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ENTRY INTO IMAGINARY SPACE:
Transit Metaphors in Adult Psychotherapy

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
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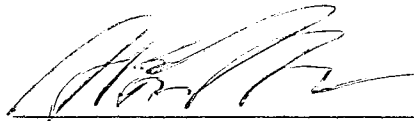
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Abstract

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by

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This project is a theoretical exploration of the role of metaphor in adult psychotherapy in repairing developmental arrests. The methodology used is in the spirit of 17th century philosopher Vico, who argued that we can learn about the human mind through exploring cultural products. Toward that end, I use three metaphors from three children's stories to illustrate the way by which the protagonists move from real to imaginary. I use these four imaginal worlds as analogues to transit into imaginary space; the three from children's literature and one clinical case. Through Alice in Wonderland, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, and The Phantom Tollbooth, as well as the clinical material of a long-term psychotherapy, I hope to elaborate different qualities of the state change from real to imaginary. I argue that these different qualities of imaginary space, or potential space as termed by D.W. Winnicott, correspond to varying affect-regulatory patterns, and that the transit metaphors that emerge in treatment can be used to access affect-regulatory information in the service of repair of developmental ruptures.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	16
I. Dyadic Context of Symbolization.....	17
II. Affect and Symbolization.....	54
III. Metaphor and Linking.....	68
Chapter 3: Transit Metaphors.....	79
I. Children's Stories and Potential Space.....	80
II. Transit Metaphors and Entry Into Imaginary Space.....	98
III. Conclusion.....	128
Chapter 4: Clinical Material.....	131
I. Collapse of the Play Space.....	136
II. Affect Regulation.....	140
III. Separation and Individuation.....	145
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	152
I. Rabbit Hole.....	153
II. Wardrobe.....	158
III. Tollbooth.....	164
IV. Awakening.....	169
Bibliography.....	174

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

“You, the reader, must allow me to occupy you, your thoughts, your mind, since I have no voice with which to speak other than yours. If you are to read this book, you must allow yourself to think my thoughts while I must allow myself to become your thoughts and in that moment neither of us will be able to lay claim to the thought as our own exclusive creation... a third subject is created.”

—Ogden

In this passage Ogden describes the narrative moment that is emergent between two subjectivities. The emergence of the “third subject” can be understood as the creative activity that generates art, story, love, development, therapeutic action; a transformation which allows for something new to be created, whether by that we mean a piece of culture or a new way of understanding “self/other.” Ogden eloquently captures the developmental phenomena that I hope to elaborate in this project, what I understand as the narrative experience within the potential space, that is, the creation of meaning that is the dynamic bridge linking internal and external experience wrought from language and feeling, self and other.

I hope to capture an aspect of the developmental process that moves from transitional space *into* potential space, and as Freedman and colleagues put it, “the presence of a certain *quality* of affect named becomes a signifier of a transformational process” (italics mine). The developmental process that is concerned with the emergent space between the infant and mother comes into being through responsive care. When all goes well, that emergent space develops into the potential to

experience self and others as creators of meaning (i.e. inter/subjectivity, culture, potential space). In this project I will be specifically exploring the way in which the creation of image and story in metaphoric thought—what I will call one’s transit metaphors—can function as a linking process and thus facilitate the movement from transitional into potential experience.

T. S. Eliot writes, “genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood.” This project is an attempt to explore the transformation of wordless experience into symbol; it is an exploration of the poetics of language and emotion; an exploration of the way in which the linkages between these essential capacities are shaped creatively, dynamically, and relationally.

My interest in this project grew out of a college class in ceramic sculpture in which I began formulating questions regarding the creative process: What is it? What gets in the way of its expression? And more specific to this inquiry, What is its relationship to intra-psychic change?

Through what started as something very much like playing in the mud, I began to put into words both, what I saw in the particular forms I was making, and an emergent understanding of what I was seeing as related to intrapsychic processes. One example of this was a point at which I noticed that the work I was doing involved an ambiguity between one figure and two—the action of the pieces were both merging and individuating. As I contemplated this metaphor it influenced my thinking about not only my work, but also, and perhaps obviously, the issue of separating and individuating on a number of levels. I constructed and experienced a

linkage between the concrete and the metaphoric that I feel generated growth artistically and intrapsychically.

Elaborating on Winnicott's ideas about the intermediate area of experience, Milner (1957) suggests the importance of such an experience is in the need and use of a "pliable medium," which provides, as she understands it, an interaction or relationship with an "object which is external but not insisting on its own separate objective existence." Working with clay, like the toy of the child, was halfway between daydreaming and purposeful action—a space opened up for my internal world to become manifest and be reflected upon. This began a kind of internal dialogue—or narrative process, which Jonathan Lear (1991) suggests is a key aspect of what is curative in psychotherapy, that is, to "contemplate the contents of one's mind".

My questions began as a feeling that there was something about the process of making sculpture that was related to the process of therapy. The classical Freudian perspective would explain such a process in terms of drives, as having to do with my having renounced my more primitive instinctual appetites, and in doing so the sculpture is a by-product, or a compromise of more forbidden desires. This may be true, but it has little *felt* resonance for me. I started to understand the forms I was making as speaking to some unconscious experience—unconscious up until the point of articulation through image. I felt that there was something about the act of articulation through the work, both in terms of images and verbalization, that effected a change in me and in later work. What Oremland writes of as a "conversation with

the self” (Oremland, 1997) begins through “playing,” and enables the development of more sophisticated levels of experience.

At that time, I understood the relationship between therapeutic process and creative process in terms of narrative ideas about “giving voice” and the construction of meaning. The act of creating forms that resonated psychologically seemed generative in that it gave me an experience of myself as an “author,” and thus, the potential for re-writing—for something new to happen. Narrative itself, as I think about it, is a metaphor that is resonant for me. In the sense that Jerome Bruner (1986) means when he writes of “subjunctifying” experience through linguistic tropes—turns of language like metaphor—that introduce ambiguity, multiplicity, and thus, possibility. For Bruner (1986, 1990), creativity rests in the opening of ambiguity: “the artist creates possible worlds through the metaphoric transformation of the ordinary and the conventionally given” (p.49). Culture not only provides a means of transacting with others but of conceiving of ourselves within such transactions (p.65). Meaning is constructed, Bruner believes, *between* the text and the reader.

And while the narrative aspect of creating and therapy remains relevant, my clinical experience, both as a therapist and a patient, has made me want to join such ideas about narrative with other ideas that seem particularly useful. Winnicott’s ideas about transitionality and potential space captured theoretically what I felt I was trying to get at.

Winnicott’s work offers a critique of Freudian models in which creativity is understood as defensive. Freud sees creativity as the by-product of instinctual renunciation, i.e. sublimation. Winnicott (1951) offers a critique of sublimation that

conceives of creativity as inherent and developing within human relationship—or the overlapping of the internal worlds of subjects. Creativity is a linking process, as well as a differentiating process. According to Winnicott it is not necessary or even desirable to describe creativity, but it can be usefully connected to creative living—the feeling of aliveness: “It is a creative apperception more than anything else that makes the individual feel that life is worth living” (p. 65).

As my clinical experience progressed I became aware of issues around affect regulation and its role in development—both my own and my patients’. Winnicott’s spatial metaphor of potential space as expressed in his ideas about transitional phenomena, when synthesized with more contemporary ideas about affect regulation, I believe, offers an interesting and perhaps useful way to understand the dynamic balance that is living creatively.

Ideas about affect regulation, I believe, are implicit in Winnicott, though they remain mostly undeveloped. For example, he writes that though he understands that playing is therapeutic, “this attitude must include the recognition that playing is always liable to become frightening” (p. 50). Too much excitement threatens play: “There is a degree of anxiety that is unbearable and this destroys playing” (p.52), and further: “playing can be said to reach its own saturation point, which refers to the capacity to contain experience” (p.52). Here he is explicitly referring to issues of affect regulation that are generally implicit in his theories about the development of the imagination.

Henry Krystal (1988) offers an interesting perspective that can be joined with narrative ideas about development, focusing on the importance of affect. He

understands development as related to the differentiation of affects through verbalization—affect states become differentiated and elaborated from diffuse and global infantile emotional states through the process of articulation. Thinking and talking about separation and individuation precipitated affect development that then enabled me to further elaborate my experience. From the verbalization of affects, growth is enabled, that is, more complexly organized. This I feel is an important addition to thinking about the creative process because it includes a crucial affective dimension to Winnicott's (1969) ideas about being able to *use* one's relationships and the environment. In order to use the environment one must be able to use one's emotional responses.

Additionally, contemporary infant researchers have since elaborated Winnicott's ideas about the role of affect in development as emergent from the maternal environment. Such work has elegantly shown through research the relationship between affect, representation, and cognition.

Attachment theory states that attachment is an expression of the biological need of human young to maintain proximity to caregivers (Bowlby, 1940). This work has delineated certain configurations of attachment based on the caregivers' attachment history. These attachment configurations shape the parents' handling of attachment feelings and behaviors with their own children. This work has been extended to posit that one's narrative about attachment history can predict the attachment classification of the narrator's child (Main, 1981). My use of this work focuses on one circumscribed aspect of their findings, that is, that one's ability to tolerate certain affective experience both influences one's ability to symbolize such experiences,

and/or access to certain cognitive capacities (e.g. memory). Attachment theory has established empirically the relationship between narrative and affect, specifically, the way in which patterns of relationship can be gleaned from patterns of thinking. These patterns of thinking correspond to parental patterns of handling affective experiences.

While this observation is made with the emphasis on the prediction of different patterns of relating, i.e. attachment classification, I am interested in using this literature to elaborate on the relational aspect of symbolization.

Much of the literature on transitional and potential space treats the capacity for imaginal experience as either “there or not.” Meanwhile, the developmental literature on symbolization processes virtually ignores affect and its role in the development of language. In the spirit of writers interested in elaborating a more fluid understanding of transitionality (Bach 1994, Bollas 1995, Goldman 1996), I will attempt to show through the exploration of four imaginal worlds—clinical material and three children’s stories—that potential space is much more fluid and dynamic than the theoretical literature often suggests. From this I hope to explicate my clinical sense of how the expanding and contracting nature of potential space within a psychotherapeutic relationship pivots upon affect-regulation issues and on the affective coloring of such experiences.

Goldman (1986) writes in “The Exquisite Corpse” that potential space “was a natural extension of Winnicott’s ideas about transitional phenomena.” Transitional space is a way of talking about a transition from being merged with the environment to being separate. In this way transitional space is a discrete developmental phase from which potential space emerges. “Potential space,” Goldman writes, “is a

metaphor for the affective coloring of a persons state of mind, attitude toward the world, in which the individual ‘begins to be’” (p.341).

Further, Goldman (1996) writes that potential space is generated cyclically, “the treatment process includes repeated, mutually generated cycles of creating, sustaining, losing and regaining potential space.” My hope is to elaborate this process as it relates to affect regulation and metaphor.

In his explication of potential space, Ogden states that “Although potential space originates in a (potential) physical and mental space *between* mother and infant, it later becomes possible, in the course of normal development, for the individual infant child, or adult to develop his own capacity to generate potential space.” In other words, potential space develops out of transitional space; transitional space emerges between the mother and infant, but potential space can be generated by the individual out of their relational experience. In this paper I will use the term transitional space to refer to the ways and moments that a patient cannot generate space intrapsychically, when instead there is an attempt to negotiate reality and fantasy using the therapist. I will use the term potential space to refer to ways and moments when this capacity is expressed in more developed form, that is when the patient and therapist can engage in play.

A more fruitful question than is potential space there or not, is *what is the quality* of one’s experience of transitionality? I will try to show that something about the quality of space can be understood through what I will call one’s transit metaphors, that is, the way in which one enters into imaginary space. The term imaginary is used in varying and overlapping ways. Winnicott contrasts imagination

with fantasizing, but I will treat imaginary space as a continuum represented at one extreme by fantasy and at the other by creativity. Fantasizing is akin to dissociation where “from the observer’s point of view nothing whatever has happened” (p.27) and “fantasizing interferes with action and with life in the real or external world, but much more so it interferes with dream and with personal or inner psychic reality...” (p.31) “fantasizing remains an isolated phenomenon, absorbing energy but not contributing in either to dreaming or to living” (p.26). Whereas, creativity is finding (creating) something of the true self in the world.

An amplification of *entry*—a psychic shift from one state to another—may help to elucidate important affect regulatory aspects of treatment. In an elegant clinical vignette Goldman (1996) notes his patient’s difficulty with entering and exiting sessions. He came to understand that his patient’s sense of herself “leaving the world and returning to face it alone” was distinct from her sense of herself with him during session—a disruption of going-on-being. His patients’ difficulty articulates what is usually a less concrete negotiation between reality and fantasy—while not initially metaphoric, the account suggests that it developed into a metaphor used in their work; “things of action” developed into “things of contemplation.”

While Goldman argues that with this patient, metaphor was used defensively, to move away from affect, as well as to maintain a distance between herself and her therapist, I would like to think about this defensive strategy as also an attempt to regulate affect *and* an attempt to symbolize. A transit metaphor, I will argue, serves to represent and thus illuminate the affective coloring of the movement from one state

to another, as well as the way an entry is experienced. The transit metaphor captures the way in which reality and fantasy are linked.

Transit metaphors can represent what Bruner (1986) calls “subjunctifying” an entry, again this is the linguistic mechanism for opening up possibilities, and making room for multiple meanings. He writes that “emotions achieve their qualitative character by being contextualized in the social reality that produces them” (p.114). The transit metaphors can be understood as an “affective signature” (p.116). To play with such metaphors not only helps elaborate the affective coloring of the imaginal world, but also can hold a space open between two poles of subjectivity. Winnicott suggests that playing is not only relevant to children, but also to adults. However, it is more difficult to discern with adults because for the most part their material is primarily verbal, but he states that play can be found in the choice of words, inflection, and sense of humor. Moreover, contemporary views on enactment shift this perspective to allow that there is much communication that is engaged in that is not yet verbal, as Goldman’s case emphasizes. To Winnicott’s statement that psychoanalysis is “a form of playing in the service of communication with oneself and others,” I would add that in particular, one’s metaphors are playfulness in the service of communication—like a game of hide and seek, meaning is obscured in order to be found.

I will examine potential space through the transit metaphors of Alice in Wonderland, The Phantom Tollbooth, and The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe and use these works as a heuristic device to understand the ways in which entry into the imaginary is related to the *quality* of the narratives. Again, it is my belief that the

quality of transitional space, as expressed through the particular transit metaphors—i.e. the particular way of entering into the imaginary space—can be useful in helping us understand what the experience of the imaginary can be like for any given patient therapist dyad, and in so doing, help regulate the play space. Or as Winnicott has put it elsewhere “What is being attempted here is to find a way of studying...the creative entry into life or of the initial creative approach to external phenomena” (p. 68).

I started to think about the relationship between the protagonist’s entry into the imaginary space of the stories and the way in which the character experienced that space. In “Alice” the narrative is terrifying only until she starts to realize that she is regulating herself (“this will make me bigger, this will make me smaller”). At such points she is able to navigate the landscape of the imaginary as more of an adventure—she becomes a subject that makes things happen, instead of feeling as if things happen *to her*, though her subjectivity is fluctuating and tenuous.

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Alice is fighting off sleepiness and boredom (i.e. deadness)—she can’t engage with her older sister’s book because it is beyond her (“What’s the use of a book without pictures or conversations”). In Alice’s case, the imaginary actually intrudes upon the real in the form of a hallucination—the rabbit scurrying by checking his watch and anxiously uttering his lateness. She follows the hallucinatory rabbit down his hole “so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down what seemed to be a very deep well.” This

narrative entry into the imaginary vacillates between disoriented, dissociated, and terrifying—not without its moments of curiosity and adventure, but the quality of the narrative is one of happenings *to* Alice; it is a landscape of impingement's and confusion.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, entry into the imaginary is also unexpected, but the landscape changes from the real to the imaginary in a relatively gentle and curious way, it is precipitated by a game of hide and seek. The character's siblings accompany them in this narrative, so that while they experience separations, the imaginary is shared. In this narrative landscape there are plenty of dangers, but the children' are royalty in their imaginary world—creators instrumental in the happenings. While meanings are transformed in this landscape, such meaning can be accessed unlike the confusional world of Alice.

In the *Phantom Tollbooth*, Milo, although also suffering from boredom, finds entry into the imaginary within his own private space—his room. *Someone* left him a package that contains the tollbooth, his vehicle and the toll: the other is implicit in his adventure . He drives through the tollbooth, paying his fare, entering into the imaginary through play, and with intention and a sense of agency, precipitated by the gift of the other. While he happens upon strange and treacherous characters and situations, he finds accompaniments from within the imaginary space whom help him understand and make use of his adventure. The companions in Alice's adventure are obstacles and befuddlers of meaning.

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My ideas began to develop a more specific focus when I realized that in "Alice" the narrative is terrifying only until she starts to realize that she is regulating herself ("this will make me bigger, this will make me smaller"). At such points she is able to navigate the landscape of the imaginary as more of an adventure—she becomes a subject that makes things happen, instead of feeling as if things happen *to her*, though her subjectivity is fluctuating and tenuous.

The idea of the mode of entry resembling an affect-regulatory pattern captured my imagination in relation to a clinical case: a young woman whose parents are both mentally ill with whom regulatory issues and anxieties are central in the treatment. I began to understand the importance of my serving as a regulating object. My experience was that the potential space in the treatment expanded and contracted and that affect regulation was a key element in this dynamic.

My experience of this often manifested itself in a fluctuating capacity to write process notes and communicate the process of my sessions in supervisions. While this is true for me at times in other clinical dyads, the experience was particularly exaggerated in my work with Mila and seemed connected with the level of anxiety in the sessions. The quality of Mila's verbalizations would at times defy my ability to capture them in notes: her language would be extremely condensed—phrases within phrases within parenthetical statements. At other times her narrative would be coherent but unconnected to the affective tone in the session. While I struggled with this, supervision often focused on what was happening between us that was not entirely verbal. I understand this interruption in my secondary process to represent a kind of collapse of potential space that reflected a collapse in her experience of

transitionality and my own vulnerability of secondary process when I feel overwhelmed—a disrupted link between her words and her affect, in which I held the wordless experience. I began to think about the relationship between affect regulation and symbolization. Henry Krystal's work on affect regulation and verbalization helped me understand the importance of struggling with articulating what was happening in the treatment and for each of us to find words that felt infused with meaning and affectively linked. One day, in an attempt to describe Mila's verbalization I told my supervisor "It's like being at the mad hatter's tea party!" I immediately felt a sense of relief and surprise in being able to capture the experience of her highly anxious verbal manner. Winnicott reminds us that "the significant moment is that at which the child surprises himself" (p.51). I began to see that the children's stories were a way for me to manage and begin to symbolize transference/countertransference anxieties.

I found the children's stories soothing. The images in the text seemed suited to contain intense and primitive feeling states, which then enabled me to articulate aspects of the treatment that I had been struggling to capture in language. I began to notice that at different points, my access to language was more and less difficult, and I began to think about the way in which the images from these stories were serving to both contain anxiety, and facilitate the process of putting the clinical encounter into words—aiding the symbolizing function. While I was exploring such stories, Mila was exploring her own metaphors in session, which I will take up later. In this space between us, I came to believe that metaphors could be understood in regulatory terms in their linking and thereby containing features.

My hypotheses are that 1) potential space can be generatively understood as expanding and contracting in response to affect regulation; 2) the quality of entry into imaginative space can communicate important aspects of how that space is experienced and thus aid in regulatory understanding and function; 3) Transit metaphors can be usefully understood and utilized as a linking activity in the service of symbolizing and containing affect.

To develop my argument I will review the literature domains of symbolization, transitional space, affect, and metaphor and put them in dialogue with four imaginal worlds as a way to explicate my ideas. These worlds, three stories and clinical material, will be used as a lens to synthesize and tease out ideas about the relationship between affect and transitionality.

This project is not, to borrow from Bruner (1990), a tidy little study, which may tend to “artificialize what we are studying to a point almost beyond recognition as representative of human life.” He explains that “...To insist upon explanation in terms of ‘causes’ simply bars us from trying to understand how human beings interpret their worlds and how *we* interpret *their* acts of interpretation” (p. xiii). And so to the theoretical scaffolding we now turn, taking with us Langer’s (1942) assurance that “the beginning of any theoretical structure is inevitably marked by fantastic inventions.”

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

*“It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there.”*

-William Carlos Williams

So here we may ask: What *is* found there? *Where* is there? And what *enables* such a finding? In exploring the way in which *entry into* imaginary space is represented, experienced, and made use of, i.e. symbolized, I will first turn my attention to concepts that bear on imaginary space: mind, imagination, symbol, and play. I will then review some of the relevant literature of affect development. And in the final section I will address the linking process between what is felt, what is known, and what can be articulated. Now let us turn to different ideas about the development of symbolization and mind.

Symbolization is the process that animates mind. When inquiring into symbolization, we are in effect looking into ideas about how people represent (i.e., encode, remember, use) experience. By this I mean both the way in which information is encoded in the brain, and the processes by which one constructs subjective meaning. I will move from the general idea that the process of symbolization is intrinsic to the development of mind. Needless to say, there is an enormous range of discourse coming at these questions from different points of entry

(e.g. neurological, developmental, psychological). Because of the breadth of literature, this discussion of mind will be broad in scope, but just enough of a framework to provide a means to get to the question of what it means to think about entry into imaginary space. To this end I will consider some developmental perspectives, as well as psychoanalytic perspectives, in the service of teasing out ideas about symbolization, play, and imagination; how each is an aspect of, and instrumental in, the development of mind.

I. THE DYADIC CONTEXT OF SYMBOLIZATION

“All single voices are abstracted from dialogues”

-Bakhtin

Before we can register our experience linguistically, that is, before we can talk about and reflect upon our experience verbally, we register the world as rhythms, sounds, the touch of flesh, tastes, and the play of light woven into and through internal states of hunger and satiety, warmth and cold, discomfort and contentment. A baby held by its mother on the subway gazes actively at faces and forms, feels and hears the rumble hum of the train while her mother playfully kisses her face and neck. This moment before it can be represented, in Loewald’s terms, is part of the “primordial density”: the world, her experience in it, her mother, and their

relationship—all registered and encoded in a particular moment and experience of being. Through development this experience will become differentiated into discrete elements: sound, form, feeling, context, (m)other, which she will be able to refer to and elaborate on through and with language. This leaves us with the question of how does this development from the primordial density to the verbal-symbolic occur?

Much of the developmental literature focuses on the development of certain cognitive capacities (i.e. accuracy of sensation, processing speed, relevant output), or in other words, how to understand the development of a rational being (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978). This essentially frames the question of mind in terms of intelligence. While developmental and cognitive scholarship has greatly enhanced our understanding of certain cognitive capacities, it is incomplete to the degree that it fails to address a central organizing human experience, emotion. With contemporary research in cognition and attachment, we have a more elaborate understanding of the role of emotion in representation, the construction of meaning, and narrative—both in terms of cognitive processes and in the subjective sense of realness and vitality.

Again, a traditional cognitive understanding leaves out a person's subjective sense in the world, focusing on the objective manifestations of cognitive capacity. Clinically we are privy to the range of suffering of individuals from those who have highly developed intelligence but a despairing experience of not being able to connect with a sense of a real self, to those on the other end of the continuum, that is, with internal worlds so “real” that they are split off from others and the external world (see Winnicott's (1971) “Creativity and its Origins” for a more elaborated explanation of these splits).

Psychoanalytic accounts of development tend to focus not only on how the various issues are subjectively experienced, but also on the ways in which intra psychic conflict, and more recently, attachment styles can shape, facilitate, and inhibit cognition. In other terms, the question of what is “mind” has roughly been approached historically by developmental psychologists through the study of external manifestations of intelligence—i.e., memory, language acquisition, and perception—and by psychoanalysts through (inter)subjective quality of experience—i.e., desire, fear, conflict, and relatedness. A fruitful place of collaboration between these two perspectives lies in the shared idea that symbolic processes develop within a dyadic context. In dialogue these two perspectives seem to offer a more nuanced understanding of subjectivity and the relationship between symbolization and affect than either one does on its own.

Cognitive Theories of Mind

Again, mind according to Piaget (1962), is synonymous with intelligence. He believed that intelligence is a dialectic between two cognitive processes, assimilation and accommodation. In this framework the process of assimilation incorporates events, objects, or situations into existing ways of thinking that constitute organized mental structures. In accommodation, mental structures themselves reorganize to incorporate new aspects of the external environment. Intelligence involves achieving equilibrium between accommodation and assimilation while taking in external reality and maintaining mental structures. In this framework, relationships with other people are strikingly absent. It is possible to understand human relationships as implicit in

accommodation, but only in the most abstracted terms. The relational context remains underdeveloped until Vygotsky's (1978) work that will be taken up later in this section.

Piaget (1962) understands play as assimilation. According to this understanding, play takes the world into existing mental structures—neither the child nor the world is impacted. Imitation is the way that the child's mental structures are reorganized, that is, development proceeds from imitation. Not only is this an impoverished observation on play, but it takes no account of innovation or creativity, as Nicolopoulou (1993) writes, such a perspective “closes off any opportunity to see play as a context for new development” (p.7).

Piaget understands the symbolic function as an isolated individual mechanism and “asserts that the development of play progresses from purely individual processes and idiosyncratic private symbols to social play and collective symbolism.” And further, that “play derives from the child's mental structure and can be explained only by that structure (Nicolopoulou, 1993, p.4).” This formulation has the effect of leaving out the importance of people, things and experiences.

According to Piaget, (1962) “play is merely the expression of one of the phases of this progressive differentiation: it occurs when assimilation is dissociated from accommodation, but is not yet reintegrated in the forms of permanent equilibrium in which, at the level of operational and rational thought, the two will be complementary. In this sense, play constitutes the extreme pole of assimilation of reality to the ego.” (p.162). Essentially, this puts mind and world in a polar relationship; mind and world are conceived of in the positivistic sense of inside and

outside, thereby resolving the Winnicottian paradox of inside and outside. It also begins to resemble the classical psychoanalytic characterization of play as wish fulfillment, in that, reality is absorbed (distorted) by the ego (Freud, 1908).

In Piaget's conception, the symbolic function, play, and collective meaning develop from the individual and as such are solitary processes in origin. Piaget is concerned with the individual child interacting with objects, thereby missing the importance of emotion and relationship. The absence of the relational and sociocultural dimension in developmental concepts created the space for Vygotsky's work in which this social dimension was central.

Vygotsky (1978) while also primarily concerned with the development of a rational being, gives a central role to culture and to its transmission through social interaction and communication. For him, a child's internalization of experience with his caretakers creates thought; narration to parents results in a narration to the self. Internal speech in this case is a developmental achievement that emerges from social speech. Correspondingly, play is always a symbolic social activity that figures importantly in cognitive development rather than simply reflecting it. In this view, development is seen to proceed from the social to the individual. In this framework children do not develop in isolation, but within a social matrix consisting of an interconnection of systems of social relationships and "collectively elaborated conceptual and symbolic systems"—or cultural heritage.

Play, Vygotsky (1978) posits, creates a "zone of proximal development" which is the difference between the child's '*actual* developmental level as determined by independent problem solving' and the level of 'potential development as determined

through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (p.86). Social interactions are thought to stimulate cognitive capacities that are within this zone.

“Play helps the child to sever the originally intimate fusion between meaning (word) and perception, meaning and object, meaning and action (Vygotsky 1978, p.11).” Play, for Vygotsky, is a differentiating process. This is what he means when he argues that a cognitive reorganization takes place through play—thinking becomes differentiated from the concrete world. Through pretense play the child begins to differentiate “the fields of meaning and vision”; meaning is dissociated from objective referents. In this way something can stand in for something else in play activity. “In this sense, pretense play involves the creation—in imagination—of a world dominated by meanings, one in which action arises from ideas rather than from things. In short, by fostering the development of imagination, play prepares the way for abstract internalized thought (p.11),” that is, symbolization.

While Vygotsky’s work is a crucial addition to understanding development, it falls short of capturing the dialectic involved in the development of mind. Instead, it merely reverses the direction of input and output. The child is a cipher in the beginning, bringing nothing to the social world at the outset. And though Vygotsky argues that symbolization develops within a social context he doesn’t explain the role of relationship except in stimulating maturation. For a more elaborated conception of this process I will turn to Werner and Kaplan (1963) who outline the developmental changes that take place in the symbolic process.

Cognitive Perspectives on Symbolization

Werner and Kaplan (1963) write that the symbolic function arises out of the “primordial sharing situation,” or the presymbolic situation in which there is little differentiation in the child’s experience between himself, the other and the referential object. The idea of a “primordial sharing situation” is a conception of the mother-infant matrix that is compatible with more dynamic concepts of the undifferentiated state of the infant in psychoanalytic terms (Mahler, 1975; Winnicott, 1971; Loewald, 1978).

Werner and Kaplan demarcate four components of the symbol situation that exist more or less in an undifferentiated state: the addressor (child), the addressee (caregiver), the referent (object referred to), and the symbolic vehicle (word). When the child and mother begin to contemplate objects together, these components become related in different ways—they become both increasingly differentiated *and* linked with greater complexity. They argue that reference is a social act, which is gradually shared through symbols. So, symbolization develops *between* the mother and infant. When ideas about transitional space are introduced later, the reader will note the way in which Werner and Kaplan’s model resembles Winnicott’s ideas, though translated into linguistic terms (e.g. referent, symbolic vehicle, etc).

Over time, they write, changes occur “in the direction of increasing differentiation” among the components. The “self” (addressor) matures and increases in complexity, peers and other social relations are added to the repertoire of the addressor, referents become increasingly complex due to cognitive maturation, and the symbolic vehicles become increasingly conventional (or shared). Werner and

Kaplan term this increasing differentiation process “distancing” or “polarization.”

The term itself reveals a limitation of their work, it captures only the separating aspect of cognitive maturation. While they write that simultaneously each component links with the other components, as well as differentiates, they don’t elaborate on the linking part of this process in which each component also becomes linked or integrated with the others. In addition, the idea that peers and social relations are merely added to a repertoire understates the developmental aspects and leaves out the quality of relatedness.

Even with the limitations of their work Werner and Kaplan do a good job of capturing the balance between internal and external, shared and idiosyncratic elements in communicating. They conclude: “As is true for all forms of socially organized relationships, the execution of communication by speech involves the integration of individual and transpersonal expressiveness: normally conducted speech requires that a balance be maintained between the objective vehicular forms comprising the code and the variable individual meanings ... [T]his balance...is rapidly reestablished when it breaks down momentarily. In the cases of pathology, however, the balance...may be rendered unstable for long periods...the instrumentality which is the linguistic code is then handled and used in idiosyncratic and ‘inadequate’ ways in the communication of reference.” (p. 51)

Cognitive Perspectives on Making Meaning

Contemporary perspectives on cognitive development have shifted from emphasis on the ‘rational being’ to the meaning-making being. This shift reflects the

understanding that meaning is negotiated *between* people. Such perspectives are represented by Katherine Nelson's (1996) ideas about the development of narrative in children and Jerome Bruner's (1986, 1990) ideas about narrative and meaning.

Katherine Nelson (1996) introduced meaning into a cognitive perspective with her ideas about Mimetic Event Representation (MER). "Children's knowledge," she writes, "begins in participation in events arranged by others" (p.93). She defines an event as consisting of "an organized sequence of actions through time and space that has a perceived goal" (p.94). This shift from objects to events means that context and meaning become organizing principles of cognition, instead of "when the focus is upon objects *qua* objects, it is possible to conceive of the object in static, even abstract, terms." She contrasts this perspective with one that focuses on events, which she writes are "always socially and culturally particular" (p. 96). Event representations include not only words or "scripts," but people, actions and props that constitute each event, which are linked through the meaning of such events, e.g. having lunch. "To have knowledge of an event is to have organized knowledge of the *sequence* of actions, that is, to represent the temporal order in which the components of the event take place, and of the causal relation among actions within an event" (p.96).

Nelson (1996) extends the Vygotskian position that cognition, and specifically language develops in a social context. But she elaborates, and makes the argument that language is not initially symbolic, but pragmatic. For Nelson (1996) language is used in shared activities "to mark them, to move them forward" but not, at least initially, to represent. Within this framework, the child need not imagine to play.

Her contribution lies in elaborating the developmental notion that language is constitutive of thought into an understanding that *participation in events marked by language with caretakers is constitutive of meaning*: “the episodic/mimetic world enables the linguistic/narrative world to emerge” (p.91). Linkages between language, people, and events, and things are made through meaning. This connects up with psychoanalytic ideas about attachment and representation, which I will take up later.

Bruner (1986, 1990) develops the idea of meaning further by explicating a narrativizing tendency in human development: “Narrative thinking, beginning with the acquisition of language, brings the growing human being into the arena of human culture.” He argues that it is the processes of meaning creation that steers beliefs and acts. Further, that narrative—or what he terms “subjunctivizing” experience—allows for ambiguity, polysemy (i.e. multiple translation) and possibility, and thus, imaginative and playful construction of experience.

This seems a fitting place to take up psychoanalytic perspectives because of the emphasis on multiple meanings and the development of subjectivity.

Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Mind

It is interesting to note that in both developmental theory and psychoanalytic theory, early concepts of mind were more insular, and only later developed into more relational concepts. Freud represents an individualistic perspective in his drive theory, and only later when he emphasizes the importance of identification, the possibility opens up to think about the role of relationships in development (Loewald, 1966).

Freud (1908, 1911, 1917, 1923, 1924, 1947) understood development generally, and creativity and culture more specifically, as the by-products of instinctual renunciation. According to his framework the child's initial desire is for the mother which is then repressed out of the fear of paternal rivalry and retaliation. These desires are goal inhibited and desexualized; a displacement from the bodily to the cultural takes place. Instinctual energy goes through a transformation as a result of the renunciation of more primitive gratification. Freud uses the term sublimation to denote this transformation. In sublimation libidinal energy is displaced and transformed. According to Freud, the transformation of instincts moves from primitive appetites for the bodily to more advanced levels of mentation. In this framework creativity and culture are seen as defensive, though not necessarily pathogenic or pathological. In this version, the other exists primarily as a libidinal object of desire, as well as a prohibitive presence.

Freud's earlier model of mind, the topographic model, understood mind in terms of the processes of Conscious, Preconscious, and Unconscious thought. His later structural model understood mind in terms of the structures of Ego, Superego, and Id. Loewald (1966) explains that the difference between Freud's two models is a difference between a conception of the mind in terms of mental *processes*—mind as an instrument, and that of mental *functions*—that is, mind as organization or organism. Each of these models emphasizes individual intrapsychic development, but in Loewald's reading of Freud he makes the point that the structural model initiates a critical shift in understanding the role of the object as instrumental in constituting mind:

“The most far reaching change was brought about by Freud’s increasing understanding of the role of identification in mental life, identification not as one of the defense mechanisms, but as a crucial factor in the formation of ego and superego. This changes the role of object-relations from mere need gratification to a constituent in the formation of psychic structure” (Loewald, 1966, p.57).

That is, relationships are essential in the development of mind. The shift from the other as an object of appetite to the other as central in development of mind opens up the possibility to understand symbolization as a dyadic process, to be elaborated first by object-relations theorists and then by attachment theorists.

From Renunciation to Reunion

An important revision of Freud’s theory of sublimation in particular, and mind in general was provided by Loewald. In Freud’s early work, instinct is conceived as an internal stimulus wherein the nervous systems’ purpose (or motivation) is to get rid of the stimulus, or to reduce it to the lowest possible level. But because the instinct cannot be completely expunged, it is compelled to “undertake involved and interconnected activities by which the external world is so changed as to afford satisfaction to the internal source of stimulation” (Loewald, 1960, p. 233). In this view, instinctual aim is satisfaction and through sublimation this aim is inhibited or more accurately substituted. The object of instinct is not conceived of as connected with the instinct; drives are intrapsychic instead of object-related.

In later writings Freud gradually moved away from instincts as inner stimuli in which the nervous system operates in a reflex arc. Instead, conceiving of instinct as function, that is, the urge of the nervous system is to deal with the environment. In his later work, instinct is concerned with integration, or binding together.

It is from this later work that Loewald revises the concepts of drive and by extension sublimation and symbolization. For Loewald, the critical aspect of sublimation rests not in a renunciation of more primitive aims, but instead it is the *reunion* of the primitive unity with conscious experience that transforms instinct. In his view, sublimation is not a defense against instinctual life but a reconciliation of an earlier experience of unity with novel experience, thereby generating new experience and development. Instincts are refigured as “psychic representations of organic needs” or “psychic processes occurring in the mother-infant matrix.”

In Loewald’s framework, instead of drive being neutralized it is *utilized*—the infant’s wishful impulses are not cut off but remain ready for use. Loewald moves from Freud’s idea in “Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood” (1910) that the “highest” and “lowest” of the spiritual and sexual are enveloped into a unitary experience. Loewald writes, that “It is the original unity that is in the process of being restored, or something of it is saved in sublimation; there is a symbolic *linkage* which constitutes what we call meaning” (p.13). Desire is transformed in sublimation, wherein “*oneness stays alive as connection.*” This transformation occurs, according to Loewald, through the feeling of oneness being revived and joined with later experience resulting in new organizations of that feeling of oneness. Sublimation also occurs as object-relations become intrapsychic interactions, that is internalized, after a degree of differentiation between self and other takes place (p.19). Through internalizations, the character or quality of objects and object-relations changes and by extension the aims change.

“Objects, object-relations, and objectives may be said to be reorganized or recreated through this reciprocal interplay ... [sublimation] involves an internal re-creative return toward [the mother-infant matrix] a reconciliation of the polarized elements produced by individuation (and sexual differentiation).” (p. 22)

The shift from renunciation to reunion is an important one in that it makes the process of linking instrumental in psychic development. Loewald refigures development as proceeding not from the disavowal or repression of desire, but from the integration, infusion, and use of desire in experience to give our lives vitality. As he puts it when writing about the psychoanalytic endeavor, it is the “blood of preconscious life” when re-united with present-day experience, that enlivens us; it becomes the power that “is taken over and transformed into the newer intensity of present life...” (Loewald, 1957)

Linking and Thinking: Bion and Loewald

Shifting the emphasis from structures to linking in the development of mind serves to bring a few important ideas to the forefront of theory. Most generally, it serves to make process central, that is, making meaning is conceptualized as an organizing aspect in the development of mind. Additionally, linking gives us a way to understand integration and the *use* of desire in development. This seems important in owning more of our experience. And a point to be taken up later in this section, is that meaning is created between people, through interaction with others and the world. Rycroft (1968) points out that Freud acknowledged the formative influence of others in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), stating that Freud “provided the linking idea between the psychology of the individual and the psychology of interpersonal

relations” through conceiving of the ego as ‘the part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence the external world’. This external world implicitly involves other people in that the process of an idea becoming conscious has to do with the extent to which it is in contact with “verbal images,” that is, to communicate with an (implicit) other.

Loewald and Bion both emphasize linking and thought in object-relations, with Bion more closely considering the affective component, and Loewald more interested synthesizing drive theory and developmental ideas about the symbolic function with object-relational concepts and ego-development. Now I would like to turn to these two theorists to highlight the process of relating and thought. Loewald and Bion extend object-relational ideas about identificatory processes to thinking. The use of the idea of linking, Bion points out, is used because what is being considered is a function rather than an object.

Loewald uses the concept of linking both in his ideas about sublimation and the linking of unconscious and conscious experience but also in his attempts to synthesize Werner and Kaplan’s ideas about symbolic function with an object-relations model that takes drive into account. Loewald critiques the tendency in classical psychoanalytic literature to understand symbols in a limited way, that is, symbols stand in for thoughts that are intolerable to the ego. The emphasis on thinking for Freud was in the processes of condensation and displacement as the modes of thinking in dreams and the unconscious, thus, psychoanalytic inquiry focused on getting at deeper meaning.

In contrast, more contemporary theory shifts emphasis from symbolic meaning to the *process* of symbolizing, or how meaning is made. For Loewald condensation and displacement is necessarily secondary process because they involve two discrete ideas either fusing together or being substituted one for another; for two ideas to condense they have to first be differentiated.

Loewald's (1976) article "Primary Process, Secondary Process and Language" addresses what he understands as a transformation of primary-process aspects of language into secondary-process organization. Primary and secondary-process can be understood in Loewald's terms as "poles between which human mentation moves" (p. 178)—not only in terms of a progression from a more amorphous "primitive" or "infantile" to more "adult" or "civilized" forms of thinking, but that language has primary process qualities. Further, development consists of a "weaving together" of primary and secondary process. In other words, it is the *linking* of these two processes that facilitates higher-level cognition. Loewald understands secondary process not as different than primary process, instead primary process elements are integral to secondary process. He synthesizes object relations with Werner and Kaplan's developmental account of the symbolic function in which primary process stems from the primordial sharing situation, or what he terms the primordial density"—words and things, self and other are initially undifferentiated. Loewald is elaborating on a notion first put forth by Freud about the initial boundarylessness of the ego.

Loewald (1976) makes the point that language is “typically conveyed in the parental voice,” underscoring the importance of a sense of presence of the other in language acquisition.

“The mother speaks to the infant as if speaking to herself with the infant included. The words...form undifferentiated ingredients of the total situation... he is embedded in a flow of speech that is part of the mother-child field.” (p.185). “The linking of thing-presentation, that is, sensation, and word presentation is a process that is secondary to an original unity where “word” is embedded in “thing.” It is this original unity that constitutes the matrix for a “correspondence” between thing presentation and word presentations as they become differentiated from one another.” (p.187).

Building on Freud, he writes that a psychical act (sensation), what he refers to as a “thing-presentation” becomes hypercathected by being linked with a corresponding word presentation. Freud defines cathexis in terms of the infusion of instinctual entities. Loewald revises the idea of cathexis and hypercathexis to mean “a concept for organizing activity.” So, organization of psychic structure, that is the development of secondary process, occurs from the linking of sensation and language, mediated by the other.

Loewald (1976) believed that words are not a more sophisticated mode of thought in and of themselves: “word presentations do not constitute a higher organizational state than thing presentations: it is the *linking* of the two by which higher organization comes about.” Again, for Loewald, linking is an organizing act. In linking words and the corresponding experience the “psychic life of the patient is intensified or deepened, has gained a new dimension”—a new form of mental representation results. He writes that linking is a “knowing-together.” By this he means that in secondary process thinking there is a *reunion* of what was once

undifferentiated. This is what gives words their “magical-evocative” aspect, their link with the sensual and “rejoining on a different level by way of creative repetition” of what was once undifferentiated. The linking of word with sensation embodies, summons, and brings to life this original unity.

For Loewald (1988), like Milner who we will cover later in this section, creativity involves a return to the mother-infant matrix in a sort of “reconciliation” of the now differentiated self. Because sublimation is a “return” to a former state of unity, it involves celebratory aspects—again, resembling Milner’s idea about ecstasy. This idea is also reminiscent of Winnicott’s idea that potential space is a separation that is not a separation, but a union. Loewald (1988) writes “In genuine sublimation this alienating differentiation is being reversed in such a way that a fresh unity is created by an act of uniting. In this reversal—a restoration of unity—there comes into being a differentiated unity that captures separateness in the act of uniting , and unity in the act of separateness” (p.24). Unity is restored in the form of symbolic linkage. For Loewald, it is the linking of unconscious and preconscious experience with the conscious everyday that gives the everyday it’s vitality, and in turn, it is the everyday that structures and gives expression to the unconscious (Loewald, 1960). Development proceeds not from the repression or renunciation of the unconscious, but the utilization of it for vital development.

Like Loewald, Bion (1959, 1962) believed that the common critical element in thinking and feeling is the process of linking: of sense perceptions and images, images and language. Bion moves from Klien’s elaboration of drive theory to include phantasy. Klien (1932) believed that an instinct includes both a phantasy and an

object. Freud saw phantasy as appearing only when the reality principle and the capacity for logical thinking have been established, leaving out more primitive phantasies, that is preverbal and previsual (Segal, 1991). For Klein, phantasy begins with the physical, an intertwining of impulses and defenses, not so much in terms of a compromise, but instead as an expression of both.

Extending Klein's work, Bion's model of thinking involved what he termed the "Theory of Alpha-Function." According to this theory, sense perceptions and perceived emotional experience (Beta elements, or "things in themselves") are transformed into alpha elements which can be used in new processes of transformation, that is, thoughts. The child takes in milk from the mother and has the experience of the "good breast," the infant's unsatisfied need is experienced as the "bad breast." According to Bion, all needed objects are bad objects because they are not possessed. All primitive thoughts or proto-thoughts are bad objects (beta elements), the child tries to evacuate these beta elements or bad objects into the mother: "The real experience with the actual breast provides the baby an opportunity to get rid of this bad breast." (p.54). It is the *preconception*, or expectation of the breast, in meeting with the *realization*, or the real experience with the breast, from which *conception* is generated. The mother perceives her baby's needs within herself through her ability to be open to the projected need, what Bion calls "reverie". "The mother who functions as an effective container of the infant's sensations can successfully transform hunger into satisfaction, pain into pleasure, loneliness into company, fear of dying into peacefulness." (P.56). When a preconception is met with frustration, the absent breast, "no-breast" becomes a thought.

Bion's (1962) container and contained idea is an example of a concept where the chief concern is affect-regulation and the way in which affect modulation is an interactive process. Briefly, the mother "contains" intense affect and "returns" it to the child in a metabolized form. However, a predominance of beta elements, or unprocessed affect, Bion believed resulted in a tendency to act and to use concrete thought due to an inadequate capacity to symbolize and abstract. The mother, in effect, lends the infant her more developed secondary processing capacity in order that affect can be processed. This is a metaphoric way of talking about affect regulation that highlights the importance of the mother in preventing feeling states from overwhelming the child.

The Role of Play and Creativity in the Development of Mind

Winnicott made play and creativity central concepts in his formulations of the development of mind. To appreciate the radical nature of this revision let us once again turn to Freud's ideas about creativity and play.

Freud explores the role of creativity in the development of mind in "The Moses of Michelangelo" (1924) where he poses the question: what is the essence of the emotional resonance in art? He posits that the answer is to be found beyond technical or formal aspects of art. He writes that:

"what grips us so powerfully can only be the artist's intention, in so far as he has succeeded in expressing it in his work and in getting us to understand it... what he aims at is to awaken in us the same emotional attitude, the same mental constellation as that which in him produced the impetus to create." (p.212).

Interestingly, Freud argues that Michelangelo's intention was to represent the idea that one's passions must be mastered in the service of a greater cause, that of making art. Michelangelo, according to Freud, alters the character of Moses, he modifies the historically depicted event of the broken tablets thrown to the ground in a fit of rage precipitated by Moses witnessing his peoples' worshipping the golden calf: "he does not let Moses break them in his wrath, but makes him be influenced by the danger that they will be broken and makes him calm his wrath, or at any rate prevent it from becoming an act."

From a more contemporary perspective, Freud's "reading" of Michelangelo's intention now seems at worst a transparent projection, or at best Freud's attempt to imagine the mind of the other. Further, we can elucidate the more Winnicottian emphasis from Freud's account when he describes all of the different emotional resonances found by other writers. Perhaps it is not that everyone connects with the artists' intention to transform baser emotions in the service of a greater cause, but instead that the emotional space created by the artist enables many different people to find something of their own internal landscape within the sculpture. It is that space to imagine, created by the artist and experienced by the viewer, that Winnicott would say is at the essence of creativity. Freud locates creativity in the renunciation of instincts, and play as an attempt at such mastery.

In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" Freud (1911) introduces not only the idea that play is an attempt at mastery, but also the idea that play has meaning. In observing a child's game of tossing a spool away and then retrieving it in the context of the child's mother being absent (the fort/da game), Freud hypothesized that play

serves the purpose of mastering anxiety. Through play, the child attempts to master and integrate his conflicts (made up of instinctual derivatives) by turning a situation that he must suffer passively into one in which he has active control. Thus, a critical component of mastery is wish fulfillment.

For Freud, play is determined by wish fulfillment or more specifically “really, by one wish, which is to be grown up” (p.47). The adult gives up playing for daydreaming, which like the play of the child is motivated by wish fulfillment.

There are several limitations to understanding creativity and play in Freud’s terms. To begin with, he views engagement with the world as a compromise rather than an inherent desire or tendency. For obvious reasons, this seems a problematic way of conceiving human nature, in the most basic sense it is difficult to account for all of our capacities that serve to facilitate exploration of the external world (e.g. the orienting response) if such activity was merely compromise or transformed libidinal drives. To understand human attachment only in terms of gratifying appetites is another problematic reduction of human experience. In “The Poet’s Relation to Daydreaming” Freud (1908) understands play for the adult in circumscribed ways. For Freud, the creative writer is analogous to the child playing, but one of the few ways the average adult has access to play is through daydreaming, which he argues is concealed out of guilt and shame (perhaps for its childishness?). But he goes on to say that while the adult gives up playing for daydreaming, daydreaming is merely fantasied wish fulfillment only engaged in by unhappy individuals (p. 46). The other option for the adult at play is in imaginative creating, he views this as a substitute and

continuation of play. If play for the child embodies only the wish to grow up, then the creative artist is an adult that refuses to and yet wishes to grow up.

In “The Two Principles in Mental Functioning” Freud (1911) writes, “An artist is originally a man who turns away from reality because he cannot come to terms with the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction which it at first demands, and who allows his erotic and ambitious wishes full play in the life of phantasy (1911, p.26).” He goes on to say that the artist finds his way back to reality by way of using his special talents. Not only is “the way back” reserved for those with “special talents,” but creativity, and by extension culture, is a by-product of conflict, rather than understanding creativity and culture as an elaboration of mind that comes out of being with other people. Further, according to Freud, the creative act leaves the world unaltered: “Thus by a certain path [the artist] actually becomes the hero, king, creator, favorite he desired to be, without pursuing the circuitous path of creating real alterations in the outer world” (p.27). This is a grim formulation for the creative artist, adults, and culture generally.

By contrast, Winnicott (1971) considers the possibility of living creatively as a continuation of play; that the development of mind is inherently a playful paradoxical process; play infuses experience with a feeling of reality and vitality.

Susan Deri (1978) characterizes the difference between the two theorists as the difference between Freud’s “dualistic conflict orientation” and Winnicott’s “dialectical developmental emphasis”. Both thinkers were interested in inside-subjective versus outside-objective reality, but while “Freud concentrated on ascertaining the most effective methods of discriminating between the two, Winnicott

delights in showing how well these two universes harmonize, intermingled within the same act, the same perception, or the same physical object” (p.46). Deri (1978) emphasizes this point by contrasting the way in which “real” is used differently by the two theorists. For Freud, what is real is outside and what is “not real” is a product of the imagination, while Winnicott treats the “real” as being infused with subjective meaning and feeling. In “The Relation of the Poet to Daydreaming” Freud (1908) argues that play is the opposite of reality, in contrast to Winnicott’s (1971) idea that play is a way to link reality and fantasy.

Ogden (1986) in a more generous reading of Freud’s theory of mind, argues that Freud’s model is inherently dialectical in that “there can be no conscious mind without an unconscious mind and vice versa; each creates the other and exists only as a hypothetical possibility without the other” (p.208). While this is a convincing argument about Freud’s theory, Freud’s work leaves this dynamic implicit, and instead it is often reflected in ambiguous and contradictory ideas about the nature of mind.

In contrast to Freud’s ambiguous and contradictory ideas about the development of mind, Winnicott makes the ambiguous and contradictory his focus, and captures this dynamic. He does so by integrating the element of ambiguity into his theory with ideas about the paradoxical and dialectical nature of subjectivity and mental processes. For Winnicott, the development of mind can not be reduced to individual processes, nor does he conceive of the development of personality to occur in what can simply be understood as identificatory processes. Instead, he understands the process to be one inherently elusive and paradoxical. The mind develops somewhere

between the infant and mother, in the intermediate area in which there is “no such thing as a baby” and correspondingly no such thing as a mother (Ogden, 1986). “The Place of the Object—outside, inside, at the border” is one of the ways that Winnicott states that the infant develops within a maternal context—all symbolization develops within such an environment. From this transitional space emerges the child’s experience of himself as a creator (of symbols) through, and with, the constitution of the symbolized other, concomitantly with the felt experience of the ‘real’ other.

This intermediate area of experience is not only “between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived,” but it is also “a resting place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated” (Winnicott, 1971, p. 2-3).

Winnicott viewed creativity as an inherent human capacity that is either facilitated or inhibited within a relationship. According to Winnicott (1971), the infant also has non-appetitive needs for relationship and a natural inclination to seek out and experience the world. Winnicott locates the origins of creativity, play, and imagination in the early mother-infant environment in which “good enough” adaptation to the infant’s needs results in an intermediate area of experience that he terms transitional space.

Winnicott playfully writes, “there is no such thing as a baby”. This is his way of characterizing the undifferentiated and interdependent state that is infancy. At this point an infant doesn’t experience the mother as separate and so feels neither desire nor dependence—he is “at-one” with the mother. From this undifferentiated state there is an experience of omnipotence, which arises out of the mother’s primary

preoccupation with her child in which she seamlessly provides for her infant. The infant experiences the mother's ministrations as the magical fulfillment of his desire. This gives the child the experience of himself as a creator. It is through gradual, ordinary imperfections of adaptation that the child becomes aware of the mother as a separate being. His sense of himself as dependent and connected to another emerges.

In his view, "good enough" adaptation provides the infant with the illusion that he creates what is found—the (m)other, external reality. Illusion gives the infant the developmentally important experience of omnipotence. It is through the infant's omnipotence that the ongoing problem of "the relationship between what is objectively perceived and what is subjectively conceived" is first experienced. In transitional space this tension is allowed to exist—contradiction can remain to the effect of linking the internal and external. In Winnicott's words, "The breast is created by the infant out of its capacity to love."

Winnicott writes that transitional space develops out of this first experience of creating the world, and that it is in the "overlap between what the mother supplies and what the child might conceive of" that an intermediate area of experience emerges. This intermediate area is a realm in which the paradox of a world that is *created* by the infant as well as *found* by the infant exists without the necessity to resolve it. In fact, to resolve such a paradox, according to Winnicott, results in defensive organizations of true and false self, whereby, the child develops a caretaking (false) self that complies with the demands of the external world without the felt experience of aliveness. The true self is kept hidden and protected from impingements, but because it is not modified by lived experience a pathological omnipotence survives

instead of the developmentally facilitative and structure-building omnipotence of transitional space.

Transitional space is an area that is in-between the subjective experience and objective reality, where contradiction, paradox, and the imaginary exist and flourish. ‘Good enough’ mothering, that is, care that slowly introduces dissatisfactions and some frustration—“ordinary failures,” provides an environment in which the child’s wishes to destroy its creation are activated. When the child finds that the (m)other has survived and not retaliated for its fantasied attacks, the child begins to have a sense of both the aliveness of his internal world and the ‘real’ other that is discovered to have been there all along. Through gradual incomplete adaptation the world and the mother become felt as real, that is, loved as well as hated.

Transitional *into* Potential

Although Winnicott distinguishes between transitional and potential space, in contemporary literature these terms are often used interchangeably. For this reason, and that I am interested in the movement *from* transitional *into* potential experience, it is useful to clarify the difference between these two terms.

Winnicott conceives of transitional space as a specific developmental phase (i.e. diachronic) between mother and infant (from 4-6 months to 8 months to a year), this phase has an impact on the development of imaginative capacity, creativity and relationship. To the degree that this negotiation goes well, potential space emerges. Whereas transitional space is a developmental phase that consists of presymbolic experience, potential space is a capacity, instead of a concrete phase, (i.e. synchronic)

that consists of the realm of symbolic experience. Potential space allows not only for the elaboration of the individuals' experience, but also engagement with the cultural surround.

Ogden's (1990) discussion about the dialectical nature of potential space is helpful here. Ogden's defines dialectic, informed by Hegel and others, as "a process in which each of two opposing concepts creates, informs, preserves, and negates the other, each standing in a dynamic (ever-changing) relationship with the other." This dialectic moves toward, and never completes integration. In transitional space there is no need for symbols because there is no one to communicate and nothing to communicate.

Symbolization and Illusion

The word illusion derives from the Latin *ludere*, to play. This derivation remains alive in Winnicott's use of the concept. He uses it in two related ways, the first informing the second. The first, is the illusion that the mother and infant are not separate, the illusion that there is no mother, and there is no baby—what Ogden (1990) calls the "illusion of invisible oneness". The second is the form of illusion that fills potential space, wherein one-ness and separateness co-exist, this is the illusion which infuses play (Ogden, 1990, p.211). Without the first experience of fusion, the capacity to play, and by extension, the capacity to symbolize, is disrupted.

By meeting the infants needs seamlessly, the mother enables the infant to have the illusory experience of having created the breast out of his need. This allows the infant the illusion that "there is an external reality that corresponds to the infant's own

capacity to create. In other words there is an overlap between what the mother supplies and what the infant might conceive of (Winnicott, 1951, p.12).” There is the illusion that there is no desire, as Ogden makes the point, there is no need for symbols, instead there is an undisturbed state of ‘going on being’: “Symbols are required only when there is desire” (Ogden, 1986, p.211).

The illusion of play is that one and two exist simultaneously, that something can be something else and also itself. Ogden gives the example of a child who was frightened of bathing after her head was accidentally submersed during a previous bathing experience. He describes the rigidity of the child with a frightened stare at her coaxing mother. Ogden shows how the mother provides a state of mind by asking the child if he has any tea, the child responds by surveying his toys and playing at giving his mother tea. The child makes an empty shampoo bottle into the milk, and blows on it to cool the “tea,” thereby representing and transforming the dangerous water into something to be played with—the water is both the tea and the bath, the mother is both herself and a guest at a tea party, the child is both the bathing child and the host.

Marion Milner (1952) elaborates Winnicott’s ideas about illusion specifically in relation to symbol formation. Object-relations theorists understood symbolization to emerge from identificatory processes, the identification of one object with another after the loss of the original object from persecutory anxieties. Klein (1932) maintained that the infant’s aggressive impulses toward the mother animated this first transfer of interest out of the need to protect the original object from such impulses. Milner (1952) offers a critique to the object-relations theorists who argue that the

motivation for the transfer of interest from the primary object to the secondary object, that is, the first symbol, is the infant's aggressive impulses. Milner (1952) believes it is not the fear of retaliation, nor social prohibition that drives the infant toward symbolization, but instead that it is an "internal necessity for inner organization, pattern, coherence, the basic need to discover identity in difference without which experience becomes chaos." (p.84). In this critique is also a shift in understanding the primary object not as the breast, but as the fusion of mouth and breast.

In her article "The Role of Illusion in Symbol Formation" Milner writes about the relationship between playing and symbolization, emphasizing the desire to return to a state of oneness: "The primary object that the infant seeks to find again is a fusion of self and object, it is mouth and breast felt as fused into one." She argues that illusion is essential to both facilitating a "recurrent partial return to the feeling of being one..." and on the way to establishing a relation between internal and external, the child uses play.

Play for Milner involves finding and obliterating boundaries—both an ecstasy of finding a substitute for the original fusion, and discovering a place of contact between self and other.

In her ideas about the "partial return" Milner challenges the purely defensive nature of regression, and instead conceives of such "ecstatic experiences" as potentially in the service of the ego: "...[T]he possibility that some form of artistic ecstasy may be an essential phase in adaptation to reality, since it may mark the creative moment in which new and vital identifications are established." (p.154).

Relationship of Transitional Object to Symbolism

Transitional space then is the point at which the child makes a transition from being merged with the environment to being separate. For Winnicott, an important aspect of this transition involved the use of the first “not-me” possession, the transitional object. The transitional object stands in for the breast or mother and is somewhere “between oral eroticism and the true object-relationship,” that is a precursor to a symbol. This object is the one the infant finds and uses.

“It is true that the piece of blanket is symbolical of some part-object, such as the breast. Nevertheless, the point of it is not its symbolic value so much as its actuality. Its not being the breast (or the mother), although real, is as important as the fact that it stands for the breast (or mother) (1971, p.6).”

The transitional object is involved in the process of differentiating sameness and difference, that is, it is at the “root of symbolism in time”. Winnicott states that the transitional phenomena “describes the infant’s journey from the purely subjective to objectivity” and that the transitional object is “what we see of this journey of progress towards experiencing (1971, p.6).” Through the transitional object (as standing in for the first object or the breast) the child passes from magical omnipotent control, to control through manipulation. “The transitional object is never under magical control like the internal object, nor is it outside control as the real mother is (1971, p.10),” that is it is a proto or partial symbol—an in-between area of experiencing in which its origins, whether it was created or found will never be questioned.

Milner ‘s ideas about the importance of a pliable medium that is external but “not insisting on a separate objective experience of its own” elaborates Winnicott’s concept of the transitional object, though the pliable medium is not restricted to the

developmental phase that the transitional object is. The relationship to a pliable medium facilitates the establishment of a relationship to the external world that can be felt as self, and further, that a bit of the self is incorporated into the world.

Ogden (1990) writes that the transitional object reflects the emergence of the capacity for dialectical process. He conceives of transitional phenomena as involving the transformation of unity into three-ness. The earlier experience of “two-ness,” Ogden writes, is more a quality than the distinct feeling of one and two, he compares this with Winnicott’s idea of “being alone in the presence of an other,” though Winnicott saw this as a capacity that developed out of transitional space. Through “well-dosed frustration,” the child is given the opportunity to become aware of his separateness in a non-traumatic way, enabling the dialectical process. The “three-ness” which emerges from this process consists of a symbol (the thought), the symbolized (what is being thought about—the mother), and the interpreting subject (the infant). The metaphoric space created between these three components is potential space (Ogden, 1990, p.214). Ogden (1990) restates Winnicott’s idea that the potential space is filled with illusion that is absence, to say that potential space is filled with the paradox of one and two simultaneously co-existing. The reader will notice that Ogden’s formulation is a translation of Werner and Kaplan’s (ref) ideas about symbolization into more Winnicottian idiom.

In her article “Transitional Phenomena: Vicissitudes of Symbolization and Creativity” Susan Deri (1978) emphasizes the role of concrete sensual experience in the development of symbolization when she writes that ‘holding’ may be “decisive for the subsequent capacity for and love of symbolization,” in that, the sensual aspect

of actual holding infuses the “first felt boundary” of the skin with pleasant feelings that delineate inside and outside. This experience shapes later experiences of communication with positive feeling: boundaries are felt as pleasurable, the communication between boundaries is felt as pleasurable.

While Winnicott did refer to actual holding and extended it to more metaphoric ideas about handling, his emphasis was on the way in which the mother enables the infant to develop and discover his mind. “It is an essential part of my theory that the True Self does not become a living reality except as a result of the mother’s repeated success in meeting the infant’s spontaneous gesture... It is the infant’s gesture... that is made real, and the capacity of the infant to use a symbol is the result” (Winnicott, 1971, p.145). One example he gives of meeting such a spontaneous gesture is a consultation with a child who is tugging at his shoes. Winnicott extends this gesture by removing the child’s shoes and socks, which precipitates a playful interaction and, he believes, therapeutic effect. Though one might be skeptical of the therapeutic effects of just one moment in one consultation, it remains an important point that, in extending the child’s gesture, Winnicott shows us that to meet and elaborate the child’s experience of his own desire, in such a way that includes the playful sharing and manifestation of his desire, is to help the infant feel his insides and the world are real.

A gesture is an action when it *denotes* something, when it no longer is a *sign* for some emotion or experience, it becomes a *symbol* (Langer, 1942). Read in the context of Winnicott’s example, we could understand extending the child’s spontaneous gesture as organizing the pleasure of the shared moment, Winnicott, and

the child's desire—the child both witnesses his shoes and socks being removed and feels the air and the doctor's hand, they share a giggle, and thus, the experience is felt. The child's action of pulling at his shoes, became a gesture through Winnicott's extending of the action (tugging denoted removing his shoes). The child's desire is made manifest, and through the experience the child has the opportunity to feel himself as real, with a mind capable of creating and finding, and sharing meaning.

Ogden argues that Winnicott's way of describing the sharing of experience transformed psychoanalysis because it changes the emphasis on what is fundamental in human experience:

“No longer will desiring and regulating desire (Freud), loving, hating, and making reparations (Klein), or object seeking and object relating (Fairburn) constitute what is of greatest importance in the development of the psyche-soma from its beginnings and continuing throughout life. Instead, what Winnicott starts to lay out here for the first time is the idea that the central organizing thread of psychological development, from its inception, is the experience of being alive and the consequences of disruptions to that continuity of being.” (Ogden, p.8).

Norbert Freedman and his colleagues (Freedman, et al. 2002) term emergent symbolization “incipient symbolization” as the first form, the opening of symbolization. This concept is linked closely with their use of Winnicott's concept of psychic space: “we may think of symbolization as an activity that creates inner psychic space,” and more specific to the therapeutic endeavor, “symbolization in an analytic context is unthinkable without some notion of inner symbolizing space.” The idea that symbols overlap and interpenetrate is central to their thinking, and because of this the development is thought to involve both differentiation, or divergence in their terms, and integration. “In any meaningful clinical interaction,

what needs to be symbolized is not just affects or object-relations but conflicting and contradicting affects and conflicting and contradictory object-relations,” they go on to argue that differentiated affect initiates transition, “at the heart of what allows this process to move forward. Affect is the glue of symbolization.” And thus, “the presence of a certain quality of affect named becomes a signifier of a transformational process.” In their framework symbolization involves more traditional notions of conflict, in interaction with affect and more Winnicottian notions of spatialization. Another central aspect of Freedman’s work is the emphasis on desymbolization, the importance of divergence and differentiation. The inclusion of breakdowns in symbolization is an important aspect of understanding both normative and disrupted process.

Disruptions in Symbolization

In his seminal work *Attacks on Linking* Bion (1959) extends Klein’s ideas about the infants’ sadistic attacks upon the breast, which he argues is proto-typical for all attacks on objects that serve as a link. He states that thinking comes into being to manage thoughts. Bion defines thoughts as initially pre-conceptions which, when joined with realizations (including negative realizations, i.e. absence), create conceptions: “Conceptions therefore will be expected to be constantly conjoined with an emotional experience of satisfaction.” (p. 111). It is when the infant is faced with the (tolerable) frustration of the absent breast that thinking develops.

According to Bion (1967), if there is insufficient ability to tolerate frustration (or insufficient help with the management of frustration) thinking is disrupted. “What

should be a thought, a product of the juxtaposition of preconception and negative realization becomes a bad object, indistinguishable from a thing-in-itself, fit only for evacuation” (p. 112). Instead of thinking, the infant engages in an excess of projective-identification in which the contents of the mind are not integrated, but projected into the other. In this situation, the infant engages in a reactive dynamic with the other and the environment in which danger pervades experience. In such a world, things and thoughts and people must not come together; the linking process is attacked. Thinking is disrupted because separation, the distinction between subject and object, is confused by excessive projective-identification. Omnipotence develops instead of learning.

In this model, it is the mother’s capacity for reverie that acts as a “receptor organ” for the infants sensations. To the degree that a mother is able to find in herself the infant’s experience, she can appropriately respond to the infants desires and frustrations. According to Bion (1967), thought is disrupted when “there is a breakdown of interplay through projective-identification between the rudimentary consciousness and maternal reverie” (p. 116).

Bion connects the development of thought to the ability to recognize and experience absence, Hanna Segal (1950) extends this idea to argue that symbolization is linked to mourning, or the ability to recognize and experience absence, that is, the depressive position. “The act of creation at depth has to do with an unconscious experience of a harmonious internal world and the experience of its destruction; that is, the depressive position.” (Segal 1950, p. 94). And further, “In symbol formation that is developed in the depressive position the symbol is not equated with the object;

it is the result of psychic work of the subject, and therefore the subject has the freedom of its use. The symbol is not a copy of the object—it is something created anew” (Segal 1950, p. 95).

In pathology, symbol and object are equated, a word is a concrete thing, thinking is doing and thus, primitive defenses must be mobilized to manage the destructiveness, to protect both the self and the object (Segal, 1950).

In *Fear of a Breakdown*, Winnicott (1963) addresses a collapse in symbolizing that is experienced as the fear of an impending collapse. When trauma occurs at a time when a child does not have adequate use of language and the adults are unable to help the child put the experience into words, what is symbolized is an ineffable dread of something terrible that is going to happen which has already happened. In this case, language links feeling and event, roots an experience in time, and gives an event specificity so it can be managed. If this does not happen, then the breakdown that already happened remains present as an undifferentiated, ineffable dread.

Differentiation, destruction and disruption are necessary aspects of development. Again, in Winnicott’s model, to experience one’s destructiveness is crucial to development in the sense that it fosters the ability to make use of the environment and to feel the other as real.

“The assumption is always there, in orthodox theory, that aggression is reactive to the encounter with the reality principle, whereas here it is the destructive drive that creates the quality of externality (Winnicott, 1969, p.93).”

In response to the rage felt when the infant’s desires are frustrated, he destroys the other in fantasy. When the infant discovers that the other has been undamaged by his attacks and if the other remains without retaliating, the other is felt as real, that is,

not a projection but part of a shared reality. It is the experience of “discovering” that the real other has been there all along, that the other has its own independent existence, that the infant finds external reality, and in turn is able to “use” the object. By object usage Winnicott refers to a capacity to be nourished by others that are “not-me”.

Many theorists now understand development as proceeding from disruption and repair of communication and the management of the affect between the dyad in these cycles.

II. AFFECT AND SYMBOLIZATION

In various ways each of the above theorists approach disruptions in thinking as an outcome of the quality of relationship and specifically, the inability to process and integrate affect within the dyad. Attachment theorists and infant researchers have synthesized and elaborated ideas about drive and relationship into models where the handling of affect, and the quality of relationships are instrumental and explicit concepts in the development of mind. That is, what can be felt and thought, and therefore experienced, is intricately woven between people and through relationships.

A major contribution of infant researchers, as well as recent advances in neuroscience have empirically demonstrated that cognitive processes are shaped in large part through emotion. The entire representational process is shaped through, and in turn shapes, emotion. Further, we can understand disruptions in transitional experience as the dysregulation that has occurred between mother and infant in

response to misattunement whereby care-taking has been intrusive, inconsistent, dismissive, or mismatched.

Shapiro and Emde (1992) write that while psychoanalysis has been concerned with affect since the beginning, Freud and his followers failed to develop a coherent model of affect. “Drives became affects, and libidinal drives were converted to affects such as anxiety under conditions that were thought about metaphorically in terms of damming” (p. ix). While terms like object-cathexis, abreaction, catharsis, dissociation, isolation of affect, imply the centrality of emotion, conceiving of emotion in terms of drive renders emotion a by-product, and thereby the *quality* of emotional experience is lost. Contemporary theorists now recognize emotion as a central organizing process (Emde and Shapiro, 1992; Siegel, 1999; Krystal, 1988).

As psychoanalytic theory moved from one person to two person psychologies, affect regulation emerged as a critical, though at first implicit, organizing concept. The British object-relations theorists grappled with integrating drives, fantasy, and interactions. Bion’s (1962) container and contained idea is an example of a concept where the chief concern is affect-regulation and the way in which affect modulation is an interactive process. Briefly, the mother “contains” intense affect and “returns” it to the child in a metabolized form. The mother, in effect, lends the infant her more developed secondary processing capacity in order that affect can be processed. This is a metaphoric way of talking about affect regulation that highlights the importance of the mother in preventing feeling states from overwhelming the child. Different theorists emphasize different aspects of this process: Winnicott emphasized the role of the mother in holding, mirroring, and playing in modulating affect, whereas

Krystal emphasizes integration through verbalization. Attachment theorists focus on the quality of the relational link between a caregiver and child, which in turn is largely determined by the quality of the parent's relationship to their parents.

Elaborations on Linking and Thinking: Attachment and Neuroscience

Again, psychoanalytic ideas that the development of mind is to a great degree determined by relationship has been confirmed by empirical work in neurobiology where research on the brain has found that the infant brain can only develop in the context of a relationship with another self (Schorer, 1994; Siegel 1999). In Siegel's words, "Human connections shape neural connections from which the mind emerges (p.2)." The link between psychoanalytic ideas and neurological research was importantly bridged by attachment research in which the biological role of relationship and the way in which meaning is made within relationships are theoretically woven together.

Siegel (1999) defines attachment as an "inborn system in the brain that evolves in ways that influence and organize motivational, emotional, and memory processes with respect to significant care-giving figures (p.67)." In short, salient relationships have a direct impact on mental functioning. He goes on to say "At the level of mind, attachment establishes an interpersonal relationship that helps the immature brain use the mature functions of the parent's brain to organize its own processes (p.67)." The very idea that Bion puts forth in his container/contained concept has been empirically demonstrated by neuroscience. The role of the attachment figure is to make the infants' states more manageable through reading the infants' signals. In helping the

child to regulate his states the attachment figure maximizes positive emotional experience and reducing negative and overwhelming emotional experience, and in this process the child has the experience of “feeling felt”.

Mary Ainsworth (1978) through her Strange Situation experiments described three major attachment patterns; these patterns are classifications based on how a child manages a series of brief separations and reunions from the parent. Implicit in such classifications are the degree to which a parent was able to effectively understand and respond to the child’s communications. It was found that inferences could be made about the quality and pattern of attachment relationships, based on the child’s responses and then later that the quality and pattern of attachment relationships had direct bearing on such cognitive functioning as memory, emotion regulation and narrative.

In broad strokes, based on the Strange Situation, attachment is classified as either secure or insecure. Insecure attachment is then further delineated according to differing defensive compromises, either avoidance or preoccupation. Secure attachment is thought to develop from sensitive and responsive care-giving, insecure attachment is thought to develop from inconsistent, intrusive, neglectful or otherwise misattuned care-giving. When mothers were able to respond to a child’s needs for comfort and security, the child learned how to express those needs easily and in effective ways. If, on the other hand, mothers rejected, ignored or in some way distorted the child’s needs, the child learned less effective ways of communicating and seeking comfort (Slade, 1999). Attachment theory develops and elaborates our

understanding of how communication (verbal and nonverbal) is crucial in regulating emotion, and more broadly, the development of mind.

Mary Main contributed to the understanding of affect and representation by teasing out identifiable patterns in attachment relationships that emerged depending upon the caregiver's ability to tolerate and speak to affect. She was able to show through her semi-structured Adult Attachment Interview that a parents' narrative about attachment issues could predict their child's attachment classification, even before the child was born (Siegel, p. 78).

For this discussion, what is important in this work is the way that such research has shown that a person's narrative capacity is directly influenced by the ability to tolerate affect. Much evidence has been produced to show that a person's ability to talk about their experience and *the way in which* a person talks about their attachment relationships strongly correlated to their handling of their own and their children's affect states. Based on the quality of parental narratives, which were distinguished not by their content or by specific childhood events (e.g. loss, rejection of trauma), but "by patterns of thinking, remembering, and talking about past relationship," a child's attachment classification could be reliably predicted. Slade and Cohen (1996) have shown that there are strong "links between parents' failure to recognize and integrate affective sequelae of childhood relationships, and the appearance of attachment and relational disturbances in the child." Cognitive representational structures—internal working models—"determine what an adult can remember or think or feel about early attachment experiences. Thus, each of the secure and insecure patterns of adult attachment allows specific kinds of access to thoughts and

feelings about past as well as potential and future relationships (Slade and Cohen, 1996, p.221).” Siegel (1999) restates this finding when he observes that “a profound finding from attachment research is that the most robust predictor of a child’s attachment to parents is the way in which the parents narrate their own recollection of their childhood experiences (p.5).” Attachment research provides a framework for understanding how communication within relationships facilitates the development of the mind (Siegel, 1999).

Slade has extended this work and argues that there is a “ link between the quality and coherence of parental narratives and the child’s capacities for affect regulation and symbolization” (Slade, p. 801). This is important because we can start to consider the *quality* of linking and attachment and the *quality* of emotional experience as expressed in language.

A mother’s own ability to reflect and think about her thinking is inextricably intertwined with her capacity to regulate and symbolize affective experience which will then allow her to contain and help her child with it’s affect states (Slade, 1999). In contrast, insecure mothers may have difficulty symbolizing experience for their children and making sense of their children’s communications, both because they have found it difficult to make sense of and integrate their own emotional experience and because they are disrupted by their child’s emotions. Dismissive parents appear to be unable to symbolize or acknowledge their own children’s dependency needs, desire for comfort, or anger. Thus, such feelings are not known to the self (i.e. not represented) and therefore cannot be represented in the relationship with the child. Preoccupied mothers are able to acknowledge and symbolize their own negative

affects, but in the extreme. For preoccupied mothers, the recognition of negative affects seems to stimulate feeling and memory, instead of creating a bounded or differentiated symbolic context for such feeling and memory. “Maternal failures to bind or contain the infant’s affective experience thus lead to infant failures of regulation and integration” (Slade, p.804).

Communication, verbal and nonverbal, consists not only in understanding and perceiving the signals of the other. For “full” emotional communication, Siegel argues, “one person needs to allow his state of mind to be influenced by that of the other” (Siegel p. 69). And further, “ Collaborative communication allows minds to ‘connect’ with each other. During childhood, such human connections allow for the creation of brain connections that are vital for the development of a child’s capacity for self-regulation” (p. 70).

Mutual Regulation and Co-construction

Lachmann and Beebe (2002) add to the discussion by proposing that both partners in a dyad are always simultaneously engaged in self and mutual regulations.

For Lachmann and Beebe, like Werner and Kaplan in their work regarding symbolization, communication is thought to consist of interactive patterns of disruption and repair, though Werner and Kaplan’s work is more focused on the acquisition of language and not affect development.

“The ability to respond and be socially engaged depends not only on the nature of the partner’s input, and on one’s own responsivity, but also on the regulation of the internal state of both participants” (p. 46). Lachmann and Beebe apply infant

research to adult treatment using a systems model of mind through which they propose that development proceeds from interactions involving mutual regulation. In contrast to the traditional psychoanalytic perspective that interactive regulations are transformed into self-regulations, Lachmann and Beebe's model posits that self and interactive regulation is simultaneous, though not symmetrical, nor causal.

Their model is not one of mutuality in the sense of each considering the intentions and desires of the other, but one in which the state of each person in the dyad is influenced by the other. They utilize microanalysis of face-to-face play sequences between mothers and infants to explore patterns of relatedness. Their work, as well as the work of other intersubjectivity theorists can be thought to capture and develop Winnicott's dialectical notion of the development of mind through their focus on the ongoing and dynamic nature of overlapping and co-constructed subjectivities.

Instead of the concept of psychic structure, such theorists tend to think in terms of interactions and organizational principles. Lachmann and Beebe (2002), for example write of "organizations that may transform," that is, organizations are made up of patterns of experience that are brought to bear on interactions by each individual. These constellations of expectations and their associated self-regulatory styles are continually in process. In their "transformational model, development proceeds through a process of regular restructurings of the relations within and between a person and environment (p. 148)."

Lachmann and Beebe's work derives from Sander's (1977, 1978, 1995) descriptions of the systems model in which he emphasizes process over structure.

Sander's work, in turn utilizes Weiss's (1970) principle of "matched specificities" which is described as "a sort of resonance between two systems attuned to each other by corresponding properties" (quoted in Lachmann and Beebe (2002), p. 31). In other words, the way in which a mother and infant will track each other's vocal rhythms illustrates how both partners are engaged in self and mutual regulation. Sanders argued that "matched specificities, shaped by the recurrence of patterns in the flow of engagement, generate expectancies in the infant (p. 32)." The two partners find a way to fit together and the capacity for growth and relatedness depends upon the capacity for each to adjust and take in the other. This "moment of meeting" is the experience in which each partner becomes aware of the state of the other. "Two states of consciousness are matched such that the way that one is known by oneself is matched by the way one is known by the other (p.32)." This moment of meeting then facilitates the development of agency and identity by altering one's ability to regulate oneself. The child begins to develop a sense of himself as someone who can be known, who can share his experience, and who can have an impact on another.

This perspective is supported by Llinias' work on the neurological phenomenon of subjectivity "The I of the Vortex". He argues that consciousness, that is, subjectivity or the state of mind experienced as "self," is generated by the binding resonance between the thalamus and the cortex (p. 126).

Face to face play, according to Lachmann and Beebe, elicits the infant's strongest communicative skill, that is, visual gaze. The infant looks, looks away, and closes his eyes, which by two to three months allows a "subtle instant-by-instant regulation of social contact" (p. 86). Further, from their work with mother's and

infants they have established a bi-directional regulation process. “Thus, both mother and infant reflect each other’s facial-visual changes” (p.93).

What they found in exploring these mutual regulations as expressed by face-to-face play was that optimal attunement was not exact mirroring, but instead is thought to be somewhere in the midrange, allowing for moments of sharing and moments of privacy. An infant who is too closely tracked will tend to experience the other as impinging, as illustrated by patterns of chase and dodge; in order to regulate, the infant must be continually moving away from the intrusive other. Such hypervigilant tracking tends to foreclose variability and flexibility in relating (Lachmann and Beebe, 2002, p. 231). In one case they write, “[a] hypervigilant patient illustrated such a tightly organized pattern at the cost of any flexibility: every ripple portended disaster.” (p. 231). “chronically mismatched interactive regulations led her to premature, drastic self-regulations” (p. 45). In contrast, the attuned dyads were usually “*moving in the same affective direction*, rising or falling together” (p. 95).

Lachmann and Beebe use contemporary infant research to put forth a model of development that is concerned with the *quality and coordination* of interactions between mother and infant and they extend these ideas to work with adult patients. “The quality of interpersonal communication is related to the degree of coordination between the partners.” (p. 231)

The degree of coordination required depends on the context. Situations of intense attention and concentration require high coordination whereas less coordination allows the room for relaxation, reverie and play.

If either partner is dis-regulated the quality of the interaction is affected:

“specific failures in self-regulation affect the quality of interactive regulation (p. 46).

Lachmann and Beebe’s work focuses on how interactions are organized at the non-verbal level. From another perspective, Krystal’s work is concerned with the way in which verbal interactions contribute to affect regulation.

Articulation

Henry Krystal (1988) approaches the importance of communication and affect regulation from a slightly different perspective. His focus in *Integration and Affect* is on the role verbalization plays in affect regulation, and in so doing teases out the way in which communication impacts affect development.

Krystal’s work is important because he elaborates an aspect of the process that others have termed linking and differentiation. He explores affect development in his work on Affect, a disorder in which a person is unable to read their own affect. While attachment theorists are concerned with the signaling that happens between a child and caregiver, Krystal addresses the signaling function of emotions within the child; an informational process that serves to perpetuate the survival and functioning of the organism. But like attachment theorists, he maintains that affect tolerance will determine the selection of the appropriate responses to any given situation.

Sociability is related to survival for human animals. In other words, emotions are one way of negotiating experience with other people and the environment with internal vitality and consistency. Effective processing of affective information helps

the child connect to a larger social context, and to navigate that environment without debilitating distortion. As a person matures and becomes a more complex and refined being, correspondingly affect becomes more nuanced and elaborated. According to Krystal, maturation of affects is primarily facilitated by verbalization. How he accounts for this is that by integrating different components of experience, words and feeling states become linked—though he doesn't use those terms—and through this the experience is differentiated from more overwhelming infantile states.

Krystal (1988) argues that emotions consist of three components that make up the signal contents: the cognitive element, that is, the meaning or message contained in the feeling (e.g. anxiety and fear signal the perception of impending danger); the expressive element, that is, the physiological activation (e.g. increased heart rate, secretion of adrenaline); and the hedonic element which is the quality of pleasure or displeasure. Each of these components occur simultaneously in the context of reflective self-awareness in which one is able to observe that one is *having a feeling*. This in turn effects the handling of the feeling and the degree to which it can be utilized as an accurate signal. Integration proceeds when these three components of affect occur simultaneously, free of blocks that cause isolation or dissociation (or other defenses against affects).

Affective experience is initially vague, amorphous and undifferentiated from somatic experience. It consists of two distinctions on a continuum of excitement: pleasure and displeasure. Through verbalization (and the implicit integration of the components of emotions) affect is gradually desomaticized and differentiated. This separation of affect and soma through verbalization modulate feelings so that they are

experienced in tolerable levels of intensity. In addition to regulating affect, Krystal goes on to say that this process can "...provide insight into [one's] own yearnings and relations to his object-representations." (Krystal, p.16)

How well affect development proceeds is dependent upon the kind of help a child receives, that is, what the parent does and says.

"[C]hildren develop affective expression styles ... mostly through identification with parents... As expression of affects becomes stifled, the child may discover that illness offers an acceptable alternative—a push in the direction of psychosomatic disorders... If affects are not adequately verbalized, desomatized, and differentiated, they become too threatening and overwhelm organized functions; they are so close to infantile affects that they pose the danger of the return of childhood trauma."

Krystal argues that an important aspect of affect tolerance is one's reaction to *having* a feeling. If a child is unable to effectively regulate affect states they may develop a dread of affects which involves the fear that the affects will intensify infinitely, that one's state will increase beyond the point of being comforted with the gradual loss of all other functions. One aspect of infantile experience is an absence of time orientation, and so the fear is that such overwhelming affect states will go on forever.

Krystal argues that a central aspect of affect regulation is the ability to recognize in the moment the extent to which the intensity of the affect experience is appropriate to what is happening and when its association with other past events or people is amplifying the emotional experience (Krystal, p.4).

An important part of Krystal's argument is the necessity of being allowed to regulate oneself. This is important in terms of separation issues, in that the child must

feel that he is allowed regulate himself, as well as in terms of the experience of the self as one who can regulate himself.

Krystal elaborates the way in which communication, and specifically verbalization regulates affect through transforming vague and amorphous affect states into differentiated and nuanced experiences, and thus, is instrumental in affect development.

With the help of attachment theorists and Krystal's work on affect development we have established that the development of mind is intrinsically connected to the quality of relationships and the degree to which those relationships help a child verbalize feeling states and thereby learn to regulate their own states and take in the world around them.

Now we can ask what does metaphor have to offer in the way of the development of mind and regulating affect? Humbolt, cited in Werner and Kaplan (1963) writes,

"Men do not understand one another by causing one another to produce exactly the same concept but by touching the same link in each other's sense perceptions and concepts, by striking the same key in each other's individual instrument whereupon corresponding, but not identical concepts arise in each of them." (P.51)

III. METAPHOR AND LINKING

"...I found myself pulled by the names: Dire Whelk, Dusky Tegula, Fingered Limpet, Hooded Puncturella, Veiled Chiton, Bat Star, By-the-Wind Sailor, Crumb-of-Bread Sponge, Eye Fringed Worm, Sugar Wrack, Frilled Anemone, Bull Kelp, Ghost Shrimp, Sanderling, Walleye Surfperch, Volcano Barnacle, Stiff-footed Sea Cucumber, Leather Star, Innkeeper Worm, Lug Worm. And I felt the names drawing me into a state of piercing awareness, a state I associate with reading and writing poems. These names—by whom given and agreed on?—these names work as poetry works, enlivening a sensuous reality through recognition or through play of sounds (the short I's of Fingered Limpet, the open vowels of Bull Kelp, Hooded Puncturella, Bat Star); the poising of heterogeneous images (volcano and barnacle, leather and star, sugar and wrack) to evoke other worlds of meaning. Sugar Wrack: a foundered ship in the triangle Trade? Volcanoe Barnacle: tiny unnoticed undergrowth with explosive potential? Who saw the bird named Sanderling and gave it that caressive, diminutive name? Or was Sanderling the name of the one who saw it? These names work as poetry works in another sense as well: they make something unforgettable. You will remember the pictorial names as you won't the Latin, which, however, is more specific as to genus and species. Human eyes gazed at each of all these forms of life and saw resemblance in difference—the core of metaphor, that which lies close to the core of poetry itself, the only hope for a human civil life. The eye for likeness in the midst of contrast, the appeal to recognition, the association of thing to thing, spiritual fact with embodied form, begins here. And so begins the suggestion of multiple, many layered, rather than singular, meanings, wherever we look, in the ordinary world."

-Adrienne Rich from "Woman and Bird"

In lush poetic terms, Adrienne Rich tells us of the way in which metaphoric language holds within it sensual, historical, varied and layered meaning; by naming or identifying an object or experience in terms of another, in describing what is unknown through what is known, we connect ourselves to the outer world and make a connection from the outer world to our interior, and in that, both are elaborated. *[T]he poising of heterogeneous images... to evoke other worlds of meaning.*

Now I would like to explore some of the perspectives on metaphor that show the way in which the symbolic activity of metaphor is inherently a synthesizing process, that is, a linking process. From this, I will argue that this linking activity is

key in understanding the way in which metaphor holds both affective information as well as an affective communication. Such metaphors emerge intrapsychically as well as dyadically, and thus, are regulated and negotiated intrapsychically and relationally.

The literature reviewed thus far presents the argument that linking and differentiating processes are key not only in the symbolic activity of language acquisition specifically, but in the symbolic processes of psychological development in general. This linking and differentiating process proceeds on a number of levels. Of central importance though, is the way in which metaphor connects body and mind, that is, sensual experience and thought. Metaphor ‘gets at’ the parts of our experience which are not verbally represented, what can’t be put into words. As Sieglman writes, “the paradox in metaphor... is that the abstract is arrived at through the concrete, through the senses.” What makes metaphor generative is the degree to which body and mind are held in dialectic tension. This is what I think gives metaphor its particularly Winnicottian appeal, but I will take this up further later in this section.

Bridging Body and Mind

Lakoff and Johnson(1980) in addressing what they saw as a gap in philosophy and linguistics in dealing with meaning and metaphor argue that the way we think and the way we speak is inherently metaphorical; our entire conceptual system, their argument goes, is metaphorical in nature, which not only influences how we think, but what we do (p.3). For them metaphor is not just a figure of speech but an elementary structure of thought (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). They posit that we act

according to the way we conceive of things, and that we conceive of things in terms of experiential gestalts. These gestalts are predominantly grounded in interaction with the environment, both in terms of our bodies and our culture. For example, they argue that a whole system of metaphors derives from the experience of walking upright, in which things that are good, happy, virtuous, and healthy are up: *my spirits are boosted, at the peak of health, rising from the dead, lofty position, and conversely, he fell ill, she's depressed, etc.*. In other words our metaphors reveal our conceptual systems which are made up of affective, intellectual and perceptual experience. Our bodies are a starting point for such experience.

Metaphor, according to Lakoff and Johnson, affords us a way to impose boundaries and conceive of things so that experiences can be referred to, related to, quantified, and identified. "Because so many of the concepts that are important to us are either abstract or not clearly delineated in our experience (the emotions, ideas, time, etc.) we need to get a grasp on them by means of other concepts that we understand in clearer terms (spatial orientations, objects, etc.)" (p. 115).

In her study of the symbolism of reason, rite, and art, Susanne Langer (1942) takes a similar position to Lakoff and Johnson's, that metaphor is fundamental to our conceptual processes. She asserts that "metaphor is the law of growth of every semantic. It is not a development, it is a principle." Further, she posits that the main way we develop new ideas is through the metaphoric process, and that "every new experience, or new idea about things, evokes first of all some metaphorical expression." Again, similar to Lakoff and Johnson she describes how the concrete and abstract are combined in metaphor, that is, linked. What Langer adds to the

discussion is her focus on image, art, and ritual. She brings the sensual into the intellectual and argues that the integration is what is most compelling in culture. Further, she emphasizes the importance of the image. Through the use of image, Langer writes, metaphor becomes an “object of contemplation in and of the mind”. Langer (cited in Rycroft, 1968), makes a distinction between what she calls discursive and nondiscursive symbolism, wherein discursive symbolism is tantamount to reason, or analytical thought, and nondiscursive symbolism resembles what others describe as imagination. Non-discursive symbolism consists of no grammar, nor syntax, but instead gains meaning from other images and sounds. The function of non-discursive symbols, according to Langer, is to “express, communicate, and explicate feeling” (Langer cited in Rycroft, 1968, p.104).

The vital importance of metaphor is evident from many different perspectives, as Sharpe (1940) has pointed out “Metaphor has been the subject of debate and investigation from Aristotle to our own time.” I would now like to narrow the focus and turn to some of the ways that metaphor is addressed in psychoanalysis.

Metaphor and Psychoanalysis

Arlow (1979) reminds the reader that the word metaphor comes from two Greek words meaning “to carry over”. In this sense, the whole psychoanalytic endeavor, to the degree that transference and countertransference play a central role, is a metaphorical process. What many psychoanalytic writers agree upon is that metaphor links different kinds of experiences, often this is conceived of as carrying meaning

from basic experiences over to more sophisticated experiences as a way to apprehend new meaning.

“It is through metaphor that we come to understand the world and through metaphor that language itself develops. Furthermore, the capacity for metaphor-making is linked with the primary process in psychological development and has its origins in the way young children apprehend the world” (Siegelman, 1990, p.3).

It is usually thought that the concreteness of metaphor gives a handle on more abstract concepts. Taking a similar position as Loewald in regard to the reunion aspect of linking primary and secondary processes, Siegelman writes that the concrete aspect of metaphor “gives flesh and blood to the abstract and theoretical.” She then adds to this a Winnicottian spin when she states that “the paradox in metaphor, as we have seen, is that the abstract is arrived at through the concrete, through the senses.” While she doesn’t develop this idea further, it is at the heart of the argument here that metaphor can be thought to connect reality and fantasy in the way that it can be a paradoxical way to both communicate and hide meaning—to join people as well as demarcate space between them.

While emphasis is often on the ‘carrying over’ of meaning aspect in metaphor, what is often left out is that meaning always, to varying degrees, has an affective component.

Similarly, the way in which metaphor carries affective information has been approached in varying ways and degrees in psychoanalytic theory, though often it has been obscured. For example, Arlow (1979) in *Metaphor and the Psychoanalytic Situation* argues that metaphor represents and “outcropping” of unconscious fantasy. The focus in his inquiry into metaphor is on the unconscious contents of what is

represented. He goes on to say that the process by which unconscious meaning is communicated and interpreted is principally through metaphor. The affective component in unconscious fantasy is intrinsic to unconscious meaning, though hidden by Arlow's emphasis on content. Sharpe (1940) also stresses the unconscious content in metaphor. She argues that metaphor can be analyzed like symbols in which the emotions that accompany early bodily processes are reproduced in speech. In fact, almost all of the metaphoric expressions used in her article *Psycho-physical Problems Revealed in Language: An examination of Metaphor* are traced back to some difficulty in controlling a bodily orifice, whether that be feeding or elimination. Sharpe (1940) argues that metaphor evolves parallel with control of the body orifices, and furthermore, that "Emotions which originally accompanied bodily discharge find substitute channels and materials." Here the affect component is directly addressed, but in such a circumscribed way as to limit meaning rather than elaborating it. By reducing all metaphor to this small, though certainly profound realm of experience, meaning is foreclosed rather than opened up.

Metaphor, Arlow (1979) argues, is a compromise formation at particularly intense moments of the treatment. Such a compromise embodies both the attempt to communicate unconscious material as well as the attempt to obscure such material. While an intense moment in treatment is necessarily an affective experience, this aspect of metaphor remains undeveloped while the content aspects figure prominently. There are instances in which Arlow (1979) and other theorists do touch on the affect regulatory aspects of metaphor, though they remain mostly in the background by focusing on the defensive function. For example, "Because of the

element of displacement of meaning, metaphor readily lends itself as a means of warding off anxiety” (Arlow, 1979, p. 371). This idea is also implicit in Ekstein and colleague’s work with more disturbed patients in which they propose the technique of interpreting “within the metaphor” because it allows for a safe distance from intolerable ideas and states. “For certain patients this was essential, because direct interpretation of the conflict could lead to catastrophic panic” (p.371). Clearly, affect-regulation is central to this idea, though not explicitly stated.

Other theorist’s argue that metaphorical expressions reveal not only unconscious fantasies, but also the nature of character structure. If affect handling is a component of a particular character structure, then once again, we can understand affect to be an intrinsic aspect of metaphor.

Levin (1980) also touches on the relationship between affect and metaphor in his article that is concerned with the analyst’s use of metaphor as an interpretive technique. He proposes that a way to understand the efficacy of metaphor as interpretation is that metaphor, through surprise and interest, heightens the level of arousal in the patient thereby engaging more of the patient’s brain at one time. The idea that more of the patient’s brain is activated, according to Levin, is based on the idea that metaphors create bridges between sensory modalities.

Reider (1972) also advocates the use of metaphor as interpretation, both because it provides some distance from troubling feelings, and because there is often an allusion to drive and defense held within the metaphor. He states that metaphor is “like a play or dream in which the primary process is accessible.” He also maintains that metaphor allows the patient freedom that he may use as he wishes in that they

may choose which layer of meaning to take up and take in and thereby easing repression. “Metaphor thus serves the defensive function of allowing the patient to keep a necessary distance from conscious awareness, while serving the function of reducing the distance between the therapist and patient (Reider, 1972, p.468).

This statement comes close to articulating the thesis of this project, that is, metaphor can be understood to facilitate intrapsychic and interpersonal linking processes, specifically in regard to affect-regulation.

In a more contemporary perspective, Ellen Siegelman (1990) makes a similar argument in her book Metaphor and Meaning in Psychotherapy where she identifies both the linking and affective component of metaphor. She writes that metaphor “combines what is already known in a new way to produce a new thing not yet fully understood.” Further, she describes metaphor as the quintessential “bridging operation,” in that it links domains by connecting insight and feeling. The joining of image and idea is at the heart of metaphor: the linking of sensual experience with meaning, connecting what is felt with what is understood and/or created. One way to conceptualize the utility of metaphor is that it can be seen as a path *toward* symbolizing pre-verbal or primary process experience by making sensual and/or unconscious material manifest through images that have associational and affective links to unconscious thoughts and feelings.

In addition to treating metaphor as a linking activity/artifact, Siegelman also emphasizes the affective component in metaphor and further argues that “Metaphor is a way to mobilize and release affect” (p. xi). In her work, she makes a distinction between metaphors that are “alive,” that is salient, and those that are conventional or

automatic. What distinguishes a salient metaphor from a conventional metaphor, according to Siegelman is the degree to which affect is present.

“In my view, an image-laden metaphor that is novel is usually born out of intense feeling: the need to communicate something never communicated in that way before, to make others see what you have seen, and very often to express psychological states that can only be approximated in words. These ineffable feeling states are either too vague, too complex, or too intense for ordinary speech. States of ecstasy or despair, and experiences of feared annihilation or mystical union all cry out for metaphors to approximate their feeling component” (Siegelman, 1990, p.7).

For Siegelman, it is the intense feeling that metaphors are borne out of that can lead to integrating (affectively grounded) insight.

This account resonates with my own clinical sense that metaphors can be utilized to elaborate meaning in psychotherapy because they bridge affect and cognition, though I think it is a useful addition to elaborate the potential space aspects of metaphor, as well as the affect regulatory issues. Specifically, my emphasis will be on *entry* through metaphor, and moreover the affective quality of such entries. This is in itself a metaphoric way of describing the transition from one state to another. In other words, there is an affective quality in moving from one state to another that both effects how the states are experienced as well as the use that can be made of them. To add this to Siegelman’s work, I think is to more fully approach the useful questions posed by Lachmann and Beebe: what is the quality and affective range that a person brings to an interaction.

Metaphor constitutes an entry into imaginary space, not only through the bridging function, but also the way in which the subjectivities of a particular patient

and therapist overlap such that the metaphors that are salient emerge out of that dyads mutual regulatory environment.

Traditionally, such resonance was referred to in terms of the empathic capacities of the therapist.

“A measure of the analyst’s empathic capacity lies in the ability to be influenced by the form, sequence, and context and patterning of the patient’s material, to the end that the analyst may be stimulated by the hidden message contained in the patient’s associations, sometimes even before the analyst becomes aware of the nature of the patient’s unconscious fantasies” (Arlow, p.373,).

And further, “The association which comes to the analyst’s mind while listening to the patient’s material is in fact a commentary on the material” (Arlow, p.372).

Rycroft (1968) argues that this empathy or intuition may in fact be due to the unconscious perception of “linguistic and syntactical habits” of an other. He goes on to argue that “disturbances in object-relations, self-awareness, affectivity are reflected in habits of speech,” that is, one’s language is infused with intrapsychic and relational information.

Intersubjectivity theorists have given us another alternative to understanding such a phenomenon as a product of an attuned clinician, though certainly empathy plays a role, but the emphasis in their framework is on way in which each dyad co-creates the environment of the treatment. Arlow seems to be on to this when he writes “The ambiguity in metaphor is unconsciously ordered in the analytic situation, as in the aesthetic process, to permit the listener to become a co-creator by completing the unfinished gestalt, richly suggested by the multiplicity of metaphor” (Arlow, p. 378).

In the next chapter I hope to illustrate how metaphors can be a “mode of entry” into imaginary space. These “transit metaphors” are infused with affective qualities

that illuminate important regulatory issues involved both intrapsychically for the patient, as well as relationally between the patient and therapist. Utilizing metaphor in this way, I think can offer a useful way to think about how, where and in what way symbolization, that is development, has been disrupted.

CHAPTER 3: Transit Metaphors

The methodology of this project rests on the idea, Vichian in nature, that our cultural products hold within them important insight into our cognition (Danesi, 1993). Similar to Bettelheim's (1975) theory regarding the psychological importance of fairy tales, I take as an assumption that children's stories reflect some of our most fundamental processes of symbolic activity. The children's story, like fairy tales, externalize internal processes, and thereby, become comprehensible as such processes are played out in the characters and events of the story (Bettelheim, 1975). One feature of this reflection is that books that are suitable for children of a certain age are appealing, in part, because they mirror the psychological concerns of those children. Many of these concerns fade in salience, but others remain resonant throughout the lifecycle, or at certain developmental junctures.

"The child will extract different meaning from the same fairy tale, depending on his interests and needs of the moment... he will return to the same tale when he is ready to enlarge on old meanings, or replace them with new ones" (Bettelheim, 1975, p. 12).

It is in this spirit, that I will use children's stories as analogues, to illustrate and address developmental progression generally, and specifically, the development of potential space.

I. CHILDREN'S STORIES AND POTENTIAL SPACE

Ellen Handler Spitz (1999) advocates traditional children's literature over more psychologically explicit children's books. She writes that, while such "self-help" books, as she calls them, may have a place in crises situations, the richness of fantasy books allow space for children to "conjure inner possibilities". Further, she writes that "genuine psychological power comes from a very different place—from metaphor and symbol rather than from forthright representations of what is near at hand" (Spitz, 1999, p.10).

As we have seen in previous sections, the developmental trajectory from pre-verbal to verbal is concomitant with the development of transitional into potential space, or another way of stating it, from fantasy to imaginary. I hope to make use of the parallel between the development of imagination, i.e. potential space, and the shift from one kind of narrative space within children's stories *into* another kind of space. I am positing, in the tradition of Vico, that viewing children's stories as analogues to symbolic development can enable us to get at the *affective quality* of moving from one state to another, both intrapsychically and relationally.

Again, Spitz (1999) makes an argument for the developmental importance of picture books in her work on metaphoric processes in children's stories. She writes that children's books "evoke the memory of having someone all to ourselves and sensing that we are, together with that someone, enveloped in fantasy" (Spitz, p. xiii). She argues that in order for stories to sustain the interest of generations of children, as well as adults, a book must resonate with the affective and developmental needs and conflicts of those audiences. A book that stands the test of time, she writes, does so

because it addresses the developmental concerns of children in such a way as to both give expression, and provide containment, achieved through images and narratives that are rich and interesting, complex or odd, but ultimately, fascinating in some way over time. Such books endure because they remain vital and continue to speak to us into adulthood. That is, the images and narratives of children's books that capture the imagination of children and adults do so, because they continue to resonate with sensory-affective meaning. Additionally, Spitz (1999) makes the point that, for the stories to appeal cross-generationally they must convey meaning on several levels (Spitz, p.7).

The trajectory in development from preverbal to verbal, from fantasy to reality, is paralleled in the shift in children's literature from picture books to books with an ever-increasing emphasis on language. In terms of symbolization, there is a movement from subjective idiosyncratic magical space, to a shared cultural experience.

In the three stories that are the main focus of this chapter, each shares the feature that I will identify as a *transit metaphor*, that is, reality and fantasy in each of these stories are clearly demarcated by a threshold of sorts, that leads from the reality-based narrative space into the imaginary landscape. Fantasy and reality are *both separated and joined* by a metaphoric link.

For example, in Lewis Carroll's The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland (1865), Alice enters the imaginary space of Wonderland through a rabbit hole. Likewise, in the first of the C. S. Lewis's series "The Chronicles of Narnia" (1950), the characters enter the imaginary space through a wardrobe. Similarly, Milo, the

protagonist in The Phantom Tollbooth, by Norton Juster (1961) enters into his imaginary space through a toy tollbooth. These stories, and those like them, are a particular kind of story, in which the bridging of the external and internal worlds is represented in the actual structure of the story.

In contrast, picture books, those stories that are predominantly images and minimal text, often generate and occupy magical spaces—magical things happen seamlessly—without question or explanation. The shift into imaginary space is not articulated, instead, magic “just happens” in such stories. Another sort of story, the precursor to adult novels, are stories in which the narrative worlds are infused with magical *feeling*, that is, there is no move from real to imaginary, per se, but instead, the imaginary infuses the real. For example, Huckleberry Finn (1959) or Tom Sawyer (1875) by Mark Twain, The Secret Garden (1911) by Frances Hodgson Burnett, are examples of stories that, though the narrative landscape is generally reality-based, the adventures engaged in are permeated with magical feeling.

In between picture books and the novel, there are stories in which the narrative moves from the real to the imaginary through some sort of portal. It is this particular narrative configuration that I am interested in exploring here, because such stories amplify both the separation and the linkage between these two worlds. Thus, it offers a way to think about the quality of the imaginary space via the quality of the link, and the kind of play-space into which it provides entry. When the quality of imaginary space can be explored, a way is opened to think about the affect-regulatory issues involved when there has been a disturbance in potential space.

I will refer to the threshold in each of these stories as a *transit metaphor*, that is, the mode of entry into the magical landscape, and the link between reality and fantasy. The three stories I will use to illustrate are: Alice in Wonderland (1865) by Lewis Carroll, The Phantom Tollbooth (1961) by Norton Juster, and The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (1950) by C.S. Lewis. I will use these stories as heuristic devices in which to understand the way that the entry into the imaginary is related to the *quality* of the narratives. The quality of the threshold in each of the stories can be seen as corresponding to the quality of both the shift from one state to another, and the quality of the experience within the magical landscape. Again, the quality of transitional space, as expressed through the particular transit metaphor—i.e. the particular way of entering into the imaginary space—can help to understand what the experience of the imaginary can be like for any given patient-therapist dyad. Another way of thinking about entry into potential space is the degree to which someone can *make use of* the imaginary, that is, play. In getting a sense of the quality of potential space it becomes possible to think about how to help affectively regulate the play space. As Winnicott has put it in his article “Creativity and Its Origins”: “What is being attempted here is to find a way of studying...the creative entry into life or of the initial creative approach to external phenomena” (p. 68).

This is not to say that literature necessarily follows such a schematic trajectory. In fact, there are several genre’s of literature that contradict a simple trajectory from fantasy to “real,” and, in fact, explicitly play with that boundary, such as: magical realism, science fiction, graphic novels, and the post modern. But I believe for our purposes, it is useful as a heuristic device to explore the parallel between the

developmental trajectory in children's literature and the development of potential space. Certainly, an argument can be made that the author is the only person revealed in examining a story, but another perspective might allow for us to consider the "reader" and the "reading". Vico, however, pushes the possibilities further when he argued in the 17th century, that we learn about our own cognition by studying the products of imagination. Additionally, the wide appeal of and experience with, certain children's stories, as well as the extensive role that these stories play in so many children's lives, suggests that there is something about the development of imagination in general that can be gleaned from studying such works.

This chapter consists of two sections. In the first I consider the general movement in children's literature from picture books to young-adult novels, thereby broadly mapping out the movement *from* fantasy *to* imaginary experience. The scope of this project doesn't allow for an exhaustive survey of these works, but I hope to provide an outline. In the second section, I examine three transit metaphors in three stories to further elucidate my thesis.

Picture Books and Transitional Space

First, there are picture books. For the child who is not yet verbal, but is interested in images, there are books that consist largely, and sometimes completely, of images. Spitz (1999) posits that the crucial aspect of such stories consists of not what happens on the page, but in the interaction between the child and caretaker as they share the images. In these books, the action is portrayed wholly through imagery. The child goes through the book with a caretaker or by himself making

what he will of the images, identifying objects and features of objects. There is often little narrative structure in these books, they often consist of merely a series of objects, or they may have a minimal narrative structure.

For example, in The Very Hungry Caterpillar (1969), by Eric Carle, the plot involves a sequence of items that the caterpillar eats, and his subsequent belly-ache. This resembles the simple “if, then” pre-verbal narrative structure that begins with the concept of sequence proposed by Goldman (2003). Eating, what there is to eat, and what happens when you eat, are themes that can be grasped by very young children. As the child matures, he or she can begin to grasp a bit of the silliness in this very simple story, which involves a caterpillar eating food that it would not normally eat.

In The Very Hungry Caterpillar (1969), in addition to the sequence of brightly colored foods, there is an actual hole in each page that leads to the next. What connects each item is not imaginary, but in fact, a concrete and literal passage from one image to the next. A book of this kind introduces a child into the symbolic realm through images and concrete links that will later become imaginative links.

Mutual regulation and Rhyme

When we listen to books read aloud by Dr. Seuss, or Maurice Sendak’s Where the Sidewalk Ends, we can easily identify and experience the rise and fall of narrative tension that Lachmann and Beebe (2002) write about regarding vocal coordination and mutual regulation. In such books, rhyme organizes the narrative and links the two, reader and listener, in experiencing, illustrating the cross modal coordination that

links minds and meaning. This is the sensual aspect of language, the words resonate physically.

Harold and the Transitional Object

Picture books are soon joined and then replaced by those that contain text along with images. Still, much of the narrative is communicated through the visual images, or through an interaction between the pictures and the text. In picture books, there isn't a movement from one kind of experience to another, from real to imaginary, but instead, the narrative space is infused with the healthy omnipotence of transitional experience. Stories like Harold and the Purple Crayon (1955), by Crockett Johnson, and Where the Wild Things Are (1963), by Maurice Sendak, elegantly illustrate an analogue to transitional space. These stories, and others like them, take place predominantly in a magic world that goes completely unquestioned by the protagonist or the reader. The story happens somewhere in between the pictures, the text, and the experience of being read to.

Harold and the Purple Crayon (1955) starts out in the protagonist's interior space: "One evening, after thinking it over for some time, Harold decided to go for a walk in the moonlight." This caption is opposite a page that is filled with the scribbles of Harold's purple crayon. The story begins with the chaos of unorganized experience from which symbolic precursors emerge, or what Winnicott calls "muddle". Soon, the interior space of Harold's thoughts is indistinguishable from the world that he simultaneously creates and discovers. What is internal and external is ambiguous, and he enters into the world through his creation of it. This story can be

seen as an analogue to the beginning of the development of transitional space. Similar to Winnicott's conception of transitional space, there is no need or desire, but instead purely the creator and his creation. The mother in the story is both ever-present and unnoticed in the form of the moon. The maternal presence is there to provide: light, accompaniment, and in the end, guidance home, but she never intrudes into the narrative as a person with her own needs and desires.

The next page continues, "There wasn't any moon, and Harold needed a moon for a walk in the moonlight"; he draws his wished-for moon, which then accompanies him throughout his journey. There is the illusion that the mother is created out of Harold's wish. Winnicott (1971) writes that transitional space develops out of this first experience of creating the world, and that it is in the "overlap between what the mother supplies and what the child might conceive of" that an intermediate area of experience emerges. The story, in fact, emerges out of Harold's wish to walk in the moonlight, that is, the wish to discover and create in the light of the mother's gaze.

The moon appears on every page thereafter, and occasionally, whenever there might be some anxiety about where Harold's journey might lead him, e.g. when he decides to forge off his "straight path," or when he sets sail, the reader is reminded that "the moon went with him." Finally, it is remembering the moon that helps him find his way back to familiar surroundings, his bedroom.

The association between the maternal and the moon is well known, and while acknowledging multiple possibilities, Spitz (1999) highlights this connection when she compares the roundness of the moon with the roundness of the breast/mother. Goldman suggests that, perhaps instead, it is the roundness of the mother's face that

connects the moon with the maternal. Harold then, like Winnicott's infant, creates the breast/moon out of his desire—in this case, his desire to explore. Spitz (1999) goes on to make the comparison between the moon and the constancy and ever-presence of the mother.

“Like a mother from the perspective of a small child, the moon appears in repetitive cycles, disappearing and always predictably returning, changing its appearance but always identifiable. Just as a mother may don different costumes and yet still be mother, so too the moon alters its shape and size and look but is nonetheless unmistakably the moon. Illuminating the darkness, it, again like a mother, serves as a beacon in the frightening realm of the unknown” (p.36).

I would add to this, that Harold creates in the light of the moon, just as a child plays and develops under the gaze of the mother. Winnicott (1971) described this phenomenon when he writes of the state in which the child learns to be alone in the presence of a devoted and non-intruding other. Winnicott refers to this as capacity to be alone in the presence of another. He argues that this capacity emerges out of a normal state of “primary maternal preoccupation,” that is, a period of time in which the mother through identification anticipates and responds to the infant's needs. This results in an experience of continuity of being, or as Winnicott refers to it, “going on being”. In this state, the infant experiences instead of reacts. Primary maternal preoccupation, Winnicott writes, in any other context would be a kind of psychotic experience, in that, there is a lack of boundedness between mother and infant. But for a period of time during her child's infancy, this experience is not only normal, but facilitative. In a sense, the ever present moon implies the primary maternal preoccupation that has gone before, and the emergent continuity of being that Harold exemplifies in his adventures.

Spitz (1999) touches on another psychoanalytic concept when she makes the point that the moon can be thought to represent both the child and the mother. “Young children” she writes, “tend to conflate mirror images of themselves with their mothers, we could interpret some of these pictured moons as representing a kind of combined self and mother” (p. 36). The illusion of play is that one and two exist simultaneously (Winnicott, 1971). Similarly, the transitional object is the precursor to symbolization, and as Winnicott writes, “This precursor of a symbol is at one and the same time part of the infant and part of the mother” (Winnicott, 1950).

In addition to the obvious phallic allusions, Harold’s purple crayon is an exemplary transitional object. The transitional object, according to Winnicott (1953), is the first “not-me” possession that represents an intermediate area of experience. The transitional object for a time is felt as “more important than the mother, an almost inseparable part of the infant” (Winnicott, 1953, p.7). The transitional object is the “root of symbolism in time, a term that describes the infant’s journey from the purely subjective to objectivity; and it seems to me that the transitional object (piece of blanket, etc.) is what we see of this journey of progress towards experiencing” (p. 6).

The story proceeds, and Harold creates the satisfaction of each of his wishes instantly—again, he creates and discovers this magical world simultaneously. It is the maternal setting that accommodates without intrusion that allows for the experience of illusion and omnipotence. Winnicott writes that a responsive setting provided by the mother enables the infant to conceive of “the idea of something that would meet the growing need that arises out of instinctual tension” (Winnicott, 1953, p.12). In this view, actual omnipotence is the holding phase and merger when

“omnipotence is a fact,” which then develops into the ‘experience of omnipotence’. The ‘experience of omnipotence’, or the illusion of magical control, occurs as the mother is in a ‘to and fro’ between being that which the baby can find, and being herself wanting to be found. (Winnicott, *Human Nature*, p. 106). The ‘experience of omnipotence’ is an essential process in the first experience of the ‘me’-‘not me’. In the earliest phase, omnipotence is the experience of seamless provision that is the result of primary maternal preoccupation, whereas secondary omnipotence is the failure of primary maternal preoccupation, and the infant must instead react which disrupts the experience of being and is a defense against the hopelessness of dependence. The ‘experience of omnipotence’ belongs essentially to dependence while secondary omnipotence is the result of hopelessness of dependence.

At one point, when Harold draws a forest of one tree—so as not to get lost—“It turned out to be an apple tree.” Upon thinking that the apples would be tasty when they ripened, he “puts a frightening, dragon under the tree to guard the apples.” Harold’s magic world then turns a bit frightening and as he backs away from the dragon, he stumbles causing his crayon to shake and inadvertently draws water, soon realizing that he is “over his head in the ocean.” This a playful moment illustrating Winnicott’s point that “the transitional object is never under magical control like the internal object, nor is it outside control as the real mother is” (p. 10). Further, it reflects the way that omnipotence unchecked can turn frightening, though in this story the dangerous aspects are quite contained. The reader can see quite plainly that Harold is drawing the story, made of a simple line drawing, in which his crayon is always visible. This renders even the dangers quite benign and easily manageable.

Additionally, Harold is drawn in solid dark lines, whereas, all of his creation is drawn in a fruity-purple color, which also has the effect of communicating his omnipotence—everything is made from him and his crayon.

Spitz (1999) describes the responses of a group of four-year-olds when asked what they would do in Harold's place of 'being over their head in the ocean': "One said, 'I would get an inner-tube!', another shouted "I would call out to someone to help me!" She goes on to comment that "the ingenuity depicted in the story called forth corresponding inventiveness in the children listening to it" (p. 70).

Harold answers each potential danger with his own omnipotent solution: he draws an ocean to put distance between him and a dragon; he draws a boat to save him from drowning in the sea; and when he falls off the other side of a mountain because he hasn't drawn it yet, he draws a balloon that enables him to float safely to the ground. Harold simply creates/discovered the safety that is facilitated by the constant maternal presence and provision. Spitz (1999) writes, in regard to the potentially disturbing aspects of a story, that the imaginary serves to modulate those aspects: "Thus, as long as the transformational possibilities stay fluid, an endlessly reassuring universe can exist, and notions of absolute finality, irrevocable loss, and irreversibility are obviated" (p.150).

Not only does Harold meet each danger with ease and wit, but he magically satisfies his appetites. When he is hungry he draws his perfect picnic of the nine different kinds of pies he likes best. In this case, the danger of devouring all of the maternal riches sets in motion persecutory fantasies that must be held at bay. Again, omnipotence has its dangers that must be guarded against. When he has eaten his fill,

Harold draws two characters to eat the leftovers: a “hungry moose” and a “deserving porcupine”—two aspects of the mother robbed of her products. Guilt and fear are salved by an act of reparation. Mother is represented in both her persecutory, and her good and “deserving” aspects. The “hungry moose” is a big starving creature who has been first deprived and then restored by the devouring child. The “deserving porcupine” with its sharp, aggressive potential is rendered both safe and good through the gift of the pies.

Finally, when Harold decides to go home he looks for his bedroom, and for a moment he is lost. He looks for his window by drawing windows, buildings and buildings full of windows, but none of them are his. He then remembers, “It was always right around the moon,” and by drawing a window around the moon, he places himself safely back in his room, that is, the moon/mother provides safety, respite, and the way home.

Spitz (1999) gives an example of a four-year-old girl, who, upon hearing this story, excitedly exclaimed, “He can draw on *nothing*! Like *this*!” as she drew in the air, and then, “He can draw on nothing and then go on it!” (p. 70). In a way, we can hear what this four-year-old articulates as a restatement of the wonder and delight inherent in Winnicott’s assertion that in transitional space there is no need for symbols, because there is no one and nothing.

Once in his room, “Harold *made* his bed. He got in it and *drew* up the covers. The purple crayon dropped on the floor. And Harold dropped off to sleep”[Italics mine]. The play with the words at the end of this story is of particular interest. First, it is a variation in the narrative, in that, this is the only point in the story when

Johnson (1955) plays with meaning in quite this way, and in so doing, effects a slight elaboration on symbolic play. By this I mean, he plays with language in such a way that emphasizes the creativity and the multiplicity of meaning. Secondly, at this last point in the story, the metaphoric meanings and the literal meanings come together, and just as the story ends, the metaphoric and the literal occupy the same space. This closely resembles Loewald's account of symbolization, in that there is a reunion of primary and secondary thought that links them, and as such, organizes the primary process. But then the meaning diverges again, the purple crayon drops on the floor, and Harold drops off to sleep.

The moment of the crayon dropping to the floor is the first moment in the story that Harold and his crayon are separated. Winnicott (1971) argues, that the transitional object represents "the infant's transition from a state of being merged with the mother to a state of being in relation to the mother as something outside and separate." This final action of the story signals a moment of differentiation occurring at the end of the story, Harold is no longer merged with the object. Another way we might understand this moment is that it is a decathesis of the transitional object, "It is not forgotten and it is not mourned. It loses meaning" (Winnicott, 1953, p.5).

In Johnson's (1955) story, there is not a transition from one state to another, in the same way that the infant exists simultaneously in the undifferentiated and interdependent state of being at-one with the mother. Instead, Harold and the Purple Crayon (1955) portrays the holding and illusion of transitional space. Differing states are communicated by inference, through the change from scribbles to Harold's self-created world on the first page, and the point at which Harold 'drops off to sleep'.

But it is the omnipotent state that is of narrative interest in this story, the shifts are referred to, but not articulated or explored.

Max and Where the Real Things Are

Maurice Sendak's Where the Wild Things Are (1963) is similarly concerned with the child as creator of his world. It can be seen as an analogue to the developmental progression that emerges out of the fantasied destruction in Winnicott's model, the interplay that leads to disillusionment, and thus, the mother and the external world coming to be felt as real.

The story begins, "*The night Max wore his wolf suit and made mischief of one kind... and another... his mother called him "WILD THING" and Max said "I'LL EAT YOU UP!" ...so he was sent to bed without eating anything.*" The mischief we see Max making is hammering a nail into a wall, and chasing the dog, fork-in-hand, with a malicious expression on his face. This can be seen as the beginning of disillusionment that is brought about first by adequate provision and then by tolerable frustrations. Max comes up against limitations and is frustrated.

Winnicott writes of the importance of gradual de-adaptation to the infant in development. The infant's response to de-adaptation and frustration is to destroy the mother in fantasy. We might even see Max's hammering a nail into the wall as a destructive gesture toward the maternal environment (as well as gratification in fantasy of his oedipal wishes). This gradual de-adaptation is important for the child to feel the (m)other and the world as real. Winnicott makes the point that too much

provision and adaptation the infant's need resembles magic, and eventually the child will want to get something *real*.

"One thing that follows the acceptance of external reality is the advantage to be gained from it. We often hear of the very real frustrations imposed by external reality, but less often hear of the relief and satisfaction it affords. Real milk is satisfying as compared with imaginary milk, but this is not the point. The point is that in fantasy things work by magic: there are no brakes on fantasy, and love and hate cause alarming effects. External reality has brakes on it, and can be studied and known, and, in fact, fantasy is only tolerable at full blast when objective reality is appreciated well. The subjective has tremendous value but is so alarming and magical that it cannot be enjoyed except as a parallel to the objective" (Winnicott, p.153).

After being sent to his room without dinner, a forest grows up around Max. His mother is banished/destroyed in fantasy, and Max and his monsters have their way. Not only does Max go to a place where his imagination can rumpus freely, but to get there he goes "*in and out of weeks... and almost over a year...*," and likewise, to return he sails "*back over a year... and in and out of weeks... and through a day.*" Max creates his own psychic space that, in contrast to Harold, has spatial and temporal distinctions in the way that Loewald described the organization of secondary process (Goldman, 2002).

Similar to Harold and the Purple Crayon, we see the moon framed by his bedroom window. In this story, while the moon is often in the illustrations, it is not on every page—perhaps signaling the initial attempts at separation. Max's mother is both explicitly in the story and represented as a presence. Though she is present, Max can move away and toward her as he pleases. Play allows reassuring contact and separation from the mother (Goldman, 2002).

Once in the privacy of his room, the narrative transforms into a magical realm, but one that emerges from Max's frustration and aggression. The forest grew, "*and grew... until his ceiling hung with vines and the walls became the world all around.*" From here, Max is occupying his own magical space where "*an ocean tumbled by with a private boat for Max,*" until he gets to "*where the wild things are.*" The creatures he comes upon are both scary and adorable, and soon Max tames them with a magic trick "*of staring into all their yellow eyes without blinking once and they were frightened and called him the most wild thing of all... and made him king of all the wild things...*" *'And now,' cried Max, 'let the wild rumpus start!'*" The omnipotence of transitional space is in full swing. It is at this point that the book proceeds completely visually, and contains no text at all for six full pages, where what is depicted is a joyous, howling, monkeying-around good time, in which Max reigns as king of the wild things. The land of the wild things is a realm where pleasure, sex and aggression play freely without limitation or frustration.

In a moment that threatens to become overwhelming, Max, like his mother, stops the rumpus and sends the wild things off to bed. For a minute, he feels lonely, but "*Then all around from far away across the world he smelled good things to eat so he gave up being king of where the wild things are.*" And so, Max makes his way back home, by the light of the moon, and finds his supper waiting for him "*and it was still hot.*" Sendak's (1963) story has an unmistakably Freudian interpretation of creativity. While he subscribes to a classical model of sublimation in which Max gives up his wild rumpusing and returns to the real world, the story is also available for a relational reading. In contrast to Harold, Max is motivated to return to the

shared world by his awareness of and his desire for the other. While Max banishes his mother and all of her limitations through his creation of monsters, at the end of his adventure, he finds that all of his ‘wild rumpus-ing’ has not destroyed the warmth and provision of the maternal home. The hot meal that Max finds upon returning is evidence of his mothers survival, that is, her existence outside of Max’s omnipotent control (Winnicott, 1969). He is on his way to being able, in Winnicott’s terms, to make use of the object.

The development from object-relating to object usage is facilitated by the survival of the object. Upon encountering frustrations, the infant destroys the object in fantasy, and when he finds that the mother has survived his attack, and was there all along, the infant begins to feel the world and others as *real* (Winnicott, 1969). Max’s mother becomes real, that is, loved as well as hated.

At the beginning of the story, Max exclaims “*I’ll eat you up!*,” and at the end of the story the monster’s beg Max to stay with the very same plea: “*Oh please don’t go—we’ll eat you up—we love you so!*” One way to understand this is as an expression of primitive love, which has a ruthless quality to it. An eager effort to take the other in. Ultimately, love and hate are integrated and the object survives both. Winnicott (1969) makes the point that the real destruction is only if the object doesn’t survive, “*Without this failure, destruction remains potential*” (p.93). Through the repudiation and subsequent re-acceptance of his mother, Max is beginning to perceive her objective existence (Winnicott, 1971, p. 47). “*This means that the mother (or part of the mother) is in a ‘to and fro’ between being that which the baby has a capacity to find and (alternatively) being herself waiting to be found*” (Winnicott, 1971, p. 47).

Where the Wild Things Are (1963) elegantly illustrates that through the interplay of omnipotence and actual control, separation and connection, a place of play emerges (Winnicott, 1971). In the next section, I will explore the connection between the play space and the reality-based narrative space through the transit metaphors.

II. TRANSIT METAPHORS AND ENTRY INTO IMAGINARY SPACE

Developmentally, a child proceeds from the finite phase of transitional space to the ongoing capacity of potential space. How transitional experience goes determines the quality of potential space. That is, to the extent that a child can trust maternal presence, provision, and survival, a psychic space develops, and from this space feelings and thoughts can be played with. Play, Winnicott tells us, is an achievement in emotional development (From “Notes on Play, undated).

The place of play, the “to and fro” that Winnicott identifies as potential space, finds its analogue in a category of stories, three of which I will explore in detail here. In each of these stories there are two narrative spaces separated and joined by the mode of entry, what I am calling the transit metaphor. Similarly, Winnicott (1971) identified potential space as the location of playing that both joins and separates the mother and child. In other words, it is a link that is a space. It is the point at which fantasy and reality, self and other come together, and the quality of coming together determines the kind of space that is generated. Much of the literature on transitional and potential space treats it as either there or not, which misses an important aspect of

the phenomenon that Winnicott was attempting to convey through his metaphor, that is, that transitional space is the affective coloring of experience (Goldman, 1986).

Thus, the area of play is not monolithic—either there or not—instead, it varies depending upon the child’s experience, and context. “This potential space is a highly variable factor (from individual to individual), whereas the two other locations—personal and psychic reality and the actual world—are relatively constant” (Winnicott, 1971, p.103). And again, “There is a kind of variability here that is different in quality from those that belong to the phenomenon of inner personal psychic reality and to external or shared reality” (Winnicott, 1971, p. 107). Such variations are dependent upon experience that leads to, or inhibits, trust.

With some reliability on the part of the facilitating environment, a child develops a sense of continuity of being, and out of this experience potential space emerges. The reliability stems not only from providing for the dependent infant, but also involves allowing for the child to move from dependence to relative autonomy (Winnicott, 1971). In such an environment the child can play with similarities and differences in relation to the mother and world in a state of “relaxed self-realization” (Winnicott, 1971, p.108).

I will focus on three variations in play space, stemming from three different qualities of entry, which in turn express variations in the qualities of potential space.

Separation, Attachment, and the Wardrobe

In reading much of children’s literature, one is struck by how many protagonists are orphaned in one way or another. The list is remarkable: Harry Potter, Pipi

Longstocking, Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, Mary Lennox of *The Secret Garden*, Cinderella, James of the Giant Peach, and on and on. One reason for this may relate to the struggle, the wishes and fears, inherent in separation.

To be orphaned, alone in the world, is one of the great fears and dangers of childhood. On the other side, the orphan offers a guilt-free fantasy of liberation from parental limitations and attachment. The child gets rid of the parents symbolically, so that he or she can feel free to have adventure, encounter the world independently, and feel mastery over the most treacherous dangers. The child tries out autonomy in fantasy, and in an extreme form.

Similarly, at the beginning of C.S. Lewis's book *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), the reader is told that it is the story of four children, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy, who are temporarily orphaned. The children are sent to the country-side outside of London during the war because of the air-raids of WWII, and are placed in the care of an odd, though appealing, old professor. The professor lives in a labyrinthine and enchanting old mansion with "*any amount of stairs and passages in-between*" (p.3). The house represents all of the possibilities of potential space, "*it was the sort of house that you never seem to come to the end of, and it was full of unexpected places*" (p.4).

The children are immediately taken up in the excitement and adventure that this place has to offer, without a thought or worry about their separation. Instead, the children are swept up in all that awaits discovery,

*"You might find anything in a place like this. Did you see those mountains as we came along? And the woods? There might be eagles. There might be stags. There'll be hawks."
"Badgers!" said Lucy.*

*"Snakes!" said Edmund.
 "Foxes!" said Susan (p.3).*

There are all sorts of exciting landscapes and creatures for children of any age in this new place. The reader, however, soon realizes that the adventures to be had, and the landscapes to be explored by the four children, will be internal and not external; the creatures they meet will not belong to the outside world, but to the inner world. The next morning it is too rainy to go outside, and so the children busy themselves with exploring the house. While the children come upon a room, empty but for a large wardrobe, they exclaim "*Nothing there!*," and move on to another room, except for Lucy, the youngest, who stays behind. It is interesting to consider that the adventure is initiated by the youngest child, perhaps it is because Lucy is the youngest, and the most vulnerable to a separation from her mother. When all alone, she looks into the wardrobe and sees several fur coats "*There was nothing Lucy liked so much as the smell and feel of fur*" (p.5). This scene is reminiscent of the child, who is missing her mother, and goes to her closet to find her smell and the sensual reassurance of her clothing. The child is also seeking out the feeling of being once again enclosed in the maternal embrace. Lucy steps into the wardrobe, and gets in among the coats, and "*rubbed her face against them, leaving the door open, of course, because she knew that it is very foolish to shut oneself into any wardrobe*" (p.5). In caressing the coats she evokes the sensual feel of the mother. Bowlby wrote of the infant's attachment that stems from the tactile bodily comfort and not from drive satisfaction.

Remembering not to close the door, Lucy invokes the maternal reminders of safety, thereby, bringing the mother in both her provisional, as well as her protecting

and limiting aspects into the magical space—even while the magical space emerges out of Lucy's desire to reconnect to her mother. The phrase, "*you should never shut yourself into a wardrobe,*" is a refrain throughout the story, and like the moon in the earlier stories, evokes the maternal presence at each transition into Narnia. The limitation counters all the freedom that the children have in their new environment. Additionally, this refrain includes not being stuck in the mother's embrace, wherein the mother's holding can be perverted into clutching (Goldman, personal communication, 2004).

Lucy continues further into the wardrobe, and slowly the wardrobe morphs into a forest. There is nothing sudden or startling during this transition. It is gradual and signaled by slight alterations in sense perceptions: the crunching of mothballs turns to the crunching of snow; the temperature changes slightly; the bristling of fur turns to the bristle of branches. Even as she moves further into this new magical landscape, she can turn around and see the door of the wardrobe open, reassuring herself *that "I can always get back if anything goes wrong"* (p.7)—she can orient herself in this imaginary world. Similar to the moon in the previous stories, one of the ways that Lucy and her siblings orient themselves between worlds, is by way of an incongruously placed lamp-post at the edge of the forest. This playful marker not only signifies the entry-way back into the real, but it illuminates the beginning of this strange magical world. It, in fact, is the first manifestation that signifies that this is not just another everyday reality. In addition, it offers some spatial organization, and signals the point at which temporal orientation is altered. For, while Narnia has its own consistent sense of time, it differs radically from the sense of time in the realm of

the everyday. In fact, years of the children's adventures takes place in no-time, relative to the everyday, upon their return only minutes have passed.

While the initial entry into the wardrobe was precipitated by Lucy's wish for her mother and exploration of the Wardrobe, the second entry is precipitated by a game of hide-and-seek. Hide-and-seek, an elaboration of peek-a-boo, is widely considered to be a game that helps children master separation anxiety. By playfully invoking the experience of absence, followed by the experience of being found, the child is able to master and contain fears of being lost, worries about not being held in mind, and reassured that separation will be followed by a delighted reunion. Winnicott writes that for artists there exist two trends: the urgent need to communicate, and the still more urgent need not to be found. While it is a joy to be hidden, it is a disaster not to be found. It is actually during this game that Lucy's brother Edmund discovers the imaginary world of Narnia. And later, on another rainy afternoon all four end up in the wardrobe in order to stay out of the housekeeper's way as she brings some tourists through the house.

Once they are all in the Wardrobe and at the threshold of Narnia, they realize that it is quite cold and decide to put on the fur coats that are stored within. When momentarily faced with the dilemma of whether wearing the coats is stealing, they resolve that "*we shan't even take them out of the wardrobe... No one could say you had bagged a coat as long as you leave it in the wardrobe where you found it. And I suppose this whole country is in the wardrobe*" (p.52), thus, illustrating both that maternal provision is inherent in potential space, as well as a hint of paradox in taking

something and yet not. Additionally, there is the reassurance that the children may take in the resources of the mother, and yet she will not be robbed.

The adult-sized coats, when worn by the children into Narnia, have the appearance of royal robes—for, as it turns out, they are the kings and queens of Narnia. The robe-like appearance of the coats alludes to the *illusion of omnipotence* of potential space, in contrast to the *actual omnipotence* of the earlier transitional phase as demonstrated in Harold and the Purple Crayon (Goldman on Winnicott, 2002). Although, Lucy and her siblings turn out to be the royal heirs of Narnia, they are unable to instantly solve their difficulties within the magical space. Instead, it is the imaginative elaboration of these difficulties that eventually enable them to resolve the conflicts at hand.

Narnia is peopled by a whole continuum of creatures, from appealing to appalling, with many who act as helpers and teachers throughout. In addition to the maternal presence, the paternal presence takes more manifest form in the character of Aslan the lion. Beyond the obvious Christian allusions, Aslan is the strong and guiding superego aspect of the father.

What the children find in the imaginary world, along with a host of delightful and odd characters, is that a dark force has taken over all of Narnia in the form of the White Witch. The White Witch is a terrible character who dominates the land, and seduces young children with Turkish Delight that leaves them with a craving for more, that resembles the most tenacious of addictions. Addiction can be thought of as a perversion of potential space, wherein the creative impulse for transformation that entails *submission* is perverted into a sado-masochistic *subjugation* (Goldman citing

Ghent, 2004). She puts the land of Narnia under an enchantment in which it is always winter and never Christmas. Significantly, the story begins as the children are sent out of London because of the air-raids during WWII. In the external world, Europe is in the midst of domination by Hitler and the dark force of Nazism looms large over the whole continent. Thus, the conflicts in Narnia mirror those of the real world. This exemplifies the way that problems that are felt as too big in the adult world are managed imaginatively in the play space.

The quality of the transit in The Lion, the Witch, and The Wardrobe (1950) is of adventurous unfolding. The anxiety of separation is contained, played out within the big old mysterious house that is attended to by an unusual and benevolent old professor. Inside the house, anxieties and desires for separation are held within the wardrobe, which holds the warmth, comfort, and provision of the absent mother, and finally the anxieties are held within the relational unit of the four children. The potential space in this story is a space within a space within a space. The transit unfolds slowly and with participation of the children, they have a sense of agency within the play space, and they move in and out of the space, for the most part, at their own choosing. There is a sense of discovery and wonder throughout, even while they contend with dark forces.

The transition out of Narnia is precipitated by the children's hunt for the White Stag. By this time, the children have banished the White Witch, and have been enjoying years as the beloved rulers of Narnia. *"And they themselves grew and changed as the years passed over them"* (p.181). The children mature as a result of their adventures in Narnia, and their relationships with each other deepen—they are

able to make use of their imaginary experience. Their chase of the White Stag, a rare animal who grants wishes to whomever catches him, leads them back to the wardrobe. “*And he led them a great pace over rough and smooth and through thick and thin...*,” and then the Stag goes *through* “*a thicket where their horses could not follow*” (p.182). It is here where they encounter the “iron tree,” that Lucy comments that:

“it worketh upon me strangely.” This iron tree turns out, of course, to be the lamp-post at the edge of the forest where the trees have grown and the lamp-post is now very ancient. “[I]t will not go out of my mind that if we pass this post and lantern, either we shall find strange adventures or else some great change of our fortunes” (p.183).

It is only as they slowly enter back through the wardrobe, resolved to face the adventure, that they remember the significance of the lamp-post, “*and they noticed that they were making their way not through branches but through coats*” (p. 185). In a sense, as they move back through the wardrobe, they connect Narnia and the ‘real world’ in their minds. Narnia starts out as a fantasy, what was thought as a fib by an attention-seeking younger sibling, but is transformed into a memory, a secret realm where they master and learn to manage the world’s evil, and discover and create their destinies. They are returned to the every-day older and wiser, but reassured they haven’t lost even an hour.

The Rabbit Hole and the Collapse of Meaning

In contrast to the gradual unfolding of potential space in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, the transition into the imaginary space in Alice in Wonderland is of a very different quality. Alice makes her transition by falling through a hole.

“Being dropped, even into bed, is terror itself,” writes Ellen Handler Spitz. Similarly, Winnicott writes of a primitive agony of fear of falling forever. In a sense, the transit metaphor in this story is demarcated in space by absence. In contrast to the containment of the wardrobe, and the facilitating, signaling, and regulating of passage of the tollbooth—taken up later—the hole, as a means of transit, conveys the primitive fears of unboundedness, helplessness, and unpredictability. These primitive fears manifest for Alice in disrupted body integrity, object-relations, and symbolic processes.

Entry and Disintegration

Alice in Wonderland (1865) is the story of a girl who is bored by her surroundings, whose reverie is interrupted by the sudden appearance of a white rabbit, whom she follows down his rabbit hole into the imaginary landscape of “Wonderland”. At the beginning of the story, Alice is fighting off sleepiness and boredom—or in other terms, psychic deadness—she is trying to come up with something to do, something to engage her. Her older sister's book is uninteresting because it is beyond her (*"What's the use of a book without pictures or conversations"*); she finds herself uninterested in her usual activities. Alice begins the story disengaged and a bit depressed. She begins to daydream, and while, as Spitz writes, “daydreams can be the beginning of storytelling,” Alice’s story is fraught with the frightening disintegration of meaning, not the cohesion of storytelling.

In fact, in Alice's case, the imaginary actually intrudes upon the real, in the form of a hallucination: the white rabbit scurrying by, checking his watch, and anxiously

uttering his lateness. Alice is slow to question the veracity of this hallucination, finding his muttering to himself unremarkable. It is only when he pulls out his pocket watch from his waistcoat that her interest is piqued. Alice then follows the hallucinatory rabbit down his hole. While the transition into the imaginary space is precipitated by Alice's curiosity, and her desire to connect to her surroundings, quite suddenly, this transition is out of her control, and turns frightening. At first, she is running down a dark tunnel, but it then takes an abrupt dip, and she falls through, *"so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down what seemed to be a very deep well"* (Carroll, 1865, p.3). In an instant, Alice's agency disappears like the ground under her feet; she can no longer choose to continue or return to her spot under the tree. In this moment, the very foundations of her being come into question; Alice not only begins to question where she will end up, but who she is.

As she falls, she can't decide whether she is falling very slowly, or the well is very deep, which exemplifies an orientational confusion that permeates Alice's experience in "Wonderland". This resembles Winnicott's description of a kind of internal deadness in his article "Nothing at the Centre" (1959) in which he observed that with one patient once he had nothing to react to "he became a thing in space, unaware of time and unaware of position" (p.51). Alice tries to orient herself by looking down, but it is too dark to see anything. She looks around her and there are many interesting things on shelves, but when she reaches for a jar of orange marmalade that she passes, she finds it empty. She then returns it to a shelf, *"for fear*

of killing somebody underneath” (p.4). In this transition, there are seductive objects offering sweetness and sustenance, but Alice finds them to be empty of both.

Alice reattempts to orient herself by remembering her school lessons—to make use of what she knows—however, to no avail:

“I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth. Let me see: that would be four thousand miles down, I think—(for, you see, Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the school-room, and though this was not a very good opportunity for showing off her knowledge, as there was no one to listen to her, still it was good practice to say it over) ‘—yes, that’s about the right distance—but then I wonder what Latitude or Longitude I’ve got to’ (Alice had not the slightest idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but she thought they were nice grand words to say)” (Carroll, p. 5).

Alice tries to use what she has learned in school to manage her transition, but finds that it is of no use to her, her disorientation is both internal and external. She then imagines asking someone where she is when she arrives, but decides they will think her ignorant, so she decides against asking for help. This instance foreshadows the persecutory anxieties that pervade “Wonderland,” and Alice’s inability to reach out to the characters around her, or make use of her environment in any meaningful way.

Alice then begins to miss her cat “Dinah,” and wishes that her cat was with her. Alice attempts to evoke the presence of a loving relationship, but her anxiety disrupts her efforts as she worries about what the cat might eat. She can’t evoke Dinah without her anxiety about deprivation and survival interrupting her thought processes. Alice begins saying to herself *“Do cats eat bats?” and then sometimes “Do bats eat cats?”* *“For you see, as she couldn’t answer either question, it didn’t much matter which way she put it.”* Her attempts to evoke the warmth and support of her real life

fails, and instead Alice becomes preoccupied with survival in this other state, her thinking becomes disorganized and she begins to nonsensically persevere. She drifts off to sleep repeating these phrases until she is suddenly awoken “*thump! Thump! Down she came upon a heap of sticks and dry leaves, and the fall was over*” (p.6)—even what might be a transition into the respite of a sleep state is disrupted.

This narrative entry into the imaginary vacillates between disoriented, dissociated, and frightening, and while it is not without moments of curiosity and adventure, the quality of the entry, as well as the imaginary space itself, is startling, dangerous and confounding. Alice’s entry begins from her curiosity and desire to engage, but it soon renders her passive and confused; the imaginary space is replete with events that happen *to* Alice. Ironically, instead of being a place ‘filled with wonder’, “Wonderland” turns out to be a landscape where there is little room to wonder, instead it is a place fraught with alienation, impingement, antagonism and confusion. Nothing from Alice’s everyday world offers her comfort, or helps her navigate this non-sensical space.

Hapless and Bizarre Objects

Alice’s attempts to link her two worlds and connect with the characters she meets by introducing her beloved cat Dinah are frustrated—the characters are often mice and birds and other such prey for cats, and bewilderingly to Alice, this effort always has the effect of driving the others away. Further into the story, another cat appears, the Cheshire cat, who appears and disappears randomly and sports a disturbing smile that arrives before the rest of him, and lingers after his body has

disappeared. One way to understand this character is that the Cheshire cat is a specter of her comforting object, who, in this state, is transformed into an enigmatic presence.

In addition to disorientation, the hole through which Alice enters the imaginary space destabilizes her sense of who she is. As she is falling, she asks herself a question that recurs throughout her adventure: “Who am I?” When Alice lands at the bottom of the rabbit hole, she begins to experience the first of what become constant threats to her body integrity. She sees a little door that she can’t fit through and beyond it she sees gardens and fountains, but not only is she too big, but the door is locked. Magically—for a minute before it wasn’t there—on a table, she sees what she correctly surmises must be the key to the garden, and with it a bottle with the instructions “Drink Me” written upon its tag. Without hesitating, she drinks the liquid and to her delight, she begins to shrink. This is the first moment of delight in the story, but it soon passes when she finds that she’s forgotten the key on the table that now towers above her, and once again she finds that she is unable to enter the garden. The experience of her body being out of control, and out of scale is repeated throughout the story. With each shift, Alice is either destructive to her surroundings because she is too big or at risk herself for being too small and therefore prey. At a point when she has shrunk very small, she says “*she was fond of pretending to be two people... it’s no use now... there’s hardly enough of me left to make one respectable person!*” (p.9). At another point, Alice grows from eating a cake, but so big that she cannot see her feet and imagines sending them boots by post. The lapses in her body integrity lead her to question her very identity: “*I wonder if I’ve changed in the night?*”...and again “*Who in the world am I?*”

At the beginning of Alice's adventure she finds that she grows and shrinks after ingesting something, by eating or drinking, and when she realizes this, she has some way of regulating herself, thus, navigating the imaginary landscape. However, she is not able to sustain this capacity to regulate herself because there doesn't seem to be any consistency about what will initiate a shift. Whereas at first, the shifts are caused by eating or drinking, she then finds that she shrinks from using a fan to fan herself, thus disrupting her already tenuous stability (p. 15). Not only does her body change in radical and sudden ways, but the environment is equally volatile.

Not only is Alice confused and changing in startling ways, but the environment is unresponsive, and confounding; the characters she meets only intensify her confusion. For example, when she happens upon a blue caterpillar, smoking a hookah pipe and sitting on the top of a mushroom, that, at this point, she must stand on her toes to peep over, he is "taking not the smallest notice of her or of anything else" (p. 36). After staring at each other for some time, the caterpillar asks:

"Who are you?" To which Alice replies "I—I hardly know, Sir, just at present—at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then."

"What do you mean by that?" said the Caterpillar sternly. "Explain yourself!"

"I ca'n't explain myself, I'm afraid, Sir," said Alice, "because I'm not myself, you see."

"I don't see," said the Caterpillar.

"I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly," Alice replied, very politely, "for I can't understand it myself, to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing."

"It isn't," said the Caterpillar.

"Well, perhaps you haven't found it so yet," said Alice; but when you have to turn into a chrysalis—you will some day, you know—and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you'll feel it a little queer, won't you?"

"Not a bit," said the Caterpillar.

“Well, perhaps your feelings may be different,” said Alice: “all I know is, it would feel very queer to me.”
“You!” said the caterpillar contemptuously. “Who are you?”
Which brought them back again to the beginning of the conversation.”
 (p. 38).

In a moment of lucidity Alice attempts to articulate her anxiety, but her effort is frustrated. At first, she tries to connect through her empathy, and when that is unsuccessful she tries to assert her separateness in order to have her experience understood and validated, but once again, is rebuffed. Instead of making a connection, the Caterpillar instructs her as to which side of the mushroom will make her grow taller and which will make her grow smaller, precipitating two extreme shifts in her state. She is confused about the instructions, *“And now which is which?”* and takes a bite to see what will happen, and understands only after she feels a *“violent blow underneath her chin: it had struck her foot!”* Next, she grows so tall that she towers above the trees, and is mistaken for a serpent by a protective mother bird who fears for her young, and begins to attack Alice. Such extreme shifts in Alice’s states occur throughout her experience in Wonderland and while she attempts to regulate herself, the arbitrary and unexpected precipitants of the shifts keep her from mastering her own state changes. Alice’s freakish growing and shrinking simply make her one of many bizarre characters in “Wonderland”.

The Collapse and Confounding of Meaning—Disruptions of Symbolization

Winnicott writes of disruptions in transitional space: “... exploitation of this area leads to a pathological condition in which the individual is cluttered up with persecutory elements of which he has no means of ridding himself” (Winnicott, 1971,

p.103). Alice's experience in Wonderland exemplifies a psychic space that is "cluttered with persecutory elements" and where meaning is confounded, instead of elaborated. At one point when she is in despair about her situation she begins to cry, but because she is so large her tears become a flood, washing away many of Wonderland's creatures, and because she shrinks unexpectedly, she herself is at risk of drowning in her own tears. *"I shall be punished for it now [crying], I suppose, by being drowned in my own tears!"* (p.15).

The narrative space is filled with volatility, danger and non-sense. There is no sense of one thing leading to another. Things change without any cause or warning: the landscape, Alice, the characters, and the rules. The games were no fun, *"there was no 'one, two, three and away! But they began running when they liked, and left off when they liked, so that it was not easy to know when the race was over"* (P. 21).

When asked by the Cheshire Cat how she is getting on, she replies:

"I don't think they play at all fairly... and they quarrel so dreadfully one can't hear oneself speak—and they don't seem to have any rules in particular: at least, if there are, nobody attends to them—and you've no idea how confusing it is all the things being alive: for instance, there's an arch I've got to go through next walking about at the other end of the ground—and I should have croqueted the Queen's hedgehog just now, only it ran away, when it saw mine coming" (p.75).

As Russell points out, if it were not put humorously, such experience would be too painful. At the beginning of Alice's adventure she happens upon a house with a footman sitting on the ground near the door. She knocks on the door, and the footman replies,

"There's no sort of use in knocking... and that for two reasons. First, because I'm on the same side of the door as you are: secondly, because they're making such a noise inside, no one could possibly hear you."

“And certainly there was a most extraordinary noise going on within—a constant howling and sneezing, and every now and then a great crash, as if a dish or kettle had been broken to pieces.” (p. 49)

As Alice enters the house, she finds the Dutchess who is holding a squalling baby, and her cook who is peppering the stew to such an extreme that everyone is sneezing except the cook. The Dutchess is throwing the howling baby across the room and up in the air, singing it nursery rhymes that are anything but comforting: *“Speak roughly to your little boy, and beat him when he sneezes: he only does it to annoy, because he knows it teases”* (p. 53). At one point, without warning or reason, the cook begins *“throwing everything within her reach at the Duchess and the baby... the baby was howling so much already that it was quite impossible to say whether the blows hurt it or not.”* Alice has no impact on the situation, although she is “jumping up and down in an agony of terror,” before long a pan flew close by the baby’s nose and “very neatly carried it off” (p.52) This passage exemplifies the quality of antagonism and violence rife throughout “Wonderland”. Characters get kicked and punched and thrown about for no apparent reason. The threat of execution pervades Wonderland. *“The queen had only one way of settling all difficulties, great or small. ‘[O]ff with his head!’ she said without even looking around”* (p. 75). At one point during a croquet game, all of the players and many of those posing as sport equipment are under arrest and sentenced to death. What the reader finds out eventually, is that no one is ever executed. However, this knowledge seems to have no impact on the citizens of Wonderland who scurry around terrorized by the empty threat. This brings us to the last aspect that I will touch on, and that is the way in which Alice’s thinking is disrupted.

The series of situations Alice experiences have a fragmented quality. The encounters that Alice stumbles into don't coalesce into a meaningful plot—she can't say what she is doing there or where she is trying to go, instead she experiences sequences of dissociated states. One reason for this is that meaning is not stable. One could argue that the slippage of meaning is what is being pondered in the narrative. In Wonderland, language is not used to communicate, instead it confounds. There are riddles with no answers, games with no rules, and tea parties where madness is what is served. As one character utters: *"If there's no meaning in it that saves a world of trouble, you know, as we needn't try to find any."* Even Alice's attempts to make sense of things is assaulted. *"I've a right to think"* said Alice sharply, for she was beginning to feel a little worried. To which the Duchess replies, *"Just about as much right as pigs have to fly"* (P.81).

Another characteristic conversation goes like this: *'flamingoes and mustard both bite. And the moral of that is—birds of a feather flock together'*. Alice responds by saying that she thinks mustard is a mineral *"Of course it is"* said the Duchess, who seemed ready to agree to everything Alice said: *'there's a large mustard mine near here. And the moral of that is—"the more there is of mine, the less there is of yours."* (p.80).

The collapse of the symbolic space in Alice's experience is further exemplified in the final scene in "Wonderland". In this scene we find that the Knave of hearts is on trial for stealing tarts. This is a reference to a popular nursery rhyme, a generally playful medium, but in Wonderland, the rhyme is interpreted concretely resulting in a

crime and the threat of punishment. The collapse of metaphor is illustrated at another point in a characteristic uttering: *“he’s murdering time! Off with his head!”*

The final scene is where we find out the reason for the frantic racing about of the white rabbit; he is acting as the court officer—scroll and trumpet ready to make proclamations and give some semblance of order to the court, to little effect, however. For, before the trial can get underway, chaos ensues. The jurors forget their names, and begin to write down exactly what Alice says, and then whatever is said regardless of the relevance. As the Mad Hatter takes the stand he is asked to remove his hat, to which he replies that it isn’t his.

“Stolen!” the king exclaimed, turning to the jury... ”
“I keep them to sell,” the Hatter added as an explanation. I’ve none of
my own, I’m a Hatter”...
“Give your evidence,” said the king; “and don’t be nervous, or I’ll have
you executed on the spot”... (p.99)

In Wonderland, possibilities, or Bruner’s subjunctive experience, lead to confusion at best and malevolence at worst. Instead of opening up a space where symbolic play can take place, the fantasy space of Wonderland collapses meaning. Metaphor can only be understood concretely and multiple meanings lead to fragmentation and confusion. Winnicott writes that confusion can be an organized defense: *“A degree of confusion is unconsciously maintained in order to hide a very simple fact: triumph of bad over good, hate over love, aggression over capacity for preservation, etc”* (1956, p. 30). Hopelessness is hidden by confusion.

The absurd proceedings of the trial are interrupted by Alice’s sudden and mysteriously caused growth spurt. This gets at the heart of the disrupted play space in Wonderland, and that is that development is derailed. At various points in her

adventures Alice's growth is perceived as transgressive, and she exclaims "*there's no room to grow up any more here.*" In the final scene, Alice is told "*You've no right to grow here*" (p.100), capturing the way in which dissociative experience inhibits and prohibits maturation. Things are kept apart because to bring them together results in frightening and overwhelming meaning, and the split off aspects of experience cannot be integrated and thus modulate the overwhelming experience as long as they are kept split off. "Environmental failure," Winnicott writes "means that the unintegrated self falls forever, and the affect belonging to this is anxiety of psychotic intensity" (p1956, p32).

For Alice there is no neutral territory between subjective and shared reality. Goldman states that if a child cannot make use of transitional phenomena to link and provide a 'neutral territory', then the only alternative is a dissociative split, with one half related to a subjective world, and the other reacting compliantly to a world which impinges upon the child—unable to operate as a total human being. The subjective world—although it can be ideal—has the disadvantage of also being cruel and persecutory.

"One thing that follows the acceptance of external reality is the advantage to be gained from it. We often hear of the very real frustrations imposed by external reality, but less often hear of the relief and satisfaction it affords. Real milk is satisfying as compared with imaginary milk, but this is not the point. The point is that in fantasy things work by magic: there are no brakes on fantasy, and love and hate cause alarming effects. External reality has brakes on it, and can be studied and known, and, in fact, fantasy is only tolerable at full blast when objective reality is appreciated well. The subjective has tremendous value but is so alarming and magical that it cannot be enjoyed except as a parallel to the objective" (Winnicott, p.153).

Alice leaves her adventures by waking from a dream, the same dream that her sister had had, with no elaboration. And while she *exclaims* “*what a wonderful dream it had been,*” she knew she would wake to “*dull reality*” (p.112). In other terms, her adventures did not have the effect of enlivening her experience in the “real world,” nor could she enjoy Wonderland as her own creation, because her sister had the very same dream. Thus, Alice’s attempts to enliven herself end up in a collapse of meaning and boundaries.

The Tollbooth and the Play of Meaning

While the children of The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, utilize their magical landscape to master separation anxieties, and Alice in Alice in Wonderland attempts to enliven her internal world and find connection in Wonderland, Milo of The Phantom Tollbooth has a case of the doldrums. Milo suffers from a loss of meaning. “*‘It seems to me that almost everything is a waste of time’, he remarked one day as he walked dejectedly home from school... ’*” (p.9) “*... ‘And worst of all...there’s nothing for me to do, nowhere I’d care to go, and hardly anything worth seeing’*” (p.11).

The story begins on a typical afternoon, Milo looks around his room and is uninspired by what he sees there, the doldrums hang in the air. While the reader never learns what precipitates Milo’s case of the doldrums, the imaginary space is used to restore Milo’s enthusiasm for life and learning, or what becomes in the kingdom of The Land Beyond, the return of Rhyme and Reason.

Milo's transition into his magical landscape begins when he notices "*something he had certainly never seen before*," a surprise gift from an anonymous person. The paradoxical nature of Milo's potential space, the way in which meaning will be played with throughout his adventure, is hinted at in his initial awareness of this strange package, a package "*larger than almost any other big package of smaller dimension that he'd ever seen*" (p.11).

It is of interest that Milo assembles the tollbooth himself, in this way, Milo is instrumental in creating his transition from one state to another, that is, creating what was there to be found. Initially, he is skeptical when pondering the imaginary space "*I don't think there really is such a country*," and then, "*Well, it doesn't matter anyway*," as he chooses his destination randomly. "*Oh, well, I might as well go there as anywhere*." "*I do hope this is an interesting game, otherwise the afternoon will be so terribly dull*." He then drives his toy car through the tollbooth, paying his fare.

"What had started as make-believe was now very real. 'What a strange thing to have happen... this game is much more serious than I thought, for here I am riding on a road I've never seen, going to a place I've never heard of, and all because of a tollbooth which came from nowhere. I'm certainly glad that it's a nice day for a trip' he concluded hopefully, for, at the moment, this was the one thing he definitely knew." (p.16).

Even at this early point we see the beginning of hope. Hope is the ability to look forward to, and to trust in change and possibilities—it is an opening.

The transit metaphor in The Phantom Tollbooth captures three important capacities in development: the ability to reflect on the contents of one's own mind, that is, mentalization; the development of the "true self"; and the ability to make use

of the environment and the other people in the environment. In short, the imaginary space in the tollbooth demonstrates and facilitates the ability to *play*.

Mentalization

Milo is given a map of the Lands Beyond, and with it he can begin to navigate the imaginary space. Along with the map, Milo is given the tollbooth, which he must assemble; coins for tolls; “one (1) book of rules and traffic regulations, which may not be bent or broken”; and “Three (3) precautionary signs to be used in a precautionary fashion.” These three signs read:

“SLOW DOWN APPROACHING TOLLBOOTH
PLEASE HAVE YOUR FARE READY
HAVE YOUR DESTINATION IN MIND”

Signs are provided, that is, signals are given to let Milo know that a transition is imminent, one that involves a transaction in which his imagination—*have your destination in mind*—will figure prominently.

One way to think about this beginning, and the resulting quality of Milo’s adventure, is Fonagy’s idea of mentalization. This idea, an integration of Winnicott’s and Bion’s ideas of containment and metabolization, is that one is not only *in* and *is* their state, the state is given back by the other, but *with a difference*. Thus, the alteration allows the child to reflect upon their state. Utilizing Bion’s (1962) concept of containment, Fonagy suggests that secure attachment is the direct outcome of successful containment, that is, the parent’s capacity to both reflect the infant’s internal state, as well as represent that state for the infant as a manageable image.

Fonagy and Target (1991) suggest that the flexible regulation of affect may be tied to a meta-cognitive process they term “reflective self-function,” which refers to the ability to represent the mental states of oneself and others.

So off Milo goes. He moves through the tollbooth, and suddenly he is speeding down a highway and “*neither the tollbooth nor his room nor even the house was anywhere in sight*” (p.16). Milo’s first stop foreshadows that his journey, and ours by extension, is concerned with the mind. He finds himself in a particular mental state, that of ‘Expectations’, that is, what are we looking for in, and from, the world, and what the world is looking for in us. As Milo is told, “*Expectations is the place you must always go before you get to where you’re going. Of course, some people never go beyond Expectations*” (p.19).

In Expectations, Milo meets the Whether man. The play on many levels is alluded to in the appearance of this foreshadower of climate. Milo asks the Whether man if he is on the right road for Dictionopolis, to which the Whether man replies:

“*Well now, well now, well now, I don’t know of any wrong road to Dictionopolis, so if this road goes to Dictionopolis at all it must be the right road, and if it doesn’t, it must be the right road to somewhere else, because there are no wrong roads to anywhere. Do you think it will rain?*”

“*I thought you were the Whether man*” said Milo very confused.

“*Oh no,*” said the little man, “*I’m the Whether Man, not the Weather Man*”

“*Whether or not you find your way, you’re bound to find some way. If you happen to find my way, please return it, as it was lost years ago. I imagine by now it’s quite rusty*” (p. 20).

While there is some similarity to Alice in the manner in which meaning is played with in “The Tollbooth,” there is not a complete collapse of order and meaning within the narrative as so often happens in Wonderland. While, the play on

‘weather’ and ‘whether’ is whimsical and at first unexpected (for those who can’t yet read), the meaning of ‘whether’ remains consistent, as does the meaning of ‘weather’. Further, the idea of a concept, “my way,” as an object is played with, *I imagine by now it’s quite rusty*. The quality is one of playfulness instead of confusion.

This doesn’t mean that strange or absurd things don’t happen. They do. And There are many instances in which Milo doesn’t figure out the way of things in a timely enough manner to suit him, but the events are ultimately comprehensible to Milo and to the reader—we can ultimately figure out the underlying meaning of even absurd events and interactions. The world, even the strange world of The Lands Beyond, is comprehensible. For example, at a banquet the King of Dictionopolis asks Milo to give a speech, and much to his chagrin, “the square meal” and “the light meal” that he orders are quite unsatisfactory, even if interesting. What he learns and the rest of the citizens of Dictionopolis know, is that each will have to eat their words. So their speeches consist of “*Roast turkey, mashed potatoes, vanilla ice cream*” or “*hamburgers, corn on the cob, chocolate pudding*” or “*Pate de foie gras, soupe ‘a l’ongnon, faisan sous cloche, salade endive, fromages et fruits et demi-tasse.*” Another example is when he must learn in Digitopolis that “subtraction stew” leaves you hungrier than you started. The ways in which meaning can be confused and tweaked when one is too literal, or too concrete are played with, instead of having the distressing and persecutory outcomes in Wonderland, meaning is played with throughout—both how it is confounded *and* used.

In fact, Milo’s adventure begins to center around the return of the banished princesses Rhyme and Reason. What Milo learns is that two brothers, one who

represents words and one who represents numbers have been at odds and through their conflict they have banished the Princesses. Since this banishment, things have been amiss in the Kingdom of Wisdom. One way to think about this is that the struggle in the imaginary space is for Milo to integrate two kinds of knowledge to return wholeness and meaning to himself and the citizens of Wisdom.

Between Expectations and the Return of Rhyme and Reason, Milo must confront The Doldrums.

The Doldrums

As Milo continues, he drives down a peaceful highway and starts to day dream, paying less and less attention to where he is going, he misses a sign, and ends up in the Doldrums.

“The sky became quite gray and, along with it, the whole countryside seemed to lose its color and assume the same monotonous tone. Everything was quiet, and even the air hung heavily. The birds sang only gray songs and the road wound back and forth in an endless series of climbing curves.

Mile after

Mile after

Mile after

Mile he drove, and now gradually the car went slower and slower, until it was hardly moving at all.

“It looks as though I’m getting nowhere,” yawned Milo, becoming very drowsy and dull.” (p.22).

Milo is stuck. *“The Doldrums, my young friend,”* one of the characters tells him, *“are where nothing ever happens and nothing ever changes. No thinking. No laughing.”* *“Well what can you do?”* Milo inquires, *“Anything as long as it’s nothing, and everything as long as it isn’t anything.” (p.26).* What we as readers

know, is that Milo was *already* in the Doldrums, beginning his adventure only names and elaborates his state for us.

Goldman states that the doldrums are a specifically “adolescent feeling of futility because the adolescent is not yet able to accept compromise.” He states that the adolescent suffers from what he terms fierce morality, the imperative of which is ‘to thine own self be true’. The doldrums are a result of the crisis of not yet having a self to be true to. “An adolescent who avoids compromise—especially the use of identification” Goldman states, “must start from scratch, ignoring all that has been worked out through the history of culture. They struggle to start again *as if they had nothing they could take over* from anyone. They feel unreal except in so far as they are refusing false solutions.” (Goldman, personal communication, 2004). While the doldrums may be the adolescents attempt to feel real, in The Phantom Tollbooth it resembles the play space of Wonderland in the way in which there is a constriction of creative activity and thought.

The Lethargians, the citizens of the Doldrums, tell Milo of their very busy, and very structured schedule that includes daydreaming, naps, dawdle and delay, linger and loiter, putting off tomorrow what could have been done today, loaf and lounge, dillydallying, and wasting time. The fierce morality that Goldman refers to may be represented by the contrast between the Lethargians and the Watchdog Tock, whom the Lethargians are terrified of, and who patrols the Doldrums to make sure no one wastes time. Tock says “*You must excuse my gruff conduct... but you see it’s traditional for watchdogs to be ferocious...*” It is Tock who helps Milo leave the

Doldrums by advising him to think. He also becomes the first of Milo's companions in *The Lands Beyond*.

Object Usage

Like *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, not all characters that Milo meets in the imaginary space are benign, but there *are* those who are friendly and allied with Milo and help him manage the bad characters. And notably, his helpers are not unequivocally good. Once Milo and Tock are off again, their first stop is Dictionopolis, a kingdom where the meaning and the power of words are played with throughout. The “thingness” of words is explored, along with multiple meanings. In the market place, words and letters are bought and sold. Milo meets the Spelling Bee and is being advised about the importance of education. Their acquaintance is interrupted by the booming voice of the Humbug whose characteristic responses are “BALDERDASH!,” “NONSENSE!,” and “BOSH!” He negates whatever is going on around him: “BAH! ... *As soon as you learn to spell one word, they ask you to spell another. You can never catch up—so why bother? Take my advice, my boy, and forget about it.*” (p.54). Throughout the Humbug is a negating presence that resembles Goldman's feeling real through refusal to take on the values and roles of the authorities. Interestingly, the Humbug accompanies Milo on the rest of his adventures.

Winnicott makes a distinction between object-relating and object usage as different points on the developmental continuum. In object usage the other is placed outside the area of subjective phenomena, the other is “real,” that is has qualities and

subjectivity of its own. This capacity results in the person's ability to use those around them, not exploitatively, but in order to bring something "other-than-me" into the person's experience. *"In this way a world of shared reality is created which the subject can use and which can feedback other-than-me substance into the subject"* (p.94).

In order for this capacity to develop one depends on a facilitating environment, wherein the subject destroys the object in fantasy and finds that the object survives, is there and has always been there. Surviving requires that those around the person do not retaliate for this destructiveness.

The gift of the tollbooth is the first manifestation of Milo's facilitating environment—he doesn't ponder *who* left the tollbooth for him, but just that it is there. Additionally, he is given what he needs both to get to The Lands Beyond, and to move through the space. Through many trials and tribulations Milo returns Rhyme and Reason to the Kingdom of Wisdom. Milo remembers home after the celebrations of the princesses' return. And he returns to his everyday reality altered by his journey into the imaginary. When he arrives home, at first he is disappointed that the tollbooth is gone and there is a letter stating there are many more lands to explore but *"we're quite sure that if you really want to, you'll find a way to reach them all by your self"* (p.255). Milo at first feels sad and lonely and thinks about everyone he met on his journey.

"And yet, even as he thought of all these things, he noticed somehow that the sky was a lovely shade of blue and that one cloud had the shape of a sailing ship ... Outside the window, there was so much to see, and hear, and touch—walks to take, hills to climb, caterpillars to watch as they strolled through the garden. There were voices to hear and conversations to listen to in wonder, and the special smell of each

day. And in the very room in which he sat, there were books that could take you anywhere, and things to invent, and make and build, and break and all the puzzle and excitement of everything he didn't know—music to play, songs to sing, and worlds to imagine and then someday make real.” (p. 256).

Milo mourns the loss of his friends and his experience, but he has been enlivened and he realizes that play space is within him—his world has been infused with magical feeling. This phenomenon is elegantly captured in Richard Wilbur's poem “At Moorditch”:

*“Now,” said the voice of lock and window-bar,
“You must confront things as they truly are.
Open your eyes at last, and see
The desolateness of reality.”*

*“Things have,” I said, “a pallid, empty look,
Like pictures in an unused coloring book.”*

*“Now that the scales have fallen from your eyes,”
Said the sad hallways, “you must recognize
How childishly your former sight
Salted the world with glory and delight.”*

*“This cannot be the world,” I said. “Nor will it,
Till the heart's crayon spangle and fulfill it.”*

Conclusion

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, like *Alice in Wonderland*, entry into the imaginary is unexpected, but the landscape changes from the real to the imaginary in a relatively gentle and curious way, it is precipitated by a game of hide and seek. The character's siblings accompany them in this narrative, so that, while they experience separations, the imaginary is shared. In Narnia, the narrative landscape holds many dangers, but the children are royalty in their imaginary world—creators

instrumental in the happenings. While meanings are transformed in this landscape, such meaning can be accessed, unlike the confusional world of Alice.

Alice's transition is sudden, disorienting and fragmenting. She tries to keep pace with a frantic rabbit, and must manage startling and radical changes in herself throughout. Her journey is concerned with the slippage of meaning.

In the *Phantom Tollbooth*, Milo like Alice, is also suffering from boredom; both are craving aliveness. In contrast to Alice, Milo finds entry into the imaginary within his own private space—his room, but his room with an alteration, some one else has been present and left him a gift. An “other” has left him a package that contains the tollbooth, his vehicle and the toll: the other is implicit in his adventure. He drives through the tollbooth, paying his fare, entering into the imaginary through play, and with intention and a sense of agency, precipitated by the gift of the other. While he happens upon strange and treacherous characters and situations, he finds accompaniments from within the imaginary space who help him understand and make use of his adventure. The companions in Alice's adventure are obstacles and befuddlers of meaning, the most friendly of her acquaintances is the disturbing and ghost-like Cheshire cat—resembling her beloved cat Dinah, but has none of the comforting qualities.

In examining these stories I have attempted to show how the emotional coloring of an experience in imaginary space can be communicated through examining the transit metaphors. Transit metaphors can be thought of as a way in which a patient and therapist can “live an experience together”. Ogden argues that this way of

describing the sharing of experience transformed psychoanalysis because it changes the emphasis on what is fundamental in human experience:

“No longer will desiring and regulating desire (Freud), loving, hating, and making reparations (Klein), or object seeking and object relating (Fairburn) constitute what is of greatest importance in the development of the psyche-soma from its beginnings and continuing throughout life. Instead, what Winnicott starts to lay out here for the first time is the idea that the central organizing thread of psychological development, from its inception, is the experience of being alive and the consequences of disruptions to that continuity of being.” (Ogden, p.8).

In each of the three stories, the characters’ manner of entering into the imaginary space holds important qualities that pertain to the kind of experience that the character has within that landscape. In the next chapter I will present clinical material that represents the fourth imaginal world that I will explore, from which the affective links between reality and fantasy will be explicated in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 4: Clinical Material

“...the real beginnings of images, if we study them phenomenologically, will give concrete evidence of the values of inhabited space, of the non-I that protects the I...all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home.”

-Gaston Bachelard

The following clinical material represents the fourth imaginal world that I will use to explicate ideas about the linking function of transit metaphors. It is derived from 6 ½ years of treatment with a young woman, Mila, who had particular problematic transitional experience, and, as a result particular affect-regulatory difficulties. It was in this work with Mila by which my own affect-regulation difficulties emerged for reflection. Specifically, it was through work with certain metaphors that emerged within the treatment that, I believe, important qualities of transitional experience were accessed and allowed for the development of potential space.

In this chapter, I will focus on presenting the case material that will be discussed in the final chapter in light of the theoretical perspectives introduced in the literature review, and the three stories in the previous section.

Mila came into her first session and stood in front of her chair—even after I sat down, she remained standing. She accusingly asked why she had the “lower chair”. She then asked if we could move the chairs closer, which we did. She then began to tell me that she’d started having panic attacks after her mother was hospitalized for diabetes. Her mother is a rapid-cycling manic-depressive and has been hospitalized

several times from the time Mila was 5-years-old. “It got so bad that I’d leave her in the morning and she’d be manic, and by the time I got home, she was suicidal. I didn’t know whether I could leave her.” While Mila was referring to her day-to-day experience with her mother, it became clear that her difficulty separating from her mother was an area of profound conflict complicated by developmental difficulties that occurred earlier in their relationship.

Mila was 25-years-old and she had always lived with her mother, and was responsible for caring for her mother financially and emotionally. She described her relationship with her mother as close, but “sometimes, too much”. Mila’s relationship with her mother was virtually all-encompassing. She managed enough separation to go to school, but she would call several times during the day to see how her mother was, and she was plagued with anxiety and guilt if she was gone too long. At the beginning of treatment this came up when Mila had scheduling constraints because she felt anxious about not being home for dinner with her mother. Mila took responsibility for waking her mother. She said that this implicit agreement began in high school because her mother would stay in bed all day if Mila didn’t wake her.

Mila’s parents were divorced when she was 12-years-old. The catalyst of the divorce was her father’s psychotic episode while he was away on a business trip. While psychotic, Mila remembers him telling her that he was going to have a new wife and family; he subsequently left the family. However, not before a very volatile eight months in which he and Mila’s mother waged an emotional and verbal war, to which Mila was a tormented witness.

Mila describes often being privy to too much of her parent's relationship—seeing and knowing too much. She had many memories of her mother being taken to the hospital kicking and screaming, and in the earliest incident, Mila had to wait in the police station for her father to pick her up hours later. Mila's mother shared information and thoughts with her that were overwhelming to the young girl—from her affair with a divorce lawyer, to every anxiety and hypochondriacal thought that occurred to her. Mila lived in a chronic state of fear of losing her mother to illness, suicide, or social service intervention.

Mila's father soon stabilized and saw her regularly, but for Mila his episode and departure signaled the departure of hope for her. She told of staring out the window after she'd been told of his "cracking up" and thinking that she was doomed. This sense of doom persisted for Mila. With her father's illness, she felt her last chance at a life was extinguished.

While this was her father's only hospitalization and he was maintained on medication and treatment, Mila described her father as having angry outbursts in public about trivial matters. During these times, she found that the only way to make him stop was to have her own tantrums, which left Mila feeling humiliated and freakish.

At the time of the divorce, Mila's mother would tell her that Mila would marry her father. And given that Mila was entering puberty and the beginning of adult sexuality, these statements left Mila feeling confused, guilty and disgusted. The already volatile home environment took such a turn that Mila, in a sense, opted out of adolescence. She couldn't allow herself to feel any anger towards her mother because

she worried that she would destroy her, or that her mother might feel so rejected that she would hurt herself. Because of the symbiotic nature of their relationship, these were not simply fantasies. When she entertained ideas of going away for college, Mila's mother threatened to give her cat away; when she left for the day with her father, she would come home to find her mother in a suicidal depression, gesturing as if she were cutting her throat. She told Mila that this gesture made her feel better, but for Mila, it felt like a threat and a reminder of what her mother might do to herself if Mila moved too much into her own life. So Mila went from being a little girl who was often forgotten in the confusion, to the primary caretaker for her mother. At some forgotten point, Mila took over financial responsibility for her mother, but how exactly this happened was hazy. The seamless quality of this change in Mila's recollection was remarkable, it was as if that was how it always had been, and should, and would, be. While she was doing fine in her graduate program—she'd always done well academically in the structured environment of school—she hadn't made any friends in her program. She felt suspicious and envious of others who seemed to have satisfying and full lives effortlessly. When she did make a friend, she was hypersensitive to rebuff, and often the relationship would end with Mila angrily demanding closeness or contact, and the other person disappearing without word, or in a rejection that felt humiliating to her. Mila did have a best friend from the time she was 13-years-old, but described feeling somewhat estranged from her since the friend's marriage. She characteristically felt left behind and devalued when anyone she knew married, as well as feeling intolerable envy. She had never had a romantic relationship, never dated, and had never kissed anyone. She described having

unrequited crushes that would end in Mila feeling humiliated in one way or another. Mila's stated goal in coming to treatment was to "get a relationship," at which point she felt she would be "cured".

Given Mila's difficulty with relationships, beginning treatment for her, and with her, was fraught. She worried that she would find out that she was mentally ill and this feeling intensified whenever becoming more involved was the issue at hand. Her equilibrium was quite brittle and would feel exposed and furious if someone in the clinic took what she felt was a "superior tone" or if they asked her name, or if for some reason the waiting room wasn't open. She was often worried and defensive that I was judging her, feeling sorry for her, or critical of her mother. At the beginning of treatment she was often hostile and condescending toward me.

Mila had been in three previous treatments, the first was a cognitive-behavioral therapy in which she derided interventions such as "imagine a safe place"—her contempt was understandable when one considers that the problem was that *she couldn't imagine such a place*. Another treatment ended when the social worker suggested that Mila put her mother in a group home. Mila did, however, like one of her therapists, but was forced to leave when her father refused to pay what he felt was an exorbitant fee. So when she began treatment with me, initially a 16-session brief psychotherapy, Mila was skeptical and wondered if she would "have to use all 16-sessions." The treatment went from brief to open-ended after the 16 sessions and to twice-a-week after the first year.

I. COLLAPSE OF THE PLAY SPACE

Mila had the appearance of both a little girl and an old woman—her young adulthood had somehow collapsed between these two aspects of herself. The sense of collapsed psychic space was very prominent during the beginning phase of treatment with Mila. During the second session, she began to tell me of a scene leading up to her mother's first hospitalization. Five-year-old Mila and her mother were standing at a bus stop when her mother started taking her clothes off. Mila remembers that her mother stripped and was yelling for a certain man—not her father—who she thought would be passing in a bus. At some point in telling this story, Mila interrupted herself and began accusingly asking “what is that look on your face?” When queried Mila responds with worries that I am “feeling sorry for her” or “pitying her”. My experience was one of deep feeling for 5-year-old Mila, but “the look on [my] face” was experienced by her as an impingement. My gaze was experienced by Mila as persecutory, flooding, and disruptive. At the end of this early session, Mila reports that her mother was “going to ask me about it and I have to tell her.” During this early phase, I often had the experience of “no room in the room”—no room for me to take in and experience what she was telling me without being felt by her as disruptive or transgressive. This experience reflected, I believe, the lack of subjective space between Mila and her mother. Moments of connection felt instant, total, and terrifying to her—and felt to me constraining. There was no room for us to have a separate and yet shared experience. For Mila, joining or attuning with or to another was both desired and dreaded. She craved closeness, but it was an experience that

was fraught with fear and impending doom or overwhelming desire; to join with another signaled a loss of boundaries, and was evocative of losing one's mind.

Winnicott writes, "psychotherapy has to do with two people playing together, and when this is not possible the task becomes bringing the patient from a state of not being able to play into one in which they are" (p.38). This beginning was marked with my sense that there needed to be a way to play. As a girl, Mila had had to grow up too fast, in her experience the imaginary was terrifying and signaled catastrophe, play and excitement were the harbingers of mental breakdown.

The beginning of work with Mila involved grappling with the experience of having no space to observe and respond to Mila's material—no place in which to play with thoughts and feelings. She once told of an incident when she first started school in which the children were playing a game of duck-duck-goose. She described her horror at the idea of someone singling her out and chasing her. As a result, she refused to get up when chosen, and ended up being punished and made to sit on the side. For Mila, she couldn't play at the idea of being chased, nor was the experience of being identified as a goose in a group of ducks in any way fun, instead it was the fulfillment of Mila's fear that there was something essentially different and wrong about her.

For a time she was placed in a special education class because Mila's difficulties with the social aspect of the school environment were mistaken for an intellectual deficit. The precipitating incident involved her teacher asking for the children to put their pencils down and Mila refused because "I wasn't sure she was going to give it back." While the special education placement was soon remedied,

and in fact she was place with the advanced students from that point on, it does speak to the degree that Mila's capacity to relate was compromised early on.

Mila describes her relationships with her peers as either persecutory or humiliating. She describes being terrorized by a neighbor girl and others, which she attributed to her "smallness". She often was defensive about other people mistaking her for younger than she was, which she also attributed to being "small," but she also took a certain pride in looking much younger. She spoke of other girls who tried to help her fit in, but she describes them as well meaning do-gooders who made her feel "pathetic". She told me how in grade school her hair was tangled in the back, and so Mila attempted to manage it by combing the top layer to hide the tangles. At some point someone told her about hair conditioner, and Mila was amazed that it was so easy to fix. This represented both her sense of trying to hide the limitations of her mother, and by extension, something wrong with her, and also that other people were privy to something that she didn't have access to. It also represents some part of her that could accept, and make use of the help from these well-meaning "do-gooders".

In another well-meaning, but ultimately misfired attempt to address Mila's social difficulties and worry that she didn't have friends, her mother insisted that she collect all the phone numbers of the children in her class. While Mila talks about the process of asking other children for their phone number as a humiliating experience of which nothing came, she also remarked that she held onto this phone list for many years.

In treatment, when Mila's awareness of her anger toward her mother emerged she was very disturbed by it. She worried that wanting to kill her mother, would kill her mother.

Each of these examples illustrates a collapse of symbolic space in Mila's development. Instead of something standing in for something else, a thing *is* the thing. A game involving being chased *is actually being chased*. Being the odd one who will be pursued and compete for a space in the circle is not the premise of a game, it is a concrete experience; having a list of children from her class is equivalent to having friends; thinking about killing someone *is to kill them*.

The presence of psychic equivalence can be found throughout Mila's material, whether it was worrying that wishing her mother dead would kill her mother, or that being in treatment long-term, like her parents, meant that she *was* her mentally ill parents. Talking and thinking about things could make them happen. Similarity couldn't be sustained without collapsing into sameness.

An important aspect of this collapse is in Mila's, at first unconscious, belief that she caused her mother to "crack up". At times she expressed this in the transference when she expressed concerns about "overwhelming me with her trauma" or her need.

From the beginning of treatment Mila often said that she felt "doomed". If she *was* her mother, then her future was foreclosed. She felt certain that she was doomed to be ill which she attributed to genetics. Similarly, she felt that she was doomed to be alone, "*who would take this on?*" she would say by way of explanation, meaning the overwhelming nature of her relationship with her mother and the sequelae of constant anxiety and responsibility.

Similarly, Mila often expressed tremendous anxiety about future catastrophic events, especially that she would “crack up”. This expresses the affective impact of a collapse of psychic space. Any number of associations or incidents could evoke overwhelming anxiety that then left Mila feeling confused and “crazy,” or bracing herself for some terrible future event. Winnicott writes in “Fear of a Breakdown,” that certain patients who fear breakdown are expressing not something that will happen, as much as expressing an unsymbolized experience that has *already happened*. This idea resonated for me with Mila and helped me organize my thinking in this regard. Subsequently, interpretations of this nature then helped Mila begin to identify and contain her anxiety.

Mila’s language was correspondingly condensed. While she spoke with impeccable grammatical accuracy,—and in fact, would correct her therapists’ grammar—phrases were embedded in phrases, within parenthetical statements, embedded in elliptical phrases. It was in the struggle to capture Mila’s language in supervision that the affect-regulatory issues became palpable. While the connection between symbolization and affect was explored theoretically in the literature review, now I would like to turn to the experience in the treatment of these issues.

II. AFFECT REGULATION

It would seem that with someone coming to treatment for panic attacks, and a history of two mood-disordered parents, that affect-regulation would be an obvious focus of the treatment. However, I learned this from the inside out. Perhaps because I was a novice therapist, and unaware of my own affect-regulation difficulties, it took

the emergence of particularly intense difficulties in my own symbolizing function, that of writing process notes, for me to get at the importance of affect-regulation in working with Mila. Writing the notes was indicative of something within the treatment about struggling to articulate experience that had been condensed, and thus, was overwhelming.

During sessions Mila's anxious verbalization felt overwhelming, and correspondingly, during supervision I would feel tremendous anxiety trying to relate the session process verbatim. While writing process notes is an exercise that I find challenging generally, it was particularly so with Mila. It was a great relief when a supervisor pointed out that perhaps the most important part of what was happening might not be verbal. At this point, I felt freer to concentrate on the nonverbal aspects of treatment and observe ways that Mila was using me as a regulating object. I found that it helped Mila to "downshift" in session for me to just be with her in those moments, and take in, in whatever way was possible, what, and at times only that, she was anxiously verbalizing. I started to reflect her state back to her, instead of trying to get a handle on the specific material. It helped to notice when she was self-soothing to signal when she was feeling particularly anxious, or when I may have not been doing enough to help her manage her anxiety.

As we moved from brief therapy to open-ended treatment, I noticed that Mila would begin her sessions before we entered the therapy room. This both reflected her struggle with boundaries and her attempts to transition into the room, which represented a state change that felt frightening to her. At this point I started to read children's literature: all of the Narnia chronicles, *The Phantom Tollbooth*, and then

Alice in Wonderland. There was something soothing about reading these works. I began thinking about entry into the imaginary space in these stories—each had a device for entering: the wardrobe, the tollbooth, and the rabbit hole. I started to think about the different implications that each entry had on the quality of transitional space—the quality of the imaginary space.

Mila often remarked that she didn't drink or experiment with drugs because the idea of "altering her mind" was terrifying and not at all intriguing, like for some of her peers. Talking about what was on her mind at times seemed to her as if I was infecting her with an anxious or sad state, or "taking away" her good state. Correspondingly, she reported that her mother attributed any change in Mila to her therapist "working through her". It took great effort for Mila to gradually feel okay not sharing her session with her mother. Mila often had the experience, and gradually articulated the feeling that she must take on her mother's affective state: "She gives me her feelings and I'm supposed to make her feel better."

As our relationship was deepening, on the way into the room she would walk close to me, as if to tuck herself under my arm, often commenting on my clothing. I came to view this pre-session activity as a kind of caressive activity, very much like the infants' exploration of the mother's face and body.

As mentioned in the previous section, gaze was a particularly fraught aspect of treatment. At times, Mila would feel my gaze to be an impingement. She began to attempt to regulate this by taking off and putting on her glasses. Sometimes when she was particularly upset and had to remove her glasses, she would comment that she couldn't see my face and she would put on and take off her glasses in way that began

to suggest modulating the contact between us. *“I want to take my glasses off and cry the whole time. But I can’t see a thing—can’t see your face.”*

At a certain point, I started having fantasies of changing her eyewear to a more flattering style; I thought her old frames dwarfed her small features. As the treatment progressed she considered buying new glasses. I understood my fantasy as a way in which I held for her, her own desire to grow up, to enter the world, particularly the world of sex and dating. At first, she couldn’t hold these desires because they were dangerous and overwhelming. During one session she asked me, “have you ever seen through these glasses?,” and she took them off and handed them to me. I took the glasses put them on briefly and then removed them and handed them back to her. I understood this exchange as an interaction that communicated her need to see herself in me, as a way of playing with difference and similarity—and emergent play on seeing and being seen.

Near this point in treatment, shortly after we went from a short term treatment to open-ended therapy she first mentioned her interest in Kate Chopin’s novel “Awakening” in reference to her desire to have a sexual relationship. While she reported having sexual fantasies, which she felt too embarrassed to explicitly talk about, she had never had any sexual contact. Through exploration we came to understand that for Mila, sex was associated with her mother going crazy, and her mother’s accusations that she would marry her father—not only would boundaries dissolve, but she might lose their mind. Sometimes her formulation went something like, she would be punished for having sex by going crazy.

Through the transference it became clear that Mila and her mother communicated through distress. One way that each could feel their impact on the other, was to join together in distress. In the beginning phases, my reaction was to feel distress, and then later I felt my anger at what I felt was an attempt to control me through eliciting distress in me.

After a year of treatment, and as our relationship developed, it became clear that the anxiety was not being contained in the treatment. At this point, during the sessions I felt flooded, and was often late. Mila was calling outside of our session times in moments that felt like emergencies to her, but in the end seemed to be attempts to touch base. At this point, we agreed to increase the session frequency to twice-a-week. Some of her fantasies about the deepened involvement were that this meant that she was crazy, that other people, or that I might think she was crazy, or conversely, that it would make her crazy. The increase in frequency helped to contain in the session the anxiety stirred up, and it also helped her to get to some of her more angry feelings. These feelings manifested in fantasies that I was taking over her life, like her mother did, that we would both be overcome by her increased dependence, and that she was doing something transgressive by getting more involved with someone who wasn't her mother. She often expressed feeling guilty that she was seeing me more than her mother, and that there was something disloyal in this, for which she would be punished.

An important aspect of affect-regulation in work with Mila was in metabolizing her rageful feelings. Initially, her anger came out in thinly veiled hostility that manifested as devaluing the therapy and clinic, criticizing other people who worked

in the clinic, or expressing her distaste for my clothing. But as the work progressed, she became more aware of her anger towards her parents. The anger, while disturbing to Mila because of what she saw as the destructive potential of such feelings, signaled the emergence of strivings to separate.

III. SEPARATION AND INDIVIDUATION

Her mother's multiple hospitalizations left Mila feeling that her attachment to her mother was tenuous and could be easily disrupted, which made separating fraught and seemingly dangerous. As Mila got in touch with her own desires to have more independence, she and her mother began to have frequent fights. Mila characterized these fights as a kind of delayed "adolescent rebellion" that she had never felt safe enough to have in the past. One of the earlier manifestations of this desire to have more autonomy was in getting her own phone line. At first this seemed to Mila as an egregious transgression, but eventually she was successful in having it installed, and her sense of entitlement increased, and her sense of guilt for wanting her own life began to diminish. Gradually, she was able to make other moves to have more of her own life. Another aspect of this beginning phase of separation was played out around Mila's aging cat. Mila had her cat since her father left, and by the time she came to treatment the cat was quite old and ill and needed an extensive medication regimen. Not only was her cat what Mila attributed her remaining in her mother's home while going to college, but Mila felt she must to be present to administer the medication, both she and her mother didn't feel that Mila's mother was capable of this. The cat

represented for Mila the idea that separating was a life or death issue. If Mila dared to separate, it would be lethal to someone.

In fact, this idea was not simply a fantasy of Mila's alone. At each move toward greater autonomy, Mila's mother would counter with a variety of alarming gestures. After a particularly intense fight, Mila's mother ended up in the emergency room for taking too many diuretics. When she moved into her own apartment, Mila's mother insisted that she not use her keys when she came for her weekly visits. On the day of her dissertation defense, her mother told Mila that she was going on dialysis. When her boyfriend's mother was making a visit to the apartment they now shared Mila's mother called her and told her that she'd taken a number of pills and had tried to kill herself.

Mila often fretted over what to do with these newly emergent angry feelings and at times would have outbursts of fury in session. These rageful outbursts had the unpredictable quality of landmines—it seemed impossible to foresee what might cause them. One time it might be that I didn't make eye contact with her on my way to the restroom while she was in the waiting room, while more predictable transgressions (lateness, absence) on my part seemed explored and forgiven without much fanfare.

A few years into treatment, Mila decided to move out of her mother's apartment. As she was preparing to do so, her mother found herself a boyfriend, the first significant relationship for her mother since Mila's father left. In a sense, Mila's mother reacted to Mila's increasing independence with a counter-dependent move, and the effect was that Mila's sense of moving of her own volition was diminished

and she ended up feeling replaced out of retaliation for her autonomous strivings.

The following session occurred a month or so before the August break and before her upcoming move:

In the midst of exploring Mila's feelings about her new apartment, I inquired about where she was moving. At first she said defiantly "why do you get to know these things about me, but I don't know them about you?" and then she added with some relish "Well, actually I looked you up in the phone book" and then she told me where she would be living—interestingly half way between her boyfriend's apartment and my own. At the beginning of a session Mila reported having a terrible headache that went away when she waited outside the clinic building but came back when she came up to the clinic. When I asked what about coming today she said that she and her mother had been fighting again. She told me that she could be very nasty to her mother during these fights and that today she had been horrible. I knew from previous material that her mother could be equally nasty at points screaming at Mila that she "hated her fucking guts." Mila said that something her mother had said had really upset her, she then said "ooo here comes the headache. She then she reported that her mother said "I hope [your boyfriend] sees this side of you and leaves you!" She went on to say that she had fantasies of killing her mother, when I asked her about those fantasies she said she imagined smashing her framed diploma over her head. She notes "I don't understand because at the same time as wanting to kill her, she's leaving on vacation tomorrow and I'll miss her. A bit later in the session she asks about the August vacation—the previous summers we have scheduled phone sessions. At this point I ask her what she wants and needs. She says that she feels she'll need the support since she's moving and she doesn't think she can cope—this last thought she elaborates and I begin to wonder if scheduling phone sessions would be colluding with the part of her that thinks she can't cope so I wonder about the what would it be like if she called me when she needed me, as is our arrangement during the year. She says she worries that she'll become a stalker that if she has too much access that she won't be able to stop her self from intruding, she then describes how she worries that this will put her in a position of feeling her need and she didn't like this. And then says maybe there would be something good about having "therapy on demand," at which point I interpret that she's angry at me for 'making her feel needy and out of control' and that she want to punish me and control me by demanding that I be available whenever she wants. She responds by saying "you have all the control in August." A bit later when it seems as though she believes the decision about what we would do has been made unilaterally by me, I point this out "It's as if the decision has already been made by me, instead of us coming up with something together." At this point she becomes enraged that I have "manipulated her into feeling her need" that I should have been "direct about the options" that I should have known that she was assuming that because I raised the question of not scheduling that that was the way it was going to be. I started to defend myself by saying that at the point at which

it became clear to me that she believed the decision to be made that I said so. She yelled “what are you stupid?” She said that she was angry that I wouldn’t take responsibility for making a mistake. I began to say that she wanted to smash me over the head with her diploma she yelled over me “you can go to hell for all I care!” She ranted on about that while she could see parallels between this and her fights with her mother she was really angry with me for manipulating her, and not taking responsibility. At the beginning of her tirade I felt my own rage reaction which was something that up to this point I had never felt with a patient. For some time I listened without saying anything and in time I felt my anger subside, at which point I interpreted that maybe she was bringing me the side of her that her mother mentioned to see whether I would leave. At this point she paused and seemed to calm down a bit and said she had to think about it, but that she was still angry.

This session was important in a number of ways. First, it enacted what happens between Mila and her mother, in that, Mila prepares to make a move towards having her own life, and I, like her mother, pull the rug out from under her. Even though my intentions were to support the more independent capable part of her, by introducing a new possibility into the therapeutic structure at a time when what she needed most was my consistency and predictability—she was moving out of her mother’s home, the home she’d lived in for 20+ years to live on her own—my intervention had the effect of disrupting her equilibrium. Understandably, she responded with becoming enraged. Introducing the idea of less contact during August at first evoked her desire to control me via “therapy on demand,” but when I corrected her mistaken view that I had already made the decision, she ended up feeling both more in contact with the needy and dependent part of herself, as well as confused and angry about not being provided a secure foundation from which to move away.

Additionally, this session, I believe, helped to detoxify and metabolize some of Mila’s rage. She came to the next session interested in what had happened and able to explore it. I survived, that is, I didn’t retaliate; our relationship survived and we

were able to talk about what had happened between us without one of us having to give up our perspective. While there have been other angry outbursts in session and in her life, they happen far less frequently. The sense of fragility is lessening, and her response to my limitations is more nuanced and accepting. Her sense that there is something wrong with her is diminishing.

An important part of helping Mila in this area was in helping her become aware of the part of her that wanted to stay in a symbiotic relationship with her mother. Initially, she was only aware of the part of her that didn't want to be so close with her mother, and her mother's pull to stay close. She wasn't aware of the parts of her that desired the closeness, and all of the ways that it helped her avoid potentially overwhelming feelings that were linked to being an adult woman.

One aspect of this dynamic was in her avoidance of sex. In the beginning she was only in touch with ways that others rejected her romantically, but not at all in touch with the ways that she was anxious about sex and involvement. When she went on a first date she was made very anxious by how much she enjoyed the good night kiss. And while there were real reasons in Mila's mind not to pursue a relationship with this man, one part of it was how anxious her excitement made her. She worried that if she became too excited that she would be overtaken.

She reported masturbating, but she described these fantasies as "not including myself," but gradually she came to be a part of her masturbation fantasies and we shared a laugh when she admitted that it was much better now that she was included.

A few years into treatment, she started dating a man from her academic program, which caused her tremendous anxiety about the possibility of having sex.

During six-months of dating without consummating their relationship, we explored her many fears about the possibility that she would bleed to death, and her equating sex and madness. Eventually she was able to engage in sexual relations, but there was a lingering fear that she would get pregnant, even though she was on birth control and using condoms. After exploring both her wish to have a baby (someone that would be there for her) and her fear that having a baby would make her lose her mind—we got to more oedipal material around her fantasy of having a baby with her father. This was responsible in part for her feeling that having sex was transgressive. In a sense, Mila experienced an Oedipal triumph, in that after her parent's divorce she still had her father and her mother did not. "I always have the feeling when my father is in my apartment that 'I have to get him out of here'," like a clandestine affair. While she found this path of exploration "creepy," through it, her fear of pregnancy subsided and she was able to enjoy a sexual relationship with her boyfriend.

SUMMARY

Mila was a young woman who came to treatment with a sense of a life foreclosed, a thought which accompanied and expressed a disruption in potential space. This disruption had numerous affective and developmental implications for her. Through our work together Mila is beginning to be able to play with the contents of her mind. As a result she is less reactive and brittle. Mila continues to struggle to separate and have more of her life, and she continues to have flare ups in symptomatology around major life changes. But she is learning to contain more of her feelings and as a result has moved out of her mother's home, into a full time

professional job, and recently moved in with her boyfriend with whom she is discussing the possibility of marriage. More and more she is getting to a kind of emptiness that she feels when she is not working or taking care of her mother. And she continues to grapple with staying close with her mother without that foreclosing her own life. Relational issues are more at the forefront as her involvement with her boyfriend deepens. She continues to struggle with feelings that she doesn't matter or exist and maintains some vulnerability around these issues, but she is more able to reflect on them.

In the concluding chapter I will try to tease out how I believe working with transit metaphors has enabled some of the work that Mila and I have done to address collapses in potential space.

CHAPTER 5—Discussion

*“Instead of subtracting readings as to narrow them down
or cancel some... Let us use human differences to add response
to response, to multiply possibilities, and to enrich the whole
experience... We can restore stories to their rightful owners...
you and me, our emotional as well as our intellectual selves...”*

-Holland

This inquiry is in essence is an attempt to explore the collapse in potential space that follows from disruptions in transitional experience, and their repair through the use of metaphor, and thus, the expansion of potential space. When a patient worries that thinking about killing her mother and killing her mother are the same, that is, when she is fearful that to have such a thought *is in fact destructive*, she is telling me (or unable to tell me about) an impingement, a developmental collapse precipitated by a failure of *survival*; she is telling me about a state in which the self or the other fails to survive, and because of this, the intermediate area where thoughts can be reflected upon and played with, is collapsed. In particular, I attempt to look at how such disruptions manifest, and in what way such disruptions can be repaired, a linkage wrought, and the potential space of treatment expanded. When I can't produce session notes or communicate the process of a session in supervision, this can also be understood as a parallel interruption in potential space to that being grappled with by the therapist-patient dyad in session.

Arlow writes that “the association which comes to the analyst's mind while listening to the patient's material is in fact a commentary on the material “ (Arlow, p. 372). In this sense, the three stories from Chapter 3 capture for me different qualities

of my work with Mila. Each captures a different quality of experiencing self and other. Transit metaphors then, are a way to represent patterns of regulation, in the sense that Lachmann and Beebe (2001) write about when they refer to the “organization of interaction along temporal, spatial, and affective and proprioceptive dimensions.” The three stories emerged as significant for me, and were my attempts at making meaning of, and capturing the quality of (i.e. symbolizing), the affective shifts in treatment with Mila. In the first sections of this chapter, I will link the transit metaphors explored in chapter three to the different qualities of state changes in the clinical work with Mila outlined in chapter four. In the final section, I will turn to a transit metaphor that emerged in treatment with Mila that she introduced. Through thinking about this metaphor in the same regulatory terms as the other stories, I was able to access important affect regulatory information that, ultimately, allowed for an expansion of potential space and a developmental repair. This example I think demonstrates the way in which different affective qualities can be represented within one transit metaphor, and in this way, more accurately captures the actual fluidity of state changes, and the expansion and contraction of potential space.

Rabbit Hole

As discussed in chapter 3, the quality of transition into imaginative space in Alice In Wonderland was sudden, startling, disorienting and frightening. Similarly, disruptions in potential space were evident from the very beginning of treatment with Mila as demonstrated through a collapse in boundaries, between my insides and her insides, and a corresponding rupture in relatedness—“*what’s that look on your face?*”

“why do I have the lower chair?”—through such statements Mila expresses a conflation of inside and out, a psychic equivalence of her feelings of diminishment and persecution and my reactions to her, as well as between concrete aspects of the environment and her insides. Though couched as questions, her expressions communicate a feeling of being transparent, and an emotional conviction that my facial expression and the height of her chair *meant* that she was “lower,” “below,” and “beneath” me. In other terms, in a moment the ground disappears from under her feet and external objects become confirmation of her internal sense of being “behind,” and “pathetic,” “like I don’t exist”. She worried that I would see her as “small” and deficient and “pathological”. In an instant, her state changes from sharing a moment from her past with someone that might help her make sense of it, to one in which she is being attacked and judged. Further, something as mundane as the height of a chair signifies something meaningful to her, and about her. As Werner and Kaplan make the point, in normal communications breakdowns occur, but repair happens quickly. For Mila, during such moments this was not the case. In such moments, there was little possibility to be felt in our interaction except humiliation and doom—possibility soon turned frightening. The quality of such state changes made it important for Mila to keep her experience in the world constricted, lest fluidity turn frightening, and connection portend conflation and confusion.

To Lachmann and Beebe’s surprise when they studied gaze and affect regulation in infants, they found that too tightly coordinated dyad resulted in rigidity of interaction and a more brittle pair.

Like Alice, Mila's state could change suddenly and unpredictably leaving her, and sometimes those with whom she is interacting, feeling attacked and confused. The shift from a state of need and desire to connect with another often collapsed into a state of persecutory anxieties—of feeling diminished, and judged as defective. In another example, Mila came into session enraged. I was aware of her state, though at first it emerges in an ominous feeling in the room where I sense danger but don't know when and in what way it will surface, I am confused as to the cause of this feeling. After some time she explained that she'd been in a good mood when she arrived, but that when I left my office in between sessions to go to the restroom, I had not looked at her. In an instant, her state had changed from one in which she was looking forward to her session and feeling content, to one in which she felt that she "didn't exist"—completely negated and rejected, and consequently enraged. As part of this dyad, I entered and experienced a world in which seemingly mundane events could result in the ground disappearing beneath my feet as well. Initially, I shared in the confusion and the anger at being startled, the sense that something incomprehensible and unjust had happened. The quality of this transition, which was precipitated by a misregulation of gaze, was sudden and disorienting, as if falling down a hole. There were many instances like this one in which either Mila's state would change suddenly, and persecutory anxieties would evoke a rageful reaction, or the feeling in the treatment would shift from exploratory and reflective to attacking and defensive. These moments occurred seemingly without warning, but often they were the result of some misattunement. I shared in the confusion and anxiety, at times by acting it out in becoming the inconsistent other that she expected through lateness,

and often being overwhelmed by, and unable to articulate the clinical process in supervision. It was through trying to capture the quality of the process that I invoked the Madhatter's tea party in supervision to describe a moment in session. I immediately realized the importance of capturing the experience in words because in that instant I felt a wave of relief wash over me—relief at finally being able to articulate the confusion and condensed quality of the process. It was during this time that I developed an appetite for children's literature. I devoured one after the other, and felt soothed by the magical tales in which adversity is transformed and children gain mastery, and in which primitive anxieties are faced and metabolized. Not only did this echo my attempts to master my role as a clinician, but reading about Alice's transition into Wonderland helped me symbolize and elaborate an important aspect of the clinical process between us. In doing so, the stories served a affect regulatory function, and helped open up the play space for me, and then between Mila and myself.

Also, similar to the narrative landscape of Alice, once the affect-regulatory issues were recognized, it was possible to navigate and help Mila navigate her persecutory world, and to facilitate a different quality of transition or state change.

A thread that runs through Alice's transition from the real to the imaginary is that she is following and trying to catch up with the white rabbit who is also frantically scurrying to some unknown appointment, terribly behind schedule. Timing, specifically the dysynchrony of timing, signals that the relationships between the characters and their environment, between characters, and between the internal world and the external world, are discordant. Similarly, much of the beginning of

treatment with Mila was rife with moments of such discordance in which interactions could suddenly transport us to a landscape not unlike Wonderland, one that was confusing, bizarre, and tinged with aggression. To align with other minds in Wonderland is to give up one's own perspective to the point of complete annihilation, or to risk such disconnection as to feel oneself or the world is completely mad.

Capturing the quality of the frightening and sudden state changes for Mila through the transit metaphor of a rabbit hole and Alice's transition into the bizarre landscape of Wonderland, helped me understand the regulatory issues at stake, both in terms of content and process: Alice's fall is precipitated by attempting to follow a tantalizing character who is frenzied and herself struggles to make herself bigger and smaller as the landscape requires. Because of Mila's symbiosis with her at times psychotic and chronically disregulated mother, the imaginary was frightening and overwhelming for her because boundaries were murky and frightening. My own struggles with self-regulation in my new role re-created a parallel situation with the one she face as a child. Thinking about the quality of Alice's transit helped me keep in mind these issues and struggle to understand the regulatory issues being played out, while attending to the nonverbal interactions in sessions, particularly when trying to understand the content left me feeling like one of the frustrated characters in Wonderland (*"flamingoes and mustard both bite. And the moral of that is—birds of a feather flock together"*). The absence, the surprise, the disorientation, the fragmentation expressed in Alice's transit helped me symbolize the regulatory issues at play and facilitate such symbolization for Mila.

Wardrobe

As Lachmann and Beebe (2002) have shown, and the clinical material of the previous section supports, gaze is an important way in which infants and adults mutually and self-regulate. The infant averts his gaze to modulate an interaction that is over-stimulating, and makes eye contact in order to engage the other, to find the other, as well as to find the self in the other's gaze. Similarly, gaze plays an important role in the treatment with adults. Once aware of the regulatory issues, I was able to understand the aspect of treatment with Mila that involved a sort of proto-play with her eyeglasses. As mentioned in the previous chapter, she would take her glasses off when she was feeling very upset, ostensibly to dry her tears, but then she would put them on when she needed closer contact, often commenting on whether she could see my face or not; at times she explicitly expressed that she wanted to see my face, and at others said she was glad not to. In this way, *she* was able to begin to regulate the interaction for herself. Again, according to Lachmann and Beebe (2002) face to face play elicits the infant's strongest communicative skill: visual gaze. Thus, enabling Mila her own "subtle instant-by-instant regulation of social contact" (p.86), and allowing for moments of sharing and moments of privacy. I never commented on this activity, but instead merely took note. The point at which she handed me her glasses in order that I could see as she saw, signaled an emergence of play—tending toward the symbolic, though not quite fully so. This proto-play resembled Spitz's description of the best works of children's literature, that they "present a shifting universe of unfixed boundaries but in which work is also being done on other levels to differentiate and stabilize boundaries" (p.21). Taking the glasses and trying them

on, extended Mila's gesture in a Winnicottian sense, and served as a noninterpretive action in Lachmann and Beebe's terms. In this case, the patient's expectation of being understood takes the form of Mila playing with the idea of seeing and being seen. Mila's play with the glasses was a way in which she was beginning to play at and with separation. The interaction between us involving Mila's eyeglasses was an expression, both concrete and metaphoric, of our mutual desire and hope to imagine possibilities.

Once possibilities were imaginable for Mila, she could more fluidly shift from the real to the imaginary. Like Lucy, who transitions into Narnia gradually, and by way of a game of hide and seek, Mila became able to make use of the provision of therapy that was more predictable and less intrusive. And while issues of separation and individuation continue to be fraught, her state changes became more consistently gradual and sessions began to have a growing quality of unfoldment. As discussed in chapter three, one can see themes in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe as grappling with separation and individuation. The possibilities of being alone are explored both by the children's temporary status of being orphaned, as well as by the character of the wise-old professor whose solitude seems filled with mystery and meaning. The story represents both the wishes and the desires of separation—the wishes to be autonomous and free to experience and explore—and the fear that one will be replaced, forgotten, and alone to face overwhelming obstacles and temptations.

For example, one session exemplary of such a transition begins with Mila playfully teasing me about having too many bags and too many keys (Too much

responsibility? Too much access? Too many other involvements? Too much baggage?). She ties this to a wish that I am a competent authority. She then states “So, I’m here,” and when I try to glean the affective quality of her statement she goes on to say:

“I could go either way. I saw someone on the train who looked like you—most like you of anyone yet—and I keep track of these things. It didn’t look like you from behind, but from the front. The bag she had was one you would like—and maybe the pants, but not the top. I knew it wasn’t you, but it looked like you. I wanted to follow her and see where she’d go...”

She then raises a recent somatic preoccupation that usually expresses her profound fear that her insides are damaged or will be damaged through contact with an other and tells me that she’s unfazed by it today. She plays with similarity and difference, and momentarily this takes her to more undifferentiated thoughts about her body and mind (and by extension, her mother’s body and mind), and then she moves toward differentiation by stating that she is not undone by these concerns today. And in fact, she then raises the issue of her upcoming vacation.

Like many other real and symbolic separations, going on vacation is particularly difficult for Mila. She worries that ‘leaving her mother behind’ will result in “something bad happening”—that her mother will hurt herself either consciously or unwittingly, or that Mila herself will die in some disaster; she worries that the taste of freedom will overwhelm her and she will find returning to her mother unbearable; she worries about her mother calling incessantly and intruding upon her space; and she worries about being lost without the close and constant connection to her mother. She reports feeling okay about her imminent departure, and she reports that her “mother seems okay about it”, she goes on, “but I had a dream. That I went and my

mother left 9 messages on my machine from the hospital. Somehow I could hear a conversation she was having with someone—she was saying “I don’t have any family—well, I have a daughter but she’s not here so it doesn’t matter/count.” This dream is remarkable not only in how the manifest content articulates one aspect of Mila’s anxiety about separating from her mother, but also in that she has a particularly difficult time reporting her dreams. Not that she doesn’t remember her dreams, but instead, when she reports that she’s had a dream she becomes paranoid while discussing it, and is usually unable to say much of anything except that she has dreamt, as if confessing an embarrassing behavior. She cannot easily move between the real and the imaginary, and instead she seems to feel that to report the dream is to lose her footing—to expose her “crazy” and “bizarre” inner world. For Mila, to be an orphan, which is an implicit part of the dream in which her mother has no family, she is free from responsibility, and free from a future constrained by parental limitations. While in this case she is unable to associate to the significance of 9 phone calls, or any other part of the dream, this is one of a few instances in which she *is* able report the dream, and she contrasts her feeling that something bad will happen, to her mother’s actual relatively stable state. She then associates to spending time with her boyfriend and his mother and the positive aspects of letting go of things, she also associates to the gratification of staying close to her mother and imagines a space of a few days that it would feel comfortable to not speak to her. She states *“I’ve never left her when she was living alone, but then again, I don’t see her everyday like I used to ... anyway, these things balance out.”* She moves in and out of her fantasies and the reality of her and her mother’s situation with little disruption. She then associates to a

more fraught trip that will be farther away, for a longer period of time, and has undertones of the possibility that her boyfriend will propose, thus, necessitating further separation. When I attempt to explore what this bigger trip represents she responds nihilistically, and states “*you’re trying to get me upset.*” Through this comment she tells me at this point, that this is too much exploration, I’m pushing her too far too fast. I then respond to her felt experience of having someone ruin her good state, and her feeling disregulated. I slow down and attempt to differentiate my real intention from her imagined intention, and state that while it seemed that there was something upsetting about the trip, and I didn’t mean to overwhelm her or take anything away, instead my intention was to help her feel freer to go. At this point there is an affect shift reflecting a more hopeful quality and renewed interest in exploration, the breakdown is repaired and the session resumes an exploratory stance. She follows with material related to a fight she had with her boyfriend about a friend of her boyfriend’s in relation to whom Mila feels threatened, excluded, and different. In part, this material can be understood to express Mila’s feelings when I am misattuned—threatened, excluded, and different, as well as the concern that greater separation will leave her feeling the same—still, she does so in the service of further exploration in session and as it pertains to her life. She describes an outburst on her part, along with the recognition that there is more to her reaction than the situation might warrant. She ends the session stating that it is something she needs to figure out, because she doesn’t want to be reactive. The quality of the movement in and out of the imaginary space, while not all positive and facilitative, enables her to sustain

her curiosity about her own internal world. Like the wardrobe, she has created a space within a space within a space.

The transition during this session, like that in Narnia, is slow and gradual and emerges out of a game of playful teasing of her therapist, a playfulness that opens up into a world of possibilities. It also moves in and out of wishes for closeness with her mother, and desire to explore other people and places. This gets at another important quality of this shift, that is, it includes other people, people with whom she wants to be close, people she's curious about, and people with whom she can negotiate conflict. She can both hold her own perspective and imagine other perspectives without threat to her psychic integrity. Aggression and envy can be reflected upon and contained. At the beginning of the session, she plays at sameness and difference between me and the woman on the train, she is both imagining my likes and dislikes—imagining my mind, the differences between me and others, and implicitly me and herself. Additionally, and like other moments in the treatment, this attention to my physicality has a caressive quality, much like that of Lucy feeling the fur coats and noticing the slight alterations in sensation as the bristle of fur turns to the bristle of branches, and moth balls turn to the crunching of snow.

Once Mila achieved some separation from her mother and was able to have more of her own life, she was faced with another obstacle in development, a sense of emptiness that she feels when alone. Her preoccupation with taking care of her mother and lack of separation, help her avoid such feelings of emptiness. This emptiness resembles Milo's case of the doldrums in The Phantom Tollbooth.

Tollbooth

The survival of the object is implicit in the Tollbooth's beginning when Milo finds/creates his transition into The Lands Beyond. The environment provides Milo with the supplies he needs to construct the tollbooth, as well as what he needs to move through it (coins, his car, road map); the possibility of exploration is presented, he pays his toll, chooses a road, and sees where it will take him. When Mila decides to continue therapy from short term treatment that is provided by her school to open-ended treatment, not only does she begin to pay her own toll, but it requires, and she makes, a considerable effort to get to her appointments. In both concrete and symbolic terms she is finding/creating the possibility of a play space that was there all along. By deciding to continue in open-ended treatment she makes use of the other, pays her toll, chooses a road and sees where it will take her.

Again, according to Winnicott, the doldrums are the result of feeling the futile crisis of not having a self to which to be true. A particularly adolescent dilemma, the conflict embodied in the doldrums is one in which the child views adult compromises as false, and as a result, is left without someone with whom to identify, no culture to inherit, nothing to carry on or over. The adolescent feels real only in their refusal of false solutions. In this sense, the Doldrums are a recapitulation at a higher level of the struggle for object survival. However, the difference for the adolescent in facing his or her own destructiveness is that the adolescent now possesses the *real* physical capacity to kill the parent. In the media we see the extremes of this conflict gone awry, but it remains in less extreme forms in normative development as the adolescent is faced with the real capacity for destructiveness.

For Mila, her mother's repeated hospitalizations and her father's psychotic break when she was 12-years-old, as well as her parents' subsequent divorce, the development that would follow from being faced with her own destructiveness was foreclosed. Her parents do not survive, and thus she is impeded in moving out into the world. Mila describes a screen memory of the moment in which she finds out that her father too, is ill and is psychiatrically hospitalized: *"I remember staring out the window, and realizing that that was the end of hope. I was doomed."*

This sense of doom was accompanied by an overwhelming and frightening degree of power that Mila had in relation to her parents. She felt and was told that she was the reason for her mother's survival; she had power over life and death. Consequently, she foregoes the rebellion and exploration of adolescence and takes on the role of caretaker, that is, Winnicott's false self. This role involved Mila's defensive attempt to manage the actual and fantasied destructiveness through the denial of all aggression, and thus all separation.

In treatment, in order for Mila to create what was there to be found, I needed to survive her destructiveness the way her parents hadn't. This, of course, was not a discrete event, but an accumulation of moments in which her aggression was expressed, contained, and metabolized without retaliation.

The experience described in chapter 4, when Mila rages during session, is not the actual "beginning" of this process. In fact, the process begins during those first few sessions when she accuses me of having a "look on my face"—that is, she attacked and in small ways I managed to survive. I mark the "rage session" as a beginning of this process, in part, because she tells me that her mother has said of her

tirades that she hopes Mila's boyfriend sees this part of her and leaves her. At the beginning of this session, Mila tells me in effect that her mother doesn't survive, she retaliates. This non-survival is expressed in many ways between them, as in during school when Mila's mother became more suicidal on the weekends when Mila would want to do something with her friends, in these instances Mila's mother would actually make the gesture of slitting her own throat; or when she "accidentally" took too many diuretics after a particularly contentious fight between them; or when she made a suicidal gesture on the day that Mila finished school. Mila's mother doesn't only retaliate for overt expressions of aggression, but also for Mila's assertions of autonomy. As a result, Mila comes to treatment with a belief in her magical powers of life and death regarding her mother—to think of killing her mother is to kill her mother—and a sense of her internal states as undifferentiated from her mother's.

Another reason that I mark this particular session as a beginning of the survival process is that for me it was the first moment in which I experienced rage during a session, and was aware of needing to manage it. It was a moment when I was aware of wanting to retaliate, return the attack, but managed to contain the impulse and reflect upon it. There were many such moments in which "out of nowhere" Mila would become enraged about some real or perceived impingement. Gradually, however, she could talk about feeling angry, hurt, or negated, without attacking. Her outbursts became less volatile and more possible to reflect and comment upon. During the session in which she reports that she's angry because I did not make eye-contact and acknowledge her as she sat in the waiting room, we explored her experience and she was able to articulate feeling disregarded and negated. I then felt

there was room to tell her my perspective that involved giving (and needing) privacy between sessions, at which point she expressed relief and surprise at the existence of other possibilities and perspectives—"I never would have thought of that." This gets at the mentalization process that occurs, that is, her state given back to her with a difference. I reflected back her feeling that she did not exist, but with an alteration that involved giving and receiving privacy, she feels relief at this new possibility.

Eventually, I could begin to comment on the aggression. In a recent session, she became very angry when I was a few minutes late. She repeatedly cut me off when I began to speak, saying "go ahead, really, I want to hear it"—expressing very much the opposite of what she was saying. I finally managed to observe and comment on her wish to "abuse" me, at which point the feeling in the room shifted, she agreed, and it appeared that she felt some relief when her wish to abuse me was made explicit. This comment was non-retaliatory, but also set a limit that she felt difficult to set for herself in regard to her mother, that I would not "just take it," but neither would I return her abuse.

Seven years into the treatment after agonizing about how to deal with her leisure time, Mila tearfully reported that her mother had never played with her. In fact, when the other children were playing, Mila described herself as staying close to her mother unwilling and unable to be coaxed into play with the other children. With this she was finally able to verbalize an important deprivation in her development, and it fleshes out her fear during the game of duck-duck-goose introduced in a previous chapter. For Mila, there was only the real, to which she clung tenaciously in order to manage overwhelming confusion and fear.

Eventually she is able to play with aggressive ideas, reporting in one session that she dreamt she was a serial murderer. Her associations were to having murdered her father and her mother's new boyfriend to have her mother all to herself. And then to more of the dream where her mother made her a three course meal: appetizer, entrée, and dessert—"which is funny, because my mother *never* cooks for me like that," which leads to material about her wishes to be taken care of by her mother, and a feeling of provision in therapy.

Mila begins to be able to treat her destructive wishes as *thoughts* and not actions. Language can be played with, and like for Milo in The Phantom Tollbooth, there is a return of meaning through the ability to play with language.

Like Milo in The Phantom Tollbooth, Mila suffers from a loss of meaning when not consumed by her mother's state. Her time off is something to be managed, not an opportunity to engage in satisfying activity, or relaxation. Instead, she worries (and hopes) that her mother's state will take over and fill up her free time, and thus, she derives some meaning from her role as her mother's comforter, caretaker, and reason for being, but absent these roles she feels lost and empty. The emergence of this sense of emptiness is a developmental achievement for Mila. The moments when she is aware of this feeling of emptiness and can articulate it, signal some differentiation between her and her mother, the survival of the object, and her entry into the doldrums that hold as their aim the discovery/creation of rhyme and reason.

Mila went from feeling acute fear that people would "find out" about her mother to imagining that she would write a memoir. In one session she says that this had been a secret fantasy of hers, but that it had always taken the form that she would tell

her mother's story. Now she was thinking about telling her story. She was beginning to imaginatively transform her traumatic losses into a creative activity. She begins to imagine creating, discovering rhyme and reason through telling her story.

Awakening

Up to this point I have discussed the transit metaphors that emerged in supervision, which provided a way for me to contemplate the process of my work with Mila, that helped me make crucial links between affect and symbolization. Now I would like to turn to what I understand as a transit metaphor that emerged for Mila in treatment, that I believe through dyadic exploration enabled a regulatory “moment of meeting,” and thus, repair of a disruption in potential space. The metaphor of awakening emerged and became an image that, while Mila introduced it, we both played with and explored in the service of expanded potential space. Through the transit metaphor of awakening Mila created and played with links between the real and the imaginary, linked up affect and image, and ultimately enabled symbolization of previously unsymbolized affective experience. This transit metaphor illustrates the actual fluidity of transitions, the layers of meaning that are represented in any given metaphor, and the correspondent fluctuations of affective qualities in one metaphor.

The idea of ‘awakening’ was initially introduced into the treatment just after Mila shifted from short term to open-ended treatment. She introduced this metaphor in regard to Kate Chopin's nineteenth century novel The Awakening, which concerns the sexual, and artistic transformation and transcendence of a young married woman

whose bourgeois context constrains her exploration and realization of her own creativity. During this session Mila refers to ‘awakening’ after she compares herself to the children in the waiting room and then a hopeful encounter with a man. After discussing the painful nature of considering the possibility of having a ‘sexual awakening’, she exclaims defiantly “*I’d better have one!*”

At this point Mila was referring to the act of sex, but could not talk about it explicitly. In this instance, she was using metaphor defensively as Goldman writes about it, that is, to obscure meaning because to speak of sex directly is to evoke the anxiety associated with the act of sex. Sometime after this session, Mila has her first date with someone whom she has been set up with by her mother—a son of her mother’s friend. It is during this date that Mila has her first kiss, a much anticipated and wished for event. In the following session she describes the date and the sense of disappointment that she felt that “everything did not magically change” after having the kiss.

The metaphor of awakening, while ostensibly referring to a novel, can be traced to the fairy tale *Sleeping Beauty*. In this fairy tale the beautiful girl is pulled into a long sleep, that is, stopped in time by the curse of an enraged and envious “witch,” and then reawakened by the kiss of a handsome prince. Her development ceases because of the overwhelming feelings of envy and rage—destructiveness—and she passively awaits magical rescue.

During this time Mila begins working on a project about the novel *Awakening*, which allows her to reflect on her fears with some intellectual distance, while in session we explored the more affectively charged implications.

While Mila discusses the ‘awakening’ as something she deeply desires, and hopes for, my contemplation of the metaphor put me in contact with another aspect of the experience. While she expressed her wish to have an ‘awakening’, I began to think about the final scene of the novel in which this awakening takes place. The protagonist, after she awakens to her creative and sexual self, walks into the sea and drowns herself. She feels that there is no place in 19th century bourgeoisie society for this new self, so her version of transcendence is to walk away from all of life, toward her own merging with a greater creative force, to embrace nothingness:

“The voice of the sea is seductive, never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander in abysses of solitude... she casts off her clothes, and “for the first time she stood naked in the open air, at the mercy of the sun, the breeze that beat upon her, and the waves that invited her. How strange and awful it seemed to stand naked under the sky! How delicious! She felt like some new-born creature, opening its eyes in a familiar world that it had never known.... The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace.... (the meadow of her childhood) no beginning and no end... They were a part of her life. But they need not have thought that they could possess her, body and soul. (sounds and sights then....) There was the hum of bees, and the musky odor of pinks filled the air. “ (p.108).

This passage, the passage in which the protagonist walks into the sea, captures the transcendence that Mila wishes that sex will effect, the merger that is longed for. But it also captures the boundarylessness and disintegration that she dreads and is unable to articulate, the fear that she will be enveloped and overwhelmed. It is through thinking about this scene in the context of awakening that I am eventually able to hold in mind Mila’s, unsymbolized as yet, feelings that she will become overwhelmed and drown in the sexual experience, and more generally destroy or be destroyed by separation and individuation.

This sense bears out in relation to her first kiss. Mila resolves not to see the man for a second date, and with some exploration it emerges that she “liked it too much”—she worried that her desire would overwhelm her, that it would make her crazy like her mother.

As I hold the image of drowning in mind when Mila discusses her awakening, I am able to stay in contact with her regulatory needs and help her connect to the other aspects of the experience. Through this she begins to articulate her fears pertaining to the sexual act, and the separation that is inherent in taking a step into adult sexuality. Overtime she verbalizes various manifestations of her fear of becoming overwhelmed, she equates sex with going crazy, she worries that she will bleed to death, or that she “won’t stretch” to accommodate a penis. She reveals that up until this time she was afraid to use a tampon. Entering into the genital area meant evoking overwhelming anxiety. She also had a habit of spitting into a tissue and then looking at the contents, which I began to understand in Bernstein’s terms of wanting to see what was inside her.

During this time she meets a man and begins to date him. For several months her fears get in the way of consummating the relationship, but she continues to verbalize and work through her fantasies in therapy. Eventually she is able to engage in sex, and while it is not immediately satisfying, nor, much to her disappointment, does it magically change everything in her life, she is able to have her first adult sexual relationship. She continues to struggle with anxiety around merger and separation, though in ever more nuanced ways.

Working with the transit metaphor of awakening, Mila was able to repair a rupture in potential space, which enabled her to move more into her life, to tolerate further separation between her and her mother, to move between the real and the imaginary in more gradual, facilitative ways. She was able to experience an awakening sexually and emotionally, to infuse her everyday experience with the “blood” of oneness without evoking fears of annihilation. She was able to move on in her life.

She felt like some new-born creature, opening its eyes in a familiar world that it had never known.... The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace.... (the meadow of her childhood) no beginning and no end... They were a part of her life.

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