

Using Ecstatic Body Postures with Hypnotic Imagery Therapy

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ABSTRACT

From examining the art of the hunter and gatherer cultures of the world, both ancient and contemporary, the anthropologist Felicitas Goodman found what she believed were postures used by their shamans. In experimenting with these postures while in an altered state of ecstatic trance, she found that the postures gave direction to the trance experience. Some postures provided strengthening and healing energy to the body, while other postures were for divination to find answers to questions. Some postures were for metamorphosis or shape-shifting to become one with a spirit guide. Others were for spirit journeying, or entering the underworld or unconscious mind. Others were used for journeying in the middle or upper worlds. Finally, there were postures for initiation, or for providing a death-rebirth experience – the death of some problematic behavior and the rebirth of greater health. These postures are useful and effective for physical, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual healing. A sequence of postures is also useful for soul retrieval, or for resolving the traumas and emotional problems learned in childhood, which analytic hypnotherapy has also been effective in resolving.

Keywords: shamanic body postures, analytic hypnotherapy, soul retrieval, ecstatic trance

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he inseparable mind-body connection is becoming more central in the process of psychotherapy, and hypnotic imagery is recognized as an important avenue for connecting with the mind-body. When healing images are implanted hypnotically in the unconscious, they become the healing connections to the mind-body. I have used hypnotic imagery and valued its effectiveness over my thirty-five years of practice as a clinical psychologist.

But a new door to the mind-body opened to me about fifteen years ago after reading *Where the Spirits Ride the Wind* by the anthropologist Felicitas Goodman (1990) on her use of the body postures as used by hunting-gathering shamans, both ancient and contemporary. The healing offered by using these ecstatic body postures has been described in three of my books, *The Power of Ecstatic Trance* (Brink, 2013); *Ecstatic Soul Retrieval* (Brink, 2017); and *Applying the Constructivist Approach to Cognitive Therapy: Resolving the Unconscious Past* (Brink, 2019). These postures can also be used in our need to heal the Earth from the destruction that we have imposed upon Her as described in my book, *Trance Journeys of the Hunter-Gatherers* (Brink, 2016b).

Felicitas Goodman, in pursuit of her doctorate in anthropology, spent time in Mexico researching what brought the congregations of the Spanish- and Mayan-speaking Apostolic Churches to speaking in tongues, a form of ecstatic trance that she recognized as being much like the trance experiences of the hunting-gathering shamans of the people of the First Nations around the world. Her research brought her to define four basic elements that brought these congregations to speak in tongues when “moved by the Holy Spirit.”

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For the person coming to
a conventional psychotherapy session,
the use of these postures may seem
somewhat disquieting or bizarre.”

- The belief that speaking in tongues is not abnormal but healthy and pleasurable.
- The experience takes place in a special or sacred space.
- The mind is quieted by prayer.
- Trance is induced by rapid stimulation to the nervous system, such as the clapping of hands.

She then created a more indigenous ritual that incorporated these four elements, and experimented with it with her students at Dennison University:

- What to expect from an ecstatic trance experience is discussed with the explanation that the experience is not abnormal but healthy and meaningful.
- The space for inducing trance is made special or sacred by first smudging and then calling the spirits from each direction.
- The mind is quieted by paying attention to and following one's breath for five minutes.
- Trance is then induced by shaking a rattle or beating a drum at approximately 210 beats per minute for fifteen minutes to stimulate the nervous system.

The elements of this ritual are frequently seen in the healing ways of the indigenous shamans of the world.

When this ritual was used with her students, she found that they went into a satisfactory trance during the fifteen minutes of drumming or rattling, but the trance experiences had no direction. In the church the belief of being filled by the Holy Spirit gave the trance experience the direction for speaking in tongues, and among shamans of the First Nations, direction was from the intent of the shaman in seeking healing or seeking an answer to some question.

What happened next in Goodman's research, though, is what is most important. She read an article by the Canadian psychologist V.F. Emerson (1972), who had researched the effect of different body postures on meditation experiences by measuring such body functions as breathing and heart rates, skin moisture (GSR), and bowel motility. What he found was that the meditative body posture had a direct and specific effect on the measured body functions. With this realization in mind, Goodman turned to the art of the hunting and gathering people of the ancient and contemporary world, as found in books and museum artifacts. There she found what she believed were postures used by the shamans of these cultures.

In bringing these approximately 50 postures to her students at Dennison University and incorporating the postures into her earlier designed ritual, she found that the postures give direction to the trance experience. Some postures bring a sense of healing and strengthening energy into the body. Some postures are for divination, for finding answers to questions, while others are for metamorphosis or shape-shifting. Then there are postures for spirit journeying, and for going into the underworld,

middle world, or upper world. Besides a small number of postures for calling the spirits and celebration, there are also postures for initiation, or for providing a death-rebirth experience with the death of some unhealthy quality and the birth of increased healthiness.

After reading her book, I had the opportunity to lead a four-morning workshop at the annual convention of the International Association for the Study of Dreams in 2007, where I used Goodman's ritual with several of the ecstatic postures. I was very much impressed by how the postures had the effect that Goodman found with her students. I then returned home to Central Pennsylvania, and invited friends over to experiment with these postures. The initial group of about fourteen people met weekly, and we all were quite impressed. During this time, questions arose and I found the email address of Belinda Gore, a student of Goodman who has written two books on the ecstatic postures (Gore, 1995, 2009). She was quick to answer my questions, was very supportive, and convinced me to join her workshops at Felicitas Goodman's institute, the Cuyamungue Institute north of Santa Fe, New Mexico on the Pojoaque Pueblo, to become a certified instructor.

I have continued leading ecstatic trance groups in Pennsylvania and now in the Hudson Valley of New York, along with frequent workshops offered at various conferences and other events around the country, and have collected well over 3,000 ecstatic trance experiences from participants in these groups.

The Ecstatic Postures

The intent of the Ecstatic Postures as taught by Felicitas Goodman and the Cuyamungue Institute was initially determined empirically by examining the experiences of groups of individuals while holding the particular posture when in a state of ecstatic trance. The postures have been considered sacred to the hunter-gathering shaman and to those who practice the Cuyamungue Method. I value looking to the postures as sacred, but they have another important dimension. When examining what the postures non-verbally express, it becomes quite evident that they do express the intent of the posture, as determined by Goodman and the Institute.

Illustrations of a select few postures are provided in this paper. Other postures mentioned but not illustrated here can be found in one or more of my books, or those by Belinda Gore and Felicitas Goodman. In the Bear Spirit Posture (Figure 1), with the person's hands resting on the lower abdomen, the rise and fall of the abdomen can be felt with each breath when breathing correctly from the diaphragm. Thus, the healing and strengthening energy is felt entering the body with the inhale, and tension leaving the body with the exhale. This figurine of the Bear Spirit Posture is a late 19th century Kwakiut wood carving from the Pacific Northwest.



Figure 1. Bear Spirit Posture



Figure 2. Jama Coaque Diviner

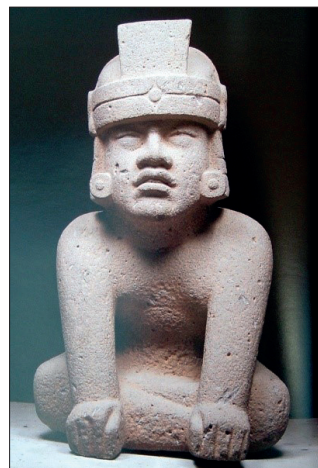


Figure 3. Olmec Prince

Several of the postures of divination have the left arm of the individual raised in front of the face, e.g. the Jama Coaque Diviner Posture (Figure 2). This Jama Coaque figurine was found in the coastal region of Ecuador. When participants are asked about what is experienced in this posture, the discussion generally turns to the statue of *The Thinker* by Rodin. *The Thinker* has his chin resting on the back of his left hand. The Jama Coaque Diviner, with his hand raised in front of the face, leaves an opening for receiving an answer, a posture of waiting in anticipation. Two other postures, *The Tala Diviner* (Gore, 2009) and the *Freyr Diviner* (Brink, 2016a) use instead the raised right hand, with the back of the open hand against the mouth of the *Tala Diviner*, and the right hand stroking the chin of the *Freyr Diviner*. Again, both postures express a feeling of thoughtfully waiting in anticipation for something.

The Olmec Prince Posture (Figure 3) for metamorphosis or shape-shifting is of the prince resting the knuckles of his fists on the ground in front of him as he sits on the ground cross-legged. This figurine from 800 to 300 B.C. was found in Veracruz, Mexico. With the knuckles resting on the ground, the arms become the forelegs of a four-legged animal, though I have often become a bird, a snake, or even a tree when in this posture. Each of the shape-shifting postures shows in some way the form of some potential spirit guide. These spirit guides may be human or some creature, substance, or feature of the Earth such as a river, mountain, trail, or canyon. The metamorphosis or shape-shifting experience is of becoming one with a spirit guide, a guide that has an important message for the person.

In examining the spirit-journeying postures, the figures of the underworld postures are generally lying prone on the floor or ground, as is seen with the *Jivaro Posture* (Figure 9). In this figure she is on her back, with the back of her left hand resting on her forehead. In

the *Sami Underworld Posture* (Gore, 1990), he is lying on his stomach with arms outstretched above the head. Being stretched out on the ground takes the person into the underworld, whether into a body of water or into the Earth. Some postures take the person into the realm of the dead. One of my favorite postures, a standing posture, is from Germany: the 6,000 year old *Hallstatt Warrior Posture* (Figure 4), a realm of the dead posture. In considering what this posture expresses, it shows a feeling of apprehension with his shoulders lifted and his arms wrapped around hugging the body. This feeling of apprehension would be expected in journeying into the realm of the dead.

The middle world posture that I often use is the *Priestess of Malta*, (Figure 5), a 5,000 year-old figurine found in a temple on Malta of a heavyset woman planted on the Earth with the fingers of her right hand pointing down to the Earth, and the palm of her left hand resting on her solar plexus. In this posture, I generally find myself on an Earthly journey, sometimes back in time.

In the upper world postures, the person is often reclined at a 37° angle, or standing with the arms raised at the same angle. This posture is repeatedly seen in Scandinavian petroglyphs of battle scenes of the dead warrior rising up to Valhalla, such as the *Tanum Skyworld Posture*, (Brink, 2016a). The upper world posture that I prefer to use, primarily because of its convenience for not requiring a sloping pad upon which to lie, is the *Venus of Galgenberg Posture*, a figurine found along the Danube River and the oldest of the postures we use, from around 32,000 years ago. The *Venus* is standing with her left arm raised at a 37° angle from the vertical (Figure 6).

A common initiation or death-rebirth posture is of the person standing with the backs of the hands resting at the waist, fingers extending upwards, with elbows reaching outward to the side, as seen in *The Feathered*



Figure 4. Hallstatt Warrior

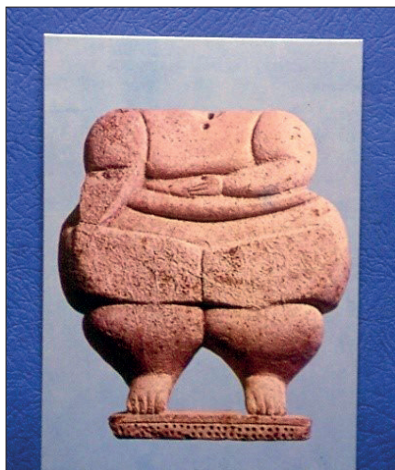


Figure 5. Priestess of Malta

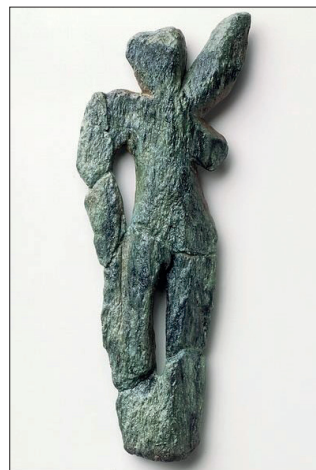


Figure 6. Venus of Galgenberg

Serpent Posture (Figure 7) that is now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. It was found in Zacatecas, Mexico, and dates from 100 to 650 A.D. I have eight examples of this posture found in figurines of other cultures. When participants are asked what they experience while standing in this posture, the response I most frequently hear is that it is of “my mother scolding me for something I did not do.” More accurately, it suggests a sense of determination, the determination of letting something of myself die with the rebirth of a healthier quality.

These are examples of understanding the posture’s intent. By having the participants lie, sit or stand in the posture, and asking the question, “What does the posture express?” a deeper understanding as to why the posture has the effect it does upon the trance experience becomes evident.

The Healing Nature of the Postures

All of the ecstatic/shamanic postures have a place in the process of healing. The Bear Spirit Posture (Figure 1) and the other healing postures bring into the body an increased sense of healing and strengthening energy, while the divination postures can provide answers as to the origin of a particular problem or what is needed in the process of healing. The metamorphosis postures can bring the individual an understanding of a spirit guide who ushers the person in the process of healing. Journeying into the underworld is frequently a journey into the unconscious mind, where the source of and solution for the problem may be found. While journeying in the middle world, something that is lost might be found, or the journey can take us back in time to find a solution. In the upper world, a spiritual or healthy peak experience often occurs. The initiation or death-rebirth experience generally represents the death of some unhealthy part

of the self with the birth of a healthier quality, a change within the person that takes some determination as expressed in the Feathered Serpent Posture (Figure 7). The following seven experiences are from using each of these seven postures: personal experiences that I have had over the past couple of years while leading the two Hudson Valley groups, with each group meeting twice a month.

The Bear Spirit

11/19/19. I feel a warm energy entering my body, and as I exhale it spreads throughout my body. The warm energy is coming from a bonfire that I am standing near. I can feel the warmth of the fire energizing me. As I look beyond the fire, I can see glowing eyes watching. I am very relaxed, and from past experiences, I know animals trust and come near me when



Figure 7. Feathered Serpent

I am in trance – rabbits, birds, and deer. This time, the eyes are of two wolves that feel my relaxing energy and know they can trust me. They are close to the ground and edge their way closer to the fire such that I soon can see their gray fur. I feel love and appreciation for them and wish I could pet them. There will be time for that, but the wolf energy is a healing energy. Wolves have two energies: one aggressive in finding food, but the other forms a lasting and loving relationship.

Healing is not always for a person with a physical or emotional malady, but can be for some community problem, or for me, addressing one of my major concerns – healing the Earth, an issue that has become part of many of my experiences. I believe that to heal the Earth we need to again become one with the Earth, as were our hunting and gathering ancestors, and to become one with the Earth means to become one with all that is of the Earth, in this case with the wolves.

The Jama Coaque Diviner

1/23/2019. The mouse returns from a number of my much earlier experiences and she is yelling at me “You’ve been ignoring me.” I follow her to her nest under the garden mulch. The nest is warm and cozy, made with bits of leaves, fluff from milkweed, and a piece of cotton cloth. It is a very pleasant nest with the mouse’s babies all tucked in. The experience brings me to my nest that has been divided between two places, Pennsylvania and New York, very schizophrenic. I’m looking forward to just one nest, the house in New York and especially the garden, looking to spring to see how it grows with edible and medicinal plants along the pathways that wind around the property. I’m looking to nurture the plants and watch them grow, a simple life.

For the last year and a half, I have been living in two places, in Central Pennsylvania and in the Hudson Valley of New York while we have been moving gradually to New York, a five-hour trip, a carload at a time. This experience was in January. In May, we will have finally sold the house in Pennsylvania, and will have completed our move. This experience of moving has felt quite schizophrenic, and I am looking forward to the life of retirement where I can write and work in the garden. The Jama Coaque Diviner (Figure 2) is telling me this will happen.

Also, the mouse became an important spirit guide for me back in the 1980s when it represented a mousy side of me with my feelings of inadequacy or inferiority. Then over the years the mouse spirit became more positive. It became a spirit of humility that I learned to cherish. But then, when other issues of importance rose, I forgot about the mouse. But she came back to me in this session as a nurturing spirit guide, and also in an earlier 2007 soul retrieval experience that I had at the Institute, as we will see below.

The Olmec Prince

11/28/18. I quickly become a coyote at night near the Institute, the Cuyamungue Institute in New Mexico, hunting and howling, howling to let other coyotes know where I am hunting in my own territory. I find and catch something small to eat, a chipmunk. I continue hunting and find something larger, a cat, and this time I howl to invite other coyotes to join me in the feast. I am on the hill on the other side of the small ravine next to the dormitory. As a human, I am in bed on the deck of the dormitory listening to the coyotes, missing the close relationship I had with this coyote that is now ignoring me. As the coyote, I leave the area.

Then I am back in New York at our cottage and listen to the coyotes howling. I again become a coyote and go hunting, find and catch a groundhog. I again howl to the other coyotes to come and join me in the feast. I realize the coyote has a life of its own and is telling me that I need to appreciate being me and the alone times I have in my life.

We do hear the coyote howling at our place in New York, and again I am becoming one with the coyote, one with the Earth in healing the Earth. The coyote is one of my more recent spirit guides, the trickster who always confronts me on something that I am “hung up on,” that I too much want to be with or close to the coyote and other animals, as were my hunting and gathering ancestors, but in living the life we have been living separate from nature, it may not be possible – or at least it will take tremendous patience to again live in oneness with nature. The tick infestation of the deer and other animals in the area, like the pet dogs and cats, places a wall between us and in being at one with the animals.

The Hallstatt Warrior

7/10/2018. I first go to the cemetery in Hurley as I have done before to the grave of my 9x-great grandmother. She was captured along with three of her children, including my 8x-great grandfather, by the Esopus Indians during the Second Esopus War, and held for three months before being released. But then I go back to the time of the First Esopus War three years earlier in 1659 when Pels, the son of Evert Pels, another resident of Kingston/Hurley, was captured. When in captivity, he decided to remain with the Esopus.

In the trance experience I am with Pels and feel his appreciation as he goes hunting with the other men of the village. He appreciates so much of the Esopus life, the hunting, and the way they value the animals, killing only enough for the moment, with one deer giving itself in the hunt. After the successful hunt, they dance to the spirit of the deer. They embrace and are close to the animals. They know the deer and the deer knows them. The young Indians spend time getting close to the deer, feeding them out of their hands, and the deer learns to

thrust them. The deer is ready to sacrifice itself to the Indians in their dependency upon each other, with the Indians protecting the deer from wolves, and the Indian is ready to die to protect the deer. As the Indians say, "Today is a good day to die," a life so different from the White man's life, and the fear felt by the deer with the White man as hunter.

This experience begins with the factual history of my ancestors being among the first settlers in the late 1650s of what is now Kingston and Hurley, New York, only about 15 miles from where I now live in High Falls, New York. My ecstatic trance experiences with the Halstatt Warrior and other postures have taken me back to incidents in my ancestry and provide the story for my book *Baldr's Magic: The Power of Norse Shamanism and Ecstatic Trance* (Brink, 2014).

The Lenape Indians were a tribe that sought and valued peace and attempted to welcome the Dutch invaders to their land. The Esopus were the Lenape of our area of the Hudson Valley, and when at their wit's end with the White men, they captured a number of the Dutch invaders with the hope that they would leave. The captured Dutch were treated very well and incorporated into the activities of the life of the village. In my ecstatic experiences with the Esopus, and this is just one, my 9x-time great grandmother was treated well, as was Pels, and found value in the life of the Esopus village where she was held about 30 miles from her husband in Hurley. But in returning to her husband, she was in a struggle to tell him and the others of Hurley and Kingston what she learned about the Esopus life. She knew they would not believe anything good about the life of the "savages." Pels, being young and single, was free and decided to remain with the Esopus, something that the other Dutch just could not understand.

These experiences bring me to a much deeper level of living with the spirits of the land, in this case, the spirits of my ancestors and of the earliest Dutch settlers of Kingston and Hurley.

The Priestess of Malta

6/27/2018. I find myself walking through the woods above our place in Coburn, Pennsylvania. I see milkweed in bloom with monarch butterflies flying around them. Then I find myself with the milkweed in High Falls, a beautiful high stand of milkweed and again with monarchs. I turn and see behind me the large elderberry bush in the woods surrounded by multiflora rose and barberry. It is calling to me for help, wanting me to clear away these invasive plants that are taking energy from the elderberry. I begin clearing a path to the elderberry and circled around it, feeling the cleared area as saying to the elderberry I hear you and honor you.

That afternoon I do clear away the multiflora rose and barberry from around the elderberry. Again, this experience

of journeying on our Earth is one of healing in becoming one with the Earth, to the milkweed and the elderberry, a central theme of many of my recent ecstatic trance experiences.

The Venus of Galgenberg

3/27/19. During the five minutes of silence of quieting the mind, I see a star explode, sending out waves of energy, energy that eventually coalesced into our sun with the planets surrounding it. I feel the wave energy coming together to form vibrating atoms and the atoms self-organizing to form molecules, and the molecules self-organizing into living cells, each with their own electromagnetic field, or in the words of Rupert Sheldrake (1995), their own morphic field. As two and more cells come in close proximity to each other, their fields start oscillating in unison to eventually coalesce and become some organ of the body with increasing sensitivity to receiving messages from other oscillating bodies – thus the waves of energy of the electromagnetic and morphic fields become particles that eventually merge into the world as we see it. But this transition takes the waves being observed to become substantial particles. Who or what was the original observer, God?

In this experience of journeying into the upper world, I experience with deeper understanding what I have been reading of the observer effect, that what is observed becomes what it is, that the electromagnetic wave when observed becomes a particle, that everything that we considered real was originally just waves of energy until it was observed, a concept that Einstein found "spooky," and a concept of quantum physics that I have been struggling to understand. This ecstatic experience helped me in this struggle.

The Feathered Serpent

3/13/2019. I quickly become a tadpole in our Pennsylvania pond. I am growing legs and my tail shrinks. I am soon a frog swimming to the shore, and while sitting upon a rock, my tongue darts out to get a fly. Then I become a fly larva and hatch into a fly. I look behind me to my left at the mountain ash and the redbud and see the new-forming buds on these trees that are slowly opening into flowers. In the pond I see the blue iris, water lilies, and horsetails beginning to poke up above the water, and slowly the iris buds open into beautiful blue flowers. I am watching and becoming part of the new birth of spring, feeling it come alive. The water in the pond rises with the snow melt, and overflows into the creek below it. The water washes over rocks along the creek, releasing minerals needed by the life along the creek. The marsh marigolds and cattails begin to bloom and are calling for the minerals made available from the rocks. They like the muck in this stream below the pond. I feel the interdependency of this life.

In this initiation or death-rebirth experience, I am experiencing and feeling the rebirth of the cycle of life from the cold and sleep of winter. The cycle of life is the cycle of calling the spirits of each direction, to me a most important part of the ecstatic trance ritual that describes this cycle. Again, I am feeling at one with the Earth, experiences that I describe in my book *Trance Journeys of the Hunter-Gatherers: Ecstatic Practices to Reconnect with the Great Mother and Heal the Earth* (Brink, 2016b).

Ecstatic Soul Retrieval

Healing does not always occur with the use of a single posture, but a sequence of postures can be especially powerful in the healing process. This I discovered when I was part of a group at the Institute led by the German instructor Ki Salmen in a sequence she used for ecstatic soul retrieval. I found in this sequence of postures a clear parallel to analytic hypnotherapy, a modality that I regularly used as a clinical psychologist. Ecstatic soul retrieval, though, uses far fewer words, with the direction to therapy coming from the postures. I have sought ways for these postures and ecstatic trance to be used in the conventional therapy session and find an increase in the effectiveness of analytic hypnotherapy and cognitive therapy as described in my two books, *Ecstatic Soul Retrieval: Shamanism and Psychotherapy* (Brink, 2017) and *Applying the Constructivist Approach to Cognitive Therapy: Resolving the Unconscious Past* (Brink, 2019).

With ecstatic soul retrieval, the starting point is to prepare the person with the strength needed to possibly face painful experiences in one's life. In some cases, these childhood experiences may be considered traumatic, but at other times the childhood experience may be a learned response to a parental dysfunctional way of relating that the child experienced over the years that limited their ways of dealing with life. Typically, the



Figure 8.
Lady of Cholula

emotional strengthening posture I use is the Bear Spirit Posture, (Figure 1), though Ki Salmen used the Tlazeolteotl Posture (Gore, 1995) for cleansing.

Following is my Tlazeolteotl experience of 8/26/07 that introduces my soul retrieval sequence:

I hear Ki's rattle divide, hearing a deeper sound coming from behind her from the wall of the kiva saying, "Tell me, tell me," over and over. It wants me to reveal something. I am sweating profusely the entire 15 minutes of her rattling. I think what I am supposed to reveal or do is to let go of my expectations or needs.

Typical of so many ecstatic trance experiences, they are in the language of metaphor, a language that may not at first be understood, but over time they eventually begin to make sense. This experience was preparing me for the sequence by telling me to let go of what to expect, rather than giving me the strength that I may need to face what I need to change. The sweating suggests that I am going to face something important and with anxiety.

To uncover traumas or early childhood experiences, a divination posture is used with the question ranging from the most general, "What do I need to be working on?" to a more specific question such as, "What do I need to overcome my feeling of anxiety?" Though any of the divination postures can be used, such as the Jama Coaque Diviner (Figure 2), the Lady of Cholula Posture (Figure 8) fits more comfortably into the psychotherapy setting. The Lady of Cholula was found in Cholula, Mexico and is pre-Columbian from 1350 A.D. It is currently in the Branly Museum in Paris. The Lady is sitting straight at the edge of her low stool, grasping her knees, again expressing the feeling of waiting in anticipation for something, i.e., an answer to the question taken to her.

However, in the session with Ki we used yet another divination posture, the Olmec Diviner Posture (Gore, 1995), which is similar to the energy of waiting in anticipation as the Lady of Cholula. But the Olmec Diviner is sitting on the ground with his right knee raised, his left leg crossed in front of him, and his hands resting on the legs. Ki gave the initial instructions: "Don't bring back more than you can deal with. Don't bring back more than three parts. And watch for an animal spirit guide to help you on this journey."

The night before this experience in a semi-dream state while sleeping on the outdoor deck of the dormitory, I heard a coyote howling, joined him, or became him, and howled to/with the other coyotes. He is the trickster, the contrary, and I asked, "What is he saying to me?" or "What am I saying to me?" The next morning, in using the Olmec Diviner Posture, I see the Diviner sitting under a tree.

With a motion of his head, he beckons for me to sit down beside him. Sitting with him tells me that I can do the journey for myself. I look to him with the question how many parts of me am I seeking. By put-

ting his right hand behind his ear, he indicates to me to listen. As I listen, I hear a coyote yip and howl. Then a second coyote yips and howls. Then a third one yips but with no howl. I look at him perplexed, and he just shrugs his shoulders. This time I know that the coyote is to be my power animal.

The answer that comes from this experience is again quite metaphoric, as with nighttime dream experiences, but the experience does provide a spirit guide that I need to follow in the next experience. The spirit guide opens the door in defining the problem. In my use of ecstatic soul retrieval, I would likely carry this experience with my coyote spirit guide to the Olmec Prince (Figure 3) to become one with the coyote, bringing him alive within me in preparation for carrying him deeply into my unconscious. Ki though uses the Olmec Prince Posture for transformation. Later I would use the Feathered Serpent posture for providing a death-rebirth experience. The intent of both postures is similar in bringing about change.

Ki next goes into the world of the spirits or the unconscious mind using an underworld posture that brings to awareness the source of the problem. We both use the Jivaro Underworld Posture (Figure 9) for this purpose. It is a posture that can be comfortably used in conventional therapy, especially for those who have a couch, as used in psychoanalysis. This posture was found in Michael Harner's book *The Way of the Shaman* (1986).

My Jivaro Underworld experience of 8/28:

I slide out the top of my head and along the ground outside of the kiva. As I glide along the ground on my back, a coyote is gently pawing at me. To get away from its paw I float up onto a tree branch. From there I see I am in a native village with grass huts circling around me. I float down to lie on the ground with the native dancers dancing around me. I am not alone. We, all nine of us in Ki's group, are there lying in a circle with our feet towards the center. The smoke of small fires rises here and there between us. These geysers of smoke are rising from the ground, and several coyotes are jumping around from geyser to geyser pawing at them as if to try to stop them, but when the coyotes leave my geysers of smoke, I am able to breathe them in, all two or three of them. They feel cool, a cool breeze, but they smell of smoke. Then I find myself back in my body with the cool breeze and feel myself back in the kiva.

What are these soul parts, again two or three? Is it working with the Institute and doing/promoting this ecstatic shamanic posture work? What is it that will complete my soul?

From the underworld understanding of what needs to change, whether understood logically or with metaphoric images that have embedded within them what needs to change, this experience provides the story that is to be carried to the next posture, the Feathered Ser-



Figure 9.
Jivaro
Underworld

pent (Figure 7). The Feathered Serpent sets the stage for the death of a painful habit or experience and the rebirth of innocence, the retrieval of the soul. In dealing with the metaphoric nature that comes in these experiences, what dies and what is born may not be logical, yet the healing rebirth of innocence is experienced.

On 8/29 instead of the Feathered Serpent death-rebirth posture that I would generally use, Ki used a metamorphosis posture. She suggested the Corn Goddess Posture (Gore, 1995) of sitting on your heels, which I find very painful so I used instead the Olmec Prince Posture (Figure 3) that allows me to sit cross-legged.

Along the road leading down into the Institute, I have found two power spots. At both power spots beside the road, I am the mouse looking up at me. I can feel my nose twitching as I am calling out, "Don't ignore me," over and over: "Don't ignore me as you did for so many years." Then I/we notice a coyote to my right beyond the mouse-me. He comes over to me and puts his face right against mine, then he turned his back to me, repeating this behavior over and over.

I interpret the coyote's actions as telling me to not take myself so seriously. The mouse was one of my very early spirit guides from many years before, my mousy or inadequate sense of self that I experienced for so many years. But I have as of late not paid much attention to her. In the soul retrieval sessions with Ki, we ended with this metamorphosis posture, though I have found using the Venus of Galgenberg (Figure 6) a good posture for ending the sequence for rising to a new level of spirituality.

The Parallels between Ecstatic Soul Retrieval and Analytic Hypnotherapy

Analytic hypnotherapy begins with a hypnotic ego strengthening exercise before identifying the affect of

the problem the client brings to therapy to be used with the affect bridge. The affect bridge, as described by John Watkins (1971), uses the hypnotic procedure of time regression to carry the problematic affect or emotion back in time to its origin. The affect bridge brings the person to some traumatic experience or parental behavior to which the client learned to respond with this affect or emotion. Edgar Barnett (1981) then uses a hypnotic cathartic suggestion of "Let your adult self go back and help your younger self understand." I have added three additional steps: First, hypnotically identify the words that the client needs to hear from the parent. These words need to be positive. Saying "Dad, please stop abusing me" does not express what is needed. Such words as "Dad, I need you to be gentle and patient with me," or "Mom, I need you to protect me," are needed. The client is asked to think of as many different ways of saying what was needed as possible. We then use these words in hypnotic rehearsal for the client to become the good parental figure with family, friends, and work associates. Finally, the client reports back in therapy, recounting what happened when using these new ways in relating with others (Brink, 2019).

Ecstatic soul retrieval begins similarly with the Bear Spirit Posture (Figure 1) for gaining strength and healing energy. The problem is then identified using the Lady of Cholula Posture (Figure 8) before carrying it into the underworld to find its source and a solution. The Feathered Serpent Death-Rebirth Posture is used for letting the problem die as the new solution is learned. The new self then journeys into the spiritual realm using the Venus of Galgenberg upper world posture (Figure 6) to provide spiritual strength for the new behavior. I have written extensively about the parallels between these two therapeutic modalities in *Applying the Constructivist Approach to Cognitive Therapy: Resolving the Unconscious Past* (Brink, 2019).

Bringing Ecstatic Soul Retrieval into Conventional Psychotherapy

For the person coming to a conventional psychotherapy session, the use of these postures may seem somewhat disquieting or bizarre. But beginning with the standing Bear Spirit (see Figure 1), explaining to the client the healthy and natural way of breathing from the diaphragm can make the use of this posture at the beginning of each session seem natural. I do not use the names we have given to these postures but describe their use in terms of the intent they express. Then, of the various divination postures, the Lady of Cholula Posture (Figure 8) of sitting in an alert manner waiting for an answer can be explained in an acceptable way. As we proceed in using the hypnotic language of analytic hypnotherapy, the elements of the experiences that come forth in the session can easily and comfortably be referred to as spirit guides or guiding spirits.

At this point I would generally go into the unconscious mind using the Jivaro underworld posture (Figure 9), which can feel very natural in a psychoanalysis session. When clients feel comfortable with these postures while seeing their significance in the process of therapy, there comes a time when I would explain the origin of these postures. When clients first come to therapy, their world is very self-centered and restricted, but with therapeutic progress they begin to open to the world outside of themselves, a world of greater diversity. In this world of greater diversity, the story of these postures can open them to even greater diversity.

But before I tell the story of these postures, I might use the Feathered Serpent Posture (Figure 7) for death and rebirth, a posture that can be explained as expressing a sense of determination in the death and rebirth process. What comes first, the story of the postures or the use of the Feathered Serpent Posture, depends upon my judgment of whether or not the client is ready to hear the story. When I feel the client is ready for the story, I will start using the names we have given the postures.

The Olmec Prince Posture (Figure 3) would likely feel especially strange in a conventional therapy session, so this posture is used sparingly until after the story of the postures is told, as is the Venus of Galgenberg posture. The Venus is used near the end of therapy. The cycle of this sequence of soul retrieval postures is often or generally repeated several times as therapy goes into deeper and deeper levels of healing, and with each cycle the words of hypnosis are used less and less, while depending more upon the direction given by the posture. The Olmec Prince and Venus might be used only in these later soul retrieval cycles.

Going Beyond

While I am writing this paper, the pandemic of the coronavirus is changing the way we see the world. Is there a place for ecstatic trance and the ecstatic postures? Our two ecstatic trance groups here in the mid-Hudson Valley are using the healing postures to send needed healing energy out to the world. I joined in on a recent virtual Zoom meeting led by Belinda Gore with sixteen of the ecstatic trance instructors from Canada to Chile and Argentina, many of whom are joining in with their groups to send this needed healing energy out to the world. I believe we can have an effect in healing the Earth. Whether Lyme disease, the coronavirus, or other new diseases that trouble the human population, these diseases are taking hold because the pathogens are losing their needed host in order to survive, losing their host to extinction caused by the damage we have imposed upon the Earth, or because our increasing population is moving into the habitats of these hosts. By returning to the ways of our hunting-gathering ancestors, ancestors who respected and venerated the Earth, the Earth can be healed.

The energy from the practice of ecstatic trance by many people from around the world can also bring healing to the Earth. Several years ago, fires raged in New Mexico near the Cuyamungue Institute. When the ecstatic

trance groups from around the world called for rain in New Mexico using the Chalchihuitlique Posture (Gore, 1995), a metamorphosis posture, rain came the next day to help quench the fire.



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