This study examined the life story of a counselee as it unfolded in her sandtrays and the changes in her symbolic images following the conclusion of the therapy sessions. The therapist applied three rounds of sandplay therapy to the counselee, who was aged six and had selective mutism, at intervals of one or two years for five years. Of the sandtrays she made a total of six sandtrays, including one from an early period and one from a later period, were analyzed according to Kalff’s theory of sandplay therapy along with techniques based on Jungian analytical psychology. As a result of this process the counselee achieved contact with her Self, ego, and animus, as well as recovery of her femininity and rebirth. Despite the lengthy intervals, the counselee was always able to resume her story at the start of a new round from the end of the previous round. At those times, figures that had appeared at the end of a previous round and symbolic images which had been left suspended would reemerge as connecting links in the first sandtray of the next round of sandplay therapy.

Keywords Sandplay therapy, Selective mutism, Symbolic images, Kalff, Analytical psychology
sandplay therapy?

METHODS

The subject of this study was Hyu, a six-year-old girl with selective mutism. She undertook the first round of sandplay therapy from May 2009 to April 2010, creating a total of 18 sandtrays. She went through a second round of sandplay therapy from August to December 2012, making a total of six sandtrays. Thereafter, from October 2013 to January 2014, she had a third round of sandplay therapy, creating a total of eight sandtrays. Table 1 is a summary of her sandplay therapy.

Sandplay therapy was performed over three rounds for five years at intervals of one or two years. Throughout this process, the therapist’s observations of the client, interviews with her, and photographs of her sandtrays were collected as data. Six sandtrays were chosen for analysis, namely the first and last sandtrays in each round of sandplay therapy, according to Kalff’s theory of sandplay therapy and techniques based on Jungian analytical psychology.

OUTLINE OF CASE

During the first round of sandplay therapy, Hyu’s mother complained that her daughter only talked with members of their own family and did not respond to other people who tried to talk to the girl. At this time, Hyu was attending kindergarten and reportedly did not talk to her teacher or other children in her class. Hyu’s mother expected that her daughter would eventually overcome her shyness and gain self-confidence in relationships, but this did not happen as she had hoped.

Two years and four months later, in the second round of sandplay therapy, Hyu remained a quiet child. She had adjusted academically to elementary school but because she was a shy and passive girl, it was worried that she might fall behind in her studies in the future. Nevertheless, she exhibited a talent for art and created remarkably delicate drawings.

A year and two months later, in the third round of sandplay therapy, Hyu still hardly talked to the therapist yet she had definitely changed. Although the girl remained shy and withdrawn, her silence seemed to be her own choice and she appeared to accept herself. A testament to her progress was that the therapist was able to conduct house-tree-person, which would have been impossible in the first round when the girl was behaviorally silent and had linguistic mutism. The results are presented in Figures 2 to 5. Figure 1 was her gift to the therapist during her first round of sandplay therapy.

Table 1. Sandplay Therapy Periods and Sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session period</th>
<th>Total number of Sessions</th>
<th>Total number of sandtrays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First round</td>
<td>2009. 5–2010. 4</td>
<td>24 sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second round</td>
<td>2012. 8–2012. 12</td>
<td>10 sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third round</td>
<td>2013. 10–2014. 1</td>
<td>10 sessions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. The picture that Hyu presented to the therapist as a gift from the first round of sandplay therapy.

Figure 2. A picture of a woman from the third round of sandplay therapy.

Figure 3. A picture of a man from the third round of sandplay therapy.
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wards introversion and indulgence in fantasy.

Furthermore, the small door and window of the otherwise huge house in Figure 4 suggests a reluctance to interact with the environment, retreat from interpersonal relationships, a sense of social inadequacy, indecisiveness, and a taciturn character. A weak ego with low energy, introverted character and a tendency to retreat are evident in the small tree in Figure 5. In particular, the narrow base of the tree trunk and the slanting of the tree to the left suggest a weak ego and introverted personality, respectively.

**SANDPLAY THERAPY PROCESS: FLOW OF TIME AND CHANGES**

At the time that Hyu began sandplay therapy she was six years old, and by the end of the first round she was seven. The first sandtray that she made in the first round is shown in Picture 1. The sandtray that she created in the last session of the first round is shown in Picture 2. Two years and four months later she started the second round of sandplay therapy, and her first sandtray from that round is shown in Picture 3.

The therapist found much of interest in Hyu’s very first sandtray (Picture 1). Having previously carried out research on the symbol of the mermaid, the therapist quickly noted the two mermaids in the upper right corner. One has yellow and the other has pink hair. The figure of the mermaid is rich in symbolic meaning for it represents love, hope, transformation, a rite of passage, temptation, betrayal, and the loss of soul (Mitford & Wilkinson, 2008). To the Medieval Church the mermaid personified unnatural desires that tempted mankind, whereas by the nineteenth century, when Hans Christian Anderson wrote *The Little Mermaid* (1837), the mermaid had acquired more positive attributes, for in his fairy tale it symbolized sacrifice. In the story the mermaid princess lived in the sea, the world of the unconscious, although she was familiar with the world. She falls in love with a man and wishes to become a woman in order to marry him. To this end, she signs a costly agreement with a sea witch to obtain legs, but at the cost of her voice (Lee, 2010). The therapist understood that just as the mermaid could not talk

Figure 4. A picture of a house from the third round of sandplay therapy.

Figure 5. A picture of a tree from the third round of sandplay therapy.

Picture 1. The first sandtray from the first round of sandplay therapy.

Picture 2. The last sandtray from the first round of sandplay therapy.
about her life, Hyu struggled in situations where she had to talk with people other than her family members.

The yellow and pink-haired mermaids reappear in Picture 2. They can now be seen together in a pond in the upper center of the sandtray. There is a walnut beside them. The therapist interpreted the symbolic meaning of this scene in terms of rebirth. In Anderson’s fairy tale the mermaid princess drowns in the sea. We must think of her fate as dying to the old so that she can be born again to the new. Similarly, the walnut next to the mermaids in this sandtray symbolizes their wish to return home to the sea.

Hyu’s selective autism slowly disappeared during her first round of sandplay therapy in tandem with the differentiation of her Self and the development of her ego functions. Starting with the sound “a-heung” in the therapy room, she started to talk to the therapist and revealed her inner world through pictures which she had drawn at home. Moreover, Hyu laughed “kkareureu” and clearly expressed what she wanted: “Please give me cocoa,” “Please give me warm cocoa.” In the final session of the first round, Hyu told her story about the sandtrays. In addition, she started to talk outside the therapy room. She talked with her teachers and friends while at a cultural center, at her piano institute, at an indoor swimming pool, and at her kindergarten, and started to perform diverse activities with confidence. She even made phone calls to her friends from kindergarten. Thus, she was making an effort to communicate with those around her (Boo, 2013).

Two years and four months later, she began her second round of sandplay therapy and the first sandtray she made is shown in Picture 3. Here as well, the mermaids that appeared in the first round appeared again. It was as if she showed mermaids that went back into the sea of two years and four months ago. In the center of Picture 2 there is a blue marble in a tin cylinder with two tiny merlions attached to each side, and there is a blue boat in the upper right corner that is facing to the left. This blue boat appeared again in the same spot in Picture 3, though this time it was facing to the right. Furthermore, on the boat, was the blue marble that had previously been guarded by the merlions. This scene recalled the following text from Jung (1984):

*If we intend to get back treasures, in other words’ our father’s precious legacies, we should go the way of water that always flows downward. In Gnosticist anthem about heart and soul, the parents send their son in order to find the pearl lost from the father, king’s crown. The pearl is on the bottom of a deep well and the well in kept by a dragon in Egypt, a carnal, inverted world of physical and mental wealth. The son and heir departs in order to bring back the germ but her forgets himself and his task amid a Egyptian worldly wild festival. Then his father’s letter reminds him of his duty. He goes on his journey, approaches the water-side, enters into the dark and deep well, finds the pearl on its bottom, and lastly offers it to the highest divinity.*

In the context of Jung’s remarks, the blue marble, which is guarded by merlions in Picture 2 and reappears on the boat in Picture 3, can be interpreted as symbolizing the pearl that disappeared from the king’s crown, and the left-facing blue boat as symbolizing his son who set out on a journey to find the pearl. Just as the son finally offers the pearl “to the highest divinity,” the blue marble last appears in a paradisiacal garden in Picture 4. Significantly, the blue marble did not reappear in any sandtray during the third round of sandplay therapy.

Psychologically, the ‘descent into the well,’ which for Hyu began sometime between the end of her first round and the start of her second round, is the prerequisite for further growth of human consciousness. According to Jung (1984):
In order for a dreaming person to climb upward to a bright place, he or she gets to know the need to enter a dark and deep place and it is revealed that it is the absolutely needed existence in order to rise higher. In this abyss, there is danger and someone wise evades it. However, by doing so, he inadvertently misses a treasure that he can obtain through a courageous but unwise advantage.

Likewise, in the two year and four month interval between the first and second rounds, Hyu found the courage to seek her treasure. She had opened the door of the deep place and was entering slowly and carefully. Therefore it was no coincidence that the first sandtray in the second round looked pregnant with a process that would happen in the future (Turner, 2005).

In Picture 4, Hyu created the sandtray very slowly and meticulously. She said this place was a garden. A garden symbolizes paradise, a place where the blessed dwell. At the center of the garden there are trees, fruits, and flowers that give life – a reward for those who discover the center of the garden (Cooper, 1978).

This sandtray was her last in the second round. Afterwards she was still taciturn, but no longer appeared as tense as she had been at the beginning of sandplay therapy. According to her mother, when Hyu used to see a friend at a playground she would become anxious and hurry back home. However, she now reported that when her daughter saw a friend at a playground, Hyu would acknowledge her friend with a nod if they made eye contact, though she would not play with the friend.

One year and two months later, Hyu undertook her third round of sandplay therapy, and the sandtray in Picture 5 was the first one she made at the time. She made it very carefully, like her previous sandtray (Picture 4), explaining that like that one, this was also a garden. There appeared to be a link between the gardens in the two pictures, made more than a year apart, as though if someone were to follow the garden path in Picture 4 then they would find their way to the garden in Picture 5. However, in order to enter the space in Picture 5 from the space in Picture 4, one should pass through the tree at the upper center of Picture 4 and the silver ribbon underneath it. Symbolically, this may represent a door as it plays the role of a mediator that enables passage from one space to another space (Heo, 2012). Therefore, in order to pass from Picture 4 to the space in Picture 5, one should open the door and enter it. The door was a portal through one year and two months of Hyu’s life, and, while passing through this ‘time door,’ her ego underwent development, which then enabled her to enter the next space. The pond at the center of the sandtray in Picture 5 suggests that it is a deep place of existence and a space where she confronts her Self.

However, Hyu’s confrontation with her Self is more evident in the sandtray in Picture 6. Picture 5 shows a crane and four ducks in a rock-edged pond, but Picture 6 offers a more dynamic scene with a girl trying to catch a fish in a pond, which is ringed by colorful stones. Beside her is a bucket full of fish that she has already caught. Another girl is kneeling and looking into it. These fish may symbolize Hyu’s Self, which was found in the depths of her subconscious. Therefore this scene has profound meaning in regards to her ego development (Kalff, 2000).

When creating the ponds in Pictures 5 and 6, Hyu poured water carefully into the trays to moisten the sand. Each pond she made looked like a spring of water that never dried up. According to many myths, the eternal spring in the garden of paradise is the perpetual source of life and the origin of mother. It is the center of the universe, the origin of life-giving water, and the origin of youth and immortality. The bubbling spring also signifies the power of language (Cooper, 1978), which is especially significant in regards to Hyu’s mutism.

There is a hierarchy of spaces to Pictures 4, 5, and 6 in which
each successive space is at a deeper place than the previous one. Nevertheless, all three sandtrays appear to symbolize Temenos, that is, a protected space. All genuine freedom, in particular the freedom of development, is premised on protection (Kalff, 2000). This finds expression in the objects of the sandtrays such as Santa Claus, a collective Animus figure who appears in Pictures 5 and 6. The Animus affects the attainment of true freedom. The paradisiacal silence that pervades the garden, and the aura of mystery in Picture 4, where sunlight from the open window of the therapy room illuminated the grass, reinforces this stable sense of protection.

The emergence of Animus raises the prospect of a new aspect of ego development (Kalff, 2000). In this context, it is significant that a house is placed in the upper left corner of the sandtray in Picture 6. A house symbolizes protection and thus appropriately the dwelling in Picture 6 is a very large, two-story house. As Santa Claus stands in front of this house, the overall scene symbolizes the development of a collective Animus under a stable sense of protection. Inside the gold snow globe in the upper right corner of the sandtray is a gold idol – a dol hareubang from Jeju Island in Korea. This idol symbolizes defense (Boo, 2013), and the gold coating gives it a certain nobility. Furthermore, the dol hareubang symbolizes a collective Animus and the archetypal godfather (Boo, 2013). Therefore, in this scene, the sense of protection has masculine energy.

Meanwhile, in the bottom center of Picture 4, there is a triangular arrangement of gold, red, and orange jewel-like eggs, which sparkle in the light from the window of the therapy room. Although lacking sparkle, the same type of egg also appears in the upper left and right corners of the sandtray in Picture 5. The ego can be compared to a light in a dark room, and therefore the sparkle of the eggs represents an ego that illuminates the world of the subconscious. An ego focuses only on what its light illuminates, though; it cannot see the larger picture. The self-complexity forms part of reality by illuminating the small parts of a large, integral Self (Jung, 1971/1976). Turner (2005) explained the ego as follows:

Another important characteristic of an ego is that it has a drive of self-realization. To explain it with an analogy of a flash bulb, an ego has an internal motive to become a totality while illuminating things in the light. In other words, an ego intends to see a larger picture. Here, internal tension is contained. An ego is an organ of consciousness and its scope is limited but recognizes that the reality the ego reflects subjectively is everything. However, at the same time an ego is not satisfied with such limitation and tries to expand. For expansion, its attributes and limitation should be changed. In order for an individual to develop and reflect more conscious awakening, an ego should bear partial destruction. In the process of growth and transformation, an ego’s structure should be strong enough to endure attack by the subconscious. It should be strong enough to maintain its appearance and at the same time flexible to transform. The bulb’s light and brightness should be increased without destroying the flash itself.

In Picture 5 it was the dol hareubang, not the eggs, which emitted light. The dol hareubang symbolizes defense, boundary, collective Animus, and the archetypal godfather (Boo, 2013). As mentioned earlier, the self-complexity illuminates only small parts of a large total Self and itself constitutes just one part of the reality. In order to understand the Self, that is, totality, we should determine the boundaries and limitations of our perception. Otherwise, our existence will be overwhelmed. Therefore, an ego as a mental complexity has the function of understanding and restricting what we perceive in conscious self-realization (Turner, 2005). The dol hareubang, as a boundary guardian, has the function of restricting the roles of an ego. Furthermore, the dol hareubang symbolizes a collective Animus and an archetypal godfather. As a result, the intensity of the ego [dol hareubang] was masculine and more solid in this session when compared to the intensity of the ego [egg] that was felt in the previous session. Moreover, Hyu’s ego structure had become sufficiently strong to endure attack by the subconscious during the process of growth and transformation.

In Picture 4 there is a cat sleeping on the white table and a pair of butterflies has landed on the adjacent white swing in the lower right corner of the sandtray. Subsequently, in Picture 5 a single butterfly has landed on the white swing in the upper left corner, but there is no sleeping cat to be seen anywhere in the sandtray. However, the sleeping cat reappears in Picture 6, this time on the white swing, as do another pair of butterflies, on the center-right-hand side of the sandtray. The juxtaposition of the cat and butterflies on two occasions is therefore both intriguing and noteworthy.

Von Franz noted that cats are very tenacious and independent, and remarked, “Women without spirit of independence often dream of a cat...A cat goes its own way. A cat knows what it wants and goes its own way.” The fact that a cat was sleeping in two of her sandtrays suggested that Hyu’s independent energy was dormant and she had not yet learned what she wanted in life or which way she wanted to go. Nevertheless, the butterflies near the cat symbolized regeneration and revival (Cooper, 1978). The juxtaposition of the cat and butterflies suggested that the characteristics of a cat, especially its vitality and independence, would be regenerated and revived. In actuality, Hyu started to express negative emotions to her father, which she previously did not have the courage to do, and began to confidently express her intentions to the other members of her family.
CONCLUSION

Over the course of five years, Hyu continued her life story in successive rounds of sandplay therapy. The changes in her sand boxes chart her contact with her Self, ego and animus development, and the regeneration of her femininity. Despite the intervening intervals of one or two years, she was able to transcend time by resuming her story in each new round from where she had left it in the previous round. Indeed, figures and symbolic images that had appeared at the end of a previous round would reemerge as connecting links in the first sand box she made in the next round of sandplay therapy.

Time is a creator and also an eater. Time is the power of destruction and yet it simultaneously shows truth (Cooper, 1978). This was certainly true of Hyu’s life story. On the one hand, time functioned as a destructor that “ate” her severe shyness, passive disposition, mutism, and withdrawal in social settings. On the other hand, time also functioned as a creator that gave her the ability to accommodate such aspects, self-confidence to some extent, an ability not to withdraw in social settings, to endure, and to say only what was necessary. Time will show truth to Hyu from now on since it will tell that which is precious.

God tames humans with time
- Baltasar Gracián

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