

How a Character Embodies an Actor

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In August 1993 it suddenly became glaringly apparent to me that my deeply held conviction that my dreams were mine was a description of my culture and not a statement about dreaming. I was sitting together with Nganyinitja, an old tribal Aboriginal woman who had lived the ancient uninterrupted nomadic Pitjantjatjara life style in the bush before she first met white fellas at the mission as a teenager. Her English was very poor and we talked dreams through a translator around a campfire in the middle of the red Australian desert. She told me that she had dreamed of a song she had never heard before and a dance in an ever expanding circle around a campfire. I asked her if she felt the dream might be related to the work which was her passion: inviting numbers of white folk to her Outback lands of which she was the traditional guardian, to teach them the old ways. I said that ever expanding groups of people were dancing around her fire to a song that no one had heard before, because most *Anangu* keep their traditions private. It seemed obvious to me that the dream portrayed some aspect of her life. I was surprised that she couldn't understand the translator, who had to use ever more words. After several minutes of fruitless attempts she said 'Maybe' just to be polite. Then she gave me an explanation of the dream which changed my understanding of dreaming. She said that she had to go back to her people and teach them the song and the dance so they could dance it for the landscape in order to keep its memory intact. The dream was generated by an ancient force which makes the Pitjantjatjara people sing the land in order for it to stay vibrantly alive. In short, Nganyinitja explained to me that the dream had a relationship to

her but that it was not for her. It was a dream for the land. The conversation ended as I realized that everything I had ever thought true about dreaming had in fact been thoughts about my culture. If Nganyinitja could experience the dream as not being for her, but as having been dreamed vicariously for the landscape, then my understanding that dreams are primarily about the life of the one who dreams them must be equally culturally biased. It pertains to the dogma of western individualism and is not a statement about dreaming itself.

In 2006, arch-father Freud's 150th birthday was to be celebrated all year long in the Netherlands, culminating in a 'Night of the Dream' at the City Theatre in the heart of Amsterdam, called the *Schouwburg*. To me, having grown up in Holland, it was a great cultural landmark, like the Sydney Opera House or Carnegie Hall. So when I was asked to show my stuff before a sell-out audience in the intimate old fashioned hall worthy of a romantic film, with its red velvet chairs rising up balcony after balcony to a domed ceiling painted with clouds, I was gripped by a hodgepodge of emotion hard to entangle. I had flown in the week before from my home in Sydney, after having attended the Opera House opening of the Bell Shakespeare production of *The Tempest* which we had dreamworked, as we had the two previous productions of the 2006 season. The show was equal to Prospero's magic, our work showed through in the performance of several actors and I felt a profound satisfaction.

Janet Sonenberg and I had developed a method of dreamworking plays from the mid-Nineties on at M.I.T. in Cambridge, Mass., where she is a professor in the drama department. Our method takes the point of view that a character, when called to life in a

theatrical production, takes possession of an actor. Such a character, we thought, behaved like a living being, and when fully embodying an actor, might have a dream life of its own. We assumed that, when given a chance, the character might manifest itself clothed in the personal images of the actor. Time and again our hypothesis proved fruitful. John Bell's Prospero's relation to Miranda, his daughter, came up in the actor's dreams as the innocent love of John's for his young grand daughter; Miranda's complicated passion for young prince Ferdinand, apparently against her Father's wishes, arose in the actress' dream of two swans on a polluted lake; Ferdinand's maturation process -- after having stranded on the island thinking he had lost his father, thereby becoming king of Naples, while meeting the love of his life -- was portrayed in the actor's dream of a mature man on skates flying a kite in a tempestuous lightning storm, electrifying the body which had to contain all the diverging vectors -- giving a distinct sense of the turmoil coming-of-age brings with itself. After the actors had allowed the dreams to embody them, their performance reached a depth of authenticity which previously had not been present. The possibility of dreaming for someone else is called dreaming by proxy and had been practiced in classical antiquity when it was possible to hire a dreamer at a healing temple, so this person could vicariously receive a healing dream if the patient was not able to dream herself.

As I found out while speaking with Nganyinytja, our contemporary Western certainty, assumed implicitly by Freud, that our dreams are about us, is actually a cultural bias. Such cultural presuppositions don't say anything about dreams, but only repeat assumptions implicit in the ambient waking culture.

For years I had searched for a self-evident definition of dreaming on which we might all agree; a pre-cultural definition based on the dreamed phenomena themselves -- a definition from the point of view of dreaming, not from the perspective of waking.

Finally I had come up with the formal definition that *a dream is a quasi-physical environment where events take place*. All else is waking bias subject to culture.

Fast forward to my work on Saturday, September 30, 2006, before an audience of Freudian psychoanalysts, and other Western minds in the firm belief that dreams belong to the personal domain. In an interview on the stage preceding my dreamwork with the actors, a well known Dutch psychoanalyst had declared, without having to explain herself any further, that dreams are messages by ourselves to ourselves, thereby unconsciously asserting the hegemony of Western individualism.

Looking into the black hole created by the bright lights I knew that the three minutes I had been allotted to explain my theoretical frame to an audience so utterly convinced of the individual nature of dreaming marked an exercise in futility. I could only focus on speaking Dutch after having lived out of the country for 35 years, hoping it wouldn't suddenly stall on me. I had to trust that our demonstration would speak for itself.

Flashback to the Monday before the Saturday event.

The artists' entry to the Schouwburg is behind an unassuming door leading to a hall with glass doors posing as sliders but which, surprisingly, open up in your face. I almost fall over backwards to avoid a collision; then I get lost in a labyrinth of gangways leading to doors that open up to dead ends.

Finally I end up in the foyer where we are supposed to gather. There I meet the actors, Katja Schuurman and Pierre Bokma. Katja is an actress with a body of such languid feline fluidity and sensuous shy innocence, that it is immediately obvious why she is one of the leading media stars and sex symbols in the country. Pierre has powerful presence, a brooding complexity, behind a serious frown and the low point of gravity of a man of a much larger physique. He is a renowned classical actor. Our task is to show a scene from their movie *Interview* by Theo van Gogh to the audience at the Schouwburg, then dreamwork it in public and have the actors play the scene again on stage, so the audience may judge if there are striking differences between the performances. Today we meet for the first phase of the dreamworked acting process, the incubation phase, the seeding of dreams.

Dream incubation is a method of intentional dreaming, geared toward a response from the dreaming imagination. We attempt to elicit a dream we can treat as a vicarious dream, dreamed for the character. Like a professional dreamer for hire at a healing temple was to receive a dream incubated by the illness on behalf of a patient who couldn't host the dream herself, the actor makes her own material available like a costume for a character to wear. Even though the dream will manifestly consist of the personal images of the actor, we assume the creative imagination of the character will inhabit them and shape them to its purposes. In my 2007 book '*Embodiment: Creative Imagination in Medicine, Art and Travel*,' I have described how, following Henry Corbin, I understand image-presences to be embodiments of their own intelligence. In the process of dreaming by proxy, we approach the dreamed images, embodied in the vernacular of the actor, *as if* they were suffused by the character's intelligence.

Classical antiquity had no problem with the fact that dream images are not who they seem. When Telemachos was encouraged to search for his father Odysseus, Athena came to him in the body of Mentor, Telemachos' teacher. She wore Mentor as a costume, so to speak. To Telemachos' mother Penelope, the goddess presented herself as Penelope's waking-life sister. In other words, a dominant of creative imagination, such as a goddess, was understood to adapt a person from daily life in order to embody itself.

Usually we enter in around the third week of the rehearsal process, when the actor has had a chance to inhabit the character and her world, and the text is known by heart. Our process reverses the roles: before it, the actor strives to inhabit the character, after our work the character takes possession of the actor, taking over her body within the limits of her craft and the author's text. Like in a sonnet, creative force presses against preset form. The pressure this evokes takes the actor by surprise, causing the text to sing afresh. At least, that is the hoped for result. One of the Royal Shakespeare Company 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."

Interview is a strange film. Van Gogh made it sometime before he was assassinated by the kind of zealot despised by history, who kills because he has a direct line to a grand homicidal Truth. The movie was made with Katja Schuurman in mind, and the female character is called Katja Stuurman. Katja's character is a sex symbol soap star, the kind which those who believe in serious art look down upon and envy. Pierre's character is called Pierre Peters, and is *not* based on Pierre Bokma. Peters is an arrogant snob, a journalist who has been given the assignment to interview Katja the Star on the night that the government in The Hague is falling and all self respecting journalists want to be there, Pierre especially, since he had predicted the event weeks before and considers it his story. So here he is at Katja's place, doing an interview he hates to be doing with a woman he despises to begin with. In his eyes she is some kind of dumb tits-and-ass, subject for a piece of work incomparable with the kind of journalism he did as a war correspondent in Yugoslavia. But instead of interviewing her, she asks him questions, seducing him while keeping him at bay, as a kind of punishment for his insolence. She intuits that he is hiding something. While Katja is out of the room, Pierre finds a diary in which it is described that the writer must have a mastectomy. Katja's breasts are famous all over the land and it would be a scoop to report this. Katja is aghast that he read the diary. Pierre promises he won't use the information. They agree to exchange confidences. Katja reads from the diary, and Pierre reveals his skeleton in the closet: in an untraceable manner he has murdered his alcoholic wife, after she caused a drunk driving car accident near their Dutch home which killed their daughter, while he was in Yugoslavia. Katja videotapes his confession in the same way he had audio taped her reading of the diary.

She leaves the room and he takes out the tape, which Katja had surreptitiously exchanged beforehand. He walks down the stairs calling his editor with the scoop that Katja Stuurman is to have a mastectomy. Outside he turns to see Katja standing on the balcony with the diary, which she now truthfully reveals is that of a friend. With the other hand she waves the tape with his murder confession. We hear the sirens of a police car coming to arrest Pierre. He has been outmaneuvered in his vain underestimation of Katja the Star, whose superior performance has been his downfall.

The scene which will be shown at the Schouwburg on Saturday has Katja provoke Pierre by saying that he has not been to Yugoslavia at all. That he is all bluff. Enraged he begins to strangle her, throws her down on the couch, jumps on top of her, fuming about the fact that she questions his authenticity. A three minute scene.

They did the film three years before. In the meantime Katja has gotten married to a man she loves deeply, and she has obviously matured significantly since then. They will present a theater performance of a film scene, chosen by Pierre, which consists of a lot of text by Pierre and a great deal of reaction shots of Katja. The time change and the shift in medium will make it hard for the audience to judge whether any differences between the film and the performance on Saturday night will be due to the dreamwork or to the uncontrolled variables. A highly flawed experiment! That, and having three minutes to explain it all to an audience of Freudians, while I'm ostensibly of the Jungian persuasion: I foolishly rush in ...

Intentional dreaming attempts to set up a communication between waking and dreaming.

We know from neuroscience that dreams are not primarily cognitive events. Embodied

emotion appears to be the shaper of dreams. The two iconic adversaries in current laboratory dream research, Mark Solms and Allan Hobson, agree about the fact 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.*’(1)

Based on this well established scientific theory it is clear that one can not just ask the dreaming imagination a cognitive question. It would be like speaking Chinese to a Spaniard.

Intentional dreaming is like placing a call, inviting the creative imagination to pick up and respond. We have to translate our outgoing call into a set of embodied emotional states, into the language of dreaming. Ever since antiquity, placing the call has been named ‘dream incubation.’ In her book *Dreamwork for Actors*, Janet Sonenberg calls it ‘seeding the dream.’

Before we start with Katja’s incubation, I need to briefly explain the method of embodied imagination as I practice it. Based on the definition of an image from the standpoint of dreaming, as a quasi-physical environment in which we find ourselves, it is necessary to access a state of consciousness close to dreaming in order to gain entry to this image realm. The closest we can approach dreaming without being asleep is in the hypnagogic state, the consciousness we pass through in the process of falling asleep. The hypnagogic state is well documented in dream laboratory research and consists of two phases: the waking hypnagogic state and the sleeping hypnagogic state, with the transition between them being usually imperceptible. The sleeping hypnagogic state is called ‘sleep-onset.’

After REM sleep, this is the most creative state of the dreaming imagination. During REM, 95% of sleep laboratory awakenings report dreams, while during sleep-onset 70% of such awakenings result in dream reports. REM sleep is difficult to access and finds the brain in a delirious state, (as Allan Hobson states in his 1999 book '*Dreaming as Delirium: How the Brain goes out of its Mind*'.) During sleep-onset the dreaming corresponds to a brain-set relatively similar to the waking brain and as such is partially accessible to waking consciousness. The waking hypnagogic state is of a twilight nature and is able to experience images as environments. This state of consciousness also appears naturally during flashbacks after severe traumatic moments, such as war or rape, when the experiencer suddenly finds himself back in a quasi-physical simulation of the environment where the trauma happened. A flashback, like an image, is not just visual: it is an environment eliciting all the senses. The twilight hypnagogic state therefore, does not give rise to narrative memories, but to flashbacks. A narrative memory in neuroscience is called an explicit memory, a memory *about* an event and is related strongly to the hippocampus region of the brain. A flashback is an implicit memory, a fully embodied emotional re-living of an event, involving primarily the limbic regions such as the amygdala. Embodied imagination as a method helps the experiencer to enter into a waking hypnagogic state which leads her into a flashback of a previously experienced environment. This flashback gives rise to a complex embodied state. The state is then etched into the body as a sense memory, a technique derived from acting. A beautiful description of the sense memory technique is given by Andy Serkis, the brilliant actor playing Gollum in the movie trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*. Gollum's famous voice, one of the most memorable elements of both Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and

The Lord of the Rings trilogy, became Andy's touchstone and key to the character. "I had an emotional root to that sound," he says. "For me, it is where his pain is trapped. That emotional memory is trapped in that part of his body, his throat. In just doing the voice, I immediately got into the physicality of Gollum, and embodied the part as I would if I were playing it for real." (2)

A complex image gives rise to a multiplicity of such embodied states Serkis mentions, which are each imprinted as sense memories in different parts of the body. This creates a 'memory body.' During the apotheosis of embodied imagination, called the composite, all embodiments are triggered simultaneously, giving rise to an intricate network of states.

The following work is a demonstration of this.

Katja's character has just snorted coke before the scene begins. As the character she can feel how the effect of the coke enters in through the back, moves up her chest, bends her backwards and comes over her like a wave, her jaws tighten, her eyes open wide as she holds on to the sink. At the same time the character feels pleasantly distant from the world. We locate this embodied state as a sense memory in the point of entry in her back, between the shoulders, from where the coke impulse spreads throughout her body. We focus on this point of entry until it is solidly engraved as a sense memory. When this sense memory location is tripped at some later moment, Katja will be instantly aware of each element in the coke scene with all the accompanying feelings and sensations. In the same way we focus upon her desire located in the neck to win, and to control Pierre; the moment of fright in the back of the throat; and her dread in her hands. Then I help her

identify with Pierre -- feeling what he experiences -- by having her become fully aware of his grip on her throat: she feels the sensations of strangulation, senses the pressure of the hands, and feels the intention in them. She can sense in his hand how Pierre is straining to contain himself until he bursts all over her. She traces his strain and explosion to his belly, where it settles as another location in her sense memory body.

This last embodiment, accessed through an identification with Pierre's character, is based on the central idea of embodied imagination, derived from the work of Corbin, that each image element is an embodiment of its own intelligence. An image environment, which always consists of a variety of elements, is a network of intelligences.

An intelligence alien to the protagonist (usually called 'I',) may be accessed by way of identification. When fully identified with an alien character, the experiencer enters the subjectivity of 'other', without 'other' losing his fundamental otherness. This I call 'paradoxical proprioception.' Katja feels Pierre's subjective experience of strain and explosion, while being aware it is not her own experience as Katja.

At this point in the technique we are dealing with three fundamentally different 'bodies': two image bodies and one memory body. The image bodies stem from the identification with image intelligences in the image-environment, either protagonist or other, Katja Stuurman and Pierre Peters; the memory body is the results of sense memory imprints upon the body in the physical environment, Katja Schuurman's. While in the waking hypnagogic state the experiencer is in a dual consciousness: one awareness is fully in the quasi-physical image environment, while another is fully aware of the fact that she is surrounded by imagination and is simultaneously in a physical environment outside the image in a body-in-the-room. The latter awareness is employed for the memory body:

while Katja is in a paradoxical proprioception of Pierre, the resulting sense memory, the strain in his belly, is implanted in Katja's body-in-the-room.

Ivon Voss, an accomplished Dutch dreamworker, is my assistant in this project. She makes notes and feeds them back to me at times when I forget elements in the complexity of body states we end up with. In the end I help Katja to hold all the states together, which she is able to do after a few minutes of concentrated practice. She remarks how frequently her mind is all over the place, and that it feels helpful to be able to contain all these impulses in a single *physical* awareness. Her body-in-the-room is now 'tattooed' with a network of sense memories which embody the essential composition of the scene. This body Katja will call up for half a minute before going to sleep in order to attract dreaming by way of a complex 'magnetic' field. By including an element of Pierre's experience we not only incubate Katja's character, but the relationship between them as well.

During the week we get anxious phone calls that she is not dreaming. She's trying too hard. I tell her to drink two large glasses of water before going to sleep and put a pad and pencil in the bathroom.

Usually, the whole process of trying to catch a dream after starting out the night in the character's body shapes the subsequent dreams increasingly. Like an anxious magnet it attracts unfamiliar imagination from elsewhere.

In Pierre's dream after his incubation, this process of giving over the reigns to the *involuntary* imagination may be portrayed in the image of his being obliged to travel due north by boat, and placing a call to a woman who has to help him get to the other side but has never done this before. She is very hesitant to get him the transportation at first, but

finally he convinces her to do so. It reminds me of the instruction given to the actor to call upon the dreaming to follow the compass due north to the other side, the *involuntary* creative imagination, (portrayed as a hesitating female helper who has never done this before and is *unwilling* at first,) to find fresh inspiration, a process the actor has never before attempted. In Pierre's dream the woman-from-the-other-side is both an evil cackling witch and a beautiful transcendent image of a woman. This double ness heralds an experience which is simultaneously out of control, intensely frightening to the habitual self, while giving access to the beauty of the inspiring image. As RSC actor Naomi Frederick told us in the quote above, giving over the reigns to the involuntary imagination, while giving precious rewards, is far from comfortable, provoking eerie echoes of the unknown. This is not gratuitous improv; it carries the germs of witchcraft and possession.

That Friday at the end of her dreaming week, we return with Katja to the same foyer in the Schouwburg. The camera woman is ready -- I don't get lost in the bowels of the building. Katja has caught two images. She is very apologetic. No narratives, just images. I am pleased. This work is more indebted to images than to narrative. Narrative makes us try to figure things out and search for clues and plot, the unavoidable Sherlock Holmes task of classical dream interpretation which may quicken the mind, but often dissociates from body. To do her work correctly, the actor needs to embody text in a spontaneous act of physical intelligence. Image environments possess the actor and infuse her with fresh physical information, giving access to a source of continuous unselfconscious character formation.

Katja dreams of her parents' home, around a rectangular table with two familiar characters, her husband and sister, and one stemming from collective imagination: a fat soap actor. In a second image she finds herself in a store. Behind a white counter is an angry young woman who doesn't want to be there, abusing customers.

Let's keep in mind that we are taking the perspective that *these are vicarious images dreamed by proxy for the character*. We are not interested in Katja's personal associations which would lead us into the world of the actor, not that of the character. We assume that the character's world created this environment, knowing that this meta-perspective arises from the phenomena just as little, or as much, as the conviction that Katja's dreams are about Katja; that Katja dreams about her familiars does not mean that these figures are identical to the physical people whose likeness they embody. Her physical husband sleeps next to her, possibly involved in a dreaming of his own, and her factual sister is doing god-knows-what. Upon awakening we know that dreamed presences are simulacra, quasi physical imitations, not physical beings. The assumption that an imitation corresponds with its physical counterpart is an implicit meta-position which is always conjecture and can never be demonstrated.

Michael Taussig, in his groundbreaking book *Mimesis and Alterity* describes a fetish, a curing figurine, among the Cuna people, which is a copy of an actual figure of a white colonizer.

'With this we are plunged, so I believe, into a paradox – namely that the copy, magically effective as it is, with the point-for-point correspondences of body part to body part, ... is *not a copy* – not a copy, that is, in the sense of being what we might generally mean when we say a "faithful" copy. Yet for it to be (magically) effective on the real world of things,

persons and events, it would very much seem that it has to be just that – a “faithful” copy...’ (3)

In the meta-position corresponding to the act of dreaming by proxy, we may understand all the elements of Katja’s dream as fetishes, containing the efficacy of the character for whom she dreamed them. A meta-position is taken up for the sake of expedience: in therapeutic dreamwork it is frequently profitable to assume that an imitation symbolizes the original, in theater dreamwork it is not.

I begin with two quick silent assessments: the first dream environment feels familiar and safe while the second is pervaded with an air of threat; and the fat soap actor, introduced with a giggle as ‘my sister’s boyfriend which in real life he is not,’ is the most a-historical presence. I assume that if I start out with this character we will not instantly get into a confusion between simulacrum and physical counterpart. Katja knows for a giggle-provoking fact that the soap actor is not her sister’s boyfriend. So there we enter.

I help her observe the environment, the wooden quality of the table, the light coming in through the window. Fat-Man’s body is large, very different from Katja’s physical self, which is lithe and petite. I help her sense into the voluminous body of the big man. After identifying with his presence she can feel an unusual spaciousness, especially in the chest. Her own body is much more compact. She breathes in deeply.

Next we look at the sister. The presence looks different from her actual sister. This character is considerably calmer looking. We focus upon the difference between the actual sister and the dream-sister, since deviations from the factual point to strong imaginative activity. Dream-Sister’s calm is felt as a quiet in the stomach. Finally I help

her concentrate her attention upon her husband. Like Siamese twins, she feels his presence fused with her left shoulder, as she senses deeply into their merged state.

The camera woman shoots our closed eyed conversation from the hip.

Now we shift our attention to the young woman behind the counter. She is mean to the customers. As Katja is able to identify with this woman who is a little younger than herself, she instantly feels the woman's intense frustration in the throat. She says nasty things to try and rid herself of the frustrating feelings, which result in little shocks and brief eruptions of relief. But the frustration is too great to be gotten rid of entirely. This frustrates the store clerk even more. She moves lightly for in instant, but then heavily with frustration once again. It is felt in the throat and the jaws.

Katja Schuurman ends up with a body composed of stability in the belly, ample breath the chest, intense frustration in the throat and jaws, which can only be partially defused by nastiness – all of which is suffused with a symbiotic desire to merge. The character Katja Stuurman in the scene to be performed is intensely frustrated with Pierre Peters, involved in a wounding exchange of nastiness, unflappable, having enough breath and stamina to trick Peters into confession, while struggling with a desire to merge and get through to him. The embodied composite seems relevant.

Saturday night, after the extensive three-minute in-depth explanation of my work, the Schouwburg audience is shown a five minute clip of the incubation work with Katja and Pierre, plus a few minutes of Katja's dreamwork, from which the nastiness and angry frustrations have erroneously been edited, leaving the audience a false pretty picture without inherent tensions. Then I work with Pierre's dream. This is the first time ever that

this method has been applied outside of the rehearsal room, in front of an audience. The safety level is well below zero. I have been allotted 20 minutes, which is very brief for a piece of dreamwork.

Pierre and I are sitting on two large comfortable chairs center stage, with Ivon Voss behind us on an ottoman taking notes as my prompter, stage left is the sofa on which the actors will reenact the scene, stage right is another comfortable chair with its back to the audience, from which Katja observes my work with her scene partner.

In the dream Pierre sits, phone in hand, calling a woman who is supposed to help him on his journey due north, to get to the other side. The intense necessity to get to the other side is present in his shoulders. I feel in my body the urgency to travel with Pierre to the land of dreams, the other side, in order to get our information. The woman of his dreams is initially not helpful. She has a cackling voice, unpleasant, like that of a witch. When he lets her presence pervade him, it feels like a dark skeleton all through his body. I flash upon Pierre Peters' skeleton in the closet, his murdered wife, and sense the magnetic north pole drawing us in. Some teenagers high up in the gallery begin to giggle in vicarious shame. It distracts me momentarily. Then dream woman becomes calm, like a Madonna, just observing him. She will be helpful, looks beautiful and eerie, making him feel estranged from himself with a fear of the unknown in his belly. I think of the presence of a murdered woman making the murderer feel forever alien to himself, dissociated by necessity.

Then we get to a dream taking place in a wartime bunker. (How appropriate for the war-torn fight between Katja and Pierre!) It feels oppressive, experienced as a strong pressure on the chest, combined with a desperate hope that he will get out of this mercifully. The

pressure increases as we are both aware of sitting here on stage, caught, not able to leave, observed by over 700 people. The pressure becomes unbearable, but Pierre is able to contain it, wondering how he will ever extricate himself from this oppressive field. Only my knowledge that Pierre Peters is being trapped by Katja, ensnared by his inevitable past, and will end his life in prison, which is foreshadowed in the scene about to be played, (starting with Katja's taunting opening gambit "You have never been to Yugoslavia!") gives me the conviction not to end the experiment here and now. Pierre Bokma looks like an animal in a trap. At the same time we are *enacting* the entrapment. I vaguely sense that I have trapped Bokma in this situation on the stage for my experiment, with everyone watching. It is as though I am holding him down, like Peters does Katja. I feel helpless and under unbearable pressure, unable to change it. Sweat pearls upon my upper lip. I can't do anything but wait until the vise holding both of us in its implacable grip relaxes.

In the last image there is a man who gets into quarrels with everyone. He kicks people, which gets focused in Pierre's left leg. A good omen for the epitome of a quarrel scene between Pierre and Katja. Now I help Pierre focus upon the composite of embodied states distributed all over his body. The oppression in the chest becomes unbearable, because of the exposed setting in which the work is being conducted. All other states recede. I am unable to prevent this single overwhelming state from taking over, losing much of the differentiation we had been able to achieve. I'm caught in the same oppression, both as oppressor and oppressed. By now the trap is a dissociated state oppressing both of us. There is no consciousness available to make our getaway, as the prison doors echo with the metallic slam of lockdown.

I am relieved to leave the stage and let them play the scene.

The dramatic intensity is of such obvious electricity that it makes their performance in the movie three years earlier pale before it. Pierre's language is deadly menacing, his behavior unbearably oppressive, pushing her down in their mutual anguish and rage. At the same time a single tear rolls off Katja's cheek, taking the full three minutes of the performance to complete its course. In all her eruptive frustration she never feels crushed by his pressure, she tells us after the show, but is most starkly aware of the impossibility of her wish, based on her desire for fusion, to get through to this man.

The audience seems spellbound, holding still for a moment after the end of the performance, before erupting into a heartfelt applause.

Later I hear that some in the audience have concluded that the Schouwburg performance had had little to do with the dreamwork, since the dreams had been *obviously* personal and unrelated to the characters.

Notes

- (1) Hobson, J.A. (1999) 'The New Neuropsychology of Sleep: Implications for Psychoanalysis,' *Neuro-psychoanalysis: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Psychoanalysis and the Neurosciences*, vol.1 number 2, p.166
- (2) <http://www.serkis.com/cinlotr.htm>
- (3) Taussig, Michael (1993) *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*, Routledge, New York – London, p.52