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B O O K R E V I E W

SANDPLAY AND THE PSYCHE:
INNER LANDSCAPES AND OUTER REALITIES

BRENDA WEINBERG & NEHAMA BAUM, EDS.

Thera Art, Toronto
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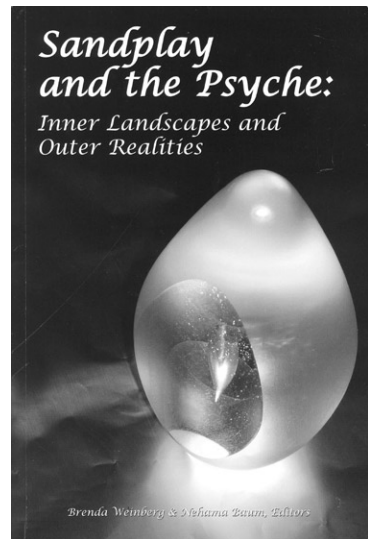
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OPPOSITE: *Oracle—
Sea Change* © *Jenny
Badger Sultan.*

Sandplay and the Psyche: Inner Landscapes and Outer Realities, edited by Brenda Weinberg and Nehama Baum, had its origins in the 2003 ISST conference in Seattle, Washington. Weinberg and Baum have gathered writings, many from Canadian sandplay therapists, on the theme of landscape and how it is used and reflected in sandplay process. In one of the articles most closely related to their theme, Lenore Steinhardt writes of the influence of landscape and geography on her therapy clients in Israel. She first looks at the use of beach and sand in its natural environment: sand structures and deep holes, sculptures in the sand. She considers how such structures may reflect the local geography and culture, and goes on to consider several uses of the beach landscape in sandplay processes. If



we think of it, the beach may be a giant sandtray, and bringing it into the office is an invitation to bring the outer landscape inside, as well as to express the inner world outwardly. One interesting section, which I wish had been expanded upon with pictures of more trays, was the consideration of a particular figure, a fisherman, in the processes of multiple clients. The synchronous use of figures and themes is a fascinating topic that merits attention in writing about sandplay.

Another important contribution is Barbara Turner's *Patterns of Transformation in Sandplay*. Turner considers the theoretical standpoints of Erich Neumann and Dora Kalff, which outline development and transformation in a sandplay process, and compares them to the work of Allan Schore and other neurobiologists on brain development and attachment. Turner also presents a lot of useful material from the field of brain research, which validates Kalff's intuition, and that of many other sandplay therapists, about the capacity of the psyche to heal in the free and protected space of sandplay. Her presentation of the mythology of the world tree, as a metaphor for the development of the psyche, is apt and an interesting contribution on its own. It also lends imagery and myth to what might otherwise be a dry presentation of theory and research.

I also very much appreciated Barbara Weller's contribution of a case study in *Journey to a New Reality*. The case begins dramatically, with an intuitive insight of the therapist, which possibly saved her client's life. Sandplay seemed an essential part of this client's process of self-discovery, for the client commented that she thought that "words wouldn't work." Her final tray, a full and developed landscape, stands in strong contrast to the barrenness of her first tray, and one can see the journey she has taken from arid beginnings.

Landscape is a vital consideration in sandplay, for it is the elements of the natural world, through the sand itself as well as the many natural objects in a sandplay therapist's collection – stones, driftwood, shells, feathers, seeds, pinecones, dried flowers– which hold the connection to spirit. We don't have random objects in our collections, but try to hold a representation that reflects all life, in both the symbolic and natural worlds. I believe this is an especially important connection to keep in our awareness as sandplay therapists as the world we live in creates so many distractions that pull us away from natural environments.

Jung wrote often of experiences he had of the natural world, as a young boy and also in his travels as an adult. Meredith Sabini collected many of these writings in *The Earth Has a Soul* (2005). Much of what he had to say seems to become even more relevant as time goes by:

Through scientific understanding, our world has become dehumanized. Man feels himself isolated in the cosmos. He is no longer involved in nature and has lost his emotional participation

in natural events, which hitherto had a symbolic meaning for him. Thunder is no longer the voice of a god, nor is lightning his avenging missile. No river contains a spirit, no tree means a man's life, no snake is the embodiment of wisdom, and no mountain still harbors a great demon. Neither do things speak to him nor can he speak to things, like stones, springs, plants, and animals. He no longer has a bush-soul identifying him with a wild animal. His immediate communication with nature is gone forever, and the emotional energy it generated has sunk into the unconscious. (Jung in Sabini, pp.79-80)

Jung goes on to say, in the next paragraph, "This enormous loss is compensated by the symbols of our dreams" (Jung in Sabini p.80). We might also say that this loss is also compensated by the work that Dora Kalff created, using imagery in the medium of sand and water to create our inner landscape in the sandtray. In the sand we have the opportunity to experience again our connectedness to the natural world; we put our hands into Mother Earth, our body touches her body, and here we have an opportunity to have an experience of the Self.

Sandplay and Psyche: Inner Landscapes and Outer Realities offers a contribution towards an important topic of inner landscape in sandplay.



Radiant Light-Dreaming in the Hypogeum © Jenny Badger Sultan.