

The Mimetic Series of the Body: Memory, Narrative, and Time in Somatic Psychology¹

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Abstract

Memory is a corporeal paradox: two temporalities are folded together in the body. In the grip of memory, the body finds itself attuned to a past reality even as it is attuning itself to the present one. This corporeal coup asserts the pertinence of the past to the present in the body by mimesis. The body copies the past into itself as movement, sensation, emotion, perception, and awareness, changing its experience of the present. Narratives of memory kindle and are kindled by the bodily attunement temporal doubling brings about. In a trauma narrative told during somatic therapy, this temporal chiasma grants the somatic therapist access to the narrator's past as to her present, making it possible for him to change her experience of the past. As the analysis of the therapeutic session makes evident, memory is not a way to reach from the present into the past; it is the way the past reaches into the present in order to influence it.

Keywords: Corporeal mimesis; embodied narrative; traumatic memory; somatic temporality

If any one faculty of our nature may be called *more* wonderful than the rest, I do think it is memory. There seems something more speakingly incomprehensible in the powers, the failures, the inequalities of memory, than in any other of our intelligences. The memory is sometimes *so* retentive, *so* serviceable, *so* obedient – at others, *so* bewildered and *so* weak – and at others again, *so* tyrannic, *so* beyond control! – We are to be sure a miracle every way – but our powers of recollecting and of forgetting, do seem peculiarly past finding out. (Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*. Jane Austin 1966 [1814], 222)

Three Mysteries

This study brings into question assumptions about memory, narrative, and time: the assumption that memory reaches back from the present into the past; the assumption that narrative is the repetition of events in words; and the assumption that time falls into the past as it moves toward the future, leaving the body in thrall to the present.

Memory is not a reflection on the past from the present; it is an incursion of the past into the present in the body by what I call *corporeal mimesis*. As the body remembers, it is possessed by tactile, olfactory, gustatory, auditory, and visual experiences of the past, along with the moods, dispositions, sensitivities, modes of attention, orienta-

tions to space, objects, and others that constitute the body's perceptual engagement with that reality. This possession might be faint or vivid, brief or prolonged, concentrated or diffuse. If it comes to my awareness, I experience it as memory, but most of the effects the past has on the body take hold of it out of awareness. I simply find myself in a mood or with a preference or attentive to an odd bit of my surroundings. Memory makes the body into a copy of its prior self.

Narrative configures my corporeal mimesis of an actual or virtual past. I do not just hear the words; I feel the events. I enter into the alternate reality of the storyworld under the configuration the narrative provides it.² In narratives of memory, the temporal locus of the storyworld is my past. Memory either sparks the telling or the telling sparks memory, or both. In either instance, the narrative not only repeats the events in words but also in the body.

Time folds over on itself in memory. The body is entered into a past temporality even as it inhabits the present one. The temporal fold means that I am absorbed into the rhythms, the spurts and hesitations, the anticipations and retrospections, the very style of being shaped to another temporality made present to this one. Two temporalities collapse into each other. Corporeal mimesis reconstitutes the past body on the present occasion.

I address these questions in the study of a session of somatic psychology in which the client tells the therapist a traumatic memory. The memory takes possession of the client as she participates in a somatic practice. Because the memory is traumatic, the possession is intense. But all memory is possession of the body by the past. This possession might not come to awareness but it takes hold of the body in its course, orienting it ongoingly to its occasions in ways that may remain mysterious. My intention is not to solve the mystery but to bring forth the mysteriousness of memory, narrative, and time.

Narrative

Acts of narration alter the narrator's experience of time by obliging the narrator to embody two temporalities: the time in which the narrative is told and the time to which the narrative refers. This double embodiment is particularly vivid in *narratives of personal experience*, in linguist William Labov's term (1972, 354), in which the two temporalities narrators bring together are their past and their present. Narrators of other people's stories restore the past in the present *as if* it were their own. Storytellers bring the temporal order of the storyworld into the temporal order of the storytelling occasion, not only by devices of narrativity but also by practices of embodiment. Narrative is not just the repetition of experience in words, as Labov puts it (1972, 360), it is the repetition of experience in the body as movement, sensation, emotion, perception, and awareness as well as language. In reconstituting one reality in and for another, narrative makes co-present in the body two temporal orders. The tension or alternation between temporalities, between the rhythms of the telling and the rhythms of the events told, gives narratives their vivacity. The embodied experience of time is enjoined on the narratee as well as the narrator. Personal experience narratives reconstitute for

hearers a world to which they were not present, making interlocutors available to each other in their absence in the innumerable transformations sociologist Erving Goffman describes as *replays* (1974, 496–559). Narratologist Molly Andrews describes this capacity to shift between temporal loci as time traveling (2014, 114). Both narrator and narratee participate in the temporality of the present. The narratee participates in the temporality of the past only virtually but for the narrator, virtual participation in the present was once actual participation in the past. Personal experience narratives are of necessity narratives of memory.

Mimesis

The act of narration brings about the body's participation in two temporalities by corporeal mimesis. Perception is itself mimetic. On encountering something, the body inscribes into itself a pattern, which is how the thing is for it. By this process of mimesis, it makes a copy of the thing. Neither the thing nor the copy is immutable, but the thing's trace in the body becomes what medieval humoral theorists used to call a habit pathway or lure, the specific way the body has come to grasp the thing. The body does not perceive things afresh on each encounter; the perception of the thing tends to follow the path it previously took in the body. Anthropologist Nadia Seremetakis regards the senses as traces of the passage of things through the body, left in the material form of the sensory apparatus itself as the memory of the olfactory, gustatory, tactile, auditory, or visual things whose consumption has been deferred (1991, 217). Thenceforth, on re-encountering the thing, the body reproduces the pattern. The pattern is not the pattern of the thing but the pattern the thing elicits in the body. Properly speaking, the body does not perceive or remember or imagine things; things solicit the pattern the body has inscribed within itself, the body copy.

The body sustains its objects of interest by repeating them to itself, by making copies, that is, by perceiving, remembering, or imagining. Narrative is an elaboration of this copy-making activity of the body. The narrative is not a copy of the events; it is a copy of the body, of how the event solicits the body by *perceptual mimesis*, in literary theorist Elaine Scarry's term (2001, 6). The text tells the reader or hearer how to perceive the storyworld, that is, how to make a corporeal copy. The copy is part of a mimetic series, a series of copies, that pass through the body. Mimesis does not repeat an event that precedes it in time, working backward toward an original; the original event repeats itself in the body, working forward in time toward the present. In acts of narration, the event reiterates or reconstitutes or reinvents itself for different perceivers, in different circumstances, on different occasions, through different materialities. Corporeal mimesis affords both narrator and narratee participation in the event the narrative conjures up. Mimesis is an act of repetition, a taking up or taking into oneself the rhythm or contour of something else in order to make it present by embodying it. It is this mimetic investment that makes it possible to invoke the event in its absence. Mimesis effects the captivation of the body by narrative.

Memory

The body re-enters into itself things in which it takes an interest; other things fade out. Perception, memory, and imagination are all re-entries. The world is always the world according to me, as it happens to be for me at this moment, my world. This is not to make the idealist claim that reality is subjective, that each of us has her own idiosyncratic hold on things such that we could not possibly participate in a shared world. It is to say that I am invested in my world and that what we participate in together is not a world of things but a world of meanings.³ Narrative negotiates meanings. Things never come to me as bare facts stripped of meaning—the realist claim—they solicit my participation in significance.

Body copies are not imprints of the world on the body; they are investments of the body in the world. The body has no interest in accuracy, in duplicating the real; my interests are vested. I deform the real to my purposes. The interest an event has for the body is a present interest. Copying is motivated. Copies are not only copies-*of*; they are copies-*for*. They are calibrated as closely to the present as they are to the past. The result of this is that with respect to the past, the copies are imperfect. I shall argue that the imperfection of body copies, of narratives, and of memory itself, is not their failure but their point. Perfect copies, what we would think of as accurate memories, are pathological. In post-traumatic stress disorder, for instance, the body is forced to repeat the traumatic event in unaltered form (Foa & Rothbaum 1997, 159). Literary theorist Cathy Caruth describes PTSD as *possession by the past* (1995, 151). As folklorist Amy Shuman and lawyer-sociologist Carol Bohmer put it, “Remembering trauma requires the victim to relive it,” (2004, 411, footnote). The neuropsychologist A. R. Luria studied a man with absolute recall, the mnemonist Simon Sherashevsky. Sherashevsky’s problem was that every present moment was laden with a synaesthetically entangled flood of memory. Each memory proliferated other sensations and memories. He found it difficult to keep track of them. As Luria writes, “The biggest question for him, and the most troublesome, was how he could learn to forget” (1987, 67). Just so with traumatic memory: it is not a disorder of remembering but a disorder of forgetting. Memory is confabulation, an act of the imagination at the juncture of perception, the body’s hook to the present, and memory, the body’s possession by its past. Narrative is the perceptible occasion of this confabulation.

We conceive memory as volitional, as if we were doing it on purpose. We can remember on purpose, but that is the perverse instance of memory: *trying* to remember is like aiming for a target in the dark. The effortless instance is memory that arises unbidden, popping into our heads, taking us unawares, pouncing out and grabbing our attention. None of us can will the ambush of memory. As aesthetician Richard Wollheim insists, memory is not a way to reach from the present into the past; it is the way the past reaches into the present *in order to influence it* (1984, 130). Memory announces itself. I do not turn my attention to the past; the past asserts its pertinence to the present through the body. Narrative proceeds as if it were making this assertion of the pertinence of the past to the present; it merely makes the assertion articulate. The effect of this articulation is to make the assertion insistent for the body of the hearer or the reader as well as of the narrator.

Somatic Psychology

I would like to introduce an instance of memory arising unbidden. The memory is a perfect memory, a perfect copy, which is to say that it is in a certain sense pathological. It arises during a group therapy session in somatic psychology.

Somatic psychology is an alternative medical practice in which the somaticist does not intervene at the level of narrative, as a psychoanalyst does, but at the level of the body doing the narrating. I took up the study of somatic psychology to extend the analysis of narrative from the words to the body. The somaticist whose practice I study, Stanley Keleman, was the founder and director of the Center for Energetic Studies in Berkeley, California. I observed occasions of his somatic work over two decades, beginning in 1994. For own his purposes, Keleman made videotapes of individual participants in group therapy sessions. For my purposes and with their written consent, I transcribe the participants' words and gestures during the therapeutic dialogue. In published material, the names of all participants except Keleman are fictitious. The following analysis is based on a transcription from the Winter Institute of 1994. On this occasion, the story's grip on the body is evident.

The Ambush of Memory

At the moment the transcription begins, Keleman has just had the therapy group do a somatic exercise in which they make themselves bigger and then make themselves smaller. As she is doing the exercise, one of the participants, whom I call Deborah Abrahamson, becomes aware of a turbulence of her interior, a sensation of flux. She describes it as "this pulsing that just goes through me." She realizes that it is a memory, a memory of being small and acting big. That is, it is a memory of the pattern the exercise traces. As therapists David Hartman and Diane Zimberoff write, "This is a body memory. This memory carried somatic energy which lives in the system and resonates and attracts whatever is similar in the system" (2004, 33). The somatic exercise happened to be a body copy.

Text 1. Sensory Memory: Making Herself Big, Making Herself Small⁴

When Deborah begins to describe her response to doing the exercise of making herself bigger and smaller, the camera is directed at the somaticist, so we hear her speak but do not see her gesture. As she describes what her pulsing sensation reminds her of, the camera pans from him to her, and her gestures become visible.

Deborah says, "The feeling- what it made me feel getting myself bigger was just as inhibiting and bad as being shrunk. They were both- they were extremes that were the same somehow. They did the same thing to me. And that when I came down from being bigger and stopped in the middle," she pauses, "it suggested that special way- it just happened again- that this pulsing just goes through me, just staying with the feeling, belly, chest, and (joints, it's up some-) um- partly some age to that feeling that scared me a lot. It feels like the=

Stanley interpolates, "The pulse or the="

Deborah clarifies, "the pulsing- it's like when I was very very little and I was

sick or something, something that reminds me of this place," as she says "reminds," Deborah holds her hands curved and facing each other, and tips them from side to side, then flares them out slightly on the word "place," "of losing-" she opens her hands softly out and in again, "there's something but it's- it's not," she curves her hands around "something," nodding, and then brushes her hands across the space in front of her, shaking her head as she says, "it's- it's not," "severe," she folds her hands and drops them in her lap, then breaks off and starts again, "like I never would have described it="

Stanley cuts in to say to another person in the therapy group, "You know it's interesting um..." When he does so, the camera pans away from Deborah and back to him.

Gestural Holds

In the middle of this passage, the camera picks up the gestures Deborah makes as she speaks. Gestures affiliated with words configure movements to meanings in the course of speaking. The foundational gesture theorist David McNeill identifies several types of co-speech gestures, of which two are intermittently visible during the therapeutic occasion: *iconics* and *metaphorics* (1992, 12, 14). Iconic gestures represent the concrete act, event, or object speech mentions. Metaphoric gestures treat abstract ideas as if they were concrete acts, events, or objects. According to linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, metaphors structure one domain in terms of another, typically conceptualizing a vague, unstructured, or abstract idea as a precise, structured, or concrete act, object, or event (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 117). Like linguistic metaphors, gestural metaphorics instruct seers to perceive the target domain of the metaphor in terms of its source domain (Lakoff 1987, 276). Metaphoric gestures are iconic for their source domain.

The gestures Deborah makes here are metaphorics, and the first four participate in the same source domain: vaporous substance. As she says "reminds," she handles memory as if it were a light, fluctuating substance she tips from hand to hand but which floats out of her hands as she tries to "place" it, not in space but in time metaphorized as space. She metaphorizes "losing" as feeling for a substance she cannot quite get hold of and then wraps her hands gently around the still unremembered "something" she is trying to hold steady. She metaphorizes "not" as brushing these elusive substances aside. The target domains of these metaphoric gestures vary from memory itself—reminding—through when the unremembered event happened—childhood—and what the memory was like—losing—to what the sensation the somatic exercise brought about was not like—severe. In all four metaphorics, the source domain lends materiality to target domains that do not have it. When Deborah folds her hands and drops them into her lap, she quits trying to hold onto the insubstantial material she has been manipulating and, in the same gesture, relinquishes her search for the memory. In response to the gesture, not the words—she has just started a new sentence—Stanley turns to speak to someone else.

Initially, Deborah's memory comes to her only as sensory memory, literally as a sensation, the pulsing sensation, without any referential content at all. Despite the indeterminacy of the memory, she associates it with the past, specifically with childhood, and with an emotion, fear. In response to her embodied experience of this memory she does not yet fully remember, she says a curious thing. She says "getting myself bigger" and "being shrunk...were the same somehow. They did the same thing to me." So the somaticist's puzzle is to work out why these two apparently opposite things should seem the same to her. With regard to this puzzle, Keleman has a speculation.

Text 2. Somatic Interpretation: The Threat of Being Big

When Stanley turns back to speak to Deborah again, the camera is still on him, where it stays throughout this interchange. He says, "But I'm saying here maybe you were afraid of whatever is adult. And told not to be."

Deborah says, "As a child."

Stanley says, "As a child. 'What do you think you're bigger than me?- you're just a kid.'"

Deborah says, "Oh yeah."

Stanley says, "Hm? Doesn't matter how big you are. 'You just be small-' 'you be the size- uh that don't be- you be the size that I tell you to be.'"

Deborah says, "Absolutely."

Stanley says, "Right? So then. And when you get into any place that you have some sense of that- you know, that middle ground? -that wants to fill you, this is dangerous business. From- to the outside."

Deborah says, "Right. Also that was really systematically done to me, whenever I got above myself, I was-"

Stanley interpolates, "told to-"

She continues, "cut down."

Stanley repeats, "Cut down. So how did you interpret that. Otherwise when someone says, 'Cut down,' right? that's the words but what's the translation. Physically."

Narrative Realities

Narratives bring forth an alternate reality, perceived either from the perspective of a character inside that reality or of a perceiver outside it, and narrated either in the voice of a teller who is a character or of a teller who is not an inhabitant of the narrative reality. Narratologist Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan distinguishes seeing and speaking as *perspective* and *voice* (1984, 72). Narrators are more precisely narrator-perceivers. Typically, narrators who speak in the voices of characters see from an internal perspective; narrators who speak about the storyworld from outside it see from an external perspective.

Narratives range from single-sentence repetitions of what happened through multiple-sentence repetitions of what happened presented as causally connected sequences of events in genres from conversational anecdotes to novels and histories. From the

perspective of its inhabitants, the storyworld is real; from the perspective of the tellers and hearers on the storytelling occasion, it might or might not be. Its reality status is not built into it but attributed to it by its tellers and hearers. The storyworld is an *alternative possible reality*, an APW, in narratologist Marie-Laure Ryan's terminology (1991, 110). Regardless of its reality status, on the occasion of its telling, the story brings forth a reality that is not there but to which tellers and hearers are granted virtual access.

On this occasion, Stanley sets up Deborah's childhood as the scene of narrative in an alternative possible world in which an adult cuts the child down. Deborah enters into that reality as a space of memory by taking over its narration. The storytelling is, in effect, a form of co-narration or joint storytelling (Young 1987, 175, 182). The narrative mutates over its course from a speculative story of what might have happened to a memory narrative of what did happen. Stanley interpolates Deborah into the storyworld as a character by speaking of her as "you," lifting her over into the APW as the character to whom he speaks; when she takes over the narration, she shifts to "I." Narratologist Gérard Genette calls narrating in the voice of a character *intradiegesis*, the story or *diegesis* told from inside the narrative reality, and narrating in the voice of a teller outside the narrative reality *extradiegesis* (1980, 228). In his impersonation of an adult in Deborah's storyworld, Stanley counts as an intradiegetic narrator even though he is only a character in her storyworld by proxy. Both narrators implicitly disclose the perceptible world from an internal perspective: we feel the adult in the storyworld looming over the child.

Once Stanley has instantiated the scene of narrative, a character speaks. The narrative switches from description to action. In pure description, something is textualized; nothing happens—the description sets forth the scene. In pure action, something happens, exactly that is textualized—the text describes the act (Genette 1980, 93-94). Whereas description is *diegetic*—it focuses on the narrator doing the telling, action is *mimetic*—it focuses on the character doing the acting (Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 106). Narratives modulate among these representational possibilities. In this narrative, the quick switch from scene to dialogue lifts the narratee's attention out of the storytelling occasion and pulls it into the storyworld. Speaking is a form of action: it is something a character does. Speech representation—speaking about speaking—ranges from saying somebody spoke through saying what somebody spoke about to saying what the person said. Speaking as a character is the most transparent form of mimesis: the narrator's voice is silenced; only the characters' voices are audible (Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 108). We overhear the adult scolding or berating the child as if we were fellow inhabitants of the storyworld. At this moment, Deborah enters the storyworld as the child the adult harangues.

When Deborah was little, and she used to do what in her family was called "getting above herself," a member of her family would, as they put it, "cut her down" to size. When Stanley asks her how she reacted to that, she says, "Well, what came to me immediately is just uh total collapse. I was forced- actually forced to collapse. Physically forced to collapse."

Text 3. Narrative Memory: The Exterior Threat

The camera pans back to Deborah as she responds to Stanley's question. "Well what came to me immediately is just uh total collapse." She is sitting with her arms folded across her chest. As she says, "total collapse," she nods. I was forced— actually forced to collapse. Physically forced to collapse. She nods as she says "forced" and "collapse," and continues nodding in the pause that follows. "And now- I mean not always- it was emotional too but there was a lot," she begins to gesture as she speaks, tipping her hand in and out to metaphorize alternation between the physical and the emotional and extending it outward to metaphorize the amount of physical force as spatial volume.

Stanley says, "Yeah," as Deborah continues, "it was a lot of physical," she extends her hand outward again.

Stanley says, "Yeah, there's no difference."

Deborah continues, "um- there's a very strong reaction to," as she says, "very strong reaction," Deborah touches her chest and then extends her hand outward. Instead of continuing in words, she sticks her chest out, pressing her arms back, elbows bent, and hands raised in fists. The movement mimics making herself big in the exercise she has just done. She folds her arms back over her chest again as she says, "doing this."

At the same time, Deborah says, "doing this," Stanley says, "Do it. Cut down."

As a child, Deborah would get above herself—make herself big—and then she would collapse—make herself small. She is, on the occasion of the somatic therapy, invoking memory by corporeal mimesis. At the moment body memory becomes conscious memory, Deborah suppresses her bodily investment in remembering by withdrawing her body behind her folded arms even as she makes the memory articulate narratively by describing her collapse. She does not collapse as she says *collapse*; she nods. Nodding acts as pragmatic emphasis on the significance of her disclosure for her interlocutor on the storytelling occasion. It is a way of standing outside the storyworld and observing it rather than entering into the storyworld and experiencing it. The catch is that somatic therapy does not work on the story; it works on the body. To return Deborah to the embodied experience of the event she is narrating, Stanley instructs her to take up the posture she entered into when she as a child. As she returns under instruction to her corporeal mimesis, Deborah remembers what she is afraid of: she is afraid the adult will hit her.

Text 4. Sensory Memory: Cut Down

In response to Stanley's instruction to cut down, Deborah tips her torso to her right, curls her shoulders forward, tilts her head down and to her left, and lowers her eyes, pursing her lips slightly. After a moment, she looks up at Stanley a couple of times and says, "And that's," she flips her right hand out and back horizontally at the level of her lap, then raises it and drops it back into her lap, unable to metaphorically grasp her new thought, "that's adding to," she spreads the fingers of both hands around a globe shape and lifts it toward her diaphragm, "it's what the-" she holds her hands

open, palm up, "the image" she rotates her hands out and downward, "that came to me," she repeats the gesture, "when I frowned was just- which feels like the way the fear maybe was uh," as she says "like," Deborah closes her fist over her own thumb, palm down, and pulses it twice, catching hold of her thought, then flips it open on "fear" and closes it again on "was uh," "that I was actually physically cut down," as she says "physically cut down," Deborah swoops her left arm, flat handed, palm down, in a broad curve from her left hip to her right shoulder and back to her hip, ending in an abrupt stop. Then she returns her hands to her lap, folded over each other.

Stanley says, "By being hit?"

Deborah says, "Yeah," then nods.

In the course of her narration, Deborah introduces the term "cut down." Initially, Stanley has taken the term to describe something somebody said to her; Deborah will turn out to have meant the term to describe something somebody did to her. Both usages are metaphorical. Stanley has taken *cut down* to be metaphorical for shamed or belittled, which he talked about with another client before turning back to Deborah; Deborah has intended the term to be metaphorical for physical force. The source domain for both verbal metaphors is cutting. The metaphoric gesture Deborah makes as she says "physically cut down" participates in the same metaphorical source domain.

Gesturers typically make gestures in a sphere of space in front of the body that gesture analysts call the *gesture space* (Haviland 2000, 18). The rim of the sphere is roughly defined by the reach of the tips of the fingers. Inside the sphere, iconic and metaphoric gestures conjure up the acts, events, and objects they represent. In the course of speaking, however, the gesture space sometimes expands to enclose the body of the gesturer (Young 2002, 50). When this happens, gestures switch from external perspective to internal perspective. With iconic gestures, it is as if the gesturer inhabits the APW as the character who moves and is moved by acts, events, and objects in the other reality. The acts, events, and objects become proportionate to the gesturer's body. In metaphoric gestures, it is as if the gesturer inhabits the source domain of the metaphor iconically. From an internal perspective, in gesture as in narrative, perceivers have restricted access to the reality they perceive, emotional involvement in it, and subjective bias toward it. From an external perspective, by contrast, the gesture space contains the APW or source domain in miniature as a reality that could in principle be investigated from any angle outside and above it. External perceivers have unrestricted access to the reality they perceive, emotional detachment from it, and an objective attitude toward it (See Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 77–82). Deborah's slice downward is a metaphoric gesture, but unlike her previous metaphors, she makes it from an internal perspective. With this gesture, Deborah has entered into the gesture space bodily.

The style of the gesture imparts to it a mood or feeling apart from its referential import. According to movement analyst Rudolf Laban, "Each movement originates from an inner excitement of the nerves, caused either by an immediate sense impression, or by a complicated chain of formerly experienced sense impressions stored in the memory. This excitement results in the voluntary or involuntary inner effort or impulse to move" (Laban 1971, 22). In terms of Laban's Effort-Shape Analysis, the

flow of the resulting movement is either *free* or *bound*. When the movement flow is free, the movement begins in the core of the body, issues from the trunk, and extends through the limbs outward into the space beyond. By contrast, when the movement flow is bound, the core of the body holds still while the limbs move independently. Free movement promises to keep extending; bound movement can be stopped at any time (1971, 21). Deborah's slicing gesture exhibits *bound flow*: the movement stops abruptly. *Effort flow*, whether bound or free, varies from direct to indirect, strong to light, and quick to slow (Davis 1977, 41). The directness, strength, and quickness of Deborah's movement, along with its sudden closure, impart to it an affective intensity that pertains, not only to the iconic movement in the source domain of the metaphor but also to the act in the target domain the gesture metaphorizes. It is as if she is trying at once to make the movement and to stop it. Deborah conducts this intensity into the only two iconic gestures she makes in the course of her storytelling.

Text 5. Sensory Memory: Beaten

Deborah says, "Beaten," then clenches her left fist and strikes it downward. "I mean like violent kind of psycho," striking her fist down again on "violent" and a third time on the interjection "pstcho," then dropping her hands back in her lap.

Stanley says, "Show me how you reacted to that." Deborah goes still. "Being struck."

Deborah stays still for a moment, then looks up at Stanley and says, "I used to—" she brings her forearms up, hesitates, crosses her arms over her head, her hands still lightly closed in fists, and says, "cover myself." Then she lets her crossed arms drop apart a little and looks up at Stanley from underneath them.

Stanley says, "Do it." Deborah crosses her arms tightly back over her head, fists clenched, curling her body forward and lifting her knees up in front of her chest and belly.

The striking fist is Deborah's first iconic gesture. The gesture animates the storyworld in the gesture space. The metaphors she has been making up to now animated only the transient realities of their metaphoric source domains. Now she instantiates gesturally the storyworld she has been instantiating narratively up to this moment. The storyworld is given body, and she enters into it bodily. She makes the gesture from an internal perspective. Indeed, she now presents iconically the act the metaphoric metaphorized. The virtual space of the storyworld opens up around her and draws her into it as a character: she lifts a fist and pounds it to the ground. However, the character she embodies is not herself; it is her abuser. It is only when she embodies her collapse by folding her body in on itself to demonstrate her response to her abuser's blow that Deborah enters the virtual space of the storyworld as the character who is herself.

This is the pivotal moment in the somatic therapy. Over the course of the interchange that follows, Deborah realizes that she sometimes feels overwhelmed by her own internal sensation. So the somatic problem with which the session began is for Deborah a life problem: how to grow up, how to act as an adult, be the boss, run the

business. And the problem is expressed somatically as the problem of making herself big without making herself scared. The problem is how to be a person, specifically, the problem of how to make present a self to meet this occasion, the therapeutic occasion, as an *allegorical* figure, in Shuman's phrase, in her own life (2005, 59). "Allegory in personal narrative is remarkable because although it is deeply contextual, depending on its occasion, listeners, and larger communicative situation for meaning, its meaning is not restricted to or even accountable to the experiences described" (Shuman 2005, 71). Deborah can import the significance of her resolution of this problem into her future life.

Becoming Selves

Somatic therapy addresses both the philosophical problem of what a self is and the psychological problem of how to bring a self about, both moments in the Ricoeurian project of forming a self. Selfhood, the philosopher Paul Ricoeur writes, "can be articulated only in the temporal dimension of human existence" (1992, 114). It is not that I am a self or that I have formed a self over time and it is already there for me at any moment. I am forming a self in time by the double movement the phenomenologist Martin Heidegger describes as *repetition* and *anticipation*. *Repetition* is the acknowledgement of the past in the present; *anticipation* is the resolute turning of the self from the present toward its future (Heidegger 1962, 443–444). This interfolding of time in the body enters the self into the mode of existence Heidegger calls *temporal ecstasis* (1962, 377). The word *ecstasis* is formed from the roots *ek*, meaning "out," and *stasis*, meaning "to stand." In temporal ecstasis, the body stands out from itself in time. Narrative participates in temporal ecstasis when its meaning expands beyond its moment of iteration and opens up the possibility of forming an authentic self. Stories reconstitute worlds for tellers and hearers, including their own, not only retrospectively but also prospectively so that, as phenomenologist Maurice Natanson claims, we come to inhabit the realities we invent, becoming "the self constructing for itself the world it then finds and acts in" (1970, 23). Stanley Keleman's undertaking over the remainder of the therapy session will be to make available to Deborah Abrahamson in her own body enough somatic resilience to allow her to experience her interior excitement without experiencing it as fear, even to come to experience it as pleasure.

Over the course of her act of narration, the series of corporeal dispositions Deborah has been unfolding in the present open themselves retrospectively into a series of disclosures about the past. They exhibit the pattern landscape architects Matthew Potteiger and Jamie Purinton describe as the double structure of murder mysteries (1998, 43). Mysteries fold together two stories: the detective story and the murder story. The detective story unfolds forward in time as the detective discovers what happened, at the same time that the murder story unfolds backward in time as the detective story discloses what happened in reverse order. The detective story begins where the murder story ends: with the dead body. The effect precedes the cause, which must be deciphered backward by an inductive process the detective must perform forward.

In Deborah's double narrative, the narrator does not conceal the event that happened in the past from the narratee for the purposes of suspense; the event is concealed from the narrator herself—it is outside her conscious memory—but revealed in her body. This omission is not the problem folklorists Diane Goldstein and Shuman identify as *untellability* (2012, 120). It is a problem of un-rememberability, that is, of the persistence of body memory in the absence of conscious memory. The memory takes hold of Deborah in a mimetic series:

- She performs a movement— “getting myself bigger,” “being shrunk.”
- She experiences a sensation— “this pulsing just goes through me.”
- She recognizes an emotion— “that feeling that scared me a lot.”
- She becomes aware of a memory— “when I was very very little,” “something that reminds me.”
- And then she narrates an event— “whenever I got above myself I was- cut down.”

The narrative comes out backward because the memory comes out backward. As Shuman and Bohmer point out, “trauma narratives are rarely chronological, and their complexity is often read as inconsistency. Judith Herman reports that trauma narrative is ‘encoded in the form of vivid sensations and images’” (2004, 403). That is, the memory becomes embodied before it becomes conscious. Body memory precedes and underlies and outlives conscious memory.

Genette distinguishes three modes of recounting events in narrative: the *singulative*, the *repetitive*, and the *iterative* (1980, 114). In the singulative, what happens once is narrated once; in the repetitive, what happens once is narrated many times; in the iterative, what happens many times is narrated once. The iterative mode is indicated by verbs of habitual past action like *used to* or adverbs like *always* or *never*. Deborah's use of the adverb *whenever* puts her narrative in the iterative mode. It is not the narrative of any specific past event but a narrative of how things used to be for her in her childhood. In the somatic session, it becomes apparent that her habit of the past has become for her a habit of the body. Sometimes when her abuser cut her down, the person did it physically and her somatic organization to meet this event persists in her. Somatic therapy converts blind repetition into an anticipatory resoluteness that reconfigures the body for its future.

Memory, like narrative, has a dual ontological status. It is an enclave of the past *in* the present—sealed off by the act of narration as the instance of remembering. At the same time, it is an aperture into the past *from* the present—opened out to the virtual presence of the past event on the storytelling occasion so that the present becomes partially transparent to the past. To treat memories as enclaves is to analyze how memory works or how stories are constructed; to treat them as apertures is to investigate how the past encumbers or impregnates the present.

The Mimetic Series

The body is memory. I reconstitute a sense of the past as precursor to my present. Each present, each “I,” invokes its own lineage of memories. The way I dispose my body, the postures I take up, the moves I make, or the senses that get stimulated—the taste of a madeleine dipped in tea, to take novelist Marcel Proust’s instance—put me into a particular *somatic mode of attention*, in anthropologist Thomas Csordas’s phrase (Proust undated: 37; Csordas 1993).

The body enters itself into whatever mimetic series bears on the present situation. This corporeal mimesis is the “hinge” of memory, in literary theorist Emma Kafalenos’ term (2006), acting as both *prolepsis*, the leaping forward of memory from the body’s past into its present as “the restoration of behavior,” in the sense performance theorist Richard Schechner imputes to the phrase (1985), and at the same time acting as the *analepsis* of memory, dropping the body back through the membrane of time into the past via “the memory of the senses,” which Nadia Seremetakis takes to be forms of memory themselves (1994). Affect theorist Anna Gibbs writes, “the self continues to undergo both analeptic and proleptic reshaping by the work of memory and anticipation” (2010, 196). The body copy is the past making itself felt in the present by an act of possession, rendering the body achronic—as if it belonged to no particular time—and at the same time, it is the trace, the residue, of the past in the present, rendering the body anachronistic—as if it were in the wrong time, to take up Genette’s distinction (1980, 40, 83).

The body’s rupture through the membrane of time, its refusal to anchor itself in time or its double anchorage in two different times, yields the body its sense of presence, its sense of bringing itself to this moment, swinging between its anchorages in time. The arc of each swing is a lineage of memory. These lineages hang together, not with each other but with me, with my bodily disposition in the present. There is no unified, coherent past. I make a past coherent for the occasion on which I conjure it up. Narrative is one of my ways not only of displaying this coherence but also of making it. It is not that I remember bits, fragments, of a once coherent past, but that the past assumes a trajectory, a felt consequentiality, from its organization in the present.

I am possessed by multiple lineages of memory, which is to say that I am possessed of alternative pasts. The capacity of the body to hold together its past in the present, against the present as well as with the present, is how I am a self, how I have a sense of sustaining a self over time. It is not because I am continuous with myself—the self is no more unified and coherent than the past—but because each discontinuous moment of my embodiment slings its own anchor into the past. As Shuman and Bohmer write, “Each dimension of experience – of ordinary life, persecution, and the journey – creates a different sense of self and follows different cultural conventions for representing experience. Each contains different sorts of memories and requires a different form of self-reflection and evaluation” (2004, 406). These continuities and discontinuities are instances of the multiple selfing Erving Goffman introduced into theories of personhood (1974, 516-537). Each of my multiple selves rides its own lineage of memory. The body is itself a mimetic series, an ongoing process of self-copying. It

repeats “excitatory patterns,” in Keleman’s phrase, which the body has maintained at low intensity levels since their inception in the past. I intend my self bodily by a series of (self-) repetitions. Narratives of the self are one of the occasions of this repetition.

Perfect copies in the body, Keleman points out, are ways to maintain an experience. The body imitates itself in order to hold onto its experience and thrust itself forward in time. But not all repetitions are exact copies, duplicates. Imperfect copies are not flaws, failures of memory; they are novae, innovations, sites for the confabulation of a new self out of memory and imagination.

The collapse of time in the body gives psychotherapies their point of leverage: they can influence the past by influencing the present, by influencing, that is, the mimetic series, the body’s memory of its past. As psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud remarked, “*Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences*” (1966, 42, italics in original). He meant unconscious reminiscences, memories they could not remember but which enacted them anyway as, for example, repetition compulsions, in which, as Freud put it, “the patient repeats instead of remembering” (1914, unpaginated). These sorts of memories, memories we cannot remember but which enact us anyway, psychoanalysis understands as the unconscious. Somatically, it is sensory memory, the kinaesthetic, postural, gustatory, gestural, visual, and other mimeses whose habit pathways in the body make the senses (Seremetakis 1994, 217).

Possessed by such a memory, the traumatized body finds itself unable to stop making perfect copies. It is inhabited by a mimetic series that may not rise to awareness as memory but as a modality of embodiment. Traumatic memory is an instance of this sort of possession. Deborah’s experience of the internal pulsations before she remembers her childhood abuse is body memory outside of conscious memory.

The iterativity of the narrative, to return to Genette’s term, the condensation of an experience that happened many times into a single narrative act, figures the condensation of the body’s response to these experiences into habitual behavior. The corporeal disposition the body formed to meet recurrent occasions in the past persists in the present for Deborah when, for instance, in order to run her company, she wants to make herself big without making herself scared. From my perspective, in these instances of corporeal mimesis, of repeating without remembering, the person is remembering perfectly but in a way protected from conscious interference, as anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu argues, by making the body its mnemonic.

If all societies...set such store on the seemingly most insignificant details of dress, bearing, physical and verbal manners, the reason is that, treating the body as memory, they entrust to it in abbreviated and practical, i.e., mnemonic, form the fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of the culture. The principles embodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformations, cannot even be made explicit; nothing seems more ineffable, more incommunicable, more inimitable, and therefore, more precious, than the values given body, *made* body by the transubstantiation achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a metaphysic, a political philosophy, through injunctions as insignificant as ‘stand up straight’ or ‘don’t hold your knife in your left hand’ ... the whole trick of pedagogic

reason lies precisely in the way it extorts the essential while seeming to demand the insignificant. (1989, 94–95)

If, as I propose, the body copies itself, then memories are always enacting us anyway. The question is not the Freudian question: Why would I repress something? It is the somatic question: Why would I ever bother to remember it, that is, to remember it consciously? What would be the point of making body memory conscious memory? And the answer to that is to interfere with it. What bids memory to arise are the exigencies of the present, the necessity that I suit myself to my circumstances, that I mold my body to its occasions, so that, as I say, memory is calibrated as closely to the present as to the past. The ambush of memory is the announcement that I intend to interfere with my past. Somatic psychology takes advantage of this property of memory to interrupt the mimetic series in which the body participates, to oblige it to make the copy imperfect.

Remembering

At the end of this somatic session, Stanley induces Deborah to experience her pulsations as if her body were a pool into which somebody threw a stone so that she feels waves emanating from the core of her body onto her skin.

Text 6. The Transformation of Memory

Deborah says, "I feel this flooding-" she pulsates her hand against her chest as if waves of water swelled and shrank inside her, "it's like throwing a pebble in the water?" she squeezes a pebble in her hand and tosses it out, "and I feel the rings coming out to my surface-" she lays out three concentric curves layered across the front of her body with the side of her arm on "rings" and then embraces the space she has just laid out on "surface," "the- of the flood," she makes wavelets with the side of her hand. "And I feel-" she runs her right hand down her left arm, "it happens a lot in exercise class when I get to a certain place where- I feel cool and wet," she runs her left hand down her right arm. "All the outside of me feels cool and wet."

She is not flooded; there is no water; there are no rings; there is nothing to embrace; her skin is not wet. But are these gestures now entirely metaphoric? Somatic therapy has returned memory to sensation in order to transform sensation into a different emotion. Keleman brings about this transformation by the process historian Frank van Vree calls "mnemonic tuning" (2013, 4) in which the shared reality he and Deborah jointly compose changes the present as well as memory. Deborah's engagement in this transformative experience is so vivid that she perceives her skin as if it were wet, flowing with water, filling her body. Thus, Deborah transforms fear into pleasure.

If all psychological disturbances are disturbances of memory, then, as psychologist Adam Phillips argues, cures are re-memberings (Phillips 1994, 69), alterations in the mimetic series in which the body participates. Deborah has not broken her body out

of the mimetic series in order to forget the past by the process of repression, nor has the past taken her over without her volition by the process of repetition compulsion. Rather each series of self-imitations results in the modulating temporal entity we call the body. The body is not an object; it is a process. The mystery is not how the process moves itself and changes; the mystery is how the process holds itself still. The body achieves the effect of stillness, of stability or constancy, by repeating itself, by what philosopher Michel Foucault calls the “impertinent vibration of identities” (1977, 183).

Acts of narration hover between this impertinence: making the copies perfect, and the impertinence of interfering with the past: making the copies imperfect. By making the copies imperfect, by interfering with my past, I break out of the thrall of memory and fabricate the mimetic series of my body.

Time and the Body

Personal experience narratives repeat the past in the present as embodied experience. The effect is to collapse time. Corporeally speaking, there is no past, only an organization of sensory modalities in the present. The capacity of the narrating body to inhabit its past as present gives somatic psychology its chance to change experience by intervening in the body’s repetition of its past. Personal experience narratives fabricate a self, not because they represent a past self, the narrator-as-character, or because they present a present self, the narrator-as-storyteller, but because narratives fold time so that the narrating body projects its past toward its ongoingly corporeally imagined future.

Notes

- 1 I started thinking about this material twenty years ago and presented early versions of it under various titles at the American Folklore Society Meetings in Eugene, Oregon, the Society for Visual Anthropology Meetings in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the Modern Language Association Meetings in Los Angeles, California, in 1998 but it received its full development over the course of my residency at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in Uppsala in 1999 during which I presented aspects of it as invited lectures at the Karolinska Institute for Clinical Neuroscience as well as the Department of Ethnology at the University of Stockholm. I have presented later versions as papers at American Anthropological Association Meetings in Chicago, Illinois, in 1999 and in Washington, DC, in 2001; and as invited lectures at the School of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 2006 and at the Visions and Ventures Symposium, Nebraska Wesleyan University, Lincoln, Nebraska in 2008. Its final and most complete presentation was as an invited lecture at the Centre of Excellence in Cultural Theory, the Universities of Tartu and Tallin, Estonia, in 2013. I would like to thank the Swedish Collegium for granting me time to write and my fellow scholars at the Universities of Tartu and Tallin for deepening my thinking. My colleague, visual anthropologist Peter Biella, has kindly converted the reel-to-reel audio-video tapes into film clips for the computer, reframing the images to exclude faces in the interests of privacy, and extracting stills of hand gestures for such publications as have included them. This most recent version benefited from the salutary critiques of the two outside readers.

- 2 Current narrative conventions use the term *storyworld* to describe the narrative reality of the story, which I have elsewhere called the *taleworld* (Ryan & Thon 2014). This is distinct from the act of narration, which I have called the *storyrealm*, itself distinct from the larger discursive occasion on which the story is told, the realm of conversation in my earlier work (1987, viii-ix). I shall distinguish them here as storyworld, storytelling, and storytelling occasion.
- 3 I invoke here the phenomenological “I,” not to limit the claim to my own personal experience but to acknowledge the first-personhood of anybody, of any embodied person, enmeshed in her world.
- 4 See Transcription Conventions in Appendix.

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Appendix: Transcription Devices

I transcribed the words and gestures of this interaction from videotapes Stanley Keleman had made by his technician Terry McClure. Publication is with the consent of both Keleman himself and his client, to whom I have given the pseudonym Deborah Abrahamson. The transcription is designed to preserve the intonational patterns of speaking rather than the grammatical patterns of writing. Sometimes, for instance, grammatical questions have down intonations at the end or grammatical sentences end in up intonations. The breaks between phrases into which I have written descriptions of gestures and postures preserve pauses in speaking.

Capital letter	Start of utterance
.	Down intonation at end of utterance
?	Up intonation at end of utterance
-	Self-corrections
=	Absence of obligatory end pause
()	Doubtful hearings
italics	Editorial notes
line break	Pause in speaking

Responses

Reconfiguring Trauma Memories in Narrative

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My response focuses on three dimensions of Katharine Young's essay. First, she observes, memories are not perfect copies but instead, for the person remembering a traumatic experience, are inscribed in the body. More specifically, memories are produced through gestures as well as words. Revisiting memories through narrative and gesture points to larger, allegorical truths that refer to and shape existing conceptualizations of experience. Thus, interpretations of the past are open to reconsideration, reclamation, and reconfiguration. Second, Young's discussion encompasses the intersections among multiple temporalities *and* multiple spatialities in trauma memory narratives. Third, although she writes about a trauma narrative in the context of an individual somatic therapy session, Young's comments have a bearing on our understanding of narratives about cultural trauma more generally. Young's observations make an important contribution to our understanding of how people revisit and potentially transform their current understandings of past traumas.

In my narrative research, I found the concept of allegory useful for describing how personal stories reference, acquire, and develop significance beyond recounting a particular event. Young cites my claim that "allegory in personal narrative is, 'not restricted to or even accountable to the experiences described'" (p. 12; Shuman 2005, 71). I want to use this

opportunity to clarify that allegories are not necessarily accountable to the truth or verifiability of the events they reference. However, they are accountable to norms, values, ideologies, and what are sometimes described as dominant narratives. When we remember, we draw on conscious as well as unconscious references to the past. When we assign meaning to an event in the past, we draw not only on the denotational references to particular people and events, but also indexical and allegorical references associated with complex cultural categories and ideologies. Stanley Keleman integrates these referential systems when he offers his "speculation" and suggests, "maybe you were afraid of whatever is adult. And told not to be" (p. 6). Here, Keleman references other dominant narratives of children, especially girls, being put down in a particular social, cultural, and historical context. With Keleman's help, Deborah fashions an alternative story, a possible counter-memory, that can contradict hegemonic or dominant narratives (Hirsch & Smith 2002, 7; Borland & Shuman 2020).

Young argues that alternative stories are created by what she describes as the "double anchorage in two different times." As Young's account clarifies, narrative memories encompass multiple temporalities and multiple spatialities, including gestural space. The fusion of space and time recalls M. M. Bakhtin's concept of chronotope, the conjunction of temporalities and spatialities, or time-space (1981, 84). Discussions of chronotopes more often focus on heteroglossia or the conjunction of voices (see Blommaert 2015, 113 for a discussion of space and time). Chronotopes are potentially powerful sites; sometimes, as the fork in the road, they define possible alternative

realities. Often, we cannot change the circumstances that constrained our choice of one path or the other in the past, but we can reclaim the allegorical message attached to a chronotope that assigns blame, recognizes heroism, and/or defines us as characters in our own stories.

As part of a therapy session, the gestures Young discusses are initially disconnected or disaggregated from narrative. Deborah, the narrator Young observes, begins with an exercise about scale—making herself bigger and then smaller through gesture. Even disaggregated from the narrative, performing the gesture serves as a reenactment, connecting Deborah to her past. Deborah uses gestural space to inhabit “the virtual space of the storyworld as the character who is herself” (p. 11). Intervening in the memory, as Keleman does, opens up the possibility for reconsidering those cultural categories. As Young notes, “this is the pivotal moment in the somatic therapy”: the moment when the therapist intervenes in and reconfigures the client’s traumatic memory.

Young’s model has profound implications for how we understand both individual traumatic memories and collective trauma. If, as Young points out, the point of making body memory conscious memory is “to interfere with it” (p. 16), then I would suggest that the same is true for collective trauma—the point is to consciously retell narratives toward the purpose of reconfiguring and reclaiming the narratives. Although scholars from many disciplines have written about cultural traumas, very few have attended to gesture as a form of embodied trauma memory (Chare 2015). Of course, acts of reconfiguration and reclamation are undertaken not only by the person who experi-

enced the trauma but also by witnesses, observers, legal authorities, and scholars (including folklorists). Not all “interfere” in ways that serve the interests of the person who suffered the trauma.

Both narratives and gestures are incursions of the past into the present, producing multiple temporalities and spatialities. The process of tracing the gestures to narratives and reintegrating them creates the possibility for reconfiguring memories in the present.

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