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**An Inquiry into The Phenomenon of Written Words in Graphic
Images: Towards a Semiotics of Art Therapy.**

Johanni Carsen

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art Therapy

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of The Requirement
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Art Therapy) at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada.**

March 1989

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ABSTRACT

An Inquiry into the Phenomenon of Written Words in Graphic Images: Towards a Semiotics of Art Therapy

Johanni Carsen

This thesis will explore the phenomenon of written words as they occur in the drawn image within the context of art therapy sessions. A brief review of selected art therapy literature will serve as a current indication of art therapists' limited level of understanding of this topic. The merits of an inter-disciplinary approach will be put forward. An investigation will be carried out into bias involving: 1) influences of modernist ideology and 2) areas of conflation involving the concepts of orality and literacy that have contributed to the limited discussion of this topic within the field of art therapy. Different typologies of written word combinations will be presented and discussed based upon historical precedents. This thesis hopes to refine and expand the commonly used term of "the image" in art therapy to one of "the text" that will encompass both pictorial and word elements, as well as to set up guide posts which will help others to explore further this and related areas of inquiry in the field.

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated with love to my parents Walter and Clementine Carsen.

I would like to acknowledge the help and support of my advisor Peter Byrne as well as thesis committee members Pierre Gregoire and Paul Heyer, who encouraged me to persevere and to get the job done. I also wish to acknowledge Marike Finlay's inspirational presence and teaching abilities.

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INTRODUCTION

My awareness of a text/image relationship was first kindled during my days as an art school undergraduate student at the University of Ottawa by an inter-disciplinary course, and through conferences, art exhibits and discussions with visiting artists. In the periodicals and catalogues that I attempted to read and understand at that time, reference was often made to thinkers such as Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, and Saussure. During those undergraduate years I sensed that I was not yet ready or able to tackle this fascinating but complicated area of study that includes semiotic, structuralist, and post-structuralist theory. However, an awareness of its existence, and importance, remained with me. It was not until my second year as a student in the Masters of Art Therapy Programme at Concordia University that I was able to return in a natural way to this area of interest.

After completing my training as an art therapy intern, and in searching for a thesis topic, I began to question the emphasis that was being placed in both art therapy studies and art therapy literature on the interpretation of pictorial images in terms of psychological processes. Little attention seemed to be paid either to the verbal aspects of speech occurring within the art therapy

sessions, or to the written words that would sometimes occur with and/or within art therapy images. It seemed that this linguistic aspect of art therapy sessions was not recognized by art therapists as constituting an area of importance.¹

I initially thought to address the verbal component of art therapy sessions as a thesis topic. However, due to the vast complexity of this area, and my lack of expertise in the pertinent fields of knowledge, I settled for the more manageable and tangible area of written words occurring within the art therapy image.

This phenomenon of a patient/client writing words or a word in an art therapy image, produced in an art therapy session, occurred frequently within the course of many of my art therapy practicum sessions. As well, I frequently had occasion to observe this tendency in the art therapy images of fellow classmates, in art therapy journals, and in images shown by teaching staff and other professionals. Yet this phenomenon remained unaddressed in art therapy discourse.

¹ The previous history of work done in the area of words occurring in the artwork of schizophrenics (e.g. Prinhorn Artistry of the Mentally Ill, 1972, Pulver Adolf Wölflin, 1976) or the area of language and psychopathology (by authors such as Arietti or Kaplan) consist of texts that did not figure prominently in the art therapy discourse that I encountered during my training, although references to them do appear in the journals.

I began to wonder why this area was being overlooked. Was it being taken for granted by art therapy theorists and practitioners? Or perhaps, were there some underlying negative biases towards language buried within art therapy tenets?

This thesis intends to explore the phenomenon of written words as they occur in the pictorial image within the context of art therapy sessions. Selected art therapists' writings will be reviewed to determine the positions that the current literature upholds. This thesis will submit that the reasons for the limited discussion in art therapy literature of the relationship and significance of written words in art therapy images stems in part from a purist notion of art that arises from the influence of modernism. Such notions were prevalent during the period when art therapy pioneers were formulating their theories. Furthermore, it will be argued that such biased notions of art have been passed on, and would still seem to be operational today, predisposing many current art therapists' conceptions of what qualifies as art.

Another bias that can be identified stems from a general disregard for the subject of "writing" in fields such as linguistics, that instead have focused their studies on speech, which has been held as the more natural domain of language. The effects of orality, literacy, and print will be outlined and discussed. Different forms of written word combinations will be presented as

typologies that have relevance to a more practical discussion of this topic as it relates to art therapy practice.

This thesis proposes to expand the theory of "the image" in art therapy to include "the word". By synthesizing both historical and theoretical information, I hope to contribute to a more up-to-date understanding of this subject area, as well as to set up guide posts that will aid others to explore further this area.

Several rationales can be identified that have precipitated the framing of this inquiry by a communication studies (or semiotic) approach, rather than by a clinical one. While I had initially hoped to address both semiotic and clinical concerns in regards to the thesis topic, it became evident that a comprehensive overview of both these areas was beyond the scope of a Masters' thesis. I choose therefore to establish a broader based semiotic focus within which clinical discussions could eventually take place.

Whereas a clinical discussion has pragmatic value in terms of practice, the ideas presented in this thesis may have relevance to further theoretical developments in art therapy discourse. Many of the concepts presented herein are for the most part new to the field. It is hoped that other art therapists will develop these concepts and ideas further, both in terms of the thesis topic as well as in other areas of concern for our evolving discipline.

CHAPTER ONE

Setting The Field: A Selective Review of Art Therapist's Views on Language

You cannot without serious and disabling distortion describe a primary phenomenon by starting with a subsequent second phenomenon and paring away the differences. Indeed, starting backwards in this way putting the cart before the horse -you can never become aware of the real differences at all.

Walter Ong

This chapter will provide an introduction to the thesis topic through a survey of art therapists' attitudes towards the subject of language as it occurs within the context of art therapy sessions, within a pragmatic tradition. Three different attitudes will be distinguished as existing within this discourse. From this survey, questions can be formulated that will serve to structure the remainder of this inquiry.

At least two historical attitudes and traditions can be identified as existing within art therapy practice and literature. On the one hand, a continental tradition exists emanating from countries such as Germany and France, wherein writers and doctors took an interest in l'art Brut or Outsider art which was first developed in post-war France. Maclagan¹ outlines the

¹ 1987.

influence of books written by people from this tradition, including authors such as Walter Morgenthaler,² a psychiatrist who worked at the Waldau asylum for several years where he observed and wrote a case history of Adolf Wolfli, and Prinzhorn,³ originally an art historian, who later became a psychotherapist. This literature influenced contemporary artists and poets such as Klee, Rilke, Kubin, who responded to and in some cases appropriated this material, as did the surrealists. Others, such as Dubuffet began to collect Outsider artworks. The interest of these writers, artists, and doctors was largely in the area of the psychopathology of expression. The attitude of this tradition which can be characterized as one of philosophical inquiry into a phenomenon, stands in sharp contrast with the second attitude of pragmatism.

The second tradition that can be discerned originates out of England, Holland and North America. Here people such as Adrian Hill and E.M. Lyddiatt in Britain, J.H. Plokker in Holland and Margaret Naumburg in America became interested in art and therapy. They developed a more pragmatically oriented attitude which resulted in therapeutics and problem solving. This approach is apparent from book titles such as Painting Out Illness,⁴ Spontaneous Painting and Modelling: A Practical

² A Mental Patient as Artist, 1921

³ Image Making of the Mentally ill, 1922.

⁴ Adrian Hill, 1942.

Approach in Therapy,⁵ Artistic Self-Expression in Mental Disease,⁶ and Schizophrenic Art: Its Meaning in Psychotherapy⁷. Little interest was shown in psychotic or Outsider Art, especially in the United States.

It would seem that both of the above-mentioned attitudes are important and need to be acknowledged; continued one-sidedness further perpetuates an unbalanced viewpoint.

Contextualizing the Survey

The books I have chosen to survey for this chapter include writers such as Kramer, Landgarten, Levick, Naumburg, Rhyne, Rubin and Wadeson. They clearly belong to the latter of these two traditions, the pragmatic approach. These books were selected because of their prevalence in my formative training, and because of their prominence as the status quo in North American graduate art therapy training programs and current art therapy publications.

Art Therapy discourse is characterized by Peter Byrne⁸ as containing a "plethora of ideas" wherein a "bewildering number of issues emerge, which overlap and interweave throughout the literature, sometimes overtly, sometimes covertly." This chapter

⁵ E.M. Lyddiatt, 1971.

⁶ J.H. Plokker, 1964

⁷ Margaret Naumburg, 1950.

⁸ 1985, p. 10

will attempt to synthesize various points of view put forth by these art therapists regarding their perceptions of word/image relationships. The arguments that will be presented can be seen to exist within art therapy discourse in a parallel fashion and are not necessarily compatible with one another.

In general, the literature reviewed can be seen to reflect a lack of appreciation of the complexity involved in a general discussion about "language". Often, art therapists' usage of certain key terms such as "language" and "words" is characterized by a lack of clarity - it was unclear at times whether these terms were referring to written or spoken words. There is no acknowledgment in the literature reviewed of similarities and differences that can be posited about acts of writing and those of speech acts. As a result, these differentiations will not be upheld in this discussion, unless such distinctions are acknowledged by the authors under review.

Another area of confusion in art therapy literature arises from the lack of distinction that can be made between the mental image and the real image; often they are taken to be the same thing. "What tends to get forgotten is that a picture, no matter how "visionary" or "fantastic", is not the same thing as a mental image; it is at best a kind of translation..."⁹

⁹ Maclagen, 1987, p. 14.

Diverging Viewpoints in Art Therapy Literature

A wide range of viewpoints concerning the relationship of written and spoken words to images can be found in the literature selected for review. We can find 1) negatively determined views of art therapy towards written (and spoken) words, which also include words being seen as a defense.

Intermediary assertions suggest 2) hierarchical relationships seen as existing between written (and spoken) words, as well as images developing and occurring in 3) a parallel fashion.

Finally, we can identify 4) positive views of written (and spoken) words in art therapy. It is noteworthy that the negatively determined positions by far out-number the other orientations. This raises the question as to the possible reactionary stance of art therapy to more verbal therapies, and to words in general. Some of the arguments would seem to fit into more than one category; e.g. being negatively determined as well as being hierarchical.

The Negative Determinist Position

Art therapy is held by many of its practitioners as an alternative to the linguistic mode of communication, both in society and in therapeutics. This rationale, as Adorno outlines, can be seen to involve the principle of negative determinism. Such a principle

operates on the premise that when a stance is arrived at by reacting to an initial stimulus, the directional shift still remains within the tradition it seeks to reject. Rather than constituting an alternative, the reactionary position brings along with it premises from the original stimulus.

Views about written and spoken words in the art therapy literature chosen for review can be seen to be negatively determined from specific standpoints: theoretically, historically, developmentally, psychosexually, and intrapsychically. As well, a more general category can be outlined based upon "difference in modality". These groupings are suggested as useful means of organizing viewpoints within art therapy discourse and are by no means meant to be taken as hard and fast rules.

Taken from the theoretical standpoint, one can identify Freudian, Jungian and humanistically oriented art therapists who subscribe to schemas of art therapy that are negatively determined in their relationships to words.

Margaret Naumburg¹⁰ writing from a psychoanalytic viewpoint suggests that:

The image-making power of the unconscious relates to man's basic and primitive way of experiencing. His dreams and fantasies are originally released as pictures; translation of such images into graphic designs therefore becomes a more direct mode of expression than words. Deeper and more primitive than our intellectualized verbal communication is the demand of the unconscious which still speaks in images, and asks to be heard.

¹⁰ 1953, p. 4

The claim is put forth by Naumburg¹¹ that there is a bias in psychoanalysis towards verbal expression:

The translation of such symbols [dream images discoverable in the unconscious], which were originally visual, into verbal expression by the patient, became a basic element of psychoanalytic therapy. A preference for verbal symbols was shown consistently by Freud; in his own words he emphasized "the universality of speech symbolism", while he tended to minimize the importance of the visual symbol that precedes the verbal."

One could question Naumburg's understanding of Freud in the above passage. Her claim that symbols were originally visual shows a basic misinterpretation of Freud's terminology, i.e. words such as "dreams" and "symbols". According to Freud, symbols weren't necessarily visual in origin, they were first thoughts (the day's residue), that regressed to visual form before becoming displaced and/or condensed to form what Freud likened to "pack ice". This analogy would be "high-jacked" by an unconscious wish, which escaped censorship to reach the preconscious in the form of the dream, remembered upon waking.¹²

Interestingly enough, both Laurie Wilson and Judith Rubin point out¹³ that Naumburg's art therapy practice favoured the "...use of artwork initially to bring unconscious conflicts to the surface, and ultimately to lead patients to a verbal conscious

¹¹ *ibid*, p. 15.

¹² I thank Peter Byrne for pointing this out to me.

¹³ in Rubin, 1987.

awareness."¹⁴ Naumburg can be seen to have "remained within the communicative framework of her more verbal model."¹⁵

Negative attitudes towards written and spoken words can be seen to arise from the alignment of art therapists on either side of a debate inherited from Jung and Freud as to the meaning of the concepts of "sign" and "symbol", wherein Jung's views are seen to differ radically from Freud's. Naumburg implies that there was no place for words in Jung's schema. She writes:¹⁶

Jung, however, does not consider that a symbol is a sign, as does Freud, for something that can be expressed directly in words. But he regards a symbol as an expression of experience usable only when other modes, such as the verbal, are inadequate.

As mentioned earlier, Naumburg¹⁷ has written about psychoanalysis as verbal expression, where Freud is seen as having narrowed the meaning of the "symbol" in favour the "sign" aspect. This argument is also echoed by Gerhard Adler who Naumburg suggests was "perhaps the most articulate of Jung's followers."¹⁸ Adler¹⁹ outlines what Naumburg constitutes as the basic different between Freud and Jung's view of symbolism:

¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 61.

¹⁵ *ibid*, p. 12.

¹⁶ Naumburg, 1953, p. 121.

¹⁷ 1950

¹⁸ *ibid*, p. 15.

¹⁹ *ibid*, p. 15-16.

A symbol is not a sign for something that can just as well be expressed in rational words. That is why Freud really uses the term "symbol" incorrectly. A stick for instance is not a symbol for a sex organ, but merely a sign or cypher; his [Freud's] "symbol" does not in any way express more than can also be expressed in another and a rational way. A true symbol is not, as with Freud, a static sign, but a dynamic experience. Where a symbol is needed as expression of an experience, every other mode of expression would be inadequate.

Edith Wallace,²⁰ a Jungian, delineates the image as preceding the word: "Since the image precedes the word, we can through images evoke unknown aspects of the psyche and bring them to the light of consciousness; this results in understanding and often healing." Michael Edwards²¹ juxtaposes Jungian "symbols" against linguistic expression: "He [Jung] regarded images as symbolic when they induced strong affects, while also defying complete or precise verbal description." Jungian views of symbols, would also seem to be an area from which has arisen a negative view of language.

Harriet Wadeson²² posits from a humanistic approach that "The message is one of image beyond and before words."

Seen from an historical viewpoint, we can find rationales such as Naumburg's²³ that art therapy, on a fundamental level follows:

²⁰ in Rubin, 1987, p. 115.

²¹ in Rubin, 1987, p. 98.

²² 1980, p. 6.

²³ 1950, p. 35.

the universal process of communication validated by the unconscious projections of man throughout his existence; for always, in all aspects of ritual, dream and artistic expression man continues to speak in nonverbal symbols that are more universal than communication in words.

We find also the assertion by Edith Kramer, quoted in Levick²⁴

"Since the time of the caveman, men have created configurations which serve as equivalents for life processes".

The intrapsychic argument that imagery comprises a basic component of the unconscious is held by most art therapists. It is put forth in an appeal that is also unnecessarily negatively determined in regards to language. This oft quoted passage of Freud is found in many art therapists' writings e.g. Naumburg,²⁵ and Wadeson.²⁶ It would seem to constitute a cornerstone of art therapy dogma:

We experience it [a dream] predominantly in visual images; feelings may be present too, and thoughts interwoven in it as well; the other senses may also experience something, but nonetheless it is predominantly a question of images. Part of the difficulty of giving an account of dreams is due to our having to translate these images into words. "I could draw it," a dreamer often says to us, "but I don't know how to say it."²⁷

Elinor Ulman quotes Naumburg,²⁸ who outlines a benefit of

²⁴ 1983, p. 3.

²⁵ 1966, p. 2.

²⁶ 1980, p. 9.

²⁷ Freud, S. New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (Ed. James Strachey). Part II: "Dreams." London, The Hogarth Press, 1963, Vol. XV, p. 98.

²⁸ in Rubin, 1987, p. 280.

the use of artmaking in therapy: "...it permits the direct expression of dreams, fantasies, and other inner experiences that occur as pictures rather than as words."

Harriet Wadeson²⁹ outlines a developmental schema when she writes: "We think in images. We thought in images before we had words. We could recognize mother before we could say "mama". [Wadeson neglects to acknowledge that neither could we draw "mama" at that time.]

Mildred-Lachman Chapman uses a self psychology approach to art therapy based on the theoretical formulations of Heinz Kohut. In reference to psychosexual development Lachman-Chapman suggests that "Clearly, art therapists must focus on pre-Oedipal development. Verbal psychoanalytical technique developed with and for Oedipal conflicts, is not a sufficient model for us as art therapists."³⁰

Another group of negatively determined views of language and written words that can be discerned are based upon difference in modality. The purpose of art therapy, as presented by Wadeson³¹ as well as other art therapists, is "...to provide another mode of expression in addition to words". Wadeson³² outlines a schema based upon "spacial matrix" where she views

²⁹ 1980, p. 8

³⁰ in Rubin, 1987, p. 90.

³¹ 1980, p. 48.

³² 1980, p. 11.

verbal expression as linear communication and contrasts it with images:³³

First we say one thing, then another. Art expression need not obey the rules of language, grammar, syntax or logic. It is spatial in nature, there is no time element. In art, relationships occur in space.

Wadeson³⁴ juxtaposes the above description against an image which she insists can portray "...it all at once. I can show closeness and distance, bonds and divisions, similarities and differences, feelings, particular attributes, context of family life, ad infinitum.". Wadeson³⁵ also writes "...Sometimes this form of expression more nearly duplicates experience." Naumburg³⁶ also values art as a "more immediate mode of expression than words." Other views are less specific in their rationale. Janie Rhyne³⁷ writes: "Sometimes I want to use art simply to express emotions that cannot be put into words."

Margaret Naumburg³⁸ writes about the perceived biases found in society: "To the unprejudiced observer, consideration of the traditional methods of western learning point to an exaggerated use of the written and spoken word as the exclusive tool of communication." Landgarten³⁹ takes a position held by

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ *ibid* p. 11.

³⁶ 1950, p. 36.

³⁷ 1984, p. 14.

³⁸ *ibid*, p. 32

many art therapists in her outline of art therapy as an alternative to the linguistic mode. She writes:

The nonverbal aspect of art psychotherapy holds an important and unique position in the realm of mental health work for it gives the clients an opportunity to listen with their eyes. This is especially significant in our current society, where we are constantly bombarded by speech through personal contact and the communication media..

Defense mechanisms are viewed by art therapists as being both adaptive and maladaptive and manifest themselves in the drawings and behaviour of both adults and children. In the context of this thesis, I shall focus on the maladaptive or negative aspect that words as defense mechanisms are seen to serve. Perhaps it is this view of language as a defense mechanism that art therapists (e.g. Landgarten, Levick, Ulman, Wadeson) most commonly ascribe to language. Although the defenses of intellectualization and rationalization are generally viewed as verbal manifestations, they have been included here because:

- 1) they constitute one of the few references to "language" in the art therapy literature, 2) they would seem to be part of an underlying negative bias towards language and words in art therapy literature, 3) they can be used pictorially, e.g. Kramer distinguishes between stereotyped art where a defense

"protects against further pathology" and "creative art that pushes the individual toward change."⁴⁰

We can sample the flavour of this type of argument in the following references. Joseph Gerai⁴¹ writes that symbolic images and thought processes can "circumvent the treacherous duplicity of verbal communication." Landgarten⁴² describes one of her patients in marital therapy; "...She was a bright, verbal woman who relied on intellectualization as a defense." Elinor Ulman's description⁴³ of a patient also typifies this attitude:

Janet was adept in the use of words but used them mainly in the service of defense. Her experience exemplifies the usefulness of art in cutting through the emotional smoke screen some highly verbal people are able to erect.

Words are seen also as being more open to manipulation, due to their familiarity e.g. Wadeson⁴⁴ who writes:

Because verbalization is our primary mode of communication, we are more adept at manipulating it and more facile in saying what we want to say and refraining from saying what we don't want to say than through other communicative modes.

Edith Kramer⁴⁵ writes of a patient's use of abstract symbols

[my emphasis]:

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 139.

⁴¹ In Rubin, 1987, p. 197.

⁴² 1981, p. 363.

⁴³ In Rubin, 1987, p. 289.

⁴⁴ 1980, p. 9.

⁴⁵ 1971, p. 131-132.

Sometimes he represented his initials in action, like living things: in one picture, they were flying a kite from the roof of the Empire State Building. Although the activity was compulsive and stereotyped, it helped him behave in a less chaotic fashion, cement relationships, and establish some tenuous feelings of identity.

Intermediary Positions

Some art therapists subscribe to a hierarchical relationship existing between image and language, with the image being given originary or preferred status and significance. Edith Wallace,⁴⁶ a Jungian, outlines an intrapsychic progression from inner to outer that messages from the depth can take beginning with: 1) emotions that become identified as, 2) a specific emotion that may be expressed in, 3) an image that lessens the force of the emotion. The image may then be explained in, 4) words which constitute conscious understanding.

Edith Kramer⁴⁷ in her book Art as Therapy With Children distinguishes between 5 various types of art products and ways that art materials can be used. In this schema, a hierarchy is seen to exist from 1) precursory activities that do not lead to symbolic creation through, 2) chaotic discharge to, 3) art in the service of defense to, 4) pictographic communications to, 5) formed expression-i.e. the "production of symbolic configurations that

⁴⁶ in Rubin, 1987.

⁴⁷ 1971, p. 54-55.

successfully serve both self-expression and communication.”

While Kramer does not necessarily include words in her definition of “pictographs”, a definite linguistic element would seem to be implied. Pictographs are seen as “pictorial communications which replace or supplement words.”⁴⁸ Kramer suggests using this kind of therapy (pictographs) only in emergency measures.

Levick finds a hierarchical outline in Jerome Bruner’s view of imagery serving as predecessor to the verbal.⁴⁹ As well, she quotes Haber⁵⁰ who states rather superficially that “the perceiver may see the world before he knows it...at the early stage of processing he does not know what he sees. Thus in the beginning there is the image even before the word.”

Laurie Wilson⁵¹ refers to D. Beres, a psychoanalyst who was concerned with symbolism from the perspective of psychoanalytic ego psychology. He describes a “hierarchy of perceptual experiences” and traces the development of both imagery and language from the building block of what he calls “the symbol” [my emphasis]. He points out that language is a shared symbolic system, central in individual development and human experience. It is held by Beres to be a higher-level form of functioning than visual imagery.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 54.

⁴⁹ 1983. p. 58.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ in Rubin, 1987. p. 46.

Another intermediary position is one where parallel views of language and images are upheld by art therapists such as Myra Levick. She writes:⁵² "The whole issue of language development has spurred considerable research. Some of the literature does support the idea that language and imagery develop parallel to each other." Levick⁵³ refers to theories of Piaget (1971) and Paivo (1971) as stated by Bruner, which claim that verbal and imaginal processes are "independent traits whose development parallels each other rather than imagery being the predecessor to verbal."

Levick calls attention to Piaget's parallel progression of language and imagic development beginning with the sensorimotor period (zero to two years of age). The joint development of cognitive, emotional and physiologic growth contribute to "An important achievement of this period...the ability to use symbols which heralds the first phase of the next period."⁵⁴ Piaget's definition of the "symbolic function" later changed to the "semiotic function" which includes both signs and symbols.

The pre-operational period, as Levick describes, extends from two to seven years of age. In this period, language and thought development occur, as well as the development of the symbolic

⁵² 1983, p. 162.

⁵³ *ibid*, p. 58.

⁵⁴ *ibid*, p. 32.

function.

Several art therapists refer to left and right brain hemispheric studies otherwise called lateralization.⁵⁵ Gerai echoes the sentiments of many art therapists (e.g. Naumburg and Silver) when he reminds his readers of our current society's emphasis on left hemispheric activities (logical reasoning, and rational thinking). According to Rawley Silver,⁵⁶ studies have indicated that "...people tend to favour either left or right brain thinking. Preferences are established early in life and for some, visual thinking is the preferred mode." Viewed in this context, Silver suggests that a bias toward either mode of functioning is more than a matter of preference, and that allowances should be made for both types of performances.

Positive Views of Words

Art therapists accept linguistic elements in art therapy practice in varying degrees, depending upon their theoretical leanings. In general, humanistic and cognitively oriented frameworks seem to exhibit a wider tolerance for language. Some examples of positive recognition given to words include Betensky's phenomenological perspective. She acknowledges the use of speech (at the appropriate time) "because words are expression, just as art is; because consciousness, thought, and speech are one; and

⁵⁵ Levick 1983, Gerai and Silver in Rubin, 1987.

⁵⁶ in Rubin, 1987, p. 235.

because in phenomenology we intend to articulate, and that is the job of words."⁵⁷ In a similar vein, Janie Rhyne⁵⁸ practicing Gestalt art therapy writes, "With our gestures, words and symbols, we show traces of our inner lives." We find Levick⁵⁹ acknowledging that a low level of cognitive functioning was revealed through a patient's writing as well as in her art.

Other more psychodynamically oriented art therapists also use words in therapy sessions such as Edith Wallace's⁶⁰ use of haiku poetry, or Michael Edward's⁶¹ suggestion of writing by the client or patient as a "form of active imagination, in response to [their] images, with a view to amplify meaning."

Although several art therapists arrive at a negative view of language based upon Jung's definition of symbols, one can also pick out a more positive view of words which can be found in the following references to Jung's writings as quoted by Edith Wallace:⁶²

Let it speak. Then switch off your noisy consciousness and listen quietly inward and look at the images that appear before your inner eye, or hearken to the words which the muscles of your speech apparatus are trying to form. Write down what then comes without criticism:

⁵⁷ in Rubin, 1987. p. 157.

⁵⁸ 1984, p. 119.

⁵⁹ 1983, p. 156.

⁶⁰ Rubin, 1987, p. 123.

⁶¹ *ibid*, p. 107.

⁶² in Rubin, 1987, p. 116.

Once you have got at least fragments of these contents, then you may meditate on them afterwards.

Summary

The exposé of art therapy theory presented in this chapter reveals three distinctly discernable positions [which constitutes the classical dialectic] taken by art therapists in regards to the thesis topic. Within these positions, a number of often confusing and overlapping ideas that frequently lack clarity and precise definition in art therapists' writings can be seen to co-exist. The cumulative effect of this writing is one of confusion for both art therapy practitioners and readers unfamiliar with the field. Consistent distinctions are not made between the mental image and the constituted image (e.g. drawn or painted etc), nor between written and spoken words. A number of terms such as "image", "language", "sign", and "symbol" require further clarification and delineation. While beyond the scope of this thesis, the sign/symbol debate would prove to be a fruitful area of investigation for art therapy discourse, involving a discussion of general theories of iconicity.

The review presented in this chapter has raised important ideas, some of which will be examined in the following chapters. Several biases can be discerned from the preceding review, that would seem to be influencing art therapists' attitudes in a number

of different and subtle ways. One bias that can be articulated emerges from the negative determinist position identified in this chapter. Rather than arriving at a rationale for art therapy through negation by juxtaposing art against language, as Naumburg advocates, a more in-depth investigation is being recommended based upon an appreciation of the complex relationship that exists between language and images. Chapter Two will introduce the concept of an interdisciplinary approach and an area of inquiry known as "communication studies."

From an aesthetic point of view, underlying notions of purity would seem to be governing certain conceptions of art held by practitioners such as Edith Kramer. Chapter Three will examine modernist ideology in order to provide a wider frame of reference in which to contextualize art therapy discourse. The focus will be on modern conceptions of art and how language functions within this framework of thinking.

The effects of orality and literacy on the development of current day thought processes will be clarified and examined in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER TWO

Setting the Field: Defining the Line of Inquiry

As illustrated in Chapter One, art therapists can be seen to lack an appreciation of the complexity involved in discussing subjects such as language. This may stem in part from too narrow a view of the field. This chapter will introduce the concept of an inter-disciplinary approach, as well as define the area of study known as communication studies, both of which may be unfamiliar to art therapists. The methods of analysis identified in this chapter will help to define the theoretical critique that this thesis will endeavour to apply to the thesis topic.

An Interdisciplinary Approach

Interdisciplinary thought and study is described by Brian Wallis¹ as being typical of the critical climate of the 1980's. Wallis refers to points of reference or models from fields such as "...philosophy, linguistics and anthropology to name a few" that can become part of the [critic's] interdisciplinary dialogue. Wallis describes such an interdisciplinary critical climate as being linked to "a larger world of intellectual endeavor that today is likely to include political, cultural and sociological as well as purely formal analysis."² Wallis contrasts an interdisciplinary approach with the apolitical stance that characterizes modernist criticism. While

¹ 1984, p. vii.

² *ibid.*

Wallis' focus applies to the world of art criticism, an interdisciplinary approach such as he describes would seem also to have relevance to the field of art therapy.

While many of the ideas introduced in this thesis stem from domains such as semiotics, linguistics and art criticism, they find a useful and common home under an area of inquiry known as communication studies

What is Communication Studies?

Before defining communication studies, it might be helpful to understand what is meant by the term "communication". John Fiske³ describes communication as difficult to define, encompassing "diverse and multi-faceted" aspects of human activities. Fiske recommends a general definition of communication as "social interaction through message."⁴ He also⁵ suggests that a "multi-disciplinary area of study" involving several approaches is required in order to achieve a thorough account of the subject.

O'Sullivan et al⁶ suggest that two general approaches to communication studies exist. One holds communication to be "a process, by which A sends a message to B, upon whom it has an effect." [my underlining] The objective of this approach is to identify and study the stages through which communication passes, in order to understand each part and its effect on the

³ 1982, p. 1.

⁴ *ibid*, p. 2.

⁵ *ibid*, p. 1.

⁶ 1983, p. 42.

entire process.

The second approach is described by O'Sullivan et al⁷ as structuralist "in that it focuses on the relationship between constituent elements necessary for meaning to occur." [my underlining] Communication here is seen as a "negotiation and exchange of meaning," involving the interaction of "messages, people-in-cultures and reality."⁸ This thesis will concern itself largely with the second semiotic and structuralist approach to communication, based upon the work of thinkers such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes and Charles Saunders Peirce .

Semiotic and Structuralist Approaches to Meaning

In order to begin to discuss the phenomenon of written words in art therapy images, it is important to understand how language in general and written words in particular differ from pictorial images. Such an inquiry falls into the domain "the study of signs and the way they work " more commonly called semiotics or semiology.⁹ These two terms have come to be employed in more than one sense as presented by O'Sullivan et al and Burgin. O'Sullivan et al suggest "semiotics" as a continental term and "semiology" as an American term. The term semiotics was initially considered to be synonymous with structuralism according to O'Sullivan et al. They describe the shift that structuralism underwent in the 1970's due to an increase of

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Fiske, 1982, p. 43.

theoretical stances that had become too divergent to remain canopied under the same term.

Structuralism¹⁰ is described as a "characteristically twentieth century way of understanding the world" and stands in contrast to nineteenth century cause and origin approaches that characterize investigations in various fields (e.g. Freud, Darwin, Marx). Structuralism¹¹ is seen to share a similar focus with current disciplines such as physics and astronomy:

Instead of treating the world as an aggregate of things with their own intrinsic properties, structuralism and physics respectively seek to account for the social and physical world as a system of relations in which the properties of a 'thing' (be it an atom, a sign or an individual) derive from its internal and external relations.

The investigation and application of such ideas to art therapy presents an exciting and difficult challenge for art therapists. It is for this reason that a large portion of this thesis is devoted to exploring concepts and areas that are perhaps unfamiliar in art therapy discourse. Many of the concepts introduced in this thesis will require further study, if they are to be of use in the field of art therapy. This thesis will constitute an effort in this direction.

O'Sullivan et al¹² delineate three areas of study that developed out of structuralism: semiotics, deconstruction and post-

¹⁰ Sullivan et al, 1983, p. 42.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² 1983.

structuralism.

Semiotics is described by O'Sullivan et al¹³ as a "theoretical approach and its associated methods of analysis", rather than as an academic discipline. The "father" of semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure (1858-1913), a Swiss linguist, is still strongly identified with this methodology. In 1916, his ideas were published in the book Cours de linguistique générale consisting of lecture notes taken by his students. Saussure's ideas were taken further in the 1960's by French structuralists such as Roland Barthes (criticism) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (anthropology), both of whom applied them in analyses of social and cultural phenomena.¹⁴ Charles S. Peirce, a philosopher (1839-1914) founded the American practice of semiotics. His ideas which differed from Saussure's, were taken up by the likes of Roman Jakobson and Peter Wollen.¹⁵

Deconstruction, largely known as a method of literary analysis, is described by O'Sullivan et al¹⁶ as stemming largely from the writings of the philosopher Jacques Derrida. Derrida's method which O'Sullivan et al suggest is a logical outcome of structuralism, is to question every aspect of a text: "doubt and questioning raised to the level of doctrine."¹⁷ While densely written and difficult to understand, deconstructionist criticism is described as being "...dedicated to teasing out the repressed, marginalized and absent in chosen discourse."¹⁸

¹³ 1983, p. 210.

¹⁴ Iverson in Rees et al, 1988.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ 1983.

¹⁷ *ibid*, p. 226.

¹⁸ *ibid*, p. 227.

Post-structuralism, also described by O'Sullivan et al as a logical outgrowth of structuralism, takes into account psycho-analytical theories and the function of pleasure in the production of meaning in texts. Post-structuralism acknowledges external forces such as class, gender, ethnicity, the role of history and privileges the status of the reader over that of the text.

Burgin¹⁹ suggests that semiology is currently used to mean the early approach that relied heavily on Saussure, whereas the term semiotics is employed currently to "designate the ever-changing field of cross-disciplinary studies whose common focus is on the general phenomenon of meaning in society." [author's emphasis] Other terms used, as Burgin outlines,²⁰ to refer to this more current application of semiotics include "textual semiotics", "deconstructive analysis", and " post-structuralist criticism".

A Semiotic Approach to Art

Margaret Iverson's effort to formulate a semiotics of visual art provides a useful introduction to the word/image problem addressed in this thesis. Iverson employs semiotic and structuralist thought in her comparison of the approaches taken by Saussure and Peirce to signification. Although Saussure's model may have limitations in terms of the range of signification encompassed, Iverson suggests that some of the semiotic principles proposed by Saussure about language may also be found to be

¹⁹ 1986, p. 73.

²⁰ *ibid.*

operational in visual signs (e.g. art therapy images). Iverson calls the Saussurian model of semiotics "a valuable antidote to the lingering assumption that the relation between the visual sign and its object is a natural and immediate one."²¹

Saussure's foremost contribution to the study of signs according to Iverson is his insight into the importance of difference. Iverson²² acknowledges Saussure's assertion that "...signs can only operate within systems of difference." James Harkness²³ describes this difference in language as operational on three levels: at the phonetic level - "dog" differs from "bog" or "doe", at the conceptual level - the idea of dog is different from the idea of cat and at the syntactical level - "dog" is a noun and is used differently in a sentence than a verb such as "bark" or the adjective "black".

The above observations of Saussure and Harkness can be applied to visual signification. Iverson²⁴ cautions that: "There is a lesson to be learned...about the nature of signification in visual signs, which will help us to guard against the assumption of fixed meanings." She suggests that each picture represents a system of relative values in which different elements signify in relation to each other. While there is a tendency to reduce this principle of difference to binary opposition in visual signification, other applications can be found. In some instances, as Iverson suggests, an absence or blank can be an eloquent expression of an

²¹ in Rees et al, 1988, p. 85.

²² *ibid*, p. 86.

²³ in Foucault, 1982.

²⁴ in Rees et al, 1988, p. 86.

emotion. While Iverson applies this principle to the solution that the painter Timanthes takes to solve the problem of how to portray grief when he has " 'exhausted all the indications of grief' on the secondary witnesses",²⁵ the concept is also useful in art therapy where many associations can be made about a blank sheet of paper from an art therapy session.

Saussure's Linguistic Sign

Another important contribution of Saussure's work is his use of the terms "signifier" and "signified", which have been readily appropriated in many domains, including structuralism. Saussure defined the linguistic sign as a "two-sided psychological entity"²⁶ that he represented by the drawing in figure 1 (see p. 30). Saussure called the combination of these two inter-related elements (concept and sound-image) the linguistic sign and suggested that each element recalls and reinforces the other (see Figure 2, p. 30). Saussure proposed replacing the words "concept" and "sound-image" with the two terms "signifier" and "signified". Saussure states that these two terms indicate "the opposition that separates them from each other and from the whole of which they are parts."²⁷

Although we tend to think of sound images as words, Saussure points to the often forgotten but important fact that "the word "tree" is called a sign only because it carries the concept "tree"

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ DeGeorge, 1972, p. 71.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 72.

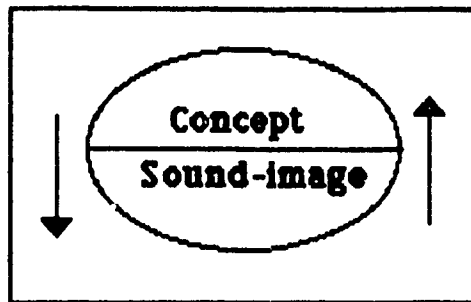


figure 1

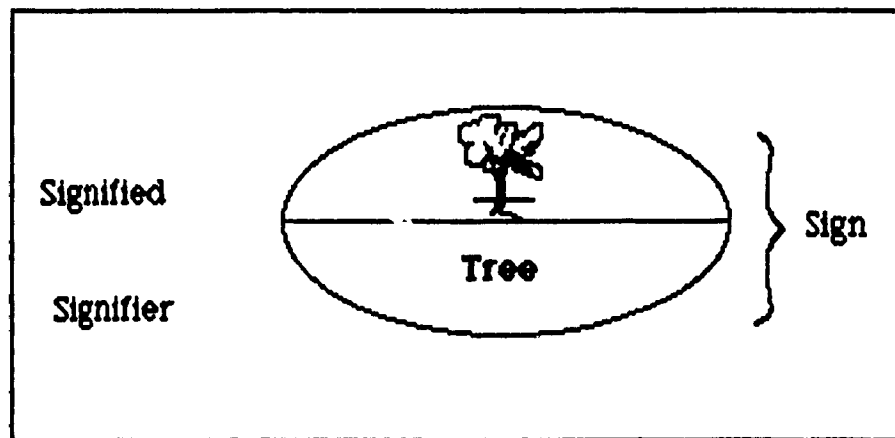


figure 2

with the result that the idea of the sensory part implies the idea of the whole."²⁸ One needs to be cautious of too literal an interpretation of the concepts of signifier and signified. As Saussure insists, the signified is not a "thing" but an abstract concept; the signifier is not a written name but a "mental picture of the thing represented by the sound image."²⁹

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 71.

²⁹ Irvine, 1981, p. 178.

Difference Through Binary Opposition—Five Modalities

One way that difference can be seen to be revealed is through what is known as "binary opposition". Iverson³⁰ writes that "There is no doubt that binary opposition does play an important role in visual signification." Iverson³¹ refers to the use of binary opposition as cited in the chapter "Frontal and Profile as Symbolic Form" from Meyer Shapiro's book Words and Pictures.³² She quotes an example from Shapiro:

In other arts besides the medieval Christian, profile and frontal are often coupled in the same work as carriers of opposed qualities. One of the pair is the vehicle of the higher value and the other, by contrast marks the lesser. The opposition is reinforced in turn by differences in size, posture, costume, place and physiognomy as attributes of the polarized individuals. The duality of the frontal and profile can signify then the distinction between good and evil.

We can find several examples of binary opposition as it applies to the words and images in terms of their differences (see figure 3, p. 33). These differences shall be briefly reviewed, as they represent significant insights into one way of discussing the word/image phenomenon.

1) Arbitrary and Motivated Signs

For a description of the distinction between arbitrary and motivated signs see p.39 of this chapter. Linguistic signs are considered to be arbitrary by Saussure, whereas visual

³⁰ 1988, p. 87.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² 1973.

signs are held to be motivated signs.

2) Double and Single Articulation

Roland Barthes³³ describes the double articulation³⁴ found in language:

The sequence of discourse can be divided into words, and the words divided in turn into sounds (or into letters). Yet there is a great difference between these two articulations: the first produces units each of which already has a meaning (the words); the second produces non-signifying units (the phonemes: a phoneme in itself, signifies nothing.)

Barthes³⁵ describes the structure of the visual arts, which can be seen to signify in a different way. He writes: "...it is quite possible to decompose the "discourse" of a picture into forms (lines and points) but these forms signify nothing before being assembled; painting knows only one articulation." The exception to this Barthes suggests, is the work of Arcimboldo whose paintings Barthes describe³⁶ as "a rather alarming denial of pictorial language." (figure 4, p.35)

3) Syntagmatic and Associative Relations

The terms "syntagmatic" and "associative" are used by Saussure to refer to two ways that words can relate to each

³³1985, p. 134.

³⁴ The double articulation of language is a term coined by the French linguist André Martinet, Sampson, 1985.

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *ibid.*

**SOME EXAMPLES OF BINARY OPPOSITION
POLARITIES REGARDING:**

Linguistic Signification	Visual Signification
1. arbitrary	motivated
2. doubly articulation	single articulation
3. syntagmatic (temporal) a) linearity of words b) creation of art work c) demands of the medium	associative (simultaneous) a) non linearity of visual language for creator and viewer.
4. glottographic systems a) logographic b) phonographic	semasiographic systems
5. classification	appearances

Figure 3

other. Hope B. Irvine³⁷ describes syntagmatic relationships as "sequential combinations supported by linearity, an orderly arrangement of words." Associative relations of words are described by Saussure as being formed outside of discourse, "...they are a part of the inner storehouse that makes up the language of each speaker."³⁸ Such words Irvine writes,³⁹ "are the result of memory associations of words that have something in common, they are not supported by linearity."

Irvine proposes that visual language relies more strongly on associative relations, than on syntagmatic ones. She argues that associative relations would seem to be operating for both the creator (in the conceiving) and the viewer (in the recreation) of the picture.

An autonomous art object presents a number of "terms" coordinated by an artist to the viewer simultaneously. The viewer may begin to "read" the picture at any point and may associate in any direction from any aspect of the painting, which itself serves as the center of constellation.

However, Irvine submits that syntagmatic relations might apply to visual language in two senses. The first involves the temporal dimension that the creator goes through in order to realize a work.⁴⁰ She writes: "...a painter does not paint a painting all at once, simultaneously, the artist goes through a conceptual process which exists in time." The second involves the sequential demands that the medium may impose e.g. paint needs

³⁷ 1980, p. 188.

³⁸ 1959, p. 123

³⁹ 1980.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 90.



Arcimboldo Image

Figure 4

to dry before more paint or other markings can be added on top of it.

4) Glottographic Systems and Semasiographic Semiotic Systems

Sampson⁴¹ uses Haas's terms to distinguish between glottographic and semasiographic systems. Sampson describes semasiographic expressions as systems "which indicate ideas directly" and "are symbols unrelated to the words of English or any other language." Sampson cites mathematics and road signs as examples of a semasiographic system. Although numbers are translated into different languages in order to name the same number he notes, the way it is written remains constant. Sampson suggests that semasiographic systems cannot be considered as true writing.

Semasiographic systems of signification are contrasted by Sampson⁴² to glottographic systems which "provide visible representations of spoken-language utterances." Noting that writing systems are all glottographic, Sampson suggests that glottographic systems subdivide into logographic and phonographic writing. Using the notion of single and double articulation, logographic systems are defined by Sampson⁴³ as "those based on meaningful units," while phonographic systems are "those based on phonological units."

⁴¹ 1985, p. 29.

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 33.

5). Classification and Appearance

Finally, in this investigation of examples of binary opposition, we can cite Barthes'⁴⁴ observation about the activity of naming, (i.e. classification or *Maya* as seen in Hindu philosophy – the manifestation of opposition, of measurement) and the world of appearance. We can see these principles at work according to Barthes, in the two modern day examples of art: in the readymade in which the object is real (appearance), where art commences “only at its periphery, its framing its museology” and in conceptual art “where all that is needed is the named object (e.g. classification through a dictionary definition); nothing else is required.”⁴⁵

Post Structuralism's Critique of Binary Opposition

Binary opposition is one way to describe differences that can be posited between elements such as language and images; the examples given above furnish useful and interesting hints for art therapists. Iverson⁴⁶ warns us that in using such a system, there exists the danger of “an imposed frame of limitations.”

⁴⁴ 1985, p. 224.

⁴⁵ *ibid.* Barthes observation points to a Lacanian interpretation of language as the attempt to bridge the gap to the original object of desire. He writes:

it is because the drawn (painted or composed) form has no name that several are sought for it and imposed upon it; metaphor is the only way of naming the unnameable (it then very specifically becomes a catachresis [the misuse of words]; the chain of names is valid for the name which is missing.” (*ibid.*, p. 225)

⁴⁶ 1988, p. 88.

Binary opposition is described by Iverson as being a product of High Structuralism. She quotes Terry Eagleton⁴⁷ who writes: "Structuralism was generally satisfied if it could carve up a text into binary oppositions (high/low, light/dark, Nature/Culture and so on) and expose the logic of their working." Iverson calls to our attention the rigidity involved in binary opposition and the ultimate hierarchization that inevitably occurs.

Such hierarchization is delineated by Foucault⁴⁸ in the area of concern to this thesis. Foucault suggests that from the 15th to the 20th century, plastic representation and linguistic reference have been separated in painting. "The two systems can neither merge nor intersect. In one way or another, subordination is required."⁴⁹ This thesis will discuss biases and connotations that have contributed to such hierarchizations (e.g. modernism and orality/literacy).

While the project in structuralism was the identification of such differences, the goal of post-structuralism is the deconstruction of these polarities. Iverson quotes Eagleton⁵⁰ :

Deconstruction tries to show how such oppositions, in order to hold themselves in place, are sometimes betrayed into inverting or collapsing themselves, or need to banish to the text's margins certain niggling details which can be made to return and plague them.

47 *ibid.*

48 1982.

49 *ibid.*, p. 32.

50 in Rees et al, 1988, p. 88.

This thesis cannot hope either to fully describe or to deconstruct all the polarities that may be posited about the word/image paradigm. Yet, through having broadly defined the post-structuralist position, a greater awareness has been created for art therapists of the possibilities that lie beyond mere comparisons such as in binary opposition.

An Introduction to Peirce's Theory of Signs

Iverson finds that Peirce's approach has more to offer in terms of a semiotics of art, because his groupings of signs encompass different modes of signification (e.g. words and images), whereas Saussure limits his discussion to arbitrary and conventional signs (i.e. linguistic signs). Iverson⁵¹ describes this difference:

Linguistic signs are arbitrary in the sense that there is no relation between the sound of a word and its meaning other than convention, a 'contract' or rule. It is clear that visual signs are not arbitrary, but 'motivated' - there is some rationale for the choice of signifier.

Iverson distinguishes between the word "dog" and a picture of a dog. Since these two stimuli do not signify in the same manner, Iverson⁵² concludes "that a theory of semiotics based on linguistics will fall short of offering a complete account of visual signification."

Charles Saunders Peirce wrote from 1867 to approximately a few years before his death in 1914. He is characterized by J.

⁵¹ in Rees et al, 1988, p. 85.

⁵² *ibid.*

Buchler⁵³ as being "a natural scientist and close student of the history of philosophy". Buchler describes Peirce's approach as both revolutionary and constructive.

While Iverson⁵⁴ discusses the three categories that Peirce assigned to signs - icon, index and symbol - from the standpoint of their ideological implications, art therapist's line of inquiry would seem to lie more along the psychological implications of the signs that their patients and clients create. (See Figure 5, p. 42 for a diagrammatic representation of these three categories.) In this trichotomy, each type of sign is seen to share a different type of relationship to the object and to the viewer. [my emphasis] It is interesting to note, as MacCannell⁵⁵ points out, that Derrida favours Peirce's model of the sign rather than Saussure's.

The Icon

The icon is described by Iverson⁵⁶ as signifying "by virtue of a similarity of qualities or resemblance to its object". The example is given of the iconic relationship that exists between a sitter and a portrait. The icon would seem to be independent in regards to both the object it represents and its viewer. Peirce describes the icon as an "immediate" image with characteristics that would belong to it even if it weren't interpreted as a sign or if there were no objects that it resembled in nature.

⁵³ 1955, p. ix.

⁵⁴ 1988.

⁵⁵ 1982, p. 130.

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p. 89.

The iconic sign can be broken down further into the two subcategories of images and diagrams. Images are seen to resemble the "simple qualities" of their objects and diagrams are seen to resemble only the relationship of their parts. Diagrammatic expressions as outlined by Iverson, would show relations of hierarchy between figures as in the Holy Trinity. Perspective, Iverson suggests, can also show diagrammatic relationships.

The Index

The index is distinguished as signifying through an existential bond or a causal connection, e.g. a footprint indexically shows that there has been a person on the beach, or as in Mary Kelly's Post-Partum Document, the stained nappies speak of her son's presence. In the history of art, the Modernist practice of Abstract Expressionism is cited by Iverson⁵⁷ as constituting "the apotheosis of the indexical sign or all-over signature." Here, because of the physical connection to the object of representation, the mind has only to notice that the connection exists; no conventional codes are necessary to establish this meaning. Iverson notes the use of indexical signs in the work of artists such as Duchamp (readymades) and Jasper Johns. Johns' use of numbers, letters of the alphabet, targets and flags are described by Iverson⁵⁸ as "pre-figured conventional designs" that "spill

⁵⁷ *ibid*, p. 90.

⁵⁸ *ibid*, p. 90.

Peirce's Trichotomy of Signs

1. Icon-e.g. portrait

- a) Image-resembles the "simple qualities" of the object
 - b) Diagram-resembles the relationships of the parts
-

2. Index-e.g. footprint on the beach

- ### 3. Symbol-signifies because of a contract or a rule e.g. the words of a language
-

figure 5

over into either indexical or symbolic signs."

The Symbol

The symbol, as Iverson describes⁵⁹ it, is seen by Peirce to signify "by virtue of a contract or rule - it is the equivalent of Saussure's arbitrary linguistic sign." With symbols, the relationship between the signifier and the object depends upon the mind or one "who knows the rule."⁶⁰ Iverson⁶¹ quotes Peirce's observation that symbols elude individual will:

You can write down the word "star", but that does not make you the creator of the word, nor if you erase it have you destroyed the word. The word lives in the mind of those who use it.

According to Jakobson,⁶² Peirce acknowledged the unlikelihood of finding "... an absolutely pure index, or to find any sign absolutely devoid of indexical quality." As well, cultural connotations play a role in the reading of signs.

From a typology such as Peirce's, the question can be asked whether the problem this thesis seeks to address lies not so much in a narrow view of words or language in images, but rather in the general lack of complexity currently attributed by art therapists to signs (e.g. Peirce's sense) both as they apply to the objects they represent and their effect on the viewer. Perhaps once again, the sign/symbol debate mentioned in chapter One,

⁵⁹ *ibid*, p. 89.

⁶⁰ *ibid*.

⁶¹ p. 91.

⁶² 1971, p. 349.

inherited by art therapists from Jung and Freud, is to blame?

Summary

In this chapter I proposed and reviewed the concept of an interdisciplinary approach, as well as outlined the area known as communication studies. This was done in order to introduce some of the new (for art therapists) domains that an interdisciplinary approach to the thesis topic will touch upon, such as semiotic and structuralist theory. It is this writer's belief that the domain of art therapy can become enriched by an interdisciplinary approach to issues such as this thesis seeks to address. By so expanding the field of art therapy, perhaps other art therapists will see its merit and be encouraged to use an interdisciplinary approach in other areas of concern to the field.

From the standpoint of semiotic theory, in Chapter Three I will examine the historical concept of modernism (from an art historical context) and its application to the thesis topic. The concept of discourse theory also will be introduced. Chapter Four discusses the notions of Orality and Literacy as another dimension of concern regarding the thesis topic. Chapter Five introduces and reviews some examples of words in images that can serve as "archetypes" in a pragmatic application. Chapter Six will propose further semiotic approaches that could be useful to art therapy discourse in regards to the thesis topic, as well as areas of further study.

CHAPTER THREE

The Effects of Modernist Tenets on Art Therapy

One could argue that art therapists have failed to locate their discipline in terms of the underlying dogmata that have influenced its practice and form. Although art therapy flourishes today as an empirical practice, I am in agreement with Byrne,¹ who submits that the existing Art Therapy theoretical structure is in need of extensive renovation. Byrne's suggestion that "we must tackle the difficulties involved in producing an epistemology"² would seem to begin with an identification of underlying elements operating within existing art therapy discourse. Such a task presents an immense challenge to art therapists seeking to better define and understand their field.

Paul Heyer³ draws our attention to the "unconscious knowledge" or "unquestioned givens" that can underlie most discussions:

These givens are so deep and pervasive that they reside beneath conscious, explicit declarations, such as the subject matter selected for discussion and the competing theories purporting to explain it.

Michel Foucault coined the term "episteme" to describe such underlying, unconscious knowledge.⁴ Foucault proposed that

¹ 1985.

² *ibid.*, p. 8.

³ 1988, p. 242.

⁴ Heyer, *ibid.*

epistemic changes occurred through a rupture or break, rather than as a slow and uninterrupted change-over.

This chapter will discuss the episteme known as "modernism" and a line of inquiry called "discourse theory". Both of these areas are concerned with social and political spheres of influence and have relevance to this thesis in particular, as well as having far reaching implications for Art Therapy in general.

The Relevance of a Discussion of Modernism for Art Therapy

The question can be asked as to the relevance of modernism for art therapy. The assumption that motivates this review stems from the belief that attitudes and conceptualizations of the world are influenced by time and history. Paul Heyer⁵ refers to Michel Foucault's acknowledgement that "...largely unconscious conditions and rules ...effect the production of related discourses at the same time and place." By reason that art therapy as a discipline emerged from ideas current during the last century, it follows that art therapy can be located within the larger context of "modernism" or the "modern" era.

While much critical writing has occurred on the subject of art and modernism, for the most part, these concepts have not been absorbed into art therapy discourse. In fact, the art therapy discursive field has remained curiously detached from the influences of art theory, history and criticism. Perhaps it is time to break this spell? While knowledge of modernist aesthetics is not being suggested as a panacea for art therapy, perhaps it can

⁵ 1988, p. 242.

help to provide some pertinent new insights.

This chapter will present ideas on modernism, culled from the world of art criticism. The relevance of these ideas to the field of art therapy is not assumed in this presentation and for the most part, remains to be determined. A more in-depth inquiry into the extent of the relevance, if any, of these ideas to the field would be a worthwhile project.

An important distinction needs to be established between images made within the context of art therapy sessions and images described by the modernist paradigm of abstract painterly expression, or any other style. It is not being suggested that the descriptions and analyses of modernist artworks referred to in this text (written mostly by artists and art critics about artwork that is exhibited in galleries and museums) are meant to describe or take the place of artwork done in the context of art therapy sessions. On the other hand, some sort of a connection cannot be ruled out entirely.

It is hoped that the benefits of such a review might kindle further applications of new ideas adapted to art therapy discourse from the related field of art criticism and theory. This brief inquiry will seek answers to questions such as: what attitudes characterize the period of modernism? How do images and language function in the modern era? What is the role of the viewer of a modernist work of art?

What is Modernism?

A great number of theories have been put forth in attempts to understand how and why modernism came to be. While a comprehensive study of modernism is beyond the scope of this thesis, certain points can be raised, culled from modernist aesthetic theory, that have relevance to the field of art therapy. It is also important to realize that to date, according to Calinescu,⁶ conclusive studies on modernist aesthetics still remain to be carried out.

The influences of modernism are not restricted to the aesthetic realm but extend into all aspects of twentieth century life in the Western world such as political, social, scientific, philosophical, theological, economic and psychological spheres. Modernism has many names, according to T.J. Reiss⁷ and encompasses forces that have variously been called "positivist", "capitalist", "experimentalist", "historicist", and "modern".

Despite the diversified depth and scope of their analyses, writers tend to mark modernism off as: "a unique occurrence, resulting from the convergence of social and political tendencies peculiar to a specific time and environment,"⁸ as an "epistemic rupture,"⁹ and as "the accession to dominance .of a single discursive class. That dominance replaces another."¹⁰ Although, as Habermas proposes, the word "modern" has lost a fixed

⁶ 1987.

⁷ 1982, p.13.

⁸ Smith 1968 see Liberalism.

⁹ Foucault, 1972.

¹⁰ Reiss. 1982.

historical reference (in that every period can be seen to experience a moment of self-conscious reckoning), Hal Foster¹¹ suggests that the ideology of modernism exists as a cultural construct, that is based upon certain conditions within an historical limit.

Descriptions of the modernist period vary, depending on the author's focus. Certain key themes emerge in regards to modernism, such as the fostering of a general "self-consciousness" or "self-obsessiveness", as well as the idea of "progress". In his Dictionary of Political Thought, Scruton¹² suggests that it was perhaps Hegel who gave a far-reaching review of modernity as "the self conscious placing of oneself in history." Brian Wallis¹³ describes Modernism as:

the great dream of industrial capitalism, an idealistic ideology which placed its faith in progress and sought to create a new order. A self-consciously experimental movement covering well over a century, modernism encompasses a plenitude of positions.

Stuart Hall views Modernism as a decidedly "western" phenomenon. He also suggests that Modernism has always consisted of various different projects, that far from being of a similar nature, were often in conflict with one another. "If modernism was never one project, then there has always been a series of different tendencies growing out of it as it developed historically."¹⁴

¹¹ 1983, p. x

¹² 1982, p. 302.

¹³ 1984, p. xii

¹⁴ 1986, p.45.

Two Modernities

Matei Calinescu¹⁵ describes two conflicting modernities that became prominent during the first half of the nineteenth century. Calinescu¹⁶ writes of an irreconcilable separation that occurred between:

modernity as a stage in the history of Western civilization - a product of scientific and technological progress, of the industrial revolution, of the sweeping economic and social changes brought about by capitalism - and modernity as an aesthetic concept.

Calinescu¹⁷ links the idea of modernity as an historical concept to bourgeois ideas that continue earlier traditions of the modern idea. Calinescu writes of this historical concept involving:

the doctrine of progress, the confidence in the beneficial possibilities of science and technology, the concern with time (a *measurable* time, a time that can be bought and sold and therefore has, like any other commodity, a calculable equivalent in money), the cult of reason, and the ideal of freedom defined within the framework of an abstract humanism, also the orientation toward pragmatism and the cult of action and success.

A modernity that stems from romantic beginnings is seen as fostering the avant-gardes. The attitude of this movement can be characterized by disgust toward middle class values and an inclination toward radical antibourgeois attitudes. Calinescu¹⁸

15 1987.

16 *ibid*, p. 41.

17 *ibid*.

18 *ibid*, p. 42.

describes the "rebellion and "anarchy" that exemplifies this position. Calinescu suggests that the idea of cultural modernity is defined by "its outright rejection of bourgeois modernity, its consuming negative passion."¹⁹

Although beyond the scope of this thesis, questions can be raised as to the implications for both art therapy practitioners and art therapy participants of these two forces: a bourgeois modernity of reason and progress and a radical antibourgeois attitude of aesthetic modernity. To what extent do these two aspects of modernity influence both the art therapist's and the client/patient's conception of art making and "being an artist"? How do these two aspects of modernity function in psychological terms?

Modernism and Art

The inter-play between the two aforementioned forces in modernism can be seen to effect our conception of what is art. According to writers such as Wallis,²⁰ assimilation of aesthetic modernism by bourgeois modernism has become a legacy of this era. Wallis²¹ describes modernism as characterizing the "cultural standard" that determines even today, our conception of what is art. "Modernism has become an institution and the official culture. Vestiges of modernism practice and ideology persist."²² Hal Foster²³ similarly depicts Modernism as a

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ 1984.

²¹ *ibid*, xii.

²² *ibid*, p. xii & xvi.

tradition that has "won a Pyrrhic victory that is the same as defeat." He quotes Frederic Jameson who notes that "we entertain it [modernism]: its once scandalous productions are in the university, in the museum, in the street." Modernism, as even Habermas writes, seems "dominant but dead."²⁴

Poster²⁵ lists the importance of the medium and of the modern order of the arts based on the Enlightenment categories of distinct and autonomous disciplines as being prominent concerns that figure in modernist works of art. These concerns, as well as the functioning of signs in the modernity will be explored in this chapter.

Phillipson²⁶ defines the term "modernism" in art as having been applied most consistently to:

that painting which appeared to follow the formalist programme of painterly questioning and has dominated critical (and much painting) practice, especially American, until the emergence of the post-modern; it also defined that sense of the avant-garde practice which saw itself as the search for the material and conceptual essence of painting.

Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried, the acknowledged priests of modernism, shaped our understanding of modernist painting in essays written from the 1930's to 1960's. Greenberg put forth the terms of modernist art practice that conformed to certain unchanging and objectively verifiable laws. Victor

²³ 1983, p. ix.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ in Wallis, 1984, p. xiii.

²⁶ 1985, p. 35.

Burgin²⁷ sums up Greenberg's definition of modernism as :

the tendency of an art practice toward self reference by means of a foregrounding of: the tradition of the practice; the difference of the practice from other (visual arts) practices; the 'cardinal norms' of the practice; the material substrate, or the 'medium of the practice'.

Greenberg envisioned modernism as the "promise of the Enlightenment in which rational determinations governed the parcelling of all disciplines into discrete areas of competence; this applied to science, philosophy, history, as well as to art."²⁸ According to Foster, Modernism can be conceptualized as the "pursuit of purity."²⁹ This was based on Greenberg's insistence on the "inherent qualities of the medium" -colour, edge and scale- as being the main areas of concern in painting.³⁰ Other characteristics, writes Wallis, such as realism, subject matter and narrative (literary or theatrical qualities) were considered to be extrinsic and "constituted impurities." [my underlining]. Hal Foster notes that : "Painting, sculpture, and architecture are thus distinct, and art exists properly only within them; each art has a code or nature, and art proceeds as the code is revealed, the nature purged of the extraneous."³¹

We can find a similar description of modernism put forth by Michel Foucault³² who describes the "antilinguistic program of

²⁷ in Wallis, 1984, p. 92.

²⁸ *ibid*, p. xii.

²⁹ *ibid*, p. 189.

³⁰ *ibid*, p. xii

³¹ *ibid*, p. 190.

modernism." Foucault writes, "From Klee and Kandinsky forward, [although these two artists contributed to the rupture of this tendency], modern art declares that a painting is nothing other than itself, autonomous from the language that lies buried in representational realism."³³

Of primary relevance to the thesis is this purist notion introduced here as a characteristic of the modernist paradigm. This purist ideal can be considered as a significant factor contributing to an underlying and ongoing bias occurring in art therapy literature regarding written words, as they appear in art therapy images.

The Modernist Work of Art

Suzi Gablik³⁴ suggests that the withdrawal of artists from society during the early part of this century was a legitimate response in reaction to a society that demanded everything have a practical value and use. She writes:

In opposition to materialist values, and because of the spiritual breakdown which followed the collapse of religion in modern society, the early modernists turned inward, away from the world, to concentrate on the self and its inner life. In the thinking of most early twentieth-century artists, a work of art was an independent work of pure creation which had its own, essentially spiritual essence. The artist saw himself as a kind of priest who divined the interior soul, or spirit. The attitude of art for art's sake was essentially the artist's forced response to a social reality he could no longer affirm.

³² 1982, p. 9.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ 1984, p. 21.

Such a transcendent rationale has become well integrated into art therapy discourse, mainly through the writings of Shaun McNiff.³⁵ He proposes historical and transcendent claims for both the shaman and the expressive arts therapist. As well, certain theories of psychology advocating a transcendent appeal put forth by Jung, Rank and Moreno also figure in art therapy rationale. According to Gablik,³⁶ this inward turn in modernist aesthetics prompted a kind of "theodicy of individual being."

Hal Foster³⁷ describes a modernist work (be it a poem or picture) as being "privileged, unique, symbolic and visionary." Modernism is characterized similarly by Frampton³⁸ and Owens³⁹ as consisting of many unique models referred to as masterworks or master narratives, and by Benjamin Buchloh⁴⁰ who describes the modernist tendency to hold "...the artist as original and the artwork as unique." Mary Kelly⁴¹ describes the artistic text constructed in modernist discourse as "...preeminently 'expressive' and primarily given at the level of the 'picture'." It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore all of these concepts in full, nevertheless, the general discussion which follows may provide food for thought for art therapy discourse. A brief summary of the areas to be covered in regards to the modernist

³⁵ e.g. 1979.

³⁶ 1984, p. 21.

³⁷ 1983, p. x.

³⁸ in Wallis, 1984, p. xiii

³⁹ in Foster, 1983, p. 66.

⁴⁰ in Wallis, 1984, p. 190.

⁴¹ *ibid*, p. 88.

work of art include: notions of subjectivity, the importance of gesture, and the concept of originality or uniqueness.

Wollen⁴² posits that in response to the technical advances realized in photography, painting embraced a "Kantian perspective" that emphasized "the subjective and the intuitive." Whereas photography became associated with the apparatus, and the encumbent technical progress which became linked with the perfection of seeing, by contrast, art was held to be invented by the first expression of the graphic human hand. Thus, the "expressive" picture is seen as referring back to the creativity of the "artistic subject."⁴³ Kelly writes:

...the painterly signifier is manipulated precisely to trace a passage, to give evidence of an essentially human action, to mark the subjectivity of the artist in the image itself. It is above all the artistic gesture which constitutes, at least metaphorically, the imaginary signifier of "Modern Art".

Kelly insists that it is not only a particular work of art that is purchased (the title), but also something by a unique individual which is possessed (the name). That "something", the object's investment with artistic subjectivity, is secured by gesture, or more explicitly, by a signature. Thus, Kelly suggests, the selling of one's artistic work is for the artist, a confirmation of his or her freedom. Mary Kelly writes: "What is desired and exchanged is an originary creativity and above all an exemplary act of human freedom."⁴⁴

⁴² *ibid*, p. 89.

⁴³ *ibid*

A modernist work of art was judged according to Wallis⁴⁵ by how effectively it separated itself from the real world to provide an "an imaginary space of ideal reflection". Artistic works were seen as being concerned with "a timeless refinement of feeling in the field of the look."⁴⁶ Craig Owens⁴⁷ traces the modernist claim of the superiority of vision over the other senses to Hegel's lectures on Aesthetics. Michael Phillipson⁴⁸ calls this a formalist strategy, "a covert empiricist philosophy" that isolates sight, thereby giving priority to sensation over significance. He continues:

Painting was to be for the eyes alone, and thus its essence and therefore its effects would be found in their pure form only, along an isolated dimension of sight, eyes cut off from consciousness, from signification, and most importantly from language. [my underlining]

According to Phillipson, within the empiricist tradition, any significance given to a painting is a secondary and derivative process, "...an epiphenomenon, that has to effect some kind of absolute transformation of one "thing" into something else, of 'sensation' into 'significance'."⁴⁹

Another explanation for the increased importance of vision can be found in Heyer's⁵⁰ reference to the diminished role that the

⁴⁴ *ibid*, p. 91.

⁴⁵ *ibid*, xiii

⁴⁶ *ibid*, p. 89.

⁴⁷ in Foster, 1983, p. 70.

⁴⁸ 1985, p.36.

⁴⁹ *ibid*.

other forms of knowledge (e.g. heresay, smell, taste) came to play in the analysis of phenomena in the classical or modern episteme. Heyer⁵¹ cites Foucault's observation of the "separation and fragmentation of the senses that occurred at this time." Heyer comments on Foucault's rare acknowledgement of technological developments of the time such as the telescope and the microscope.

The Role of the Viewer

Brian Wallis⁵² describes the task of the modernist viewer as "transporting himself to the special world and time of the artist's original production." Wallis lists as one of the issues that signals the break with modernism the shift of the production of meaning, from the artist to the viewer, who is seen to receive or complete the work. As Godeau⁵³ outlines, it was Duchamp who refused this modernist idealism and instead proposed that "the identity, meaning and value of [a] work were actively and dynamically constructed by the viewer."

The Age of Representation

T.J. Reiss,⁵⁴ has written extensively on Modernism. Following a Foucauldian approach, he stresses the importance of signs for modernity and outlines how they function. "All human action, all human mental life, and indeed the universe as a whole,

50 1988.

51 *ibid*, p. 251.

52 1984, p. xvii.

53 *ibid*, p. 76.

54 1982.

insofar as it relates to things human, are a matter of the production, interpretation and interrelating of signs."⁵⁵ Reiss specifies seventeenth century Europe as the place which gave rise to what he terms the dominant "analytico-referential" discourse or the modern episteme. [Foucault calls this same period the classical episteme.] This episteme according to Reiss, became the *dominant* structure of the time and "the necessary form taken by thought, by knowledge, by cultural and social practices of all kinds."⁵⁶ Reiss excavated the telescope as a "metaphor for the modern episteme and as a symbol for the functioning of signs in its discourse...".⁵⁷ Signifiers (words and images) in this modern episteme were seen to function as transparent, arbitrarily selected instruments placed between concept and object. The signifiers themselves were taken for granted and looked through, at reality. According to the telescope metaphor, the absent object could be known. This metaphor, according to Reiss became internalized by Freud as "a true description of the psyche's relation to the external world and as a means of understanding real mental functioning."⁵⁸

Reiss is not alone in positing his modernist metaphor of the telescope. Jean Baudrillard writes that representation "...starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent, even if this equivalence is utopian, it is a fundamental axiom. An

⁵⁵ *ibid*, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Reiss, 1982, p. 23.

⁵⁷ *ibid*, p. 26.

⁵⁸ *ibid*.

image is seen as the reflection of a basic reality."⁵⁹

Such a model can be identified in the theoretical underpinnings of art therapy. Robert Hughes⁶⁰ describes it well when he writes of "the belief dear to modernism, that the power and cathartic necessity of art flowed from the unconscious, through the knotwork of dream, memory and desire, into the realized image."

Marika Finlay⁶¹ distinguishes between the preclassical view of language, which did not differentiate between the "world/referent" and the view of language held in modernity. She cites the eucharist as an example of the word, where the wine and the bread are seen as God, rather than as substitutes. Finlay points out that the differentiation was made in modernity between the word and its referent, but that the word or sign still served as a "transparent mediator of the world for our knowledge."⁶²

Craig Owens outlines⁶³ that "Modernist theory presupposes that mimesis, the adequation of an image to a referent, can be bracketed or suspended, and that the art object itself can be substituted (metaphorically) for its referent...". This rhetorical strategy of self-reference upon which modernism is based, Owens continues, is identified from Kant onwards as the source of aesthetic pleasure.

Dan Latimer⁶⁴ describes the assumption generally held about the modernist work of art that: "...*inside* the work of art are, in

⁵⁹ in Wallis, 1984, p. 256.

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p. 47.

⁶¹ 1986.

⁶² *ibid*, p. 3.

⁶³ in Foster, 1983, p. 95.

⁶⁴ 1984, p. 118.

proportion, all the elements of the *outside*". In other words, a work of art is viewed as a part of "an enormous circle, a hint of some vaster reality which allows us to reconstruct the whole."⁶⁵ Latimer cites four versions of this depth model of interpretation identified by Frederic Jameson as operational in modernism. These include: "the dialectical model of the essential and apparent, the Freudian model of latent and manifest, the existential model of authentic and unauthentic, the semiotic model of signifier and signified."⁶⁶ According to Jameson, these depth models disappear when Modernism loses its power.

While representations serve as a mediation for our access to reality, Michel Foucault and others are quick to point out that representations are not "natural and secure, but are arbitrary and historically determined."⁶⁷ Wallis draws attention to the corresponding hierarchical power interests that lie behind acts of critical selectivity (e.g. defining, naming, ordering, classifying, cataloguing and categorizing). Finlay⁶⁸ notes that modernity marked an irreversible cleavage between the signifier and the signified." This rift, once introduced, was irreparable, a fundamental cleavage in language, in knowledge and in the subject who could never more be identical with his image of himself."

Since the 1970's, Wallis⁶⁹ writes of the main purpose that art and art criticism has followed - to dismantle the "monolithic

65 *ibid.*

66 *ibid.*, p. 119.

67 Wallis, 1984, p. xiv.

68 1986, p. 3.

69 1984, p. xiii

myth of modernism and the dissolution of its oppressive progression of great ideas and great masters." In its stead, we find a celebration of low culture (e.g. pop art, kitsch and video) and a gradual shift from the rigid and structured modernist art disciplines to interdisciplinary crossovers. Wallis acknowledges the influence of European critical theory e.g. translations of Barthes, Foucault, Baudrillard, Lacan, continental feminist theory and British film theory. He writes:⁷⁰

This extensive body of critical and theoretical work, responding to the breakdown of modernist discourse in literary theory, psychoanalysis, and the social sciences, shifted attention away from the masterworks toward the operations of modernism itself, and from the established divisions of traditional culture toward an interdisciplinary examination of the dynamics of representation. Specifically, this work studied the function of cultural myths in representation, the construction of representation in social systems, and the perpetuation and function of these systems through representation.

Craig Owens⁷¹ identifies the modern age as among other things, the age of representation. He cites Heidegger who proposed in a 1938 lecture, that the transition to the modern age did not involve the replacing of a medieval picture by a modern world picture but rather by "...the fact that the world becomes a picture at all...". Craig Owens emphasizes that "For the modern man, everything that exists does so only in and through representation."⁷²

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ in Foster, 1983, p. 66.

⁷² *ibid.*

Brian Wallis⁷³ explains that art is but one example of the many forms that representation can take:

In the wildest sense, representations are those artificial (though seemingly immutable) constructions through which we apprehend the world: conceptual representations such as images, languages, definitions; which include and construct more social representations such as race and gender.

In general, postmodernist critics and thinkers (e.g. Jameson, Owens, Baudrillard) extend this "crisis of representation" one step further to celebrate the ascendancy of the signifier over the signified meaning.

The Question of the Subject

Along with the modernist emphasis on representation, according to Owens, the corollary assumption that "the world exists only in and through a *subject* who believes that he is producing the world in producing its representation..." can be identified.⁷⁴ Thus, we can say that another characteristic of the modern episteme involves an a priori assumption of the identity of an "I".

Michel Foucault attributes socio-discursive conditions for the possibility of the emergence and discourse of knowledge about the subject.⁷⁵ The "author function" i.e. the answer to the question "who is speaking?" is seen by Foucault as by no means being a

⁷³ 1984, p. xv.

⁷⁴ Reiss, 1982.

⁷⁵ Finlay, 1986.

constant or universal given. Referring to stories, folktales and songs that circulated in the Middle ages that were accepted without concern for author functions, Foucault suggests that before the Seventeenth Century, the human subject was not the central object of study and that certain socio-discursive conditions were necessary for the "subject" to emerge.

From Language to Discourse Theory

The term "discourse", like the term "modernism" can be seen to enjoy a wide use in a variety of contexts. In its non-contentious sense, discourse is described by O'Sullivan et al,⁷⁶ as a linguistic term that refers to "verbal utterances of greater magnitude than the sentence." In this context, discourse analysis is concerned with the utterances and interactions between speakers and with the rules that can be posited about such interactions.

O'Sullivan et al⁷⁷ describe a separate theory of discourse that developed out of post-structuralism and semiotics. The term discourse is described here as "an attempt to fix, within one term, some of the theoretical ground gained in the early days of the structuralist enterprise."⁷⁸ O'Sullivan et al refer to the initially oppositional stance that the intellectual proponents of structuralism and semiotics adopted in their efforts to criticize and change the ideas concerning the question of "where meaning comes from".

⁷⁶ 1983, p. 72.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

Rather than upholding the traditional view of meaning residing in things "out there" in the world, or deriving from inner feelings, structuralism proposed that "*meaning* is an effect of *signification*, and that signification is a property not of the world out there nor of individual people, but of *language*"⁷⁹ [authors' emphases]. Whereas the word "language" functions grammatically as a noun (or thing), the word "discourse" can operate as both a noun and a verb (an act). O'Sullivan et al call attention to the "interactive process and the end result of thought and communication"⁸⁰ that this new term can encompass. Macdonell⁸¹ points out that meanings can be encoded not only in speech and writing, but in non-verbal signs as well. "Whatever signifies or has meaning can be considered part of discourse."⁸²

It is through the writings of Michel Foucault in particular, that discourse has come to be recognized as "the product of social, historical and institutional formations"⁸³ and "as a manifestation of power over human subjects."⁸⁴ O'Sullivan et al juxtapose the potentially infinite meanings that language systems can produce with the social relations that exist at the time of the production of meaning, that tend to act as limitations. They point out that language skills learned by people take place within already established discourses such as "class, gender, nation,

⁷⁹ *ibid*, p.73.

⁸⁰ *ibid*.

⁸¹ 1986.

⁸² *ibid*, p.4.

⁸³ O'Sullivan et al, 1983, p. 74.

⁸⁴ Heyer, 1988, p. 240.

ethnicity, age, family and individuality.⁻⁸⁵ Discourses can also be seen according to O'Sullivan et al, as consisting of power relations in that "some [discourses] are more prestigious, legitimated and hence 'more obvious' than others, while there are discourses that have an uphill struggle to win any recognition at all."⁸⁶

Within the context of art therapy, four main patterns of discourse can be identified. These include (in no particular order): 1) the discourses of the setting 2) the patient's discourses 3) the discourses of the artwork and 4) the art therapist's discourses. It is important to appreciate the complex interaction and the difficulty of speaking about one of these discourses, without referring to the other (often parallel) discourses that could be occurring.

It is this writer's belief that applications of discourse theory have much to contribute to the field of art therapy in general as a useful tool in identifying amongst other things "agendas." In regards to the thesis topic, often art therapists covertly or overtly encourage their patients/clients to use words in their images (such as in titles or stories.)

Summary

We have seen the merit of applying an interdisciplinary approach as presented in Chapter two, to uncover biases within modernist tenets. Several important insights regarding the role

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

and function of the artistic signifier were gleaned from an examination of the modern episteme. Most notable is the purist bias, still operational within art therapy discourse, that was identified and discussed. As well as helping to frame the discussion of written words in art therapy images, it is hoped that this review of modernism will provide some seeds for further discussion in art therapy discourse.

A similar approach can be applied to the concepts of orality and literacy, which have been conflated in art therapy discourse. Chapter Four will examine these notions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Undoing the Orality/Literacy Conflation.

We know enough to say writing is not
talk written down.

C. R. Cooper & A. Matsuhashi

The review in Chapter One can be seen to have raised a number of "grey areas" in terms of art therapists' appreciation of the role that language plays in a variety of contexts within the structure of art therapy sessions. Numerous instances can be seen to exist where art therapists rely heavily on verbal exchanges in order to conduct and process art therapy sessions. These include verbal exchanges between the therapist and the patient as well as verbal exchanges by both the therapist and patient (and others), about the art therapy images. While such aspects of verbal communication will not necessarily be addressed in this thesis, an acknowledgement of their existence is important.

In chapter Three, I outlined features of an ideology which can be seen to exist within that aspect of Art Therapy discourse which stems from the influence of modernism. A similar investigation will reveal that the differing aspects of orality and literacy are not clearly differentiated in art therapy discourse, thereby contributing to some of the aforementioned confusion found in art therapy literature as a result of such an over-sight.

Familiarity with the concepts of orality and literacy will

prove helpful to art therapists in several ways. This line of inquiry will raise many important and interesting ideas based upon an understanding and appreciation of the growth out of orality, of present day thought processes (and psyche), resulting in the development of literacy, print and electronics. As well, a general understanding of the concepts of orality and literacy will help to define the strengths and differences in pre and post chirographic (i.e. written) thought patterns.

This introduction to the concepts of orality and literacy hopefully can serve as a form of groundwork that may prove to be of use when other aspects of verbal exchange in art therapy sessions are examined in the future. Of specific concern to the thesis topic are written words that have formal links (as graphic marks) with other imagistic means of expression (i.e. pictographs, hieroglyphics). The historical development of images and writing systems will be introduced here and discussed further in Chapter Five.

Since the field is so large and dense, I will rely mainly upon one major source for my exploration of this area (orality and literacy). While the concepts of orality and literacy, as outlined by Walter Ong¹ provide a comprehensible synthesis of this topic, other writers on the subject will be referred to in a lesser degree (e.g. Gelb, Scribner and Cole, Diringer, Sampson, Derrida). It is important to appreciate the difficulty in discussing oral concepts without also referring to ones of literacy and vice versa.

¹ 1982. Unless specified, all further references to Walter Ong will be to this text.

This chapter at times will follow a diachronic or historical approach to these investigations.

The Effects of the Orality/Literacy Shift on the Transformation of Human Consciousness

Walter Ong contrasts oral cultures with manuscript and print cultures and posits that the invention of writing and subsequently print has caused a slow and subtle transformation of human consciousness. He describes the shift from orality to literacy, characterized as a shift in dominance from hearing to sight, as involving a significant difference between the tendency of sound to incorporate the hearer and that of sight to isolate and to situate the viewer outside of what he observes. Ong cites Merleau Ponty's² description of the dissecting quality of vision (clarity and distinctness) as opposed to the unifying tendency of sound (harmony).

Our awareness of the differences between orality and literacy is outlined as having developed only in the current electronic age, due to perceived differences between the electronic media and print. Many scholars have failed to take into account the impact of oral and literary traditions in relation to their lines of inquiry; such a criticism can be levelled as well at art therapists. Art therapy theory has evolved without an in-depth understanding or appreciation of the relationship that can be seen to exist between images, speech and writing. This oversight on the part of art therapists is perhaps put in perspective by Sampson's³ acknow-

² 1961.

ledge of the general neglect of the topic of writing in the field of linguistics for the better part of the twentieth century.

The Oral World

Primary oral cultures are defined as cultures that have "no knowledge at all of writing."⁴ These contrast with cultures that are based on chirographic (handwriting) and print technologies. Ong acknowledges the difficulty that literate people have in appreciating and understanding the oral world. He writes:⁵ "A literate person cannot fully recover a sense of what the word is to purely oral people." This difficulty would seem to stem from our inability to dissociate words from the visual field that they are imperiously locked into by writing. We are reminded that all languages developed without the help of writing, i.e. without the transformation of vocal sound to visual marks. Ong suggests that it is psychologically threatening for a chirographic society to be dissociated from writing; that amongst other things, we enjoy the sense of control provided by the likes of dictionaries, punctuation and grammar rules.

Characteristics of Oral Thought:

The Nature of Sound

In a world without writing, one cannot "look anything up" because there are no traces,⁶ there are only events. Words can

³ 1985.

⁴ p. 1.

⁵ p. 12.

⁶ Ong defines a trace as a "visual metaphor showing

be recalled, but they do not have any visual presence. Ong calls attention to the fugitive nature of sound that unlike other sensations cannot be stopped. Sound he describes as existing "only when it is going out of existence."⁷ Vision on the other hand, is described as lending itself to registering both movement and stillness; no equivalent holding is possible in the world of sound, one only gets silence. The oscilloscope is a visual rather than an auditory recording of sound.

Memory Aids

Thought in oral cultures was sustained through communication with others, as well as through mnemonic patterns. Formulaic sayings comprised the substance of oral cultures in their function as rhythmical aids that helped to preserve knowledge. Thoughts that didn't take on patterned, formulaic mnemonic form could never be remembered, and therefore were not recoverable. Analysis (in the sense of the breaking up of thought) is a luxury that only chirographic and typographic cultures can afford.

Rhythm, another factor that aids recall, is outlined by Jousse⁸ who establishes relationships between breathing processes, gesture and rhythmic oral patterns in ancient hebrew and other biblical interpretations. Others⁹ are also cited who also suggest that oral memory has a highly somatic element.

dependency on writing" (p. 31)

⁷ p. 32.

⁸ in Ong.

⁹ Peabody 1975, Lord 1960 and Havelock 1978.

The Power of Words In Oral Thought

Words in the oral tradition are seen as being being powerful and dynamic. Language in such a context, as outlined by Malinowski,¹⁰ is a mode of action and not just a sign of thought. Because of the spoken and sounded aspect of words, magical strength was assigned to words in oral cultures. For "typographic folk", such as ourselves (as Ong is wont to call us), we tend to forget the oralness of words-as-events and the resulting powerfulness that accompanies such a conception.

The magic and powerfulness of words in oral cultures contrasts with a typographic culture's view of words as existing "out there" on a flat surface. "Such things [printed words] are not so readily associated with magic, for they are not actions, but are in a radical sense dead, though subject to dynamic resurrection."¹¹ Names in oral cultures gave a sense of power over the things they named. While this still holds true in print culture (we can learn about what we can name) there is a tendency for typographic societies to think of names as labels attached to the named object. Such a situation doesn't occur in oral cultures.

Writing as Technology

Ong contends that the thought processes of functionally literate people are directly or indirectly formed by the technology of writing. He sees the invention of writing, more than any other single invention, as having transformed the consciousness of

¹⁰ in Ong, p. 32.

¹¹ p. 33.

humanity. Moreover, he maintains that writing effects literates' thought processes in both their written and spoken words.

According to a diachronic or historical approach, speech is held as the natural domain of thought and of the psyche. Oral speech is learnt naturally by all humans, unless they are in some way impaired. Ong traces the development of speech from the unconscious to consciousness. This is the domain of the mother tongue; grammar is seen as inhabiting the realm of the unconscious because "you can know how to use the rules and even know how to set up new rules without being able to state what they are."¹²

In contrast to speech, the more artificial process that writing involves is outlined. He notes¹³ that writing "does not inevitably well up out of the unconscious." Instead, it is determined by rules that are articulable and consciously contrived. Examples are given of rules such as the letter 'a' representing a certain phoneme, or of a certain word being represented by a specific pictogram:¹⁴

Thought is nested in speech, not in texts, all of which have their meanings through reference of the visible symbol to the world of sound. What the reader is seeing on this page are not real words but coded symbols whereby a properly informed human being can evoke in his or her consciousness real words, in actual or imagined sound.

For this reason, writing is called a "secondary modeling

¹² p. 82.

¹³ p. 82.

¹⁴ p. 75.

system",¹⁵ because written words are not real in the same manner as spoken words. Chafe¹⁶ suggests that writing is typically one-tenth the speed of oral speech.

Ong points to the ironic parallel that can be drawn between Plato's warnings against writing being an inhuman, unresponsive technology causing forgetfulness, and similar arguments that are put forward today, warning of the ill effects of computers. While it may be difficult for a literate society to comprehend objections such as Plato's against writing, we are advised that¹⁷ "Writing, print and the computer are all ways of technologizing the word."

The technology of writing requires the use of specific tools - e.g. pens and brushes, as well as specially prepared surfaces - paper, animal skins, pieces of wood. Although writing can be seen as an artificial creation, the paradox is seen to lie in the enhanced quality of life that the proper interiorization of technology brings about. A similar example is given of the degree of interiorization that is necessary for a musician to play an instrument as though it were "second nature or a psychological part of himself or herself."¹⁸

History of Writing

The development of writing is seen as a relatively late occurrence in the history of human kind. Leakey and Levin¹⁹ are

¹⁵ cf Lotman, 1977.

¹⁶ in Ong.

¹⁷ p. 75.

¹⁸ p. 83.

¹⁹ 1979.

cited, who estimate that although homo sapiens inhabited the earth for some 50,000 years, the first script that can be called true writing was developed by the Sumerians in Mesopotamia around the year 3500 B.C.

Ong marvels that the alphabet as we know it today was worked out only once as by a Semitic people(s) around the year 1500 B.C., in the same area from which the cunieforn originated. He discusses variants of the original alphabet, but concludes that every alphabet in the world (e.g. Hebrew, Ugaritic, Greek, Roman to name a few) results in one way or another from the same Semitic descendent.

Pictographic Writing

Many of the different scripts that evolved independently of each other in different places in the world can be linked to earlier kinds of picture writing. Some have their roots in the more crude use of memory aides (such as notched sticks, rows of pebbles and other devices for counting) and tokens.

Although pictures had been drawn for thousands of years before this, they are generally held as being fragmentary and undifferentiated. Gelb²⁰ suggests that petrograms (drawn or painted pictures on stones or clay) and petroglyphs (incised or carved images on stone) may have been made for several overlapping reasons serving artistic, commemorative and magical purposes.

The use of pictures in the history of writing can be seen to

²⁰ 1963.

have functioned in two ways, according to Ong. Pictures served either as aides-mémoire or they were furnished with a code that allowed them to represent words in grammatical connections to each other. The use of pictographs (e.g. a picture of a bird representing the word for a bird) eventually developed into more stylized versions known as the ideograph and the rebus.

Chinese is named as one example of pictographic writing that employs ideographic writing. The ideograph is described as a writing system in which "...the meaning is a concept not directly represented by the picture but established by code."²¹ Ong gives the example of the Chinese word for good which is represented by pictures of a woman and a child next to each other. As both he and Diringer²² point out, there is no connection between the picture and the thing called to mind.

Another type of pictograph is called rebus writing, where the symbol primarily represents a sound. The rebus is described as a phonogram or sound-symbol in a concrete sense, rather than in an abstract sense, such as a letter of the alphabet. The picture is one of the many possible items that the sound signifies. Ong gives the example of "sole" as in the fish, "sole" as in the sense of only and "soul" as paired with body. Pictographic systems unfortunately require a great number of symbols. A benefit of a basically pictographic writing system (e.g. Chinese) is that although people can't understand each other's dialects, they can understand one another's writing.

²¹ p. 86.

²² 1977.

Another system that can be defined uses syllabary scripts, where words are composed of alternating consonantal and vowel sounds. Japanese is an example of such a script that has no consonant clusters. Many systems other than the alphabet such as Japanese, Korean and Chinese writing systems are hybrid systems, composed of different combinations of pictographs, rebuses, ideographs. The alphabet also becomes hybrid when it uses the number "1" instead of writing "one."

The Importance of a Fixed Code

Ong cautions that most pictographic communications such as those used by Native American Indians are not considered as true scripts because of codes that did not become fixed enough. A true script is described as more than a picture and more than a memory aid. Whereas pictures represent objects, a true script "is a representation of an *utterance*, of words that someone says or is imagined to say."²³ Likewise, a writing system is defined by Sampson²⁴ as "a system for representing utterances of a spoken language by means of permanent, visible marks."

Ong points to the critical breakthrough that occurred in human consciousness when the writer of a text could specify the exact words that a reader would bring forth from a text. It is the visible recording of the workings involved in sound and the consequent processes that this recording triggers that constitute "the most momentous of all human technological inventions."²⁵

²³ p. 64.

²⁴ 1985, p. 26.

This chapter's focus on the history of writing necessarily includes a reference to pictures as the basis of all writing. It is important to distinguish that pictures were to a large extent, as Gelb²⁶ points out, independent of speech:

Such pictures do not represent writing because they do not form part of a conventional system of signs and can be understood only by the man who drew them or by his family and close friends who had heard of the event.

Characteristics of Written Discourse

Ong notes how writing changed the previous world of speech to the new sensory world of vision, transforming both speech and thought in the process. Numerous characteristics of writing are outlined, that operate on many levels. On a physical level, the particular economy that characterizes written discourse is discussed. The tendency of texts to "assimilate utterance to the human body"²⁷ is pointed out. While texts are read in various ways in the world, it is suggested that we have yet to find one that proceeds from bottom to top.

Ong refers to the thing-like quality of written words that allows us to both see and touch them. Scribner and Cole²⁸ likewise describe the "freezing" of language that writing brings about. Words can be seen thus as "residue" or "deposit" in a way that doesn't exist in the oral tradition. Whereas pictograms

²⁵ p. 85.

²⁶ 1952, pp. 25-26.

²⁷ p. 100.

²⁸ 1981.

represent things as things, the alphabet represents sound itself as a thing. This transforms the evanescent character of sound to the "quiescent, quasi-permanent world of space."²⁹ As Ong outlines, sound only exists when it is passing out of existence. The alphabet suggests that a word is a thing, present all at once rather than being an event. He writes: "All script represents words as in some way things, quiescent objects, immobile marks for assimilation by vision."³⁰

The alphabet is characterized³¹ as the "ruthlessly efficient reducer of sound to space" and is also held to operate on sound in a more direct manner than do other scripts. de Kerckhove³² suggests that the alphabet, due to its thorough phonetic nature, favors left-hemisphere brain activity fostering abstract and analytic thought.

Writing and Death

Ong points to a paradox that he finds inherent in writing involving the close association of writing with death. The connection is described as being "very deep, so deep that it registers almost always in the unconscious or subconscious rather than in consciousness."³³ Both secular and biblical examples are presented wherein either veiled or open references to writing and print as death can be found. These range from Plato's "writing is inhuman, thing-like and destroys memory"³⁴ to biblical

²⁹ p. 91.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ p. 100.

³² 1981.

³³ 1977, p.235.

references "the letter kills but the spirit gives life"³⁵ to Robert Browning's poetry where "faded yellow blossoms/ twixt page and page" are described as the "psychic equivalent of the verbal text."³⁶ Ong writes:³⁷

The paradox lies in the fact that the deadness of the text, its removal from the living human lifeworld, its rigid visual fixity, assures its endurance and its potential for being resurrected into limitless living contexts by a potentially infinite number of living readers.

The more "natural" process of speech acquisition is contrasted to the "special reflective training and terrifying restraints"³⁸ that writing requires. Examples are given of words such as "cutting" (into a surface), "incising", "stylus" (which originally meant stake, a spearlike instrument) and "inscribe."³⁹

Jacques Derrida, the post-structuralist French philosopher outlines a two sided profile of writing. He calls⁴⁰ the common and literal sense of writing " ...the dead letter, it is the carrier of death [because it signifies the absence of the speaker]."⁴¹ Derrida feels that this aspect of writing tends to be rejected by people who prefer instead to comfort themselves with "notions of presence" that can be found in the metaphorical sense of writing described by Derrida as "...natural, divine, and living..."⁴¹

³⁴ p. 81.

³⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:6 (in Ong, 1982, p. 81.)

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ 1977, p. 240.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ 1967, p. xi.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, xii.

An Underlining Oral Aspect to Writing

Despite the shift in sensory focus, Ong cautions that writing and print can never totally do without some oral component. The world of sound is held as the natural world of language. "Wherever human beings exist they have a language, and in every instance a language that exists basically as spoken and heard, in the world of sound."⁴² Ong writes that: " 'Reading' a text means converting it to sound, aloud or in the imagination, syllable-by-syllable in slow reading or sketchily in the rapid reading common to high-technology cultures."⁴³

The many benefits that written words make possible are outlined. Writing permits backward scanning,⁴⁴ thereby giving discriminatory power. Writing makes verbalized records possible. It relieves the mind of memory work, thereby fostering new speculation.⁴⁵ Written words allow revision and manipulation of unconscious material.

The Effects of Writing:

Introspection

Through separating the knower from the known, Ong outlines how writing has contributed to introspection, influencing both religion and depth psychology. He writes:⁴⁶

⁴¹ *ibid*, xii.

⁴² Siertsema, 1955 in Ong 1982.

⁴³ p. 8.

⁴⁴ Goody in Ong.

⁴⁵ Havelock in Ong.

⁴⁶ p. 105.

writing makes possible increasingly articulate introspectivity, opening the psyche as never before, not only to the external objective world quite distinct from itself, but also to the interior self against whom the objective world is set.

He attributes the sacred texts that are found in introspective religions such as Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam to the development of writing.

Flat and Round Characters

Ong refers to the round character, a term devised by E.M. Forster, to describe the character that has "the incalculability of life about it"⁴⁷ and performs in ways "unpredictable but ultimately consistent in terms of the complex character structure and complex motivation with which the round character is endowed."⁴⁸ The development of the round character is traced, beginning with ancient Greek drama, through the age of Shakespeare where the advent of print benefitted it enormously, to the Age of Romanticism, when the round character peaked in the format of the novel.

The effects of the round character can be felt in other areas beyond literature - namely in psychological and more especially psychoanalytic conceptualizations of personality. Freud's understanding of the psychology of human beings is described as being typified by characters found in drama such as Oedipus, which are round in character. Ong proposes the occurrence of

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ p. 152.

parallel developments in modern depth psychology with those of characterization in drama and the novel, both of which depend on the inward turning of the psyche that occurred in writing, that became intensified through print: ⁴⁹

The insights of 'depth' psychology were impossible earlier for the same reasons that the fully 'round' character of the nineteenth-century novel was not possible before its time. In both cases, textual organization of consciousness was required, though of course other forces were in play

Print Technology Out of Writing

While the main topic of this thesis is the occurrence of written words in art therapy images, a discussion of the characteristics and effects of print technology is important for two reasons. First of all, print technology can be seen to grow out of and to extend the effects of writing in the shift from sound to visual space. Secondly, a familiarity with the effects of printed words is relevant to the field of art therapy because of the wide use of cut out magazine words (collage) by clients and patients .

While Ong and others have speculated as to the various effects of literacy in the form of writing, distinctions also can be made concerning the subtle effects of print and electronic technology (which develop out of writing) on our thought processes and expression. Ong writes⁵⁰ that "...print reinforces and transforms the effects of writing on thought and expression."

⁴⁹ p. 155.

⁵⁰ p. 117.

Characteristics of Print

Writers such as Marshall McLuhan,⁵¹ George Steiner⁵² and Walter Ong⁵³ have all written about the more subtle effects of print on consciousness. Ong emphasizes the effects of a shift from sound (orality) to visual space (writing and print) and draws our attention to the changes caused by the fifteenth century invention of the printing press. Foucault, as Heyer⁵⁴ notes, also does not fail to notice the effect of the invention of the printing press as one factor contributing to the "...church-inspired notion that the primal nature of language is written: not trusting the memories of men, God introduced written words and it is thus in writing that the true word is to be found again."

Whereas in writing, letters do not exist before they are written, with print, letters pre-exist as units (types), before they exist as words. The effect of this is that "Print suggests that words are things far more than writing ever did."⁵⁵ Ong suggests:⁵⁶ "It [print] embedded the word itself deeply in the manufacturing process and made it into a kind of commodity." Heyer⁵⁷ proposes that perhaps it was the invention of typography that contributed to the arbitrary nature that was assigned to language (signifiers) in the classical episteme. This can be compared to the pre-classical view espoused by Foucault

⁵¹ 1962, 1964.

⁵² 1967.

⁵³ 1958, 1967, 1971, 1977.

⁵⁴ 1988, p.249.

⁵⁵ Ong, 1987, 118

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p. 118.

⁵⁷ 1988.

that was "characterized by a belief in similitude between word and thing, signifier and signified."⁵⁸

Ong suggests that the shift from the world of sound to that of visual space also contributes to a thing-like conception of human consciousness and unconsciousness. He writes:⁵⁹

By removing words from the world of sound where they first had their origin in active human interchange and relegating them definitively to visual surface, and by otherwise exploiting visual space for the management of knowledge, print encouraged human beings to think of their own interior conscious and unconscious resources as more and more thing-like, impersonal and religiously neutral. Print encouraged the mind to sense that its possessions were held in some sort of inert mental space.

This inherent thing-like tendency is perhaps what James Hillman's "soul making" seeks to counteract. Hillman writes⁶⁰ "...there is a credibility gap, since we no longer trust words of any sort as true carriers of meaning...A new angelology of words is needed so that we may once again have faith in them."

In retrospect, western manuscript cultures can be seen to have retained a large degree of oral-aural components. Manuscripts are not easy to read by typographic standards. They remain closer to the give and take exchange that characterizes orality; with comments in the margins, a dialogue is carried on with a world beyond the borders of the text. Books in manuscript culture still had a feeling of utterance to them, as opposed to being an object. Ong describes manuscript culture as being producer-

⁵⁸ *ibid*, p. 253.

⁵⁹ pp. 131-132.

⁶⁰ 1975, p. 9.

oriented and contrasts the more ornamental and ornate qualities of chirographically produced words with the machine-made, tidy regular lines of print. Print is described⁶¹ as "an insistent world of cold, non-human, facts." This greater legibility factor of print contributed to more rapid and silent reading. Many people are involved in this consumer-oriented production, oft revised for easy and quick assimilation.

Effects of Print Technology

Ong outlines numerous subtle effects that can be seen to arise out of the development of print. He refers to T.J. Farrell's observation that print encourages the use of punctuation marks which are unpronounceable and even more removed from the oral world than are letters. Print gives rise to duplication of both precise verbal descriptions and visual diagrams. Modern science was one of the outcomes of this development, as was literature and other sciences such as psychology.

Ong calls our attention to the new sense of ownership that print fosters. This gave rise to what he describes as:⁶²

romantic notions of "originality" and "creativity", which set apart an individual work from other works seeing its origins and meaning as independent of outside influence, at least ideally.

He notes the important development of "white space" that resulted out of the technology of print - the charging of the visual

⁶¹ p. 122.

⁶² p. 133.

surface "with imposed meaning", due to prints' determination of words and their spatial relationship to one another. Numerous ways that typographic space "is present to the psyche" are suggested e.g. scientific, philosophic and literary imaginations, to which one could add the artistic imagination. Laurence Sterne's use of blank space is cited from the book Tristram Shandy, that functions as the equivalence of silence. The concept of white space, as mentioned earlier, is given similar significance in art therapy sessions.

The subject of concrete poetry brings us closer to Chapter Five, wherein more practical examples of word combinations will be presented. Ong⁶³ refers to the inescapable reference to verbal sound that such poetry raises, even though we can "feel printed words before us as visual units." He advises that concrete poetry plays with the limitations of textuality. "Even when concrete poetry cannot be read at all, it is still not merely a picture."⁶⁴

The Electronic Age

And finally, we cannot fail to acknowledge the current age of "secondary orality", the electronic age, which is described as "the orality of telephones, radio and television, which depend on writing and print for its existence."⁶⁵ This age both reinforces and transforms its predecessors. While the electronic computer age intensifies even more the effects of print, radio, television, audio recordings and telephone all share elements of primary

⁶³ p. 121.

⁶⁴ p. 129.

⁶⁵ p. 3.

orality such as "...its participatory mystique, its fostering of a communal sense, its concentration on the present moment, and even its use of formulas."⁶⁶ Ong sums up our prior dependence on orality and literacy when he writes: "We are turned outward because we have turned inward."⁶⁷

Ulmer⁶⁸ refers to Ong's suggestion⁶⁹ that an analogy can be made between the oral, written (and printed), and electronic development of communication and the "the oral, anal and genital [psychosexual] stages of maturation." While certain parallels can be drawn between the movement of the human psyche and that of human communication systems, Ong admits that the parallels are not total.

Summary

This survey of the history and concepts of orality and literacy has helped to clarify subtle differences that are generally overlooked in discussions of images and writing in art therapy literature. For example, we now realize that the cave paintings cannot be compared with current art therapy images in quite the same breath; they belong to different cultural systems.

The concepts of orality and literacy add new meaning to shifts previously described as changes from magic to science or from prelogical to more rational states of consciousness. As Heyer⁷⁰ writes, "...Ong challenges the traditional linguistic notion that

⁶⁶ p. 136.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ 1985, p.314

⁶⁹ see Ong, 1967, pp.93-110.

⁷⁰ 1988, p. 269.

writing is only a complement to speech, which succeeds in preserving it beyond the moment." Arguments were presented about the manner in which the technologies of writing, print and electronics store knowledge and the ways in which they also style the way we know it.

This discussion can be contextualized into a much larger field that merits further investigation by art therapists. Writing has been held in several linguistic traditions as a secondary system, with speech being privileged over writing (e.g. by Saussure⁷¹). Perhaps this is another bias that is influencing art therapy discourse in a negative capacity as outlined in Chapter One.

Derrida for one, challenges this privileging and suggests that there was no linguistic sign before writing. Although Derrida's work bears further investigation,⁷² both Ong and Heyer advise that Derrida fails to distinguish and acknowledge the nature and effects of orality in his argument.

Chapter Five will introduce some typologies of word/image configurations that have a practical application to art therapy images. Chapter Six will present images culled from the literature reviewed in Chapter One, containing some of the typologies discussed in Chapter Five. As well, a contemporary recontextualization of art therapy practice in the light of semiotic thought will be suggested.

⁷¹ Heyer writes "In various linguistic traditions, especially in the work of Saussure, writing is held to be a secondary or derivative system that need not be taken into account when studying language." *ibid*, p.85

⁷² see p. 95 & 97 of this thesis.

CHAPTER FIVE

Some Word/Image Precedents

Everyone remembers finding letters in his soup, and first discovering the alphabet.

Massin

And when Alice introduced herself to Humpty Dumpty, and he said, "It's a stupid enough name...What does it mean?" Alice asked doubtfully, "Must a name mean something?" "Of course it must", Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh: "My name means the shape I am..."

Lewis Carroll

The intention of this thesis has been to prepare the ground for a more in-depth discussion of the phenomenon in question - written words in art therapy images, from the perspective of theoretical orientations unfamiliar to art therapy discourse. Due to the ground breaking nature of this thesis, a major portion of the discussion has entailed a contextualization of the thesis topic in regards to biases and connotations that can be seen to surround it. While such a grounding prefigures a more practical discussion, attempts will be made to synthesize and apply ideas presented thus far.

One manner of engaging in a pragmatical discussion entails the identification of forms that written elements in art therapy images can take, based upon historical precedents. A discussion of typologies will identify "models" that can serve as reference

points or "archetypes", thus aiding art therapists in their understanding of the various presentations they might find of words in art therapy images. A list that is by no means comprehensive, based upon historical precedents taken from a wide range of situations includes: pictograms, hieroglyphs, rebus situations, calligrams, concrete poetry, illegible writing, letters, and titles. While some of these areas have been touched upon to a certain degree from formal and historical perspectives, concrete descriptions and a practical discussion will help to clarify their visual dynamics and form.

In viewing the above mentioned categories as historical precedents, one needs to acknowledge the weight of past associations that they bring with them. One of the most striking problems that surrounds some of these "archetypes" in the general literature, is the large degree of obfuscation that accompanies their usage (e.g. pictogram, ideograph, hieroglyphics). Sebok¹ describes the "terminological chaos" that has resulted from a negative delineation of a verbal messages (i.e. those held *not* to be linguistic). This chapter will endeavour to present examples of a small number of these models, along with some viewpoints that have been expressed about them.

While a discussion of typologies will help to clarify various terminologies for art therapists, the limitations of a such an approach also need to be recognized. A discussion of written words in art therapy images that relies solely on historical

¹ in Blonsky (ed.), 1986.

precedents might tend to overshadow or preclude other explanations that are equally valid. Another caveat involves an admonition against mishmash applications of terms without taking into account the theoretical underpinnings that accompany them. To avoid this, a general review dealing with theories of iconicity will prove to be an extremely useful contribution to the field of art therapy. While the ultimate goal of a discussion of written words in art therapy images lies in its practical application, caution should be observed - simplistic or premature applications of partially understood or developed theories will do more harm than good.

Towards a New Grammatology

The discussion that follows needs to be envisaged as the tip of a large and complex iceberg. Rather than constituting any kind of a definitive picture of the issues involved, this survey should be considered as a brief outline that will endeavour to clarify terminology and point to larger theoretical issues.

Ulmer² distinguishes between: 1) histories of writing³ dealing with the evolution of writing, that eventually became paralyzed by the question of "what is writing" with its overemphasis on origins, and 2) "theoretical questions that were never attempted." Certain of the terms that will be discussed can be seen to hold historical as well as more current references, e.g. hieroglyphics and rebus.

² 1985, p. 6.

³ typified by people such as I.J. Gelb 1952, Diringier 1962, and Goody 1977.

Ulmer⁴ outlines three aspects of a new field of investigation related to writing called "Grammatology"⁵ that involve:

a history of writing (still under way), a theory of writing (one version now formulated by Derrida), and a grammatological practice (the application of the history and theory to the development of a new writing).

For Ulmer, the facts [of origins] that have been researched need to be formulated into "a theory which will organize and conceptualize"⁶ them.

Pictograms

Roger Brown⁷ distinguishes between cave pictures (such as those found in Spain and France) which are held to have originated between 35,000 and 15,000 B.C. and pictograms which date from later periods, that have been found in various parts of the world such as America, Egypt, Scandinavia and China. Brown advises that we can decipher cave pictures in a general sense - e.g. as animals, because they are representational, however, we cannot say exactly what kind of animals they are - i.e. "...bison, ...mammoth or saber tooth tiger..."⁸ (see figure 6, p. 95). Brown gives examples of pictograms (see figure 7, p. 95) which he labels as sun, moon and man, and describes them as "unmistak-

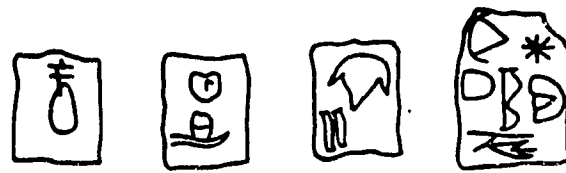
⁴1985, p. 6.

⁵ coined by Gelb, 1952.

⁶ 1985, p. 6

⁷ 1958, p. 58.

⁸ *ibid.*



EARLIEST PICTOGRAPHIC TABLETS FROM URUK

Figure 6 Uruk Pictographs

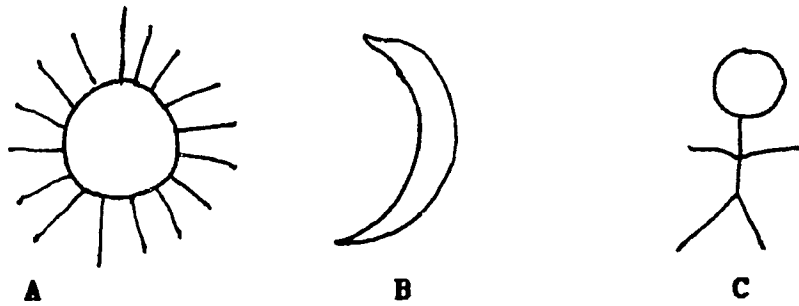


Figure 7 Pictograms



HITTITE HIEROGLYPHIC WRITING

Figure 8 Hittite Hieroglyph

able". He characterizes the pictogram as:

...entirely independent of speech. It stands in direct relation to a class of non-linguistic objects or events. The pictogram has a semantic rather than a phonetic value. In addition, it is representational. The symbol manifests one or more of the critical attributes of the signified non-linguistic referent.

In general, pictograms are not very successful in translating abstract concepts.

Two other terms often associated with the term pictogram are the terms "ideograph" and "logogram" that deserve clarification. Brown distinguishes between the subtle difference that may be posited about pictograms - the thing pictured - and ideograms (sometimes also called ideograph) - "an idea associated with that thing".

Brown suggests that the ideogram is useful for showing abstract ideas such as death, life, haste or peace. Brown⁹ gives the example: "For soul the Egyptian drew a bird with the head of a man. Presumably the bird is suggestive of flight and the human head makes this flight non-avian." Because of a lack of common experience or knowledge of the code, ideograms tended to be better understood in the past than they are today.

Brown¹⁰ submits that the earliest pictograms and ideograms tended to depict the chronology of the events as they occurred in time. Logograms, as Gelb¹¹ suggests, followed the sequence of

⁹ *ibid*, p. 61.

¹⁰ *ibid*, p. 62.

¹¹ 1952

ideas expressed in speech, while still retaining a semantic character.

We can note Gelb's advice that the term ideograph should be avoided altogether because its use has been extended beyond the sphere of describing primitive systems. He writes:¹² "The Orientalists who use the term "ideogram" for the simple word sign...have been so sinful in this respect, that the term "ideography" has become a real opprobrium in linguistic circles."

As mentioned in Chapter Four, one can view the evolution of the pictograph to the more stylized development of the ideograph and rebus. According to Logan¹³ and Gelb¹⁴ one can chart the development of writing in general from logographic (entire words depicted with one sign), through syllabic systems (with each individual syllable coded) to the alphabet (which codes each individual phoneme). This movement over time is seen as a movement toward more abstract signification.

Hieroglyphics

The term *hieroglyphic* enjoys two references - one historical and the other, more contemporary and esoteric.

An historical discussion of the term *hieroglyphics* acknowledges its derivation from the Greek meaning "sacred carvings"¹⁵ on stone. Although different systems of hieroglyphic writing have been identified e.g. Egyptian and Hittite, they both can be


¹² 1952, p. 35.

¹³ 1986, p. 20-21.1

¹⁴ 1952, p. 201.

¹⁵ Logan, 1986, p. 33.

described as "picture writing"¹⁶ (see figure 8, p. 95). In Egypt, hieroglyphic writing was used mainly for public displays, rather than in everyday usage. Two cursive, non-iconic systems were developed for practical use: first the hieratic, followed by the demotic.

Hieroglyphics are described by Sampson¹⁷ as being mainly a phonographic system - "...the consonantal value of the graph was the first sound of the name of the thing pictured." Sampson¹⁸ refers to this as the "acrophonic principle (see figure 9, p.99). For example, the letter "m" can be traced back to the hieroglyphic sign  that looks like rippled water. This hieroglyph as Sampson explains, stood for the letter "n", which was the first sound of the Egyptian word for "water". The Semites substituted the letter "m", as their word for water began with this sound.

Egyptian hieroglyphic writing was deciphered in 1822, by François Champollion mainly through a comparison of demotic, Greek and hieroglyphic versions of the same inscription on the Rosetta stone. Derrida identifies this as an "epistemological break". Until this time, according to Derrida, the hieroglyph was "excessively admired as a form of sublime, mystical writing."¹⁹ Once such "hallucinatory" obstacles were overcome, according to Derrida, "Then a systematic reflection upon the correspondence between writing and speech could be born."²⁰

¹⁶ Gelb, 1952, p. 82.

¹⁷ 1985, p. 78.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Ulmer, 1985, p. 6.

²⁰ *ibid.*

in < wn mn Ꞗ Ꞗ nn a hn n bn • Q ln
 | sn < sn Q sn
 - ir > wr □ pr Ꞗ mr Ꞗ mr Ꞗ hr w hr n dr
 - bh > ph > mh > ni
 Ꞗ ms < ms Ꞗ ns < ns = gs < gs
 Ꞗ ts < tz Ꞗ hs < hz
 > 'k
 Ꞗ sk < sk
 - ml - hl Ꞗ st < st
 Ꞗ sd Ꞗ kd Ꞗ dd > dd
 > 'd > 'd Ꞗ wd Ꞗ nd Ꞗ hd

Figure 9 Egyptian Biconsonantal Signs

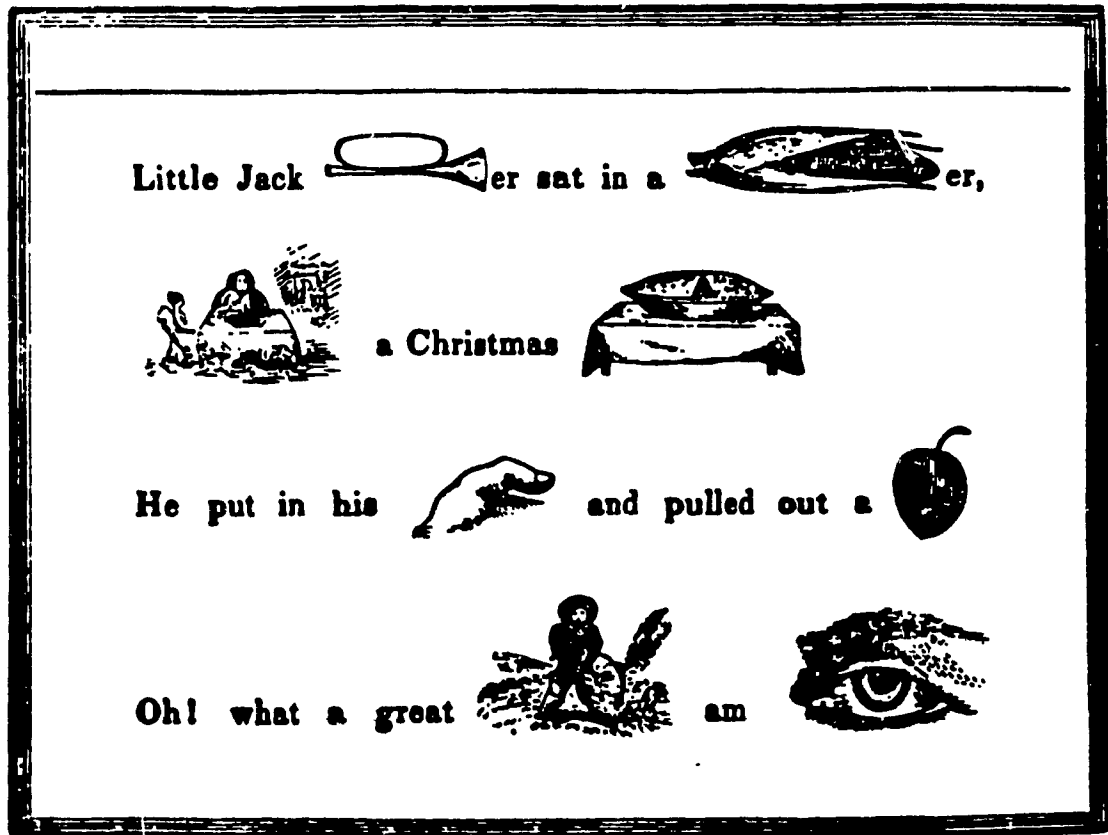


Figure 10 Mother Goose in Rebus Form

Grammatology was founded as a science through this eighteenth century decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs. Ulmer delineates:²¹

Theoretical grammatology (the second stage of the science of writing) could be characterized as a "new Egyptology," being a writing modeled upon the works of two principal decipherers of the modern world - Champollion and Freud (himself, of course, a collector of Egyptian artifacts).

Although beyond the scope of this thesis, reference can be made to Derrida's use of what he calls "the hieroglyphic principle" to develop a theory of "signing" that stands in direct contrast to Saussure's "sign". Derrida suggests that hieroglyphics are tripartite in that they include:

figurative characters (literal representations of objects...); a symbolic element, expressing abstract ideas by analogical extension of the figurative images; and phonetic characters (figures used exclusively for their sound value).

Derrida proposes a tripartite "picto-ideo-phonographic" script.

The Rebus

The rebus is defined in the Encyclopedia Britannica²² as the "representation of a word or syllable by a picture of an object, the name of which resembles in sound the represented word or syllable." While rebuses can be combined to make sentences,

²¹ *ibid*, p. 17.

²² 1987, Vol. 9, p. 976.

intricate rebuses contain both letters and pictures. Historically rebuses have been used in almost contrary ways - to convey meaning directly (e.g. as information or instruction for illiterate people), as well as the inverse to "...deliberately conceal meanings, to inform only the initiated or to puzzle or amuse."²³

Danto²⁴ points out that the rebus is solved "by pronouncing the words that go with the individual pictures, replacing these with homonyms, and getting a spoken sentence that makes sense..." He gives examples of rebuses such as Duchamps' L.H.O.O.Q, which is mildly lewd, but only in French. The untranslatable aspect of the rebus is held by Donato to be of prime importance. He writes "Lose the language and you lose the possibility of resolving a puzzle of this sort."

Another more current application of the rebus involves reference to Freudian theory. Maclagan calls attention to Freud's almost exclusive tendency to approach the pictorialisation of thought from a linguistic perspective. Maclagan²⁵ grounds Freud's thought in the "classic figurative tradition that forms the backbone of the history of art between the Renaissance and the end of the century" in European culture. This attitude is typified by the tendency "to seek to contain the image, to discipline its suggestive power by anchoring it within some kind of verbal programme or iconography."²⁶

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ in Smith (ed.), 1978, p. 325.

²⁵ 1983, p. 10.

²⁶ *ibid.*

According to Maclagan²⁷ "Freud consistently compares the turning of thoughts into pictures to hieroglyphics or to a rebus, that is ultimately to be read like a text." Maclagan cites Freud:²⁸

The dream-content [the first translation of the dream-thoughts]...is expressed as it were in a pictographic script, the characters of which have to be transposed individually into the language of the dream-thoughts. If we attempted to read these characters according to their symbolic relation, we should clearly be led into error.

Maclagan²⁹ contrasts this attitude with another response found in European culture - that of the Neo-Platonists and the Symbolists who credited the image "with its own authority" and saw it "as having a numinosity and immediacy that are superior to language." Maclagan suggests that in the rebus (see his example figure 10, p. 99) the image is cut off from other associations and becomes a substitute for words.

The rebus principle merits further research, discussion and application to the field of art therapy by those who are interested in contributing to this area of art therapy discourse.

Calligrams

The word "calligramme" was first used by Apollinaire in 1918, as the title for a collection of his published work (see figure 11, p. 103). Foucault³⁰ describes the calligram as "a poem whose

²⁷ *ibid*, p. 11.

²⁸ *ibid*.p. 11.

²⁹ *ibid*.

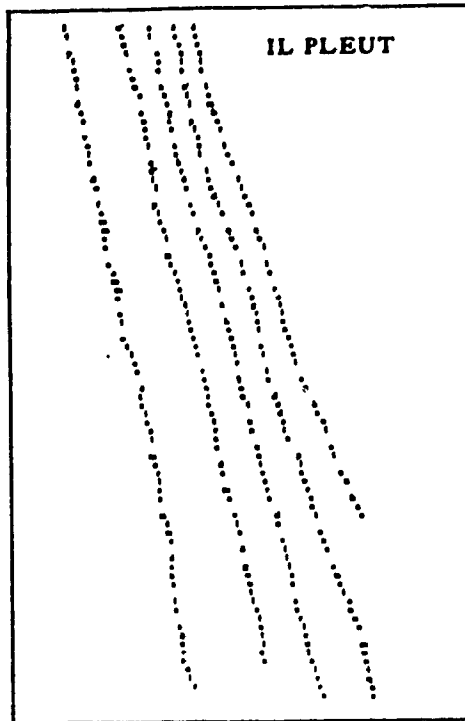


Figure 11 Calligram by Apollinaire

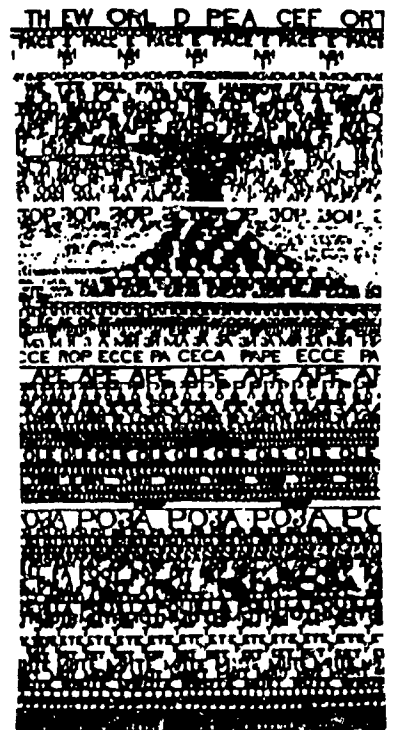
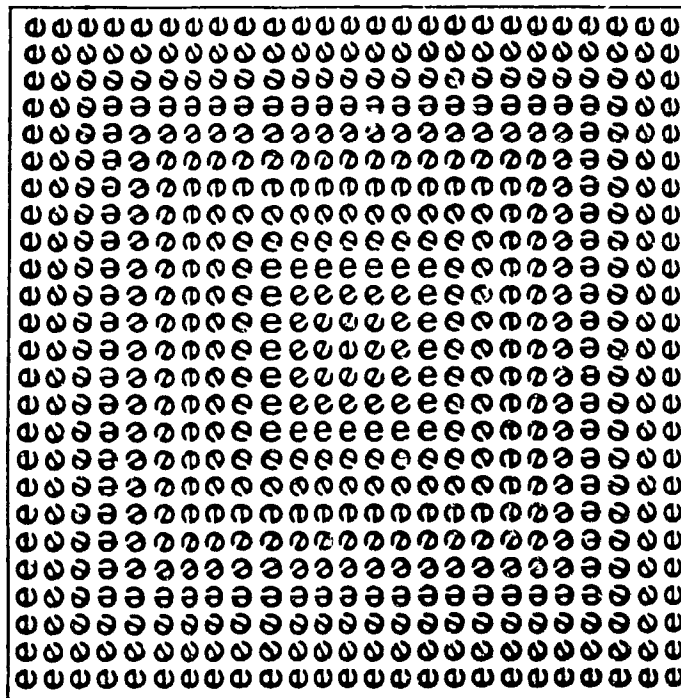


Figure 12 Two Examples of Concrete Poetry

words are arranged in such a fashion as to form a picture of its 'topic'." Apollinaire's goal, according to Massin,³¹ was to create a form of expression wherein the reader could "...read a whole poem at a single glance, just as a conductor reads the super-imposed notes in a musical score all at once, so one can see these plastic and printed elements."

Massin traces the history of the calligram to Greek rhopalic or figured verse. Up to the time of Apollinaire, figured verse was not taken very seriously as a poetic genre, regarded instead as childish and unworthy of distinguished writers.

Foucault³² describes the unique functions that the calligram performs: "...the calligram has a triple role: to augment the alphabet, to repeat something without the aid of rhetoric, to trap things in a double cipher." Foucault notes how the calligram "brings a text and a shape as close together as possible."³³ He comments upon the intimate interplay that exists between the shape of the form and the content of the letters - the form tends to arrange the sequence of the letters and the text reiterates what the form represents. Foucault also describes the calligram's tendency to distribute writing "in a space no longer possessing the neutrality, openness and inert blankness of paper."³⁴

The calligram is thus understood by Foucault to be a tautology, but in a different manner than rhetorical discourse.

³¹ 1970, p. 198.

³² 1982, p. 20.

³³ *ibid*, pp. 20-21.

³⁴ *ibid*, p. 21.

Whereas rhetoric functions on the basis of allegory, based upon the fullness of language, as Foucault describes it, the calligram's usage of the double capacity of letters manages to "signify both as linear elements that can be arranged in space and as signs that must unroll according to a unique chain of sound." [my emphasis] Foucault writes:³⁵

Thus the calligram aspires playfully to efface the oldest oppositions of our alphabetical civilization: to show and to name; to shape and to say; to reproduce and to articulate; to imitate and to signify; to look and to read.

Foucault suggests that the calligram cannot both speak and represent at the same time. "The very thing that is both seen and read is hushed in the vision, hidden in the reading."³⁶ Massin comments upon the powerful appeal and use of calligrams for the field of advertising.

Concrete Poetry

Concrete poetry is another genre of poetry that bears brief mention. Mary Ellen Solt³⁷ identifies three different kinds: visual (optic), phonetic (sound) and kinetic (moving in a visual succession). Unlike the calligram, which includes a readable text as well as a plastic component, in concrete poetry as Solt describes it,³⁸ the concern rests with the "making of an object to be

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 25.

³⁷ need info. p. 7.

³⁸ *ibid.*

perceived rather than read. The visual poem is intended to be seen like a painting." (see figure 12, p.103)

Different schools of concrete poetry exist around the world that favour various aspects of this form. Some focus on the playful aspect of the linguistic signifier, some favour a communicative semantic aspect, while others focus on the purely aesthetic. Concrete poetry in general can be seen to introduce a spatial dimension to language, instead of the temporal one required for articulation.

Amongst the formal components that can be identified in concrete poetry according to Solt, we find: the weight and the scale of the letters used, the tension that does or does not exist between the letters that can intensify the visual message and the relationship of the typeface to the concept.

Illegible Writing

Barthes³⁹ calls illegible writing a "a special semiography" that has been practiced by numerous artists such as Klee, Ernst, Michaux, Picasso and Requichot. The "Being" of writing for Barthes lies less in its communicative function than in the emotions and gestures behind it: "the rage , the tenderness, or the rigor with which its strokes and curves are drawn"⁴⁰

For Barthes⁴¹ illegible writing attests to several things: to the "contingent, historical [and] *invented*" [author's emphasis] aspect of meaning, and to the fact that "nothing separates writing

³⁹ 1985

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 220.

⁴¹ *ibid*, p. 220-221.

(which we believe communicates) from painting (which we believe expresses): both consist of the same tissue"⁴² [author's emphasis]. Barthes⁴³ describes illegible writing's ability to "unbalance the message" and to "retain memory's form but not its content."

Barthe's reference to the inexhaustible palimpsest into which all art and writing can be placed leads to a brief mention of the Mystic Writing Pad - a model of the mind that was put forth by Freud and further taken up by Derrida. Ulmer⁴⁴ outlines how Freud came upon the "Wunderblock" or the scriptural metaphor in his search to find a mechanism that would "serve as a model for the psychic apparatus."⁴⁵ What appealed to both Freud and to Derrida in the notion of the writing pad is a writing surface that both "preserves and erases ... the trace."⁴⁶ This metaphor holds great importance in Derrida's theory of grammatology and deserves further exploration and application to the art therapeutic field.

Letters

Massin's book Letter and Image⁴⁷ provides numerous examples throughout history of what Barthes⁴⁸ calls the Occidental

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ 1985

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 76.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 77.

⁴⁷ 1970.

⁴⁸ 1985, p. 98.

letter's potentially "diabolical" nature. As a "contradictory signifier",⁴⁹ the 26 letters of the alphabet keep language within its yoke, and on the other hand, as Barthes suggests, "it tirelessly releases a profusion of symbols."

Massin describes the "liberation of the letter" which begins in "the stammers of childhood"⁵⁰ and can also be seen in early medieval manuscripts. Animated letters descend from two traditions according to Massin - the illuminated letter consisting of "Mediterranean influences...with its predilection for abstract tracery and arabesques"⁵¹ and the zoomorphic letter composed of creatures which date back to early Christian times.

Barthes views the examples provided in Massin's book as attestations to the independence of the letter from sound and from phonemic usage. Barthes describes the alphabet's potential as an autonomous system that can be seen as "grotesque, diabolic, comic, new, magical."⁵² The use of letters as signs outside of meaning is described by Barthes as an obstruction of the route that seems to run naturally from the letter to the word. He writes "freed from its linguistic role... a letter can say everything."⁵³

A contrary view would hold that letters are fixed, arbitrary conventions and as such, are meaningless. As David Burnett points out,⁵⁴ in certain instances the use of letters in pictures

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ 1970, p. 19.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁵² 1985, p. 99.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 100.

⁵⁴ 1979, p. 49.

can be seen as a negation of the value which is put upon them
 "for gaining knowledge and making communication."

Titles

Barthes⁵⁵ calls titles "the bait of signification", referring to the title's "doubling" function in classical painting that stated what the picture represented. Barthes also calls attention to the tendency of gallery viewers to "first fling themselves" on "that thin line of words which runs along the bottom of the work..." As Foucault⁵⁶ suggests, there is an inevitable tendency "to connect the text to the drawing". Titles can be looked upon as a clue to help contextualize the image through the general pointing function that words are seen to provide. Irvine likewise views titles as an "invitation to share by suggesting a category for viewing."⁵⁷

Foucault⁵⁸ also places the text below the image in what he calls "the old arrangement."⁵⁹ This Foucault describes as the "...natural site [of titles] ...where it serves to support it, [the image] name it,...explain it, decompose it..." Foucault calls the relationship that exists between a painting and its title "a complex and problematic" one that results in what he calls "a gulf" because we cannot read and view at the same time. Many contemporary artists such as Magritte and Twombly have called

⁵⁵ 1985, p. 184.

⁵⁶ 1982, p. 20

⁵⁷ 1980, p. 36.

⁵⁸ *ibid*, p. 22.

⁵⁹ *ibid*, p.37.

attention to this relationship in their work. Magritte⁶⁰ writes of his subversive use of titles: "Titles are chosen in such a way as to keep anyone from assigning my paintings to the familiar region that habitual thought appeals to in order to escape perplexity."

Similarly, Barthes⁶¹ describes the "labyrinthine function" of Twombly's titles in that they block access to the work. Barthes suggests that titles of Twombly's work such as "The Italians" or "Sahara" prompt us to look for figures that relate to these referents in his abstract work, where nothing "represents" these words. Yet as Barthes writes, "we vaguely realize, [that] nothing in these canvases contradicts a certain natural idea of the Sahara, of the Italians."⁶² Barthes concludes that "... having followed the notion they suggest, we are forced to retrace our steps and start out in another direction. Yet something remains- a kind of ghost that pervades the canvas."⁶³

Barthes' description of the general disruptiveness of words in painting can be linked to the constant exclusion of linguistic signs from painting that occurred in the classical episteme. Foucault writes:

Hence the fact that classical painting spoke - and spoke constantly - while constituting itself entirely outside language; hence the fact that it rested silently in a discursive space; hence the fact that it provided, beneath itself, a kind of common ground where it could restore the bonds of signs and the image.

⁶⁰ in Harkness, 1982, p. 36.

⁶¹ 1985, p. 184.

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ *ibid.*

Other "archetypes" or typologies that have relevance in art therapy discourse and merit further discussion include names, emblems, banderoles and graffiti.

Summary

The above review presented a wide range of word/image precedents that will prove useful as archetypes in future practical discussions of these phenomena, as they pertain to art therapy sessions. As well as clarifying certain terminology in terms of their historical references, contemporary post-structuralist insights also have been suggested, opening the way for a larger associations that can be made to the areas in question.

This sketch of various typologies is not meant meant to be taken as a comprehensive review, but rather as the beginning of a challenging and alternative way of framing discussions. Many of the examples presented above deserve further investigation and will yield rich and fertile ground for both psychological and post-structural insights.

In Chapter Six, a general review and application of Barthes' notion of the text will be brought to bear on art therapy discourse. This concept has relevance to many aspects of art therapy practice. Several examples of the typologies discussed in this chapter will be illustrated, drawn from the literature reviewed in Chapter One. Areas for further research will be suggested with the hope that others will pick up this investigation and carry it further in terms of both theory and application.

CHAPTER SIX

Rethinking the "Image" in Art Therapy

An interdisciplinary inquiry into the phenomenon of written words as they occur in art therapy images has revealed underlying biases and connotations (as discussed in Chapter Three and Four) that have contributed to a limited discussion of this topic within the art therapy literature chosen for review. Historical precedents of word/image combinations were suggested in Chapter Five as typologies that could have practical relevance to art therapy practice and in certain cases, (e.g. the rebus and hieroglyphs) to more contemporary modes of inquiry such as post-structuralist thought. The general historical context that has been furnished by such a review will serve as a base for future research that may follow in this area.

Methods of Inquiry in Art Therapy

Addressing a new area of interest in art therapy discourse presents an opportunity to reflect upon the general manner in which art therapists frame their method of inquiry. To date, two methods of theorizing can be distinguished - an "applied" approach (using principles from psychology and the visual arts) and a diachronic or historical approach.

By far, the most common theoretical *modus operandi* for art therapists involves the tendency to appropriate and apply theories (mostly psychological and developmental - e.g. Klein, Winnicott,

Jung, Freud etc.) to areas of concern for art therapists. As seen from the literature reviewed in Chapter One, to date, this type of an application in regards to the topic under discussion in this thesis suffers from confusion, biases and a lack of depth. Little attention has been paid in art therapy discourse to the large body of writing that exists in domains such as art criticism and semiotics.

The same may be said with regards to a diachronic or historical approach that suffers from haphazard application. A lack of appreciation of underlying biases and connotations that have contributed to a limited discussion of words in images abounds (e.g. the cave art argument supporting a negatively determined reaction to the linguistic mode of communication, as seen in Chapter One).

A third approach to the thesis topic involves the application of ideas from areas less familiar to art therapy discourse such as structuralist, semiotic, and post-structuralist thought. For the most part, it has yet to be determined whether such theories will in fact have relevance and practical application in art therapy discourse. A general contribution of this approach would seem to involve the fostering of a more critical and discriminatory attitude towards a large number of relevant topics.

A review of Barthes' seven point notion of the "text" provides an opportunity to reframe many aspects of art therapy practice in a more contemporary light. Several images will be reviewed, illustrating dynamics discussed in Chapter Five, as well as

pointing to areas for further study.

"From Work to Text"¹

Barthes suggests that along with an interdisciplinary approach, a new object, the "Text" can be postulated that results from "the sliding or overturning of former categories."²

Barthes refers to this as an epistemological "slide" rather than a "break", that has contributed to new notions of language and representation (e.g. such as those discussed in Chapter Three).

This new notion takes the place of what formerly was called the "work" (be it novel, photograph etc). Burgin³ describes the method used to analyze a work:

...the particular object of analysis (novel, photograph, or whatever) was conceived of as a self-contained entity, whose capacity to mean was nevertheless dependent upon underlying formal "structures" common to all such work - the task of theory was to uncover and describe these structures.

Burgin likens this to the production of an "anatomy" of meaning where nothing was postulated about the "flesh" of meaning, that is forever changing.

The term "Text" was conceived of by Barthes⁴ and is described by Burgin as a "space between the object and the reader/viewer", rather than as an "object" enclosed by boundaries or

¹ title of an essay in Barthes, 1977.

² *ibid*, p. 156.

³ 1986, p. 73.

⁴ with help from Derrida and Kristeva, as Burgin points out.

definite meaning (e.g. such as the modernist ideal of painting that excludes language). Burgin outlines the unlimited space of the Text that "opens continuously into other Texts, the space of intertextuality."⁵

An Application of Barthes' Notion of the Text to Art Therapy Discourse

Barthes' notion of the text is an interesting way of reframing art therapy practice. What follows is a seven point outline of "enunciations" that Barthes uses to describe the text.⁶ I will argue that to a large extent, many of these notions are already operational in art therapy discourse. They simply become reframed in this outline. Various aspects of the work/text paradigm touch many aspects of art therapy practice, some of which relate more specifically to the thesis topic.

1) As mentioned earlier, Barthes describes the text as a "methodological field, experienced only in an activity of production,"⁷ rather than as an object. In art therapy practice, although the actual artwork is valued as an object, this valuing in part constitutes a symbolic gesture that relates to the greater activity of the therapeutic encounter. It is the interaction between the client/patient, the artwork and the therapist that constitutes art therapy. The focus of art therapy is on therapy, rather than on the production of art objects.

⁵ *ibid*, p. 73.

⁶ although Barthes uses the term "text" primarily in reference to literature, Burgin gives it a wider application that includes images.

⁷ 1977, p. 157

We also can describe the active approach needed on the part of the art therapist to recognize and to draw out meaning from the image, as well as from other discourses—i.e. on a corporal level, on an institutional level, transference and counter transference issues plus ever-changing theoretical postulations.

2) Barthes describes the lack of hierarchization that characterizes the text and the "problems of classification" that it poses. Barthes values the text's "subversive force in respect to the old [literary] classifications." In certain aspects, art therapy can be seen as a subversive practice, in comparison with other modes of therapy. Art therapy practice tends not to function in a reductive capacity that relates the art directly to pathology. The healthier side of the patient, as well as the reparative power of the artistic process, is also valued. The patient has an active role to play in the therapeutic process, with the creative process at times also providing fulfillment to the maker.

In its more radical stance, the text is described by Barthes⁸ as "that which goes to the limit of the rules of enunciation e.g. rationality, readability, etc." Although to date, art therapy discourse does not challenge the limits of convention in its theoretical form, the space that is tolerated within the art therapy sessions, as well as what is contained in the art work may well do so. In that the text is always paradoxical for Barthes, this principle has application to art therapy images, that

⁸ *ibid.*

often also contain paradoxes.

3) Two modes of signification can be attributed to the work according to Barthes. He writes:⁹

either it is claimed to be evident and the work is then the object of a literal science, of philology, or else it is considered to be secret... something to be sought out, and then the work falls under the scope of a hermeneutics of an interpretation (Marxist, psychoanalytic, thematic, etc.).

In either case, for Barthes, the work in this context functions in the domain of the "civilization of the Sign"¹⁰ with its emphasis on the signified.

The text on the other hand, indefinitely defers the signified, focusing instead upon the playful aspect of the signifier. The movement in the text is one of seriality, "... of disconnections, overlappings and variations",¹¹ rather than the uncovering (deepening) hermeneutic approach, or one of maturational evolution. The logic of the text described by Barthes is "metonymic; the activity of associations, contiguities, carryings-over, coinciding with a liberation of symbolic energy... :the Text is radically symbolic."¹²

Ideally, art therapy practice and images operate as text. Barthes' description that "a work conceived, perceived and received in its integrally symbolic nature is a text" would seem to fit closely with art therapist's goals in working with their

⁹ *ibid*, p. 158.

¹⁰ *ibid*.

¹¹ *ibid*.

¹² *ibid*.

clientele. We can refer to Hillman's description of the art therapist:¹³

...[S/]he would be involved in doing the main task which is not interpreting, not turning the material into practical reason, not trying to strengthen the ego. But... would be encouraging, seducing, conducting [the] fantasy process to go further. As psychology moves beyond itself towards a psychology which is not a translation of psychic events into professional language... then psychology would...perhaps, I hope take more and more the forms of art and its play.

4) The text, in its plurality is irreducible, according to Barthes. Rather than containing a "co-existence of meanings",¹⁴ the text is characterized as a "tissue", a "woven fabric" and as an "explosion."¹⁵ Burgin refers to Barthes' term the 'déjà-lu'. the 'already read' or the 'already seen' that encompasses "everything we already know and which the text may therefore call upon, or 'accidentally' evoke."¹⁶ The combination of the déjà-lu is unique with each text and each text can be seen as an inter-text to another text. "These intertextual fields are themselves in constant process of change (another reason why there can be no final closure of meaning)."¹⁷ Eagleton¹⁸ points out that this diversity of meaning converges on the reader, rather than on the author of the text.

This notion has application to art therapy in that the therapist seeks to witness and contain the discourses of the

¹³ 1969. p. 6.

¹⁴ Barthes, 1977, p. 159.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ Burgin, 1986, p.73.

¹⁷ *ibid.* p. 73-74.

¹⁸ 1983.

patient/client, (including the artwork) and responds in turn with another set of discourses, that trigger another set of responses. As well, the images also trigger more images and so on. Each therapist and each patient/client will have different associations to each of the images that appear in the course of the therapy.

5) Barthes fifth point touches upon the relationship of the work or text and the author, with society. In art therapy, I would suggest that this occurs in two ways - through the case study, and through the presentation of the art therapy images to the world-at-large. The work according to Barthes grows by development. The "process of filiation" that characterizes the work relates very much to a style of case presentation that develops a logical argument, in the hopes of illustrating a particular pathology, as per DSM III categorizations and other prescriptions of pathology.

The text extends itself by network, which Barthes suggests is closer to current conceptions in biology of the living organism. To write case histories that are texts presents a great challenge to art therapists. Perhaps we are in the process of redefining such a methodology. Our dependence upon prior discourses (psychiatric and psychological) as well as institutions that value the case history as "work" have to a large degree influenced the form of case studies in art therapists' writings. Hillman's healing fictions¹⁹ are one alternative that share some of the sensibilities of Barthes' text. For Barthes, the "author's" life becomes yet another fiction that contributes to the fiction of the

¹⁹ 1983.

text. Quasha²⁰ writes:

The fantasy that our pathologies can finally be cured Hillman has repeatedly shown to be a perverse misapplication of the medical model to psychotherapy, whose true function is to sustain and guide our conscious participation in the psychic world we (largely unconsciously) generate in every moment of living. Healing is not a procedure leading to a product, a concretized healthy person, healing is a life process that begins with our acceptance of our fictive realities...

In terms of the second mode of relating the author, text and society, an uneasy relationship surrounds art therapy images, especially those created in psychiatric institutions. Very strong hierarchical and power relations surround the ownership of any work created in the hospital - it belongs to the institution. The patient by drawing, gives up his discourse that is taken over by the "other". As well, the question as to whether and how to exhibit art therapy images for general viewing by the public remains a delicate issue.

6) Barthes advises that the frequently "unreadable" aspect to the text serves to "...decant the work...from its consumption [from consumer society] and gathers it up as play, activity, production, practice."²¹ By so doing, he hopes that the distance between the writer and the reader will become more diminished. For Barthes, the text is that which resists reduction to "a passive, inner *mimesis*"²²

²⁰ in Hillman, 1983, p. x.

²¹ Barthes, 1977, p. 162.

²² Barthes, 1977, p. 162.

Criticism has been levelled at semiotic writers for their dense and often hard to read texts. Sturrock²³ suggests that writers such as Barthes, Derrida and Foucault are deliberately choosing to offend the canon of clarity that is held in their country of birth (France) "as a national virtue, the mark (or *sign*) of a truly french mind."²⁴ Barthes is said to have interpreted this emphasis of clarity as an political act, that guaranteed a "discourse of persuasion and autocracy" of the ruling class in the social hierarchy.

Sturrock points out that a post-Freudian view of language tolerates ambiguity, because of the realization that we do not have language completely under control. Writers such as Lacan, Barthes, Derrida, and Foucault "...would rather show us that there is infinitely more to be said on every topic than will ever be said by those who believe that anything worth saying must be said unambiguously."²⁵

Sturrock²⁶ posits that as readers, we have to work through a text, "picking our way through ... ambiguities, gathering meanings as we go", rather than accept "illusory simplicity" in handed down doctrine from on high.

The involvement of the reader with the text might help to ease the pressure that is placed upon the art therapist to "explain" the image and relate it to pathology. Adopting a more playful attitude to the case study and to discourses from outside

²³ 1979.

²⁴ *ibid*, p. 16.

²⁵ *ibid*, p. 17.

²⁶ *ibid*.

the established field of art therapy may help our profession to grow in a way that is more congenial with itself and its ideals.

7) Lastly, for Barthes, the role of pleasure is important in the Text. This can be rephrased as the emphasis assigned to the role of the signifier over the signified. Sturrock²⁷ writes, "The signifier is what we can be sure of, it is material; the signified is an open question." These writers are asking of us "...to delight in the plurality of meaning this opens up, to reject the authoritarian or unequivocal interpretation of signs." This includes for Barthes²⁸ the creation of a space in the Text "...where no language has a hold over any other, where languages circulate..." The text invalidates the separation of the arts.

The challenge for art therapists, to integrate into their profession more contemporary theories of meaning in terms of both art therapy theory and practice, will not be an overnight accomplishment, but rather a slow and steady expansion of the field. In such an expanded field, the pictorial image would include linguistic representations, that would be valued as another means of expression. The inclusion of such theories is perhaps a way to reconnect with the artistic process, which involves a literal meeting of surfaces, a play of signifiers, in a way that is non reductive, and yet relevant and responsible in terms of professional goals that art therapists have set for themselves (i.e. the recognition of their practice) and seek to

²⁷ 1979, p. 15.

²⁸ 1977, p. 164.

fulfill.

Re-Viewing Art Therapy Images Containing Words

We can cite many instances of written words occurring in art therapy sessions. In general, they might occur as stories and poems, in journal writing and in games. Specifically they may appear in art therapy images as: titles, headings, sentences or messages, requested (e.g. warm-up exercises, titles) and/or spontaneous, written on the same page as the image or on the back of the image, as collage elements (usually typographic), as letters or initials, as nonsense words, as foreign languages, or swear words. Different kinds of writing might include printing, writing, capitals, small case, mixed cases, different scripts, and graffiti. The therapist also might write on the client's picture (back or front) taking a dictation or writing a description of the session.

As a result of this thesis, we now realize that more can be posited about written words in art therapy images than has been previously attributed to them by art therapists. In reviewing images chosen from the literature reviewed in Chapter One, we can find examples of typologies introduced in Chapter Five. These images are being presented in the spirit of graphic identifications, rather than as texts in Barthes' sense. Such a reading will require further work in this area of study.

In Figure 13 (p. 124), we can identify three distinct components: a rebus (pipe dream), the letter "s" and some

printed words and numbers that have been written on the left side (which are difficult to read), as constituting important elements of this image. The art therapist assigns a largely communicative aspect to the drawing, due perhaps to the group setting in which the image was made. While the rebus is

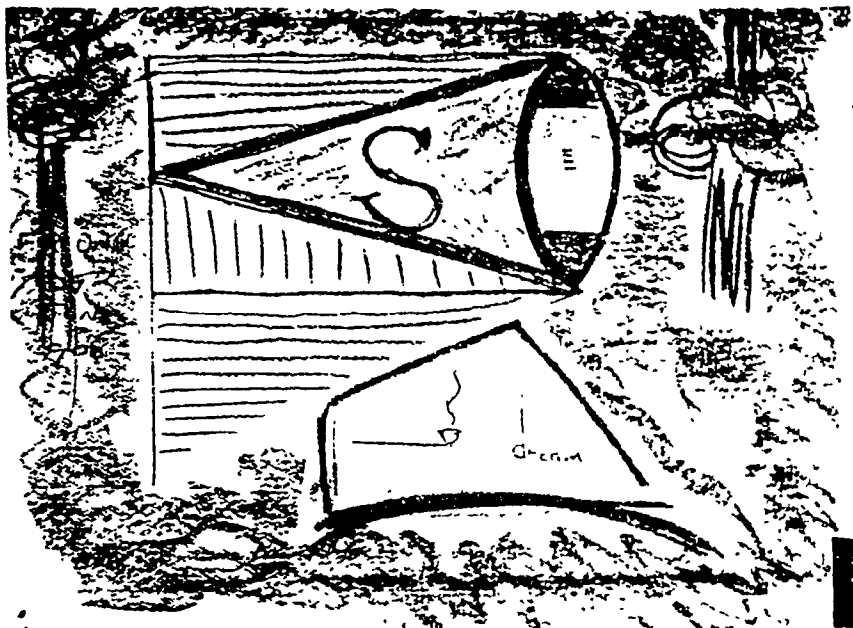


Figure 13

covertly acknowledged by the patient in his title "Pipe Dream", none of the linguistic components are acknowledged or developed by the art therapist in her discourse, in terms of their formal, theoretical, or intrapsychic significance.

Figure 14 (p. 125) can be seen to display a calligram like reference, in that the contour of the words completes part of the image. The image in this case can be seen to precede the words, that in turn, complete it. The therapist viewed the writing in a positive way, as "free associations indicating positive

transference"²⁹..

Art therapists need to acknowledge the extent to which their discourse in the form of directives (e.g. make up a story, give the image a title) influence the occurrence of written words in art

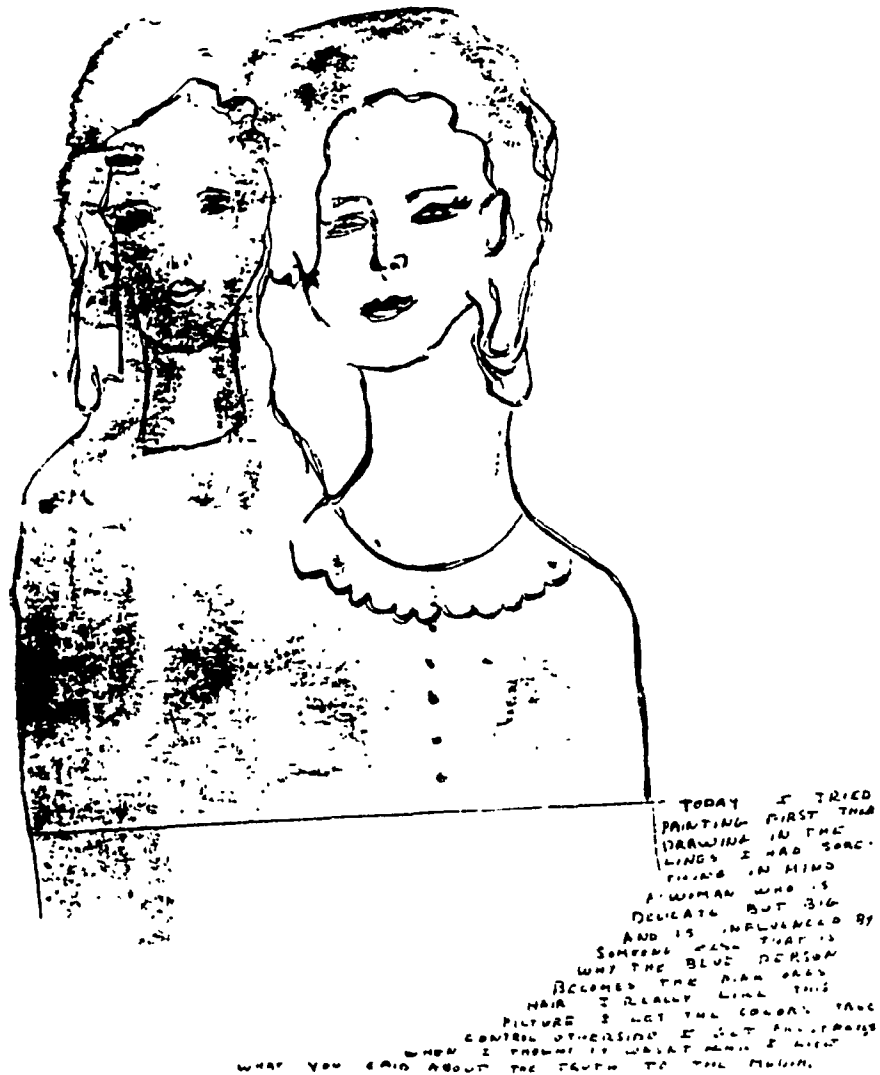


Figure 14

therapy images. In this case, the patient/client was following instructions and was asked to "make up a story about the two

²⁹ Landgarten, 1981, 191p.

representational female figures."³⁰ The tendency to give directives is frequent on the part of many art therapists, and often is not acknowledged as stemming from the art therapists' discourse. Perhaps the recognition of the important and interesting dimensions that linguistic components contribute to the therapeutic process will kindle more positive and informed views on the part of art therapists, who will endeavour to understand such linguistic elements when they occur.

Figure 15 (p. 126) presents an example of two letters (initials in this case) that can be juxtaposed very strongly to the horses that accompany them in the image. Kramer³¹ comments upon the ambiguity of the image as:



Figure 15

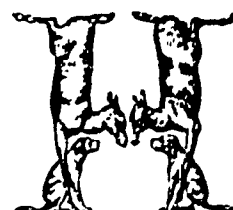


Figure 16

"...a kind of kicking dance between a brown horse and a white one which can be interpreted either as a battle or as love

³⁰ *ibid*, p. 190.

³¹ 1971, p. 161.

play..." Further along, Kramer writes "the motion of both [horses] is so reciprocal and flowing that positions seem at the point of being reversed, and the whole has the elegance of a ballet rather than the ferocity of a real fight."³²

We can compare the horses in this image to zoomorphic letters that convey meaning. (see figure 16, p. 126 for an example of an "H"), that also seem to be static in their stance. We can notice that the two letters in figure 15 are different in size, and are composed of different brush strokes - the "D" seems to have more "air" or "energy" to it. Perhaps the two letters align themselves with the two horses - the D with the white horse, and the L with the black horse.

As can be seen from the images presented here in this phenomenological description, much research remains to be done in terms of further development of a vocabulary that will enable art therapists to relate to both to the images, the written and pictographic components that their patients and clients present to them in therapy.

Summary

While the inquiry provided by this thesis confirms the initial supposition that prompted this investigation, it has also revealed the extent to which more work is needed in order to engage in a meaningful discussion and understanding of this topic. An investigation of underlying biases and connotations that have

³² *ibid.*

contributed to a limited discussion of written words in the art therapy literature chosen for review can be seen to precede as well as to preclude a case study type of presentation of this topic. This thesis has endeavoured to establish an appreciation of both the complexity and the richness of this topic, upon which further research in both pragmatic and theoretical levels is needed.³³

This thesis has endeavoured to redefine art therapists' attitude toward written words that may appear in their patients' or clients' images, through the presentation of knowledge from domains outside of the current art therapy literature. Much work remains to be done in this fascinating area of study. Continued exploration and application of these ideas and theories will enrich the growing field of art therapy theory and practice.

³³ Such as investigations dealing with theories of iconography (e.g. Lacan, Peirce), developmental (e.g. Piaget, Bruner), cognitive (e.g. Luria, Vygotsky, Piavo) and psychopathological perspectives (e.g. Arrieti) to name a few.

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