

THE LIVING IMAGE : Dreamwork in Psychodrama

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Introduction

Dreams held a prominent place in the work of the early pioneers of psychotherapy. Freud's (1899) book *The Interpretation of Dreams* heralded a prolific period of investigation into the human mind through the recall and analysis of dreams. Analysts of both the Freudian and Jungian schools continue this work today. But many other descendants of those early days of psychotherapy, including modern psychodramatists, have marginalized dreamwork in favour of more reality/ego based approaches. While the numbers of psychotherapists have increased steadily throughout this century, my guess is that the percentage of those psychotherapists who confidently and intentionally engage in dreamwork has steadily declined. It is not my intention here to explore in depth the many reasons that have contributed to this. Some of the reasons therapists might give could include:

- Dreamwork is a luxury I can't afford. I haven't the time. I have to deal with crisis situations. I have to come up with speedy, concrete results.
- Dreamwork is risky. It takes the client/patient out of "reality".
- Dreamwork was not a part of my training. I wouldn't know what to do.
- I don't even understand my own dreams. How can I help interpret someone else's?

All of these are valid reasons for not engaging in dreamwork. Dreams, however, persist in happening. They are extremely frequent psychological events. Therapists have them, clients have them, indeed laboratory research into sleep has shown that we all have them - every night - whether we remember them or not (Fontana 1995). It seems that every night, more than once a night, we all enter another world. While we are in this world, it has sensory and emotional impact and is experienced as real. With the rare and interesting exception of "lucid" dreams, we do not know we are "only dreaming" until we wake up and find ourselves in bed with more or less vivid images and feelings in our memory of where we have just been. Unless consolidated by either writing or telling another out loud, that memory very rapidly fades, and all we may be left with is a vague "feeling".

I cannot dismiss this persistent psychic activity as being of no concern to the psychotherapist. I hold with Harry Wilmer's view that, "*Psychotherapy is impoverished if dreams are not listened to*" (Wilmer 1991, p.211). I am also concerned that a person seeking help with relating to and understanding their dream experience may feel that their only choice is between lengthy psychoanalysis on one hand or over-simplistic and misleading "dream dictionaries" on the other.

What I hope to present in the following pages is an approach to working with dreams

that respects the process of dreaming itself. For this I will draw on others currently exploring the area of psyche and dream, especially John Heron and David Fontana from the world of psychology and education, James Hillman from the field of depth psychology, and Robert Johnson, a contemporary classical Jungian. The approach I propose necessarily furthers the basic aims of all psychodramatic work - the development of spontaneity and creativity as defined by Morneo - but is not identical to Moreno's own documented way of working with dreams. The spontaneity and creativity evident, both in dreams and in working with dreams, is remarkable. Dreamwork is not a psychotherapeutic panacea. But the psyche, the creator of our dreams, does often seem to be aware of things that the waking ego is not. It persistently reminds us, through dream, that there is more to us than our ego-self chooses to acknowledge. To label this "creator of dreams" as the unconscious is, I feel, a misnomer. Our psyche is not unconscious. It is our ego-self that is unconscious of much of what and who we are.

I believe that the doors of the therapeutic space should always be kept open to dreams and, if a dream presents itself, the psychodramatist is in a particularly good position to invite the dream in and enable the client to actively engage with it. As with any encounter, the timing of the meeting, the meeting place, and the personal attitudes and prejudices of those involved profoundly affect the outcome. If the encounter is spontaneous, it will have a strongly felt quality of *aliveness*. Moreno was a champion of equality, respect, and spontaneity within the encounter. Let us see what can happen if we apply this credo to our own images from the dream world.

What Are Dreams?

The word *dream* has more than one sense. We might talk about the feeling of "being in a *dream*", or say "it was like a *dream*", when we experience something that seems rather wonderful, outside our mundane reality, and that excites our feelings and imagination. We might describe some person we find idealistically attractive as "*dreamy*"; or describe someone who is lost in their own thoughts and fantasies as "*dreamy*". We might, like Martin Luther King, say "I have a *dream*...", meaning a cherished vision of a possible future that inspires us; or confess to a "*pipe-dream*" which is accompanied by feelings of wishing and longing, but which our view of reality does not allow as a possibility. We might also cynically say "You're *dreaming!*", when he hear someone speak of something we believe is impossible, or impractical. The *dream* which is our concern in this paper is with the image-story, the inner drama, that we experience at night when we are asleep. What the other uses of the word *dream* have in common with the night-time *dream* is that they all require the involvement of the imagination, and somehow go beyond the limitations of "reality".

Dreams are images. They are products, indeed productions, of the mind in its imaginal mode. "...*dreaming is the imagination at work during sleep and the imagination is the dream world flowing through us while we are awake*" (Johnson 1989, p.21). The human psyche's ability to image/imagine is a capacity that lifts us out of the restrictions of simple material existence. Images are inner, mental re-creations of sense perceptions, enlivened by psychic energy. Another way of saying this is that they are psychic energy clothed in the fabric of sense perceptions. The psyche can create visual images, auditory images, olfactory images, taste images, kinesthetic images, and images involving a "felt" presence that is unseen. Even these "felt" images, if consciously focused on, will usually then manifest in an overtly sensory way.

It is the psychic energy that imbues the sense-image with meaning and impact. James Hillman says that, "*Psychic images are not necessarily pictures and may not be like sense images at all. Rather they are images as metaphors. An image in poetry and the entire imaginative process of music, of course, must be heard with the ear, but they are listened to with a third or inner ear*" (Hillman 1979, p.54). The intensity of the image relates to the intensity of the psychic energy within it and is felt as both a sensory and an emotional intensity. Our dreams are perceived as if through our senses, just as our experience of the waking world is sensory. Some dreams are more vivid and resonate more strongly than others. Later in the paper we will explore this in terms of levels of dream. Dreams and other spontaneously produced images are the psyche's natural way of manifesting to, communicating with and stimulating the conscious ego-self. Once a dream is a dream it is no longer unconscious, at least for as long as the ego-self is experiencing it or remembering it.

By the word *psyche*, I am referring to the whole of the human mind, both what is conscious and unconscious to the ego-self. This includes what John Heron (1992 p.14) calls "*its unexpressed and unexplored potential*". Heron uses the word *entelechy* to describe this potential and the drive towards its fulfilment - "*an entelechy is the immanent, formative potential of what is actual. So the entelechy guides the emergence of, and is progressively realized in, the actual entity*" (Heron 1992, p.69). This idea relates to Maslow's term *self-actualisation*, and Jung's term *individuation*. The psyche has a life and movement of its own. This is not identical to the life and purposes of the ego-self which has dis-identified from the psyche, nor is it identical to material, organic life.

The psyche, the actual and potential person, is alive, but not simply because it is involved with a living organism. Its life is inherent: this psychic life interacts with the living organism, but cannot be reduced to it. The psyche has its own capacity

for being a centre of life. Feeling, imagination, reflection and action live. (Heron 1992, p.30)

Robert Johnson (1989) uses the term "the unconscious" as practically synonymous with the psyche, because the ego part of the mind is unconscious of the whole. I feel this can be unhelpful, as it can encourage us to dissociate from that within us which is not conscious to the ego-self. The unconscious can begin to appear as somehow solid and separate from us. We can feel like we have two minds - the conscious mind and the unconscious mind. Psychologists often take sides in their choice of which "mind" they concern themselves with. Jungians and some modern transpersonal theorists get around this by referring to the *self* - which is another way of describing entelechy or the whole mind. The psyche is the whole mind, including its entelechy. Through out this paper I use the term *psyche* as described by John Heron above and, when I quote from Robert Johnson and others, I am reading the word "unconscious" as "psyche".

I am aware of the ego's essential role in consciousness, and of the paradox that it is through awareness of our separateness that we can become aware of our connectedness. I have no interest in denigrating the ego. However, I will be approaching dreamwork from a perspective that does not give the ego the central position on the therapeutic stage. As mentioned earlier, equality is necessary to encounter. The entelechy of the psyche requires communication between its parts. Dreams happen in the world of sleep when the ego, released from its grounding in the concrete and material, is subject to, rather than in charge of, everything that happens. Therapy happens in the waking world where it is generally considered beneficial for the ego to be in charge. For dreamwork, the stage must be shared, and the ego must discover how to share it.

In *Feeling and Personhood*, Heron (1992) proposes a model of the human psyche he calls an "up-hierarchy", which "*works from below upwards, like a tree: something that has roots, a trunk, branches and fruit* (p. 20)." Here the psyche is seen as operating in four basic modes, each one emanating from, and based in, the one below: the *affective* mode of feeling and emotion, the *imaginal* mode of imagery and intuition, the *conceptual* mode of discrimination and reflection, and the *practical* mode of action and intention.

What Heron's model clearly suggests is that feeling and imagination underpin and create our understanding of reality. Attunement to, resonance with, that which exists around us is necessary to the process of imaging which forms and informs both our inner and outer experience, our reality. Once we move into the mode of concept, with its inherent

subject/object split, we can tend to cut ourselves off from our grounding in feeling and imagination, believing reality is somehow separate from, and even at odds with, feeling and imagination. It is then that the images we create can appear "*as if they are coming at us, rather than we are producing them*" (Heron 1992, p.25). But the truth may be that we both experience and continually create our reality through the modes of feeling and imagination. Our experienced reality is distorted when there is a failure in, or a distortion of, feeling and/or imagination, or when those modes become unavailable to us consciously. It is also through these modes that a person is most open to therapeutic change. This should not sound unfamiliar to the psychodramatist. We are well aware we work in the affective and imaginal modes, as well as the conceptual and practical. It is in affect and image that spontaneity becomes easily available. Concepts are pretty resistant to change without the use of affect and image. Once concept has become conserve, we will continue to act in the same way, unless feeling or imagination activates some other alternative and we re-ignite some spontaneity. Dreamwork is an opportunity to regain our grounding in feeling and imagination.

The Function of Dreams

So dreams are images, produced by the psyche as a natural part of psychic life. What is their purpose? Two areas of purpose occur to me which inter-relate. The first is the garbage-pail metaphor: dreams are somewhere to deposit and work on left-over stimulation of the day. Initially this appears to be a denigrating way of viewing dreaming, as a kind of necessary but low-status activity the ego-self doesn't need to concern itself much with. But garbage can be viewed as compost. Once this perspective on the metaphor is taken, we see dreaming as a means of turning left-over day-residue into rich, fertile material the psyche can grow something in or "mould" into something new. "*What is merely shit from the daytime perspective - or what Freud called day-residues - becomes soul food when turned upside down*" (Hillman 1979, p.39). Since sleep laboratory research shows that a large proportion of dreams never break through into consciousness (Shohet 1989; Fontana 1995), this purpose of dreaming has validity for me. The psyche is engaged in some necessary business of its own, which it will continue with whether we participate consciously or not. On the other hand, the remembering of dreams responds radically to the motivation and intention of the ego-self to do so. It is as if the psyche moves dreams closer to consciousness when invited to do so. And even the most resistant rememberer of dreams will, at some point, have a dream thrust upon their consciousness whether they will it or no. Heron (1992) uses the analogy of breathing for the process of imaging, both being largely involuntary, but with real potential for active, voluntary participation.

This brings us to the other main purpose of dreaming which lies in the area of communication and connection. Dreams, when consciously experienced and remembered, are communications we receive in our sleep. If the ego pays more attention to dreamlife, the number of dreams that become conscious usually increases. However, once dreams become conscious all is definitely not clear. The language of dreams is symbolic. All is not what it seems in the dream world. The language of the psyche and the language of the ego are not the same, though they appear to use the same "words". Dreams do not respect the physical laws of time, space, and constancy. Images of the people and places we know in daily life who feature in our dreams may behave or appear differently. Appearances shift and alter suddenly. Dream images are shape-changers. Our sense of time is distorted. Our feelings in a dream situation are often bizarrely different from what they would be confronted with a similar situation in the day world. Things which would not disturb us do, and things which would disturb us do not. Veronica Tonay (1995) in her book, *The Art of Dreaming*, explores the links between dreaming and creativity, describing clearly how emotions in dreams are often not embodied in the dream ego, but rather symbolized in the other dream images around it, leaving the dream-ego peculiarly emotionless. Dreams communicate through metaphor. "*The unconscious speaks in symbols, not to confuse us, but simply because that is its native idiom*" (Johnson 1989, p.20).

Dreams have been considered in some times and places to be communications from God, from spirits, from ancestors, etc. (Fontana 1995). Since Freud we have tended to view dreams as communications from the psyche, informing us of feelings, processes and aspects of ourselves we are not conscious of. Robert Johnson (1989, p.13) states clearly that "*The point of inner work is to build consciousness.*" Johnson describes the imagination as a transformer that converts the invisible material (of the unconscious) "*into images the conscious mind can perceive*" (Ibid, p.22). So, through dream images, the conscious mind is connecting with unconscious material. For Jungians the purpose of this communication is to enable us to "*gain awareness of the deeper layers of consciousness within us and move toward integration of the total self*" (Ibid, p.13).

The process of dreaming is two-way, as we see above – images from the waking world find their way inwards. The psyche then composts this material, uses it for its own purposes, and then communicates it back in the form of dream images. The over-all purpose of the psyche is the fulfillment of entelechy, however you want to view that: as wholeness, self-actualization, cosmic man, individuation, enlightenment, or, as Hillman calls the work of the psyche, soul-making. "*The Good Book says the human soul is made in the divine image. Let us understand this also to say: the human being is made by the divine*

images in the soul" (Hillman 1979, p.138).

Levels of Dreaming

Not all dreams feel the same, and not all images in dreams feel the same. The images resonate at different intensities. This varies from the mundane, to the whimsical and intriguing, the unnerving and bizarre, the nightmarish and the powerfully spiritual. The emotional response felt within the dream, or upon awakening (which is not necessarily the same as the feeling within the dream), is an indicator of what level the psyche was working at in the dream. The vividness of the remembered sense images is another indication. Sometimes we can only recall a single image from a dream. It is as if the psyche thrusts the image forward and says, "Here! Remember this!" The work of the psyche within the dream is on the timeless level of entelechy, but the communication pertinent to the time-bound ego is encapsulated in that one image.

Both Heron (1992) and Fontana (1995) divide dreams into three levels. Heron (pp.140-141) speaks of the level of *internal dynamics*, the level of *mythic images*, and the *transcendent* level of dream imagery. The first level here seems to be the level closest to the ego, where the psyche turns outer events into inner events and lends those events an inner, psychic perspective. This perspective can then feed back into waking life, through feeling, image and possibly reflection and action. The next level deals with "*the basic parameters of life: gender, birth, death, age, growth*" (Heron 1992, p.141). These dreams would be called "archetypal" by Jungians, but Heron, following the current, popular thinking of Ken Wilber, declares this to be confusing. He chooses to distinguish between *archaic-mythic* images, and *transpersonal* images, which he reserves for his third level of dreams. Here are the great dreams that "*shape the format of human destiny*" (Heron 1992, p.141).

Fontana (1995) tries a simpler three levels which he calls "*The Non-Symbolic Level, The Mundane Symbolic Level, and The Higher Symbolic Level*" (p.82). I find his first level confusing, since all dream imagery is symbolic. To designate a dream as non-symbolic seems highly contradictory. He admits himself that, "*Even at Level One, the dream is a dramatization, not a representation*" (Fontana 1995, p.86). What he seems to be saying about dream imagery at this level is that the meaning of the imagery is both easily accessible and directly relevant to one's current daily life. It reflects the dreamer's current life view and situation, but does so via symbolic imagery. He gives the example of a dream where the dreamer is looking down at the world from a great height, reflecting the dreamer's detachment from the world and everything in it (Fontana 1995, p.45). Second level dreams are those that

are either Freudian "wish-fulfilment" dreams, or Jungian "compensations". The dream is either "*repressed material or emotional drive in the unconscious which is seeking expression*", or is "*making up for some lack in the behaviour of your conscious self*" (Fontana 1995, pp.92-93). The third level is the classical Jungian archetypal level. Fontana does not make the Wilberian distinction that Heron makes. As soon as one touches the archetypal it resonates differently, because it is about something beyond our personal, individual sense of self. These dreams have to be lived with. "*The meaning only becomes clear as your life events unfold, perhaps the following months, even the years. Don't be in too much of a hurry to grasp at this meaning*" (Fontana 1995, pp.96-97).

Some understanding of the word *archetypal* is necessary for any discussion of dream at this deeper level. *Archetype* is a Jungian concept, but it has found its way out of the realm of classical Jungian psychology and is referred to within many other psychological and therapeutic approaches. For clarification I naturally turn to the great writer and theorist on archetype, Erich Neumann. Neumann states that, "*When analytical psychology speaks of the primordial image or archetype..., it is referring, not to any concrete image existing in space and time, but to an inward image at work in the human psyche. The symbolic expression of this psychic phenomenon is to be found...represented in the myths and artistic creations of mankind*" (Neumann 1972, p.3). We are aware of the presence of an archetype, not only in the sensory image, but in the feeling the image arouses in us.

The dynamic, the effect of the archetype, is manifested in energetic processes within the psyche, processes that take place both in the unconscious and between the unconscious and consciousness. This effect appears, for example, in positive and negative emotions, in fascinations and projections, and also in anxiety, in manic and depressive states, and in the feeling that the ego is being overpowered.

(Neumann 1972, p.3)

For all Jungians the entelechy or movement of the psyche is towards consciousness, conscious awareness of the whole and the essence of life, represented by the archetype known as "*the self*". All archetypes have what Jungians call a *numinous* quality. They inspire a sense of awe in us. "*The term 'numinous' applies to the action of beings and forces that the consciousness of primitive man experienced as fascinating, terrible, overpowering, and that it therefore attributed to an indefinite transpersonal and divine source*" (Neumann 1972, p.5). The nearer the image is to its archetypal core, the deeper the image, the more powerful the numin. Neumann makes an interesting statement about the

effect of archetypal images: "*They take hold of the human personality as a whole, arouse it, fascinate it, and attract consciousness, which strives to interpret them*" (Neumann 1972, p.8).

In other words they stimulate the conscious mind, awaken it, shake it up, get it moving about. Fontana concurs with this idea of the psyche challenging the ego through dream when he states:

It seems overwhelmingly that the unconscious uses symbolism in dreams because it actively wants to set us puzzles in order to stimulate us into inquiry. To prompt our conscious minds to start working creatively. To goad consciousness into keeping pace with unconsciousness. (Fontana 1995, p.60)

For Fontana, the difficulties in understanding a dream increase with the levels. He does say that any one dream may be working on all levels at once (Fontana 1995, p.83). This, I think, is an important possibility. Veronica Tonay (1995) supports this idea, and also reminds us that dreaming, as an activity of the psyche, cannot necessarily be translated into ego language: "*Not every dream lends itself to interpretation, and not all dreams can be interpreted from a single point of view*" (p.vii).

James Hillman (1979) is the champion of the psyche's point of view, versus the ego's perspective, when considering dreamwork. For him, dream is all one ever-deepening level. He objects to the practice of dragging dream imagery over "the bridge" from the inner realm of the psyche into the daytime realm of concrete, material reality. The psyche may use images of the day's events, but the dream is not about those events. The dream is about the inner workings of the depths of the psyche. You need to meet with and deal with dream imagery in its own realm - what he calls the *underworld*. He speaks of three approaches to dream images, the last one being his own:

The first, let us call it Freudian, takes them back to the actuality of the day by means of association or by means of the objective level of interpretation. Other people are essential for understanding dream persons. The second, which we may call Jungian, takes them back to the subject as an expression of a person's complexes. My personality is essential for understanding dream persons. The third, archetypal method, takes them back to the underworld of psychic images. They become mythic beings, not mainly by amplifying their mythic parallels (a standard Jungian method of relating dream images to known mythic material) but by seeing through to the imaginative persons within the personal masks. Only the persons of the dream are essential for understanding the persons in the dreams. (Hillman 1979, pp.63-64).

This is a radical view of working with dream. Here he is talking of people images in dream but his thesis is that all dream images should be treated in this way. For Hillman (1979, p.80), the dream is complete in itself: "*we cannot understand the dream until we enter it.*" We need to "*speak like the dream, imagine like the dream*"(Hillman 1979, p.130). This calls for us to make an "*intellectual and imaginative effort*" to follow the dream down into the depths of its own world (Hillman 1979, p.131). Hillman is not very specific in **how** one does this, but he makes some tantalizing references to theatre which are encouraging to the psychodramatist, such as:

Theatre creates that dissociative illusion of being in and out at the same moment, both souls there at once. We are both wholly in the dream and yet aware that it is, we are, only an act. (Hillman 1979, p.191).

Hillman's underworld metaphor carries with it images of death, but he insists that his readers not confuse this with literal death. For Hillman, one of the greatest harms we can do ourselves is to literalise the metaphorical. This is the height of materialism. The underworld of dream is not about the concrete or the material. The death he is referring to is the death of all that the materialistic, literal ego clings on to. By working on dream "*we gain internal ground...we get a sense of what matters...that sense of matter apart from material things and a materialistic view of things*" (Hillman 1979, p.136).

There is some support for Hillman's connection of dreaming and death in the Tibetan Buddhist Tantric practice of Dream Yoga. Here the practitioner learns to stabilize their ability to meditate to the extent that they are able to fall asleep in a meditative state. The practitioner experiences the stages of falling sleep with an aware mind. These are similar to the stages the mind goes through at the point of death, known to Tibetans as the Bardo. Entering the dream world is like entering the Bardo (Namkhai Norbu 1987). The point of the practice is not to then control dreams, but to be aware through them; to know them as dreams. Dream Yoga is only taught to advanced students by a qualified, realized Master. But there are books popularly available which claim to teach methods that lead to "lucid" dreaming. It is disturbing to me, and I am sure anathema to Hillman, that these books emphasize ego-control over dream life. This kind of dream technique has nothing to do with the aims of Buddhist Dream Yoga. Lucid dreams happen to many people, on and off, without intentionally inducing them (Fontana 1995). Even if you do use techniques to induce them, it is impossible to stabilize this in any reliable way, except through Dream Yoga. And one must seriously question why one is attempting it.

All of the above-mentioned notions on the levels of dreaming point to the ability of dreams to have a perspective on life and experience that differs from that of our waking ego-self. They also seem to be saying that there is some value in taking on board, or understanding, that other perspective. Psychodrama is the method par excellence for facilitating new perspectives. It is time now to place dreamwork in psychodrama.

The Placing of Dreamwork

Many people who talk about dreams use the metaphor of a geographical locality where dreams exist - the dream world, the imaginal world, the world of the unconscious, or, as Hillman calls it, the underworld. This place is in contrast to the waking world or daytime world of concrete reality. Hillman dates this topographical metaphor back to Freud. "*By saying 'a topographical regression takes place in dream', Freud has moved the dream, and with it psychology itself, from a functional and descriptive cosmos to a topographical cosmos. He has restored to psychotherapy the realm of inner space*" (Hillman 1979, p.16). In fact, the topographical metaphor has ancient roots in the shamanic journey. Both Hillman (1979) and Robert Johnson (1989) speak of dreamwork and the creative imagination as a "bridge" between the two worlds. Both encourage us, like the ancient shaman, to walk across the bridge from the daytime world into the world of the dream. Hillman is vehement in his opposition to walking the dream in the other direction.

While I agree completely with Hillman's opposition to ego-tyranny over dream interpretation, and his rejection of the heroic mode of being in relation to dream imagery, his notion of descent to the underworld as a basis for dreamwork is, I believe, not appropriate in practice. The underworld may be where we go in our dreams, but we cannot work with dreams there, unless we master lucid dreaming. There are indeed times in the lives of some persons when such a descent occurs outside of sleep. It heralds a very deep and radical transition. Even if psychosis or clinical depression does not result (and it most certainly can) as part of this process, it is a painfully shattering experience. In a descent, you must go alone. It involves a dying to one's whole sense of self, in order for a new identity to be born. No one, not even the best therapist, can go with you. That is an essential part of the process. Sylvia Perara (1981) in *Descent to the Goddess* and Alida Gersie (1991) in *Storymaking in Bereavement* have both described this kind of descent. The therapist can, like the faithful Ninshubur in the Inanna myth, play an essential role in the process from above, but a person in descent must go down alone. We also descend alone to dream every night. But this process is contained by sleep; and the ego is protected by the awakening. For dreamwork we must find a place, where there can exist a balance between ego participation and the imaginal

activities of the psyche. As dreams are dramatic in form (Hillman 1979& Johnson 1989), the psychodrama stage is an ideal space to create that place.

I am not happy with the "bridge" metaphor. A bridge seems an ungainly place on which to work and explore, fascinating as bridges are. There does not seem much room to move in, and I wonder immediately what is **underneath** the bridge. Hillman might say it is the river Styx! There are no mentions of bridges in the ancient Greek journey to Hades; and the ferryman's boat seems an even more precarious place to be working!

Staying with the topographical metaphor, my image of a place for working with dreams is that of a *borderland*. A place that is neither the daytime world nor the dream world, but which lies between them, and is accessible to the inhabitants of both worlds. This is a no-man's land, in which there is a suspension of hostilities. In this place the laws and beings of both worlds can inter-relate, and both world-views can inform and enrich each other. On the psychodrama stage we can create a space, which is not the unconscious, but where psychic images, which have their origin in the unconscious, can still survive, move and change - where they can be alive.

Dream Psychodrama

Moreno has described in detail his own method for dealing with dream in psychodrama. (Morero 1985; Moreno 1987) For the most part I have no quarrel with his approach. He, too, is interested in the deepening process, as indicated when he spoke of psychodrama as "*threatening the conformist, threatening the man who wants to live within a budget, psychologically speaking, who wants to be safe and secure, and who doesn't want to know too much about himself. He may feel it is better to live on the surface than in the depths*" (Moreno & Sacks 1965). I heard Zerka Moreno state that "*psychodrama is really relationship therapy*" (at Holwell Institute, April 1996). Moreno was primarily concerned with the relationships between people. For me, dream psychodrama is not about those types of relationships, though it may draw on images from them. Dream psychodrama is more about a person's inner relationship with themselves, and with the psychic process that Heron calls entelechy.

My feeling is that Moreno's dream psychodramas encourage the ego to manipulate the psyche's images. There is an emphasis on control over dreams that does not sit well with the idea of the entelechy of the psyche. This is evidenced in statements like: "*the characters in your dream are like wax figures on the stage...They have no life of their own,*

therefore you tell them what to do" (Moreno 1987, p.189); or where the protagonist is encouraged in psychodramatic dream extension *"to end it in a fashion which appears more adequate to him, or which brings him to a better control of the latent dynamics upsetting him"* (Moreno 1987, p.200).

Moreno seems to work with a presumption that the people in dreams who wear the image of people in the protagonist's life are literal representations of those people as the protagonist sees them, rather than daytime world images being used by the psyche for psychic purposes. To relate to dream images as actual people from the daytime world can confuse and set back the dreamwork. An example of such confusion occurred in one of my dream psychodrama workshops. In the dream the protagonist is standing on the beach looking up at the cliff top where she sees an old man holding a baby. She experiences an incredible sense of longing for the old man to give her the baby. We extended the dream to see where it would take us. The "old man" was clothed in the image of her former gardener, now deceased. In the dream this old man held a powerful, pivotal position. There was a numinous quality about him felt by all present. But at a point towards the end of the psychodrama, the protagonist "dismissed" the old man as she would have done her gardener. In the sharing, the person who had played the role of the old man shared her deep feelings, in role, about the inappropriateness of this dismissal. The "old man" was aware of his powerful place in the inner world. He was not something that could be made to leave the scene. He was an element of it, not someone who had come into it. It highlighted the importance of de-literalising dream images. The "old man" energy within the dreamer's psyche may have borrowed the image of the gardener, but it was other than that gardener. This could have been made clear at the time if, as director, I had intervened and, through role-reversal, protected the integrity of that dream image.

There is also the assumption in Moreno's dream psychodrama that the waking ego and the dream ego are identical. My experience is that this is not so. The ego in dream is not the same as in the waking world. The following dream psychodrama will illustrate: The protagonist reported a dream which had left her with images and feelings that disturbed her. In the dream there is a rough, dark sea. She is standing in the water, and yet not in the water. Some distance away she sees a big, strong boat with its prow pointing downwards as if about to plunge into the sea. A man is standing very upright in the water near to the boat and is in direct eye-contact with her. His intention seems to be to go down with the boat. He seems to be wanting confirmation from her that it is all right to descend. She signals both thumbs up. The boat goes down and the man too, still in his upright position, sinks into the sea. She awakes horrified, thinking, "I have sent that man down to his death.

I am sure there are many levels to this dream and many possible interpretations, but our interest in dream psychodrama is to bring the dream images to life and allow for meaning to be created through spontaneous encounter. Interpretation comes through the action. "*Analysis becomes submerged into the production*" (Moreno 1987, p.199). I was struck by the fact that her distress came into being as she woke. It was not a part of the dream. We went through the initial stages of creating her bedroom on one side of the stage, going to bed, falling to sleep and the dream emerging. At this point she moved from the bed to the main part of the stage to set up the dream scene. I asked her to choose something or someone to represent **her sleeping self**. This distinguishes the self who is lying in bed dreaming from the self who is in the dream, or dream-ego. It also frees the protagonist from ego-tyranny, allowing them to enter into and relate with all the different aspects of self, including the sleeping self. The protagonist is freed to be their whole person, not identified with any one of the parts, free to go in and out of role, containing the whole production within themselves. When watching the whole scene during the mirror technique, the audience and the protagonist are constantly aware, through the presence of the sleeper, that what they are witnessing is from the dream world, not the daytime world.

Having created the dream scene, using fabrics, objects and auxiliary egos, she role-reversed with the boat, the man, the dream-ego, and the sea, in that order. As the sea, which called itself "the Depths", she said, "I have different levels, infinite. Somewhere there is a bottom called Death, but that is not **the** bottom. I am magical in parts." She played for awhile with those magical parts, but decided that the energy and meaning of the dream did not lie there. Back in the role of the boat, it became clear that the boat was not heading for those magical parts, but instead it was "going into the dark Depths, the unknown." From all of the images in the dream there came statements of certainty and commitment about this descent. The dream ego's final statement was, "It's all right for this to be happening." Back in bed, as she awoke, the feelings of horror and guilt returned. To resolve this, a dialogue was set up between the dream-ego and the waking-ego. In the protagonist's final statement, she reflected for herself that she was taking her dream imagery too literally, and that "There is an aspect of myself I need to trust more."

If the protagonist had taken the feelings of the waking-ego into the dream, this may have distorted the psychodramatic dream images, just as the dream became distorted for her upon awakening. It was important for the ego-selves to be distinguished. If she had been encouraged to alter the dream to soothe the waking-ego's distress and bring back its sense of being in control, the integrity of the dream would have been compromised, and the meaning that emerged, lost. If we are interested in dream, then we are interested in what the dream

images have to say. We need to allow them freedom of speech and movement, even if what they say and do is at odds with the ego's ideas of right and wrong. The protagonist needs to be free from the restrictions of the waking-ego to participate in dreamwork. Something has to be shed before entering the borderland. That "something" is ego control over the outcome and over the dream images themselves. A judgmental attitude concerning what should and should not be, needs to be let go of. Attitudes such as this can be seen as ego conserves that inhibit the creativity of the dreamwork. The feelings and concerns of the dream-ego have equal place in the psychodrama with the other dream images, but they do not over-ride them. And the feelings and concerns of the waking-ego may have no place at all in the work. This takes a degree of trust in the imaginal process and in the entelechy of the psyche. The above protagonist was not familiar with depth psychology or the works of James Hillman, but she was familiar with operating in the imaginal mode, and well able to confront reality beyond the concrete level, as evidenced by her statements in role as the Depths.

Dreaming is a creative act of the psyche, with the non-ego aspects of the psyche calling the tune. **Dreamwork** is a collaborative creative act; the conscious ego-self opening to the images that have emerged from the unconscious. It is "*conscious participation in the imaginative experience*" (Johnson 1989, p.140).

The first character of the creative act is its spontaneity, the second character is a feeling of surprise, of the unexpected. The third character is its unreality which is bent upon changing the reality within which it rises, something prior to and beyond the given reality is operating in the creative act... the fourth character of the creative act is that it means acting sui generis...Parallel to the tendencies that lift certain processes into consciousness are others that tend to their mimetic embodiment. This is the fifth character of the creative act. (Moreno 1985, pp.35-36)

To preserve the above qualities in creative dreamwork, I do not normally negotiate contracts for dream psychodramas in the way I would for psychodramas based on autobiographical material. It would be the ego writing the contract, and this feels uniquely inappropriate for dreamwork. The all-embracing contract is to explore the dream in a way that enhances spontaneity and creativity, and that respects the other-reality of dream images. At the end of the psychodrama, the protagonist can accept or reject the communications within, and implications of, the dreamwork. But within the psychodrama, they relinquish control. It is a paradox of creative work that, through letting go of control, a greater sense of mastery and confidence can develop. Dream psychodrama, which is creative dreamwork, does not

translate our dreams for us into the language of the waking world. It is not about how we can use our dreams to affect our waking reality, or solve problems in the waking world. This may or may not happen as a result of dreamwork. It is about enriching our relationship with our own imagination; about enabling the dreamer to become a better dreamer, a more confident creator of images. It is about listening to the inner voices of the psyche; and intentionally participating in entelechy. To do this we need to relax the ego's relentless control over the search for meaning and understanding, which insists on an ego-reality interpretation.

The Living Image

Dream psychodrama happens in a creative borderland between the waking world and the dream world. The psychodrama is an *invitation* to the images of the dream world to enter the borderland and meet with the protagonist. The essence of my approach to working with dreams in psychodrama is to treat the images as **alive**, not as wax figures. They are given their life by the spontaneous imagination of the protagonist. To be alive is to be constantly changing. Living images can change suddenly and rapidly. Throughout the whole process I encourage the protagonist to resist setting the image in any fixed way, either visually or by interpretation. To think in a fixed way that you have your "father", or a "tree", or your "animus" in front of you inhibits the image from living and changing. If there is a need to name the image, this is done through role-reversal. The image names itself, and sometimes it gives no name, but only some elusive qualities. Even the name can change as the image evolves. Because, in psychodrama, the image is represented by a physical auxiliary ego, it is at times necessary for the protagonist to close their eyes and see again with the inner eye. If the image changes, it may be necessary to change the auxiliary ego. The dream-ego can also alter suddenly, like any of the other images. What at one moment is an older woman may suddenly become a small child. To balance this suddenness of the changing image and changing role, I try to keep the pace of the psychodrama slow and relaxed. We take the time for the protagonist to experience each image and each shift of image, and to embody that change. Once they have fully experienced the movement and interaction of the dream images, the protagonist also goes into role of watcher and witness. This mirrors what is often the experience of dreaming, of being both watcher and participant. It is possible to do very brief and powerful work with just a single image rather than the whole dream. The remembered dream is always just a starting point, the locus, out of which the images grow and flower.

My experience has been that if the image is allowed to grow and change, it will continue to reveal itself in more and more meaningful ways. If dreams are allowed life, they

affect our lives indirectly but profoundly through extending and deepening our sense of self. "...*the dream is effective as long as it remains alive*" (Hillman 1979, pp.122-3). I first experienced this in my mid-twenties, in my very first psychodramatic dream exploration. A particularly horrific dream image, which had haunted me for years, transformed, as I embodied it, into a powerful and hugely compassionate image that had an long-lasting effect on my view of myself as a woman. Both I, and the clients with whom I work, are continually surprised and humbled by the manner in which images transform when invited to. A shady saboteur becomes a critical ally and then a tender lover. A deep sea diver in full gear becomes a man in a bright Hawaiian shirt. An empty concrete room becomes a beautiful cloistered courtyard, full of flowers, with a fountain playing in the centre. Invitation is important to living images; and it is also important to not know what is about to happen.

Dream images are given temporary physical substance through psychodramatic enactment but they must not be imprisoned by that substance. It is not so much that images are changed in becoming embodied, as it is we who are changed through embodying them. Images change anyway. We become aware of the changes, and can influence (not control) them, through consciously inviting and allowing them, and through participating in the changes. The therapeutic effect of psychodramatic dreamwork is in the altering of body/mind through the process of the embodiment of images. The doing is profoundly important. Often a resolution of the work with a particular image comes as the protagonist takes the image back into themselves, as if physically. An example of this is the image of a huge woodburning stove with a fire roaring away inside it, the whole suspended in the air above the dreamer. As such, the image intimidated the dreamer. Through encounter and dialogue, the protagonist eventually found a way to take the fire image inside her own body where it became for the while "her secret". According to Johnson, the embodiment of images is essential to dream work.

Ideas and images from your dream should enter into your emotions, your muscle fibres, the cells of your body. It takes a physical act. When it registers physically, it also registers at the deepest levels of the psyche. (Johnson 1989, p.101)

I think of dream psychodrama as ultimately transpersonal work, although it can have very immediate effects on one's current life view. It is a way of exploring and furthering our process beyond the limitations of our carefully constructed sense of self. It requires a degree of ego-surrender that not all people can allow. Blatner reminds us, in his discussion of spontaneity, that:

there tends to be an element of surrender in spontaneity, as well as innocence, and this results in an expansion of consciousness. To do this in the present moment involves relinquishing excessive censorship in the mind's functioning, and it requires a corresponding opening to the inner impulses, intuitions, and inspirations. (Blatner 1988, pp.64-65)

I would add to that list "and images".

The dream exists before ego consciousness, as is evidenced by animal and infant dreaming (Hillman 1979) and, if the Tibetans are right, continues after ego disillusion in death (Namkhai Norbu, 1987). It works alongside, through, and beyond the preoccupations of material waking reality. By paying close attention to even the smallest of our dream images we are doing "big" work. It is inner, psychic work; what Hillman calls "soul-making". It is **not** a substitute for the necessary work that has to be done with one's everyday life situations and with our relationships with other people. However, doing dreamwork with other people, as in psychodrama, can hugely enhance our sense of connectedness with others and with ourselves. The experience of ego-surrender can stretch our hearts and expand our whole being. Dreams are both intensely personal and private, and remarkably easy to share and relate to, once we give ourselves permission. Shohet (1989) describes how strong links can be forged between people through the sharing of dreams. Because of the archetypal nature of much dream imagery, dream psychodrama, temporarily at least, dissolves the barriers between individuals, constructed by the demands of their different ego realities. Dream psychodrama both celebrates the "Many" and reveals the "One" in the paradox of the One/Many nature of our existence. Through communication with, and active embodiment of, the living images in our dream world, we can know and experience ourselves as encompassing both aspects of the paradox. The living image is what we are: alive, ever-changing, unique, connected, and complete.

The Living Image – References & Bibliography

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