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**Imaginary fields: the cultural construction of  
dream interpretation in three contemporary  
British dreamwork groups.**

**Iain Ross Edgar**

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## ABSTRACT

Dreams have, since time immemorial, both reflected the culture of those who dream them and have been used by them, with or without the help of soothsayers, to shape their personal lives and that of the culture of which they form part. Anthropologists have also, since the beginning of their discipline, commented on and analysed dreams in diverse cultures and in turn derived from these and other analyses, theoretical principles and approaches.

In the modern world, and particularly in the twentieth century, first individual and then group therapies have incorporated the narration and analysis of dreams into their methods. More recently still, this process has been, at least partially, democratised and the therapist acting on the individual patient has transformed her/himself into the dreamwork facilitator and resource person for a, more or less, autonomous group.

In this research I established and jointly facilitated three dreamwork groups in order to use experiential groupwork methods to demonstrate the articulation of embodied, but implicit, knowledge. In my analysis of the group process I use anthropological concepts derived from the survey of literature at the beginning of my thesis.

The analysis proper proceeds in four stages.

The first is concerned with "dreamwork", the way that the narration to and within the group can be shown to be collectively converted into a verbally expressed narrative of an experience

seen as having hitherto been concealed and confined to the imagination.

Second, I turn to the analysis of structure and process in the group itself and the communicative context in which this dreamwork took place.

Third, I use an hermeneutic analysis to unpick the emic and etic interpretive, and to some degree feminist-inspired, perspectives used by the group to make sense of the narratives they have collectively created.

Finally, I move outwards to the processual, meaning-creating and outcome, analysis of such groupwork methods as gestalt, psychodrama and imagework which are used to elicit meaning from narrated dream imagery.

I conclude that dreams are transformations of cultural symbols and that their interpretation is an example of what Obeyesekere, significantly calling on both psychoanalysis and cultural analysis, has called "the work of culture".

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## INTRODUCTION

Dreaming is a universal aspect of being human. It appears to be the most private and hidden activity which is usually perceived as being both unpredictable and often incomprehensible. Yet most human societies have sought to understand dream imagery and many have accorded such imagery and its interpretations high, even prophetic, significance. The paradoxical and ambivalent position of the dream is well illustrated in Western industrialised societies where on the one hand 'interpreting dreams' is seen as a highly specialised task reserved for psychoanalysts and needing a long and challenging training. On the other hand, dreaming is denigrated as being wholly illusory, as being just a 'dream' and of no consequence.

Mediating this dichotomy is, of course, a substantial popular interest in dream material and there are numerous tabloid newspaper features on 'the meaning of dreams'. Dream images are seen as directly translatable into typical meanings and there are many 'dream dictionaries' (e.g. Gonzalez-Wippler 1989). Indeed a popular culture of dream interpretation is evident throughout historical times in many societies as Parsifal-Charles (1986) shows in her encyclopaedic and historical review of writing about dream interpretation through the ages.

Moreover the concept of the dream and its metaphorical use are widespread in English speaking contemporary society. We refer to the 'dream' as being a normative feature of each of the stages of life. The 'dreams' of youth are contrasted with the disillusion, cynicism and 'lost dreams' of old age. The 'dream' of



the 'good life' is seen as a fundamental dynamic in both the construction of human ambition and in the development of a shared social contract. Social dreams are embedded in human institutions. We dream of 'getting on'; of being carefree and fulfilled in our relationships; of 'falling in love' and so sharing 'love's dream'. Popular music pours out a continuous repertoire of dream references usually about romantic love of the ilk "I'm dreaming of you!" and its endless, perhaps repetitive, cycle of hope and loss. Societies can be founded on dreams as is the case with the 'American dream' and provide a form of charter myth (Malinowski 1954:116). The well known 'dreamtime' of Australian aboriginal groups fundamentally constructs their cosmological world-view and social structure. Religious thought, in general, is imbued with anticipatory, visionary hope of the life to come, and the imagery of the consequences of moral choice.

Indeed the current situation regarding the evaluation of dream in Westernised societies is even more perplexing when we try to differentiate between vision and dream. Whereas a 'dream' can be discounted as 'just a dream', a 'vision', whether that of the leader or manager, is highly regarded as a core ability. Sometimes there is even a conflation of these two terms as when Martin Luther King started his famous final speech by saying, 'I have a dream....' Such examples well illustrate our social ambivalence about mental imagery, 'the pictures in our mind'. In short we are both individually and socially replete with socially constructed imagery in which the notion of the dream is a fundamental feature in our collective formation of anticipated futures, and remembered or imagined pasts.

However this thesis is not primarily concerned with the analysis of the concept of 'dream' per se. Whilst there is evidently ambiguity and even laxity, in the referential meaning of the word dream, in this thesis I am using the term, unless specified otherwise, to describe the particular mental imagery experienced in sleep.

The focus of the thesis is a study of a sequence of dreamwork groups run by myself and a groupwork partner from September 1989 to June 1990. The origin of the idea for the thesis began earlier and developed in part from a series of dreams I experienced whilst undertaking fieldwork for my M.Phil thesis into the use of myth, ritual and symbol in a British therapeutic community for adolescents. I subsequently made an analysis of the possible formative impact of these images on the development of the themes in my Master's thesis in a paper 'Dreaming as Ethnography' given at the 1989 Association of Social Anthropology Annual Conference: Anthropology and Autobiography and I reproduce this in Appendix one as part of the reflexive account of the construction of this thesis. Hillman (1989:137) has also suggested that dreams can provide the ethnographer with important insights into emotional and conflicting aspects of the fieldwork situation.

My interest in studying the social meaning of dreamwork was crystallised by my reading of Tedlock's 'Dreaming: Anthropological and Psychological Perspectives' (1981a). This was an edited volume of papers from a North American seminar which signified a new approach, that of the 'communicative theory', in social anthropology to understand both the personal and social significance of dreaming and it confirmed for me the

scholarly value of studying created dreamwork groups in British society which appeared not to have been done before.

I have a number of intentions in this thesis. First I contextualise the study of dreamwork from historical and religious as well as from psychological and social anthropological perspectives. I describe the methodology of the study, and the construction of three ten week dreamwork groups that I ran over a period of a year. I describe and analyse how group participants established meaning and significance between day/night imagery and current life events. The establishment of meaning will include a focus on how the group process and various groupwork methods, such as gestalt and psychodrama, amplified and developed this meaning-making process for the narrator of the dream. In this way the communicative context of dream narration will be explored. One particular interest is to illustrate a process of transformation that is at the heart of dream interpretation and which sheds light upon the nature of our understanding of both self and world, that between the perceived internal image - the dream image - of the dreamer and its translation into a social and personal meaning for the individual dreamer and also sometimes for the group.

I also seek to show how the different interpretive approaches used by group members constituted a set of values, assumptions and processes about the relation of dream imagery to daytime life experiences. This constitutes in fact the equivalent of an emic dream theory.

The ethnographic parts of the thesis address the following questions:

a) What is the transformative process between the dream image and the formation of a socially constructed meaning for that image?

b) Are dreams experienced as meaningful by the group members?

c) How are dreams experienced as meaningful by group members?

d) How do group members perceive dream, and sometimes day imagery, as meaningful in relation to their current life events?

e) What themes emerge from the processes of dream discussion and interpretation?

f) How are these emerging themes linked to social issues such as a gendered awareness of personal development, and racist stereotyping?

g) What is the communicative context of these groups?

h) How does the communicative context develop and influence the understandings and interpretations arrived at by group members?

i) What is the impact of dreams and dream interpretations on waking life? In that sense how do dreams influence reality?

j) Do dreams become collective for the group?

The above basic questions are answered by the thesis as a whole. Within this framework:

Chapter one presents social anthropological perspectives on dreaming and also locates the key theoretical perspectives.

Social anthropologists have developed theories to analyse how dream material and its interpretation is socially constructed in specific and very different societies. I use these cultural

perspectives on the role, function and use of dreams to inform my awareness of the value of dream material in Western industrialised societies.

In this chapter I also review the historical development of dream theory, beginning with the work of Tylor in the nineteenth and Rivers in the early twentieth century. I continue by considering the influence of perspectives derived from Freud in the twenties and thirties. Although, of course, Rivers himself was also greatly influenced by Freudian theory (1910: 387), as was Seligman (1923) in his search for 'Type dreams', which intended to show universal latent meaning in dreams across all societies. Likewise Lincoln's (1935) work on the distinction between 'individual' and 'culture pattern' dreams is also noted. I describe the 'content analysis' approach of the 1950s and 60s, which attempted to quantify and analyse dream imagery cross-culturally in order to show patterns of cultural and personality variables.

The development of ethnopsychiatry in the 1950s by Devereux (1951) and his concept of the pathogenic dream is then considered, and the cross-cultural work of D'Andrade (1961), the conflict resolution approach of Crapanzano (1975), and Kuper's (1979) structuralist attempt to compare the logic of myths with that of dream material.

Finally, I present Tedlock et al's most recent work and their development of a new communicative theory of dreaming, which redefines the traditional boundary between psychological and anthropological approaches to dreaming. Their communicative theory of dream analysis proposes as the object of study, as I have already mentioned, the consideration of dream as a

communicative event that involves the creative dynamics of narration, a study of the psychodynamic and cultural aspects of the group setting, and the indigenous dream theories of the society.

In chapter two I consider the methodology of the study and its impact on my findings. It begins with a reflexive account and analysis of my own historical interest and role within the dreamwork groups. I explore the dynamic between myself as researcher, dreamer and group facilitator. I discuss details of my research method including the use of participant observation and interviews and their effect on the outcome. I also discuss the ethics of research into the area of participants' dreams, and issues of reliability, validity and sampling in the study. This chapter concerns especially the relationship between imaginative data and research findings. It also explores the current use and potential of artwork and vignettes in research. I go on to discuss the possible value of groupwork-based experiential methods derived from gestalt therapy, psychodrama, imagework, dreamwork and sculpting. I suggest methods of particular value when the research aim is to reach the implicit knowledge of the individuals and groups being studied. Bourdieu's concepts of 'the body' and 'habitus' provide a way of conceptualising an embodied consciousness, which can be made manifest through the above methodologies. Finally, the epistemological and methodological potential of these methods are considered along with the implications of their adoption for the training of anthropologists and sociologists.

Chapters three to six present the substantive findings. In chapter three I discuss the process of narration of the dream in

the group. I analyse the cultural dynamics of narration and accompanying theoretical issues. Chapter four focuses on the analysis of the group context and how that is related to the dreamwork. This includes stages of group formation; characteristics of group members; decision-making and leadership; conflict and communication; the development of group identity; trust and self-disclosure; and members' evaluation of the group.

Chapter five analyses the interpretive approach of group members in order to present the overall emic and etic 'dream theory' of the group. Within this analysis I present a summary account of the theories being considered. There are various perspectives including:

a) a comparative religious perspective that sees the dreams as a message from 'God'.

b) the Freudian approach in which dreamwork consists of decoding the latent meaning message disguised in the manifest message, which usually consists of primary-process wish-fulfilment. Here I give close attention to the distinction between primary and secondary thinking and between manifest and latent content;

c) the revised psychodynamic approach incorporates contemporary revisions to classical psychoanalytic perspectives. This approach emphasises the importance of manifest dream imagery and its value as a problem solving process that takes place as metaphor.

d) Jungian perspectives see personal symbolism as partaking of universal or 'archetypal' symbolism, and consequently dreamwork offers the opportunity of developing a

deeper awareness of the self. The theory of the archetypes is presented together with Jung's compensation theory of dreaming. I suggest that the group developed a form of 'mini-archetype' through its analysis and contemplation of key images. Jung's development of the practice of active imagination is also included.

e) transpersonal psychology and its adaptation of Jungian theory and method.

f) I also introduce the Gestalt approach in which all aspects of the dream are perceived as an aspect of the self and their meaning is primarily derived from a conscious emotional experiencing of all parts of the dream.

g) socio-political perspectives are incorporated. These perspectives perceive all psychic imagery as derivative of an objective cultural situation. Interpretation should therefore seek to empower group members to shed oppressive social ideologies. For example interpreting the image of a black person in a dream as an example of the Jungian 'shadow' could be understood as racist. Explaining the image of a 'witch' as a negative aspect would be seen as oppressive by some feminists.

The chapter illustrates the usage of these different perspectives within the group and explains the inevitable eclecticism of interpretation. Group dream interpretation is therefore analysed as being derived from different competing but simultaneously held analytic paradigms. The amalgam of such analyses represents the equivalent of an emic dream theory. This 'dream theory' represents a cultural repertoire for understanding self and others within and through dream and other visual imagery. Examples of dreamwork utilising the different paradigms are presented.



Chapter six analyses the various groupwork methods used by the group and illustrates with substantial case studies the process by which these methods facilitated the elicitation of meaning from both dream and day imagery. Methods used by the group included: discussion and personal contextualisation; member suggestion, association and projection; pair and small group work; gestalt and psychodrama; artwork and imagework; symbol amplification (dream re-entry); meditation; and, finally, linguistic and metaphorical contextualisation, including punning. This chapter also summarises the ethnographic evidence that dreams influence the lives of the group members and therefore illustrates the second half of the proposition developed by Herdt:

that culture may actually change experience inside of dreams, or that the productions of dreaming do actually become absorbed and transformed into culture (1987: 82).

The dream, its narration and interpretation can then be seen as generating both personal and group identity as well as future action. At the end of this chapter I consider the progression of members' dream symbols, their change and development through the life of the groups.

The conclusion locates dreamwork within an overall context of metaphorical thought. Using the insights generated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) into the metaphorical basis of our rationality and language, I show how metaphorical thought is the basis of both dream imagery and conscious awareness. Further, I establish that the insights generated by the group's reflections on the dream data are created and validated by relating this data to the metaphorical meanings contained in ordinary language use.

Overall, the thesis demonstrates the cultural specificity of

dream imagery and dream interpretation, and offers insight into the social construction of both the unconscious and the interpretive process itself. Furthermore, the examples illustrate the problem-solving capacity of dream imagery and dreamwork, as well as exemplifying the metaphorical nature of cognition and language. Finally, I attempt to advance an understanding of the 'work of culture' as Obeyesekere defines it "(a) discontinuous movement from the ideational representatives of deep motivations to their transformations into culturally constituted symbolic forms" (1990:289). The 'nonsense' of dreams becomes the 'sense' and 'meaning' of everyday life, its categorisations, anticipations, affirmations and future actions.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH

Anthropologists have historically been more concerned than sociologists with the study of dream as an aspect of the social life of the groups they studied. This probably arises from three intersecting factors. First, many of the societies they studied respected the dream and clearly acted upon the insights apparently gained from them. Secondly, therefore, the study of dream became a part of the holistic analysis that partly defined the enterprise of social anthropology. Thirdly, anthropologists were aware that dream and myth had similar features, both being sequences of vivid images and depending upon 'inner visualisation for communication and impact' (Kracke 1947:32).

Kracke regards myths and dreams as being "closely related", and refers to Burridge's use of the term 'myth-dream' to describe the situation in societies, such as Rastafarian cults, which do not make a clear separation of the two imaginative forms. Myths have been analysed as if they were the dreams of a culture (Abraham 1979:153-210). Moreover, as myth for Lévi-Strauss is a form of bricolage (1966:17) so the dream for Kracke is a form of bricolage which gathers,

from among the day residues ready to hand, and uses them to express metaphorically an emotional conflict, and to work out (or work toward) some resolution of it (1987:38).

Kracke demonstrates in his analysis of Kagwahiv Indian Amazonian society (1987:33) that the Kagwahiv Indians make a fruitful exchange between the associations and interpretations

made from their myths and the way they explain their dream imagery to themselves. However, as well as similarities there are differences also, as whilst "a dream recounted ends as a narrative, a myth begins as one" (Kracke 1987:36).

Anthropologists have therefore been constantly confronted with their subjects' concern and different evaluation of dream contents and alternative conceptions of the distinction between objective and subjective reality. Tylor (1871:88) perhaps began the cross-cultural interest in dreaming through his understanding of non-literate people's lack of a hard distinction between reality and illusion (Parsifal-Charles 1986:477), and his perception that myth creation, mythogenesis, was a product of dreaming by way of animism. Freud's work in the early twentieth century stimulated the first main phase of anthropological enquiry into dreaming. Seligman (1921;1923;1924;) sought to test the Freudian hypothesis that the latent meaning of dreams was universal across cultures (Tedlock 1987a:20). Colonial workers were invited to provide manifest dream materials which were analysed to discover so-called 'type-dreams'. This analysis was conducted without consideration of their cultural and communicative context. Later, Lincoln (1935:22) in his study of North American Indian dreams developed a distinction between "individual" and correspondingly unimportant dreams, and "culture pattern dreams" which were significant for the group and actively pursued. Although Lincoln perhaps is given the credit for the development of a typology of dreaming based on ethnographic research (Parsifal-Charles 1986:291) even his results are now considered ethnocentric (Tedlock1987a:21).

The 1940s and 1950s saw the development of the content theory of dream analysis (Hall 1951:60-3; Eggan 1952:469-485; Hall and Van de Castle 1966:17). This attempt to quantify and consequently to analyse cross-culturally partly reflected the culture and personality school of social anthropology. It has continued into the 1980s with the work of Gregor (1981:353). Indeed the content analysis of dreams is still used in psychological research. Catalano (1987), for example, recently sought to prove through content analysis that the dreams of emotionally disturbed adolescents are different from those of normal adolescents.

The voluminous extraction of dream symbolism by these anthropologists allowed the compilation of numerous manifest dream reports and their cross-cultural analysis for personality and cultural variables. Whilst this approach does attempt to value the dream positively as psychodynamically and culturally significant, it is, in fact, an approach that decontextualises dreams. The importance of dream narration, dream discourse and indigenous dream theory is almost entirely ignored. Moreover, Crapanzano (1981: 145-158) has argued that the ethnocentrism of the content analysis school of dream analysis is based on an epistemology that reduces language to a merely referential function.

The development of ethnopsychiatry from the 1950s onward by Devereux (1980) is another anthropological landmark in the analysis of dreaming. Devereux in his work with North American Indian groups sought to further integrate a Freudian approach into anthropological fieldwork (1951:139-168). He applied Freudian concepts of transference and reality-testing to

dream reports as well as making a critical analysis of the concept of pathogenic dream (1966:213). He was concerned particularly with the notion of causality that underpins this concept.

In a study of a Crow Indian (1969:139) Devereux analysed his Indian patient's dream within the cultural context of the Crow Indian vision quest and showed how he himself used this cultural context for therapeutic work with this patient. Devereux's work effectively initiated the subject of ethnopsychiatry or transcultural psychiatry. For instance Devereux was able to use in therapy his Crow Indian patient's cultural belief that success in the dream world anticipated successful behaviour in waking reality. He showed (1969:165) how the Crow Indian incorporated Devereux as therapist within the identity of a Crow Indian Spirit Being. Devereux facilitated the patient's orientation to reality through the therapeutic use of his culturally sanctioned and prolific dreaming. However, as Obeyesekere has pointed out in his criticism of Devereux's culturally specific reflexivity, for Devereux the 'manipulation of ethnic symbols' may only provide 'adjustment but not introspective self-awareness or 'curative insight' (1990:21).

Another psychoanalytically orientated anthropological approach to the analysis of dreams was that of D'Andrade (1961:327-8) who analysed the function of dreams in sixty-three societies, using material from Human Relations Area Files. D'Andrade concluded that dream usage arose out of anxiety, and that in hunter-gatherer societies, where there was a need for more self-reliance than in pastoral-agrarian societies there was also significantly increased use of dreams.

By the 1970s dreamwork was beginning to be considered within the context of the cultural system of which it was a part. Crapanzano (1975:145-158) analysed the metaphorical usage of saints and jnuns in the dreamworld of the Moroccan Hamadsha. He showed that personal use of particular dream symbols, and their performative function in terms of conflict recognition and possible solution, were firmly embedded within the 'implicit folk psychology' of the culture.

I have already noted that the similarity between myth and dream is an abiding theme in social anthropology. Kuper (1979:645-662) and Kuper and Stone (1982:1225-1234) attempted to apply the structuralist method of analysis of myth, developed by Lévi-Strauss (1963:206-231), to dream. Kuper considered that the similarity between myth and dream was that both are attempts to cope with problems of reality. These authors proceed to analyse certain dreams and dream sequences as if they constituted a systematic argument which used an ordered set of transformations to reach a resolution. In their analysis they attempt to show that the binary rules that structure mythical thought can be transposed to our understanding of dream content. Whether a structuralist approach of this kind marks a major breakthrough in the understanding of the dream in society is unclear. Tedlock recognised that Kuper had succeeded in discovering "underlying linguistically coded analytical rules" (1987a:27) within the dream narrative. However she and others have raised various criticisms of this approach. The observance of rules does not imply that such rules generate the dream material. Kracke (1987:50-52) as we have seen, argues that myth and dreams are also essentially different in that myths move from

verbal narration to sensory imagery whilst dreams move from imagery to narration. Hence the narrative texts of dreams and myths, whilst related as we have already seen, are still dissimilar. Mannheim (1987:151) also implicitly criticises a structuralist analysis of dreaming by his rejection of the idea that structural laws can be discovered in the "narrative structure of dreams". Rather he asserts that structural laws exist at the interface between culturally and historically specific interpretive and signifiatory systems. His view is based on his comparative study of Andean Indian systems of dream interpretation which found that, whereas their understandings of myth had hardly changed, those of dream interpretation had been almost completely transformed. He explained that there was "a fundamental difference between the way signs function in Andean dreams on the one hand, and in Andean ritual and myth on the other" (1987:149). This difference arrives because:

Quechua dream interpretations encode only the semantic dimension of language and thus have meaning only in terms of the immediate relationship between signifier and interpretant, while myths encode both the semantic and syntactic dimensions (Tedlock 1987a:28).

A structuralist approach can then be a part only of the cultural understanding of dream material, particularly as it is not concerned with the importance of the communicative context of the dream report itself.

Anthropologists have continued to develop the concept of the dream report. Tedlock suggested that the manifest dream content:



should be expanded to include more than the dream report. Ideally it should include dream theory or theories and ways of sharing, including the relevant discourse frames, and the cultural code for dream interpretation (1987a:25).

Tedlock describes this perspective as a communicative theory of dreaming. It has to consider the dream narration as a communicative event involving three overlapping aspects: the act and creation of narration, the psychodynamics of narration, and the emic interpretive framework. Such a theory considers the analysis of dream as more than that of an hermeneutically based text. It is also a social and cultural process or activity with expressive and instrumental outcomes. When this takes place then, we may take seriously Herdt's proposition, already quoted above:

that culture may actually change experience inside of dreams, or that the productions of dreaming do actually become absorbed and transformed into culture (1987:82).

The communicative theory of dreaming then, alerts us to the importance of the psychodynamics of the social setting and the interpretive framework of the participants. The social anthropologist is concerned with the analysis of an interpretive framework which necessarily structures both narration and interpretation.

Two examples from Tedlock's edited volume (1987a) illustrate this important point. Basso (1987:86-88) relates her analysis of the dream theory of the Kalapalo Indians of Central Brazil to the differences between Freudian and Jungian perspectives on dreaming. Freud usually related dream imagery to the past whereas Jung saw such imagery as possible symbolic

sketches of the dreamer's future. Jung (1948:255-263) called this a prospective function of dreams, not to be confused with a prophetic function. Jung wrote:

(Dreaming) is an anticipation in the unconscious of future conscious achievements, something like a preliminary exercise or sketch, or a plan roughed out in advance. Its symbolic content sometimes outlines the solution of a conflict (1948:255).

Obeyesekere also sees a "progressive" role to dream imagery in that such imagery develops a "symbolic remove" from the deep motivation that occasions it (1990:17&57). Basso saw a progressive theory of dreaming as being those emic theories of dreaming that understood that dream imagery is future oriented in so far as the dreamer uses dream imagery and its symbolisation of current concerns to speculate upon, and orientate to, future goals of the self. Basso justifies this assertion by claiming:

Dreaming is also a performative event because it causes the future by revealing the dreamer's life as it is encapsulated in current aspirations, moods and inchoately understood motivations and fears of an individual. The dreaming is thus less a matter about what will happen to a person than about the self becoming (1987:101).

Also in this volume, Tedlock (1987b:105-129) compared the different ways of dream sharing and dream interpretation between a Mexican and a Guatemalan group, the Zuni and the Quiche, to show how such differences are rooted in contrasting metaphysical and psychological systems. How the living and the deceased are differentially conceptualised is crucial to her

analysis. This leads to wholly different interpretive results of similar imagery.

The Tedlock volume seeks to redefine the boundary between the psychology and the social anthropology of dreaming. The customary distinction between psychology's field being the intra-personal and anthropology's being the social is broken down. Psychology needs to understand how the dreamer uses concepts and language which are, of necessity, culturally based to narrate dreams. Anthropology, on the other hand, has to recognise that the communication and framing of dream narratives are always dependent upon emic dream theory. This development mirrors a more general fusion of self and society which has also been developed within contemporary feminist psychoanalysis (Eichenbaum & Orbach 1982:12). The intersection of self and society, and the dissolution of the subject/object distinction is once again a hallmark of the "embodiment paradigm" in anthropology discussed later in this chapter (Csordas 1990: 5).

The eighties have also seen the probable final collapse of the 'Senoi' theory and practice of dreaming. Stewart (1951:21-33), and later Garfield (1975:80-117) popularised the supposed dream usage of this tribal group in central Malaysia. The debate about the authenticity of their reports, based partly upon the work of anthropologists who studied the Senoi at an earlier date, has rivalled the debate over the authenticity of the Castaneda journals in its public impact (Castaneda et al 1970; Douglas 1975 193-200). Stewart, based on brief fieldwork, claimed that the Senoi were a uniquely peaceful and harmonious tribal group, without mental health problems. The cause of this happy state lay in their attitude to, and use of, dreams. Apparently each day the Senoi

would hold "dream workshops" and would work collectively through interpersonal difficulties on the basis of interpreting their imagery. They acted upon their interpretations to avoid future conflicts. Senoi children were, he claimed, taught how to "incubate" dreams and thus to control their dream life. Stewart's theories on Senoi dreamwork had a major impact on the developing dreamwork movement, particularly in the United States during the last fifteen years, and recently in Europe as well. Most popular dreamwork manuals are significantly influenced by this version of Senoi dreamwork (e.g. Williams 1984:301; Shohet 1985:78-81). However Domhoff (1985:34) demolishes Stewart's claim for a unique Senoi dreamwork culture. He shows that the Senoi do not have dream workshops and have no unusual dream usage. Domhoff develops an effective sociological analysis of the sixties' human growth movement in the United States and the way in which it adopted Stewart's 'findings' to counter disillusion with contemporary cultural reality.

Tedlock and her colleagues (1987) provide an invaluable account of the state of contemporary anthropological analysis as well as offering some key directions for future work on dreams. Although the book, 'Dreaming: Anthropological and Psychological Interpretations', was, in general, well received (Parsifal-Charles 1986:460; Hodes 1989:6-8), it has been criticised by Hodes (1989:6-8) for its dated view of psychoanalytic thinking. He suggests that psychoanalysis has moved on from its original central concern with relating mental contents, including dream imagery, to previous socialisation. It now tends to centre on the transference relationship as it is experienced in the here and now by therapist and client. Hodes considers that there is a striking

convergence between psychoanalysis and social anthropology and that both are becoming increasingly concerned with the communicative context of dream sharing. The dream in the psychoanalytic group is now seen as contributing to group culture and as being expressive for the group, as well as being indicative of personal transference (Yalom 1985:429; Cividini-Stranic 1986:147). Yalom uses the example of a dream by a group member about to undress in a room. This was considered by the therapist as expressing the dreamer's mode of silence and their fear of disclosing a personal relationship to the group (1985:430).

Finally, another development of this decade has been the use of both researchers' and informants' dreams for ethnographic research purposes. Dreams are seen as throwing light on the subjective orientation and cultural position of the anthropologist, as well as on the intersubjective encounter between anthropologist and informant. As Hastrup (1992:119) has written "all ethnographers are positioned subjects and grasp certain phenomena better than others". I think that a reflexive anthropology may in time recognise dream imagery as a valuable source of critical insight into the progress of fieldwork.

Levine (1981:276-93) analysed the dreams of three of her informants for transference material concerning her own relationship with these informants. She was able to gain an increased awareness of issues such as power, asymmetry between herself and informants, poverty and dependence and the degree of gender support she was offering to one informant during her marital difficulties. As already indicated, I have tried (Edgar 1988; & appendix to this thesis) to relate my dreams experienced during fieldwork to both the stages of fieldwork research and to

the eventual analytic themes that developed in my Master's thesis (1986). Whether the anthropological study of the 'other' will necessarily one day embrace the researcher's own unconscious has yet to be seen, although Caplan has suggested, in her discussion of 'engendering knowledge' that:

...the time has come for us all, male and female, to recognise that the sense of self which has sustained the practice of ethnography for so long is irrelevant and that as the French poet Rimbaud put it 'Je est un autre' (1988:17).

I have now considered briefly the history of social anthropological approaches to dreaming and indicated my conviction that the perspectives developed in Tedlock's edited set of papers offer important ways forward which I intend to pursue. A communicative theory of dreaming offers, as she suggests, an opportunity to integrate psychodynamic perspectives with "natural-language, socio-linguistic, semiotic, and interpretive approaches to the study of meaning in others" (1987a:30).

Overall, this consideration of the history of anthropological interest in dreaming as a potentially valuable facet of a society's social life demonstrates the validity of conceptualising dream as a significant field for social anthropologists ( and sociologists) to consider. Moreover since doing anthropology at home is now well accepted within the discipline it is appropriate to assert the value of considering the analysis of dream, and dream narration, as a valuable part of the social anthropological enterprise.

### Anthropological Theory

I will refer at points in this thesis, such as at the beginning of chapter three, to particular anthropological studies of emic

dream theory. From such anthropological evidence it is clear that whether the culture in question is non-literate or literate its members dream within the images, myths and symbols of their culture. I took into my study of dreamwork groups in British society this profound sense of the almost certain cultural specificity of the processes I was to observe and participate in. Moreover, I was aware that although the range of interpretive possibilities utilised by the groups would be bounded in some sense by the range of acceptable perspectives on interpreting dream imagery within contemporary British society, these boundaries are very broad. Group members could perceive dream imagery within a range of discourses ranging from that of total meaninglessness to one embodying spiritual wisdom.

The mainly anthropological perspectives that I use begin, as I have discussed, with Tedlock's communicative theory of dreams. This situates my focus on dream narrating as a cultural process, firmly in the social, and I would argue as constituting a central part of any comprehensive study of social life. I intend to sharpen it however by using the embodiment paradigm derived from Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu, and explicated in Csordas (1990).

This presents the self as an integrated mind/body in reality inseparable from the social creation by which the subject is both generating and being generated (Csordas 1990:10). Moreover Csordas, following Merleau-Ponty (1962:238-9), asserts that not only are the reflective self and its cognitive processes culturally constructed, but experience prior to a reflective and abstract understanding is also culturally formed. He develops Merleau-Ponty's concept of the "preobjective or prereflective" to express

this idea (1990;10). Csordas also suggests that Bourdieu's concept of habitus can be subsumed within the concept of the 'preobjective'. For Bourdieu the body is similarly not an object within a world of objects, but rather a 'socially informed body' (1977:124) generating meaningful interaction through its 'perduring dispositions' (1977:72).

Bourdieu's concept of habitus illuminates the way in which the body contains implicit knowledge (1977:124). He shows how social values are retained and contained in the posture, gait and gaze of their possessors. It is no accident that totalitarian institutions spend so long inculcating cultural forms like British boarding schools in their emphasis on 'good manners'. The body is then "treated as a memory" and:

The principles embodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot even be made explicit; nothing seems more ineffable, more incommunicable, more inimitable, and therefore, more precious, than the values given body, *made* body by the transubstantiation achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a metaphysic, a political philosophy, through injunctions as insignificant as "stand up straight" or " don't hold your knife in your left hand" (1977:94).

Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and body explain how the social is written into all aspects of our lives and provides a conceptual link between the 'worlds' of humanistic groupwork methodology and the social sciences. In chapter Two I use his concept of habitus and body to elicit how 'unconscious' knowledge



of the self and the social can be accessed through the use of humanistic groupwork methodologies.

Bourdieu's explanation of how social knowledge is unknowingly acquired and internalised by individuals uses a similar notion of the 'body' to these humanistic psychologies. In both people are viewed as containing within a body, conceptualised as including the mind, dispositions and orderings of experience that are capable of becoming, but will not necessarily become, conscious.

In Csordas's analysis, Christian charismatic religious practices including Glossolalia (speaking in tongues) and "resting in the spirit" are exemplary of embodied knowledge. The charismatic, even when speaking in tongues and being semantically unintelligible, is expressing, in sound and gesture, embodied, implicit and culturally based practices which position and contextualise the utterances. He also applies this embodiment paradigm to an analysis of the Navajo understanding and experience of the role of lightning in the causation of cancer (1990:483).

Dream and its cultural elucidation is, par excellence, a domain in which the concepts of a culturally constituted preobjective, and habitus are valuable. In a dream, as I shall argue the dreamer is both conscious and yet asleep. The dreaming subject experiences a stream of visual imagery, often with attendant affect but, excepting perhaps in the case of "lucid dreaming" (see p.124) has no reflective awareness of him/herself as located either in the dream state or as a discriminating author of his/her own metaphysical drama. And yet upon awakening, as well as in the dreamwork group sessions, bizarre and often

indeterminate imagery of dreams is cognitively re-experienced and defined, more or less, into culturally based themes, structured narratives and patterned discourses. Indeed coming to terms with existence as evidenced through dreamwork presents a graphic example of Csordas's notion of the process of objectivisation of self (1990:16). The developing narrative of the self present in a dream narrative and continued in the dreamwork of the group illustrates the implicit self becoming explicit. The affective awareness of "the embodied image" (Csordas 1990:160) delineates the therapeutic experience of the dreamwork. Moreover, the narrative and its possible existential meaning for the dreamer is then negotiated within a group process, using groupwork based techniques. This process as well as the product of dreamwork is a principal theme of this study.

The embodiment paradigm and the perception of dream narration as communicative process needs further supplementation which can be provided through an hermeneutic concern with the interpretive process involved in the nature of human understanding itself. Geertz articulates this hermeneutic approach as "the understanding of understanding" (1983a:5). The base of my study is a "psychoethnography" as Obeyesekere (1990:xx) defines the study of the transformation of symbolic forms from and into culture. The base of the ethnography is a textual construction of the dream reports and the process of developing meaning in emic terms by the group members. Such a "thick description" shows the creation of "the webs of significance" that Geertz (1973:5) defines as 'culture'. 'Psychoethnography' cannot see the description of a material universe or a set of economic and political realities as its main

task. Rather I describe the processual construction of meaning in a group setting. This process, illustrated in Figure 1, is the translation of the following sequential pattern:

Fig.1: Interpretive Process:

dream imagery

dream narration

psychodynamics of dream audience

interpretive process

relating of interpretation to future of self  
and group.

My basic ethnographic text follows the pattern, shown in Fig.1, and I justify the process described within it as a 'psychoethnography' because it translates the symbolic forms of the unconscious into cultural forms and communicable meanings. Furthermore, I analyse the nature of the emic dream theory of the group. I create an interpretive circle in which I analyse both the cultural construction of the unconscious through its evident dream imagery, and a partially shared linguistically and metaphorically based interpretive process rooted in collective understandings of both dream meanings and socio-political context.

I show how, within the groups, the focusing of attention on the narration of the dream generates a suggestive process whereby some of the dream symbols become a 'mini-archetype', to borrow Jung's term (1959:3), for the group. At this point the imaginative resources of the group are generating a close absorption with a manifest symbol, be it a button, a loaf of bread or the winged flight of a bird. Central to this absorption is the generation of multiple references for the other group members. The described button of the dream becomes a trigger for the recollection and narrative display of the multifarious 'buttons' within members' remembered lives. The button becomes archetypal at that time for the group. In this sense Ricoeur's description of an hermeneutic analysis as a study of "the world of references" (1991b:248 and 1981c:177) opened up by the text is particularly apposite. An hermeneutic analysis then concerns itself with "what is in front of us" (Ricoeur 1981a:202) rather than what is "behind the text". Indeed my study is in large part such

a study of the personal and group readings of the narrated dream texts, an emic analysis of understanding.

I study then a movement from sense to reference (Ricoeur 1981b:218), from an initial personal and group confrontation with apparent 'non sense' - the bizarre imagery of the dreamworld - through to a delineation of the sense of the imagery in narrative, to reach an acceptable reference to the life situation and personal biography of the dream narrator. Furthermore the study analyses the emergent meanings and cultural consequences of this dreamwork in terms of the impact upon the future construction of the selves of the group members. Perhaps in few other ethnographic fields can these transitions and transformations be so evidently perceived and read. Furthermore the notion of the psyche as a "decipherable text" (Ricoeur 1981:256) is central to an understanding of the process of the narration of the dream itself. The "textual study" is then a study of the ascription of meaning (Geertz 1983b:32) within and around the speech acts concerning the dreamwork.

#### Metaphor and the Social Relevance of Dreamwork.

Once dream imagery is perceived in this way as meaningful, and particularly once the imagery of the dream has referential meaning ascribed to it, it becomes a conscious metaphor. Kracke has described the dream as a, "highly condensed, visual or sensory, metaphorical form of thinking (1987:38)". We have seen that he suggests that dream, like myth for Lévi-Strauss, is a kind of bricolage in that it gathers:

from among the day residues ready to hand, and uses them to metaphorically express an emotional conflict, and to work out (or work towards) some resolution of it (1987:38). The metaphorical nature of the dream prompts me to consider at this point the role of metaphorical thinking more generally.

Lakoff and Johnson(1980) have analysed the metaphorical basis of our rationality and language. They have shown how metaphor fundamentally structures our concepts and thus implicitly consciousness and actions as well. Metaphor works by "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (1980:5). Moreover the metaphors that structure consciousness are not arbitrary but based in everyday experience. For instance there is a relationship between the experience of spatial living, 'spatial/orientational metaphors' such as 'up/down' and human states of well-being and sickness. States of happiness tend to be expressed as 'being up' in some form and likewise being dejected or sad is commonly metaphorically described as being 'down'. There is then a continuing dialogue and relationship between physical and cultural experience and understanding of the world through a metaphorically structured, language-centred, consciousness. Metaphorical thought is therefore the basis of both dream imagery and conscious awareness. As Bourdieu says, "...the mind is a metaphor of the world of objects which is itself but an endless circle of mutually reflecting metaphors" (1977:91). In later chapters I show how the apparent insights generated by a group's reflection on the dream narrative are created and validated through the relating of images from this narrative to metaphorical meanings contained in ordinary language usage.

### The Promotion of Ritual Structure

So far I have described the meetings of dreamwork groups as events like those of any other discussion group or of people with certain interests in common. However, I show in the ethnography, the group process, as structured, evoked a ritual process in which social change and personal development took place. Such a process of change is analysed by Turner (1974: 25 - 55) and I applied it in my M.Phil thesis (1986 & 1990:45-57).

In the dreamwork groups studied, although it was at the suggestion of the group leaders that the group should begin with the lighting of a candelabra and incense and finish with the blowing out of the candle, the suggestion was readily accepted by the group. The group event was framed by these acts. Within that time and space a typical set of procedures followed, which began with the 'opening round', which led into the discussion of one or more dreams in depth and often reached a climax with the 'acting out' of some part of the dream imagery through play, imaginative identification, meditation and artwork. As I show, within this process, there would frequently occur the transformation of the individual dreamer's symbolic image into a symbol for the group. The evidence for this is demonstrated in the ethnography in terms of the 'future life' of the symbol in the group's discourse and other members' dreams. In this way the group developed 'mini-archetypes' with which they developed the cultural identity of the group and generated significance for the dream and fantasy imagery. Within this created liminal space separated from participants' other group involvements (Turner 1977:37-9), the group spun its patterns of meaning through its absorption with, sensitisation to, and concentration on the



narratively manifested images of the unconscious. The dream imagery became a form of theatrical event in which 'the meaning' was attempted to be read by the group as both audience and actors. The theatre analogy with dream is not new. Resnik (1987: 1) uses it as his central metaphor to structure his analysis of the dream.

The ritual structure of the group event, bounded in time and space, is peopled by self selecting seekers after their own meaning, who 'invent' and evoke symbols to contemplate, out of the resource of their own imag(e)inations. The image and its re-experiencing intersect and interpenetrate each other. The dream image is retrospectively recreated in new forms within the minds of the group members. The evoked meaning, reference and relevance for their lives of these manifest symbolic forms, does not stay within the domain of the private world of the dreamer. Rather it is fashioned out of the group process of action and suggestion, and becomes the collective property of the group. The group then 'owns' the symbol having converted a private symbol into a public one. This transformation of understanding feeds into everyday life and the shape-shifting symbolic form feeds into the future dreams and discourses of the group's life. In a sense the original image of the unconscious becomes a symbol for the group through its cultural narration and appropriation by the group; thereafter it reclaims its metaphoric nature when referential meaning is ascribed to it. The everyday context of language and meaning has been transformed through a ritual process into a heightened and participative knowledge in which personal transformation has been sought and sometimes achieved.

In my discussion of the interrelation of metaphor and ritual I have suggested the ways in which dream symbols become living metaphors. These, of course, are what anthropologists have in other contexts described as root metaphors or key symbols. There are many different theoretical views on the nature of such symbolism. Firth, for example, identified a symbol in a way reminiscent of the definition of metaphor already developed, as one thing representing or standing for another. He considered that the relationship between the symbol and that symbolised is that of the particular to the general and the concrete to the abstract. A lion symbolises courage. In this view a symbol is a concrete indication of abstract ideas. Firth (1975:64) cites Langer who makes the following distinction: a sign signifies an object or a situation whilst a symbol makes us conceive of an idea. The relationship between a symbol and its referent is usually complex and as Jung has noted, there is often an inarticulate even unconscious aspect to our use of symbols:

Thus a word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has a wider unconscious aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained. Nor can one hope to define or explain it. As the mind explores the symbol, it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason. The wheel for instance may lead our thoughts towards the concept of a divine sun (1964:20-21).

A symbol then refers to an abstraction that cannot be fully articulated. Firth also describes symbols as "stores of meaning" (1975:81). Symbols can be potent agents of both personal and social change. Symbols, such as national flags and anthems, can be

powerful instruments in the creation and and maintenance of collective identity (Lewis 1977:6).

As a study of individual and group enquiry into the meaning of dream imagery, my thesis is concerned with the meanings of both personal and cultural symbolism. I study the process whereby the personal symbols of the dreamer are transformed through group process into public symbols both for the group and for the individual. The group evocation of the meaning of the personal symbols, through gestalt and psychodrama for instance, transforms personal mental imagery into culturally contextualised sets of meanings. Dream imagery becomes "good to think with" (Lévi-Strauss quoted in Harris 1986:13) or as Obeyesekere puts it:

Personal symbols must be related to the life experience of the individual and the larger institutional context in which they are embedded (1981:13).

The cultural derivation of dream imagery in British society is shown, for example, in the frequent instance of group members using motifs and situations from television, such as the news or 'soaps', as fruitful day residue through which to re-enact symbolically their existential predicaments, in a transformed way. Moreover, as I outlined in the previous section on 'metaphor and the social relevance of dreamwork', I later demonstrate how meaning is attributed to dream imagery through reference to culturally sanctioned collective understandings expressed in idiomatic language use. Thus the interplay between personal and cultural symbol lies at the heart of the data and its analysis. Whilst for Freud, as I outline in chapter five, the essence of dreamwork is the analysis of the transformations of deep motivation into the personal symbols of the dream, my study is

that of the circular transformation of cultural symbol into personal symbol into cultural symbol. As Obeyesekere says in countering the views of Leach (1958:148-149), "the symbol is both personal *and* cultural" (1990:22).

### Conclusion

This account of the anthropological and social science theories which inform my thesis represents, as Geertz writes a "...recurring cycle of terms, symbol, meaning, concept, form, text and culture" (1983:50), to which I would add metaphor. Such terms represent the conceptual framework of this study and account for the imaginative and referential world of meaning created within the dreamwork groups.

## CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

This chapter considers the methodology of the study. The chapter begins with a reflexive account of my prior interest in dreamwork, and the dreamwork movement. Issues pertaining to textual construction are noted. Thereafter I present the methods used in the study, which were primarily participant observation followed by semi-structured interviewing. I consider the issues arising from the use of these methods and particularly the issue of the merging of the roles of group facilitator and researcher. I then consider the issues of sampling, validity, reliability and replication in relation to the study. The ethical issues involved in the study are also considered. Finally I outline the possible adoption of experiential methods of data collection using the groupwork based methods of gestalt, psychodrama, artwork, imagework and dreamwork, and the training and ethical issues involved. I present this approach using Bourdieu's theory of the habitus and Csordas's theory of the pre-objective.

### Reflexivity and method

The genesis of this dreamwork group and the associated research lies in my own long standing interest and occasional 'use' of my own personal dream imagery. For over twenty years I have often been struck by the ability of dream imagery to reformulate imaginatively situations that were preoccupying my waking thoughts. These reformulations, although often bizarre, sometimes seemed to have an anticipatory aspect to them rather as Basso (1987: 101) has suggested. I found that occasionally by

dwelling on a seemingly powerful dream image and by turning it around in my mind and considering how it might relate to developing situations I was able to arrive at a conclusion. Such a conclusion often took the form of a decision about the direction of my life with respect to, for instance, career development or relationship issues. I then considered that the process I was conducting was a more explicit formulation of the folk wisdom to 'sleep on it' if one had a difficult problem. So for several years I kept a dream diary and consciously tried to remember my dreams. At this time I immersed myself in the work of Jung and realised that he had similarly advocated such a significant relationship to one's dream imagery. By significant he meant that it was insufficient to relate to dream imagery solely as a kind of internalised source of artwork but that through a dialogue with one's dream imagery important insights might emerge that could lead to personal change and development.

What was an off-and-on personal interest developed in two ways. First I encountered the dreamwork movement in the mid-eighties through participation as a member in a personal development group that included a consideration of dreams. This particular group combined bodywork exercises, meditation and discussion of members' dream imagery. The dreamwork movement itself began in the seventies in the U.S.A. as an offshoot of the human potential or personal growth movement. At this time the publication of works by authors such as Garfield (1974) and Ullman and Zimmerman (1979) both popularised and guided groups and individuals into ways of working with their dreams. The dreamwork movement values dream imagery as being of potential benefit to the dreamer and the 'meaning' of such

imagery as being accessible and understandable to the interested person (Hillman 1989:124-131). Dreamwork groups are relatively commonplace in the U.S.A. but occur less frequently in Britain. Through the group that I participated in I became interested in the linking of group process to the understanding of dream material. Secondly, whilst researching a therapeutic community (1986) I experienced a significant sequence of dreams just before, during and after the fieldwork stage. I found that contemplating these images and wondering how they might relate to the fieldwork experience was a powerful source of insight development, and assisted in my orientation to the varying stages of the fieldwork process and imaginatively prefigured core themes of my research (1989). An analytic account of how I used my dream imagery was given as a paper at the 1989 Association of Social Anthropology Annual Conference on the theme of 'Anthropology and Autobiography' (see appendix). This conference and the published papers from it (Okely & Callaway 1992) was designed to explore and analyse the previously often implicit contribution of the personality of anthropologists and their relationships to their informants, to the production of ethnography and development of theory.

The role of the self in the construction of the anthropological text has become a key concern in contemporary social anthropology. The 'objectivity' of the cultural construction of the 'other' in the written text is a central debate (Clifford 1986: 1-26; Geertz 1988:9; Carrithers 1990:263-82; Okely and Callaway 1-25). An extreme and almost solipsist perspective is presented by Leach in his discussion of the significance of the author as creator of the anthropological text:

An ethnographic monograph has much more in common with a historical novel than with any kind of scientific treatise. As anthropologists we need to come to terms with the now well-recognised fact that in a novel the personalities of the characters are derived from aspects of the personality of the author. How could it be otherwise? The only ego I know at first hand is my own. When Malinowski writes about Trobriand Islanders he is writing about himself. When Evans-Pritchard writes about the Nuer he is writing about himself (1989:141).

Kuper (1993:57-9) reviews the current debate in relation to the post-modernist concern with textual authority and the creativity of the writer through a comparative analysis of differing ethnographic studies of the Kalahari peoples. Kuper concluded that the personal construction of the anthropological text is a necessary and important part of the enterprise, and needs elucidation for bias and orientation. Similarly, Hastrup, as we have seen, emphasises the importance of seeing the anthropologist as a "positioned subject" (1992:119). However an awareness of the particularities of the ethnographer's personal biography and history and their theoretical orientation does not preclude, for Kuper, an affirmation of the value of an ethnography in:

providing reliable accounts of human behaviour in particular times and places. Source criticism is a preliminary to the critical use of sources, not an alternative (1993:68).

My study is conceived and written within the context of a critical and reflexive awareness of myself as an interested subject as well as a distanced student. Indeed if all anthropological work



is in some sense a "personal odyssey" as Wade asserts (1993:213) then I acknowledge that dreamwork and its study offers for me and perhaps those kindred others who come to such groups, the possibility of a form of transcendence of the limitations of the dualities of ego and unconscious; self and world; present and non-present; desire and attainment; ideality and reality; knowledge and limitation. In a demythologised and desanctified world the dream image through its historical estimation and its personal reality becomes the sole source of an authentic and unknown, even unknowable, potential.

This therefore is a reflexive study in which I have outlined the course of my interest in dreamwork and its study and disclosed some of my own dreams. Apart from in the Appendix, I share only one snippet from a dream that I discussed in the groups themselves, partly because I only worked on one or two dreams since I acted mainly as facilitator. As it happened these unreported dreams and their interpretations were not in fact good examples of the points I wanted to develop. However the fact that I behaved as a participant through regularly sharing dream and personal material during the beginning round of each group contributed towards the overcoming of what Caplan calls the "self-other" dichotomy (1993:23). I have since remained as a member of a self-directed dreamwork group created mainly but not exclusively from an amalgam of the three groups that I co-facilitated.

Overall then my intention is not to present an "author-evacuated text" as Geertz describes the traditional tendency in anthropology to ignore the presence, influence and social structural position of the author (1988:9). I acknowledge my

authorship through such devices as writing in the first person and through a certain sharing of biographical information and personal gendered experience, feeling and perception within the group process itself. Indeed I admit that in a certain sense, as initiator of the idea for creating a dreamwork group and being jointly responsible for its development, the field of study itself is inseparable from my anthropological intention. I study then, to perhaps an unusual extent, a personally initiated and intersubjectively constructed field of study. However in another sense ethnographers always share in the generation of their data, for as Hastrup observes "We have realised that fieldwork itself may generate the events, that are then portrayed as facts" (1993:176). Likewise Clifford (1986:2) redefines ethnography as the "invention of culture" rather than its representation.

Since the studied field did not predate the research enterprise the typical criticism of the anthropological enterprise as using "informants lives and statements to produce texts" (Wade 1993:201) is different with respect to my study. Whilst I still use the data of their groupwork lives there is a reciprocity involved in that many of my informants reported benefiting substantially from the opportunity to 'do dreamwork' in a constructed group. Indeed three years later, as I have already indicated, several original group members still regularly meet in a self-directed dreamwork group.

### Methods

I used two principal methods to collect data. First I adopted a participant observer approach within the groups themselves, and secondly I did follow-up interviews with group

members. With respect to the first approach, I was explicit from the beginning of the groups about being both a co-facilitator and a researcher. To this end I tape-recorded all the group sessions and individual interviews. I also kept some notes of the dream material as the groups went along though often I found this very difficult to do while maintaining a facilitative role. At the end of the session, after the debriefing with my co-facilitator, I made extensive notes about the dream accounts and the interpretations arrived at and also about the development of the group and individual members' contributions. My co-facilitator was, as it happens, also studying the group process so I had lengthy discussions with her about the development of the group and also the contribution and issues arising from our leadership styles.

In the main, group members seemed to accept my combination of leadership and research roles. I will be explicit about leadership problems encountered, particularly in the second group in the later chapter on the group process. At the beginning of each group, I confirmed the members' collective assent to the tape recording of the sessions for future research purposes. Each time there was a discussion about tape-recording and agreement that at any time any member could ask for the tape to be switched off and subsequently could ask for a dream or its discussion not to be included in my analysis for research. Such a request was in fact made on several occasions and has been honoured. For a dreamwork group to be successful there has to be a strict confidentiality rule and this understanding was easily transferred to the research process.

An interesting by-product of taping the sessions was that members could have access to the tapes after the group session

was complete and members who had worked on a dream usually did borrow the tapes and valued listening to the discussion of their dream in a more leisured way. I lost one tape in this way and the tapes for the first seven weeks were unfortunately poor in quality because of an inferior recorder being used.

However tape-recording, seen as symbolic of my research by the group, was not universally welcomed. One group member in the interview session was quite critical and angry about "this" as he referred to the same tape-recorder in the interview,

*" the most interesting thing was the tape recorder...i.e. THIS at first I was rational and felt okay about it but as the group went on I felt it intruded on it...I felt your research was intrusive...I thought you were manipulating it [the group] for the research...I felt a split between the idea that people have come together for the group and you have brought the research [need] to the group...I am wondering why I am feeling antagonistic to your research when I also brought my own needs and issues to the group...therefore why am I feeling this? "*

I try to answer and justify myself.

*T."the confidentiality didn't worry me...perhaps it was envy ...this springs to my mind now that you were going to get more out of it than me".*

This example shows that for at least one member there was, whatever the reason, considerable animosity towards me as a researcher. Indeed with this member conflict about my facilitative versus directive role became an issue during the second group. Since finishing the facilitation of the group I have kept in contact with many of the group members partly through

the ongoing dream group and have circulated copies of articles so far written. Feedback to date from these group members has been positive.

At one level I was however able to combine both facilitation and research roles. This was only possible because of the co-facilitator who shared the work of facilitating the groups. Since we usually divided our tasks into one of us taking a more active facilitation role and the other observing and timekeeping this allowed me every other week to concentrate entirely on observing the group process. Several of the group members were also skilled in groupwork and for considerable periods the groups ran themselves with minimal intervention from us. At times, however, the role of facilitator meant an absorption in group process that hindered a more distanced receptivity to the unfolding of the group's life. Having a tape-recording certainly meant that the words of the groups were not lost and even transcribing these tape-recordings months and even years later brought the feeling of the sessions came back to me. As Hastrup reflects:

Fieldwork experience has become memory before it becomes text...the actual dialogues feed the discourse infinitely. Although fieldwork took place some time in an autobiographic past, the confrontation continues. The past is not past in anthropology; it is an ethnographic present (1992:125).

Since I was at the outset primarily interested in recording dream narrative, interpretations reached and the individual and group dynamics pertaining to them, it was not such a hindrance to have

a record that was primarily aural. I also believe that my own memory of events, processes and participants was in fact good.

The second method used was that of interviewing all the group members and these interviews took place after the groups had ended or when an individual had ceased to attend. Individual interviews were sometimes delayed for several weeks. At least one member seemed to have forgotten almost all the group's collective interpretations of her dreams by then. Interviews were semi-structured and the interview question areas are included in appendix two. The interviews took place either at my workplace, at member's homes or latterly at my house. Each lasted approximately one hour.

They were noteworthy in several other ways. Often new information was offered by the subject. For instance one member shared in the interview the coincidence of symbols, such as the sacrifice, the stone circle and the named woman, between the dream described and their fantasy journey on a transpersonal psychology weekend (see p. 83). Often the subject had by then changed their appreciation and articulation of the 'meaning' of the dream and fantasy symbols. A clear example of this is shown by the following interview in which the subject shares their formerly unshared, at least in the group, experience of the fantasy journey of going 'through the door in the mind',

*" I was upset by this and talked afterwards to Q...In the fantasy I found a dying woman in the belly of the earth and I never really got to the bottom of it...I was rather shocked as I didn't think death such an issue...I was wary of this woman at first...she was in the process of dying...I realised I*

*could go over and be there and take her hand and be there nursing her".*

In the ensuing discussion in the interview, the subject came to relate this image to her developing work in a branch of alternative medicine. At the end of the discussion she said,

*"that is really useful...now I can categorise it."*

The interviews gave members the opportunity to express the development of their mental imagery over the course of the groups and also of their growing understanding of the imagery. One member discussed for instance her awareness of her sexual nature being first expressed in the image of the 'brown woman' described (see p. 143) and then represented in the 'negro image' described (see p.154).

Gender was an issue in the research process. I suggest later that the mixed gender of the group was significant. For example three female members working in one session in a small group shared a 'faeces' dream that they would not have felt able to share in a large mixed gender group. More significantly, as I argue later in the thesis, the third group especially became focused around issues of women's emotional needs in and out of heterosexual relationships. At this point criticism was voiced by some female group members towards male members for their relative lack of self-disclosure. As a male in the group I was, of course, in a similar position to the rest of the minority of males, except in so far as I was also a co-facilitator. Moreover the group was co-facilitated with a female groupworker. My gender in the research process was probably most manifest in the interviews with some female members when I felt less than confident in pursuing very intimate and emotive issues for them when they

emerged. For instance, when one female member referred to having "blue pencil" dreams about other group members I didn't follow this up. However my male gender may have assisted male group members sharing in the interview situation their vulnerabilities about relationships with women. One male member, for instance, shared a sequence of several dreams he had experienced, prior to the group, in which he had been pursued by witches.

### Theoretical Issues

The groups I have studied involved only a relatively small number of people and it is perhaps rash to generalise from them. However in so far as the dreamwork groups were self-selected they represent a cross section of the kinds of people who are likely to be currently interested in understanding their dreams. As I show in my discussion of group composition, members had different characteristics in some respects such as age, occupation and gender but also had had some experiences in common. For instance, several members had considerable groupwork experience and there was evidence of interest in Jungian, transpersonal and gestalt approaches to understanding dream imagery.

Judging by my general experience of dreamwork groups I think that these group members were not unrepresentative and that their repertoire of group and interpretive processes are probably likely to be typical of other actual and anticipated dreamwork groups. In Britain, and in advanced industrial societies with a common historical past, in this general way there is likely to be a continuum of approaches to understanding dream



imagery and this array of interpretive paradigms is likely to be similar in range to those I discuss in chapter five. So although my study does not claim to offer a definitive account of the characteristics of all British or European dream groups, it does offer an indication of the kinds of questions that can be asked, and the possible repertoire of processes and approaches likely to be found in such groups. It is in this sense that I think the study is in fact representative.

Moreover the study is reliable in the sense that the data are available for re-analysis by another researcher because they are available on tape. The participants could at least in theory be re-interviewed. It is, however, much more difficult to assert that another researcher would reach the same theoretical conclusions as I did. Clifford (1986:99) points to this dilemma by reference to the markedly different readings of Samoan culture by Mead and Freeman.

The key issue with respect to validity of the data is whether and in what sense the dream narration is an 'authentic' representation of the visual imagery of the dream. This concern is amply discussed in chapter three when I consider exactly what is being narrated in the groups. However this is not such an issue as I first thought, since my object of study is not the dream or fantasy image for itself but rather the group's understanding of the imagery and the process by which it is reached. Indeed the problematic aspects of the narration of the dream also represent, as I show, the insight that the narration itself, as in the case of other social accounts, represents the first stage of interpreting a dream. Validity in this study then consists in the authenticity of the attribution of cognitive meaning to visual experience,

rather than in the authenticity of the reported dream image.

Since the test of validity of data is primarily based on the "adequacy of the evidence offered in support of them" (Hammersley 1992:69), I have presented many of the dream narratives and some of the accompanying discussions verbatim or almost so. I have aimed to ground my theoretical assertions about dreamwork within a context of relevant, concrete and empirically verifiable events (Hammersley 1992:62-69) and the events in question are the social processes of the the dreamwork groups. I have aimed to present a "data-rich" (Bell 1993:30) as well as a reflexive analysis. Indeed at times I have, through use of verbatim transcription, allowed the multivocality of the members to represent itself within the text. So, on occasion, I have let the words of the members evaluate the group (v. p. 113-4).

In relation to the formation of categories and themes of the eventual analysis I have followed primarily a grounded theory approach using "constant comparison" as suggested by Glaser & Strauss (1967:45) to elicit relevant categories. Theoretical categorisation has grown from an immersion in the descriptive parts of the analysis. This is a typical feature of theorising from an ethnographic base as Hammersley writes:

..most views of theorising that have informed ethnographic methodology are inductivist, in the sense that they treat theory as emerging out of the description of particular events. Such an approach views description as (at least) the first stage in the development of theory (1992:22).

I did attempt to undertake a qualitative analysis of the data using a qualitative computer research package, called Hypersoft (Dey 1993:273). However whilst I was aware of the various

mechanical operations such a package could offer (Tesch 1991:26-8) I found small textual translations from the Microsoft Word file to the Hypersoft file eliminated the possible advantages of using such software. Particularly when making the transcripts of the group sessions I had developed a system of underlining and putting text in bold to indicate embryonic forms of analysis. However whilst the Hypersoft package could have proved mechanically advantageous to me, the translation into Hypersoft files took out these 'bold' and 'underline' annotations thereby undermining the possibility of using this package to advantage.

Finally this study of dreamwork groups is a study of the 'other' in an unusual sense. Whilst "doing anthropology at home" is now commonplace (Jackson 1987:1-15) and has been integrated into mainstream anthropological theorising and practice, it is often still the case that identifiable social groups like gypsies (Okely 1983), police (Young 1991) and the very frail elderly (Hockey 1990) and their behaviours provide the source of the 'other'. In my study the bounded group consists of the dreamwork groups and their individual and collective relationship to a perceived unconscious. It is a "self-declared group" in the sense that Hastrup uses the term (1993:174). Whilst the hidden, the implicit and the 'unconscious' can be a focus for any anthropology, as indeed it is in Obeyesekere's study of Sri Lankan ecstasies (1981), it is perhaps somewhat novel for the study of dreaming, dream narration and dream interpretation in the Western industrialised world to be the ethnographic focus, although the work of Hillman is similarly focused on the US context (1989: 117-141). Whilst I share with my respondents their language, cultural history and conceptual structure, the group confronted the 'other' of the

phantasmagoric and bizarre world of dreams and dreaming. My study then is of that personal and social encounter with the 'other', or the exotic within.

### The use of experiential research methodologies

The aim of this section is to introduce the use in social science research of experiential techniques developed from the humanistic personal growth movement which first developed in the United States in the 1960's. So far research methodologies have barely begun to utilise these powerful strategies for personal and group change. In this section I first locate these methods and their related methodologies within the qualitative research domain and propose a concept of their value. Then I give a brief description of the methods themselves which is necessary to familiarise the reader with the techniques themselves. Thereafter I review the current use of experiential research methods. Finally I consider the methodological and epistemological implications of these methods alongside the implications for training of their adoption by social science researchers.

It is an irony that general social science research has not seen itself as being involved in the generation of individual or group perspectives, although its major empirical concern is with their understanding. The world is seen as outside and waiting to be described; it has already been 'constructed'. It is true that much social science research (for example in the Weberian tradition) no longer embraces positivistic models of society. The role of the researcher as generating rather than merely collecting

his/her own data still tends not to be seen as central to the research enterprise. Indeed his/her involvement is still seen as problematic and as something that needs deconstructing or at least elucidating in terms of a reflexive analysis of the impact of the researcher's own personal or cultural bias. There are of course exceptions to these propositions, including action-research and the use of focus groups.

However there is another whole set of potential research methods and related methodologies that are only very slightly used by researchers and that derive from experiential groupwork and the humanistic human growth movement. The study of the actual and potential use of some of these methods will be the focus of this section. The methods I refer to are sculpting, psychodrama, gestalt, dream and imagery work, and artwork. The hypothesis underpinning these approaches is that a research methodology can imaginatively generate novel ways for respondents to experience themselves, their past, present and future.

Psychodrama, for example, is a kind of role-play or re-enactment of some past or possibly future situation. Such a dramatic recreation of past or possible events is a group-based activity initiated in the 1920s by Moreno (Brazier 1991:2). The group members are used in the drama to act the different roles of a particular situation concerning one of their members. Since a 'typical' psychodrama evokes strong emotion concerning basic human experiences like loss, love and fear, the feelings of the rest of the members of the group will be evoked. Facilitating respondents to do a psychodrama in a therapeutic situation may allow the respondents to rehearse and often to experience a form

of catharsis about an unfinished aspect of their personal life. Such a process of involvement may, and often does, generate new insight and reformulation of the concept of self. In a different way the experience for respondents of considering how their dream image might relate to their present situation may, on occasions, generate a fresh perspective on their personal and social preoccupations and those of others involved.

Sculpting involves a group member using some of the other group members physically to represent past or present relationships in the former's current family, family of origin, or a significant group such as a work group. The person doing the sculpt arranges the key people to display how he or she feels or would like to represent the group or family in question. So a sculpt may display the whole gamut of feelings in relationships whether they be togetherness, security, conflict, anger or hurt. Alliances and hostilities in a group can easily be shown by using typical motifs such as 'the clenched fist' or 'hugging' and the spatial representation of people through closeness and distance is a powerful way to express feelings. The 'sculptor' may be very surprised by how he places significant people in his/her life such as siblings or parents. The 'knowledge' that he/she represents in the sculpt may be surprising and show feelings and perceptions that have until this point remained unacknowledged. The evocation of such unacknowledged perceptions through the use of techniques such as sculpting and psychodrama, if utilised by a researcher, would allow them the opportunity to access significantly deeper perceptions than an interview or questionnaire normally allows. Perceptions of which the respondent is barely conscious can then become conscious.

It could be used for example in research on family members' views on 'health in the family'. A sculpt involving each family member physically positioning the others in relation to one another and in relation to the question 'how do you see health in your family' is very likely to generate significant perceptions on individual and family lifestyles, communication patterns within the family, and data as how the issue of 'health' itself is perceived. For example it might reveal family members to be more oriented to psychological than to physical definitions of health.

In the same way gestalt techniques derived from the innovative work of Perls (1969) offer similar opportunities. Gestalt therapy focuses on the 'here and now' of people's feeling states. Perls moved away from the idea of the unconscious and developed in its place an integrative model of the self in which the 'therapeutic task' was to reclaim buried and incomplete aspects of the self through a form of directed role-play or projective identification. In gestalt the person working on an issue 'becomes' the person they wish to dialogue with and this is often symbolised and made more actual by the person changing seats when in the role of their own mother, daughter or boss. Through this process of spatial change and emotional disclosure the person is intended to 'get in touch' with suppressed and repressed parts of themselves. In for example the context of dreamwork, from which examples will later be presented, Perls considered that each part of the dream represented a part of the self and the process of working with dreams involved this projective identification with different images from a particular dream. Such a procedure is quite different from the analytic procedures of orthodox analysis. We can see then that these

powerful techniques from humanistic psychology have as a common theme the intended arousal of neglected and avoided aspects, experiences and emotions contained within the self. Often the body itself is seen as representing suppressed emotion and a gestalt therapist will often point out the difference between the spoken and unspoken expression of the self.

This view of the self potentially offers a severe criticism of the nature of personal and social data offered by the more orthodox research methods involved in the various forms of interviewing and questionnaires. The limitations of the latter are well documented but usually the critique is limited to the truthfulness of the respondent and issues of procedural reactivity, together with the implicit biases that can enter the interview process by way of race, gender, age and class dimensions. What an experiential model of research methodology suggests is that for those research projects that are interested in reaching levels and forms of knowledge not immediately apprehensible by the respondent or even through participation in a focus group, these groupwork based methodologies offer powerful instruments. The researcher then, of course, is involved in the production of experience as well as its recording and analysis. I now introduce other examples of this type of approach namely imagework, artwork and dreamwork.

Imagework, otherwise known as visualisation or guided fantasy, is usually based on a directed daytime fantasy which involves the participants being directed in a daydream of some kind, though imagework can involve individuals guiding their own.



Imagework has developed from the active imagination technique of Jung and the theory and practice of psychosynthesis developed by Assagioli (1965:11-34). More recently transpersonal psychotherapy has integrated the work of Assagioli and Jung to form an imaginatively based approach to therapy.

Rowan says that:

In active imagination we fix upon a particular point, mood, picture or event, and then allow a fantasy to develop in which certain images become concrete or even personified. Thereafter the images have a life of their own and develop according to their own logic (1993:51).

This is an active process in which the person actively imagining 'lets go' of the mind's normal train of thoughts and images and goes with a sequence of imagery that arises spontaneously from the unconscious. It is the quality of spontaneity and unexpectedness that are the hallmarks of this process.

A very typical exercise of this type is for the facilitator of the exercise, after an introductory relaxation exercise, to lead the participants on a journey. A classical form of this is to start the journey in a meadow and to lead participants over an obstacle and up a hill to a house on the hill and there to meet a wise person who they can talk to about any question that they have. An exercise like this is described in Ernst & Goodison (1981:161) and, in my experience can trigger disclosure of and work on important personal issues. Examples I have encountered in leading such sessions are participants dealing with unresolved grief issues and rehearsing the outcomes of possible important decisions.

Moreover the quality and characteristics of the environment in such a fantasy journey are seen by practitioners as indicating

aspects of an individual's personal state. Therefore the kind of weather encountered may indicate the individual's present kind of feeling state whether of happiness or of sadness, whilst the type and difficulty of the obstacle met and the method of overcoming it may indicate the current level and development of problem-solving skills. In chapter six I present examples of imagework, from the groups that I ran, that were based on motifs or images that developed spontaneously from group members' dreams. Such examples of imagework are a member's 'being a plant bulb' in their imagination; another 'being a bird' and finally 'going through a door' in the mind. In the last case two group members had coincidentally dreamt of not going through a door during a recent dream.

Artwork is often used as one method of working with dreams and images. Group members are offered the opportunity to draw their sequence of mental imagery or the dream they have had. In this way they objectify the imagery and offer themselves the opportunity to relate to the imagery outside of themselves as well as offering a way in for others to share insights, make suggestions and otherwise dialogue with the now externalised imagery. Benson has written about the use of artwork as:

These techniques emphasise the feeling and intuitive aspects of personality and offer a valuable way of exploring events in the group life which are not always logical or are hard to talk about in a coherent way (1987:213).

Again we see the possible benefits of using these approaches to reveal and disclose those things which the respondent either is most anxiously concealing, or has already concealed, from themselves.

The dreamwork movement has been outlined earlier in this chapter. Whilst most dreams are seen initially as incomprehensible to the dreamer, I have found that very often the group member who works on their dream is enabled to derive some understanding and even insight into an aspect with which they were currently preoccupied. Often we would use the other action methods of gestalt, psychodrama etc as ways of getting in touch with the latent perceptions of the dreamer. Examples of this process and their outcomes are offered later in the thesis.

Here my argument is that these methodologies offer the opportunity for researchers to progress more deeply into the psyche of the respondent, and on some occasions, for the researcher to obtain material suppressed and repressed by the conscious mind. It is not, of course, a novel concept in anthropology that we carry and contain forms of implicit knowledge, even values, within us. In chapter one I introduced Bourdieu's concept of habitus and Csordas's concept of the preobjective to show how the "socially informed body" contained implicit knowledge. However such implicit knowledge may well remain unconscious and unknown without intervention from others either in the form of therapy or long term social analysis like participant observation. As I shall demonstrate later the methods described provide me with the means to reclaim this knowledge of self and society.

First, however, I want briefly to point to some of the uses of such methods that have already been practised within the social sciences. Several researchers have used vignettes, or incompleting stories to facilitate the expression of opinion by informants (Caudill 1958:131-147; Alves & Rossi 1978: 541-564; Finch 1987:

105-114). Whilst the vignette technique is not a new one and differs from those I have just outlined it does in a similar way offer the respondent a creative opportunity which can then be read by the researcher as offering socially significant and normative statements. Bendelow suggests that the use of vignettes is valuable as a way of accessing "general imagery" (1993: 218). In her own study of the gendered dimensions of the perceptions of pain she has used artwork as a way to access respondents' perceptions. She used paired sets of reproduced artwork to trigger respondents' expression of "beliefs about pain" and subsequently analysed these responses for gender distinctions.

James (1993:129,149,290) used children's artwork both as an interviewing trigger and a way of accessing their perceptions of 'significant others' in the school setting. Wunder (1993:117-127) reports her research as a sociologist into the day and night (dream) imagery of the siblings of disabled children. She presented her unexpected finding that the respondents' imagery showed a series of common themes in relation to their disabled siblings. These themes included desires and aspirations to be 'a saviour'; guilt that 'they' were normal; the "notion that someone or something (a fairy Godmother) would change things"; and sorrow about the disability. The author concludes that such day and night imagery represents a potential source of data that researchers could access and use to increase empathy and knowledge about the key preoccupations, conscious and unconscious of their informants. The author considers that groups such as persons with AIDS, children of alcoholics or people with chronic or terminal illness would benefit from such consideration.

Indeed to my mind if the proposition holds that such imaginative data is relevant and valuable to the researcher, the methodology should be usable with any comparable social group. Wunder's article shows that both day imagery and night/dream imagery offer the opportunity to explore profoundly and to understand more deeply core personal, group and social issues.

I aim to show that the quality and level of perception of self and social state obtained through the methods used in the group, such as image and dreamwork, gestalt and psychodrama, are qualitatively different from those possibly obtained by questionnaire and orthodox interview process. This methodology can tap the hinterland of the self and may relate and reveal deep changes in the person. Social research often intends to discover perceptual attitudes about the person and their views of the world for comparative analysis. The results are constrained by many factors of which one is the conscious self of the person. The examples I present show imaginatively, (see p. 200) such as in the example of the 'parrakeet fantasy', the time and nature of a transition in the person's social state, personal identity, capacity to change and ability to conceptualise the self.

Finally, imagework can be used as an adjunct to oral history. Oral history crucially depends upon participants' memory and their access to their memory at the time of the recollection. As part of the process of remembering, guided recollection can be used. This consists of leading respondents, individually or in a group, through their early memories as a way of retrieving forgotten aspects of their personal experiences. I have been involved in a type of exercise when the aim of the session was to retrieve and analyse participants' perceptions of their childhood

awareness of significant difference in other children. This was a workshop session involving, after a relaxation exercise, participants being facilitated, through a guided exercise, into their earliest recall of significant difference amongst their childhood peers. Following the exercise, discussion and analysis took place as to how early concepts of race, gender, ability and other differences were constructed and their implications for the formation of self-concept and peer group formation.

This section set out to show how action-based, experiential, methodologies derived from humanistic psychology can be usefully appropriated in applied social science research. They have particular value and power when the aim is to reach the implicit knowledge of the respondents. Such techniques could have many uses such as in the example I gave of the use of sculpting in researching family health attitudes. Yet it is evident that they are especially valuable in researching repressed areas of feeling, for example focusing on possible sexual abuse situations involving children and adults.

To be effective these techniques require considerable familiarity with their use and skill in their application, although arguably a researcher could observe a groupwork practitioner using them, rather than using them him/herself. An ethical concern with careful use is especially important as these techniques do reveal latent feelings and unrealised intuitions previously only partially made conscious or possibly even repressed. Yet it is important to evaluate these methods for possible use separately as well as thinking of them as a related group. For example, the use of sculpting, artwork and some levels of imagework are not difficult to learn to use sensitively. Yet

psychodrama, gestalt, dreamwork and advanced levels of imagework do need considerably higher levels of skill and familiarity.

Clearly some researchers will feel that these methods are unacceptably intrusive and raise power issues that are very problematic. However whilst I accept that these non-traditional methods have, as their intention, the gathering of more profound data, I would argue that any data-collection method involves intrusion and can provoke problematic self-disclosure. Even a simple interview can suddenly trigger a sensitive area for the respondent and leave the researcher with ethical problems in terms of how to handle supportively the resulting situation. The methods I have outlined will often be a catalyst for both minor and major disclosures, yet the negative aspects of disclosure can be greatly prevented by the sensitive explanation of the task and technique to the participants before and after the exercise.

Nevertheless I feel that I have demonstrated their general usefulness especially in relation to theories of not necessarily verbalised knowledge, like those of Bourdieu, Merleau-Ponty and Csordas.

### **CHAPTER THREE: THE CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF NARRATION**

In this chapter I intend to analyse and to illustrate the process of transformation that is at the heart of dream interpretation; a transformation which sheds light upon the nature of our understanding both of ourselves and the world. The process of transformation I am referring to is that between the perceived internal image - the dream image - of the dreamer and its translation into a social and personal meaning for the individual dreamer.

Dream interpretation consists of several stages. There is the recollection of the dream by the dreamer and the subsequent filtering of the original imagery into what Kracke (1987:36) describes as 'language-centred thought processes'. This filtration of imagery into thought is an act of translation which begins the construction of meaning. It does this by relating the visual imagery to the cognitive categories of the dreamer's culture. Such cognitive categories carry implicit ways of ordering and sequencing time and space, person and action that inevitably begin to define and delimit the possible readings of the text or narration.

Brown (1987:155) presents this translation through the Freudian distinction between primary and secondary process thinking. He argues that dream imagery is immediately translated from primary process thinking into secondary process thinking upon recollection. The dream audience can receive only the verbal text of the dream even if that text is embellished by



drawings and paintings of the dream imagery. Often the dream narration is already the beginning of an interpretive process insofar as the dreamer will be associating with and categorising the sensory imagery. The dream has thus become a text available to an audience, and is now open to hermeneutic analysis (Ricoeur 1970:5). Kracke (1987:35), however rejects this approach altogether. He thinks that it negates the continued involvement of the dreamer throughout the interpretive process. This arises because the dreamer is him or herself associated with and affected by the dynamics of the group.

The dream narration is then a social act which both expresses and creates social affinity and meaning. There is however still a gap between imaginative thought and speech. Herdt uses the idea of discourse frames to express this perception. In the Sambian society of New Guinea, Herdt found three different discourses within which dream sharing took place. There was public talk, secret talk and private talk. Each of these discourses was structured in differing ways in relation to 'cultural rules, premises, expectations - frames that organise behaviour' (1987:59-61). Public discourse was the most common, during which anyone in the social group could be present. Secret discourse referred to the communication of ritual secrets and was sexually segregated. Private discourse concerned personal secrets, typically about sexuality.

The question of the importance of knowing which parts of dreams are not being shared is clearly demonstrated in the following example. An entertaining incident from one of the dreamwork groups that I studied arose when the group split into three small groups of three or four members to discuss recent

dreams. It was only in this situation, as I pointed out in chapter two that it was possible to share a recent dream involving faeces. With much laughter the three women concerned admitted during feedback to the larger group that unless they had been together in a same gender group they would not have shared that particular dream content. Examples of group members not disclosing sexual contents of dream images, particularly when they referred to other group members, were commonplace and emerged in the subsequent individual interviews. The not-narrated can then be as significant as the narrated! Such examples show how important knowledge of group and social processes are to the interpretation of disclosed dreams.

Narrative theory also distinguishes between different features referred to in the totality of the narration. Genette (1988:14) distinguishes between the 'story', which refers to the finished set of events being referred to; the 'narrating' itself, which is also a key feature of the communicative theory of dreaming; and the 'narrative', which refers to the product of that event, be it a written or oral text of some kind.

### Narrative issues.

Dream narrations in the group were replete with instances that illustrate the actual process of the translation of primary process thought into secondary process thought. Two examples will suffice to illustrate this processing as it occurs during narration. Throughout this thesis I shall quote extensively from the transcribed dreams of group members. To distinguish narration of the actual dream from the dreamer's commentary in narration I have put the first in italics and the second in normal

print. However in this chapter alone I have highlighted the commentary in bold script. Throughout the thesis I have also generally omitted punctuation such as commas and fullstops when quoting from the transcript so that transcript excerpts are not encumbered with too much implicit grammatical analysis by the author. However I have indicated pauses by the speaker by three dots and I have retained the use of question marks, quotation marks and exclamation marks. The first example describes a dream which was narrated to the group by a female member. In her narration she describes a dream in which she experienced feelings both of jealousy and concern about being rejected by her partner at a party. The dream narrative went as follows:

*"I woke up crying...I was at a party in L. with a group of friends...and I have recently been to a party over there...I was with S. who is my partner though it is difficult to describe the relationship and I came into the room and he was talking in quite an intimate way with someone...a woman...whose face I could not see...and I thought he is going to kiss her...and he kind of bent over and kissed her...I was directly behind her and I wasn't sure if in the dream he actually saw me or not...I think he did see me he sort of scooped this woman up and went off to a different part of the room...and I thought I don't like this...and I didn't know what to do about it and I sort of followed him about the room and we did this kind of dance round the room with him and this woman and each time we got close he would move away again and he was enjoying himself...this being wrapped up in this woman...and I thought what can I do about this and vaguely seeing*

*someone I knew but I thought I don't want to be with him as he is ugly...and then I woke up...crying...really upset...even though really S. was staying in my house that night...not in my bed...I didn't want to see him to get a cuddle...it was if it had really happened and I blamed him".*

*"What was disturbing was this dancing away and me not knowing how to handle it and me saying it was okay for him to be having a nice time and enjoying himself but it also wasn't alright...it wasn't really as if he was trying overtly to avoid me...it was almost a taunting quality but so subtle...he wasn't being overtly angry or provocative but he was aware that I was there and he was moving away from me"*

The above dream narration illustrates several issues. First the narration begins with the statement "*I woke up crying*". This places an emotional frame around the forthcoming dream narration. The disclosure that the dream had such a powerful emotional effect on the dreamer keys the group in to expect emotional expression and an emotional tale. The statement that the dreamer "*was at a party in L.*" is followed by the comment that she has recently been there to party. Implicitly the group is being told to expect reference to the actual party as well as to the dream party. It is also being indicated that the dreamer has already begun to think about the possibility of meaningful connections between the 'real' and the 'dream' party. She refers to her partner but indicates that she cannot describe the partner in a simple way or at least not the person's role in her life. This partner was known to one or two group members and the

dreamer's awareness of this may have led her to be careful about her definition of this person's role in her life.

The narration continues with a description of perceived action by the partner, but this action was unclear to the dreamer... "*I thought he is going to kiss her*" indicates a lack of certainty as to the actual meaning of the action. Further on the dreamer indicates more uncertainty by saying "**I wasn't sure if in the dream he actually saw me or not...I think he did see me..**". This uncertainty indicates either a lack of a certain awareness in the dream itself or a subsequent lack of clarity in the remembering process, due possibly to the emotional significance of the perceptions involved. The narration continues with two references to 'sort of' as in "**sort of scooped this woman up**" and "**I sort of followed him**". Both uses of 'sort of' indicates a vagueness as to the actual act and may be avoiding a fuller definition of the feelings accompanying that part of the recollection and narration.

The dreamer then indicates the dance they did by saying "*this kind of dance*", probably indicating with gesture a form of dancing. The dream narration continues with her recollected perceptions of her thinking in the dream until the dreamer describes herself as waking up crying. Her immediate emotional response was to identify the content of the dream with her current relationship with her partner. On waking, the dreamer clearly carries over the hostile feelings generated or mediated through the dream and its immediate recall. She attributes these feelings in the present to her relationship with her partner. **She says "it was as if it had really happened and I blamed him"**.

The narration continues with the dreamer elaborating both the dream action and her daytime personal response to her partner's behaviour. She defines "what was disturbing" and evaluates which behaviour in the dream "wasn't alright". Clearly at this point the narrator is responding to her remembered dream imagery as if "it was real", though at no point in this narration does she identify her partners behaviour in the dream with his behaviour in 'real life'. This example shows that the narration is clearly different from the original dreaming experience and it is obvious that such an original experience can never be directly replicated. What is however demonstrated through this narration is that it is a narration that has been translated into 'language-centred thought processes' (Kracke 1987:36). The dream imagery is presented in a form which is recognisable by group members and with acknowledged emotional responses, which members could understand, throughout the telling. The narration is reconstructed during the telling to the group and illustrates the problems of translating imagery into exact linguistic concepts, hence the inexactitude of words used, such as "sort of..". Furthermore physical gesture, laughter and the narrator's consciousness of the group's awareness of her personal situation are features of the narration. Also, particularly near the end, narration, emotional response and critical discussion become fused.

The dream audience has then participated in much more than an objective telling of a dream. The narration "fixes not the event, but the meaning of the speech event" (Ricoeur 1981:199) for the narrator, before further amplification of the dream's meaning by the group and the narrator. Indeed the narration, in

this instance, is a presentation of a kind of visual play involving a common drama of love and betrayal with which the group can easily identify. The narration offers a potential "ensemble of references" for the group and the narrator, as Ricoeur (1981:202) describes an hermeneutic perspective. The party in the dream being narrated can stand for all parties experienced by the group. The world of the narration would become then "the totality of references" (Ricoeur 1981:177) opened up by the narration.

The second example of a dream narration illustrates again the construction of the narrative by the narrator,

*'It was a horse race meeting...also a fairground meeting and a race was about to take place...The horses' names were very unusual...there were only three horses and then the odds went up...one was 10 - 1...one was 100-30 and the other was 12-1 and these were ridiculous odds and no bookie would give such odds as they would be bound to lose money...and the colours were yellow-blue-yellow and their numbers were in those colours and I said I must get a bet on and I went to the bookie's place and it wasn't a normal bookie's place...and it was like a roundabout and these 3 horses were represented by three parrots...a yellow and a blue and a yellow and they were whizzing around as if they were on a fairground carousel and I was itching to place my bet on one of these three horses or on all of them as I was going to make a pile of money...and there was no bookie there and the race was about to start...like missing the boat again''.*

This dream narration shows some similar points. We see again a running commentary by the dreamer that contextualises

the dream imagery as bizarre. The narration stresses that the betting odds being offered by the bookie were "**ridiculous odds and no bookie would give such odds...**". The betting place was not a "**normal bookie's place**". The whizzing around of the parrots is conveyed in metaphorical terms "**as if they were on a fairground carousel**", clearly an interpretation of the kind of movement noted in the dream. The metaphorical description of the parrots as being like a fairground carousel enters into the dream narration as part of the dream and becomes a part of the dream text heard, learnt and remembered by the group. That text, constructed and mediated by interpretation, association, daytime cognitive categorisation, omission and embellishment becomes the dream text of the group. The humour and gesture of the narration are part of the text experienced by the dream audience and later discussed and 'worked on'. I will show later that posture and gesture are consciously read by group members particularly in gestalt interpretive mode.

The dream narration was sometimes interrupted as a dream snippet which was narrated thus:

*"Its just a snippet...it was frightening...I was walking down the street...suddenly through a gate came a horrible head of an awful dog...it came over but was held by a leather strap." X."Was it a rottweiler?"*

Narrator, "*it was a pointy type of rottweiler*"

An insignificant interruption maybe and one that can be held not to have significantly influenced the narration. Yet it illustrates that the audience is active and anxious to begin fitting the reporting of visual imagery into an understandable idiom, one



that is 'good to think with'. The Rottweiler perhaps currently stands at the apex of dog demonology.

The narration is a moving feast. The next example shows the difference between two dream narrations of the same dream made in the same meeting. On this occasion the italics represent the first narration, the underlined italics inside brackets the second telling and the bold script the accompanying commentary.

*"it's a recurrent dream...most dreams I have are bad... one theme in the dream is to do with houses... the other theme is trying to start on a journey but I can't...two themes came together which is quite worrying "people (maybe was one man) were actually destroying my luggage that I had piled into a van...I was getting ready to start...I was in the house...I was really furious with people...I picked up and threw the telephone at them through two windows...the wires got entangled and the house caught fire (all these wires under the floor caught fire and there were the lines of fire all over the road) and was collapsing around me...I got outside...got my luggage onto the van (I was rushing around trying to get me and my luggage into the van)...people were firing...they were shooting at the van...I was trying to shield myself...I run towards another door (the door - the door (**emphasised**) in the dream reminded me of the front door of my old school...it was a very old door) then suddenly I found myself (holding an old blanket or cloak...I thought the blanket would shield me) holding a few months old child...but the baby is able to articulate a whole sentence which I wrote down in the dream but I don't remember it"...there are two themes*

**that often come up I am thinking about this dream a lot.**

The first telling or narration of this dream occurred in the beginning round when group members shared important events in the last week and mentioned if they had any dreams to 'work on'. This member signified at the beginning of the session that he wanted to 'work on' the dream and that it was an important one as it was both a recurrent dream and it had some nightmarish qualities, for instance the fire and the being shot at. The second telling comes after another dream has been 'worked on' and is noticeable as being longer and with greater self-disclosure. More detail is given as in.

*"I was rushing around trying to get me and my luggage into the van" or "holding an old blanket or cloak...I thought the blanket would shield me".*

In the second narration the narrator's association of the door in the dream with his remembered old school door is conveyed. Also a second dream is referred to in the second telling which begins to detail the original description of this dream as a repetitive dream.

Different tellings at different times even within the same evening show well the contextual nature of dream narration. The dynamics of narration then become part of the available text of the dream. The second and more elaborated telling can be due to a greater trust in the group and in the progress of the group's formation during the session itself. This session was only the second session of the second group and the narrator was telling his dream to the group for the first time. Alternatively the variant tellings can be analysed as structural transformations of an 'original' dream. Kuper (1983:153-175) has analysed different

dreams of a subject over a two night period and presented a structural analysis of the progressive transformations of the oppositional themes in the dream sequence. However the material in the present two renderings of the one dream, whilst clearly different and embellished, suggest rather that the extended second telling is due to a development of recall, and a greater trust in the group following a discussion about another dream, rather than being significant as a structural transformation of the original dream.

The bizarre nature of dream imagery and its patterning is itself problematic for its translation into the daytime categories of cognitive thought. Part of the following dream shows the narrator struggling with a description of what was at the time for her 'the indescribable',

*"I was out in the country...there were no trees...lots of hills long grasses...I was with lots of people...I don't remember who they were...There were a couple of horses who were with us...we were watching birds...at one point I looked up and there was this enormous bird...vast...absolutely stunning ...I was looking at it totally amazed at how beautiful it was...its wingspan was vast...brown and white patterns...as I looked at it...it became two...one layer almost came off and flew away from it...I can't explain it very logically...but it was as if it had two layers...I think at that point I was on a horse...and it started to gallop".*

The bird in the dream is described as splitting into two in a rather amoeba like way. The surreal quality of dream imagery is well-known and such imagery has been influential in the development

gof modern art. The work of Dali is particularly noteworthy in this respect (Walton 1967:7).

The use of imagework or guided fantasy was described in chapter Two. The narration of these fantasies in the dreamwork groups studied often appeared to be describing a sequence of personal mythical events that sometimes related to previous fantasy journeys. The narration of these fantasies was often structured as a dream sequence with a distancing of self involved, and a narration of the apparently bizarre and incomprehensible. The following example is a description of a fantasy journey of a woman in the group. The fantasy was of 'becoming the bird' based on the dream of another group member, described above,

*"I was on a beech tree...there was a beautiful big tree on a mound with others around...I was a lovely dusky soft brown bird sitting on a nest in a crook of a tree...I was two birds ...this brown bird stayed there all the time and I was also a beautiful bird of coral colour with big strong wings on top of the tree...I took off and a strange thing happened and I was in a great forest and I was looking down on a stone circle and there was a young women on a flat rock in a white dress as a sacrificial victim and I went down and picked her up in my very strong claws...I went off to a cliff somewhere and put her on a ledge and she went into a cave...I was worried she would get vertigo and fall off the edge...I flew off to a snowy peak...it was beautiful like a volcanic cone and I am looking down and I go to explore an enormous lake and woodland with creatures such as a deer and rabbits and flowers...and I soared up past these cliffs again and I came down to land again...and I was a bit confused as to who I*

*was...I was a bird or a human and I was at a stone circle and there was this lovely women in white again and I assumed she was the same woman again and she was called Daphne and she wanted to give me a beautiful all faceted round crystal in a black cloth...I then flew back to the tree...it is quite fascinating".*

Clearly the dreamer found this imaginative sequence fascinating and she was able to identify the woman in the dream with a previous motif from a fantasy journey made outside the dreamwork group. Mythological features abound in her description of the fantasy. The motifs of the stone circle, the sacrificial drama, the rescue from the air, the escape to a mountain peak and the crystal gift from the rescuer locate this sequence as in some sense dream-like and therefore involving the same issues and dynamics of narration and communicative context for my analysis.

Narration of a dream involves a social construction of the imagery both to oneself and to the narrator's perception of the group. The following example shows the dreamer reinterpreting her feeling about the image to make it to be more acceptable either to herself or to the group.

*"I was in the train of someone very famous...a pop star or a king...someone who carried great presence and I was part of the entourage and I was travelling the whole time...I was arriving just before this great person... I was arranging hotel bookings etc...and I was bathed in his reflected glory and I felt terribly self important or rather I didn't but I played the role of being self-important as really it was quite boring".*

At first the narrator exhibits pleasure with the feelings of self-importance engendered through the role experienced in the dream. However she swiftly redefines her sense of self-satisfaction with the role, to harmonise more exactly either with her own sense of self or with her desired image within the group.

The next example shows the narrator 'playing to the group' and having an investment in the group's perception of herself as a sexually attractive person,

*"I was going round in various groups levitating above everyone and then ducking down when things were good and interesting...I was levitating above people's heads and there were two gorgeous men and I went down into that like a shot!"*

The narration of this dream defined the narrator as a 'free spirit' as she later defined the wish fulfilment aspect of this dream for her. The description of the men as '*gorgeous*' and herself as going '*down into that like a shot*' presents herself to the group as sexually or romantically interested.

The presence of the group and the narrator's awareness of themselves and their role and image in the group is then crucial to the formation of the narrative of the dream.

Overall then the narrative of the dream or of the guided fantasy in the group is significantly different from the original experience of the dream or fantasy material. Even in its remembering the imagery is processed into the categories and forms of our culturally constructed existence. Association and embellishment, censorship, the desire for privacy and exhibition all influence the rendering of the tale of the dream. The dynamics of the dream audience, the degree of trust, prior friendship,

shared values and length of time together all contribute to the 'narrating' and hence the 'narrative' itself (Genette 1988:14). Hence there is no final or original or definitive dream text itself, rather one of many possible renderings in a powerfully defining group and cultural context.

This cultural reworking of the original dream imagery has been considered by Obeyesekere. He suggests that we utilise cultural forms to weave the dream imagery into a narrative plot, which he calls "emplotment":

This term (emplotment) enables us to designate the process whereby the dream thoughts are creatively organised into a narrative that can, in some instances at least, stand on its own as a story. To miss this is not simply to miss something significant about dreams; it is to miss understanding an aspect of cultural creativity that can transform deep motivation into narrative (1990:267).

The construction of a communicable and ordered narrative out of the bizarrely ordered fragments of often ill-remembered dreams confronts participants and a researcher with the fundamental experience of narrative creativity as well as with a confrontation with the "preobjective" self (Csordas 1990:5). The experience of first defining the dream image to oneself and then translating the imagery in all its multi-various and potential definitions into a communicable linguistic entity goes beyond baffling and taxing the imaginative resources of the dreamer. It transforms the most subjective of experiences into an object for viewing and absorbing by the group as well as by the original dreamer. This process of objectivisation, of the self becoming an object within and for the world, as defined by Csordas (1990:40),

reaches its zenith in these dreamwork groups. The dream imagery, on occasions, is transformed into artistic statement and performed dramas. Such an objectivisation of the self was noted by group members as the following quote shows. In a dialogue reported in detail in the following chapter, one of the members (A: page 106) describes the dream as *"a story or picture and therefore the dream is out there and can be worked on quite safely"*.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE GROUP**

### **Introduction**

As we have seen in chapter two, the dreamwork movement in Western industrialised societies began in the United States in the 1970s as an offshoot of the personal growth movement. The essence of this movement is that the dream image is an important aspect of the self and is significant in developing understanding both of oneself and of one's world. Writers such as Garfield (1974) popularised ways of working in groups with dreams. For this she drew substantially on anthropological research into how non-literate peoples viewed dreaming, often in an altogether more positive way than in the West.

Ullman (1979:92-116) and subsequent other writers have written about how to run dreamwork groups. In the last few years dreamwork groups have mushroomed in the U.K and can now be found in most large cities. The women's movement especially has explored the dream and the products of active imagination (Ernst & Goodison 1981:161; Butler & Wintram 1991:52-54) with a view both to a deeper understanding of female personal and social identity, and also as a way of challenging negative patterns of gendered socialisation. In particular the writing and guided imagery exercises of Ernst and Goodison have inspired and taught groups of women, including survivors of different forms of sex abuse. Shohet (1985:83-120) has reported the creative and significant use of dreamwork groups in schools and communities. He also writes about the use of dreams for specific consciousness raising purposes such as

overcoming racial prejudice. More recently dreaming has been seen as a way, not just of understanding the self as some kind of ego isolated within a social vacuum, but as a way of becoming aware of how social structure and social stereotyping have been constituent factors in self development (Ullman 1989: 281-282). Fromm has described this area of our group lives as the 'social unconscious' (1955 quoted in Ullman 1989:281). A sociological/anthropological perspective on dreaming (Ullman 1989) can therefore unmask prevailing personal/group myths and stereotypes about men/women and black/white people, for example, and so, I suggest (1992:57 and forthcoming), can be used in consciousness raising groupwork initiatives as well as the perhaps more typical 'therapeutic' or personal growth type groupwork settings.

This chapter focuses on the group, its dynamic process and how this process interacted with the dreamwork. In particular I consider the following: characteristics of the members; the stages of the group; decision-making and leadership; conflict and communication; the development of group identity; trust and self-disclosure; and members' evaluation of the group. Overall this chapter analyses the dynamic and interactive aspects of the group life. Tedlock's communicative theory of dreaming proposes that such an analysis of the social dynamics of the dream sharing be considered as an essential aspect of any anthropology of dreaming.

I will now focus on the three ten week dreamwork groups of which I was the co-leader. These groups were of two to two and a half hours duration and took place between September 1989 and June 1990. Recruitment to the group was by local advertising,

word of mouth and through the membership networks of the local independent groupwork training agency where the sessions were held. The recruitment literature only suggested that potential group members should be interested in sharing their dreams. We did not interview or select members prior to the start of the first session of each of the three groups. The groups were held in that agency's premises. The room we used was distinctive in that there were no chairs in it but only many large cushions. Group size was between six and twelve.

The group programme usually consisted of a structured round at the beginning in which members shared how they were feeling. This opening round provided the opportunity for members to begin to relax, join the group, shed preoccupations and share important current events in their lives. This was followed by a short description of any dreams they had had and their wish to work on a particular dream or not. Then the group would choose two or three dreams to consider during the rest of the evening. The most common method of working with a dream was by suggestion, discussion, association and comparison. The group attempted to help the dreamer relate their dream imagery to their current daytime, conscious life. We regularly supplemented discussion with action techniques such as the use of gestalt exercises, particularly an emotional identification with different parts of the dream, psychodrama, artwork, meditation and visualisation. The visualisation exercises proved particularly productive and were always based on a powerful image from a member's dreams. Images used in visualisation ranged from 'being a bulb' to 'going on a journey as a bird' to visualising a 'door

in the mind' and then going through it. Every session was audio-taped for research purposes and members had access to the tapes.

Membership: (see appendix 3 for table of members' backgrounds)

The first group had six members of whom four continued through to the end of the third group. The second group contained twelve people which was really too large for such a dreamwork group (Williams 1984:251). The third group contained nine members. On average one person started each of the three groups but left after one or two sessions. Members were of all ages, were mainly female, white and professional. Some were married, but more often were separated or divorced. Members had children of varying ages. Many of the members had interests in what very loosely could be described as New Age pursuits such as yoga, meditation, astrology, circle dancing and aromatherapy. There were two members who attended Quaker meetings and one Methodist member. Otherwise mainstream religious commitments were not evident. Nearly all members presented as heterosexual. Whilst almost all members had been to therapy or personal growth groups before, none had been to ongoing dreamwork groups, though one or two had been to a single dreamwork group or guided fantasy (transpersonal psychology) weekend. Several members knew one or more group members prior to joining the group and this prior knowledge was a significant dynamic on occasions within the group. For instance on one occasion when discussing a dream image about 'laying paving stones' a member reminded the dreamer that they had given her advice when laying out her garden in her present house. Occasionally prejudices about one another appeared to come to the

fore in, for example, whether to interpret a dream image sexually or not. Access to 'privileged' and prior knowledge of the dreamer was claimed by another member on at least one occasion. Some members knew each other from circle dancing and this provided a familiarity for some new members.

There were a variety of attitudes to the value of dreaming. Many members thought dream imagery was in some way potentially relevant and useful for their waking lives, but felt that a pondering alone on the meaning of their imagery was necessarily limited. Others were coming to the group primarily for its potentially supportive role and for a 'space' in which they could share their current concerns. One group member who articulated this orientation particularly strongly stated that the dreamwork part of the group was incidental to her and she felt that dreams were vehicles to represent and share intimate life concerns. She spoke also of the 'undefended self' encountered in dreamwork. Another member said he was coming to the group to gain experience of groupwork and had little awareness of his own dreams. Another who came for most sessions of one of the ten week groups believed strongly that all dreams were prophetic and came from a strong 'religious' or at least 'spiritualistic' orientation.

Almost all the members who stayed through a group term of ten weeks disclosed either to the group or in the follow-up interviews that they were going through a period of their life which involved, in their eyes, great change or considerable crisis. These crises were typical of the issues of our times; they included ageing, separation, divorce and work/career stress. Whether the magnitude of these perceived changes differed from the scale of life change normally experienced has not yet been specifically

studied. Moreover it became clear that the years following, for instance a marriage or partnership breakup, could still contain a major period of 'coming to terms' with the loss and change experienced. Indeed the conscious processing of these change experiences in relation to the recalled dream imagery provided the bulk of the subject matter of the group discussions.

There were two co-leaders, and my colleague was a female freelance groupworker and counsellor. As group leaders or facilitators we prioritised the telling and the working with members' dreams and tended only to disclose our own dreams once on average during a ten week session. These occasions were when either no member had a dream or when, in my case, it was the final week of a group term. There was a level of groupwork expertise and some members were well able to facilitate gestalt and psychodramatic exercises for example. However several members were not so experienced and exhibited reluctance and shyness in relationship to the disclosure of both the detail and form of personal concerns.

### Stages of the Groups

A common feature of theorising about groupwork (Benson 1987:84; Brown 1979:66; Preston-Shoot:1987:111) is a concern with the issue of the group process as exhibiting various stages. These theorists present groups as typically passing through common stages. Tuckman (1965:384-99) describes these as "forming, storming, norming and performing", whilst Schutz (1979:11-137) describes a developmental pattern involving stages described as inclusion, control and affection. The value of such formulations is the idea of some kind of potential pattern to the

mosaic of possible group events and processes. At the beginning of their existence groups typically are concerned with issues of emotional belonging, of whether the individual members 'feel' or expect to 'feel' comfortable and accepted within the group.

Members typically experience ambivalence at this stage as to whether the group is 'right' for them. Anxiety, whether manifest as silence or loquaciousness, is a typical feature of this stage.

After the issue of belonging has begun to be resolved, the group begins to focus on its perceived task and deals with power issues between members and with the group leaders. This is usually called the 'storming' stage and as this metaphor suggests this is a typical time of conflict and rivalry, about, for instance, the actual aims of the group and interpersonal power. However it is important to realise that such group stages do not occur in a standard linear pattern but rather the stages snake in and out, and events and developments in and sometimes without the group can precipitate 'storming' sequences. As I will show later the three dreamwork groups encountered and developed different conflicts and issues in their time.

In the linear pattern I am (with some reservation) outlining, groups, having navigated the stage of critical and political definition, can then embark on their actual work. In this case it was the discussion of dreams and the search for meaning within and through the discussion of dreams. In all three groups this stage was reached and 'the work' of the group was achieved. The groups 'formed' into an effective form and pattern for their task, and this effective form tends to be considered as a set of norms. 'Performing' is often in the groupwork literature the final stage of the groupwork process and defines the time in the group

when the work of the group moves forward without time being absorbed in, for instance, defining the task and the roles of the membership. The stage of 'norming' tends to blur into that of 'performing' and generally refers to a satisfactory group climate in which members are contributing well and where there is a high and developing degree of trust and coherence.

I will outline the development of the three groups giving examples of these stages.

### First Group

This was a small group with only six members. It developed very quickly, was small with only six members, and was characterised by a high degree of experimentation in ways of working with dreams. It was in this group that methods such as gestalt, psychodrama, meditation, fantasy work were used for the first time. The group rapidly developed a high level of trust and coherence and quickly developed norms that lasted throughout all the three groups. For instance the practice of 'doing a round' at the beginning to allow members to share how they were feeling in the present was adopted. This beginning with a 'round' is a typical groupwork device and has several functions: among them are the equalisation of speaking roles, the opportunity to impart critical personal information to the group and the opportunity to 'leave aside' current preoccupations and to focus on the group session. As part of these rounds we established that members should briefly share if they had a dream or not and the present value and intensity of that dream. This member evaluation of their dream helped establish whether the dream was short or long; powerful or not; single or recurrent. This disclosure allowed



the group and its facilitators to begin to prioritise which dreams to 'work on'.

The group then rapidly established itself as an entity with agreements about when and how often to meet. Rules of confidentiality and agreement about tape-recording were discussed and agreed. The session always began with the lighting of candles in a candelabra and an incense stick and finished with the candles being blown out. Refreshments were taken at the end of the first two groups and during a mid-meeting break in the third group.

This first group quickly developed a cohesion and a commitment to experiment. The group in the second week did a guided fantasy based on the image of a flower bulb which had been described as part of the dream worked on during the first week. Members also had the opportunity, during this guided fantasy, to remember any dreams they had had and to symbolise these in terms of an image or object. Then they, metaphorically speaking, brought these back to the group, like a souvenir from a journey. The variety of symbols and images coming back ranged from a gold chalice, a silver cup, a picture of stones under swift flowing water, an eagle and an image of being burnt at a stake! These disclosures to the group and the discussions provoked by them facilitated a rapid coming together of group members and a sense of excitement as to the potentiality of the group. In fact, towards the end of the first group one member commented ironically that 'we' knew much about the unconscious lives of group participants but surprisingly little about their daytime identities and preoccupations.

In the final session of the life of this first group no dreams were discussed. Instead one member discussed a pressing relationship issue and received supportive feedback from the group members. This ability of the group to suspend 'dreamwork' on occasion was to be a feature of all three groups and it occurred in approximately one session during each ten session period.

Different group members experienced the group process differently. In interview one member said in response to the question "What did the group mean to you?"

*"I felt really ignorant in relation to the group especially at first...One day I went away feeling really awful...On the third week I felt bad through not contributing enough...it felt difficult to speak my mind about dreams in the group...I felt I was letting others do the work...I nearly didn't go back then but the next week it was brilliant...I worked on a dream and then we did a guided fantasy/meditation with one of the facilitators...I was able to really understand the dream...then I really started to enjoy the sessions and then I couldn't go to the last two sessions...I gained confidence...I don't have to feel inferior".*

### The second group.

This began several weeks after the first one ended and after the Christmas break. The break was longer than usual to allow for one group member to return from a long holiday and so rejoin the group at the beginning. The second group contained twelve members and was probably too large for a dreamwork group. All the members from the first group except one returned to the second group. There was surprisingly little friction between 'old'

and 'new' members and this ease was probably caused by the characters of the new members, who were energetic and ready to 'work' and share dreams from the outset of the group. Moreover, as already indicated, some 'new' members were already either friends or knew some 'old' members. However the group soon began to enter into a conflictual area in relation to the 'different' perspective on dreams of one of the 'new' group members. Whilst this issue will be developed in the next section on 'conflict', the group's focus on resulting interpersonal and leadership issues seriously affected the group's ability either to 'norm' or 'perform', to use that terminology of group process. The effective departure of the member with a 'different' perspective on dreams towards the end of the second group's life allowed the group to 'do' some dreamwork and some discussion of dreams occurred in every session. However the impact of the interpersonal difficulty, differences expressed as to orientation towards dreamwork and the meaning of the dreams had significantly impeded the development of group trust and group coherence. One male group member reflecting on the experience of the two groups said,

*"..the first group was the most exciting time...we worked together really well...conflicts got resolved...I experienced a very positive lot of action...In the second group I was grateful that the group start was delayed as there was a lot going on in my life...It was a bigger group of people who I didn't know...the group went down...I got quite stuck in it and things didn't get resolved as in the first group...there was a lot of unfinished business...which was resolved by the two most prickly members leaving the group...they were potentially very valuable members".*

### The Third Group.

The composition of the third group was different from the first two. Three new members joined and three members from the second group left. Two of the three 'new' members left after one week, apparently because they, certainly one of them, had wanted a more directive group. The third 'new' member left after three sessions for reasons he reported as "wanting more challenge in the group". However the 'old' members recognised that due to the prior cohesion of the group, the third group was probably a difficult group for 'new' members to join without feeling excluded. This left a group of nine members, of whom one didn't come towards the end of the sequence. The group ran for nine weeks and finished with a party on the tenth week to which almost all members who had been at the three groups were invited and came. The time of the weekly sessions in this third group was extended to two and a half hours instead of two hours though often in this sequence there was a refreshment break in the middle of the session.

This third group was characterised by several features. Firstly the dynamic innovation of the first group was somewhat absent with less innovative groupwork practice and more reliance on simple discussion of dreams. Secondly, there was again an establishment of a high level of trust and group coherence and particularly high levels of self-disclosure were manifest in this group. In the middle of the sequence, there was a noteworthy session in which coincidentally three female members disclosed either that they were in the process of leaving their long term male partners or were effectively considering this. No discussion

of dreams again took place in that session but as a consequence there was a resulting focus on women members disclosing personal issues and some criticism of male members for their reluctance to or for their inability to conceptualise and communicate about their emotional lives in a group setting. The group during this period was described as 'being like a women's group'. For instance in the sixth session the focus of the group discussion was on why and when women leave long term relationships and the resulting costs and dilemmas concerning money and children that result. This emphasis on greater female participation in the group and a feminisation of group issues was a feature for the second half of the third group. Male members were not excluded, but at least one felt pressed into sharing more intimate aspects of himself with the group than he felt at ease with. At the beginning of the session after the partnership disclosures, he said that he had felt "pressed to speak" and had felt uncomfortable because of this. He further felt that he had had to carry "guilt as a male" but had realised that the issues being discussed were his also.

Overall the three groups had different characteristics due to changing membership structures. For those members who were present throughout the three groups, the three separate groups probably felt more like three separate stages of the same group, there being a core of members throughout the three groups.

### Group Norms

Reference has already been made in the previous section on stages of the life of groups, to the development of group norms as being indicative of group development. Norms quickly became

established about how the group should spend its time. Smith states, with reference to his review of the study of group norms that the following norms would typically be approved by most members in encounter-type groupwork settings:

.... all groups approved of asking for feedback, talking about the here and now, giving feedback, challenging the leader, and probing a member who had been silent. Virtually all groups disapproved of putting down a member who had just opened up with personal feelings, talking a lot without showing one's real feelings, and being frequently absent from the group (1980:19-20).

In the first session a balance between action work, in this case a gestalt exercise, and discussion on the dream narrative occurred. This set a pattern for subsequent sessions. Most weeks one or more of the following methods such as gestalt, psychodrama, guided fantasy or meditation was used to facilitate the dreamwork. Every dream 'worked on' was of course discussed usually beginning with questions of clarification about the dream imagery and its narration such as "was there anyone else in the room?" or what colour were the clothes you were wearing?" Whilst the group and its facilitators were ideologically firmly set against interpreting anyone's dream, there was often a suggestive process. Members might suggest a way of looking at a dream such as, "Have you explored looking at ....?" or "Perhaps you are identifying too much with the X role?". By the end of the groups two processes had happened in relation to suggestion. Firstly the boundary around a suggestion was more clearly asserted and a member making a suggestion would tend to make the suggestion with the following preamble, "If that were my dream, I would.....

think about it in that way". This symbolically clarified the point that any comment made by a group member to the dream narrator was likely at best to contain projective aspects by the speaker onto the dream symbolism of the narrator. A member asserted the importance of members 'owning' their suggestions in the following words:

*"When you interpret you are saying that here is some useful information about me which I offer you as possibly useful for 'you' therefore it is easier for the dreamworker (narrator) to evaluate interpretations and either accept or reject them".*

The further issues around the mode of suggestion by group members is developed in chapter six.

However whilst this apparently exemplary framing of any suggestion was being asserted as the best way to make suggestive comments, the experience for several dream narrators in the group was that they were being bombarded with suggestions that they couldn't assimilate. Criticism was made that members were not always 'respecting the dream' by the multiplicity of suggestion being made. This situation of 'bombardment' was caused by the eagerness of people to share their ideas and projections with the narrator of the dream. The commonest method of developing the potential and implicit meaning of a dream for the narrator, after suggestion and clarification, was gestalt identification. As already described the basic gestalt exercise involved the narrator imaginatively identifying with one part, object or event, from the dream and then describing themselves as if they were that object or event. Further methods of 'working' used were working in pairs and threes on occasions. Usually there was considerable

discussion prior to going into any grouping smaller than the large group due to the expressed concern that this would inhibit the development and shared experience of the group. However when this pairs/small group approach was used, approximately once each ten week sequence, then the results were usually favourable in so far as members could verbally share, or in one case, draw and colour their dream narrative to a greater extent than they could in the large group. The second occasion this happened was that involving faeces dreams as already mentioned (see p. 54.). The development of group norms was not however without areas of conflict emerging and sometimes being resolved.

### Group Conflict

Conflict is a normal part of group life and can lead onto a resolution or a broader synthesis of aims and means, or it can be destructive for whole or part of the group. Miles says that:

A group without conflict may be in serious difficulty, points of view are being masked and inhibited, and good solutions cannot be worked out (1959:25).

Douglas (1976:117) agrees with this viewpoint, stressing the importance of distinguishing between creative and destructive conflict in a group.

Four main areas of conflict emerged in the dreamwork groups studied. These were: the nature of dream interpretation; the nature of the group; the role of myself as facilitator; dealing with the evidently 'different' orientation of one group member. I will discuss each in turn.

The key difference concerning interpretation was in relation to the acceptability of a well known part of the Freudian



paradigm. There was a split in the group between members who tended to want to interpret dream imagery as covert sexual symbols and those who felt that they were well able to dream explicitly of sexual issues when necessary and resented such sexual interpretations of their imagery. The split between group members on this issue is exemplified by the following dream of a female group member. She dreamt of:

*"..another women having a gynaecological operation...lying in a tank of water. One of the doctors was carrying a huge hypodermic syringe. and injected it into the women's skull".*

The issue of another female group member interpreting this image as a sexual one was still unresolved weeks later when the original dreamer forcefully disclosed to the group that there had been a subsequent and sexually explicit progression in the dream that she had not previously disclosed. The dreamer disclosed this additional information to show to the group that she was able to dream explicitly about sexual matters and to invalidate the suggestion that the hypodermic was a covert sexual symbol. This example also illustrated contemporaneously the importance of non-narration or in this case delayed narration of sensitive dream data.

I have already indicated that members came to the group with different degrees of interest in the study of dreaming itself. At least one member was explicitly seeking a personal support group and felt that dreams provided a suitable vehicle for facilitating discussion about prevalent life concerns. The issue of how much the group was a dreamwork group became manifest only during the middle of the second sequence and was linked to the other conflictual issues relating to my facilitation and the

different orientation of one group member. In the sixth week of this group almost the whole session was taken up with the introductory round. This was partly due to there being substantial feedback from the previous week's experience of a guided fantasy. The frustration felt by some members more interested in doing dreamwork is evident in the following quotation,

*K. "I feel a lot of time was spent doing the initial round...we are losing dreams...it is interesting but!"*

*Z. "I feel we need time to build up a feeling of safety, trust and connection with people before going into the most private space...otherwise I would feel most exposed...need trust and confidence to know what to share".*

*J. "I feel this very strongly...I have a lot of material to share but...I am not happy to share until I have some sense of the other members in the group".*

*K. "Time goes very quickly".*

*D. "We need to be more brisk".*

*H. "We are processing last week this week...we didn't have time last week".*

*D. "I am against rigid time slots...it will be different each week".*

*F. "It is not a round...it is a to-ing and fro-ing...I am not sure what it is".*

*Q. "I need to speak in the first hour to get the first two to three sentences out".*

*F. "We need structure to do that".*

J. *"It feels that it doesn't matter that we are not spending time on dreaming much as we are not really working on dreams now...we also value other things".*

L. *"I want space to hear people's dreams".*

G. *"I suggest lengthening the group".*

O. *"It feels to me that people are wanting varying things in terms of how much structure and space".*

The above discussion illustrated the wide disagreement at this point in the second group. That particular session continued with discussion of the previous week and then moved onto discussing a dream.

However in order to try and resolve this situation I started the following week by saying, *"I want the group to do some dreamwork!"* Shortly afterwards I was confronted by criticism of my being overdirective:

Z. *"I feel upset...I feel I am going to upset the apple cart...I felt uneasy about how the group was started tonight by Iain...I don't need to be told about dreamwork...told to 'get down to business...I need trust in the facilitator...what is your motivation in starting the group by saying 'let's get going on dreams'...I was one of the first to trust your discretion re recording...last week I began to wonder about that when you spoke about U".*

(next there is criticism of my passing on personal information to this second group from a group member from the first group who had left at the end of the first group. This information was passed on by me with that member's explicit consent but, due to its importance for other group members following their involvement

in that member's psychodrama, I was criticised by Z. for the way in which I had imparted it).

Z. *"I was upset (referring to the imparting of the information) quite a lot and went away unhappy though I was happy about other parts of the week...I was unhappy about your complete lack of discretion"*.

I defend myself by saying that,

*"U. wanted to communicate this information to the group...and wanted to say goodbye to the group"*.

Z. *"You should have checked out the telling with other members of the group in the psychodrama...I don't want to go back into it as I would have to go back into the dream and recognise the difference of perceptions"*.

I defend my opening remark saying that,

*"There is a continuum of interest within the group for dreamwork"*.

K. supported me and said, *"I was glad to hear news of U. I didn't feel anything had been betrayed"*.

D. *"I felt last week was not 'off task'...dreams are a tool to understanding myself...both others and me...we bypassed the dream and got to the real point...the meat of the thing which is the 'undefended self'...there was great deal of interaction between them"*.

F. *"Agree there is a powerful relationship between my dreams and my life...what we did last week was immensely useful and powerful as a away back into dreams from the bottom rather than the top down"*.

R. *"There is a difference in how safe people want to be"*.

A. *"Dreams are a way into the undefended self or we can work on dream as a story or picture and therefore the dream is out there and can be worked on quite safely...we can explore the interactive saga of life without a dream and this was happening last week...there are three levels to be worked on...first straight in like last week...secondly with the dream out there...thirdly with the dream as a way into the self."*

Q. *"There is too short a time for dreamwork given the amount of time spent on other issues...I think we have got somewhere when we have worked with a dream...you (the facilitators) have set your stall up and I have come to your stall".*

J. *"I feel frustrated about how little time is spent on dreams".*

J. says she has, *"the courage to talk about a dream"*.

The dream we then discussed proved to be one of the most valuable both for the individual and the group. The final main area of conflict for the group proved to be the group's response to one member in the second group who demonstrated a markedly different orientation to the dreamwork and who was perceived as having a different way of working in a group. This member disclosed that she had had a history of mental health problems, and arguably, from the perspective of the group, should have been counselled by the facilitators to leave the group. However the facilitators did not do this. In the third session of the second group this member narrated what she called a "murder dream" which contained very violent imagery. Considerable tension built up in the group following this narration. The narrator ascribed a

'devilish' feel to the dream and tended to monologue about the dream and rejected all attempts to 'work' with the dream imagery in terms of possible linking of the dream imagery to her current life issues. The following week she refused to participate in the artwork session in which members drew pictures of a dream prior to sharing them. In the feedback after the pairs and artwork part of the session, this member (H) appeared to dominate the group and the following edited excerpt from the transcript illustrates other group members resisting her interpretations and recommending her not to feel responsible for everyone in the group,

*H. "I feel awful about sharing my dream last week".*

*Z. "you can't guarantee happy endings to dreams!"*

*A. "Has talking about the dream triggered difficult feelings?"*

*H. "I am concerned about how the group received the dream...felt something horrible going wrong...feel everyone was disturbed by my dream...I want to reassure people that it wasn't a horrible dream...I feel that my dream which was a peaceful dream turned into a disturbing one unlike the outcome for Y's dream the week before...I feel I have been a negative damper on the situation".*

*D. "The effect of looking at dreams in a group can be quite disturbing...there is no agreement that we all go home happy".*

*X. "I think the beginning of the session is the time to talk about how much is left from the previous week's work".*

*Q. Challenges H. about how much she (H) may have "hurt us"....and says, "I can handle any such hurt".*

F. Strongly says, *"I am responsible for my feelings and I can handle my feelings"*.

H. *"I feel wrongly guided about dreamwork last week"*

G. *"Do you really mean this?"*

H. *"I was made to feel uncomfortable last week and I feel I made others feel uncomfortable also"*.

K. *"You should check out if you think you have made people feel uncomfortable"*.

F. *"I think you should have sorted this out at the beginning of the session"*.

H. *"I think everyone else here knows everyone else except me"*.

This interaction was probably the most difficult interpersonal sequence of the group and thereafter the group adopted a vigorous and reflective impatience with this group member. This was shown in the following interactions. She came to one or two more sessions and whilst she was able to speak freely, she was in turn challenged by other members if they felt she was unduly taking up 'group time' or if she was imputing thoughts and feelings to other members with which they disagreed.

As previously described, the third group was markedly less conflictual, except, as noted, when gender became an explicit issue in relation to levels of self-disclosure within the group.

### Group Cohesion

Whilst group cohesion can be shown in many ways, such as regularity of attendance, the sharing of speaking roles and sensitivity to members' needs and aspirations, one aspect of cohesion that is noteworthy was the regularity of remembrance of

and sharing of members dream and fantasy imagery. On many occasions members spoke of previous dream and fantasy imagery and their interpretations. Members would refer to having incorporated an image from someone else's dream into their own. An example of this was X. referring to "Y's cats (from a dream not described in the thesis) *crept into into my dream and one went into my bath and it was really dirty and they left all these bits in the bath...there were three cats*". I asked how she knew that they were X's cats and she said "*they just were*". Another spoke of 'stealing' someone else's dream image. Members reported, particularly in the later interviews, having dreams about the group and group members. However these tended not to be disclosed in the group.

The above reported experience of shared visual imagery is evidence of a group cohesion and a group life. This sharing of imagery also represents the development of a common ownership of the imagery of at least some dreams. Such a collective identification supports my assertion of the group's development of a form of 'mini-archetype' or 'root metaphor' which the group incorporated as part of the narrative of both the individual and the group, and as such was part of the identity of the group both personally and collectively.

### Leadership

The model of leadership used was that of facilitation. Facilitative leadership seeks to avoid the imposition of unnecessary structure upon the group and aims to allow members the maximum power possible within the group. The aim of this model is to 'make easy' the development of the group and the



individual involvement of particular members. I planned and ran the group with a freelance groupwork colleague with whom I had worked with before in a groupwork setting which had incorporated some dreamwork. Whilst I came to the role with more interest in dreamwork per se, she had a greater interest in the group process than myself, as she was enrolled on a groupwork training course and was studying the process of the group for her assessment on that course.

We tended to take turns in introducing and finishing sessions and usually did not work on our own dreams in the group, though exceptions to that have already been noted. My colleague shared and worked on her dream material more openly than I did. We did however share current life information about ourselves and referred to any dreams we might have had in the opening 'rounds'. We fully shared the planning and debriefing before and after sessions and were in basic agreement as to the aims and range of methods to be used by the groups. I have already focused on the main points of friction in the groups and how these included, among other issues, the role and dynamics of leadership.

Whilst there was a basic harmony and trust between us as co-leaders there were small disagreements, for instance, about ending the sessions promptly, with my co-facilitator keen for a prompt finish both for the sake of having a clear structure and because of different domestic arrangements from myself.

Our leadership was positively affirmed by most group members. One member referred to our,

*"bringing different perspectives which had been enhancing for the group...felt leadership had been very valuable...had*

*been valuable and gentle...had developed non-confrontational feel and had been supportive and guiding...I felt safe about sharing stuff".*

Overall the facilitative style and the different groupwork experiences we brought to the group allowed the groups to develop effectively and provided an interesting dreamwork and groupwork experience for most of the participants. Probably the least successful operation of our role was in the second group where we allowed the group to deal with the difficult interpersonal situation. This strategy, however, is consistent with a facilitative mode of group leadership.

### Self-disclosure

Smith (1980:19), a principal theorist and evaluator of the research literature on groupwork sees self-disclosure to the group and feedback by the group to the member as the central ingredients of encounter-type groupwork. Self-disclosure was a key issue in these dreamwork groups. The dream and its narration within a supportive group opens up a direct way into what a member described as "the undefended self". The dream image might not initially appear relevant to major preoccupations of the self but often in the narration itself or certainly in the ensuing discussion and action work, key possible insights, often accompanied by emotional pain and even traumatic memory, might be triggered. Different levels of self-disclosure by different members at different stages of the group were apparent. Already described was the 'peak' of self-disclosure towards the end of the third group when three female members shared intimate concerns from their personal life. Self-disclosure is obviously related to a

number of factors, including the degree of trust in the leadership and other group members, the level of security about confidentiality within the group and the member's previous experience of self-disclosure and its consequences for themselves within the group setting.

Often a member would refer to the possible issue 'brought up' by the dreamwork in a form of personal code, indicating their understanding of the reference but not wishing to declare it more explicitly. For instance in the 'button' dream to be discussed in chapter six, the dreamer refers to the button hanging by a thread as symbolising a much larger impending loss in her life. At that stage the group would only have been able to speculate as to what 'much greater impending loss' might refer to, though in this case the reference was made explicit by the member later in the group sequence. Another time a dreamer referred to a member's suggestion as "hitting the nail on the head" but ventured then no further. Quite often a member would refer to a dream that they had had but wouldn't 'work on', for instance, "*I have had a dream but couldn't talk about it tonight*". Likewise with the results of the guided fantasy sessions, members would not always share completely the experiences they had undergone in those fantasies.

In terms of developing a climate conducive to self-disclosure I have already referred to the efficacy of dreamwork to encourage this given reasonable facilitation and a working group. Within these groups there were key times when self-disclosure developed, such as when members first discussed relationship issues, or when sexuality was discussed. However privacy was always retained and in the individual interviews I conducted following the end of the groups there were several references to

dreams, often of a 'blue' nature that members had had about each other that had not been disclosed.

### Evaluating the group

During the follow-up interviews I asked for members' evaluations of the group as a whole. The replies were generally very positive and partly reflect the situation in which those members who only stayed for one or two sessions were not later available for interview. The following is a selection of evaluative comments. The first focuses on gender.

*"Particularly important was meeting new people and particularly the men in the group...I felt able to be the same person with the men as with my women friends in the group...this is a new experience for me as my life has been very divided for me so far (on gender lines)".*

*"Overall I do feel better about myself and part of this is the group...like a sea change...yes...and I give credit to the group for a lot of that"*

*"Particularly my reaction to conflict...it has underlined my avoidance of conflict and made me value confronting conflict...felt I have become more honest about sharing how I feel".*

*"I feel the group has been invaluable in helping to show where I am or consolidating where I am...I knew it would be the right thing to do to start working on my dreams in a group...it has been a very interesting time for me...I have made a step that I have been on the verge of making for a long time and there will be other steps...all my dreams were indicative of that...either heralding it or giving me a handle*

*on it in some way...the third group was twice as good as the second and the longer I was in the group I felt more comfortable...there was double the benefit in the third group (this member was in the last two groups only)...you have to make all that groundwork to get to the state of trust and security to get that benefit from what you disclose yourself...disclosing to a safe group of people is vital as it verbalises how you are feeling and you may not know how you are feeling...I have developed these intuitive connections due to the dream group".*

*"I will take dreaming much more seriously now...I won't dismiss them again...I want to dream...my subconscious has things to say to me...I don't feel frightened of dreams now the fear is defused".*

This chapter has shown the importance of an understanding and an analysis of the group process and group life. Dream narration does not occur within a social vacuum. Dream narration needs an audience and which parts of the dream and how the dream is narrated will depend upon the totality of the group climate. Trust, security and effective leadership are clear prerequisites for full disclosure of the remembered dream imagery in narration. As one dream narrator said above, *"disclosing to a safe group of people is vital as it verbalises how you are feeling and you may not know how you are feeling"*. This quote well indicates the importance of the subjective feeling of safety in the facilitation of self-disclosure. The quote also shows that through narration the memory of the dream is enhanced and also that the narrative process itself promotes awareness of

current feelings. In this way feelings are made manifest both to the narrator and to the group. The implicit feeling is made explicit through narrative and positive audience participation. So, affective awareness follows the articulation of the 'embodied image' (Csordas 1990:160). Such trust and security are not however inevitable aspects of dreamwork practice in groups, as our experience in the second group shows.

The next chapter continues the communicative analysis of dreamwork by considering the dream theories applied by the group members.

## CHAPTER FIVE: EMIC AND ETIC CLASSIFICATIONS OF DREAMS

### Emic Categorisation

The original intention of this chapter was to develop an hermeneutically based classification, or typology of dreams, comparing typical dreamwork classifications and a classification emerging from the groups themselves. Hence I embarked on two processes. First I developed my own categorisation for the dream narratives as well as considering how the dream narrations fitted those of Shohet (1985:43-47). However, as I shall demonstrate, these classifications are very problematic and may only obscure more than they reveal.

The categorisation that I developed for classifying the manifest dream imagery, in part from listening to how group members viewed their dreams, is as follows: nature; relationship; activity; conflict; sexuality, precognition and active/passive role dreams. Members would for instance introduce their dream by saying, "I had a nature or a sexual dream the other night". Some dreams seemed to fall easily into one category, for instance, one member's dream of being in the country (this dream was partly described on page 82) easily fitted into the 'nature category',

*"I was out in the country...there were no trees but lots of hills...long grasses...I was with lots of people...I don't remember who they were...There were a couple of horses who were with us...we were watching birds...at one point I looked up and there was this enormous bird...vast absolutely stunning...I was looking at it totally amazed at how beautiful*

*it was...its wingspan was vast...brown and white patterns...as I looked at it it became two...one layer almost came off and flew away from it...I can't explain it very logically but it was as if it had two layers...I think at that point I was on a horse...and it started to gallop and in reality I am very afraid of horses...I was aware of how this horse is starting to gallop...but I didn't panic...didn't fight it...I let myself go with it...There was no saddle...I don't know how I got onto it...I held onto the mane...let go...allowed it to gallop and just trusted it to be okay and it did stop eventually...it stopped and then I remember it happened again and I thought this time it is going to go off with me and it was wilder this time and it was galloping and galloping...we got to a point where the land was quite flat and then a very very steep hill almost at an unbelievable angle and the horse was charging...going at this hill...I was thinking oooh...and what happened was I wasn't particularly panicked and the horse actually went up this hill and I was able to slip off the horse and sit in the grass perfectly serenely and happily...I sat in the grass for a while feeling very good...this aborigine came up...running...as he was worried to see if I was okay as I had fallen off the horse and I just said a big grinning "thank you" to let him know that I was alright...not knowing if he would understand "thank you"...and there was another character ...a 'nature boy' and he talked...he was talking about his island...and he was one of the group who came across to the place I had been galloped to...and he was talking about his island and the rainfall and how heavy the downpours were and how wonderful that was...and he was really portraying*



*it in a powerful way and I remember being aware in the dream that it wasn't the rainfall that was wonderful but him and his perception of it and I remember feeling we "could all be like that" and I thought that we could all have that view of life and he said that everything was "topsyturvy and not as it should be".*

This rather long dream narration displays a range of apparently strong 'natural' imagery. The manifest content, to use the Freudian distinction, is very much to do with nature, with countryside, birds, horses and other natural phenomena. However, on closer examination the dream contains the dreamer, an aboriginal 'nature boy', riding which is a cultural activity and the dreamer engaged in a thought process about the 'way of things' in the world. The dream contains humans and cultural activities. In discussing the dream, as we will see in a later chapter, the developed 'latent' meaning arrived at by the dreamer herself concerns her present personal struggle about which part of her 'nature' to prioritise in pending work and career decisions. Once the dream is discussed and 'meaning' arrived at for the dreamer, the initial 'naturalness' of the dream is significantly developed and the nature motifs are translated into cognitive categories in relation to current life issues. So this 'nature' dream as the dreamer described it, is in the 'reality' of the dreamwork discussion, a dream concerning relationships, conflict and activity. Once a 'latent' meaning for the dream imagery is arrived at by the dreamer in the group, this set of meanings becomes a part of the 'dream text'. Perhaps the emphasis the dreamer placed on the word 'nature' in describing the dream prefigured the later discussion concerning her 'nature'!

This example of the complexity of reference and signification of the dream and its interpretation within the group could be repeated many times over. It was rare for a dream, as opposed to a dream fragment, not to involve at least an activity, a relationship and a 'piece' of nature. So whilst the intention to classify the imagery using emic categories rapidly became problematic, the group still used the categories in references like 'that was more of a relationship' dream or a 'nature' dream. Moreover members reported and narrated dream symbols that appeared to form a sequence between dreams, such as one which involved one member in dreaming a sequence of dreams of various animals that she felt represented in some way a part of a process of 'coming to terms' with an aspect of herself (see p. 222). Equally problematic, for the purposes of such categorisation, is the distinction between what is primarily a 'relationship' dream and what is primarily a 'sexual' dream. This even without reference to Freud's sexual interpretation of manifest dream imagery. The degree of activity or passivity by the dreamer in the dream is also seen as significant in terms of the explication of the meaning of the dream (Shohet 1985:64-65).

The precognitive kind of dream occurred regularly within the group and refers, as Shohet (1985:44) also defines this type of dream, to dreams in which in some sense the future is perceived to be anticipated. The validity of this kind of dream in terms of its possible outcome is, of course, a major issue and I have already referred to Basso's and Jung's development of the concept of the 'progressive' dream (see p. 25). The question of whether dream imagery can in some sense 'predict', 'anticipate' or 'prophecy' the 'future' is a very old concern and it is commonplace for non-

literate societies to validate this 'predictive' feature of some dream imagery (i.e: D'Andrade 1961:328). The 'Umeda' hunter-gatherer group, for instance, believe as Gell states (1992:46) that if a woman dreams of a fish she will get pregnant. On several occasions members insisted that dream images in some sense became manifest in reality unexpectedly in the future. The most common example of this is shown in the following dream in which a few weeks later the dreamer feels she sees in 'real life' the place in the country that she has 'dreamed' about,

*"I am on a ritual journey...I am alone but I am aware of a group of people off to my right...the setting is a rather dark...a very steep bank...there is dry crumbly earth...straight ahead and on either side a ridge comes round...there are loads of tall trees and people on the ridge on the right and I am going to be trying to scramble up the centre...this is the steep bit but the other way is the right way to go...there is a very mysterious feel about this place...later on people are rehearsing a play...I have a part in this play...the last image is being in a theatre with very tall narrow brick walls...my last thought is it would be terrible to get out off if there was a fire".*

A few weeks later the dreamer reported enthusiastically that she had come across the place in the country for the first time.

The most striking issue involving the concept of time in a dream sequence was that of a dreamer who described having regular dreams of babies but had no conscious wish to become pregnant. This situation appeared to continue and she narrated such dreams in the group. Later and after she left the group she in fact became pregnant and once she was reconciled to her

situation she reported beginning to have 'toddler' dreams! These ceased following a miscarriage.

The recurring dream or the recurring symbol within a dream such as a baby motif was common, and these dreams had a high priority in terms of both being significant and worth 'working on'. Nightmares similarly were thought to be particularly important to 'work on', and were defined not by symbol but rather by affect, such as the experience of fear and terror.

Whilst the emic categorisation of dream types is severely problematic it did serve to provide a rough categorisation for use in, for instance, determining whose dream had priority in being 'worked on' during a particular session. Recurrent dreams and nightmares had priority; thereafter priority was allocated more on when the member had last had the use of 'group time' and on how emotionally significant they and also the group felt the imagery was for them at that time.

In terms of the dreamwork movement, Shohet's (1985:43-47) classification of dreams is representative of non-psychoanalytically orientated classifications. He classifies dreams into the following kinds: nightmares, creative/problem solving, precognitive, warning, lucid, wish-fulfilment, clearing, 'big', information, communication and social dreams. Social dreams refer to the 'social order' in which we live and he exemplifies this type by referring to Jung's famous 'rivers of blood' dream which Jung subsequently regarded as referring to the forthcoming Great World War. 'Clearing' dreams as a category refers to those dreams that process daytime events and avoid information overload. Shohet's category of 'big' dreams is typical of many societies

which divide dreams into important and not important ones. 'Information' dreams refer to those dreams in which unrecognised problems which had not previously intruded before on daytime consciousness are reflected in dream imagery.

The lucid dream is a category often referred to. The concept of lucid dream refers to the quality of consciousness experienced in a dream. The lucid dream is supposed to be one, "where you know you are dreaming in the actual dream" (Shohet 1985:45). The lucid dream is perceived as being true as a result of laboratory experiments performed by Hearne (1985:76) and reported by Ansen (1988:5). Group members certainly reported such dream experiences and one member even affirmed that his dreams always and only involved a kind of video replay of long past events, a kind of 'direct memory dream'. Another potential area of study was into hypnogogia which Mavromatis (1991:104) defines as "the unique state of consciousness between wakefulness and sleep" which can be blurred with the phenomena of dreaming. However a concern with hypnogogia did not manifest itself within the dreamwork groups studied.

These categorisations are interesting in so far as they reflect the assumptions of the dreamwork movement and those people involved in the non-psychoanalytic study and use of dream material in UK society. The categories assume the value and potential 'meaningfulness' of dream imagery. The categorisation reflects a perspective that dreams can be prospective, useful and even informative as to future events. In this perspective our daytime consciousness is seen as assimilating environmental information which is not made conscious, and yet can be manifest, metaphorically or not, in our dreams. Hence these categories do

not assert a mystical authority to dream imagery as does Biblical prophecy on occasion.

### Emic/Etic Classification

This section articulates the range of interpretive schemata within which group members explored, explained and understood their reported dreams. Such a set of schemata represent the interpretive framework of the group and the overall 'dream theory'. The theories used, and sometimes articulated by group members, cover the gamut of contemporary, and mainly psychological, ways of understanding dreams. As already indicated in the introduction, the approaches used included quasi-religious, Freudian, Jungian, revised psychoanalytic, gestalt, transpersonal and what I define as a socio-political contextualisation approach emanating from a structuralist perspective. In this section I aim to both define the various theoretical perspectives and identify examples of their interpretive use within the group. In so far as I am defining and contextualising these group-articulated perspectives I describe the analysis as consisting of a mingling of both emic and etic accounts.

### Religious Approach

Whilst in these dreamwork groups a religious approach was rarely explicitly expressed, a religious perspective on dreaming is highly significant in many of the main world religions. The importance of the dream within both Judaism and Christianity is frequently evident in both the Old and the New testaments. 'God'

is said to communicate with the prophets, such as Abraham, Noah and Moses through the medium of the dream and likewise 'God' speaks to men and women, such as Mary and Joseph, in the New Testament. In Islam as we will see the dream had a high valuation, whilst in the Hindu tradition dreaming is placed above waking reality in the hierarchy of realities (Tedlock 1987a:3). Recent religion, such as that of the Bahai faith, likewise positively evaluates the potential of the dream. The following quotation from the writings of the founder of the Bahai faith make this clear:

Indeed, O Brother, if we ponder each created thing, we shall witness a myriad perfect wisdoms and learn a myriad new and wondrous truths. One of the created phenomena is the dream. Behold how many secrets are deposited therein, how many wisdoms treasured up, how many worlds concealed. Observe, how thou art asleep in a dwelling, and its doors are barred; on a sudden thou findest thyself in a far-off city, which thou interest without moving thy feet or wearying thy body; without using thine eyes, thou seest; without taxing thine ears, thou hearest; without a tongue, thou speakest. And perchance when ten years are gone, thou wilt witness in the outer world the very things thou hast dreamed tonight.

Now there are many wisdoms to ponder in the dream, which none but the people of this valley can comprehend in their true elements. First, what is this world, where without eye and ear and hand and tongue, a man puts all of these to use? Second, how is it that in the outer world thou seest today the effect of a dream, when thou didst vision it in the

world of sleep some ten years past. Consider the difference between these two worlds and the mysteries which they conceal, that thou mayst attain to divine confirmations and heavenly discoveries and enter the regions of holiness (Bahauallah 1945:32-33).

Indeed even within a religion the significance and role of the dream can significantly vary over time as Kruger (1992:57-82) demonstrates throughout his study of the ambivalent position of the dream in early and medieval Christian thought.

This ambivalent view of the dream, still evident today in the popular view of dreams, Kruger (1992:19-24) traces back to late-antique authorities such as Macrobius. Macrobius presents five different and hierachically ordered categories of dreams ranging from the true and the revelatory (*oraculum and visio*) to the false and mundane (*visum and insomnium*). Yet mediating this opposition of true and false dreams, Macrobius suggests a middle type of dream (*somnium*) in which truth is represented in fictional, allegorical and metaphorical form (Kruger 1992:24). I will show later how the dreamwork groups I studied often came to understand dream imagery as a form of metaphorical truth.

Classification of the dream within a religious perspective typically focuses however, not on the discovery of some latent psychological or existential meaning, but rather on reaching a correct perception of the authority and purpose of the dream as meant by the spiritual authority which has invoked the dream. Such a classification involved in medieval Islam, for example, an applied understanding of hierognosis (Corbin 1966:384). Hierognosis refers to the hierachical classification of the different orders of visionary knowledge displayed both in dreams and



waking realities. Therefore dreams would be interpreted by oneirocritical means by reference to the status of religious imagery appearing in any dream. The dream had a special status in Medieval Islam as the Koran was partly revealed to the Prophet in dreams and the Prophet apparently spoke regularly with his companions about their dreams. Dream interpretation involved particularly the assessment of whether the dream image and its apparent meaning emanated from angels or demons (Meier 1966:422); demons being able in dreams to manifest themselves as angels. The oneirocritical assessment hinged on the context of the dream and particularly on whether the dream advocated moral or immoral choices, as angels would be unable to advocate 'evil' as the concept of 'evil' was understood in Islam.

Interestingly, it is in the Sufi tradition within Islam (Corbin 1966:406) that the concept of the 'imaginal world' is developed to define a discernible world between that of sensibility and intelligibility. This 'imaginal world' is defined as a world of autonomous forms and images which is apprehended directly by the imaginative consciousness and was held to validate suprasensible perception. This concept of the 'imaginal world' reappears in Jung's (1959:49) concept of the 'active imagination', Assagioli's (1965:144) theory of psychosynthesis and visualisation techniques, and Rowan's (1993:51) presentation of transpersonal psychology.

I have already described aspects of the use of 'imagework', or 'visualisation' as it is usually called, in contemporary psychotherapeutic practices and in the dreamwork groups studied. Suffice it here firstly, to recognise the apparent genesis of the concept of the 'imaginal world' in the Islamic theory of the

visionary dream; secondly to recognise that the contemporary anthropology of dreaming is beginning to develop this concept of the 'imaginal world' to critically discern the culturally diverse relationships between the concepts of the dream and waking reality (Tedlock 1987:3-4). Price-Williams (1987: 246-61) subsumes both the capacity to dream and 'actively to imagine' within the concept of the mythopoetic function in humans. The mythopoetic function, a term introduced by Ellenberger (1970:314), is essentially a formulation of the creative capacity of the imagination to generate spontaneous imagery which are open to interpretation. The conceptualisation of an 'anthropology of the imagination' is separately taken up in Duerr's 'dreamtime' which argues coherently and philosophically for an integration of imaginative products within the concept of the 'real' (1985:89-103). Price-Williams recommends that the task for anthropology is to elicit why some imaginary products gain social support and others do not. However, such a view denies the possibility of both a partial cultural structuring of the unconscious and a contextual study of the narrative account of the visual imagery.

Within the group overt religious adherence and belief was only occasionally evident, though a significant minority of group members referred to religious practices, such as church going. I am using the term 'religious' in this setting to define a rare attitude by a group member to perceive the dream primarily as a 'spiritual communication' emanating from a 'divine being'. The consequence of this perspective is that the purpose of 'dreamwork' is confined to hearing, understanding and if necessary obeying the instruction inherent in the dream 'message'.

The one dream narrated to the group which was presented as being a 'religious' dream in the sense outlined above was as follows,

*"Someone was claiming to be my mother but not my mother...and got married to a man with two children...a boy and a girl...the boy was handicapped and totally twisted...his body was all twisted and he couldn't do anything for himself...it was not only his body that was twisted...he was also a very malicious and a very devilish kind of personality and his sister was about ten or eleven...to look at her was very attractive and she did her brother's bidding and any devilish thing he planned she would put into fulfilment and because I was their sister by their parent's marriage I couldn't get away from them and they made my life hell...I don't know why the girl was healthy and attractive...a normal kind of child...I couldn't go to anyone about my problems with the life I had got with them because the boy created pity and the girl didn't look bad she looked normal...she was so attractive and if I had told anyone what I was going through they wouldn't have believed me...I don't know why but the girl was having tubes put into her back...I was told to put the tubes into her and coolly calmly I was going to murder that girl...instead of tubes I got cannulas with rods in the middle...I put cannulas near the blood vessels...I was going to release the cannulas and the girl was going to bleed to death slowly...I wasn't going to be found out...she was wearing a loose blue dress and so no-one would notice the blood and so I put the cannulas in and I knew they were in the right situation and I walked away*

*waiting for the day for me to release them...before I got the chance to take the rods out the boy and the girl said to me jointly 'we know what you are doing what you are planning we have made your life really bad...we would apologise to you and go away and leave you in peace'.and I woke up".*

The narrator of this dream effectively prevented discussion or suggestion from the group as to how she might approach thinking about the dream. She combined a monologue about the 'events' in the dream with considerable self-disclosure. She spoke about the dream in terms of experiencing "devilishness from the dream". Later in the individual interview with this dreamer she spoke of the dream being "a warning" about future events in a particular setting. She referred to dream images as "having to happen" and the dream as being "prophetic". The other members referred subsequently, particularly in the individual interviews, to this dream narration as having been profoundly unsettling. Indeed this was the only occasion in the two hour groups when a break was called for after this dream narration and in the middle of the session. The effect on the dynamic and life of the group of having one member who resisted the ethos of the group and who had a singular view of the meaning of dreams has already been presented in chapter four.

Whilst this dream, the only one narrated by this member, was the only evidently 'religious' dream in the sense I have described, reference to imagery from religious texts was occasionally evident in the narration and subsequent discussion. One member dreamt the words, "*the years that the locusts have eaten*" and had been helped to find the rest of the biblical reference "I will restore the...." (Joel Ch.2.v.25:748). Later in

discussion in the group she felt the reference was meaningful in the context of her present feeling about her coming to terms with the loss of her years in a marriage which was now being dissolved. Here however religious imagery is being used metaphorically.

### The Freudian Perspective

Freud's pioneering work on the structure of the psyche and the role and function of the unconscious is extremely well known and many of his insights have passed, not always exactly, into the popular culture of understanding dreams. Freud proclaimed the interpretation of dreams to be "the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind" (1953:5.608) and saw dreams as being the repository of the unfulfilled wishes and desires of the dreamer. In particular he distinguished between the manifest content of the dream and its latent content (1974:143-156). The manifest content was made up of motifs derived usually from the trivialities of daily experience, which he called the day residue. The latent content referred to the hidden, repressed and unconscious meaning of these motifs or images which was buried in a distorted form within the manifest content. The transformation or distortion of the latent content of the unconscious takes place through the processes of dramatisation, symbolisation, condensation, displacement and secondary elaboration (Rivers 1918:389). Dreamwork then became for Freudian analysis the bringing to light, through free association, of the repressed aspects of the self. Often these repressed aspects referred to incomplete aspects of childhood development, such as the unfulfilled Oedipal wishes of the dreamer, or a similar

traumatic event. Dreams then are "the guardians of the sleep" (Freud 1953:4.233) as dreams allow the safe and hidden expression of repressed wishes.

Freud also elaborated the important distinction between primary process and secondary process thinking. Primary process thought is for Kracke, "a highly condensed, visual, or sensory, metaphorical form of thinking". Secondary process thinking is defined as conscious, "centered on language and is linguistically communicable" (1987:38). Dreaming is for Freud, par excellence, primary process thought which he regarded as a more primitive form of thinking which also formed the core of myths and fairytales. Such an important distinction has however been challenged and Kracke reviews this debate, concluding that:

Primary process thought is a qualitatively different kind of thought from secondary process and is just as much subject to maturation and refinement as the latter (1987:37-40).

The critique of the hierarchical relationship between these two kinds of thought is significant as it opens the way to evaluate dream imagery as an important means for integrating the social, as well as the unconscious experience of the person.

The capacity of the unconscious mind to represent unresolved conflict through imaginative processes is central to most psychotherapeutic systems of thought. The generative capacity of the mind to creatively represent conscious and unconscious concerns in dream imagery is crucial to varying forms of dreamwork. What is at issue is what daytime concerns the mental imagery of sleep stands for and how it is generated. Once dream imagery was seen as a potentially decipherable code the

way was open for varying formulations of the meaning of the symbol systems of the sleeping mind.

Within the dreamwork groups studied the Freudian approach was consciously articulated mostly in relation to the popularisation of Freud's view that most symbols, and particularly many common ones, reflected repressed sexual desires (2). There was a view expressed in the group that typically long thin objects would represent the phallus whilst container type objects would represent the vagina and womb. Often there was joking about such perceived representations. Sometimes there was disagreement and interpersonal conflict generated by a member attempting to impose such a sexual interpretation upon a member's dream. The most evident example of this process has already been described in chapter four.

Overall the group members brought a Freudian interpretive approach into the discussion on dreams in so far as Freud has laid down certain parameters from which all contemporary psychological perspectives tend to derive. As already indicated these parameters include his crucial distinction between primary and secondary process thinking, the distinction between manifest and latent meaning and his account of symbolisation. Indeed his evaluation of dreams as potentially meaningful and indeed therapeutic is the foundation for twentieth century dreamwork approaches.

### Revised Psychoanalytic Approaches

Whilst a Freudian perspective is the classical twentieth century perspective on the meaning of dreams, his findings have been substantially developed particularly in what Fosshage

describes as a 'revised psychoanalytic model' (1987:28). In this revised psychoanalytic perspective the basic distinctions between primary and secondary process thought and that between the manifest and latent meanings of the dream have been re-evaluated. Dreaming in this neo-Freudian perspective is seen rather as a manifest problem-solving and integrative process that takes place as metaphorical thought.

Primary process thought is, within this recent model, perceived as being a different but equal form of mentation that is capable of refinement and development during the subject's life. Complex mental operations, such as the solving of mathematical problems solved, can be achieved in dreams (Fosshage 1987:28). Moreover, the adoption of this model allows for a focus on the manifest content of the dream as being of predominant value for interpretation. No longer is the manifest content considered important solely as a device with which to free associate in analysis. Rather the metaphorical imagery of the manifest content is the most appropriate available representation of the issue or conflict being expressed in the dream. Fosshage describes this appropriateness as, "Hence, a dreamer usually selects a particular dream figure, not to be a disguised stand-in for someone else, but rather because the figure within the dream context is a most poignant representative of the particular issues at hand" (1987:31).

The classic perception of the 'real' meaning of the dream being deeply disguised changes then into a focus upon the manifest images and symbols of the dream. Moreover the dream is seen as being 'prospective' as I have already referred in chapter one to Basso's and Jung's view that the dream is future-orientated,



rather than orientated to the infantile past, and it is also adaptional. Dreaming is then a problem-solving and integrative process occurring as metaphorical thought. Glucksman summarises this revised model as:

dreaming mentation regulates threatening impulses and feelings by means of its defensive operations, and facilitates the acquisition of new insights, fresh perceptions, and adaptive solutions to current dilemmas in the light of past experience (1987:20).

The old adage of 'sleep on it' as a way of resolving conflict and finding new solutions to life's predicaments can be seen as reflecting such a progressive view. No longer does the dream have to be interpreted by the expert analyst but rather is more democratically accessible to thoughtful dreamers.

Many of the dreams and the understandings of them reached by group members and presented in this thesis illustrate for the dreamer the potential value of the manifest imagery of the dream. The following dream and its interpretation will suffice to illustrate this point and represent many others, some of which will be presented later in the thesis,

*"I was in a crowd of people and I was watching some sort of martial official ceremony...and there were some men in formation I think either on parade or dancers wearing very striking clothing for performance or uniform...the ceremony finished...I was standing back in the crowd and I couldn't see well...people dispersed a bit...then I could see better and there was a stage and a door at the back opened and a group of people came out and there was going to be a wedding between a very ugly gross capitalistic man with a leer on his*

*face and a very young weeping and despairing young woman...and she went to the extreme left and on the right was the agent who had arranged all this and who was a malevolent character with wolfish teeth...there were family members there and there was a clergyman and it was all Dickensian and I woke up before the marriage and she was standing there sobbing."*

The above powerful dream allowed the dreamer to recognise both to herself and to the group her overall estimation of her marital situation and the family dimensions to the marriage decision. The manifest imagery of the 'unhappy marriage' clearly represented to the dreamer, though still with significant distortions, her own perception of her marital situation.

### A Jungian Perspective

Jung, like Freud, is a twentieth century giant in the field of dream interpretation. Jung is important for dream interpretation in several ways. He developed the idea of the collective unconscious, the archetypes and the theory of the dream as compensatory. As already shown, his technique of 'active imagination' is significant as a key technique enabling people to access less conscious states and fields of imagination.

The concept of the 'collective unconscious' was developed by Jung to represent his perception that the human psyche contained impersonal and archaic contents that manifested themselves in the myths and dreams of humans. Jung's idea that all humans contained a common and universal storehouse of psychic contents is in contradistinction to Freud's view of the unconscious as

consisting primarily of a personal unconscious. Jung defined the difference thus:

Whereas the personal unconscious consists for the most part of *complexes*, the content of the collective unconscious is made up essentially of *archetypes* (italics as in original) (1959:42).

For Jung the collective unconscious was a pre-given, something inherited by all people.

The Jungian archetypes are the tendencies of the psyche to manifest patterns and forms in certain particular ways. They are not in themselves the actual culturally specific representations as perceived in dream and fantasy, though Jung was not always clear about this distinction (Samuels 1985:33). Archetypes formulated by Jung include the self, the shadow, the anima and animus, the mother, the child, the wise old man and the trickster figure. Jung maintained that the archetype can never be fully known (1951:109). They have a noumenal, awe-inspiring, quality and only their manifestation can be observed in an ordered form in myth, and in a more disorganised way in dreams and fantasy.

Jung's theory of the archetypes has bewildered many psychologists and certainly empirical definition is difficult. However, taking the example of the anima archetype, Jung broadly defines this archetype as being the "feminine aspect" of a man (1964:31). Within this definition the multifarious representations of the the 'female' in the dream may represent positive and negative aspects of this 'feminine self' of the male. For instance a man may contain both representations of the 'muse' as inspiring 'genius', and also that of the siren who lures man to his downfall. Neither image represents the 'anima' in its totality

but both are aspects which can be recognised and given meaning through dreamwork. Further the anima, for a man, can be the principle of relatedness to the unconscious. Jung's view of the anima has been critiqued by feminist writers, such as Wehr, as representing a timeless and decontextualised view of the relationship between male and female that is inevitably sexist (1987). Whilst she affirms his recognition of the feminine and creative aspect of the self, she advises a definition of the feminine that has emerged from women themselves (1987:125).

Within the dreamwork groups studied there was a definite, albeit popular, awareness of Jung's theory of the archetype and the collective unconscious. Reference was often made to 'this is an archetypal' dream or image in the dream. Such references were made when the image considered was perceived as being universal in some way. Hence a child motif in the dream of a man in the group was considered archetypal, whereas a series of child images in the dreams of a young women were not. In the former case (see p. 80) the interpretation arrived at was that the child image represented the lost intuitive aspects of the person's life as well as the "mourning" for a lost childhood, whereas in the latter case the dream image was felt to signify an unconscious concern with maternal desire.

The group process amplified the various symbols from dreams into a form of 'mini-archetype'. Symbols such as 'bread', 'button' and a 'sherry glass' developed into evocative and contemplative images that were good for the group to think with. As one member said,

*"Dream images are common to people and common issues come out of collective underlying themes...therefore working*

*on one dream puts you in touch with one's own issues...it is neither here nor there as to who had the dream".*

The use of dream symbols, such as the bird, the bulb and the door which were all derived from the dream imagery of the members to focus guided fantasies upon, also had a similar effect of generating these symbols into mini-archetypes or living (root) metaphors. Reference to mythological stories to help discern possible meaning in dream imagery was evident on occasion. A woman reported a dream, a part of which referred to a sherry glass being in her hair. In the discussion of this image reference was made to the Samson and Delilah myth, the common symbolic interpretation of the cutting of hair and its equation with the loss of virility. This example, however, shows how the use of such a myth as that of Samson and Delilah can potentially fix female sexual power within an imaginative order that affirms male virility and feminine deceit.

Jung's theory of the 'compensatory' function of dreams is well known. Jung saw the role of dreams as:

to restore our psychological balance by producing dream material that re-establishes, in a subtle way, the total psychic equilibrium (1964:50).

He gives as examples people who are arrogant or ambitious dreaming of flying or falling. He regarded dreams in this sense as warning people about their one-sidedness.

Overall the above key ideas of Jung's thinking informed the 'dream theory' of the group in several ways. Members perceived that dreams might involve impersonal and common symbols and that these were not reducible in a Freudian sense to sexual referents. Rather the symbols referred in some rather arcane way

to becoming more complete, more oneself. In this sense there was some recognition of what Jung termed the 'individuation process' (1959:275), being the evolving union of conscious and unconscious aspects of a life, working through dream contents and the reflective process the dreamer applied to their own consideration of these symbols.

Jung saw the dream as a natural and normal phenomena (1964:90). It did not mean something other than it was. He quotes the Talmud which says of dreams, "The dream is its own interpretation" (1964:90). Jung prefigured the contemporary dreamwork movement's focus on the manifest content on the dream and conceptualised the dream as anticipating possible futures and not as referring back to infantile pasts'. For Jung the dream is a symbolic sketch of the future, and a treasure house for self-discovery.

### Transpersonal Psychology

Transpersonal psychology has already been referred to with respect to its interest in 'imaginal thought' and for its advocacy of visualisation and guided fantasy as key methods in the practice of the therapy. Transpersonal psychology is broadly based on Jungian thought, particularly his theory of archetypes, and on his practice of active imagination as a technique. Assagioli, according to Rowan (1993:40), first used the term transpersonal as part of his articulation of psychosynthesis. Assagioli distinguished between the more impersonal 'prepersonal' archetypes as defined by Jung, and what he called the 'transpersonal' archetypes of the superconscious (1967:8). The superconscious is, for Assagioli, the higher creative and intuitive aspects of the self. The aim in

transpersonal psychology is to connect the ego with its superconscious, its 'higher self'. This connective process is facilitated through a series of guided fantasy journeys usually in a group setting. A conceptual advantage of the transpersonal perspective on the theory of the archetypes is that many more themes emerging from the imagination can be viewed as archetypal. Instead of the limited number of true Jungian archetypes any common symbol such as the flower or the journey can be seen in context as archetypal. So the transpersonal theory of archetypes validates such a description of important symbols evoked and developed by the group, such as 'button', 'loaf', 'bulb', 'bird' or 'door'.

At least two group members had participated in transpersonal psychology weekends, and on two occasions they reported a development of imagery between the transpersonal psychology experiences and those of their dreams. One of these dreams has already been presented (v. p.82). In the individual interview the dreamer told me about a mythic journey on a transpersonal psychology weekend she attended prior to the dream group,

*"when I first worked like that it was very powerful (she then describes the mythical journey from before) I went to a castle and there was a knight in the room in chain mail with a mask or visor over his face...I'm not sure if there was something awful under it or if it was empty...it was very scary...and then I was flying over some woodland and I saw a cave with a chalice in it and then a stone circle way below...then before I knew where I was suddenly I banged down on the ground and a Druid was about to cut out my*

*heart...it was necessary...then I was in a crypt with a coffin and three women with candles and a knight who had died there and it was the same young knight and I became that knight and came alive again...and came into the castle and I thought it was to do with my father...or my father in me and I was thinking of my father and then one day in the garden after the image of my father and the image of the knight in chain mail came into my mind and this was how he was before he died...he went senile...and he was cut off from us and it was like there was nothing there...it seemed to heal something to do with my father as though I owned a part of myself again and I associate my fantasy with this older one...so it felt things had come full circle...it was the same stone circle...and I was given a diamond by the woman and I'm asked who she was and she said Daphne...so I felt in a better position than being sacrificed...Daphne (name changed) is goddess for the month of X which is my birthday...so there is a progression in the fantasies as well as in the dream motifs".*

I have included some of her associations concerning her identification of the knight with her dead father. Several motifs that can be considered as transpersonal archetypes or 'mini-archetypes' are contained both in the dream and in the above fantasy journey, such as those of the stone circle, the potential sacrifice, the diamond and the woman, Daphne.

In the second example the dream imagery prefigures the motifs of the transpersonal fantasy journey. In the dream, which is long and contains a recognisable sequence and structure, a 'green man' steals a small square box and a large key and throws



the key and box onto a ledge so as to hide it. Only one 'brown woman' saw the 'green man' hide the box. The brown woman got the box and the key from the ledge and took them back to her flat. The green man later came back and violently searched all the flats. This is a brief summary of the parts of the dream referring to the key and the box. In the individual interview she talked about how the key and the box had reappeared for her spontaneously in the fantasy journey on the transpersonal weekend only a week later,

*"I feel the dream is very well explained now...in most areas it makes sense...I had it a week before going on transpersonal two which was on the male and female principles...on the weekend we were meant to set out to get a chalice and a sword (in the fantasy journey)...but I came back with a box and a key which had been in the dream...so the dream prefigured the fantasy by a week...I refound the box and the key...I feel they are masculine and female symbols...in the dream the box is locked...I opened it in fantasy...couldn't open the box in the dream as the key was bigger than the lock...in the fantasy the box has a golden cup in it and I close the box and take it to a wise person and she told me to open it again and it had a silver spear in it which was the moon and I took the moon out of the box and I went down the hill with the moon in my left hand and the key in right hand...it was amongst the most exciting experiences in my life...I haven't put it down since sailing on..."*

This mythical drama, which the person found most significant at a turning point in her life, contains imagery from her dream of a week before. The image of the key and the box

from her dream reappears, apparently in defiance of the group leader's instruction to 'take a chalice and a sword', in the fantasy journey. This reappearance contains a progression however as, whilst in the dream the box cannot be opened because the key is too big, in the fantasy journey the box is opened with important results for the woman. The symbol of the moon represents for the woman the reclamation of part of her femininity, lost for years in an unfulfilled marriage.

Both these examples show progression and transformation of symbols between fantasy and dream. Both contain transpersonal archetypes such as the moon, the box, the key, the sacrifice and the diamond. Moreover the pattern of the stories in the reported dreams and fantasies is mythical in so far as the story sequence primarily contains impersonal symbols and themes and is analogous to legend, folklore and fairytale. Moreover the dreamer/fantast's attitude to the imagery defines the symbolic pattern as archetypal in a transpersonal sense. Hillman views such archetypes as being defined by their "emotional possessive effect, their bedazzlement of consciousness so that it becomes blind to its own stance" (1985: 23-24), as well as by their content. The theory and practice of transpersonal psychology was then a significant feature and way of approaching, defining and understanding dream and fantasy symbolism in the dream groups.

### Gestalt

The gestalt perspective in the group was very important as one member defined herself as a gestalt therapist, and gestalt techniques, as we will see, were an important technique regularly

used in working with the dream imagery. Gestalt therapy was the creation of Fritz Perls (1969). His theory rejected the notion of an unconscious and focused on a concern with the person 'getting in touch with the here and now' and 'being in touch with their feelings'. Dreams in gestalt theory are "the high road to integration" rather than Freud's "high road to the unconscious" (Houston 1982:44). Each part of the dream is seen as a part of the person that potentially they can get in touch with through dreamwork. Even an insignificant part of a dream is an opportunity to develop a further emotional integration of the various aspects of the self. Gestalt therapy is an action approach to re-experiencing the self in a more complete sense. Hence in gestalt dreamwork the dreamer is advised to see each part of the dream as a part of themselves. They are asked to identify emotionally with all or part of the dream imagery. Hence they speak of their dream not as about something 'out there' and impersonal but rather they would say, "I am the ....." , speaking always in the present tense. Often the dream narrator uses two chairs or cushions, one to sit in when 'being the dream', and one when they are themselves. Effectively this allows them to dialogue between different aspects of themselves and this can be a powerful experience. I will give an example now of a group member doing a gestalt identification with a 'being a sherry glass ' which in her dream was a hair roller in her hair! Further examples of the use of this gestalt technique will be given in the next chapter.

D. suggests X. imaginatively identifies with being a wine-glass,

Y. *"Let your hair down!"* laughter.

X. *"You are very serious about it".*

others, *"We are we are...we're riveted"*.

X1. (X1 = narrator as sherry glass) *"I am a wine-glass... slender...old...valued"* (laughs).

F. *"what is it like in X.'s hair?"*

X.1. *"Not the right place...might break...don't want to be in her hair or in her pocket...might get crushed"*.

D. *"How do you feel about being old and valued?"*

X1. *"I like being valued...not old...vision of being used a long time (laughs)...Oh dear"* (X. obviously has an insight into the meaning of what she has said).

X1. *"I feel very squashed in the pockets...want to be seen in a display cupboard."*

I. *"Do you want to be drunk from?"*

X1. *"I enjoy being filled up with sherry...it is my use...lovely pale dry sherry."*

D. *"It gives pleasure."*

X1. *"Yes."*

X1. *"Has a lovely effect on the brain...lets everything flow away"*

T. *"Sounds quite aristocratic...fino sherry."*

X1. *"Yes special you see."*

T. *"How do you feel in M.'s hair?"*

X1. (bit missing ) *"Bound in straight hair...will make X. look better...a bit demeaning...used in this way...feel unsafe in pocket...squashed...very unsafe in her hair"*.

D. *"What is your relationship with X."*

X1. *"She values me...um...out of character in a way."*

Y. *"Then why in the hair?"*

XI. *"It was the only thing she had to hand to use or it was convenient...when I feel I am being a sherry glass...I feel very good"*. (laughter).

XI. *"Very gracious"*.

X. *"Not sure which part of me is the sherry glass...I keep wanting to say 'I am very old' (emphasised)...handed down from grandmother...slender also...I have lasted a long time (emphatically spoken). End of gestalt exercise.*

. In the ensuing discussion personal feelings of fragility, age, being valued and long used sprang up on account of this exercise. She immediately related these to her current emotional situation of coping with recent divorce and separation. Issues of power and the use that is made of someone were facilitated through later discussion as were current feelings about herself. Personal meaning of the hair symbol was sought through spontaneous association and insight into metaphorical language use such as the sexualised meaning of 'letting your hair down'.

Ideas from gestalt theory and practice figured prominently in group discussion and practice. The gestalt practice of identifying with a significant part of a dream was the most common technique used except for group discussion and suggestion. The idea that the dream imagery referred only to oneself and had no meaningful relationship to external events was an important perspective often voiced in the group. The gestalt perspective is clear that all dreams are to be understood subjectively.

There was often ambivalence about external referents to dream imagery. If a female group member dreamt of their male partner, did they perceive the image to be potentially disclosing of

an aspect of their partner, an aspect of their 'male' self or to be a metaphorical statement about their relationship to their partner? Whether to understand a dream image in an 'objective' or a 'subjective' way was always a key issue in the group, and also was sometimes a concern between a dream group member and a partner. The dream already described (see p. 74) in which the female dreamer has a 'jealousy' dream about seeing her male partner dancing intimately with another woman at a party, was narrated by the dreamer and understood as being relevant to his possible behaviour. The dreamer had woken up following this dream, feeling that the dream was very real and as a consequence felt quite rejected. She had described this dream to her male partner who advised her to 'interpret' the dream image of him as part of herself! He advised her to explore the part of her that wanted to be at the party and having a good time and not to blame him in reality for her dream imagery of his unfaithfulness. Here the politics and dynamics of interpersonal relationships intersects with plausibly different ways of relating to dream imagery.

### A Social and Political Perspective

The interpretive purpose displayed in the dreamwork groups was influenced by social theory as well as by psychological theory. A feminist perspective was the most manifest political and social perspective in the interpretive process. Ernst and Goodison have attempted to integrate a feminist perspective in their use of both dreamwork and visualisation methods (1981:158). A feminist perspective, in relation to dreamwork, is concerned through its focus on personal imagery, with an analysis of the oppression of

women in a patriarchal society as well as with the practical empowerment of women within their actual lives.

Such a perspective approaches any interpretive position in relation to dream imagery as possibly needing to be critiqued from a feminist standpoint. Moreover such socially constructed systems of meaning as interpretive frameworks for dreamwork are continually being re-evaluated as shown by the following example drawn from a family therapist recently writing about using dreamwork in such therapy. Buchholz (1990:388-390) analysed examples of using dream material in family therapy situations. He encountered a deep level of mutual understanding of dreams within these families. In one example both the 18 year old boy, Billy, and his father had had the same dream in which Billy was pursued out of a cellar by a witch figure. Discussion of this dream image opened up key dynamics within the family linking Billy's drug addiction to his relationship with his parents and the relationship between them. The 'witch' image was chronologically and dynamically linked to an early description of Billy's mother by her mother-in-law as being a 'witch', and overall the dream was understood in the session as expressing Billy's wish to escape a seductive mother. This 'witch' image appears to have been a key for both the male and female members of this family to disclose deep fears and hitherto unrevealed fantasy material about each other. However, the negative meaning ascribed to the 'witch' image in the discussion about the dream is presented in the article as being unproblematic. Yet, such a negative stereotyping or interpretation of the 'witch' image can be critiqued from a feminist perspective as being a sexist interpretation. Such a conflictual diversity of interpretation well

illustrates the micro-cultural and political aspects of contemporary dreamwork. Likewise the feminist interpretations evident in the examples from my dream data, such as in the following data, similarly illustrate the point,

*"It started with me driving the car...my boyfriend was there...we arrived in a country village...my little boy went off to the shops...I bought a loaf of bread (Y.comments later she is always organising people buying bread for the family) I went into a bookshop for a job interview which I was not very interested in but I had heard about...I went through to the back garden...went through the back garden...I love bookshops but I am scared of them...I used to have the shits in the library...still sometimes do...but I love books...it was very warm in the shop...there was an attractive woman sitting at a table...she was a secretary...I came up to her...I said "I believe there is a job"...she said..."if you just wait there...the owner is coming back soon"...it was lunchtime...couples were coming in dancing and kissing...my boyfriend and his ex-wife were there...having a frictional conversational...they are very unhappy...they are attacking each other...I stood there just observing with this large loaf of bread...getting stickier...the icing all dripping down onto my smart suit...waiting ages...went up to secretary...again I said "I don't really want to do this job anyway".*

This dream reflects the woman's concern with her current job situation and an impending interview. The unpacking of meanings from this dream imagery was long and complex and involved the member reflecting on her present job situation and feelings about current and past key relationships. Overall she felt



the dream reflected her anxiety and fear of assessment linked to a present fragility of self image in the domestic sphere. By doing a gestalt identification with the icing on the bread she got in contact with very basic feelings and perceptions about her mother and her mother's expectations of her. Throughout the discussion and exercise a powerful theme for the group was the spontaneous discovery of the various metaphors of bread embedded in ordinary language use such as 'using your loaf', being 'kneaded', being 'proved', 'being good enough to eat', a 'bun in the oven', and 'loafing about'. These became both humorous asides but also powerful metaphorical summaries, via the puns on, for example, "being needed" and "being proved", of the dreamer's self state and current self image. She, during this session, developed an identification with the bread symbol which became a multi-vocal symbol of the self capable of many different amplifications of meaning. The 'bread' metaphor became then, through enactment, a lived (root) metaphor for the group and was often referred to in group discussions as exemplifying the profound and transformative effect of working with dream symbols in the group context.

Whilst the group in this session was focused on assisting the dream narrator and playing with these 'bread' metaphors, the issues arising from the discussion are reflective of structural, in this case patriarchal, aspects of culture. The dreamer identified the linking of the bread and the icing and the interview with her concern about maintaining her physical attractiveness and avoiding her male partner's rejection if she became overweight. The group on this occasion focused on affirming the innate attractiveness of the dreamer, without reference to male

expectation, and the ability of the dreamer to define herself - to become "her own loaf"!

Any structuralist perspective that is concerned with explaining and correcting social inequality, whether it be that of class, gender, race, ability or sexuality, has to consider the role of stereotyping of the oppressed 'other'. Whilst individuals may well be conscious of their ability to negatively stereotype women, black or gay people, the way the dream image is explained and identified may well be viewed as discriminatory. With regard to the example of racial stereotyping, Jung's analysis of the 'black man' as representing the 'shadow', or inferior, personality is now rightfully seen as racist by contemporary commentators on Jung's work. Wehr, for instance, makes this point as well as highlighting the inappropriateness of this part of Jungian theory in the analysis of a black person (1988:63). The potential for white people to, perhaps inadvertently, interpret dream imagery in a racist way was possibly also illustrated in the group. A white woman dreamt,

*"I was standing in a people-carrier...a train or a metro that was jam packed with people...I was standing by a sliding door and down the platform came a very handsome and tall negro and he had both legs down one side of his trouser...the right trouser leg was hanging...both legs were down the left side...he was shuffling along and not making very good progress...the right trouser was hanging loose...flopping at the side...we made space for him in the people carrier...I was friendly with all the people on the people carrier...everyone was very amused about this character...we knew he was an*

*alien...he didn't know how to handle human clothes...we all laughed."*

Clearly the dream is portraying a negative image of a black person in the dream. The black man is 'alien', socially extremely inept having two legs down one trouser leg. He is also very handsome. Here is the image in a white woman's dream of a socially inferior, but very handsome black man. Perhaps it is not surprising that in both the discussion about the dream and in the individual interview, the image of this black man is interpreted as being related to her "physical", sexual nature, to the "dangerous and unscrupulous part of her masculine side". The black man then is interpreted as standing in this typically negative, or partly negative, role for the white woman. He embodies the repressed and 'darkly' dangerous sexual nature of the white women. If such a dream image was present in the dream of a black person, male or female, what difference would and should that make? In the above dream it is possible to hypothesise that the dreamer is using historically constructed and racist stereotypes, certainly to interpret (with others) the image and even more problematically to 'create' the image.

Whilst an interpretation is definitely the responsibility of the dreamer and of the group, it is a much more problematic question to consider if the dreamer is 'responsible' for the dream image itself. Can then the dream be said to express intentionality? This is not a new problem. Gell (1992:57) refers to an incident concerning a missionary in the 1920s in Brazil in which an Indian demands compensation for his lost pumpkins solely, as it transpires, on the evidence that the Indian had dreamt that the missionary had stolen his pumpkins! To the

Indian the dream expressed clearly the desire of the missionary to 'steal' his pumpkins.

A further and perhaps more bizarre example refers to a reported case in the United States Of America where a man was accused of a murder on the 12th October 1980 in Chicago solely on the basis of his dream report. The police in this case considered that his dream account contained information that he could only have gained had he actually committed the murder (Bershady & Wagner-Pacifici 1989:8)! At the time of the writing of the paper the authors reported that at the first trial the Jury "believed the so-called dream was a deflected confession" (1989:11). However, this judgement was overruled by the Appeal court, which was in turn overruled by the Illinois Supreme Court, which ordered a re-trial.

Within the various twentieth century psychological systems I have introduced in this chapter there would be a consensus that the ego is not responsible for an action in the dream, since the dream image, while it might represent overt or covert wishes, does not represent 'reality' and 'real' morally responsible behaviour. Freud asked himself the same question:

..is the ethical significance of suppressed wishes to be made light of wishes which, just as they lead to dreams, may some day lead to other things...I have not considered this side of the problem further. I think, however, that the Roman Emperor was in the wrong when he had one of his subjects executed because he had dreamt of murdering the Emperor. He should have begun by trying to find out what the dream meant.....I think it is best, therefore, to acquit dreams (1955:658).

So whilst the ego is not held in Westernised society to be responsible for the dramas, perversions and cruelties that the dreaming subject experiences, the person is responsible for any interpretation accepted of the dream image. These interpretive frameworks are historically and culturally constructed and may contain negative stereotyping of oppressed groups. The political and cultural analysis of the whole process of dream interpretation is still perhaps in its infancy.

### Conclusion

The example of the 'loaf' dream narrated and interpreted illustrates well the eclecticism of the group's interpretive schemata. In it we see a gestalt perspective in terms of seeing each part of the dream imagery as part of oneself. There is an awareness that the loaf of bread with its dripping icing is a particularly powerful symbol for the person, akin to a mini-archetype or transpersonal archetype. There is an awareness that the manifest imagery is significant for the dreamer in so far as the meaning of the dream is 'read' as being partly about an impending job interview. A feminist interpretive perspective is applied in the discussion as to how the symbolism of the dream should be 'read' by the individual. The imagery is interpreted metaphorically in a way that is intended to empower the female dreamer in her future relationship to both her relationship with her male partner and in her work context.

This chapter has evaluated the range of emic and etic perspectives on dream imagery evident within the group process. Not all contemporary perspectives on dreaming are manifest in this group. For instance, there is the cognitive-psychological

approach that views dream imagery as a particular form of mentation without any meaning (Foulkes1985:14). This viewpoint was not evident in the group though this fact did not mean that the group was not totally baffled on occasions by the inaccessible nature of a particular dream.

This analysis of both emic and etic interpretive perspectives found in the groups constitutes an hermeneutic analysis of the subjective form of the group's understanding as applied to the dream narrations. Such a set of perspectives constitutes a native dream theory. The eclecticism of interpretation manifest both implicitly and explicitly represents a culturally specific repertoire of interpretive possibilities likely to be utilised in any contemporary dreamwork groups in the modern world.

## CHAPTER SIX: METHOD AND MEANING

This chapter will present the varied groupwork-based methods used in the groups and illustrate, with case examples, the process by which these methods facilitated the evocation of meaning from dream and day imagery. The methods used by the group included: discussion and personal contextualisation; member suggestion; pair and small groupwork; gestalt and psychodrama; artwork and imagework; symbol amplification (dream re-entry); meditation; and finally linguistic and metaphorical contextualisation through the medium of punning. Finally I consider how the members evaluated the 'meaning' derived from their dreamwork.

This chapter particularly illustrates and sets forth the processes of cultural creativity applied to dream narration in the groups. A recent validation of social anthropology as offering a study of cultural creativity, rather than an exclusive concern with the application of abstract theory, is made by Charsley in his study of the cultural history of the wedding cakes (1992:5). Drawing upon the emic and etic interpretive frameworks articulated in the previous chapter the data reported show the actual movement from 'nonsense' to 'sense' for the dreamer/narrator. The cultural and processual creation of meaning is evident in many of the following examples. After the narration of the dream the narrator experiences, on occasions, the evocation of meaning which is satisfactory and relevant to her/him. Satisfactory meaning can be seen to resonate within the identity and through the memory of the member as they choose

to follow one or another interpretive pathway opened up by the group process. If culture is the ascription and negotiation of meaning to everyday events then dreamwork, and particularly the use of action techniques within the group context, illustrate in an exemplary way the processual, interactive and negotiated nature of cultural creativity.

Moreover what is significant as we review this verbal and affective generation of meaning is how meaning and the ability to make connections between external events and internal imagery (memory and imagination) is often buried and repressed within the body of the person, that is the 'socially informed body'. In this way the 'embodiment paradigm' offers an anthropological and conceptual bridge between the development of human insight and the successful application of experiential groupwork practice.

### Suggestion.

Suggestion effectively means the ability of a member to ask the dream narrator for either further information or to 'suggest' looking at the dream or a part of it in a particular way. Any question of the form of "what colour was ...?" or "how did you feel when?" or "how do you feel now about..?" or "have you considered how X might relate to Y in your daytime life?" includes both a question being asked for more information, to flesh out the narrative, and also 'suggests' a possible avenue for enquiry by the dreamer.

Suggestion can be more directive and 'suggestive'. For example in a dream where the dreamer had dreamt of having a baby, in contradistinction to her daytime intention, a group member asked her the question "What do babies mean to you?"



and the dream narrator replied, "Love, food, too much responsibility". Sometimes the suggestion made is very directive as in the following example. A male dreamer has the following dream,

*"I was in a shop that I couldn't get out of...I was stuck...the customers wouldn't go...they kept coming in...it was five o'clock...I was trying to push them out and lock the door...and they wouldn't go...(the dreamer says the dream is fairly easy to understand)...the dream led into there being two couples...I was on holiday in America I think...there were two men and women...I was one of the men...I didn't know the others...I had some exams to revise for on Monday and the dream was on the Friday but I was inveigled into going on this trip and I went...I had to go through the customs...and there was a desk in the sand and all the bureaucracy and I put down a document dated the thirtieth of November...the Customs Officer said "this is out of date...you can't go..." by this time the other three had gone on...one women was walking off the boat and I waved and shouted "hey this sod won't let me go through and I will have to go back" and they just walked on looking over their shoulders and then the man on the table just disappeared and I thought I can go now and I ran out and the boat has gone."*

Y. *"Perhaps the boat leaving and your being missed was your wish not to take responsibility for decision-making.... the women went and the decision was made for you."*

D. *"That is the situation to a T! Also I thought there I am stopped officially and I am saying "I am coming back" and yet the whole decision is taken out of my hand."*

This example shows an interpretive suggestion being made by a group member, based on their extensive knowledge of the person's life situation. In this case the interpretation was accepted but this was not always the case.

### Discussion and Personal Contextualisation

The ability of the group to perform 'successful' dreamwork depended on members' self-disclosing and, in particular, on the narrator of the dream giving contextual information about events and processes current and past in their life. In the following dream the symbolism is about 'moving house'.

The female dreamer begins by saying the dream takes her back into scary feelings; she tells the dream as a story. She can see parallels with her own life, *"it is mix of things...real and other people`s doing"*.

*"I go to my parent's house...I haven't lived there for long...my mother tells me she is going to move...I am quite surprised...mother says to father..."you are getting old...You will have to stop all this physical work around the house..." the back garden is in complete disarray...they are digging up paving stones in their paved garden...they don't know where they are going...they have no other place...I feel confused...they seem crazy to be digging up the paving stones and to be moving...I decide to go along with it...I don't feel it would achieve anything by discussion...mother is being very angry about digging up the paving stones...I am*

*helping...I am sifting through the fibrous soil and taking out bulbs...I am not leaving anything behind”.*

The narrator then continues to give information about her life that is clearly vital for any attempt to understand the dream imagery.

*“This dream occurred the day after my house was put up for sale...therefore the material is half real! I have lived in this house for many years and I have brought up a child in it.”*  
 ...She then talks about moving from her own house and about how very panicky and insecure she now feels. *“I have a much stronger reaction than I imagined...I am shaken...I am having these feelings as I am talking...I feel fear and uncertainty”.* She tells how she remembers how she got to her house, *“it is the first place I have felt secure in.... previously my accommodation has been rented....my parents are alive and are not moving...it is a bizarre idea that they should be moving...they are very rooted...my parents have lived in their present house for X years and before that in a house where I grew up for Y years....my parents view of me is “she is always doing unpredictable things...its just her...another crazy thing!” I feel my house is an anchor...It feels really scary...I can't pull up the anchor until I can sell the house...I can't do something new...In the dream there were bulbs...my parents wanted to move everything with them even the bulbs”.*

In this example, perhaps surprisingly from the first session of the first group, the dreamer gives considerable personal biographical information to the group. In this example this information allows the group to focus on the dream imagery as being likely to represent, albeit in a changed and distorted form,

the dreamer's feelings aroused by her proposed house sale. The feelings of 'being uprooted' are later described in the gestalt section in this chapter.

In the following discussion of a dream we can see the evocative process between suggestion and insight that leads to a set of understandings about the dream by the dreamer,

*"I stayed in bed one morning...it's only a snatch of a dream...it's about my teeth...they are not a constant anxiety but I do have a fear of having my front teeth smashed...I do have crowns that I am self conscious of...the dentist in the dream has put new teeth on...so I feel relief that I shall have teeth to cover the gaps...then I look in the mirror and I see they are my mother's teeth...when I look in the mirror I realise they are greyer...this seems okay for a while till I realise that the new teeth are much greyer which will show people that the original teeth were crowns too."*

The following is an edited version of the ensuing discussion. D is the dream narrator.

D. *"I am thinking about being without teeth...about being raw and exposed and about people knowing there is something false about you."*

Q. *"Did she bite?"*

D. *"Its not about biting...The dentist knew they were mother's teeth...my relationship with my mother is okay but distant...Usually dreaming about teeth is about your own ageing...typically teeth falling out is about is about ageing...there's a lot in the dream about image and about being real...I had a fear of breaking my teeth and it did happen...I had an X accident and I lost my front teeth...Lots of people*

*visited and I was freaked about not having any teeth...Why this fear about not having teeth? it must mean something about not taking care of myself and as it was an accident it was okay to have lost them".*

The narrator then talks about the ugliness of having no teeth.

D. *"Something is rotting"*

Q. *"Like being a toothless hag."*

D. *"Yes...I was glad to have my mother's teeth rather than being toothless...it feels sad to have ended up with something not quite right...I remember my mother taking her denture out of her mouth and cleaning it...I didn't want my mother's teeth...I want my own teeth undamaged...there is something about pretence...it was a double pretence...as I had had the crowns first."*

Q. *"What is being covered up?"*

D. (laughs) *"It's about not being truthful...about pretending to be something I'm not...pretending to be more whole...more perfect than I am."*

Q. *"Putting on a good front"*

D. *"That really fits in with work...Its about the front...about pretending to be together...its about this job I am supposed to be doing...I haven't been feeling together at all dealing with everyone else in emotional crisis".*

Q. *"Its about being strong"*

D. *"At work it's about me taking care of everyone else...and who takes care of me?"*

D. talks about her feeling of pretending and of 'being strong' at work. There is nowhere at work for her to explore this...nowhere for her to get attention...

D. *"There is a limit to how long I can go on putting up the pretence...I have had a real battle getting the management to realise that workers needed their own support...I feel the management had not been supportive or understanding of these needs...sometimes I blame myself and think that I ought to be able to manage."*

K. *"I feels D has had to wear it (the mask) for everyone else ...like you are wearing the teeth...you are wearing it for everyone else in the workplace."*

Z. *"You are the only one being 'shown up' (like teeth)."*

D. *"That is exactly like it is...I feel I am carrying it for the 'consumers' and in order to get the situation changed I have had to be very real about myself...and with people who I haven't felt responded sympathetically."*

Q. *"You have to be mother?"*

D. *"Yes...I have to be mother to the whole fucking world ...that's what it feels like and yet I don't know how to stop."*

J. *"The image of biting coming across for me...that is the opposite of nurturing...of softness."*

A. *"Its like the nurturing I am really missing...I am also not being very caring about myself...but there is this sudden surge of anger...it is the resentment about giving out and not getting back...and the lack of response from other people."*

D. then talks about the dentist and her feeling that she is receiving second best concerning the teeth in the dream,

Q. *"Just like in the organisation."*

D. *"They're not good enough...both the teeth and the work support are pretty shoddy...second best...shoddy...fits but not very good."* then D. talks about not being happy in general at

work and a member suggests the 'mother's' teeth are invasive in some way,

D. *"What I can pick up there is the invasive bit...about boundaries...I feel really overwhelmed and there is nowhere for me to go...a friend is staying with me and had made dramatic disclosures about their Y. (reference changed)...also someone I know has been attacked (reference changed) this symbolised the last straw for me...so the invasiveness bit symbolised for me the awful side of humanity...it seems to be overwhelming and I am feeling overwhelmed by it."*

Z. *"How can we resolve this within the time and prepare D for leaving the group this evening?"*

D. *"As I think about it I feel angry about it and don't think it is good enough...I am angry...it is quite hard for me to be angry...I feel it is difficult to confront...to say I want and I deserve something better...I feel he (the dentist) is doing his best but it is not good enough".* D. then speaks to the 'dentist' as in a gestalt exercise,

D. *"I don't trust you enough to really give me some nice teeth I want some really splendid teeth...I can have the best crowns in the world".*

U. *"Are you going to ask him to do it or go somewhere else".*

D. *"I don't trust him but it feels really threatening to go somewhere else and to start all over again and to take this big risk...and all these dentists are men! my real dentist is very nice...so its about not settling for things that aren't good enough."*

In this discussion about the 'meaning' of the dream and of how the imagery may relate to 'reality' there is a process of

question and suggestion and growth of insight for the dreamer. This is not purely a result of suggestion by group members, as is shown at the beginning by the dreamer rejecting the avenue of enquiry suggested by the question "Did she bite?" The dreamer knows about the 'typical' connection of teeth with ageing but doesn't exactly pursue that theme in relation to her own ageing process. Rather she connects the imposition of the teeth with the loss of teeth in an accident and particularly focuses on the theme of the 'falsity' of the teeth. Then she talks about falsity and in response to a question about "what is being covered up?" talks about putting on a "front" at work. The idea of a 'front' is suggested by a member and the dreamer says that really 'fits in with work'. The next stage sees the dreamer sharing her perception that she is 'being strong' for other people at work, particularly other workers. The 'teeth' symbol now is explicitly connected with that of the 'mask' or 'persona'. In response to the question "you have to be mother?" the dreamer replies "Yes I have to be mother to the whole fucking world". The dreamer here is identifying with the 'motherness' of the teeth being inserted into her mouth in the dream and recognising that that is how she feels in her work setting. Following a suggestion that "boundaries are being invaded" (i.e. mother's false teeth in her mouth), the final level of interpretation reached is that feelings of being overwhelmed by events in the world, the patriarchal world, are manifest. Feelings of anger are articulated and finally the dreamer is facilitated to affirm her 'first class' value and her right to have first class teeth fitted.

This example illustrates very well the progression of insight through different levels in response to suggestion and interpretive



questioning. There is a transformation of the image of the 'teeth' to their being seen as representing the 'front' or 'persona'. (originally the persona was a Jungian formulation). The word 'persona' then is expanded to refer to 'mothering', perhaps 'inappropriate mothering', and finally, the identification with 'mothering' changes to a feminist articulation of anger at patriarchal abuse. Resolution is achieved through self-affirmation. Any of these levels of insight, which expand in terms of scope of reference from the personal to the global, could be seen by the group as equating with 'meaning' for the dreamer. 'Sense' has been derived from the 'nonsense' of the dream.

The interpretation of the 'teeth' image is through reference to biographical data and to the physical context of the teeth as being in the 'front' of the mouth; being a 'social front' to others as well as being a functional piece of equipment for the mastication of food. In that sense the understanding of the 'teeth' symbol relies on a public and culturally specific symbolism that evaluates the significance of teeth, and particularly the gendered nature of 'attractive' teeth, in certain ways. Our teeth are perceived in Westernised culture as being a part, and a very important part as evidenced by the amount of cosmetic dentistry, of our social front to the world. The social construction of our teeth as a "dental object" has recently been analysed by Nettleton (1992:18-28).

The 'mother' image in this dream and its discussion are again personally contextualised. The dreamer states that "her relationship with her mother is okay". Hence that possible avenue for exploration is not pursued. The 'mother' symbol instead is connected with her 'overwhelming' set of feelings of responsibility for others, particularly in her workplace. The 'mother' symbol is

identified with care and responsibility for others, and it is critically interpreted as not being a fulfilling aspect of herself but rather as an inappropriately acquired set of responses which she would like to divest herself of. Feeling like being a 'mother' to the "whole fucking world" is a problem to her. There is a translation here from a reference to the personal mother to the 'archetypal' mother as Jung defines the 'mother archetype' (1959:81). As Jung states, all archetypes have a potentially positive and negative aspect and here we can see a negative, or partly negative, rendering of that set of feelings and roles identifying this archetype for the dreamer. We see here then the dreamer concluding with a feminist critique of herself for coming to adopt such a 'false' persona and for identifying with such an inappropriate 'mother' role in relation to the world. However her self criticism is deflected, expanded and refocused into a generalised anger with the abuse and rapacity of the male in this society. The conclusion is self assertive and affirms her autonomous selfhood and her rights to the best. The socially constructed transformative and evocative process hinges on a series of transformations engendered by the interaction of the dreamer with the group: teeth = front = mothering = lack of self care = anger at men = affirmation of self.

### Pair and Small Groupwork

The group split itself into pairs and small groups of three or four people on three occasions. Pair work allows the opportunity for greater self-disclosure and is particularly effective at the beginning of a group to facilitate personal sharing. However I made no attempt to audio-record any pair or small group because

of the obvious problems of noise and the need for several recorders. The significance of pairwork for this discussion is that the setting is made more intimate, otherwise the group and social processes are the same, though more restricted in terms of the use of drama. One example of the development of greater self-disclosure through small groupwork is an occasion referred to earlier, when three female members all shared dreams with faeces' imagery in them. They further said that it was only because of the size and shared gender of the small group that they disclosed this imagery.

#### Group Member Association

As already indicated in the chapter on the group process, member association with the dreamer's narrated imagery was a two edged affair. Whilst an empathic understanding and identification with the imagery and with the possible meaning for the dreamer was perceived as supportive and developmental as is shown in the last 'teeth' example, the reverse could be true. Members could 'jump in' with their own associations and projections and thereby confuse the process for the dreamer. This was a group 'problem' discussed and addressed in terms of needing to 'respect the dream'. In the group the practice was developed of introducing a possible line of enquiry and suggestion by the phrase, "if that was my dream I ....". Again, as already discussed in the chapter on the group, the question of sexual projection by a member onto a dream image was also an issue for the group.

Occasionally there seemed little connection between the dream imagery and the resulting interpretive and supportive discussion. For example the following is another 'tooth' dream,

*"In church at choir practice there is the vicar and me and two other singers and I am waiting for it to start...perhaps other people are still to come...and I am clenching and unclenching my jaw...like that and I am aware that there is a filling in a bottom molar and there is a filling in a top molar and they are touching...and then I am aware that there is a piece of metal coming down...(T. starts crying a bit) and um it actually comes down and gets trapped in the bottom one and I am still clenching and unclenching my jaw...and I am almost tempting fate doing it tighter every time to see if a hook of metal is going to trap into the bottom molar and to do this and sure enough I do it till they lock together and the only way I can open my jaw is by pulling out the bottom filling and I sort of go...(makes noises) and the tooth underneath crumbles and the whole mouth feels full of bits...and I am leaving the church and going into a small room and I look in the mirror...and there is a huge filling in a load of bits and then a few hours later...I have a sense of a few hours later...there are still a few bits of tooth coming out and it feels just horrible and the tension is just horrible and I have this thing about metal in my mouth and I had an earlier dream about silver foil in my mouth and it is not the physical pain it is the tension...waiting almost for a physical shock."*

There followed a clarifying discussion. T. represents the dreamer. A short gestalt exercise involved the dreamer 'feeling what it was like being her mouth'.

A member asks about 'fault' saying,

*"It seems to be what you wanted...you were testing it out and it was your fault you brought it on yourself".*

*T. "This time yes...not always in the other ones (previous similar dreams)".*

Then the dreamer is offered the opportunity 'to be the crumbly teeth'. She doesn't want to do this and another member 'doubles' (note 3) and so acts as if she was the dreamer. TT. is the double of the dreamer (T),

*"TT. I am falling out...I am losing my grip and I am very insecure and wobbly and my contact with the living tissue ...stop me if this isn't right...I am falling about into T's mouth...and I have given up...I am useless."*

*T. "Thank you it is really helpful to see...the thing I find really hard is the metal and the hardness of the tooth and the softness of the mouth and that really shakes me and sets my teeth on edge."*

*X. "Its harder and shouldn't be there and is out of place".*

*T. "Something shakes my whole being and it is the whole idea of eating chewing gum and a friend coming up and then chewing onto the frame of your teeth and expecting it to be soft...it is the hard/soft thing...it is really horrible".*

*Y.. "There is no pain around this is there?"*

*T. "Not the physical pain it is the trauma...same with the foil on the tooth...its not the pain it is..." (silence)*

X. *"Things seem insecure with your teeth falling out...and any minute something is going to happen".*

T *"You are almost tensing your self for something to happen".*

P. *"It is as if it is an alien body in the softness of your mouth that shouldn't be there...it's like you are putting it to it's final test...to see what it is going to feel like and I am wondering where this hook is coming from".*

T. *"It came out of the filling...there is a hook in the top molar...it sort of grew coming down and it was very small." (demonstrates).*

Y. *"what made you cry?"*

T. *"When I was talking about the metal in the tooth." T. is still shuddering and upset.*

P. *Do you want to look at these two sides of yourself...the hard and the soft?"*

T. *"I recognise I have both sides in me...over the last few months I have come to terms with the darker side of me and am recognising it...giving it more space like the soft side ...saying "we love one another don't we?"...I have been angry and voiced more difficult things than usual...is this the soft/hard thing?...yes...as the soft is the more accommodating side and the hard side says no...actually that has pissed me off for many years...I was afraid to express feelings that weren't positive and it is new to feel that that is alright and that I can relate to the hard and the soft...the accommodating and the not accommodating sides".*

I. *"That is rational but what about the horror of the metal in the teeth...can you associate the picture with anything else outside?"*

T. *"I made a connection yesterday...the night before the dream I had an experience of some boys barring the way whilst I was cycling and one of them grabbed my bum...and today I made this connection and I was happily cycling along and I saw these four boys and I went headlong into the situation...and afterwards I was quite shaken and I had to get down off the bike and I felt quite vulnerable...and that has shaken me and then I had the dream that night".*

F. *"you said you should have foreseen it."*

T. *"I was talking about it and I felt I wasn't to blame and I was really angry about it (crying still a bit) why should I have to look out all the time why...can't I just feel open..."*

A member then suggests that she is making a connection between the 'fault' in her tooth dream and the real life threatening incident. The dreamer says she is not sure if the two are related.

T. *"I'm not sure if the dream is related to this incident."*

Here the dreamer voices her concern that the possible interpretive connection is illusory.

Q. *"The mouth mirrors the vagina...think of the tongs they use and the stitches...there is a connection with your bum that they got hold off."*

I. *"Holding the bum is an invasion of your body...an assault...I can feel a lot of anger and guilt around that that has been around for a long time with you...you would have felt that the incident was your fault."*

Q. *"Is guilt the hook?"*

H. *"Are you hooked on guilt?"*

no affirmation by T. of this.

Q. Talks about as a nurse how, *"you feel responsible for their sexual harassment."*

T. talks about why feeling so, *"vulnerable when they are only thirteen year olds...when I am really shaken it is my teeth that shake with fear hence the connection between fear of boys and the tooth dream? "*

I. *"So the teeth are 'on guard' like a portcullis?"*

T. then talks about her recurrent dreams such as a horrible dream drinking champagne in which the glass shatters in her mouth and she keep picking bits out.

Then the dreamer, deciding to 'work' on this interpretive avenue, elects to act out her feelings and speak to the harassing boys, and she uses a cushion to express her feelings in a cathartic way. Other members 'double' for her.

F. Shouts at the boys (role-playing being T.), *"fuck off go away leave me alone get your filthy paws off my bum".*

T. Says they will carry on 'daring' (to invade her space).

T. (in tears), *"I don't feel strong enough...I still feel too small and vulnerable".*

T. (coming out of drama by now), *"I feel when you two are speaking that it is penetratingly real and I want to speak at them like that but I don't have the strength to say...but it feels very real and if I put it in my mouth it will...I will crumble".*

Another member suggests to T., *"Can you tell those boys quietly what you feel?"*

T. does this.



P. Becomes the boys saying (as boys), *"We had a good laugh...you looked really cute coming along there"*.

T. *"I am not here to look cute for you I am just here to live my life. I should be able to do what I want"*.

P. *" I didn't mean you any harm...it was a good laugh."*

T. *"But you intruded"*.

(some of the tape was lost here)

The discussion continues with the expression of anger towards such kids and then a discussion of how women can protect themselves from such verbal and physical harassment.

The group in this example develops an embryonic structuralist analysis consisting of oppositions linked by analogy and homology. Structuralist theory has used binary analysis (Fox 1975:99) as an analytic device. Binary analysis is a way of reducing and organising the cultural complexity that confronts anthropologists when analysing or comparing societies. Structural analysis, such as in Lévi-Strauss's story of Asdiwal (1976:146), posits certain structured logical features underlying cultural activity and conceptualisation. These are deemed to be universal to all cultures. In the 'Mythologies' Lévi-Strauss seeks to establish a framework of 'laws' determining mythical creation in human society (1970:10). Part of this logical structure is the analogous sequence of paired oppositions. Among the most commonly found sets are: heaven: earth; raw:cooked; sacred:profane; and male:female. These binary oppositions are connected into a system by the principle of analogy (Leach 1970:27). For example Needham suggests that these oppositions:

.....need not be connected by qualitative resemblances between individual terms, but instead they are connected as

homologues (a:c and b:c) in a classification by analogy...(1979:66).

Such constructions claiming to reflect the universal features of human understanding are open to criticism about their usefulness. Sperber writes that such anthropology is in danger of having, "constructed a structural model without an object" (1975:68). Leach also later questioned the usefulness of the approach of binary analysis (1970:53) and Douglas is critical of Lévi-Strauss's reliance on binary analysis (1975:250). Certainly anthropology can use binary analysis to organise cultural phenomena into an identifiable pattern or formal model. Yet the conclusions drawn can vary. Needham writes that the only test of a successful model is, " the degree of success in rendering social facts coherent and intelligible" (1979:58-59). An admirable example of the use of binary analysis as a part of a cultural analysis of dream is Carrither's study of the dreams of a monk in Sinhalese culture (1982:29-45). In his analysis, which relies extensively on binary analysis as an ordering and classificatory device, he shows how the monk both dreamt within the religious imagery of the Buddhist order, of which he was a member, and also understood this imagery through the lens of Buddhist morality and religious cosmology.

I use binary analysis as a way of structuring and making intelligible the interpretive flow. The appropriateness of such an analysis at this point is due to its resonance with the way that the narrator and the group began to structure their explanations and associations to the narrated dream imagery.

The extended example above shows again several interpretive processes occurring in the group. In the first part

there is the connection, facilitated by the group, of the imagery of the dream in a subjective way. The imagery is thought to refer to the duality or set of opposites within the personality of the dreamer. The key opposition is that of hard: soft. Within the discussion of the dream imagery, the opposition between the hard teeth and soft tissue is developed; there is the opposition between natural and unnatural in which the 'natural' is the tooth and the 'unnatural' is the metal filling. The opposition between the soft mouth and hard tooth is developed by an invitation from a group member for the dreamer to look at that opposition with reference to their being two sides of herself, the soft and the hard side. The dreamer interprets this opposition in terms of the tension between the loving, caring and nurturing side and the assertive side that is able to deal with conflict and can voice difficult feelings,

*"...the soft is the more accommodating side and the hard side says no!...I was afraid to express feelings that weren't positive...I can relate to the hard and the soft...the accommodating and the not accommodating sides."*

The dreamer re-expresses this opposition in terms of 'accommodating' and 'not accommodating'.

At this point the dreamer declares a possible connection between the dream imagery of that night and the harassing experience of the day before. At first she declares that this connection may not really be related to the imagery, there being no clear 'hook' for the projection. However shortly after she identifies the connection in terms of her feeling that her teeth shake with fear and this gives her the connection between 'teeth' and the frightening experience of the day before. With this

information the group leave the previous interpretive format, a more gestalt mode, and take a more social and political, even feminist stance in relation to reclaiming physical space, not dental space, for all people and particularly women. The 'crumbling teeth' which appears at one point to become a metaphor for her current non-assertive and 'crumbling self' are turned in the ensuing role-play into an assertive voice in her mouth claiming her rights and exposing her criticism of the boys.

Further oppositions have then emerged, particularly those between male: female, and danger: safety. The opposition between inside : outside becomes an analogy at two levels between that of the accommodating self : the non-accommodating self and also the feminist : non-feminist self; passivity and assertiveness are also being polarised. However the opposition inside : outside also resonates with the possibilities of a subjective : objective interpretive reference. Overall we see then an emerging system of binary classification, partly articulated by members. I present these in the following table:

Fig:2.

Soft mouth: hard metal

Natural : unnatural.

Soft nature : hard nature.

Accommodating disposition : Non-accommodating disposition.

Inside : outside.

Crumbling : hard.

Female : male.

Feminist : non-feminist.

Internal referents : external referents.

Psyche : world.

This set of oppositions, linked by homology and analogy (Needham1979:66), are evident in the text. Yet change in attitude and the affirmation of the self are being enacted in this dramatic restaging of a crumbling mouth and a harassing incident. The soft passive and non-assertive accommodating self is being changed into an assertive self. In the individual interview with this member, after the groups, in answer to the question, "*Has the group affected your life?*" she said, "*Oh yes, particularly my reaction to conflict...it has underlined my avoidance of conflict... and made me value confronting conflict*".

This dream narration and discussion show several important features along with that of the issue of how a dreamer associates or projects onto their imagery both before and during the narration and discussion of the dream. This example also shows the implicit and beginning development of a structuralist analysis of the dream text by the group, and including within that text, the set of external referents identified by the dreamer with the aid of the group.

### Gestalt

The theory and method of gestalt has already been introduced with an example in chapter two and additionally in chapter five, with an example (see pp.151-2). As the gestalt method used was such an important and frequent process I will give two further examples and an example of a form of group gestalt.

In the following example I will present the gestalt identification and its ensuing discussion. The dream in question has already been presented (see p.162) and relates to the dreamer's parents moving house. In the gestalt exercise the dreamer is encouraged to be the 'bulb(s)' that at the end of the dream are being dug up by her parents. In her memory of the dream this is a relatively insignificant part of the dream. The transcript includes questions and suggestions from the group as to ways of understanding the dream imagery,

*"I am a bulb...I'm rather a nice shape...full of nourishment ...food for the future...a bit magical...I go into the ground ...stay in the ground...through the winter..just in the ground ...suddenly it is spring...I really grow...emerge spectacular ...absolutely incredible... a real splash of colour...bright vivid colours...really beautiful after the winter..I make a spectacular display...its really good"* (emphasised).

*I. "How do you feel about being dug up?"*

*F. "I feel really scared...there are no roots only a bare base...I feel a bit sick at the thought of being dug up...I have only a brown paper coating...it's a bit yellow...layers have been taken off."*

*I. "How do you feel about mother?"*

*F. "I don't feel secure with mother...I don't know why she is digging me up...I have no sense of being taken care of...it's a bit brutal...I don't know where I am going to go...will I grow as well? Its very threatening".*

*D. "I have a sense of your having been in the ground a long time...of your losing your roots...of feeling a bit forgotten...of not having slabs on top of you...slabs are like tombstones".*

I. "where do you want to be?"

F. "I don't want to be in the garden...I want to be somewhere more open with no garden wall or fence...I want to be in a grassy area...so when I come up I've got a contrast with the colours...I want some space...it would be quite nice to have some trees there...it feels quite safe with some trees there."

T. "There would be really strong tree roots there".

F. "Yes I would like some beech trees... they feel protective but not constricting...I would want some water...quite a large lake...I feel insecure...a bit bare-skinned also...I have got to have my head and neck out...I don't want to be too deep underground...I want some air...not too deep in the dark...if it is too deep I start to feel I am suffocating and I can't get my flowers and leaves up...I have a partnership with the soil..as long as I'm not buried too deep...we have a kind of truce".

Q. "You have got a good relationship going! (laughter) what do you do for the Summer?"

...bit missing and unidentifiable from the tape..

F. "I am trying to accept the interdependence bit...I have fears about dependency...and I can then react the other way...I need to accept interdependence without being frightened of it being dependency.." (F. here is talking about her relationship with her mother).

X. Asks F. to explore, "she who was digging you up".

F. "Didn't feel protected...felt exposed...didn't feel safe...didn't know what she was doing...no sense...something precious was being transported somewhere nice...the feeling of not being cared for was predominant."

X. "She is not being kind to you in moving?"

*F. "She is not taking care of me".*

*Q. "She is not leaving anything behind?"*

*F. "It felt a destructive thing to be doing...this digging up...not taking care of things...like smashing...don't know why I felt angry." F. now talks about the house she lived in before her present house, "...I had to leave...then I moved into my present house which was not where I wanted to be...I have a lot of anger about having to move..(tape not clear)... there is a driven quality about my mother...about her driving my father and me that fits in with how I see her".*

Although in this example the tape is somewhat unclear, it being the first meeting, the example well illustrates the dreamer's capacity to imaginatively identify with 'being a bulb'. She was able to 'get in touch' with a set of feelings about 'uprootedness' and began to articulate where, as a bulb, she would like to be. Her present feelings of vulnerability become manifest and the theme that emerges for her is the issue of dependence, independence and interdependence, particularly in relation to her parents. The identification with the bulb and the bulb's imagined relationship with the soil becomes, during the exercise, a lived symbol for the relationship between herself and her mother in particular. Whilst originally, in the dream and its narration, the bulb image had appeared unimportant, through this gestalt identification the bulb symbol had been 'grown' in the dreamer's mind and a range of perceptions and emotions triggered and experienced through participating in the exercise. In fact the bulb symbol was adopted the following week as the first visualisation exercise for the group with powerful results from the identifications experienced.



Such a visual and affective identification by the dreamer/narrator with one or more of the dreamt and narrated symbols is typical of the processual process encountered in these groups. Another reality is being generated in the group session, as clearly the narrator 'knows' she is not in reality a bulb. Rather she is involved in a ritual evocation of a fantastical reality which she joins through the supportive work and facilitation of the group. Normal reality is suspended in the liminal and ritual space and time constructed by the group. The candlelight and softened atmosphere of the meeting encourages this suspension of reality. The dreamer and the group 'warm up' to this imagined reality. Buried feelings are allowed and encouraged to emerge and are approved by the group. 'Being a bulb' is a ritual transformation of the self, a play imaginatively enacted within the group space. She is not really a 'bulb' as she speaks as a 'human bulb' who *"feels a bit sick at the thought of being dug up"*, and who can again transform herself from the 'growing bulb' into the 'bulb being dug up by her mother' which is clearly a symbol for her relationship with her 'mother' in real life.

This is not a social discourse, a simple conversation with others about moving house and her relationship with her mother. The monologue and occasional dialogue has a different and ritual dimension. Evocation, invocation and identification flow through the spoken works. She starts "I am a bulb... I am rather a nice shape...full of nourishment...". Such spoken sentiments articulate a profound metaphorisation and articulation of the self. The imaginative creations represent a spontaneous playing with metaphorical meaning and its possible relationship to normal reality. The choice of the bulb, derived from the dream image, is

typically full of almost endless possibility. The bulb is the seed and it is her imagination, encouraged by the group, that develops this remembered image into a kind of mini-archetype and lived metaphor. This development of a lived or root metaphor allows the possibility of a transformative experience to be engendered. In this sense it is a ritual process and occasion that allows the evocative development of a symbol in a controlled and managed space. She becomes the bulb which in its changing place becomes her existential predicament of moving house and her unsatisfactory relationship with her mother. Indeed in this presented text we can see whole seasons pass by as in:

*"I go into the ground...stay in the ground through the winter...just in the ground...suddenly it is spring...I really grow...emerge spectacular...really beautiful after the winter".*

Transformation then has occurred, feelings evoked and expressed and an imaginative change process facilitated. This text reports another reality which is taken seriously and encouraged by the group. Group members have played a central role in this movement, asking questions, making suggestions and repeating key phrases. The group is a significant part of the communicative context which enables an articulation of satisfactory and emergent meaning.

The second example was a particularly powerful experience for the dreamer. The dream went as follows,

*"I had bought a car a black one...I think a Ford Escort but I am not sure...I am very pleased with it...it is a good buy and the inside is very spacious...it has pineclad walls and windows as well...after a while something strange happened about this car...I realised it was a hearse (significant*

transformation from car to hearse takes place here) a converted hearse...and there is a body in it as well...hidden away in the roof...concealed and at some point it might slide down some kind of ramp...at first I don't recognise this body...it is in formal morning suit with top hat and striped trousers and that kind of stuff...that part of the dream stops there...and picks up with something more understandable to me in relation to my X. dying and so it switches to Y. place as my X. was born there and the ashes were returned there...In Y. I am at P. castle and I know we have to bury my X...and there is a salute you know when they fire the cannons at one o'clock...that happens and I look over the battlements and there is a red stone church or buildings close by and I know that is T. near where my X. was born and the scene switches there and there is some problem about doing the service for a few hours and meantime I discover there is the first name on the coffin only...there is only the first name on the coffin...I am really upset about that as it could be any such (first name) and it isn't and then I wonder what we are doing anyway burying X. as he has to be cremated and the dream goes onto something completely different and is unconnected and so it ends there."

T. is the dreamer in the ensuing dialogue.

T. "I woke up a bit like when you are a kid and a hearse drives by and it makes you feel superstitious about whether death is coming".

Q. "Who was the body?"

T. *"It wasn't my X. I think it was my husband because it had a (colour) beard".*

F. *"You said the hearse was a good buy!"*

T. *"Yes I got that as well...I was certain it was a good buy...he had on the clothes he had on when we got married".* Long silence for thirty seconds.

F. *"That sounds quite confused...you don't quite know where you are".*

Q. *"Does your husband represent your father".*

T. *"No...he is I think...God it is complicated...I thought if he represented anything it would be..."* she speaks very quietly here,

P. *"Has that aspect of you died?"*

T. *"It (that possible interpretation) doesn't resonate".*

Here we see a tacking back and forth as possible meaning avenues are offered up for exploration by the group but the dreamer/narrator doesn't necessarily accept them. Rejection occurs when the the imaginative idea suggested, "doesn't resonate'. This resonating or not resonating is controlled by the narrator as the only 'facts' in the situation are being conveyed and constructed by the narrator her/himself. She/he controls the production of an acceptable narrative of the self.

F. *"Is it significant you are going on a journey?"*

P. *"Were you driving?"*

T. *"It was my car...I don't remember driving".*

K. *"It feels that there is an excitement about it...it is a gripping time".*

P. *"With pine cladding inside" laughter.*

T. *"It was very blond pine...I suppose it could be "pining"  
(sounds as S has a sad insight here).*

Q. *"It was a car with character".*

T. *" A multifarious car".*

Q. *"The car was you?"*

T. *"Yes."*

D. *"You were sure it was a ford escort".*

T. *"Yes I think so".*

T. *"When I got it buying a car was a fairly liberating thing to do...when I missed (my husband) going away it was partly missing the car...I had to face that".*

F. *"When he was at home that was the "death" of him!"*

I. *"It was an escort".*

T. *"You are going too fast for me...It was the death of him?...Oh right!...when he came home" It takes a moment for the dreamer to connect with what was suggested.*

F. *"You didn't really miss him?...If you were going to be something in the dream which bit would you pick".*

T. *"I suppose the car".*

F. *"Not the body".*

T. *"No...no".*

Q. *"How do feel as the car?"*

T. *"Uhm I have a secret...Oh goodness me....I am quite a flashy car...quite smart...I cut a good figure you know as cars go".*

I. *"Fast?"*

T. *"I don't like that one...I don't have a sense of speed...people are in awe of me but I don't really know why that is...I feel very kind of substantial".*

F. *"What's it like...having a secret?"*

T. *"It's like it's mine...something that belongs to me...its quite powerful and precious as it belongs to me but it is getting quite heavy...the roof is not very strong...I don't know whether I can keep this secret going...it feels like there is lots of room inside...loads of space...it is quite bright and light but it is empty".*

F. *"Where are you going?"*

T. *"Following my nose...I can see lots of different roads and I can go down anyone of them".*

Q. *"Is that body pressing down".*

T. *"Yes a bit".*

T. *"I am not like a hearse as I haven't declared the body...its a secret".*

T. *"People don't see me as a hearse...but I know I am".*

T. (big sigh). *"That's had quite a powerful effect...I feel I might be dangerous (emphasised)...It has more to do with what I seem to be and what I am...I am puzzled about that ...I don't see myself as a hearse...so it upsets me that people behave as if I am normal".*

F. *"Do other people see you as a hearse?"*

T. *"They see me as one...they do but I don't...people don't know about the dead body".*

(chunk missing)

P. *"How do you feel about this body descending from you?"*

T. (sighs) *"I am pleased it has gone...it's ah...its the body that makes it a hearse...I don't like to be a hearse".* (sighs, it is clearly difficult for her)

Q. *"You don't have to keep a secret anymore".*

T. *"It doesn't matter about the secret".*

F. *"What's going to happen to the body?...you have completely got rid of it?...it's gone...you have been carrying it a long time".*

I. *"Do you want to say anything to the body?"*

T. (crying) *"Yes...I would like to say a little bit...(much sighing/silence)...You have got a beard".* G. then acts as a body.

T. puts a black jacket on the body.

T. *"I didn't know who you were...I didn't recognise you."*

long silences and I can't catch everything, but my notes say that it was about T. not loving him but he loving her; she spoke in a muted way but with no anger; said goodbye to him and let the body slide away. This was very emotional for her and the onlookers. T. says, *"I felt I shouldn't have got married".*

In this dream narration and accompanying gestalt exercise, the theme of death is powerfully present with the image of a recently dead close relative and the car as a hearse with a dead body in it. The dreamer recognises that in the dream it is her husband who is the dead body in the hearse. A question allows the dreamer to confirm that *"the hearse was a good buy"*. The suggestion is made that the dreamer should consider whether the dead person represents some part of herself that has died. The dreamer rejects that subjective avenue. The cue to the 'interpretation' begins with the punning on the word 'pining'. The dreamer says she *'could be pining'*. It is unclear as to whether this is pining for herself or a part of her or a 'dead' relationship or an actually dead person. She is invited to pick a part of the dream imagery, to do a gestalt identification with it. She chooses the car

image and straight away recognises that she has a secret and is apparently surprised that she is *"quite a flashy car...quite smart...cut a good figure"*. This identification with the car begins to reflect her self perception and she continues by musing on having a secret in the car. Then, although it was impossible to recognise it from the tape, she in her imagination, *"tips the body out of the hearse"*. At this point the dreamer becomes very upset after having shed the dead body of her husband. In the ensuing dialogue that she makes with the dead body she speaks tearfully and emotionally about lost love and the imbalance of love between them.

In this dream narration and gestalt exercise it is clear that unexpected and embodied emotions were raised for the dreamer and their articulation to the group was significant. In the individual interview the dreamer spoke about this event as follows,

*"I would have to look back in time to see when but my sense is...it was important in my detachment from my husband...a process of defining myself almost for the first time in my life otherwise I always have been in a relationship...and already I am in a process of clarification...of stocktaking...of standing back...clarifying what is me and what is him...and if I was on my own what is me...what would I do? who am I? if I was on my own how would I do...this is not clear if I am in a relationship all the time...I am not not sure who is supporting who...when I seem to need to know who I am and what I might be capable of and that suddenly became part of my agenda and that dream and the way I worked on it...it was very*



*powerful I think it had an energising effect on that process and I couldn't ignore any more that my husband was in the hearse and in mourning (morning) suit...I*

*could have put it to one side if I hadn't worked on it...but because I had made it public and worked on it and involved others in it...it had consolidated its importance.*

*The importance of that time was making a public declaration that I didn't love my husband? I think that was correct "the dream gave me a vehicle to say that"...I had said that to myself but not in public".*

Did that influence your life?

*"I told him eventually".*

This second example particularly shows how emotionally unexpected and indeed emotionally disturbing the contents of a gestalt exercise can be. Although the dreamer had some 'secret' insight into her then feelings for her husband she had not shared them publicly and this act of definition, almost certainly both to herself as well as to others, generated change in herself and her relationship with her husband. As she said in the interview *"it was a very powerful...it had an energising effect on that process and I couldn't ignore anymore that my husband was in the hearse and in morning/mourning suit"*. The dream gave her then a "vehicle to say that" and the pun on vehicle is I think unintentional! The 'secret' knowledge of the body as Bourdieu uses that notion is triggered into consciousness by the gestalt exercise and the reflective process on the dream. Whilst the manifest content of the dream is quite clear in so far as the image of her husband is precise, the context of her husband as 'being dead' yet paradoxically dressed as for his marriage brings into

play a crucial contradiction of marriage and death in one and the same scenario. The dreamer is almost forced by the dream and the ensuing gestalt exercise to confront the paradoxical imagery and delve into whatever existential meaning they might hold for her. That meaning is her current emotional response to her husband and her view on the original act of marriage itself.

Moreover 'being the hearse/car' is an active identification with a dream symbol that confronts her with unexpectedly positive imagery of herself as, "*quite flashy...cutting a good figure*". The affirmation of self present in this part of the session is in contrast to the deeply sad and tearful expression of feelings when she is dialoguing (talking) with the 'dead husband'. Also 'being the car' allows her to change the imaginative situation and develop her feeling response as she does. She allows the "dead body' in the hearse to slip out and experiences the relief of being unencumbered with it. This imaginative letting go of the image of her dead husband in his marriage suit enables her to dialogue with him and so confront her own present feeling state. Particularly, the gestalt process allows the dreamer to construct an acceptable account of her domestic predicament both to herself and others. This gestalt exercise then again illustrates the process of the generation of meaning both to self and others.

The final gestalt example I offer is a form of group gestalt. The dream has been previously presented (see pp. 80-81) and in this part I want to show how the group imaginatively identified with the 'child image' in the dream and then, from that position, gave a response to the dreamer. The dream involved the man trying to start a journey, throwing a telephone, house catching

fire, people shooting at him and his holding a few months old baby. X is the dreamer.

F. *"I want to give you a message about that baby...when you were talking about the baby I had a powerful connection about it...it is very hard to say...but I am the baby and I am love and I am open...also take me with you".*

G. *"The feeling I had was that if I were the baby and you want to desperately protect me...the message is that I am a tough baby and I don't need so much mollycoddling as you think I need."*

P. *That is interesting and is in direct contrast to the feeling I had which was 'protect me...nurture me...that is what I need'".*

Q. *"I have a feeling of peace and strength around the baby...thinking of Christ as a baby asleep in the storm in the boat...as this baby I want to say I feel safe with you...you will look after me".*

H. *"I feel the same...I know you are already cherishing me and thank you".*

J. *"You protect the baby instinctively even though bullets are flying...The baby wants to make the changes...the baby wants to come out...the baby message is 'get me out of the closet'".*

T. *"I catch something like that the baby is saying it doesn't matter that you haven't a particular message as the message is 'trust the wisdom of the child'".*

X. *"Thank you".*

I. *"The brightness and the sunshine of the child struck me in contrast to the darkness and the fear like a pool of light in the dark...an interesting symbol to meditate on".*

Y. *"It is something to do with a new beginning...a new opportunity...amidst all the chaos is the seed".*

X. *"That is nice as I feel just absolute chaos and turmoil inside of me...nice thought that there is a still focused part".*

F. *"I feel it is not just an ordinary baby but one with a voice with skills way beyond its years...a very special quality".*

O. *"This may be facetious now you have no phone there is no-one to intrude...phones are a terrible thing and now you can relate without the phone interrupting".*

X. *"That is an interesting thought...thank you very much everyone...that is very helpful as the child is the one thing I couldn't understand as it was an absolute puzzle and it does fit in with what I need to do in my life".*

This exercise involved each group member giving the dreamer the message that they imagined the child would have given. As can be seen the messages given are contradictory. Interestingly a male member says *"I am a tough baby and I don't need so much mollycoddling as you think"*, whereas female members stress the nurturing and caring needs of the baby. The result of this exercise is best expressed in the dreamer's own words later in the individual interview,

*"it was about nurturing the child in me...maybe about mourning my lost childhood and nurturing the child in me...I have been doing transactional Analysis (note 4)...recently I easily slip over into either my frightened child or angry parent in terms of my emotional reactions...hence the*

*conflict as to what I do with my needy child...this has undone part of the value of this dreamwork i.e. nurturing this child and then I feel one of my problems is that I get into this needy child syndrome...maybe I am in touch too much...the dream made me feel I was okay...a lot of my adult life has been about proving myself and getting acceptance such as by qualifications and travel and living abroad and becoming an X...you can be accepted as a child...accepted as being rather than as doing...that insight is important and I bring it with me into this situation...for instance working on the dream allowed me to relax and to say to myself get on with what I was doing ..it legitimised and authenticated my choices...the dream was a milestone in terms of my life...rather than something coming out of it...my life was taking shape and I was doing things with my life...I got a lot of insight from the dream and the work gave me an insight and took away the fear and gave me a feeling of acceptance".*

The interview statement is clear as to the value of 'working' on the dream and also the child image. The dreamer identifies the 'child' image with his lost intuitive self, that he has now made sacrifices for, in order to reclaim this part of himself and so seek 'wholeness'.

Overall the gestalt exercises analysed here and also those described elsewhere allow the dreamer, with facilitation, to identify with the dream symbol and experience in the 'here and now' the potential multiple referents of that symbol. How much there is invention and projection onto the symbol, particularly in the group gestalt case, remains an open question. However the

transcripts do show the creation of meaning in action. The process of association and identification of meaning with the dream symbolism is the crux of the dreamwork. Gestalt practices are particularly effective at evoking buried insights and emotions of the self and in so doing leading to new formulations, and anticipations of resolutions of core human dilemmas.

Moreover during gestalt exercises in dreamwork, the sense of self is expanded to include an imaginative identification with all parts of the dream. In the exercises the dreamer/narrator 'acts as if' they are the 'bread', the 'sherry glass', their mother etc. This reformulation of the self can be powerful in reshaping the boundaries of consciousness. Gestalt then is a technique of "self-construction" as Jedrej and Shaw (1993:14), drawing on Foucault's concept, observe in their recent review of anthropological studies of the cultural role and construction of the social meaning of dream use in contemporary and traditional African societies. Gestalt, and the other experiential techniques presented in my thesis, allow a playing with the self through which the personal and social identity of the narrator is invented, rehearsed and sometimes affirmed and legitimated through the group process. This invention of self occurs through the interplay of both the ontological and cultural aspects of the self. Dream manifests the available ontology of the self in a multitude of colourful symbolic forms which are already potentially charged with implicit and embodied personal and cultural meanings. These symbolic forms suggest original pathways towards identity construction previously unknown by the person. The car as we saw becomes a hearse, an escort, and also a 'cutting figure' through which the dreamer/narrator can explore hidden meanings using the cultural

symbolism of cars in modern society. The remembered and dreamt metaphor becomes a living metaphor for the narrator and for the group. The construction of meaning is fused with the performance of social action. Meaning, social action and power intersect as Jedrej and Shaw argue (1993:8). Moreover the self is acted upon by the group as well as in the private fantasy world of the individual.

Such a re-identification of the self is not without personal and even cultural consequences. In particular the group gestalt exercise on the 'baby' symbol, which has just been described, allowed the entire group to imaginatively identify with the dreamt and narrated images. In this sense gestalt exercises involve the transformation of a remembered visual image into a metaphorical summary of core attributes of the self or, as I have defined this result, into a 'mini-archetype'. Such a process also would occur using psychodrama as a process.

### Psychodrama

Psychodrama is the enactment, dramatisation and role-play of imagined events. Invented as a therapy by Moreno (1945) this cathartic therapy involves the group as participants in the drama. I have introduced psychodrama in chapter two. The director negotiates the development of the drama with the subject of the drama, the protagonist. The protagonist describes the interpersonal situation they want to work on and gives information about the participants of that situation. The protagonist chooses from the group, people s/he wants to represent the identified people in the situation. If it is a family situation s/he may choose their parents, a grandparent, siblings

and their own children, partner etc. After the actors have received sufficient information to dramatise the story the psychodrama or enactment takes place with the director checking its authenticity with the protagonist who usually plays themselves to begin with. Thereafter the drama can be developed in any imaginative form. The protagonist can take over being a parent or a sibling, for instance, and speak and act from that position. If a new character is referred to, perhaps an aunt, the play can shift to enacting an imaginary scene between the protagonist, the aunt and whoever. The 'dead' can come back to life and the living can speak to the 'dead'.

This is a powerful form of working and small scale dramatisations were quite often done in the dreamwork groups. For instance there was the re-enactment of the situation of the dreamer asserting herself towards the harassing young boys (see pp. 174-6). Only on one occasion was a larger dramatisation implemented. This was based on a drama of the female dreamer holding a baby in an apartment in New York where two rats attack the baby. The rat is killed by the dreamer who later throws away the baby. This is a brief report of the dream and its enactment principally involved the attack by the rats of the baby and the later dialoguing between the mother and the baby. However, whilst the drama was vivid and engaging there is little evidence on tape that insight was generated or at least made explicit to the group.

### Imagework

I have already introduced the concept of imagework as a therapeutic and personal growth strategy in chapter two and have



identified imagework within Transpersonal Psychology in chapter five.

I will now show by means of an example the impact and value of using this approach as a research as well a personal growth technique. In the example the guided fantasy was based on the dream of a member which she had worked on during the session. In the dream she had dreamt of a vast beautiful brown bird with a very large wing span. During the dream sequence the bird had become split into two layers and one half had flown off. This had been experienced as a powerful dream image, both by the group and by the dreamer. Two weeks later another group member dreamt about her son, and about her being about to fly off with him, using some lively leather wings. The initial discussion and sharing of recent dreams that week seemed to include lots of reference to travelling. Another mentioned that all her recent dreams had been about travelling. We decided then to do a guided fantasy to explore this theme of travel in the group. I led this fantasy journey. Following a relaxation exercise, I suggested that members could become any bird they liked and then I followed on with a set of spontaneous travel instructions with long intervals in between speaking to allow members to go where they wished. Probably the fantasy lasted about twenty minutes in total and on this occasion had not been prepared, but had developed 'spontaneously' out of the themes and imagery around in the group.

The range of experiences people have during these exercises is very wide. One member became an owl and couldn't get going until they had found (imagined) a puffin to go with; another was a bird in the Andes mountain range; another was a

swallow and flew off to Capri; another a soft brown bird sitting in a tree; another a brown gull going to Portugal; another became a Canadian Goose and migrated down the West coast of the United States of America. The example I will now consider involves another member who in this fantasy journey became a parakeet bird and flew over the jungle. The following is their description of their fantasy journey transcribed from a tape recording of the session following the fantasy exercise. The member had been too disturbed by their experience to share it at the end of the actual exercise,

*"Basically I was a parakeet...I lived in a garden in Sydney Australia...together with a great many of my family...and I was flying in response to instructions to go a long distance...I flew to the coast...a tropical region and then it was a bit drastic...I disintegrated and my integrity could not be retained and I became...I spread out as bits and pieces of head feathers claw etc over a jungle and I became a jungle and then of course I could not come back and at that point I decided I could not cope with this and I went quite deep inside and surfaced again later...I took all that home with me and by the time I had finished looking at it I had become happy being a jungle and felt very much at home as that there...but I was totally unable to follow instructions...I was a disobedient bird!"*

The member concerned said that she had "got a lot out of" the exercise but had been disturbed by the experience. Another member suggested to the first member that she had found 'her place' and the first member thoughtfully said "yes". That was the extent of the disclosure during that session. Several months later

I interviewed her. In the intervening period the member had shared to the group that she had decided to finish her marriage and had negotiated a separation from her husband. She had become much more open and expressive in the group and according to herself she was living her life much more authentically in general. The following quote is from her description and reflection on the exercise several months later in the interview.

I ask this member about how she had understood this guided fantasy and she said,

*"I have arrived in the Jungle and I am very pleased to be here and it is just amazing! "*

I asked her about the connection she now made between herself and the jungle image and, after describing how horrendous the experience had been she said,

*"I exploded...I wiped myself out but it was meant to be like that...and going on she spoke about the, "the jungle entity itself... all sorts of different components...all growing and moving...nurturing each other...tangled...full of unseen but not necessarily dangerous things...it was an exciting environment...It was full of sound and potential...full of growth...It was precarious possibly but I don't myself feel precarious".*

I asked if that description of the jungle reflected how she now felt about her life and she emphatically said, "yes", and that she felt *"she had shed a lump of concrete and had great energy levels now"*.

This sequence shows that whilst, in this example, the image sequence experienced had been frightening at the time, the

dreamer had reflected upon it and had come to see the experience of being suddenly transformed from a small bird in a family of birds into a jungle represented metaphorically her own transformation from being married for many years into being in a separated state. The frightening image of the jungle had become a very positive image for her. The example from this piece imagework shows imaginatively the time and nature of a transition in the person's social state, personal identity, capacity to change and ability to conceptualise the self.

The second example of imagework is from the third guided fantasy in which members had to imagine themselves designing a door in their minds and then going through it. The idea for this exercise came, after coincidentally, two members talked of dreaming of locked doors. The exercise started with an instruction to go down an escalator and there find a guide and a 'magic carpet'. The most substantial fantasy reported after this exercise was the following one,

*P. "There was a lovely rich Turkish guide there...I had to leave him behind...then I got to the door very quickly and there was a flight of steps...of dark grey steps...I had been given a little golden key...I put it round my neck...I was waiting for instructions to open the door...I was then in a vast soaring cathedral with vast arches...it was quite dim...suddenly it becomes lighter in the cathedral...the stone around is warmer honey-coloured not grey and the door becomes lighter in texture...then all these people there come pouring in from every direction and I went into the cathedral again...the first impression was light and colour and richness...like in the Orthodox churches the eye is drawn*

*up to these cavernous spaces and I had the impression of light coming in from up there...I floated up into the air and I was drawn up there...I thought I was going to be shown something in this place...it was very much built like a mandala in the centre...there was no altar but rather a centre piece...the centre piece was a gold cross and I wasn't sure what I was meant to be doing with all these people...so I asked my guide to come...I was reluctant to face them at first...here was a gold dish with circular wafers on...not like the church tradition I was brought up in...and I felt resistant to that and to taking a wafer and I missed that out and went back to it later and I had to stand in the centre...and I was given a tiny little...I am mixed up...when I was up there I looked down at the centre and I was given a gold chalice with wine in it and then I had to go down there and drink the wine...and I had a wafer and then I had done that...there was loads of bread...lovely warm granary rolls and I was giving everyone them and I told them to sit down...and my guide put a robe round my shoulders and told me to dance and then I danced and the tune that came to me was the 'lord of the dance' and I danced out of the door and all the people came out and it was on the hillside now outside the church and they went off happy with their bread and I didn't want to get back on the carpet and I walked down the hillside and I lay on my blanket and I had a pillow to sleep on...I needed space after all the people"*

The discussion after this reporting of the fantasy journey focused on a career discussion and whether the imagery of the fantasy seemed to be beckoning the member in some future

direction. A substantial discussion as to the opportunities and the problems with such a decision ensued. The visualiser spoke of how it was the first time for years that she,

*"hadn't been doing some kind of...X activity...I have been lying fallow...things don't seem to be happening in the right direction...I have been feeling all day how much pain in the world there is...I have had a bad time at work recently...the whole world has been crying out...but they (the people in the fantasy) went away happily".*

The dreamer fits the experience of this imagery and the later discussion into daytime categorisations which are seen as representing an optimistic expression of her inclination to make a particular career choice in the future, whatever the obstacles. This she did attempt to do.

### Artwork

Artwork as a groupwork method was introduced in the chapter on methodology. Although art materials were available every week in the second and third dreamwork groups they were only used on the one occasion. However because the artwork was actually done in pairs the ensuing dialogue was also in pairs and is not therefore available for analysis.

### Meditation and Dream Re-entry

Meditative technique was only used once in the groupwork process. This involved a relaxation exercise, the opportunity to choose a previous 'good' experience in life, and finally the introduction of this developed meditative state into a recent dream experience. The meditation went as follows,

*"Go into your inner space...relax your body and be open...let your body relax...become aware of the breathe...become aware of preoccupations and as you breathe think how you want to deal with the preoccupations...breathe them out...spend two to three minutes letting go of those preoccupations...go back to a time in life when you felt very centred and very true to yourself...try to recall in detail what is going on in your life then...what is happening...what are you doing...how are you behaving...how does it feel to be behaving in this way...being really true to yourself...what image sound or colour can you associate with being centred?...let one come to you...in your imagination take yourself into a dream that you have talked about tonight...what does that dream want of you? how does it reveal your true self?...come back to an awareness of the group with the awareness you have found".*

Group members experienced this meditation, led by my colleague, as very positive and commented as such in the individual interviews. The following are two examples of the experiences people reported after this meditation,

*F. "I remembered being on a marathon course in Amsterdam...felt very energised at 4.00 in the morning and everyone was flagging and I got everyone dancing and I was dressed in golden white clothes and I took this image into the dream and I took the golden me into the dream and took the me that was in the dream and was the rejected one and I took the other two and we made a circle around her and she was in the middle and she was brown and X. was blue and the party girl was there and she was red and I was*

*golden...then I brought the other people from the party in and they made two circles round us outside and then everybody put one hand on the person in front and one hand on the person on the side of them and it was like a healing web...I feel quite choked about the woman being in the middle".*

This example of dream re-entry related to the jealousy dream already discussed (see p. 74). This meditation exercise involves a dream re-entry stage in which the 'good' sense of self evoked by the meditation is 'taken into' the dream. This 'good' sense of herself is represented by her as being dressed in 'golden white clothes'. As this 'other' self the dreamer is able to 'redraw' the dream imagery and reach a more acceptable conclusion to what we saw had been a very distressing event. The dreamer 'draws' two circles of people around the dancing couple, which includes her partner, who has made her feel jealous in the original dream. All the people in the circles touch each other making for the dreamer a kind of 'healing web'. This 'healing web' probably refers to a refiguration of emotion in herself in relation to her previous emotional experience of the dream imagery. She can be seen as regaining power in the imaginative situation by redrawing and completing the sequence of imagery in a way more acceptable to herself. In this the notion of 'more acceptable' seems to reflect a public encircling and containment of the dangerous pair.

The next example of feedback from the meditative exercise refers to the following dream and its immediate discussion. X is the dreamer,

*X. "I was on an escalator...I was with my flatmate and I was very angry with her...there were things that I really*



*had wanted to say to her for a long time and she was just saying yes yes and that is all".*

*I "What things exactly?"*

*X. "Things like I am not putting up with this any more...I have had enough of it and I am moving out and I am not just here for your defensive and aggressive statements...she was wearing a hat".*

*I "Is that how you were feeling?"*

*X. "It was...we were very good friends and we moved in together...but this not a good idea...I have lots of annoying habits...it is better now but still there are irritating aspects".*

Her feedback from the meditation and dream re-entry was as follows,

*"It feels really good. ( about the meditation and centering image)...I was on the escalator in bathing shorts and it was hot and I felt so free...saying I am free and I can do what I want...I haven't thought back to that time and I feel really good to be that sort of person".*

In the individual interview the dreamer referred to this experience in the following way,

*"In the dream about my flatmate on the escalator...the dream was about getting anger off my chest...it was a really good experience to have worked on in the meditation...in the meditation you could do what you really wanted...in the dream I then felt fantastic as I realised I didn't have to take on all this stuff...the dream reflected real life...the dreamwork really effected my behaviour as I changed my behaviour...I found I was being too accommodating to avoid conflict with my housemate...it was really good...in the*

*meditation you had to take out a word and I took out 'free' and I realised I had not had this...I realised I could change...I felt empowered to change".*

This example shows well the change effect of the meditative process and dream re-entry and subsequent discussion. The dreamwork during the session has evoked a connection for the dreamer between the dream imagery and her present anger and frustration with her flatmate. The meditation evokes a strong self-perception that allows her to feel in control of the situation through decision and anticipated future action. The dreamer describes this process later as 'feeling empowered'. She feels she has gained power within her domestic situation through the whole dreamwork process. Buried feelings have been actively related to her perception of her relationship with her flatmate, and at the same time her manner of coping with her present situation reflects her understanding of her personality patterns, and their strengths and weaknesses.

These two examples above illustrate the use of gestalt, revised psychoanalytic and feminist perspectives in the interpretive process of dreams. Obeyesekere (1990:18), following Weber, defines culture as the "imposition of meaning, based on a species-conditioned drive towards meaning". Dreamwork displays this human faculty very clearly.

### Punning, Metaphor and Idiom

I have already presented some instances of the meanings of dream imagery being generated through the creative and reflective use of pun, metaphor and idiom. The use of verbal puns in dream interpretation is a common form of interpretive device

and can be traced as far back as Ancient Egypt. Mackenzie (1965:28) gives the example of the Ancient Egyptian word for buttocks being very similar to that of orphan. The Chester Beatty papyrus which is dated around 1350 B.C. and is the oldest written record of dream interpretation advises that dreaming of showing your buttocks is a sign of the death of one's parents.

One example of the use of puns as an interpretive device is that of the hearse and husband dream in which the double meaning of 'pine' and 'pining' triggered a creative association. An example of the interpretive use of metaphor and idiom has been given (v. p.149-50). There the dream in which the woman was attending for interview holding a loaf of bread with sticky icing on it was partly understood through the many idiomatic uses of the bread symbol as in 'being kneaded', 'being proved', being 'good enough to eat', 'loafing about' and others. This dialogue between personal image and potential social meaning as evidenced in the metaphors of ordinary language, such as the above bread metaphors, became a feature of group members 'making sense' of their dream imagery.

The following example of a dream involving 'buttons' is also exemplary of this group and cultural process,

*"I am in a shop...I am either a customer or another shop assistant...I don't know which...another customer is asking for a special unusual button to go on a suit...a box of buttons is put on the counter and I see a lovely asymmetrical black and white button which I have drawn and will describe to you in a minute...I draw her attention to it but she says she likes the buttons on my coat...laughter...I look down at them and think yes they are nice but they are not really*

*unusual...the bottom one is coming loose and I pull the thread to retighten it so I don't lose it...She goes on talking about her dress which is for a special occasion...I pick up a beautiful soft shiny dark women's hat in plaited straw which is notable for its quiet style and top quality...it really feels lovely...I am aware that it is not perhaps really the right colour to go with black which is what she said the suit is and the colour she wants the button...she takes the hat from me and tries it on...I go on to look at shoes...I am conscious I would like the hat but the colour is quite wrong for me and I don't suit hats...I feel okay about passing it on to someone else...that's it...the button is oval and the holes are set off to one side and it has green etched indentions in it in the centre...one is longer and the one on the sides are shorter and they are actually highlighted in white and so it is actually a black and white button...the white is just the detail of it".*

The following edited transcript (edited due to length) will show the generation of meaning for the dreamer. P. is the dreamer,

*P. "It is an old-fashioned shop with the chairs people used to be able to sit on...good gracious...doesn't that go back...buttons are significant to me as my mother had a big box of buttons and when I was ill I was allowed to play with them...Oh Gosh...aye aye...I remember my mother had two boxes of buttons and when my mother died my father gave one to his brother's girlfriend at the time and I was furious...she had good sense and kindness and she gave me back the old buttons such as the mother of pearl and glass ones that belonged to my Grandmother...that is a memory*

*that has come out of it". Here the dreamer shares her remembrance with the group.*

*Q. "Have you lost anything?"*

*P. "Not a material possession but I am in the process of losing something more fundamental but I don't want to talk about it".*

*F. "How old are you in the dream?"*

*P. "there is a contradiction...I'm not sure if I am a customer or a shop assistant...I am still fascinated by design...I'm not sure in the dream as to my age...the hat is a bit shapeless...but the quality of the straw is gorgeous...it is like silk...its a wonderful colour...between mushroom and bronze and is absolutely beautiful".*

*J. "Were you recommending the hat?"*

*P. "Yes...she came in for a special button for her suit and we went through the buttons and I found a beautiful one which I thought would be lovely at the top of her suit but she wanted the one on my coat...but then if I had a coat on I must have been a customer...but that is being logical for a dream...she was getting something for a special occasion...hat..shoes...that is something I am quite capable of doing of spending time in a shop with a customer and becoming quite quite involved".*

*H. "What is the other person like?"*

*P. "I have no sense of her except she is quite smartly dressed she is quite a bit older than me...I feel she is not actually doing herself justice if she wants the button off my coat when there is this lovely one in the box".*

*Y. "Does she remind you of anyone?"*

P. *"Yes of my mother...at another level this could be me...I could be all the characters in the dream".*

Y. *"Or the button?"*

P. *"Yes I haven't worked on that...I had a sense she had to make up her own mind...I could only offer her areas of choice though I knew I wanted her to have the hat...I would really love to wear that hat (said emphatically)".*

Y. *"How would you feel if you put it on?"*

P. *"Very self conscious...I feel everyone would look at it...I wouldn't want to draw such attention to myself...like I am doing now".*

T. *"There's a sense of presence and liveness about you".*

P. *Describes the colour of hat again..."It is bronze and shiny" laughter.*

Q. *"It sounds valuable".*

P. *"It has a quality of value about it...a silky quality...of straw...which seems to increase its value".*

G. *"What makes you feel uncomfortable about wearing it?"*

P. *"How I would look in it...I have never been able to wear hats...I am the person you go to a shop with to cheer you up when she wears a hat....I have always had this kind of envy of people who can just put hats on and look wonderful".*

F. *"Were you aware of this in the dream?"*

P. *"Yes...the other woman didn't value it...to put the hat on would make me the centre of attention...that is scary and makes me feel being judged...in some way...a judgement made of me...do I match up to a standard? am I able to wear a hat".*

Y. *"Do you feel happy to wear a button?"*

P. " Yes...absolutely must be something to do with things about fear...here something is coming to me (sudden insight prompted by group suggestion) there it is...about the intellectual about not feeling comfortable in very intellectual situations...I feel fascinated by them...would love to be there but feel utterly unable to be...that feels really powerful".

I. "What brought that up?"

P. "Something about getting into the head...being above the head".

Y. "Being ahead!...the hat is rather like you...rather beautiful and pink with a glow about it".

P. "In the car tonight...I thought am I the hat...do I deny something in myself?"

Y. "What about your mother?"

P.. "Oh yes very there is a strong connection about not putting yourself forward...about keeping in the background...putting other people before yourself...about being very kind...offering to other people first".

F. "You picked the button out for someone else...you tightened up your loose button".

P. "Its about holding onto the things I already have and doing it in the easiest way because...just by pulling the thread".

Q. "It is quite strange...if the other person was your mother and she wanted the other buttons".

P "That would have been very typical of her...she would have worn the ordinary button...she liked buttons like that but she would have put them in a box".

Z. "Like you".

P. *"I have just realised this" (laughter).*

T. *"Is the box a symbol for you?"*

P. *"The box I drew is...oh wait a minute...it is a very recurring symbol...I had another journey in a dream and I was looking for a box to put books in".*

T. *"Do you put special things in boxes?"*

P. *"Yes...the button box was almost kept for special times for cheering us up as children".*

Y. *"Almost like you are going through now".*

P. *" Yes...I need all the buttons I can find now".*

F. *"but in a box rather than wearing them and putting yourself forward?"*

P. *" Yes well that is changing...as I would quite like to wear that button and that is what is quite scary...as I am acknowledging I don't have to go on being as I have been for so many years and I can actually be something else and I feel from inside me that that is okay and that is about wearing the button".*

Q. *"And the hat?"*

P. *"And the hat (laughter)...the button still feels safer to wear than the hat".*

F. *"You are beginning to be comfortable about wearing the button...you will need to see what will make you comfortable wearing the hat".*

H. *"What is the predominant feeling in the dream?"*

P. *"I am puzzled...I normally dream dreams that I can get immediate insight into...I woke up with the childish pleasure of going through this box...I feel quite young because of that".*



W. *"It is also about being on display...as in the shop".*

P. *"Yes...it is about display and providing a service and being there for others and not being the one that matters that is symbolised".*

Z. *"The customer is always right?"*

F. (Identifying with being P.) *"Not if they get your buttons they weren't right...laughter...it is too easy for me to trade myself in and holding to what is right for me and not losing the boundary between being me and what I need to be in the outside world."*

T. *"I saw on your face that you might be the person or was who would have traded themselves in".*

P. *" In the past I am the sort of person who would have chopped off the three buttons on my coat and given them away...but no way was I going to do that in the dream".*

Z. *"Did you think of buying the button?"*

P. *"No isn't that sad!"*

D. *"You said this was sad?"*

P. *"I couldn't in a sense look after myself...buy myself something...treat myself".*

I *"We use metaphors...losing your buttons...buttoned up ...bright as a button".*

Q. *"The use of a button has a practical function".*

P. *"They can be both practical and functional and decorative things...they don't have to be boring" (P. speaks with real feeling as if a resolution is reached).*

T. *"They control the opening and closing."*

P. *"Provided the thread doesn't come off".*

F. *"You sew them on so well".*

P. *"That rings true and the rearranging is quite a palaver to remove them to somewhere else and is a long job and that is very symbolic as to what is happening at the moment".*

I. *"To be the loose thread would be quite challenging".*

P. *"The thread hanging on and loose could be cut and that would reduce the amount of thread holding the button and eventually it would come off...and (whispering) I suspect it is already off or nearly"*

X. *"I feel the silky straw is very feminine".*

P *"I agree...it has the quality of femininity...I realised that the colour of the hat didn't suit me as it is too like my own colouring".*

G. *"Therefore it wouldn't be so flamboyant".*

F. *"Do you have any feelings about her not wanting the button or hat".*

P. *"Not then...I have now...I have old feelings of not being appreciated...of having gone to all that trouble and not being appreciated...these are very very old feelings...There are very few feelings in the dream at all...I felt I was observing in the dream...I was admiring the quality of that hat and that I would like it...I would covet it".*

Q. *"Covet is a funny word".*

P *"I know it probably as I had to learn the ten commandments".*

F. *"Thou shalt not covet your neighbours hat! "great laughter.*

P. *"I feel this is a very female-orientated dream...all the women are getting ready and dressed for something".*

F. *"Do you have a message for the women in the dream?"*

*P. "You are not doing yourself justice...that's given me lots to think about".*

The almost full transcript of the discussion of this dream shows the woman revealing major life preoccupations. The art deco button came to represent the dreamer's conflict between clothing and dress accessories as being for display or for utility. Latent feelings of having to always meet her own needs last and feelings of low self-esteem were expressed. She identified the loose button as representing a much greater impending personal loss in her life, that of her partner (stated in a later group session). As with other dreams the button symbol's potency was explored through the spontaneous consideration of the idiomatic usage of the 'button' and 'thread' symbols, such as in phrases as 'bright as a button', 'buttoned up', 'unbuttoned' and 'hanging by a thread'. At a cultural level the revealed interpersonal and sexual symbolism of buttons in this culture became a vehicle for developing personal understanding. Such a discussion of both learnt and experienced symbolism again gave the group the opportunity to critically reflect on questions of gender roles, socialisation and opportunities for empowerment by women.

Through these examples from the dream narrations and discussions we can see how the dreamer and the group use significantly gendered and sexual symbols both unconsciously in dream material and consciously in group dialogue. The examples show that dream data consist of sets and sequences of images that are derived from everyday life and can reflect current concerns of the dreamer. The meanings generated are derived from this dialogue between self and group, and elicited by reflecting upon how we derive our dream imagery from our culture, and then in

turn understanding our dream imagery by considering the use of metaphor in everyday language.

### Meaning and Action

Throughout the thesis the effects of dreamwork on the lives of participants have been referred to, if not expanded upon. This section intends to summarise the impact of dreamwork on members' lives and in so doing present ethnographic evidence to show that, after Herdt, the "productions of dreaming become absorbed and transformed into culture" (1987:82). This idea that dreams and social action intersect and develop each other has recently been developed by Jedrej and Shaw (1993:8-9). They refer to Evan-Pritchard's classic study of Azande witchcraft in which Evans-Pritchard writes:

The memory of dream images may influence subsequent behaviours and subsequent happenings may intrude upon the memory of dream images so that they conform to one another (1937:384).

This section also illustrates what Basso defines as the "progressive function of dreaming" or the "self becoming"(1987:101).

The ethnographic evidence that I have derived from my study of the three dreamwork groups supports the proposition that dream and social action intersect with each other. My final evidence for this assertion will be presented under the following everyday categories: decision-making, self-esteem and 'coming to terms with life'. Whilst Evans-Pritchard (1937:381) presents interesting examples of the role of dreaming in providing "acceptable accounts of action" (Jedrej and Shaw:1993:9) in the

courtship behaviour amongst the Azande, no data was available in relation to sexual behaviours within the group.

### Decision-making

Dreamwork clearly contributed to decision-making concerning both work and relationships of participants. The dreamwork helped clarify the issues through their public expression and exploration. The member who dreamt of her dead husband in the hearse (see pp. 186-7) spoke, as already reported, of the dreamwork's contribution to her 'stock-taking' of the relationship. The imagery of the dream and work upon it in the group helped significantly towards making the relationship issues explicit to herself. This example is repeated in several of the reported pieces of dreamwork. The example of the dreamer who dreamt of a woman being forcibly and unhappily married (see p. 136) is one. The dreamer of the loaf (see pp. 151-2) subsequently told the group that the dream had enabled her not to go to a job interview and had contributed to a significant rise in her self-confidence about her work ability. The person who dreamt of meeting her flatmate on the escalator (see pp. 207-8) resolved to express her negative feelings about their flat-sharing. The dreamer who dreamt of the beautiful bird (see pp. 118-9) shared in the interview how the experience of working on the dream had clarified for her her feelings about both her present job and her ambitions about developing alternative employment.

### Self-esteem

These categories which I am using obviously overlap in so far as, for example, self-esteem is an inseparable aspect of

decision-making. The recently discussed 'button' dream provides a good example of how the dreamer reflected on the gendered effect of her parenting and socialisation upon her life to date. Moreover there were indications through the transcript that she was changing through the process as,

*"Well that is changing...as I would quite like to wear that button and that is what is quite scary...as I am acknowledging I don't have to go on being as I have been for so many years and I can actually be something else and I feel from inside me that that is okay and that is about wearing the button".*

The effect of this piece of dreamwork on the dreamer is later summarised by her in the interview,

*"The meaning was getting in back in touch with my childhood self...the carefreeness of it...the pleasure that buttons could bring...also something I shared with my mother brings me close to her...brings me right within myself and takes me back to when I was in bed and sick and I had the button box and I would sort them out and make patterns and that was how I got through childhood illnesses and it reminds me that I had inner resources and at the time of the dream it was very important to remind myself of that as I was about to start on my own again...the box is within and is Pandora's box!"*

The dreamer defines the meaning of the dreamwork in terms of her rediscovery of her own inner resources. These inner resources are affirmed through remembrance of her childhood and her development of coping capacities at that time.

Another example of 'self-esteem' being the focus of the dreamwork is the 'mother's teeth' dream (see p.163). During this piece of dreamwork the dreamer explores the possibility of the teeth representing her 'social front' and following on from that identification her angry and vulnerable feelings emerge. By the end of the dreamwork she has made an affirmation of herself and of her own worth (see pp. 166-7).

An example from my own dreamwork in the group is when I shared a dream snippet in the second group in the beginning round. In this I dreamt that my car had a six inch dent on the driver's side of the car. My interpretation of the image was that it was related to the group session the week before when my leadership style and purpose had been confronted (see pp. 105-7). That process had somewhat unnerved me and the dream image seemed to reflect the extent of the damage to my reputation as a facilitator in the group and to my personal self-esteem. I related this in the group session as the dent in the car not being too serious in terms of the function of the car and talked about how one might expect "bumps and knocks" in life.

### 'Coming to Terms with Life'

If, as the revised psychoanalytic perspective suggests, dreams are a "manifest problem-solving and integrative process that takes place as metaphorical thought" (see p. 135), then we could expect that a study of the dreamwork in the groups would reveal an abundance of members 'coming to terms with life'. Most of the dreams and their accompanying dreamwork already presented can be seen to fit this category. Whether their problems are of relationships or work and career issues, dreams and

dreamwork as described and analysed can be crucial in the identification of an explicit awareness of the situation by the dreamer, and often can be formative in developing a resolution to change themselves or their situation.

Whilst all the examples of dreams so far explored have been of single dreams, members did occasionally experience a dream sequence, and then interpreted the sequence and the transformations of imagery within the sequence. One member had several dreams involving animals including one with lots of sleek black cats that clung sinuously to her body and which she was unable to get rid of. Another dream involved a bear, cats and birds,

*" There was a bear in a toilet with another woman who is on the right...a big bear comes...she runs one way and me another and she finds the way out...I am in this little alcove area behind the door...the shambling bear is coming through to get me...there is no door on the alcove...there is another door round the corner and I get it to protect me and partly shield me from the bear and then some people come to rescue me and I come out and they are planning to have a meal at a cafe...then I am with some family...there are some houses including mine and there is a big old building...a similar situation to near mine...in the dream it is different to mine and there are all these black cats...a great herd of them and they have multiplied and live in this building and we shoo them away without any trouble...they run away...across fields there are these lights coming to rescue me from the cats...these points of lights streaming across the fields and in*



*the vanguard of the lights are these lovely little birds...green yellow and a bit of red...then I woke up ".*

In this instance the dreamer felt that the progression from the previous cat dream and the bear image in the above dream to the image of lights and birds coming towards her represented a movement in herself to a more optimistic stance towards her life. The dreamer had recently experienced a distressing divorce and felt some of the feelings engendered by those events were represented for her in the dream imagery and their transformation.

This chapter illustrates clearly the cultural re-working of dream imagery within and through the group process. Meaning is created, the self is invented in new, dazzling and disturbing garments. The groupwork processes allow and facilitate a play betwixt the ontological and the cultural. The self becomes temporarily the bidden image and implicit, embodied emotion is evoked through the ritual performance of the groupwork task and setting. Consciousness becomes its imagery and opens up new fields of potential mental and affective connectedness. Such new fields, encompassing both the narrator's mind and the consciousness of the group is not however limitless. Meaning is not evoked from outside its context. Interpretive possibilities are those dormant within modern society's repertoire of potential meaning for material objects and cultural processes. An art deco button, whilst capable in these groups of becoming a lived metaphor evoking and symbolising a gendered socialisation process, remains a button firmly within the terms understood normally for a button in society. Likewise a hearse is a car that carries dead people, even if in the fantasy world of the

narrator/dreamer it represents a personal feeling state concerning the relationship with her partner. The interpretive processes recorded then are culturally contextualised and pertinent to our modern or post-modern society, not any society.

Finally, the findings offer clear evidence as to when, how and what effect dreams have on the lives of dreamers. In this sense the thesis shows the intersection of dream and reality in modern society in a way foreshadowed by Evans-Pritchard.

## **CONCLUSION: DREAMWORK AND THE 'WORK OF CULTURE'**

I originally thought that in this thesis I was studying dreaming and dreamwork, the latter understood as the personal and group interpretation of their dreaming. As the study has progressed I have become more and more aware that the primary data of the dream is inaccessible, particularly to the dreamwork group. My focusing on issues of narration showed me that the process of translation from image into a cultural discourse was paramount in the rendering of the image into a discursive form. The dream itself remains an 'unknown' or noumenon, except in a limited sense to the dreamer themselves. Even then the original imaginative experience of the dream image is filtered through language and personal and cultural association into a narrative formulation, and often a story.

The study has however been about how people in this society can think, feel and talk about their dream experiences. Hence I have focused on an articulation of both the interpretive process and the outcome. I have presented the various forms of understanding of dreaming identifiable within the groups studied. These ways of understanding dream and fantasy imagery constitute an hermeneutic analysis of a contemporary dreamwork movement that focuses solely on the 'manifest' imagery of the dream. The 'latent' is culturally negotiable and that negotiation is represented in the data within this study. Indeed, finally I realised that I was studying the process of making 'sense' out of 'nonsense'. The nonsense being the bizarre and phantasmagoric world of dream imagery and the 'sense' being the interpretation

of the imagery and the connections made to the dreamer's current life experience.

I am now in a position to present answers to the questions originally posed (see p. 11). Dreams are shown throughout the thesis as being meaningfully experienced by group members (question b). I have shown in answer to question c) d) and e) how a range of meanings, grouped into themes, were reached by group members, as evidenced in the section, 'Meaning and Action' (see pp. 218-24). That section also shows, in a summary way, (and answers question i: see p. 11) how dreams and their interpretation do influence members' reality. Whilst there is some ethnographic data available in my thesis as to symbol transference between members dreams, for example (see p. 110) where a dreamer affirmed that the 'cats' she had dreamt of had been 'X's cats', what has been more striking is how the individual dreamer's image has become the common imaginative property of the group on many occasions. The imaginative creation of one member has been reworked and fashioned through the group process with reference to the metaphorical meaning embedded in ordinary language use. The 'bread' dream (see pp. 151-2) and the 'button' dream (see pp. 209-18) and their interpretations are good examples of this process. It is then in this sense that the dream image can be said, on occasions, to have become 'collective' (see question j) for the group.

I have then written an analysis of the cultural construction of meaning derived from the dream. As I have aimed to show dreams are transformations of previously experienced cultural symbols and their interpretations are exemplars of the 'work of culture'. Dream images have become transformed into "cultural

products" (Obeyesekere 1990:282) that have effected the lives of the subjects. Obeyesekere has defined the work of culture thus:

Hence, insofar as these cultural symbols are removed at various levels from the sources of motivation, one needs the notion of the *work of culture* (original italics), over and above the mechanisms of the dreamwork, to depict the processes of transformation of unconscious motives into cultural symbols that have significance to the individual in respect of both person and culture at the same time (1990:282).

If humans are defined primarily through their ability to be "self-interpreting animals" (Obeyesekere, quoting Heidegger 1990:275) this activity of interpretation is shown most clearly in the dreamwork I have studied, presented and analysed. I have aimed to show both how 'meaning' has been reached, and the 'meaning' outcome arrived at both for the individual and the group.

The process of 'meaning-making' has been shown to operate at different levels and so provides an answer to my first question (a: see p. 11) as to 'what is the transformative process between the dream image and the formation of a socially constructed meaning for that image?'. I have presented a processual analysis of the role of groupwork method, such as gestalt, psychodrama and imagework, in generating an identification and articulation of the implicit and embodied knowledge of the subject. I have related this concept to both Bourdieu's concept of the habitus and Csordas's idea of the pre-objective. I have aimed to show that culture, as a field of actual and potential meaning and power, is embodied within the person and is interactively and processually

constituted. The processual creation of meaning from within the repertoire of shared cultural understandings, or habitus, has been shown in chapters five and six. Members brought with them to the group sets of cultural understandings which became manifest in their orientation around dreams. I have also suggested that the groupwork methods presented offer the social sciences enhanced means for accessing both the embodied self and the habitus of a bounded culture. A really 'thick description' of a culture needs to include an analysis and evaluation of its dreaming and dream narration. A study of dreamwork, as I have presented it, offers the opportunity to study further a particular culture's habitus, and its creativity through the manipulation of metaphor by language and the manipulation of symbol through ritual process.

I have shown how the communicative context, as defined by Tedlock and in answer to my questions g) and h) (see p. 11), is significant in different ways in the above 'work of culture'. Group process both conditions and activates the development of a participatory mode of dream interpretation. For instance the quality and quantity of self-disclosure, and hence of dream narration, depends fundamentally upon members' perceptions as to the degree of safety within the group. Then I have shown the various interpretive frameworks, acknowledged and unacknowledged by the group; these were the emic and etic perspectives. I have illustrated how the processes of dream association and dream analysis by the group are constrained and enabled by the cultural context of the dreamt symbols. This is shown, for instance, in the analysis of the teeth dream (see pp. 165-9) in which the the repertoire of possible social meanings of the tooth symbol is delved into in the interpretive process.

Moreover I encountered within the group interpretive process, for example in the 'bread' dream discussion (see pp. 151-2) and the two 'teeth' dream discussions (see p. 163-9 & 170-80), a substantial and contemporary concern with a feminist analysis of social experience, which became a crucial means of 'making sense' of the dream image and its apparent sagas. In this sense, and in answer to question f) (see p. 11), an empowerment approach to dreamwork makes a useful link with both the notion of changing paradigms of dream interpretation, and with the interpenetration of the highly personal world of the dream with a critique of power and social reality. The dream and dreamwork are often thought of as being the most subjective of private realities and yet I have found through this study that they partake of 'the stuff of reality' in both their use of cultural symbols and their interpretive outcomes. Dreams then do both influence and are influenced by a culturally structured reality.

Also I have intended to show how both dream image and narrative discourse are fundamentally metaphorical in nature. Such a metaphorical kinship explains how the dream interpretation process was often most successful when there was a 'playing' by the group with the metaphorical possibilities of the dream image as embedded within idiomatic language use.

The findings of the ethnography have shown how the dreamtime of the groups is in a sense a liminal space outside of ordinary time. The sense of time in the groups, through their focusing on the interaction of dream and reality, is condensed, stopped, reversed and apparently overcome. The dream is a story that you tell yourself without knowing why; a story told with shyness or openness that becomes more alive once it served back

by the group and the facilitators. The dream becomes more of a reality through its public shaping in front of an audience. The group as co-workers and audience then are vital to the emergence of meaning, and this helps situate dreamwork firmly as a social activity.

A ritualised reality is created within the liminal space of the dreamwork groups. The normal sense of self is transformed. The 'I' can become a bird, a button, a hearse for example. How does this take place? I have shown that the dream imagery is a metaphorical potential for the dreamer and that as these images are narrated they are increasingly subject to social and cultural manipulation. The dream is given body through the process of imag(e)ing. The first telling is usually incoherent and develops a progressive coherence and clarity through its shaping within the group, which Obeyesekere describes as *emplotment*. The process of telling stimulates the memory. Yet an evolved and more coherent narrative is a combination of dream fact and real fiction as the narrator attempts to fuse their dreamworld and reality.

Within the ritualised reality of the dreamwork groups, metaphor and meaning is made in front of members' eyes. The ritual process of the group and its methods evoke both distant and near realities. Above all the ritual setting evokes feelings, often buried, inchoate and half recognised feelings as in the hearse/pining dream (see pp. 185-6). The thesis as well as looking at the private production of imagery considers the emotions shared and the feelings generated as the enlivened and fading images are chased and hunted by the group.

The symbols evoked and fashioned within the group join feelings to thoughts. Turner (1974: 55-6) showed in his analysis



of ritual process how social values are collectively owned through their fusion with everyday physical phenomena. The evoked symbols and root metaphors of the narrator and the group generate novel meaning through the creativity and multi-vocality of the symbol within the ritually constituted time and place. The work of the ritual is achieved in generating the connectedness of dream imagery to everyday reality. This connectedness is made possible through the self-enhancing power of the symbol. We can observe a transformative process as the button of the dream, for example, becomes a multi-faceted icon for the gendered life story of the individual. The button as a metaphor is created before our eyes; meaning darts in and through suggestion and verbal play. Reality itself becomes a meaningful metaphor. The dreamer/narrator sees various vignettes of her life history as in a cinema. This evocative retrieval process cannot be done alone but only within the group context and through the production of a liminal space in which *communitas* means an equality before the imaginative productions of the unconscious. An understanding of the dreamwork group as a ritual process is then a key perspective in the elucidation of the transformative process anticipated in question a) (see p. 11).

By the end of the twenty-nine group sessions the original members had become expert imagemakers, personally and collectively metamorphosed through the use of metaphors. They had become facilitators of their own personal transformation through their growing expertise in working with dreams. They had learnt to tell the stories of the self and to articulate a personal ontology. In this sense they had learnt to realise the self. Such an empowerment of the self was achieved through a developing

mastery of the personal and social meaning of their own metaphors as developed in and through the group process.

Overall my thesis contends that the culturally constructed meaning of the dreams in the groups did not lie within the original identity of the dreamt symbols. Rather the meaning was evoked as I have shown through the group process. In this sense the dream is not solely a text waiting for a textual analysis. Rather it is a created and lived performance. Viewing the dream and its narration solely as a text may tell us much, but it will not tell us all. The meaning of the button or the bulb images, lay in their cultural contextualisation by the dreamer and the group. In themselves they then meant nothing! Symbols then can be said to mean nothing except what is produced by the audience and the group interaction. If this thesis is correct then dreams do not represent the fundamental truths of the personality as psychoanalysis asserts. Rather they are formed through the bricolage process and their essential nonsense is made culturally meaningful solely through the group process. Such a perspective positions social anthropology, and perhaps sociology, in a powerful position to claim an increased role concerning the elucidation of the processes and outcomes of dream interpretation in modern society. Whilst anthropology has in the past only considered the dreams of bounded groups in the third world as of cultural significance, my thesis asserts the significance of dream and its elucidation in modern society as a vital source of understanding and information about the culturally constituted and becoming self.

## Notes

- (1) Some groupwork theorists consider the 'ending' stage of a group a separate stage; see Brown:1984: 72 and Preston-Shoot:1987:115.
- (2) At first Freud used the term representation to define the transformation of thought into image. Later he developed his theory of symbolisation, hypothesising a common meaning to certain symbols (Freud:1953:e.g. 5.353-60).
- (3) 'Doubling' is the action in psychodrama when one of the group, not the protagonist or director, goes behind the protagonist and imaginatively speaks as they feel the protagonist is 'really' feeling and thinking. Also there can be one 'double' with the protagonist throughout the psychodrama..
- (4) 'Transactional Analysis' is a psychotherapeutic approach developed by Eric Berne and involves an application of game theory to interpersonal situations; also a conceptualisation and analysis of the self as being constituted primarily by three core aspects that of: parent, adult and child.

## Appendix One

### 'Dreaming as Ethnography'; paper given at the 1989 ASA annual conference: 'Anthropology and Autobiography'

In this paper I am intending to explore the relationship between dream imagery and the production of an ethnographic text. I shall present a sequence of my dream imagery whilst engaged in ethnographic work, together with the insights derived from that imagery. I will endeavour to show how these insights are connected to the results of my thesis and to certain aspects of the social and therapeutic world of the community. My hypothesis is that dream imagery is a relevant source of data and that "imaginal thinking" (Kracke 1987:52) in the form of myth, dream and art is a valid form of knowledge.

The community I studied is a therapeutic community for disturbed adolescents in Britain. The community consisted of twenty staff and approximately fifty residents. Residents came from all parts of Britain. Almost all were in the care of local authority social service departments and most had previously been in other forms of residential care, such as children's homes. Many residents were of above average intelligence and all were defined as being delinquent or socially disturbed. The community defined itself as a therapeutic community and was modelled on principles set out by Bettelheim (1974), Jones (1968) and Kennard (1983). Central to these principles were both an emphasis on psychodynamic theory, and the use of social processes as therapeutic constructs such as democratisation, permissiveness.

reality-confrontation and communalism (Rapoport 1960). Small and large encounter groups were a central feature of the community.

I lived in the community for one term in 1981 and subsequently wrote an anthropological thesis specifically analysing the community's use of myth, ritual and symbol in the construction of the therapeutic milieu of the community. I was alert to the potential value of dream imagery as being indicative of the meaning of external sense data through having kept a dream diary on and off for many years and having studied Jungian theory in the past. Typically I was orientated to viewing dream imagery as providing possible evidence of "emergent possibilities" (Tedlock 1987:5).

In recounting this series of my dream images I am aware of the many problems of using such imagery, since dreams are notorious for their ability to be variously interpreted and that one's consciousness of dream imagery imposes a complex filtration process of the original dream data. Indeed the narration of the dream imposes a further filtration as Tedlock describes:

by the time the dream is narrated this imagery has been filtered through a complex, language-centred thought process which imposes a disjunctive temporal sequencing onto the continuity of dream space (1987:22).

However, what is important is the impact of dream imagery on the dreamer, in this case an ethnographer, and the congruence of at least parts of the imagery with central preoccupations of the community in question. With these provisos I will embark on a description of the dreams, seven in all, and indicate the ideas I

derived from a consideration of them. Parts of the dream remain unclear to me and I shan't be exhaustive in my conjectures.

The first dream (18.5.81) occurred two weeks before going to the community. I dreamt,

*"I was in France...going up a tower or lighthouse...I was unsure about going up this tower and about the weather and what kind of day it was...I reached the top and found it was an island with a community on it and a small town there...I went into the town...I wanted some coffee but had little money...I went back to the lighthouse...Water was coming into the lighthouse...I met a young man who invited me to his house".*

Apart from the anxiety and uncertainty that the dream displays about my going to the community, this dream alerted me to the notion that the community was in some way foreign and an island.

The separateness of the community was an important aspect both with regard to the functioning and identity of the community and to my subsequent involvement and study of it.

Geographically and socially the community was quite separate from the rest of the community and this contributed to its distinctive identity. The community was situated in a large Georgian country house three miles from a town. Staff and residents lived on the estate. Interaction between residents and the wider community was highly controlled and normally residents only went into town in groups with staff. They would have to receive special permission to go alone. There were no social or sporting arrangements for residents with the local community. Residents lived in the community either for most of the year or for all of it, depending on the availability of their

external familial situation. The social separateness of the community was sustained most clearly in its daily life with the inversion of key social norms through the adoption of a therapeutic community philosophy. An example of this would be the opportunity for residents to say anything they wished to any staff member, resulting in frequent verbal abuse (Permissiveness: Rapoport 1960). However this was balanced by the expectation of residents and staff to openly confront residents with how their behaviour was perceived by others in the community (reality-confrontation: Rapoport 1960). Insulation from outside forces was of course not total, but did provide the base on which the distinct identity of the community and the sense of specialness experienced by residents was founded (Edgar 1990). My dream alerted me to the potential foreignness of the community, particularly as I had made no prior study of therapeutic community theory and in that sense was unprepared for the novel experience that living for a time in such a community was to prove.

The second dream (1.6.81) occurred on my first night at the community, and combined with the circumstances of the dream, was very vivid. I dreamt of a,

*"...nuclear explosion twenty miles away towards a nearby large town...I ran out of the main community building with the Director and I lay down close to him...I privately prayed and considered running behind a tree...I speculated on the radiation damage being done to myself by the nuclear explosion...Then the shock waves from the explosion reached me".*

At this point I woke to find a huge thunderstorm happening outside, in 'reality'.

Next day I found out that many residents had been woken by the storm and had spent time watching it. Reflecting on this conjunction of storms I felt that my experience in the community was to be a 'tremendum' in the sense that, for me at least, great and deep change would happen. When I reflect on the many outcomes to date of my involvement in that community I can affirm that perception as accurate.

The other inclination I gained from reflecting on that dream was the beginning of an awareness of the importance of the Director to me. He was a friend of the course leader at Newcastle Polytechnic where I had just been appointed and he had been presented to me by that friend as a charismatic leader. My first impressions of him the day before had confirmed my impressions of a powerful person with strong and often iconoclastic opinions. The dream presented a picture of my closeness to him at a time of great threat. My subsequent relationship with him was crucial both for my stay in the community and for the eventual development of my thesis. I quickly developed both an admiration and an awe of him due to his evident powerful ability to work with residents and dominate the staff group, the latter not without some conflict. I listened most carefully to his words, his metaphors and his use of anger in the daily community meetings. He clearly dominated the community. This is shown by his and the community's refusal to give permission for an earlier major research project to be published because of its criticism of himself (or so I was told by staff and the Director; access to the document being nearly impossible). The Director in his writing

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clearly expressed his belief in the importance of the charismatic leader as being a central figure for the adolescent group to work through their transference upon. I have often thought of the psychological nature of my own transference upon this man. In some ways my resulting thesis with hindsight was primarily about his power and influence in the community, through his control of the social identity of the community and in particular his definition of therapy and what was to be considered as therapeutic in the community. In meetings he would often define which residents were progressing well and which weren't and which relationships between residents were positive. In such ways he was able to control residents' and to some extent the staff's own definition of themselves. He had considerable rational-legal authority in many areas of the community's life, as in appointments of staff and entry/exit of residents.

The above analysis of his influence is by no means exhaustive and I intend to return to this issue later; however it is sufficient to show the import of our relationship at least to my study. As I have detached from the community I have become aware of the contingency of his power and his psychodynamic interpretations. What at the time felt akin to revelation would become in time opinion, and yet the memory of that power was and is crucial to understand his influence on staff and resident.

The third dream concerned a male applicant for a place in the community. I had been the social worker of this fifteen year old boy for the two years preceding his application. I had worked with the problem between the boy and his stepfather until the level of animosity and actual violence led to the boy's reception into care. Almost straight after finishing my job as a social

worker I started my fieldwork stay in the therapeutic community. The boy was by this time placed in an assessment and reception centre where his future was being considered. The dream occurred about ten days before his interview. I knew that an application for him to come to this community was possible but at the time of the dream was neither aware of the interview date nor had I been consciously thinking about this particular ex-client. The dream portrayed,

*"The boy as stuck in a spaceship circling the earth seventy-two miles up in space...the boy drops a message to earth which lands at my feet...I go to a nearby R.A.F. base which sends up a plane to rescue him".*

This dream speaks both of the affinity that I had with this boy and of the boy's predicament. What I didn't know at the time was that the boy had in reality been languishing and stagnating in the reception centre and, as so often is the case, he had been increasingly becoming involved in delinquent activities due no doubt in part to the delinquent peer group influence.

This dream has a consequence in that I spoke about it to some staff and residents, and because I had been this boy's previous social worker, a status reinforced by the dream image, I was invited to his interview. Such an invitation was exceptional as the admission interview for this community was regarded with great importance and normally all categories of short term visitors would be excluded from the interview. So I attended the interview and in the end the boy was admitted. He stayed there for nearly two years.

This dream did not exactly lead to concept formation in my resulting thesis. However it impressed upon me the need of many

adolescents for therapeutic opportunities such as this community offered, in contradistinction to the regimes that many children and adolescents experience as being 'in care'. Personally it also linked my previous work as a social worker with my study of the community. The coincidence of my different roles for this boy were also highlighted by the dream. I had been both his social worker and also involved in his transition into the community, and this combination seemed peculiarly well expressed in the dream image that I have recounted.

The fourth dream (4.8.81) also spoke of coincidence. I dreamt,

*"..that one of the female residents was climbing up with me and my family above a seaside Roman fort...It was too steep there and she was knocked down by a boulder and fell into murky water...I tried to save her...I thought I had caught hold of her but found it was only a pillow and she drowned".*

The very next day the daily community meeting, which was an hour long encounter group with all the members of the community present, was concerned with the fact that during the night someone had thrown a cardboard box into this same girl's room and she had burst out screaming and woken the whole house up. What struck me about this dream was the possible synchronicity of the internal dream image and the external social situation. Obviously there are differences too, but the internal and external situations contain the same person or their image - a fearful situation for that person and either an object (the cardboard box) or a person (the girl) being propelled through the air. Jung's theory of synchronicity is expressed in several of his writings and he describes it here as:

.. synchronicity, a concept that formulates a point of view diametrically opposed to that of causality. Since the latter is a merely statistical truth and not absolute, it is a sort of working hypothesis of how events evolve out of one another, whereas synchronicity takes the coincidence of events in space and time as meaning something more than mere chance, namely, a peculiar interdependence of objective events among themselves as well as with the subjective (psychic) states of the observer or observers (1951:XXIV).

This dream, like the two two before, made me feel closely related to both the conscious and unconscious life of the community at that time. A further relationship can be suggested between the concept of synchronicity as being helpful in indicating a different order of coincidence, and a mode of therapeutic interpretation used in the community. The community had a basic Freudian orientation. However the community did not analyse residents' or staffs' dreams but did seek to make meaningful links out of disparate experiences. Elsewhere I have described the therapeutic stages anticipated for the residents. In the fourth stage which I have described as 'understanding' I suggest that:

"There was an assumption that each person's experience was significant for everyone else in that people share similar emotions and mentalities. Residents' ability to empathise with each other was developed in this way and links were sought between seemingly disparate events such as the theft of clothes and residents' fear of the loss of senior residents at the end of the year" (1990:48).

Perhaps there is a link between the suggested synchronicity of my dreaming and community events, and the above mode of interpretation. The Director himself was aware that the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious life of the community was unusually close.

The following three dreams occurred after I had left the community. I dreamt vividly about the community for many nights. I only recollected the one image (fifth dream), "*that of taking a table to the community from the East End of London*". The notion of table had particular significance both for the community and for my experience of that community. The dining tables themselves had been specially chosen and made apparently by the only firm that made tables with thick oak table tops with an adzed surface. However whilst these tables were impressive and seemed to be valued by residents in the way that residents protected the tables from cup markings, the tables personified a key element in the therapeutic structure of the community. I have described this aspect of the community's therapy as the "myth of symbolic compensation" (1990:53). This mythogenesis was:

the continual assertion by the Director that the whole physical environment of the community was imbued with therapeutic meaning for the resident. For example the kitchen/dining room area was described by the Director as replicating, at a symbolic level, the good feeding experience that the fortunate infant experiences with it's mother. Such replication was achieved through the attention given to the possible meaning for the disturbed adolescent of each and

every object and decoration in that environment (Edgar:1990:53).

The tables were especially clear examples of this mythogenesis and were used by the Director, when talking to visitors, as evidence of the special environment of this community. Moreover the layout of the tables was considered important in that the pattern was like a squared 'S' shape to assist in continually mixing residents up and prevent small group ownership of particular tables. Just next to these tables was the 'buttery' which was the only source of refreshment for both staff and residents outside mealtimes. So the 'table' was important in a number of different ways to the community. What was located on the table was also very important not just for nourishment of body. I have already referred to the "myth of symbolic compensation". Tables were also key objects in the regular community feasts. Feasts were one kind of calendrical ceremony that I have described (1990: 53) as being crucial in the cultural creation and identity of the community.

The above brief analysis of the symbolic usage of 'tables' in the community is important in attempting to understand my dream image of 'taking a table' to the community once I had left. At the time of the dream image I had not begun my subsequent analysis of the community. Indeed at that time I had not embarked on a higher degree programme. The way I 'interpreted' the dream at that time made me aware that I had something to offer the community, although I did not know what that then was. I can now see that my thesis is a description of that community at that time. The idea of my 'laying out', as on a table, those symbols for public view seems to me now to fit well with the dream image.

The sixth dream occurred three or more months after I had left the community and just prior to my revisiting it. I had written an initial report on my perceptions of the community and at the time of the dream I was unaware of how favourable a reception my report would receive. Of the actual dream all I was able to recall was meeting the Director and a bright sun shining at our meeting. When, a little while later, I met the Director I well remember our meeting because after he had read my report the Director said how well I had understood the community. His saying this triggered a profound and simultaneous mental image that I recall as being like seeing a 'golden well of images and symbols flowing through it'. Simultaneously I felt this image of a golden well seemed to represent the creative source of the dynamism of that community and was in some way linked to the Director's charismatic leadership.

I resolved to attempt to describe and analyse this creative use of symbolism. Subsequently I chose social anthropology as a subject base for this study, because of its partial specialisation in the study of small-scale societies, using participant observation methods. Moreover social anthropology particularly studies the conscious and unconscious use of public symbolism and ritual practice. I felt that this community resembled an almost pre-industrialised third world society through its geographical isolation linked to its inversion of certain social norms. I was impressed by its cultural creativity, for instance, in its particular calendrical structuring of time. The community had developed its own forms of celebration for Christmas and other seasonal events as well as developing its own 'special' celebrations such as the end of term Summer feasts. The origins then of my initiation into

anthropology and into writing a thesis, that would attempt to analyse the social constitution of a specialised world of symbols, I can trace to my experience of the above mental image which in turn was pre-indicated by that part of the sixth dream that I can recall.

The final dream (24.8.82) occurred at a time when I was negotiating with the community to undertake a further one year period of study of the community. This proposal came to nothing finally due to the Director's departure from the community. The dream contained images of difficulty in reaching the community by train and that my ticket was not valid due to a strike. Then the Director and I easily walked halfway up a hill. We then went into a Green Dragon pub, after which the ascent up the hill either stopped or became more difficult again. The dream indicated or reflected the more problematic engagement that I had with the community at that time as well as representing the continuously friendly and supportive relationship that I had with the Director.

### Evaluating dreams

Dreaming in the Western world tends to be denigrated as akin to meaningless fantasy. With the exception of psychoanalysis, dreams appear non-productive. This has not been the case throughout history or throughout the range of present day societies. Historically, Hindu, Muslim and Christian religions have positively evaluated at least some forms and instances of dreaming. Tedlock suggests that a majority of the world's peoples do not structure their conception of reality "according to the simple oppositional dichotomy of real versus unreal, or reality versus fantasy" (1987:1-2). She suggests that it is:



..a rationalist proposition that dreaming is somehow a lesser...more subjective, false, private, illusory or transient reality than the 'harder', more objective, true, public, real, permanent reality of waking life (1987:2).

However the Western world has not had an entirely negative view of dreaming. Freud designated dream thinking as primary process thought which elaborately encoded and metaphorically expressed daytime contradictions. It is a regressive theory of dreaming (Basso 1987:86) in which the dream interpretation is to be derived from the study of the subject's past. Jungian psychoanalytical theory on the other hand stresses the anticipatory and creative function of dreams:

(Dreaming) is an anticipation in the unconscious of future conscious achievements, something like a preliminary exercise or sketch, or a plan roughed out in advance. Its symbolic content sometimes outlines the solution of a conflict (Jung 1948:255).

Such a progressive theory of dreaming supports my own experience of the value of dream imagery, in my case in developing an ethnography. In the same article Basso, through an analysis of dreaming among the Kalapalo Indians of Central Brazil, perhaps goes even further by suggesting that:

Dreaming is also a performative event because it causes the future by revealing the dreamer's life as it is encapsulated in current aspirations, moods and inchoately understood motivations and fears of an individual (1987:101).

Dreaming assists the dreamer in his or her orientation to their future and so is not separable from the creation of that future.

Kracke (1987:40) suggests that dreams resemble myths in that both have an integrating function in respect of new emotional experiences. The conscious portrayal of both myth and dream bridges primary and secondary forms of thinking and makes primary process thinking conscious. Perhaps it is a further example of synchronicity that I studied a community that I was to suggest used mythogenesis as a therapeutic form of 'bricolage', and I used as part of my methodology manifest dream content as a source of both data and ideas.

An important anthropological aspect of dreams is their narration and hence communication in a cultural context. In relation to my own dreaming, however, this is less significant as I communicated only one dream in the community (third dream). My narration is rather happening through means of this paper. Dream narration does not happen in a social vacuum and the question of social support for different kinds of dream content narration is crucial (Price-Williams:1987:261) in facilitating self-disclosure. I am not sure of the social support for my thesis about dreaming with this particular audience! On the one hand this audience can represent the rationalist, academic tradition par excellence, on the other hand professional anthropologists can be assumed to respect and be sensitive to different cultural forms. In particular the theme of this annual conference positively encourages a non-traditional and more personalised account of the dynamics of ethnographic construction.

In this final section I have drawn substantially on the evaluation of dreams on the published results of a cross-cultural seminar on dreams held in the United States in 1982 (Tedlock 1987). The richness of that cross-cultural data and the shared

perception of the positive value of dream imagery as a valid field of enquiry for both psychologists and anthropologists convinced me that the impact that my dreaming had had on my ethnographic construction was not a personal whimsy but had cross-cultural parallels as well as psychodynamic support in the work of Jung. At this seminar the phrase "imaginal thought" was coined (Kracke 1987:52) to indicate the equal if different form of thought represented by dreaming and mythogenesis. Perhaps a distinctive feature of this paper is that at one and the same time it is proposing a form and a method of analysis as well as presenting a personal and social text of a dreaming experience.

Iain R. Edgar

25.2.89.

## Appendix Two

### Dreamwork Interview Schedule

Introduction: explain confidentiality.

1. Age? Occupation?
2. How have you experienced the group?
3. How have you experienced sharing dreams?
4. How have you experienced the interpretation of dreams in the group?
5. How did you hear about the group?
6. What did you hope from the group?
7. Were these aims realised?
8. Were your expectations related to problems in your life?
9. Had you been in a dreamwork group before?
10. Had you read about dreamwork before?
11. Have you experience of being in groups before?

12. Had you talked about your dreams before?
13. What is your personal experience / history of dreaming?
14. Are you aware of any particular kinds of dreams that you have?
15. How do you generally feel about your dreams?  
fearful.....enjoyable?
16. Have you experienced any major life transitions during the period of the group, or just before?
17. Are there dreams or parts of dreams that you did not share with the group? can you say anything about these?
18. What areas of your life did they relate to?
19. For what reason/s did you not share these with the group?
20. Did you share these dreams with other people, if so can you say who?
21. Has the group affected your life in any particular way/ if so, how?
22. Any other comment you would like to make?

23. Are there any areas you would like to have covered in this interview, but haven't? if so, what are they.

Appendix 3

This appendix presents in a table basic data about the members of the dreamwork groups. Data is shown for members who stayed for more than three group meetings. \* indicates an estimation. In the first column 'attendance': 1,2,3 relate to the first, second and third groups. Age is represented as at time of interview, July 1990. Occupational identity is defined partly by the member and partly by my categorisation i.e. admin.

TABLE 1						
	Attendance	Gender	Age	Occupation	Relationship status	Children
A.	1. 2. 3.	F.	45	Counsellor	Cohabitation	Yes
B.	1.	F.	25*	Student	Single	No.
C.	1. 2. 3.	F.	44	Counsellor	Single	Yes
D.	1. 2. 3.	M.	60	Retailer	Single/ divorced	Yes
E.	1. 2. 3.	F.	54	Counsellor	Single/ divorced	Yes
F.	2. 3.	F.	46	Admin.	Single/ divorced	Yes
G.	2. 3.	F.	45	Admin	Married	Yes
H.	2.	F.	54	Retired/ Nurse	Single	Yes
I.	2.	M.	50*	Retired	Single/ divorced	Yes
J.	2. 3.	M.	45	Engineer	Married	Yes
K.	2. 3.	F.	26	Unemployed	Single	No



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