



## JUNG'S PRACTICE OF THE IMAGE<sup>1</sup>

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Considered from the standpoint of methods of psychotherapy, the practice of active imagination is the one distinctive feature of Jungian analysis, and Jung's key contribution to technique. In 1981, in her preface to Barbara Hannah's work, *Encounters with Soul*, Marie Louise von Franz wrote: "Active imagination is thus *the* most powerful tool in Jungian psychology for achieving wholeness – far more efficient than dream interpretation alone" (Hannah, 1991, p.2). According to von Franz, Jung saw active imagination as the *via regia* to individuation.

With the publication of *Liber Novus*, we are now for the first time in a position to actually study what I call Jung's own practice of the image: what he actually did with the images that appeared to him. We can follow how he attempted to develop from this a replicable technique in psychotherapy, which he named active imagination, and we can compare Jung's own practice of the image with, first, with his accounts in his published writings, and second, with what he did with his patients. These are not isomorphic. What he says about active imagination is significantly different from what he himself does in ways that are interesting, particularly to practitioners of sandplay and are also different from what he urges on others.

I would like to begin with some correspondence between Jung and John Layard, one of most colourful characters in the Jungian world. John Layard was a serial patient; among others, he had analysis with Homer Lane, H.G. Baynes, Siegfried

OPPOSITE:  
*Painting by C.G. Jung from Liber Novus: The Red Book. All color plates included with this article are from The Red Book: Liber Novus. Ed. Sonu Shamdasani, trs., Mark Kyburz, John Peck and Sonu Shamdasani (2009) and used with the permission of the publisher, W.W. Norton & Company, and the Foundation for the works of C.G. Jung.*

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Bernfeld, Wilhelm Stekel, Fritz Wittels, Erna Rosenbaum, Gerhard Adler, R.D. Laing and with Jung.<sup>2</sup> The interchange I'd like to read is from the 1940s, in which Jung addresses the topic of active imagination. On 30 April 1947, Jung wrote to Layard:

As you know the principle of my technique does not consist in analysis and interpretation of such materials as produced by the unconscious, but also in their synthesis by active imagination. Of the latter I have seen nothing yet. But this is precisely the "technique" which seems to be indicated in your situation. You are not only informed enough but also intelligent enough to go for a long stretch under the assumption that I'm buried and that there is no analyst for you under the changing moon, except the one in your heart. As you will understand, this does not mean at all that you analyse and interpret your dreams according to the rules of the thumb, but that you do what we call in the German language the "Auseinandersetzung mit dem Unbewussten" [confrontation/coming to terms with the unconscious] which is the dialectical procedure you carry through with yourself by the aid of active imagination. This is the best means I know to reduce an inordinate production of the unconscious. It doesn't seem right that a man like yourself is still dependent upon analysts. It is also not good for you, because it produces again and again a most unwholesome dissociation of your opposites, namely pride and humility, if you can accept the gifts of the unconscious guide that dwells within yourself, and it is good for your pride to humiliate itself to such an extent that you can accept what you receive. I don't intend to behave as if I were a corpse already. I'm therefore quite willing to help you in your attempts in this direction, but I refuse in your own interest to plague myself with your material, which is only helpful when you acquire its understanding by your own effort. Pride is a wonderful thing when you know how to fulfil its expectations. Did you ever ask yourself who my analyst is? Yet, when it comes to the last issue, we must be able to stand alone vis à vis the unconscious for better or worse.

(Adler, 1973, pp.458-9)<sup>3</sup>

I think if a candidate in a Jungian training wrote that Jungian analysis "does not consist in analysis and interpretation of such materials as produced by the unconscious," they would likely be taken to task. The key sentence here is Jung's statement "you act as if there is no analyst for you under the changing moon, except the one in your heart" and his understanding that is the "unconscious guide that dwells within" that is the real healer. On 1 May, Layard replied to Jung: "I know...that active imagination and the Auseinandersetzung should come in to help. But this is precisely what I so far, with tiny exceptions, have been unable to achieve.

2. Layard Papers, University of California at San Diego.

3. In the published edition of Jung's letters, Layard was anonymised as 'Mr. O.' Layard's active imaginations may be found in the Layard papers.

If you could help me to this, it would be my salvation, because I am sick and tired of dependence..." (Cited in James Greene, n.d., p.13). To this, Jung replied on 2 May:

I am somewhat astonished that you haven't learned yet to apply what I call "active imagination," as this is the indispensable second part of any analysis that is really meant to go to the roots. The point is, that you start with any image, for instance, just with that yellow mass of your dream. Contemplate it and carefully observe how the picture begins to unfold or change. Don't try to make it into something, just do nothing but observing what its spontaneous changes are. Any mental picture you contemplate in this way will sooner or later change through a spontaneous association that causes a slight alteration of the picture. You must carefully avoid impatient jumping from one subject to another. Hold fast to the one image you have chosen and wait until it changes by itself. Note all these changes and eventually step into the picture itself and, if it is a speaking figure at all, then say what you have to say to that figure and listen to what he or she has to say. Thus you give a chance to your unconscious to create its own figures into visibility where your conscious can deal with them. Thus you can not only analyse your unconscious but you give your unconscious a chance to analyse yourself, and therewith you gradually create the unity of conscious and unconscious without which there is no individuation at all. If you apply this method, then I can come in as an occasional adviser, but if you don't apply it, then my existence is of no use to you. (Adler, 1973, pp.459-60)

Jung's comments here are striking: the task is not just a hermeneutic one of interpreting images, but of letting oneself be "analysed" by the unconscious.

Layard appears to have had difficulty making headway with this. Two months later, he wrote to Jung:

I have made no further progress with active imagination, and apparently I may not see you unless I do. It is like telling a person he mustn't bathe before he can swim ... Do you want your work to live on in the written word only, or in flesh and blood? It is sad if they have to exclude one another. I wish you would concern yourself with me. (Cited in James Greene, n.d., p.15)

On 7 May, Jung gave him detailed advice as to how to approach his anima figure, Beatrice. The central advice was: "Treat her as a person, if you like as a patient or a goddess, but above all as something that does exist" (Adler, 1973, p.461). On 29 October Jung reiterated to Layard that dealing with active imagination and resistances "belongs to the elementary equipment of an analyst" (cited in James Greene, n.d., p.16). It's clear from this that Jung saw himself as supervising Layard's self-analysis, but it's not self-analysis as an interpretive hermeneutic venture, but an enterprise of allowing the figures to analyse Layard. But who is this physician within? Who is the analyst in the heart?

What I would like to do now is to look at the phenomenology of Jung's first forays into the 'practice of the image,' in as much as we can reconstruct it. From this angle, what is critical here is not how Jung understood the meaning of the content of his fantasies, but reconstructing his procedure.

In October of 1913, Jung was on his way to Schaffhausen by train, and experienced a waking vision. Here is his account of it, written around a year later, in *Liber Novus*:

I saw a terrible flood that covered all the northern and low-lying lands between the North Sea and the Alps. It reached from England up to Russia and from the coast of the North Sea right up to the Alps. I saw yellow waves, swimming rubble and the death of countless thousands ... Two weeks passed then the vision returned, still more violent than before, and an inner voice spoke: "Look at it, it is completely real, and it will come to pass. You cannot doubt this." (Jung, 2009, pp.123-4)

In his 1925 seminar, he recalled this episode as follows:

In October 1913 I was travelling in a train and had a book in my hand that I was reading. I began to fantasize, and before I knew it, I was in the town to which I was going. This was the fantasy: I was looking down on the map of Europe in relief. I saw all the northern part, and England sinking down so that the sea came in upon it. It came up to Switzerland, and then I saw that the mountains grew higher and higher to protect Switzerland. I realized that a frightful catastrophe was in progress, towns and people were destroyed, and the wrecks and dead bodies were tossing about on the water. Then the whole sea turned to blood. At first I was only looking on dispassionately, and then the sense of the catastrophe gripped me with tremendous power. I tried to repress the fantasy, but it came again and held me bound for two hours. Three or four weeks later it came again, when I was again in a train. It was the same picture repeated, only the blood was more emphasized. (Jung, 1925, p.44)

It seems probably that what took place was a hypnagogic vision: i.e., that Jung entered into a stream of imagery in a state of drowsiness while reading a book. To Aniela Jaffé, Jung later recounted that he began to write down his inner states in metaphors, in an attempt at self-observation, such as being in a desert with an unbearably hot sun (that is, consciousness).<sup>4</sup> Thus his first move was to attempt to find imagistic correlates to his emotional states. Then he begins to write and to engage in play. While engaging in this play, he builds a church with a red pyramidal stone as the altar, gathering stones from the lake shore at the bottom of his garden. This reminded him of his childhood dream of the underground phallus. To Aniela Jaffé he recalled that he would usually do this

4. Protocols of Aniela Jaffé's interviews with Jung for *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., p.41.



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after lunch, and also sometimes in the evening. This clarified his thoughts, and led him to notice fantasies, which he then recorded in the *Black Books* (Jaffé and Jung, 1962, p.198). He had the feeling that he was practicing a rite, i.e., mythology. From 12 November to December 1913, Jung commenced writing entries in the first of the so-called *Black Books*. In 1925, he recalled: “For the sake then of trying to achieve the maximum honesty with myself, I wrote everything down very carefully, following the old Greek mandate, ‘give away all thou possessest, then thou shalt receive’” (Jung, 1925, p.51). This was a citation from the Mithraic Liturgy. He had cited the same lines on 31 August 1910 in a letter to Freud, posing them as a motto for psychoanalysis (McGuire, 1974, p.350).

This first sequence – from November to December 1913 – I characterise as the search for a method. It depicts Jung’s turning towards his soul and commencing a reconsideration of his life up to that point, a transvaluation of values. Up to this point, he had been successful, and had achieved all that he had sought. Then came the vision on the way to Schaffhausen, which provoked him to return to his soul. He considers himself an anchorite in his own desert, trying to find visual metaphors to contain and express his experience (Jung, 2009, p.141n). He experiences a sense of doubt and confusion, and there is no movement until 11 December, so for a full month he has been writing to his soul, but there has been no reply.

A dialogue now develops (Jung, 2009, p.143f.). His soul tells him she is not his mother. He should be patient; the way to truth is to those without intentions, and he must realise that intentions limit life. He addresses his feeling of self-scorn, and his soul tells him that this is out of the question; scorn is only an issue if he is completely vain, and asks if he knows who she is, has he made her into a dead formula? So the soul enters the discussion with some heavy criticism. On 12 December, as he recounts in his 1925 seminar,

not knowing what would come next, I thought more introspection was needed. When we introspect, we look within and see if there is anything to be observed, and if there is nothing we may either give up the introspective process or find a way of “boring through” to the material that escapes the first survey. I devised such a boring method by fantasizing that I was digging a hole, and by accepting this fantasy as perfectly real.

(Jung, 1925, p.51)

Jung had probably actually started by physically digging holes in his garden, down by the water, to release his fantasies. He then begins to imagine doing the same, while seated in his library. He then descends into the depths and a fantasy sequence unfolds (Jung, 2009, p.147f.). Jung’s “I” finds himself in a dark cave. He sees a red stone which he tries to reach through muddy water. The stone covers an opening in the rock. He places his ear to the opening, and hears a stream and sees a killed person float past and also a black scarab. A red sun shines at the bottom of the stream and there are serpents on the wall

which crawl towards the sun and eventually cover it. Blood springs forth, and then subsides. This is a striking, horrific image. One gets the sense that Jung attempted, in a way, to go back to the vision of horror that he experienced in October. He is involved simply passively, as a spectator, during what unfolds.

This process shifts on 21 December (Jung, 2009, p.174f). He encounters the figures of Elijah, the blind Salome and a serpent. Jung's "I" looks into a stone, and sees in it Eve, followed by Odysseus on his journeys. Elijah tells Jung's "I" that Salome is his daughter and that they have been companions since eternity. Salome tells Jung's "I" that she loves him. Elijah tells him that Salome loved a prophet and announced the new God to the world. Jung's "I" is shocked at all this. He hears wild music. He wonders if Salome loves him because he murdered the hero. He then has further encounters with them on 22 and 25 December.

These critical fantasies signal a breakthrough from passive witnessing to active engagement. It is as if he has broken through a barrier, and a method has been found and consolidated. He listens to the figures, and allows himself to be instructed by them. One thinks back to his advice to John Layard. He brings his dayworld perspective; he does not try to go native, and challenges the figures to explain themselves in a manner that he can understand. So this is the confrontation, the dialogue, with each protagonist exchanging views. There is no attempt to interpret the figures he meets. Instead, he seeks orientation from them. In the 1925 seminar, he recalled:

Fantasizing was a mental function that was directly repellent to me . . . . Permitting fantasy in myself had the same effect on me as would be produced on a man if he came into his workshop and found all his tools flying about doing things independently of his will. It shocked me . . . .to think of a fantasy life in my own mind; it was against all the intellectual ideals I had developed for myself. What I did then in order to get at this inferior, unconscious side of myself was to make at night an exact reversal of the mental machinery I had used in the day. That is to say, I turned all my libido within in order to observe the dreams that were going on... As soon as one begins to watch one's own mind, one begins to observe the autonomous phenomena in which one exists as a spectator or even a victim. (Jung, 1925, p.28)

In this process of reversing the mental machinery, the assumption is one sees the dreams one is actually already caught up in. One is not creating images; one is discovering the images that are already at play, entering into a pre-existing imaginal field. These figures are already there, lurking beneath the surface.

He continues with this procedure until the summer of 1914, noting this down in his *Black Books*. Again, there is no attempt to interpret. Alongside the notations of these active imaginings, of these fantasies, are simply reflections on his mental states. The first entries here depict a religious quest. There is an active intentionality here. It is a quest to recover a sense of meaning in his life.

In a way, this process comes to an end about May 1914. After a hiatus, the outbreak of the war then gives him a new perspective on what he has experienced, which leads him to develop a new hermeneutic. Struck by the prophetic nature of about a dozen of his fantasies, he begins to wonder, in a certain sense, whether all of his fantasies were prophetic, if not on a literal level, then on a symbolic one. He then begins to write a handwritten manuscript of a thousand pages, taking the main thirty-five episodes and writing a lyrical elaboration and commentary on these. One finds here the first immediate parallel to the practice of sandplay: delayed interpretation. He reviews the sequence from November 1913 to May 1914, and spends about a year considering this material as a whole.

Let us now consider at his interpretations in the second layer of the work (indicated in the published edition by “[2]” – to follow the chronological sequence, it is recommended to read the first layer of fantasies consecutively, and then doing the same with the second layer). He does not interpret in personal terms, but in terms of general layers of principles of human functioning. This is not what he would recommend to anyone else. He tries to divine what is to come in the world in a literal and symbolic manner and tries to understand the significance of the coincidence of his fantasies with what is taking place in the world. The key movement here is one from figuration to abstraction. If one reads this second layer through consecutively, and considers what it represents, it is clear that it is a complete philosophy of life: an ethic, a metaphysic, a cosmology, a theology – and also, incidentally, a psychology. This is what Jung learns from meditating on these images.

The result then of Jung’s practice of the image, his active imagination, is not an answer to how the man, Jung, should live his life, but far more general. It has taught him how, in his view, we should all live our lives. The implications of this is that one can’t solve the injunction of the Delphic oracle to “know thyself” as an individual, without knowing what it means to be a human being, and to grasp how one fits into the whole. After writing this manuscript, Jung has it typed and edited and corrected.<sup>5</sup> He then engages in the calligraphic project, which presents an aesthetic elaboration of both the fantasies *and* the interpretation and the second layer.

It is important to study the text before looking at the paintings in *Liber Novus* because of this dialectical movement: one has the first phase of the active imagination, the first phase of his engagement with the figures. One then has then has this creative burst in the form of this second layer, which was unparalleled in his whole life. In the condensed period of one year, he’s developed a full-blown metaphysic, cosmology, theology, ethic and psychology, which he would continue to meditate on and elaborate for the rest of his life. Following this, he attempts to combine these two layers together. In the

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5. For photographs of these and other manuscripts, see Shamdasani (2012).

summer of 1915, the fantasies start again, after a further hiatus of a year (Jung, 2009, p.474f). What is going on here? The first set of fantasies were characterised by an attitude of not-knowing and a suspension of judgement, which was followed by a study, elaboration and interpretation of the whole sequence of fantasies several months later. Now he goes into the fantasies knowing what he wants to do, which changes the tenor of the experience. There is no longer a clear separation of layer one, pure fantasy experience, and a second interpretive layer. Instead, we find a melange of the two, in which he further elaborates and differentiates his personal cosmology. He no longer needs to separate the moment of understanding and the moment of elaboration, finding that he can do both at the same time, which results in the third section of the work, *Scrutinies*.

While he's engaged in this further elaboration and transcription into the calligraphic volume, he resurfaces to address the public in a series of works. Here, he attempts to translate insights from *Liber Novus* into a language acceptable to a medical and scientific audience, combined with the general features he has been able to confirm in his work with his patients. Jung's self-experimentation was by no means a solitary enterprise; he took his patients along with him. In this endeavour, he was attempting to find regularities, types of situations, figures that repeated themselves. What he finds is one general idea; that there is a sequential process that develops through these images, to which he gives the name "individuation."

In 1916 he writes a paper, on the transcendent function. It's important to note that he's not happy with this paper; he simply sticks it in the drawer, and doesn't publish it. This is an attempt to describe his method. We can now consider it anew from the perspective of Jung's own practice.

Here, he defines the transcendent function as arising out of the union of conscious and unconscious contents. He notes that a critical problem confronting analysis was that the new attitude gained from it became obsolete afterwards. Unconscious materials were needed to supplement the conscious attitude and correct its one-sidedness. After analysis, the interpretation of dreams was not complete. Unconscious material was needed to make the transcendent function, but since energy tension was low in sleep, dreams were inferior expressions of unconscious contents. Thus other sources had to be turned to, namely, spontaneous fantasies.

Jung described his technique for inducing such fantasies: "The training consists first of all in systematic exercises for eliminating critical attention, thus producing a vacuum in consciousness" (Jung, 1916, para.155). One commenced by concentrating on a particular mood, and attempting to become as conscious as possible of all the fantasies and associations which came up in connection with it. The aim was one of allowing fantasy free play, but without departing from the initial affect in a free associative process. This leads to a concrete or symbolic expression of the mood, which had the





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result of bringing the affect nearer consciousness, hence making it more understandable. The mere process of doing this could have a revitalising effect. Individuals could draw, paint or sculpt, according to their abilities. Once these fantasies had been produced and embodied, two approaches were possible: creative formulation and understanding. Each needed the other, and both were necessary to produce the transcendent function. For some people, Jung noted, “it is technically very simple to note down the ‘other’ voice in writing and to answer its statements from the standpoint of the I. It is exactly as if a dialogue were taking place between two human beings” (para.186).

If one compares this rather dry depiction with Jung’s own practice, one finds that it only outlines part of Jung’s procedure, namely, the initial mechanics. There is no indication of the wider cosmological, metaphysical and theological exploration that he himself was engaged with. He’s not recommending in this paper, at least at that time, that others should do something similar themselves.

Let’s look briefly at how Jung engaged in this practice with his patients. This is from a memoir by Tina Keller, recently published, who was in analysis with Jung during this period, and later with Toni Wolff:

Dr. Jung insisted on preparation. We were taught to write out our dreams and association to each of its elements.... The most important technique I learned in the sessions with Dr. Jung was writing ‘from the unconscious’. Early in my analysis Dr. Jung said, ‘You must at once begin to prepare for the time you will no more be coming to me. Each time, as you are leaving, even as you are going downstairs, you have more questions. Write these down as if they were letters to me. You do not need to send these letters. When you ask a question, in the measure that you really want an answer, and you are not afraid of that answer, there is an answer deep inside you. Let it come up.’ I tried and nothing came, and I told Dr. Jung. But he insisted. He even said, ‘Surely you know how to pray!’ (Swan, 2011, p.23)

What’s striking in this is Jung’s handling of the therapeutic rapport. A certain myth has arisen, according to which Jung wasn’t interested in the transference, or couldn’t deal with it. We find here a very subtle differentiated procedure, where he’s recognising a potential situation of transference dependence, and attempting to depotentiate himself right from the outset as a transference figure, to facilitate dialogue in the patient with their own “inner physician,” which links us back to his recommendations to Layard. Writing letters as if they were writing to him: we find a number of patients actually engaging in this practice. From this point onwards, Jung’s therapeutic interest was not in what one could term “general” psychotherapy, but in the psychotherapy of the individuation process, and it was here that active imagination had a preminent role.

Here's a further example of Jung's procedure from Christiana Morgan's diary in 1926. Jung is encouraging her to do active imagination and here are his comments, as she notes:

Now I feel as though I ought to say something to you about these phantasies. You can of course take my suggestions or leave them. This is a very delicate matter on which to speak and one can hardly know enough to give advice. One can only rely on intuitions, and I feel intuitively that I must express this to you. The phantasies now seem to be rather thin and full of repetitions of the same motives. There isn't enough fire and heat in them. They ought to be more burning. In a way this is natural because you are somewhat out of your life here. You are away from your own problem. Your unconscious is quiet. But even so you ought to force out of them the kernel of truth there is in each one. You must be in them more – that is you must be your own conscious critical self in them – imposing your own judgements and criticisms. Suppose you were in a mystery ceremony and are one of the actors. You just take part unquestioningly. This is what you are doing now. What I would like to have you do would be to enter the church as your own self and ask people what they were doing and why they did it.<sup>6</sup>

This is strikingly interventative and directive. What Jung is encouraging here is for others to do as he did himself, and shift from a process of passive witnessing to an active engagement, using his own practice of the image as a paradigm. He went on to say to her: "Sometimes when I come to a knot with some patient which I can't seem to unravel I concentrate on the patient and have such a vision which is immensely helpful" (*Ibid.*). So active imagination wasn't only a practice for patients, but could also have a significant role for the analyst themselves in the practice of analysis.

In 1928, Jung discussed the procedure again in his 1928 book, *Relations between the I and the Unconscious*. He writes that the "the central thing is not the interpretation, the understanding of the phantasies, but always the experiencing of them" (Jung, 1928, p.234). This represents a shift from his emphasis on creative formulation and understanding in his paper on the transcendent function. The very act of engaging in this process had a vitalising effect.

In her book on active imagination, Barbara Hannah records: "When I was being analysed by Jung, he always wanted to hear if I had done any active imagination, but after listening carefully to any that I had done, he never analysed it or commented on it at all, except to point out if I had used it wrongly... This was to avoid influencing the active imagination" (Hannah, 1991, pp. 12-3). Here we see Jung supervising, but at a suitable distance.

6. Christiana Morgan, analysis notebooks, Countway library of Medicine, Harvard Medical School, 12 October 1926.

In 1929 he discussed the method again in his Commentary on the *Secret of the Golden Flower*. Whilst discussing the Taoist notion of “wu wei”, action through inaction, he noted that “The art of letting things happen, action through inaction, letting go of oneself as taught by Meister Eckhart, became for me the key that opens the door to the way” (Jung, 1929, para.20). We have already seen, in his comments to Tina Keller, the parallel to prayer: here the parallels he gives are to Taoist notion of “wu wei” and Meister Eckhart’s notion of “Gelassenheit.” Taken together, these references are at a quite a remove from other practices in psychotherapy at this time. The goal was a new attitude, “that accepts the irrational and the incomprehensible simply because it is happening” (1929, para.23). Here again, Jung was stressing the functional value of active imagination, quite separately from the meaning and content of the fantasies produced. He noted: “When the fantasies take the form chiefly of thoughts, intuitive formulations of dimly felt laws or principles emerge, which at first tend to be dramatized or personified” (para.31). We have here a cryptic depiction of his own procedure – what layer two of *Liber Novus* represents par excellence is this “intuitive formulation of dimly felt laws or principles” which first appeared in dramatic, personified forms.<sup>7</sup>

In the 1930s, Jung stopped his transcription of the text of *Liber Novus* into the calligraphic volume and laid the work to one side. His main project, which was primarily embodied in his lecture series over thirteen semesters at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, was the comparative study of the individuation process. Significantly, this featured a comparative study of active imagination in various traditions. These could be considered a network of related practices aiming at the transformation of the personality. In a lecture of 1938, we find the following depiction of active imagination:

It leads to a more flexible concentration, a concentration which allows things to move, which plays with them, so to speak. When an image presents itself, we should not give it a cramped attention but should watch it with no prejudice or expectation, then we shall find that other things will come and settle around it and the whole scene will develop.  
(Hannah, 1959, p.12)

It is this trusting attitude of consciousness which is necessary to allow these images to emerge. “If one concentrates enough on the contents of the unconscious, they begin to move and various peculiar phenomena take place” (*Ibid.*). He noted this was the technique of the Egyptian crystal gazing, and the temples of Asclepius. This gives indication of the width of the range of what Jung considered to be active imagination. He goes even further: “Children are full of active imagination, but we think

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7. For further discussion of Jung’s practice of the image, see Hillman and Shamdasani (2013).

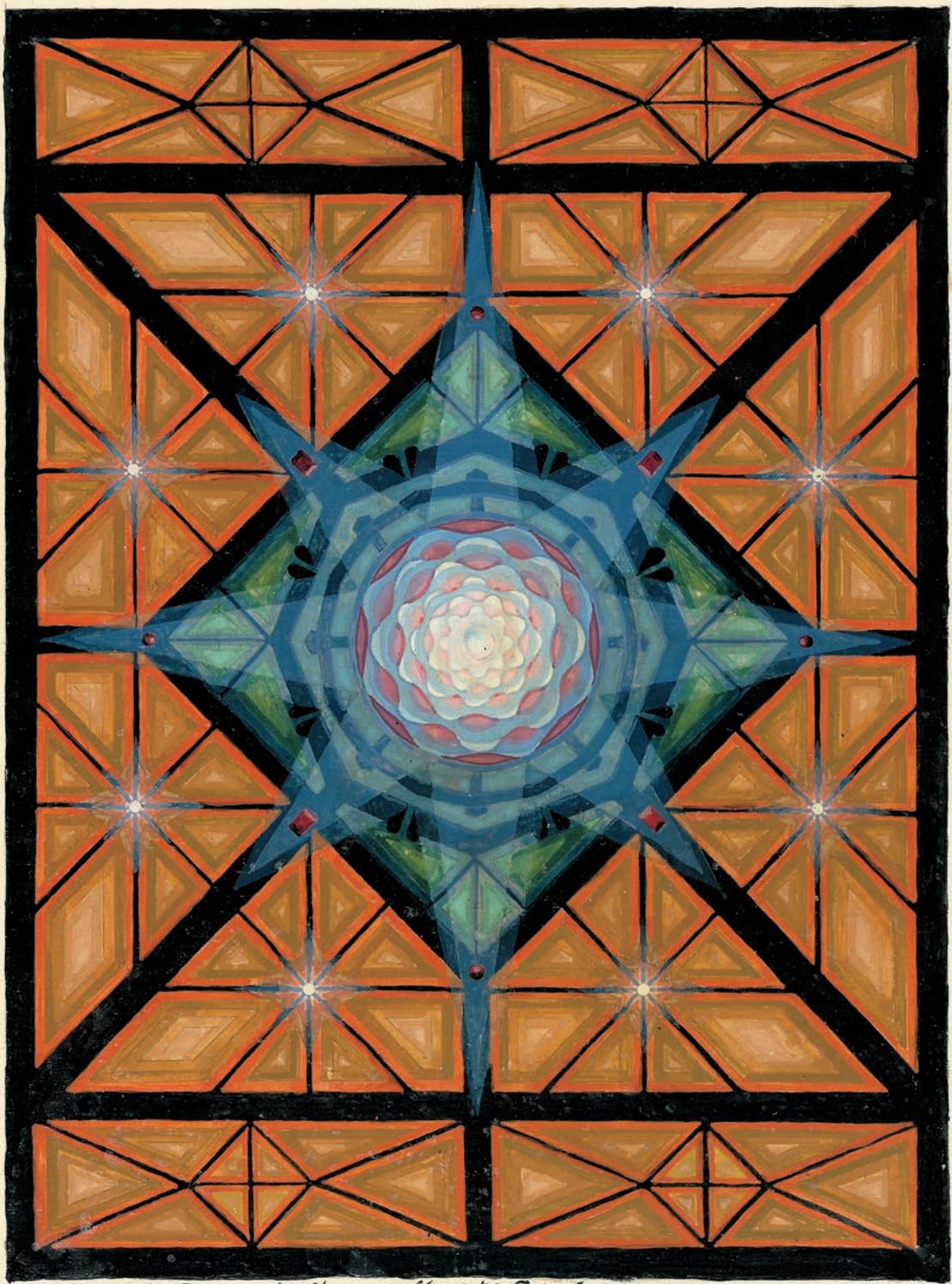
of it as a childish activity.” Jung went on to contrast his own practice with that of yoga:

The technique of yoga is based on the practice of such concentration, and the resemblance between eastern Yoga and active imagination in the West should not be overlooked. But it should be remembered that Yoga is an ancient system, a prescribed technique, and that the western parallels are exceedingly poor in comparison. Active imagination, as we practice it today, is no system, and we could call it childishly simple. The object of mediation is prescribed in the East but here we take a fragment of a dream or something of that kind and meditate upon it. (*Ibid.*, p.000)

The distinction he is drawing is between procedures which start with a prescribed image and his own procedure of starting with a spontaneous image. But these are both, in his mind, classed as different modalities of active imagination, which he describes as follows: “Active Imagination is to be understood as a way or method, to heal, raise and transform the personality... Through active imagination the image is imprinted on the psychic essence of personality with the purpose of transformation” (*Ibid.*, p.000). He then goes on to describe Buddhist Tantric practices, yoga and alchemy as different forms of active imagination, or intentional imagining. It follows from this that there is not *one* thing called active imagination. Jung himself is presenting a differentiated topology, or even typology, of types of active imagination, and commences their comparative study.

What then happened to active imagination in the analysis? I've already cited von Franz and Jung himself on its pivotal role. Quite simply, it starts to disappear. There are very few articles in the Jungian journals about active imagination and very few books. A critical juncture was a series of articles in the *Journal of the Analytical Psychology* in the mid 1960s. In 1966, Dorothy Davidson wrote an article entitled “Transference as a Form of Active Imagination.” She notes that already by then in London, active imagination was rarely practiced. The justification, she says, is that they were encountering a different class of patients. As she put it: “The problems of the modern patient are to do with the first, not the second half of life” (Davidson, 1966, p.137). Active imagination, in her view, was played out in the transference: “successful analysis can be thought of as a lived-through active imagination” (p.135). Setting aside the question of the validity of Davidson's recommendations from a therapeutic angle, it is hard to get over the impression that the continued utilisation of the term ‘active imagination’ is simply pure scholasticism. The term is employed in a radically different sense to Jung to designate a form of interpersonal relationship. The continued use through resignification of the term provides a façade of fidelity to Jung.

In 1967, Michael Fordham wrote an article entitled, “Active Imagination: Deintegration or Disintegration?” Here, he presented eight cases in which the images performed a dual function— their objectivity was not only creative and



D. IX Januarii a<sup>no</sup> 1927 obit<sup>us</sup> Hermanos Sigg aet. s. 52 amicos meos.



1928. als d' dies bild malte / wach' das goldene wohlbewehrte schloß zeigt / sandte mir Richard Wilhelm  
 in Frankfurt d' chinesis'ch / tausend Jahre alt - kist vom g'alt - schloß / d' kein d' unsterblich - körpers.  
 ecclesia catholica et protestantes et saculi in p'orto. accon' finitils.

integrative, as would be expected as they were based on the deintegration of the self, but they were also used to hold and cover pathological disintegration which could only be resolved by penetrating to the source of the splitting.

In 1968, Rosemary Gordon wrote an article, “Transference as the Fulcrum of Analysis,” taking up Dorothy Davidson’s thesis. Gordon stated that:

Transference analysis can, therefore, be thought of as a ‘lived-through’ active imagination; that is to say, the active imagination is carried on – not within a person, between his ego and one or more unconscious complexes – but between one person and another, that is the patient and his analyst. (Gordon, 1968, p.112)

The implication was that there was no longer a need for a separate practice of active imagination, as the aims of the procedure could fully be accomplished through transference analysis.

This critique of active imagination was mirrored with a wider shift towards transference based models and the accommodation of Jungian analysis to the reigning *doxae* and *mores* of the psychotherapeutic world in the various countries in which it was being developed.

In conclusion, I would like to turn now to the relationship between sandplay and active imagination. A variety of views have been expressed. In 1999, Kay Bradway and Barbara McCoard wrote an article radically separating sandplay and active imagination, arguing that the former had nothing to do with active imagination.<sup>8</sup> Contrastingly, in 1981, Louis Stewart wrote an article entitled “Play and sandplay” in which he argued the following:

As one part of the several techniques of active imagination, sandplay has the particular merits of, first, requiring no special skills or talent for the use of the materials, and second, and most important, providing a direct link to the play world of childhood. (Stewart, 1981, p.36)

Interestingly enough, this passage was underscored in the margin by Joel Ryce-Menuhin in his copy of the book. He himself in his 1992 book, *Sandplay: The Wonderful Therapy* simply listed sandplay as one of the modalities of active imagination (Ryce Menuhin, 1992, p.33).

As we have seen, in Jung’s discussions of active imagination, he included practices such as Egyptian crystal gazing under this rubric. So it is unlikely that he would have excluded sandplay. It is then fair to state that Stewart and Ryce-Menuhin were on the right track, and further, in suggesting that sandplay had some advantages to offer, as it didn’t get into the problems one faces with the technical skills needed to be able to draw, paint, sculpt or write a dialogue, and the risk of regarding these as aesthetic activities in their own right. There are also striking parallels that they would not have been aware of:

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8. I thank Barbara McCoard for indicating to me that her current position is different.

undergoing the whole sequence before engaging in any reflection on these images, as in Jung's own example, and the emphasis of regarding the main fulcrum of therapeutics not in 'mutative interpretations' but in an establishing a dialogue between an individual and their own figures and facilitating a lived through symbolic process.

Jung considered active imagination as the crux of any far-reaching analysis and the *via regia* to individuation. It was the key technique that distinguished his mode of practice from other forms of psychotherapy. If analysis no longer has recourse to active imagination, to what extent is it still in the spirit of Jung? The issue here is not one of evaluation, but one of understanding Jung's own criteria. The question then arises: is the spirit of Jung's own practice of the image more present in the practice of sandplay than in 'Jungian' analysis, in ISST rather than IAAP? Who today foregrounds the facilitation of an individual's engagement with their own images, as opposed to utilising largely transference-based or inter-subjective models? Historical reflection suggests the spirit of Jung's practice of the image, his engagement with his own figures, is indeed more alive in the practice of sandplay than in other Jungian conclaves.

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