

CHAPTER 12

Imagery and Trauma

The Psyche's Push for Healing

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In the small but robust and rapidly growing world of spiritually oriented therapists, some of us came to discover a Western understanding of psyche through spiritual practice, and some the reverse. I found myself in the former camp, with a budding interest in clinical work that grew out of an early exposure to Buddhist meditation. By the time I hit adolescence, I had learned that working with the mind in a thorough but deeply compassionate, non-coercive way had clear psychological benefits. As I moved into adulthood, with all the psychic tumult that comes with efforts at individuation, I began to appreciate and grow curious about the ways in which certain methods within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition seemed to offer me needed ways to stay the course of psychological development. Understanding and separating from my family-of-origin seemed to be a process that my spiritual practice was effectively addressing, in ways that were different but just as relevant as my work in psychotherapy. Healing images were evoked that simulated the feelings I still longed for, of safe belonging, maternal holding, and paternal pride in my being.

When several years later I began my psychoanalytic training, I was reminded of my appreciation for images of parental care when encountering the work of D. W. Winnicott, the British psychoanalyst. Winnicott wrote with remarkable insight into the terror so many of us face as we seek somehow to remain connected to the people who brought us into this world, while blazing some psychic new trail away from them, a trail with no clear roadmap (Winnicott, 1975). With his characteristic humor and warmth, Winnicott encouraged parents not to expect a thank you note from their children when they traverse this journey successfully, but instead to survive the many ways they may come to feel psychically killed off as their children traversed the choppy waters of individuation (Winnicott, 1965; Ulanov, personal communication). These waters never fully ebb, he rightly suggested. The hero's journey away from our origins, even origins that have been treacherous or fraught with danger, unleashes in the psyche a primordial longing for safe merger that is typically defended against through the mosaic of jarring behaviors parents of teenagers throughout the globe have come to know well.

Tantra and Individuation

In the Tibetan tradition of Vajrayana Buddhism, also known as Tantra, I had been learning and practicing a form of meditation that seemed to touch on the primordial longing for love and connection free from all the shadow content that comes with human closeness. Like many of my American-born spiritual friends, I was aware of the profound psychological impact of these meditations. Together, we utilized the mindful concentration we'd been learning to hold our attention on the imagined presence of certain images—green shimmering Tara Mother Buddha, indigo Blue Medicine Buddha, fiery red Wisdom Mother Vajrayogini—that we were encouraged to commune with imaginatively and, over time, to internalize as manifestations of our own deepest level of awakened mind, our Buddha-nature.

The practice of Tantra, one quickly finds, is powerfully relational. Unlike the increasingly secularized practice of mindfulness meditation, in which one can feel that the ability to cultivate heightened non-reactive awareness comes solely from one's own efforts, in the Tantric tradition, practitioners learn to rely on external images that are considered to be both powerfully healing *and* empty of any external reality. For many, this conundrum of supreme reliability and absolute emptiness can take some time to work out. These symbols are meant to represent manifestations of our own healing nature, our own mind infused with insight, receptivity, love and compassion, which require another simply to jump-start an untapped internal resource. In the concept of *trikaya*, usually translated as triple body, these images are referred to as *sambhogakaya*, or enjoyment bodies. Having grown out of *dharmakaya*, or the truth of emptiness that is all-pervasive, they can be utilized to evoke a felt sense of other, both healing and caring, that is always available to be relied upon, even as we seek to understand that such images merely reflect our own deepest nature, our own internal resource of well-being. *Nirmanakaya* are thought to be the incarnate beings, teachers, and helpers, who manifest to bring forth these resources we all harbor (see Gross, 1998, pp. 171–186).

For the many developmental challenges faced in the terrain of human intimacy, the process of evoking and communing with such images can offer another method for using one's imagination and archetypal imprints for healing. The psychoanalytic method has similarly had a deep and abiding appreciation for the importance of symbolizing. Freud mused endlessly on the ways in which we symbolize psychic life via dreams, and learn to sublimate desires not readily met through art, poetry, and the myriad ways we represent unmet needs symbolically. Jung suggested that our efforts at symbolization were critical for mental health, affording us ways to access layers of meaning and longing that he believed we inherited from the evolution of human consciousness (Jung, 1983). Clinicians such as Melanie Klein and Hanna Segal suggested that through a developmental capacity for symbolization we are able to relate to external reality, most notably our primary caretakers, while protecting ourselves and others from misperceptions of objective truth.

In other words, when children learn to distinguish their symbolic representations of experience from experience writ large, they can play with it, reflect upon it, and mentalize, or think about it. Such a child might find herself comparing a grumpy parent who is short-tempered after a difficult day at work to Cruella de Vil. And while such a comparison, if expressed directly to the parent, might cause some embarrassment, it will save the child from losing touch with a parent's fuller, more multiple, and external psychic reality. Such a child might begin to see in herself the capacity to feel and act like Cruella on given days, and Santa Claus on others. These images, or archetypes, offer us ways to symbolize highly charged affective experience, to integrate our own and others' dynamic multiplicity. In so doing, we are better able to be spared the suffering that comes with overly restrictive images of self, other, and self-other interaction.

In all schools of psychoanalytic thought, there is a deep appreciation for the ways in which restrictive notions of self and other resulting from trauma, or a prolonged experience of mis-attunement within one's family of origin or culture, create complicated and multifaceted forms of pain and suffering. The psychoanalytic method seeks to use the relationship between therapist and client as a way of better understanding how the individual has come to experience herself, and to anticipate her treatment of others. In Jungian depth psychology, now mirrored in the work of Internal Family Systems, there is also a fundamental reverence for the client's ability to access healing resources within her own mind (see Schwartz, 1995). Thus, the therapist is encouraged to work as more of a translator, or receptive psychic radar, for the client's unconscious, where such resources live (Ulanov, 2004). With this work comes a deep and abiding respect for the client's images, dreams, and fantasies. It is a way to honor the healing imagination that exists in us all.

As the traditions of Buddhism and psychoanalysis began to mix in my own clinical journey, I came to utilize those healing images from Buddhist cosmology that resonated so viscerally for me, while learning to connect with the healing images arising from my clients' psyches, often informed by their own religious traditions. What I hope to explore in this chapter are the ways in which my relationship to the healing imagery found in Vajrayana Buddhism has allowed me to more fully enter into and utilize the healing imagery of my clients. Like all clinicians who respect their client's capacity for healing, I have made efforts first simply to notice these imaginative interactions free from interpretation, then to more directly utilize them for healing. In the following clinical example I will explore how my own meditative practice seemed to intersect with my clients' use of healing imagery.

Margarite: A Case Vignette

My first session with Margarite took place on a blazing hot day in July. From the window of my office I could see the heat rising in waves from the asphalt street. My *mantra* throughout the day was directed at my air conditioner: please freeze me like an ice cube for the benefit of all beings. This emphasis on climate is relevant only because when I opened the door to greet Margarite that afternoon, I was

struck by a stunningly beautiful Latina woman clad in elegant purple batik from head to toe, and wearing a thick woolen hat. My mind flashed to a supervision session years back when we had discussed a severely depressed patient who wore winter hats in the summer. My typically jovial and steadfastly non-pathologizing supervisor had looked distressed: “Winter hats in the summer,” he’d said, shaking his head, “that’s *bad*.”

I shook Margarite’s hand and invited her in. Before long she began to describe in great detail the many ways she had felt alternately hurt, disappointed, and altogether misunderstood by her previous therapists. “Totally incompetent,” she said, shaking her head in disbelief, reminding me of my supervisor’s note of alarm. I stood forewarned, watching her adjust her hat when it occasionally slipped too far back, revealing a high regal forehead with rivulets of sweat pouring downward and landing in small pools on her pretty shirt.

Despite her previous disappointments in therapy, Margarite quickly began to share with me the sense of profound aloneness and abject despair that had been haunting her throughout her life. It was a despair so jagged and unrelenting that it left her willing to try therapy “one last time.” She looked up, her almond-shaped black eyes searing into me. She described her mother as an extremely hard-working and keenly intelligent woman who had put herself through college and completed a master’s program in history after she moved to New York City from her native Dominican Republic. Her father had been a librarian, also from the Dominican Republic, and had died when she was fifteen years old from pancreatic cancer, leaving her and her mother to care for themselves and Margarite’s three younger siblings.

Her mother had become a high-school history teacher in a well-respected school and continued working full time, and continued growing increasingly, though quietly enraged. It seemed to my client as if her mother had wished Margarite had died instead of her father. When I asked, she confirmed that she’d noticed her mother’s rage before her father died, a noxious presence of categorical disapproval she often felt. But it became more obvious and over-powering to her in those last years before she left to attend an Ivy League college where she studied biology, “It was as if she hated me, and I couldn’t figure out why. I was a good kid.”

Margarite eventually had become a professor of biology at an elite college and a well-known researcher. As we continued our work, she spoke to me of losing faith in her ability to ever be a genuinely happy person. She had limited contact with her family-of-origin—her siblings and mother had all dispersed to different corners of the globe—and she was in a relatively new romantic relationship with a man whom she experienced as benign but self-centered, and unable to challenge her in any significant way. A previous ten-year marriage had ended in divorce. Margarite spoke honestly of the ways she felt herself treating her former and current partners as her mother had treated her, “With an oozing though somehow contained contempt. Something impossible to talk about or see clearly, yet totally pervasive, like an *odorless gas*.”

While I appreciated Margarite’s laser insight and psychological curiosity, I found it difficult, even treacherous, to help her reflect on the ways in which the aggression

she'd gotten the brunt of was getting mobilized and enacted with her partners. She quickly followed any such association with a litany of the ways her partners had deserved her wrath. They couldn't keep their focus on her, they couldn't offer support when she most needed it, they were selfish, unable to acknowledge the ways in which they hurt her, unwittingly or not. "Total *fucking* idiots," she said, shaking her head in a dismay so thick and condemning it sometimes made me laugh with discomfort. Sometimes we laughed together in what felt like a joint appreciation for her blunt honesty, even if it had an edgy protective function that caused her and her partners a good deal of suffering.

What I felt in my initial work with Margarite was her need for copious amounts of unrushed, attuned, non-judgmental listening. My early efforts at interpretation were met either with confusion or affront, and so I opted for a long period of time to offer a more supportive therapy, a place where she could be heard without interruption, and begin to more fully feel into the complexity of her losses. Slowly, we mapped out the various parts of herself she had noticed in her professional and personal life, and the ways in which these parts needed care and attention. We talked through her understanding of her family's history, the way her parents were parented, the culturally supported tendency toward inflexible expectations, the value of hard work, and the scorn unleashed when any hint of vulnerability or overwhelm was revealed. Margarite was aware that these values had helped her accomplish a great deal, but she was growing more curious about the emotional toll such grueling expectations had taken.

It seemed to her that before her father died, the edginess of these expectations was somehow made more palatable by his presence; that it felt normal to be so hard-working in an immigrant family. It seemed that her father somehow offered a softness that served as a buttress for the overwhelm she sometimes felt. He had been the real love source in the family. A hard-working, but kind and decent man. After her father died, Margarite felt that the meaning drained out of life, that her work felt driven by a sense of obligation and fear of failure, rather than any sense of real inspiration. Her father had been the rock in the family, her North Star.

Enter Primordial Woman: Dream Imagery and Transformation

Almost a year into our sessions, Margarite began to share with me a compelling image that came from her dreams, of an ethereal yet fiery woman whose power seemed to pervade all reality. She had long black hair, was sometimes small like a doll, and other times massive like a Redwood tree. She stayed in the background of her dreams but always communicated to Margarite by her very presence that she was there, watching, helping, unafraid. Together we used my version of Jung's active imagination to work with this archetypal image. I encouraged my client to speak to her, ask her what her role was in her life. The woman told Margarite that she could take her rage, it wouldn't hurt her. She had the strength, and she understood Margarite's need for safe expression. Margarite envisioned her unexpressed rage—toward her mother, toward her father for leaving her, toward

herself for feeling so undone by his death—as a blaze that burned her up; in our guided visualizations she handed the woman her fire, which the woman gladly received.

I noticed after these sessions a palpable relief in Margarite, that there was finally somewhere to put feelings that had formerly seemed to have no place except within her own mind. She'd been burning up without someone to help hold these feelings. Together we sat in moments of rare quietude, as if we'd survived together some unexpected rescue after a drawn-out catastrophe. "I feel better," she said. I nodded, feeling better too. The ambiance in the room had shifted, becoming somehow quieter, less riled.

Unbeknownst to Margarite, at the end of our first year of treatment, my father died suddenly. It was a loss I could not have anticipated or imagined. Like Margarite, I too had experienced my father as a North Star, a person who had offered me throughout my life a sense of direction, even in the midst of great family tumult. A person of character whose work ethic was only surpassed by his capacity for decency and kindness. In addition to the shock of his death, which I had witnessed, was a most unexpected rage in its wake, a rage that seemed to have a lethal impact. Before I finally fell asleep for rare periods of rest in the months following his death, I fantasized about who I would kill and how: his absentee surgeon who had failed to show up; my family members who seemed unwilling to suffer any real feelings of loss; myself for having failed to adequately protect him.

As a long-term Buddhist, such ferocious feelings were not easily managed. I worried about their influence, the way they riled my mind, leaving me feeling extraordinarily wrathful. During this time my appreciation for the conversation between Buddhism and psychoanalysis deepened, as my own mentors—people conversant in both traditions—encouraged me to allow for this wrath without judgment. One cherished colleague said she was a "big fan" of my new-found aggression. It offered zest to my personality. When I expressed fear that it would eat me alive, she looked at me tenderly and asked what I could do with it. How to use it for good? My gratitude for the question was immense, as I realized yet again that there was no inherent problem with aggression—it too was empty—but in need of skillful expression.

In the weeks to come I found myself flashing on the image of Manjushri, the Buddha of compassionate wisdom, a big gleaming sword in hand that was meant to symbolize his capacity to cut through delusion. I thought of the sweet and mild-mannered chaplain who had accompanied the surgeons to tell me that my father was in distress while recovering from what was supposed to be a minor medical procedure. When I met with him again two days after my father had died, consumed with a jagged rage toward the hospital for making it impossible for me to be with my father at the end, and toward his surgeon for abandoning him on the day of his death, he wisely reminded me that "anger can be an indication of something important."

When I returned to work two weeks later, I met with Margarite on my first day back. While I tended toward revealing little about my personal life, with clients who needed to know my whereabouts for their sense of safety, I was honest and

direct. For this reason, Margarite had some insight into how I'd spent my summer vacation. She walked in, a big and generous smile spreading across her face. "How's your father?" she asked. I waited for her to sit down and told her that I was very sorry to tell her that he had died. She grimaced, looking stricken. She shook her head, still grimacing. "I'm so sorry," she said. "God!"

I felt tears forming, which I fought. But when one tear slipped out, she softened, even as I braced myself for the anger my vulnerability might incite in her for having to feel concerned about me. I asked her what it was like for her to see me cry. She took a breath. "I see a woman devastated by the loss of her father." Even as I took in her response with palpable feelings of gratitude and tenderness, I worried that my tears would be too much for her, indicating some limited capacity to tolerate her pain, or my own. Interestingly, she seemed unconcerned about this, and more concerned about my capacity to get pissed. "What the fuck, Pilar?" she asked. "I hope you sue those bastards."

My mind flashed on Vajrayogini, a feminine Buddhist wisdom deity known for her "semi-wrathful" properties. For many years, this powerful symbol had been a central part of my spiritual practice. In Buddhist artwork, she is depicted as deep red in color, with long black hair, drinking blood from a human skull and wearing a garland of fifty freshly severed heads. I'd found these images to be quite compelling, the way she seemed joyfully to revel in her aggression, which from a Buddhist perspective spoke to her capacity to relinquish or "kill off" all non-truths. She is understood to be blissful and, in her dynamic bliss, to realize the truth of emptiness, that everything is relational in nature, and therefore lacking any fixed, unchanging or independent being or essence.

While I could not have fairly described myself as blissful during that time, I nevertheless had come to feel that the presence of wrath, or aggression, could be a means through which deeper truths were encountered. I thought of the mild-mannered Southern chaplain, the way he'd seemed to understand the need for my upwelling of anger to shake up a hospital system disinclined to face the truth of mortality, as if patients would never die on their premises, and their surviving family members would never feel the devastation of sudden loss. As if they were so powerful that this basic fact of life—that we are impermanent—was not applicable in their self-made cocoon.

In the days just following my father's death, I had been turning for support to the more peaceful images—of shimmering Green Tara Buddha—known for her capacity to offer swift compassionate action. This gentle but nimble healing presence was a primary source of care for me in those first days of radical loss. But in the weeks and months to follow, volcanic spurts of a furious rage would surge through my mind, with a violence that took me far from Tara Buddha. Swirling among these fiery feelings were distressing images of my sweet-natured father putting his trust in a hospital system that did not care for him properly; of a culture of hubris I encountered in the administration when I went to address the circumstances of his death. I experienced a quality of wrathful upset that was quite foreign to me. In these moments, the image of Vajrayogini holding her ascetic's *khatvanga* staff, stepping on two squirming gods who lay powerless beneath her, gave me

a way to work with and envision my own experience of wrath that could be used for something generative, a way to cut through the delusion of an outmoded healthcare system.

The Hidden Tender Heart

In the sessions with Margarite that continued through this challenging time in my life, I noticed an interesting and unexpected shift. It seemed to me that as I felt increasing aggression, she felt less burdened by rage, and more connected to a sense of her own tenderness, a capacity for love that I had seen in her from the start of our work. She had moments of real mirth when recalling a tepid effort from her partner to listen to her with more sensitivity, “He honestly looked constipated, like he was trying to push out understanding another person.” The image made us both guffaw. She seemed to recognize in herself an ability to be patient and empathic, qualities she associated with her father, which had remained camouflaged by a distorted self-image created in response to her own feelings of misdirected rage.

But when a few weeks later she was denied a large research grant for which she was clearly the front-runner in her field, a grant she had poured herself into over the course of two years, to a white male colleague with half her resumé, the tenderness she had allowed for seemed to evaporate into an oceanic depression. “I feel like the universe is against me,” she said. I shook my head and blurted out, “Fuck the universe!” She looked up and laughed. I was not prone to such outbursts but felt in that moment that the impact of the injustice should not deflate her sense of worth. That this was the real injustice, the way those victimized are often left feeling disempowered and valueless for being so. I went on to say that while I was sorry for swearing, I meant to express that her rage was rightly directed at the fractures in our world that allowed for misogynistic and racist behavior. She had done nothing to deserve this. I would take a stand against *karma*-theory as it was popularly understood, which would somehow hold her accountable for such setbacks. She laughed again, knowing that I was a practicing Buddhist, and having read about *karma*, or the laws of cause and effect.

I continued, “The cause for this suffering, as I understand it, is unconscious bias and racism. The effect is your sense of having been ripped off. But that loss, I think, is putting you in touch with other losses in which you were made to feel responsible. Not the least of which was the loss of your father.”

Margarite quickly wiped away a tear, having explained to me early on that she was not interested in crying her eyes out in therapy like every white woman on Manhattan’s Upper West Side she’d ever known. But I felt her taking in my response, sensing into it that she did not deserve to take on the rage that rightly should be directed toward those structures that would thwart the achievements of formidable women of color.

We sat together in a few rare moments of silence. Margarite was a terrifically verbal and expressive person, who spoke freely and openly with me, something I had come to enjoy and appreciate in our work. But in this session I felt in her a powerful need to let the rage that had been triggered in the wake of a major

professional loss work its way through her psyche, opening up corners of her mind and heart dearly in need of attuned care. As I reflected on this session, I felt that my recent increased capacity to feel aggression without judgment had made it easier for Margarite to be relieved of her own. I was more available to join her in such feelings and, in this way, allow them to come up more fully and move out with greater ease and authenticity.

During this time, Margarite shared with me that she had awoken the morning before our session feeling immobilized with a deadening depression. A stack of papers to read and grade, two lectures to complete, and another grant proposal to research all remained untended to. She spoke of feeling a strong pull toward death, a sense of being in the wrong world. I nodded, knowing such feelings, but also sensing that Margarite was re-experiencing a state in which acute pain was actively denied by those who had caused it. Her depression I understood to be symptomatic of feeling pain that is unrecognized by others, rendering a sense of unreality engulfed in hopelessness. But then, surprisingly, she went on to tell me about her image of a powerful female presence, an ageless woman, dark but almost without skin, and eyes that seemed to hold her, that had appeared and said: "I'll help you do one thing today, whatever you most need to do. I *will* help you." Margarite felt her reaching out to take her hand, something that made her feel both youthful and capable. She looked like Margarite's notion of the "original woman." In response to her presence and offer, Margarite got out of bed and worked for one hour on a new grant proposal. It was an hour that gave her a needed sense of survival, of psychic restoration.

We stared at one another, jointly feeling the relief and amazement that Margarite had connected with this healing presence, allowing herself to feel helped in the midst of such a powerfully disappointing and triggering time in her life. I pointed this out to her, affirming that a part of her had been available to facilitate this feeling of being supported in the right way, a trusting part that could envision that another being might be desirous and capable of helping her. She listened, nodding in agreement, and said in a tone I hadn't heard before, "I think that's right. It usually feels too dangerous even to imagine that someone could help. As if I'd disappear into the abandonment. As if asking and getting nothing back could kill me."

Healing through Imagery and Deep Affect

Aware that I felt a powerful identification with Margarite, I made efforts to consciously note that our circumstances, and our psychic resources, were not the same. I too knew the feeling of needing help that was not forthcoming, and feeling undone by loss. But the specificity of Margarite's experience and ensuing feelings were not the same as mine. As such, she needed to make use of the imagery that *her* psyche put forth, not mine (see Ulanov, 1999). In this way, I worked to cull meaning from the nuances of her healing female presence. We talked about her associations to a teacher in her early childhood, an elderly neighbor who seemed to have a knowing way about her, a grandmother Margarite had loved dearly who died when she was a teenager. We talked about this small community of women who knit

together an image that was available to her when it seemed that no one or nothing else was. A collective body of women who could offer a strength and sensitivity of awareness that felt specifically feminine in nature, a capacity to take in the experience and reality of another.

Interestingly, throughout this time, I found myself less able to access the healing presence of Vajrayogini, the semi-wrathful yet simultaneously blissful Buddha who had been such a central part of my own spiritual practice. I felt my own capacity to call forth the resources I had come to utilize and rely upon receding into the background of my psyche as the tumult of changing circumstances continued to reorganize my life. But I knew and trusted that what she symbolized—that nothing is without the elemental capacity for meaningful change—was available to me when I could make use of this awareness. Her stance of joyful confidence, that she could stomp out delusion, was a needed resource, a way for my mind to weather seemingly unending inner tumult. A way to stand on and stomp out delusional notions of reality. One such delusion, I had come to appreciate in a new way, was that the devastation of loss could be put to rest once and for all. With Margarite, I came to understand that major losses reorganize the psyche just as they change the circumstances of one's life, creating new spaces for profound feelings of devastation, rage, and ideally a quality of sacred gratitude when one's suffering is responded to with needed sensitivity and care. Room must be made in all our methods of healing for the full and powerful range of affect that accompanies us as we are changed by life and death.

Throughout my work with Margarite, and many other clients who have taught me needed lessons of human experience, I have developed a deepening respect for the many ways in which the healing methods found in Tibetan Buddhism can be used for recovery from psychological trauma. As a relational psychoanalyst, and a practicing Buddhist, I am continually reminded of how these contrasting healing traditions are powerfully enriched when they actively converse, and most importantly how suffering can be reduced when clinicians make efforts to let their own spiritual healing endeavors infiltrate their clinical work.

With Margarite, I rediscovered the remarkable ways in which the psyche pushes for wellness, especially when it is in communion with others, both incarnate and imagined, available to bear witness without judgment, and to help in the specific ways most needed. This is how we come to feel a sense of inherent value, and how I believe Margarite's feeling of value was slowly restored. It wasn't enough for her to know that I would be reliably present and emotionally attuned during our sessions. I could not be the sole facilitator of change she needed. Nor was it enough for her to have other people in her life who were available to her, though such people of course were vital resources as she made efforts to heal from past and current loss. What I believe she needed, and came to rely upon with greater ease and trust, was a deepened relationship to her own caring and emotionally responsive capacity, as it was modeled by her image of the "original woman." She needed those psychic structures in her own mind that could hold more of her experience with empathy, understanding, and a willingness to respond with a sense of fellow feeling. In Buddhism, this is known as our Buddha-nature, that part

of the mind that is entirely free from judgment, with the spaciousness necessary to open to all reality at all times. In psychoanalytic theory, this is sometimes referred to as needed self-structure, or an internalized good object, that offers the care and kindness that we need to be able to show ourselves, particularly when in the midst of radical change.

It is possible that the psychoanalytic tradition has relied too heavily on the therapist as the primary agent for change. Modern psychotherapeutic methods could be greatly enhanced by the Buddhist trust in the psyche's push for healing, a trust reinforced by the work of Carl Jung, and others. And Buddhist notions of healing could be enhanced by the psychoanalytic appreciation for the power of an attuned other to jump-start these needed resources. It seems that we are able to have a fuller experience of our own psychological reality when it is known by another. Both traditions, I have come to find, want to hold up the healing impact of imagery that we so easily miss in a culture that prizes discursive thought and linear thinking. When engaged skillfully and whole-heartedly, our psyche's images have the power to help us navigate even the most unexpected trauma and loss. They are those critically needed resources for our ongoing psychological and spiritual development that can offer what is most needed and least expected.