The Many Meanings of Play

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Play:

"Time to Murder and Create"

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In *Little Gliding* T. S. Eliot writes about "a time to murder and create." Throughout the history of humankind we have struggled to understand the vicissitudes of birth and death. These struggles and explorations are knitted into the fabric of the ongoing details of our lives and are powerfully captured in art, literature, and science. Early in childhood we begin to puzzle over murder (death, destruction, injury) and creation (birth, sex).

In analysis, a child's play often highlights how play can serve as a vehicle to struggle with, integrate, and master concerns about death, destruction, and injury. These compelling concerns are intimately connected to painful feelings of powerlessness and anxiety. Efforts by the child in analysis to master these issues involve the elaboration of themes. Often the play has a repetitive aspect suggestive of trauma and efforts at mastery. As in a dream or a nightmare (Mack, 1974), there is a kind of desperate creativity. Many authors have explored the relationships between play, creativity, and artistic and scientific achievement. In this chapter I will describe how a period of play in the analysis of a seven-year-old boy facilitated his struggles with painful affects, especially powerlessness, anger, and destructiveness. At the same time I will suggest that play facilitates an inborn tendency toward progressive development that is powerfully augmented in the analytic process. As Winnicott said, "Heredity, in the main, is the individual's inherent tendency to grow, to integrate, to relate to objects, to mature" (1965, p. 137). I agree with Winnicott that "the theory assumes a genetic tendency in the individual towards emotional development as towards physical growth; it assumes a continuity from the time of birth (or just before) onwards; it assumes a gradual growth of ego-organization and strength, and the individual's gradual acceptance of the personal instinctual life, and of responsibility for its real and imagined consequences" (1965, p. 116).

In a broad sense creativity can be thought of as involving the production of something new or different from its original components. Although the tendency to link creativity with producing has a

seemingly anal component, this does not imply an exclusively anal focus. Rather I think it emphasizes the importance of the body throughout the life span, especially in early development. As a result, many of our most compelling metaphors involve the body. In this sense, to create is connected not only with producing but also with giving birth to, envisaging, acquiring insight, sensing, and so on. In addition, the infant's and young child's organizing and shaping of their relationship to the world, animate and inanimate, are profoundly creative efforts.

It is commonly recognized that play is an important aspect of creativity. Whether the play entails action or is entirely mental, central to it is a freedom of recombination that leads to something new. The play involves a trying out of actions, roles, ideas, and fantasies; it is characterized by a reversibility, multiple possible combinations, and further departures from newly discovered organization. In play and creativity, affect is central and has many functions, the provision of motivation among them. At the same time, organization, integration, and mastery of affect are facilitated by the creative aspects of play. There are many extremely painful affects to be experienced, borne, and put in perspective. Murderousness, rage, destructiveness, and the related helplessness are instances of these powerful affects. The creative potential of play helps children and indeed all of us maintain affective vigor and progressive development.

Sam's Analysis

Sam was six years old when his parents first consulted me. They were worried because Sam was having frequent temper tantrums. He was very resistant to being asked to get dressed or come to meals. Sam would refuse, yelling and becoming highly agitated. His parents said it was very difficult to discipline him or set limits. When they restricted his television or took toys away, Sam yelled, "Who cares?" and became more desperate. When his parents made him sit on the screened porch until he was calmer, Sam would yell piteously. Recently he began to climb off the porch onto a large oak tree. He could not climb down the tree and was often found perched precariously on the branches. When forbidden to do this and told how dangerous it was, Sam insisted that nothing could hurt him.

I learned from his parents that Sam was tense and active as a baby. They adored him but were

puzzled and frustrated by his irritability, his irregular sleeping patterns, and his difficulty with breast-feeding. Sam rarely seemed serene or placid, and his parents responded by feeling uncertain and anxious. Sam was in the middle of battles about toilet training when at age two and a half his brother Eddie was born. Sam's angry outbursts began after Eddie's birth. A few months later, because of the father's work, the family moved, leaving Sam's mother feeling dislocated, isolated, burdened, and depressed. In addition, Sam's father developed asthma, which included both mild and severe episodes. The father was stoical about his illness and the subject was rarely discussed, although episodes of wheezing necessitating the use of an inhaler were not infrequent. At age three and a half Sam rather abruptly became toilet trained. He did well in kindergarten where he had a number of friends, although he tended to be verbally but not physically bossy.

Sam was a large, somewhat pudgy boy with curly red hair and a lively sparkle in his eyes. He related easily and enthusiastically. At first he wanted his mother to join him in my office but after several sessions said she could stay in the waiting room. I shall focus on a three-month period after about one year of analysis, but shall first provide a brief overview of Sam's play in the first year in order to set the stage.

Initially, Sam was eager to play board games, inventing his own versions. It became clear that his winning and being a great winner were very important. Sam often reported to his mother his prowess as a winner, and we came to understand this in relation to his competition with his brother and his fears about his father's vulnerability. We also explored how in his version of chess the queen was strong and dangerous and had to protect the king who, like his father, sometimes seemed weak and vulnerable. I sensed that exploring the dangerousness of the queen would come later. After several months the feelings became more intense in our relationship. Sam elaborated how helpless and weak I was and how he could beat me, kill and bomb me, in various games. Sam explained that it was crucial that I not retaliate, not learn from him, and not do these things to him.

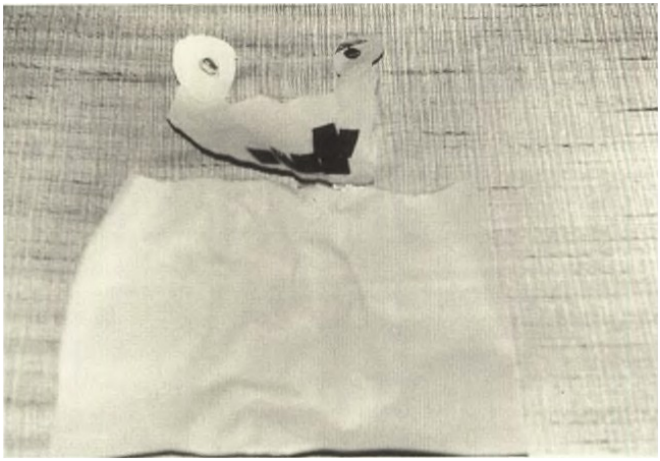
When it seemed safe that I would not retaliate, we began to learn about Raycor, a big, brown, furry monster, even bigger than a house, who lived in a pit. Many guys fell into Raycor's pit where they were squashed, punched, stabbed, and killed. This was played by Sam with great intensity and sound effects. As the play developed, Raycor bit and ate the bad guys and took all their money. Sam

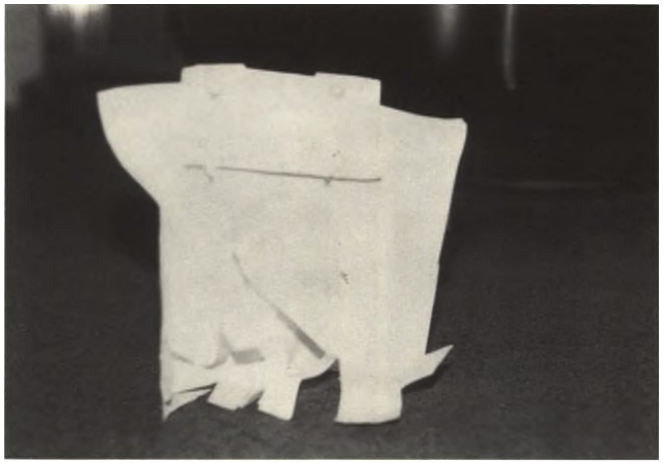
emphasized that bad guys were bad guys and good guys were good guys—and that they never changed. As the play developed further, both good and bad guys were thrown into Raycor's "sticky, stinking, yucky hole." Sam, wondering which holes in the body were the deepest, decided that the mouth was. He found a hole in the radiator cover and played at who got stuck in it and who could come out. Guys were trapped and became desperate and scary; Sam wondered whether somehow the trapped dead guys could get out.

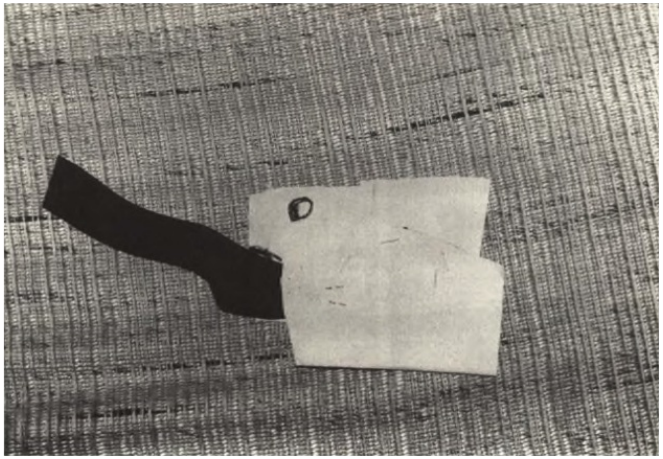
At the same time Sam was making and acquiring huge amounts of paper money and littering the office with it. He seemed to be consuming money and excreting it all over the room. During this time, Sam explained that the hole was hungry and that a chess piece, the bishop, could eat the hungry hole and that only the bishop could go into the hole, front, back, and middle, with a stick and get people out. Thus Sam explored his voraciousness, his fear of feeling powerless, and his related exploding rage and destructiveness. The bishop and his stick were related to Sam's sexual excitement and fears that were part of these fantasies. During this play Sam often held onto the front of his pants.

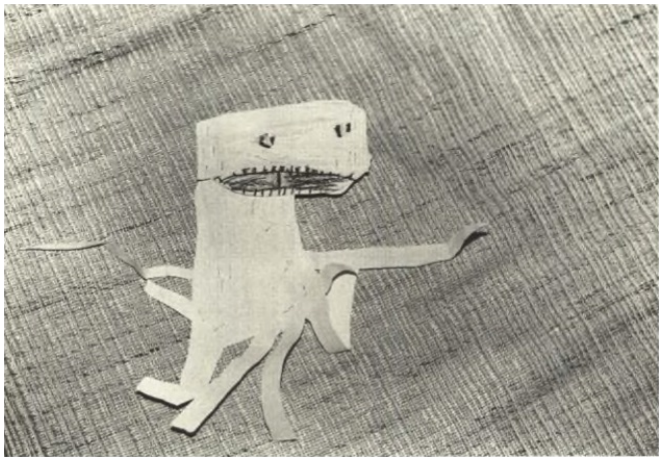
As the play unfolded near the end of the first year of analysis, Sam began to ask questions about me. He wondered if I had children. He told me his brother, Eddie, was four now and that Sam had been three when he was born. Sam said, "I love my brother. I have to. No, I hate him and love him. For now I like him. I liked having my mommy and daddy only for me, but I like Eddie." Sam's associations to trying to climb on my roof and to climbing the oak tree helped us explore how he felt severely punished for hating Eddie and wanting his mommy and daddy to himself. Subsequently Sam played a game of war, saying he loved war and would kill me, chop my head off. In the battles, fighters would bite, eat, and swallow each other. Sam became increasingly murderous and destructive. He broke my pencils, stabbed my blotter, spilled water in the wastebasket, knocked over chairs, ripped leaves off my plants, and broke paper clips, calling them Eddie. Sam said, "Eddie's at the bottom of the pit. I'll fix him, I'll kill him." Then he yelled that he was good and I was "bad, weird, the enemy," and he would cut me, chop me to bits, and drop me in the hole. Sam wanted to climb out of my office window. He told me Eddie had finished school for the summer but he, Sam, had another month left. I talked with him about how Eddie got to stay home with his mother and how then Sam felt full of killing, biting, chopping feelings—just as when Eddie was born and he was punished.

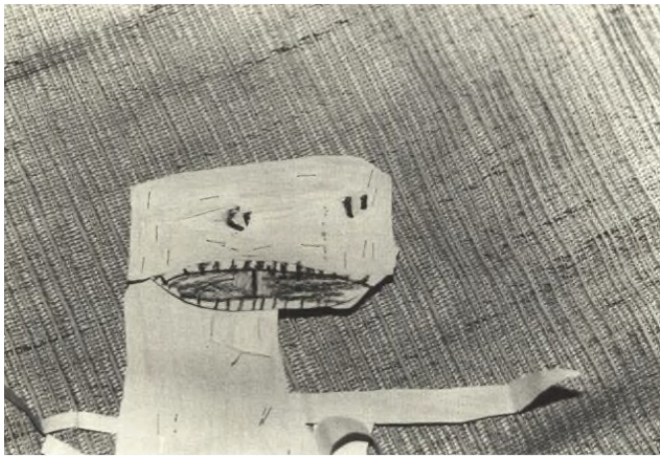
At this point Sam, over a three-month period, turned with a kind of desperate creativity to a different form of play. This period seemed to offer a particular perspective on Sam's use of play to explore, organize, and master his overwhelming sense of powerlessness, rage, fear, and destructiveness. He now created and explored the characteristics of a series of creatures he constructed out of paper with a stapler, scissors, tape, and crayons. These objects seemed to embody the affects with which Sam struggled. The scissors cut, bit, and ate. The stapler bit, stabbed, held together. The tape held, stuck, hung, protruded, and connected. The paper contained, survived, was transformed, and reborn. The crayons intensified detail, uniqueness, and feeling. First Sam cut out paper men and I was instructed to do the same. His men were outnumbered but came out of planes and their guns destroyed all of mine (fig. 1). As my men lay dead and dying, he stomped on them. Some men who did not have guns helped in the fight by stinking really badly and killing in that way. Sam used a lot of supplies and left torn paper littered over the floor. This developed into Sam making an alien with "big laser eyes and lots of teeth" (fig. 2) who could be killed only by thirty shots plus twenty shots under water. Sam tore off the heads of my men, tore off "his eyes, his nose, his mouth, and all of him." More vicious were "biters, an army of them that nothing can survive (fig. 3). Some can bite the air also." Sam held his penis during these attacks. He told me, "We aren't enemies; our people are enemies." He developed a machine that could put his people back together, and in the whole world only he had this machine and I would never have it. My men had their tongues ripped off and died because of it. Sam's men had a tongue that went in and out (fig. 4). When it was broken, Sam could fix it. Once touched by his tongue, which could be made longer and longer, my men were crushed. When Sam needed a part for his men, he ripped it off one of mine. He often did not share the scissors or stapler. When struggling with my feelings about being enslaved and destroyed, I commented on his ordering me to do things. Sam said, "You can do it; it's not so bad. I don't ask you a lot." I believe he was reminding me of the primary maternal preoccupation (Winnicott, 1965, pp. 37-55, 83-92) and the need for me to survive his destructive attacks on me and my supplies.

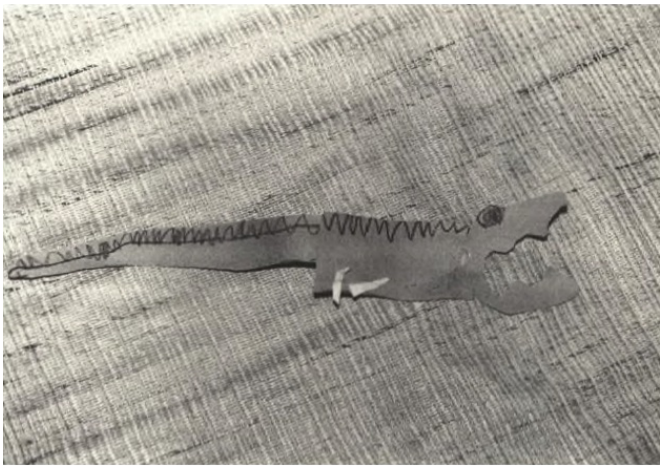


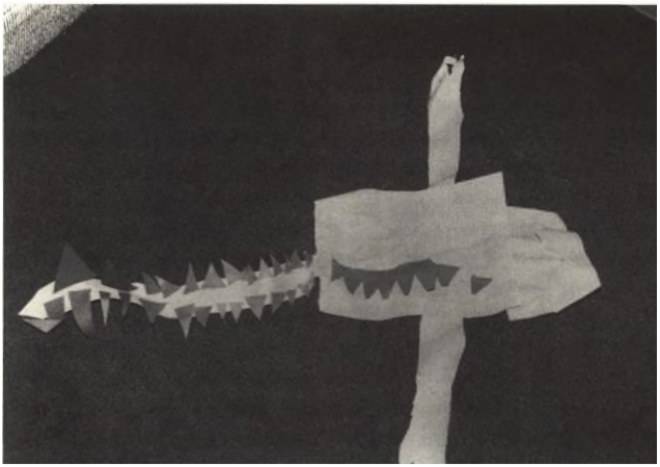


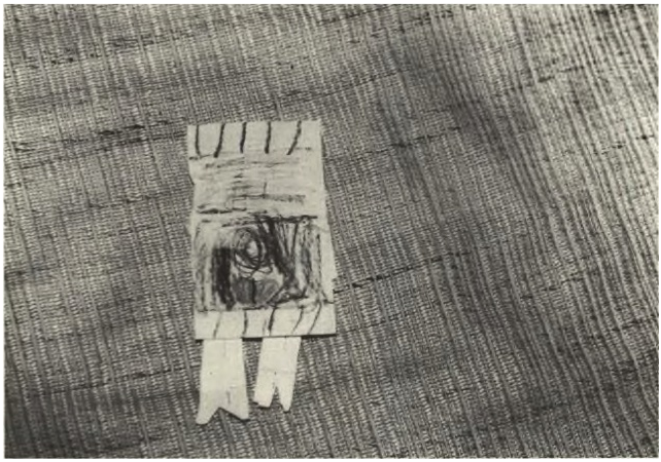












Despite the destruction and aggression expressed in pounding the staples into the paper, Sam's constructions showed a careful attention to detail and craftsmanship. Occasionally he explained how and why something was designed, saying that every detail was important. Sam created a new, manylegged, many-teethed monster (figs. 5-6) who made men bleed by ripping them apart and pulling their eyes out in a few seconds. As this play was elaborated and continued over several weeks, Sam became calmer. He made a biting dragon that needed an eye (fig. 7) and an alligator with a powerful spiked tail (fig. 8). These tore apart creatures I was instructed to make, such as clams and buffaloes. After constructing a man with a red and black biting mouth (fig. 9), Sam made a black hole that sucked men in and tore off their arms and legs and the tops of their heads. He explained with enjoyment but considerable trepidation that you could escape the black hole by having something cut off or by going to another planet where you would be all alone forever. There was also a moon that could freeze you and a sun that burned you up as it sucked you into its mouth. "Nothing can survive its fires." Then Sam told me that the scissors were very hungry. For weeks I was instructed to make sandwiches, ice-cream cones with forty-eight scoops, cakes with a million candles, whole and sliced watermelon, and hamburgers. These were torn to shreds by the scissors, which afterward became 112 percent less hungry. When Sam did not come to analysis for a day, the scissors grew hungrier and "could eat for a million years and still be hungry." Sam said, "I'm not eating or

tearing; it's the scissor who hasn't eaten for a year when he was younger. Now he is seven. He didn't eat because he didn't want to. He didn't have a mommy. He would have eaten her up in a second, so he couldn't have a mommy."

Although there are many possible meanings to Sam's play, he was adamant about not hearing my ideas. Perhaps this was related to his mother's tendency to explain things to him and his guarding the creative "central still and silent spot of the patient's ego-organization" (Winnicott, 1965, p. 189). In any case, staying close to his experience as expressed in the play at the moment reminded me of Heraclitus' statement that you cannot cross the same stream twice. It seemed that the play as created and developed by Sam with its many symbols, metaphors, and affects was richer than my theories and musings. In Sam's construction of affectively powerful symbols and metaphors, the play created structure and integrative experience. As

Nietzsche advised, "I tell you, you must have chaos in you, if you would give birth to a dancing star." I sensed this in Sam when he told me that it turned out that the hungry scissors and he had the same birthday. Sam wanted a birthday cake for the hungry scissors—chocolate and vanilla. After this, these constructions ended.

For the next year and a half Sam continued to elaborate these issues. For a while this took the form of a mad scientist who had a bad and destructive slave. The mad scientist eventually made the slave good, and they went on an adventure to secure great amounts of money. Subsequently Sam explored the experience of a "pooper" (paratrooper) who because he flew sideways and was bad got twenty-five cents instead of a trillion dollars, was covered with mud, taped up like a mummy, and kept in jail for twenty-four hours a day for twenty years. Sam continued this work by inventing rules for an elaborate game. At first he cheated and mercilessly and cruelly defeated me time after time. This gave Sam another arena to struggle with—his helplessness, weakness, destruction, cruelty, humiliation—how bad players can become good players, how if you lose you can win next time, and how impossibly high requirements to be a most valuable player can become modified. In addition, Sam increasingly was able to express his attachment and affection for me. He spoke sadly about how hard it was when there were interruptions and we had to wait until we would be together again. At the same time the struggles that brought Sam to analysis had largely resolved. His development was

progressing well, and he seemed to be a competent, energetic, happy boy.

Discussion

In his play in analysis Sam struggled with his murderousness and rivalry toward his brother and with his hunger, rage, and love for his depressed mother and ailing father. Sam's struggles as expressed in his play were woven into a rich fabric of experiences and feelings of murder and creation. In 1912 Hug-Hellmuth wrote, "No event among the abundant phenomena of human life is insignificant for the child. In particular the beginning and end of life, the entrance and exit of individuals, are inexhaustible sources of his 'whys' and 'wherefores.' Once he is aware of the eternal riddle of life, he pursues it as the goal of all investigation, playful and serious. For in *life and death* he sees *love and hate*, *cruelty and pity* joined to each other" (p. 499).

Although the technical approaches in child-analytic work of Anna Freud and Melanie Klein varied considerably, they both appreciated the powerful affects observed in children's play in analysis. Anna Freud emphasized the importance of mastering the interplay of sex and aggression: "There is no doubt that our clinical task is rendered more difficult by the fact that neither libido nor aggression are ever observable singly, i.e., in pure culture; except in the most pathological instances, they are always fused and for the purpose of study their respective actions have to be disentangled. But this, I believe, is true for biology as well as for psychology: sexual mastery cannot be achieved without the appropriate admixture of aggression; aggression cannot be integrated into normal life without an admixture of libido; equally, on the higher plane, death cannot be attained except via the vicissitudes of life" (1972, p. 175).

This was powerfully expressed and integrated in Sam's play, as was the fear of annihilation, love, hatred, anxiety, guilt, and grief, as highlighted by Klein: "An intrinsic element of a deep and full personality is wealth of phantasy life and the capacity for experiencing emotions freely. These characteristics, I think, presuppose that the infantile depressive position has been worked through, that is to say, that the whole gamut of love and hatred, anxiety, grief and guilt in relation to primary objects has been experienced again and again. This emotional development is bound up with the nature of defences. Failure in working through the depressive position is inextricably linked with a

predominance of defences which entail a stifling of emotions and of phantasy life, and hinder insight" (1950, p. 46).

In his play Sam was able to bring symbolic expression to his affects, conflicts, fears, wishes and fantasies. There was an increasing freedom in his affective and fantasy life both in his play in analysis and in his life. Stone underscores how "aggression arises in the drive to master actual or threatened traumatic helplessness" (1976, p. 220). This was explored in Sam's play where we elaborated the terrible helplessness of creatures facing Raycor and the biting, tearing, burning constructions, the sun and the moon, and how one could be safe only by being these powerful destructive forces.

Sam's constructions, his biters, alligators, dragons, involved a high level of activity. As Winnicott wrote, "To control what is outside one has to do things not simply to think or to wish, and *doing things takes time*. Playing is *doing*" (1968, p. 592). Vygotsky (1978) expands on this by emphasizing how action and activity require an adaptation to reality. The materials Sam used, the staples, scissors, and tape, have their limitations, even though they are chosen among many objects and can be put to many uses. Scissors basically must be used in cutting, crayons in coloring. The combination of repetition and gradual expansion of aspects of Sam's constructions is also reminiscent of Greenacre's views about play and the establishment of a sense of reality. Greenacre observed, "Still another source of repetitive tendencies is to be considered, although little attention has generally been paid to it in this connection, viz., the necessity for repetition of experience in establishing the sense of reality. While this is obviously important in infancy, it enters into life situations in later life as well" (1959, p. 65).

In addition, as Susan Isaacs points out:

> There is a wealth of evidence to show that phantasies are active in the mind long before language has developed, and that even in the adult they continue to operate alongside and independently of words. Meanings, like feelings, are far older than speech. . . . Words are a means of *referring* to experience, actual or phantasized, but are not identical with it, not a substitute for it. Words may evoke feelings and images and actions, and point to situations; they do so by virtue of being signs of experience, not of being themselves the main material of experience. ... It has sometimes been suggested that unconscious phantasies such as that of "tearing to bits" would not arise in the child's mind before he had gained the conscious knowledge that tearing a person to bits would mean killing them. Such a view does not meet the case. It overlooks the fact that such knowledge is inherent in bodily impulses as a vehicle of instinct, in the excitation of the organ, i.e., in this case,

the mouth. (1948, pp. 84-86)

Isaacs also quotes Samuel Butler's charming way of putting it: "When the lady drank to the gentleman only with her eyes, and he pledged with his, was there no conversation because there was neither noun nor verb?" (p. 84). Play affords Sam the opportunity to experience his destructive feelings, fears and fantasies, and bodily sensations that sometimes precede but more often go beyond our verbal experiences. This viewpoint is concisely stated by Melanie Klein: "Thus, not only does symbolism come to be the foundation of all phantasy and sublimation but, more than that, upon it is built up the subject's relation to the outside world and to reality in general" (1930, p. 238).

As Sam began his constructions and I thought about my role, I was reminded of a comment by Marion Milner: "Perhaps, in ordinary life, it is good teachers who are most aware of these moments, from outside, since it is their job to provide the conditions under which they can occur, so to stage-manage the situation that imagination catches fire and a whole subject or skill lights up with significance" (1952, p. 88). I watched Sam's growth and mastery as he struggled with his nearly overwhelming feelings of anxiety, destructiveness, murder, love, hunger, and guilt. I felt confirmed in my sense that play embodies an innate human potential with great possibilities for mastering painful affects and facilitating progressive development. Winnicott seemed of the same mind: "In other words, it is play that is the *universal*, and which belongs to health; playing facilitates growth and therefore health; playing leads into group-relationships; playing can be a form of communication in psychotherapy; and, lastly, psychoanalysis has been developed as a highly specialized form of playing in the service of communication" (1968, p. 593).

When an analysis goes well, there is a unique play possible in which the analyst tries to appreciate the symbolic affective communication of the child and attempts to communicate this appreciation with tact and sensitivity in symbolic terms and, when accessible, in verbal terms. The analyst's work requires different adaptations, as was the case with Sam where sometimes I was the stage manager and other times I was, as Winnicott wrote, "repudiated, reaccepted, and perceived objectively. This complex process is highly dependent on there being a mother or mother-figure prepared to participate and to give back what is handed out" (1968, p. 596). In this process Winnicott helpfully warns about the uses of interpretation. "Interpretation outside the ripeness of

the material is indoctrination and produces compliance. . . . A corollary is that resistance arises out of interpretation given outside the area of the overlap of the patient's and the analyst's playing. Interpretation when the patient has no capacity to play is simply not useful, or causes confusion. When there is mutual playing, then interpretation according to accepted psychoanalytic principles can carry the therapeutic work forward. *This playing has to be spontaneous and not compliant or acquiescent*" (p. 597).

As we study how Sam used play to master destructive feelings and fantasies, it is important to note how play in analysis can facilitate mastery and development. Play facilitates the elaboration of symbolism and metaphor, which in turn provides a kind of scaffolding for structuralization, integration, and organization of affectively charged experience. The child analyst, by having an interest in and appreciation of the child's efforts to play, catalyzes an innate developmental thrust in the child to play out anxious, painful, and compelling experiences, fantasies, and feelings. The analyst uses verbal and nonverbal means to communicate to the child the willingness to follow the child's communications and experience and to not persist in disrupting and redirecting the explorations out of the analyst's own conflicts and overwhelming affects. In time this often includes a shared understanding of defense, conflict, the past, and transference. In Sam's analysis an understanding of aspects of the past as reexperienced and reenacted still lay ahead. For him the therapeutic action of play in analysis involved the use of symbolism in relating inner and outer reality and in exploring and surviving murderousness. In *Playing and Reality* Winnicott wrote, "When symbolism is employed the infant is already clearly distinguishing between fantasy and fact, between inner objects and external objects, between primary creativity and perception" (1971, p. 6). Play in this sense is a process and "the task of reality acceptance is never completed. . . . no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and . . . relief from this strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience" (p. 13).

The issue of being able to exist and feel real is linked by Winnicott to the transitional object and the ability of the transitional object to survive the child's destructiveness. The relationships among destructiveness, survival, love, reality, and progressive development are described in a powerful way by Margery Williams in *The Velveteen Rabbit*:

> "What is real?" asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick- out handle?"
>
> "Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but really loves you, then you become Real."
>
> "Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.
>
> "Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."
>
> "Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"
>
> "It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand." (1981, pp. 14-16)

In his construction of biters, tearers, burners, and freezers, Sam in displacement was able to destroy me, his brother, his depressed mother, and his vulnerable father; despite the piles of ripped paper we survived. In the transference he was able to be starved and so hungry he ate his mother up, and she returned in the next analytic hour to be devoured again. During these constructions and destructions I was interested in what Sam was doing and pleased with what he was creating for himself. Winnicott's hypothesis about the genetic roots of this seem plausible: "The favourable circumstances necessary at this stage are these: that the mother should continue to be alive and available, available physically and available in the sense of not being preoccupied with something else. The object-mother has to be found to survive the instinct-driven episodes, which have now acquired the full force of fantasies of oral sadism and other results of fusion. Also, the environment-mother has a special function, which is to continue to be herself, to be empathic towards her infant, to be there to receive the spontaneous gesture, and to be pleased" (1965, p. 76).

Out of the hate, destructiveness, ruthlessness, there emerged reparation, concern, repair, and a sense of Sam's contribution to me. Perhaps this began with the constructions that Sam had me keep in his box in the office and later evolved in games in which he at first mercilessly defeated me but gradually allowed me to win and was interested in what it was like for me constantly to lose and be destroyed. In addition, gradually for Sam there was an increasing sadness about the scissors that were so hungry that they could not have a mother and about not always winning games that were

viciously fought. As Winnicott wrote, "Here being depressed is an achievement, and implies a high degree of personal integration, and an acceptance of responsibility for all the destructiveness that is bound up with living, with the instinctual life, and with anger at frustration" (1965, p. 176). The related issues of overcoming fears of annihilation and separation are well expressed by the Skin Horse: "'The Boy's Uncle made me Real,' he said. 'That was a great many years ago; but once you are Real you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always'" (Williams, 1981, p. 16).

Although Sam's constructions marked a period in his analysis that is easily identified as creative, this only highlights the intimate ongoing connection between play in child analysis and creativity. Greenacre struggled with the same sense of continuum and underlying creativity in play. "I use the term creativity in a somewhat different sense ... to mean the capacity for or activity of making something new, original or inventive, no matter in what field. It is not merely the making of a product, even a good product, but of one which has the characteristic of originality. No absolute dividing line between creativity and productivity can be made" (1959, p. 62). In this sense play in the analytic setting is a creative effort similar to that in music, art, and literature. Freud spoke to this point as well: "Might we not say that every child at play behaves like a creative writer, in that he creates a world of his own, or, rather, re-arranges the things of his world in a new way which pleases him? It would be wrong to think he does not take that world seriously; on the contrary, he takes his play very seriously and he expends large amounts of emotion on it" (1908, pp. 143-144). Sam's play in analysis lends support to the aphorism that art creates nature. Sam's play was his art, and this relationship fueled the creation of his nature on a wider and freer path of progressive development. This is something that artists have often pointed out. Thomas Mann wrote, "The truth is, that every piece of work is a realization, fragmentary but complete in itself, of our individuality; and this kind of realization is the sole and painful way we have of getting the particular experience—no wonder, then, that the process is attended by surprises!" (1930, p. 41).

As I have argued earlier, for the creative possibilities of play to be facilitated, the analyst does best to reach for a freedom and openness in his or her own person. Bion put it well: "To the analytic observer, the material must appear as a number of discrete particles, unrelated and incoherent. The coherence that these facts have in a patient's mind is not relevant to the analyst's problem. His problem—I describe it in stages—is to ignore that coherence so that he is confronted by the

incoherence and experiences incomprehension of what is presented to him. . . . this state must endure until a new comprehension emerges" (1980, p. 15).

Creative forces in play powerfully facilitate the emergence of new comprehensions, which are most crucial in the affective realms and involve symbols other than words. Play provides these symbols in terms of the process of acting on materials, objects, sounds, space, and time. This action, in Sam's case, involved paper, scissors, staples, and crayons. Sometimes there is a ritualized or repetitive quality to the play. Although this impedes a freedom and fluidity that are valuable aspects of creative play, stylized play also communicates the nature of anxieties, conflicts, painful affects which, as they are elaborated and understood, allow the play to develop additional freedom and richness. At first Sam's play involved board games and was more repetitive and confined. These games communicated his anxieties about competition, weakness, vulnerability, murderousness, destruction, and retaliation. Sam's increasing ability to use symbols to elaborate, communicate, organize, and integrate these affects enhanced the creative thrust of his play. Greater freedom in combinatory play led to a greater richness in what might be called his art of rearrangement. Sam utilized this in his constructions to create and integrate both his omnipotent destructive rage and the experience of intolerable helplessness. Play's creative potential made possible a time for Sam to murder and to create.

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