

# **Fat as an Ally**

Diploma work presented by  
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in partial fulfilment of requirements  
towards a diploma in  
Process Oriented Psychology

Zürich, April 1997

## **To Eyal, my beloved**

### **Acknowledgements and thanks to**

Perlie, for lovingly and expertly correcting and for her support; Mario, Verena and Joseph for reading, commenting, supporting and loving; Timmy for a very special being and for teaching me more about the beauty of fat.

To my beloved teachers of the heart: Arny, Max and Jean-Claude.

To all my friends and colleagues, especially those from other cultures, who taught me so much about myself and about them.

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## Introduction

Let me start with a dream, a part of one, which I dreamt about a year ago:

I am meeting with a gynecologist, a fertility expert, to talk about my inability to get pregnant. She's an elderly lady with silver hair. She asks me how much I weigh. I answer: "85 kilos." She says: "You should know that the upper limit is 90 kilos - after that the weight presses down on your tubes and closes them, and the egg cannot get through."

I woke up thinking: "That's it. I'm too fat, too heavy, I'll never be able to get pregnant, I have to diet and lose weight immediately."

I took this dream to a therapy session, convinced that I understood it, already worried about not being able to diet and discipline myself enough. In the session, after some hesitation, I was able to drop my initial (primary process) interpretation of the dream and go into it again, trusting in the unknown this time. What came out was the feeling that I was close to my limit (90 kilos in the dream) of putting my weight into conflicts, i.e., of getting into every conflict around me with my full weight, that soon doing that will become infertile for me, will block my new ideas (my eggs).

I choose this dream to start my paper because, in the special way that dreams have, it contains the whole of my process in it. And it contains all the parts of this paper too: the public and the personal aspects of being fat; the inner critic; the personal power that I came in touch with through working on my weight, as well as its limits; the bigger context of fertility, bringing forth new life, new ideas; through learning about the ally aspects of my weight. All are to be found in this dream. This dream, although dreamt quite late in the timespan covered by this paper, is timeless in that it holds in it the whole of my life myth, development and the stages or aspects of my process around being fat.

This paper is about my life-long experiences with body-shape and fat. It is also about being a woman in our society. It is also about the emergence of the spiritual in my life, about the integration of body and soul in a culture that believes in their separation.

I have been concerned with and working intensively on my weight, eating habits and body image for the last 13 years, and I will share some of these experiences in this paper. I have been reading and studying feminism and cultural themes since high school. I have been active in various forms of the feminist movement in Israel from that time, too. I have dedicated the majority of my philosophy studies to an intensive search into feminist philosophy and cultural critique. And, I have been working on myself in various psychological settings for the last 13 years. This will be, I hope, the reaping of the efforts, interest and love I have put into this work.

Because being a fat woman doesn't happen only in the private realm of one's personal body in our society, but is also a social and cultural issue, I have chosen to focus on the minority aspects of being fat. I will also try to bring in some of my understanding of how the psychological development of women in our society happens and how that affects different body issues. I also would like to show how being fat has become an ally in my life, showing me the way to integrate my sexuality, spirituality, intellect, personal power, and history. How it has helped me to become more whole, and how it keeps showing me the way ahead.

Much of my understanding of my own and others' processes, as well as most of the theoretical background I have, come from Arnold Mindell's extensive teachings and from many of his colleagues and students, who became my teachers and mentors. The theory and practice of processwork have given me, for the first time in my life, a fullness of view which allows me to bring together and understand all levels and aspects of my experience, in myself and in others, in relationships and in groups. I have written here whatever parts of the theory I thought necessary for understanding the context of what I have written (mostly in the form of notes), but have chosen not to give a full exposition of the theory of processwork, since I find it has already been done extensively and well in the past.\*

Working on my fat and my food addictions was my beginning point and wanting to understand them was my main motive for choosing to write my diploma paper on this subject. However, in the course of collecting material, reading, writing and "cooking" with the paper, I realised that things had changed very much in me. The addiction,

starting out as the main subject and focus, transformed and became a part of the process, an aspect of the ally, of the way of learning about my wholeness. I am not only a fat woman, I am much much more than that, and although fat has been a huge ally in my life, it has not been the only one. Other aspects of my personal and collective history, being a woman, being a Jew, are also very important, and worth their own papers. Fat has taken front stage for a while in my life, but I think other aspects have and will come forth to teach me and also become my allies.

## **Fat as a Minority Issue and as a Feminist Issue**

Minority psychology and social activism have been developed in the last half-century mainly by African-American scholars and activists as a result of and in support of their long struggle for equal rights. Most of my awareness of minority issues comes from African-American (though also people from other minority groups, Indian, African, gays, disabled people) teachers and friends<sup>1</sup> through the medium of group-process and diversity awareness.

In this part I will draw on my theoretical background, as well as my personal experience, both as victim/minority group member - in my identities as a fat woman and as a Jewish woman, and also as a white, educated and mainstream Israeli, my identity of belonging to the mainstream/perpetrator group.

It is my belief that in order to gain awareness about minority issues and to be able to work with them, I had to experience both sides of the conflict in my own body. Group-processes in different settings have given me the opportunity to experience my various identities and roles. With time, I also learned how to switch between those different parts and, even more important, how I am always both victim and perpetrator. Working on my inner conflicts around how I look, am I important, am I loved, am I loveable, can I be accepted being all that I am, and bringing these inner conflicts out into the transforming vessel of the group-process, has been a very important aspect of my process of coming to terms with who I am.

Being fat and being a woman are both minority issues in our society. Being fat is an aspect of being a woman, a minority issue not in terms of number, but in terms of importance and place in the general culture, as well as the value attached to the different cultural characteristics of both gender roles. Fat women are doubly marginalized since they do not conform to mainstream standards and views of how women should look. Much has been written<sup>2</sup> about the visual aspects of patriarchy, especially in feminist critiques of art, photography, cinema and the media. Mainstream culture in the West is dominated by the visual channel and so are also the different forms of visual representations of women. It is mostly men, within the framework of patriarchy, who decide which types of the

representations of women are spread. Whether we are dealing with art, films, television, fashion or advertising, most of the decision-makers are men, immersed in patriarchal thinking, psychology and value system, and the result is that men's point of views, judgements and expectations of women are dominant, and not that of women's.

The role of the media in this field cannot be exaggerated. The world-wide boom in information and media which took place in the last 20 years, spread its own images of women, certain kinds of images only. In magazines, films, television, advertisements and books and, lately of course, the internet, the same models, actresses and female images are duplicated by the millions and represent the narrowest possible range of female images. In terms of weight alone, these images represent the lowest 5% of the female weight scale, with a tendency to lower and lower weight over the last 30 years. (Naomi Wolf, p. 185) Hardly any other skin colours, body shapes, age signs or other markings are ever shown, unless it's about some pathology, deviation or correction, for instance, in articles about cosmetic "corrective" surgery, or the famous "before and after" pictures.

In her book *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf writes about the history and development of the different aspects of the myth and why it has come about. One of the most convincing arguments she makes is an historical and cultural explanation of the emergence of the "Beauty Myth". Wolf explains that this happened after the second wave of feminism, which took place the 50's and 60's, and was influenced largely by Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, and by the creation of the women's rights movement with its consciousness raising groups. During the 60's, more and more women started making in-ways into the once closed circles of power and money, by getting higher education in once purely "masculine" fields like business, law and politics, and started, in growing numbers, to demand and enjoy their share of that power. The reaction to this new tendency, in the form of a massive backlash to women's rights and equality, took the shape of the Beauty Myth. Wolf writes :

*"By simply dropping the official weight one stone (= 7 kilos) below most women's natural level, and redefining a woman's womanly shape as "too fat", a wave of self hatred swept over*



*First World women, a reactionary psychology was perfected, and a major industry was born. It suavely converted the historical groundswell of female success with a mass conviction of female failure, a failure defined as implicit in womanhood itself." (Naomi Wolf, p. 186)*

Fat women, big women, older women, different types of women, are virtually unseen in the media. Most of what's written around women's images goes in the direction of correction, prevention and camouflage of the most natural phenomenon of all - change. We are told and shown incessantly how to hide, cover, correct, and camouflage who we really are: round-stomached, big-thighed, round-faced, spotted, lined, coloured, scarred, big, small, droopy, long, flat, hanging breasts, all the possible variations of the human body.

The consequences of the Beauty Myth are many. If you look into teenage culture in the last 10-15 years, you will find a growing obsession with weight and looks. Girls start dieting and obsessing about weight at an ever younger age, and these behaviour patterns are spreading eastward from America to Europe and less, but in steadily growing numbers, to Asia. I recall being shocked to hear that a friend's daughter, a bean-like 7 year old, had announced that she didn't want to wear her two-piece swimming-suit anymore "because my belly is so big and it sticks out."

Teenage girls come into a stage of life where they are no more identified as children and not yet identified as grown-ups. 'Many physical, hormonal and emotional changes start happening, and you feel you have no control over what is happening to you'. Teenagers are bombarded by endless replications the same female images, in which they can hardly find themselves reflected. At the same time, the field, in the form of conscious and unconscious influence from the media, peer groups and parental expectations, exerts an enormous pressure to start conforming to the standards of the Beauty Myth and the roles of women in our society. Weight is one of the few factors that seem more or less controllable in a world where things seem to be more and more chaotic and uncontrollable: wars break out, the economic situation is unclear, the streets and schools are unsafe, and if you belong to a minority life is even less safe and controllable. Lacking other forms of initiation into adulthood, which are missing in our western culture, and yet craving them deeply, young girls get initiated into the world of dieting, food control, and

weight watching as a means of bringing some sense and order into their chaos. Girls, (and boys do too but they have a different set of standards) want to be accepted and loved, they want desperately to belong, and by conforming to the demands of the Iron Maiden which represents, according to Wolf, the rigid and unyielding frame into which standard female images have been confined under the Beauty Myth, they can belong to the biggest minority of them all: Women.

A friend recalls being a confused, insecure 14 year old, wanting very much to be accepted. It was clear to her, she recalls, that the way to do that was through dieting and losing weight. So she did her first diet, aptly called the "Hollywood Diet", lost 2 kilos and was happy, until she regained them, and more. She, like so many other women, was initiated into the female, grown-up world of the diet roller coaster and food addictions.

The connection between dieting and food addictions has been studied and this connection has been shown in several ways.<sup>3</sup> This will be further discussed in the chapter about eating addictions. Suffice it to say that the combination of inner critical voices amplified by the strong cultural message to be thin and ever thinner and the almost total lack of role models for femaleness and femininity, women who are successful in ways other than being beautiful, create a hole in the soul of many young women, which is often then filled with food and incessant thoughts about food - which is what dieting amounts to.

The amount of time and energy, the volume of obsessing and guilt feelings spent around various aspects of beauty, not only dieting and eating, but also exercising, shopping and using cosmetics, as well as the growing readiness to go into painful, dangerous, expensive and totally redundant cosmetic surgery, waste women's resources that could be otherwise be invested in their own interests: We spend so much time and money on dieting and diet products, support groups or private dieticians, only to discover again and again, that at the end of each dieting period there is a reactionary eating period which inevitably results in more weight gain. We fight futilely with the signs of age and life experience on our skins, spend time, money and energy applying and removing products that, per definition<sup>4</sup>, cannot make any changes, since any such product would be considered a medication - needing health authority approval and

a doctor's prescription.

We exercise, some of us to the point of addiction, because we are brainwashed to think, among other things that "it's good for us" and for losing weight. We risk injuries, since most of this exercising does not come as a real need from inside our bodies, but is instead an idea put into us from outside.

More and more of us literally risk our lives by undergoing cosmetic surgery which is totally unnecessary, convinced that the pain and trauma will result in the change we so long for and which never really comes, since it is not experienced from inside. On the contrary - we are encouraged to believe that acceptance and love will come if we only look right.

The narrowing standards and ever changing demands on how we should look create a breathless feeling of always having to chase an ever changing image - an imminent and repeating experience of failure. Every season the new trend, look or craze sends women out to search and spend time and money in order to fill these demands. Since most women do not look like models, and do not enjoy the benefits of existing mainly as images which are often retouched or computer manipulated, we are locked into a more and more impossible race to be who we are not, if only we could do "just five minutes in the morning and in the evening," "just a little effort for the benefit of your body," etc., etc., - ad infinitum.

We are driven by spirits and images that do not exist in reality, since even the most so-called "perfect" ones are computer manipulated to look skinnier and more perfect than they really are<sup>5</sup>. Their access to money and power - top models are among the highest earning women on this planet - makes us dream about them and project on to them our own personal power - as yet inaccessible to us. They have it all - we have nothing. We dream that with the fame and money and power come also love and acceptance and stable relationships, while in reality, most of these women spend most of their time alone, and the sad secret of this "dream" profession is that many of them are anorexic or show anorexic behaviour<sup>6</sup>. They do not have it any better than we do.

The worst part of it all is the depth of internalised oppression that most women experience as a result of growing-up in such a field. Internalised oppression is the way in which a connection is formed between the outer world, the specific culture and its messages of right and wrong, and our inner feelings and personal psychology. This is where the Feminist Movement claimed that the private is the political, meaning that our most inner feelings and intimate behaviours are influenced by the (patriarchal) culture - via internalised oppression. Beginning at the earliest age, we are told and taught, by our parents, family members, teachers, and later different forms of media, what is "feminine" and what is not. What is correct for us, and what not. What will bring us "the right kind of man," and what not.

From very early on, our mothers, who are mostly themselves part of the ever self-perpetuating patriarchal system, try to teach and ingrain in us the subtle rules and implicit expectations by restraining our wild, spontaneous impulses. Look at how young girls are still scolded for being wild, energetic and powerful, and how they are rewarded for showing feelings of a certain kind only, for being quiet or demonstrating domestic behaviours.

Even if the mother herself is a wild character who has been able to go against the stream and live her personal power, the girl will most probably get the restraining education from other "well wishing" agents, and in any case is bound to encounter it from outside, from the world, sooner or later. Women who show their wildness and aggressiveness publicly still risk being put into psychiatric institutions, losing their children and their place in the world. So we learn to adapt. We develop this incredible inner critic, which gives us a running commentary on how we are doing, how we are measuring-up to the standards. This inner criticism is very strongly influenced from outside, from all the warning, scolding and educational messages sent by almost every magazine, television program or movie we watch.

The way I have experienced it, and no doubt many other women too, is that the main message internalised is that we are never good enough as we are, and this is especially true around weight. No matter how much we weigh - we could always weigh a little less. No matter how much effort we put into exercising, we could always do a

little more, which would then show by more weight loss, tighter muscles and skin. This focus on weight and shape as our saviour, our happiness, creates a situation in which all our inner resources and personal power are projected on the almost unattainable and certainly un-sustainable body-dream. We never live in the here and now. Our pains and anger are numbed and dulled by eating, the resulting guilt feelings are countered by a new resolve to diet, and what remains is an always-present, background depression, which is strongly connected to and supported by our inner-critic voices.

Simply the realisation of how often and how heavily these voices criticise me about what, how much, how often I eat, how I look, how much I weigh, how I hate different parts of my body, was a shock for me. The experience of having to occupy an empty seat between two occupied ones, knowing in advance that because of my size I will not be able to avoid touching or even having to push my neighbours, became a terrifying, humiliating, absolutely painful one. Eating on the street or in public places is for many of us almost impossible, since our inner critical voices get amplified by outer critical looks and scornful remarks. I was forever thinking that everybody seeing me eating will be thinking "hasn't she had enough by now?", "she certainly shouldn't be eating that". I know that I certainly still think along these lines when I see big people eating. When I started listening with awareness to the details, I was overwhelmed by the sheer amount of criticism I heard in my head all day, every day.

I realized how this inner criticism then spreads out to every realm of my life. Not only how we look, but also how we function as women, mothers, wives, colleagues, lovers. No part of life is safe from the comments of that old black crow, perched on your shoulder, quacking in your ear. You are a constant failure, in whatever you attempt to do or be. Rarely did I find a counter-voice, of a therapist, a friend or a teacher, who knew how to support me and love me for what I am. Because of that lack, you might, like me, tend more and more to look for the soothing feelings through eating, through food on your lips and tongue and mouth, comforting, loving.

I needed both the feminist ideas and convictions and the theory and praxis of working towards minority awareness in order to fully understand my being a fat woman in western society. Because of the enormous cultural pressure on women, understanding what

happens only on the personal psychological level is not enough. We are always influenced by the field<sup>7</sup>, the world, and are deeply connected with them, and things, therefore, cannot be understood as solely personal.

## The Psychological Level - Food Addictions

In my journey around and into my fatness, I had to bring together the inner and the outer aspects of it again and again. Although, as I said before, it has been my experience that the journey cannot be made only on the inside, that does not mean that the inside is not important - on the contrary. This journey has taken many turns and has taken many forms. During the last 13 years, I have worked on myself and on my relationships with different therapists and facilitators.

A big part of my understanding of my process comes from the extended period of therapy I spent with Yehudit Sobol in Israel. Much of the recognition and understanding of myself as a second generation<sup>8</sup> to a holocaust survivor, with all the related patterns of behaviour, fears and pain, comes from this work. Beyond the strong connections existing between food and love in many cultures and families, food is an extremely emotional subject for someone who has suffered from famine during the war. Food took on an extra meaning in the relationship between my mother and myself, adding another layer of to the existing pattern of food as a replacement for other needs.

It is so common and easy for us to become addicted to food because this is the first replacement for love and warmth that we encounter. It is much easier to prepare and give baby a bottle, than to be patient and have enough trust to believe that one can find out and satisfy, eventually, the baby's specific needs. Those will be, of course, many times related to hunger, but not always. I think that our western culture's tendency to try food first and always, supports the tendency to replace food for love and warmth. In addition, for many of our mothers, victims of a cold and distant upbringing themselves, food **does** become the accepted way to replace giving us warmth and love and for accepting us the way we are, and we learn very early to exchange sweetness in the mouth with being cuddled, warmth in the bottle for warmth in our mother's arms. Later, when the attempts to educate and mould us into mainstream society's expectations inevitably result in hurt feelings, shame and pain, we are already conditioned to numb the difficult feelings through the comforts of food. The foundation has been laid. On it, all

types of food addictions and distortions will later find their place. The expectation to become "good little girls" inevitably result in hurt feelings, shame and pain, for no one is born a "perfect little girl", one only becomes one out of fear of losing mom's love.

So many times I've experienced, in myself and in other women, this deep connection between the lack of self-love and acceptance and food. For years, I would think about the next meal, or become physically hungry, when I was really hurt or angry. Only with much careful work<sup>9</sup>, could I slowly, step after step, discover first that there were feelings and needs behind these hunger attacks, then, what their nature was and how early I had started repressing them, and, only much later, how to deal with them without using food. To this day I still need and use food as a replacement for having feelings or expressing needs, as a 'hole filler' in the most physical sense.

This hole in the middle of oneself, often mentioned by many addicts and not only by addicts, is created, I believe by the early rejection of our essence, of our wild selves, of our very specialness. For women in our society, this rejection is especially harsh and harmful, since girls are expected from a very young age to conform to society's norms of feminine behaviour, i.e. be quiet, receptive, non-aggressive, tame, helpful and related. All the rejected parts and experiences form what Marion Woodman calls a 'homeless soul'<sup>10</sup>, and the body which should have been the home to this soul, is abandoned. This body goes on living having a hole in its middle, a hole which tends, in our society and times, to be filled with food or other substances like alcohol ('spirit')<sup>11</sup>, drugs (the 'high') or medications ('uppers', 'downers' or just plain 'pain killers'). These common names all point to the altered states of consciousness which are often linked to the use of these substances.

Processwork teaches us<sup>12</sup> that every addiction is an expression of a yearning for a special state. Addictive substances, food included, are taken as an attempt to recreate these yearned-for altered states of consciousness. For women, it often has to do with disavowed parts which were cut-off by the strong social pressure to conform, and with the pain which results from that.

Lately I discovered, in yet another exercise on addiction awareness<sup>13</sup>



, that eating chocolate and marshmallows produces in me an altered-state which brought back a very old memory - the feeling of resting my cheek on my mother's soft palm. I was very surprised. I had no idea that that was what I was yearning for when I ate marshmallows, or let them slowly melt into my hot cocoa drink. This is the body-home Woodman is referring to, where the wisdom of the Great Mother is stored, the feelings and emotions which hide in the altered-states we so much yearn for.

*"...something in the addict reacts to the food and they are compulsively drawn to or repelled by its energy. "I'll die if I eat, I'll die if I don't." They may be trapped into going with the compulsion (bingeing), rigidly withstanding it (starving), or be alternately attracted to or repelled by it (bulimic eating and vomiting). Whatever their reaction, food is the magnet around which their lives circulate. In that context, food symbolises the life force, the Great Mother, with which the wisdom of the body is desperately attempting to connect."*<sup>14</sup>

Of course, things are even more complicated than what I can describe here. Food and eating are not only soothing, but have also a punishing, pain-creating function. This pain can be physical or emotional, resulting from an over-filled stomach after bingeing, the cramps of vomiting or the pains of starving, and can also be emotional, suffering from guilt and shame over broken decisions and inner resolve "to do it right this time". And beyond that,

*"Once the voice crying at the heart of the addiction is heard, then the bingeing and starving and vomiting can be seen for what they are: an attempt to obliterate the crying. Then the physical food need no longer tantalize... spiritual food can feed the soul."*<sup>15</sup> **On Being Fat and Sexy**

Food, eating and sexuality are very closely connected. Eating (suckling) is one of the first bodily sensations that we experience, and it is closely connected with feelings of satiation and satisfaction (life) and hunger (death). These very early sensations, I believe<sup>16</sup>, are the first to organise our world into different kinds of energies and experiences - those which are pleasant to us and those which are not. We start out as creatures which experience the world, internally

and externally through the body and its sensations: warm, cold, hunger, thirst, pain, comfort and discomfort. Some of our discomfort signals are interpreted by our caretakers as hunger signals, and so we learn to connect the inner discomfort of hunger with the outer comfort of feeding. Other discomforts require the holding and warmth of our caretakers - experienced again through the body. Since the different kinds of needs-satisfaction are so close in the beginning, the connection in the body, in the deep memory of the muscles and bones, stays very close and intimate. In many cultures and for many people, therefore, food remains sensualized and sexualised for the rest of our lives.

Food, eating and sexuality are tied together for me through this deep connection in the body, in its inner life and in its existence in society. A very big part of our sexual behaviour and feelings are influenced by our culture<sup>17</sup> - our families, and what happens outside of them. Mainstream society in the West, with its particular underlying patriarchal norms and values, influences us enormously through its tacit and explicit expectations, in our sexual behaviour as in any other behaviour. We learn very early what is right and what is wrong behaviour, which parts can be touched and which should not be, what is clean and what is dirty about our bodies, what smells nice and what doesn't. These are all aspects of self-acceptance, taught to us consciously or unconsciously by our parents and families. The different stresses put in different families and cultures on these various behaviours decide very much how well the little boy or girl will feel with her body later on. And, as a result, also how well they will be able to function and feel sexually.

One of the results for me, I found, was the feeling of not daring to have needs of my own, or daring to voice them, not being able to say or even feel for myself when I wanted sex and when I needed to be held and loved, or even just kind, non-judgmental support. I tended to confuse my need for love and support with sex. Ours is a culture which confines love and closeness between people to a very narrow range of relationships. We grow up learning that only certain kinds of closeness are allowed, and that sex is almost the only kind of intimacy allowed. Any other kind of expression of bodily closeness and warmth is either taboo, or otherwise negatively judged. Same-sex friendships, physical closeness between friends which is not sexual, closeness and affection in therapeutic relationships are all

examples of relationships in which confusion, insecurity and a lot of edges reign. As a result, it is very easy for a young inexperienced girl, as I was, to mix sexual relationships with love and intimacy. Like me, more and more teenagers find themselves having sexual relationships long before they are inwardly ready for them, and with far too many partners because sex is the only form of intimacy we know. Good examples for other life styles or role models for other ways so painfully lacking in our culture.

Another aspect of sexuality was for me the feeling of being inadequate, of not being beautiful enough to be sexy or always worrying about how I look in bed, never being able to let go and relax into the experience itself. This is another strong effect of the Beauty Myth, in which only certain types of images are linked with sex, and beauty is sexualised to the point that we cannot imagine seeing a beautiful woman and not thinking her sexy, but even stronger, finding it very difficult to see so called "non-beauties" as sexy.

Men and women, when they function as carriers of the patriarchy, represent the outer critical voices, and exercise this power in relationships through remarks on other women's looks as well as their own, with or without clothes, enhancing the already pervasive inner, critical voices. Thus they cooperate with mainstream society's perpetrator role, rarely being aware that by taking on this role they are furthering and replicating the same oppression from which they themselves suffer so much. Only when I became aware of how much I put myself down, I cut myself short, I think of myself as ugly, stupid, unworthy, only then could I begin to understand how oppression comes to be, and how I have an active part of it every time I do it to myself.

All these combine together to create an inner and outer atmosphere in which being a big woman means you are denied the permission to feel and behave sexy. You lack role models who can show you how to do it. There are no strong images around of goddesses of abundance<sup>18</sup> like those prevailing in Renaissance art (in paintings from Raphael, Titian, and later, Rubens), or those common in other cultures, to show us how big women carry their bodies: big breasts thrusting, huge bottoms swaying proudly, vast soft arms and thighs enfolding, incarnating fertility and love itself<sup>19</sup>. Left alone to your

own inner demons of criticism, every act of undressing, every attempt to dress sexy or try to feel beautiful and attractive is doomed. Fat women are not encouraged to be sexy. In fact the feeling is of ridicule, of outright offence, to the fact that a big woman would even want to be considered sexy and attractive.

Giving myself the permission to be sexy, to flirt, to fantasise and enjoy sex, was one of the most liberating and empowering steps in learning to accept myself the way I am - a big woman. Discovering how to dress sexily, what to shop for, daring to wear the "forbidden" clothes ("heavy women should never wear tight clothes..."), to flaunt my bigness, are all aspects of it.

Many many times I found it hard to believe, sometimes didn't even hear, compliments from men, including my husband. It took us ten years of painstaking hard work to come to the feeling that we can relax in bed, that we need not make love if we do not feel like it, that we each have the right to say no at any point. It took me the greater part of these ten years to actually believe that I am sexy, could be beautiful, attractive. I had to learn to open up to my friends and hear them saying over and over again, and **believe** them that they actually find me beautiful. It took numerous group processes, in which I came out strongly with all my wildness, anger, rage, and was always reassured and accepted by my peers. It took long years of building my trust, in the Tao, in myself, in other people. Time and time again, I would slip back into the bad feelings and the depression, hating my body and out-of-control eating. It took many many repetitions and cycles, to slowly change and recede somewhat into the background.

Still, I find working on this chapter painful and difficult. The denial of my sexuality, the mere possibility of my body being sexual and attractive has been a very painful area in my life, and this pain returns ever so often. It is my belief and experience that much of my addictive eating has happened around the denial of this pain. Again and again I'm stuck, blocked by painful images and yearning, deep yearning that things could be different, easier, warmer, that I would not feel always so outstanding in my powerful body, so alone in wanting to flirt around, in my need to be seen, acknowledged, found attractive by other men and women. And I do not stand alone.

## **Goddesses of Abundance - The Mythical Level**

Beyond our personal history and psychology lies the mythical, or transpersonal level of our being<sup>20</sup>. This deep level of phantasy, dreaming and experience, within the body and without it, plays a huge role in our lives. These myths influence our deepest yearnings and secret dreams, give us hope and show us the way. They appear as our childhood dreams and our earliest memories, in life-long chronic symptoms, and as symbols which deeply fascinate us in literature, art, films, whether of our own creation or others'.

When you work for a very long time on different aspects of the same process, it becomes obvious that not all of it is personal. Some aspects of working on being a fat woman are time spirits<sup>21</sup>, mythical figures of love, beauty, wildness, rage or revenge, which have to do with the deep changes taking place on the collective psychological level of our society. The growing search for meaning, the growing fear of ruining our planet to the point of self-annihilation, the growing anger and impatience that many women experience towards men, or maybe better said, which our feminine aspects experience towards the power-driven aspects of the collective patriarchy, are all parts of it.

In my work in groups and through my dreams I have encountered many of these figures. I have become, at times, a blood thirsty avenger of everything that ever happened to a woman at the hands of a man. I was often very angry and pained by the oppression, ridicule and shame which older, fatter, unusual, disabled, wild women suffer because they do not fit the "standard". I was also often a big mama to everybody. In my dreams I am very often the seductress. In my fantasy, sometimes the fire which burns all, sometimes the disembodied love which heals all. I have momentarily become all these figures and through them learned much about the deeper reaches of myself.

Processwork teaches us that everything that happens to us and that we experience as unwanted and unintended disturbances is a part of us, albeit a less known one. Roles taken on during group conflict work, parts which come out in relationships, figures which come forth in dreams as well as figures which come up during single and inner work, are all parts of ourself, as well as of the field, the society

and environment which surrounds us. During group processes we may momentarily take on some of these roles, and thus experience them through our bodies. By participating in many group processes, by taking on many aspects of the conflicting roles and feelings around the men-women conflict and through other conflicts as well, I was able to learn a great deal about myself and about these conflicts, and to change through that. This was only possible due to the skillful and loving facilitation of many of my teachers and friends during group processes and seminars and I am very thankful to them.

For me, some of the strongest images of all are the ancient images of the fertility goddesses, like that of the Venus of Willendorf and numerous others, and their incarnations - all big, beautiful, self loving women. The actress Maria Sagerbrecht comes to my mind, or the unforgettable Juliet, in the French film *Romuel et Juliet*, about whom I wrote the following:

"Juliet walks, her thighs and hips sway from side to side in a soft 8-like motion. Juliet sleeps, her brown big breasts spread out on her body like puddles of ice-cream slowly melting. Juliet makes love, lying on her back, hugging her lover, he disappears between her arms and thighs, he smiles, he looks and touches her brown velvety skin, he falls in love with her again. Juliet has five children from five different men, all of whom crowd into her bed at night - they all want to sleep with her, touching her, snuggling under her arms and shoulders, holding each other for warmth, closeness, dreams. Juliet is my dream of a woman. She is my dream-come true of living in my body, of loving it and accepting it the size and shape it is. She embodies for me the way a woman is connected to earth with every step she takes, with every child she carries and brings into the world, feeds and nourishes and loves and accepts. She is my model of independent living, she raises her kids on her own, she has separated from all five husbands, and now she's doing it alone."

This quotation shows, by example, how certain works of art, stories, fairy tales or symbols can affect us deeply and become part of our dreaming and growing. Film heroines, literary figures who have affected us, stars, public figures, can all become our heroes, our role

models as to how to deal with certain situations, how we would like to be, look, live. They are all parts of us, waiting to be acknowledged as part of us, and lived out. They **are** us.

I am still learning from the mystery of bringing together my childhood dream, in which I am shot in the back and explode in warmth and light, with my long term process/symptom of being fat. How it is my weight that teaches me again and again, in ever deepening cycles, about the explosion, the heat and the light. It is no coincidence that my medium of action is relationship and groups - they are the biggest teachers and strongest vessels for conflict - the transformer of explosion into heat and light and eventually love.

## **Fat as an Ally**

The idea of an ally was adopted by Mindell<sup>22</sup> from Castaneda's books on Don Juan and from other shamanistic teachings. It is used in processwork through working with strong dream-figures which exist in the background of people's processes for long periods. Usually when one begins to work with them, they are perceived as enemies - hated, rejected, unacceptable figures or parts of oneself. If, with time, you succeed through working on these different ally figures in acquiring their friendship and even loving them, they may turn into powerful ally figures in your life. My loud, powerful, space-taking, heavy, fighting side - my hated and beloved ally - has been my biggest teacher in groups and conflicts on how to survive as a woman and a stranger in a strange land. In my development discovering that being fat can be an ally has been a crucial step, enabling me to write this paper. Encountering my ally and befriending her has enabled me not only to get to know my soft, loving, receptive side, to get to know my fears (which I could hardly acknowledge before). Last and not least, she opened the door into spirituality and showed me the way ahead.

As described in the chapter about minority issues, being a fat woman in our society automatically puts you into a victim position: rejected, criticised, ridiculed, and patronised. You get the feeling that either you are not seen or do not exist because you do not conform with society's standards of femaleness, or that you are being constantly looked at in a critical way. But, once you are able to leave this role by noticing, acknowledging and taking on the opposite one, that of the critic, even for short periods, you discover that being big and heavy can be a huge ally in your life.

This process has been a slow, painful, ever-cycling one but also an ecstatic one for me. I am still learning how my weight is my ally. It has guided me in learning about my personal power through my body. In my therapeutic work, I had many opportunities to experience my physical power, through different types of contact and mutual-pushing movement work. This is an extraordinary means for experiencing physical power through the body. (When done with a lot of awareness to feedback, the amount of force used can be accurately gauged to help the other side over their edge to



experience this power<sup>23</sup>). Especially for women in our society, it is an important, even crucial experience, since we have practically no formal or socially acceptable opportunities to experience our physical power in relation to others<sup>24</sup>. On the contrary. We grow-up in an atmosphere of fear of men's physical superiority, to the point that even very big and powerful women feel totally paralysed when they encounter force or violence.

I have learned through my body weight that I cannot be pushed around easily. In mixed groups of men and women, my size comes in handy as an enhancement of the radical, provocative remarks I make. It has been helping me to "burn my wood",<sup>25</sup> to give substance to my rage about the discrimination and marginalization of women's experiences, as well as other minority issues. Through having experienced it physically, in different kinds of bodywork, both as client and as therapist, I am not so intimidated by larger men. I know that if I get my heart into something, it is very difficult to move me. All that does not mean, of course, that I am not afraid of violent situations. I am. But I also know some about my own violence and aggressiveness, and my size has allowed me to go into such situations with a little more confidence and trust than before.

Since violence is a growing phenomenon in our society, especially among young people, I found it absolutely necessary and fascinating to learn something about my own violent parts as a reflection and a part of the society I live in. In our western rational, linear culture, our own aggressive impulses, perfectly natural as they may be, are brutally pushed away and marginalized by the education we receive and later by the norms of behaviour in mainstream society. This creates a primary identity which tends to be rational, quiet and peace loving, which, in turn, tends to constellate a secondary process of violence, loudness and hate. This also explains why we are so fascinated by violent scenes in the media and why we participate as spectators in sports like boxing and soccer which allow us, as spectators, to express our own aggressiveness and even our own violence in an organised, acceptable way. Thus, I had to find out about my own violence and aggressiveness before I could pick-up and identify with these aspects of myself consciously, in order to be able to choose when I wanted to use them. This is an ongoing process for me, which promises to reveal many more treasures in the future.

In recognising my hated fat as an ally, as an advantage, as giving me a specific vantage point on things, I was able to leave the victim role for periods and learn something about being on the privileged, powerful side. These are, for me, priceless opportunities to experience with awareness both sides of a polarity and to be able to learn from it something about the feelings of my opponents in a conflict. Thus, my experiencing my fat as an ally has taught me much about both sides of the victim/perpetrator duality, which governs much of our lives.<sup>26</sup>

I need a lot of space. Physical space. I have a strong voice, coming out of a big body. I make a presence. I cannot (and do not want anymore to) blend into the background. My body takes a stance for me, even at times when I feel small and unseen. I learned how to use my unusual appearance as a social/feminist statement about the diversity of female forms. To walk down the street and challenge the critical looks and remarks. To model for other women how to come out and defend your position, how to stand for yourself, how to go in and out of conflicts. My cultural background, growing up in Israel, a land of huge diversity of origins and cultures, hot and aggressive temperaments and very non-European communication styles, has also helped me in learning about conflicts and their resolution.

The learning has been happening for me on all levels. From the public or large group setting, to small group or dyad work in seminars, as well as working on myself alone, in meditation and dreams. For example: in one of the exercises I did the figure of a Sumo fighter came up. She moved in an absolutely grounded way, was huge (much bigger than I am), and was dead earnest about what she wanted and needed. I am absolutely fascinated by Sumo fights: the fighters' facial expressions, bodies, and the unbelievable agility and swiftness in their movements, once the fight starts. Those are all aspects of my ally figure, some nearer, some further away from my present identity.

I also learned, through the painful struggle to accept myself and love myself the way I am, about the pain inside me, about the deep grief which being a woman in this society carries with it. How difficult it is for all of us to accept ourselves, in whatever shape the Goddess has given us, and step out of the vicious circle of criticism, of trying to

correct ourselves and failing. How difficult it must have been for my own mother, realising quite early that I am a different child from what she expected or dreamed of, and trying as best she knew to spare me the pain and rejection she was afraid I would experience, by trying to teach me the "right" things which were completely wrong for me. Within myself and with my clients and friends, I encounter again and again expressions of self-hate, denigration, put-down. On so many levels we are taught to hate and disrespect our bodies, our selves. To hate our looks, our smells, our blood, to try and wash away, diet away, even cut away what is our essence. It is a very painful thing to witness, in myself as in others. Being fat has taught me about suffering, rejection, self-hate, addiction as a way to quiet the pain. Thus it also taught me about the pain of other rejected, disavowed groups and aspects of the human experience.

This journey brought me also the gift of enjoying my body physically, sexually. Through the slow process of gaining more and more awareness around my inner critical voices, through some very friendly techniques (see: Tools), and with the repeated experience of being loved for my radical wild self as well as for other parts of me, I learned to appreciate and with time to love my body. The way it looks, but much more the way it feels. In dancing and moving, in walking for fun, in touching and being touched by my partner, my body feelings are usually noticeably better than when looking at it. Once more, ours is a culture of the visual channel. When we switch to the movement or the proprioceptive one, our experiences of the otherwise so hated and heavily criticised fat body may be much better ones. It took me very long however, to be able to shut off the constant stream of inner abuse, and really listen to my body enjoying itself. Somehow, probably because of my personal history, the mere notion of pleasure is heavily laden and forbidden for me. Learning to overcome that has been one of the biggest steps towards my body and fat becoming an ally to me.

Through art and literature, I discovered images of other women, of goddesses with huge flowing breasts and big limbs. I learned to look at cunts and see their beauty, diversity of form and colouring, resembling exotic flowers. These images gave me some models and ideas how life can be different for big women, for women in general. It gave me an idea of what the world could look like if we could appreciate all stages of life equally, and respect their inherent

wisdom. It has brought me to see and appreciate much more the beauty and deepness of older women, the forgotten land of our society. It made me love them in me, and me in them.

Learning to accept myself has also brought me closer to my own mother. No longer a total captive to the old patterns which existed between us, we could both draw back a little, in order to take a new and better look at each other. My ally taught me about the differences between us, the boundaries, the love and connection, too. I no longer need her automatic and full approval for my being, and am therefore also able to accept her as a less than perfect being, and love her for who she really is.

As my ally, my fat keeps putting me into situations and experiences which newly challenge the boundaries of my identity. The challenge is to keep working, at the same time holding on to and enhancing my self respect and self love in difficult inner and outer situations, as well as staying open to, and even choosing, at times, to go into them. She is my ally in my relationship with my partner, not letting me slip so easily into depression instead of being critical or angry, but also not letting me feel devastated when I am attacked myself.

I notice, as I write these last sentences about my ally, how far away food and eating have drifted in the last chapter. The addiction, being an ally in itself has, to some extent, finished its job and slipped away almost unnoticed. Food is no longer required to fill the hole, to shut away the pain, to dampen the anger. Through working with my body, through living in it much more than ever before, I am able to experience all that directly and my vessel is indeed vast enough to hold all of it, all of me.

## **Fat as a Spiritual Process**

Like all discriminations, (each one with its own unique character), the very thing which creates the discrimination and oppression, is also the key to spiritual growth. Through the enormous pain that marginalized people suffer in their lives, they may also realise the omnipresence of a benevolent, wise power, and find it within themselves. Growing-up to reject who you are in your core, and then re-learning how to love yourself, cannot be achieved without some kind of recognition of a greater power, which governs our lives and gives meaning to the pain and the suffering.

So much comes to mind here that it is almost impossible to decide where to start. Maybe with the Zen saying that the mountain does not actually care which way you chose to climb it. Many, much more gifted and knowledgeable than me have written about finding the spiritual way and travelling it, yet it is important for me to share some here, bearing in mind that "the Tao that can be spoken is not the real Tao"<sup>27</sup>.

The most important recognition, for me, was how deeply I am connected with nature and how happy, touched and in awe I am, at times, by it. Through feeling again and again how my heart opens and my inner core is being touched by birds, animals, flowers, the sky, water, I have learned about my soul and about the Goddess and how I can feel her presence. In the most heated group processes, where painful stories were told, and the pain, suffering and hatred on both sides came out, I learned about the depth of the gap which separates us from other people, and about the love which can heal it - in me and in others. My dark-skinned friends taught me about racism and about pain and about being able to love your oppressor, your most hated enemy, and about recognising him in myself. In the synagogue, when I am wrapped in the Talit and feel the power of the congregation around me singing together the ancient "Shma Yisrael", the words that so many Jews have said upon being killed for being Jews, the words that so many generations have said as the affirmation of our faith, I feel a presence which is greater than I, than

any human being.

Through the love, the open heart, the pain mine and others', my ally, my big body, my fat self, has taught me about what is beyond, what is important for me, where my way lies.

I also learned again and again to trust the love of my partner, my friends, my teachers, groups, the Tao. My struggle taught me to listen to my body, to recognise the pain, the tears, the shame, to go into it and always find the love and support I needed on the other side. During the long long period in which I projected everything painful and critical, all my failures, onto my fat body, and hated it for them, I was always also graced by the presence of love, which I am thankful for every day of my life.

Spirituality, for me, comes in through the small things. In seeking the divine presence in a small exchange of love, in an unexpected smile, in a new flower, the return of spring. In remembering the pain and suffering, acknowledging it when it is there and rejoicing in the moments of happiness. In awaiting and enjoying (if only possible) the unexpected which always happens. In searching deliberately for the small treasures which are ours to have - just look. There isn't anything bigger or more important for me.

## **Tools**

In this chapter are some tools and specific techniques for working with different aspects of food addictions, weight and body image. Also included are some wider approaches and some ideas I found helpful. I have used all of these to a greater or lesser extent myself and have applied them in working with clients and colleagues.

## **Addiction work**

Process-oriented addiction work is based on the idea that people use substances or behaviour forms as "vehicles" which enable them to go into an altered-state. Because these altered-states are usually disavowed and rejected by our society in general, and therefore also individually, there is a hole where this state should have been experienced. This hole, as I mentioned in previous chapters, we tend to fill with addictive substances and behaviours. The more we learn about our own addiction specific altered-states, and train ourselves in reaccessing them with awareness, the less we need the "vehicles" which carry us there. The awareness which this kind of careful work develops in us makes the difference between going over an edge in a semi-conscious way using the addiction-substance, and going over an edge in a slow, monitored, aware way which allows the fullness of the experience. Altered-states experienced through addictive substances and behaviours are often the closest possible ones to the real states we yearn for. Going into them using substances resembles going to a hotel when one yearns for a feeling of home. It can be beautiful and warm, but often one wakes up with a strange feeling the next morning. Reaccessing these altered states without using the addictive substance can teach us, with time, how home really feels like for us and how to get there on our own.

Food, like other agents, can become an addictive substance, enabling access to a disavowed though sought-after altered-state. Since hunger is also a basic need which comes up regularly in every body, it is at times difficult to recognise the addictive part of it. What helped me was the gradual realisation that I get hungry at weird times and in strange places, which after some thought and investigation, usually turned out to be somehow connected with

repressed feelings. When I learned to notice and deal with the feelings directly, as well as allow the altered-states which wanted to happen, food lost most of its addictive power for me.

### **Tools and skills for working with inner critics**

Processwork offers some very powerful tools for working with inner critical figures and voices. The first step is always to recognise that there is an inner figure, "living" in the visual and/or auditory channels. This is one of the biggest steps because as long as you do not see the difference between the various inner parts, not all of whom are always negative and critical, the work will be slow and more difficult.

The main tool Processwork offers in dealing with the Inner Critic (IC) is role play, in which the therapist takes over the critical voice and deliberately tries to polarise it. According to the dreamfigure theory,<sup>28</sup> for each role within a person or a group there exists an opposite and complementary one. Therefore, it is possible to separate the two poles and act them out, in order to get more information and gain more awareness about them. The work includes many changes of roles, and much work on the edges that appear around taking a role unknown to the client, or around going into an experience which is far from her everyday identity.

These roles appear also as time-spirits in groups, many times when working around women/men issues. Since globally the conflict between women and men is coming more and more to the foreground, the time-spirits representing these different roles are appearing more and more often, giving us more information and bringing in new aspects of this global process. This also enables us to gain more awareness on the cultural/minority aspects of the inner critic systems. What comes up in different roles in a group is most likely also a part of the personal histories of people inside and outside of the group.

In working with the IC I found these additional techniques helpful as well:

- \* Working with the IC and attempting to turn its message to one of love. The idea is to dialogue with the inner critical figure and to ask it to turn the message into a loving one, one that the other side can



more easily listen to and accept.

\* Listening to the criticism carefully and trying to act on it<sup>29</sup>.

Assuming that there could be some benefit in the criticism, sometimes it can be useful to try and follow the critic's ideas and see where and what they could lead to.

\* Especially around heavy criticism in the visual channel ("my belly is too big", "I hate my thighs", "My breasts are too small" etc.), it is helpful to switch channels and to work with positive feelings in the proprioceptive channel, sometimes also by blocking looking.

\* Sometimes it can be useful to counter what Jane Hirschmann and Carol Munker call "bad body thoughts"<sup>30</sup> (see examples above) by the following special technique:

*Each bad body thought is dealt with by the following steps: first, an apology to oneself for the abusive remark. Second, challenging the authority of that thought by saying, for instance "who said that big breasts are ugly, that only a flat belly is beautiful, that only breasts of a certain size are beautiful and sexy, etc." (this step brings in awareness to the cultural/social internalised oppression aspect of these thoughts). Third, put the thought aside, dismiss it and refuse to let it in again. When it comes up in a new form - you go through the steps again.*

### **Other tools for working with food and eating**

In the US there is a growing anti-diet movement, which developed as a reaction to diet and food oppression. This movement has created some very interesting and helpful approaches to dealing with dieting and food addictions. These approaches<sup>31</sup> combine minute attention to eating habits and techniques for changing them, with work on the emotional background of eating addictions. An important step is the total renunciation of dieting in all its forms and the full permission to eat whatever is desired. This can be tricky and difficult, since, as I discovered, one can diet unconsciously, all the time believing that one isn't and never has. (Unconscious dieting is a form of "food police" or inner critic voice which functions almost without us noticing that somebody in us is counting, measuring and forbidding). For many women, the mere thought of letting go and not controlling their eating, which they may have been doing for years, is absolutely frightening. This is a step into the unknown which

requires much edge-work and trust.

At the same time, a lot of attention is given to relearning the body's instinctual needs and intuitions around food and eating. Signals of hunger and satiation have to be discovered and re-learned, as well as what kinds of food are the most satisfactory at a given point. Other aspects of the eating/body complex are approached through positive thinking and support through group work.

\* Some women I know have reported positive experiences with the Overeaters Anonymous groups. These are based on the same general 12-step program developed originally for alcohol addiction. Since I have not tried it personally, I cannot comment on it, except to say that it seems to be a non-oppressive, less regulated setting, which also makes room for spirituality, and which is more process than goal oriented.

### **Working on your personal power**

Process-oriented movement work - I have already described some types of movement work, i.e., controlled and slow motion mutual pushing or other types of wrestling - can be very helpful in discovering and learning about your own physical power. It is important that at least one person maintains awareness about what is happening in order to learn something from it and to avoid injuries. When things happen very quickly, it is helpful to do a slow-motion version of the movements which are happening, while keeping the focus on the specific feeling quality of the movement, as well as on the information coming up in other channels, if possible.

Impact, aka Model Mugging - is a method of teaching self-defence to women which was developed in the US. It maintains that since most women are never really taught how to fight physically and have rarely had the experience of actually hitting somebody, it can be helpful for them to go into the physical experience of it with a thickly padded male figure (trainer). Women are encouraged to use their full force, as well as the techniques taught during the course, to get out of threatening situations and physical assaults. Women report having very strong emotional reactions during the course and learning a great deal about themselves - body and soul.

**The public/worldwork aspect of working on being fat**

The more women stand up for being victims of body and eating oppression in a time when the west enjoys an unheard-of surplus of food, the better for all of us, globally: through participation in group processes, representing both victim and oppressor, through demonstrations (like lately, against the beauty queen contest in India), talking, writing and appearing in the media, telling our stories, demanding time and recognition, using our newly discovered power and weight to bring forth the pain, suffering and waste which make such a big part of our experience as fat women. In women's circles, we are reclaiming our bodies, our goddesses and ancient knowledge, celebrating our power, our weight, our bodies and who we are. And last but not least - educating our children by opening them to the diversity of human form and experience.

## Notes:

- \*. For expositions of the different aspects of the theory of process work all of Arnold and Amy Mindell's works are the right address. In addition, recent developments can be found in *The Journal of Process Oriented Psychology*, and in the various dissertations and papers written by members of the international processwork community in to be found the centers in Switzerland and in Portland, Oregon.
1. I'm deeply indebted to TC Wilson, Wyllene Watson, Jean Gilbert Tucker, Melissa Fernandes and Rita Shimmin for their patient and enlightened teachings on racism and minorities.
  2. For example:  
 Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, London, Virago, 1985  
 Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography*, London: The Women's Press, 1984.
  3. See for example:  
 Hirschmann & Munter, *When Women Stop Hating Their Bodies: Bad Body Fever*  
 or Tribole & Resch, *Intuitive Eating: Hitting Diet Bottom*.
  4. In many countries in the west, ministries of health prohibit the use and sale of any product that actually crosses the skin barrier and penetrates into the deeper layers of it and into the bloodstream as cosmetics because those are considered to be medication, which require, under the Geneva treaties, long and complicated approval tests. These tests are not usually carried out for cosmetic products, and therefore, per definition, these products can only have a superficial effect, if any. (N. Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, p. 109-111).
  5. Ibid, p. 83.
  6. Ibid, p. 185.
  7. The interconnectedness of all things is a very old and widespread idea (outside the west). In this paragraph I refer to it in the specific way in which Arnold Mindell explains it in his books *The Year One* and *Sitting in the Fire*.
  8. The psychology of the second generation of the Jewish Holocaust survivors (and nowadays also of the third generation) is a well developed field in Israel. There exists a recognised syndrome which includes long-term patterns and behaviours common among this group: a basic disbelief in the right to live and to be happy, a feeling that one is the carrier or the embodiment of memories of the dead relatives, and a deep feeling of unworthiness and unimportance in the face of the unbelievable suffering and loss that the parents went through, to name but a few. Working on my second generation feelings took a very long time, and is with me to this day and will probably go on till the day I die.

9. The tools of process-oriented inner-work and addiction-work, as well as other approaches, are described in the chapter: Tools.
10. Marion Woodman, *The Pregnant Virgin*. One of many places where Woodman discusses this process is the paragraph beginning on p. 57.
11. Ibid, p. 60. I use this somewhat other than M. Woodman.
12. Arnold Mindell, *City Shadows*, and also described, discussed and exercised in many PW seminars, led by M. Schÿpbach, R. Hauser and A. Mindell, among others.
13. See chapter on Tools.
14. Marion Woodman, *The Pregnant Virgin*, p. 103.
15. Ibid, p. 117.
16. I am aware that there exist many different theories and ideas which try to explain the connection between infant experience and the various sexual behaviours that the human animal exhibits. Some I find plausible, some less, However, it is not my goal to discuss any of those in detail here. What I write is my own synthesis of experience, insights through therapy, and many years of reading and studying.
17. As also shown by Naomi Wolf in *The Beauty Myth: Sex*.
18. A magnificent and inspiring exception to this widespread attitude is the book *Starke Frauen*, photographs by Herlinde Koelbl.
19. A fascinating exposition of the historical, psychological and archetypal aspects of the sacred whore, the revered and highly respected priestesses of the Goddess of Love in her different appearances can be found in Nancy Qualls-Corbett's *The Sacred Prostitute*.
20. The idea of the mythical or transpersonal level of our Self comes from C.G. Jung, who wrote extensively about it. Many of his followers have used it and developed it further for their needs, and Mindell's use of it is an especially pregnant one for me. My sources of inspiration in this area are Marion Woodman's books, Mindell's *Working with the Dreaming Body* and *River's Way*, plus many other sources about the Goddess and feminine wisdom. In addition, I have worked on and experienced aspects of it in many seminars and therapy sessions.
21. According to Mindell's *Sitting in the Fire* (p. 42) Time Spirits are: "A cultural rank, position or viewpoint that depend on time and place ... (and) change

rapidly. They are filled by different individuals and parties over time, keeping the roles in a constant state of flux."

22. The theory and praxis of working with ally figures can be found in Arnold Mindell's *The Shaman's Body*. I have worked on these figures in many sessions during seminars given by Arnold and Amy Mindell, Max Schÿpbach, Reini Hauser and Jean-Claude Audergon and many other teachers and friends.

23. See: Tools, process-oriented movement work.

24. See, as an exception, Tools: Impact.

25. "To burn your wood" is an expression which comes from a specific group-process, which took place in Israel in 1988. It means roughly: to work through your anger, let it come up and experience it again and again, until the fire is out, and you can deal with that specific issue with some detachment. More about it can be found in Mindell's *Sitting in the Fire*.

26. See Harsha Adler-King's book (to be published) *The Beauty of the Victim*.

27. Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching* - my own interpretaion. One of the published versions, that of D.C. Lau says: "The way that can be spoken of; Is not the constant way; The name that can be named; Is not the constant name." (p. 57).

28. See A. Mindell, *The Year One*, p. 98.

29. I learned this very creative approach from Reini Hauser and I am very thankful to him for it.

30. See: *When Women Stop Hating Their Bodies: bad Body Thoughts*, p. 42.

31. These approaches are described in detail in Jane R. Hirschmann & Carol H. Munter, *When Women Stop Hating Their Bodies* and Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch, *Intuitive Eating* .

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2. Marion Woodman, *Addiction to Perfection*, Inner City Books, Toronto, Canada, 1982  
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