

The Association for Sandplay Therapy

Loving Kindness, Clarity & Humility in the Practice of Sandplay

"The Journey of the Magi"



Wishing you all a very Happy New Year!!!

This month saw the feast of the Epiphany, and it reminded me of the dissertation I did for my MA, when I used T.S. Eliot's poem "The Journey of The Magi" as a backdrop. My dissertation was about my own journey through the sand. What astounds me now is that in those days I had little knowledge of Jungian Sandplay and yet, when I look back there is layer after layer of symbolism and understanding which could so easily be understood through a Jungian lens. It called to me in a way that I didn't understand then, but which I can see with greater clarity now. A true Revelation. Don't we always say that what we see in the sand is so often in advance of our cognitive understanding?

The poem, about Eliot's personal and spiritual conversion experience, was written to parallel his search for meaning (for him, a journey towards Christianity). The spiritual perplexity of the meaning of birth, death, and rebirth is the journey that the magi and Eliot himself underwent in their attempt to find a new faith, a new sense of meaning. It tells of a journey that at times was so hard the Magi (and Eliot) felt like giving up. It tells of the harshness of life, the regrets, the uncertainty, but also the sense that they would do so again, simply for the joy of birth.

Surely this is the journey all our clients undertake as they embark on their Sandplay process? It certainly echoed *my own* search through life, a journey through deaths in many forms, to a kind of rebirth. Despite the many desert experiences, I know I experienced many Epiphanies over the years, sometimes a mere glimmer of hope, at other times a flash of revelation and light. I travelled from a very frozen place to one of rebirth, just as the Magi did.

"A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter."

And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
 Lying down in the melting snow.
 There were times we regretted
 The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
 And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
 Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
 And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
 And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
 And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
 And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
 A hard time we had of it.
 At the end we preferred to travel all night,
 Sleeping in snatches,
 With the voices singing in our ears, saying
 That this was all folly.
 Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
 Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
 With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
 And three trees on the low sky,
 And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
 Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
 Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
 And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
 But there was no information, and so we continued
 And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
 Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.
 All this was a long time ago, I remember,
 And I would do it again, but set down
 This set down this: were we led all that way for
 Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
 We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
 But had thought they were different; this Birth was
 Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
 We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
 But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
 With an alien people clutching their gods.
 I should be glad of another death."

What jumps out at you as you read this poem? For me, and this could well vary through time as it is usual for symbols to change their meaning, I am captivated by the idea of "cold weather", a symbol of hardship and doubt, of things being frozen. Such a contrast to the summer weather at the palaces representing sensuous decadence.

As the Magi descend into the valley and Dawn breaks (think of the descent into the Psyche where the inner light of the self is found) there is a symbolic seasonal shift, and the weather in the valley becomes temperate. The "running stream" could refer to Baptism (which would tie in with the poem's theme of spiritual rebirth) and is a shift from the frozen nature of the earlier parts of the journey. Water can be a symbol of the grace offered by the birth of Jesus, bringing fertility to the valley which is now living, smelling of vegetation. The "three trees on the low sky" might symbolize the three crosses at Golgotha, the site of Jesus's crucifixion, or they might refer to the Holy Trinity. The "white horse" might refer to the one in Zechariah 6:5, who announces the coming of Jesus, the coming of Salvation, of rebirth. We hear of vine leaves (Christ is often referred to as the Living Vine) around the lintel, the lintel perhaps being seen as Threshold, a doorway to somewhere else, into the Unconscious.

The men gambling might well allude to Judas's betrayal of Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, or to the soldiers dicing for his clothes. Then the kicking of the empty wine skins represent the change of the old dispensation in to the new; the kicking away or shedding of that which no longer has purpose or meaning.

So we see a journey from the trappings of Status/Ego as Kings/Wise men, influenced by the politics, by the marketplace of the time to the simplicity of a baby, as the story goes, lying in a manger, in a cave. There could be no lowlier a place, and yet here they bowed

down before the child, and were re-born themselves. They had heard the chatter of those who said their journey was mere folly, yet they continued through the harshest of winters. They learned to forgo the trappings of Ego and Persona, and entered and embraced the shadow within their own unconscious; a shadow of hardship, but also simplicity and joy. The Ego had died to make way for the birth of the new self. We will all have our own understanding of the poem, and indeed of the journeys we and our clients make in their Sandplay processes, but do have a think about what it means to YOU, and feel free to let me know.

Rachel McGovern
AST Board Member



**AST International Congress 1st to 8th September 2024
at Hippo Lakes, South Africa!**

**The Quest for Meaning through Sandplay:
What Does the Experience of Sandplay Mean to You?**

We are delighted to let you know that registration for our International Congress at Hippo Lakes, South Africa is now open!

Click on [this link to take you to the registration page.](#)

If you have any queries regarding your choices or anything else to do with the Congress, please email Dr Celia van Wyk at training@sandplay.co.za or Phone / WhatsApp: +2772 145 1437 and she will reply to you as soon as possible.

We are so excited for this amazing opportunity to bring Sandplay professionals from around the world together in this wonderful environment and we look forward to meeting up next September.

Thanks so much for being a valuable member of AST.

Eunice Stagg
President – AST



Training Opportunities



Eunice Stagg, President AST, STR-CT
- UK Training

New Sandplay Training Dates for 2024:

- February 26th 2024
- May 13th 2024
- July 8th 2024
- September 23rd 2024

**For further information, please contact:
e.stagg@btinternet.com**



Nataly Valyraki, STR-CT - Sandplay
Training in Greece

Sandplay Therapy Training from January 2024 - for the 1st time in Greece and in the Greek language!

Earn your Sandplay Therapist title with certification from the Association for Sandplay Therapy.

Hybrid Education Model: Online Webinars & In-Person.

**For further information, please see:
www.sandplay.gr**



[Celia van Wyk, PhD, STR-CT - Sandplay Training in South Africa](#)

New Sandplay Training Dates for 2024:

- 18 October 2023 – 23 October 2024 (Wednesdays)
- 22 January 2024 – 31 March 2025 (Mondays)
- 27 January 2024 – 29 March 2025 (Saturdays)

For further information please contact: celia@sandplay.co.za / training@sandplay.co.za



[Barbara A. Turner, PhD, STR-CT, RPT-S](#)

Sandplay Online Webinar Training

Webinar-based Sandplay training continues with the addition of our second group. This is a wonderful way of learning and connecting with our international colleagues. Part of Dr. Turner's PhD program was in creating online transformative learning platforms. In this she specialized in Sandplay therapy.

If you are interested in joining a training group, you may contact Barbara:
DrBarb@BarbaraTurner.org

[Fiona Werle - Sandplay Training in Australia](#)

Part One AST Training in Australia:

April 8th - to 14th 2024

For further information, please contact: fionawerle@opengateinstitute.edu.au

Individual and Group Consultations

A reminder that if you would like **Individual Consultation** from a Registered Sandplay Therapist-Consultant (STR-C) or Registered Sandplay Therapist-Consultant Teacher (STR-CT), the following members of the AST are available to support you. Please click on the name and it should take you direct to their email or website.

[Alison Howe STR-C](#)

[Brendan Harding STR-C](#)

[Rose Harriet STR-CT](#)

[Daniella Marinescu STR-CT](#)

[Rachel McGovern STR-CT](#)

Eunice Stagg STR-CT

Lynne Souter-Anderson STR-C

Jamie Straessler STR-C

Barbara A. Turner, PhD STR-CT

Natalia Valyraki STR-C

Celia van Wyk STR-CT

Additionally, AST Board Members Rachel McGovern (UK) and Nataly Valyraki (Greece) hold separate **Group Consultations** online. Nataly's **Group Consultations** for this year take place once a month. They last 2 hours and continue until June 2024 (10 sessions, 20 group consultation hours):

GROUP 1: 3rd Wednesday of each month 15.00-17.00 UK time

GROUP 2: 4th Tuesday of each month 16.00-18.00 UK time

Obituary: Dr. Linda Hunter

Author of "Images of Resiliency: Troubled Children Create Healing Stories in the Language of Sandplay"

A celebration of the life of Dr. Linda Hunter, age 66 years, was held at the Vet's Hall in Oakland, USA, on Saturday, Jan. 20, 2024.

Linda passed away suddenly in Brighton, Colorado, on Dec. 24, 2023. Services and burial for Linda were held at the chapel in Memorial Park Cemetery in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on Saturday, Jan. 6, 2024.

Linda was born on June 18 1957, in Coleman, Texas, and graduated from Coleman High School in 1975. She later went on to Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, receiving a Bachelor of Arts Degree.

Linda continued her education at Regent University in Virginia Beach, Virginia, receiving a Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology and a Doctorate in Psychology.

Linda fulfilled her residency program in Lincoln and then moved to Oakland where she started her own business, "Northeast Nebraska Psychological Services", with locations also in Lyons, Tekamah and Fremont.

Linda was loved and greatly admired by her peers and will be missed by many of her patients.



**Find Current
Information on
Facebook**

If you are not following AST on Facebook, you are missing the latest information.

**FOLLOW
AST**

We post trainings, articles, resources, sites for miniatures and more.

Be sure to check us out!

Please consider contributing your musing or experiences to the newsletter.
We love hearing from our members across the globe.

Send your submission to: info@sandplayassociation.com

Sandplay | Stroud, Gloucestershire, United Kingdom

[Unsubscribe info@sandplayassociation.com](mailto:info@sandplayassociation.com)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by info@sandplayassociation.com powered by



Try email marketing for free today!
