



Robert Bosnak

Embodiment

Creative Imagination in Medicine, Art and Travel

Embodiment

Embodiment: Creative Imagination in Medicine, Art and Travel sets out Robert Bosnak's practice of embodied imagination and demonstrates how he actually works with dreams and memories in groups. The book discusses various approaches to dreams, body and imagination, and combines this with a Jungian, neurobiological, relational, and cultural analysis. The author's fascination with dreams, the most absolute form of embodied imagination, has caused him to travel all over the world. From his research he concludes that while dreaming everyone everywhere experiences dreams as embodied events in time and space while the dreamer is convinced of being awake; it is after waking into our specific cultural stories about dreaming that the widely differing attitudes towards dreams arise. By taking dreaming reality, not our waking interpretation of it, as the model for imagination, this book creates a paradigm shock and produces methods which can be applied in a wide variety of cultural settings.

Through detailed case studies, professionals and students will find thorough discussions of:

- ways to flashback into dreams and memories while in a hypnagogic state of consciousness
- the practice of embodied imagination and its profound physical effects
- psyche as a self-organizing multiplicity of selves
- the nature of subjectivity
- the body as a theater of sense memories
- the limitation of reason
- the process of dissociation
- the treatment of trauma

This book discusses a variety of techniques which may be applied by health professionals to their work with patients and clients. It will also be of particular interest to Jungian and relational psychoanalysts, psychotherapists and clinical psychologists, as well as to artists, actors, directors, writers and other individuals who wish to explore the creative imagination.



Robert Bosnak is a Dutch Jungian psychoanalyst who, after having been in private psychotherapy practice in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for 25 years, currently lives and works in Sydney, Australia.

A radical work that demands nothing less than the end of Descartes' view of the self as singular and fixed, of the self as solely a mental entity. Rather, Robert Bosnak argues, the human "self" is a constantly changing theatre of multiple, embodied or quasi-embodied beings. Intelligent and autonomous, operating in any state of consciousness but especially manifest in dreaming or vision, they are ignored at the cost of our own health. Aboriginal traditions may call them Ancestors; Jungian psychology "projections"; Bosnak directs us to a different metaphysics. Drawing on Henry Corbin's Imaginal Realm, as well as on medieval alchemy, scientific complexity theory, East Asian philosophy, postcolonial critique, and above all on three decades intensive work with dreams, *Embodiment* reveals how humans can relate to the multiple beings alive in each of us. By intensively encountering their essences and relationships to one another, we can, like the alchemists, extract subtle medicine to "enhance cohesion throughout" our multiplex selves. We can be healed. Original and fascinating.

Kimberley C. Patton, Professor of the Comparative and Historical Study of Religion, Harvard Divinity School.

Late at night, when everyone is quiet, sit alone with Robert Bosnak's astonishing book, *Embodiment*, and allow him to accompany you on an exciting journey that is at once physical, spiritual, psychological, and astonishingly compatible with current data from neuroscience and cognitive science. Bosnak challenges our time-honored assumption that what we call the real world and the dream world exist in two discrete domains, and demonstrates in vivid clinical detail that the living presence of dissociated selves that animate our dreams can be summoned into our waking life, can coexist with our waking selves, and can enter into creative discourse with them.

"Dreaming," Bosnak's paradigm for embodied imagination, represents a simultaneous multiplicity of emotional embodied states. He argues that the creative use of embodied imagination in waking life—including in therapy—must correspond as closely as possible to the dreaming condition in order to permit the coexistence of various states of being. Optimally, this requires the presence of a state of consciousness between sleeping and waking—a state that is naturally experienced while falling asleep. In Bosnak's words, the goal is to present "a total world, so real that you are convinced you are awake. You don't just think so, you know it in the same way you now know you are awake reading this book." As a working psychoanalyst, I have found this to be so accurate that I can never again say "It's only a dream." I highly recommend that you make room on your bookshelf for *Embodiment*.

Philip M. Bromberg, Ph.D. Training and Supervising Analyst, William Alanson White Institute; Clinical Professor of Psychology, New York University Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis. Author of *Standing in the Spaces: Essays on Clinical Process, Trauma, and Dissociation* (1998), and *Awakening the Dreamer: Clinical Journeys* (2006)

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In memory of Henry Corbin

Dedicated to my teachers and students

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Sydney, May 2006

Prelude

The strange world you are about to enter, filled with alien perspectives and ancient recurrences, is also the most common world of all. It is a world of many selves in constant states of interaction. Some selves are physical, such as the population of our waking worlds; other selves, like the figures we meet in dreams, appear physical, but are fundamentally unknown. The latter exist in a world where imagination takes on body. Theirs is the realm we shall address in this book: the embodied imagination. These appearances present themselves as “other,” as having a subjective existence different from our own. Some cultural settings tell us that these dreamed beings are sub-personalities and are therefore integral parts of us, others say that they are ancestors, or spirits from a metaphysical realm, while yet others understand them to be garbled memories randomly downloaded by a delirious brain. None of these statements – psychological, spiritual, or positivistic scientific – have anything to do with the phenomena they purport to describe, but only repeat their own culturally established self-understanding. While meeting figures in embodied imagination, as in, for example, a dream, they present themselves as real. We viscerally know we are meeting *other* selves. Any notion beyond this meeting with otherness is a culture-specific afterthought, not stemming from the encountered phenomena.

What we perceive while dreaming is that we are in a place which is not of our making. We didn’t invent it. It is a spontaneous presentation, an independently alive manifestation. Apparently physical worlds come to life in a flash and disappear without a trace.

We stand at the dawn of creation.

Into the cave

Deep inside the prehistoric caves the world looks different. From nowhere it seems, suddenly, 13,000-year-old mammoths look down upon us with relative disinterest. They stare at the stalactites dripping down like stone icicles beyond us. One stands thoughtful and woolly, his tusks uncomfortably long as they never stop growing, wearing down his old age. They call him the Patriarch. He is beautifully represented, carved into the stone in different layers of depth, which makes his woolly fur stand out in fuzzy precision. He is carved over scratches made by fingers into stone, scratches similar to ones the cave bears have left behind in the walls to sharpen their claws. The bears had long gone by the time our ancestors came to enter this cave in Rouffignac, in the Perigord region of what now is France, 13,000 years ago.

I envision our ancestor entering, seeing the carvings left by bear. This must be the way the wall is met, he thinks. So first he makes similar scratches with his fingers, to imitate the ancestor, the bear, who has made his winter beds here for tens of thousands of years. This is the way the ancestor did it, so this is how we begin, honoring our forebears as a background to our own impressions. The Patriarch stands looking back at the entry of the cave, kilometers ago, carved over a grid of scratches. Four fingers, like a bear's claw, is the matrix. Farther to the right we see two herds of mammoth meeting, looking at each other. The frieze follows the contours of the wall. These are the powers in all their gigantic nature. They meet, face off, maybe peaceably: two tribes of great spirits. This is the largest consistent drawing. It is the cave of mammoth spirit facing itself – encounter, reflection.

Along the wall I see, shimmying on his belly along the cave barely two feet high, our ancestor on his way to be initiated into the world of the great spirits, the massive mammoth. He crawls on to the great hall, half a meter high, where, lying on his back, he draws the great spirits among whom he lives, the alien beings, greater, swifter and stronger than he on the ceiling in order to capture and venerate their spirit and become initiate to their powers. Unable to take distance he draws the ceiling animals life size, in perfect

proportion, as if by entering their body he can feel along their contours as he draws. Lit by a tiny grease lamp, spooking the cave around him, I see him in a face-off with dark fears, and his awe of the Great Ones. Encounter, meeting, face-off, opposing directions, the Great Ones show the way.

We leave the primordial corridor, seated comfortably on a toy train riding us back over kilometers of dug-out cave to suit our quick contemporary taste for instant experience, to the entry where we buy postcards.

In imagination we meet mammoths carved in the bedrock of being. They predate us, dwarf us and are possibly indifferent to our existence. Imagination is our way of knowing them.

The trip is an experiment, never tried before. We shall go with a small band of 17 people to live in a rocky shelter along the muddy Vezere river, inhabited for over half a million years by humans and proto humans alike, put up camp and dream together, in order to get knowledge by way of imagination. In caves which sometimes are like great cathedrals with stalactite columns of glistening beauty, pipe organs of gigantic proportion shaped by excretions from walls, and in the flickering light of the fire, animal spirits coming at you from the heart of the rock, you know there exists a *spirit of place*. Imaginings in these surroundings are different from those in Times Square. We instinctively recognize the difference. The deep recesses of earth incubate different musings than does the screaming neon light of New York's entertaining heart. Each excites us differently. After a while our heart beats with the spirit of a place, unless we are able to hide away in a walkman-world of insulation.

Our camp is at La Madeleine at an unexcavated site below to the one where such a treasure trove of prehistory was found, that scores of museums were supplied and a whole era got its name (from the Latinized version of Madeleine): the Magdalenian period, 13–30,000 years ago. The owners of the site have given us permission and we did not ask the *gendarmérie*, the ultimate authorities in prehistoric sites. We camp outside the law, outside of time, outside of national boundaries, with participants of six countries from four continents. We eat the same food the prehistorics would have eaten – except for one inexplicable lapse of pasta – while we sleep on the sand under the rock canopy which sheltered *Homo erectus*, the proto human who roamed this earth long before we, *Homo sapiens*, did. I dream here that a band of tall *Homo erectus* folk, replete with marching drums and tubas like a prehistoric scene from *Music Man*, come walking up from the far end of the rocky shelter to welcome us, Cro-Magnon man (inhabitant of the Magdalenian period and our genetically identical ancestors), the new kids on the block.

For a week now we have been dreaming of our personal heartbreak, and the pains and joys of being this specific individual in our personal day and age. But the dreaming is beginning to shift . . .

Around our fire, Asuka from Japan sits downwind (the wind has turned since we started this two-hour session of dreamwork), oblivious to the smoke blowing in her face, as she sojourns in deepest concentration inside her world of dreaming. She feels isolated from the group. Her English is good, but somehow when it comes to dreams she cannot follow what is spoken. It reminds me of my own difficulties in understanding English when it is sung. Around the campfire with its low flames, she reports her dream of sitting around the campfire with flames reaching up very high. Another woman from the group reaches through her isolation, touching her gently, asking her how she is doing. Then, beyond the fire, Asuka senses the presence of a stone. She tells us that in her native Japan there are some stones house spirits, called *kami*. Such is the stone she senses. Helped by the concentrated effort of the group, Asuka is now in a flashback of the original dream experience. Once again she sits by the towering campfire feeling great sadness and isolation. At first her sadness is dry, she tells us, but then it turns moist in a flow of tears. I cry as well, having often felt that particular Japanese version of the pain of being excluded from the group as from the source of being. The more she senses the rising flames of the common campfire, the more outside and sad she feels. Her skin is like an eggshell, she tells us, encasing an inside of emptiness. When the member of the group, called Shelley, touches her, Asuka feels as though the shell cracks and a tiny opening is made. She points to her right cheek, between the bridge of the nose and her eye. Her hand motions are exquisite as she gestures the tiny-ness of the opening through which now the pressure equalizes, making her no longer feel empty inside, cut off from the fullness outside. Reality becomes alive again. Then she senses the stone behind the flames. As she focuses on it, suddenly, she is pulled feet first into it. The stone is as a Harry-Potter-portal opening to an otherworldly depth. Asuka feels she could travel down forever, never reaching to the core. Surprisingly enough, her torso does not go down, however, it is just her feet that reach for this endless depth. Her feet have become intelligent, sensing toward the core, sensitive and determined. At the same time she notices the upward-thrust of the gigantic campfire flames, which pull her towards the sky. Asuka is stretched painfully, like a string, between the heavens and the underworld. Yet in this pain she feels no longer isolated from the group.

This stretch between the worlds, the various states of being, has been called “soul” by western alchemists. For soul, they say, is stretched between mortality and eternity. They named it *anima media natura*, soul stretched between our opposing states, the meeting of a single lifetime and Forever. It is quiet in our rocky shelter where half a million human years surround our brief contemporality.

Una is as Irish as they come. Her last name is virtually unpronounceable to the non-Celtic tongue, which twists and stumbles, to her slight amusement, over the strange vowels and unexpected consonants. Her blue eyes

spark with humor, passion, and the ability to carefully observe, trained by her profession as an academic scientist. All she recalls from last night's dream is a frieze of primordial animals upon a cave wall. It is so vague, she almost thought not to enter it into the grab bag of dreams of the night after the work on Asuka's dream. As our small band sinks into deep focus around the fire, Una flashes back to the frieze. A bison stands out, but mainly it is the light that has stayed with her. The frieze is in full daylight while the surrounding cave is dark. The light does not reach outside of the tableau. Slowly the world inside the gathering of great wall animals becomes apparent to her. The medium in which they exist is thick as if the molecules in this world are larger than are the ones in the world of waking. She ponders the moment of waking and describes the transition from the world of dreaming to the world of common wakefulness. It is a movement from a world so slow that time is different than in our common contemporary thin and speedy world. The common world is more sharp and crisp, the world of the wall beings more round and slow, as if they move through water, through a thick medium of large elements. Una has her eyes covered with her hands, as if she sees the wall inside her palms. We feel she is describing a world where time is different, as though discontinuous from our own. This is qualitative time as distinct from the quantitative hourglass of waking time. The archeologist in the group asks questions about this world. Una answers with the certainty of one describing what she sees around her. She intimately knows this world of the primordial frieze in the wall-world bright with daylight. The clarity of her responses convinces us: imagination is a way of knowing. Just before she leaves this slow world of thick molecules, the animals gather around her in joyous goodbye, before they retreat back into the wall and out of sight, our worlds once again separated by a gulf of discontinuity.

During the trip it has been a pleasure for me to have been able to speak my native Dutch with Berthe. Her gentle youthful face is both shy and sensuous. She has brought with her, from the same night as Una's dreaming, the memory of a bull running at the end of the field off the far end of our campsite. The bull turns up again, charging right at the rock face of our shelter. Berthe is woken up by her worry that the bull will crush his skull. After admiring the bull again, embedded in the full concentration of the clan around the firepit, she seems to automatically zoom in, seeing the majestic bull up close. His back is arched, his head is down, his horns are full of power. A sexual force spats and crackles in the musky wood fire smell mixed in with desire. I breathe in deep.

Increasingly she can feel the power of the bull as we direct her to sense the arched back and the power in the neck. The bull becomes more and more present until we can all but hear its hoofs. Then the bull stands still. Berthe zooms in closer until she is almost touching its skin, can hear its breath, can feel air enter through the nose. "I want to *be* the bull," she

exclaims ecstatically in shamanistic abandon. But a shaman in ecstasy has been fully trained to lose all vestiges of habitual self, so the bull can become an epiphany of *himself*, instead of habitual self becoming the bull. If Berthe becomes the bull, she will cast a fragile net of self-habits over the contours of the bull and will either inflate or burst. Unprepared to lose self in ecstasy, western man dabbling in shamanism usually ends up in a regressive self, overawed by the power of experience, thus gaining nothing from it. The embodied imagination I practice creates a network between Berthe's embodied self and the presence of the bull. Berthe is to stay in a dual consciousness, fully *embodied by* the bull, while being entirely aware that the bull is other, not self. This is a way to honor all phenomena.

Now she can feel throughout her body the enormous thrusting power in the bull as he charges into the rock face. But her perspective has changed, she can look through the eyes of *other*, of bull-being, at the wall, and sees it porous with many openings and entries. She feels the bull run into the wall and then become part of it, all energy transforming into stasis, having run into the counter pole of ec-stasis. Together with the bull she knows that it fluctuates between ecstatic energetic charge and a static waiting as a picture on a wall.

It is as though through a medium of Paleolithic wall painters the animals have charged into the wall, waiting in static polychrome for a next observer to embody, who again will feel their energetic charge, and change them back from stasis to ec-stasis (out-of-stasis). The ecstasy Berthe experiences is an epiphany of the bull.

Above us, the polychrome bison in the Font-de-Gaume cave are magnificent. We can see them charge above us as did the bull in Berthe's dream. On the floor is a metal mesh for us to walk on. We stare up in awe.

Asuka dreams of this, the last night at the shelter, though in her dream the whole cave is wrapped in wire mesh and she can only vaguely feel the spirit of the cave behind it. She calls her dream "the *kami* of the cave in the modern world."

Berthe has a dream on the day we leave the caves to go back to our homes in modernity:

We are standing at the entrance of a cave which has never been investigated. No tourists, no tickets, no guides – just the cave. We now dream in a different manner, with other senses: not primarily visually, but auditory and in movement. C and K, two members of the group, present their dreams. C tells us his dream by taking us into the cave. We investigate the cave by way of his dream – our dreams are our guide. Dream and environment are one, and yet distinguishable. K listens attentively; hers and C's dreams are narrowly intertwined, like

all of our dreams are now, almost one. K listens to see if she can give additional information by way of her dream.

Our group has become a unified receptacle within which each one of us, by way of imagination, senses various movements of the spirit of place.

We have become a momentary tribe.

A radical change of perspective

The most absolute and unmediated form of embodied imagination is a dream. It instantaneously presents a total world, so real that you are convinced you are awake. You don't just think so, you *know* it in the same way you now know you are awake reading this book. This constant, world-creating fact has fascinated me for as long as I can remember, and my entire life has been organized around this simple insight. I find this permanent act of creation a miracle, on a par with the creation of the universe itself. My appreciation has made me travel all over the globe in order to find out how other people dream. And indeed, the all-encompassing power of dreaming is the same for everyone I've talked to: while dreaming we find ourselves in an environment so utterly real that we call it a dream only upon waking, when it gets defined by the particular cultural context into which we wake. A positivist scientist may wake into the understanding that he has just experienced the utter nonsense of a brain trying to make sense of cerebral noise, an Aboriginal Australian may have received word from the ancestors, a psychologist may assume that she has just observed a meaningful display related to her daily life or distant past, which needs symbolic decoding. However, whatever their waking culture, before they woke up they were each experiencing basically the same set of phenomena: a world perceived as real, presenting itself as physical, peopled by characters who display their own intentions, accompanied by physical sensations (heart-beat, respiration), sometimes strong enough to make them wake up.

This world-creating power I call *embodied imagination*. It manifests not only in dreams. But whenever in this book I address trauma, physical and emotional health, spirit of place, theater, or philosophy, I take *dreaming, not waking, as my paradigm for creative imagination*.

From the point of view of dreaming perception, an image is a *place*, an environment in which we find ourselves. While dreaming, the environment presents itself as physical, though at the tail-end of dreaming, in the process of waking, we can observe that this physicality evaporates. Therefore the image is of a *quasi*-physical nature, presenting itself as if it were physical. This quasi-physical environment creates strong responses in the body,

embodied states. In the world of creative imagination we encounter quasi-physical presences, frequently in the shape of people we know. From the point of view of dreaming they behave like beings in their own right, with their own intentions.

I call this set of phenomena *embodied* imagination for several reasons. First of all, as I have stressed above, creative imagination on the level of dreaming usually presents itself as quasi-physical. When in a dream someone walks into a room, the room presents itself as physical and so does the person entering. They are embodied presences. Besides this being an utterly miraculous fact, it is actually quite simple and apparently obvious to anyone, anywhere, to whom you point it out.

Secondly, it takes a body to perceive imagination. Disembodied imagination may exist, but even so, while encountering it we are in a body, so we can't know it in its disembodied condition.

Thirdly, there is the fact that we are embodied *by* imagination, that imagination grows itself a physical body. Look at the stooped posture of someone who walks around in a world that permanently feels grey, heavy, and bleak, whatever his current external circumstances might be. He continuously lives in an image environment as real as a dream, and it crushes him. Eventually his spine will have a permanent curve. The curve has become the home the bleak image has embodied for itself.

And finally, most startling, there is the fact that images are the embodiments of their own intelligence. This is not immediately obvious. In fact, it has taken me decades to begin to grasp it. The independent intelligence of image-presences, not as sub-personalities of the dreamer, but as beings in their own right, slowly began to dawn on me in private conversations with Henry Corbin along the banks of the Lago Maggiore in Switzerland, where I lived in the early 1970s around the time when our children were born. He would speak with great passion of the great cataclysm in western culture taking place around 800 years ago, which I instinctively compared to the cosmic drama which led to the extinction of the dinosaurs. Corbin was in his seventies and widely considered the leading authority in the West in Iranian-Islamic thought. I was in my early twenties, had just graduated from law school, with a hippie mind full of drug-induced 1960s wisdom, lacking any trace of erudition. So most of what he said went right over my head into the beautiful sunsets over the mountains across the lake. But he had taken a liking to me, with my eager youth and the thirst of an intellect which had only recently become aware of its own existence. To me it was obvious that intelligence was a human quality, located mainly in the brain, which we used in order to make some sense of the world. All intelligent activity came from us, in our endless quest to snare the universe in human understanding. But as my mind quaked in his presence, I began to entertain the possibility that we are surrounded by intelligences displaying their bodies, much like dream figures to our sleeping

mind. In my readings of his work, long after his death¹ I heard his words echo back to me: “And we have just called attention to the metaphysical tragedy involved, from this point of view, in the disappearance of the world of . . . substantive Images, whose organ of knowledge was the active Imagination.” I remember his passion, sadness and outrage about the end of this world in western awareness, and it has taken me many years to begin to understand through direct experience the world to which he was referring.

What are these substantive images that embody their own active intelligence? They aren't figments, nor are they reconstructed memories, day residues, even though they sometimes dress themselves in events of the day. They are not sub-personalities, as I have already said. According to the visionaries studied by Henry Corbin, they are forms of intelligence which present themselves as substantive bodies to the perceiving eye of the creative imagination. They consider this realm of substantive images to be as real as the physical world perceived by the senses, as the timeless transcendence experienced in the spirit of contemplation, and as the formal beauty of structure perceived by the mind of mathematics. It is a real world *between* matter and spirit, between body and mind, a real world of creative imagination, which dropped out of western awareness around the thirteenth century, and in an eight-century long mental march turned into its opposite in the contemporary notion of the imaginary, imagination as the opposite of reality. This book is a passionate attempt to contribute to the restoration of an awareness of alien intelligences perceived by creative imagination – *embodied images with a mind of their own* – while comparing it to our current, what I consider to be impoverished, perspective which views intelligence as singular. If I succeed in sensitizing you to the existence of an in-between reality – neither physical body nor mental allegory – of alien embodied intelligences, without expecting you to believe in flying saucers, you will catch a glimpse, as did I in my conversations with Corbin, of a place *outside the body-mind conundrum*. As it did to me, it may radically unfamiliarize you with our current world, in which the brain is the single purveyor of intelligence, or a world in which an invisible God steers creation. As such, this book is in the psychoanalytic tradition which from the outset has been a project of unfamiliarizing the subject by positioning it in an environment of unconsciousness. That psychoanalytic schools instantly try to refamiliarize the subject by way of an elaborate description of the functioning in this unconscious realm, thus claiming ownership of it in the best colonizing traditions of western thought – with the various psychoanalytic schools in the roles of the competing colonizing nations – does not deny that unfamiliarizing comes first. Only then can habitual consciousness crack open widely enough to let in some rays of renewal.

I consider our habitual self to be a learned set of phenomena. In my youth I learned that I am the son of my parents, a sibling of my brother, a

Jewish male in a certain stratum of Dutch society, relatively insecure, ambitious, full of feelings of inferiority I need to overcompensate, in a body I know from the mirror and through human mirroring. This is one of my various learned patterns of consciousness I implicitly identify as self by calling it “I” while pointing at my body.

Whenever I use the terms “self” and “other,” I employ common parlance. I speak these words in the context of a naïve genre, like a naïve painter who works in a purposefully unreflected, simplistic style. This common self I see as a secondary phenomenon. It comes into being by way of our innate ability to identify. What we usually address as *our* self, I understand to basically be an identification with set habits of consciousness.

And what new understanding, then, may a reader expect who is willing to entertain this paradigm shift, and accompany me in my 30-odd year quest to probe a world of alien embodied intelligences? In fact, the result is the opposite of understanding. We will come to understand things less and less, opening up a space for epiphany, the ongoing self-revelations of alien realities to the unsuspecting mind, allowing us to experience a “Visionary event, ecstatic initiation . . . the world intermediate between the corporeal and the spiritual state and whose organ of perception is the active Imagination.”² I have found this confrontation with alien intelligences terrifying and intensely satisfying, enabling encounter and dialogue with quasi-physical bodies with a mind of their own.

During my decades of trying to grasp – and probably misinterpret – my conversations with Corbin, I developed, in the spirit of C.G. Jung and aided by my training analysts Aniela Jaffé and James Hillman (and many other teachers), a method of investigation into embodied imagination.

In order to locate myself within the field of embodied imagination, I will once again start out by honoring the scratches on the walls of time left behind by my forebears and contemporaries, thereby positioning myself in systems of tradition.

In the beginning there was Freud, who left me with the distinct impression that dreams were of essential importance in the field of psychotherapy. Like his fictional contemporary, Sherlock Holmes, he was a master sleuth who approached the dreaming imagination as a giant riddle in need of systematic decoding, an attitude he had in common with the heroes of his favorite story, clever Oedipus and the riddling Sphinx. As far as I understand, he suggested that dreaming and waking are tangentially related, and that the tangent could be found by way of associative patterns, which help us lead the dream images back into waking self-understanding. From Freud I took the intimate relations between dreaming imagination and day residues – moments of daytime memory digested by dreaming – and used them for my ideas around intentional dreaming, a technique used to stimulate creative imagination, which I will describe extensively in the chapter on theater, Chapter 10. I did *not* take on his attitude in which a

dream is treated as a distortion of something more basic. To me, dreams are self-presentations, as are trees, houses, or the world we inhabit. There is nothing behind a dream, as there is nothing behind space itself.

Freud analyzed his own dreams. The first one he worked in his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899/1900) was the famous dream of Irma's Injection. In it a patient tells Freud that his treatment had failed utterly and that her condition had horribly deteriorated. From this I take that embodied imagination responds to our work with people, creating a field of vectors referred to as "transference/countertransference" in some circles, "relationship" in others. Harold Searles was instrumental in helping me understand these dynamics. From it I also take solace in the fact that Freud felt utterly out of control when confronted with his dreams. I have frequently described Freud's feelings of inferiority at the outset of his intimate confrontation with dreaming as "dreamworker's panic," the moment of utter helplessness upon entering the world of uncontrollable unconsciousness.

I do not adopt Freud's, or anyone's, view that meta-psychology explains phenomena. In my understanding, phenomena, when carefully observed, exude meaningfulness without us necessarily knowing what they particularly mean. I take meta-psychology as a pattern of conceptually presented images which may amplify the signal emitted by the observed phenomena, a principle called "amplification," which brings me to Jung.

Whenever Jung does not get absorbed in the literalness of his own meta-psychology, towards which I feel the same as towards Freud's, he is able to avoid "this-means-that"; he sometimes speaks in the language of a major technology of his day, the radio transmitter. He says that unconscious images emit a weak signal which does not reach the threshold of consciousness. This weak signal can be amplified so consciousness can pick up the transmission, by bouncing captured images, like those stemming from dream recall, off a backboard of collectively existing cultural image-patterns such as found in art, story, myth, and ritual.

In my own life, travel has served as a large amplifier, pumping up the volume of otherwise unheard signals. Travel in order to truly meet an alien culture serves as a signal-amplifying membrane; hence the word "travel" in the subtitle of the book. When you stay in an alien place for a while, a kind of osmosis begins to happen. Slowly the alien world around begins to grow inside you. You don't particularly have words, but you sense that, of its own accord, the environment is becoming apparent to you. It sensitizes you to its own specific organs of perception, different from the ones you had before, and what had seemed impenetrable now seems to meet you. You have to wait for the unfamiliar place to grow towards you. And when it does you can hear hitherto unrecognized frequencies.

Amplification does not lead to direct understanding, but to a fermentation process which makes subliminal image-signals grow stronger, allowing them to rise above the surface of cognition. Jung was an avid collector of

amplificatory imagery. He traversed cultures, myths, stories, and rituals like a traveling journeyman on a mission, becoming a jack of all trades in a variety of fields of collective imagery. In one field of embodied imagery, however, Jung gained mastery: alchemy. I have been radically influenced by Jung's alchemical studies, which he began when he was 50, in 1925, and continued until his death at 86 in 1961. Even though Freud had used several notions from alchemy, such as sublimation and condensation, he never embraced this ancient technology as a metaphor system corresponding to his work with unconscious imagery. Jung did so with a passion. Throughout this book you will encounter references to alchemy as a system of metaphor, arising in creative imagination while being confronted by the alchemical quest to transform the nature of metals. Chapter 9 is entirely devoted to color metaphors in the alchemical process. I consider alchemy to be a most valuable cultural backboard against which to amplify our contemporary confrontation with embodied imagery in psychotherapy, medicine, and art. It makes us hear hitherto inaudible transmissions arising from the material.

Jung was also my guide in the field of what he called "active imagination," an active conscious engagement with the spontaneous embodied presences of creative imagination. He considered embodied images, spontaneously emerging into consciousness while in a state between waking and sleeping, to be autonomous components of a reality he called soul, anima. He understood these presences to be irreducible to conceptual schemata. In this way he was the phenomenal observer I love. (Throughout I use the word "phenomenal" in its literal meaning of "pertaining to phenomena; known or derived through the senses, rather than through the mind.")

I part company with Jung when he talks about Self with a capital S, the purported central organizing principle of soul. The influence which eventually made me go an alternate route away from Jung's Self came from my training analyst, James Hillman. In my opinion, Hillman's 1975 book *Revisioning Psychology* was his masterwork. But that may be because I was around when it was being created. Hillman would come from Zurich down to the Lago Maggiore to stay at Eranos, the enchanting small conference center where since 1933 many ideas had been tried out by some major intellectuals of the twentieth century. There he stayed in his room at Casa Gabriella, while Deanne, our tiny children and I lived next door in Casa Shanti. Outside our frequent psychoanalytic sessions we often tended to run into one another, especially in the large downstairs conference kitchen where, by himself, he indulged his pleasure in lentil soup. This was between 1972 and 1975, while he was preparing for the Terry Lectures at Yale in 1972 and for the subsequent book published in 1975. He was then a handsome mid-forties, kind of tall thin man with a sharp hawk-like face wearing large glasses over penetrating light eyes, in a wiry toned body, hardly that of most of the analysts and academics who swam around during

the August conference. While he was staying at Casa Gabriella we often floated together in the Lago. Many ideas come up while swimming or hanging off a buoy, bobbing about in a huge mountain lake below the southern Alps in the Italian part of Switzerland.

Hillman disagreed with Jung's notion of the Self, sensing Jung's views as an overvaluation of a singular patterning force, which Hillman referred to as the psychological face of monotheism. He championed the decentering process he called "falling apart," which of course frightened a lot of people. As an ardent lover of Renaissance Italy, particularly of Florence, Hillman was instinctively a polytheist. He believed psyche to be peopled by a host of what a Renaissance scholar might describe as divine beings, and a phenomenal perspective might call embodied images. These images were living many stories at the same time, without being constellated by a single center around which to circle. In fact, Hillman considered the experience of monotheistic centering, exemplified by the mandala, to be just one of the many stories lived in the world of images. He warned that to conclude from the presence of monotheistic centering images that there therefore must be a central pole is a fallacy of mind. As a consequence of this mental fallacy, Jung's writ-large notion of Self had usurped psyche, replete with its roots in the polarity thinking of Good and Evil, light and dark, The Masculine and The Feminine, conscious action and unconscious compensation – opposing forces ruled by the laws of balance. Hillman addressed this fallacy in his re-visionist paean to decentering, touting psyche as akin to a patch quilt of interactive self-interested city states without an overarching empire. Hillman received the Medal of the Commune of Florence in 1981.

One of the remarkable locations in the American scientific landscape is the Santa Fe Institute. Here the understanding of complex living systems was expanded to include principles of emergent self-organization which function without an organizing self. Whereas, in my instinctive mistrust of imperial aspirations, I had agreed with Hillman about the absence of a capital, overarching grand Self, I was aware of the ongoing emergence of significant organization taking place in the image material with which I was being confronted on a daily basis. Falling apart was all good and well, but what other ordering principles than the Jungian balancing on the fulcrum of a metaphysical Self might be at play? Here complexity theory, as developed by the Santa Fe Institute in the 1980s and 1990s, came to my aid. Complexity theory posits that on the border between order and chaos – on the verge of going out of control, but not entirely – the most creative processes would unfold in such disparate fields as biology, physics, mathematics, economics, and artificial intelligence. In this in-between realm, disintegrating and out of balance yet still responding to patterning, elements would dance jigs which self-organized into relatively stable states on a higher level of complexity than had previously existed, without a steering hand from outside. This became the theoretical basis for my practice

of holding elemental body-states extracted from embodied imagination simultaneously in awareness, leading to a reorganization of conflicting elements into a more complex pattern creating a more elastic medium. Fault-line tensions giving rise to quake zones along which the system had previously split wide open would decompress and the system as a whole would have more stretch. In mathematical terms, problems, impossible to reconcile on a two-dimensional plane, could easily be accommodated in a three-dimensional sphere. Contained complexity on the verge of losing it, adds dimension, resulting in a more versatile sense of self; all in lower case without an overarching Capital.

My emphasis on body began with a life-threatening illness, which changed everything. It was then cemented by my marriage to Deanne Lemle Bosnak, a movement therapist from before the time it became an official profession, trained in dance and relaxation by dance master Milton Feher in New York, who as I write this, is in his nineties and still actively teaches dance and movement. She started the movement therapy department in the Klinik am Zurichberg, the Jungian mental hospital where we both did most of our clinical training. I was influenced by her in more ways than I can assess.

I was also taught by Ilana Rubinfeld, a conductor who had been a student of Fritz Perls, and had become a Gestalt therapist and teacher of the Alexander technique. From my hands-on work with her it became obvious to me that a variety of emotionally-charged body-states can exist simultaneously. I learned ways in which to identify with these alien states. However, as will be clear throughout, I differ from Gestalt therapy in that I prefer a phenomenal approach to the presences of imagination, and thus I fundamentally do not know whether the encountered presences are sub-personalities of an overarching personality, as Gestalt posited. Perls followed Jung in understanding each element of a dream as a subjective part of the dreamer. I have no idea if this is true. It is not a conclusion which can be drawn from the phenomena as they present themselves in embodied imagination. I consider Perls' sub-personality viewpoint a meta-psychological culture-specific afterthought, not necessarily related to observed phenomena.

In the early 1970s I followed an intensive course in Moreno's psychodrama. Here I learned how characters inhabit bodies to the point of enactment. I began to feel in my body a character's thrust towards self-presentation, deepening my lifelong love affair with the theater. At the same time I became aware of the bad acting going on in class. The personages of imagination were disfigured by the lack of acting skills displayed by the participants. This became particularly apparent when non-human entities were to be portrayed. The plasticity of untrained bodies is simply not supple enough to morph into the characters wishing to incarnate. Over the years I decreased a full-bodied enactment of the characters wishing to

manifest, and felt their impulses within a purposefully still body, making it possible for the subtle embodied impulses of characters to fully self-manifest without being distorted by a lack of physical plasticity.

In theater scholar Michael Taussig's *Mimesis and Alterity* I encountered the idea that, besides the character's apparent desire to come into being, there is a corresponding compulsion to become *like* others, a compelling force already observed in monkeys, hence the verb "aping." This force precedes even mammalian life, since the grand master of it is a reptile, the chameleon. Taussig borrowed this idea of the compulsion to resemble others, *mimicry*, from Walter Benjamin, the great 1930s literary critic who could observe this resembling compulsion by looking out his window onto goose-step Nazi Germany. By mimicking the characters we encounter in embodied imagination we are drawn into their characters by the compulsion to resemble them. Mimicry in turn triggers the unconscious identification reflex, which makes us partake in another's presence in a similar way as we had previously been identified with habitual consciousness, with our selves. This makes it possible to directly experience the embodied presence in its otherness. If we were to *become* the presence – like Berthe becoming the bull – this otherness would get lost and we would no longer be true to the observed phenomena, of which otherness is an essential component.

I never read the work of Eugene Gendlin, probably to my detriment. But some of his students came to train with me in my dreamwork method, bringing with them Gendlin's subtle focusing technique. It traces felt experiences throughout the body until they settle in a particular location in the body. This corresponded to my emphasis on trigger points in the body where felt experiences are located as sense memories, which could instantly be triggered by a focus upon that location. I will explain all of this in detail later on. My difference from Gendlin – as presented to me by his students – is that I pay attention to a variety of contrasting states focused in different parts of the body, concentrating on the interaction between them, rather than focusing on an individual state.

The notion of sense memory was first generated by theater pioneer Constantin Stanislavski early in the twentieth century. It later developed in what came to be called "method acting" in the US, exemplified by the likes of Marlon Brando. It was based on the fact that through sensuous exploration a memory could be felt as an embodied state involving all the senses. I will discuss this in my ideas around flashback memories in Chapter 5.

A colleague once told me the story of one of his patients who had a recurrence of a physical symptom. Her right hand would turn bright red when discussing certain issues. After long investigation it became clear that this flushed hand embodied a memory which had disappeared from consciousness, in which as a small child she had been forced to perform unspeakable acts of touch with this right hand. Embodied memories are site-specific locations of sense memories which bypass mental cognition. I

extensively employ embodied sense memories in my work, having found ways to artificially implant them as psychoactive impulses in the body.

It must be obvious by now that I aspire to a phenomenal orientation. My intellectual instinct is towards a Socratic radical agnosis. Like Socrates I am constantly confronted by the fact that I know nothing. I rely on my senses, but I have no idea about what exists beyond the phenomena they impart, and I do not believe that my experiences validate any metaphysical position, any meta-psychology. Maurice Merleau-Ponty has been very useful to me in his emphasis on *The Primacy of Perception*. He reminds us that, preceding any conceptualization, we lead a life of naïve sense perception. Phenomena, occurrences directly perceptible by the senses, come first. All mental acts are based upon them, embedded in them. Merleau-Ponty's notion that phenomena perceived by the senses reveal themselves partially when carefully observed corresponds with my own experience. Phenomena never give themselves away entirely, but *do* present a partial reality, making phenomenal knowledge always partial and incomplete.

So let's observe the phenomena.

Embodied images, seen from the point of view of dreaming, are environments in which we find ourselves. An image-environment is a *place*. In the following pages I will demonstrate that embodied images behave as ecosystems. Each element in an image-place is predicated upon the other, much like in a natural physical environment. Each particle informs the entire system, much like in an Aboriginal sand painting. Drawn in the red sand we see from top-left the tracks of the ancestor walking towards a campfire where women are sitting with their digging sticks, half round circles next to oblong shapes. At the same time, snake ancestors enter from both sides, gearing up for battle. From another location we see the tracks of another ancestor on a raid, stealing food. Elsewhere are the tracks of the owner of the food who has spotted him. Everything is surrounded by features of landscape. Place and storytime are simultaneous and indistinguishable, portrayed as a moment in place as seen from above.

As the frontispiece of his book *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*, Corbin shows a fourteenth-century picture of the Ka'aba in Mecca. It is much like an Aboriginal painting, seen from above. Each element of Place and Story is simultaneously implied. He comments³ “. . . to contemplate them is to enter into a multidimensional world . . . And the whole forms a unity of qualitative time, in which past and future are simultaneously in the *present*. This iconography does not correspond to the perspectives of historical consciousness.”

As I will describe in great detail, the embodied imagination method gives access to this realm of qualitative time in which many stories come together in a single place. This perception goes beyond our usual historical consciousness which reduces later events to previous ones, the perspective of most contemporary psychology.

And in our method, the place where many stories converge is the body.

I was reminded of this simultaneity in the world of embodied imagination when we were invited into the straw hut of a South African Zulu *Sangoma*, a medicine woman who told us what happens to her in trance. All the spirits arrive simultaneously. They enter into her and she shakes in strange contortions. Sometimes she faints. She is being entered by spirits who use her body to gain a momentary access to physical presence, all at the same time. The qualitative time of the image realm self-manifests in the contortions of her body. In our work on embodied imagination I have seen a body contort in order to hold on to the various conflicting simultaneous impulses that had been extracted from the dreaming.

The embodying image

The closer Berthe gets to the bull, the more her body becomes infused with its power. Like walking into a storm, the bull becomes a maelstrom of turbulence. The closer we get to an image-presence, the more it becomes an environment in which we find ourselves. We are pulled into the presence and participate in its medium. This is the literal meaning of the word *ekstasis*, a movement outside of our selves, changing our state of being.⁴ Through this movement outside of our selves we are initiated into a world that is unfamiliar. Like the *Sangoma*, we become absorbed by the embodied presences. In embodied imagination there is an *inversion* of the notions of inside and outside. In western culture we assume that we have an inner life which is taking place inside of us, in the same way that synaptic processes happen inside the brain. This feels obvious. But as Berthe gets closer to the bull, she is pulled into *his* world. From our central paradigm in this book, dreaming perception, the bull is not inside Berthe, but she has been absorbed into his world. In relation to Berthe, the bull is not *inside*, in an *interior* space. As the bull takes possession, *it changes the very nature of the space* in which Berthe finds herself. What she experiences as her inner life is actually a participation in the presence of the bull. This confusing fact has best been expressed by Henry Corbin, in an article which is foundational to the study of embodied imagination.⁵ Corbin says: “. . . the relationship of interiority expressed by the proposition ‘in’, ‘inside of’, is inverted. Spiritual bodies or entities are not *in* any world, nor *in* their world, in the same manner as a material body is in its place or may be contained in another body. On the contrary, their world is in them . . . each spiritual entity is ‘the entire sphere of its Heaven’.”

First I must reiterate that my attitude aspires to be phenomenal; I am not a metaphysician. I do not know of what Berthe’s bull consists. I know nothing about his substance or if he is made of spirit. All I know is that he is present. From the phenomenal point of view the bull is an encountered embodied presence behaving like an intelligence alien to Berthe’s. All I know about him is that he presents himself to Berthe as a living being, and that, when she moves close enough, the bull pulls her into his alien world.

She is being embodied by his particular bull-substance, encountering his specific self-contained medium with natural laws of its own. She has knowledge of the bull in the biblical sense: visceral, erotic, initiatory, epiphanic, changing who she is. In the same way that dreams, phenomenally speaking, are self-contained worlds within which we dwell – not contained within an overarching space beyond the dream – when we participate fully in a substantive image, we are bodied forth by it, we become *of* it. The bull does not exist *within* the imagination as a physical bull exists in a physical meadow – once we have become *of* it, once it has taken possession of us, we find ourselves shaped by the contours of its sphere; it has become the substance in which we dwell while in its qualitative storytime. The idiosyncratic order within charging bull is a vortex of potency, thrust, heat, and longing, entirely its own. Once inside these alien vectors we are tossed about in forcefields which deeply affect our bodies. Berthe breathes fast, her heart pounds, her eyes produce tears and probably, if she were connected to an EEG apparatus, her brainwave pattern would shift, as might the brain imaging of an MRI or PET scan. Her body is fully affected. The affective substance of charging bull has taken possession.

When the substantive image takes possession, when we have come under its spell, charging bull has become embodied. Our body becomes part of the bull-world, like the Zulu *Sangoma's* body possessed by spirits of the dead. Such an embodiment of substantive imagination is, however, not the expression of a part of *our* subjectivity. The bull embodies Berthe. She has passed through a state change, an *ekstasis*. An embodied image comes to life by possessing us. Upon being absorbed in its medium, we become the medium of its epiphany. As in truly mixed media, Berthe's subjective body is the locus for charging bull's self-manifestation, the veil of *his* appearance. Yet, of course, her specific body will affect the manifestation of charging bull, and so, *an embodied image is the interface between self and other*. For an instant, much like the *Sangoma*, Berthe and the bull have a body in common. When fully confronted with embodied imagination, both self and other turn inside out, and we become a mutual body, *a mutual state*.

As long as we assume that substantive images are part of *us*, we do not understand this inversion, this being turned inside out. Becoming infused with alien intelligence results in unexpected original flashes. Mutual intelligence gives an opening to the unfamiliar. If, however, we model embodied imagination on the paradigm of a physical space containing entities, we are convicted to a familiar world which remains firmly in possession of itself, as in "the bull is part of me." Beside it not being supported by the observed phenomena, I contend that in this way we never will be able to explore the essence of the beings we encounter in embodied imagination, participate in their substance, or partake of their alien intelligence, and thus we will never leave the habitual confines of self. Berthe, gripped by charging bull

substance, is embodied *by* him and he by her. Through Berthe charging bull turns inside out, and so does Berthe.

Why does this matter?

If we see the bull as *really* belonging to Berthe's person, as a kind of sub-personality, we lose the truly alien nature in which the bull presents himself while dreaming. Phenomenally speaking, we lose a central aspect (its alienness) of the bull as an autonomous presence. The central tenor in this book is that embodied imagination is a true meeting with alien substantive intelligences which can possess our subjective bodies and influence our physical body. I understand the certainty that all imagined presences are subsumed by our personhood, to be an embodiment of the nineteenth-century power-grabbing colonizing ego, present at the outset of psychoanalytic discourse: "where id was shall ego be," as Freud said. Colonizing ego itself is a substantive image embodying us, as it takes possession of our mind, making us desire to rule and subject. The understanding that charging bull is one of Berthe's sub-personalities accords him the same disrespect all colonialist discourse inherently displays towards the world it has subjected, preventing us from ever knowing the colonized foreign intelligence. In this way we shall always remain accidental tourists in the realm of embodied imagination, staying firmly at home while traveling.

Embodied imagination portrays multiple worlds. Our embodied states mirror manifold substances: bulls, *kami*, bison, Uncle John, the neighbor's car. Even when lying dormant, like a painting on a prehistoric rock face, they are present as a multiplicity of potential existences waiting for imagination to embody them. To the dreaming model of embodied imagination, a multiplicity of subjectivities is the norm, not the pathology. There is no single subject but a host of substantive beings, each manifesting its own subjectivity mixed with the medium of our physical bodies. My habitual self is a substantive presence among them, one potential identification among many. Like the spirits-filled contortions of the *Sangoma*, embodiments give momentary physicality to a simultaneous multiplicity of selves which fleetingly inhabit and shape our physical being. From this perspective, the main task of imaginal work is to *let the variety of substantive selves be aware of one another by networking them through the craft of imagination*. In this model a person with what used to be known as a multiple personality disorder is one who does not fathom the natural multiplicity of embodied imagination, and so is condemned to embody each self sequentially, oblivious to the simultaneous coexistence of dormant other selves, existing in a state of potential, like paintings on a cave wall, biding their time to take on body.

Embodied imagination displays multiple subjectivities, which mysteriously self-organize into an experience of cohesion, giving rise to a sense of self. How does this happen? Why do they not end up in an experience of utter chaos?

Originating simultaneously in a variety of sciences, complexity theory addresses just these questions, how in the borderlands between order and chaos, multiple entities tend to self-organize into a creatively adaptive cohesion. I came to complexity theory by the circuitous route along which one's work leads one – usually by the nose. It all started among the green tea bushes at the foot of Mt Fuji in Susono. There in a retreat house, around 1988, what was to become the *Mana* group (meaning “true name” in Japanese), first began meeting. Up to that point my work had philosophically been derived from Jung's polarity thinking, which had been most succinctly expressed in his brief 1917 article called “The Transcendent Function.” Even though the bulk of my practice had already moved into the exploration of embodiment, veering away from my more mentally-oriented Jungian training, I was still powerfully influenced by Jung's theoretical position. He maintained that psyche functions as an elaborate system of opposing forces. Frequently these forces would be in a polar conflict. Jung maintained that, if opposing forces of equal value are held simultaneously in a consciousness which is actively resisting the temptation to make a choice (whereby one pole would be eliminated), psychic energy will be forced down to the roots of the conflict, where the coincidence of opposites lies dormant. Polarity can only exist in a common spectrum of which these poles are the opposing ends. Unrelated entities can be widely different, like an apple and a motorcycle, but they are not opposites, since they do not participate in a common spectrum, as do for instance day and night. When the opposing energy is consciously prevented from splitting into one-or-the-other, the tension will drive the oppositional energy down into its underlying common roots, which eventually awaken, and create a new, original embodied state which encompasses the opposing conditions. This transformed state arising from the roots of conflict is felt to include each cell of the body. I have given several examples of this in my 1996 book *Tracks in the Wilderness of Dreaming*. (Since there is no transcendence in the “transcendent function,” which describes a force down to the roots [*radix* in Latin], I would have preferred it were called the “radical function,” but we're stuck with the infelicitous term.)

That year, in Susono, suddenly a dream was worked differently. A surgeon dreamt that he was in the operating theater doing surgery. We worked the dream from the perspective of the surgeon-self first and then we managed to experience the event from the point of view of the patient, who, as I recall, had not been entirely anesthetized. We came to a strong tension of opposites between the experience of surgeon and patient, and I was just about to intensify this opposition in order to stimulate the transcendent function as described by Jung when the surgeon suddenly became identified with the spirit of the operating theater as a whole, encompassing the event in the way a theater production as a whole embodies a play. Now there were three simultaneous states which needed to be held together, resulting

in a less dramatic but more subtle outcome than the usual polarity work. From then on we began to experiment with an ever-proliferating number of states, the main task of the habitual self being to keep track of it all. This led to the point when so many states were held at the same time that the result was uncontainable chaos and a subsequent disorganization of the work. From there on out I began to experiment with an optimum amount of complexity in the network of states.

According to complexity theory, ecosystems, being both cohesive and complex, have a tendency to self-organize. Complexity theory, taking its cues from chemistry, maintains that in the twilight between order and chaos, a point is reached where there is an optimal relationship between forces of chaos and forces of order, the fluidity of out-of-control tumbling molecules and the stability of latticework solids.

By networking among the fluidity of selves, a latticework of cohesion grows. Ordered structures reach their fingers among the chaotic fluidity. The more cohesive the population of embodied states the greater the self-organizing tendencies among them, and the lower the chance that embodied presences split off and settle in dissociated clusters. The ecosystem as a whole becomes highly adaptive. When, however, the cohesion becomes too great, reaching beyond the complexity point into predominant orderliness, the structure ossifies, settles down, and becomes unresponsive. The most fruitful organization displays an ongoing improvisation in the choreography of selves. Soon I realized that the problem I was facing with working a multiplicity of states – having to find the optimal network of states for the transformation process to be as subtly creative as possible without leading to chaos – was the same problem complexity theorists were grappling with.

“If connections are too few, networks are frozen and no change occurs, and if the connections are too many, there is no stability and networks remain chaotic. Along the margin between too little and too much connection, ‘the spontaneous emergence of self-sustaining webs’” occurs, says Mark Taylor,⁶ quoting biologist Stuart Kauffman. “When a network or system reaches the condition of combinatorial optimization, there is a ‘combinatorial explosion.’ This critical transition takes place at the tipping point where quantitative change suddenly leads to qualitative change.” John Holland of the Santa Fe Institute, one of the earliest complexity theoreticians and called “Mr Emergence” by some, explains:⁷ “Emergence . . . occurs only when the activities of the parts do not simply sum to give the activity of the whole.” An excellent example of such emergent behavior is portrayed by Mitchell Waldrop in his brief history of complexity theory in Santa Fe.⁸

Craig Reynolds . . . had billed the program as an attempt to capture the essence of flocking behavior in birds, or herding behavior in sheep, or

schooling behavior in fish . . . Reynolds' basic idea was to place a large collection of autonomous, birdlike agents – “boids” – into an onscreen environment full of walls and obstacles. Each boid followed three simple rules of behavior:

- 1 It tried to maintain a minimum distance from other objects in the environment, including other boids.
- 2 It tried to match velocities with boids in its neighborhood.
- 3 It tried to move toward the perceived center of mass of boids in its neighborhood.

What was striking about these rules was that none of them said, “Form a flock.” Quite the opposite: all the rules were entirely local, referring only to what an individual boid could see and do in its own vicinity. If a flock was going to form at all, it would have to do so from the bottom up, as an emergent phenomenon. And yet flocks *did* form, every time. Reynolds could start his simulation with boids scattered around the computer screen completely at random, and they would spontaneously collect themselves in a flock that would fly around obstacles in a very fluid and natural manner. Sometimes the flocks would even break into subflocks that flowed around both sides of an obstacle, rejoining on the other side as if the boids had planned it all along.

In the same way, at the “combinatorial optimization point,” the multiplicity of embodied states inhabiting a single body begins to act in an emergent pattern, behaving like a single flock, a self-sustaining web, qualitatively different from the sum of its parts. I don't know if such a web self-organizes within the contorted *Sangoma*, but it surely happens to a person experiencing the multiplicity of diverging impulses in embodied imagination, as I shall describe in the next chapter. The method creates a network of embodied states which then spreads a sense of cohesion throughout the body. Cohesion, like a drop of oil on water, spreads far and wide throughout lived experience. An experience of expanded reality ensues.

Instead of nineteenth-century western id-to-ego colonizing models, in which a strong rational ego controls and infiltrates irrational unconscious forces, embodied imagination requires an attitude of communication. The task of the waking self is to enhance infrastructures among embodied presences, while guarding against the rigidifying tendencies of habit, which stretches its fingers across the material until it freezes fluidity into its solid grip. The art of self-knowledge must include an element of not having any idea of who or what you are, and the ability to live with the resulting uncertainty. An ongoing relationship between the habitual self and the other presences keeps us always a bit off balance, unsettled, on the verge of being out of control, somewhere between chaotic fluidity and a solidified self.

Deep within the magnificent cave of Pech-Merle, of a stalactite beauty worthy of the gods, a rounded natural alcove of a smooth concave whitish yellow limestone contains an extensive frieze done in charcoal, depicting horses, bison and mammoths, dating from the cold phase of the Magdalenian period, about 16,000 years ago. Each animal is depicted over the other so the whole gives a chaotic view of many entities, like generations of superimposed graffiti on a subway wall. When looking at it for a while it is the simultaneity of beings that jumps out at me. This frieze is a fusion of worlds, where horse, bison and mammoth mix in a stew of black spaghetti; intersecting substantive images, each a world of their own, behave like a self-sustaining web of archaic subjectivities. From their limestone stasis, a whirl of their abundant selves for an instant embodies me. I feel dizzy.

A display of method

The road down is slippery. The woman, who organized our stay in the Japan Alps, points down to the floor of the small canyon. We hear the rushing water below. All I can think of is how much effort it will be to climb back up. I've just flown in from Australia and compare the lush vegetation here in Japanese summer to the sparse craggy bush with squiggly trees and red rocks of winter, some hours ago, in the pale haze of the Blue Mountains near Sydney. It is as though my soul refuses to arrive here, and is still languishing among the eucalypts. I can almost smell them. I violently shake my head in an attempt to arrive where I am now. My Japanese colleague looks askance. I act as though an insect is bothering me.

Placing our feet carefully we descend to the waterfall. Butterflies everywhere. A simple bridge, and we're there.

Water rushes over large boulders making the sound of clattering drums in rhythms so fast they seem like a smooth continuum. But if you follow an individual strand of water, a momentary falling sculpture interrupts the rush of sheer motion. The air is naturally cooled in ways we try to imitate inside our homes and office buildings, but can't. Moto-san, a slender young psychologist, 24, with a large, sharp-featured poetic face, remarks, later upon recall, that the stone on which he sits seems cold to the touch, but actually is warm. Heat and cold are strangely mixed. We sit, and let the spirit of the place, the *kami*, do its work upon us. In the sound of water my soul unpacks.

I arrive.

In the late 1980s, Tokyo clinical psychologist Hanako Hamada and I started a Japanese dreamwork group which eventually came to be called *Mana*, "true name," and which, as I described above, was the source of my move from polarity to multiplicity. At the point when we enter this particular story, it has been in continuous existence for 15 years, some members having been part of it for over a decade.

We are staying near the waterfall at a forestry school, living in little huts surrounded by moths, greedy for light. Seated in the meeting room with a high steep roof of corrugated metal, I've led the group of 12 into a vivid remembrance of the waterfall while in a hypnagogic state – an awareness

between waking and sleeping which I will explain in the next chapter when discussing the dreaming brain – and suggest they focus simultaneously on a problem which stymies them.

Moto-san, a new member of the group, unfamiliar with the method of embodied imagination, concentrates on the fact that he graduated as a clinical psychologist four months ago and can't get himself motivated to go out and find work. He is not really sure what he wants to do with his life anyway, and keeps on frittering away his time. He knows that he is interested in dreaming, but how to find a career in the field is unclear. Should it be the scientific study of dreaming, the neuroscience? Should it be the use of dreams in the practice of psychotherapy? Or something entirely different altogether? He is at a loss, paralyzed by indecision.

That night, this seeding grows a dream, which is translated to me, from the Japanese, as follows:

I'm with a man my age wearing a gray suit. In actuality he is older than me, but now seems younger. We were friends in junior high and high school though he was some grades above me. I'm teasing him in jest, prodding him with an extendable chrome pointer. After some time we decide to have tea in a café.

Now we are sitting around a round table. If this were a clock, my friend sits at 3 o'clock, I at 6, and a college mate, dressed in green, at 9. Dishes have already been served, and the price is an expensive 3000 Yen (about US \$25 at the time). I am presented with a menu with only one choice on it. We are almost at the last dish. As if it were a sample, there is only one dish for four people. On the plate is a silver fish, a mackerel grilled with salt and some green vegetables. This kind of dish is much too simple for this restaurant. I could cook that at home. And I don't like salted fish anyway. It's too oily. I'm surprised, find it expensive. I look at the eyes of the friend at 9 and then at the friend at 3, suggesting we should eat, because we have been served. Across from me, at 12 o'clock sits a forty-ish slender woman, dressed in a white shirt. She seems to be the owner of the restaurant.

When we first hear the dream, after he has told us about his concentration on the questions around his trouble in choosing a future, we all laugh when he tells us that the menu only has one choice on it and that he finds this choice, which has already been served, too simple, too expensive, and distasteful. The dream has the feeling of being a direct response to his quest.

I am reminded of James Hillman's adage: "In a dream, the ego is usually wrong." (The reason behind this being that the habitual self in a dream is a hybrid character – part waking self, measuring by daytime criteria, part self who lives in dreaming – and thus easily misinterprets dreaming reality.)

We are sitting outside, on a porch surrounded by woods. The sky is blue, with some scattered clouds. A stubborn beige bark butterfly, with round eyes painted on its wings, keeps landing on my left hand, looking for nectar, finding salt – like Moto-san. My hands sweat in the humid heat. The members of the group are sitting on pillows, eyes closed, in hypnagogic concentration and inner vision.

We first help Moto-san focus on his friend in the gray suit. He feels excited. It's good to see his friend again. Experiencing a strong desire to tease his friend, he begins to poke him with the pointer, sticking him in the right side and the back. I sense something sexual in this pointer which is, after all, extendable. As he focuses his attention on the pointer in his left hand, it is cold. There is no feeling in the hand, no circulation near the pointer. All his focus is on the stripes of the gray suit. By way of that focus, Moto-san begins to notice the posture of his friend. It is kind of bent, the chest looks hollow, the shoulders rounded. The more he looks at the hollow chest, the more he can feel the sadness his friend appears to be feeling. Tears begin to well up, tears of sadness, and, as it feels to me, frustration. In his friend's shoulders Moto-san senses disgust, expressed as a kind of heated tension. Much like Berthe and the bull; Moto-san has become embodied by the substantive image of the gray-suited friend, and is now fully immersed in Gray Suit's world, feeling the body in the gray suit subjectively, by way of identification. Gray Suit feels the way Moto-san feels whenever he is aware of the challenge of looking for work: disgusted with himself and sad about his predicament. We help him concentrate on the hollow chest and rounded shoulders, engraving this embodied state of self-disgust and hollowness into Moto-san's body-memory. It takes some time to anchor these emotional chest and shoulder feelings, so we quietly wait. After this they will have become trigger points, and we only have to touch upon them to release the state they embody. During the silence I am engrossed in my own dilemmas around my impending move to Australia and my fears and worries around my financial future. Sometimes teasing voices tell me I will never make it, sowing doubt if my pointer will extend, or if it will remain small and ineffective. And then there is my Viagra-age insecurity about the state of my sexual potency . . . we're on the same wavelength, Moto-san with his cold pointer, and I.

Now that we are fully within the embodied atmospheres surrounding the friend in the gray pinstriped suit – the dress of the Japanese salary man rushing through downtown Tokyo, visible after 10 p.m. in his office as you look up from the train, who commutes home for two hours and is back at 9 a.m. – we can forward the dream recall to the scene around the round table in the restaurant.

Moto-san first becomes aware of the friend dressed in green who sits at 9 o'clock, his college buddy. He immediately notices his arm on the table, bent with a fist. Hands are very expressive, so I begin to investigate the fist.

It is tight, says Moto-san. By feeling into the tightness of the fist, the college friend's reality begins to engross us. The Green friend is thinking of the future. He is involved in his own future, making plans. (A year later, Moto-san told me this Green friend had indeed packed up and gone to live in London.) While feeling the fist, Moto-san notices his friend's strong legs. There is spring in the legs of the Green man.

Around us rain is beginning to drizzle. This happened yesterday while we were working out in nature, so at first we continue, seeing if it will pass. I ask him about the legs. He describes how Green's legs have get up and go, the ability to spring into action. At this point a downpour begins and we all have to get up and go inside. One of the members of the group leads Moto-san inside while asking him questions about the image to keep him surrounded by the image-environment while the group picks up the *tatami* mats to bring them safely inside. Later we talk about the remarkable coincidence of the legs with their get up and go, and having to actually get up and go inside. While in a hypnagogic state these coincidences feel pregnant with meaning. As Ikuno-san leads Moto-san inside, while keeping him focused on the legs of the Green friend, he begins to cry. Why? she asks him. She reports to us, when we are all inside, under the high corrugated roof, while the torrential downpour sounds like Niagara Falls, that Moto-san had replied that when he had told himself "Now is the time to go!" he had felt some kind of catharsis. We sit for a while with the tears of Moto-san, feeling the legs that can get up, and the pounding rain. In order to hear, the group has gathered very closely around him. The moment feels very intimate. After some time I ask what the Green man feels about the dish of which Moto-san had complained. To Green friend it feels fine. No problem. He's involved in the future. After firmly anchoring this set of feelings into his legs, Moto-san begins to float back to his own perspective, upset with himself that he can't leave, even though he feels the price is too high, just because he is already sitting there and has been served. There is anger inside his neck and between his shoulders. We give it a while to sink in. The feeling that he can't act is experienced as a pain in the knee joint of the left leg. At the same time he is sad that he feels this inability to make a move. He hates that weakness in himself. Doesn't want to feel it. His shame envelops him in utter isolation.

Now I make a vigorous intervention. Shame and self-loathing can make underlying feelings disappear. All the subtle feelings are now inaudible because of the loudness of the shame. I tell him to, just for a moment, disregard the self-recrimination and to keep on feeling his underlying sadness about his inability to move. It is located in his sternum. It hurts there. Again we wait a moment.

Finally we focus on the woman-owner across from him. He can't see her, he is just aware of the white shirt. We have him describe the shirt. It is made of thick material, with a round neck. The material is rather cool. Air can

easily pass through it. As he is beginning to feel the white shirt with the air passing through, he can suddenly feel into her straight back. Her backbone is very strong. Moto-san is pervaded by her inner strength. I can feel my own back straightening and have a sudden confidence in my future.

Now that a variety of relevant perspectives have been experienced, we come to the point of the *composition*. We are now going to help Moto-san compose an embodied web that connects each state he has felt during the work. The group begins to systematically remind him of the trigger points which are spread throughout his body, containing the embodied memories of the states he has lived through in the past two hours. We begin with the legs.

In the right leg the get up and go,
 in the left knee the weakness and inability to move,
 in the spine the inner strength,
 in the sternum the sadness,
 the self-loathing in the hollow chest,
 in the neck and between the shoulder blades the hot anger,
 the sense of future in the tight fist,
 the tears of catharsis around “Now is the time to go!” in the eyes.

He holds this network of embodied feelings for about two minutes while we remind him of them. For a while the feelings are there simultaneously, like an Aboriginal body-painting full of storylines. It is felt like a hot fever coursing through all the cells of his body. But then something happens.

“Everything is gone,” he says. “I feel nothing.”

We look perplexed, with a fear that all has been for naught.

Then Arimoto-san asks, “What does that ‘nothing’ feel like?”

I notice that I’m holding my breath.

“As you ask me that,” he responds, “there is a protector coming over me. It comes over my shoulders, my chest.” As he talks we can hear that his voice has changed. It comes from a bigger chest, a larger body. “I feel that I can affect the world with this protector over me.”

I remark on my experience of his voice having changed. Have the others heard it? Everyone nods.

“I don’t recognize this body,” he remarks, curiosity in his voice. “It is a bigger body with broader shoulders, a larger torso.”

“In this body, can you feel back into the situation you have incubated, about finding a job?” I inquire.

Moto-san rotates his hands, as if he is fixing something before him. “If I want to move something, I can do it. If I want to withdraw, I can. With this protector over me I have more influence on the world around me. I’m more effective. But the body doesn’t feel like it’s my body. It feels like a *rental body*, a body that doesn’t fit me.”

I suggest he remains in this rental body for some time before we stop. Then I suggest he spend a few minutes a day in this larger body, until it begins to feel like it fits him. At the same time, I add, it would be good to begin to work out, so that the physical body grows. He is actually very slender and string-like. In this way he will not only work this issue through the subjective body, but also by way of his objective physique. What has been felt as a temporary rental body can become, through constant and devoted repetition, a permanent embodiment, *expanding Moto-san's embodiment repertoire*.

Two years later it is clear that Moto-san has purchased the rental body: he has become an avid swimmer, has a filled-out tapered body, and leads a satisfying professional life in the field of psychology.

The notion of a multiplicity of embodiments flies in the face of our stable identification with a single self, which we call our identity. We have identity cards to prove that we are who we are, one single person. From early on we learn to be in a single coherent body image, based on the contours of the body-object. We are taught that we each have one single body, which is identical with our name and with our reflection in the mirror. Moto-san was taught that he was a man, Japanese, and that, culturally, a Japanese man living in this day and age does and feels a set scale of actions and emotions. The habits of consciousness thus created encrusted him into a single identity. At the same time he is part of an imagination which constantly bodies forth substantive images, fleeting presences, which momentarily exist as a flash of creation, distinct until we wake away from their realm. We can apprentice ourselves to the intelligence of the substantive images, rehearse them, like an actor rehearses a character, until they grow our bodies into new ways of being in the world, and as we break the molds, new life flushes in. While the fixation of habit dissolves, fluidity and ambiguity are in ascendance, new embodiment dawns, like Moto-san in a bigger body, which feels like a rental body. This new state needs to be rehearsed in order to gain permanence, or it evaporates like a dream in the first light of morning.

Substantive images are fleeting in nature, while the lived body appears to have a certain amount of permanence, for which Merleau-Ponty coins the felicitous term of the "robust body." A rehearsal of substantive presences makes them part of the permanent embodiment repertoire of the robust body.

After the work, Hamada-san, my co-leader, said that in the end, when everything went dark, she panicked, feeling all the work had been wasted. Someone asked Arimoto-san, a decade-long member of the group, what brought her to ask the crucial question, "What does that 'nothing' feel like?"

She replied, "I have noticed in our work before, that sometimes in the end, everything turns black, all the feelings leave. And that is just before the moment when change happens. That's why I asked."

I had never thought about this, but indeed, frequently the screen goes dark after holding the composite for a while. I had always explained it to myself that this was because the system can't cope with so many simultaneous states any more, and has to let go. But Arimoto-san's intervention points to other possibilities. Maybe the dark silence is the moment of Gestalt psychology's figure/ground shift, when the background becomes foreground, and out of the silence, from behind the loud din of experience, a background state emerges.

This "nothing" might be the moment complexity theory talks about, when it asserts that, when a system, balanced between order and chaos, has become too complex to remain in its current state, a *tipping point* occurs, at which instant, like an avalanche, a qualitatively different state emerges from the prior overly complex network of states. This new condition can encompass a higher level of complexity in the way the three dimensions of a cube can hold what a two-dimensional plane cannot.

Or Moto-san's "nothing" may be a moment of annihilation, when he has become utterly unrecognizable to himself, his familiar self having been stripped off like a set of dirty clothes.

The dreaming brain and simultaneous multiplicity in space

In an Aboriginal dot painting in Central Australia, many stories are simultaneously portrayed in a single space. I have been told that these, by now world-famous, paintings have developed from body painting, making the body *become* story, much like Moto-san's rental body full of storylines. It appears that embodied imagination portrays a multiplicity of stories as a momentary epiphany in space. The most potent stories we currently tell ourselves about dreaming are stories about the brain. To our contemporary minds the brain has become the place of epiphany, the location of dreams. If we can point to places in the brain where dreaming happens, the mind of science can locate them, and tell their stories in brain language. This chapter will describe the stories science posits about dreaming in the brain, as told by two of the leading minds in scientific dream research, J. Allan Hobson and Mark Solms.

Our story begins with Hobson, who maintains that "conscious experience is the brain-mind's awareness of its own physiological states."⁹ Subjectivity is proclaimed to be a secondary derivative of the physical body.

When hearing J. Allan Hobson, professor of psychiatry at Harvard, talk, one is instantly inspired by the utmost fascination he has with the world of dreaming. Yet Hobson maintains that "dreaming is epiphenomenal with respect to the most fundamental biological adaptations of REM sleep" such as "temperature control and immune function maintenance." (An epiphenomenon ranks secondary to a primary phenomenon, in the way the heat of a reading lamp is secondary to the light it casts, or the light of a heat lamp is secondary to the heat it provides.) In this story, dreaming is an intelligent forebrain trying to make sense of inherently meaning-free noise. It makes "the best of a bad job in producing even partially coherent dream imagery from the relatively noisy signals sent up from the brain stem."¹⁰ It reminds me of a tale I was once told by a poet who grew up in the Deep South of the USA in the 1950s. Television had just come to their rural area. When father brought home the TV, the children didn't know that transmission hadn't yet begun in their community, and so, not knowing what television actually was, they sat in front of the TV screen for hours, looking

at the static, making up endless stories. According to Hobson's telling, dreaming itself contains no intelligence, and dream reports are stories our intelligent higher cortex tells us to make sense of the pure static sparked by activities of the lower brainstem, which is fundamentally unrelated to intelligible imagery.

Neuro-psychologist Mark Solms tells another story:

Following the discovery of rapid eye movement (REM) sleep in the mid 1950s by Aserinsky and Kleitman . . . it was widely assumed that the physiological state known as REM sleep and the subjective state known as dreaming were one and the same thing described from two different points of view. It followed from that assumption that the neurological mechanisms that produced REM sleep were simultaneously the neurological mechanisms that produced dreaming . . . all of these models attribute a pivotal role in the regulation of the REM cycle to deep brainstem nuclei . . . [and] . . . the subjective experience of dreams to brainstem activation during sleep of higher cortical structures.¹¹

This point is important because the brainstem, to which dreams were assigned because of the identity REM = dreaming, runs physiological processes. To this academically ruling point of view, propounded by Hobson *et al.*, dreaming is a secondary subjective experience of primarily physiological processes, making sense of static.

Solms continues (*italics added*),

it has in fact never been demonstrated that the abolition of REM is accompanied by a cessation of the subjective experience of dreaming. Conversely, it has repeatedly been demonstrated that cessation of dreaming is compatible with the preservation of normal REM sleep . . . Although there is a statistical correlation between the physiological state of REM sleep and the conscious state of dreaming, dreaming is not causally dependent on REM . . . *physiological mechanisms that produce dreams are independent of those that produce REM.*

This is a crucial point in Solms' story, because most of the conclusions about the neurophysiology of dreaming were based on REM research using cats and rodents, not humans. If REM sleep is not identical to dreaming, then the animal studies of REM sleep would be just that, REM studies, and not studies of dreaming itself. During REM, Hobson argues, the neuro-chemical state of the brain is that of a kind of delirium, and thus dreams are ravings devoid of meaning. However, studies show that "a full 70 percent of awakenings during sleep onset [the sleeping hypnagogic state, before most REM mechanisms are set in motion] elicit hallucinatory dream reports . . . indistinguishable from REM mentation."¹² (Statement between [] mine.)

In agreement with Solms, Hobson later modified his position about static by adding brain imaging REM data, showing (italics added) “a preferential activation of limbic and paralimbic regions in the forebrain . . . [implying] . . . that *dream emotion may be a primary shaper of dream plots* rather than playing a secondary role.”¹³ This implies that dreaming itself may contain emotional intelligence. He also states that while dreaming, the “brain region thought to be important for spatial imagery construction” is activated. The friendly adversaries agree that dreaming is related to an experience of space.

What is the fundamental difference between these two stories?

If dreaming was purely brainstem activity serving biological processes only, it would be a rudimentary process on the level of the immune system and heat regulation, not designed to convey intelligible imagery. Taking dreams to belong to the higher forebrain as well, makes images potentially carriers of cortical intelligence. Whereas in Hobson’s story meaning is projected upon a screen full of static, in Solms’ tale meaning formation would come from the dreaming itself. To remember the tale of the Southern poet: in Solms’ story the children would be watching and imagining around an actual program, not exclusively making up stories around static. Under those circumstances, dreaming could be a transmission of meaningful information. This meaningful information would be structured around affect, since the limbic system is heavily involved. As the brain region thought to be important for spatial imagery construction is involved, this affective state presents itself as an unfolding of coherent cortical spatial information.

This debate is still raging, with passions flaring high on both sides: are dreams the direct counterpart of REM sleep (Hobson) or is the relationship between REM and dreaming purely statistical, the brainstem quakes of REM just being the alarm clock waking the mind to dreaming (Solms)?¹⁴

My instinct makes me prefer a non-causal connection between dreaming and REM sleep (Solms’ position), thus opening up the neuro-scientific study of dreaming as more than delirious brainstem static devoid of accessible meaning. It would make sense to me if dreaming were an archaic process of continuous embodied imagery, intimately related to homeostasis and self-defense (“temperature control and immune function maintenance”), filtering up through forebrain locations of affective cognition – primal pulses differentiating into cortical complexity. Solms reaches his conclusions through studies he conducted with a large sample of human subjects who had suffered topical brain damage, by investigating how certain brain lesions affect the subjective experience of dreaming, thereby making inferences about the normal process of dreaming.¹⁵ He uncovers six zones in the brain, which, when damaged, severely affect our capacity to dream, three of them leading to a complete cessation of the subjective experience of dreaming, concluding that these areas must therefore play a role in the process of dream formation. Then he investigates which other

symptoms, besides affected dreaming, appear upon damage to these parts. From this emerges a clinical picture, a syndrome, a field of psychological factors related to these brain areas involved in the process of dreaming.

The first syndrome he mentions, which comes with a global cessation of dreaming – no subjective experience of dreaming whatsoever – connects to a location in the forebrain which deals with a person’s ability to “derive abstract concepts from spatially organized information.” Hobson is in full agreement. Lesions to this region – the left parietal lobe – make it impossible to “distinguish spatially between right and left,” or to “identify and distinguish between fingers on a hand.” Dreams are related, therefore, to orientation in space. Solms continues, saying that (*italics added*) “mental processes in this region are represented in the form of *simultaneous patterns rather than sequential processes*.”

These factors are mirrored by Solms’ second syndrome, related to a topical damage to the right hemisphere of the brain, the right parietal lobe, which also comes with a global cessation of the subjective experience of dreaming. Here visuo-spatial working memory, the ability to “hold perceptual information in *consciousness*, in simultaneous visuospatial patterns,” is erased.

On this fundamental level, to put it succinctly, dreaming is experienced as *the occurrence of, and orientation in, simultaneous patterns in space*.

That dreaming is about spatial events I have discussed extensively above, starting this tale in primordial caves. Dreaming as potential cognition is related to Solms’ insistence on cortical involvement in dreaming

The *simultaneity* of spatial patterns leads us to further exploration.

It is obvious from the experience of dreaming that a dream unfolds along the lines of a narrative. Next to our predilection towards storytelling (remember the children watching static and coming up with vivid tales), I assume that these narratives are *also* enumerations of embodied states existing simultaneously in spatial networks, presenting themselves sequentially to the perceiver. This assumption is demonstrated in the work with Moto-san. The dream story he tells over time can also be read as a simultaneous *recipe* for a stew with a number of necessary individual ingredients. Boiling them together expands the cooking pot into a bigger body. This relates to my understanding of images as ecosystems, in which each element exists in a simultaneous network with all other elements. From this ecological perspective, I take Solms’ left and right parietal lobe syndromes as my central neuro-science story and treat embodied imagination as if it were the sequential presentation of simultaneous patterns in space. Adding the point on which Solms and Hobson agree (namely that brain imaging REM data show “a preferential activation of limbic and paralimbic regions in the forebrain . . . [implying] . . . that dream emotion may be a primary shaper of dream plots rather than playing a secondary role”), I conclude that these simultaneous patterns are of an emotional nature.

“In a typical emotion,” Antonio Damasio tells us,¹⁶

certain regions of the brain send commands to other regions of the brain and to most everywhere in the body proper. The commands are sent via two routes. One route is the bloodstream, where the commands are sent in the form of chemical molecules that act on receptors in the cells which constitute body tissues. The other route consists of neuron pathways and the commands along this route consist of electrochemical signals . . .

Emotions are fully embodied states existing throughout the physical body. Adding this to the mix of stories told by neuro-science, dreaming may be seen as *a simultaneous spatial experience of multiple embodied emotions*.

As becomes clear from the work with Moto-san, this perspective leads to far-reaching consequences in the work with embodied imagery. If dreaming, our paradigm for embodied imagination, is seen as a simultaneous multiplicity of emotional embodied states, it might be useful if the work on embodied imagination itself were to correspond to the dreaming condition. In that case it would require a conscious simultaneous experience of multiple states, as seen in the Moto-san work.

The awareness in which the practice of embodied imagination may achieve such an experience of a simultaneity of disparate embodiments is called the waking hypnagogic state, a state of consciousness naturally experienced while falling asleep. This early phase of sleep, is what laboratory jargon calls “sleep onset.” The waking hypnagogic state is then imperceptibly followed by the sleeping hypnagogic state, a prolific non-REM state of dreaming. In the waking hypnagogic state images surround us, though they are usually experienced as more flimsy than are the solid quasi-physical presences of dream worlds. This relative flimsiness is partly due to our dual state of consciousness in the waking hypnagogic state: one consciousness is acutely aware of the image environment, while another knows she is imagining. In the common dream state we are in a single consciousness, which is exclusively experiencing the reality of the environment. Through careful attention to details of the image environment, affective states, and physical sensations, the natural waking hypnagogic state can be artificially intensified, so the initially flimsy image ambience becomes increasingly dense, sometimes perceived as equally real, as while dreaming. At the same time waking consciousness is strengthened. During the naturally existing waking hypnagogic state we frequently drift off, as waking consciousness momentarily evaporates, leaving memory open to the amnesia of sleep. In the waking hypnagogic state, artificially enhanced through practiced focus, dual consciousness has become polarized – we are both more awake and more densely surrounded by image environments than in the naturally occurring waking hypnagogic state, while memory is

contiguous, not riddled with amnesia. Because of the increasingly physical self-presentation of the image environment, our physical responses become more palpable, as when one is engrossed in a movie while being fully identified with one of the characters. Our breathing adjusts to the image environment, our motor centers become activated, and the heart gets involved. Our ability to identify gets loosened from our habitual selves and attaches itself momentarily to non-selves who inhabit an image place. We experience the world through them. As seen in Moto-san's case, the practice of embodied imagination employs this dissociability of identity in the waking hypnagogic state to lure the identifying faculty away from habitual consciousness, causing it to morph into strangers. In this way imagination is experienced from radically different perspectives. Each perspective stems from a different embodied state, giving rise to a complex embodied network, which may lead to the infusion of radically new embodied metaphors into the entire system, like Moto-san's rental body.

If we look at dreaming as a narrative unfolding of simultaneous embodied states, we could portray it as horizontally moving along a single timeline: the dream story as it is first told. In networking embodied imagination, we flip the horizontal single narrative structure 90 degrees, collapsing time so the embodied states rest vertically in one simultaneous moment. This tilts a horizontal storyline into a vertical *axis*, a cross-section of multiple embodied stories, much like the geological strata seen in a young mountain, where earth tilted up, making its many story times visible at a glance. This understanding corresponds to our findings from the work on trauma: that embodied images are ecosystems in which the totality of the network determines the quality of the atmosphere. Take one element out of the network and the atmosphere changes totally.

Metabolizing trauma

Taking dreaming as the primary paradigm of embodied imagination, I have defined embodied images as *surrounding, imagined, quasi-physical environments and presences in and among which we find ourselves, presenting themselves as self-evidently real, accompanied by basic physiological processes.*

While dreaming we find ourselves in a quasi-physical environment, surrounding us entirely. This environment presents itself in such a degree of physical reality that we are convinced we are awake. This embodied world is a lived experience. The same is true for a trauma flashback.

As I stated before, an embodied image is an ecosystem in which each element is predicated upon the other, and all forces are in a constant state of interaction. A change in one element transforms the entire ecosystem. This ecological way of looking at embodied imagination can readily be demonstrated in the treatment of trauma.

“If you leave me, I will kill you. I will know where to find you and I will kill you. I’ll spend every dime I have to kill you and I have lots of dimes.” He was a man of power, closely connected to the Russian Mafia in Brighton Beach, one of the most powerful mobs in the world. His words were not idle, he could make them stick. Natasha had found this out *after* she had come to the US from her native Moscow on a tourist visa, *after* their brief courtship, marriage and instant staying permit, and *after* the baby was born.

She was scared to death of Nicolai. At first it had been the endless bouts of vodka and beatings, then after Boris was born, the time he dropped the baby in his drunken stupor, his boasting of the hitman he had used to knock off a man who had once had dinner with them and had since disappeared. Nicolai was not a man of idle threats. He was “good” for his word, as far as violence was concerned. She had been planning a getaway, to take a bus to California, but he had found her stash of hidden cash and guessed its purpose. That’s when he said it, and that was the moment when the fear had been so overwhelming that she couldn’t breathe. Then, years later she *had* managed to flee. She moved into a small apartment in a quiet street and two weeks later Nicolai moved in across the street, grinning broadly. Boris had

still been small then. Now he was 18 years old, and Natasha was still suffering various symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). She had managed to divorce Nicolai without getting herself killed, but she was terrified of him. He was still living across the street.

The seminar she attended was one of my regular North American ones she had been to before, when she had had a positive experience with my method of working embodied imagination by way of dreams. This time I was explaining the relationship between embodied imagination and trauma, in a talk I had named “Metabolizing Trauma.” In the past few years I had developed several strategies for the treatment of trauma based on techniques developed in embodied dream imagery, which had proven to be quite successful.

One approach is based, in part, on the findings of Ernest Hartmann, psychiatrist, psychoanalyst and laboratory dream researcher, who had found that one of the natural functions of dreaming is to integrate traumatic experience into the larger tissue of the psychological system. He demonstrated this by way of following the manner in which post-traumatic dreams of healthy individuals (*not* suffering from PTSD) slowly change representation of the traumatic event. This he contrasted with dreams stemming from PTSD patients. He says, “The dream, even if it occurred only a few days later, often did include the trauma but already involved some distortion or change, bringing in material from other parts of the dreamer’s life . . . [this contrast with] cases of posttraumatic stress disorder in which there is indeed a repetitive dream dealing with the trauma.”¹⁷ Hartmann quotes novelist Doris Lessing¹⁸ describing her father’s war memories as “congealed,” told over and over, verbatim, while using the same exact gestures. Hartmann maintains that in healthy dreamers the trauma was being “contextualized”¹⁹ into the texture of the psyche as a whole, woven into the net of consciousness, previously torn by the trauma. For post traumatic stress *disordered* dreamers the trauma has congealed into stereotype, remaining a solid dissociated satellite. Thus the difference between healthy and unhealthy responses to trauma is in the *imaginal distortion* or change which begins to occur immediately after the traumatic event in healthy dreamers, as Hartmann tells us on the basis of his extensive research of thousands of post-traumatic dreams. I understand this distortion to be the *metabolizing work of imagination*, which begins to play with reality in order to dissolve hard-to-digest chunks of living. This understanding had led me to work post-traumatic dreams by way of concentrating on elements in the dreaming which were different from the actual event as consciously remembered. This almost invariably led to clinical improvements. From thereon in I concluded that it was not necessary to wait for a dream, but that the same effect could be achieved by leading people into an artificial flashback.

A *spontaneous flashback* is a moment in which the traumatic environment suddenly re-establishes itself and the traumatized person finds themselves in

a repetition of the traumatic events. An *artificial flashback*, on the other hand, arises from a careful recollection of the environment until it is fully present again. Because the artificial flashback has slowly been constructed, the traumatized person *knows* that she is in a flashback, and is thus in a dual consciousness: on the one hand she is utterly present to the traumatic situation, which once again fully surrounds her, while on the other she realizes that she has artificially brought this condition about, and is simultaneously safely sitting in a room with a therapist.

A flashback, artificial or spontaneous, has a great deal in common with a dream. They are both immediately present, quasi-physical, directly experienced embodied environments. Thus work on a flashback is very similar to work on a dream.

While I am explaining all this, Natasha is experiencing “thin-as-threads lightning bolt-like charges through my shoulders.” (She reports this in an email communication a few weeks after the work.) When I ask for a volunteer with whom to demonstrate this artificial flashback method, focused on distorting discrepancies between the acutely present flashback environment and the event as recalled in ordinary waking memory, she immediately raises her hand, saying she suddenly realized very strongly she was living trauma, which has prevented her from finding a new life partner. She makes it very clear that she is very eager to work. We know each other, having worked on dreams together before in this group. From the urgency in her voice I make an intuitive assessment that working the trauma, even in the public environment of a familiar group, may be more useful to her than letting the situation fester as it is. She tells us how she left her marriage under the threat of death. “I’ll spend every dime I have to kill you,” she repeats Nicolai’s words. “He also threatened my son that if he ever told anyone about his father’s alcoholism, he would . . .” Her voice trails off. “Nicolai lives across the street. I’ve been living like this for years. I feel like I’m dangling, feeling the threat of his criminal background. I just realized that I’m not in a new relationship because of it. My realization has something to do with Boris turning 18, leaving home.”

“If it’s okay with you,” I begin, “can you go to the moment he first said to you he’d kill you if you’d leave him? Can you tell me about the environment in which it happened – tell it to me as if you were telling a dream. Where are you?” I ask her. As concrete specificity is essential in working with embodied images, a person has to first be taken back to a specific moment in time.

“I am in several parallel moments. I am in our home in New York, in the living room. It is night.”

“Try to focus in on a single event . . . Where are you?”

“We are sitting on a sectional sofa. He’s dripping with sweat, angry and drunk, sitting cross-legged in the Indian style, in underwear – sweating, angry, drunk.”

“Where is the light coming from?”

“From a glass coffee table.”

“As he’s talking, what’s happening in your body?”

“My shoulders are crunched, up by my ears. Feeling the injustice,” she says. Her fists are shaking.

“Can you look around the room and see – is there anything unusual *right now*? Anything that’s not quite the way you remember it?” Here I contrast the immediately present flashback environment with ordinary waking memory.

Natasha is quiet for a long time. In a later correspondence with me she described this long silence:

In my particular scene, the living room, I could vividly see the details . . . I was quite surprised to be able to see the furniture, the walls. I did not “picture” them, they revealed themselves to me as I moved my gaze around the room, slowly . . . I looked at the cross-legged once-husband and saw the fabric of the sofa, the glass and brass, even the areas that were worn of their shine, on the end table and coffee table. I saw the pattern in the fabric of the curtains on the window wall. I saw the TV, the wood of the walls, the knots in the wood, the details of the arrangement of the bookshelves. I had seen three of the four walls and all was exactly as it had been. In clearer detail than I could have believed I would be capable of remembering. The looking was slow. I was now going to need to turn my body to see the fourth wall and the portion of the first wall that was to my back.

“My son is not there,” she suddenly exclaims. “He is not in the room in his, his little kid thing,” she says, struggling to express her experience in words. “He actually was in a baby seat on the parquet floor, but now he isn’t there. There’s just the parquet. No baby!” Again she is silent. She later described this second silence as follows:

Here is where the powerful moment occurred. I have blamed myself for 20 years for having made the poor choice of my marriage, and all the bad fallout of that choice. As I readied myself to turn and scan the rest of the room I was horrified that – in fact I somehow sensed – that the room would be identical, which would mean that (tears come to my eyes as I write this) nothing had changed, and that I was only beginning to deal with this terrible choice and that I had years and years of more shaming and blaming and therapy ahead of me. That the outcome of this work with you was to discover that I had yet to begin, and that everything was still the same, and I was trapped in the anguish of the presence of the angry drunk husband. And so I turned, and I looked and everything was the same. The pictures on the wall, the bar, the bar

stools, the whole room all the way around and back to where I was seated. And then somehow I looked at the floor, noticed the pattern of the piecework of the parquet, pained terribly that nothing was different, not a single detail of the room had changed. I know this all only took a few brief moments in the room in which we did our work, but the sorrow and discouragement was tremendous. Nearly unbearable. I felt like I was back at the beginning. Suddenly I noticed that the place where Boris would have been sleeping was empty. He was gone! And then I thrilled to the realization that not only was Boris not there, I had experienced the whole work, the whole process the whole scene, the whole thing without even worrying about or thinking about Boris! I had never ever, ever, *ever* been in that room without being psychically intent on the well-being of that baby. To experience that room, to have heard the man say he'd kill me if I left him. To be there with the cigarette smoke smell, the odor of rum and coke, the sticky rings on the glass table, the overflowing ashtray, the dripping sweat off armpit hairs, all the usual details without a care, a thought, a worry, even a recollection of the existence of Boris for the whole re-living of the scenario!!!

After allowing the silence to persist for a while I say: "Focus on that sense he is not there in the scene."

"I have trouble breathing," she replies, crying.

"Look at the place where he's not."

Natasha continues to cry.

"What is that experience like . . . that he's not there?"

"He's safe. He doesn't have to be there."

"Feel that he is not there – that he is safe. Feel that in your body."

"It feels spacious."

"With this feeling, can you look at this drunken man? What's it like to be with him in this state?"

"Disinterest . . . No, not quite . . . Bafflement. He's so small and skinny and weak – pitiful. What is this little sweaty angry being doing there?"

"Keep looking at where your son is not."

"This is really over," she responds, quietly knowing this for a fact.

The actual work had taken less than 15 minutes. The sheer brevity of the work makes me suspect that it must have been a catalyst transforming a system on the tipping point, poised for an avalanche of transformation.

Natasha sent me a follow-up description of the month after this work:

My psyche was "metabolizing" in this month. I found myself waking in the night, unable to sleep for hours; scenes, memories flashing, playing like movies, sometimes several places and times simultaneously; it was impossible much of the second week and early parts of the third week to manage paperwork, filing, book-keeping, finances. I took sick time

from my job. I volunteered for the trauma work because threadlike lightning bolts shot and zinged through my tense shoulders when you mentioned the idea. This entire month was like that. Energy flowing in my body and psyche, which are waking up, loosening, softening, and I'm able to stand firmly but softly in the face of it all. It felt like a dose of WD-40 [an oil-based lubricant spray used for machinery] was sprayed on. My son Boris' energy, somehow, by contagion, osmosis, resonance or something of that ilk, was also transformed regarding his father's absurd-dwarf-drunken-insignificance and his machinations. His dealings with his father changed. What once seemed large and powerful – Boris' father – was in actuality absurd and small.

What Natasha has shown us is that a traumatic state is in fact an ecosystem, with each element of the trauma environment predicated on the other. When one element in the environment changes, like the absence of Boris on the parquet floor, the entire ecosystem goes through an avalanche of radical transformation. It is similar to the introduction of a new element into a physical ecosystem. In Yellowstone Park in Wyoming, wolves had been hunted into extinction. Recently they were reintroduced in the park. The results for the ecosystem were unexpected. Because wolves eat elk, the elk were no longer free to leisurely eat willow sprouts. The result of the change in the ecosystem caused willow trees to return to Yellowstone Park. A change in an ecosystem has a cascading effect. Similarly, when the baby was no longer part of the trauma ecosystem, the once "large and powerful" father became an "absurd-dwarf-drunken-insignificance." This then cascaded into a change in the current relationship between the 18-year-old Boris and his father.

The customary energy household in an ecosystem manifests itself in a routine. A change in the system uproots this routine: "it was impossible much of the second week and early parts of the third week to manage paperwork, filing, book-keeping, finances." The break-up of routine releases static energy: "Energy flowing in my body and psyche, which are waking up, loosening, softening." When the nucleus of a traumatic system splits open, the chain reaction is dramatic.

An approach to the embodied imagination as an ecosystem does justice to the quasi-physical nature of the environment in which embodied imagination presents itself. ("I was quite surprised to be able to see the furniture, the walls. I did not 'picture' them, they revealed themselves to me as I moved my gaze around the room, slowly.") While in an embodied image, be it dream or flashback, we find ourselves among the presences, as real and as quasi-physical as the experiencing subject moving among them. A change within the system presents itself as unexpected, not manufactured by expectation. Natasha describes her *surprise* at the absence of her baby. The change came to her spontaneously and unbidden.

Flashback-type memory is completely different from the discursive, narrative memory of ordinary waking consciousness. As Natasha insists, it presents itself as revelation (“they revealed themselves”). The Greek word for revelation is *apokalupsis* (apocalypse). A traumatic flashback is an apocalyptic experience in the most literal meaning of the word. As we saw from Natasha’s work, this kind of memory-as-ecosystem is not necessarily fixed, it can have complete plasticity, unlike the congealed state of Doris Lessing’s father’s stereotyped war memories. Each apocalyptic moment of our past has its own future, either fixed or plastic. Research into PTSD has shown that the vast majority of potentially traumatizing experiences have plasticity, and are capable of being woven back into the network which has gone through the substantial qualitative change necessary for a reattachment. Endless, stereotyped, fixed repetition is the exception, and such trauma will not reattach to the Renaissance patchwork of states, but will remain a body drifting in space.

In flashbacks our past is a presence. The change of one single element in this present past changes our future. In this most basic way, the blanket statement “You cannot change the past,” is a lie. A flashback is like a time machine in a science fiction movie. If the hero uncovers a minor change in the past, he returns to a vastly altered present. Much of our past is potential presence, constantly ready for embodiment, open to change.

The endogenous healing response

While staying at my parents over Christmas in 1969 my appendix ruptured, my belly became the home of pus, and from there on in my intestines refused to work. In the hospital where I was born, the doctor scurried in and out with averted gaze and told my parents that he couldn't do anything more for me. I was most likely to die. Emaciated and yellow, a victim of starvation, I sat with my legs dangling over the side of my bed. It had been an enormous effort to get into a sitting position. I looked in the mirror and realized with absolute clarity that this was all a big mistake. This was *not* the story of my life. I had become lost in the story of someone who was not me. I was not supposed to die right now. I was supposed to live a lifetime, experience with passion, not be a human wreck and die in the same hospital in which I had been born less than 22 years before. I felt a switch within me, a certainty that this was most definitely not *it*. My health started to return from that moment on.

And so my life of embodied awareness began.

After I more or less recovered from my appendicitis, I returned to my physical condition since age 17: fatigue and constant diarrhea. It had gone by many names, attached to it by concerned physicians taking a stab at it. Now after five years of this low grade misery, an excellent and compassionate gastroenterologist suggested I stay in the Leiden University hospital until they had figured it out, once and for all. I was most grateful, spending the next ten months in a comfortable hospital room, undergoing an endless battery of tests, leading nowhere fast. Finally my doctor decided that it would be best to kill my entire intestinal flora with huge doses of antibiotics and start over. And miracle of miracles, I was cured . . . or so it seemed. After three months I went back to my doctor telling him of the success of his cure. We were both delighted, especially since he had written me up in some medical journal. A week later it began all over again, the endless diarrhea, and I decided to quit western medicine. Subsequently I got married, and then met Aniela Jaffé, Jung's former assistant, and co-author of his *Memories Dreams and Reflections*. We moved to Zurich, where I started intensive analysis with her (which my bride was already convinced I sorely needed),

mainly by way of dreams. During the first two years of my analysis my intestinal troubles improved. I began to recognize that whenever I was in an oppressive situation, my intestines were in trouble; that a moment of stress immediately translated into a run to the bathroom, making me painfully aware of the fact that emotions are embodied. I shifted from the realm of hypersensitivity, which I came to understand as an actual lack of a sense of embodied states, into the condition of sensitivity, the ability to become aware of some of the ongoing shifts in body tone. Slowly I began to understand that my intestines were displaying a kind of emotional intelligence, knowing more than the one I had believed until then to be "I." During the work with my dreams, unknown states of consciousness began to emerge, and my intestinal affliction vanished, never to return (touch wood).

Since then I have been fascinated with the relationship between dreaming and the physical body.

From those with phenomenal aspirations, mainly in the works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, we have learned a differentiation between a body as subject and a body as object – the subjective and the objective body. It is the difference between the body that you *have* and the body that you *are*. The body you have, the body-object, can be opened up and investigated, like any other object. The body you are, the body-subject, is based on your subjective experience of being an embodied presence in the world.

By treating the body as object, conventional medicine, based on the Hippocratic tradition in classical Greek medicine, has won tremendous victories, especially in the last hundred years. However, classical Greek medicine had *two* equally important sources: Hippocratic medicine and Asclepian medicine. The latter treated the body by way of the body-subject, primarily through embodied imagination.

Even though we cannot believe the way a Greek believed 2,500 years ago, since we live in vastly different conditions, I have to ask you to for a moment suspend disbelief. In the dark of night, 2,500 years ago in Epidaurus, next to the great amphitheater, one of the acoustic miracles of early Greece, the ones to be initiated into their illness by the God of Healing, Asklepios, were getting themselves ready to recline for sleep on their *klinai*, the benches on which a dreamer was to receive healing spirit in a dream (from which is derived the word 'clinic'). It was in this dreamed meeting with the healing spirit, either in human, animal or other form, that Asklepios' healing force would enter the body and facilitate healing through the subjective body. The Asclepian spirit appears fully embodied – a man, a snake, a dog – dense and real like a physical being, and affects the physical body through subjective experience. Outside the temple we can still see sculpted portrayals of the healings which took place through the subjective body: highly physical cures, like the healing of broken bones. Who in contemporary western culture would believe that you could enhance the healing of a broken limb by way of dreaming?

Below the white-capped mountain range peaking in Tateyama Mountain, near the town of Toyama on the central Honshu Island coast along the Japan Sea on the opposite side of Tokyo, Norifumi Kishimoto, MD of Toyama University, had organized the 2006 Fifth International Psychosomatic Conference, a series he and I had started in 2000 while I was a visiting professor in clinical psychology at Kyoto University. This conference, called “Body, Mind, Soul,” was to focus heavily on the placebo effect – actual healing through the expectation of cure.

The word “placebo” was first used as a medical term in the early nineteenth-century. “I shall please,” is the translation of the word; in future tense, “the future will please you.” A placebo is a pill or action with a dreamed-for outcome. It is pleasing the healing imagination of the patient, which runs with it into a sense of future, calling the healing spirit into action. It demonstrates a direct effect of imagination upon body. For the Toyama conference, Richard Kradin, MD from the Harvard Medical School and a specialist in placebo research, prepared a paper based on his forthcoming book *The Placebo Response: The Psychobiology of Healing*. As a presenter at the conference I was strongly influenced by his work.

In his article “The Placebo Response,” published in the summer 2004 issue (47(3): 331) of the journal *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, Kradin tells us that a widely publicized 2001 Scandinavian meta-analysis of 130 randomized clinical trials in which patients had been assigned to receive either placebo or no treatment, showed no significant placebo effect. However, these outcomes were severely criticized, since patients in randomized clinical trials recognize that they have only a 50 percent chance of receiving the specific treatment. This is very different from situations in which the patient expects a potent intervention 100 percent of the time: “If subjects do not believe that they received the active treatment, no placebo response is expected.” It is a powerful expectation of effective healing which causes the placebo effect. On the average, about a third of patients responds favorably to placebo.

In his Toyama address Kradin quotes a striking 100 percent expectation example:²⁰

Consider a recent study where a widely known joint surgery procedure was compared with a sham placebo surgery, in the treatment of osteoarthritis . . . In this study, one group received arthroscopic joint surgery while another group was anesthetized, injected with a local anesthetic, given three stab wounds in the skin with a scalpel, but subsequently no surgery to remove arthritic tissue in the joint was performed. *Both* groups showed comparable levels of improvement with respect to knee pain at six months following their “surgeries.”

The placebo effect is based on changes in brain function:²¹

In a recent report . . . Dr. Andrew Leuchter, a psychiatry professor at the University of California, Los Angeles reported on the results of imaging the brains of patients with major depression, who had shown positive responses, not to an anti-depressant, but to a placebo. According to Dr. Leuchter: “We were just looking at the placebo group as a control group. It was really quite a surprise to us when we . . . could see that they had significant changes in brain function.”

Kradin quotes Anne Harrington’s article “Seeing the Placebo Effect”,²² in which she says that placebo is “a concept that links the domains of subjective and objective experience.” Placebo conjoins Merleau-Ponty’s body-subject and body-object, it is the go-between. Kradin regards placebos as “symbols that have the capacity to evoke changes in human physiology and whose implications for medical science and society at large continue to evolve.” He tells us that the notion of “placebo” had fallen into ill repute among scientists when it became the adversary to overcome, in order for a research outcome to be judged significant in a randomized controlled clinical trial. It is hard to like a powerful adversary. If you want to bring an anti-depressant to market you have to jump over the 50 percent effectiveness score of placebo. As a doctor funded by pharmaceutical research, what is there to like about a placebo?

Kradin concludes his Toyama address with the words: “The placebo response is about to enter yet another phase in its labyrinthine history. Instead of being considered as imaginary or as a confounder of clinical trials, it will next be recognized as a scientifically definable endogenous mode of healing rooted in mind/body psychophysiology and complexity.” Kradin’s statement that placebo effects are caused by “symbols that have the capacity to evoke changes in human physiology” corresponds with my notion that imagination has embodied effects. These are triggered by a “scientifically definable endogenous mode of healing.”

Neuro-scientific studies of placebo demonstrate the strong effect imagination has upon the physical body. A placebo foreshadows a future process of healing. It places the patient in an image environment chronologically opposite to the one during a flashback. The placebo moment is future tense, the flashback moment past tense, while each is *experienced* as right now. The patient in the placebo experience is enveloped by the expectation of cure. This absorption into the placebo experience creates an embodied image, in the sense we have defined it: a surrounding, imagined, quasi-physical environment in which we find ourselves, presenting itself as self-evidently real, accompanied by basic physiological processes.

We shall now turn our attention to cases in which we may observe ways in which our work with embodied images stimulates the endogenous healing response.

Let's call him the Cat Dreamer. He had a bleeding cancerous tumor the size of an orange on his anus, and wanted no further treatment. For his pain management he had been taken to the palliative care unit at the Shizuoka Prefectural Hospital, under the care of Dr Kishimoto, who was at that time director of the Psychosomatic Medicine Department, before he took his teaching position at Toyama University. Dr Kishimoto and I had decided to work together to see if embodied imagination could effectively be used for the patients in his hospital. As we saw in Moto-san's case, embodied imagination as a method includes a prolonged practice of the outcome of the initial work, which may affect the physical body in a wholesome manner. It extends the actual session with a one-minute rehearsal practice based on the work, which the patient can perform by themselves a few times a day, so the fleeting addition to the embodiment repertoire may develop into a reconditioning of the physical body, as the embodied images make their way deeper into the physical system.

I got the opportunity to work with the entire staff, the nurses, doctors and pharmacists, of the palliative care unit and they were all eager to participate. We called this patient the Cat Dreamer because he dreamed about a cat, the only dream he could remember since having been diagnosed with rectal cancer. He dreamt:

I am in a strange room in a city. I'm lying on a couch. In the back of the room, behind the TV I see two lights. At first I think it is the traffic outside. But then I realize it is a cat. I see the cat move around the room. I call for my wife, but she isn't there. This is strange because my wife is usually around. Then I call for my son. He is not there either. I am alone in the room with the cat.

At first I help him feel back into the dream. After focusing on some details he flashes back into the dreaming ambience. He notices how stiff he is, lying on the couch. When calling for his wife and son, he feels his loneliness. Then we begin to look at the cat. I have frequently seen the appearance of animals in dreams of people with physical illness. This is reported in anthropology as well: medicine animals are sometimes encountered in cases of illness.

The dreamer observes with pleasure how graciously the cat moves. He loves cats. He has a cat at home of which he's very fond. But this is another cat. He has never seen this one. I encourage him to feel into his body and feel it mimic the movements of the cat. As his body state becomes more like the cat, the chances increase that cat substance will enter him and infuse him with cat intelligence. In order to make this happen he has to become as much like the cat as possible.

Walter Benjamin²³ wrote in his 1933 article "On the Mimetic Faculty": "Nature creates similarities. One need only think of mimicry. The highest

capacity for producing similarities, however, is man's. His gift of seeing resemblances is nothing other than a rudiment of *the powerful compulsion in former times to become and behave like something else*" (italics added). Benjamin's observation is basic for embodied imagination. To become infused with alien intelligence the habitual self has to apprentice itself to the alien presence through mimicry.

I want to help the dreamer experience the impulses this cat embodies. By remaining virtually motionless while mimicking, only allowing for the most subtle, almost imperceptible, movements, cat-like impulses can be felt by simulating them, thereby animating the particular choreography of cat. This may lead to a spontaneous identification with cat, a shift of perspective from self to cat.

In our first session Cat Dreamer is highly resistant against a shift of identification after I encourage him to concentrate on the cat. This kind of resistance happens frequently. People do not want to leave their familiar ego-centered perspective behind in order to inhabit a foreign subjectivity, like that of a cat. Ego-decentering is scary. At this point I explain to him that archaic medicine has been working with dream animals for thousands of years and that it can be quite effective. This seems to lower his resistance. He observes the sleek supple movements of the cat and for a brief moment he can feel a loosening in his body, but tightens right back up. From this encounter with the cat we devise a practice he will be doing with the nurse. Later it appears that he prefers to do it alone. The nurses talk too much, he says. He looks at the cat until he feels a moment of the movement of the cat in his body.

Three weeks later I return. He tells me that he gets stuck with the practice. "I am I!" he says. "I am not the cat." I agree with him. No, of course you are not the cat. You encounter the cat. The cat is an independent being you meet in your dream. But it is possible to feel into the life force of the cat by observing the cat. He agrees. When we look at the cat this time he can feel the movement of the cat throughout his body. A blissful expression comes on his face. The cat is taking him over; he becomes possessed by the cat. We have facilitated an artificial possession by the cat entity, so the impulse which creates the cat can course through the dreamer's body. He feels the suppleness of the cat, the movement of its legs, so different from his familiar identification with his stiffened body, immobilized by the cancer. By moving out of his familiar embodiment he has entered the unfamiliar fresh territory of an unknown way of being. The cat is the medicine, it animates the dreamer.

This supple cat animation, starting with the dream, was enhanced by our work. Dr Kishimoto reports:

When he was admitted to our unit on July 2000 for the first time, we felt a solid barrier around him. He said only something necessary. He

did not smile. He stayed in his room all day after his condition improved. He did not express his feelings. He gave few answers to our questions. He withdrew into his hard shell. We felt great difficulty in communicating with him. Now we have good communication with him. We can see his smile frequently and he talks more. Looking back now, I think the change gradually started around the time when he had the cat dream, about one month before the dreamwork. There is another change. He could not make up his mind whether he should receive the anti-cancer treatment. I feel he made up his mind after the dreamwork. (I did not ask him about it but I feel so.) He is now considering how he will spend the rest of his life. It is a great change that we can talk about such things. I do not know whether the dreamwork has a direct effect on him, but I feel something has changed in him around the dreamwork.

On 12 April, the anti-cancer drug was given directly into the artery of the patient. The course is going well. The bleeding from the anal tumor has stopped. Yesterday he walked to the nurse station.

The Cat Dreamer died later that year.

Chiga-san has ovarian cancer. She has been in the *Mana* group for about 12 years and came down with the illness about two years ago. Last year she seemed to be in remission, but this year it started to act up again and she has had to resume chemotherapy. Hanako Hamada, my Tokyo co-therapist, interpreter and friend, has suggested we do a session of embodied imagination focusing on her illness. We are sitting in my tiny room overlooking the beautiful Tokyo garden of the International House of Japan. The plum tree is in full crimson blush; it is around the vernal equinox. Chiga-san has carefully selected the dream we shall be working on. She has seen it, as they say in Japanese, this month.

With Japanese friends – I don't remember who – I am going to travel to the inland of Japan. We are in an airplane. I can only see my seat. It is about the size of the one I am sitting in now. [She is in a low armchair that takes up much of my room. I am on the single bed with the silver gray cover and Hamada-san is translating from my desk chair.] I am looking down at my feet and I see the floor opening quickly. Below me is a glass plate and I can see the ocean. We are flying low. I am surprised at the beautiful colors of the ocean. I can see a spot of pure transparent water, one in green, and a deep blue one, each very distinct. The glass plate now slides open. I am not afraid, just marvel at the beauty. At the far end of the plate I can just see a bird with beautiful colored feathers, different shades of green and deep blue, fly by. I look, astonished. Then the scene shifts. I have arrived on a South

Sea island, and talk to some Gauguin-type Micronesian women. I remember one of them, the main one. She has a masculine face with very distinct features. Her nose is straight, her black hair short, and she's wearing a straight mid-length reddish-brown brick colored dress. She is my age, in her fifties. She talks in a language I don't know, but I understand her in Japanese. She tells me that the bird I have just seen is very important. Her eyes look out in the distance. Then I wake up.

Chiga-san is sitting with her eyes closed in a state of deep concentration, waiting for me to help her flashback into the dreaming. I first ask her about her initial travel companions. They are Japanese and very different from the Micronesian women. She can't see them in the plane and is just aware of her seat. The trip is supposed to lead her to the inlands so she is surprised when she sees the sea under her. There is no fear. When she is fully situated in her airplane seat and feels the dreaming environment around her once again, I begin the descent into the flashback, deciding to work the dream backwards. Since in embodied imagination we are interested primarily in interactions between self and alien embodied presence, and less in the single storyline as told from the perspective of the habitual self, we start with the main Micronesian woman who appears to know the astonishing bird. As Chiga-san focuses her gaze from within the flashback, I guide her attention to her own feet. She can feel the firm ground under her. It isn't sand, she knows instantly, through a direct experience in her quasi-physical bare feet, in the way she would have known it in a similar situation through the skin of her feet in the physical world. She describes the woman standing a few meters away, the brick red dress, her reddish-brown firm ankles and natural posture. Her legs are very firm, unlike Chiga-san's who has suffered from bad circulation in her legs since the first cancer operation. I help her focus on the Gauguin-woman's tone of voice. It comes from her pelvis, says Chiga-san, rubbing her belly around the location of her cancer. She is now listening carefully to the voice, feeling her own pelvis. Then I change the focus to the far away eyes and the woman's natural stance. Surrounded by a flashback environment of a South Sea island, Chiga-san is standing right there with her. My little room overlooking the Tokyo garden is far gone. As I ask her again about the ankles of the woman and her posture, I wonder out loud if Chiga-san can sense the woman's legs. "No," she responds, "I envy her; I envy the way she is in her body." (Chiga-san, like the Cat Dreamer, instinctively establishes the fact that she herself is *not* the alien presence.) I help her follow her envy. Envy is a careful observer. She marvels about the way this woman inhabits her physical world. As she describes the woman, Chiga-san spontaneously begins a process of interior miming, using her sense of mimicry to become of a similar nature as the woman she observes. She is in transit from her self-perspective into an identification with the perspective of a substantive image. Suddenly she

excitedly exclaims: “I have my legs back!” meaning that while embodying the Micronesian natural woman, becoming more like her, the circulation in her legs has started up again, for the first time in months. They feel warm and filled with well-being. Her legs have become possessed by the alien substance of Micronesian-Woman. This is a moment in the endogenous healing response during which *the infusion with an alien state of being affects the physical body*.

After some moments of feeling this I lead her attention back to the voice of Micronesian-Woman, and Chiga-san begins to feel into the subjective experience of the body she now co-inhabits by way of identification with Micronesian-Woman, locating the place from where the voice originates. She becomes aware of the deep sound traveling up through the torso. A calm is felt in the pelvis and the upper torso seems to open. Chiga-san explores the inner world of the Gauguin woman now that she has fully entered into her embodied state. I ask her to feel the woman tell about the importance of the bird. Immersed in Micronesian-Woman’s state of being, Chiga-san can now see the bird through the eyes of this nature woman. “The bird is flying straight up,” she reports, “Its wings are up against the body as it soars straight up.” She can feel the upwards thrust of the bird. She is now acutely aware of Micronesian-Woman’s body, with the legs in the natural stance, the firm ankles and the warm circulation, the calm in the pelvis, the open upper torso, and the upwards thrust of the bird. Between the firm grounding of Micronesian-Woman and the upwards thrust of Colorful-Bird a vertically stretching geometry unfolds. We allow it some time to become a fully embodied awareness.

Suddenly, I shift focus to the distinct patches of color in the ocean and suggest she lets the colors of the ocean work on her. The colors of these patches had been the same as those of the bird, green and deep blue, and possibly partaking of the same substance as Colorful-Bird. Colors matter vividly to embodied imagination, as I shall demonstrate in Chapter 9. (The Latin word for tincture, concentrated medicine, also translates as “coloring agent.”)

She sits in silence for a minute, experiencing this momentary cross-section of embodied states. I ask her what is going on. “There is a clear current going all through my body.” Chiga-san’s interaction with substantive intelligence produces an embodied circulation, described by Chinese and Japanese traditional medicine as the flow of *Q’i*. A deep stillness shines in her; she reminds me of the green copper giant Buddha in Kamakura. We let her bask in the clear current for some minutes, so the tincture can do its work of dissolving old patterns and infusing her with fresh animation. A current of endogenous healing response pervades the body.

After she begins to re-emerge from the flashback, I help her devise the minute-long rehearsal practice she will now do a few times a day for as long as she is able, applying it as a tincture to her suffering body: free from outside

distraction she will focus until she returns to the flashback in which she stands next to Micronesian-Woman while sitting in a comfortable chair, feeling her quasi-physical feet on the firm South Sea island surface. She will notice the woman's features, her dress, her ankles, and her natural stance. After she feels fully identified, she will hear the voice rise up through her body and will begin to sense the calmness in the pelvis, the open chest, and see the bird flying straight up until she feels its soaring. When all the body-states are clearly felt simultaneously, she will focus upon the renewed circulation in her legs. Then she will look at the colors of the ocean and let them work on her until the clear current begins to pulse through her. She will stay in this current for as long as she can. She is to do this brief rehearsal practice a few times a day, until it becomes a conditioned reflex and this body-state and the clear current will be instantly present the moment she focuses on them, in the way Pavlov's dog begins to salivate the moment it hears the dinner bell. Hamada-san will help her stay with the process over time. As Chiga-san returns to my Tokyo room after her journey she beams with joy, tapping her left shoulder. "When you gave me the rehearsal practice and I knew I could come back here whenever I wanted, I saw the bird turn around – it was as small as a pea in the distance – and fly back. It landed on my shoulder and the sadness I had felt seeing the bird fly off disappeared." Later she clarified that when she said "my shoulder," she meant the shoulder of Micronesian-Woman, with whom she had been entirely identified by the end of the work. The practice makes it possible for the color impulse, the tincture, to not lift off into oblivion, keeping it close. By entering over long periods of time into the pulsing clear current, the endogenous healing response can continue to work upon the suffering physical body.

Even a one-time immersion in the whirl of image-substance can affect the physical body, as is told by Michael Dupre, an American man in the advanced stages of AIDS, who wrote in the magazine *Dreaming* in June 1992 about an August 1991 piece of embodied group dreamwork he did with me and Hamada-san in Moscow, and the aftermath of it (while outside on the nearby barricades people defended democracy against the reactionary August Coup which heralded the demise of the Soviet Union). It was a dream in which he first found himself in the exquisite spiritual atmosphere around the tomb of a Russian Orthodox holy man we had visited the day before, while in the next scene people were being chopped up into hamburger meat. He wrote:

The horror of the reality and the beauty of the mystery. A healing had taken place between my fear of AIDS, death and dying, and my trust and surrender to things spiritual. I learned that fear and trust can be there simultaneously – no judgment . . . as part of the aftermath of the dream, I enjoyed three weeks of normal bowel movements . . . the experience was wonderful.

In my subsequent research into illness-focused embodied imagination, I find frequently that the somatic beneficial effects of the work last for about three weeks. After that the work needs to be repeated, like a booster shot. For example, Chiga-san did her practice for about three weeks, during which time she experienced great physical benefit from it. At the end of the three weeks the practice lost its energy and needed to be repeated by Hamada-san and members of the *Mana* group.

Sometimes the benefits to the physical body last much longer, through sustained careful attention over very lengthy stretches of time. Andrew, a man living with AIDS for over 20 years, dreams that he wants to sell a jacket at a street fair. It was owned by a friend of his who had died of AIDS and Andrew wants to get rid of it. As he takes it out of his closet, he notices that the jacket has a deep crease in it from top to bottom. He has to get the crease out before he can sell it. Early on during his HIV infection Andrew had suffered from Bell's palsy, after a bout of shingles had infested his left ear. His whole left side had become paralyzed. Over the next few years the paralysis had diminished, but a numbed left facial droop going down through a partially immobilized left shoulder and chest had remained for over a decade before the embodiment work. Andrew immediately identified these debilitating leftovers from the paralysis as the crease in the jacket. From there on in we effected, by way of identification, a transit into a subjective experience of the substance of jacket, feeling the crease in the jacket from the point of view of the cloth. Embodied imagination behaves much like the world of fairy tales: trees talk, stones live, brooks babble, and creased jackets have an inner life. Andrew entered the crease daily for up to an hour over a period of several years. During this time he felt, excruciatingly slowly, life seep back into the numbed parts of his body, as he regained range of motion. His face drooped considerably less. It felt, he said, as if he were inhabiting a slowly expanding body, as if he was growing back into parts of his body which had been off limits.

Concentrating the natural endogenous healing response into a potent tincture may take a great deal of tenacity, motivation and focus of spirit, but the results can be, demonstrably, worthwhile.

Surrender and dissociation

Micheline belongs to a French Canadian group which has been practicing the embodied imagination method for well over a year. She has multiple sclerosis. Two days ago she suffered the most painful convulsions leaving her completely raked over the coals, exhausted and with horrible aches and pains. That night she had the following dream, which we worked two days later in Montreal, in French. Here follows the text of a letter she wrote to me (translation mine), interspersed with my comments.

When the dream opens I say: “It has been a long time that I have not been in contact with nature.” I am on a dirt road in the country. I look to my right and see little flowers, I bend down and am so moved. Their very simple beauty and the delicacy of the little blue flowers are good for me, make me feel good. The center of these little blue flowers is yellow. I continue on the road and very quickly I feel pulled to my right, attracted to enter in a kind of field of bramble bushes. Suddenly I come upon a spot that opens up. On the ground are mosses that form a grand circle. I sense that this circle has something sacred and magical to it. I think of deer and am ill at ease. I leave this spot. I am on the road at about the same latitude as where the little flowers had been, and there I see a black dog coming towards me. The dog is familiar and strange at the same time. He passes me to the side.

I am in front of an enormous rock. What strikes me first is the formation of the rock at its highest and most distant point: blocks in geometrical shapes. The other part, closer by, is of a more natural shape. I hear my sister – who has taken it upon herself to climb the rock from behind (I don’t see her) – tell me that she is careful because it is not stable. Everything happens very quickly. I look up to the top of the rock and see my sister standing there. Simultaneously the earth quakes. I see the rock move on which my sister stands. A crack forms between the two geological formations of the rock. An immense fear overwhelms me and I cry out with all my power and with all the energy I can muster: “Sit down!”

The effects of the dreamwork

The flowers

I have to laugh because you sent me directly to the flowers. I was aware of your presence at that moment. An immense tenderness enters in all the fibers of my body like little cells of well-being.

We start at a safe place, the flowers. In that safe place the little blue flowers with the yellow hearts, which had moved her so, become mixed with a tenderness that evolves between us as I accompany her to this field of flowers. The flowers in the dreamscape and the intimacy in the room combine into cells of well-being entering into the fiber of her being.

The circle

I invite her to stand in the circle and focus on her feet.

I have the sensation that dark forces are active. It is as though I could feel the deer which had been lying down in this circle and had left it, feeling seismic shocks, arising from the depth of the earth. You took me along in order to describe the circle more closely: the little trees and the bushes which surrounded it. The strongest impression of the circle, and of the deer, is a strange thing that happens within me. From my coccyx to the top of my head the seismic energy creates a kind of great breath through my spinal column. An opening.

The dog

I feel ill at ease with the dog. You have me concentrate on his behavior.

I help her transit into an identification with the dog.

I can feel his suppleness. My shoulders release.

As I said before, animals and colors are of particular importance in dreams surrounding physical illness: the colorful little flowers waft tenderness, the deer have intuitive foreknowledge of shakes to come up from the depths, while the dog imparts suppleness.

The rock

All the effects which are now at play in my body pass all the way through me. I feel pervaded. I feel in a movement of unrestrained

shaking. From that moment on, when I think of the dream, or when I am thrown by an event, I stay tenaciously connected to that sensation. I take with me all the effects of the dream and let myself be traversed, touched and even shaken when the pain is too great. You may add, when you cite my dream, that the tincture is still beneficial. From my coccyx to the top of my head the seismic energy creates a kind of great breath through my spinal column. An opening.

Surrendering to overwhelming pain, spotted in its first subtle impulsive presence before it is to inevitably become a physical spasm, by a deer-like early warning system, giving her time to open up to it and thus be prepared, allows the quake to traverse the system unhampered. Maintaining an acutely aware presence throughout this ordeal is, according to Micheline, a beneficial experience. It allows the shaking to pass through efficiently, without the obstruction of a terrified body defending itself against these quakes. It prevents dissociation, the detachment of one particular state from the community of states.

I apprenticed myself to Micheline's words.

Helen had been in analysis with me in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for many years and then moved to upstate New York, to an area of deep gorges and fast rivers. After some time she had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, now a year ago. We had not had any communication about this when I came to conduct my yearly dream workshop in her community a year later. Her dream became the way in which she communicated with me about the impact of her diagnosis. As yet there had been barely any symptoms, beyond an acute fear of the illness, she told me when she broke the news, a day before telling the group this recent dream, presented here from a verbatim transcript.

I am in a large stone building with another woman. Jerry has hurt himself in a building near us but down a very steep incline. The woman with me decides to jump into a small swiftly-moving river that cascades down the incline near the building. She dives in and I decide to follow as the fastest way to help. I am mostly riding, standing up on the water, on top of the rapids, exhilarating, beautiful. Occasionally I sink to my chest. Somehow I see a large wave. It crashes over me. I am engulfed and lose consciousness and wake up on a hospital table with two men who have rescued me. Twice I say to them, "call the police," because I'm thinking about getting help for Jerry.

Jerry, she tells me, is a colleague at work. Rapids (of which there are several in the near vicinity where she now lives), she finds awesome, loving to see, hear and smell them. When I ask her what in her life feels pertinent to this

dream, Helen refers to her MS diagnosis a year ago. She worries what her work will be like, what the new constraints are going to be, even though she feels healthy now and the last lesion had not been severe, and over a year ago. But she is thinking about it a lot.

As a general strategy, I enter a dream in a place which feels relatively safe, and work my way to the place of the highest resistance or dissociation. Her description of the stone building is a good location in which to enter the dream imagery, because it gives the impression of being sturdy and solid, and stands out clearly in her mind. If we can enter the embodied solidity portrayed by its presence, we have a safe atmosphere to return to if feelings become unmanageable and the tension in the vessel gets to be too high. It can be used for “decompression.” I can feel the moment of the great wave as an intense fear in my belly, while before me the final overwhelming image of one of my favorite movies, *The Last Wave* by Peter Weir, rises up to crush me. That’s where we need to end up. Better get a lot of stability first, before facing that cataclysm!

From her flashback into the substantive image environment, she describes the building as huge, strong, high up and old. She can sense the strength of the building, built to weather the height and the rapids nearby. It is made of man-made stones, not boulders, but large, two by three feet. Inside, the light is grayish, not very bright; natural, low, dim. I direct her attention to the walls, in order to help her get a sense of their strength, having weathered many a year. In hypnagogic concentration Helen replies that she can feel how strong the walls are, getting the sensation of their strength in her spine. She has become infused by the “strong, old, big building” substance. It gives her a strong sense of support in the back. Through emphasis I help her etch this image-substance as a trigger point in her spine, so that when needed, just by focusing on her spine, the etched-in “strong, old, big building” embodiment can automatically release its implicit atmosphere of massive strength.

Now I guide her to an awareness of Jerry. Jerry is the one who has suffered the cataclysm, he is the victim of the accident. A diagnosis of a serious illness is frequently first experienced as an accident. Helen sighs deeply as I mention Jerry’s name. When I ask her, she tells me that Jerry has suffered an accident. It has something to do with his legs. He can’t move. I am reminded of an old friend of mine whose legs had been immobilized by MS. His memory brings back the nausea I had felt around the acrid smell of his withering body involved in a 30-day (successful) fast at the Bircher-Benner clinic in Zurich, to arrest the illness. My revulsion of the illness puts up a harness around me, while at the same time releasing hopes of a cure. Helen speaks about Jerry’s injury with such conviction of reality that I do a double take to see if she is talking about a physical accident that has happened to the Jerry in her waking life. But it is clear that she is referring to a memory within the dreaming, to the quasi-physical

Jerry she knows while dreaming. Helen is taken over by an urgency to help him. She *has* to help him. This emotional urgency manifests as a sensation in her arms and throat. Tears of empathy with Jerry begin to well up. While feeling the empathy she is aware of how deeply he's been hurt. (My own friend with MS stands before my eyes, leaning on his crutches.) After some time I refocus attention on Helen's back. She describes her back as strong, with arms desiring to move forward in a reaching, rescuing kind of motion. The embodiment of rescuing hangs, as it were, like branches off a strong trunk: a geometric configuration is organizing the complex embodiments.

After allowing her for some time to experience this trunk-and-branch geometric interaction of embodiments, the Helen-arms and the building-spine, I proceed to the woman who dives in, by tracing the energy of her motion. Focusing on choreographic details helps a dreamer become engrossed in an alien image-presence, allowing it to take possession. Helen describes Diving-Woman as to her left and already in motion, already having made the decision to dive. Diving-Woman is most apparent to Helen as she dives in, hands first. Identified, Helen says that it feels supple in her arms, as she demonstrates, while remaining seated, the curvature of the dive. She has total confidence, Helen reports from within the subjective experience of Diving-Woman, who has taken possession of her. Her body moves smoothly and she is very confident. I feel a brief moment of aesthetic pleasure.

At this point Helen gets scared. She feels an agitation in her stomach. She has dropped out of the confident embodiment of Diving-Woman, back into her habitual self. She's agitated and fearful about the crisis and the necessity to move quickly. The steepness of the path outside comes to her mind. But the woman doesn't go onto the path. In a kind of wonder she repeats how the woman just dives in, as if Helen can't quite believe it. I encourage her to feel the fear. As she does so, I can feel my breathing relax. During the fear episode I had been holding my breath. When I comment on it, she says that her own breathing has relaxed as well, after she began to pay attention to her fear. Now we can return to the dive. Helen remarks how physical and instinctual the dive feels from the woman's embodied perspective. It is not a mental process, just pure instinct. She can feel this instinctive process as energy in the upper part of her back, not just as solidity, but as suppleness.

Before I lead her to the rapids, we take a moment to sense once again into the state of the "stone building," to harvest its solid strength. Now a multiplicity of image-substances is simultaneously experienced: "stone building" etched in her lower back, "supple dive" in her upper back, "rescuer" in the arms, and "fear of the steep" in her belly. The single horizontal storyline as reported by the protagonist has been flipped 90 degrees into a vertical cross-section, an instantaneous theater of embodiments.

Now we enter white water. I can feel in myself a remarkable lack of trepidation. In fact, I feel nothing, as if I have checked out. She describes

how just her feet are in the water, how she's gliding on the water. It's exhilarating, beautiful, the vista spectacular. At the same time she can feel the fear in her stomach. The steep part frightens her, not the rapids. The water she experiences as exciting. She can feel the combination of exhilaration and fear in her intestines. Abruptly I introduce the giant wave. It's twice her size, well over ten feet. She's facing it. It is huge, blocks all vision. She can no longer see the sky. Inevitably, it is going to come over her. "I just feel I'm gonna lose consciousness. Knock me out [she laughs], overwhelm my consciousness completely. Won't be able to think about it [laughs again]." When I ask her what is funny, she replies that she always likes to be able to think through everything. No way, this time!

"What is it like to be in front of a wave that will end your consciousness?"

I can feel sensations running back into my body, fear, excitement, dread, gnarling intestines – I'm back from having been gone.

"It's awesome but it's scary."

"What is it like to be confronted with this awesome scary entity?"

"I'm just thinking that I don't have that stone building any more. No place to stand or hold on to. It's a complete letting go."

"Can you sense the awesomeness of the wave, and power of it? What is it like, that awesome power? What is it like to be faced with power beyond comprehension?" I'm covered in goose bumps.

"I can't stay in this form of consciousness, with that power." Helen sighs deeply.

Now I reintroduce the etched-in massive strength extracted from the strong building, and the suppleness of Diving-Woman, in order to give her a chance to remain conscious throughout this onslaught. I have her move through all the trigger points we have gathered so far, in order to resurrect their embodied states as she faces overwhelming force.

"Can you feel in your back the stones that have been there a long time? Feel in the upper back suppleness and the confidence of the instinct. Feel the stomach, the fear of the steepness. Feel the arms reaching to save Jerry. With this body, sense the rapids. In this body, can you feel the awesome power of the wave and stand face-to-face with it? Don't go unconscious. Just feel it. What is it like to be face-to-face with the wave?"

I can feel my *Q'i* gather for a strong push, like a midwife helping a mother give birth.

"I feel shaking, quaking in my body."

I remember Micheline, who lets herself be "traversed, touched and even shaken" by the quake. I'm holding on to Micheline, who becomes my guide through the quakes, while I find strength in her knowledge that it can be done. Consciousness *can* be maintained through it all, Micheline lets me know, allowing herself to feel "pervaded, in a movement of unrestrained shaking."

“Feel it. Stay with it, that shaking. What is it like inside the shaking?”
With Micheline as my patron, I forge ahead.

“I want to stop it.”

“Please, please don’t go out of it. Don’t lose consciousness or pass out. Go entirely inside the shaking. What is it like?” Like in a martial artist, my *Q’i* has reached a laser-like concentration.

“Just feels like – I have a very – real hard to accept it. I keep returning to it. Feels like things move on their own.”

“Yah, really feel what moves on its own. When there are words speak them. Don’t go unconscious. Don’t pass out.” I suddenly feel still, knowing we’re coming out the other end.

Helen makes lots of head movements, her legs shaking, while her fingertips keep touching with open hands.

“Shaking. Slowing down now. I don’t know. It feels like when the doctor taps your knee and things just move. No conscious state I can understand.”

Micheline stands behind us as our guide. I’m moved.

“Keep feeling this autonomous movement. It has its own way. And as you feel this, can you once more stand face-to-face with this awesome wave? What happens?” I ask her, in order to have her enter into the shaking even more fully, now that I know she can feel it without going unconscious.

“Shaking continues. Just feels like it’s possible to move with it somehow. I don’t have to stay still.” Helen sobs for a second. “It can just move. I can just move more.”

“You don’t have to cramp up against it, lose consciousness, pass out.”

“It can go through me,” she says, taking a big breath. I sense Micheline’s smile. I’m grateful to her.

“Keep on feeling that.”

“Feels like it subsides. It has gone through me.” She visibly quiets.

“This feeling that it can pass through you – if you can stay in that feeling for a few minutes every day. Do you think you can do that?”

We have extracted the tincture from the wave of dread. Like an autonomous reflex response to a doctor’s tapping, the dread can pass through. By repeating it daily the attitude evoked by the tincture may become a conditioned reflex, so that when dread arises, as it inevitably will at moments when MS moves deeper into the system, it can pass without resistance, leaving a deep breath in its wake, I tell Helen, quoting Micheline.

“Yes,” she says, nodding, nodding, nodding. “Yes.”

“We’re going to be stopping.”

Helen opens her eyes, smiling, nodding, wiping tears.

“What strikes me is how important it is to feel all aspects before you can face the wave,” I comment, glad it’s over.

“I didn’t think you could keep conscious,” she remarks with incredulous undertone.

Losing consciousness is a way of dissociating from overwhelming trauma. Detached from the suffering body, the event drifts away from the network of consciousness, unremembered. At the cost of losing body Helen has left painful experience behind through knocked-out anesthesia. The price she pays is a loss of physical energy. I had felt it during the work, when I had suddenly lost touch with my sentient self. I felt drained.

By way of our work Helen's overwhelming dread has been woven back into the main tissue of embodied states, from which it had been ripped away in the traumatic moment of the MS diagnosis. Now her body, with its animal fear, feels no longer abandoned. The daily repetition may make the interwoven tissue grow sturdier, causing her to regain access to the dissociated physical energy.

"I'd be scared shitless," I exclaim softly, from the bottom of my heart, thinking what it would be like to have an MS diagnosis.

We smile at one another.

What does Helen's example mean for the process of dissociation, and how does surrender to an alien condition re-associate the cut-off embodiments? The premise of this book is that the embodied imagination displays a variety of simultaneous subjectivities in a state of interaction or dissociation. In dreams, dissociation is frequently embodied in an experience of distance, isolation, or in more violent manifestations, of being torn off from the fabric of community. According to some visionary traditions (as mentioned by Corbin, who focuses on medieval Sufi visionaries), *affinity* embodies in imagination as *closeness* in space. The closer embodied presences are imagined to be, the more affinity they have. In this way I see dissociation as the life of a subjectivity which has been exiled to the far cold reaches of outer space, out of radio contact with the network back home. In the work with Helen we can see how the terrifying experience of the wave ejects the experiencing subject out of consciousness. This overwhelmed subject who cannot face the wave of dread now roams alone, abandoned in terrifying outer space. The work on the dream, in the setting of a safe, enveloping community, has created a connection between the overwhelmed subject and the network of consciousness. The traumatized self, who had presented himself in the dream as the off-screen Jerry, the one who is suffering an accident having to do with the legs, a frequent effect of MS, absolutely needed to be found. Helen's struggle with her diagnosis created an increased intimacy within the group in which the dream was worked. The reattachment in Helen's private atmosphere coincided with an increased association in the public sphere. An image of an Asclepian temple comes to mind, where the autonomous healing response surged up as divine epiphany in communal settings.

A vision based on a network of simultaneous subjectivities points beyond self-centered psychologies to a network of selves, like cellular clusters

constantly shifting shapes, associating and disassociating in the magma of embodiment. Such a psychology does not originate in a paradigm of a single self that fractures, but in the metaphor of a more or less cohesive community of subjectivities in various states of interaction, communing with one another, with other humans around, and with the physical world.

Kinds of imagination

Since early medieval days, a distinction has been made between what was called true imagination (*imaginatio vera*) and confabulation (*phantasmagoria*). From the standpoint of dreaming, I have called this true imagination *embodied* and *substantive*, while I consider confabulation to be a mental process, akin to rational thinking. The hallmark of substantive embodied imagination is a direct phenomenal experience of a spontaneous self-presentation. The characteristics of confabulation are an indirect, disembodied feeling of distance, and a controlling, grasping attitude of habitual consciousness trying to figure things out or make them up. Whereas embodied imagination facilitates a meeting with substantive alien presences through mutual intelligence, confabulation belongs to the endless reconfirmation of pre-existing notions of self, holding otherness at bay. Confabulation is akin to allegory, an image which stands for a thought, described by Corbin as “a rational operation, implying no transition either to a new plane of being or to a new depth of consciousness.”²⁴ They are mortal enemies: where confabulation holds sway, embodiment disappears, causing a loss of substance and erecting a wall against the fresh. It is of the utmost importance in work on embodied imagination to guard against confabulation.

The following example illustrates this essential difference. It was taken from a transcript made of a group cyberdreamwork session. (Cyberdreamwork facilitates dreamwork via a voice/video program on the Internet through www.cyberdreamwork.com.) By day this dreamer from the American North-East woodlands, is a therapist working in a hospital.

I am in the open living area of the unit where I work in the hospital. Suddenly I see a bear thundering down the corridor toward the nursing station. I look as the bear approaches, runs by me and disappears through the open door, off the unit, and down the stairs.

We help the dreamer flashback into the quasi-physical hospital environment. The Bear Dreamer remembers that he is in a long white corridor with windows looking out over the front of the hospital. It is daylight, but the

corridor is lit by fluorescent institutional lighting. He recalls how he is standing with his back to the stairs, facing the open door at the end of the corridor. Now in a full flashback with the accompanying hypnagogic state, the dreaming ambience re-establishes itself. He feels himself to be in a quasi-physical environment, a real place that appears physical while simultaneously, in dual consciousness, he knows he is sitting at his computer telecommunicating with a group of people from all over the world. He is surrounded by a substantive embodying imagination while simultaneously being aware of his physical environment. All he has to do is look around and observe the spontaneous presence of his environment. The cyberdream group asks the dreamer a variety of questions and after some time he tells us that the first time he becomes aware of the bear is when he hears the sound behind him. He turns to just see the bear storming down the stairs.

As in Berthe's dream of charging bull, an image-presence may reveal its embodied intelligence if we allow ourselves to come under its spell, so we may become infused with its substance. We know an alien intelligence through participation. While the Bear Dreamer was dreaming, the bear appeared as a substantive living being, making noise, engaging all the senses of the dreamer. The bear may become a portal into an alien intelligence, manifesting a full-bodied world of substance and life, vibrant, calling immediately to the senses.

At this point, when the interior miming process is to begin, following the mimetic compulsion to become other, one of the members of the dream group makes a mistake. She asks: "What is the bear feeling?" Impatiently she bypasses the miming process and tries to go directly to the experience of the bear. She omits the necessary preparation of the dreamer's embodied state, making him become as similar to the alien presence as possible by way of careful observation and mimicry, so a full identification may follow spontaneously. This short circuit leads the dreamer to try and *figure out* the bear, into hypothetical *thinking* how a bear *might* feel, thus making him look at the bear while distancing himself from it. This distant hypothesizing activity leads to confabulation. It can never produce embodiment since it keeps the spell cast by the bear at bay. He says, looking at the mental image of the bear: "I *think* the bear is very curious. He is looking around at all the people. Curious about me. Looks at me. Wonders where he is. Very curious."

All hallmarks of confabulation are in place: there is no call to the senses, just a disembodied hypothesizing thought, grasping for what a generic bear might feel – a thought *about* feeling, not itself a feeling – while his voice remains descriptive, in no way affectively gripped by the embodying presence of this particular bear. The substantive sense of a quasi-physical environment is gone. Dual consciousness disappears. He is now just sitting behind his computer trying to figure things out, trying to please the other participants. Image-substance has vanished.

I stop the process. The more the dreamer is trying to figure out the bear, the more we lose the embodied bear presence and resort to confabulation, crowding out substantive imagination, since disembodied confabulation does not allow for an infusion of alien intelligence. It pre-empts an embodying activity through controlling mental efforts, usually out of fear of giving over the reins to the unfamiliar.

After re-establishing the flashback, I help the dreamer refocus his attention on the moment when he first sees the bear thunder down the stairs. At this point I decelerate the action to a frame by frame slow motion. By slowing the imagination, a zooming-in automatically comes into effect, and underlying physical sensations surface. We help the dreamer focus on somatosensory observation. He can see the muscled legs of the bear, the way it holds its head, the look in its eye. He can sense the force that is embodied in this large animal in full thrust. The breathing of the bear becomes apparent to him, he senses the way the bear is in its body. He notices the forelegs, marvels at the power displayed by the hind legs. And then, suddenly, without warning, the dreamer loses all self-consciousness, is absorbed into the bear. Possessed by this *particular* live bear intelligence the dreamer now encounters the world from the bear's perspective. Embodied by the bear, he viscerally knows that the bear is seeing nothing but the open door at the end of the corridor. All the bear wants is OUT! The bear is not aware of the humans in the corridor. Its awareness is focused solely on the open door. With great force, immediately felt by the dreamer, the bear body throws itself towards the door to get out of the building, out, out! After the body of the bear has ceased to be present, and the dreamer has returned to his habitual consciousness, he is fully aware of the enormous difference between the experience of the moment when the bear was a disembodied mental confabulation, and when the bear was substantive, alive, and fully embodied in all its muscles. The first felt like a mental curiosity, while the second experience was an infusion with bear intelligence, unknown to habitual consciousness. While spontaneously possessed by the bear's spirit, consciousness was narrowed down to the exclusive presence of the open door at the end of the corridor. As bear, he experienced an intensely instinctive claustrophobic feeling of getting the hell out of this place. The dreamer had been gripped by the bear, out of control, fully animal, while at the same time, in dual awareness, knowing full well that he is practicing imagination. With hallucinatory clarity the dreamer was immersed in the medium, controlled by an alien force . . . and knowing it. In dual consciousness, an unfamiliar awareness had momentarily embodied.

The litmus test as to a full identification with an image-presence pertains to visual perspective. During the confabulation the dreamer kept looking at the bear, whereas while *participating* in the bear his point of view had changed 180 degrees and he was looking at the door.

Embodied imagination is a call to the senses. It involves all the senses in the same way a physical environment does. If sensitive to nature, when walking in the woods, surrounded by trees, all our senses are engaged. We are fully emotionally involved with our environment through the spell the woods cast on us. In embodied imagination, the spirit of place takes hold of us, as the spirit of the caves does, or the spirit of Times Square.

Let's go back to 1884, to Harvard College where professor William James first described dual consciousness – being simultaneously in two perspectives – and its importance to psychological thinking. This time he is lecturing about another matter, namely the material which is to become his article “What is Emotion” published in the philosophy journal *Mind* of that year. Professor James might pose us the following question: “You are walking in the woods. Suddenly a bear appears! Do you run because you are afraid, or are you afraid because you run? This is not a riddle, don't try to figure it out as a riddle. Do you run because you are afraid, or are you afraid because you run?”

I would have immediately responded that I became scared of the bear and so I ran. Professor James would have been very pleased with my response because now he could explain to me why I was wrong. He'd expound, as he did in the aforementioned article: “Our natural way of thinking about . . . emotions is that the mental perception of some fact excites the mental affection called emotion, and that this latter state of mind gives rise to bodily expression. My thesis on the contrary is that the body changes follow directly the *perception* of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur *is* the emotion.”

From which I might conclude that I'm scared because I run.

According to William James, emotion is perception (by way of feeling) of embodiment. When confronted with James' bear, the embodied state of flight precedes the fear. If we first had to feel scared before fleeing, the bear might have a five-star dinner. The state of flight is immediate, the emotion called fear is the perception of the flight response. What James posits, and what has been confirmed by modern brain research, is that embodiment precedes emotional awareness, and sometimes even fully-fledged perception. Some things (especially threatening ones) entering through the eyes, bypass the visual cortex at first and go straight into physical response, by way of the archaic limbic brain (in this case the amygdala). Noted neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux²⁵ replaces James' bear with a snake, in a limbic tale important to embodied imagination, which according to Hobson *et al.* (see Note 13), may be organized by affects generated in the limbic system:

As the hiker walks through the woods, he abruptly encounters a snake coiled up behind a log on the path. The visual stimulus is first processed in the brain by the thalamus. Part of the thalamus passes crude,

almost archetypal, information directly to the amygdala. This quick and dirty transmission allows the brain to start to respond to the possible danger signified by a thin, curved object, which could be a snake, or could be a stick or some other benign object. Meanwhile, the thalamus also sends visual information to the visual cortex (this part of the thalamus has a greater ability to encode the details of the stimulus than does the part that sends inputs to the amygdala). The visual cortex then goes about the business of creating a detailed and accurate representation of the stimulus. The outcome of the cortical processing is then fed to the amygdala as well. Although the cortical pathway provides the amygdala with a more accurate representation than the direct pathway to the amygdala from the thalamus, it takes longer for the information to reach the amygdala by way of the cortex. In situations of danger, it is very useful to be able to respond quickly. The time saved by the amygdala in acting on the thalamic information, rather than waiting for cortical input, may be the difference between life and death.

The amygdala creates an embodied response, putting all physical systems on red alert, before cortical conceptualization has occurred. Embodiment is the fundamental archaic way of knowing. *Embodiment precedes mental and emotional knowing.*

Ask yourself why other people's dream tales are frequently so boring. In many instances the plot is missing or trivial, instead of a storyline there is an enumeration of, often disconnected, events. It may be my weak constitution, but after ten yards of dream yarn I'm asleep. Sometimes that is a problem for a person to whom so many people come to tell their dreams. Mike Vannoy Adams once said in a lecture that every so often, when you tell someone a dream, you should say: "And then you entered," so they wake back to attention.

But once we flashback into the ambiance of dreaming, the quality of time shifts and we are in a fully convincing reality that surrounds us, absorbs us; nothing boring. I believe this is related to the fact that while listening in an external manner to dream stories, we are in the plot-driven narrative imagination, while in the flashback hypnagogic state, we are in embodied imagination. Since dream tales usually have no, or uneventful, plots, there isn't much to catch an outsider's attention.

Dreams organize embodied affects into worlds of appearance surrounding us. Narrative in dreams sometimes seems like a mnemonic device, a way to remember evaporating dream states by way of sequencing scenes, in order to get an external grip on otherwise fleeting dream moments. Dream narratives are more related to hieroglyphs of events after death like in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, than to a plot-driven soap opera.

By itself, the story we tell ourselves after we wake up relates to the events we just participated in, like a newspaper article to the events it describes. If the narrative evokes the event, we may flashback into embodied imagination by following the storyline, like a mountain climber lowering herself into a crevasse by way of a rope. Often, after a dream evaporates, the story is all that remains, like an abandoned, dangling line. This I call a stale dream. In a freshly remembered dream, like in an evocative novel or an engrossing movie, narrative is a vehicle that may carry us into the eventful world of embodied imagination. In plot-driven narratives we just want to know what's next, their fast pace surfing over embodied detail in favor of thrilling excitement, their characters functional ciphers. Compared to these, dream stories bore us to tears. Embodied imagination, as the life of actual presences, requires participation, while plot-driven narratives invite us to sit back and be entertained. Embodied imagination is hardly passive entertainment. It may be moving, engrossing, transforming, and fascinating, but it requires an active involvement.

When almost a century ago Jung reintroduced the reality of imagination into western psychological awareness (where imagination was considered to be the opposite of reality, unlike the true imagination of medieval days), he thought the active participation in it as paramount, and named it *active imagination*. He called it "dreaming the dream onwards." His method I call *free active imagination*, employing the imagination's natural tendency towards constant unfolding, moving the action away from the initial image, much like what, by different means, free association does. The method of embodied imagination I have been employing, in contradistinction, is a restrained imaginal activity which stays firmly *bound* to the embodied image it explores. The difference is best demonstrated by way of an example.

A dreamer, taking a class in Jung's active imagination, dreams that she is in a round marble hall. A wide marble winding staircase leads down. The dreamer takes a few steps down the stairs and wakes up.

In the active imagination class, the dreamer is encouraged to dream the dream onwards. In free active imagination the image dreams itself onward into a cellar where she encounters a variety of remarkable things and surprising events. It is an exciting journey, leading to useful discoveries.

When she subsequently works the dream with me, I ask her about details of the environment until she is in a hypnagogic flashback. Then I ask her to go to the staircase and begin the descent, step by step. She can feel her foot leaving one step, going down to the next, the front of one foot first, then the weight shifting to the heel. She feels the balance in her body. By focusing attention on different aspects of her body, as well as on the experience of the distribution of her weight as she moves down, we slow down the process to almost freeze frame. The more details we gather, the slower the motion, as awareness has to focus on many embodiment details at once. As she comes to the final step before awakening she can feel first her toe touching

the marble, and as she comes down with her foot, she suddenly feels a terrifying fear zing through her body, from the toe up. She is terrified of going down any further. (This had probably woken her up in the first place.) Her whole body is in a frozen fear of going down.

This fear had been bypassed by the free active imagination method, which allowed the natural unfolding of the image to proceed unrestrained, thus not slowing down enough to let embodiment take over. The results were useful insights in the cellar, which, however, had been of a substantially less embodied nature than the awareness of the frozen fear of going down.

Embodiment requires intense restraint, or the natural speed of imagination will surf on and on.

Primal matter and tincture, the coloring agent

As we turn our gaze back to the days when imagination and truth were not yet mutually exclusive, a vast architecture of embodied substances rises up before us, a structure worked upon for close on two millennia: the art of alchemy.

Alchemy is a peculiar mixture of chemistry and imagination. Several scholars have researched the relationship between alchemy and the chemistry procedures used, understanding alchemists as early chemists who worked with physical material. Science historian Lawrence Principe, in his remarkable book *The Aspiring Adept, Robert Boyle and his Alchemical Quest* talks about a transmutation from lead to gold performed before the alchemy-skeptical physician of the seventeenth-century Prince of Orange. Subsequently, the gold thus obtained was assayed and checked by the mint master of Holland (then in its Golden Age heyday as the richest nation on the globe, well advanced in science, paying special scrutiny to counterfeit). Afterwards, the entire procedure was investigated and verified by the meticulous rational philosopher Spinoza.²⁶ I suspend my disbelief, making way for the assumption that the transformation about which the alchemists talk in their secret language was phenomenally observed as actually coming from the material and did not, like a giant Rorschach, stem from projections upon the material.

Whatever the case may be, since this book looks at *quasi*-physical substances, I will look at alchemy for its work upon quasi-physical material, *as if* the alchemists were in a hypnagogic state of consciousness while working their material. (And indeed, many of them may have been, suffering as they were from all kinds of poisoning.) From a chemistry point of view, the florid pictorial descriptions to which alchemists were prone might be understood as allegories for chemical processes and state changes in the physical material that was being processed. From the quasi-physical perspective we have been exploring here, the same alchemical pictures may well be viewed as mutual intelligence. While the alchemist was identified with embodied substances in the process of phenomenally revealing their alien intelligence, the state changes observed could be infusions of fresh intelligence arising from the mutual interaction between the alchemist and the substances he was cooking.

This chapter is about the transitions in states of consciousness engendered by the slow ongoing mutual encounter between alchemist and intelligent image-substances embodied as metals.

Above, we have seen what happens when embodied images are encountered in slow motion: a wide array of feelings and physical sensations emerge which alter the very foundations of awareness. The alchemists' motto was "*festina lente*," hurry slowly. The "hurry" conveyed the urgency with which they approached their material, while "slowly" referred to a pace so close to freeze frame it made image-substances congeal into fully fledged embodied states. The alchemists called the metals they worked "body," *corpus*. They insisted throughout that these metallic bodies were alive with spirit and soul, which supports the idea of alchemical matter having been a mixture of chemical and quasi-physical substances.

The basic consistency of all substance was called *prima materia*, primal matter. Since alchemists considered matter as existing in a state of continuous creation, primal matter consisted of sparks of live creative forces around which visible matter coagulated. This is similar to the quasi-physical substance of creative imagination, as for instance a dream. An embodied image is in a permanent state of being created. When creation stops, the dream is over. Through extreme slow motion the alchemist participated in this ongoing creative process of primal matter, which began to pervade him, exteriorizing its inner sparks to the alchemist by way of the inversion process discussed previously, so that he could know its hidden self and partake of its intelligence.

The primal matter of metals was called "alive silver," *argentum vivum*, quicksilver, mercury. This alive silver had to be purified, cleansed of all its ill aspects, eventually producing a golden tincture which could heal all substance: turn lead (which they considered a sick form of alive silver) into gold (its most precious condition), a sick body into a supremely healthy one. This was done by the art of the fire. Alchemists would melt, in the way of ice, the crusted outer coagulation of metallic bodies, making them flow alive like quicksilver, in order to obtain the creative sparks of primal matter, the substantive intelligence around which the metal had embodied. Unveiling bodies unto their naked intelligence was necessarily a slow process, as is all embodiment work. And as the alchemist gathered sparks, the creative potency of primal matter increased. The result was to be an ultimate medicine of such creative intelligence that it could heal all bodies, ranging from lead, an afflicted metallic body, to the diseased human body itself. Many alchemists were medical doctors. They would make this medicine from poison. The word they used was *pharmacon*, which means both poison and remedy, from which we derive our "pharmacy." Only from what is afflicted and its affliction could a medicine be made. This extraction of medicine from affliction they called the process of refinement. The ultimate medicine was named *tinctura*, the coloring agent. The tincture

was of such refinement that it was almost a pure disembodied spirit, pure abstraction, like mathematical structures; yet *almost* is the operative word. While science after them went all the way through to mathematical abstraction, alchemists always worked with particular embodied substances, waiting in slow motion for them to reveal their intelligence. This highly refined embodiment, called *subtle* body, is a pure manifestation of primal matter. Subtle bodies are embodiments existing between physicality and abstraction, in a realm of quasi-physicality, which we have called embodied imagination. Subtle bodies belong to a primal world between body and mind – less physical than matter, more embodied than mind – and their very existence annihilates the mind/body conundrum by adding a third, an in-between: primal matter. This in-between primal matter is both embodied intelligence *and* physical body, partaking of both inspired metaphor *and* physical anatomy. It was called soul-as-medium, *anima media natura*, soul stretched painfully between eternal abstraction and decaying flesh.

From this perspective, alchemy takes place in an ensouled medium where bodies such as metals display an inner life. The “in-between as medium,” in which this world unfolds, has vast ramifications. It flies in the face of our Cartesian understanding that intelligence comes from humans who direct it towards objects. From the point of view of the in-between medium, a meeting between subjects – such as alchemist and metal, Berthe and bull, Aboriginal and landscape, you and I – releases a mutual intelligence.

I shall return to the far-reaching philosophical implications of mutual intelligence in Chapter 11. Suffice it here to point out the enormous difference between the notion of projection, in which a subject projects their unconscious contents upon an object, like a film upon a screen, and the idea of mutual intelligence which presupposes an intelligent dance of subjects, their joint choreography articulating their mutual involvement. I am therefore at odds with Jung’s basic understanding of alchemy. James Hillman wrote his 1975 masterwork, *Re-visioning Psychology*, as – among a host of other matters – a fundamental critique of the prevailing Jungian dogmas of the time. While he deconstructs and re-envisions much of Jung’s work, Hillman adopts Jung’s alchemy dogma wholesale: “The alchemist projected his depths into his materials, and while working on them he was also working on his soul” (p. 90).

We saw that fresh embodiment occurs by way of the circulation *between* nodal points in an ecosystem (such as among the participants in Motosan’s gathering around the restaurant table), *between* embodied presences and an exterior community (deceased ancestors and their living descendants), *between* people (you reading my writing), *between* selves and their worlds. Wherever there’s an in-between, soul animates, enlivens, quickens. Whenever we notice a *correspondence*, like that between our daily lives and

the dreaming imagination, we feel animated. This animation is not necessarily constructive, it may be painful, disintegrative and horrific, but it is not dried-up-dead. It cascades through the world in waves, as it did for Natasha after her trauma flashback, in which there had been a direct correspondence between the absence of baby Boris on her quasi-physical parquet floor, and the Boris in her waking life having turned 18 and leaving her physical home. Correspondence animates. That's why we like interpretation, which points to correspondences. Alchemists might understand this cascade as a reanimation of "root moisture," the intelligent primal matter hidden at the roots of all embodied substance. Our language has kept the mental element of primal matter in the term "root metaphor."

Much could be said of alchemy and the alien intelligence of substances, far exceeding the scope of this present book. I just want to focus on a color spectrum described by some alchemists, with on the low end the raw material and on the high end the tincture. Each color in this spectrum corresponds to a state through which the substance, the primal matter of the mineral body, has to pass in order to become the golden tincture. These state transitions are not only chemical changes in minerals, but, since minerals are understood to be substances with intelligence, they portray changing moods of embodied consciousness as well. Since tincture, coloring agent, is made of subtle primal matter, less dense than physicality, a minuscule amount has close to endless potency – like the energy of an atomic nucleus – as can be seen in the nuclear chain reaction the tiny change in Natasha's flashback brought about.

How is the tincture made?

A Latin alchemical text, part of a fifteenth-century database called The Rose Garden of the Philosophers (*Rosarium Philosophorum*), puts it this way (translation mine; between [] connecting text):

[According to] the true principle of nature [you should know that] you do not need many things, just one . . . there is just one stone, one medicine, one vessel, one method, one arrangement . . . there is only one single thing . . . the rich as well as the poor have it, it is found everywhere. It is assimilated in all things and is composed of soul, spirit and body, and can convert from one nature into another until it becomes of perfect grade . . . our water is the sperm of all metals and all metals dissolve in it. Reducing bodies to their primal matter or alive silver, is nothing other than dissolving frozen matter, by way of which a lock opens and one nature can enter into another.²⁷

Only a body reduced to its primal matter could transform, or be transformed, from one quality into another, because only then its frozen state

had fully melted, giving way to its substantive intelligence. The art of the fire could melt this gross frozen state into liquidity. Once endlessly refined, this liquid primal matter could become a medicinal tincture “of perfect grade,” of such fine spirit-like vaporous subtlety that it could penetrate all other liquefied unlocked bodies and heal them of their afflictions (“dissolving frozen matter, by way of which a lock opens and one nature can enter into another”). The primal medicine of perfect grade could infuse an ill body with its creative essence, and unlock the body’s sick nature, transforming it into the tincture’s own perfect health.

The description, “you do not need many things, just one . . . it is found everywhere. It is assimilated in all things and is composed of soul, spirit and body, and can convert from one nature into another until it becomes of perfect grade,” describes primal matter, and is also an apt description of the ubiquitous quasi-physical presence of embodied images which are assimilated in all things, and may unveil their substantive intelligence when slowly probed. I take embodied substantive images with their quasi-physicality to be like the primal matter of the alchemists, in whose view a body coagulates around a liquid primal intelligence. Embodied imagination infuses like a vapor an otherwise mechanical universe with animation (soul), intelligence (spirit), and creative embodiment. Modernity’s eradication of embodied imagination, by classifying it as unreal, has left us with a soul- and spirit-free cosmos of unintelligent objects in empty space, a dubious achievement. A universe embodied around its primal matter is a world of inspiration.

The following display of colors portrays a spectrum between raw and refined. It does not mean that the alchemical process moves neatly along a linear path. It jumps all over the spectrum, with many processes going on simultaneously. Some of the alchemical ovens have up to 64 different sections where materials can be heated to a variety of different temperatures. I have sufficiently explored the essential simultaneity of embodiment processes not to have to emphasize this aspect at this point. The linear portrayal is like a narrative in a dream. As always, the individual images matter more than the storyline told from a single perspective, in this case the implicit tale of evolving progression.

Raw animation in green

In 1598 a series of alchemical treatises, called *Splendor Solis*, the splendor of the sun, reached book form, written in German by an author under the pseudonym Salomon Trismosin. The First Treatise in the *Splendor Solis* begins with the following words: “This Stone of the Wise [a name for the ultimate substance, like ‘our gold’ or ‘tincture’] is achieved through the Way of Greening Nature . . . this Stone arises in growing and greening

things, whereby what is green is reduced again to its natural state.” The old German word he uses for “greening things” is the active verb-derivation *gruenennden*, which literally means “that which makes things turn green.” The greening force in nature is present in the color green. Each hue of green is a current state in the process of greening. Greening is visible in the power of springtime. The alchemist was to reach through into the primal momentum of this greening force. This was done by destroying all kinds of natural forms in which greening had found its momentary expression, all states of green, in order for the greening force, the seminal essence of nature, its primal matter, to be extracted. Since each color was perceived as a manifestation of an essential process, substances of corresponding colors were understood to have corresponding essences.

The metallic green was perceived as a mineral manifestation of the greening force driving all of nature. In the realm of metals, copper oxide is the display of greening. In the *Rosarium*,²⁸ (translation mine) the alchemist Senior says:

Our gold is not the vulgar gold. You have asked moreover after the green-ness, assuming that copper has a leprous body, because of the green-ness it possesses. Therefore I tell you that all that which is perfect in copper, is only the green-ness which is in it; because this green-ness, through our art, is immediately transformed into our most true gold.

Copper is the seed of the planet Venus in all her venusian splendor (ruling both passionate love and beauty), and venereal terror. Copper oxide tarnishes copper. The greening passion grows in the corruption of untarnished beauty and the tribulations of love and desire. Greening grows affliction. In affliction the work begins, in the corrosion of lovely innocence and in the agonies of passion. In copper oxide the greening force was seen to be strong, so it needed to be melted in order to reach into the greening animation which had brought it about. At other times other substances were used, called “milk of the virgin” or “urine of the young boy,” thus frequently the work began in the corruption of greenhorn innocence. This corruption of innocence is emphasized by alchemical images of brother-sister incest, killing both. The lust of green springtime leads to the death of initial conditions, which turns green growth into black death. In contrast to some contemporary psychologies which believe in the evergreen primacy of ongoing growth, alchemical psychology begins in the force of corruption, since it believes that a remedy can only be made from poison; only that which has the power to corrode can be refined into a transforming potency. The offices of therapists are flooded with people whose initial conditions are the tribulations of love, the traumatic corruption of innocence, and the ravaging deviations from the prevailing norms of love and beauty.

Animation in black (*nigredo*)

A plumber told me once, that when you rub your hands along copper oxide, it leaves black marks. When greening terminates, it turns from seminal force to dead husk. Its constant process of growth stops, and like a maple leaf in autumn it rusts and turns to compost. During the final days of summer, the crust of primal matter, its frozen husk, rules this greening animation with ossified rigidity. When set conditions have too long been ruled by fixed structures, dissolution is of the essence. Alchemists imagine this as the death of the old king, the old ruler of a superannuated state. In order for the root moisture to be freed from this bone-dry condition, the old king has to drown in primordial waters. Remember, “. . . ‘our water’ is the sperm of all metals and all metals dissolve in it.” We’re standing at the portal of seasonal death, when green drowns back into the primordial sea of sperm, which generated it to begin with. In alchemical woodcuts a pathetic old crowned man is seen with just his flowing white beard above water, crying for help, obviously in great anxiety. You know he is about to pass out and drown. An old rule disintegrates and sinks back into the animating matrix of being, in order to disintegrate down to its smallest constituting elements. The old state is atomized. This frees the forces of the wild, racing out in all directions. What had been central is no longer, the center cannot hold. This is a centrifugal time of high anxiety, not knowing what is up, a time during which the interiors are in great turmoil. It is a time of churning gut, messy excrement and the odors of decay. Alchemists portray an era of war, a battle of opposing forces, killing off one another; a snake devouring itself, dogs fighting, a torn age of struggle and wishing it weren’t so. What had been known and obvious glides down a harrowing slide of unknowing, until all certainty evaporates. Eventually the greening force turns into sludge, blacker than black, at the bottom of the retort in the alchemist’s lab, exhausted after dying, surrendering to death. All dynamics stop: the end of the road. To call it compost is to view it kindly, this terrorizing mayhem. Alive silver is tormented from bridal suite to bridal suite, they say, fusing on and on, affecting everything. Matter is being tortured into opening up to as yet imperceptible potential through the tearing of its outer seal, its crust, its scab (“dissolving frozen matter, by way of which a lock opens and one nature can enter into another”). Each state resists change, inertly following its own momentum. Physics tells us it takes work to overcome inertia. *Nigredo animation is work*. When all is lost and reality appears in suspended animation, as depression settles on the waters, actually the work of disintegration is breaking down the inert. What feels like immobilizing despair and depleted impotence, truly is hard labor. Nothing happens, and that is all that happens: the vacating force of ‘nothing’ empties out space, like a shipwrecked sailor bailing out a vessel. This view of black accords depression its existential place, freeing it from its

exclusively clinical definition. If we look at black only as the absence of light, we will not see that it has its own inner value as an evacuating force.

Animation in blue

Loss makes the body sad.

When old forms have disintegrated we lick our wounds, nostalgic for the past. Leaning back to what once was and will be never more, the melancholy twang of a blues guitar fills the night air; sitting with the fragments of what was once a life, the animator weeps. Old memories return of times when the world was familiar and intact, regressive desires to reconstitute what was lost mix with the awareness of its impossibility. The bell tolls – for us. Loneliness is the order of the day, being separate from what once was whole. Matter has the blues. The country singer’s ballad tells us that she took his dog, she took his home, and she drove off in his pickup truck.

In blue we find the angel under whose aspect our suffering becomes bearable. When suddenly it dawns on us that our acute most private loss connects us to the nature of existence – which in its constant motion is all about loss, always – our personal suffering has found its angel, its timeless aspect, which the alchemist called the *caelum*, the heaven in all things. And like the heavens it is blue. It is the first manifestation of substantive intelligence, the first sense of significance appearing in the rear-view mirror. In blue a body suffers loss, while glimmers of meaning emanate from behind.

Animating rainbow

When *caelum* is reached by the work of blue, bodies having been reduced to primal matter by separation and loss, the substantive intelligence starts to radiate out into manifold colors. This is called in alchemy the “peacock’s tail” (*cauda pavonis*). A new spectrum of states shines forth from primal matter. The essence of the moment is *display*, appearance. Each speck of primal matter is also called *scintilla*, spark, imagined like a live creative pixel in a multi-dimensional screen. The peacock’s tail displays a scintillating vibrancy of coloration. To the alchemist, *scintillae* are sparks of inspiration, moments when pure creative spirit enters into the agony of embodiment. An artist or thinker recognizes it as the time after fallow despondency, when a new idea announces itself “out of the blue.” Around this inspiring firework of sparkling information new states can organize. Whether the rainbow animation be a brainstorm radiating out to the furthest reaches of body, a flush of feeling, or a slow multi-fingered dawn, each sparkle presents a potential state, which may develop into a fresh new image. The peacock’s tail portrays a fleeting promise of renewal, an emotional multi-faceted moment of beauty after a flood, like when the irascible Lord of the Old Testament sealed His promise as a rainbow upon the

heavens. In the alchemist's laboratory it presented itself as a fleece-thin oily cover over pitch dark fluid, like petrol spilled on water, refracting light.

Animation in white (*albedo*)

Alchemists usually equate white and silver with that grand mirror in the sky, the full moon, *luna*.

In white the forces of initial greening reach their reflection, their moment of self-awareness. No longer is the initial motion just a blind force, it has become reflective. Here esthetics rule. Here the peacock tail meets its own display and becomes aware of itself.

At the core of esthetic reflection lies the notion of *metaphor*. Aristotle said²⁹ that “the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of similarity in dissimilars.” He thus highlights a knack for pattern recognition as an essential element in the mastery of metaphor. The *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*³⁰ gives the following definition of metaphor: “A condensed verbal relation in which an idea, image or symbol may, by the presence of one or more other ideas, images or symbols, be enhanced in vividness, complexity, or breadth of implication.” Aristotle adds: “From metaphor we can best get hold of something new . . . Liveliness is especially conveyed by metaphor.” After the sclerotic old king had died, disintegrating strife had had its debilitating reign, and the blues had made us pensive, then the display of the new is caught in its reflection, for in “metaphor we can best get hold of something new.”

For metaphor, as we can see, a twofold presence is needed, so one presence may reflect in another, and one may detect emerging patterns in the scintillating chaos on display in the rainbow of potential. When single-mindedness makes room for reflection, consciousness emerges in its primary linguistic meaning of “knowing with” (*con-scientia*). In a single optic one must needs be identified with what one knows – there is no “knowing with,” since there is no other presence together with which to know one's knowledge. Thus knowledge may be instinctive and strong, yet if it is unreflected it is in the true sense of the word unconscious. (I attribute this understanding of consciousness to Wolfgang Giegerich who pointed it out to us during a lecture at Kyoto University.) Silver heralds the advent of *con*-consciousness. In white, animation becomes conscious of its own manifestation. It knows *and* reflects. (Remember the difference between an embodied image with which we are identified, such as a spontaneous flashback, or a flashback we enter artificially, by way of dual consciousness, while knowing we are simultaneously in a physical environment outside it.)

As Aristotle says, metaphor not only portrays the new, it makes us get hold of it as well, thus enhancing “vividness, complexity, or breadth of

implication.” In white we are not only in the grip of an idea, we simultaneously have a grip on it (and thus potentially upon ourselves, if we are not to be possessed by an idea in fundamentalist single-mindedness, the *unwhite*). Silver tarnishes easily and needs constant polishing or it loses its capacity for reflection. A reflection is not a dogma, once and for all, it constantly needs attention. Also, sulfuric heat, like an outbreak of passion, burns silver black. James Hillman quotes one of the great alchemists of all time, Albertus Magnus, teacher of Thomas Aquinas³¹: “Sulphur burns silver . . . and the blackening of silver shows that it is burnt by the sulphur.” Sulfur manifests sudden eruptive heat, like a struck match. Moonlight is cool and in order to keep its reflective ability it must guard against its metaphor-driven liveliness reaching a fever pitch (“Liveliness is especially conveyed by metaphor”). Thus while surrounded by a tinderbox of inflammable ideation it is of particular importance for silver to keep its cool. Its inability to do so is manifest in the unconscious single-mindedness of any fundamentalist certainty and its resulting terror. In our contemporary condition we need shiploads of silver polish and sulfur containers, or unconscious single-mindedness will continue to meet its match in unconscionable conflagration.

Albertus tells us how an alchemist conceives of a mirror³²: “A mirror is caused by moisture which is solidified and is capable of taking a good polish; and it receives images because it is moist, and holds them because it is solid and limited (*terminatum*): for it would not retain them in this way, if the moisture were not incorporated and limited by a boundary” (*Minerals*, III: ii, 3). Albertus enumerates the qualities of silver reflection: it is receptive, since it is moist, yet it is not fluid. It is still and firm in its reflection, unlike water, which ripples at the slightest provocation. It is solid, not wishy-washy, having constancy and endurance. It is limited by a boundary, thus it retains. Says Albertus (p. 27): “Air does not retain such images, although it receives them . . . having no boundary, it does not focus them into one place and shape . . . but acts only as a medium through which the images pass, and not as a limiting boundary that gives them being.” Hillman tells us: “The airy mind cannot fix and reproduce even its own images. They only pass through and we ourselves are only media . . . for the mind to mirror images it needs a specific case . . . We cannot image without being precise, and what is not precise, not limited, not focused is not an image.” For this reason this book is organized around specific tales of embodied imagination. Paying slow and concentrated attention to vivid particulars engenders embodiment, while flashes of abstraction only feed the mind. In white all generalizing disappears into crisp specificity. White has the cruelty of a sharply-focused camera lens, from whose unblinking eye nothing escapes.

White consciousness is reflectively aware of the point of view within its seeing, the seer in the seen. *Albedo* gives good deconstruction.

Formulation in white is both accurate and poetic, a cool portrayal of reflected realities. The white eye of esthetics differentiates each hue, every texture, until each image is displayed in as convincing a reality as is a dream while dreaming. The labor in white is polishing, cleansing all fuzziness into clarity, as the last haze of husk is removed, and blind animation becomes self-aware. Out of the primal greening in all springtime things, subtle matter has emerged, as different from gross matter as a mirror image from the body which casts it.

Animation in yellow (*citrinitas*)

Reflections from the realms of white are not to enter into the world directly. A reflection is not a course of action. Reflection is like sour dough leavening bread. Yellow is a time of fermentation, ruling the phase in the method of embodied imagination when the embodiments are etched as sense memories into the body, to there ferment. The alchemist portrays this as the spermatic seeds, which are put into the earth to sprout. For this reason it frequently happens that methodical embodied imagination, which is like planting psychoactive seeds in the body, has no immediate effect and only shows above the surface of consciousness after a period of subterranean fermentation. The result may be unrecognizable, since the embodied metaphor of the silver state has had a yeast-like effect, making the bread rise, but is no longer visible in the outcome.

A gruesome image from the *Splendor Solis* shows a red man with a black head and a bloodstained sword, who holds the golden head of a dismembered man, white as snow, chopped into five white pieces. In his left hand he holds a piece of paper on which is written: "I have killed you so you may receive superabundant life . . . the body I will bury, that it may putrefy and grow and bear innumerable fruits."³³ The white reflection has to be reconfigured underground in order to bear fruit.

Embodiment must grow a physical body, like Andrew with his dream of the creased jacket must plant this crease metaphor into his body over several years in order to leaven it, thereby lifting his paralysis, while Moto-san goes swimming. Yellow is a time of practice and rehearsal, a time when reflective images, like leavened bread, gain more and more body. It is the winter after the planting of the metaphor into the system, when on the outside nothing seems to happen, but fermentation brews underneath.

Another side of a yellowing atmosphere is about becoming jaded. It is a time of irony, of seeing through. A sense of the ridiculous makes our fresh insights less important, less urgent. It equalizes highs and lows, because we've seen it all before. In its extreme it may lead to cynical inaction and nihilist sentiment.

And then there is the yellow belly of cowardice, when what has grown from reflection might ferment an act from which one shirks away for fear of

danger. In that case cynicism comes in handy. This yellow rains on anyone's parade, while carrying within itself a hidden core of shame.

The alchemist sees in *citrinitas* a first pale dawn, after a full-moon night, before a bright red sunrise, a tentative time of gestation.

Animation in red (*rubedo*)

Sunrise.

After a time of fermentation, a fresh creative spirit enlivens the leavened body into a concrete *act* which retains its self-awareness without losing its spontaneity while acting upon the surrounding world. When Goethe's Faust is wondering how to translate the Greek word *logos* in the beginning of the gospel, usually translated as "In the beginning was the Word," he concludes that it should read "In the beginning was the Act." *Rubedo* is the fresh infusion of fermented reflections, driving an act of embodied metaphor which spans unbearable tension, catalyzing all it touches into its own highest value. This red moment always reminds me of one of the great creative acts of the twentieth century, Mahatma Gandhi's 1930 Salt March. After a period of meditation and fasting, which I compare to the fermentation phase, Gandhi-ji walks with thousands of his followers to the ocean to gather salt and sell it, in defiance of the British Salt Tax, which did not allow Indians to gather or sell salt. Since no one was allowed to gather their own salt, everyone had to buy it from the British monopoly, which many could not afford. Gandhi's practical act – embodying indomitable defiance, the right to sustenance, self-reliance, and the wide spectrum of metaphoric reverberation in the image of common salt – tintured the British Empire, and eventually led to the rise of independent India. This *rubedo* act was a subtle self-aware embodiment of practical metaphor affecting the powers in the world.

The gold of the alchemists is not the natural gold, but the red tincture, which infuses what it touches with its golden presence. The gold tincture is the coloring agent radiating red into a waiting world, acting upon it, and making it partake of its *radically original* subtle essence. This clear red tincture, made from corrosive growing force, is a substance which, once having been divided against itself and forced back down to its roots by gloom and fallow death, shines forth by way of the ferment derived from an original metaphoric reflection, in a vital act which has never before existed, breaking the mold, fundamentally changing the style of life.

In red, primal matter is realized, infusing the physical world with penetrating concentrated action. In red, the ills of a body are remedied.

Incubation, art, and dreaming by proxy

We are such stuff as dreams are made on

Dr Kimberley Patton, professor at Harvard Divinity School, in a paper she presented at the 2002 international conference of the International Association for the Study of Dreams in Boston,³⁴ gives us some of the most famous examples in classical western incubation history, and the birth of clinical practice:

. . . at the shrine of Asklepios in the great long *abaton* of Epidauros where the bearded compassionate god, perhaps in the form of a great snake, appeared to the dreamers asleep on their *klinai* to prescribe remedies, or the one at Cos where in dreams he wiped away disease with his hand, or the mysterious round building at Pergamon in Asia Minor with its cut channels for purifying water to run through the healing chambers, where, according to the account of the Hellenistic orator and hypochondriac Aelius Aristides, once the god came in a dream and “prescribed that the very bones and nerves of a sufferer’s body must be pulled out and then put back.” But they must not simply be replaced, new for old. Instead, there had to be a “certain change of those existing, and thus there was need of a great and strange correction” (*Aelius Aristides*).

Dream incubation practices are geared towards eliciting a response from embodied presences to a suffering presented to them while asleep in a place devoted to dream healing. Their images infuse a dreamer with their substantive intelligence and create a “great and strange correction” to the very bone of body and nervous system. Our journey to the caves in France was such a quest for incubation.

Patton maintains that dream incubation the world over has three elements in common: intention, location, and epiphany. The *intention* to encounter an image-presence must be strong, supported by ritual activity, such as cleansing, eating certain food (like our Paleolithic meals), fasting,

sacrifice, and travel to the incubation site. Any activity that may enhance and focus our intention towards such an encounter is useful in the incubation process.

The *location* where incubation is to take place has to be inhabited by a strong spirit of place, such as the cave in which we were sleeping which had continuously been inhabited by humans and proto humans for over half a million years. There one would absorb the ambience and receive dreams specific to the place. There Berthe met with the charging bull. Often an unfamiliar place one does not ordinarily inhabit – like the forestry school near the waterfall in the Japan Alps, where Moto-san incubated his dream about his attitude toward his future career – can bring about fresh dreaming.

Patton tells us we have to go to the place inhabited by the spirit we wish to encounter: “If I want to be healed by Asklepios, I must bring my wounded body to him at his shrine, and after I have fasted and purified myself and made special offerings in the walled temple precinct, I must sleep in the *abaton*, together with other sufferers and under the watchful, scripted mediation of the priests, with the shared goal of receiving a therapeutic dream from the god.”³⁵ She continues to tell us³⁶ that the Greek word used, *episkopein*, means “to visit.” An incubation leads to a visitation by a dream. In this way, we do not *have* dreams, we are *visited* by them so they may infuse us with their intelligence. She again quotes hypochondriac classical poet Aelius Aristides about such a visit by the healing god Asklepios:³⁷

For there was a seeming, as it were, to touch him and to perceive that he himself had come, and to be between sleep and waking, and to wish to look up and be in anguish that he might depart too soon, and to strain the ears and to hear some things as in a dream, some as in a waking state. Hair stood straight, and there were tears of joy, and the pride of one’s heart was inoffensive. And what man could describe these things in words? If any man has been initiated, he knows and understands.

The word *epiphany*, a Greek word combining *epi-*, to, and *phainein*, show, implies a relationship. The image-presence shows him- or herself *to* someone. The visitation by the god is initiatory, meaning that the encounter and the infusion with the alien knowledge changes one’s being. It is not so much that the god only prescribes the medication; his presence *is* the medicine.

In this book I have presented several examples of intentional dreaming. Chiga-san’s intense desire to get a dreaming response to her cancer relapse resulted in the presence of a strong-legged woman, a colorful bird and color patches in the ocean. Upon working these images, they became the raw

material for the ultimate circulation of clear transparent tincture. She had the dream at her home, which would make it not a fully fledged incubation, which, according to Patton, requires a spirit of place. Maybe our work inside a fully embodied image ambience added a sense of place. The “Micronesian” dreaming environment itself became the quasi-physical place where the epiphanic encounter with the alien spirit, Micronesian-Woman, could occur. This makes a precise flashback into the quasi-physical place, with all its embodied details, of extra importance if we want an epiphanic moment to occur, such as Natasha’s lightning insight around the absence of baby Boris on the parquet floor in the fully ambient ‘New York’ apartment. In this way we can help release the spirit of place residing in the quasi-physical flashback environment.

As we have seen, the chances of a self-manifestation of an alien presence occurring can be enhanced in the work with embodied images, by creating a medium of similarity between self and alien. Before the healing god will visit, we have to enter his temple and become infused with his spirit. In embodied imagination we practice careful empathic observation and mimicry, so the alien presence may come to spontaneously inhabit our body, take possession of us, and engender a “great and strange correction.”

In all the examples we have thus far seen, we could remain under the illusion that dreaming and the encounter with embodied presences is about us, about our healing, our transformation, our personal lives. In this chapter we shall investigate the notion of dreaming by proxy, *dreaming for another*, and its relevance for art.

Sometimes it would occur that a person could not be moved and so another would sleep in the temple for them. Michael Kearney, investigator of Asclepian healing rituals, tells us:³⁸

Arata, a woman of Lacedaemon, dropsical [dropsy: pathological retention of lymph fluids]. For her, while she remained in Lacedaemon, her mother slept in the temple and saw a dream. It seemed to her that the god cut off her daughter’s head and hung the body in such a way that her throat was turned downwards. Out of it came a huge quantity of fluid matter. Then he took down the body and fitted the head back on the neck. After she had seen this dream she went back to Lacedaemon, where she found her daughter in good health; she had seen the same dream.

Another person could sleep in the sanctuary as a proxy for a sick person who could not be moved.

When working on a piece of art, such as a theater performance, we can dream by proxy *for* the work of art. In this context – dreaming as a proxy for the art we are working – we take the dream as dreamed by a character

in a play, a painting on canvas, a sculpture emerging from a stone, a storyline in a novel, or a creative challenge in scientific research. Like with Arata's mother, the dream that visits us is not *for* us, it is for the work which uses us to birth itself, it is for our "daughter." This notion stems from an era before the days when genius became personal – as in: Einstein is a genius – from a time when genius employed our craft to manifest itself, and it was understood that Faust wrote Goethe as much as vice versa.

Epidaurus, 1993, very early one morning

How she had done it, I don't know, but Maggie Bromell, my co-organizer of 'Dreaming in Greece,' had received permission from the archeologists to conduct dream groups near the *abaton*, outside of the usual opening times of the temple grounds, so we could work in quiet on dreams at the Asclepian sacred site, where 3000 years ago others had done the same. Nearby was the snake pit, where people in need of shock treatment were lowered to have an Indiana Jones experience. It all felt very present. We were assured that, at this precise location, we were the first in close to two millennia to formally work dreams in order to find medicine for our ills. In those days, when medicine was practiced in the logic of epiphany, theater was central to the healing arts. The most astounding amphitheater in the world is right at this sacred site, a structure in which the drop of a penny can be heard loud and clear in rows far up, a miracle of acoustics.

Stan Strickland played the flute, in haunting sounds of sunrise. We listened, transfixed, realizing why the muse was central to healing in days when theater had been the equivalent of dreaming in physical space.

Stratford-upon-Avon, 2003

Theater director Janet Sonenberg had sent an advance copy of her book *Dreamwork for Actors*,³⁹ to Michael Boyd, artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) in Stratford. In this book, Janet describes the work she and I did at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where she is Chair of the Music and Drama department, to study the way in which ancient dream incubation methods, such as they had been practiced at Epidaurus, could be adapted to contemporary theater. The method she and I developed over a period of about seven years had turned out to be quite successful, and she had put the fruits of our extensive MIT research in this book. As a result, Michael asked us to come to Stratford and experiment with actors of his company, to see if it could become an ongoing rehearsal method for the RSC, and a way to develop plays from scratch. Coincidentally, Michael had been interested in the Asclepian tradition and the early connections between dreaming and theater.

The RSC put us up in a delicious, terminally quaint white cottage adjacent to the Dirty Duck, the arch-pub where, after the shows, actors come to sit in the garden in the back, while the audience is kept meticulously out in front. One young man-on-the-make has designs on a beautiful actress who has just entered, and tells her the show tonight was great, much better than the one he saw last night. He doesn't realize tonight's show was with the same cast as last night's; different plays, same actors. She grins and walks on to the back garden. We hang out at the 'Duck,' Janet, my son David – a professional actor and screenwriter in LA who has come along to assist us – and I, discussing Shakespeare and theater in general. David and I have worked closely before, writing screenplays together, and now we are again collaborating. Hearing him discuss his field (the movies, a passion we have shared since his early childhood), in the Bard's home town, with my close friend, colleague and highly skilled director, I think I'm in heaven.

During the day, when we're not working with the actors, we walk, surrounded by tourists, down streets with houses so old they need crutches. I feel very European and quite at home. Some buildings look downright Swiss. David and I talk about how strange it is to have a whole town existing purely on a single man's accomplishment. We don't think young Will could have imagined it: his hometown with all its restaurants and gift shops, the internet café, all because of him.

The large red brick RSC structure, housing two theaters, the Main House (Royal Shakespeare Theater) and the Swan, situated along the River Avon, looks like a sprawling church without a steeple. On top of the Swan, a theater inspired by the old Globe Theater is the Ashcroft room, named after actor Dame Peggy Ashcroft, a Shakespearean great and longtime member of the Company. You get there by climbing up three flights of stairs through the bowels of the building, passing rooms where women are ironing sixteenth-century shirts, and costume racks crowd halls. The room is like a rustic attic over the apse of a country cathedral. Standing in the sweet spot of this all-wood polygonal rehearsal room you hear your own voice in 3-D, as if you were wearing Bose earphones. Exhilarating, like meeting an acoustic kid sister of the Epidauros amphitheater.

Janet was back here after crossing the Atlantic twice in the same week (going home in order to assist two of her freshman children in the so called "taking the kids to college" ritual, as all-American as Thanksgiving turkey, and equally stressful), giving her little chance to develop jetlag. Our method requires two moments divided by time for dreaming. We usually give it a week. Janet had done phase one, the incubation process – or, "seeding the dreams" as she calls it – with the actors. It goes somewhat as follows: the actors rehearse a scene from a play until they are off-book, knowing their lines cold. Then we come in and ask them what about the scene was hard on them, or incomprehensible, in what scene they felt a strong thrust in the character, or where they could use a fresh alternative view. From this

question we would fashion an embodied condition, the incubation-body, which the actor would reinhabit for about half a minute before going to sleep. Here is a quote from Janet's book⁴⁰ (text between [] mine) which shows a dream incubation process I did with a young actress in Janet's MIT theater program, Linda, who is to play Nina in Chechov's *The Seagull*. After she had told us that she wants to further explore the moment when Treplev lays the seagull at her feet, I conduct the following work with her.

"What do you see?" I ask her. Linda describes the image that manifests itself spontaneously.

She [Nina] sits on a bench in a long dress. It's sunny. She looks at the landscape – which is beautiful. Suddenly, something makes her look down, and there is a dead seagull and a pair of muddy shoes.

I will patiently tease out the strands of this brief anecdote until it becomes a sentient environment. After several minutes of patient questioning, Linda arrived at this expanded first-person vision.

The sun is on my face. It's warm. I see myself in a dress that covers my shoes. I can't really see my shoes or legs at all. My clothing is wholly inappropriate for the weather. I should have brought my wrap. I should have known better . . . I hear my mother's voice saying that I should have known better.

While Nina's mother is dead, Linda's mother is not. She is a vibrant presence in Linda's life.

I'm cold and shivering. I'm trying to have a little contact with the bench for warmth . . . My back is really stiff. It's stiffening up. My back feels like steel . . . I look out at the grass and trees. They are beautiful. Then I look down. I don't know why – I didn't hear a sound. There is the seagull. For some reason I really want to see some blood – but I don't see any blood. The seagull looks almost alive; its feathers are only dirty from the mud. Its wings are deformed. Then I look at its eye. There is only one eye staring at me, and it's like black marble. Beady. Now I see the top half of a man's muddy shoes. They are Treplev's.

Linda's imagined vision reached its organic end point at Treplev's muddy shoes. Distilling a clear and concise incubation image is the next step, and it brings this part of the process to a close. Still deeply focused, Linda was asked to sequentially re-experience the following sensations that comprise the fully formed incubation image: (1) the chilly feeling in the back – "like cold steel making contact with the bench"; (2) the sight of the seagull's

dead, “marble”-like “beady” eye; and (3) the sight of the “muddy” shoes. When she was able to move effortlessly from one of these points to another, the process was complete. Linda’s subsequent dreams were considered as dreamed by proxy for *The Seagull*’s Nina.

Dreaming after incubation is like the rippling of water after you throw a heavy stone in a lake, reverberations echoing in all directions, “magnetically” pulling in corresponding embodied intelligence in the subsequent dreaming. These incubated dreams – which compare to ordinary dreams like cultured pearls to natural ones – we would approach as if they had been dreamed for the character, on whose behalf the dreamer had seeded the dreaming, dreamed them. We worked the dreams which visited Linda as if they had been dreamed by proxy for *The Seagull*’s Nina. The outcome of the work on this cultured dream was a dreamworked body, like Moto-san’s rental body. In this dreamworked body Linda was to go on stage.

One of the RSC actors, Naomi Frederick, describes the subsequent unfolding of such a dreamworked state as follows:

After working with the dream I was not in the body I anticipated. It was not what I had thought of for myself. It was very interesting, being displaced. It was an out of control thing that both fired me up and weakened me. I was in an unfamiliar body. I was relying entirely on the feelings you helped me find. I don’t usually feel as much, particularly in the early stages of rehearsal. It was like a cradle. The moment you came upon a line, you suddenly found yourself *there*. And a new feeling would feed in, one of the feelings you [the dreamworker] had addressed, and that would then inform the next bit. It was not cerebral, it was physical.

It is of great importance that the actor be fully embedded in the text, otherwise there would be only a tumbling waterfall of feeling states, without the carefully crafted embodied articulation which makes for the difference between expressive therapy and art, between self-expression and the articulate presentation of a character. The former feels self-centered, the latter fascinates.

The rest of this chapter will be dedicated to a detailed description of the dreamwork we did at the RSC on Act II, Scene 5 of *Romeo and Juliet*.

We all know the story: early teenage star-crossed lovers from enemy camps of a vendetta between families, who die for love, thus redeeming the feud. We remember the balcony scene, when they proclaim their love. Juliet is fearful:

If they do see thee, they will murder thee.

To which Romeo replies:

Alack there lies more peril in thine eye
Than twenty of their swords . . .

The scene ends in their pledge:

Juliet: If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully
Romeo: Th'exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine.

The next day at nine in the morning, Juliet sends out her old nurse to hear if Romeo is true to his troth.

Act II, Scene 5 begins with Juliet fretting that three hours have passed since she sent her nurse to meet with Romeo, and she berates the nurse's slowness:

But old folks – many feign as they were dead;
Unwieldy, slow, heavy, and pale as lead.

Enter Nurse, looking exhausted, complaining of her aching bones. Juliet wants to know only one thing:

What says he of our marriage? What of that?

But she has to cajole it out of Nurse, even give her a shoulder rub. Nurse comes closer to telling what transpired between her and Romeo, singing his praises, and then suddenly changes the subject:

What, have you din'd at home?

Juliet becomes exasperated. Nurse continues:

Your love says like an honest gentleman, and a courteous, and a kind,
and a handsome, and, I warrant, a virtuous – Where is your mother?

Juliet exclaims:

Where is my mother! Why, she is within.
Where should she be? How oddly thou repliest!
“Your love says like an honest gentleman, ‘Where is you mother?’”

Finally Nurse relents and tells her:

Then hie you hence to Friar Lawrence' cell;
There stays a husband to make you a wife.

Beth is to play Juliet, Patricia the nurse. After the actors had rehearsed the scene sufficiently by themselves, Janet did a dream incubation with them, similar to the work I had done with Linda, but with the added feature of a transit into the non-self character (in Juliet's case a move into Nurse's perspective, and vice versa). She had each actor enter into the Nurse and Juliet scene in her imagination, not in the way it would be staged, but as an image environment, surrounding the actor, as does a dream. There the actor could feel the moment in the scene which most troubled or fascinated her, where she needed more information. She would imagine it like a dream environment. Janet helped each actress enter this environment while in a hypnagogic state, working it partly from the character with whom the actor was identified, part from the perspective of the other character. In this way, not only were the characteristics of each personage explored, but their implicit relationship as well. Each actor ended up with a variety of impulses, felt as an embodied axis, as nodes of embodiments in a network of states. They were to enter upon this network before going to sleep, and spend thirty seconds carefully keeping track. After this they would go to sleep and record the ensuing dreams.

I tend to accompany the incubation process with a suggestion that there might be some dreams feeling a bit different from usual dreams. Then after the incubation period I ask if there is any dream that feels different. Frequently some dreams have this different sense, so we know which dream to use. The suggestion may work like a marker isotope.

Our method for a scene with two scene partners asks for a rehearsal procedure of three run-throughs, divided by two periods of 20-minute embodied dreamwork on incubated material.

The first run-through is what the actors have prepared together, employing all acting approaches available to them, so the performance has some definite form. The more form the performance already has, the more stability the actors have on text, the more the embodied magma of creative imagination has to push against and work with, like passion having to take on form in the rigid mold of a sonnet.

The scene has great potential for comedy, bordering on slapstick. Juliet's emotional reversals, between intense hope, disappointment, and her going nuts with the nurse, are intensely comical, as she responds in utter exasperation to Nurse's teasing cat-and-mouse play with her passionate impatience. Tiny gestures let loose roars from the audience, the other actors gathered, plus Janet, David and I. It is all "you-should-have-been-there" kind of stuff. I won't even try to describe it.

Suffice it to say, we all enjoyed a fun belly laugh over Shakespeare's farcical writing. Now Patricia's Nurse will dreamwork with me for 20 minutes.

Unbeknownst to me, her incubation was around the fact that she felt Juliet to be very selfish, only concerned with Romeo, having no feeling for

what she, Nurse, was going through. She described it as a kind of desperate clinging on Juliet's part. It made Patricia gasp for breath.

As a Dutchman I don't recognize her accent, but it sounds to my untrained ears a bit like that of a friend of mine from Sheffield. Her face is awash with mischief and sadness. Patricia's beloved is in the hospital, which makes her anxious. She looks caring and warm. She's perfect for Nurse.

Patricia bends over laughing apologetically in the way we find our own dreams embarrassingly hilarious.

"I had this drea-ea-eam last night," she bursts in giggles.

"Yeah, that's a good one," I concur. (A good dream to use for the work, I mean.)

"We were in a kind of big school hall, and Jasper, who is one of the actors here, was holding my hand and we were walking across this hall, and it was full of really frightening monkeys, that were biting people." She giggles again, aware of others listening in. "And we had to walk across the room. Jasper was holding my hand and saying, 'it's okay, if we walk across, we will be okay.' And I was scared but I kind of knew I would be okay with Jasper." Other company members laugh in conspiratorial fashion, of "Oh yeah, we know *that* about Jasper," or maybe something more ironic, or just in recognition; I'll never know nor ever asked. "For *some* reason," she laughs along. "And Naomi (Naomi Frederick, of the above quote) was there, sort of lying on a picnic blanket. And," her voice stretches thin, a siren of laughter, "and she was covered in milk!" Incredulous hilarity is now truly getting to Patricia, and by extension, to us all. "A monkey was attacking her and really biting her, and I could see that happening, but we got across, and that's all I remember." [She giggles with innocent apologetic charm.] "I have no idea what any of that is about."

"Neither do I," I respond.

"Good, that be best," she concurs.

Janet tells me later, from the incubation session, that Patricia's Nurse felt Juliet's eagerness and urgency to know Romeo's message as a desperate clawing, much like the monkeys in the dream. But since I don't know this, I am protected from the mistake of working the dream as an echo, not as a creation unto itself.

"Okay, so umm," I hum and haw, waiting for a bright idea of where to begin. I don't find it, so I begin with the old stalwart, "Where is this scene located, this scene of the monkeys, where are you?"

"It's like a school hall, like a big gym. And it's quite light, quite a high ceiling. And the floor is sort of pale wood. Slats of flooring. And there's probably markings like a hockey pitch on the floor and the walls are white." She is describing an environment she finds herself in.

“Is it daytime?”

“Yes, it probably is. There’s probably electric light above us.”

“Where do you start in the room?”

“Not from a fixed point. Kind of walking, with these monkeys going crazy all around.” She laughs again.

“Can you sense into the way that you’re walking?” I ask, to connect her to a sense of embodiment. “What is your body posture as you are walking?”

“I’m holding Jasper’s hands, and I’d say, my shoulders are probably quite tense, and I’m walking quite slowly and hesitantly.”

“Can you feel into that body, that body with the tense shoulders?”

“Yeah, yeah.” She is obviously sensing it right now.

“Stay in that for a moment.”

Pause.

“And what do you feel in the hand that is holding Jasper’s hand?” I ask, in order to focus on the interface between her body and the body of *other*, setting the stage for a shift in identification, a change of perspective.

“Tension, grip.”

“Tight grip?”

“Yeah.”

“Can you sense into your hand? The tight shoulders and the tight grip. Is your hand sweating?”

“Eh . . . Yeah.”

“Are there sounds going on around you?”

“Yeah, those screaming monkeys!” She laughs. “Just that, just the noise of that.”

“And that sense of that it’s funny is now, not as you are in it,” I ascertain, to get her closer to dream actuality.

“Yeah, yeah,” she acknowledges. “It feels quite frightening, but I know I’ll be okay. Because of Jasper.”

“Can you sense with your hand how he is holding your hand?” I ask on the runway towards a u-turn in viewpoint.

“His hand is over my hand, like that.” She shows me by having one hand taking hold of the other. “It’s secure, but it is not tense and gripping.”

“Can you sense into the security that is in his hand?” I focus on the subjective experience of an embodied condition: the secure, not tense and gripping hold his hand displays.

“Yeah,” she utters softly, slipping into his subjectivity like into a glove.

“And can you sense how that translates into his arm? And into his shoulder, and into his body?” Spreading subjectivity by route of contiguity throughout the body of *other*. His subjectivity becomes increasingly apparent to her as she inhabits an increasing space of his body. At the same time his spirit takes hold of her. “That sense of security that he’s having, what is that like for *him*?”

“Right,” she replies instantly, as if she is already participating in his being. Working with actors is like sculpting in butter, they move into *other* so smoothly, allow possession with such ease! “It’s rooted, earthed.”

“Can you sense into that, how is that in his body, that rooted sense?”

Pause.

“Yeah.” She says it slowly, observing carefully.

“Is there any place in his body where that rooted sense is most prominent?” I ask, to locate the embodiment as a sense memory in a physical trigger point where it can exist as energy potential (like a bull on a cave wall), an impulse easily tripped into a force of possession, leading to unselfconscious action on stage.

Pause.

“Maybe the chest,”

“Mmm,” I say. It is a bit too “maybe” for me. When it gets to be “maybe,” confabulation can burst in like an enemy through a breach. Yet I continue, seeing if it leads to more embodiment. Confabulation usually feels heady.

“So feel his chest, that rooted-ness that he has in his chest, as he’s holding your hand. His hand, the rooted-ness in his chest . . .”

Pause.

“And how is he aware of the monkeys?” I now focus our attention, by way of his subjectivity, upon the action in the scene. In this way the event can become an experience for him, as felt by her, witnessed by me. The experiencing self and dream-Jasper are now merged, like Siamese twins. “Stay in his awareness.”

Pause.

“Are they a danger to him?”

“Eh . . . yeah, if you’re not aware, if you’re not careful, and watchful.”

“Can you sense into his watchfulness?” I say, uncovering a new state of mind.

“Yeah,” she affirms.

“And how is his watchfulness helping him in being among these monkeys? Does it make him move differently?” Again, I use motion to enhance embodiment.

“It makes him move fluidly and carefully,” her voice trails with the fluidity of his motion.

“Sense into the fluid care of his movement. What is that like in his body?”

“Aha,” she utters, in my tone of voice, indicating she is now focusing in along the same lines as I.

Pause.

“And again, sense where in his body this fluid care is most prominent in his movement.”

Pause.

“Probably in his hips,” she remarks, with a faint whiff of “maybe.”

“Sense into his hips. Feel the fluid care in his hips. Feel this fluid care in his hips and the security in his chest.”

Pause.

“And feel your tense shoulders and your gripping hand.”

She nods.

“So you feel the hips, the chest, the shoulders, and the hand.”

She nods again, fully present in the embodiment locations we have worked up. Here we have a first network of impulses, comprised of two subjectivities, two embodied patterns of experience, “Patricia” and “Jasper.” At this point we go on to the most alien presences, the monkeys.

“And now begin to focus on the monkey.”

Decompression occurs instantly. No longer having to keep track of the contrasting embodiments and conflicting impulses, Patricia can breathe more freely, coming up for air. My voice becomes lighter as well. A new episode – a new surface.

“Any of the monkeys that you see most clearly?” I ask, almost cheerfully, as I come up from under the pressure.

“Probably the one attacking Naomi. Kind of looks like Cheeta from the Tarzan films,” she laughs.

“Describe the way this Cheeta-monkey moves.”

“Like when they bounce up and down, they’re like that a lot and their teeth are bared.”

“Can you sense into the way the monkey is bouncing? Experience the way the whole body bounces and the teeth are bared. What is it like to bounce like that?”

Patricia gazes inward for a long time.

“It’s quite nice, ’cause it’s quite free. I can feel it in my legs. But there’s something about it that is quite distressed.”

“Focus more on that. Feel how the legs are free and distressed at the same time. Feel the freedom and the distress.”

Pause.

“Feel the bouncy legs, the bare teeth, the freedom and the distress.”

Pause.

“Tell me more about it.”

“I don’t really have anything more to say,” she says, wanting to satisfy me but not knowing how.

“But you can feel it?”

She nods.

“Then feel it, just feel it, okay? Feel where that freedom and the distress are most prominently located in the monkey’s body.”

“That would be the pelvis,” she replies instantly.

“Is it the same place as Jasper’s place, or is it a different place?”

“It’s not in the hips, it’s more in the pelvis.”

“So sense it in the pelvis. Can you sense both the freedom and the distress there?”

“Yeah . . .” Her voice trails off, focused completely on the experience.

“So, stay there for a moment.”

Pause.

“And as you feel that can you also feel the bare teeth? What is in that expression?”

“Anxiety,” she says, with certainty.

“Feel into that anxiety in the mouth.”

Pause.

“So, feel the freedom and the distress in the pelvis, and the anxiety in the mouth.”

Pause.

“Now look at Naomi. Is she still or is she moving?”

“She’s lying down, she’s quite still. I think it’s kind of attacking her face.”

“Does she give any sign of reactions?”

“No, I don’t think so. No.”

“Has she passed out, is she unconscious?”

“I think she just thinks that’s the best way to handle it,” Patricia says, clearly from within her own perspective.

“So she’s entirely still?”

“Yeah. I think she’s trying to hold it.”

“Can you sense into that, can you look at her and sense the way in which she is lying down and she is holding it.”

“Yeah,” trailing off into the Naomi experience.

“What is that like in her body?”

“Rigid.”

“Where in her body is the rigidity most held?”

“Stomach.”

“Sense the rigidity in the stomach.”

Pause.

“And the shoulders.”

I decide not to go there since the shoulders are already occupied as the location for the tense “Patricia” experience. Her present physical body is becoming a memory theater, a topographical map of trigger impulses, and if I can help it, I want only one trigger per location.

“So feel the stomach.”

I turn to Janet, who is sitting behind the desk with the recording equipment. “Now I’m going to compose it. We will start from below,” I say to her, referring to the technique by which the whole network of processed trigger impulses is felt simultaneously as an integral body experience. I turn back to Patricia.

“Feel the bouncy freedom in the legs.”

“Yes,” she replies, like someone catching a ball tossed at her.
“In the hips the movement that is careful and fluid.”
“Ahah,” she mutters, indicating she can feel it here and now.
“In the pelvis, the freedom and the distress.” By now I have lost some of the words we used to describe the states, and Janet whispers them to me like the old-fashioned prompters under their little canopy coming up from below the stage.

“Ahah.”

“In the stomach, the rigidity.”

Nod.

“In the shoulders, *your* fear.” I emphasize the possessive pronoun “your” to indicate that this fear is hers, that she is identified with this feeling. She is to feel the fear slightly more personally than, say, the pelvic freedom of the monkey. This keeps a flavor of ego position in the mix.

“In the hand, the tight grip.”

Pause.

“In the mouth the bare teeth and the anxiety.”

Nod.

“Now let me go over it once more.” I repeat the composition sequence.
“Can you feel all that?”

“Ahah,” she mutters in slightly surprised confirmation.

“Just stay in it, I won’t say anything for a minute, just stay in it.”

The room is steeped in a minute of silence, as she stews in the brew.

“Keep your focus,” I encourage her halfway through. “What does it feel like now?”

“It’s lots of different things.”

“Just feel them, you don’t have to verbalize them, just feel them.” Experience is more important at this point than putting it into words. In fact, at this moment, words might diminish the experience by putting it on a Procrustus bed of the expressible.

“All right, just let it be.”

“Now let it all go, leave it behind and now play the scene again,” says Janet.

Patricia is now stretched over a highly complex network of embodied states. This network is to release unconscious information, outside of Patricia’s knowledge and control, into the character of Nurse. Nurse has gained an unconscious soul. As with all unconscious material, it is partially related to waking awareness, partly unrelated and mainly tangential, existing in a state between order and chaos around the creative moment we have come to call complexity.

Patricia and Beth walk to the back of the rehearsal room to once again become Juliet and Nurse. This time through, Nurse is very emotional. She is upset that her little Juliet is growing up and leaving her. It becomes a scene in which Juliet has to comfort a Nurse who is not at all interested in

Juliet's experience, just in her own sense of loss and apprehension about things to come if Juliet follows this path of danger. The scene collapses under its own weight and loses all sense of the comic. By the end, Nurse is in tears as Juliet holds her. Patricia has been overwhelmed by the experience of the dreamwork, which has brought up her anxieties around her hospitalized lover. And yet, it still feels like a possible Juliet and Nurse interaction, just heavy, anxious and loaded. As an omniscient audience, knowing what is about to unfold between Romeo and Juliet, anxiety about a wounded lover feels not far off the mark. Whereas the first performance was slanted in the lighter, farcical direction, this one plummets like lead. The cat-and-mouse game, the tease and comical despair, is gone. Irony has been replaced by dark foreboding.

After the scene other members of the company surround Patricia, comforting her, as she sobs. This troupe of actors is a caring group.

Beth is Juliet. Her lovely blonde twenty-something face is gentle, open, without any airs or guile. Like Patricia, and all the actors of this company, she excels at her craft. She seems thrilled by the sheer joy of acting.

With Janet, the week before, she incubated Juliet's growing exasperation with Nurse, Juliet's intense eagerness to hear Romeo's response in the matter of marriage, and Nurse's constant interruptions.

"We incubated three points: the anxiousness in the beginning before Nurse enters, the twirling around on the bed. Then the build-up, where she is going to tell me and interrupts herself again, 'Your love says like an honest gentleman, and a courteous, and a kind, and a handsome, and, I warrant, a virtuous – Where is your mother?' Nurse's pinched face, Juliet's confusion, anger and frustration. And then there was the last part when Nurse finally says, 'a husband to make you a wife.' That's a release, feeling tingly. So those three sections."

"Were there any dreams coming out of this which may have felt a bit different from your usual dreams?" I ask, suggesting that there might have been.

"There was one that was very strange."

"Let's take that one," I respond eagerly.

I can't say where we were, I don't know. There was me, but I had dark hair. There were a lot of men there, I was the only girl. They were sort of in two groups, but they weren't. They were all together. They were all wearing the same color, but slightly off. I was in the middle. There was sort of steam rising, and weird electrical blue light around us all. I didn't know if we were on stage, I couldn't make it out. I was in a play, or maybe it was real life. It was just sort of a steamy image. I couldn't really see. The men were all in these dusty blue suits. Big posh sort of suits. And I'm in a suit. It felt kind of strange. Like a school uniform.

We were playing games, but we had knives. We were shouting and everyone was laughing. That's why I thought it might have been a play. So then this guy came over to me, we were all laughing. He was a black man, but he had a white rim around his face and he had white gloves, like one of the drifters, or something. And a very tight Afro perm. Quite long, with this white rim painted around his face. He was like a pollywog, those toys you used to play with. But he was a real man, surreal, painted. So again, I didn't know if we were in a play or if it was real again. Strange. And he came over to me and said "I've been stabbed." And I said, "Yeah really," and I laughed. And then he said, "No, I have really been stabbed. Put your hand there." So I put my hand there on his top. He repeats, "Yes really I have been stabbed. But don't let anyone know." So I laugh again. But then I can feel his blood come over my hand. It was hot. Then I could feel that he had been stabbed and he was dying but I had to laugh. He wanted me to keep laughing. "Don't, give it away, don't give it away, that I have been stabbed," he kept saying. So I had to laugh, keep carrying on the game for the men behind. I couldn't tell any of their faces. I say, "Please let me tell someone. I can help you." He says, "No just keep laughing." And so I keep laughing, and I could feel his blood running through my hands. And I was just laughing. And then I woke up.

To get her into her dreamed body, I start out by asking Beth questions about the way she is dressed.

"Like a small schoolgirl," she replies, "like a teenager, sometimes even younger, like primary school. My body is young and small. My hair is much thicker. My legs are playful like a little girl."

Here I anchor the first sense memory of a trigger point: "Sense into the playful legs of the young girl. What is it like inside the playful legs. Can you feel them?" After she replies affirmatively, I hold her in it for a while for the embodiment to etch into the legs.

Now we explore some further aspects of the stage-like setting with the steamy blue light, which gives her head a floating feeling, which we anchor. Then we get to the black man with the white rimmed face.

"He's right in front of me. It's black but it looks like make up. But he is really black. He has black man's hair. There is white painted around the rim. His lips are painted, with red cheeks. He is smiling. I'm smiling too."

"Do you have the same smile?" I venture. When she nods I realize I can enter the man by way of this smile. "What is expressed in that smile?" I ask.

"It's beaming." I pause, to anchor the beaming smile in the lips.

"What do you feel when you first notice that there is something amiss?" I ask to move the action forward to the main moment.

"Confused. It's in my mouth and cheeks. Neck as well. I thought it was a game. That it was fun. I feel he might be lying to me. I'm confused."

“Which hand do you hold up to his belly?”

“It’s my right hand. He takes it on my wrist. He leads it to his stomach with a firm grip. Then I feel the blood flow and it makes me feel sick. It’s quite thick.”

“Feel the thickness of the blood on your hand and how it makes you feel sick. Where in your body is that most prominent?”

“It goes from my cheeks down – yuck – to my stomach.”

“Confusion in the cheeks that goes down as a sickness to the stomach,” I repeat, in order to wait for sense memory to settle in. After some time I continue. “And then can you feel the moment when you say: I have to tell because I can help you. What is that feeling like?”

“It’s hard. It’s hard for me to say it. ‘Cause he keeps smiling, you know. I sort of pull my arm away a bit.”

“Stay with the moment that you have your hand on his belly and you feel the blood streaming out. Is it warm blood?” It takes some necessary cruelty on my part to make her stay with these difficult moments.

“Yes. It feels quite clotty.”

“Sense into his wound. Can you sense if he’s in pain?” I have begun the transit into his perspective.

“Yes.”

“Can you begin to sense the pain he’s in, in *his* belly?” I help her move her attention through her hand touching his wound, into his wound and his experience.

“I still feel sick,” she replies, going pale. I’m moving too quickly, pressed forward by the 20-minute time constraint. I back up.

“Feel the hand on his belly and use the hand to feel into his body. Your hand is like a sensor. What is happening in his body?”

“Things are alive and warm.”

“Keep your focus in his body. Begin to feel what it is like for him to have been stabbed. Keep feeling it through the hand.”

“It’s shock.”

We’re in!

“How does the shock live in his body?”

“I can feel it. It’s in his stomach and his throat. It’s hard to swallow.” She is now fully identified with the man. I hold her in the stomach and throat experience. She etches it in with remarkable focus. After some time I continue. It is hard to go slow with the clock ticking and the Company watching.

“Can you feel the importance for him as he says we should keep on smiling? What is that urgency to keep on smiling? Feel it in him.”

“He doesn’t want to face it.” Her voice is sure with the certainty of direct observation. “His back is stiff.” We wait for the back to steep in full awareness of its stiff refusal to face the dying.

Time is up. I will compose what we have from the bottom up.

“Feel the legs that are the springy and playful legs of the child. Feel the stomach that has been stabbed. And the shock in the stomach. Feel the chest. The stiff back that doesn’t want to face it. The throat that is full of shock. The right hand that feels the clotted blood that is alive and warm. The cheeks that feel confusion going down to the stomach that feels sick. The head afloat. The beaming smile on the lips. Can you feel that?”

“I can feel all that.”

After she has stayed with this network of impulses for another minute, Beth and Patricia prepare for a third run through of the scene. The result is breathtaking. The scene is funny, though the humor is ambiguous. Underneath Juliet’s innocence and longing for her Romeo, there is shock, confusion, as well as an unacknowledged undertone of playing with fire and an awareness that her life is about to change forever. This is a Juliet ready to risk all, having made a momentous choice. She has a sense of foreboding suppressed by a brave smile of denial. We can feel how heartbreakingly young she is, just 14 years old, but with the courage of her passion she is ready to die for love. Juliet has fully incorporated her dialogue with Romeo from the previous scene: “If they do see thee, they will murder thee.” “Alack there lies more peril in thine eye, Than twenty of their swords.” Though a floating head of puppy love is present, this girl is stubborn, prepared for anything: breaking with her family, losing all her loved ones, and Nurse can feel it. Juliet has already changed; the little girl she once nursed is no more. Nurse’s sense of loss is palpable. She fears for her Juliet, is angry with her, tense, tight shouldered, dread in the belly, but she is also grounded and sure footed, with watchful eyes, ready to lead Juliet to her destiny. Damn the torpedoes! At the same time there is such love between them in the face of whatever may come, that we, the audience, laugh and cry at the same time. After the scene is over, nobody moves. None of us has ever seen this scene played with so many layers of reality present simultaneously. The performance feels entirely instinctive.

The embodied condition

Dreaming was the cause for the proclamation of the absolute split between body and mind in western philosophy.

It began with a thought experiment.

In *On Merleau-Ponty*,⁴¹ Daniel Thomas Primožic describes René Descartes' thought experiment in the latter's *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

Descartes seeks absolute indubitable certainty through a method of profound and exceptional doubt . . . Descartes recalled times when he believed he was upright in his chair, writing upon his table before his study fire. He asks us, however, to recall also those astounding moments when our obvious sensate experiences are found to be merely false assumptions on our part.

“How often has it happened to me that in the night I dreamt that I found myself in this particular place, that I was dressed and seated near the fire, whilst in reality I was lying undressed in bed! At this moment it does indeed seem to me that it is with eyes awake that I am looking at this paper; that this head which I move is not asleep, that it is deliberately and of set purpose that I extend my hand and perceive it; what happens in sleep does not appear so clear and distinct as does all this. But in thinking it over this I remind myself that on many occasions I have been deceived by similar illusions, and in dwelling carefully on this reflection I see so manifestly that there are no certain indications by which we may clearly distinguish wakefulness from sleep that I am lost in astonishment. And my astonishment is such that it is almost capable of persuading me that I now dream.” [Descartes assumes] an all powerful, cosmic *evil genius* whose business it was to always deceive. By thus discarding all evidence given by the senses and the body, Descartes concludes that, “I am, I exist is necessarily true each time that I pronounce it or that I mentally conceive it . . . But then, what am I? A thing which thinks” [*cogito*].

Whether Descartes is dreaming or awake, he is always in an environment. There appears to be a chair, a fireplace, a book, a Descartes sitting in the chair, whether he is dreaming or not. He is surrounded by embodied presence. Whether these bodies, including his own, are physical or not, they present themselves as physical. Embodied presence is self-evident, even though we do not know for sure what kind of embodiment we are talking about, quasi-physical or physical. Whichever the case may be, existence always presents itself as embodied.

In attempting to dispel the deceptive evil genius of embodied imagination, who creates all presence in Descartes' dreamed study with the open fireplace – and is able to confuse him as to the kind of reality with which he is dealing, presenting Descartes to himself as awake while he's not – Descartes is willing to sacrifice all information relayed to us by direct embodied perception, by our body as a source of information. In the *Primacy of Perception*,⁴² Merleau-Ponty concludes: “The perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence. This thesis does not destroy either rationality or the absolute. It only tries to bring them down to earth.”

Descartes, however, forswears embodied perception in order to avoid the mercurial cosmic trickster, who bodies forth the world of experience by way of imagination. In doing so, Descartes *identifies* with an intelligence-which-thinks, which he is then compelled to call *I*, since he is identified with it.

But as we have seen, besides physical humans, there are many quasi-physical intelligent subjectivities, some sitting together around a table in a restaurant, as it was for Moto-san. By uncritically assuming that subjectivity is singular as well as mental, Descartes sets us on a path leading inevitably to a split between body and mind, and the assumption that mind is more certain than body, and passes the mike to a disembodied mind and an objective body.

From the point of view of dreaming as well as of waking perception, whether in a quasi-physical or a physical world, there is a primacy of *the embodied condition*. This condition precedes all bifurcation between psyche and physical body, it 'is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and existence. The embodied condition spans a complex network of embodied images and physical body, without any possible allocation of directional causality.

We apparently share this embodied condition with a multitude of physical and quasi-physical others, in super-complex networks that defy all dualisms. In this intractable web even the clear distinction between the physical and the quasi-physical becomes less certain. Embodiment is the sense that a presence, self or alien, is substantive. We have observed that this substance, self or alien, displays its own intelligence.

Since Descartes we have considerably fewer problems accepting the existence of intelligent mind living in an objective body, than with entertaining

the possibility of quasi-physical intelligences. We are less surprised with self being smart than with quasi-physical presences having a mind of their own.

Kevin, an East Coast American man, is suffering increasingly debilitating pains in his left foot, which have defied medical diagnosis. The pain is steadily getting worse. The night before the dream, Kevin focused intensely for half a minute on his left foot before going to sleep, while simultaneously feeling the desire for a dreamed response to this intractable issue. In this way he seeded his dream life, and dreaming responded as follows:

I'm on a big city street. It's overcast; grays, no sign of green plants, etc. It's a two lane, two way street with sidewalks running from street to the buildings, which run continuously, no alleys. There are backpacks leaning up against the walls (of buildings on my side of the street), and a few are in the middle of the sidewalk. Mine is there also, and I am standing off from it a bit. I see this guy walk up. Forty-something, non-descript, and he starts looking through one of these backpacks that are open. I think he is the owner, then I realize he's a thief and I yell over at him, "Hey!!" He looks up, while at the same time his hands are grabbing a camera (from the pack), which he pockets away with sleight of hand. Then he continues down the street slowly, not running. I see a cop and debate about pointing out the thief to the cop. But I think, "the backpack was open, the owner left it unattended, hey, what do they expect?" I keep my eye on the thief, but do nothing.

Kevin puts the dream in the following context.

"In general I'm struggling with feeling too laid back in my life," he tells us, after some of us wonder about the ending of the dream. "I'm not easily springing into action. Like for instance, I don't have a car. Have to do everything on foot. That makes the pain in my foot worse. But I still don't buy a car. I'm definitely not focused enough. Need to be more focused to break out of that, make a capital C choice, have goals, a plan. And that, I really resist." He pauses. "I think it's a great idea, though, having a plan," he adds with dry humor.

"Do you know the street?" a member of the dream group asks.

"It is no street in particular that I know. But it wouldn't surprise me if it were in New York City. My associations to a city like New York are complex. I wouldn't want to live there. Not enough nature."

"What about theft, thievery, being stolen from?" someone wants to know.

"It feels to me like the universe is not a supporting place. I think I've bought into the scarcity mentality. I wish I believed the notion that if only you go out, and just be who you are, and try to serve, then it's all going to work out. I feel a disconnection from nature. I don't feel supported by it."

“Backpacks?”

“The pack I had wasn’t a pack with a frame. Brings up the idea of ‘simplified’, the idealist in me. Getting by on my wits, just with the stuff on my back. There may be a time when that skill might come in handy. I’ve been listening to a tape of *Walden*, by Thoreau, and that reinforces that streak in me, that society may be turned back.”

The apparent context of the dreaming seems to be a disconnection from (his) nature, and a desire to return.

I will start the report about the work on the dream in the second half. After bringing Kevin into a flashback of the dreaming by concentrating carefully on the ambient details of the scene, we focused on his responses to the thief and the conflict between actively doing something about the theft, experienced as a quickening jolt in the right leg snapping him out of a trance, and the passive left leg with the painful foot which tingles as if asleep.

In the second phase we transit into the perspective of thief by carefully concentrating on choreography.

“How does he move? How does he walk? You said he walks slowly.”

“He’s doing a leopard walk. He brings his foot forward, his balance is in the back, sensing the ground through his sole before he puts his weight down.”

Through the mimicry produced by careful imitating observation, Kevin’s body state is drawn into a similarity with that of the alien presence. Then suddenly, spontaneously, he is pulled into the alien orbit, becoming fully identified with the thief and his leopard walk while immersed in a paradoxical introspection from within an alien subjectivity.

“Can you sense that cat-like walk and the way the weight shifts? Can you describe the way in which that moves through the body?” I encourage a focus on the flowing movement of impulse, making our way towards the awareness within it.

“It feels very balanced. It is not throwing the leg forward and having to depend immediately on it for balance. It feels centered in the *hara* area. It feels more aware of peripheral vision.”

Kevin has found the origin of the impulse. It is located in the *hara*, the Japanese word for “belly,” describing the traditional core of psychophysical gravity located one hand’s breadth below the navel.

“What kind of awareness is in the catwalk?”

“An awareness that each step can be tested before you commit to it. And so it’s . . . it feels like an expansion of a cat-like sense, of the aura, the forcefield.”

Kevin is groping to formulate an embodiment aware of its own metaphorical state.

“Sense into that, and feel how each step can be tested. Just sense the balance; how his body is so balanced.” Sensing through-and-through while

in balance (“his balance is in the back, sensing the ground through his sole before he puts his weight down”) seems to be a central quality in the thief impulse.

“That left leg is very aware,” he remarks.

“Feel into the awareness in the left leg.”

Pause.

“Can you describe the awareness in the left leg?”

“A very heightened awareness: street smart, jungle smart. I can feel his toes talking to each other. I can feel the earth under the concrete.” While in Kevin’s perspective the left foot had been asleep, from the point of view of the thief the left leg displays a heightened active intelligence.

“As you feel that in his left leg, can you also feel the camera in his hand? What is it like for him, having just taken the camera?”

“It feels natural in his hand. I sense he can tell a lot about the camera, without even seeing it.”

“What does he *feel* about the camera in his hand?”

“He feels that it’s *his*; that it’s really a marvelous trinket. A sense of a toy that he’s at home with.”

“Can you sense into his toying nature?”

“Like a cat with a toy. Yes, it is a big part of his nature. I sense he can toy with things, and can be toyed with. But the sense of mastery and connection with this toying nature is part of that. Part of that nature can deal with the hassles and hazards of his profession.”

This is one sensitive street cat to whom the world is play, who’s good at thieving, at taking what he wants. A complex subjectivity is emerging.

“Keep sensing his motion.”

“He has kind of that swaying confidence: king of the jungle, at home in the jungle.”

“Does he have any sense that he’s being observed?” Is this thief’s apparent unselfconsciousness a product of ignorance, or is he fully aware? I wonder.

“Absolutely! He knows I’m watching.”

“Does he care?”

“He’s aware, but it’s not a problem. If I were to go after him or call the cops, he could handle it.”

This state of thieving is robust, able to play with adversity while remaining alert at all times. From the raw image of the camera thief a subtle essence-of-thief is being distilled.

“Sense into that. Can you feel his motion, his cat-like motion, his confidence that he can handle anything, the toying in the hand, the peripheral vision? Can you sense his essence?” I like this thief.

“I can feel a small drop of it.”

“Keep on sensing, his movement, his toying, his vision, his confidence, his feet that can sense below the concrete. Can you feel it?”

“Yeah, I can feel more of it.” The signal has been amplified through repetition.

“Keep on feeling it and at the same time feel the left foot. We won’t say anything for a minute, keep on feeling it.” I’m applying “essence of thief,” the tincture, to the poisoned foot.

We observe a minute of silence.

“Keep on feeling, the testing of each step, the one leg that doesn’t depend on the other . . . keep on feeling that. And at the same time feel the left foot.”

Pause.

“What happens?”

“The essence feeling is definitely spreading out in my body, down my left leg as well.”

“Let’s spend another two minutes letting the essence do its work, and then we’ll stop.”

I bring up the stopping indicating that the concentration can soon be relaxed, thereby enhancing current concentration.

One minute pause.

“Just for a minute longer, then we’ll stop,” indicating the sprint in the home stretch.

Another minute pause.

Now that the remedy has been applied the process of extraction has to be reviewed, in order to re-apply it over the next days and weeks, until it become a remedial conditioned reflex, triggered autonomously. From this review a daily practice is devised.

“Imprint this on your body memory:

This hand that toys,
The eyes that see peripherally,
The movement throughout the body,
The cat-like motion,
The feet that can feel through the pavement, can take steps, trusting
each step,
The balance,
The certainty of being able to handle anything.

Can you feel all that?”

He nods.

“That’s the medicine for the left foot. Apply it daily.”

Upon constructing the prescription, we stop.

After the work the pain in the foot is gone. Kevin reports after a month that the debilitating pain has not yet returned. After about two months he sends me the following email:

As for our work with Thief, call me wild eyed and idealistic, but it was the exact remedy, THE Cure, as homeopaths are sometimes humbled enough to say. I let myself feel it that day and those times since when I do feel that twinge in my foot, I am right back there again, remembering the fox walking, the wide angled vision (owl eyes), feeling the Earth under the tarmac, plugging my legs back into the socket, getting the current flowing less obstructively. For weeks afterwards, there was no pain, no drawing of attention to the pain and its reminders of mortality. I hear the call to move ahead with manifesting my dreams in life, and let someone who's waiting and willing to go for it take advantage of this mysterious time and place to take their shot: to meet life, to go forth, which I associate strongly with my left leg particularly. There was no pain. There has been no reoccurrence of the leg/foot's dis-ease anywhere near what it was before and during the dreamwork intensive. And I haven't been applying the medicine religiously either, by any means. I'll confess, in ways it's like a toothache – when that pain is there, ouch!! It's got my undivided attention. When I numb it out, etc., and it's gone, it's gone, and I am sucked back into the dream of no toothache land.

When Kevin entered into the heart of the dreaming response, the metaphor emerged (“the fox walking, the wide angled vision (owl eyes), feeling the Earth under the tarmac”), leading to a physical restructuring, (“plugging my legs back into the socket, getting the current flowing less obstructively”), which, when fully inhabited unto the point of conditioned reflex, leads to revitalized living (“to move ahead with manifesting my dreams in life”), a sense of mystery (“this mysterious time and place”), and awe, (“THE Cure, as homeopaths are sometimes humbled enough to say”). Such is the dreaming response to Kevin's pain in the foot, his overly passive living, and the disconnection from his nature. The previously senseless pain has become the irritant triggering a conditioned reflex (“when that pain is there, ouch!! It's got my undivided attention”): a fox walk and owl vision. The alert animals of night have entered Kevin's day and his legs have been plugged back into their sockets. Remember Aelius Aristides' remark some millennia ago, that once the god of healing came in a dream and “prescribed that the very bones and nerves of a sufferer's body must be pulled out and then put back” leading to “a great and strange correction.”

It is striking that the herald of the remedy is a thief. Thieves are disciples of Mercury, *genius of deception*, guide of souls, duplicitous god of thieves, patron of alchemy, whose seed, mercury or quicksilver, was the alive silver of the alchemists: in its raw state it was poison, while when refined it was remedy. His essence is motion, which is the cure for Kevin's immobilized state, poisoning his foot. God of flux, his sperm is portrayed in alchemy as the quickening flow of molten metal, the primal matter of all minerals.

Mercury may painfully lead us to a meltdown while we are stuck, quickening encrusted sick habit into new possibilities.

This mercurial figure reminds us of the character Descartes fears most: an all-powerful, cosmic evil genius whose business it is to always deceive. Descartes' whole system was built up as a defense against this character, a system attempting to reach a solid ground of certainty, away from the live molten flow created by the deceptive deluder.

Kevin is habitually identified with the one-of-the-ailing-foot in a life asleep. That's who he thinks himself to be. It keeps him in a relative state of innocence, away from the uncertain vicissitudes of life and its cunning ways. But in his creative imagination there is another embodied intelligence, very different from the one with whom Kevin is habitually identified. The thief is a member of the mercurial family feared by someone identified with the lens of rational man in a quest for certainty and stability. Descartes tries to dispel the great deceiver by becoming the embodiment of rational doubt. In the process he had to posit that the only place where body and intelligence coincided was in the pituitary gland, and God only knows how extended matter communicated with disembodied mind in the first place. It seems a high price to pay to win a momentary prize of certainty.

We have taken a different route. Viewing through the stolen camera of creative imagination, we have moved *towards* Evil Genius, the deceptive thief of all certainty, and learned to explore his subjectivity. Taking the realm of dreaming as our paradigm, we have seen that images are embodiments of their own intelligence, and that the physical objective body may become the book into which they inscribe their stories. We have seen manifold worlds of many intelligences existing right alongside the dream of reason with its angels and monsters, as Goya reminds us in his nightmare painting entitled *El Sueño de la Razon Produce Monstruos*. We have explored a scintillating world of intelligences we didn't know existed until we paused long enough to become infused by them. We learned to hurry slowly, unlike the restless mind of a 23-year-old mathematician and active military man who formulated, while on campaign, the Cartesian mindset after receiving, on 19 November 1619, three dreams on which he based his first new philosophical ideas and his analytical geometry, a date he considered a landmark moment in his life. Unlike the man who later built a system to protect himself from the delusions caused by the dreaming imagination which had revealed his foundations to him.

What I personally found most startling in the process of following Corbin's tradition of substantive images with their own intelligence – as far as I understood it and it made sense to me – was the experience that what I had understood to be *my* intelligence now appears as a polyphonic presence of self and aliens. The notion of such a mutual intelligence gives me inklings of an Aboriginal landscape suffused with dreaming. It made me aware of

being a proxy for the art we make, the theater we produce, and the research we do. It gave rise to a universe that talks back . . . And as the silent object world in which only humans have voices receded, I began to feel out of control, hovering between rational order and noisy chaos, where they say creative imagination lives.

Sometimes I long back for certainty.

I understand Descartes.

Appendix: a practical guide to technique

The description of the following work with embodied imagination, based on a complete transcript of a two-hour audio-taped group session, methodically demonstrates the mixing of embodied states into a substantive composite held in the body.

This embodied imagination session is accompanied by an explanation of each successive technical procedure facilitating the extraction of subtle medicine from the raw image material.

This material was first presented in honor of Professor Hayao Kawai at the 25th annual conference of the Japanese Association for Clinical Psychology, Osaka 2006.

Around us hangs the early chill of autumn in the still-green woods of New England in the American North-East. We walk a bit hurried, not yet dressed correctly for the season of change. Ariel, a psychotherapist in her forties, had this dream the night after doing an incubation exercise, about a love relationship she is currently in. She had focused on a recent moment in the relationship, which had been symptomatic for the chronic problems she feels in it, stayed with the body feelings this evoked in her, and then had gone to sleep.

Ariel had felt – by carefully imagining herself into a recent event, which had been paradigmatic for the pain in her relationship – how deeply her body was affected by the problematic situation. In this relationship-afflicted body she fell asleep. The dreaming responded as follows:

I'm in a classroom, sitting at a student desk. There are three desks in front of me. I have in my hands some student papers. I look down and on top of the papers there is one which I have given a B to, and I realize that I had not looked very carefully at the paper, when I had given it the B. So I cross the B out and give it a D+. But I feel some trepidation, because I will give it back to the student and I believe he'll be angry. However, I get up and go to the front of the room, where he is sitting, and hand him the paper. And he says to me – he is not enraged, he

crouches a little down into himself – “I could do the B paper, I’m capable of it, so why not just give me the B?”

Listening

In the embodied imagination protocol we begin by instructing the presenter to please tell the dream or daytime memory in the present tense, and as much from inside the remembered image environment as possible. After this instruction we pause for about 30 seconds to observe our own moods and body states. We do this in order to know how we are tuned before the images enter our system. It is my understanding that a listener begins to reverberate with images as they are being told (even if you do not understand the language as I found out while working in China), which creates changes in moods and subjective body states in the listener. In order to notice these changes, we first have to check into who we are *before* we hear the image material.

I notice that I’m still a bit cold from coming in underdressed for the early autumn New England weather. I feel a tension in my belly in anticipation of the work. I usually feel that I will make a mess of it and that nothing will emerge: a mood of performance anxiety. My chest feels clear and my legs are relatively relaxed. I know from experience that as the dream is told I will go into a brief panic, caused by the incomprehensible nature of dreaming. This panic will destabilize my ego-comfort and open me up to the unknown. It is quite an unpleasant experience, which hasn’t changed much in my 35 years of working with dreams, but for the fact that I’ve come to accept it as a way in which controlling consciousness bites the dust. This out-of-control feeling which I call *dreamworker’s panic*, has much in common with the dread of the blank page experienced by a creative writer, or with the painter before a blank canvas. It may be similar in all improvisational arts. It is a meeting with the borderland between control and chaos, a moment of creative complexity.

After the first telling of the dream, sitting around in a circle of ten people, everyone focused in deep concentration on the images we have just heard, I notice that I am feeling a contraction in my chest at Ariel’s fear of the student’s anger. It creates a straitjacket sense of constricted breathing within me. Since my chest had been clear during the check-in, I take notice. I don’t know if this change in my subjective body state is just a further symptom of my performance anxiety and my usual dreamworker’s panic, or if it is also related to Ariel’s dream world which has just entered my inner life. Whatever the case may be, I take this change in proprioception to be *potentially* related to Ariel’s dreaming.

Since I have been concentrating with one ear on the dream as Ariel tells it – my other ear focused inward, listening to my own inner changes – I have

lost some of the dream narrative. Also, upon entering a dreaming environment, dream-amnesia sets in, which makes dreams harder to remember than daytime stories. Dreams have a tendency to evaporate quickly, as everyone knows from those dreams you're sure you'll remember forever, which will have vanished within a minute. While carefully listening to a dream, you can feel consciousness sinking towards oblivion, if you let yourself. As a matter of protocol, we listen to the dream twice.

Context

After the second telling, we ask Ariel context questions. A context question places the dream within the associative web of her waking life. Questions in this phase are not about elements we will focus on while moving around in the dreaming environment, such as "What does the classroom look like?" These questions we reserve for the actual work on the embodied imagery, since they help the dreamer get deeper into the dream atmosphere. In the context phase we ask for connections with day-to-day living. "Is there anything that springs to your mind around any component of the dream?" "Is there anything going on in your life at this moment that might be related to this dream?" Since this dream has been incubated, we automatically take the incubation problem to do with her current relationship as one of the contexts for this dream.

"I no longer teach, but I have taught literature at a university for 20 years. The thing I disliked most about it was grading papers. Not for the reason in the dream. I hated reading them. The student sitting at the front desk is actually a patient of mine, Peter. He is a fairly recent patient of mine, extremely affable, and I'm not aware of anything that comes up in the dream, like any rage he might have towards me or I to him. He is very extroverted, talks a lot, is positive."

Structure analysis, strategy and pacing

Frequently, dreams are organized around *hinges*, places where the organization pivots. This dream hinges around the moment when Ariel decides to change the grade. The action until then is one thing, the action after it moves in a different direction. When we notice a hinge in the dream structure, we want to explore it. It is a moment when a spontaneous shift takes place, a particularly fertile place for investigation, since in such a turning point diverging vectors exist in an as-yet-merged state. A hinge contains an impulse of change in the material.

Another structural element is a moment in which the development differs substantially from ego-expectation. These moments warrant exploration as well, since they may indicate strong imaginal activity. Ego-expectation points to routine and habitual consciousness. A break in this may indicate

the presence of the unusual, which may lead to a vein of fresh material. Peter, the student, reacts differently from the way Ariel expects.

A change in physical position is also frequently a useful place to look around. When Ariel gets up from her desk there may be a state change.

In general it is advisable to start the work on an embodied image in a relatively safe place (if such a location exists). In this case, Ariel sitting at a desk, before the grade change, qualifies.

Now that the structure of the dream has become a bit clearer, we strategize around the way in which to move through the dreaming environment. There are two concerns while strategizing: the route and the available time. The route requires a determination of where to start and which moments in the dreaming to frequent. It is not necessary to follow the narrative route, especially if this were to lead instantly to the place of the highest fallout. We want to start with a less radioactive place, a safe place, so that both dreamer and dreamworker can get used to the embodied environment without being immediately overwhelmed by it. In this case we *will* follow the narrative, since nothing prevents us from doing so. Were the dream to open with a relatively unsafe moment, we'd go to a safe place first in order to avoid instant turbulence. An initial concentration on a safe place also establishes a sense of safety between dreamer and dreamworker.

After determining the route, we take a stab at a relative allotment of available time. I suggest we will spend substantial time around the hinge, changing the grade, less time around the change in physical position, getting up from the desk, and substantial time with the confrontation with Peter, some of which we will spend from Ariel's perspective, and some in which we will try and transit into Peter's viewpoint. This time allotment I call *pacing* the work. In all embodiment work it is of the essence to move slowly, since that is the only way we can feel each element in the body. The moment we speed up, we enter into purely mental processes, which are considerably faster than embodied imagination. Embodiment requires that one sinks into each feeling and follows it down meticulously to the accompanying physical sensation. Interpretation moves very fast, and usually remains a pastime of the mind. In embodiment work moving fast is not an option, even if the time is very short. The only control we have over the available time – imagine the next patient in the waiting room – is to work less material. It's like cooking: the bigger the turkey, the longer it takes to bake. Now that we have caught a glimpse of what we are going to do, in the full understanding that we may turn on a dime, letting the winds of spontaneity guide us as much as our plan, we have a sense of how to place the work within the available time: a little time in the beginning, a lot of time around the hinge, some time in the change of body posture, a lot of time in the confrontation from both perspectives. The last section of the work, which will need a relatively short period of time, is the networking of the composite: simultaneously feeling all the embodied impulses located in

different places in the body. Without such a plan, we might pace the work too leisurely, and run out of time before the essential elements are worked. Pacing allows the work to fit the available time.

In the waking hypnagogic state, the state of consciousness in which the work on embodied imagination takes place the slower you move, the more embodied the work becomes.

The waking hypnagogic state

Embodied images such as dreams and flashbacks are ambient. We find ourselves surrounded by them. In order to work with an embodied image, therefore, it is necessary to once again be surrounded by the image, enveloped by it in full absorption. As long as this is not the case, we are not participating in it. Working the embodied image requires a participation in its state.

In embodiment work we use the part of the hypnagogic state which is just above the waterline of sleep. Just before falling asleep, the image world is already embodied and ambient, while waking consciousness is still present enough to carry out tasks. For our work we artificially spread this naturally occurring state, which usually lasts only the few conscious moments of dozing off, over prolonged periods of time. With adequate concentration, a waking embodied world may surround us for hours at a time. The consciousness in this state is different from dreaming itself. While dreaming (as well as while we are awake), we are in a single consciousness: we are convinced we are awake. In the waking hypnagogic state we are in a surrounding image-environment, while knowing at the same time that our physical body is in a physical world outside this image-environment. Therefore, usually, image-environments in the waking hypnagogic state feel a bit less real than do common dreams. They also feel less real than lucid dreams, a dream during which you know that you are dreaming. During lucid dreaming a dual consciousness exists in the same way as it is present in the waking hypnagogic state we have been exploring. But the waking hypnagogic state has the advantage of being much more accessible than the lucid dream state. Becoming lucid at will requires a great deal of skill and training (some Tibetan monks appear to be particularly good at it). While a usual dreamer can readily get into the waking hypnagogic state, becoming lucid while dreaming is, at least, unreliable.

When in the cave, Una ponders the moment of waking, and describes the transition from the world of dreaming to the world of wakefulness. She reports a movement from a slow world where time is different from that in the thin and speedy waking world. The waking world is more sharp and crisp, she says, the world of dreaming more round and slow, as if the embodied inhabitants move through water, through a thick medium of large elements: an apt description of the hypnagogic state. The slow

hypnagogic world frequently causes a time warp: in what feels like a single minute, ten minutes by the clock may have elapsed, or vice versa.

Embodiment and sense of place

First we focus on the setting of the dream in order to have Ariel imagine back into the dreaming environment. We help her get a sense of place. As she settles into the dreaming environment, she begins to participate in the embodiment, and the waking hypnagogic state establishes itself automatically. We do this by asking her for details of the environment, not expecting her to describe it in a photographic manner, but in the way of Chinese and Japanese painting, where a single brush stroke can create a mountain. A broad description of the environment places her within it.

“My attention was not very much on the room. So it seems like the average college-type classroom. Neither large nor small.”

A group member asks what the lighting is like.

“Fluorescent, yet yellowish. It has a more yellowish glare than fluorescent light usually has.”

“How far away are you from the front desk?”

“Actually, fairly close. It is as if I’m sitting in a seat too, and the desks are fairly close. The desktop is touching the seat before it. So I’m three seats back, not very far away.”

“Can you see any feature in the room?”

“Not very much. I feel as if there is a door off to the right. One of the seats between me and Peter is occupied by a student, and I have another sense that there is only Peter in that row, and me. It seems as if there is sort of a classroom around me but no one is speaking and it is just us. A kind of ‘both-and’ feeling that I have.”

“Are there any smells in the room?”

“The room smells stale . . .”

Around us an embodied room begins to absorb us. We begin to inhabit it through focused attention. Now that we have stumbled upon a smell, usually a very good entry into the affective realm, we switch to Ariel’s emotional responses.

Affect

We know from dream laboratory research that affect may be the primary organizing principle of dreaming. Allan Hobson (see Note 13), expressing current academic consensus, maintains that “dream emotion may be a primary shaper of dream plots rather than playing a secondary role.” Therefore a focus on affect needs to be established as soon as it becomes available.

“Does that give you a feeling?”

“I feel trapped.”

“Stay with that for a moment.” We allow a brief pause, to let the feelings sink in. “Can you say more about feeling trapped?”

“Tired. A sense of hopelessness. It feels inescapable.”

A fully embodied state is materializing. We can all sense it. After investigating the first two strands of this state, the image-environment (“stale room”) and the emotional response (hopelessness) we shift our attention to the third element of a dream state, the bodily sensations.

The lived body

Embodiment is the way in which image becomes flesh. We affectively *live* our bodies. It is the primary affective knowledge we have of our bodies, more direct than any knowledge we have of our body as an object. By following the way in which affects live as embodiments, we uncover the lived body as a physical expression of emotional states. A state of embodiment consists of *affect*, *image* and *physical sensation*.

“Where in your body do you feel that most?”

“I can feel it in my lungs. I can breathe, but there is something pressing down on me.”

At this point I braid the three strands – affect, image, body – together.

“Feel that in your lungs, and as you feel that in your lungs, smell that stale smell. Feel that sense of being trapped, that pressure. Keep focused on your lungs, really *feel* it in your lungs.”

After my emphatic directive I pause briefly to give her a chance to take it on board. Such emphasis raises the pressure. “And can you say something about the desk you see?” Now sensation, affect and image are mixed and concentrated.

Pressure and reduction

We all experience the increase in pressure, as if a mixture in a container is taking on a more pressurized state, or like a diver going deeper, feeling the atmospheres build. We’re cooking. Consciously building pressure in the work, by constantly weaving affect, image and body, without letting anything escape in physical movement or emotional expression, condenses the atmosphere, making it more palpable, thus allowing for amplified awareness, and increased concentration. Ariel is sitting entirely still with barely any feeling showing, while at the same time being in an increasingly emotional embodied state. Experience feels more solid, less vague and ephemeral. The alchemist calls it “thickening,” the way a sauce thickens through cooking, which the cook calls a reduction. When in an alchemical context we speak about reduction, we’re talking kitchen.

“It’s small. There is not much room to move. I’m holding the papers in my hands because there is not enough room on the desk to have them there. And I’m turned a little bit to the right, where the opening is. The desk space is small.”

Ariel is now situated in an embodied metaphor, composed of elements pertaining to small, cramped, trapped, and stale.

“And the chair is a little bit close to the floor. So my knees are bent.”

I feel taken over by a very strong embodied impression, so I decide to check it with her.

“I have the sense that it is *very* small, like a childhood desk. Am I correct?”

“It feels like an adult desk that just isn’t big enough for me. When you say that, a thought comes to me: ‘Why don’t they make these damn things big enough for people?!’ I feel frustrated, angry that some poor design has made me feel awkward. I feel frustrated and awkward.”

A participant wants to know if there is a place in her body where she can feel that awkwardness right now.

“Yes, it’s in my shoulders. It feels that if movement were to come up from my shoulders the whole desk would be upset. I feel awkward as though I might upset the whole desk. That it might topple when I got up. That it might not be stable.” At this point Ariel is enveloped in an embodied metaphor. A fear of toppling an unstable cramped structure has mixed with angry frustration. This state has unfolded from feeling small, trapped and stale. The incubation around the painful relationship with her lover reflects in a metaphor.

“What do you feel?”

“Encumbered, and as though I couldn’t move without making a big commotion.”

Here we pause, because the image has fully blossomed into a body of rich metaphor.

Distillation, trigger points, sense memory, and composite

At this point we gather in all the embodied elements by way of recapitulation, in order to distill them into a concentrated essence which we help locate in a single trigger point in the physical body. In this way, by touching upon this physical trigger, the entire embodied metaphor will be instantly present as an affective state. In this manner, the waking body can become a memory theatre for a variety of locations triggering discrete embodied states. These trigger points are to become the nodal points in an axis of simultaneous embodiments. This technique is comparable to *sense memory* in acting methods. The actor remembers embodied states by way of focusing upon sense impulses in the body (e.g. the memory of ice-cold temperatures may inhere in the freezing ears and the numb nose. By triggering these

physical locations, the experience of actually feeling ice-cold enfolds the actor's body under the hot floodlights, making his shivering believable).

Since it is our objective to create a composite of a variety of states embodied by the dream, the dreamer has to be able to remember a state after having experienced it. Remembering affects as purely emotional states precludes experiencing them simultaneously or in close proximity. Emotions are like music, they play out over time. Thus, for example, when one experiences sadness, it is often not possible to simultaneously also feel rage and joy. However, by concentrating a state into an impulse which, when triggered, matures instantly into its full embodiment, and etching the impulse as a trigger point in the body, it is possible to feel them simultaneously. It is possible to feel your legs and your shoulders at more or less the same time. In this way the waking body becomes a kind of topographical map of embodied states, which will release their affective implications when touched upon, actualizing a composition of states. The alchemist describes the composite as the medicine, the goal of the work. The body as a memory device becomes a kind of three-dimensional hard drive. The waking memory body I'm talking about is not the body in the dream, not the Ariel at the small desk. It is Ariel's body as she sits in the room while working her embodied imagination. We employ dual consciousness, the simultaneous awareness of presence in the dreaming environment and in the workshop where the work is physically taking place. We use our waking sense of living in a single body to create a single receptacle for a host of strongly diverging sense-memory impulses. In this way the waking body in the physical room becomes a topography of impulsive trigger points and the affects they embody.

“Can you sense the smallness of the desk in your shoulders?”

In deep concentration Ariel mumbles an affirmation.

“And what exactly is happening in your shoulders?”

“They feel heavy. They don't want to move for fear of upsetting.”

Topographical body map

Because the sense memory topography can reach a high level of complexity, we have devised a simple notation system. On a line drawing of the contours of a body we mark the locations and write next to them four pieces of information (here presented with random examples): the name of the location (e.g. sternum, shoulder, heart); the emotion (e.g. anger, sadness, love); the sensation (e.g. stabbing feeling, ache, bloated feeling); and the perspective (e.g. Berthe, bull, tree). Frequently the emotion and the physical sensation are enfolded in a single experience.

In the end, when doing the final composition (see below) we can use the body map as a memory support in order not to forget any of the embodied states we need to trigger in order to add them to the mix.

The disadvantage of making an annotated body map is that we have to change consciousness in order to write, and may lose momentary contact with the dreamer. The more states a dreamworker can remember by heart, the better.

Container

At this point a participant asks Ariel a question based on a thought.

“Do you feel responsible for keeping the desk exactly in that spot and not moving?”

Ariel sounds confused as she responds, “It doesn’t feel that it is a question of responsibility. It feels that it is my being, the way that I am, and the way that the desk is that don’t . . . I’m getting lost.”

In her voice we can hear that she has lost the hypnagogic state as well as the containment by the current embodiment of the encumbering desk, since the question moved her to thinking *about* responsibility, away from the direct sensate cramped ambience. We can feel the pressure dropping. The container has sprung a leak. Embodiment evaporates into mentation. Embodied awareness differs from mental awareness, the former is slow, the latter fast. Embodiment is self-contained and grows like an organism in soil, while mind zooms off to the sky. The emblem of the alchemists with their motto “Hurry slowly!” was a tortoise, contained by its shell. The urgency in the work drives us to hurry. We have to capture the urgency in the hurry and keep it cooking by slowing it down. This takes effort.

I quickly jump in, strongly emphasizing my words, in order to plug the leak, the first three words just being short exclamations to carry the emphasis. I let my sentence trail off, mimicking the last moment she was still in the hypnagogic state.

“*Yeah, yeah, yeah. Stay* with the sense that your being and the desk’s being don’t . . .”

Ariel instantly drops back into the hypnagogic state. “It’s an impossible match. And I must remain where I am, in order not to startle . . .”

“What is this sense of the impossible match between you and the desk?”

“The desk was made for someone much smaller than me. The only way not to disturb the desk is by not moving.”

“Feel that sense of not moving, that sense of not disturbing, the desk that is too small, really feel that in your shoulders.”

“I can really feel it.”

Depth fluctuations and embodied metaphor

The trigger point for the embodied state, composed of the feelings and sensations of being *trapped in a fear of toppling a stale, unstable, cramped structure*, has been firmly etched in the shoulders. At this point, figure of speech and the configured body are one and the same.

Now we may move on to another point in the dream.

After a pause I ask, "Do you first notice that you have given too high a grade, or do you first get up from the desk?"

"I first notice I've given too high a grade."

A participant asks, "Do you hold yourself responsible for not having looked carefully at the papers?"

Whereas previously the question about responsibility had propelled Ariel out of the hypnagogic state, this time the question leads her into it, since it was asked at a moment when we are at the beginning of a descent, instead of the previous time when we had been deeply engrossed in a hypnagogic condition. After finding a trigger point and etching an embodied metaphor firmly into the waking body, we have to build up the hypnagogic state again. The dreamer has to briefly come up for air after the powerful concentration required to etch an embodied state in a physical trigger point in order for it to become a firmly located impulsive sense memory.

"Yes, I feel embarrassed. If I had looked more closely the first time, I would not have had the added embarrassment of having a higher grade crossed out and a lower grade written over it."

At the beginning of a new movement, when a new atmosphere needs establishing, the more inexperienced members of a group are usually quite active. The questions are simple and straightforward. I, as the group leader, hold back. So, the next part of the prompting is up to the group members.

"Do you remember the moment when you first looked over the papers?"

"No, I don't remember that. I have the recollection of having glanced over the paper and giving it the B. I feel I've leafed through."

"Do you know what made you give the B?"

"I don't know. In the dream I just know that it really deserves a D+."

"What is your first emotion when you notice that?"

We follow the same weaving pattern as before: image-ambience (seeing grades written on papers), affect, physical sensation.

"Resignation. I must tell him. I must tell the screw up about the paper. And I just think it difficult. And I feel, again, embarrassed that the wrong one was there at the beginning, the wrong grade."

"Where in your body do you feel that embarrassment?"

"I feel that in my sternum. I feel it right here," she responds, as she holds her hand over her sternum. We have come upon a second trigger spot in which the impulse giving rise to the resigned embarrassed state must now be anchored.

"Focus right on that spot."

Ariel responds with an affirmative mumble.

Now, again I help her etch the impulse into the trigger spot, the sternum, through the use of focused emphasis. "Feel into your sternum, and feel that embarrassment in your sternum."

Pause.

“Feel the embarrassment in that spot.”

Lengthening the time during which the embarrassment can work, I pause again. (Some of us make a notation on the body map: sternum, embarrassment, Ariel.) Then I speak louder, in order to move from this etched state of embarrassment into another one.

“And then you realize that you *have* to tell the truth. Can you say a little bit more why it is so important to tell the truth. Why don’t you just leave it be?”

“Because I can’t go on avoiding things because I am embarrassed.”

“Is that an actual theme in your life?”

Ariel laughs. “Not actually. But the feeling of resignation. It is lower. It’s in my gut.”

What had previously been a mixed state of embarrassment and resignation has crystallized into two separate conditions. Now we have to follow the traces of resignation into the gut; we give her some time to feel them. We pause until it seems that they have fully sunk in. Then we continue.

“What do you want to do?”

“What I want to do, is to do this task I must face.”

“Are you trying to avoid telling the truth?”

“I’m trying to protect myself. I notice what I have done, and know what I must do. I remember the pages fluttering before me, and not having looked carefully enough. Then I put the D+ on. And it is while I’m writing the D+ that I have these feelings of resignation and embarrassment.”

“Is your handwriting firm?”

“Yes, it is very firm it is very deliberate.”

“What kind of writing tool do you use?”

“It’s a pencil and I press down very hard. I make a very dark impression when I give the D+. I cross out the B really hard.”

There appears to be an affect embodied in her writing hand, so we have to focus on it.

“Can you feel the pencil in your hand?” I ask.

“It feels good to have the pencil in my hand. I feel deliberate, competent when I write the D+. I have a feeling of certainty in my hand. It is very different from the feelings I have in my body, the rest of my body.”

“Can you feel the pressure in your hand? Focus on the certainty and the pressure in the hand as you write the D+.”

“My hand feels sure, it feels sure, it feels useful.”

Contrast

The writing hand is the next trigger point in which to etch the sure feeling of certainty impulse, which contrasts with her other feelings. Contrasting feelings are of particular importance because – besides adding additional pressure for the cooking – in contrast, elements stand out and become

visible, like in a photograph, creating resolution. We have to carefully imprint the contrasting state of certainty in the writing hand. I do so, again, through the use of emphasis.

“Can you *feel* it?”

Ariel nods slowly, as if she is carefully considering the matter. Again, we pause until her focus on her hand as a place of impulsive certainty, seems completely stable. Then we continue to the next moment, following the narrative.

“How do you get out of your chair?”

“In one movement. I am not encumbered by anything. A flowing movement up. I come up and walk behind my seat from the left side. I walk over to him. He is not surprised.”

“How are you standing?”

(Upon listening to the tape I realize we have skipped the change in physical position we had intended to investigate, thereby missing out on adding the flowing unencumbered movement to the mix. Oh well . . .)

“I’m looking down at him. I am standing, he’s sitting. I’m looking down. I do come down a little bit so I can come closer to his face. He’s looking down at his desk. He is hunched over, not quite fitting in the desk.”

Identifying

In this scene there are two subjectivities going on simultaneously, Ariel’s and Peter’s. First we will approach from Ariel’s perspective, because it is usually easier for a dreamer to identify with the subjectivity of the habitual self than with that of another personage in a dream.

Identification with a particular singular sense of self is a learned habit, a conditioned reflex, creating our personal sense of subjectivity. This singular identification is based on culture, gender, race, ethnicity, class, family background, era, prevailing body images, personal experiences, etc. This, we learn from early on, is who we are. It is our habitual identification. We become so closely identified with it that we no longer know that the *activity of identifying*, and the habits of consciousness with which it is mixed, are two different elements. We call this mixture “I,” ego. Identifying is an unconscious psychological activity, an identification is its present embodiment. The activity of identification is outside the purview of our conscious will. It happens *to* us. Our identification is usually, but not necessarily, with our habitual body. The mixture of the unconscious identifying activity and the presence with which it identifies gives rise to the experience of subjectivity. *Subjectivity is the proprioceptive experience of identification.* Since we are usually identified with our body and a cluster of consciousness habits which we call “I,” we believe that subjectivity belongs to self. We call the subjectivity of self “subject.” We go as far as to imply that what is not the subjectivity of self must therefore be object. But if we define subjectivity

as the proprioceptive experience of identification, it is possible to participate in “non-I” subjectivity through identification with an alien personage. Remember how easy it was when you were little to suddenly become a cowboy or a princess? In early childhood, the action of identifying was still part of play, not yet consolidated in a firm identity. Likewise, during the hypnagogic state it is relatively easy to dissolve the identifying activity from habitual identifications, thereby decentering the location of awareness away from habitual consciousness. The moment between one identification and another I call a *transit*. This is a moment when the identifying activity is momentarily free-floating, unpossessed by any particular embodiment. The alchemist calls this the interregnum, the old king is dead and the new king is not yet crowned, the old identification has dissolved, the new one has not yet taken possession. The identifying activity, like the motion of a formless ghost, flows freely in mid-air: a moment both disorienting and playful. Maybe it is an instance of Moto-san’s “nothing.”

After first following the ego-centered lines of habit, we will help Ariel shift identification and transit awareness into the subjectivity of the student at the desk, in the same way Berthe became identified with the bull, experiencing its subjectivity while maintaining its otherness.

“What is your posture like as you are standing there, looking down at him?”

“It is straight and comfortable, and when I come down a little further, it is also comfortable. I feel rather free. When I lean into him, like I’m doing now (she demonstrates her posture to the group while remaining sitting with her eyes closed), but I don’t really lean, that’s not true. I lower by the knee and bend closer. Yeah. My posture is erect and feels unencumbered.”

“What are you aware of at this moment?”

“Only of this paper I have in my hand. And I put it before him. I’m not sure if it is touching his desk, but it is close.”

“Can you feel the fear?”

“It has quieted down to a low murmur in my stomach. It is there, but I don’t feel conflicted by it. And, oh yeah, my feeling in my upper chest, that’s where I feel getting ready for the defense.”

Ariel has indicated two places in her body where she is feeling things: the low murmur of fear in her stomach, and the defensive preparation in her chest. (Again we pay no attention to her unencumbered erect stance. In hindsight my lack of interest in this state puzzles me. Was I colluding with Ariel’s unconscious dismissal of her self-confidence, or was my own erect stance lacking – like Moto-san’s pointer which might not extend – or both, or none of the above?) We will start with the fear, since she had already alluded to this in the original telling of the dream (“but I feel some trepidation, because I will give it back to the student and I believe he’ll be angry”).

“What is it like in your stomach?”

“The fear is like a quiet muttering. I feel restlessness there.”

“Can you feel the fear element in the restlessness?”

“Yes, now I can.”

Q'i

Again we anchor the trigger point through emphasis, etching it into the body. I feel my emphasis building from the place in my body from where in martial arts the *Q'i-ai* arises, the battle cry, which generates the *Q'i* energy (*Ch'i* in Chinese), one hand-breadth below the navel, called *hara*, belly, in Japanese and *dan-tien*, the elixir field, in Chinese. From my work in Japan and China I am well aware of the moving power of concentrated *Q'i*, the psychophysical force that can have strong effects which can be felt at some distance away from the “sender,” beyond an actual physical touch. *Q'i* is understood to be the movement of force informing all organs of the body by way of river-like pathways in the lived body. Its relation to the physical body, though unmistakably present (as demonstrated by the objective success of acupuncture and other *Q'i*-based medicine), remains mysterious. *Q'i* appears to be the coincidence of force, embodiment, and intelligence. It can be harnessed through concentration. In embodiment work it is used to etch embodied states in a network of physical trigger points, creating, what a Japanese dreamer called “a loosely woven basket,” like the river system of *Q'i*.

“Try and feel the sensations there,” I insist, focusing on the stomach.

“It is sort of a cramping feeling now. The fear is a cramping.”

“Can you *feel* into the cramping? Can you *feel* the fear?” I ask her, gathering *Q'i*.

“There is an emptiness and a hollowness.”

Now we have entered into the core of the fear, and I reduce the intensity of emphasis.

“What is it like, the emptiness and hollowness that accompany the fear in your stomach?”

“It’s a cold bleak place, where no one ever comes. As if I had never been born . . . It is very hard to bear. I know this place but I don’t want to stay here.”

Steeping

Ariel needs to be steeped for a while in this hard-to-bear feeling, so the trigger becomes easily accessible. For the etching to stick in the trigger point, needed for the topographical body-memory, the dreamer needs to be submerged for a while in the state so it may deploy its full concentration,

like tea in water. Doing this often requires a certain amount of compassionate cruelty, like laser surgery. “Do you mind if I keep you there for a moment?”

“No, go ahead.”

“As you are there, how is it affecting you to be in this place?”

“I feel . . . It makes me want to hide. I want to curl up in a fetal position. Very cold. I’m getting very cold.”

“Focus on the cold. Feel how cold it is.”

Pause.

“Focus on the cold; what is it like in the cold?”

Pause.

“It’s this feeling, it is just like, it’s hard to express it, because there are no words in it.”

Having come to a non-verbal state of consciousness, we have to focus awareness even more, since memory will rely only on physical sensation, with no words to help the recall. Again I increase emphasis.

“Right. Just stay with that feeling, that feeling of empty space. *Really* feel what that is like.” Pause. “Can you feel it?”

Ariel nods slowly, her closed eyes seemingly looking intensely at some interior embodied event.

“It’s this giddiness, almost. It’s as if the full strength could not be taken for itself, as if it comes from up here [she points to her chest], not from my stomach.”

She has moved up and out of the fear, since she can’t bear the direct impact, into what she had described as the defensive state in the chest.

“It’s a witnessing. The word ‘girlish’ comes up.”

I decide to make the defensive move, which is occurring spontaneously, explicit.

“You said it was a defense against the fear of his rage.”

“That is clearly what I expect his response to be. I expect rage. And I am getting ready to stand my ground and I feel weakened, and not enough air, and not solid.”

I suggest she stay with this state to fully experience the defensive stance, weakened by the fear in the stomach. Since we can’t touch on the fear directly yet, we’ll have to come back for it.

Mimesis or aping

Then I direct the group to help Ariel pay attention to Peter, so she can, through a process of empathic observation and mimicking, come to resemble Peter, thus creating the conditions for being pulled into his orbit and become identified with him. In this way she will be able to experience his perspective as if from within.

Mimicry is our earliest way of conversation, as we mirror mother's states in the flesh, and she ours. And even after the sustained onslaught of verbality, we can still communicate by embodied communion, in a vestigial kind of way.

As quoted before, Walter Benjamin wrote in his 1933 article "On the Mimetic Faculty":

Nature creates similarities. One need only think of mimicry. The highest capacity for producing similarities, however, is man's. His gift of seeing resemblances is nothing other than a rudiment of the powerful compulsion in former times to become and behave like something else. Perhaps there is none of his higher functions in which his mimetic faculty does not play a decisive role. (see Note 23)

This observation is basic for embodied imagination. Aristotle says about imagination⁴³ that "the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of similarity in dissimilars." Aristotle adds: "From metaphor we can best get hold of something new." "Liveliness is especially conveyed by metaphor." Thus, combining Walter Benjamin and Aristotle, the genius of metaphor begins in nature's compulsion to become and behave like something else. To get hold of something new and lively in embodied imagination is to become similar to an alien intelligence. Monkeys are great at it. Their lively capacity for metaphor is embodied in their uncanny ability to imitate. The compulsion toward similarity, mimesis or aping, can also be seen when viewing members of any social group behaving like one another.

Identification moves by way of this compulsion to resemble. I was told that some Aboriginal Australians who perform a kangaroo dance before hunting kangaroo say: "In order to catch a kangaroo you have to be better at being a kangaroo than a kangaroo or you'll never catch a kangaroo." So by dancing all the movements of the kangaroo, the hunter comes under the spell of kangaroo-being, mirroring kangaroo in his body.

A participant asks, "What is he wearing?"

"I can't see it very well. He is wearing a bluish cotton shirt and dark trousers. But I can't see what he is wearing very well."

"What's the feel of him?"

"He's kind of gangly in fact. He doesn't say anything. He keeps his head down."

"What is the color of his hair?"

"It is very dark brown. And that is most of what I'm seeing. Most of what I see is his hair. He's looking down."

"Where is your face in relation to his?"

“I move a little. It’s beside him. I’d say that the lower half of my face is sort of close next to his ear, and that the upper half of my head is still slightly above.”

“Where are his hands?”

“His hands are in his lap.”

Since we can’t get a sense of his facial expression we have to focus on the tone of his voice, on the way he speaks. In that way we can be pulled into his experience.

“What is he saying?”

Ariel spontaneously imitates Peter’s voice. Mimicking leads easily into a spontaneous identification. “I could do the B paper, I’m capable of it, so why not just give me the B?”

“What does he sound like when he says this?”

“A little bit sad. I need to take a second because it keeps wanting to slip away.”

I encourage her to take her time and allow for a long pause.

“I can’t yet characterize it with feeling words. It feels like he does not want to be closed down by it. No, not exactly, it’s more wanting to be unfettered. It is like he feels slightly depleted.”

Ariel now is becoming inhabited by, and begins to inhabit, Peter’s state. Identifying is in the process of moving towards Peter, away from Ariel, into mutual intelligence.

“Can you focus on that sense of depletion in his voice? Don’t focus on the words, just on the tone. Just on the tone that carries the words.” Pause.

“What is the tone of his voice?”

Pause.

“He feels depleted and he crouches lower in his seat when he says that, when he’s got the grade. He feels trapped.”

She sounds as if she begins to feel his feelings. I encourage her to go deeper into them.

“Can you sense into the trapped crouching as you hear his voice . . .”

Even though the trapped feeling is similar to what Ariel was feeling a while ago while sitting at her small desk (they are, after all, both sitting at a desk which is too small), now the experience is from within a different sense of body. Her own trapped experience had been one of tired inescapable hopelessness.

“Yes.”

“What is it like to crouch like that?”

“It feels awful; like just wanting to get out.”

Ariel is now fully identified with Peter, experiencing his subjectivity directly.

“Can you sense that in the body, that ‘just-wanting-to-get-out’ crouch? Can you describe what that feels like?” I use the sentence “Can you feel that in *the* body,” not in *your* body, or in *his* body. By leaving the body

ambiguous, I allow for a carryover to the physical body present in the workshop, which is the mnemonic device.

“I feel it in the arms, and running all the way up and down the chest, and I feel a tightness, a bursting feeling. Being too big in a small place, needing to burst out.”

Peter’s bursting feeling differs from Ariel’s tired inescapable hopelessness under the same circumstances.

“Focus on that need to burst out.” Pause. “What is it like?”

Pause.

“It is the feeling of some violence in the body, and at the same time staying perfectly still.”

“Can you stay with that for a moment, that violence in the body and at the same time staying perfectly still?” Pause. “What is that sensation like in the body?”

“It feels weak in the knees.”

“Now stay with that sensation of the weak knees, as that manifestation of violence and stillness. Can you feel it?”

“Yes.”

Networking the impulsive composite

Now we are going to trigger the whole impulsive composite.

“Also feel the sensation in your belly, can you feel it?”

“Yes.”

“The icy stomach . . .”

“Yes.”

“The witnessing in the chest. The smallness in the shoulders . . . Can you feel all that?”

“Yes.”

“And as you feel all of that, can you also feel the force in the hand as you press the pencil down on the paper?”

“Yes.”

“Feel that for a while.” In an aside I ask the group if I forgot anything. A participant reminds me of the embarrassment trigger in the sternum.

We pause to let Ariel feel all the states. I slowly go over the vertical cross-section of states again.

“Shoulders. Sternum. Chest. Stomach. Belly. Knees. Hand.”

A lot of states to contain. I usually prefer not to exceed five simultaneous embodied states, in order for the process not to end up in complete chaos.

Pause.

“Now wait for words. Don’t try to find words, wait for the words to come by themselves.”

Long pause.

“The coldness in the belly is coming forward, trying to take over all the other things.”

The cold fear in the belly is an unbearable feeling, so strong that it threatens to overwhelm her, which was why she had moved into a defensive position. The feeling is now in the process of obliterating the whole network of states. The ice-cold unbearable feeling is about to freeze out consciousness, because, by its very nature, it resists reflection.

“Keep your awareness with all the other things,” I encourage her, in order to salvage the network from the deep freeze.

Long pause.

“This range of focusing . . . There is nothing else but all these sensations and keeping track of them,” she remarks.

“Stay with that.”

Now that the entire network of states is kept in awareness simultaneously, it is a good moment to utilize it as a tincture for the situation which led to the incubation.

After a pause I continue, “As you are in this body can you feel back into the relationship issues which you incubated? Feel into your relationship with this whole network of sensations in your body.”

“I am aware of a paralysis in him, too.”

Pause.

“Stay focused on this body,” I insist. Now that I have pulled in the relationship as an adjunct to the dream we need to return to the network.

At this point I want to add contrast to the mix. Until this moment we have worked the images in a chromatic, impressionistic way, situating the embodied states in a wide “range of focusing,” as Ariel calls it. By adding black and white contrast at this point, the whole image will attain a higher resolution, while adding to the internal pressure in the mixture.

“Can you feel in this body the contrast between the hand and everything else in the body?”

“Yes.”

“Stay aware of this contrast.”

“My hand is the only thing that is certain of what it is doing.”

Now that the hand is polarized, I ask her to focus on the contrast between her hand and the rest of her body.

“It is hard to hold because the contrast is so great.”

We can almost see Ariel’s interior stretch like a resistant elastic band (“the best souls are made of rubber,” says the great alchemist Maria Prophetessa), to accommodate for the stark, polarized contrast.

“Feel how great the contrast is.”

Pause.

“What is it like to feel such great contrast?”

“Terribly uncertain which way to go. My hand is so sure, and that cold feeling in my belly is still everywhere.”

After a long pause, Ariel slowly surfaces from the hypnagogic state. After a few minutes of silence, participants begin to give their strong empathic responses to the work. Then one of them asks Ariel how she feels after the work.

“I feel light, lighter. Before there had just been this heavy, leaden feeling of resignation. Also about my relationship; a resigned feeling that I just had to deal with it, and that I didn’t want to. Like with changing the grade in the dream. But now there is a sense that that thing, that cold feeling, has company.”

“Misery likes company,” someone quips, leading to the relief of a laughter which is just a tad loud.

Geometry

After this general relaxation, Ariel continues.

“It’s the sense that it is tolerable. I can tolerate it. And that is because of the network around it.”

Frequently an embodied network results in a geometric structure, this one being a central ice-cold hub with spokes of other states. It seems that the embodiment work leads to a formal self-organization in the network, giving inner structure to a complexity which otherwise might have been a chaotic concoction.

“I like that notion that it has company,” I remark. “You are not just referring to being in the group right now, are you?”

“No.”

“Do you mean that there are feelings around a very strong feeling in the middle, which makes that central feeling, the cold, less isolated?”

“Yes,” Ariel nods with great emphasis and obvious relief, as if I have found the exact words to describe her condition.

“Do you mean that the network itself is vitalizing?”

She nods again, emphatically.

Experiencing an unbearable familiar state contextualized as one among a variety of related states releases the static energy, clogged in dissociated isolation, into the larger system, as a quickening fresh circulation. It reminds us of Hartmann’s notion that dreaming contextualizes trauma into the general texture of psyche.

I meet Ariel again in the spring.

“That dreamwork warded off my seasonal depression which always starts in the autumn. I could already feel it creeping up at the time of the dream. And with the dreamwork it just stopped and retreated and never came back. I didn’t have it all winter.”

The lonesome cold had been warmed by company.

As said before, networking a relatively limited complexity of embodied images has a cascading effect, enhancing cohesion throughout. This small amount tinctures all of existence.

Communion

She adds: “The company that is so reassuring to me at the end has to do with both inner and outer correspondences. There is the wild community of feelings alive and in tense connection in my body, and that seems matched by the directions and the dynamics of the group. When I was in my twenties, I had surgery to repair a congenital heart defect that had been missed when I was an infant. In the eighties, before every such heart surgery the patient underwent a catheterization procedure to measure the size of the rent. I was kept awake for the procedure and the catheter was miked. How bizarre it was – like Poe’s famous story – to hear the beating of my heart outside my body. Working my dream in your group last summer felt a little bit like being on that hospital table. When the heart beats within and without, there is no division between the imagined and the real.”

In the end, the distinction between the quasi-physical and the physical blurs.

Notes

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