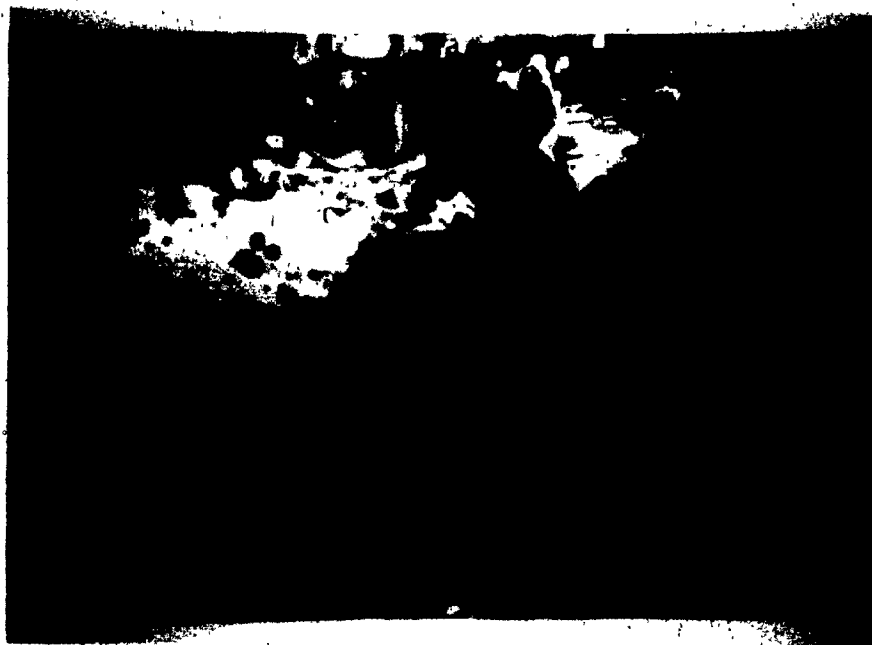


Figure 16. Chaos matters: Hiding within and washing away



Figure 17. Birthing and containing: Ego and Self



Figure 18. Pauses



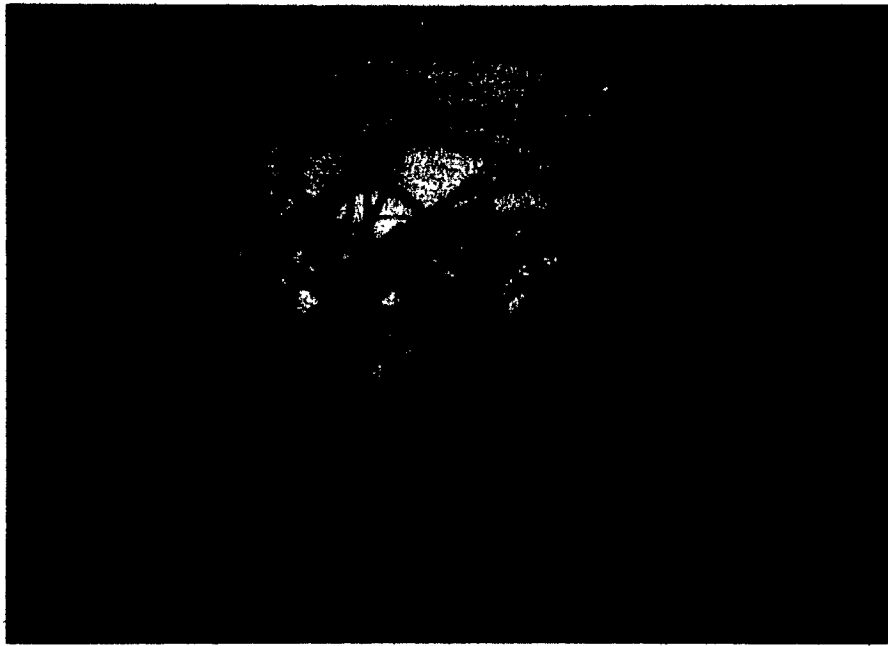


Figure 19. Self-Reflection

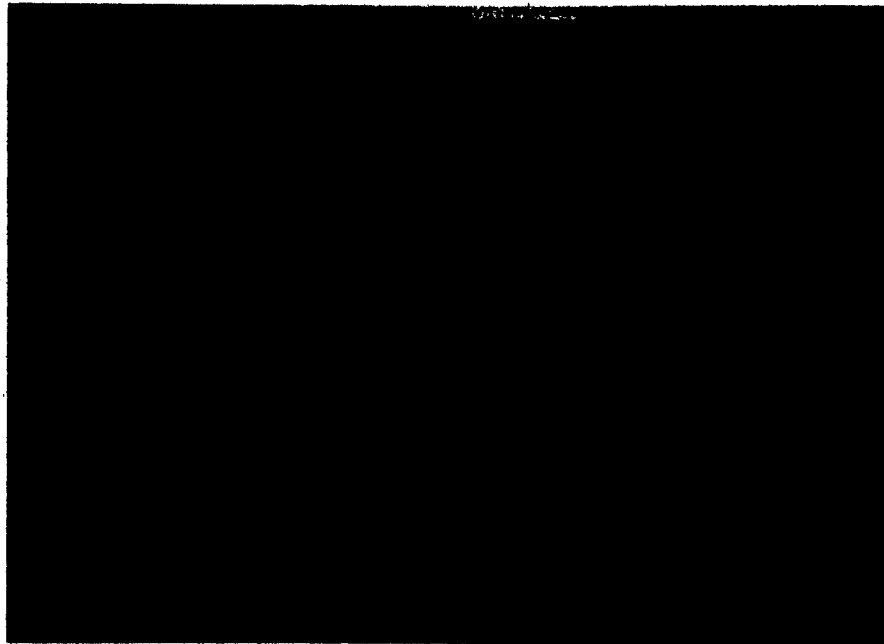


Figure 20. Mirroring

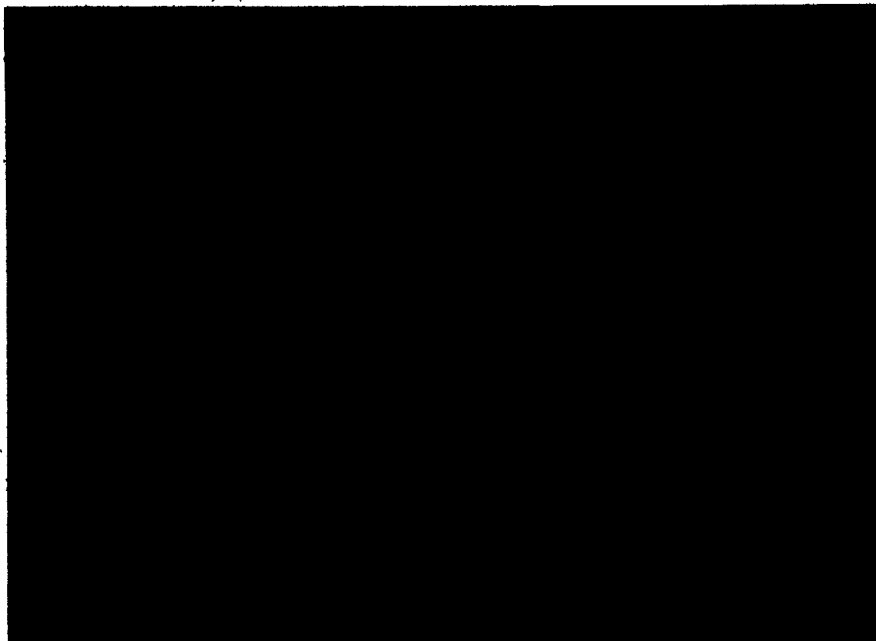


Figure 21. Secret paper

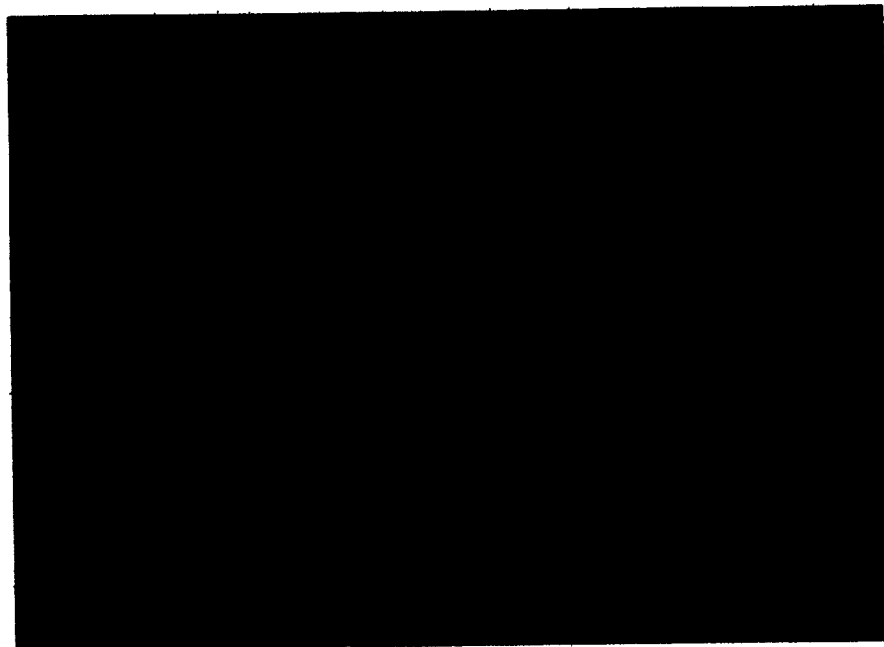


Figure 22. Pictures that are "born"

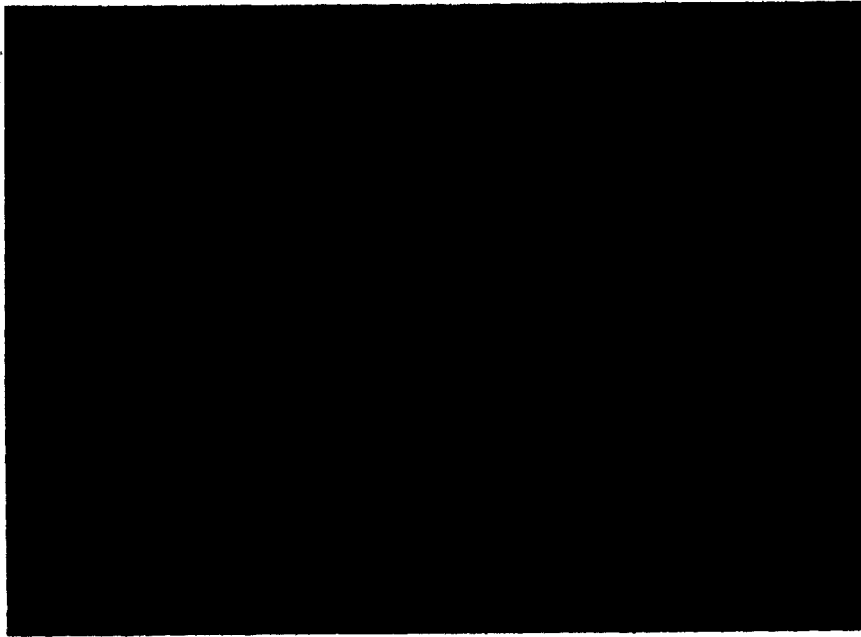


Figure 23. J. is moved by his image

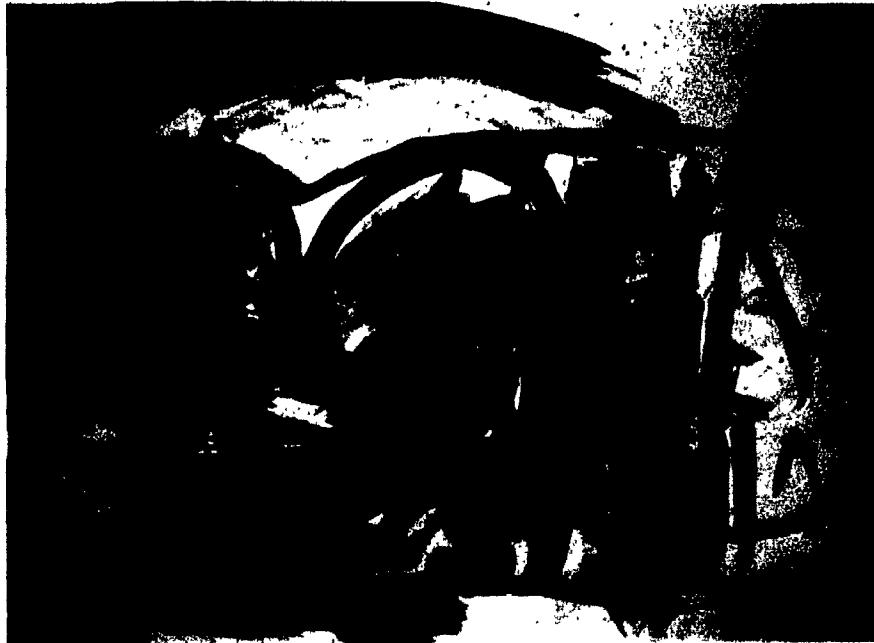


Figure 24. Attacking an inner object



Figure 25. Tolerance

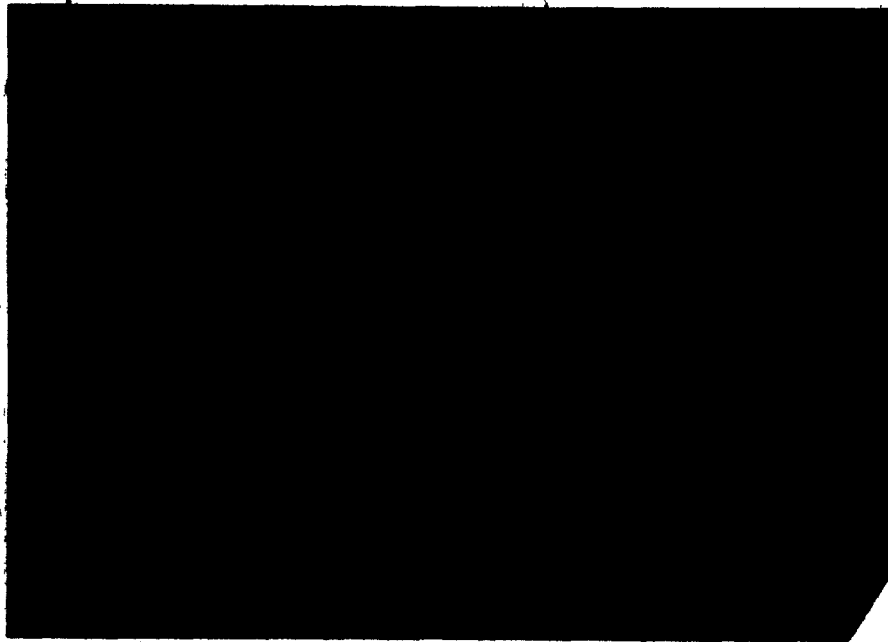


Figure 26. Regression: An eclipse of consciousness

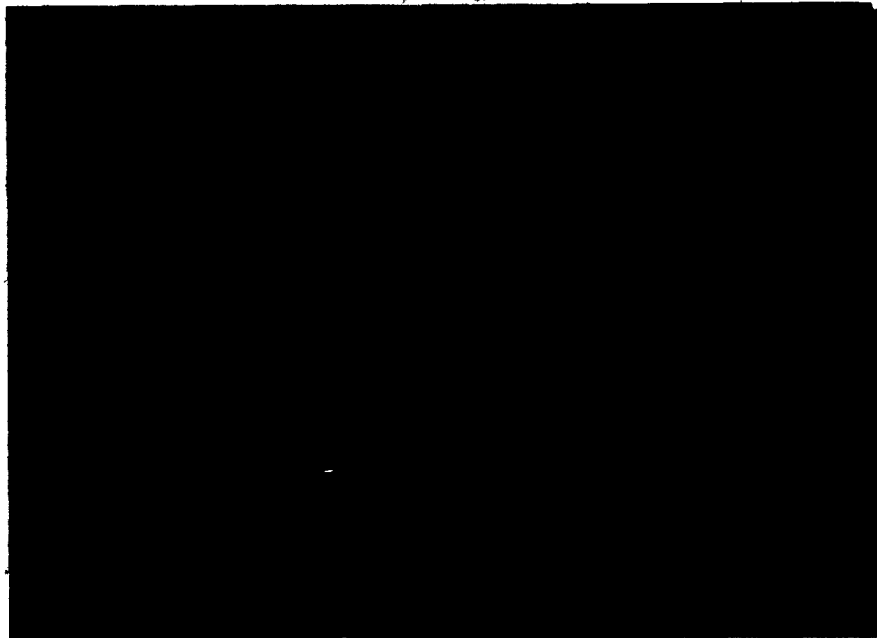


Figure 27. Symbol formation



Figure 28. Phantasy to imagination; changing ego's relationship to inner and outer worlds



Figure 29. Relationship to mother: Real and archetypal

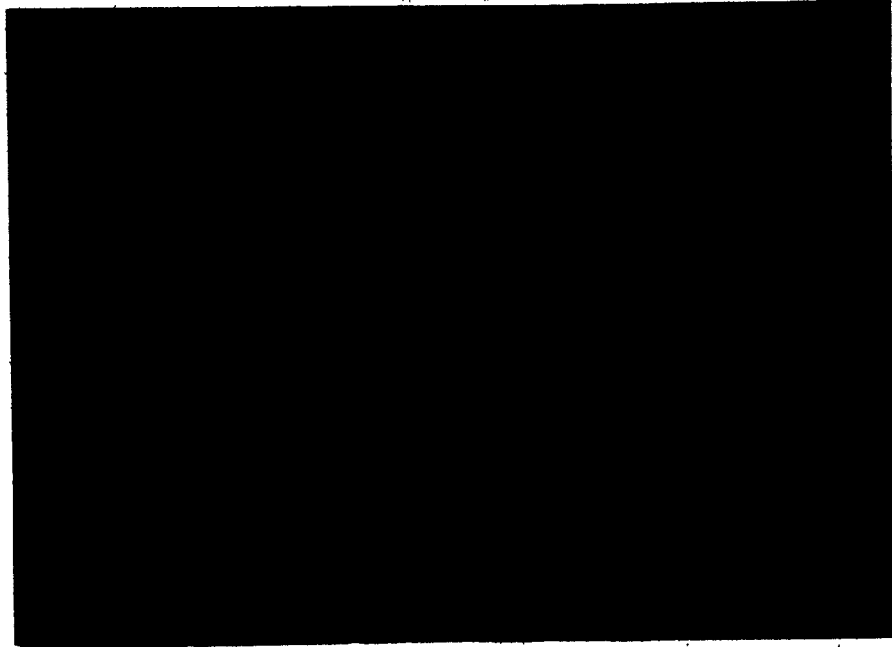


Figure 30. Imprisonment rather than containment



Figure 31. Joint drawing, mirroring/transference



Figure 32. Inner/outer distinction

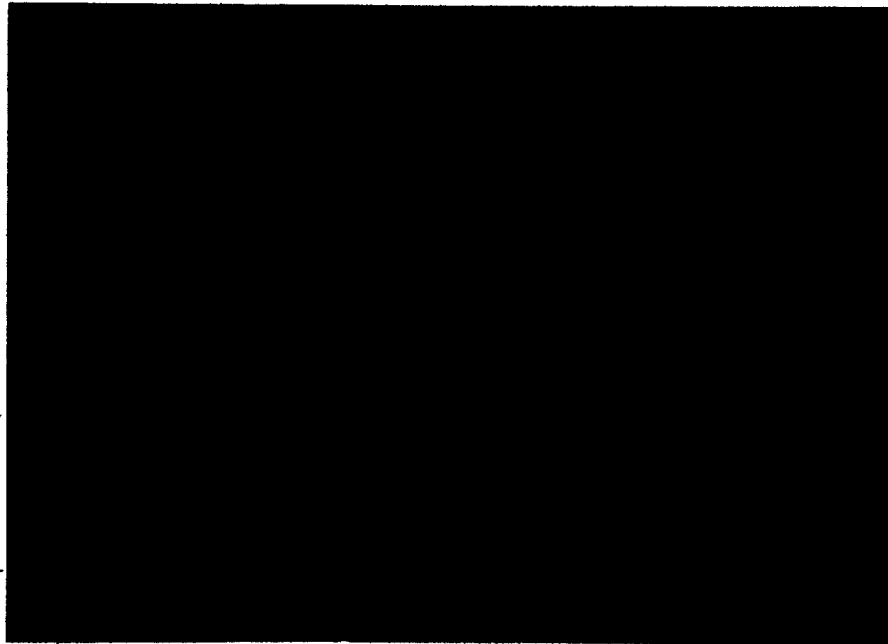


Figure 33. Chaotic food



Figure 34. Three expressions of
his mother experience



Figure 35. Self Portrait: Sexual abuse

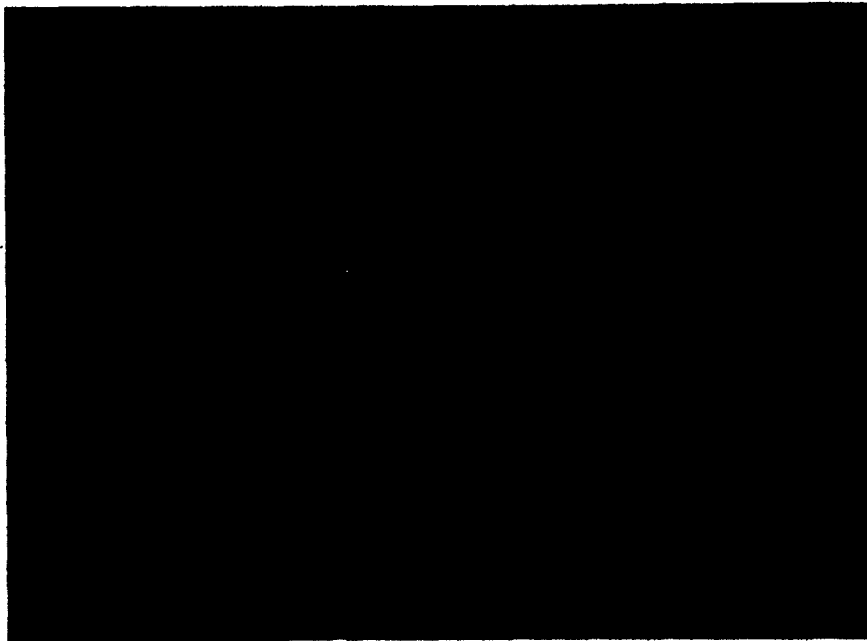


Figure 36. Sharing the secret

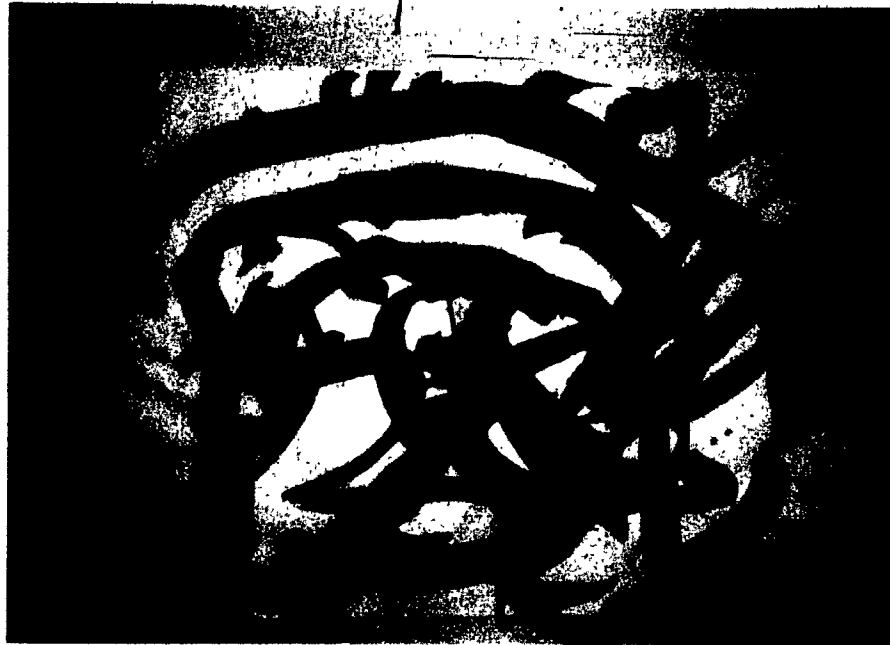


Figure 37. The dream witch; personification
of separation

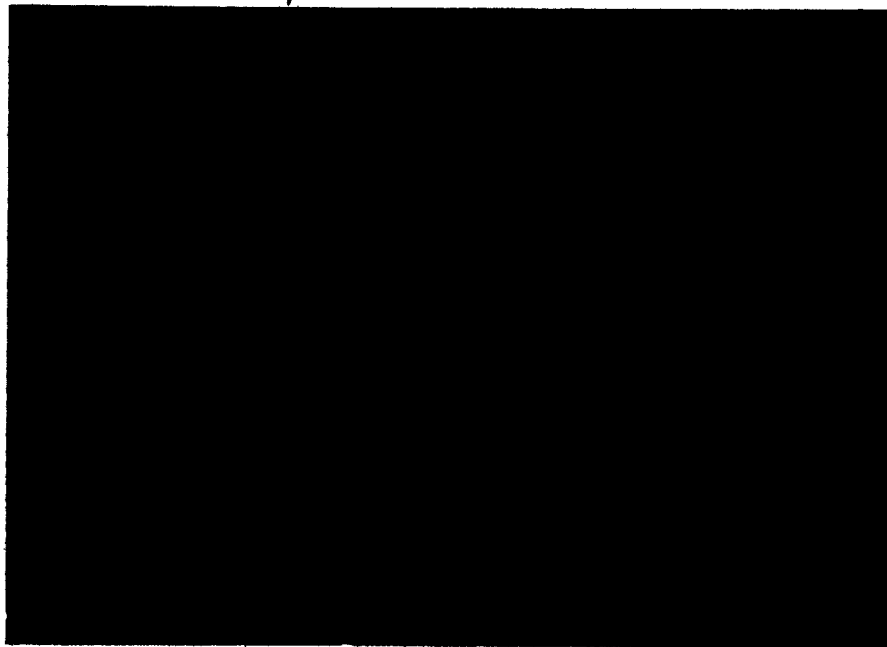


Figure 38. Reverencing and embodying her

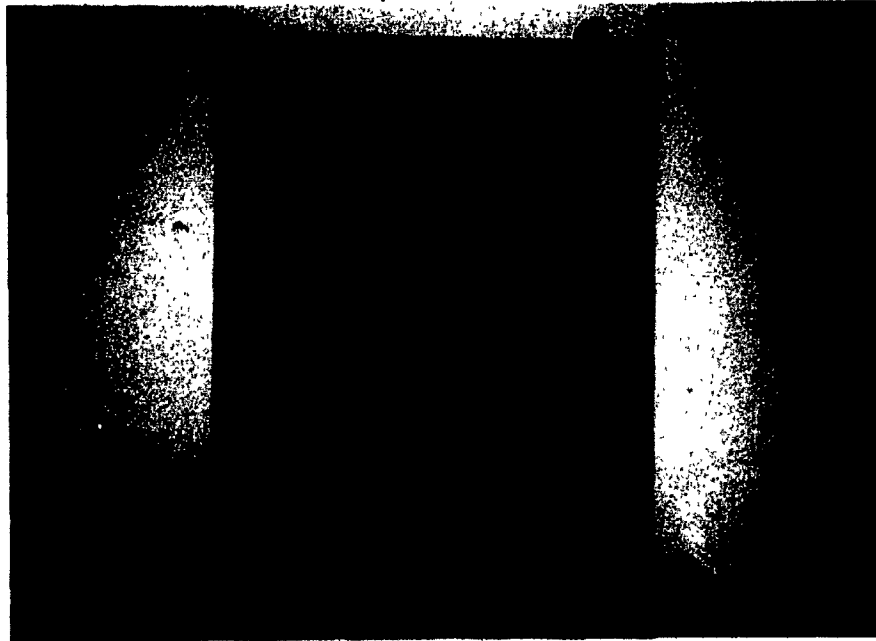


Figure 39. The witch's pushing away

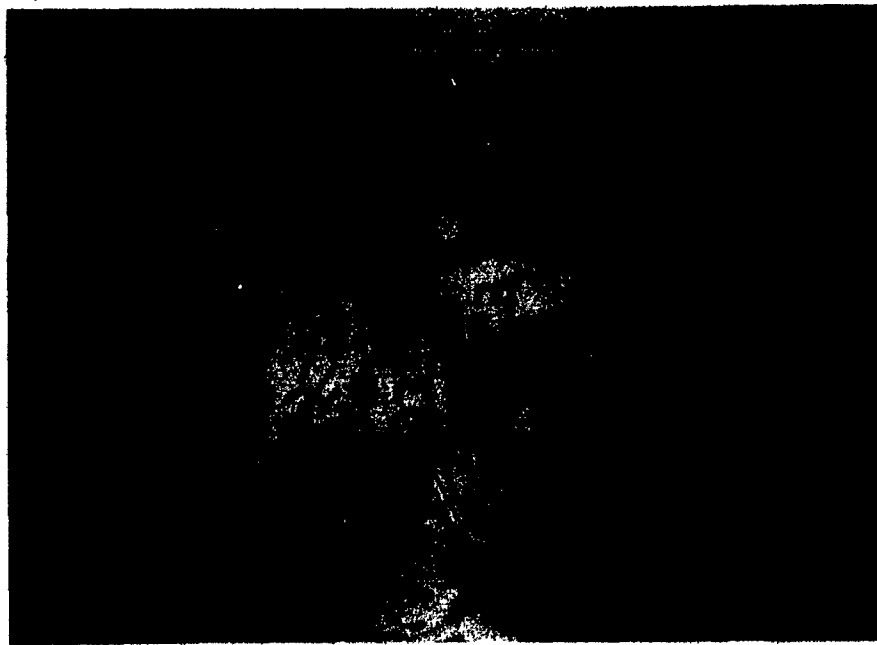


Figure 40. The witch's reward for her inner assistance



Figure 41. Distanced female figure #1

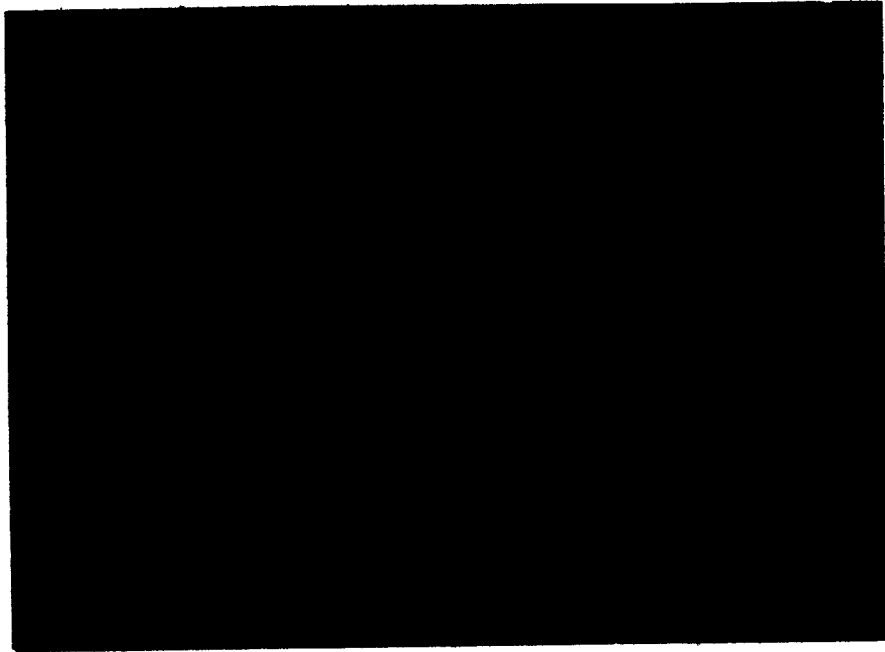


Figure 42. #2 Inner art therapy nurse



Figure 43. #3 When image and experience
interpenetrate