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Drawings of Children with Final Stage Cancer: Signification and Interpretation

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Abstract

This article focuses on the notions of signification, interpretation and significant and their projection on the spontaneous drawings of children suffering from final stage cancer. We attempt to present a brief study of signs and signification symbolisms. We argue that the children's spontaneous drawings may be useful as semiotic processes and structures organised and produced by the children and have specific signification and/or representational purposes.

Key words: interpretation, signification, significant, child, cancer

Introduction

Childhood cancer may be described as the most influential event in a child's life, forcing children and their families to face many enormous challenges and especially the uncertainty regarding surviving the disease along with the major changes and restraints regarding everyday life (Enskär et al., 1997a, 1997b· Woodgate & Degner, 2004); the serious psychological and physical burden caused by the long-lasting painful therapeutic procedures (McGrath, 2001); and the numerous consequences regarding physical and mental health (Hatira, 2000).

A number of emotions such as concern, fear, sorrow and despair may become especially disturbing (Malchiodi, 1999· Woodgate, et al., 2003), causing feelings of helplessness (Spinetta et al., 1999). In addition, through the defense mechanism of

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withdrawal (Hatira, 1998), children try to recover from the psychological distress caused by the therapeutic procedures and the complications of their illness (Bibace & Walsh, 1980· Oppenheim, 1996).

For some decades researchers have been studying the impact of the adverse factors of the disease and its treatment on the children's self-image, psychological and psycho-social condition (Stuber et al., 1996). One of the most stressful challenges faced by the children and their families are the uncontrollable symptoms of the complications of the disease and especially the relapses which often lead the sick child to the final stage of the illness and eventually, to death.

Children with cancer facing death

Even though, today, a significant percentage of children with cancer survive the disease, however there is still a percentage who reach the final stage – approaching death. Undoubtedly the imminent death of a child with cancer causes a family crisis. The child's awareness regarding his/her illness, its complications and severity and his/her apperception of his/her imminent death does not shock only the child's family, but the therapeutic team as well (Bibace & Walsh, 1980· Kübler-Ross, 1983· Hatira, 2000). The child's attitude and behavior, the material gathered during psychotherapy, and especially the one appearing in the drawings made by the child either during the therapeutic sessions or spontaneously in periods of crisis, may provide the therapeutic team with useful information concerning the appropriate crisis management strategies (Cyr, 2007) that might be helpful for both the child and his/her family.

The emotions of a child during the final stage have been rarely studied and the relevant literature is extremely poor. Nevertheless, we know that they have some particular emotional problems, manifest or latent, related to an (un) investment in their

own health (i.e. “this illness might kill me...”); it declares that the child experiences the illness as attack in his health. The child experiences the illness as an object persecution that wounds and potentially kills (psychoanalytical theory of relation’s relations object); thus, we need to focus on the related defense mechanisms (withdrawal, denial, overcompensation). Very often, sick children are unable to express their emotional problems because their parents are psychologically overwhelmed by their own fear of prognosis and extreme anxiety, as well as by their identification with their child, their overprotective attitude and their separation anxiety (Malchiodi, 2001a; Hatira, 2000). Experience indicates that the time devoted to thinking and remorse should be better invested in attention and care, since this latter attitude promotes emotional and relational movements, and has a transforming value that leads to an enhanced integration of emotional experiences (Balottin, et al., 2006).

Children can discuss their imminent death, are aware of the fact that they are dying, and they often use symbolic means, such as drawings, in order to communicate their emotions (Kübler-Ross, 1983). Even very young children are able to grasp and understand the meaning of death. Children with final stage cancer have an unconscious awareness of death, which they express mainly symbolically through their dreams and artistic expression.

Being near death, children face an internal struggle as well as questions about why they should die. All their anxiety, denial, anger, sorrow, along with the acceptance of their imminent death may be projected in their drawings (Bach, 1990). Particular forms, colours and drawing contents may be indicative signs of the condition experienced by the child (Malchiodi, 2001b, 2001c). Quite often we are able to identify specific symbolisms in the drawings of children facing death (Oppenheim & Hartmann, 2003).

Drawing as a way to express and communicate feelings

For children, drawing is a natural way to communicate, to express their feelings and inner thoughts. Furthermore, children rarely resist it, since it is far less threatening than verbal communication (Rae, 1991· Hatira, 1998· Malchioti, 2001b).

Drawings are being used since decades by psychiatrists and psychologists in order to analyze children's subjective emotions, their unconscious concerns, their fears, as well as other emotional states (Winnicott, 1971a· DiLeo, 1973· Klepsch & Logie, 1982· Richardson et al., 1990). Furthermore, drawings have been used to investigate children's attitudes toward painful procedures (Sturner et al., 1980); their self-perception in relation to the chronicity of their illness; the complications of the disease; pain (Villamira, & Occhiuto, 1983· Gabriels et al. 2000· Stefanatou & Bowler, 1997); as well as their emotional reactions following physical or psychological distress (Peterson, & Zamboni, 1998).

Many studies approach these problems through a psychoanalytic perspective in order to comprehend, process and intervene more effectively in the sick child's behavior (Allan, 1978· Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987· Wallon, 2001· Malchiodi, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c· Myers, 2002). Drawing has the advantage of being able to 'narrate' more about the painter than words would (Brenkman, 1999). In addition, it functions as a reflection of children's internal schematic representations, of their developing organizing or semantic systems through which they understand the different aspects of life (Athey, 1990· Rollins, 2005). This is of particular importance when referring to the drawings of children suffering from a chronic, life-threatening illness.

Methodology

An important aim of this study is a deeper interpretation of the signifier/signified and the significant in children's drawings; this would allow the therapeutic team to have a better understanding regarding the use of signs as symbols and symbolic references.

Based mainly on a psychodynamic approach, we focus on the source of the meaning in order to grasp the painter's intention as revealed by the manifest and the latent content of the drawing. The spontaneous drawings studied in this paper have been offered as 'gifts' to the members of the children's therapeutic teams in a specific place (the hospital) and in a specific time period (during the final stage of the illness). The aim of the recipient should be to carefully study the symbolisms of the drawings so as to reach a conclusion regarding the children's awareness regarding their imminent death: in such drawings, the signs should be identified as qualified marks of a sound subjectivity (Kitahara & Matsuishi, 2006· Yatsenko, 2002).

In the endeavor to interpret these drawings we assume there is a supreme, unique and autonomous significant of life and death. We also assume the idea of awareness as separate and universal, apparently communicated through a neutral symbolic language or a picture, a representation. The child with his drawings is a harbinger of messages and the aim of the viewer is to study/interpret carefully the symbolism of the drawings so as to form an inference relative to the children's realization of their impending death. In these drawings the signs should be defined as suitable symbols of a healthy subject.

In all aspects, studying these drawings helps in the identification of the signification of the signs and their content; in their symbolic manner, the drawings enhance our understanding of the meaning of signification, offering a perspective into the children's inner thoughts and part of their unconscious material. Hereby, we need to point to the distinction between representation and signification. Representation may be

understood in its conventional meaning, as a morphological structure of a previous view or experience of objects or events, allowing for their identification in representational form. Signification, on the other hand, can be approached through the detection of the signs of the content; the symbolisms attributed to these signs are subjected to the projection hypothesis requiring interpretation.

In the present study, in order to consider that a successful representation has been accomplished, we should be able to identify the shapes of the objects that the child intended to 'use' as representational signs-symbolisms in order to communicate important information to his/ her therapist(s). Here, representation consists of a direct unification between the representational images (i.e. houses, faces, trees, the sun, the sky etc.) as significant and the represented objects as they appear and are interpreted in the content of the drawing.

This study is concerned with the ideas of signification, interpretation and their application to the task of interpreting children's drawing. we present a brief introduction and brief discussion of semiotics, study of signs and signification systems, because we argue that drawings be profitably viewed as semiotic processes and structures which children and construct for specific signification or representational purposes. The important task for those needing to interpret children's drawings is to how they signify for the child. If we return to the drawing in1, it is difficult to understand how it is meaningful for the child unless have some knowledge of the child's interests and concerns which lead to production of the drawing.

Even then it is difficult to gain a clear understanding those affective, cognitive and physical processes that constitute the drawing process. This is not a representational drawing in conventional sense of depicting a view of an object or event. However it is a drawing in which the child is attempting to represent his specific idiosyncratic interests

in tall structures and the letter form 'r', further, it is a drawing in which these interests are visualised according to the child's idiosyncratic graphic logic. In many ways my discussion of this drawing helps to make the distinction between representation and signification. Representation can be understood in the conventional sense of a representation, in a formal structure, of a prior view or experience of objects or events, so that these can be recognised in the representational form. John Willats (1997, p. 22) writes that: If a picture is to provide an effective representation it must be possible to recognise in it the shapes of the objects that the artist or draftsman intended to represent. We shall therefore define an effective shape representation as a pictorial representation in which the three dimensional shapes of objects that the artist or draftsman intends to portray can be seen, clearly and unambiguously. Here representation consists of a direct association between the representational image as signifier, and the objects represented as signified. This is not unlike the sign relation, consisting of signifier and signified, postulated in structural linguistics by Saussure (1977).

The way in which I am using the term signification on the other hand replaces the relation between signifier and signified to one between signifier and signifier. That is to say, the relation is not between a signifier and something beyond and outside of its domain which we can access directly, a signified, because that which is signified can never be accessed except through signification, hence the signified is always a signifier. Thus when we speak of an effective representation we are not comparing a representational form with a true likeness which we can somehow approach outside of symbolic systems, our judgement is always already informed by symbolic systems. Therefore the approach I will be taking is the latter. Whilst it is possible to argue that when used for specific purposes certain projection systems in drawing convey information more effectively than others. Here the notion of signification is, I believe,

appropriate in that it provides a way of thinking about drawing practices in terms of their different signifying strategies. With these concerns in mind I will provide a brief introduction to semiotic theory and then show how it can help in our task of interpreting children's drawings.

31 drawings out of 23 children, who were having cancer, are presented here. Some of the children are still on treatment and some of them are on the final stage of cancer, in the pediatric cancer clinic for children at «Aglaia Kyriakou» hospital in Athens. Drawings collection, took place in different stages, during the treatment of children with cancer inside the hospital, and started 20 years ago. Through an exceptionally large number of drawings, we have selected the most indicative (table 1 and 2) in order to discuss the significance of their symbolism and the signs of their representations. Also we tried to look at them under the affirmative prism of the relative researches which have clear references and interpretations about the signs of loss and death of children who are on the final stage of their illness.

Some of those children are not living any more, and they had offered their drawings to their therapist during the psychotherapeutic procedure. Some other drawings were offered spontaneously to the psychologist who was working with them at a given time. Drawings of children in 3 cases (drawings 11/31, table 3, 4 and 2: fig. 12) were given as a spontaneous present to doctors or nurses during their morning visit in their hospital room. Although therapists (doctors and nurses) accepted kindly the drawings, there was not any willingness to make any kind of interpretations by them or by the children themselves, regarding those drawings. Drawings which are presented in this article are of great significance, and they are very representative because children offered them as presents to their therapists while they were on the final stage of their illness, very close to death. All the interpretations of the children drawings were

analysed and interpreted based on their personal history, as long as those children participated in a psychoanalytic psychotherapy intervention.






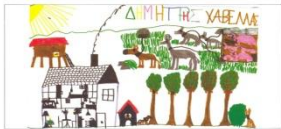

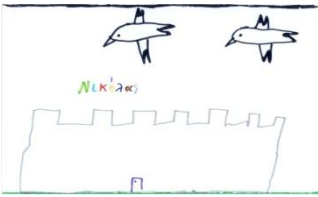

All the drawings were interpreted according to the psychodynamic approaches and theories which had been developed mainly from Kübler-Ross and other researches who have attempted to analyze and decode the symbolisms of the drawings of children who are close to death. Drawings were analysed and interpreted by the author, based on her vast experience of many years work with children with cancer, as long as she knew thoroughly children's stories through the long term psychotherapeutic work with them.

From that point of view, any interpretation which is attempted is not an arbitrary and subjective act of interpretation. Moreover is based on the long term psychotherapeutic work of the author with those children, which accompanied every stage of their illness.

The drawings presented hereby were being selected for three years. The parents' official permission for their presentation has been granted through the parents' organization FLOGA.



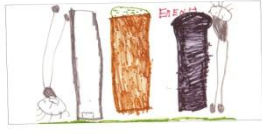









The signification and the significant in the perception of death

Table 1. Signs and symbolisms as representation of death

 <p>Figure 1. Boy, 10years, ALL</p>	 <p>Figure 2. Boy, 13 years, AML</p>	 <p>Figure 3. Girl, 12 years, ALL</p>
<p>“chaos”</p>  <p>Figure 4. Boy, 15 years, ALL</p>	 <p>Figure 5. Boy, 9 years, ALL</p>	 <p>Figure 6. Boy, 10 years, ALL</p>
 <p>Figure 7. Girl, 9 years, AML</p>	 <p>Figure 8. Boy, 9 years, ALL</p>	 <p>Figure 9. Girl, 10 years, ALL</p>

In Table 1, we can see that in the drawings of children with final stage cancer death may be represented by crosses (Figure 1); churches (Figure 2); faceless forms or chaos (Figures 3 & 4); black birds (Figure 5 & 8); a black house (Figure 6); a sunset (Figure 7 & 9); black skies (Figure 8).

Table 2. Signs of an apperception of death

 <p>Figure 1. Girl, 11 years, AML</p>	 <p>Figure 2. Boy, 12 years, ALL</p>	 <p>Figure 3. Girl, 5 years, ALL</p>
 <p>Figure 4. Boy, 9 years, Ewing's Sarcoma</p>	 <p>Figure 5. Girl, 7 years, osteosarcoma</p>	 <p>Figure 6. Boy, 12 years, ALL</p>
 <p>Figure 7. Boy, 9 years, ALL</p>	 <p>Figure 8. Boy, 7 years, ALL</p>	 <p>Figure 9. Boy, 7 years, ALL</p>
 <p>Figure 10. Boy, 14 years, ALL</p>	 <p>Figure 11. Boy, 13 years, Sarcoma</p>	<p>'betrayal'</p>  <p>Figure 12. Boy, 12 years, Osteosarcoma</p>

In Table 2 we can observe signs of an apperception of the imminent death. This apperception is followed by feelings of complete loneliness (Figure 1 & 2); tormenting interpersonal relationships (Figure 3); an inconsistency between mind and body (Figure 4).

Bach (1990) in her researches for the children's drawing it as observed that in the drawings of children facing death there is a particular preoccupation with the upper left part of the paper sheet (Table 2); there is often a path or road leading to that region

(Figure 5); or an escaping point in the form of a colourless area (Figure 6) or a colourless spot in the coloured sky (figure 7) or the sun (figure 8). This part of the sheet represents the sunset (Figure 9) and for these children it may also represent the end of their life. Kübler-Ross (1983) observed that the upper left quarter page is very important regarding its connection to spiritual issues and depictions of death, (Table 1) the depiction of the sun in the upper left of the paper sheet (Figure 6 & 7), or in its middle part (Table 2) with the rays in the shape of a cross (Figure 7), or even the green clouds in the sky as if they were in the ground (Figure 7), are all signs and symbolisms detected more frequently in the drawings of seriously ill or dying children than in the drawings of healthy ones (Perkins, 1977· Bach, 1975, 1990). Other elements of the drawings that have been interpreted as death symbols (Table 2) are the presence of a window in the attic or the roof of a house or a house without roof (Figure 8 & 9), called ‘a window of the soul’ by Bach (1966), and the presence of snakes (Figure 10 & 11), as noted by Perkins (1977), which may symbolize the change and transformation as well as the serious threat against the child’s life.

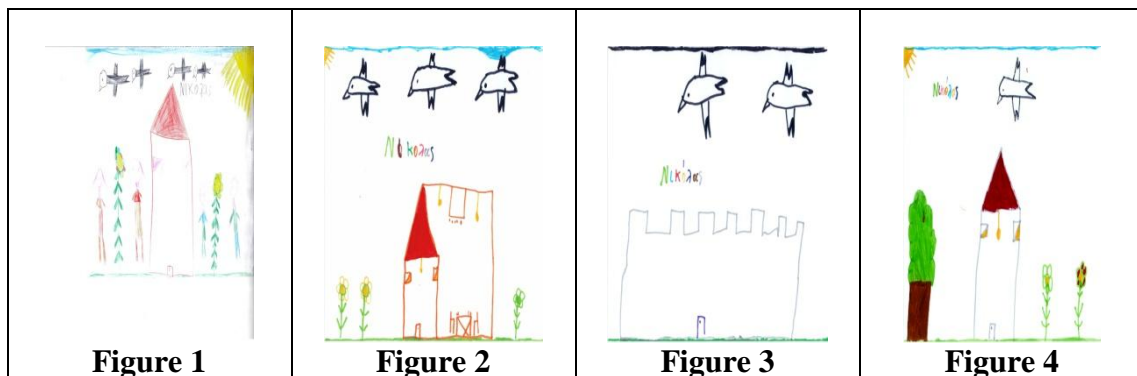
The signification and the significant in three case studies

In the following presentations, we can observe that both the manifest and the latent content of the children’s drawings ‘include’ the children’s personal references, inner thoughts and emotions. In each one of these cases we reluctantly state a particular hypothesis, using for each case the ‘frames’ of the story as they had been expressed in psychotherapy, in order to proceed to a conclusive observation and interpretation. We follow these steps because we need to support the substantiation of the information through the therapist-client relationship dynamics; still, any interpretation must be open to further investigation and alteration.

The case of N.

N. is 9 years old; when he was 3 he was diagnosed with leukemia. In the last six years, N. had four relapses. He is in the final stage and in a single hospital room for the last five weeks. During the last four weeks, N. has been offering his doctors one drawing per week (Table 3).

Table 3.



In the first drawing (Figure 1) he presents his family; the family house is paint in red, has no windows and the door is extremely small. His parents are depicted in the left part of the house and his siblings in the right. In the centre part there is a representation of N. himself and according to his own admission wishes to be portrayed as a flower with its petals lying on the ground. *“I am that flower... I like it because it is the largest...”* The flower is taller than the significant others, imposing its transient presence. We can observe the signification of his self and his self-image (the older/ taller ones die) and the significant of the consequences of his illness (leaves peculiarly designed). The flowers maintain the color of the sun as an ultimate need to be protected by his parents and possibly his doctors. In the sky, four black birds fly in a row, with their wings forming a cross. They might symbolize N.’s four relapses or his awareness of the ‘countdown’

leading to his imminent death. Certainly, the formation of the birds was not random; they form a cross and they fly paradoxically, towards the left, a signification with rather wants to tell us something: a return to the past according to the theory of symbolism of space developed by the Swiss graphologist Max Pulver (1994), the left side of the page symbolizes the past, the memories, the ties with its roots, and at the top centre and lower left, thaw fears. Also according to Ania Teillard (1968), the movement towards the left represents the return of Ego (to being) though the movement to the right represents the departure of Ego (empirical and individual Ego).

A week later, N. drew again (Figure 2) a house in red; many details were included. All the house lights were on and the table was made for the family dinner. The door and windows were open, a signification of his departure. No human figures were included. The flowers, with the leaves depicted in the natural manner, it can symbolize the healthy members of the family, while N. himself is represented by his name written with various colors precisely above the roof of the house. Here we can see just three birds, again flying leftwards and with their wings forming a cross. The same symbolism reappearing: is it his third relapse or the countdown of his time alive?

In the third drawing (Figure 3), N. has depicted a 'castle' in a place completely isolated and possibly as distant as a graveyard. We can refer to the signification of a graveyard and the significant of a tomb, while grief, as a preliminary lament, is represented by the dark blue. N. himself is represented just by his name (the only thing that will remain as a memory) which is again colorful. The sky is no longer blue but all-black and there are only two birds flying in the same manner. This is a 'mute' drawing, expressing complete loneliness, silence, detachment.







In the last drawing (Figure 4) we can see again his house in the middle, with the door lights on and the windows open; again, there are no human figures. The house is

no longer red; instead, it has the dark blue of the ‘accommodating structure’ of the previous drawing; its roof has the same dark brown as the trunk of the apple tree on the left. The two flowers represent his parents. The apple tree, is well-designed but has just one fruit, a reference to his low self esteem. Furthermore, it looks less than an apple tree and more like a cypress, a tree common in graveyards. In the sky there is now only one bird just above the house roof, always flying leftwards. N. died four days later.

The case of G.

G. is 10 years old and suffers from high-risk leukemia. The relapses of his illness forced for long-term hospitalizations. His mother had died a year before his diagnosis and his father had re-married soon after the mother’s death. Within the same year his step-mother gave birth to a girl and was very authoritarian and devoted to her own child. His father was distant and basically absent during G.’s hard times with his illness. G. felt extremely lonely and strongly expressed his need for love and tenderness to the people of the therapeutic team.

Table 4

 <p>Figure 1</p>	 <p>Figure 2</p>	 <p>Figure 3</p>
 <p>Figure 4</p>	 <p>Figure 5</p>	 <p>Figure 6</p>

In the last week before his death he suddenly started offering one drawing per day to the team members during their morning visits. The latent content of his drawings ‘narrates’ his family history. With these six drawings (Table 4) he attempts to ‘promulgate’ to the significant others (the therapeutic team and possibly his family) his suffering due to the family situation, his fears about his illness and its consequences and his awareness regarding his imminent death.

In his first drawing (Figure 1), we can see an unfinished house (one wall and the floor are missing) in brown (manifesting depression), with its door and windows closed. The house represents his mother and to it he is projecting her absence (her death) and his unfulfilled needs for love and affection (the missing wall and floor). At a previous session of his therapy he alluded “I feel alone in the house as if I don’t have a wall to lean on” Insinuating that he misses his mother who was a safe support in his life. Possibly, that the house without a wall depicts that which he feels. G. Does not have the wall support (his mother) or the floor as its base. His house at this stage of his report is no longer the same. There are no longer the basic supports to make him feel secure. The roof of the house, drawn with tense and unequal lines, manifests the existence of a problem in the family. It is an incomplete house: stability, security, unity and coziness have vanished through its openings. This is also confirmed by the unequal and tense lines made when drawing the black chimney; the smoke coming out represents his anger and emotional pain. As a signification and a significant his house is no longer a secure shelter. Near the house we see an apple tree with no leaves and a few fruits, while other fruits are on the ground. The apple tree represents himself and its fruits his ideal self, his will and ability for success, his personal value and the things he could accomplish; but in these there is no stability, since the fruits are not attached to the tree and they seem to disappear when reaching the ground. Presently though, the tree-self has neither leaves

nor branches, only a green corolla suggesting the boundaries of G.'s connection to the outside world; this is an expression of his anguish and lack of autonomy. According to the research of F. de Meredieu (1981), in this way the child projects 'his own body outline'. In other words he portrays himself just as he understands it. The apple trees represent him-self and the fruit which maybe borne on the branches represent crowning achievements and self confidence of the child. Children love to draw apple trees and we have often observed their drawings include an apple tree as a representation of their own self.

Davido (1971) considers the fruit of trees also flowers symbolize woman's fertility and sensitivity respectively. Koch (1958) however, theories that the fruit express the pursuit of success within the array of capabilities, the care of appearance, the demonstration of personal worth and the reality in the sort term with its immediate results. Finally, the landscape in which the tree reigns supreme portrays the outside world and its objective situations in which the subject lives and acts. Therefore from the drawing of the tree we are able to extract facts about the character of the subject whose drawing it is (Kroti, & Mani 2003, pp.125-126).

The drawings of many children suffering from leukemia seem to include a very symbolic use of red marks and spots, as well as frequent spontaneous depictions of fruit trees loosing their fruits (Perkins, 1977· Levinson, 1986). The yellow smear onto the apple tree may not be accidental. It seems as if the color has 'fled' from the sun (representing the father), an anthropomorphic sun peculiarly designed (as peculiar is his father's attitude toward him) in the upper right of the drawing. We might be observing the weakened dynamics of the father's emotions (destructing color from the sun) as well as G.'s intimate wish to be comforted by his father (the color onto the apple tree). In between the apple tree and the house, G. has written his name framed by two crosses.

When asked why he had made those two crosses he answered that in this way he is protecting his name, that is his body, possibly exorcising evil in the form of illness and death. A pale sky, two black clouds and a few birds symbolize the threat stemming by the illness and its consequences, since they express his fears and concerns.

In the drawing made the following day (Figure 2), the form, the size, the lines, the colors and the symbolisms are being repeated as significations and significant in their representations. The house is again lacking a wall and its floor, there are no windows, the door is closed and the roof is simpler, with no chimney, while the dark blue color symbolizes the lack of motherly affection as well as his grief for his mother's death and the loss of his health. Again, the apple tree has no leaves and its fruits 'stand' on the air. A green hill also appears in this drawing. Three green flowers (his father and siblings) seem to be bending their 'heads' toward the apple tree (G. himself); the tree is also bent toward them. Apparently, G. has always wanted a warm relationship with them. Each one's positioning on the hill is not random: when G. offered this drawing to his doctor, he asked him: "*Doc, why are cemeteries located uphill?*" In the blue sky, the black birds in procession signify the threat of his imminent death.

In the third day, his drawing again included the incomplete house. In the pale blue sky, the sun has no rays and there are more black birds expressing his anguish and concern in the face of death. The hill now has just two green flowers on top, possibly his parents. He is still represented by the apple tree which now has only green fruits, an intimate wish of rebirth, a regression to his infancy. In between the house and the tree there is a frame, the signification of a sepulchral stone and the significant of his name on (or on top of) it along with the phrase-wish '*long-live*'.

In the fourth drawing (Figure 4) we see a representation of his family without him. He himself is represented included in a red frame where he has written his name and a

tribute to his doctors: *'I love all doctors'*. He is also represented as an apple tree; here, both the tree and its fruits are black. Having a rainbow as a roof, in the left part of the sheet, with no door or windows, the house again symbolizes his mother. In the latent content of this drawing, G. states his inner wish for his family to remain united after he is gone: they are holding hands while he is flying above them. The sky is black and eight black birds fly in procession in the center of the drawing: G. died eight days after having offered the first drawing.

In the next drawing (Figure 5) we see a red-haired father on the hill, hair as red as the sun just above him (anger and abolition of the father's omnipotence) and his two siblings between two lean green trees (his mother and himself?). Next to them and on the right side of the sheet (referring to the imminent future) there is a small black house (death, grief). The smoke coming out of its peculiar chimney tends to touch the "*thunder stricken*" tree. In the center there is a non- anthropomorphic round sun with red and yellow rays representing his anger for his father who was unable to save him. In the four corners he had designed four crosses either to exorcise evil or to express and communicate his belief in his imminent death.

In the last drawing (Figure 6), the manifest content of the sea refers to a return in the safety of the uterus, to the peace and tranquility of the amniotic fluid. In the bottom of the sea, the five fish represent his family, with him possibly being the small fish flying out of the sea and thus escaping from them. The setting orange sun is again anthropomorphic, with two huge empty eyes and a huge mouth shaped by its rays. It is as if his surprised father is staring at his escape; maybe it is G.'s attempt for self-compensation for the pain his father has caused him. The sky is colorless with only the black birds present.

The case of S.

S. is twelve years old and his right leg had been amputated due to osteosarcoma. His drawing (Table 2) was offered to his doctors a few days before his death (Figure 12). This was the only drawing he had made while hospitalized. The drawing covers the whole sheet; its manifest content depicts two huge empty eyes, while its latent content represents the self, the body- and self-image. The symbolism is apparent, with the right eye being only partly designed. It seems cut and it might symbolize the amputated leg or even S's amputated life. The word 'betrayal' is written just below the eyes, where his body should have been. The multiple spots around the eyes represent the multiple metastases and the black color along with the word 'betrayal' represents even verbally his awareness of his imminent death. Simultaneously, a major complaint is being expressed for life's betrayal in an actual, symbolic and fantasitic level. S.'s hurt narcissism invalidates his ego defense mechanisms. The signification is the clear representation of the bodily trauma and the significant lies in the latent content of the drawing: a cold look to the betrayal.

Dyson (1993, p. 24) illuminates the way drawing is helped by the critical role of talk and gesture to become "a mediator, a way of giving a graphic voice to an intention".

Conclusion

The drawings included in this research have been studied for a long time and were endlessly analyzed. These long-gone children's drawings include the signification and the significant of a silent lament, a complaint or a loud protest. They constitute a dynamic session between the child's inner life and its external world. They should not

be interpreted as a “realistic presentation of a specific action” but as a depiction of the child’s inner reality “in a deeper level” (Lindqvist, 2001).

The pediatrician Donald Winnicott (1971b) noted that the children’s drawings could be used as a means of communication between them and the therapists. He recognized that the value of the drawings in helping the children denotes the problems and the views of people in general. His work confirms that the drawings could be the catalyst for the increase in interaction, exchange and develops as a sequel the effectiveness and the depth of the relationship between the drawer and the drawing, the therapist and the child.

These children did not paint just to present their creation to their therapists, but have also been depicted themselves into their creations. Their own representation took shape and color and acquired a symbolism in certain parts of their drawings. Thus, they symbolically ‘talked’ with significations and significant as a meaning of what they meant to say and communicate. A drawing does not narrate; it is the child itself narrating through it. Such drawings are self-created ghosts within an analysis, they are the meaning that the child should and wishes to listen to and make heard. It is also a production, with an analyst taking part in the hearing or being able to talk through his/her ‘listening eyes’ (Dolto, 1987).

The presence of the therapist while the child is drawing is a significant factor particularly in the general aim is therapeutic and doesn’t constitute only a part of the general estimation. When a child draws, as Allan (1988) indicates, with the therapist present, on a regular basis, activates the therapeutic capability, conflicts expressed and solved, and the therapist may acquire a clearer and concrete picture of the conscious. As in all therapeutic alliances the active presence of a professional is a necessary presupposition of any change. Also his presence maintains a safe area for the child.

The therapist furnished a supportive, secure environment that that child is able to experiment, today, and express himself and his psyche through art.

The trauma of experiencing the illness and its consequences is apparent in all kinds of symbolic discourse, since every depicted detail of their experience is important (Lee, 1970· Martins, 1999· Appleton, 2001). The reality of this particular illness and its therapy is a devastating experience for the children and their families, and this is a message that should be taken into serious consideration despite the fact that most of the children finally survive it.

Thus, we are aware that children with cancer have great emotional strength to face patiently and courageously all that is taking place after their diagnosis. Through their drawings they provide us with limitless information regarding the dynamics of their psychological processes: their bodily and mental exhaustion. The content of their drawings, the symbolisms, the colors, the proportions, the size and positioning, the line trails, the representation of their self-image, even the first impression made by their drawing definitely consist a particular experience for the therapist.

The symbols constitute a more general and more moving means of communication. An object might indicate an abstract connection of an effusive conscious agreement. In the dreams an archetype might emerge from the whole or in graphic enactment with the form of 'mantala' (Sanskrit circles). A type of transference might yet emerge which bridges the chasm between inner self and outer reality, as for instance the toy a child takes with him to bed (Winnicott, 1971a). All these symbolic forms find response in children's art.

We realized that the drawings were not made by chance; moreover, that they had not been offered by chance. They were given in order to provoke a discussion with the significant others or to inform about what the children already knew or wanted to learn

(Hatira, 1998, 2000). The drawings allow us to listen to the children's complaints, their fears and demands, their rebellion against their parents. "The drawing is not a constant description, nor a unique question, but an evolving dialogue, a theatrical setting with numerous characters" (Oppenheim & Hartmann, 2003, p. 10).

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Σχέδια παιδιών με καρκίνο τελικού σταδίου:

Κοινοποίηση και ερμηνεία

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Περίληψη

Αυτό το άρθρο εστιάζει στις έννοιες της κοινοποίησης, της ερμηνείας και της προβολής στα αυθόρμητα σχέδια των παιδιών με καρκίνο τελικού σταδίου. Παρουσιάζεται μια συνοπτική μελέτη των σημαδιών και των συμβολισμών της αναπαράστασης των συναισθημάτων και των φόβων των παιδιών που βρίσκονται κοντά στο θάνατο. Υποστηρίζεται ότι τα αυθόρμητα σχέδια των παιδιών μπορούν να είναι για τον θεράποντα χρήσιμα εργαλεία και δομές ως σημειωτικές διαδικασίες που οργανώνονται και παράγονται από τα παιδιά για να τύχουν της συγκεκριμένης κοινοποίησης στους σημαντικούς άλλους (γονείς, θεράποντες) ή/και τους αντιπροσωπευτικούς σκοπούς. Μέσω των σχεδίων τους παρέχουν στους άλλους πλούσιες πληροφορίες σχετικά με τη δυναμική των ψυχολογικών διαδικασιών: τη σωματική και ψυχική έντασή τους. Το περιεχόμενο των σχεδίων τους, οι συμβολισμοί, τα χρώματα, οι αναλογίες, το μέγεθος και ο προσδιορισμός θέσης, τα ίχνη γραμμών, η αντιπροσώπευση της (αυτο)εικόνας τους, ακόμη και η πρώτη εντύπωση που δίνεται από το σχέδιό τους αποτελούνται σίγουρα μια ιδιαίτερη εμπειρία για τον θεράποντα. Τα σχέδια που περιλαμβάνονται σε αυτήν την έρευνα έχουν μελετηθεί σε ένα βάθος χρόνου, ικανού να δώσει μια ασφαλή ανάλυση. Τα σχέδια αυτών των παιδιών περιλαμβάνουν μια κοινοποίηση και τη σημαντικότητα ενός σιωπηρού θρήνου, ένα αίτημα, ένα παράπονο, μια καταγγελία ή μια δυνατή διαμαρτυρία. Αποτελούν μια δυναμική σύνοδο μεταξύ της εσωτερικής ζωής του παιδιού που πεθαίνει και του εξωτερικού κόσμου του.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: ερμηνεία, κοινοποίηση, σημαίνον, παιδί, καρκίνο.

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