

# GUIDED IMAGERY:

  

## A Psychosynthesis Approach

History and Manual for Practitioners

by Martha Crampton, Ph.D

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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION

In the years since this monograph was first published, the field of guided imagery has grown by leaps and bounds. It has now become part of the mainstream, not only in psychotherapy, but in fields such as mind-body medicine, creative problem-solving, education, and the popular self-help literature.

The power of the mind to create health or disease is now widely recognized. A wide spectrum of practitioners from diverse schools of thought now incorporate imagery techniques in their work. In recent years, The Academy for Guided Imagery has trained practitioners in the skills of “interactive imagery”, particularly in the health care field. Their web site, [academyforguidedimagery.com](http://academyforguidedimagery.com) has information on their conferences, educational materials, and other resources. Dr. Marty Rossman, a co-founder of the Academy, has written a book, *Guided Imagery for Self-Healing*, which provides information on more recent developments in the field. Dr. Rossman has a web site of his own, [thehealingmind.net](http://thehealingmind.net), which also provides a wealth of resources for self help.

As I re-read the history part of this monograph I was once again touched to connect with the work and the spirit of the great pioneers of Guided Imagery (originally called “mental imagery”). For some mysterious reason, the territory of Depth Psychology was opened up primarily in Europe. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to work with some of the inspired European innovators in this field and feel a debt of gratitude as I ponder again their profound contributions. I am particularly grateful to Robert Desoille whose writings I stumbled across in a colleague’s library in Montreal. His “waking dream” method opened my awareness, as it did for a generation of seekers in Europe, to the treasures of spiritual wisdom available in the depth psyche.

As the French language material has not been published elsewhere in English, this monograph fills in a gap for the English-speaking reader. The issues it raises are timeless ones and still of great relevance today.

The Manual for practitioners was originally developed for my students at the Canadian Institute of Psychosynthesis in Montreal. However, the principles and examples it offers will be useful to anyone seriously interested in Depth Psychology or Guided Imagery. I must ask the reader’s indulgence for my archaic use of the masculine pronoun. This was written before the days of gender-neutral language and would be too onerous to change.

I hope you will find nourishment in these pages.

*“An article by Martha Crampton in the early 1970’s was a major source of instruction for me as I began to study the art of guided imagery. Martha’s clear and elegant style elucidated the complexities and essence of this intimate way of being with people in a way I had not previously encountered. I am so happy that these treasures will once again be available and strongly encourage anyone who seeks to deepen their understanding of the imagery process to read them. “*

—Martin L. Rossman, M.D., President of The Healing Mind Inc.

## SCOPE OF THIS MONOGRAPH

This paper will present a method of guided imagery practiced by the author within the context of psychosynthesis. This method, which we have called "Dialogic Imagery", will be placed in historical context. It will be described and compared to other major schools of mental imagery within the practice of psychotherapy and personal growth. The discussion will be limited to imagery techniques of an extended nature—i.e. ones in which the subject remains in an altered state of consciousness over a period of time which may vary from thirty minutes to an hour or more. The relationship of this method to the principles of psychosynthesis will be discussed, along with guidelines for practice. A series of transcribed sessions is included with commentary.

## HISTORICAL ROOTS OF DEPTH IMAGERY WORK

Man has long sought contact with the deeper and higher realms of his psyche through the use of techniques involving mental imagery. The "vision quest" of certain Amerindian tribes, in which a young man would practice fasting, flagellation and other austerities in isolation until he obtained a vision of his totem animal, has been described by ethnographers. Peoples throughout the world, from time immemorial, have employed hallucinogenic drugs in the attempt to enhance their inner life and to gain access to new realms of visionary experience. The practices of induced dreams and dream incubation are other forms of evoking the symbolic potential of the psyche which have been widely utilized. These customs apparently were common in ancient Greece and Egypt, as well as in India, China, Islam, early Christianity and primitive peoples (de Becker, 1965). These practices form an interesting link with contemporary use of guided imagery in that the person provoking a dream to seek guidance for an important decision or healing of an illness tried to establish contact with a "god" or archetypal healing image that could provide this help. In much the same way, modern mental imagery techniques evoke numinous symbols through which the subject receives inner guidance and healing experiences.

In the field of Western psychology, the early pioneers in the use of mental imagery were Francis Galton (Galton, 1883), and Alfred Binet (Binet, 1903), both of whom were primarily interested in its relationship to intelligence and mental faculties. In the psychotherapeutic realm, it was Pierre Janet who first noted the interest of the reverie state and attempted to use images in his therapeutic work. In particular, he found that a technique of substituting one image for another was effective in his efforts to overcome the "idees fixes" of hysterical patients, (Janet, 1898), and certain schools of mental imagery still employ his technique of substitution.

The first psychotherapeutic approach based primarily on the use of mental imagery techniques, according to the authors of the most authoritative text in this field (Virel and Frétygny, 1968) was that of the German doctor, Carl Happich. Happich's method, which he started to develop around 1920 utilized a number of predetermined scenes such as a meadow, a mountain, or a chapel, as points of departure. The approach employed by Happich is described in the English translation of Kretschmer's article (Kretschmer, 1951) which appears in the book *Psychosynthesis* (Assagioli, 1965). His subjects would go through the prescribed visualisation, reporting their experience afterwards to the guide. Happich used this technique in both diagnostic and therapeutic modes, and would have his patients repeat the visualisation until they were able to experience positive symbols, eliminating negative signs such as a rotting stump in the meadow. His emphasis was strongly religious and Christian, and his goal was spiritual integration. In addition, Happich had his patients meditated on what he called "designs", which were mandala-like structures, and on words or sayings. He believed that preliminary relaxation was important to the success of his method, and to this end emphasized breathing exercises.

In France, the use of guided imagery techniques in psychotherapy developed at first under the inspiration of Robert Desoille who borrowed the name for his method, "rêve éveillé" or "waking dream" from Leon Daudet. Desoille was an engineer who had studied some psychology on his own. He never claimed to be a professional psychotherapist, nor did he charge fees for his sessions, though today his method is the basis of one of the two

major schools of mental imagery in France and is widely practiced by therapists there. His work is less known in the English-speaking world owing to the unavailability of most of it in translation. Desoille went through many phases in his evolution with the "waking dream" method. His source for the method, though never officially acknowledged, was the occultist, Eugène Caslant, who taught a technique in which subjects visualized themselves as rising or descending in imaginal space as a means of psychic development (Caslant, 1937). Caslant seemed to believe that the archetypal figures thereby encountered were actual celestial beings, though Desoille was inclined to interpret them as archetypes of the collective unconscious. From his occultist origins Desoille went through a period in which he was influenced by Freudian thought, then by Jung, and finally by Pavlov, (Desoille, 1961), though it seems that the latter may have been more related to his political leanings than to his basic psychological affinities.

In Desoille's method, the subject lies down with eyes closed in a darkened room. He is asked by the guide to imagine various scenes of rising or descending in imaginal\* space. Desoille recommends beginning with the images of ascension which he associates with sublimation and evocation of the person's higher ethical and spiritual tendencies. The images of ascent frequently lead to encounters with archetypal celestial beings and finally to experiences of a mystical nature in which the subject merges with or is surrounded by light. Desoille believes that such experiences are strengthening and reassuring to the subject, preparing him to face the usually more difficult experiences of descent in imaginal space. The images of descent lead the subject down through holes in the earth or under the sea to encounter archetypal images of animals, monsters and ethonic or underworld entities representing his more primitive, instinctual side. He is encouraged to confront these experiences with courage, and Desoille is not opposed to having the subject destroy his antagonist on occasion.

Desoille adopted Caslant's technique of symbolic ascent and descent with an image "through the chain of archetypal images" in order to effect their transformation and to discover the correspondences of these images at different levels. Through the method of ascension right up to the mystical level, the subject is helped to understand more evolved ways of coping with life situations and encouraged to revise his moral attitudes. If, for example, a subject encounters an octopus in the depths of the sea, he may be asked to bring the octopus up to ground level, at which point it might turn into his mother whom he fears will engulf him. If then asked to imagine going up a mountain with his mother, or still further up into the heavens, the conflict experienced in the relationship with the mother is seen in a new light and a reconciliation experience at a more mature level can take place. Desoille places great emphasis upon the mystical experience which he goes so far as to describe as the "only experience of creative value, the only one which can be a point of departure for reconstruction of the personality". (Desoille, 1945, p. 379)

Desoille's belief was that the healing and transforming ecstatic states could only be obtained by symbolic ascent. He states: "These images, associated with a euphoric state, should only be sought through symbolic ascent. Although it is possible to bring about euphoric states through symbolic descent, these states, however attractive they may be, do not lead to sublimation or a desire for greater contact with reality: rather, they encourage the patient to take refuge in an unhealthy type of reverie. The search for these euphoric states through symbolic ascent is a necessary condition for ultimate sublimation, despite their apparently regressive quality. It seems that such states, which take the subject back to the infantile level, give him a corrective affective experience in a short time, thereby compensating for the distorted affective education of his childhood" (Desoille, 1945, p. 378).

\* The term "imaginal" has been chosen to render in English the French term "imaginaire" as employed by such authors as Desoille and Virel and Frétigny. It refers to the realm of mental imagery and is defined in WEBSTER'S NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY as "relating to mental images".

(Webster, 1965) It is used by various scholars of the imagination, particularly in the Jungian and Sufi traditions (Whitmont, 1971; Durand, 1971; Corbin, 1972). Corbin, the French specialist in the works of Ibn Arabi and other Islamic visionary mystics, speaks in an equivalent way of the "mundus imaginalis" and states: "... if in French (and in English) usage we equate the imaginary with the unreal, the Utopian, this is undoubtedly symptomatic of something that contrasts with an order of reality which I call the 'mundus imaginalis', and which the theosophers of Islam designate as the 'eighth clime'" (Corbin, 1972, p.2)

Desoille believed that by this means the repressive superego would be weakened, enabling the subject to integrate his sexuality. He believed, however, that it was necessary to go beyond the Freudian framework and that ultimate integration of the personality could only take place when there was a shift from the ego to the Self as a center of identity (in the Jungian sense). It was necessary that the person develop higher values and learn to express these in the world, discovering his own potentials. Desoille believed that the development of a spiritual attitude was a necessary aspect of this process, enabling the subject to gain confidence in his own destiny and to develop what Desoille regarded as the flower of human consciousness: the "oblative" state of self-giving in the service of others. Desoille's work has probably been the most influential of the guided imagery techniques, both in France and in North America. His work was often cited by Roberto Assagioli. Some of the psychosynthesis practitioners who have introduced guided imagery techniques in North America, include the "guided daydream" method in their repertoire. Unlike Desoille, however, they employ other techniques as well.

In Switzerland, the doctor, Marc Guilleroy, was the main pioneer in the psychotherapeutic use of guided mental imagery techniques. He began his experiments with the method he at first called "rêverie dirigée" (guided reverie) as early as 1925. As he left few writings (Guilleroy, 1945) he is a little known figure in the history of mental imagery. Guilleroy later eliminated the term "guided" in speaking of his method, as he felt the Desoille method was too directive and preferred to allow the subject to develop his own images with minimal intervention from the therapist. His theoretical orientation was rooted in psychosomatic conceptions which were in part derived from his association with the Lausanne physician, Roger Vittoz (Vittoz, 1907). He emphasized the importance of the neuromuscular correlates of mental imagery, believing that the resolution of conflicts at the imaginal level had a harmonizing physiological effect. He said of this method, "The reverie is directed in such a way as to transform the conflicts at the level of consciousness into conflicts of motor tendencies, more and more intense, but also better and better controlled by the subject. He (the subject) tends to identify with his imaginal body-image ('moi corporel illusionnel'), which we all know from our dreams and which is the dynamic motor element of the reverie. The doctor helps to build and reinforce this, intensifying the process progressively by drawing the subject's attention to the tactile and kinesthetic sensations of his imaginal body." In his emphasis on the importance of being well established in the imaginal body, Guilleroy prefigures the work of Virel, (Virel, 1965) who also believes that the effectiveness of his "oneirotherapeutic" method, is in large measure a function of the degree to which the subject fully "inhabits" his imaginal body during the imagery session.

Other prominent early investigators of therapeutic mental imagery methods were a few psychoanalysts, notably Pierce Clark (Clark, 1925), Anna Freud and later Carl Jung. Clark found that the use of fantasy was effective in the treatment of narcissistic neuroses (Clark, 1925), while Anna Freud utilized both free and guided imagination in her work with children. The children would work with eyes open and tell stories about objects or images presented. (Freud, 1927). Clark, as Freud before him, found that transference onto the person of the analyst was impossible for narcissistic patients, making them refractive to classical analytic procedures. He found a way around the problem by suggesting to such patients that they use his "fantasy method" to get in touch with childhood memories. He had them close their eyes while lying in a prone position and imagining various sensations, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors from their childhood.

Clark was of the opinion that these reported experiences were more likely subjective retroprojections than actual events. He treated them in the same manner as the "childhood memories" utilized in analysis as indicative of psychological rather than objective realities. In this manner, his patients were able to get in touch with fantasmal representations of the mother-infant relationship where, according to psychoanalytic theory, the auto-erotic libido of the narcissistic patient is fixated. Clark felt that the helpless infantile state should be prolonged until catharsis took place in order for the subject to move beyond it. He noted with surprise that the complicated psychoanalytic terminology did not seem necessary in order for such patients to be cured by this introspective method. It is of interest that he found it useful to employ a device often used by practitioners of mental imagery methods today: having the subject write down his recollection of the session. This provided a means to reflect on the content and to analyze blockages and repressions revealed through what was not recalled.

The method of "active imagination" developed by Jung was different from the previously cited approaches in that it was not interactive. It was a practice the patient would undertake by himself without participation of the analyst. However the material might be brought for analysis to a subsequent analytic session. In all probability, the method was something Jung discovered in his own personal psychological explorations, especially during

the years of his long descent into the unconscious from 1912 to 1917. As he stated in his autobiographical work, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, he had developed a method of "systematic fantasy" even as a schoolboy in Basel. There are few references to the method of active imagination as such in Jung's writings and his disciples disagree about what he meant by it. F.F.C. Hull summarized what is available in Jung's published and unpublished writings on the subject, (Hull, 1971) and cites a quotation from *Psychological Types*, (Jung, 1921, para. 712-714) as the earliest formulation, though the term "active imagination" was not yet in use. In this work Jung stated:

"We can distinguish between active and passive fantasy. Active fantasies are the product of intuition; i.e. they are evoked by an attitude directed to the perception of unconscious contents, as a result of which the libido immediately invests all the elements emerging from the unconscious and, by association with parallel material, brings them into clear focus in visual form.

Passive fantasies always have their origin in an unconscious process that is antithetical to consciousness, but invested with approximately the same amount of energy as the conscious attitude, and, therefore, capable of breaking through the latter's resistance... Active fantasy is one of the highest forms of psychic activity. For here the conscious and unconscious personality of the subject flow together into a common product in which both are united".

Elsewhere in this work (para. 184) Jung points out the relationship of conscious and unconscious to the transcendent function:

"This function of mediation between the opposites I have termed the transcendent function, by which I mean nothing mysterious, but merely a combined function of conscious and unconscious elements...If the mediatory product remains intact, it forms the raw material for a process not of dissolution, but of construction, in which thesis and antithesis both play their part. In this way, it becomes a new content that governs the whole attitude, putting an end to the division and forcing the energy of the opposites into a common channel. The standstill is overcome and life can flow on with renewed power toward new goals".

Active imagination, as practiced by Jungians, is not limited to visualisation, but includes other techniques such as painting, sculpture, writing, dancing, and acting. Jung emphasized careful recording of the material so that it does not slip back into the unconscious. The point of departure may be anything that indicates a constellation of unconscious material such as a feeling, an obsessive thought, a dream scene, or an image to which one feels drawn.

Active imagination is recommended only for those persons who have been in analysis for a long time and are considered to have a sufficiently strong ego to be able work on their own. One of Jung's concerns in developing the method was to find a way for persons who had terminated formal analysis to continue their inner work. He would utilize the technique either with persons approaching the end of their analysis, giving it as an assignment to be done prior to an analytic session or suggesting it for persons who were no longer working with an analyst. Some of Jung's followers, however, integrate the method in their analytic work and the technique is considered by Humbert, who has written an article on the theory and practice of active imagination, to be particularly useful in two opposite kinds of cases: where the person is either flooded with a too active dream and fantasy life or where there is a tendency to rigidity and intellectualization. He states that active imagination "serves to discharge and help coordinate those veering, over-powerful emotional constellations which have not been sufficiently accepted. Conversely, it is also indicated when a too rigid consciousness blocks the rising images or, above all, intellectualizes the interpretation of dreams" (Humbert, 1971, p. 112).

Jung makes an interesting comment about the role of attention in active imagination:

"...looking, psychologically, brings about the activation of the object; it is as if something were emanating from one's spiritual eye that evokes or activates the object of one's vision.

The English verb, to look at, does not convey this meaning but the German "betrachten", which is an equivalent, means also to make pregnant. "Trachtig" means to carry, to be big with young, pregnant,

but it is used only for animals... So to look or concentrate upon a thing, "betrachten", gives the quality of being pregnant to the object. And if it is pregnant, then something is due to come out of it; it is alive, it produces, it multiplies. That is the case with any fantasy image; one concentrates upon it, and then finds that one has great difficulty in keeping the thing quiet. It gets restless, it shifts, something is added, or it multiplies itself; one fills it with living power and it becomes pregnant." (Jung, 1967).

Jung's point seems to be of particular significance to mental imagery work, as it is by focusing our attention on an image that its meaning and dynamism unfolds. A practitioner of mental imagery techniques will do well to remember this when subjects experience an uneventful moment. Usually the suggestion to take a better look at the image or simply to watch it and see what happens, will enable the image to "give birth".

Active imagination, as employed by Jungians, tends to have a very archetypal quality, often with a flavor of "wisdom teaching". There are many encounters with figures such as the Great Mother, the witch, the mermaid, the dragon, etc. The following excerpt from one of the few writings available on the subject, gives something of the quality of these sessions:

"Patient: 'I should like to know what it is that fate wants me to do. Fate always seemed to me to be something alien and hostile to my own nature, something which God imposes on me from the outside. If I were able to see that fate, my fate, was always in me, and that it belongs to me very personally, I might then perhaps be able to live it consciously and not only to accept it passively.'"

"Great Mother: Your fate was born in you as a germ. One has got to live in order to develop that germ. Or, it develops by itself as long as one lives. This unfolding of fate is life's goal. As long as you are unconscious of this, fate seems to impose itself upon you from the outside. Try to become conscious of this germinating process in yourself. To the degree in which you can become conscious of it, so in the same measure you unite with God. God is your fate" (Marjula, pp. 26-27).

The above passage is from a book by Anna Marjula called the *Healing Influence Of Active Imagination In A Specific Case Of Neurosis*. It is from a subject who apparently is more attuned to auditory than visual imagery. For some subjects, the most meaningful experiences in mental imagery occur through the spoken word, while for other more visual types, the meaning tends to come more through the transformation of the visualized image. A case of imagery which might be called a "mixed type" is reported in Rix Weaver's book. *The Old Wise Woman: A Study Of Active Imagination*. A person of the more purely visual type is illustrated in a document on active imagination cited by Elie Humbert:

"I don't know what makes me decide to go into the cave of the witch; perhaps to ask her what all the phantasmagoria are about. I find her before a large fire over which a black caldron has been set. I try to 'see' the witch better, but do not succeed. I cannot feel that I am in her presence, because I perceive that she is only a shadow. I am the witch. Then I feel stronger and I take the caldron into my arms; knowing that with it I am prepared against all eventualities, I feel that I can make another attempt to dive. This time I succeed, but in the sea I find Andersen's little mermaid, love unrecognized, love lost, Taken with panic once more, my spirit is unable to go on. But again, I must absolutely find a solution, do something, not stay there fascinated like this by a figure of femininity that has been killed. I tell myself that the witch does not have in her bag only representations of terrible spells, that she is also the mother, and that, as the mother, she must have a lot more tricks in reserve than all the negative ones she has shown me. Then I see a dolphin, and this time, it is helpful and maternal, although a little frightening. I say to myself that the witch must be able to behave maternally too, and that as a great sorceress she ought to be able to help me, if I make up my mind to demand it of her. So I go back to the cave to get something else out of the caldron. Once more I am in the grotto. I am the witch, standing beside the fire on which the caldron is set. I am collected and internally calm. Then I see great flames rising up, which mount in a column of fire right to the top of the grotto. The column takes the shape of fiery seraphims. This vision is very beautiful. I see shadows of people approaching from all sides to receive something from these fiery seraphims. Now that I have made contact with the positive mother witch, I think that I can try diving again—conscious of what I am in myself..." (Humbert, 1971, p. 107).

This case was cited at some length, as it illustrates an important aspect of the Dialogic Imagery method, i.e. symbolic identification with other figures in the imagery. Rather than confronting the witch, as in the Desoille method or the German meditative methods, the subject becomes the witch, entering into her consciousness. My experience in working with mental imagery has revealed that symbolic identification with other "dramatis personae" in the imagery, particularly with frightening or powerful figures, is one of the most effective means for integrating the various psychic elements and for transforming negative energy. This session also illustrates how awareness of mythological and archetypal themes can enrich one's ability to interact with depth imagery. One further point about the Jungian approach that seems worth mentioning is the emphasis Jung placed upon the ethical imperative to live up to the insights obtained through work with imagery. Although one of the weak points of the Jungian method seems to be a lack of "grounding" or relating the archetypal experiences to the subject's daily life, it is interesting to note that, at least in principle, Jung believed in the importance of doing this. In his autobiographical work, he states:

"I took great care to try to understand every single image, every item of my psychic inventory, and to classify them scientifically—so far as this was possible—and, above all, to realize them in actual life. That is what we usually neglect to do. We allow the images to rise up, and maybe we wonder about them, but that is all. We do not take the trouble to understand them, let alone draw ethical conclusions from them. This stopping short conjures up the negative effects of the unconscious.

It is equally a grave mistake to think that it is enough to gain some understanding of the images and that knowledge can here make a halt. Insight into them must be converted into an ethical obligation. Not to do so is to fall prey to the power principle, and this produces dangerous effects which are destructive not only to others but even to the knower. The images of the unconscious place a great responsibility upon a man. Failure to understand them, or a shirking of ethical responsibility, deprives him of his wholeness and imposes a painful fragmentariness on his life." (Jung, 1961, p. 192f.)

I cannot too strongly concur with Jung's position on this question, as it seems to be true that knowledge without congruent action, just like unassimilated food, may actually be toxic to a person and stir up a backlash from the unconscious. For this reason, it seems necessary to have a broader spectrum of techniques to draw from than those available in the analytic context. Work with the will and active techniques are important for helping the subject to relate his imaginal experience to the world of everyday living.

Many other names could be cited in recounting the development of mental imagery techniques in psychotherapy. This paper will attempt to mention merely the most seminal sources. The best available history of work in the field is the book by Virel and Frétygny, *L'imagerie Mentale: Introduction A L'onirotherapie*, (which, unfortunately, is not yet available in English translation). It was with great joy that the author first met Drs. Virel and Frétygny in 1967 and had the opportunity to exchange views on the practice of mental imagery as it was occurring on both sides of the Atlantic. Following this meeting, it was decided to organize a scientific society which would have the purpose of facilitating exchange among workers in the field. In 1968, the first international congress of the International Society for Mental Imagery Techniques was held in Geneva, organized by Virel and Frétygny, with delegates from several European countries, from North America, South America, India and Australia. The diversity of viewpoints, both practical and theoretical, of contemporary workers in this field is very great, and it would be beyond the province of this paper to attempt to delineate the approach of each. The majority have their roots in one or the other of the approaches which have been described, and have developed their own variations. A history of mental imagery techniques would not be complete without mentioning the synthesizing work of Andre Virel and Roger Frétygny themselves. In their book, *L'imagerie Mentale: Introduction a L'onirotherapie* they have described their own approach to working with mental imagery in a psychotherapeutic context. Their method, which they have called "oneirotherapy" from the Greek word "oneiros", meaning dream, is an interactive one and draws on many of the previously described methods. It tends to be much more flexible, however, with different variations employed according to the circumstances. They tend to prefer a freer approach than most practitioners and avoid, when possible, giving a specific "image of departure" or being overly directive. As their treatment of the theoretical and practical issues involved in mental imagery work is more complete and clinically substantiated than other writings in the field, their conclusions will be cited at some length.

Virel and Frétigny employ oneirotherapy as the basis of their therapeutic procedure. The process is carried out within the context of an interpersonal relationship and attention is given to integrating the imagery sessions with the patient's life situation. Treatment is begun by taking the history in order to establish contact and a sense of the person's life. Then the oneiric phase begins prior to which relaxation exercises are employed. Virel and Frétigny place great emphasis upon preliminary relaxation which they believe is essential for contacting the deeper levels of the psyche in an imagery session. Then the person experiences some form of mental imagery, in dialogue with the therapist. The preferred form is what the authors have termed the "oneiodrama", which we shall discuss later. In the period following the session, the subject is asked to write a summary of what happened, noting particularly the feelings he experienced. The beginning of the next session is devoted to analysis and discussion of the oneiric material with note being made of those aspects that the subject repressed or failed to record. The therapist will often make suggestions about specific things to do or attitudes to take in life situations, which the patient tries out between sessions.

Virel and Frétigny place great emphasis on having the subject well established in his imaginal body ("moi corporel imaginaire") and they utilize suggestions to this effect, having the subject get in touch with his physical sensations, the ground under his feet, feelings of warmth, etc.

Other interesting features of their work are the psychopharmacological and psychophysical aspects of their research. They have experimented with a variety of psychoactive drugs as adjuvants to mental imagery sessions and found that some of these facilitated the process. They noted that large doses of LSD, as used in North America, caused many problems through dislocation of the space/time schema and difficulties in controlling the imagery. They concluded that it did not appreciably enhance the sessions. They did, however, note a valuable secondary effect in that significant imagery was released in subsequent oneirotherapy sessions and in nocturnal dreams. Small doses of LSD ("psychelytic" as opposed to "psychedelic" therapy), had the value of enhancing affectivity as well as the imagination and were found especially useful for abreaction sessions and for releasing defenses. The authors conclude that certain drugs have the effect of facilitating relaxation, others of intensifying affectivity, and others of enhancing the oneiric quality, and state the need for further research by qualified investigators in this field.

The authors have explored the psychophysiological correlates of the mental imagery state, and Virel's doctoral dissertation in psychology at the Sorbonne (Virel, 1967) included a polygraphic study of mental imagery sessions (E.E.G., recorded cardiac rhythms, ocular movements). He found that, in general, during sessions with trained subjects, there is a relaxed state with an abundant and not very reactive alpha rhythm. There was little slowing down of the tracing to frequencies below the alpha range. This apparently contradicts Kamiya's report that subjects he was training through operant conditioning to control their alpha rhythm suppressed it by calling up visual imagery (Kamiya, 1969). It is also somewhat different from the finding of Green's research team at the Menninger Foundation that "hypnagogic and dream-like images during a state of semiconscious reverie have been observed with a number of experimental subjects in conjunction with periods of theta rhythm and low frequency alpha-waves" (Green, E, Green., and Walters, E.D. 1970, p. 10). Green reported that the most significant range for the production of hypnagogic-type imagery is the upper theta range right at the border of the alpha range. (6-8 Hz.) (Green, Ibid, p. 12). It is possible that some of these discrepancies may be a result of different experimental conditions and differences in amount of training of the subjects. The imagery to which Kamiya was referring were images which the subjects deliberately conjured up and concentrated on for the sake of suppressing their alpha rhythm. This would involve a higher degree of conscious effort than was involved for Green's subjects for whom hypnagogic imagery was described as "pictures or words that they did not consciously generate or manipulate, but which sprang into the mind 'full blown' so to speak" (Green, Ibid., p. 13). It is possible that the results with Virel's subjects, which were frequently in the middle range of the alpha band (around 10 Hz.) were influenced by the fact that the subject remained in dialogue with the therapist during the imagery session while Green's subjects remained in a state of internal reverie. My own preliminary investigations in this area seem to indicate that there is a great deal of individual variation among subjects in the EEG correlates of the mental imagery state, and that this is also a function of the level of training. A number of subjects displayed the synchronized sinusoidal alpha pattern, while a lesser number were in the theta range and still others showed neither of these patterns. Adequate data are not available at this stage, but preliminary results would suggest that biofeedback training in this area would have to bear in mind the wide range of individual differences. Thus, alpha training for one subject could enhance mental imagery while for another subject it

might interfere. It is safe to say that much further research is needed in order to reach more definite conclusions in this area.

Another interesting aspect of Virel's and Frétygny's book is the treatment they give to the question of supportive devices when working with mental imagery. In general, they do not favor the indiscriminate use of "protective" images such as the magic wand or magus which Desoille employed liberally, and would reserve such images for specific kinds of situations. They believe that the practitioner should be familiar with various devices which can help to alleviate anxiety in the course of a mental imagery session. They propose that such measures be appropriate to the type of problem encountered. For example, if a person is in a dark cave, the guide can suggest that he has a flashlight; if the person is in physical danger, it could be suggested that he has a sword or other weapon; and if he is feeling helpless, he could have a magic wand. They also sometimes propose that a fearful subject trace a magic circle around him which offers complete protection. They point out that, though a subject will rarely think of protective devices such as these himself, there is generally no difficulty in having him accept them when they are suggested by the guide.

Because of the fact that artificially induced protective images have the effect sometimes of preventing the subject from coming to terms with his conflicts and his fears, the authors recommend that such images be suggested only in the following cases. First of all, they are used if the subject is a potential psychopath or has a major anxiety symptom. Secondly, they are used to prevent an intense anxiety experience that might cause a subject to stop treatment, either because he is unable to tolerate unpleasant experiences or because he is not yet sufficiently secure or involved in the therapy to stay with it otherwise. Finally, protective devices are employed if the image is related to the subject's core conflict and it is desired to "tame" this image for further exploration. In principle, the author's practice of dialogic imagery is similar to that of Virel and Frétygny in the sense that protective artifices are used only in extreme cases. In actual practice, my tendency would be to use such devices much less frequently than they do. Instead I tend to employ other techniques such as goodwill and identification with the feared image. These alternatives to a self-defensive or magical form of protection will be discussed in more detail in the section describing the Dialogic Imagery method as such.

Another important issue which Virel and Frétygny take up is that of directiveness. As a general rule, they favor a non-directive approach. There are certain exceptions, however, where they believe a directive approach is necessary. The first exception is when the therapist suggests a protective image. The second situation is that of the passive/dependent person who expects to be told what to do. The challenge to the therapist in such cases is to suggest themes progressively more general and vague so that the subject eventually learns to take more initiative himself in elaborating the imagery. Another situation in which the therapist will be forced into a more directive position is when dealing with a person who at first seems to lack imagination and psychic energy, as in cases of neurasthenia. The strategy proposed is to substitute suggestions in the form of questions for suggestions given as directives. Another special situation is that of persons suffering from obsessional ideation which occupies their whole field of awareness. The authors suggest with such people the substitution of a "counter-image" (what Caslant called the "contre-image" and Janet called "substitution d'image"). This technique has the effect of neutralizing the obsessional image and allows the subject a freer field of exploration. Still another type of situation where the authors feel a directive approach is justified is that of persons exhibiting a too rapid flow of imagery. In such cases, the therapist will intervene to suggest that the subject focus his attention on one image in particular and explore it fully, rather than allowing a flood of new images to come in. They also recommend practice in one or another of the methods of sensory and mental concentration such as autogenic training or the Vittoz method. (Vittoz, 1907). Finally, there is the situation of the person who avoids dealing with a significant image. One can gently encourage such a person, with a well-chosen leading question, to explore the potential of this image and discover its message. The authors also use a directive approach in the "maturation" stage of oneirotherapy- i.e. in the period between two sessions. In this way, their approach is similar to that of psychosynthesis, as they suggest specific assignments to their patients between sessions.

Unlike the approach used by psychosynthesis practitioners, there does not seem to be an attempt to "ground" the imagery experience in the subject's daily life experience during the imagery session itself. Instead, the grounding is carried out either through "second-degree imagery," which we shall discuss later, or through the assignment of tasks in the person's life.

Another point of considerable interest which Virel and Frétigny take up is the role of images of light. It is well known that imagery connected with light is a common experience of the mystics. Eliade has devoted a large section of one of his books on religious symbolism to experiences of the mystic light and luminous theophanies (Eliade, 1965). Desoille, as we saw, believed that contact with the mystic light obtained through ascension in imaginal space, was an essential healing experience. Virel and Frétigny, while recognizing the value of such experiences for many subjects, believe that they are overemphasized by the Desoille school. They feel that the experience of warmth has been neglected by most practitioners and that sensations of warmth can be just as important as visions of light. They put forward an hypothesis suggesting that the frequent dissociation of light and heat in the Western world is an expression, not only of the predominant place given to the sense of vision, but also of the dissociation of intellect and affectivity. Because the authors believe that the experience of warmth is associated with love, they suggest to patients experiencing light phenomena that they become aware of sensations of warmth, and found that most subjects were receptive to the suggestion. They further point out, which my own experience has confirmed, that valuable and transforming experiences of contact with light can occur without ascent in imaginal space. Such experiences may occur with descent and also at ground level, whenever the subject moves beyond ordinary space/time boundaries. They point out certain limitations and dangers of attempting to artificially induce light phenomena, as in the practice of the Desoille school. In the first place, they do not believe that the quality of such experiences is very high unless a subject has first eliminated some of his more serious complexes and blockages, and that quite often the experience itself will be impossible. Furthermore, such persons may have extremely troubling experiences in contact with the light. They also note some exceptions in certain syndromes such as false mystics, schizophrenics, and some paranoid types. Such persons are frequently able to attain contact with the light. However, they tend to have dissociative experiences without cathartic or constructive value, and remain unable to integrate these with their daily lives.

Virel and Frétigny differentiate various forms of "oneirotherapy". Their preferred form is what they term the "oneirodrama". Other forms are considered inferior and their goal, whenever possible, is to bring the subject to the point where he can experience the oneirodrama. For this to occur, a deeply relaxed state and complete identification with the imaginal body are required. In this way the subject loses awareness of his physical body-image and the world of sensory-motor experience. The authors are critical of the Desoille school for neglecting to put the subject in a state of relaxation. They also disagree with Desoille's directiveness and numerous interventions on the part of the therapist. They see these as preventing the subject from relaxing his cortical control and obtaining abreaction.

In an oneirodramatic session, the subject is not merely experiencing things intellectually or observing in a detached way. His imaginal body is fully involved in the action and he experiences sensations in the imaginal body. Whenever possible, "second degree" imagery (see below) is employed in the oneirodramatic session and abreaction is sought through dramatic action. The authors state that the sessions should be non-directed, with little intervention from the therapist, though in some sessions they report the therapist does suggest that particular images be seen.

The second category of oneiric experiences described by Virel and Frétigny is what they call "mental imagery". In this they include all the other forms of imagery employed in such methods as those of Clark, Happich, Desoille, Jung, etc. They believe that such methods, though useful, are incomplete, as they often lack the elements of catharsis, dramatic construction, complete identification with the imaginal body, and sufficient freedom in unfolding the drama.

Another category of imagery work they term "verbalisation accompanied by images". This applies to subjects who describe with detachment a flow of imagery which seems gratuitous and without relationship to their own problems. The authors believe this is a symptom of autistic fabulatory tendencies and requires other methods of treatment.

"Second-degree mental imagery" is a name given by the authors to a situation in which the subject, in the midst of an imagery session, either spontaneously or, more frequently, upon suggestion of the guide, leaves the on-going sequence of his imagery to enter his inner world and allow a different order of imagery to appear. This is much like a dream within a dream. Most frequently, the second degree imagery takes the subject back to a scene from his childhood which he relives just as he was at the time, with the same appearance and behaviors. The

authors deliberately induce such sequences at times when they feel the subject is approaching the core of his problem. They use means such as suggesting that the subject sit down and relax within his imaginal body, allowing another image to emerge in his mind.

A further type of imagery session described by the authors is what they call "mental imagery with immediate interpretation", in which the subject sees images which he associates to or analyzes as he goes along. There is not much unfoldment of the imagery as such; rather, the subject uses the image as a jumping-off point to get in touch with significant personal material which he then discusses. The authors also distinguish the situation of what they call "mental imagery with delayed interpretation" in which the subject has a flash of insight into the meaning of an image from his previous session during the following days. They find it of special value to follow through in working with such images in the next session.

Virel and Frétigny also speak of a state they call "pure verbal imagination". This occurs with certain subjects who have difficulty visualizing but can nevertheless "imagine without seeing". They have found it is often possible, by asking the subject to describe what he is imagining, to obtain data which is therapeutically valuable. The use is limited, however, and they prefer to use the technique of free association of words and images in such cases. Sometimes, the use of relaxation procedures will help such a subject to move from verbal imagination to the point where he can see images.

The authors discuss the problem of hyper-rationalisation when a subject, instead of allowing himself to experience the impact of an image, gets involved in sterile rationalisation. Such is the case with many schizophrenic patients. They also feel that certain schizoid personalities may produce imagery which, in appearance, is rich but is devoid of affective meaning. They believe such subjects are locked up in purely verbal notions. Other types of hyper-rationalisation may be caused by previous experiences in an exclusively verbal therapy such as psychoanalysis. People who have been conditioned in this way may need special help in opening up their imaginative and intuitive faculties through such means as relaxation techniques, the Vittoz method, psychodramatic approaches, or psychopharmacological adjuvants. Another type of problem is encountered with subjects who have studied methods of concentration which have a tendency to prevent a free flow of imagery. Appropriate exercises are required for such persons to develop spontaneity.

In the case of persons who are refractory to mental imagery procedures, the authors recommend a period of training during which the subject is first taught deep relaxation, then taught to obtain a blank mind screen, and finally given practice in free association of ideas and images. Eventually, the images begin to organize themselves in a more coherent sequence and the subject is ready to undertake a more extended type of imagery session.

Virel and Frétigny have made a useful summary of the various ways of starting a mental imagery session. There are, first of all, the methods which do not employ a fixed inductive image, such as the method of Guillerey, and which allow the subject to find within himself his own starting point. This is also the approach most commonly used in our own work with dialogic imagery. Then there are various codified approaches for starting a session. (Caslant, 1937; Desoille, 1966; Happich, 1948; Leuner, 1965). Desoille has proposed the following six themes as starting points for imagery sessions. (Desoille, 1966).

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Theme</u>
1. Confronting one's more obvious characteristics	1. For a man, a sword For a woman, a vessel or container.
2. Confronting one's more suppressed characteristics	2. For both sexes, a descent into the depth of the ocean
3. Coming to terms with the parent of opposite sex	3. For a man, descent into a cave to find a witch For a woman, descent into a cave to find a magician

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| 4. Coming to terms with the parent of one's own sex | 4. For a man, decent into a cave to find a magician<br>For a woman, decent into a cave to find a witch |
| 5. Coming to terms with societal constraints        | 5. For both sexes decent into a cave to find the fabled dragon   |
| 6. Coming to terms with the Oedipal situations      | 6. For both sexes, the castle of Sleeping Beauty in a forest   |

Leuner's themes of departure are as follows (Leuner, 1965): a meadow; climbing up a mountain; following the course of a stream; visiting a house; an ideal personality of the same sex; unconscious affective relationships symbolized by animals; unconscious attitudes toward sexuality (for males, a rosebush; for females, being offered a ride by a man in a car); a pool of water in a swamp; waiting for a figure to emerge from a cave; eruption of a volcano; a lion; an old picture book buried in the cellar floor of a house.

Closely related to the codified images of departure are what Virel and Frétygny call "key images." These are images which have been found to be productive as a starting point, but which do not often occur spontaneously. They would include such things as the forked stick (which is imagined stuck in the ground, the subject being asked to dig holes around it in order to find buried objects); the vase; the key; the magic wand. The authors have made a distinction between what they call "key images" and "nodal images", ("images carrefours") which occur frequently in a spontaneous manner during mental imagery sessions. The latter would include such things as a vase, a chapel, a sword or a dragon.

Other common points of departure for a session are unresolved images from nocturnal dreams or from a previous mental imagery session. In the latter case, it might be a significant image which has not been given sufficient attention.

In addition to starting images, it is possible to have starting "themes". Virel and Frétygny mention as examples of such themes a scenario chosen from folklore or invented by the guide to meet the subject's specific needs. They fail to mention the possibility of choosing a specific problem or topic as a theme of departure, without an associated image, which is the most common mode employed in my work with dialogic imagery. In this mode, the subject chooses a theme and allows an image to emerge spontaneously as a departure point for exploring this theme.

Before leaving the work of Virel and Frétygny, it seems worthwhile to mention the distinctions they make in terms of a guide's level of directivity. First, there is the non-directed session in which the imagery is allowed to unfold freely without intervention from the guide. This would include the techniques of Binet, Guilleroy and Jung. Secondly, there is what they call supported imagery, in which the role of the guide is confined to supporting and reassuring the subject when he becomes anxious, suggesting means of attack or protection. Thirdly, there is the type of session, in which the subject's imagery is elicited through questions, without actually being directed by the guide. Such questions are aimed at helping the subject remain in touch with the important elements of his imagery—e.g. looking at something more closely, describing the details of something, exploring certain topographical or dramatic possibilities which the subject has mentioned. Finally, there is what may properly be called directed imagery in which the guide intervenes to channel the direction of the oneiric activity. This type of directiveness includes the suggestion of specific starting images, orienting the subject in terms of spatial coordinates, suggesting specific acts, etc. The Desoille school is the most clear example of the directed form of imagery.

Since the original publication of this monograph in 1974, a great profusion of writings on mental imagery has appeared in North America, bearing witness to a rapidly growing interest in this area. Some of the more significant recent publications have been added to the bibliography, though there has been no attempt to cover the literature of the intervening years in a comprehensive way. The focus of this review is primarily on the

historical roots of mental imagery techniques in psychotherapy, with emphasis on the European tradition which has so profoundly influenced subsequent developments in North America.

It is also of interest to note that the First American Conference on the Fantasy-Imaging Process was held in Chicago in October 1977. The conference was organized by Shaffer\* and included speakers on the use of imagery in such fields as psychotherapy, education, the creative process, the transpersonal psychology and holistic medicine. It seems safe to assume that we can anticipate a continued and accelerated development of mental imagery as a tool not only within the psychotherapeutic and psychagogic\*\* fields of application, but within many other disciplines as well,

\* John T. Shaffer, D. Min., Director, The Well-Being Center, Inc. Jacksonville, Illinois

\*\* The term "psychagogic" is little known in North America, though it seems to be a useful word and was widely used by the school of depth psychologists around Charles Baudouin in Geneva. Its origin is in the Greek words meaning "guidance of the soul" and its emphasis is on the forward movement or unfoldment of growth, rather than on the elimination of symptoms or undesirable traits.

## THE METHOD OF DIALOGIC IMAGERY

Having briefly reviewed the historical roots of mental imagery techniques in the fields of psychotherapy and personal growth, we will now describe the Dialogic Imagery method. Similarities and differences between this method and related approaches will be discussed. Guidelines for practitioners will be indicated.

The term "Dialogic Imagery" was chosen to describe this method in order to emphasize the framework of dialogue in which the work takes place. This distinguishes it from other forms of extended depth imagery practiced without a guide such as the "active imagination" of Jung.

The method, as now practiced by the author, has evolved continually since its beginning in 1964 as a result of contact with various approaches and the fruits of experience. My first ventures in this field were inspired by the work of Desoille, with whom I studied in Paris just prior to his death. Impressed by profound experiences of an archetypal and mystical character obtained through the Desoille technique of symbolic ascent, I naively assumed at first that such experiences would have a transforming effect on the life of the subject. Experience tempered my view, however, and it was perhaps salutary that my first subject was a psychopath who achieved rather spectacular experiences of an apparently mystical nature with no effect whatsoever on the amoral conduct of his life. Over the years of working in the field of transpersonal psychotherapy, my approach has become less oriented to what Maslow calls the "peak experience" (Maslow, 1964) as an end in itself and more oriented toward whatever is a person's next step. My work with imagery now rarely makes a direct suggestion of rising or descending in imaginal space. Likewise, no starting images are suggested though we may work with a theme which the subject has proposed. In allowing the free flow of the subject's imagery to take place, he is able to contact whatever is most important in that moment, with peak experiences coming in their own time when he is ready. Further, when such experiences do come, they will be more meaningful because of this preparation, and the subject will be in a better position to integrate them in his daily life.

In this allowing of the free flow of the subject's experience, Dialogic Imagery is closer to the oneirotherapeutic methods of Virel and Frétigny than to the other approaches we have discussed. In certain ways our method is both more and less directive than theirs. It is less directive in the sense that we do not use "images of departure" unless it is an image provided by the subject, as in a dream or previous mental imagery session. The most frequent starting point in our sessions is a spontaneous image the subject allows to appear on his mind screen. Such an image may open the way to a next step or elucidate a theme the subject wishes to explore. Our method is also less directive than theirs in the sense that we avoid introducing images that are foreign to the subject's own experience. Virel and Frétigny often have recourse to a "deus ex machina" summoned up to ease or transform an uneasy situation. For example, when one of their subjects is crying because she has seen her father's coffin and was spoken to harshly by a friend, it is suggested that she see a star instead of working through these reactions. She enters into the star and is carried off by it, terminating the session in a euphoric experience of light (Virel and Frétigny, pp. 87-88).

Our method is more directive than that of Virel and Frétigny, in that we tend not to leave the subject for long periods without communication from the therapist. There seems to be a tendency in the oneirodramatic session, to allow a subject to act out, on the imaginal plane, whatever he feels like doing without interruption. For example, one of their sessions unfolds as follows:

"...I see the witch who climbs out of her tomb and comes toward me. She looks like my mother. I strike her with my sword and she falls into pieces. I continue on...

Across the road is a huge tree that blocks my way. It seems to be alive. I strike it with my sword and it falls in pieces. Then I encounter a dragon that kills my horse with his poisonous breath. I slide under his stomach and thrust my sword into his body. He dies...

(Virel and Frétigny, 1968, p.74).

It would be against the principles of our method to encourage a subject to commit violence of this kind, as aggressive acts, even in imagery may be dangerous to the psyche. A basic postulate of our method is that all aspects of the imagery, both human and non-human, represent some part of the subject. Thus, when antagonistic elements appear, the goal is not for one to destroy the other, but rather to seek reconciliation. To destroy a figure in the imagery is symbolically to destroy some part of oneself, and may produce reactive guilt and depression.

This seems to apply to non-human elements as well. A colleague reported (personal communication) the case of a patient who entered a suicidal depression after chopping down a tree in an imagery session. Thus, our principles suggest intervention on the part of the guide to prevent destructive acting out. We prefer to limit the expression of aggression to what is necessary for cathartic purposes. Non-violent techniques of reconciliation may be used such as identification with the "enemy" or transforming him through goodwill and empathy.

A further way in which our method differs from oneirotherapy is the emphasis we place on the "grounding" process, i.e. the relating of what takes place at symbolic levels to the everyday life of the subject. Virel and Frétiigny address grounding to some extent in the "maturational" stage, assigning homework in the form of situations to confront, attitudes to assume, and tasks to undertake, in the period between sessions.

Although we also give such assignments, we find it particularly valuable to integrate the grounding process within the session itself. Our approach is to elicit images or discussions to help the subject see how the themes of the imagery are expressed in his current life. This involves both looking at problem situations and imagining healthier ways of behaving. While oneirotherapy's grounding through "second degree imagery" deals primarily with experiences from the subject's past, the grounding in psychosynthesis is concerned more with the present life and desired future changes. The "as if" technique, in which the subject visualizes himself acting in life situations as if he had the desired qualities, can be a useful way to rehearse new attitudes.

Our method also differs from oneirotherapy in the way it is combined with other techniques, both within and outside of the imagery session itself. Although Virel and Frétiigny state that some candidates for oneirotherapy are better suited for another approach such as psychoanalysis, they nevertheless seem to consider oneirotherapy the method of choice if a person is able to respond to it. In psychosynthesis, the extended depth imagery session is only one among many techniques employed. It is not necessarily considered the method of choice and in any case will be combined with other methods. In my own practice, if I see a client on a weekly basis, a dialogic imagery would not likely be used more than once a month, often less frequently. In intervening sessions, other methods such as dream work, role-playing, body movement, briefer imagery techniques (Crampton, 1969), or discussion of the person's life situation and use of the will are used. Even within the context of the imagery session itself, it sometimes happens that the subject will move toward a different type of activity such as spontaneous movement or sounding, which will then be encouraged if it seems appropriate. The transcribed sessions at the end of this section include some examples of sessions of the "mixed" type. The one which we have called "Bubble" illustrates how the method can be combined with spontaneous body movement, and the session called "Opening the Door/Opening the Voice" integrates both body and voice techniques within an imagery session.

Having discussed how our use of dialogic imagery differs from related approaches, we will now relate the method to the principles of psychosynthesis.

A hallmark of the psychosynthesis approach is its great respect for the wisdom of the creative unconscious. This is reflected in allowing the spontaneous unfoldment of the subject's imagery and in the relative non-directiveness of the guide. This follows from the postulate that there is a spiritual essence, the Self, through which integration of the personality takes place. (Assagioli, 1965). It is assumed that the wisdom of the Self will bring forth the client's material at a pace and in a manner most suited to the client's needs. The function of the guide is to support this process.

Psychosynthesis, unlike many depth psychologies, does not consider it sufficient simply to bring the material of the unconscious into the light of consciousness. Though it values the wisdom and healing available through the unconscious, psychosynthesis also considers it necessary to help the person assume responsibility for what the unconscious reveals, and to use his will to integrate this material in his life (Assagioli, 1973).

On this point, we are in agreement with Jung's statement quoted above about the need to go beyond mere insight to the drawing of ethical conclusions from the products of the unconscious, and to the expression of these conclusions in one's life. In psychosynthesis, it is through the use and training of the will that the person is helped to take a position of ethical responsibility vis-à-vis his psychological material. Either within the session itself, or in discussion following the session, there is an effort to apply insights from the imagery to daily living. Examples of this are given in some of the transcribed sessions, with "The Organ" being the most complete in this respect.

What we have called the "grounding" process is closely related to the will, and is designed to integrate the material of the session into the person's life.. The grounding may take place in several ways. When time permits, it may be incorporated within the body of the imagery session itself. Sometimes, it is not possible to do this, either because the time was spent resolving the imagery drama, or because the subject is fatigued. It is more important to terminate the session on a positive note than to do the grounding in the same session, if time does not permit both.

In situations where both are not possible, the subject can play back the tape of the session at home, either transcribing it or taking notes, and grounding will be done in the subsequent session. Sometimes, this will take the form of discussing how he or she made use of the insights from the session during the week or of how they might be applied in future. Another technique that may be used in follow-up sessions is role-playing of the "subpersonalities" (Vargiu, 1974, pp. 74-77) or aspects of oneself represented by the various figures in the imagery. It is assumed in our method that, just as the different elements of a dream may represent various aspects of the dreamer (as Jungian and Gestalt therapists would agree), so the elements in an imagery session, both human and non-human, may represent aspects of the person. A further technique which is helpful in grounding sessions, is the use of "answers from the unconscious" obtained through visual imagery, particularly in the form of a "life vignette". (Crampton, 1969) In this technique the person asks his unconscious to present images of himself in his actual life that reflect a theme of the imagery session.

When the subject is fatigued through having spent a long time in the mental imagery state, it is preferable to terminate the imaging as such and proceed to the grounding work through dialogue. Practitioners of mental imagery may be insufficiently aware of the element of fatigue. In my opinion, the imaging part of a session should not be prolonged beyond 45 minutes, or one hour at the most. Beyond this point most subjects will not gain full benefit from the work and resistance may set in due to overload.

Practitioners of hypnosis tend to be more sensitive to the fatigue effect occurring in altered states of consciousness. They often bring their subjects out of hypnosis for a rest period if the session is prolonged. Caslant, the grandfather of the "waking dream" technique was aware of this fatigue factor, and offered a practical suggestion for diminishing it. He proposes that the guide, whenever shifting to a new type of question, allow the subject to rest for a few moments.

"One must always interpose a rest period between two questions of a different nature...One should request that the subject leave his imaging in order to rest and wait until the subject himself indicates that he is ready for the change. The procedure will eventually take place very rapidly; with practice, the rest period may only last a few seconds, but it is indispensable. Without it, the subject will experience a growing fatigue and confused states that will soon discourage him". (Caslant, 1937, p.71)

When grounding is attempted during the imagery session itself, it may take a variety of forms, most of which are illustrated in the transcribed sessions. The most common procedure is the evoking of grounding images relating to specific life situations. This frequently includes the use of the "as if" technique, in which the subject imagines himself acting with the desired qualities (cf. "The Organ"). Another technique that may be used on occasion is that of affirmation, in which the subject states out loud a positive affirmation emerging from his own material (cf. "A Room of One's Own" and "Opening the Door/Opening the Voice").

Spontaneous movement is also effective for grounding, and may emerge naturally in a session (cf. "Bubble" and "Opening the Door/Opening the Voice"). In guiding the movement, similar principles are applied as in guiding imagery. The guide's interventions are aimed at helping the subject become aware of and articulate what he is experiencing. One can also employ techniques of "existential questioning" (Schorr, 1972, p. 21; Frankl, 1965) to facilitate the grounding process. In sessions dealing with real life material rather than archetypal imagery, as in some of the sessions with parental imagoes, grounding takes place within the imagery itself.

In psychosynthesis, as in other depth psychologies, an important goal is to integrate and improve communication between conscious and unconscious levels of the mind. Mental imagery provides an ideal means of doing this, as the subject has simultaneous access to both levels as he works. He is in touch with material from the unconscious, including the supraconscious (the realm of higher values and spiritual experience), in much the same way as during the dream state. However, unlike most nocturnal dreamers, the mental imagery

subject can act upon this unconscious material with his conscious mind and with his will. Thus, the imaginal realm plays an important role in personality integration by bridging various levels and aspects of the psyche.

The imagery state provides an ideal situation for working with the material of the unconscious. The subject can relax deeply, going into a sort of "twilight" state, and yet remain in contact with the guide to prevent falling asleep or aimless meandering (which frequently happens when trying to image alone). Guided imagery also has an advantage over nocturnal dreams in that it is available upon request and not dependent on the subject's ability to recall his dreams. In addition, there is an opportunity to explore the feelings and attitudes involved at the time they are actually occurring, as well as to bring about their transformation. As Progoff states:

"...When the proper rapport is established as the base for twilight imaging, it is like having a deep dream where the elusive contents are not forgotten and lost but are described, shared and recorded in the moment when they occur. It has the effect of loosening and stimulating the flow of the non-conscious levels of personality, thus generating a momentum of feeling that breaks through the impasse of self-conscious analytical attitudes. It also has the effect of deepening the contact with the self so that many intuitive and even poetic experiences occur, as we shall see, even in persons who are accustomed to nothing more than a superficial perception of life."  
(Progoff, 1963, p. 114)

One further point about the relationship of imagery to psychosynthetic principles is well expressed by Weaver in talking about the method of active imagination:

"...the finding of ourselves is both a reductive and synthetic process. Analysis of the personal unconscious which precedes depth analysis should also be synthetic as well as reductive. To merely reduce is to pull away every foundation on which the ego has established itself, a foundation which has been necessary to meet the demands of life for ego personality is established according to the 'funds on hand'. The synthetic process builds toward something, that is, for each plank which has to be removed, being either warped or white-ant ridden, there must be a healthy plank ready to insert, so that the whole structure does not collapse."

(Weaver, 1964, p. 10)

Our effort in psychosynthesis is always a dual one: to employ analytic measures, when necessary, to understand the nature of a problem or blockage, but to go beyond this toward resolution of the problem. The synthetic process is mobilized at this point, as it is that which moves us beyond our present stage toward higher levels of integration. Mental imagery techniques provide an excellent means of getting in touch with positive and transforming symbols that point to the person's next stage of development.

Having situated Dialogic Imagery in the context of psychosynthesis principles, we will now look at more technical aspects of practice.

The setting and logistics for depth imagery sessions is the first point to consider. In general, the first part of a psychosynthesis session is spent discussing the client's life situation, the progress he has made, and issues he wants to focus on. If it seems that an extended imagery session would be an appropriate way to address these concerns, this will be offered to the client as a possibility. The final decision about which method to use will rest with the client. This respects his autonomy and helps him to gain a sense of responsibility for his own inner work. If it is decided that imagery will be used, the person lies down on a couch, the lighting in the room will be dimmed, and eyeshades or a scarf to cover the eyes will be made available. Most subjects do not require eyeshades in order to visualize clearly, but they are definitely helpful for others. It's a good idea to have a blanket nearby, as many people become chilly when lying down. If the session is to be recorded, the microphone will be placed between the subject and the guide, pointing toward the subject. It is important to use a high quality microphone because people in the mental imagery state tend to speak in a soft voice, and recordings with an inferior microphone may not be clearly audible.

Recording of the session has several advantages. First of all, it provides a record of what happened which can be referred to by both subject and guide. This is helpful in order to refresh the memory and to verify certain points that may have been forgotten. It is interesting to compare the subject's report of what happened with the verbatim

transcript. It frequently happens that the more important aspects have been forgotten, as they are too close to the growing edge of the subject's consciousness and may be repressed. Because mental imagery occurs in an altered state of consciousness, its contents, just like the contents of states of dreaming, hypnosis, or meditation, are subject to "psychic erasure" and may be forgotten if not recorded. Much can be gained by simply re-listening to the recorded tape, as points will stand out which did not seem so important during the actual experience, the lapses of memory can be filled in, and the subject can hear his tone of voice, which is often very revealing. Much can be learned from the sequence of material, which may not have been apparent during the actual session, especially when a written transcript is made. Subjects often report that listening to the tape has had as much value to them as an extra session. In my own practice, I request persons who are making transcriptions to provide an additional copy for me. This is helpful in discussing the session with them and is useful for refining one's technique.

Once the subject is comfortable physically he is asked to take a few minutes to relax, clearing his mind and following the flow of his breathing. For certain subjects who have too much anxiety tied up in the breathing process, alternative forms of relaxation must be found. We do not place as much emphasis on relaxation as Virel and Frétigny do, since most subjects access deep and meaningful levels of experience without extensive relaxation procedures. However, for persons who are unduly tense or who have difficulty letting go of rational control, special training may be useful.

While the subject is relaxing, it is important for the guide to attune himself to the subject by remaining present to him in a caring and attentive way. When this attunement has taken place, many practitioners note a subjective impression often described as a blending of the auras or energy fields. Some practitioners and subjects experience this in a quasi-physical sense as though it were creating a subtle "projection screen" upon which the imaginal experience takes place.

It is of interest that Caslant, the Swiss clairvoyant who was Desoille's teacher, refers to a similar phenomenon. He states, in speaking of the means to avoid distraction on the part of the subject:

"One can achieve this by attentively observing him, in other words, by remaining with him in thought. As every thought produces fluidic emission, one can create in this manner, a current on which the subject can support himself in order to observe and retain his images. The experimenter will note, in fact, that every distraction on his part, will be accompanied by some weakening of the subject's vision, by some abnormal variation in the structure of the images, and, in general, by descent to a lower plane".

(Caslant, 1937, pp.75-76)

Perhaps our science of the future will find a means of accounting for such phenomena. In any case, it seems clear that the subjective, non-verbal relationship between the guide and the subject is of great importance. It will help the subject to relax and feel secure if he senses a positive and attentive attitude on the part of the guide. As to other aspects of the helping relationship, it is important for the guide, while remaining caring, to keep a certain detachment and objectivity. It will be helpful if his attitude is calm, neutral, and accepting of whatever happens, without getting flustered by unusual happenings or by experiences that may be frightening to the subject. If the guide keeps his calm and confidence, this will be transmitted to the subject and support him in facing his challenge with courage.

In beginning the oneiric phase of the session, the subject will choose between allowing a image to appear spontaneously on his mind screen and inviting an image related to a specific problem or question. In general, I prefer the spontaneous method, unless the subject is grappling with a specific issue on which he feels the need for clarification. This seems to go directly to the "sore point" or to whatever most requires attention at the time.

It is important not to automatically reject an image that appears. Often, if the subject watches it long enough, some meaning will emerge or a transformation will take place. It may be helpful to suggest that the subject "become" the image in trying to understand its message. Jung's words about the role of attention in helping an image to "give birth" are very pertinent. The guide can remind a subject who is tempted to discard an image that his own unconscious mind created this image and something within him knows what the image means. If the person stays with an image long enough, the meaning usually unfolds.

The art of guiding a session is highly intuitive, and it is difficult to lay down hard and fast rules. The guide may find himself prompted to a response he does not rationally understand, and it may be very fruitful to follow such promptings. Intuition develops through experiment. If the intuition is phased in a tentative way, it is not likely to be harmful.

When in doubt, a good principle to follow is to go with the flow of the imagery as much as possible. Asking the subject to focus on what he is seeing and to describe it more fully is an intervention that helps to unfold the process without directing it. It is also useful to ask what the various figures in the imagery are feeling, thinking, or doing. If the subject seems to be stuck, the guide may use non-directive interventions such as: "Watch your mind screen and tell me what happens." or "Just stay with this image until you sense some change" or "What seems to want to happen now?"

It is important to tell the subject that he or she is completely free to reject any suggestion you make about the conduct of the imagery. This helps to protect from the results of infelicitous impulses on your part. Subjects have a way of sensing when a suggestion will take them away from what they need to be experiencing. In fact, it is often a sign of progress when a subject is able to reject certain suggestions of the guide, indicating that he has acquired more autonomy in the direction of his own process.

A major challenge to the guide in an imagery session is to handle constructively confrontation between antagonistic elements. This is one case in which active intervention and a more directive approach on the part of the guide may be indicated, particularly to establish the ground rules. I have found it helpful to explain to the subject that all elements of the imagery represent aspects of himself. The goal is to bring about communication and greater integration between these elements along with transformation of their negative aspects. Of course, if one figure is a person from the subject's real life toward whom he has a lot of pent-up anger, it is generally necessary for to release this anger before reconciliation can take place. In so doing, verbal expression will be encouraged. It is also important at some point that the other person in the imagery be allowed to answer from his or her own perspective. If the subject has difficulty empathizing with the other figure, one can suggest that he try to "become" this figure through a process of symbolic identification. It may be helpful to suggest that the other figure answer as he would if he were able to get in touch with his authentic feelings and express them honestly, rather than the way he would be likely to reply in real life. This helps to get past the other person's defenses and to build bridges of understanding and connection.

Symbolic identification may be a useful technique when there is difficulty establishing communication between the figures. One student saw an image of his mother sixty feet tall and made of cement. He was unable to find a way to reach her as long as he remained in his own skin. His voice did not carry that far and the elevator he tried installing did not function. It was suggested in this case that he actually become the mother. In doing this he connected with the mother's pain. She was humanized in his eyes and gradually became smaller until she was human size. The usefulness of the symbolic identification technique (Gerard, 1967), leads us to question Virel's assumption that fruitful work requires being firmly identified with one's own imaginal body. It's possible that this would make the shift of consciousness occurring in symbolic identification more difficult. Many of our most fruitful sessions have been ones in which the subject is not identified with his own imaginal body at all, but in which integration takes place through figures which are projections of various aspects of himself.

In situations of confrontation, it seems preferable to allow the subject to work things out in his own way, once guidelines have been established. Integration can be encouraged by questions such as "Is there a way you could establish communication with the monster?" or "Is there anything that either of you wants to express to the other?" If this does not produce results one can ask if there is anything the subject can do to help the feared figure. One of Leuner's techniques is to "feed" the monster, thus taming him by attempting to meet his needs. (Haronian, 1967) If there is a need to resort to a protective device because of severe anxiety, something that reinforces the subject's own resources is a good solution, such as a sword of light or connection to spiritual allies. In the "Dragon" session, it was suggested to the subject that she use her "good will" to make contact with the dragon, which enabled her to assume a positive and courageous attitude. If a subject is reminded that no force is more powerful than the force of love, it may evoke sufficient love to bring a constructive resolution.

This is not to say that negative feelings should be suppressed. This would cause the imagery to become blocked

or shallow and prevent resolution. Negative feelings need to be acknowledged and expressed. The subject can be supported in expressing these from "center to center" with intent to heal and not simply to hurt.

In our experience, any "negative" symbol can be utilized in a positive way. Rather than being avoided or destroyed, it can serve the therapeutic process. Thus, rather than having the subject attempt to remove a wall that appears in the imagery, as the oneirotherapeutic method proposes (Virel and Frétigny, 1968, p.74), one can explore, as Gestalt therapists do (Perls, 1969) what function it is playing for the subject. In such a case, the subject can "become" the wall through symbolic identification and explore the part of himself that feels the need to protect something. He can also dialogue with the wall and negotiate more mature ways to protect himself.

An important area of work in therapy is healing the parental "imagoes". Dialogic Imagery can play a valuable role in this process. The parental imago is a term used by Freud to refer to the representation of the parent figures within a person's psyche. These imagoes appear as dream figures or other symbolic expressions of the psyche. They are often projected upon other persons in the subject's life. Most people who come for therapy have unhealthy or immature representations of the parental imagoes. The parent figure may be devalued and dehumanized; it may be tyrannical, feared and hated; it may be idealized or bigger than life. All such unhealthy images must transform for the person to achieve true freedom. Claiming one's own power and autonomy in relation to the parent figures is an important step in maturation and healing. This only occurs when forgiveness at a deep level has taken place, when judgment has been replaced with compassion.

Even though a person's actual parents may have many negative aspects, it is possible, within the symbolic world of imagery, to come to terms with them, to forgive and understand them, and to see their weaknesses with compassion. This is then reflected in the person's relationship with the real life parents, whether or not they are still living. Of even greater importance are the changes that occur in the person's relationship with himself. When hatred, fear, and dependency toward the parents are released, the person is no longer identified with a child or victim role. He is more able to love, to engage in healthy relationships, and to connect with the transpersonal energies of the Self. In Jungian terms, the "negative animus" and "negative anima" are transformed and become positive resources for the client.

Partial transformations of the parental imagoes occur in several of the transcribed sessions. The session of the "Idol" shows a transformation of the mother imago from a negative archetypal form to a positive human form, while the "Mother and Child" and "Cradling Mother" sessions deal with the mother imago in her human form. In the "Dragon" session transformation occurs from a negative to a positive archetypal figure, which then becomes a "psychopompus" or inner guide. (Whitmont, 1969; Jung, 1957)

A few other technical points will be helpful to those not familiar with mental imagery work.

When people are new to mental imagery, it may be helpful to explain that things happen differently in the imaginal world. The guide can point out that in this realm they are not bound by the ordinary "laws of nature". They can, for example, do such things as levitate, breathe under water, or communicate telepathically. Some people may have difficulty initially in learning to let the imagery unfold, as we are conditioned in our culture to hold on tightly to rational control. However, with patience, this skill can be learned. And in learning to let go to our depth process, we acquire a new trust in our inner wisdom and in the power for healing and evolution at the core of our being.

Weaver speaks eloquently of the value in simply witnessing the unfoldment of an imagery sequence without allowing the rational mind to interfere:

"We must be able to let things happen in the psyche. For us this becomes a real art of which few people know anything. Consciousness is forever interfering, helping, correcting, and negating, and never leaving the simple growth of the psychic process in peace. It would be a simple enough thing to do if only simplicity were not the most difficult of all things. It consists solely in watching objectively the development of any fragment of fantasy."

(Weaver, 1964, p. 18)

Another point to bear in mind is that an imagery session can take many forms. The guide must learn to flow with the process. It does not seem important to force the imagery into a unified dramatic mold, as in the oneirodrama. If a particular imagery sequence is replaced suddenly by another one, it is not necessarily a sign of avoidance. It may be simply that the unconscious is better able to deal with what is emerging through different set of images. This process frequently occurs in nocturnal dreams when the scene suddenly switches and the theme is taken up through a different metaphor.

The question of how to deal with silence during the session may come up. The guide must determine whether a particular silence is productive. Sometimes a subject is silent for a long time when going through an intensely moving experience. In such cases, it is important that he have sufficient time to absorb it. If the person starts to move away from an important experience too rapidly, the guide can suggest that he stay with it longer and offer suggestions to deepen the experience. On the other hand, silences may develop that simply indicate the subject's attention has wandered. Silences of this type may occur if the person hits resistance or if the session has been long and the person is fatigued. The guide in such a case can ask a neutral question such as "What are you experiencing now?" or "What is happening now?" in order to decide on the best course of action. In the case of fatigue, it is best to wrap up the session as soon as possible. The transcribed sessions provide examples of various types of silence and these are discussed in context.

There are a few points to bear in mind about terminating an imagery session. As we said above, it is desirable to limit the imagery work to about 45 minutes, or slightly more if needed to reach a good stopping point. It is also important to allow time for the grounding process. In special cases, when the subject has good ego strength, it is possible to leave the session unresolved, provided this is framed in a positive way. This is what happened in the session prior to the transcribed "Idol" session. In spite of the best efforts of the subject and the guide, we seemed to have reached an impasse. Something in the subject simply did not want to make contact with the idol. She preferred to leave the imagery where it was and live with this "refusal" within herself for a week to see what she could learn from it. It is advisable to make such decisions in concurrence with the subject and to ask the person, before terminating, whether he feels sufficient closure.

The question of when to use the technique of dialogic imagery has not yet been discussed. Virel and Frétiigny have pointed out some clinical limitations. It is not, however, simply a question of whether a person is able to visualize easily. Certain people seem more able to connect with their inner process through imagery than others. This may be related to the introversion-extroversion factor as well as to intuitive development. In general, people of an introverted tendency with a well-developed intuition seem to find imagery more meaningful than extraverted types whose intuitive faculties are weak. The latter, though able to image may find it easier to "connect" with their own material through other techniques such as role-playing and feedback from other people. There is also the issue of persons who may prefer to indulge in the fascinating world of archetypal experience to the neglect of their practical life in the outer world. For such persons, mental imagery may be counter-indicated, or will be used to a limited degree.

Many of these theoretical points are illustrated in the transcripts of sessions which follow.

## **THE IDOL**

### **BACKGROUND**

The subject, whom we shall call Esther, is a woman in her late twenties, who is employed as a counselor. She has been in psychosynthesis for 5 months and has had several previous sessions of dialogic imagery.

Esther's personal history, as reflected in this session, involves a mother who played the martyr role to an alcoholic father. Owing to her husband's heavy drinking and frequent loss of employment, Esther's mother was obliged to work as a cleaning woman in order to make ends meet. This began when Esther was 4 or 5 years old, and it resulted in the small child trying to display "model" behavior, denying her own feelings and needs so as not to place an added burden on her mother.

Esther learned at an early age to feel guilty about making demands of her own or wanting something for herself. She has adopted a masochistic pattern, allowing herself to be taken advantage of by other people and then resenting it. She is afraid that she will not be liked unless she sacrifices her own needs to what she imagines are the needs and demands of other people. Toward her mother she experiences a mixture of pity, adoration and aversion, feeling sorry for the hard life her mother has had. She feels responsible toward her mother, yet resents the burden that places upon herself.

This particular session is the sequel to a session from the previous week in which Esther had seen a golden idol that looked like her mother with herself as a child 4-5 years of age. She attempted to establish some communication between those two figures without success and experienced a great deal of resistance to further work at that time. Hence, it was proposed that we begin this time with the unresolved situation from the previous session. This session was translated from the French.

### **TRANSCRIPTION OF SESSION AND COMMENTARY**

G-1. Let's start today's session with the image you had at the end of last week's session. Can you describe the scene as you now see it?

S-1. Humm...The room is darker. I am there about 4 or 5 years old and there is an idol in the background. It is imprisoned in a layer of gold plating. A light is on the idol; there is a spotlight aimed at it. The rest is dark. That's about it. (The idol appears to have meaning on several levels. On the one hand it represents Esther's mother whom she has idolized and given a great deal of power over her life by sacrificing her own needs for what she imagined were the mothers' needs. On the other hand, the idol represents one of Esther's own "subpersonalities" which is rigid and superior, demanding homage from others.)

G-2. OK. Can you communicate with it?

S-2. It seems to me that in order to communicate with it, I will have to remove this armor-like thing which is covering the idol.

G-3. That's a good idea.

S-3. I'm getting closer to it. My God! I remove the covering and I see (sigh) I see a vampire underneath. I see, I really see something horrible—an atrocious-looking face (sigh). It's contorting its face in ugly ways.

G-4. Do you want to communicate with the vampire?

S-4. I am afraid of it...you know...I am afraid, maybe...Can I ask that face why it is so frightening?

G-5. Did you say you want to ask it why it is that way?

S-5. It seems to be saying that this is just another mask it has to wear. (silence)

G-7. Are you drifting off?

S-7. Um-Hum. (silence)

G-8. Are you back with the face now?

S-8. I will try to push myself a little bit...Um, I'm asking the idol: "What is forcing you to wear this?" (silence) I don't know...(silence) It seems as though...I feel that...You know what? I really don't feel like doing this imagery now. Well... the way I see it.. .it's a little as though last week I did not want to resolve certain things inside myself. This week it's as though I don't want to work them out with you. It's as though I were saying: "I will give her nothing", you know.

G-21. Maybe you are projecting the "master" image on me today and seeing yourself as my slave. (This was in reference to another set of subpersonalities we had explored in a previous session. They are, of course, closely linked to the vampire/victim set of subpersonalities. The conflict manifesting through the idol and the little girl was also being expressed in the transference relationship.

S-21. Um-hum!

G-22. And feeling that I am forcing you to do something you don't really want to do.

S-22. Well, as we're talking about it, I can feel my resistance diminishing. (Acknowledgement of the transference takes the charge off so it no longer interferes with the imaging.)

G-23. Do you feel that you'd like to continue with the imagery now?

S-23. Yes, I feel more ready to continue now.

G-24. Well, when we left the imagery, I had asked you to try to identify with the vampire. Do you want to try now?

S-24. Um-Humm. As I see the vampire now, it seems as though it is very hungry and it's about to get up. I feel that, being in the vampire's skin I would like to attack the little girl who is standing there...because she looks so defenseless and that attracts me. She looks so fragile, with no means of defense, it seems to provoke this reaction in me. She looks so innocent. (At this point the role of the "complementary" subpersonality has been identified. A tormentor subpersonality cannot exist without a willing victim.)

G-25. What would you like to do to her?

S-25. To destroy her, to strangle her, to kill her, to devour her.

G-26. Can you understand why it is that her defenselessness provokes you to want to destroy her?

S-26. Well, I'm aware that I have this reaction, but why? (pause) It's because she's so ambivalent. It seems that at the same time she is asking me to destroy her and not to hurt her. This is probably what provokes my reaction...Her message is not clear at all. (pause) Then, it's really me, this little girl. I mean, she has my face (sigh) It couldn't be more me than this...I suppose this is what's causing my reaction...It's because she seems to be pleading but there are these two sides to her message.

G-27. What makes her want you to hurt her?

S-27. (Pause) Oh my God! Weird answers are coming to me. As long as she's inviting me to hurt her, I am stuck with my vampire skin. It's as though there is something magical that could happen if only she wouldn't ask me to destroy her. I feel that I could be transformed into something other than a vampire, but the fact remains that she is asking me to destroy her...and it is as though, well, the miracle can't happen. I am caught in my own game...I

think there's something in that.

G-28. Would you like to tell the little girl that you are fed up with being a vampire and ask her to stop provoking you?

S-28. Listen, I have been jinxed for a long time. I am caught; I have to destroy people, to devour them. And as long as people stand in front of me asking me to destroy them and not to do so, it's as though I am forced to stay in this shell. But I am getting really fed up with this! Yet, I don't seem to be able to do what is needed to gain freedom and you don't do what you could to set me free. Instead, you keep my appetite for destruction whetted. I would like to change. Gee, I do really want to change so much.

G-29. Would you like to try identifying with the little girl now? (When the attitudes of one protagonist have been sufficiently explored, it is desirable to suggest symbolic identification with the other figures involved.)

S-29. Yes, I have become her.

G-30. How is she taking this?

S-30. (Silence) She is a little confused I think. I think she realizes that she is being provocative but she doesn't know how to stop it. I think that she too would like to put an end to this game...And me, as the little girl, I would like to see this stopped because it terrifies me. I am fed up with being scared to death!

G-31. How did your mother frighten you when you were a little girl? (The next part of the session is an attempt to bring about "grounding" of the imagery within the context of Esther's life.)

S-31. Her sadness frightened me. It was not something aggressive...it was her sadness.

G-32. Was it her sadness that sucked you, that vampirized you...that drew all your energy?

S-32. Yes, that's it.

G-33. Why do you want her to destroy you? As the little girl, can you understand this? (At this point, we are returning to the imagery itself in order to shed light on Esther's attitude towards her mother. Esther is once again symbolically identifying with the child in the imagery.)

S-33. Why I want her to destroy me...is that the question?

G-34. Yes, are you aware that, as the little girl, you are sending her this double message?

S-34. Oh yes! Oh yes! I go towards her and then I... (sigh) That part of me that is seeking destruction offers its throat; but the other part of me that doesn't want that is the one that tries to flee the situation, that doesn't want to play this game, that... (sigh) But there really is a part of me that is offering itself up.

G-35. What does this part of you seek in offering its throat to the vampire?

(It is important to try to identify the goal of the subpersonality so that healthier ways can be found to satisfy its needs.)

S-35. (Silence) Well (sigh) it's to relieve the other person or so that the other one will stop harassing her. Yes, when she's offering herself that way it is as though she were saying: "OK. She'll take what she needs, the vampire, and afterward things will be all right. But there is always another time, and another, and another..."

G-36. How did you offer yourself up to your mother when you were a child?

(We are now leaving the imagery again to work with the childhood experience.)

S-36. You know, I think it was by immolating, by sacrificing things that were part of me—things that were in

me that I was killing. My way of offering myself was to put on my best behavior or to act as though I didn't have any problems, and so on. At times, the little girl was sad, you know; she was afraid and it showed. But as I grew up, I seemed to get the message that I shouldn't show that there were things that made me feel unhappy or insecure.

G-37. Would that have made your mother even sadder?

G-37. Oh yes! I did not have the right to look unhappy.

G-38. It was as though your own needs didn't count anymore...

G-38. Well, when I was very little I used to show it when I felt afraid or unhappy. But as I grew up, I didn't show it anymore...

G-39. Around what age did you stop showing your feelings?

S-39. Hummm.. (sigh) Starting maybe when I was...but I was showing it just the same...around 8 years old...but there were moments when it came out anyway. It is as though I was putting a blanket over to hide them...but there were moments when it showed.

G-40. In the imagery, you are quite young; you are 4 or 5 years old. Maybe this pattern started at a younger age? (The precise age of child figures in the imagery is often of importance and may provide a clue to developmental crises.)

S-40. Maybe...It's hard for me to have any real memories of this. That's possible—quite possible. Yeah! This is the period when my mother...Oh God! when my mother went back to work...I was 4 or 5 years old. (By focusing on what happened when she was 4 or 5, Esther was able to remember that her mother had started working long hours outside the home at this time and to understand the relationship between her mother's fatigue and her feelings of not wanting to create extra trouble.)

G-41. Ah! Your mother went back to work then...

S-41. Yes, that's right.

G-42. And she came home very tired?

S-42. Yeah! We were living with some elderly aunts who took care of us during the day while mother was working. Ah yes! It was at that age that I began to understand that she was suffering. It seems that before I was 4 years old she seemed to be a source of strength to me and that was all. After that age, I still saw her as strong, but as a suffering martyr too.

G-43. Can you understand now how the fact of sacrificing yourself is keeping you both prisoners?

S-43. I can see that clearly now.

G-44. Is the little girl able now to send a different kind of message? (With the grounding established, a suggestion is made at this point to return to the imagery so a higher level resolution can emerge.)

S-44. Umm. (laugh) Oh my God! Uh...what's happening is that suddenly, the little girl is growing, growing and then she starts to radiate, you know, to radiate light, and then she keeps on growing. (sigh) (It frequently happens that children in the imagery start to grow up when the source of an issue is recognized and attachment to the child's role is released. In beginning to experience her own true power Esther is also connecting with the inner light of her spiritual essence.)

G-45 How does she feel?

S-45. Stronger...and now she also has the feeling that she can do things.

G-46 And the mother how does she feel?

S-46. She's still the way she was at the beginning though...I think...I have the feeling that in the little girl that grew up there may be everything that's needed to transform the other one. The other one was not transformed by herself. She has remained the way she was. I guess that the one that grew up should go near her, or touch the vampire, to make things change. Because the victim has created the vampire, in a sense, it is she who must take the initiative in releasing the vampire from her role.

G-47. Can you see her getting closer to the vampire?

S-47. Um-Humm. It's strange...it is like a blessing that she is giving to the vampire-something that is—uh—something very powerful. (Esther is aligned with her own higher Self at this point and able to transmit transpersonal energies.)

G-48. How does the vampire feel?

S-48. (Silence) It's as though there is a shell falling off. You know, I see the vampire as some sort of a mask or a piece of bark falling off a tree when it is useless and inside there is my mother, fairly young, with a smile on her face and looking well. (The mother imago is no longer seen as devouring or pitiful; she has inner resources of her own so she no longer needs Esther to feed and protect her.)

G-49. Is there something that you would like to express to your mother? (It is important to encourage communication until some sort of reconciliation takes place.)

S-49. Maybe, uh...(pause) some tenderness, but on...equal terms. That's it. That I am equal to her...we are on the same level. She is not the one that used to eat me up and I am not the smaller one; neither do I see myself as bigger and stronger with her being sad. So I am holding her like this (by the shoulders) and I am looking right at her face and what is different is maybe that while doing this I don't feel that she is miserable. I can feel that she is as capable as I am of living by herself...I don't have to carry her weight (silence)...I don't know. I feel there is a lot of clarity in this. You know, for me it means a lot, this relationship of equality. (The goal in working with the parental imago in the process of Dialogic Imagery is to achieve just this: a situation where the parent figures have come down to life size and are perceived simply as fellow human beings. The subject becomes inwardly free in relation to the parent- able to relate to the parent with love and compassion, unburdened by fear, guilt, resentment, or dependency.)

G-50 You are not her victim anymore?

S-50. No.

G-51. Nor are you responsible for her life?

S-51. No. She is autonomous. I am not afraid she will fall if I leave her there.

G-52. Does something else need to happen before we leave the imagery? (It is important to make sure that there are no "loose ends" before terminating a session.)

S-52. No. I think that...for me it's clear. I am staying with this image in which I'm in front of her, holding her, and she is in front of me and we are looking at each other, but there is no complication in this...(pause)

G-53. Do you want to say something? (This suggestion was made as it seemed that the communication was incomplete.)

S-53. I would like to tell her: "I love you when you are like this". (silence) I would like to tell her that this is just the way I love her when I am not, on the one hand, afraid of her or on the other hand when I am not obligated. It pleases me just like that.

## **DISCUSSION**

This session illustrates a number of important aspects of the Dialogic Imagery method. First of all, it is a good example of working with a parental imago (subjective representations of the parent). In cases such as this where the imago is distorted through fear and compulsion on the part of the subject, it must be humanized.

In the imagery as in life, Esther was torn between her desire to help her mother and her inability to assuage her mother's sadness along with resentment that she had to do this. She was afraid to approach the idol because she must have sensed the vampire underneath- the burdened mother who could make demands upon her that she was unable to meet.

In the course of the present imagery session, Esther gains insight into and comes to take responsibility for the role she has played in perpetuating the "game" of self-sacrifice. Thus, the child is able to grow up and see her mother as autonomous and equal. Because in real life Esther received a good deal of affection from her mother and, in turn, felt warmly toward her, the issue in coming to terms with the maternal imago was not, as in cases where affection was lacking, to establish love and forgiveness. Rather, it was to establish equality and autonomy between the mother and child.

The first step in doing this was to see the vampire image behind the idol mask. This allowed Esther to recognize the pattern of self-immolation in which she had participated. By seeing her own role in creating and maintaining the vampire imago, Esther was able to transform it.

As it was pointed out previously, the figures in depth imagery, as in dreams, represent different aspects of the subject. In this context, the idol represents one of Esther's subpersonalities which is rigid and superior, demanding homage from others in subtle ways. The complementary pole to this aspect of Esther is the subpersonality represented by the child who feels weak, helpless and inferior. In another session, we worked on this material through role-playing and dialogue between the child and idol subpersonalities. She became more aware of her phallic "animus" qualities represented by the idol. She realized her need to control people by personal magnetism and intellectual brilliance. By taking the perspective of the "Self" or "fair witness" she was able to see herself and the games she had been playing with a good deal of love and compassion. A heavy weight of self-condemnation was lifted and has not returned since.

Following this session, Esther's self-image improved considerably. She seemed more confident, radiant and relaxed. She was given the task of applying the will to these insights, attempting to avoid situations where she would fall into the role of the idol or the helpless child. She received positive feedback in the groups she led where people found her to be more real and more present.

## THE ORGAN

### BACKGROUND

The subject for this session is Esther whose background was given with her previous session, "The Idol". The present session took place about two months after the Idol session. A good deal of progress has been made during this period, in which Esther has developed much more self-acceptance and a more positive, buoyant outlook on life.

This particular session explores some of the new positive elements that are emerging in Esther's personality: her creativity and sense of connection with others. Although Esther is a very "creative" person in the sense that she has always liked to express herself in a variety of media, including poetry, music, painting, and sculpture, much of this expression in the past has tended to be of a tormented nature. In this session, Esther experiences receiving supraconscious inspiration for her creative expression.

This session was selected for transcription as it illustrates how auditory imagery in the form of music can be a vehicle for consciousness transformation. The grounding process in this session is also of particular interest because of the difficulties encountered and their final resolution.

It was decided that this would be a "free imagery" session, with no particular theme or image as a point of departure.

### TRANSCRIPT OF SESSION AND COMMENTARY

G-1. Just allow an image to appear on your mind-screen and tell me what you see.

S-1. Well, what I see is a fairly large room which is quite bare. At the right, way up, there are windows—fairly small windows which give just enough light. The wall across is made of stones and is quite high. Then on the left there is an organ and at the right there is a little writing desk with old papers in it. There are a few other simple pieces of furniture chairs and benches—but not much. It reminds me of a room in a monastery.

G-2. Are you in this room? (This question is to establish the presence of the imaginal body.)

S-2. Yes, I am at the door. And I have the feeling that I have something to do in there. It seems that...I have to get back into contact with the objects that are in there. In a vague way, I think this is linked with my childhood. (sigh) The organ seems to be more associated with my father and the little writing desk with my mother. (silence) Everything is very dusty and there are spiders' webs. (silence).

G-3. What would you like to do?

S-3. I feel a little passive. I'm standing there and I'm looking...(silence) I feel rather curious about the old papers in the writing desk. I think they are letters...all tied together.

G-4. Would you like to read them? (There are often important messages contained in the written documents which are found in mental imagery sessions.)

S-4. Um-Humm. They are in front of me now. There are many piles of papers. (sigh) I take the first one. It's strange what comes to me, you know, as I open the letter, it looks like music...music written for the organ. It is written in Gregorian. It's very, very old. It's written in Latin too. I didn't expect anything like this.

G-5. How does this make you feel?

S-5. Well, I feel kind of confused and maybe a little let down. I believe I was hoping to find something

clearer...It's as though I will have to decipher some more. (sigh) I feel that's all there is to it - written music...no letters.

G-6. Do you think there is a message for you in the music?

S-6. Well, surely there must be! I tell myself: "It is trying to tell you something!" Surely, it is. It's not a fluke that I've seen this. I think there is only one way to find out—to take the partitions and play them. (sigh) So, then I take a partition and I sit at the organ. But I have never played in my life. There are many stops. It's strange—the key board looks as though it has been cleaned quite thoroughly. At any rate, I can play right away. (silence) Humm! This is a lot of fun. I didn't know I could play that well—effortlessly!

G-7. What kind of music are you playing?

S-7. It's pretty close to Bach. A Bach toccata... (silence)

G-8. Keep on playing and try to understand the meaning this music has for you.

S-8. (Silence) It seems that...it is mostly expressing joy. It's something in which there is a lot of joy. This music by Bach is something which is very light and airy...which soars...it reminds me of a kind of incense in a way. It's strange. It seems that I'm not able to see anything sad in all this, but I have the feeling that I should. That bothers me a little bit... it seems that it's difficult for me to stay open to what's going on because in the back of my mind I am telling myself: "I must find some things that will link me to my childhood".

G-9. Try to stay with what's happening.

S-9. Um-hum. (silence) I go on playing. It seems to remove the dust from all over the room. Everything is getting clean. I don't feel that everything is dusty as it first seemed to be. At any rate, not the organ itself. (sigh) There is no more dust on top of it. Now it seems like an organ that has been often used—not like it has been abandoned. (Making contact with supraconscious energies can remove "dirt" or negative energy from a situation. It seems likely that the abandoned organ may represent Esther's own creative self-expression, abandoned to some degree in childhood to avoid burdening her mother. This may be the significance of the fact that she associated the empty room with her childhood.)

G-10. Is it removing the dust from the room?

S-10. It seems that way. I have a vague impression that the things in the room...though I feel this more strongly about the organ...that especially the organ is not as dusty as it was before. And more and more, I have the impression that the room is not an abandoned room anymore, that...I feel as though I were in a chapel where there are a lot of people. It seems that I am playing and people are listening. There is a contemplative mood...Yes definitely, the room has now become a chapel full of people, sitting in pews and listening to the music. (silence). (The room has been transformed into a chapel—a religious setting. This reflects the transpersonal nature of Esther's experience.)

G-11. And how do you feel now?

S-11. I feel quite well. I feel...that...it's strange that I, who have always been so afraid to play the piano in front of people because I made mistakes and felt badly about It...and now, it's as though it doesn't bother me at all. It is flowing smoothly. There is nothing in my mind that says: "What am I going to look like if I miss a note?" I am playing. That's all. I am playing. This is what's important. (silence) (Esther is able here, for the first time in her imagery, to get in touch with an inner space in which she feels free from her habitual fear of criticism and having to meet the expectations of other people.

G-12. What is your relationship with the audience? (This question was asked as it seemed important to focus Esther's attention on what seemed to represent a new way for her of relating to people.)

S-12. (Laugh) That's exactly what I was thinking about just now. I was just thinking that I was a little cut off from them because I am not facing them. I am playing the organ and they are behind me. (sigh) Then...just when I was telling myself that I was cut off from them, I heard voices. I heard something like a choir singing...so I realized that they were also taking part in what was happening. I can now hear very clearly people singing the Kyrie of Mozart's Requiem. It's really beautiful. I don't know what part the organ has to play in this...but...let's say that I do feel closer to the people than when they were not singing. (silence) It's strange, in the imagery, the singing goes on and I go on playing and I want so much for everybody to be really close in this. And then...it's like as though the voices...and the organ...it's like a bouquet—like flowers opening up...soaring up...(sigh-silence). The image I am seeing now is like I am outside the cathedral where this is happening and I see the music soaring up like a bouquet...that's strange, I am less preoccupied with myself than with what's happening...(silence). I don't feel like thinking about anything else. I want to stay with this image.

G-13. Stay with it. This is important.

S-13. (Silence) In any case, one thing is really clear to me. This is the interaction of what is happening externally and internally. I mean to say that the cathedral, the people and everything that's happening correspond to things I have to live in the everyday world and at the same time, me, the cathedral and the people also correspond to something inside of me.

G-14. They are all like different parts of yourself? (This response was just a reflection to let Esther know that I was with her and to invite any further elaboration of her comment.)

S-14. Yes. (silence) Also, I feel a lot of will behind all this.

G-15. You do? What kind of will is it?

S-15. The will to make things happen this way, that my life should be like this.

G-16. Can you think of concrete situations where this could happen? (At this point, the grounding process begins, in which an effort is made to transfer the learning from the imagery experience to specific life situations. Esther's comment about wanting to live this way provided a good opening for this transition.)

S-16. Yes...when I am in a group. That is one place, you know. When I am leading a group I often feel like the girl who is afraid to miss a note when she is playing in front of people. The message seems to be: "Go on and play. Then everything will be all right. Sooner or later people will join you and start to sing with you. Then you will be all united." The same need is there in my interpersonal relationships. These are the concrete situations where I have to be responsible for myself. The situations in which...in fact this applies to every situation, as I should always behave in a responsible manner, except that it's harder when I have a leadership role to play. Even when I don't have a role to play, and I am just with people, the problem is there. (silence)...

G-17. Can you think of a specific group situation in which you could imagine being with people in this spirit of togetherness? (It is being suggested that Esther use the "as if" technique here—i.e. that she imagine herself acting as if she had the desired attitudes).

S-17. Well...where it would be really useful, even though it doesn't happen often, is when I am left all alone to lead a group where there is usually a co-leader. At these times, and even when both of us are there, I am often preoccupied by the fact that I have to take my place...you know...and not leave everything to the others.

G-18. Can you imagine yourself in such a group setting now?

S-18. Um-Humm.

G-19. Are you all alone with the group?

S-19. Ugh!

G-20. Try to stay with the feeling that you are united with the others. That you are all part of the same bouquet.

S-20 That's tough! Because when I see myself in the group alone, they are against me.

G-21. Now, try to reconnect with the experience that you had while playing the organ. (Persistence and patience may help if the "as if" technique does not work the first time.)

S-21 Humm...

G-22. Try to use this feeling you had to become centered again and then go back to being with the group in another way.

S-22. (Long silence) What is coming is that...that I don't have to make them sing. They have a choice whether they want to sing or not. In other words, it's their decision if they want to participate in the group or not. I am trying to play my part as well as possible...

G-23. How do you feel now in the group?

S-23. Well, I still haven't regained the bouquet feeling. I'm still afraid.

G-24. Maybe if you let events unfold you could rediscover, right within these events, the lightness you felt when you were playing the organ. Try to apply the will that you have to make this musical experience a reality in your everyday life.

S-24. (Long silence) It is difficult...

G-25. What is happening in the group?...

S-25. Well, I was just thinking, I am a person amongst others. But what is coming to me now is that something in me still feels that I have to direct the group and control what happens. That's a heavy feeling.

G-26. Try to let something happen within the group.

S-26. Well, what seems to be happening now is that they are getting angry at me. They are not pleased with me.

G-27. All right. Now try to respond to the fact that they are angry with you in a centered way. (long silence) How do you see yourself reacting?

S-27. Well, I just see myself withdrawing.

G-28. Try to apply your will to do something else. Try to keep the music with you.

S-28. (Sigh-silence) Yes, I am trying to be centered. I will try first of all to let them express freely what is making them angry.

G-29. What are they saying?

S-29. That I am always blocking them. That I do not allow them to live their own experiences.

G-30. Can you ask them to tell you how they would like you to be? (This is a direct suggestion which is intended to elicit the wisdom inherent in the group concerning the way Esther plays her role as a leader. If antagonistic elements in the imagery are given a voice, one generally finds that they have an important message.)

S-30. Um-Humm...(laugh) "We want you to be you. Don't try to play a role. You are trying too hard, you are so

busy trying to settle everything that's going on that you don't allow us to live our own experiences." My reaction to this is to...maybe the thing to do after listening to them is to try and tell them how I feel about what's happening. What I feel when I hear things like that is a little sadness...because...Maybe I should also tell them how hard it is for me to receive anger sometimes. Because, sometimes, they do tell me things and I close up a little. I close up an awful lot even. On the other hand, I tell myself that maybe we can try to live this together. It teaches me an awful lot and you people could probably gain by it too. It might be valuable for you to look at your side of it too. I don't want to throw it back at them. But I would like to tell them: "Well, let's make this an exercise. Let's try to find out what it is in me that annoys you, maybe we can...In any case, I can look at myself and maybe you can discover something about yourselves through these things that annoy you in me. We can all look at what we are living together here."

G-31. Does it look as though they will accept this idea? (It is important to check out the attitudes of the "opposing" party. If they are predominantly unreceptive, further dialogue is required.)

S-31. There are two or three who don't look too happy. But on the whole, it doesn't look too bad...They seem to be saying: "Well, now you are being yourself and we like this!"

G-32. Can you imagine an exercise that you could use for this purpose?

S-32. Well, it would be something related to projections. I would like to suggest to the group...I would say: "There are things that"...No, I could take myself as the example. "There is something I find very annoying when you get angry at me, because it seems that you are trying to put the blame on me for everything that doesn't go the way you would like it to." And I would like to ask myself: "What is it that makes me mad about you and how can I find this in myself?" We could all take five minutes to relax and then ask ourselves the question: "What is it in the other one that annoys me and then how can I find the same thing within myself?" I would try to work in the direction of projections. But we should be careful about judging ourselves, as this often happens when working along those lines. We can try afterwards to find reasons to be pleased with ourselves, at least be happy to have understood something more clearly. Anyway, I want to live this experience in a positive way and I think it is important for the group too...to find within our self what we don't like in another person...we don't like this much. So it seems to me that it is also important to see to it that people feel good about having seen things more clearly—that they congratulate themselves for having seen more clearly. I would have to be the first one to do that, right?

G-33. Do you want to imagine doing the exercise to see what happens? (It seemed important that Esther actually go through this exercise to "try on" her new attitude at the imaginal level and thus be better prepared for situations in real life.)

S-33 Humm? Do what? (There was probably some resistance to doing this which resulted in her not understanding the question.)

G-34. Do the exercise.

S-34. (Sigh-silence) At any rate, what I discover is not new. I have known for a while now that when I react to their judgment it is simply the echo of my own self-condemnation. And the group in doing this exercise find out a little more clearly that they are blocking their own energy to some extent, that it's not just me who is in their way and not allowing them to live their own thing...Not everybody in the group reaches this conclusion...Maybe out of 6 of 12 people, 5 or 6 are open to this, but there are 4 or 5 who still think it's more my fault than their own.

G-35. How do you feel toward the group now?

S-35. Well, I do feel less guilty. My feeling is that I have done what I could in view of the situation.

G-36. And how do they feel toward you?

S-36. I feel a great deal of warmth and acceptance from most of the group. A couple of people don't look too

pleased, but you can't please everybody, you know.

G-37. Can you accept the fact that they are not pleased? (It was especially important for Esther that she learn to tolerate the fact that some people may not be pleased with her, without feeling guilty or defensive.

S-37. Yes. I feel pleased with the way it worked out. I wanted to avoid the two extremes of throwing this back at them, as though all the responsibility was theirs, and taking everything upon myself, and feeling guilty about doing something wrong. I don't feel that I did either of these things this time. In real life, I often get defensive when I feel attacked, but this time I felt I was able to accept their anger without having to defend or to condemn myself.

## **DISCUSSION**

This session is a variation on the archetypal theme of "finding one's own place" that is part of the individuation process. One could think of it as a sacred ritual created by the psyche. In the basic form of this ritual, the person enters a room or some other space of special significance in which he is free to be totally himself without external interference. The keynote is that there is no longer a need to conform to the expectations of others. The person experiences a positive and accepting attitude toward himself, with a sense of his essential worth and dignity. Some form of creative inspiration is usually involved, which may take an expressive form, as in this session, or may simply be a new awareness. (The imagery session entitled "A Room Of One's Own" provides an interesting contrast to this session as the subject, rather than expressing herself creatively, simply accepts the essential worth of her life without feeling she has to "do" something to prove this.)

A certain amount of preparatory inner work must be done before the "place of one's own" appears. This includes some self-awareness, some ownership of personal responsibility, and some progress in healing parental imagoes. Esther's work in her "Idol" session was no doubt an important preparation for this experience. By bringing the mother imago "down to size", Esther was able to claim her own strength instead of projecting it onto the mother. She was able to recognize her own worth and realize that she had a right to live, rather than feeling she must sacrifice her own needs for the sake of the mother.

The significant role of the music in this session deserves comment. For some subjects who are sensitive to the musical dimension, music may be an important medium of communication, particularly for supraconscious energies. Although Esther was at first disappointed to find musical partitions rather than written words, it was suggested that the music might have a message. That it did is not surprising, given Esther's love for music. What was important for her here was being able to play without her usual fear of making a mistake or being judged by others. Although she had not rehearsed the music and did not believe she could play so well, she played with great confidence and inspiration. It was as though Esther realized she had a higher purpose in that place and was prepared to do whatever was needed to fulfill it. The experience which ensued had some qualities of an initiation experience. She was raised to a new level of consciousness by her courage and steadfastness.

The grounding part of this session is of particular interest. It illustrates the difficulty at times of integrating supraconscious awarenesses at the personality level and the value of persistence. The "as if" technique was employed to facilitate exploration of a new mode of being and to allow for rehearsal of new attitudes and behaviors. A number of questions were asked by the guide to ensure that the grounding was complete. Esther reported that the session was of great benefit to her during the following week when she handled a group conflict with much greater skill and ease than she would have done in the past.

Dialogic Imagery provides a powerful way to access spiritual energies. This can be of great importance to a person like Esther who is responsive to higher values. A beautiful and inspiring vision can have powerful and lasting effects in a person's life. As it was said in Isaiah, "Where there is no vision, the people perish". In Esther's case the image of the music soaring up like a bouquet of flowers had great inspirational value. It activated her will to make this vision a reality in her life. This is clearly stated when she says: "I also feel a lot of will behind all of this...the will to make things happen in this way... that my life should be like this". And it is only when the will is involved that significant change can occur.

## **CRADLING MOTHER**

### **BACKGROUND**

The subject, whom we shall call Margaret, is a physician in her early 40's who, in recent years, has been working in the field of psychotherapy. She is happily married and the mother of two children. Her issues are a certain shyness, lack of assertion, overly frantic life-style, and recurrent depression which sets in with each visit to her mother. She has had three and a half years of Freudian analysis, one and a half years of Jungian analysis, along with some work in Gestalt, encounter and a variety of other approaches to personal development, without resolving the basic problem with her mother. This was our first session.

This session has been chosen because it brings out an important aspect of reconciliation with the parental imagoes concerning, in particular, the levels at which this can take place. In the first stage there is some reconciliation at the personality level. Margaret asserts herself as a separate person with a right to lead her own life, while treating her mother with respect and concern. In the second stage, through Desoille's technique of symbolic ascension in imaginal space, she experiences a more spiritual level of reconciliation, with love and compassion for her mother. Though I rarely employ this device, Desoille's technique of ascent seemed appropriate in this case.

This session was much longer than usual, lasting for close to one and one half hours. This was done because the subject was from out of town and had to meet a departure deadline. If she had been a local person, the work would likely have been done in two separate sessions. The first part of the session is summarized.

Our session started with the recounting of a recent dream. Margaret saw herself inside a house being attacked by Indians. In a later sequence of the dream she saw a garden surrounded by six foot walls. Two old farmers were saying that they wondered why people always build the wall twice as high as necessary. We decided to start the guided imagery session with an unresolved element of the dream. Margaret was asked to imagine herself in the house again and, instead of hiding from the Indians, she would try to make contact with them. (When dream figures attempt to break into a house, they represent elements of the person's psyche seeking integration within the personality. As we will see, the qualities of the Indian were important for Margaret to integrate and helped her encounter her mother in a constructive way. )

In the imagery she met an Indian whom she described as "very strong and direct, and sort of pure. He just does what is necessary, and nothing stops him". She was slightly afraid, but overcame her fear of approaching him. At first there was a barrier between them, but she reached out and took his hand and found it to be warm and gentle. He represented an ideal of strength combined with gentleness. There was some exchange between them, and he gave her a message to "step gently", to enjoy life instead of rushing around so fast.

It was then suggested that we try to ground the experience in her daily life. She feels that she needs to develop the Indian's strength and straightforwardness in dealing with her mother, without always being afraid of hurting her. She first thinks it is a ruthless quality she needs to develop with her mother, but later speaks of it as "direct strength", "like an arrow winging its way to the target". It is suggested that she try to imagine an encounter with her mother, acting toward her as she would like to be able to act. The rest of the transcript is given verbatim. It is a good example of a session based primarily on auditory imagery, like one of the active imagination sessions we quoted.

### **TRANSCRIPT OF SESSION AND COMMENTARY**

M-1 (M. will henceforth stand for Mother). I never wanted to hurt you, but it seems to me that you have so much and I have so little. You had so many good things given to you and I didn't. I never thought you would leave me. It makes me feel very bad.

S-1. I want to say "Mother, I see that things have been very sad for you. Nobody seemed to want you very much. Quite often, you were sort of desperate, and didn't know what to do. You had to keep fighting, struggling in any direction, just to keep living at all. Now I'd like to give you some of the calm, beautiful things I've found.

It's quite difficult for me to give them to you. Often I'm afraid to reach out to you. But there's an underlying bond of love between us in spite of all the garbage that got into it. Right now, it seems to me, Mother, that I have to do what is necessary for me. This is a necessary stage for me that I have to pass. That doesn't mean that I'm rejecting you, Mother—just that I'm at a point where I have to do what is necessary for me. And from that point, as I look forward, in a way I feel that I will be able to be closer to you. I do what I think is right for me and that's what you want for me too."

M-2. It's very difficult for me to let you go.

S-2. You just don't believe it. You just can't believe that your little girl got up and left.

G-1. Can you respond to this as your mother?

M-3. I never wanted you to leave. I thought you'd stay with me. And now I should like to visit my anger on you—get it right out in the open. You caused me a lot of pain in my life. And it seems to me, between us, there is always a lot of pain. But in spite of what happens, Margaret, you're still my daughter. I see your good qualities very strongly and it hurts not to share in them. It hurts.

S-3. I think, Mother, a lot of the good things you see in me are just as much in you, if you would just let them happen. You just see your good in me and then you want to be with me all the time. But we share the good things. You've got it. It's all yours too. Just think about yourself, Mother. Think how happy you were when you knew a baby was coming. Think how you pictured us, your little family, all loving and tender. Think how much joy you could give at times, when we were on a holiday or on outings—how you used to make people laugh. Think of all the things you've done and how you've struggled on. Be proud of it- doing things that people wouldn't think possible. I'd like you to have a good feeling inside you. So just sit down, settle your bottom in the chair, and listen. I can put up with all your little idiosyncrasies and try to help you, but the good things I can't give you. You have to find them inside yourself.

M-4. It feels as if you're drawing away from me. You've got something I haven't got. and you'll take it away from me. I draw my good things from you. That's why I can't afford to let you go.

S-4. Just sit down, Mother. Get yourself firmly in the chair, and get yourself firmly settled down. Now think. What do you expect? Just think. What do you think I am? A little doll? A little puppy? A little plaything? If you remember, you helped to create a whole new life—to me you were a vessel of new life, and that way you became a part of life yourself. And then I became a vessel for my children, and so it goes on. The growth goes on, through you, through me. That's all there is—you just allow it to happen. You let it go through you. And that way, you're a part of everything (sighs). You share everything, just as I do. You have your part to play. You give to me, I give to my boys, like a beautiful children's game that goes on and on and on. And all we can do is play our little part. You do your part and I do mine (sighs). You're a part of it and I'm a part of it (sighs). Does that make you feel any better?

M-5. I think it does. It makes me feel as if I belong somewhere—that I have a part to play that's just as important as everyone else's. I feel as if I belong on this earth now. So often, I have felt I don't have a place here, that I'm not good enough. That makes me feel I belong.

S-5. And now I have to tell you why it's important for me to do my own thing, whether it seems cruel or not. I think because you feel worthless, Mother, that it's hard for you to believe that the things I do are not rejecting you. I usually do what I have to do. When I write and tell you, it's not meant to hurt. It just has to be, but it doesn't seem to get through to you. Perhaps you could remember, though, that I'm not fighting you. It's when you see yourself living through me that I just have to push you away. This seems to me the right thing. It doesn't mean that I don't love you. It just means that it's something I have to do for myself (sigh). When I try to put my views forward I react violently, much too violently. I keep feeling I have to make it clear to you that I have to do those things, but it doesn't get through. If you could just listen, then I wouldn't need to get violent. Do you understand, Mother? Do you understand, or is it still not clear? Are you comfortable about it?

M-G. I feel so empty when you go away from me.

S-G. Don't be afraid. That's okay. That's a good feeling. It's a good feeling to be empty—just to be empty for awhile. You are always rushing to get yourself filled up all the time. Maybe it does feel uncomfortable at first, but it's a good thing. You can't take in any good things until you have some empty space inside. Don't be afraid of it.

M-7. It feels strange to me. I don't know if I believe what you say. You seem to have some very strange and wonderful and weird ideas.

S-7. Well, these are the things I've found out along the way about myself. And I don't think we're that much different.

M-8. I'm afraid when these strange things happen to me.

S-8. Don't be afraid, Mother. You'll be okay. Just sit yourself down the way you are now. Just sit there and **be** afraid and **be** scared. If you can be that way, you'll find out it's all right to be afraid (sigh) I want to say 'goodbye' now, Mother. I don't think there is any more I can tell you..

M-9. Goodbye, Margaret. I feel I understand you a bit better now, and I feel better about things. I'd like to see you again soon.

G-2. If you are not too tired, I'd like you to go up a mountain with your mother and see what transformations take place when the higher energies come in. Do you think you would like to do that now? (This suggestion was made because it seemed that Margaret had not achieved complete resolution of her relationship to her mother. There was still an emotional "wall" between them, just like the walls in her dream. Since Margaret was soon to leave town and I would not be seeing her again for some time, I felt it would be worth the extra time to seek a higher level resolution of this difficult relationship. The Desoille technique of ascension was suggested, as it tends to access superconscious energies. It seemed that Margaret was at a point where she could utilize and integrate such an experience. Margaret nods assent to the suggestion.) Just imagine now that you are going up a mountain with your mother and see what happens.

S-9. (crying) I'm remembering the holiday I spent in Switzerland with my mother. She was very short of breath, but she wanted to go up the mountain badly. She took my arm, and we went up very slowly. She was puffing away, but she wanted to share this with me. I go back and start from there and see where it goes.

G-3. It doesn't have to be difficult in the imagery.

S-10. She takes my arm, and we go up this path, which is wide and not too steep. The air's good- really good. It makes me feel good. It's very open—really wide open—puffy white clouds (sigh)—a lot of space (sigh). And my mother's starting to lag now. She's finding it heavy going. Her feet are small.

G-4. You can use any device you want to help you up the mountain. (Subjects may need to be reminded that they can draw on many resources in the imaginal realm.)

S-11. Okay. It's heavy going. How would it be, Mother, if I pushed you in a wheelchair, and you could relax for a little while, and let me help you? And she's not quite sure about accepting help. I say, "It's okay. Just relax and don't worry. Leave your fears at this point—just throw them away. You don't need them". We're like hobos—like the cast-offs of mankind. But we're there and it doesn't matter. We just keep going, and I'm sharing it with my mother. It's very—it's just wide open—there's nothing—nothing between us and the sky. And my mother curls up like a baby and falls asleep. I let her sleep (sigh). She's small and old and curled up and very comfortable. I tuck a blanket 'round her (sigh). And she needs someone to touch her at this point. I just rub her back. She's still asleep, but I know she needs it. (Margaret is allowing herself more and more to sense and respond to her mother's emotional need). It's as though I want to take her out of the wheelchair and put her on a blanket on the ground and plant flowers all around.

G-5. Do that.

S-12. I think I'd like to leave her up there. That seems like a good place for her. I don't need the wheelchair anymore. I'll just throw it over a cliff. It doesn't look good on top of a mountain. Why don't I just sit down for awhile and think? I just feel like sitting very quietly.

G-6. Are you at the top of the mountain now?

S-13. We were at the top of the mountain and I'm starting to come down now.

G-7. Is there anything you want to say to each other before you come down? (It seemed important to press for further communication in order to resolve the situation. It would have been better to use the word 'communicate' instead of 'say', as this would allow for non-verbal communication as well.)

S-14. I think I'll pick her up and take her in my arms and just cradle her.

G-15. What are you feeling now?

S-15. I feel sort of blocked off. I am cradling her and feeling her warmth against me. I still feel—I'm not quite sure. I picked her up and I don't want to put her down again. I feel I should go on caring for her. (The blocked emotion is most likely the love Margaret feels for her mother but is afraid to express because of her mother's dependency).

G-9. Just wait and see what happens.

S-16. (crying, with fear) All I know is a sweet feeling all around us in the air (cries). It's all sort of blue- all shimmery (sobbing)—as though the air is alive- that sort of feeling (cries).

G-10. Just stay with it and see what happens.

S-17. I hold her close and there's this feeling all around—all around—like music. I feel I've just got to hold her and not let her go. It's very important not to let her go. (Music frequently accompanies supraconscious experience).

G-11. Just hold her as long as you need to.

S-18. There are more warm feelings coming now. I don't know if it's from me or from her. (sigh). I'm holding her and the air (sigh)—I feel more tenderly towards her now, and more happy inside somehow. Yes! I feel happy about her: (cries, sighs). I know she's a beautiful baby (cries). She's a beautiful baby. She needs a lot of love (cries)...

G-12. How is she now?

S-19. She needs an awful lot of mothering (sigh). Oh, I don't know what to do now. I'm just...perhaps I'll ask her. I don't know—what do you like just now, Mother? I don't know whether to leave you...

M-10. I'd like you to stay a little bit longer, please—just to the end of the day (sigh).

S-20. Okay, Mother. I think that's a good idea. I'll tuck a blanket 'round you, keep you warm, keep you cosy, till the shadows come. Do you want me to leave you here or carry you down again. I'll do what you think is best. I don't know.

G-13. Could you ask her?

S-21. What do you think is best, Mother?

M-11. You just put me down and go your own way. Just let me take care of myself now. And let's see how that works out for a change. I should like you to be happy. I'm all right up here. I like it here. You'll have a chance to do what you want and I'll have a chance to do what I want. Yes, I think I would like to stay. And you remember this place—it's a good place. (sigh)...

S-22. When the sun goes down, I'll go down the mountain and I'll say goodbye and you say goodbye. And I feel, in a way, I'm leaving my mother in a good place with good air, and the sky, and the flowers (laughs). And I'm the one that's got to go down the mountain (laughs) and go on with everything. It's getting kind of dark and dusky now (sigh). It's quite peaceful. I think it's finished now (laughs). I have the feeling I've taken care of her.

G-14. This is what happens when we connect with the transpersonal energies. Then we can feel the love. Until we can feel the love we are not free. Have you thought of any ways of grounding this experience?

S-23. I shall go to see her in a little while, and I'll write to her.

G-15. It's the inner change that matters. Then she'll feel the love and be happier. It's what's inside you that matters.

S-24. Yes, then when I do see her it will be right.

## **DISCUSSION**

After this session, Margaret wrote:

"I now realize the intensity of the relationship with my mother and understand it better...it always seemed strange to me that her standards for me were so high, when she spent most of her life in bed, having her family run up and down stairs with trays of food. But the image of her as a baby who needed mothering desperately, and could not lift herself out of this regressed state, makes her inability to care for her own basic needs much more understandable and acceptable to me. I can see that she must have been deprived at some stage of her life, and I can accept the weakness I despised as a teen-ager. I feel sorry for her, and yet not as entangled".

She also mentioned that she has noticed a change in her work with her patients. "I am more confident, able to move more quickly and cleanly, and I see some of them making unexpectedly rapid progress".

In her previous therapy, Margaret had reached the stage of standing up to her mother and asserting her need to live her own life. She had built a high wall to protect herself. Some approaches to therapy consider this sufficient. However, in my experience, a person does not gain freedom from the pathological, guilt-ridden tie to a parent unless he is able to contact feelings of love, compassion, and forgiveness for the parent. Otherwise he has, at least subconsciously, feelings of guilt toward the parent he is unable to love.

It seems useful, nevertheless, that the first "ground level" encounter with the mother figure took place. The two experiences are complementary. As Margaret asserted her own autonomy in a respectful way, she was less afraid of being devoured by her mother. This prepared her for the transpersonal resolution on the mountaintop, in which she was able to experience warmth and tenderness. She did not attempt to impose her will on the mother and allowed her to choose what she wanted to do. Because the mother's need for love had been satisfied, she was able to let go of the daughter and Margaret did not have to feel guilty about leaving her.

## **HOLY SEPULCHRE**

### **BACKGROUND**

The subject, whom we shall call Piers is a physician in his mid-fifties. He had been in psychosynthesis for 3 months at the time of this session and was working on the integration of his emerging transpersonal awareness with his daily life, both personal and professional.

This session had as its starting point a dream which Piers reported. In the latter part of the dream, he was with his wife in a car, which she was driving. They were driving in the country along a road, which became an increasingly narrow path and he was feeling that he wanted to take the wheel. In front of them was a huge rock, which he described as a marble slab. He awakened from the dream in a state of panic, feeling there was no way out. His association to the rock was the Holy Sepulchre, Christ's burial place, and rolling aside the marble slabs, which were placed over it. The first part of the dream was concerned with scenes in the subject's consulting room in which he found himself feeling compelled to do things he did not want to do in order to please his patients. One patient undressed, revealing that she was wearing falsies, and insisted that he kiss her, though he found the act disgusting.

We had some discussion of his dream about the way in which he presents a "false breast" to the world or becomes involved in inauthentic forms of giving. Another sequence in the dream was concerned with Piers' patients suggesting a new approach to working with groups, which he was rejecting. They were sitting in his office around a round table, which he associated with the round table or "concilio" used in some Catholic retreats, while he tried to remove them from his office to keep his next appointment. Piers thought the round table represented a new transpersonal approach to working with groups that he feels simultaneously drawn to and frightened of, as it means a loss of his position of authority.

### **TRANSCRIPT OF THE IMAGERY SESSION WITH COMMENTARY**

G-1. Imagine yourself in front of this rock in your dream again. (It is often helpful to start an imagery session with an unresolved situation from a dream, and work it through to a constructive solution.)

S-1. I am standing in front of a tomb and very suddenly a high wind and lightening develop. It's like the Ark of the Covenant—being struck dead like in childhood Bible stories...

G-2. How do you feel?

S-2. Yeah, well...I had a vision of the tomb. There was a bright yellow light behind it and there was just this rock—like the uncarved block of the Tao. It's smooth...no inscription...and now it's all fallen away and it's a mountain peak with this bright yellow light. All through the atmosphere there's this bright yellow light and I'm very alone with it.

G-3. Do you want to enter into contact with it?

S-3. Well, I was going...I was feeling very drawn to it and uh I feel sort of enveloped by it and the nerve's just not quite...oh yes, I disappear into it but it's not frightening.

G-4. You disappear into the rock? (This question was asked primarily to maintain contact with the subject, as he had entered a period of silence. It is preferable in most situations not to allow a long silence to continue, as it often eventuates in loss of contact with the main thread of the experience. A neutral comment aimed at clarifying what the subject is experiencing will re-establish contact with the guide, and thereby help the subject to maintain his focus.)

S-4. I disappear into the rock and then I see like an X-ray, the body inside the rock like a nude picture "in utero" except that the body's not curved upon itself but straight and it is at an angle and then it's turned by some agency upright to coincide with the block...like a yellow skeleton or mummy wrapped in wrappings...

G-6. What are you aware of? (This question was again asked to break a long silence.)

S-6. Now the wrappings seem more like swaddling clothes. An infant comes out of the face of the rock and the binding's are off. It's very chubby. It's a "putto", you know, the "putti"...you see them on the churches in Italy. The rock turns into a man holding the infant...in a brown robe...a very powerful father and he's walking down the mountain with the infant...very stately on green grass...I see some oxen pulling something or just a plowman in the field...the Breughel-Icarus theme...

G-9. What is the infant doing now?

S-9. Laughing, he has red hair...standing up and growing...

G-13. What kind of person is he becoming?

S-13. Very strong, he's becoming like that plowman behind the plow which I guess must be his father...very strong and sort of bursting...

G-14. Sort of bursting?

S-14. Well, the image I have is that he is sort of bursting through his clothes with vigor ...uh...very happy and forthright. He's about twenty. He knows where he stands. He's turning around and going back up the mountain now because he's big enough now...and the yellow light is still there and the stone is still there. I tried to get rid of it but it's still there.

He's looking off into that yellow light. The boy just lifted right off the mountain...didn't fly exactly but just went to be joined with that light. It's necessary, I guess, to live in that light, to be always aware of that light.

G-17. How does he feel merged with that light? This question was asked to move the subject from a somewhat intellectual realization to a more affectively involving experience.)

S-17. Very happy.

G-18. Stay with that merging and experience it fully. (It is important that experiences of merging with light, which can have a powerful transforming effect, be entered into as fully as possible.)

S-18. It's in his chest now. He's still all there but that light's inside. He doesn't disappear the way he did before into the rock. It's not the same kind of merging and he doesn't...he doesn't become an infant or something or a skeleton or whatever he did before...

G-19. How do you sense the meaning of this?

S-19. I feel very calm and what comes to me is...the light can be let in...or the intuition we were talking about and it doesn't destroy anything. Also, if I am what I am which is just a plowman or a peasant, I am grounded in an earthy way. Then I can let the light in without losing myself.

G-21. Would you like to stop here?

S-21. Yes. (Because Piers was fatigued after an intense experience, it was decided to terminate the imagery session as such and continue with a discussion in normal waking consciousness.)

## **DISCUSSION**

This session offers a number of interesting points for the field of transpersonal psychology. At one level it is an enactment of the death/rebirth theme. This theme is foreshadowed by the slab of rock in the dream. He associates this with the Holy Sepulchre, connected with the death and resurrection of Christ. This can be seen as

a symbol of death to the ego and rebirth to the Self. A person approaching this stage frequently experiences great fear, as ego death is perceived as extinction. This is particularly true if the person has not resolved his autonomy issues, since residual problems at the personal level are carried over to the transpersonal stages of growth.

In the case of Piers, there are clear autonomy issues reflected in his initial dream. There was a sense of resistance to the patients promoting a "round table" format for group work, in which he feared losing his status as an authority figure and becoming submerged in the group. There was a compulsion to submit to the wishes of the female patient who insisted he kiss her, in spite of his repulsion at so doing. The "false breast" or pseudo-nurturing attitude indicates a need to please others even when it violates his own values. Similarly, the fact that Piers' wife was driving the car in the dream and that he felt the need to take the wheel, suggests a need to sit in the "driver's seat" in his own life.

It seems likely that Piers' terror in approaching the marble slab is a reflection of his fear of losing himself in union with a higher power, of encountering an overwhelming force over which he would have no control.

The initial encounter with the rock is interesting in that there is imagery of both death and new life. The light holds both death and rebirth. The figure in the rock is both a mummy and a fetus and an infant. And the infant is carried down the mountain and raised to manhood in close contact with the earth. When he becomes mature enough he is able to approach the light in a different way. He can merge with the light without losing himself.

In the discussion which followed this session, these themes were explored with Piers. It was pointed out that "death to the world" or consecration to a spiritual life need not mean personal extinction or withdrawal from involvement in the world. It was suggested that he could think of it as freedom from subservience to public opinion and the need to ingratiate others—a foundation for serving the world from his own center. The plowman does not work for his own ego needs or to appear worthy in the eyes of the world. He is free to be joyfully himself and is unconcerned with what others may think of him. As Piers put it, "He has no pretenses. He's not an idiot, he just has no pretense. But he has this childlike simplicity you need to seek out, I suppose". This is in contrast to the way he described himself in the dream as "this terribly complex person with these complex people and these complex issues". He goes on to comment: "There is something about that turning the earth over and just with horses. It's never a tractor; it's always an old plow, always a single plow."

The image of the plowman is one which has appeared in Piers' previous imagery sessions, usually in a sequence where he has come down from a lofty place such as a mountain or elevated temple to plow the earth. It seems to represent humility and simplicity for him, in contrast to ego-inflated identities of spiritual pride, superiority and isolation. It is perhaps significant that in Chinese mythology, the plow represents the symbolic union of heaven and earth. In reflecting on the meaning of the plowman to him, Piers remarks that the plowman is "at one with his work, and - maybe that's what it is—he plants the seed and he has confidence in what the seed will do; he has confidence in his relationship to God. He's not concerned with the market or whether it will sell or whether the storms will blow the harvest away. He just does his job because that's the thing to be done and he just does it...no apologies—and he cooperates with something bigger—with Nature or with God, and if the buyers like it, fine. If they don't, it doesn't matter." He was able to get in touch with the fact that he has been overly concerned with the "buyers" of his crop, that he has to some extent made himself into a commodity to be sold by his need to make people like him. He states, "There is something I came across here of not wanting to give these things I am giving but I do very much want to give something." The plow suggested a mode of being in harmony with Nature, which could free him to overcome the ego barriers of isolation, superiority, and the need to please.

## **BUBBLE**

### **BACKGROUND**

The subject, whom we shall call Maria, is a psychologist in her mid-twenties. She had been in psychosynthesis for about two months at the time of this session. This was her first experience with dialogic imagery.

Maria is a person with a rich inner life who finds difficulty in relating to other people in an open and trusting way. As a child, when she attempted to be open with people, she encountered ridicule and sometimes physical abuse. Her father was a violent man who was given to frequent beatings of Maria which she did not feel were justified. In consequence, she developed a "tough" facade to cover up her pain and vulnerability and is constantly on guard against attack and criticism. Her tension is reflected in a sporadic physical symptom of involuntary jerking of the spine.

This session is of interest in that it begins with imagery and ends with body movement, showing how the two techniques can be effectively combined.

### **TRANSCRIPT OF SESSION AND COMMENTARY**

G-1. Allow an image to appear on your mindscreen and tell me what you see.

S-1. Seems like circular formations with X's in the middle like sand dollars or a ship's steering wheels.

G-2. Just keep watching the images. Let them unfold. (If the imagery reported does not have an obvious meaning or action potential, an intervention of this type will help to evolve it toward something more easy to work with.)

S-2. I'm not really getting images, just like a dark screen.

G-3. That's all right. Just take your time. Tell me when anything does appear on the screen. You may want to let the first image come back and concentrate on it more fully. (If the guide remains confident that an image will eventually appear, it usually does. It is important to reassure the subject if the imagery does not come immediately, that something will emerge if he will just take his time and relax.)

S-3. (Pause) It's hard to describe. Seems like two black boulders and a drop of light where they meet.

G-4. What do you feel as you watch this image?

S-4. Right now I'm just enjoying watching it.

G-5. Just keep watching it and perhaps you'll feel like doing something or perhaps the image will change in some way.

S-5. Right now the drop of light is growing and becoming...sort of like a crocus grows. And now this drop ascends and expands and another one grows and ascends and expands, just a continuous chain.

G-6. From between the boulders?

S-6. Right.

G-7. How do you feel as you watch this? (An intervention encouraging the subject to contact his feelings often helps unfold the process.)

S-7. It's a really beautiful feeling. I feel like I'm expanding with the drops as they move upward.

G-8. Just allow yourself to identify with the drop and experience this feeling of expansion (long pause. Maria is breathing very deeply.) If you feel like it, tell me what you're experiencing, or you can just be in silence if you wish.

S-8. That movement has slowed down and it's like I'm above it, suspended in a soap bubble.

G-9. How are you feeling now?

S-9. I feel sort of contented, just floating there...and curious.

G-10. What are you curious about?

S-10. Where the bubble will go.

G-11. Just stay with the image and see what happens. ("Stay with the image" is a suggestion that generally brings about unfoldment of meaning.)

S-11. (deep breathing) It feels really good, as the bubble. Very happy and contented. And I feel uncertain. Yeah, uncertain that the bubble might burst. Sort of like walking on a tight rope and it's really exhilarating being there, while at the same time there's a fear you might fall. (deep breathing) Feels really good to breathe. Sort of like having been under water and coming up for a great waft of fresh air.

G-12. um...are you still in the bubble?

S-12. Yeah, I think so. (deep breathing) I'm really in my body now. Just feeling the energy flowing down my arms.

G-13. Get more in touch now with this feeling you have in your body. (When physical sensations are spontaneously experienced, it is generally valuable to encourage the subject to get in touch with them more fully.)

S-13. I feel really light-headed. A little dizzy and like there is energy being freed. It feels like I'm relaxing and letting the energy be freed by relaxing.

G-14. Can you feel what kind of energy this is?

S-16. (Deep breath) Like joy energy.

G-17. How does it make you feel?

S-17. (Deep breathing) Makes me feel like I can really trust other people...Like I don't have to be afraid. (Maria is crying with joy and release of tension.) Like I can relax. Like I can see things more clearly. When I was with Jane the other day, I felt like I could really focus and see her clearly—really look through her eyes, and I thought it was sort of like a childlike innocence, an openness, that was a childlike way of being. (pause) Like somehow, the beginning of being able to communicate with fewer distortions from me. Like polishing my glasses, maybe not needing my glasses. (deep breathing) My lungs feel really clear.

G-18. Take all the air you need and enjoy it...

S-18. (Deep breathing for several minutes) Kind of feel like I do right after a swimming meet. After a race.

G-19. How's that?

S-19. Just like there's been a great buildup of energy, an expenditure and a release. Just this tingling through my

body and, just after having really pushed yourself through the water, and then the race is over, and then you emerge and you allow yourself to relax, to regenerate from the expenditure, like you just pull yourself up out of the water, just lie down on your back, totally with your feeling.

G-20, Can you get into this feeling?

S-20, I still feel sort of a tightness in my back, where, when my back jerks, the jerks come from. Like I want to send energy through my spinal cord, to really work out this block, (See comment in background on Maria)

G-21. Let an image come, which will help you work this through.

S-21. Something like that bubble that I had earlier, like when the drop was going up.

G-22. You see that bubble again?

S-22. It's like I want to send it up my spinal cord.

G-23. OK, let that happen.

S-23. Surges of...like a stream, I sort of feel it flowing up my back and out through my body.

G-24. What feelings do you have while this is happening?

S-24. Just want to go with it. (deep breathing)

G-25. Let yourself go with this flow of energy then. Feel it opening you up.

S-25. Long pause, deep breathing). I want to sit up. (From this point on Maria is working with body movement rather than with imagery.)

G-26. OK. (Maria is stretching) What are you feeling as you do this?

S-26. Working out the muscles of my back. Feeling flowing through my muscles.

G-27. What would you like to do?

S-27. (Shaking arms) I'm shaking out the tension.

G-28. Go ahead and do that.

S-29. (Vigorously shaking arms with laughter and deep breathing) Maybe my hands will get better. (deep breathing) (Maria has a chronic psychosomatic skin rash on her hands.)

G-30. Would you like to do some movement now or return to the imagery again? Which feels right? Maybe you'd like to get out in the room where you'd be more free to go with what's happening? (Prior to this time Maria had been first lying, then sitting, on a couch. When body movement is involved, it is best that the subject have sufficient open space around to allow freedom of movement.)

S-30. Yeah. (Laughter). (At this point Maria goes into the middle of the room. She kneels down on her knees and does S-curve body movements. After a few minutes of this activity, she becomes very still. She removes the eyeshades she was wearing for the mental imagery session and starts gazing about the room looking at things with an expression of awe and exclaiming how beautiful everything looks. She begins crying with joy at the beauty of the objects on a small table in the corner of the room.)

The session was brought to close by sitting quietly together in a meditative state, looking silently into each

others eyes. This allowed her to maintain the expanded state of awareness and include interpersonal contact within it. Maria cried a bit in joy, enjoying the deep sense of communion between two human beings. Later Maria commented that the whole experience was like an LSD trip without the artificial elements. She felt it had opened in her an expanded and liberating state of consciousness which could help overcome restrictive patterns and fears. It gave her renewed confidence in the process and possibilities of inner growth and helped her feel she could trust the flow of her own experience.

## **DISCUSSION**

This session is interesting in that it bridges personal and transpersonal levels. It also illustrates the combination of body movement and mental imagery.

The initial image of the wheel or sand dollar is like the "mandalas" or circular images of wholeness and integration studied by Jung. It seems to foreshadow the subsequent transpersonal development of the session.

The experience of expansion seems to have been important to Maria, taking her beyond some of her rigid limitations. Her imaginal expansion with the bubble is correlated physically with her deep breathing. Having enough air to breathe represents freedom from restriction and the free flow of life energy. As she allows herself to breathe deeply, Maria experiences "energy being freed". She is able to relax and feel an openness of being, an ability to trust and connect with other people. The encouragement to stay with her breathing was important to this process.

There are a number of points in this session where Maria experiences physical sensations she is encouraged explore. This can help to deepen the work. If the subject has a desire to move, it is usually more productive to go with this and work with the insights it generates than to insist that the session proceed in the imagery format.

One interesting feature of this session is the enhanced aesthetic awareness that accompanied Maria's expansion of consciousness. It is reminiscent of the numinous "suchness" described by Zen practitioners in their perception of commonplace objects.

## **A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN**

### **BACKGROUND**

This is the second of the three sessions with Maria included in this monograph. Maria's background was given with her first session, "Bubble". The present session took place one week after the Bubble session, which no doubt prepared the way for this one. This session illustrates the archetypal theme of finding one's own Sacred Space.

An element of Maria's history which is relevant to this session, is the conditioning she received about her role as a woman. Most of her adult life she has been in revolt against the image of woman as passive and inferior, as a creature who exists only to please men. She feels this was subtly inculcated by the culture she lived in. As a result, she grew up with a good deal of resentment against men and a rather competitive attitude. She felt that she must prove her equality to and, if possible, her superiority to them. This resentment towards men and the urge to strike back at them is no doubt related to the harsh treatment she received from her father. On one hand Maria is oppositional towards men, not wanting to show her vulnerability. On the other hand she has felt bound by a need to please them and feelings of dependency.

At the time of this session, she displayed a combination of domination, manipulation, and dependency in her relationship toward her husband, a somewhat passive man she chose because he would not push her around. Since this session, in which she gained a sense of her own worth and autonomy, Maria has shown more sensitivity and respect toward her husband. There is less feeling that she cannot survive without her husband so she feels less resentment of his perceived "control."

### **TRANSCRIPT OF SESSION AND COMMENTARY**

G-1. When you feel ready, allow an image to appear on your mind screen and tell me what it is that you see.

S-1. I keep getting steps.

G-2. Steps?

G-2. Yeah.

G-3. What kind of steps?

S-3. Steps where I'm at the bottom, they go up. So I guess, I'll go up the steps. There's a landing. It's all wooden, very plain. There are three or four doors off the landing. I want to go to the one to the left. I'm just standing in front of it, watching myself from the bottom of the steps.

G-4. Do you want to go through this door?

S-4. Yeah, in a little while. (Deep breathing)

G-5. What are you feeling now?

S-5. Well, I was just wanting to center myself, to become conscious. I feel like on the inside of the door there are cobwebs and things.

G-6. Do you want to find out?

S-6. Yeah, I'm inside of the room now. There's dust and cobwebs. A little window and a little light coming in it. There are barren pieces of furniture and an old dirty rug on the floor. (Some strain in the voice, Some tears.) An old bookcase, full of books, and glass tubes and things and now I'm thinking it's like an old alchemist's room. I want to dust off the furniture and turn on the light or light a candle. It feels really good to be here. (Tears) (The

finding of dust in the "room of one's own" is not uncommon, and also occurred in "The Organ" session. This would seem to express the fact that this "room" or inner place has been uninhabited for some time. The presence of alchemical instruments suggests a setting in which psychospiritual transmutation or alchemy can take place.)

S-7. I'm sitting in a chair by the table and I've lit a candle or a dim light.

G-8. And what do you feel now?

S-8. Like I want to fix up the room. I want to dust it all off.

G-9. What are your tears saying? (Even when it appears that tears are tears of joy, it is worthwhile to ask the subject what they are expressing, as this helps to articulate the feelings involved.)

S-9. I'm feeling really good because it's like it's my room. It's an old room of mine that I'd really liked. (Deep exhalation, deep breathing) It's a room I can really work in, I can really concentrate in. Like all those books on the shelves are all my books. And I used to use them but I'd forgotten all about them.

G-10. What would you like to discover in this room of yours?

S-10. Unfoldings. Unfoldment of truth and beauty. Of anything, anything unfolding would be truth and beauty. It's a really autonomous place to be. It's an in-and-of-oneself place to be. (This states very clearly the essential nature of the "room of one's own" as an archetype.)

G-11. Can you imagine an unfoldment taking place there?

S-11. This song came to me. "In the tangles of my mind and the light of the morning sun." I want to unbind the tangles of my mind to let the light in. I want the room to have rich and dark colors. Dark autumn colors, dark reds and oranges.

G-12. You can imagine decorating the room, just as you'd like. (It is important that the room be clean and arranged exactly to the subject's taste so she can feel completely at home there.)

S-12. Well, there'd be old dark wood, unpainted wood, and candles, maybe red velvet, oriental carpets, leather bound books.

G-13. Get the room exactly the way you'd like it to be. Imagine you have all the resources that you could probably dream of. Make it your perfect room.

S-13. Oh, yeah, the organ we just got at the apartment. A priest gave us this little organ, a pump organ, a really old one. A lot of books and music. And cooking really earthy kinds of foods comes to mind and rustic paintings, really rustic things. It's like it's a timeless room. It's ageless, nothing modern about it at all, it's like a room maybe 200 years ago would have been. Sort of like a cell too. It's like a monk's cell. Seven years ago I wanted to go to a girls' college. I wanted to just lock myself away and just learn, but then I kind of decided that the world was men and women. I'd wanted to get out of the social games of high school but then I decided that it would be more balanced somehow to have men around, but there's this within me that wants to just be me and I think it's good, it doesn't mean I'm trying to withdraw from other people, from men, but from games and having to be anything but what I am. (The "room of one's own" is frequently perceived as a monk's cell as it represents a protected space in which the inner life can unfold away from societal pressures and conditioning.)

G-14. What are the games that you want to withdraw from?

S-14. Yeah. It's games having to do with having to please men.

G-15. To please men?

S-15. To cater to them, to try to look a certain way.

G-16. What do you feel you have to deny in yourself to please men?

S-16. (Long pause) One thing I have to give up is my intelligence.

G-17. How do you pretend to be?

S-17. I'm always surprised when a man takes my intelligence seriously, and is not frightened away by it. I also have to hide my strength. They might be frightened by that.

G-18. How do you pretend to be weak?

S-18. By not being able to make clear decisions. By not trusting the validity of my own feelings. Wow, it sounds like my mother a little bit too.

G-21. Let's go back to this little room now where you don't have to play any games, and feel yourself free from the need to please anybody. You can just be yourself and discover what you would feel like doing in this room of yours.

S-21. Well, one thing is play the organ a lot. A lot. (Whisper) And I want to sit quietly a lot. And have time to slow down. I want to have time to slow down and to just absorb the wisdom in these books. I want to grow old there. There's just this one little window, and there's sunlight streaming in. The room's dark except where the one light or candle is.

G-22. Do you like it that way? Because you can make the room any way you want. If you want more light, you can imagine it that way.

S-22. No, I like it that way.

G-23. What do you see yourself doing?

S-23. Just sitting in a big chair.

G-24. What are you thinking or feeling?

S-24. I just want to sit there for a long time.

G-25. What's going on inside of you as you sit there? (When there is no external action going on, one can inquire about the inner activity.)

S-25. (Deep breath) Just getting calmer.

G-26. Just feel yourself getting calmer and calmer then. (If a subject is trying to relax and become quiet, it is helpful to encourage her in this direction. This helps the person to feel the activity is legitimate and deepens the experience of calmness.)

S-26. There's like a clock ticking slowly. Now I'm sort of watching the sun rise. Rising over fields and over trees.

G-27. How do you feel as you watch it?

S-27. I'm just getting in touch with the rhythms of time, like the clock ticking and the sun rising and the sun setting, the earth revolving.

G-28. What do these rhythms of time tell you about your own life? (This question was asked in an attempt to bring about some grounding of the experience in Maria's daily life.)

S-28. That it's just part of a process. Not to be lost in the fussy, narrow kinds of thinking. To get in touch with the eternity of the process, of the rhythms. That there's nothing that has to be done. It felt really good saying that, feeling that, that there's nothing that has to be done.

G-29. Is there something in you that's been saying the opposite?

S-30. Yeah. The part that would define myself through what I do, that I don't have any worth if I'm not doing something valuable (tears in voice). I also know I can step back and just watch. Whether I'm doing anything or not doing anything, there's no difference. Just watching and that's where the unfolding comes in. It's not what I'm doing per se, it's what's revealing itself. What's being revealed. Nothing needs to be done.

G-31. Can you say that again? (It is often valuable to have a subject repeat out loud a positive affirmation. This is particularly effective when he or she is in the relaxed state associated with mental imagery.)

S-31. Nothing needs to be done.

G-32. Could you say that your worth is not determined by what you do? (This formulation was suggested to emphasize the aspect of intrinsic worth rather than that of non-action.)

S-32. My worth is not determined by what I do. My worth is not determined by what I do.

G-33. Where is your worth?

S-33. My worth is in watching the unfolding. A line from the *Desiderata* comes in, where it says: "You are a child of the universe, like the sun and the stars, you have the right to exist. No doubt the universe is unfolding as it should, whether or not you are aware of it," something like that.

G-34. Can you say in your own words now, "I have a right to exist?"

S-34. I have a right to exist. I have a right to exist. (Deep breathing) I have a right to exist. (Maria spoke these words with intense feeling, obviously deeply moved.)

G-35. You can add something to that in your own words if you want. (It is helpful if affirmations are repeated in a variety of ways. This increases the likelihood of the message getting through and allows the subject to unfold and elaborate his insights on the matter.)

S-35. I have a right to exist because I am. To exist because I am. Just am. That's a great mystery. And it's all right. And it's fun to unravel the thread of the mystery and to see the patterns of the forms that have been woven, to get further away, to see the pattern and not be involved in the intricacies of the detail.

G-36. I think that's a good point at which to end, if it feels complete to you.

S-36. Yes.

## DISCUSSION

As we pointed out in discussing the "room of one's own" archetype in "The Organ", Maria's version of this theme emphasized her intrinsic worth as a human being rather than the creative self-expression of the Organ session. In Maria's case, being had to come before doing. She needed to overcome patterns of doing for the wrong reason, of doing to meet expectations and to prove herself. From this acceptance of herself and the worth of her own experience, Maria has begun to get in touch with a new kind of doing, a doing that comes from center, inspired by her own deeper promptings.

Visualization of a room of one's own, whether it occurs spontaneously or is suggested in a more structured type of imagery session, can be a useful device. It is a place to contact one's real thoughts, feelings, values, and aspirations, uncolored by the need to meet the expectations of others. It is important that the room (or other space if it is not in a building) be arranged exactly to the subject's taste and that he feel at home there. In certain structured imagery approaches, such a space may be used for creative problem solving, and props may be suggested to aid this process.

The technique of affirmation, as employed toward the end of this session, blends well with dialogic imagery work. When using this technique, it is important to choose a "seed thought" that effectively counters a negative assumption and reaches a deep enough level. There are what one might call "root attitudes" underlying more surface attitudes. It is more effective to deal with the former as they tend to have effects in a variety of related surface attitudes. In this session we went through several iterations, ending with "I have a right to exist"—a good example of a root level statement.

## **DRAGON**

### **BACKGROUND**

This is the third in a series of sessions with Maria. Background information on Maria is given with her previous sessions, "Bubble" and "A Room of One's Own". This session took place a few months after the others. During this time Maria has been growing steadily in autonomy and self-confidence.

This session will be given in excerpts to save space. It was chosen because it illustrates the transformation of the archetypal male imago from a dragon to a "psychopompus" or inner guide figure. It also illustrates techniques for confrontation of "monster" figures.

The starting point for this session was the discussion of a problem Maria experiences in meditation which manifests as a sort of "eclipse", causing her to lose touch with the inner light whenever she gets close to it. We decided to address this problem through dialogic imagery.

### **TRANSCRIPT OF SESSION AND COMMENTARY**

G-1. Whenever you're ready, just let an image come that will help you understand this eclipse.

S-1. There was a dragon monster that loomed there and it looks like it has claws really long and sharp and I'm afraid they'll come out into me somehow, puncture me.

G-2. Do you see yourself there with the dragon?

S-2. No, I saw it in the sky.

G-3. Can you bring the dragon closer?

S-3. Well, it's closer and its eyes look not very conscious—dull somehow—and its mouth is wide open. Its teeth are really sharp too.

G-4. What does the dragon seem to want?

S-4. To torture me.

G-5. Can you tune in to the dragon and sense what he's experiencing?

S-5. I'm not there yet. I want to see more how I perceive it. Well, I just want to run away from it, or throw something at it and then run away. It's hard to become the dragon or the monster. (Maria is becoming more autonomous now and is able to tell me when she feels unable or disinclined to follow my suggestions. The suggestion to take the dragon's perspective seems to have been premature).

G-6. Just notice what you sense then. If you can't fully become him, see if you can empathize with him. (This is a less threatening step than identification.)

S-6. He's really blinded by rage that comes up from some frustration. And I keep thinking of my father—the monster.

G-7. What's making him feel frustrated?

S-7. Not being able to let go somehow (pause). I know where I'm at now (sobbing). It's like I really want to allow the energy that's within me to flow out.

S-15. ...I was avoiding, like the monster's eyes which were so unclear and out of focus. This reminds me of what my Aikido teacher pointed out, that I'm either in a position of aggressively attacking or of avoiding the other person's center. Yes, the monster is both those parts because its eyes were avoiding and yet it was coming at me aggressively... Yeah, it's like if I closed my eyes and started swinging my fists, that would be avoiding and attacking the situation at the same time...

G-18. Can you see the monster there before you? (There is often a lot of resistance to encountering monsters, but the guide can frequently bring this about with patience).

S-18. I'm not quite looking at it though. I need to find a way to look at it more, to get in touch with it. I didn't know what to do and then I felt like I needed some kind of protection, and then I became enveloped by light. (Maria has spontaneously adopted a protective device, but this is not enough to allay her fear.)

G-19. Can you experience good will toward the monster? (Good will can be a key to transforming fear.)

S-19. There's a sort of a battle between good will and fear.

G-20. See if you can let the good will win out and adopt an attitude of wanting to help the monster. You can transform his energy—which is really your own energy—into something positive. (Some theoretical rationale was provided here in the attempt to motivate Maria to make the effort.)

S-20. I'm feeling that if good will is there and there's enough openness and light that I'm allowing out—that somehow as soon as he gets within range of hurting me, he just melts. (laughter).

G-21. Do you see that happening now?

S-21. Yeah, a bit. Or else I'm just stepping out of the way of resistance and he's going on past me—missing me—sort of a bullfight.

G-22. See if you can get him to understand that you really want to help him, to make friends and understand him. You could ask him what he'd like you to understand. (Mere avoidance of injury is not enough, as long as the basic enmity remains.)

S-22. Yeah, he says that he's not a monster. He's just another person who's afraid, and when he takes off his monster costume, then he can allow himself to be healed. Then my good will can reach him better. It seems like a him, though.

G-23. Does he want to do that—to allow himself to be healed? (It is important to pick up a positive suggestion of this kind.)

S-23. Yes. He seems a little shriveled now—sort of in a fetal position a...bit.

G-24. You can continue to make contact with him.

S-24. He's becoming softer and I can see that his body was kind of dried up before. It's becoming full of water, of liquid, becoming full.

G-25. Just continue to watch and see what happens.

S-25. He's lifting his chin up. He's coming out of a stuck kind of introversion and he's slowly uncurling his arms and his legs. He's exposing the feeling part of his body just by opening. There seems to be some kind of shame connected with that though.

G-26. What is this shame?

S-26. It's like somewhere I learned to be ashamed of loving, somehow.

G-27. Where do you learn that? (pause) When have you felt this way?

S-27. I'm getting father, mother—mother crying and father laughing at mother for crying. Then loving this first grade teacher and being forced to go to another teacher, and crying but being told that I had to grow up or something.

G-28. It seems to be linked with crying, with the feelings that go with crying.

S-28. Yeah, pain. Trying to avoid the pain that loving causes or has caused.

G-29. Could you talk to the monster about his feelings of shame?

S-29. From not being strong enough and wise enough, and it seems connected with how a child doesn't have a strong ego at that age. At 4, 5, and 6 years old, it's just beginning to form. So the confusion came because so much of what was learned was from out there, and it just impinged upon the child.

G-30. How has the situation changed now that you're grown up? (Having explored the childhood roots of Maria's problem, it seemed important to have her get in touch with the strength she now has as an adult. Part of her was still reacting as though she were that small child and forgetting that things are different now. This is an example of the technique of "existential questioning".)

S-30. It's through. It's feeling like I was kind of beaten down and now there's an opening. The added strength of self-awareness is there and that's what wasn't there when I was really young.

G-31. What difference does that make in the way you can allow yourself to be with others?

S-31. I want to go back to the monster that's now opened, that is trusting now, and the trust is erasing the shame. Yes, it's the trust and the acceptance that's erasing the shame and the fear. And it's opening more and more and feeling the light and the energy. But it's been sitting down until now

G-32. What's it doing now?

S-32. I feel like I've rushed ahead of seeing it evolve slowly. It is a male. It's masculine, and I just see it standing now as a very strong form.

G-33. What's happening now? Is there something that wants to be communicated between the two of you? (Our goal is still to bring about a positive encounter. This type of question is general enough to leave the manner of it up to Maria.)

S-33. Somehow now I feel smaller than this male kind of angelic figure. The male form is telling me that I can trust it, and I'm able to believe that more and more.

G-34. Can you ask him what is your relationship to each other?

S-34. Well...I'm interpreting. It's psychologically the animus, but I don't know if I should be doing that.

G-35. Just let it come from the imagery. What is his role in your life?

S-35. To guide me—steadily and surely—calmly, gently, lovingly.

G-36. Ask him if there's anything that he wants you to know at this point...

S-37. He says, "That I am here." And I feel really glad.

G-38. Is there a feeling of closure about this, or is there something more that needs to happen?

S-38. He was much bigger than I was, but I knew his strength was behind me as I left him—that I could go out into the world knowing that he was there—as a very strong source of guidance. The meeting increased my trust in that—the trust and the strength. I noticed that with that last part, my right hand was over my left hand.

G-39. What did that mean to you?

S-39. That the masculine could become gentle and protective of the feminine.

## **DISCUSSION**

Maria's written comment on this session, a week later, is: "This feeling of inner strength and guidance stayed with me. I am feeling much more solid and self-contained, more autonomous, since this session. Whenever personality fears have been predominant, that voice within me speaks, saying, Remember that I am here', and this puts me in touch with this inner source of strength and guidance".

This session was an important one for Maria, as it represents the turning point in her relationship to what Jung calls the animus or male archetype, transmuting it from a negative to a positive form. It helped her move past her fear and resentment of men stemming from the harsh relationship with her father. And it helped her integrate her inner masculine energy in a way that felt supportive.

Although on one level the dragon seems to represent Maria's father with his rage, frustration, and blocked energy, it also represents those aspects of Maria herself. One of her main problems has been an excessive introversion, with difficulty in trusting others and opening to them. There was a "dried up" quality to her affectivity, symbolized in the shriveled body of the dragon. The filling up of the body with liquid is an example of a "synthetic" symbol, pointing the way to healing or to positive resolution in the future. It illustrates what Jung called the "prospective" or forward-looking nature of the unconscious.

This session is an example of grounding interwoven with the oneiric material. A grounding sequence takes the subject out of the imagery to get in touch with the childhood origin of her feelings and the fact that things are different now. This paves the way for the concluding imagery sequence.

## **MOTHER AND CHILD**

### **BACKGROUND**

The subject, whom we shall call Matthew, is a professional male in his late twenties. He is in his fourth month of psychosynthesis and has had four previous imagery sessions. He entered therapy because of depression and anxiety concerning his sexual orientation and his difficulty in establishing meaningful relationships with people. He has engaged in homosexual activity with boys over the past two years and is conflicted about this. Prior to this he had several unsatisfactory relationships with women. He expresses the desire to reorient himself to a heterosexual lifestyle.

In the present session his goal was to make contact with and to accept the child within himself. This topic was chosen because Matthew felt that one of his problems—a preoccupation with and acting out of sexual desire for adolescent boys—was related to a need to contact certain qualities within himself. He was attracted to what he experienced as the beauty and tenderness of boys, hoping through the intimacy of sexual contact to appropriate this beauty and tenderness for himself. He thought of himself in his maleness as ugly and had been brought up to feel it was unmanly to express tender feelings. He also had his assertive tendencies squelched by a tyrannical father.

### **TRANSCRIPT OF SESSION AND COMMENTARY**

G-1. O.K. let's go back and make contact with this child within yourself that you've had trouble accepting. Just let an image appear on your mindscreen.

S-1. Well, I see my mother and a lot of women's shoes all over the place.

G-2. What's she doing? (This type of intervention helps the subject to focus on his imagery, without suggesting a particular direction.)

S-2. She's just kind of getting herself seated, making herself comfortable, crossing her legs.

G-3. Do you see yourself there or just your mother?

S-3. Just her.

G-4. What does she look like? (A question about the appearance or expression of a figure can help to clarify the dynamics.)

S-4. Well, she's very uncomfortable, she keeps shifting around all over the place.

G-5. Would she like to talk?

S-5. Well, she's really getting angry now, screaming.

G-6. What's she screaming about?

S-6. Somebody just bothered her, somebody just interfered with her space. What a face—really contorted, angry.

G-7. See if you can get inside her and sense what she's feeling, what's happening inside her.

S-7. Well, in her life she defines some spaces as hers and when somebody transgresses these, steps over those bounds or interferes with those spaces, it makes her very angry and she's very tight and very armored when she's in that space.

G-8. Can you get inside your mother to understand what makes her feel this need for space of her own?

S-8. Well she feels very worthless because she feels like she's just the housekeeper, and nobody's paying any attention to her. Most of her life is being thrown out the window. Her husband doesn't care about her, doesn't at all confirm her as a woman. She's just like a prisoner; and he doesn't even allow her to go out places and do things either. She's a little frightened to do those things anyhow, but he forbids them, like they're really bad things to do.

G-9. What's bad for her to do?

S-9. To go out with women and play cards or something like that or do anything away from the house. She's just supposed to be in the house taking care of the children...and she feels just like a slave, but because she's afraid to go out on her own she won't seek a divorce or go against him in a very forthright manner.

G-10. How does she feel toward her children?

S-10. Well she resents them because they are alive and have all kinds of promise and she's just getting deader by the day. They're like a reminder of her subservient role. My sister and I are in the picture now.

G-12. How old are you?

S-12. I don't know. I'm really tiny. Body-wise I'm ridiculously tiny, like a doll, but my features suggest that I'm maybe five or six or something like that. I reach up and pull off her bra, kind of looking the other way while I do it. She's just sitting back on all these pillows.

G-14. How does she feel about this?

S-14. She doesn't seem to mind.

G-15. What did you want to do that for?

S-15. Maybe just to be sure she was a woman. That's strange because she could almost relax when I did that—that was almost like, she finally settled down on all the pillows she sits on.

G-16. What does she want or do you want now?

S-16. I just want to crawl up and sit on her lap.

G-17. Why don't you do that? (silence) What's happening?

S-17. Well, I kind of do that and put my arms around her neck.

G-18. How are you feeling?

S-18. In the imagery? (Uhhmm) Pretty good, I'm smiling and very happy.

G-19. How do you feel about yourself?

S-19. Well it's really good in the imagery. Like I'm just sort of standing there in her lap and she lets me do all that—I look really happy and a pretty good-looking kid. It's strange you know, she just sort of sits there and now she sort of hugs me and pulls me down onto her lap.

G-20. Does she want to tell you anything?

S-20. She just kisses me a lot, kind of rocks me back and forth. She has arms now.

G-21. She has arms?

S-21. Well I used to think of her as not having arms because...well, I don't know. Her arms are part of her body now and she kind of holds me and caresses me. (Arms are often symbolic of the ability to reach out and make contact.)

G-22. Just stay with that image and with the feelings that come to you as you do that. (It is important to allow time to absorb a nourishing experience of this kind.)

S-22. I kind of walk away and start exploring now, and she just sits there, like I can come back whenever I want.

S-31. It's been very hard for me to show her any affection because of the way she was—like I didn't trust her, you know, I just didn't trust her. I thought I had to choose between my parents, I think, and I chose my father I guess.

G-32. Do you want to say something now to your mother about this, about why you acted the way you did towards her?

S-33. Well, if she could have always treated me the way she did in the opening part of the imagery, with the feeling that those were her feelings toward me, then I could have been more responsive to her.

G-34. Can you tell her why you were unable to be responsive towards her?

S-34. I don't seem to have many feelings present about it. It must be a long way back because when I was even eight or nine that's the point when I had pretty well cut her off, or we had been cut off one way or another, you know.

G-35. Try to talk to her if you can about why you had to cut her off. See if you can get back and give a voice to that child who had to cut her off and tell her what the child couldn't say then.

S-35. It seems like you don't love me and you don't want me around and you hardly notice me, and you're always accusing me of things like of not liking you or being bad, so I have to cut you off. Dad's going to kick you out anyway and then you won't have any money and you can't get a job. If I stick with you, I'll be in real trouble, so I'm going to stay with him. I don't believe you love me anyway.

G-36. Can you imagine your mother speaking what she would have liked to be able to speak and probably couldn't? (It is sometimes helpful to suggest that a person in imagery speak in a more honest and insightful way than he or she might be capable of in real life. This tends to bring about more empathy and understanding for that person.)

S-36. She says that she needs me very much because I'm how she can learn about men—because she's always been afraid of them and not trusted them and, being her own son, I might be different. I mean she might be able to love me and I might love her.

G-37. What else does she want to tell you? (It is important to encourage as much communication as possible when there are unresolved problems with parental figures.)

S-37. She says she can hardly stand it anymore and that if I leave her, then she'll really be cut off—she won't have anything after that. I think when I was very young...like we might have been close. Like she used to take me on bus rides and stuff like that. My parents would fight a lot when we were young and she was almost like one of the children, you know, abused in front of us and she got cut down to such a level that she couldn't be a source of nurturance, in a way, which wasn't really being an adult, I guess.

G-38. Is there anything else you'd like to say to her or express to her in any way?

S-38. I'm sorry about the way you've been treated in front of your own children. That's a horrible humiliation and I can see why you could hardly show your face to us after that. In a way, being humiliated like that must have made her feel she couldn't be nurturing to us too, being treated like a child that way—well you shouldn't treat children that way either! It was always sort of like the three of us against him. When I was very young, there wasn't...it was so confusing and frightening that it felt like you had to choose where was your best chance of surviving.

G-39. How do you feel now?

S-39. Pretty good, that child was a surprise, you know, the first time.

G-40. In the mother's lap you mean?

S-40. Yeah, the way he looked and everything—I should probably talk to him, if time permits.

G-41. Do you want to speak to him before we finish? (It is a good idea to allow the subject to finish off any loose ends or uncompleted business there may be for him before terminating a session.)

S-41. Well, yeah, it might be a good idea to just say something to him...See, I can hug him like he comes over into my lap, you know, and he's really a beautiful child—everything is really right about him. And I think I need to learn to stay with him through the sad times too.

G-42. Part of the work is going to be done by learning to see your parents more as people so you'll realize that when they did seem to reject you, it wasn't because you were a bad child, but because they had their own deficiencies and problems. Part of accepting the child within you is to understand your parents more fully. I think you've made a good start on that today, but there is still work to be done.

S-42. It was interesting that child looked like...if I can remember right in baby pictures—five or six year old baby pictures—I was really a good-looking kid. And maybe at that time she was being pretty nurturing. You know somewhere, it must have sort of got cut off. Well, I know it did for sure. Yeah. Wow, he was really happy playing around there and she could kind of accept that. When the sadness comes on, it's at a later age, like I don't see the five or six year old looking so sad as I see the 8 or 9 or 10 year old. You almost have to do it year by year, right up till yesterday. I don't know, it seems like maybe that's what you have to do.

G-44. Well, we'll go back to whatever ages are needed for your healing. Let's see how your psyche presents it to you. Your inner wisdom knows what's needed for the healing to take place.

## **DISCUSSION**

In keeping with Matthew's goal for the session, it was suggested that his imagery be related to the need he felt to make contact with and accept the child within himself. The image which appeared was that of his mother, through whom this acceptance took place. In order to reach this point, it was first necessary for the mother imago to ventilate her anger and frustration; then she was able to lovingly embrace her son. This transformation took place through a process of symbolic identification in which Matthew "became" the mother in his imagination so he could understand her from within.

The latter part of the session uses a form of inner dialogue in which auditory imagination plays the primary role. In this dialogue, Matthew has a chance to express his pain and resentment toward the mother. As usual, when negative feelings are given their voice, positive feelings of compassion and understanding begin to emerge. This no doubt contributed to the more positive attitude toward women which Matthew is developing.

In the week following this session, Matthew had a successful heterosexual experience in the context of, a loving relationship. He became aware for the first time of what he called "the beautiful complementarity of man and woman." Since this session, when he has thought of his mother, it has been in a much more positive and

accepting way. A further change was that he became keenly aware of the importance of accepting himself and began to feel more able to do this.

## **GIFTS**

### **BACKGROUND**

This is an excerpt from a mental imagery session with Jasmine (see her other session titled "Plant/Fish/Parents" for further background about this subject.) This section has been chosen as it illustrates the phenomenon of "wisdom teaching" that may occur in guided imagery work. Although wisdom teaching is more common in the types of mental imagery that deliberately address the archetypal levels (such as Jung's "active imagination", Desoille's "waking dream", and structured dialogues with wisdom symbols), our method of dialogic imagery also produces this phenomenon from time to time.

This selection from Jasmine's session, which is her first mental imagery experience, is the final section of a session which began with exploration of various landscapes. She reached a point where she began to descend in imaginal space (which, along with the contrary movement of ascension, may be an indication that archetypal experience is to come.) She had gone down some steps into a basement and continued to descend through rocks, emerging on a little road at the bottom. She seemed to have a strong sense of going somewhere, so I simply allowed her to continue until the numinous encounter took place.

### **TRANSCRIPT OF SESSION WITH COMMENTARY**

S-1. The road gets wider as I continue down. I get the feeling that there is life down there. The road gets very wide as it becomes a cul de sac. I am hurrying to get there. There is a grey stone church with a steeple on one side of the road and across from the church there is a flea market. The people are few and old. They are in a squatting position. Their heads are covered and they look like East Indians. The men are wearing skull caps and the women are wearing veils. They are not selling their goods, they are giving them away. They are all asking me to come to them as they would like to give me something. One woman is showing me a brass vase.

G-1. Do you go to them?

S-2. Yes, I am sitting on a square tin. The old man has given me a pair of sandals, I guess I was bare footed. I am wearing the sandals.

G-2. How do you feel about that?

S-3. Very good. Wearing the sandals I feel tall and I feel as though I have something solid under my feet. A woman has given me something to eat. I am now leaving. The man says that they have a lot of things to give away, but no one to whom they can give them so he was glad I came.

G-3. Is there anyone with whom you would like to speak some more? (This question was asked as it seemed that the possibility of a "wisdom teaching" experience was very strong. When such a possibility emerges in Dialogic Imagery, the subject is ripe to receive the teaching and it is of great value.)

S-4. I would like to speak with the old man; he has a very friendly, kind face.

G-4. What would you like to ask him?

S-5. He has shown me two sheaves of wheat. They both have a lot of grains. One stalk is straight, the other bends gracefully. He has asked me which of the two is the better. I have told him the one that bends. My reason for suggesting that sheaf is because I figure it must be bending because it has more grains. He agreed with me and now he compares the sheaves to people. He says that it is like two persons who possess knowledge—one stands aloof and the other bends with humility. The latter is the greater of the two. This is a man with a lot of wisdom. He is now packing his wares to leave. I feel a little sad and lonely at his leaving.

G-5. Can you make contact with them before they leave so you will know how to find them if you should wish to again? (This suggestion may be helpful when subjects are reluctant to relinquish a beneficial experience.)

S-6. I feel sad to bid goodbye.

G-6. Can you tell the man and perhaps he can help you? (It is preferable not to terminate such experiences on a note of sadness. Questions of all kinds can be addressed to wisdom figures and are generally responded to in a helpful way.)

S-7. I have told him, and I also expressed my pleasure in having had the opportunity to meet them. The man has suggested that some of the qualities I have come to appreciate in him I may want to integrate in my own life. He said I would not find it necessary to seek him out to experience those qualities as they are also a part of me.

## **DISCUSSION**

This is a very poetic experience, which suggests the great treasures that await us all, often unclaimed, in the depth levels of the psyche. The figures appear every day to give away their gifts, but nobody comes to receive them. Although this experience appears to have particular significance for Jasmine, it has a message for everyone who has failed to explore the rich inner world, with its gifts of life.

The gifts that Jasmine receives are uniquely tailored to her own needs. The sandals make her taller, and provide something solid under her feet, giving her more stature and "something solid to stand on". This seems related to feeling her own strength and autonomy. The gift of food seems related to her need to receive nourishment from her life experience. The parable of the sheaves of wheat provides her with the gift of humility which, significantly, only comes when she has experienced her own stature and been well fed. It seems likely that this session helped to prepare Jasmine for the subsequent session in which she achieved reconciliation with her parents—an experience which required humility on her part as she needed to ask her mother's forgiveness.

## **PLANT/FISH/PARENTS**

### **BACKGROUND**

The subject, whom we shall call Jasmine, is a professional woman in her early middle years. She has had one previous imagery session. Jasmine has had a fear of not getting enough "food" or nourishment in life coupled with a fear of being fed in the wrong way. There is some feeling of dependence on others for approval and consequent fear of rejection. She compensates for this by the image she projects as a strong, self-sufficient, and nurturing person who helps rather than needs others.

### **TRANSCRIPT OF THE IMAGERY SESSION WITH COMMENTARY**

(excerpted)

G-1. Just allow an image to appear on your mind-screen and tell me what you see.

S-1. I see a streak, like lightening in the distance.

G-2. Watch your imagery and see how it unfolds.

S-2. The sky is blue, there are white fluffy clouds. In between the clouds the sky is a mixture of pale blue and silver grey. The lightening has ceased and the sky and clouds are receding. In the foreground there are some hills. I feel like a magnet is pulling me toward the hills. I can fly across. I am there now. I am walking down a road. As I descend, the road gets wider and wider. The vegetation on either side resembles sugar cane or bamboos. There is a gentle breeze and I can hear the rustling of the leaves. I would like to go off the road into the fields. I see people. A woman is cutting sugar cane and she has given me a piece. She is describing the fruit. It is sweet and juicy. There are lots of people around here. I would like to stay with them for a little while.

G-10. You can do that.

S-10. I am with them and I am now helping them. I feel good—the earth under my feet and the gentle breeze is blowing. We're all equal here. There is no boss.

G-11. Do you feel like speaking with any of the people? Is there anyone who attracts you particularly?

S-11. Yes, there is a little child—a little baby who is lying on a mat while the mother works. I have taken up the baby and I am playing with her. The baby has fallen asleep. I have returned her to the mat and I am now among the adults. The woman is asking me why I am here.

G-12. What do you tell her?

S-12. I am here because I get a good feeling of equality, acceptance, peace, sharing, mutuality—that we can appreciate each other.

S-16. I would like to stay here a little longer.

G-17. You would like to stay here a little longer? O.K.

S-17. Yes, the feelings are somewhat tentative. I would like to feel it more ingrained. (pause) I would like to stay here and work a while.

G-18. O.K. If I make any suggestions and they do not feel right, just say so.

S-18. I can leave now, it is the end of the day and everybody is getting ready to leave; people are taking their tools. It is an appropriate time for me to leave.

G-19. Would you like to experience these feelings more deeply to help you integrate them in your own life?

S-19. I would like to take the feelings, so I want another minute to intensify the feelings.

G-20. Stay with your imagery and see what happens.

S-20. (Long pause-about 3 minutes) Yes, I am ready to move on.

S-24. Something strange is happening now. My body and my head appear to be swimming around. In fact, I cannot differentiate between my head and my body.

G-25. What do you feel like?

S-25. I just suddenly feel like being in a pool of water, like a jellyfish.

G-26. Stay with this experience and describe what is happening. (Subjects often need encouragement to "stay with" a significant experience.)

S-26. I am a mass swirling around under the water.

G-27. What thoughts and feelings come to you as you do this?

S-27. I get the desire to go down to the bottom and make contact with the flow of the sea. After I have touched it, I would like to return to the top. I must go down first before I get back up. (pause)

G-28. Are you doing that?

S-28. Yes, (pause 4 minutes). There are several green plants down here...large leaves. (pause) I am looking for something down here. It is somewhere around the roots of this plant.

G-29. See if you can find it. Do you know what it is?

S-29. It is the roots I want.

G-30. The roots of the plant?

S-31. I don't want to lose any of the roots. So I am gently moving the silt from around it. I have got the entire plant out. (pause)—I am going to take the plant up.

G-32. O.K.

S-32. The plant looks beautiful, we're making our way out of the water. The leaves are in the air but the roots are in the water for moisture. I would like to take the plant but what will I do with it?

G-33. See what your intuition will guide you to do.

S-33. I will hold it for awhile. (Jasmine is making stroking movements with her hands.)

G-34. Are you caressing the plant?

S-34. Yes, the leaves.

G-35. What do you feel when you do this?

S-35. As though I am getting some nourishment, the plant is also getting some nourishment. We are both

nourishing each other. (pause) I am ready to put down the plant.

G-36. O.K.

S-36. I am giving it some shade under this tree. But I do not like the soil here. It is dry and hard. I will find better soil. I have now found a spot on the bank of the river. The roots will still get into the water. I am planting it under a weeping willow tree—it will get the morning sun from the south, the shade from the river. I am sitting beside the plant now.

G-37. How does the plant feel? (As all elements of the imagery, whether or not they are human, are assumed to represent aspects of the subject, it is useful to ask how plants or even inanimate objects feel. In this case, the rooted plant with its leaves in the air may be a symbol of the subject's identity as a separate person with her own roots in the earth and her own air to breathe.)

S-37. The plant is feeling happy but it is likely to feel lonely if I leave. Of course, I can take the plant with me but the soil here is good.

G-38. Stay here as long as you want. (It is important that the subject be allowed to proceed at her own pace.)

S-38. I feel ready to leave. I am in the water and swimming down the river. I feel good about leaving the plant as I left it in a good spot.

G-39. What are you doing now?

S-39. Here the river flows into the sea. I am on the beach. There is a vast expanse of sea. Here the river and sea feed each other.

G-40. Where are you—in the water?

S-40. No, I am sitting here watching how the river flows into the sea. I am quite impressed.

G-41. Just contemplate this scene and see what feelings and thoughts it brings to you.

S-41. I am thinking about this river and where I have come from. I have left the plant out there but I am still connected to it because the roots of the plant get nourishment from this river. (long pause) I am walking down the beach and there is a fish on the seashore. He was still alive, so I threw it back into the water. There are several fish that are alive; those that are alive, I throw back into the water. I have one fish which I am holding. It is a flat fish with purple fins. The large eyes are staring at me.

G-42. What are the eyes like?

S-42. They are searching for something.

G-43. What do they appear to be searching for?

S-43. They are looking to me for direction.

G-44. You can enter into dialogue with the fish if you wish to.

S-44. What would you like me to do with you? Fish: I would like to stay with you for awhile. S: That would be fine with me but you are likely to die; you need to be in the water to sustain your life. Fish: No, I will not die. S: Yes, you will. Fish: Why don't you try me and see? S: What if you die? Fish: You need to have more faith. S: It is a risk more than faith. Fish: It is not a risk, I will not die. I do not need the water to survive. The warmth of your hand is equally important to my survival. (pause) S: I am holding the fish like this and am walking down the beach. The eyes look brighter.

G-45. What kind of relationship do you feel with the fish?

S-45. Well, the fish was right, all he needed was air and warmth. This is why I am holding him between both palms of my hand so he can be kept warm. I feel the same relationship with the fish as I felt with the plant.

G-46. What is that?

S-46. The fish belongs here but I feel some responsibility to find him an appropriate place before I can move on.

G-47. Let's see if you can find a place.

S-47. I would like to return him to the water but he is resistant. I am digging a hole in the sand. When the tide comes it will fill the hole with water. The fish is looking comfortable and happy and I feel right about leaving.

G-48. Why does he like it outside the water? (This question was an attempt to clarify the needs of the fish which, since they are unlike those of fishes in real life, can be assumed to be of symbolic significance to the subject.)

S-48. He likes the air and space around him. But this is contradictory because I held him between my palms and he was happy. Ah! He said that he wants space but he also wants contact. He wants contact but with freedom to breathe. (Just as the plant needed air to breathe, so does the fish, again suggesting the importance of "breathing space" or autonomy in the life of the subject. There seems to have been some resolution here of the complementary needs for autonomy and contact, preparing the way for the reconciliation scene with her parents.)

G-49. How will he manage now? (It is important to insure the welfare of all "dramatis personae" in an imagery session, insofar as possible, as they can all be considered as aspects of the subject.)

S-49. Having had the opportunity to make contact, he can reach out and make contact on his own. (pause) There is a breeze. It is twilight, I see a house and there is a light. It is a funny-looking house—with spaces. The walls are about three feet high—then a lot of space, then another floor with open space. It is illuminated.

G-50. Do you feel like entering the house?

S-50. Yes, there are lots of people around. I would like to make contact with them. There is no interaction. I am going to leave and go up to the second floor. It is a narrow spiral stairway. I have climbed four levels. There is a white chesterfield, soft carpeting.

G-51. Is anybody there?

S-51. No, it is vacant but I can feel the presence of those who might have been there before. There is a chair and my father is sitting in it. I will go and sit beside him. He has taken my hand and we are sitting in silence.

G-52. How do you feel?

S-52. A little sad. I feel so close to Daddy.

G-53. What is the sadness you feel?

S-53. The sadness comes from the little time we have left.

G-54. Are you close to your father in real life?

S-54. Yes.

G-55. Is there something you need to say to each other?

S-55. No, I would just like to hold his hand and let him know that I feel very close to him. I don't need to say anything. If I only hold his hand, he will get the message I want to convey.

G-56. Just do whatever you wish. (long silence) What are you feeling? (Although Jasmine is obviously having an intensely moving experience, verbal contact is nevertheless re-established by the guide after a rather long silence in order to complete the session in a reasonable time.)

S-56. A feeling of closeness. I have never felt so close to him before and all these years have gone by. He has asked me to go to my mother. She is in the adjoining room.

G-57. Can you see your mother?

S-57. Yes, she is sitting in a rocker and she is waiting for me. She said that she has been expecting me for some time. Her eyes are sad. I am sitting on the floor and my head is on her lap and she is stroking my hair. She says that she has been wanting to do this for a long time but I won't let her. I told her that I am aware of this and I am sorry that it has taken me such a long time.

G-58. How do you feel about this?

S-58. I feel good.

G-59. How does your mother feel?

S-59. Much better, her fingers are more relaxed and her voice softer. At first, she was afraid—perhaps of rejection, but now she seems confident.

G-60. Is there anything you would like to say to each other or are words not necessary at this time?

S-60. I have told her that I was sorry and she has said that I do not need to apologize about the past or feel badly about it. Let us instead credit ourselves with a new perception and the beginning of a new relationship. I have gone back into the room and my father is smiling. He is expressing his joy about the bridging of our relationship. The three of us are sitting quietly together.

G-61. Is there anything you would like to do?

S-61. I would like to stay here and consolidate my feelings. (Long silence). The session ends here.

## **DISCUSSION**

Although it was not possible to remain in close contact with Jasmine after the session, she wrote in a letter, "After this experience, I felt a weight lifted. I also felt as though certain blockages have been released and I feel more unified in my body and less defensive. My relationships with both parents have improved. There has been a release of tension on my part and my feelings are positive". She stated some time later that prior to this session, she had felt pessimistic about the possibility of establishing close and meaningful contact with her mother. She was pleasantly surprised to find her mother receptive when she did make an effort, realizing that the obstacle had been from her side and not from her mother's.

As for the session itself, several features seem noteworthy. The subject is unusual in the sense that she has a strong sense of what she wants to do with the imagery and is relatively independent of the guide's suggestions, sometimes countering them with ideas of her own. This tends to happen with subjects who have more experience with mental imagery sessions, but is rare for a beginner. With a person like Jasmine, it is important

to follow the subject's intuition as it was clear she had a sense of what she needed, and that she was able to extract nourishment from her experiences along the way.

This session was rich in positive experiences which Jasmine felt inclined to savor in silence for a long time. As such experiences tend to have a powerful transforming effect, it is important that the subject be allowed ample time without interruption to receive the nourishment. When sufficient time was allowed to take in the experience, there was a felt readiness to move on. The absorption of positive experiences plays an important role for a person like Jasmine who has difficulty allowing herself to receive the right kind of nourishment in life.

The actual content of the session revealed an interesting sequence of events which all seem to have led up to the culminating experience of reconciliation with the parents. In the section where Jasmine met the sugar cane workers, she gained an experience of "equality, acceptance, peace, sharing, mutuality" in which there was a feeling of mutual appreciation. What seemed especially important to her was the fact that all were equal, that there was no boss. This suggests that her relationship with her parents—at least, her mother—has been impaired by viewing the parent as an authority figure. She needed to experience her equality before she could approach her mother in a spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness.

The second sequence that seems significant is the one which involves bringing the plant up from the water with its roots intact and planting it on the bank of the river. The plant is brought out of the waters of the unconscious, and great care is exercised so that no part of it will be damaged—an important point when working with symbols.

The third preparatory experience is Jasmine's encounter with the fish. Like the plant, the fish needs air to breathe as well as contact. It may be that the fish represents a "cold fish" aspect of herself that was previously unwilling to bridge the gap with her mother. Perhaps this is the meaning of warming up the fish by contact with her hands. This interpretation is supported by her comment that "having had an opportunity to make contact, he can now reach out and make contact on his own". In her experience with the fish, which is a higher life form than the plant, there is a synthesis of her need for autonomy or breathing space with the need for human warmth and contact. This leads to her final experience in the house with her parents. Here too, there is a graded sequence of events. She begins by meeting her father, an easier relationship for her, and from this moves to the encounter with her mother from whom she previously felt estranged.

Experiences of reconciliation with the parent figures are quite frequent in mental imagery work of this kind and are highly important therapeutically. Until the parental "imago" and the subject's self-concept are transformed to the point where this is possible, a person does not, in my experience, attain inner peace or emotional maturity.

After the session, Jasmine states that she feels more unified in her body and less defensive, with a release of tension and removal of a "weight". When there is no need to defend oneself against the imagined affronts and intrusions of parental figures, it is possible to be more relaxed and open to life. In the reconciliation process, physical affection and tenderness, are often expressed, as is the case here. The experience is more profound when it includes this dimension. When apology and forgiveness are appropriate, as in this case, it is important that these be expressed. With many clients, there is a need to vent feelings of pain and anger to the parent, as well as to experience compassion for the parent through taking on the parent's perspective. With Jasmine, however, the necessary preparation seemed to occur instead through her symbolic encounters with the sugar cane workers, the plant and the fish.

## **OPENING THE DOOR/ OPENING THE VOICE**

### **BACKGROUND**

This session has been chosen as it provides an example of how guided imagery can be combined with body movement and voice techniques. Parts of it will be summarized to save space.

The subject is Igor, an educator in his late twenties. He has been in psychosynthesis about 4 months at the time of this session, and has had a few imagery sessions prior to this one. Igor is a young man who presents a rather mild-mannered appearance. Though there is clearly a lot of strength and creative energy inside him, he has difficulty in manifesting this. The topic for our session was therefore to work on ways of exteriorizing his "light and strength".

Igor's background was an over-protected one in a wealthy family. He grew up as the neighborhood sissy, not competing with the other boys in sports and subject to a good deal of teasing about this. He compensated for feelings of inferiority by nurturing feelings of pride in his esthetic sensibilities and looking down upon coarser beings. He has tended to be withdrawn and is now experiencing the need to come out of his shell to express who he is in the world.

### **TRANSCRIPT OF SESSION AND COMMENTARY**

G-1. When you feel ready, allow an image to come that will help you understand what is needed to let your light and your strength to shine forth.

S-2. I get an image of my lungs expanding.

G-3. Get into that feeling. Let yourself feel that expansion. (It is important, when subjects are experiencing physical feelings, to help them get in touch more fully with these.)

S-3. It got bigger and bigger, and now it's like a room. (A sequence follows in which Igor sees himself in the middle of a large, empty room, wondering what door he should go out of. He goes up to one door after another, opening them a crack and closing them, unable to decide which one to take. This reflects his life situation at the present time in which he is having difficulty deciding which of many paths to take. He eventually selects a door and goes outdoors into a field.)

S-19. I'm out in that field. I see the sun and there is a point that it reaches. It's like I want to melt or burn away this blockage.

G-20. Can you experience this happening?

S-20. I imagine myself climbing out, as a snake sheds its skin. I climbed out of the skin and am having a whole different feeling about myself...

G-23. How are you feeling?

S-23. Well, in the imagery I see myself feeling really free and lively and reacting to the sun, but lying here I feel a kind of tightness in the small of my back.

S-24. See if you can go with the feeling in your imaginal body and experience that freedom and lightness. (pause) What does it feel like?

S-24. I'm getting the feeling of really expansive inner space. I still feel tight in my body sometimes. I am feeling something new also. Some images are there that I feel have meaning for me, but I am not integrated with them yet.

G-25. What are these images?

S-25. First of all, when I went through the door to the fields, I realized that the doors were only an illusion, that once I stepped through that door in this new way of being that anything that was behind those other doors was also available to me.

G-26. What is it about this new way of being that is important? (It is helpful for the guide to encourage the subject to articulate any positive experiences he may be having. This focusing of attention on the experience helps bring it to life and make it more meaningful.)

S-26. It's a feeling that I am whole. In this feeling of expansion I don't feel separated from the rest of the world. I don't feel some kind of incompleteness or lack of something. And that lack of something would be a reason for insecurity or wanting to be somewhere else, or having to frantically bring something else to where I was then. As I was speaking there also was a very strong kind of blissful feeling, some new awareness...

G-28. Do you feel more integrated with the image now than you were before?

S-28. Yes, but still my body is holding on to something.

G-29. What is your body holding on to? (pause). We could work through movement if you feel that would be more helpful. (When tension in the physical body is blocking integration with the imaginal body, the technique of spontaneous body movement is often more appropriate than continuing with the imagery.)

S-29. Yes, I'll try that.

G-30. Just let yourself get in touch with how you are feeling in your body. Let your body move any way it wants. (Igor begins standing and walking slowly around the room)...

S-30. My inner voice was saying to move with the feeling of being strong...that I could just move or just stay still and be free. In other words, this would be a freeing kind of thing- this idea of standing right here and feeling strong at the same time.

G-32. Let your body move around any way it wants to, either moving or standing still. See if you can really experience this strength and freedom. (Igor walks around the room in a slow and purposeful way, sometimes stopping to get the feel of standing still.) How does that feel?

S-32. Yeah, that feels a lot better. See, I know that I don't have any problem doing this kind of freedom movement. I know that I can do that. It's more just standing still and being able to retain contact that I need. I think that it's got a lot to do with the voice. I want to get my voice to resound throughout the whole body, rather than being all choked up here (points to his throat).

G-33. Can you let something out with your voice? (silence for a few minutes).

S-33. My voice can let my strength shine out. (Igor speaks this in a deep, rich, and forceful voice, which seems at least an octave lower than his usual voice.)

G-34. How does that feel?

S-34. Yeah, that feels okay.

G-35. Do you want to try it again? (Repetition helps to reinforce and deepen it.)

S-35. My voice can let my strength shine out. My voice can let my strength shine out.  
My voice can let my strength shine out. (As Igor repeats this, his voice becomes progressively fuller and more resonant. One can now hear the resonance in his skull as he speaks.)

G-36. There is a lot of strength in that.

S-36. I feel energy generated in doing it.

G-37. Yes, there is a lot of energy in the room now. Your voice has totally changed.

S-37. My voice can let my strength shine out.

G-38. Try it as long as you feel like it.

S-38. My voice can let my strength shine out. Yeah, I'm feeling something down in here (points to stomach) rather than in here (points to throat) so much. And when I do that, it makes me feel more balanced. When I'm talking up here, it makes me feel top-heavy. When I talk deeper, my whole being feels like it is working together.

G-39. What happened to that tension in the small of your back?

S-39. It feels a lot looser.

G-40. Are you feeling some closure with this, Igor? Would you like to stop at this point and talk about it?

S-40. Yes. (Our discussion is mostly about the way in which his voice has changed and the possible value of voice training for Igor with a teacher who specializes in helping people to find their own voice.)

## **DISCUSSION**

After this session, Igor wrote:

"This imagery session has, I feel, been a real breakthrough for me. I felt much better about myself and my voice afterward and I still am having some of these feelings a week later. I can bring the image of myself to mind where I went out into the fields and had a great feeling of expansion and wholeness. I feel very free and strong when I do this. I also can feel stronger by bringing the seed thought, 'My voice can let my strength shine out' to mind. I find that projecting my voice strongly outward really can make a very positive difference in how I feel about myself and how others see me."

This session illustrates the technique of affirmation incorporated as a grounding procedure within the imagery session. Affirmation is one of the stages of the will (Assagioli, 1973) which is often neglected. Yet it is a very simple and effective technique that is almost universally applicable with all types of people. An important aspect of affirmation is repetition, which is why Igor was encouraged to repeat his statement several times. In the course of repetition, the phrase becomes more deeply implanted in the subject's mind, and is more readily available when needed. Repetition, as Assagioli says, is like the successive blows of a hammer that eventually drive in the nail. It also has the function of enabling the subject to make his statement in a variety of ways, until he comes to say it more "from center" and with real conviction.

This session presents an interesting contradiction between Igor's experience in his physical and imaginal bodies. A judgment call may be required in situations of this kind as to whether to continue the imagery session or to focus instead on the physical sensations. If the physical sensations are not too distracting and the imagery sequence is productive, the guide may choose to continue with the imagery. However, bodily tension is valuable material to work with. It may be preferable instead to switch to another modality such as to body movement or focusing awareness on the tension itself. In this case the decision was made in consultation with the client. Igor chose to focus on his body, which allowed the emergence of an important next step.

### **Martha Crampton, Ph.D.**

is a psychologist with a practice of psychotherapy and life coaching in New York City. She studied with Roberto Assagioli, M.D. and founded the Canadian Institute of Psychosynthesis in Montreal. She has contributed to the evolution of psychosynthesis in North America through her teaching and writing.

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