

## REFLECTIONS: BOOKS & EVENTS

JOURNAL OF  
SANDPLAY  
THERAPY®  
VOLUME 28  
Number 2  
© 2019



### *A THERAPIST'S GUIDE TO MAPPING THE GIRL HEROINE'S JOURNEY IN SANDPLAY*

BY ROSALIND HEIKO

#### *A Reflection by Eliana Gil*

Fairfax, Virginia, USA

© 2019  
Sandplay Therapists  
of America®/Journal  
of Sandplay Therapy®

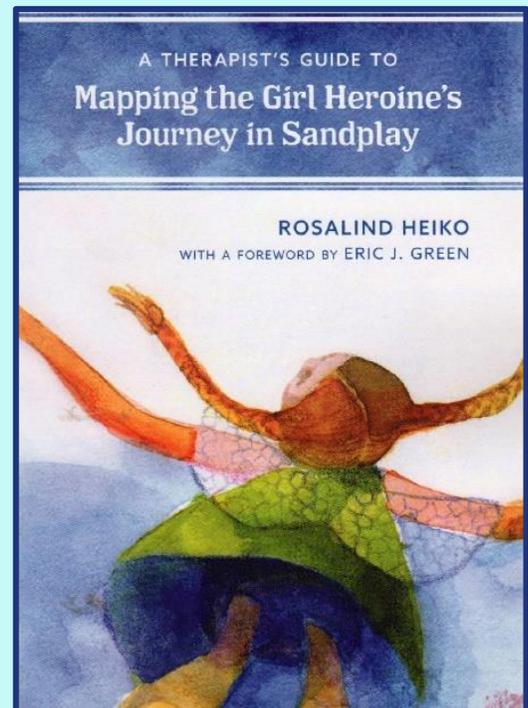
*Dr. Eliana Gil is a  
Licensed Marriage  
and Family Therapist,  
a Registered Play  
Therapy Supervisor,  
an AAMFT Supervisor,  
and a Registered Art  
Therapist.*

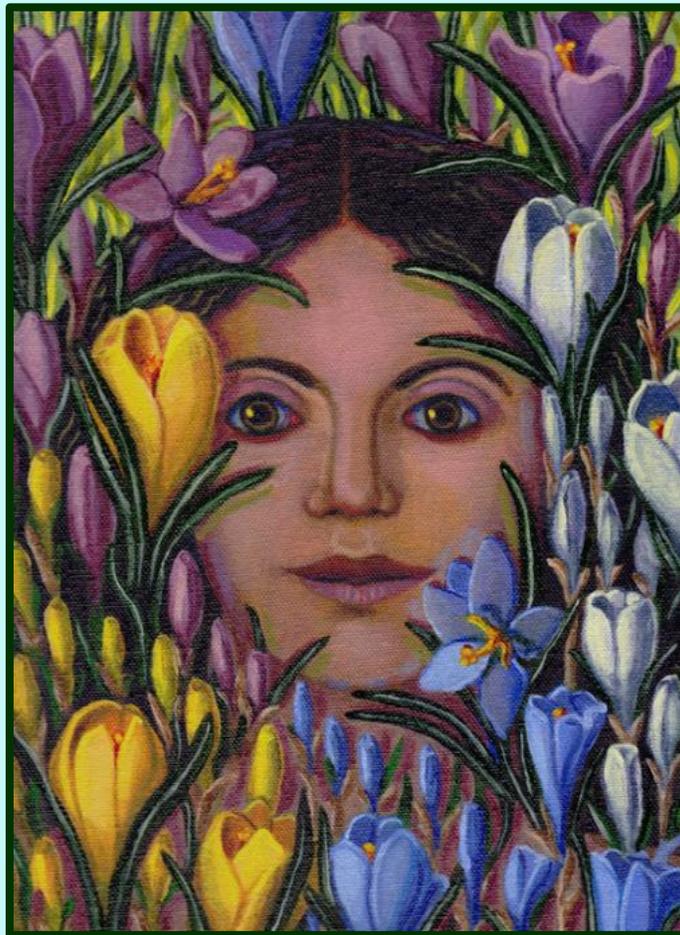
*Dr. Heiko is a  
Registered Play  
Therapist-Supervisor  
and a Certified  
Sandplay Teacher  
Member of Sandplay  
Therapists of America  
and the International  
Society for Sandplay  
Therapy.*

*Paintings pp.2-9 © by  
Sheryl Humphrey*

When I read Dr. Roz Heiko's book, *A Therapist's Guide to Mapping the Girl Heroine's Journey in Sandplay*, I was inspired to see how Dr. Heiko puts clinical reflection and willingness to deepen therapeutic understanding at the forefront of her work with children. This is not a book about a quick activity, or even a book about a theory or technique. This is about a revolutionary concept of clinical responsibility and purpose: A way to begin to think about the complex and textured clinical material that children bring our way. And yes, there is a substantive blueprint that helps us navigate some of what we will have opportunities to witness as children come into our offices and choose the sand tray as their primary way to work.

This is where Dr. Heiko makes her greatest contribution: She gives us a way to view the tray (and the evolution of trays over time) that is organized and grounded. She provides us with a map with which we can observe what was, what is, and what possibly will be. She engages us in thoughtful pondering of the powers at play when children, especially young girls, begin their work in the sand tray and with story.



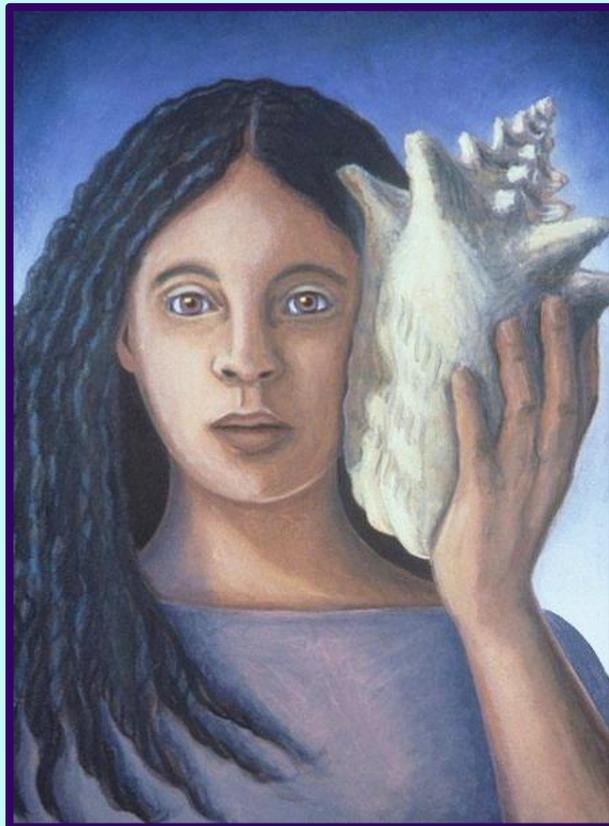


Encountering the Crocus © 2017 by Sheryl Humphrey

I have been exposed in the past to Joseph Campbell's (1991, 2001) work on Hero Journeys and it was quite evocative to read about the counterpart Heroine's Journey and to reflect on the unique challenges of girls' developmental challenges. Heiko states: "Girls in particular must mediate expectations from without and within. The need to self-regulate with regard to our emotional states and the situations in which girls find themselves, is crucial to living bravely, creatively, and well through the challenges, traumatic experiences and obstacles encountered in daily life" (2018, p.4). This single-mindedness on girls and women (and the feminine side of males) was made more exciting for me because I have just entered my seventh decade, and I am reading Mary Pipher's lovely and stirring book *Women Rowing North: Navigating Life's Currents and Flourishing as we Age* (2019), the continuation or re-charting of a heroine's journey, for sure. So my brain was firing with insights and resonating neurons. I felt both capable of expanded vision and visibility, a true deepening of myself in relationship to my work and the

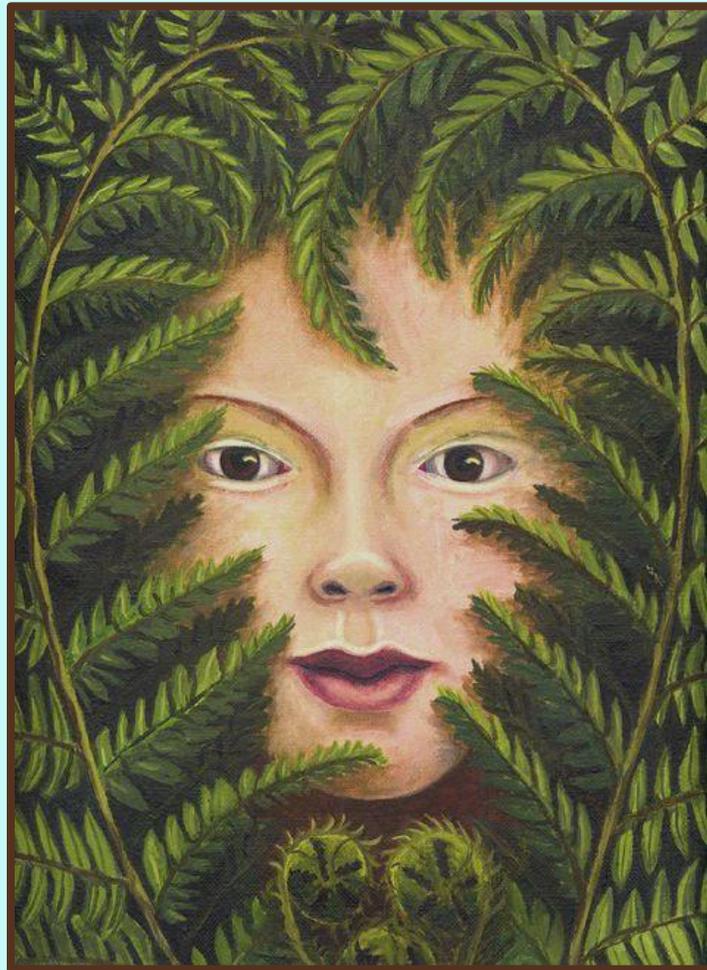
work of my clients! This has truly been an exciting adventure of intensifying and expanding comprehension. And although I am officially retired from direct clinical work, I am consulting and teaching and immediately began revising some of my focus and direction in this important work.

Dr. Heiko has been a personal friend of mine for more than a decade and I respect and admire her tremendously. But with this book I came face to face with her passion and dedication and steadfastness in developing and amplifying her approach in order to show others a legitimate way towards greater depth in their work. I must admit at times in the past, I felt her material was a little beyond me, perhaps a bit too complex for me. But the book truly provides an illuminated path for us to assimilate into whatever clinical approach we have, and will be in the best interest of our professional growth, and more importantly, the growth of our girl child clients. Dr. Heiko shows us how to understand what we see and how to provide what she calls, “targeted therapeutic assistance.” Paradoxically, most learning occurs when cognitive interpretation can be suspended at times, in favor of sensing and “being with” or being “on” the journey with the child.



Girl with Shell, 1998 © by Sheryl Humphrey. Private collection.

Her basic premise in the Heroine's Journey is that children use the sand tray to externalize their stories and show where they are in the journey, presenting themselves with concrete challenges, facing both their vulnerabilities and resources, and having moments of discovery. The therapist accompanies the child, mindful about where they are and where they need to go, sometimes gently facilitating their journey. She offers strategies for both looking over trays as well as determining progress. Dr. Heiko outlines the pathways of the map, which she terms "gates," and which include five major processes: Gate 1: Pathways: choosing the journey; Gate 2: Discernment: facing fear and embodying courage; Center: Constellating the Self; Gate 3: Harmony: reconciling tensions and integrating shadow; and Gate 4: Re-turn: appreciating abundance. She discusses the issues, obstacles and interpretations relevant to each crossing.



Girl in the Ferns © 1999 by Sheryl Humphrey

Heiko also discusses both providing sandplay integrated with play therapy as well as critical general guidelines for the general practice of sandplay. Some in-depth case descriptions vividly capture Dr. Heiko's appreciation for all that is alive and active in children's sandplay work. The reader also has opportunities to practice mapping by reading and then completing a template of gates, issues, and constellating of self. In other words, this book can serve as a map for therapists whose primary desire is to anchor their work in more substantive interaction with the content and process of sandplay therapy.

The critical piece that is missing in our current climate of rushed certifications, is joyfully found here. This book is written for those clinicians who wish to slow down, see what is and is not visible, follow along in the girl heroine's journey, provide gentle guidance when needed, and value and chronicle the remarkable opportunities available with clinical study and conscious investment in the work we witness. The child provides a window into her world and we can either observe through a shaded opening that remains vague or cloudy, or we can open the window and observe with clarity the wonderment of the healing process in the sand. The clinical decision is within reach and this book makes it so much more accessible and feasible. This book is profound and will take repeated readings and practice to reach its optimal goals of assisting therapists with their young sandplay girl clients.

#### REFERENCES:

Campbell, J. (2008). *The hero with a thousand faces*. Novato, CA: New World Library.

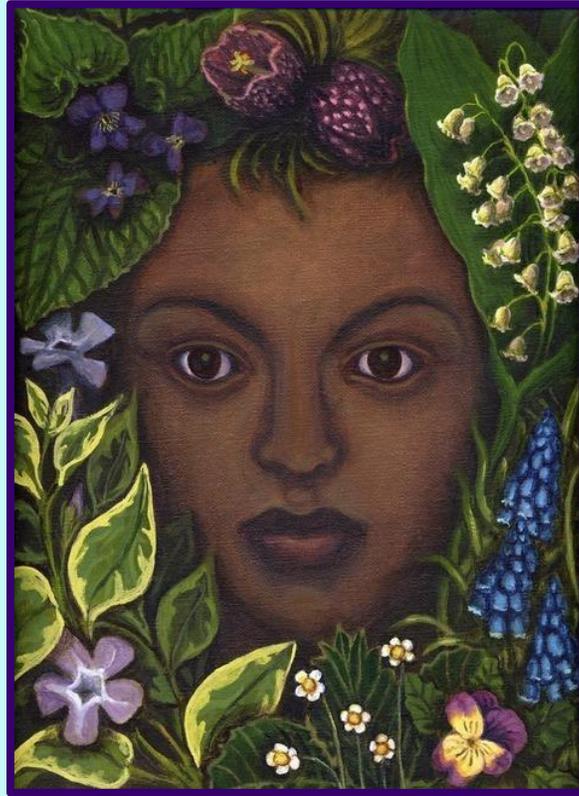
Campbell, J. (1991). *The power of myth*. First Anchor Books.

Heiko, R. (2018). *A therapist's guide to mapping the girl heroine's journey in sandplay*. Lanham, MD: The Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group.

Pipher, M. (2019). *Women rowing north: Navigating life's currents and flourishing as we age*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.



Girl with Butterfly, 1995 © by Sheryl Humphrey. Private collection.



Girl in the Little Spring Flowers © 1999 by Sheryl Humphrey

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS REFLECTION**

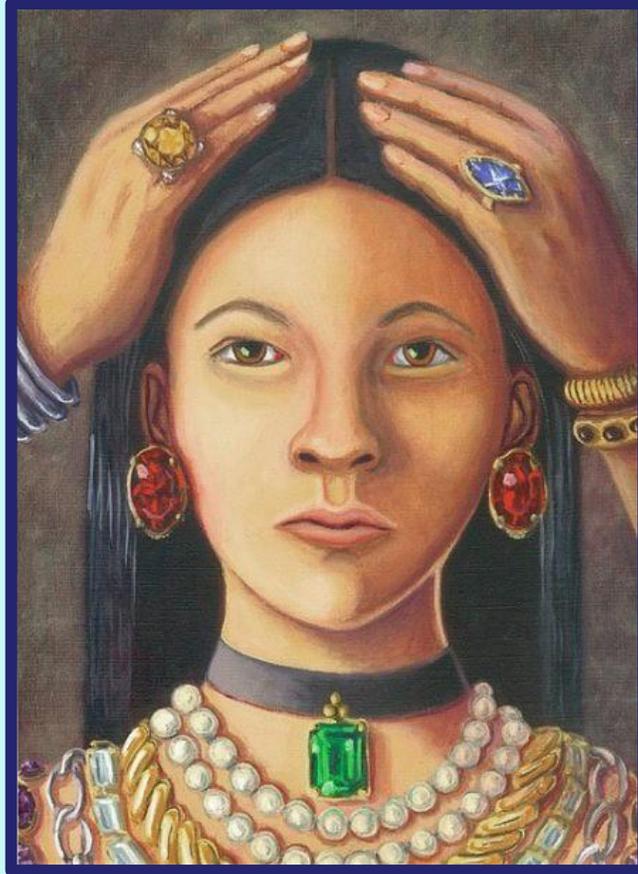
**DR. ELIANA GIL** is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, a Registered Play Therapy Supervisor, an AAMFT Supervisor, and a Registered Art Therapist. She is also a Circle of Security Certified Parent Educator, a Level II Theraplay provider, and participated and completed a two-year Individual Certification process with Dr. Bruce Perry. She was honored with the Association for Play Therapy's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2011 and a Practitioner Award from both the American Family Therapy Association and the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children. She is a Founding Partner and Senior Clinical and Research Consultant of Gil Institute for Trauma Recovery & Education, in Fairfax, Va. In the last two decades, Eliana has directed two child sexual abuse treatment programs in Northern Virginia and continues her work in the field of child abuse prevention and treatment. She has served on the Board of Directors of the American Professional Society on the Abused of Children and the National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse. Dr. Gil has written numerous chapters, journal articles, and books on child abuse and related topics and has participated in educational videotapes that feature her work through Guilford Press. Her most recent books include *Post-Traumatic Play: What Clinicians Should Know* and the second edition of *Play in Family Therapy*. Dr. Gil co-authored *Termination Challenges in Psychotherapy* with Dr. David Crenshaw. Dr. Gil is a well-known international lecturer, author, and clinician. Since 2014 Dr. Gil has conducted specialized, unique trainings in Fairfax, VA. She also sponsors the Mid-Atlantic Play Therapy Institute in Northern Virginia. CORRESPONDENCE: [emgil@earthlink.net](mailto:emgil@earthlink.net) and [Starbrighttraininginstitute.com](http://Starbrighttraininginstitute.com)

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK**

**ROSALIND HEIKO, PHD, RPT-S, ISST, CST-T, NCSP**, is a registered play therapist-supervisor, and sandplay teacher member of Sandplay Therapists of America (STA) and the International Society for Sandplay Therapy (ISST). Dr. Heiko holds national certification in school psychology and directs pediatric and family psychology in Cary, North Carolina, specializing in working with trauma in children and families for over thirty-five years. She travels nationally and internationally, training therapists and working with children and families. Dr. Heiko is the founder of NC Play Therapy & Sandplay Training and is a former board of trustees member of the Sandplay Therapists of America (STA). She is currently a teaching member of the International Society for Sandplay Therapy. She has published chapters in several notable play therapy books, as well as in the *Journal of Sandplay Therapy*. Dr. Heiko's most recent publication is the 2018 book, *A Therapist's Guide to Mapping the Girl Heroine's Journey in Sandplay*.  
CORRESPONDENCE: [www.drheiko.com](http://www.drheiko.com)



Keeper of the Red Rose © 2007 by Sheryl Humphrey



Girl with Many Jewels, 1996 © by Sheryl Humphrey

### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

**SHERYL HUMPHREY** is a painter and writer in Staten Island, NY. She did two years' undergraduate study at Yale University, received her BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University, was awarded The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Graduate Fellowship in Painting in 1982, and earned her MFA degree at Brooklyn College in 1998. She has exhibited extensively in New York and across the US. Her paintings are included in many public, private, and corporate collections, including Prudential Insurance, the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, and the Williamsburg Art & Historical Center in Brooklyn. The artist says of her work: "My paintings are representations of powerful forces that I sense within myself, in others, and in the world around me. I sometimes think of these paintings as portraits of the spirits of Nature; they reflect my visions of anthropomorphized energies at work in the universe. Readings in herbalism, alchemy, folklore, and mythology, in conjunction with close contact with Nature in my garden, are sources for the subjects of my paintings." Ms. Humphrey is the author of *The Haunted Garden: Death and Transfiguration in the Folklore of Plants* (2012), available at <http://www.etsy.com/listing/118819081/>. Ghosts and gardens also figure in her writings, which have been included in anthologies published by Egeus Press. See more of her work at <http://sherylhumphrey.tumblr.com/> CORRESPONDENCE: [brainiacbooks@gmail.com](mailto:brainiacbooks@gmail.com).

*A THERAPIST'S GUIDE TO MAPPING  
THE GIRL HEROINE'S JOURNEY IN SANDPLAY*

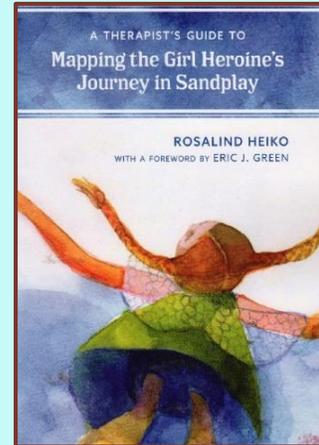
BY ROSALIND HEIKO\*\*\*

***A Reflection by Eliana Gil***

Fairfax, Virginia, USA

**KEY WORDS:** Sandplay therapy, girls, "Heroine's Journey," child, psychotherapy, healing process, pathways, choosing the journey; **Discernment:** facing fear and embodying courage; **Center:** Constelating the Self; **Harmony:** reconciling tensions, integrating shadow; **Return:** appreciating abundance. **Reflections:** Books & Events\*\*\*.

**ABSTRACT:** Dr. Eliana Gil reflects on Dr. Rosalind Heiko's 2018 Book, *The Therapist's Guide to Mapping the Girl Heroine's Journey in Sandplay*.



Belle Pepper © 2000 by Sheryl Humphrey