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## *Liberty Enlightening the World: An Archetypal Image*

*By Elizabeth Baring*

**I**n the aftermath of September 11th, 2001's terrorist attack, in New York City my connection to the Statue of Liberty was rekindled. Her gaze met me wherever I turned, on the TV, in the newspapers, in magazines and even on the coat hanger covers from the dry cleaners. In my practice, three clients used the Statue of Liberty to experience and express their feelings regarding September 11th, 2001.

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### THE STATUE OF LIBERTY AND ITS HISTORICAL ANTICEDENTS

The Statue of Liberty, 152 feet high, was presented to the United States by the Franco-American Union to commemorate the American Revolution. It was inaugurated in New York City on October 28, 1886. The French sculptor, Auguste Bartholdi, enlivened the figure of Liberty by giving her two profiles: one active and the other motionless, like an icon (Wooster, 1986, p.17).

OPPOSITE: *Figure 11.*  
*Drawing by 43 year old woman.*

As you enter the [New York] harbor from the east, one leg appears to be forward so that Liberty seems to be striding briskly forward in a flurry of robes and drapes. From the west or head-on, the Statue seems to be standing stock-still: an icon, frozen eternally holding her torch aloft. In one hand, Liberty holds a torch and in the other hand, a book inscribed with the date 1776, the birth date of the American nation. A broken chain...rests at her feet, symbolizing specifically America breaking away from England and generally, freedom from the chains of tyranny everywhere. (Wooster, 1986, p.18)

Wooster (1986) posited that the concept of liberty had changed from the collective: a group that overthrew the ancient tyrannies of State and Church to form a new kind of political entity: Democracy... Originally it might be said that Liberty meant roughly Autonomy...It [Liberty] came to symbolize individual freedom, especially the freedom to prosper. (p.46)

*Liberty Enlightening the World* is the Statue of Liberty's full name. [This name] reveals the extent of the influence that liberal and progressive philosophy had on the sculpture's intellectual creator Edouard de Laboulaye. The torch, its flame and the shining seven rays that emanate as a nimbus from Liberty's crown are potent expression as her symbolic duty as enlightener. (Moreno, 2000, p.84)

Libertas was the Roman Goddess of liberty. The Statue of Liberty is a modern allegorical representation of this goddess. Libertas...emerged from the Roman law of freedom (*libertas*) and was fully deified in the fourth century B.C. Her sacred attributes included the *vindicta* [rod or staff with which a slave was tapped to grant manumission], the *pileus* [Phrygian bonnet or cap of freedom], the scepter [signified the goddess's dominion over mankind]...(Wooster, 1986 p. 142)

It is interesting to note that there is no direct analogy to *Libertas* in Greece. "Freedom", "choice" were not values in Ancient Greece; everything was Destiny and *Anarike* (necessity). *Libertas* is a "new"

thought (personal communication, Eva Pattis, 2002). She is a core image for the United States of America. In this time of uncertainty, after September 11th, 2001, she rises up as a Goddess, an icon for a nation under attack.

#### THE STATUE OF LIBERTY AND SANDPLAY

I found only two sandplay cases that discussed the Statue of Liberty and its function. Kate Amatruda referred "to the Statue of Liberty, the symbol of freedom" (1998, p.83). She also posited that the Statue of Liberty represented goddess energy. She commented that Liberty has appeared much more frequently in trays since September 11th, 2001 (personal e-mail communication, November, 2001).

Linda Hunter in *Images of Resiliency* discussed the case of Robert, a ten year old preoccupied with death (1988, p.80). Hunter, discussing his first tray, noted that, among the miniatures Robert used, the Statue of Liberty was placed in the center of the tray, Liberty symbolized the promise of "...a home and belonging, the flame of freedom held in the raised hand of a woman" (p.82). Liberty possibly represented hope and promise for his future as they worked with his issues.

#### THREE CLINICAL VIGNETTES

The children who came to therapy subsequent to the September 11th tragedy made many ground zeros. Those children who had watched the repeated images on the television, returned to the theme several times. The American flag appeared in many trays. Towers were built and then knocked over, others built towers for the first time and left them standing. Some children needed to dump bricks, tiles, and glass pieces to cover the entire floor.

Three of my patients included the Statue of Liberty in either their tray or in a drawing or in both. I will discuss these cases incorporating Ammann's guidelines on the symbolic meaning of the spatial phenomena.

James was a sturdy, very coordinated, friendly nine year old with big brown eyes, dark hair and a slight lisp. His father died of cancer when James was a baby. The mother has not remarried. James came to

therapy because he had “accidentally” broken his cousin’s collarbone when they were wrestling. His teacher recommended sandtray therapy. One year into the treatment I moved offices. James’ mother now drove him to New York City. In October 2000 he drew a picture (Figure 1). He started the session by wrapping a tissue around his index finger as a “bandage” even though his hand was fine. I surmised that James was showing me metaphorically that he was feeling injured and hurting in some way and wished to be soothed and nurtured. As James was drawing he told me that he was studying the Hudson River at school and that his drawing was a picture of the George Washington Bridge, the road to the tollbooth and New York City on the other side. He included a miniscule rendition of the Statue of Liberty on the upper right hand corner. He told me that he was having a difficult time at school and this drawing was about him driving to see me.

According to Ammann’s diagram of the spatial phenomena, the upper right hand corner, where the minutely drawn Statue of Liberty appears, represents the personal father relationship, or school. It represented the active side, moving in a progressive direction (1991, p.48). When I noticed the Statue of Liberty in the upper right hand corner I reacted with hope and joy. This upper right hand corner can indicate where the person needs to go in therapy. I thought to myself, Liberty could be heralding James’ sense that he will feel free and whole. He might be able to transform his aggression into creativity.

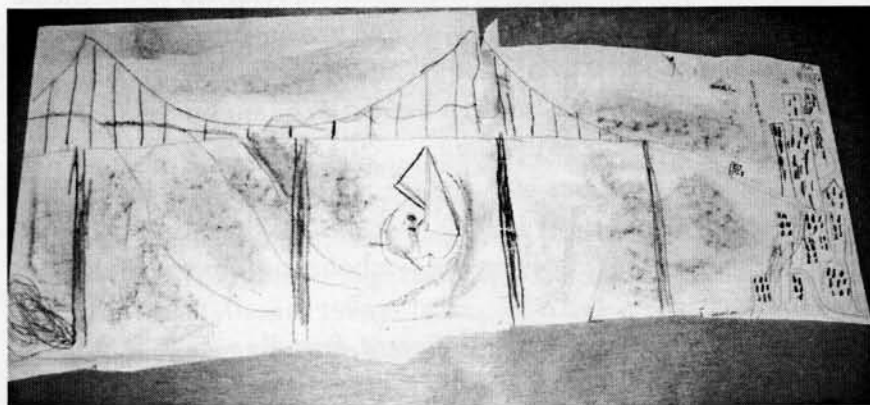
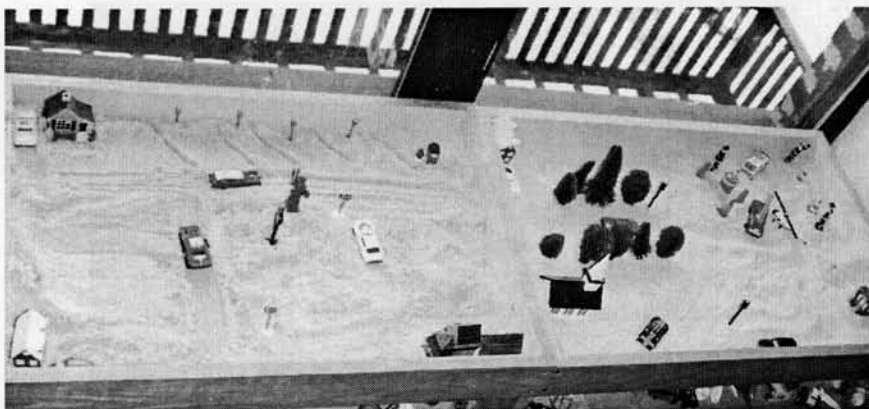


Figure 1.

On September 18th, 2001 James did the following two trays (Figures 2 and 3). In the upper right hand corner of the tray on the right there is a rescue operation going on. He told me that the scene in the tray on the right represented the city and the one on the left the country. He told a complicated story about a rescue operation and then smoothed out the left hand tray and completed the tray. Was he alluding to the ongoing search and rescue work at Ground Zero?

James lived in the country; my office is on Central Park West in New York City. When his teacher told his class about the tragedy in New York City, James immediately asked him whether the Twin Towers were close to Central Park. He called me, as soon as he got home from school that afternoon, to find out if I was all right. Did this rescue theme address the transference? Did he feel helped to address his personal trauma, the loss of his father at a young age? Or did the rescue theme allude to the traumatized yet resilient American psyche? Under the extreme circumstances of September 11th the rescue and recovery operation continued.

In the tray on the left (Figure 3) the Statue of Liberty was in the middle of the tray. The center of the tray represented the ego-center of the personality (Ammann, 1991, p.48). There was a clock on the left and two stop signs facing forward. I was excited to see the Statue of Liberty in the center of the tray. I understood her to be symbolizing James' sense of freedom, hope and enlightenment.



*Figure 2.*



Figure 3.

The following week (Figure 4) he called this tray the “praying room.” As he lit the candles he said that he wanted to draw a picture. He drew the Statue of Liberty (see the piece of paper on the window above the tray in Figure 6). He then placed the Statue of Liberty in the right hand tray next to the column with the praying man (Figure 5). Unfortunately this is not visible in the photograph. I wondered if Liberty, as goddess and protectress had helped James connect to a deep internal spirituality. He told me that he would finish the drawing the following week.

The next week he asked me for his drawing so that he could finish it (Figure 7). He spent the whole session relaxed and quietly coloring it in and adding the flag. James had brought together two collective images forming a unique and healing image for himself. He was aware that he had not put in the right number of stars nor the correct number of stripes. This drawing was very important to him and to me, in my countertransference, and I said to James, “You have done it.” His face broke into an enormous smile. I wondered if he had resolved his issues with his personal father? Was James feeling free and whole? Was there a lesser conjunctio? James had drawn the goddess of freedom and liberty, and the American flag. According to Bradway, the flag is a

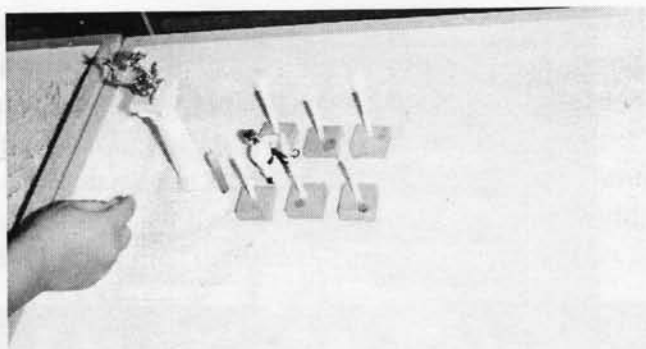


Figure 4.

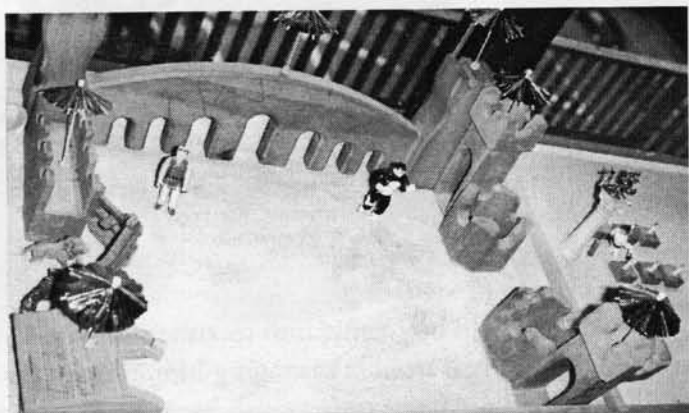


Figure 5.

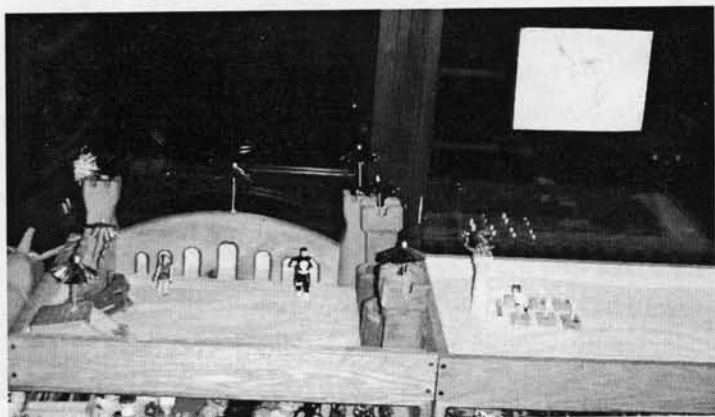


Figure 6.





Figure 7.

symbol for victory and self-assertion and she reports that according to Dora Kalff it is a symbol of celebration (2001, p.42). James and I felt in a celebratory mood. Unfortunately, beneath the happy mood there continued the underlying horror that had begun the previous week. Although James would have to tolerate this horror, the unique blended image of Liberty and the American flag would bring support and resiliency to his young ego and deep spirit.

Philip, a six-year old boy, came into treatment because of angry outbursts. His mother had trouble managing him. She used to try to cajole him with humor. After a two-month break over the summer, Philip returned for treatment. He came to see me on September 13th, 2001 and asked me whether I knew about the Twin Towers? I asked him to tell me about them. "They were hit by two planes and they fell down," he said. "I told my mom, but she already knew," he added. He looked a little bewildered and then moved toward the sandtray and made a scene (Figure 8). Philip proceeded to place mounted knights jousting, Indians, cannons, and a man on a stretcher in the upper left corner. There was an Indian woman paddling her own canoe in the foreground. He told me the picture was about, "all kinds of armies."

Since then his pictures have been about battles with many different armies. On November 1st, 2001, he did the following tray, (Figure 9, Figure 10 detail). He told me that the Indians and the cowboys were on the same team and they want to attack America. The camouflage

figures were holding up the cowboys. The big green guys from America won. Was this a parallel process about his feeling overwhelmed and attacked emotionally by his intrusive sisters? Was this tray another account of America under attack? In the upper left hand corner he had placed the Statue of Liberty. According to Ammann, the motifs in the upper left hand corner indicate the inner world, the spiritual and religious life. She stated, "new spiritual impulses arise from



Figure 8.



Figure 9.



Figure 10.

immediately began to draw. As she worked, she recounted how when she had taken the ferry from Staten Island back to New York, she had been inspired by the Statue of Liberty (Figure 11). Teresa said she felt safe returning to Manhattan Island, even after the events of September 11th. I thought about the meaning of her drawing. Teresa had great difficulty expressing her feelings. She intellectualized her emotions and was conscious of this. Her rendition of the Statue of Liberty weeping could be an expression of her unspoken feelings. She longed to be relieved of her suffering and be free to lead a fulfilling life. If she allowed herself to grieve, her pain could be transformed.

In each of these cases the Statue of Liberty represented a personal quest for

the upper left corner” (1991, p.49). Was the Statue of Liberty heralding new spiritual impulses for Philip? Did the Statue of Liberty symbolize the healing energies needed to resolve the warring factors of Philip’s personality and collective trauma?

Finally, the case of Teresa, a 43-year-old widow with two children. Teresa made two scenes. A few weeks later she came to her session and

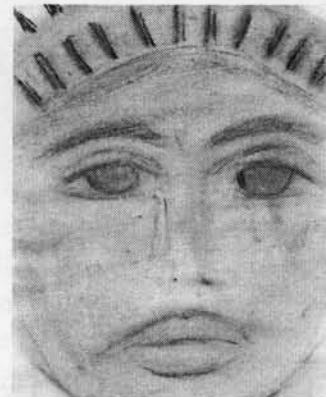


Figure 11.

freedom, truth and enlightenment through the resolution of inner conflicts while grappling with the collective horror of September 11th, 2001.

Lady Liberty

I wonder what she thought  
As she stood there tall and strong  
She could not turn away  
Did she long to offer comfort  
As her country bled,  
With her arm forever frozen,  
High above her head?  
She could not shield her eyes,  
She could not hide her face,  
She just stared across the water,  
Keeping freedom's place.  
I wonder what she thought  
On a day so many died.  
I know what she must have felt  
And I know she must have cried

*Courtesy of  
Jennette Morgan, 14 years old  
New York, 2001*

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*The Serpent Energy*



An aggressive or overly "self-like" interpersonal style is associated with a higher risk of being perceived as a narcissist. In fact, research shows that individuals with a high degree of narcissism are more likely to be perceived as aggressive and self-centered. This is particularly true in the workplace, where narcissistic individuals may be seen as more competitive and less cooperative. However, it is important to note that not all individuals with a high degree of narcissism are aggressive or self-centered. Some individuals with a high degree of narcissism are simply more confident and assertive. Therefore, it is important to consider the context and the individual's personality when making judgments about their behavior.



Therefore, it is not an exhaustive list. Other possibilities will arise as we address new insights. The research of Edging Hood and other colleagues continues to inform us as we play our part. It is this very openness to different perspectives that I find invaluable in my work.

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