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PHENOMENOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVES ON A SPONTANEOUS ARTISTIC PROCESS DURING PSYCHOTHERAPY FOR DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER

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The process of change in psychotherapy is typically described in the literature by the therapist. It is usually the therapist who extracts meaning from the raw data given by the patient. This is done with the aid of the therapist's conceptual tools and is therefore potentially biased by them. This study aims at uncovering the subjective post-hoc meanings given by an incest survivor, who had been struggling with Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), to her spontaneous artwork produced at home. DID (formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder) is a severe psychopathology involving disturbances of connection and continuity in a person's thoughts, memories, feelings, actions and sense of identity (Nemiah, 1981). Patients with DID have developed a capacity to separate the memory of the experience and circumstances of trauma from their ongoing memory, resulting in a temporary mental escape from the pain of their ordeal. This once functional coping mechanism develops, in many cases, into an incapacitating psychological condition in adult living.

For the adult individual in psychotherapy, spontaneous drawing can serve as a special kind of a personal diary. Unlike the material produced in written journals, spontaneous artwork may represent creative symbols of the patient's preconscious imagery. It can concretize the otherwise elusive inner world of the dissociative patient and help the patient with the process of self-observation by externalizing some of the hidden inner realities. The powerful therapeutic impact of spontaneous art in an adult survivor of child abuse is demonstrated by Miller (1995):

> Not until I started working with colours did a change occur. It is not rare for colours to awaken petrified feelings, but my past history played a specific role here: Painting brought me in touch with the child within me, who stopped drawing at a very early age and, in an attempt to rescue a part of her self from exploitation, 'went underground.' (p. 19)

Most experts agree that expressive therapies can help in the treatment of these patients, who have internalized warnings not to talk about the abuse (Braun, 1987; Coons, 1986; Frye, 1990). Others have argued that expressive therapies can be instrumental in the recovery, integration and exploration of traumatic material (Greenberg & van der Kolk, 1987; Sachs, 1990). Gardner (1980) suggested that creative, artistic expression is determined by three factors: the existence of talent, a supportive environment and the need for alternative means of self-expression. Fuhrman (1993) argued that DID patients may use artistic expression as their primary form of self-expression and that those suffering from DID fall into Gardner's third category. Indeed, high levels of creativity were found in a large percentage of DID patients (Schultz,

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Braun, & Kluft, 1985). A spontaneous artistic process in DID may operate not only as sublimated catharsis, but also as a transitional process that may aid the dissociative patient in dealing with insignificance, emptiness and disconnectedness. Marmer (1991) posited that the lack of others and the deficiency of good objects in the life of the abused child may create a strong need for transitional objects. This need may be partially responsible for the original creation of the alters. This need may also manifest itself later on in the drive to engage in the creation of projected artistic images. These images start out as concrete, but their development in the spontaneous artistic process may later become more abstract, operating, as with Winnicott's (1953) original notion of transitional objects, more as a process and less as an object.

This presentation is a retrospective study of the spontaneous artwork of an integrated DID patient. Its purpose is to obtain a phenomenological perspective on the evolution of the symbolic experience of the self in a healing DID. Edmund Husserl, founder of modern phenomenology, regarded phenomenology as the study of phenomena as they present themselves in consciousness, or the study of immediate experiences (Husserl, 1913/1976). His Science of Consciousness was an attempt to reduce perception of phenomena to their essence. Humanistic psychotherapists who adopted the phenomenological approach had been keenly interested in the investigation of the fullness of subjective experiencing of "things," away from preconceived or inferred theories about them (Betensky, 1987). In this approach the client-turned-beholder is the one who gives the picture the description of what is in it. By intentional looking that attempts to suspend what is supposed to be seen, art therapy clients can experience their own artwork and its distinct subjectively salient features. We posit that the preintentional process of scanning the artwork and the stirring toward the object to be identified in the visual field is an interesting meeting point between psychoanalysis and phenomenology, a meeting point utilized during the Rorschach examination and during some drawing tests in clinical psychology. We feel that not only are the fields compatible, but that they are necessary elements of the human psyche's gestalt. Martin Heidegger (1960), one of the founders of phenomenology, presented the concept of two dimensions of Dasein (being): the ontological dimension that does not show itself and the ontic dimension that does show itself. Heidegger proposed that the unconscious processes are hidden in the ontological dimension of Dasein, which only phenomenology can reveal. In this paper the authors, an art therapist and a clinical psychologist, will attempt to embrace both approaches much as is done in projective testing in clinical psychology.

In the discussion section of this paper we attempt to put the phenomenological description in the context of the unfolding therapy from the therapist's perspective. We wish to anchor our findings in psychoanalytic object relations thought. We regard art, in this context, as a potential mirror of internal object relations and their associated defenses and developmental problems. In the creative act the various representations of the patients' world are shaped and reflected through artistic form. Inherent in the clinical case of object relations theory is sensitivity to developmental lines and how they manifest themselves in the adult personality. Margaret Mahler placed great importance on the early years of life and the vicissitudes of mother-child interaction in shaping of an inside me and you (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975). Psychoanalytic theories tend to underscore the role of adequate mothering in the emotional development of the well child. In families where father-daughter incest occurs, the mother is either consciously or unconsciously abdicating her role as protector and benefactor of both her husband and the child-victim. It is in such an emotional maternal void that the incestuous father begins to seek the gratifying proximity of his daughter. Nonsexual pleasure, associated with genuine paternal affection, is often one of the primary rewards, reinforcing a powerful father-object internalization. The primary attachment bond in those frequently dysfunctional families is often the abusive father himself. Fairbairn (1943/1990) postulated that an early relationship with a bad object creates shame through the process of identification with the abusive parent. The child who needs the incestuous father cannot reject him and frequently resolves the problem by internalizing the bad paternal object in what Fairbairn saw as an effort to control him.

We regard the healing process of many father-daughter incest victims as requiring a process of separation from the bad object and subsequent individuation from it. In this study we also try to utilize Mahler's concepts (1986a,b) in order to understand how the undoing of the symbiosis with the father and the psychological rebirth of the healing internal infant have manifested themselves in the patient's spontaneous art. We implemented theoretical elements from Mahler's separation-individuation process in both the patient's independent analysis and our own perspec-

tives on the artistic process. We were able to demonstrate the following developmental stages in our patient's spontaneous artwork:

1. An Autistic stage, in which the inner psychological infant is unable to organize the diffusion and fragmented stimuli she experiences,
2. A Symbiotic stage in which a state of oneness exists between the patient's psychological identity and her abusive father,
3. A Differentiation stage in which the perpetrator father and the psychological infant are no longer perceived as one, although they have not separated yet, and finally
4. A Separation-Individuation stage in which the patient struggles to achieve her initial sense of separateness and identity.

The Case

Yael, a 27-year-old woman, was referred to ES for the treatment of chronic depression and relationship difficulties. Although in a routine structured interview she revealed she had been sexually abused by her father, she also reported complete amnesia for any specific incident. After several more sessions, Yael was clearly diagnosed as meeting DSM-IV criteria for DID. She was the first of three daughters born to a dysfunctional, depressive mother. Her father was a college art teacher who also sculpted in his own home studio.

Yael admired her father, who used to spend much time with her teaching her about art, playing with her and conveying that she was indeed very special to him. In the course of therapy Yael began to encounter dissociated memories of sexual abuse spanning from infancy to late adolescence. These memories included two-way oral molestations, as well as both digital and penile penetrations of her other body orifices.

Yael, a college graduate, was also a closet artist when she first came for treatment. She preferred ink drawing, but at times engaged in gouache paintings as well. Most of her artwork included abstract graphic design characteristics. As her psychotherapy unfolded, 31 personality alters were identified. Most of them were encountered and worked with in therapy. Her alters included child, adolescent and adult personality parts of both sexes.

Throughout the course of her therapy Yael periodically shared with her primary psychotherapist (ES), a clinical psychologist, some of the artwork that she spontaneously produced at home. In response to this, and because of the inherent value of having a male-female treatment team working with an incest survivor, Yael was also seen by LS, an art therapist. This in turn enhanced Yael's artistic process, as may be expected. At the point of integration she had accumulated over 250 drawings, paintings and sculptures that were spontaneously produced at home, but never brought to therapy for analysis.

Procedure

Eight months after terminating therapy with us, Yael gladly agreed to return to the clinic for a retrospective description and self-analysis of her voluminous creative productions. She consented to this activity knowing it was for research purposes, because she felt it could help her put her own healing process into perspective. Two hundred and fifty art pieces were submitted for the study, most of them dated and thus easily arranged in chronological order of production. The drawings and paintings produced for investigation spanned a period from eight months prior to therapy to eight months following termination, an overall period of four and a half years.

Yael and LS met eight times for 90-minute sessions. During these 12 hours, which were all audio-recorded, Yael freely associated and talked about the pictures, the circumstances of their creation and her current perspective on them. LS tried to confine her role primarily to reflection and paraphrasing as a facilitator of the process. She followed a phenomenological method of art therapy based on Betensky (1977, 1987)

1. Visual display of the art expression,
2. Physical distancing to gain perspective,
3. Intentional looking at the art expression with therapist encouragement for the client to become the receiver of the deposited messages in the artwork,
4. What-do-you-see procedure, an invitation to the client to share the results of the earlier steps and to phenomenologically describe what the client sees in the picture,
5. Assisting the client to unfold the private meanings contained on various levels in the visual product.

Results

Preliminary discussions were devoted to the establishment of the preferred line of analysis. After having

followed steps 1–5 on a large sample of her artwork, Yael decided on focusing on a recurrent graphic theme that she thought reappeared in her artwork and was of interest to her. She termed this pattern the "shape," but later referred to it as the "self." In her investigations of her pre-therapy drawings she could not identify the "shape." She commented that she saw those pieces as integral, but internally fragmented entities.

Figure 1 is representative of this category. When referring to it she described a large body always on an edge and attempting to balance itself. The body created its track as it rolled on. Yael added that during that time she had had no clue as to what was happening to her and where she was heading. She said that in those days she felt she had no path to follow and that she was about to stumble and fall at any moment. Pictures dating from the initial period of treatment, during which Yael became more acquainted with her disorder, were seen as depicting a process of disintegration. The "shape," which she alternately termed the "self," first appeared as an independent pictorial entity. In some pictures the "shape" appeared several times. It should be emphasized that during this initial phase Yael had not yet been informed of her diagnosis.

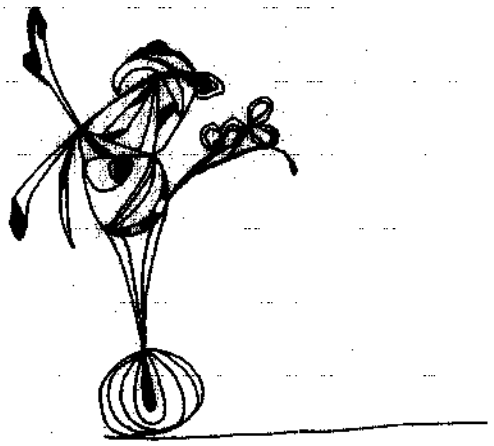

Figure 1.

When reflecting on Figure 2, Yael said that she was still not aware of her multiplicity even during this ink-drawing process, although some dissociated awareness was explicitly indicated in words on the drawing itself. Yael remembered during the post-integration debriefing having been perplexed by these words. She identified several abstract "self" shapes in this picture. She said that those most meaningful to her were the shapes marked with black nuclei. In reference to the enclosed "shapes" Yael remarked that she was sure these "self-shapes" represented her encapsuled inaccessible child alters, who had contained the still inaccessible unknown information. Yael identified one of her "selves" (marked: "the enemy?") as her father's introject, who later in the therapy played an intransigent, sabotaging role. The growing disturbing awareness of her internal fragmentation was also expressed in an explicit verbal message on the upper right corner of the drawing in which she refers to herself both in the plural and third-person forms.

The next group of pictures belong to the immediate period after Yael's diagnosis was both disclosed and explained to her.

When she had looked at Figure 3 Yael reflected that through it she was trying to explain the internal structure of her own divided self. During the time this picture was made she had experienced herself as internally oriented, hidden and protected from the outside world. No one in her environment could have possibly known then about her unique psychological structure and dynamics.

Figure 4 was drawn about six months into the treatment. During that period Yael's internal conflict was intensifying. The tension between her drive to uncover her tormenting secretive past and her equally powerful denial of the incest was mounting.

This is the 58th artwork in the chronological order of creation. Yael said that consciously she was still not aware then about her differentiated internal cast of alters. She thought, however, that this picture stood for a subconscious knowledge of the fact that she had internal self-entities of various developmental stages. At this phase of her post-hoc analysis, Yael interchangeably used the terms "shape," "figure,"

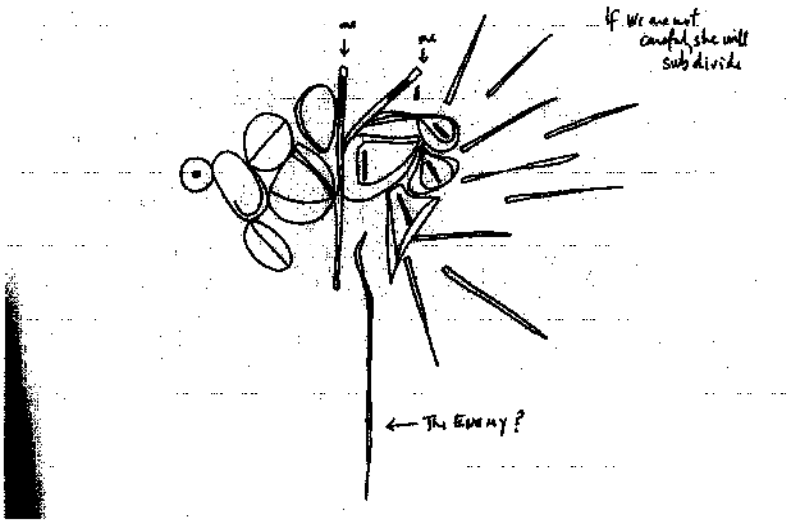

Figure 2.

"self" and "person" to describe the recurrent graphic theme she was following. When reflecting on Figure 4, Yael saw five developmental conditions of "the shape." In counter-clockwise order, she first addressed the enclosed linear "figure" on the upper left side of the drawing; she then saw the three-piece two-dimensional "figure" standing below on a line, followed by the headed profiled "figure" in the lower left corner of the drawing. This "figure" is held by its groin. The next "figure" not only has a body and a head, but also displays hands reaching out (top center). The most developed "self," Yael thought, was located to the left of that "figure" and, although weak, this figurine possessed a heart. It could feel.

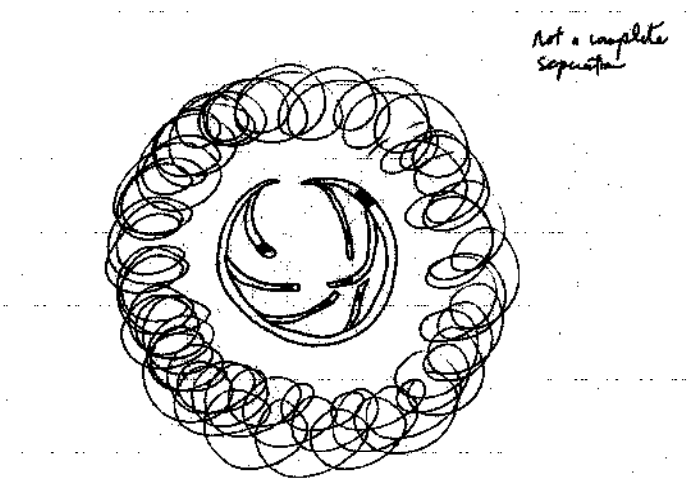

Figure 3.

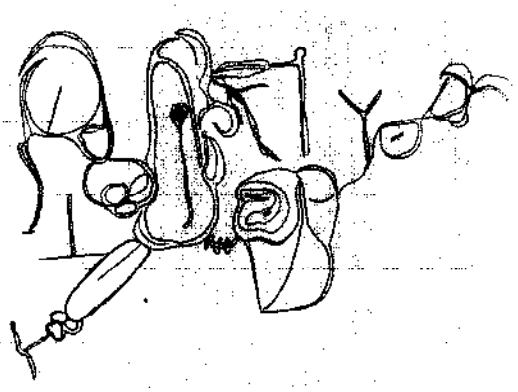

Figure 4.

Ten months into the treatment, child sexual abuse memories started to be uncovered and dealt with. Yael identified in Figure 5 the core question concerning her identity.

Are she and her father separate or one and the same? The "self-figure" in Figure 5 is inseparable from the father figure, which she named "the enemy within." It was described as her own bad part, her own identification with her father and her desperate attempt to continue to adore him. The picture was drawn by a child alter who drew an internal map identifying the alters in secret mirror-image handwriting.

During a subsequent phase in therapy Yael became aware not only of her multiplicity, but also that her psyche was three-dimensional in respect of levels of consciousness.

In Figure 6 Yael saw three levels. The lowest, deepest level was represented by eleven underground root-like "figures." Yael stated that she had seen then that those "figures" stood for her dissociated selves. On the second level of consciousness Yael identified a shadowy, victimized, dead "waking self," "walking through the world." The highest level contained a crucified "figure" with massive roots in the "waking self" domain. Yael pointed out that it possessed forces symbolized by the depicted ability to bend the sun's radiation. She added that the left side of the picture expressed her threatening, complex and complicated experience, whereas the right side stood for the peace-of-mind-in-death she was yearning for. The star represented "faith," her guardian angel.

During the second year of treatment, most of Yael's alters had accepted that the internal dissociative experience was there and the fact that her consciousness was comprised of independent self states. Her self-perspective at that time is well represented in Figure 7. In this picture, Yael (peeking) is holding up a mirror for her to observe her own reflections in it. Yael identified the innermost image as "the figure," contained and protected by layers upon layers of selves. She also pointed out that what people saw was

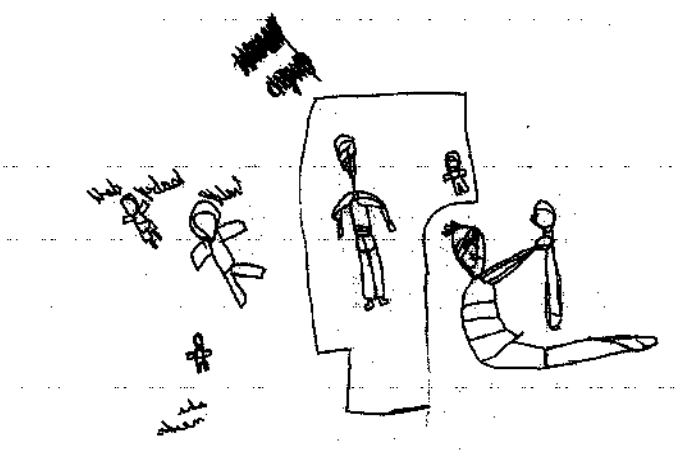

Figure 5.

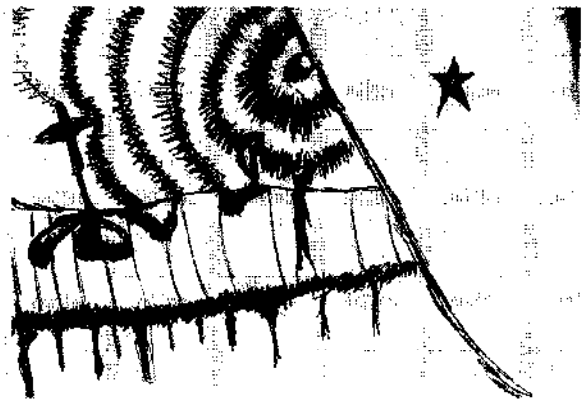

Figure 6.

the "figure" holding up the mirror. Her internal reality was apparent to her only.

Although Figures 1–7 were drawn on standard A4 (30 × 21 cm) paper, as were about 200 other ink drawings from that period, about nine months prior to her integration Yael began to apply gouache and acrylic paints and used much larger formats. Figure 8 is representative of the change. It is an acrylic color painting, 100 × 70 cm in size. A 15 × 1 cm wooden stick is vertically glued to the center of the picture and is painted over.

Yael identified the "figure" as lying horizontally at the bottom of the paintings. At the "figure's" side are two vertical lines, which Yael also termed "figures." She suggested they were gatekeepers, standing quietly, guarding the limits of what was occurring inside. The guards were said to both define the space where the process was taking place and protect it. She described the wooden stick as the phoenix rising out of the ashes beneath, and as a resurrection emerging from the dead "figure," erupting in red flames into a new "figure." Yael added that during the production of this piece she had been under the influence of Lou, an angry adolescent alter who wanted to share the emotional explosive aftermath of the incestual rape experience. Yael added that during that period she had felt that if the inner rage had not been allowed out there would have been no transition from "we" to "I". In other words, she had seen no possibility for integration before her rage was worked through.

Figure 9, a huge 220 × 110 cm acrylic color painting, was produced about six months following her integration. Yael identified it as a "post-integration self-portrait." The "figure" was now embodied by the entire portrait.

Yael identified a "shadow" at the bottom of the painting. She recognized it as the last remnant of her father's influence on her identity, which she had found difficult to shake off. The self-portrait was done in blue, which to her represented the healing optimism and spirituality of Beatrice, her guardian angel. An immense yellow heart fills up the space of the entire torso. "It wants to expand and contain the whole world which had just been revealed to me," she explained. Yael proceeded to point out that the "figure" had an additional smaller heart, a golden paper appli-

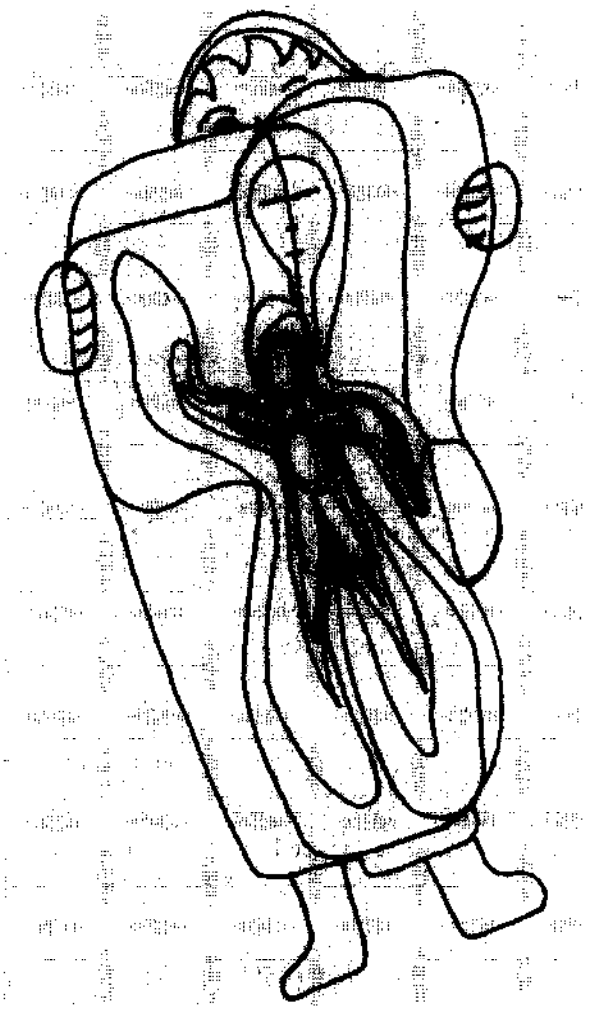

Figure 7.

Figure 8.

qué painted over in red, a memorial to an injured heart recently healed.

The last picture presented in this paper was painted eight months following her integration.

Figure 10 is an immense 220 × 110 cm acrylic color painting that represents Yael's numerous artistic attempts during that period to understand, from an integrated point of view, the girl she had been. She strived to put her childhood into perspective and to get used to seeing it as her very own. This picture was an attempt to draw a self-portrait of the child Yael, who had fragmented under the duress of the abuse and had not really survived it. Yael could now acknowledge the child that she might have been and invite her back into her life. She insisted that her essential soul, her being, her core self, was unscathed by the incest. The abuse had entombed the child Yael and she was depicted in this picture as having outgrown its confining boundaries. Yael pointed to a handle on the upper right of the frame surrounding the child as capable of unlocking the frame and allowing the child out. The star of Beatrice, her guardian angel, hovers over and penetrates the confining frame. "This is not a drawing of a dissociated child-alter," she explained, "this is me loving my child-self." Although the background of this child was one of a divided reality, represented, according to Yael, by the horizontal line in the background of the self-portrait, "this line" she emphasized, "does not go through me any longer."

Discussion

In this section we present our understanding of the developing symbolic representation of the self as seen in Yael's artwork through a theoretical framework that utilizes Mahlerian concepts. In contrast to the patient, who had chosen to follow the development of a discrete symbol (the "figure"), our approach was to analyze Yael's works as a sequence of whole representations of the healing self. During her debriefing Yael admitted that prior to therapy she had absolutely no awareness of her fragmented personality structure. We believe that the alter responsible for the ink drawing represented by Figure 1 (possibly the host personality) was oblivious to the underlying fragmentation. This picture represented, in more ways than one, an Autistic stage. Nevertheless, a careful examination of the picture does reveal a pictorial compartmentalization. We found dozens of creations from that pretherapy period displaying enclosures, internal spaces, or holes (e.g., Figures 1, 2, 3). Glover (1943) identified the concept of nucleation, a defense mechanism

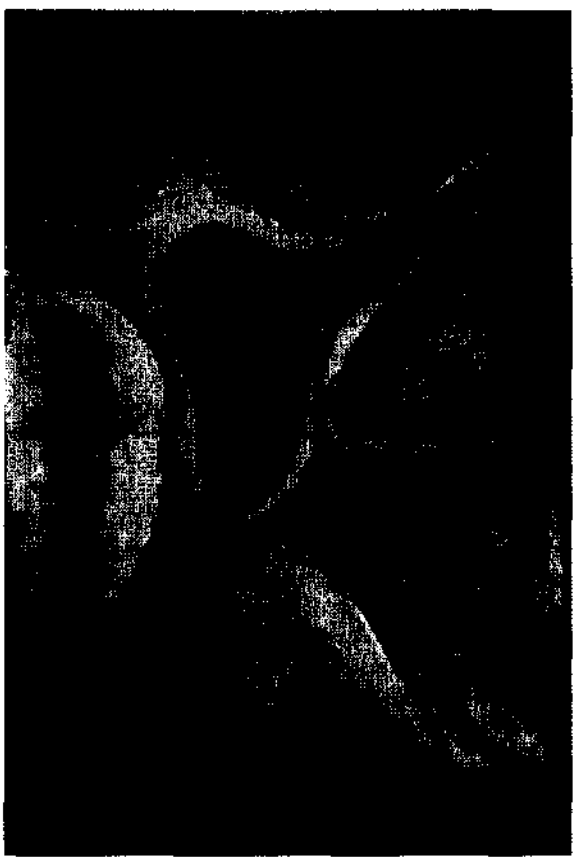

Figure 9.

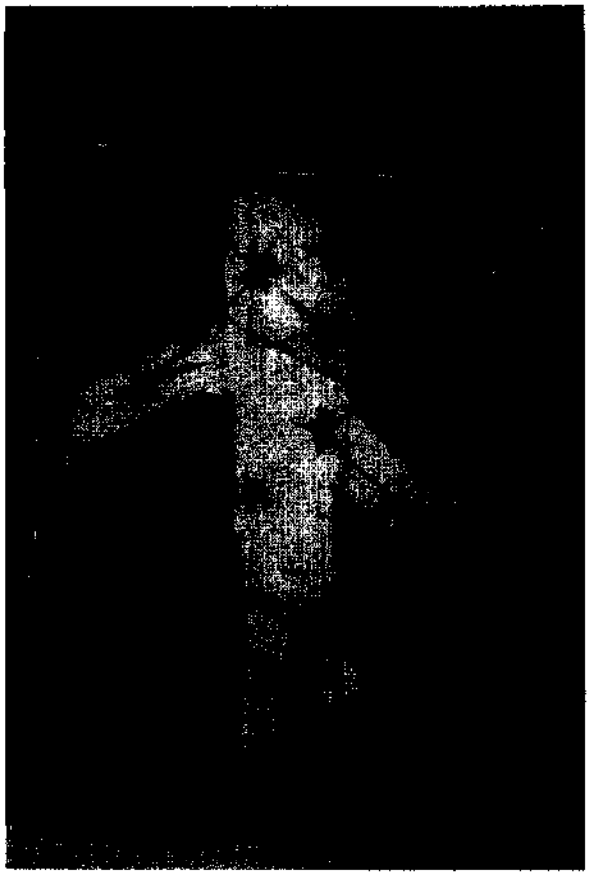

Figure 10.

operative when the ego is under overwhelming stress. Hopper (1991) described how the ego cannot bear to retain a comprehensive memory trace of the sensations, affects and ideas about its self, its objects, and its trauma, and so it makes a summary of them, which it isolates and puts inside its own capsule. Scharff and Scharff (1994) suggest that in response to overwhelming early trauma, children with constitutionally weak egos may sustain a shattering of the self leading to the formation of multiple personality. The Scharffs posited that the process of dissociation can result in two response patterns that are at opposite poles of the traumatic response continuum: frozen encapsulation in the trauma and the diffuse splintering of the personality. In the case of Yael we saw both clinical phenomena. In fact, the two seem sequentially related. Following the encapsulation in Figures 1–3, the enclosed trauma seemed to have become contained by the splintered personality alters that had emerged later in the process (Figures 4, 5, 7). This was not the sole stylistic alteration we had observed in Yael's productions.

Shortly after commencement of psychotherapy, Yael started to add written captions to the drawings. Our own records support Yael's post-hoc account and indicate that during the time Figure 2 was created she had not yet become aware of her other personality alters. In this picture another alter must have felt the need to draw our attention to the inner drama and to the subjective loss of inner cohesion. As time went by, different handwritings emerged. We felt that as more of Yael's inner world had been allowed to surface, more variability of self-expression could be observed. The variability was concomitant with the different characteristics the various alters had presented. This process of an expanding variety of styles started to change course, and a movement toward convergence in modes of self-expression was noted as Yael approached integration. Toward the end of therapy, as Yael was using more color and space, her use of script diminished. During the time immediately preceding her integration, she apparently no longer needed words to express herself in art. The full range and intensity of her feelings were later represented in vivid colors, vigorous hand strokes and large formats.

We feel that the therapeutic process of the psychological formation of Yael's self is well represented in the sample sequence of pictures presented in this paper. Before her treatment started the images she produced were usually centered in the middle of the page (see Figure 1). They typically displayed a very complicated though balanced structure, each comprising multiple elements. These images held no subjective meaning for Yael. They were perceived as mere exercises in graphic aesthetics. With the commencement of psychotherapy, the comprising elements in Yael's drawings begin to separate and occupy more space on the page, some still connected to each other, others completely separate. Noticeable was the conspicuous use of two recurrent motifs: straight lines forming disconnected sword- or blade-like shapes, possibly standing for objects identifying with the abusive parent, and circles forming interconnected enclosures, perhaps inclined to hide and prevent the uncovering of their victim identity (see Figure 2). This symbolic transition from an undifferentiated, but compartmentalized singular entity (Figure 1) to a state in which the projected self is depicted as comprised of two strands of cohabiting elements (Figure 2) could also

be seen as demonstrating a development from an Autistic stage to a Symbiotic stage. Figure 3 is another fine example of this era. The round internal spaces observed earlier now become a tight coil, a wire fence protecting the internal objects with which Yael had already become familiar.

The advancing therapeutic process was accompanied by a creative spatial loosening, reminiscent of the unravelling of a ball of string (Figure 4). At this period in Yael's life, personality alters became more insistent on active participation not only in therapy, but also in the creative process. A growing number of artworks from that time represent the creative involvement of different alters. The sequence of pictures displayed varying styles, motifs and materials. Figure 5, for example, was drawn by a child alter. This picture also represents the first emergence of explicitly anthropomorphized symbols in Yael's work. With Yael's improved capacity to tolerate conspicuous awareness of the horrible narrative of her childhood ordeals, we also notice an increased representation of human figures. A numerical illustration of this process is the following: of the 97 pictures preceding Figure 5, only 13 contained a distinct anthropomorphized element. Of the following 83 pictures, 50 contained at least one human-like figure. Another illustration of the artwork of different alters is demonstrated in Figure 6. This personality part typically invested more intense energy in her artwork evident in the quick tempo of her short, dense pen strokes.

Going back to our theoretical analysis, we believe that the stage of Symbiosis is represented in Figures 2–5. From Yael's point of view there appears to be a problem in internally differentiating the personality alters. There is a sense of inner complexity, but a clear specificity of internal objects is lacking. We had searched for clues as to the unique identity of the internalized parental objects. Conspicuous in her absence from Yael's subconscious, as symbolized in the 250 pieces she submitted for this study, was the mother. The father, on the other hand, clearly appeared as a central element in many pictures. Figure 2, originally drawn with complete obliviousness to its meaning, features a "self" shape tagged "the enemy." We later encountered a personality alter who was the father's introject that Yael named "the Saboteur." He stood for the sense that Yael belonged to her father, was as corrupt as he, inherited all his talents and was basically indistinguishable from him.

These blurred interpersonal boundaries between her and her abusive father were graphically represented in Figure 5. In the setting of the psychologically absent mother, this father was both maternally nurturing as well as intrusively abusive. As Yael's bystanding mother had not been libidinally available for comfort and sustenance, she could not be internalized as a reassuring image. Instead, from the sense of goodness she perceived in her father, the child had to split off the star-shaped guardian angel residing safely outside the violated self (Figure 6); Yael, however, remained tied to the internal representation of the bad parent. We felt that the era represented by Figures 5 and 6 reflected a beginning stage of Differentiation. The struggle for separation was commencing. Yael's growing recognition of her personality structure and her diminishing denial of her internal complexity was a valid sign of her progress in therapy, reflected also in a stage of Separation from the incestuous father's identity.

As treatment progressed, Yael was able to benefit from the therapeutic holding context and to allow herself to contain goodness. This, in turn, reinforced the weakened central ego and enabled her to share experiences across amnesic barriers. The continuous spontaneous production of art forced the denying host personality to become aware of her defenses and to monitor communication among alters. This process, we believe, fostered the healing of the splits toward personality integration. The integrated self then came to be defined in terms of its potential, rather than in terms of the father's badness. Figure 7 displays Yael's explicit acceptance of that and demonstrates the beginning of a converging process of the part-selves into a complex three-dimensional concept of herself. This implosive progression was accompanied by an emotional eruption both in therapy and in her spontaneous, artistic work. Gouache, acrylic and finger paints began to be the preferred materials. The expanding emotional expression seemed to have required larger spaces for artistic expression, reaching mammoth 110 × 220 cm pieces. Yael also began to produce collages, using materials such as metal, wood and cloth. She showed growing self-confidence to become audible and visible as an incest survivor who deserved to live and to heal. In Figure 8 one sees a representation of the emotional sense of breakthrough and rebirth, represented by the wooden stick that stands out as a new entity emerging from a background of flaming rage, associated with Yael's tortured past. The period that followed Figure 8 was characterized by powerful abreactions and a painful attempt to forge her own dis-

tinct identity as a non-victim. Yael had begun her stage of Individuation. This developmental stage is acknowledged as particularly challenging for abuse survivors. Kramer (1983) described a lack of self-object differentiation in women sexually abused by their mothers. Fisher (1991) believed that the crisis of the rapprochement subphase in incest survivors cannot be naturally resolved, and the child cannot individuate. Ambivalence and rage have to be denied to preserve the internal representation of a good parent. The process of Individuation thus requires the experiential acknowledgement of the dissociated anger.

During this time, artistic creativity came to a virtual halt. Yael evidently needed every breath of energy for her therapeutic struggle to reverse the mental process that tore her self apart. Figures 9 and 10 were completed after personality integration was achieved. We believe these pictures demonstrate the need to comprehend and process the existential experience. After the explosive, shattering process had been reversed in therapy, Yael was left feeling very young again. Indeed, the semi-abstract self-portrait in Figure 10 is one of a child. Yael had healed her injured child self, and around the time Figure 10 was painted she was experiencing herself as the original core Yael who had defined itself in terms of her potential and her capacity for growth. She recreated what Bollas (1989) termed the core self, or the idiom of her personality, and what Fairbairn (1952) called the pristine self.

At this point we witnessed what Mahler termed "the psychological rebirth of a human infant" (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975). The new sense of self was perceived as so potent that it occupied practically the entire vast paper arena used for these pieces. In the picture Yael seems to be showing how sensitized she is to feelings. She shows us what a large proportion of her subjective self is occupied, at this stage, by her newly discovered capacity to feel, represented by an immense heart. The victorious self is standing on the diminished shadow of her abused past. While a pictorial disjoining of the right arm is still noted in Figure 9, Figure 10 represents an integrated self-entity dotted with symbols of hope in the shape of her guardian angel, Beatrice hovering above. Yael saw this picture as representing the girl whose normal development had been arrested, but who was given a new life. Full of hope, she now (in the artwork) feels she can start shaping her own new identity.

Schultz, Braun and Kluft (1985) found high levels of creativity in a large percentage of DID patients. Fuhrman (1993) thought that this finding perhaps suggests that those suffering from DID may use artistic expression as their primary form of self-expression. Bearing in mind that encoded traumatic experiences are not subjected to cortical processing and control and are imprinted in the limbic system as affect and sensations without narrative (van der Kolk, 1994), artwork may frequently be the main route to the exploration of traumatic material. In the case of Yael, it was her own drive to express herself artistically, not a therapist's initiative. Frequently, her creations were precursors of material to be worked on at a later time. The data collection for this study may very well have been the final integrating intervention for Yael. It helped her put the entire sequence of her non-verbal subconscious process in perspective and to add a "cortical" verbal soundtrack to the processes experienced. Yael, who previously derived her identity with reference to her victimized and surviving aspects of the self, felt safe enough, when she summarized her debriefing process, to state that this had helped her to come to appreciate her artistic talents. She added that she was ready to move on artistically to a future- rather than a past-oriented creativity. Yael was now in what Winnicott (1951) termed a potential space. This is the external space between mother and baby that is taken in and in which he or she grows, plays, creates and thinks as a separate person. Yael was now ready to enter this space, redefining herself as her own object, worthy of her own benevolent self-care.

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