When I received Marcia’s paper, I found myself moved by the language of poetry through which Marcia interweaves her own experiences, the story of Esther’s and Bill’s situation while Esther was dying, fragments from their life and her interpretations of the process. Moving from reality to story to philosophical thoughts and back leads into an undulating movement which I would almost describe as a dance; a dance like the ones we can still find on several continents where women and men, holding each other’s hands, move together rhythmically back and forth in spiralling semi-circles. They walk the ways of life and express what they experience: threats, dangers, anxiety, and death, yet also excitement, joy, and the bliss of being together, hand-in-hand, in all this transitory process. It is as if in these labyrinthian movements, Marcia’s text mirrors the texture of Esther’s and Bill’s life itself which, as she describes, seems to her like a process of ongoing search and transformation. Back and forth: they live together, then apart; they live in anger and in bliss.

Marcia interprets the dynamic of these motions as a search for meaning, a search for transformation of a personal, particular story into “lived destiny,” into significant history. She parallels this with the search of the infant for the mother; not only in her particularity as the birth mother but in her universality as the matrix of being. With Marcia I recognize a deep yearning within myself, my friends, clients, and others to experience connection and holding in situations that are challenging and/or threatening. She portrays this as part of Esther’s and Bill’s time in the hospice. Both know what is happening; both are united in a deeper sense of grasping the seriousness of the situation. Both accept each other in their familiar roles including flaws and weaknesses, dreams, and fantasies. Both are willing to

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share, even with a third person, and to reconstruct their lives by telling stories: a couple and a chaplain, helping each other through a deep challenge.

From this experience of bonding, I understand how Marcia comes to evoke images of mothering on a personal and transpersonal level. With psychoanalysis' recognition of the earliest experiences in childhood there has been a major shift from the preoccupation with the father to the almost exclusive focus on the importance of mother in object-relations theory and self psychology. Marcia draws upon these psychoanalytic contemporary concepts for her interpretation of Bill's and Esther's life, Esther's process of dying, and her own role as a counselor. She connects Winnicott's concept of the "true self," facilitated into being by mother, with Bollas' concern for the potential of a human being that has either been transformed into a lived destiny, or hindered, by mothering. Marcia says: "The search for these answers is, I believe, akin to the child's search for the mother, for those object-relationships which allowed meaning to be discovered and created. . . . The work of the therapist here is to guide both the dying and the one who will live on back to the mother, to both her particularity and to her more universal presence" (Black, 1991, p. 4).

The recognition of women's ways of being with infants as a task and work of tremendous impact has certainly been of value in understanding the development of both men and women, and their ways of relating later in life. Through Marcia's reflections the reader is invited to feel and understand how the long process of Esther's dying in Bill's caring presence reflects their search for meaning connected to their first "object-seeking experiences" (Black, 1991, p. 5). Goldenberg (1990) compared object-relations theory's intense interest in the past to that of contemporary women's spirituality, where the collective history of women is remembered. "Even more significant than their shared reverence for the deep past is the fact that both theology and object relations theory agree on what, or rather who is the most important part of the past. . . . Like the Goddess movement in religion, object relations theory places a woman at the beginning of the universe and thus champions a shift from an interest in male symbols to a focus on female ones. Both ways of thinking pose a challenge to the importance to the father" (p. 195).

In the following considerations, I will raise some questions in regard to the mother image both in object-relations theory and Marcia's interpretation of Esther's dying that originate exactly in their emphasis on mothering and the way it is expressed. One consideration is named by Goldenberg herself (1990). She criticizes object-relations theory in that it "sometimes concentrates too narrowly on the social world as seen from a baby's perspective. To psychoanalysts, mother is the social context of baby,