

# *Gathering the Kindling, Lighting the Spark*

Personal Report on the *Taller Alba Emoting* held at Diego Portales University  
January 8-12, 1996 with psychology students and working psychologists.

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## *The Prelude*

"We tend to think of the rational as a higher order, but it is the emotional that marks our lives. One often learns more from 10 days of agony than from 10 years of contentment."

-Merle Shain, Each Day A New Beginning

"I could not understand her words, but I knew her gentle laughter to be a reflection of my own." -author

I suppose you have heard of, and maybe even experienced personally, culture shock. Well, I had had my first real intense experience with culture shock two years before when I first came to Chile. Disorientation, loneliness, sadness, confusion, fear because one knows s/he is an outsider, frustration and even anger towards different customs, all rollercoastering in loop-de-loops and nose diving descents. Any Yank who has been to Chile will tell you that culture shock in Santiago takes longer to kick in for us than in other countries and that it creeps up on you when you least expect it, 3-4 weeks into your stay. It was August 30th, 1995, and I was holding onto my sense of sanity and comfort, dreading the coming shock that might come in a few weeks. I was hoping that it would not be, and somehow knowing deep down that it could not be, as bad as last time.

I had arrived in Santiago four days before to begin work on my Fulbright Grant which I had recieved to study "psychophysiological acting techniques", my central focus being on the "psychophysiological method of emotional induction, *Alba Emoting*", created by Dr. Susana Bloch. People always gave me a perplexed look or said, "Oooohhh, of course, that" in a sarcastic what-is-THAT-supposed-to-mean tone of voice when I told them that is what my grant was for, whether I told them in English or Spanish. I would always assure them that unless they were ready to sit and listen for a long time, that was the simplest explanation I could give them. I have since gotten better at summarizing what I am studying here in a more understandable way, thanks to all those people who let me talk their ears off in my first months here.

My Spanish was a little rustier than it had been when I left Santiago a year and a half before to return to Northwestern University and finish up my studies in Performance Studies and Latin Amercian Studies. I had had my first Santiago *Alba Emoting* class two nights before, led by Solange Duran and Dr. Susana Bloch. I sat in a conference room at the Diego Portales University waiting for Susana to give a lecture on *Alba Emoting* to a group of psychology students and some certified psychologists and therapists. I had heard of her lectures at ATHE in the U.S., but had never attended them, so this was a new view of her for me. I had also never heard a theoretical lecture in psychology in Spanish before. Deep breath, letting go of

frustration, confusion, and feeling like an outsider. Embracing my uncomfortable reality so I could be more comfortable in it.

Dr. Bloch began the conference with some footage of a Spanish actor learning the emotional effector pattern of sadness. She then gave a quite impressive, academic lecture explaining *Alba Emoting*. She explained how she saw emotion as having three aspects - physiological, expressive, and subjective feeling. The focus of her research had centered on the expressive and the physiological. Reproduction of these could cause the subjective feeling, one might reason. She had proven this to be so. She shared her research techniques and results, her conception of the 6 basic emotions, what this meant for actors, and what this might mean for psychotherapy.

Susana fielded questions at the end. Quite a lively discussion began in the room, with some quite skeptical and taken aback by her findings, and many more others amazed and pleased to finally hear someone making sense of that mysterious abstract space of emotions which we as a culture are so inexpert at talking about and understanding. Everyone was made to think, to question, to wonder. Many left thrilled and excited about the possibility of learning more, some left disturbed and confused, and at least one left angry and frustrated. Certainly no one left unmoved. A list was passed around for participants to log in, and for those who would be interested in future training sessions to check a "yes" box. As it passed my way, I saw that almost everyone had checked yes. After we had long ago passed the hour when we should have ended the conference and the university faculty began to run us out so they could start the next planned activity in that room, there were still so many questions and comments that Susana left the room surrounded by awakened inquiring students.

## *The Invitation*

It was Jan. 5, 1996, and I was preparing my home for my upcoming birthday party. Culture shock had come and gone, and returned for the winter holidays (my first ones outside of my hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, and my first winter holidays to ever experience in SUMMER). My friend and mentor Susana Bloch called me to wish me a happy birthday. She also surprised me with an invitation to assist her in a Training Session with a group of psychologists and psychology students to begin the following Monday, January 8th. She explained that this Alba Emoting Workshop would take place January 8-12 at the Diego Portales University, and that the participants were mainly those who had expressed interest at her lecture back in August. I was so surprised and pleased. She said she thought of me specifically because she knows I plan to study psychology and expressive arts therapies in the future and that I am very interested in the potentials for application of Alba Emoting to therapy.

As is my nature, and as is expected at my novice stage of development, I immediately began to worry about the plans I should make for warm-ups, exercises, and games each day. She calmed me and suggested I speak to my colleague, Solange Duran, and just relax and take it one day at a time. She explained that she would be telling me day by day what it was I needed to prepare since how I planned each day's warm-up would depend on how the previous day's session went. I was reminded of how amazingly Susana handles groups, ever calmly attuned to their moods, needs, and limitations. I myself experienced this a year and a half before in my own first personal encounter with Alba Emoting in a two week training session in the northern suburb of Chicago - Evanston, Illinois - and recently in weekly classes here in Santiago, Chile, and a few short training sessions in a new theatre school here, "La Mancha."

Here had come another well-timed chance for me to observe and learn from her teaching methods, as well as try out my own as I assisted her. It was also the first concrete chance I had had to explore the possibilities for combining theatre techniques and therapy with Alba Emoting as the main bridge! I could hardly contain myself. That night at my birthday party, I shared my news with everyone of my friends who I thought might understand what I was talking about, and even to some who certainly did not and just nodded patronizingly as I gushed with child-like excitement babbling about this "metodo psicofisiologico de induccion emocional" and its potentials in therapeutic work. What a way to start out my new year, and what a birthday present!!!

## Taller Alba Emoting

### *Day 1 - Learning to Laugh, Learning to Play, Learning to Breathe,*

X

We entered the work space, Susana and I, and found it was far from ideal. It was quite a small room with windows to the noisy street and intrusive fluorescent lighting. The form and atmosphere of the room was also very impersonal. Susana asked if there was no other room we could possibly work in since this one was somewhat inappropriate to train 12 people in Alba Emoting. We were told that for today we would have to stay with this space and that they would see about getting a new one tomorrow. We also soon discovered that there were not just 12, the stated maximum of participants with such delicate work, but rather 18 participants!! The organizers had pushed the limits a little. So from Day 1 the challenges of this kind of work were made just that much more apparent.

Susana began the session in a comfortable inviting way. We were all in a circle and she taught us the integrative breath, including the important aspects of the feet being parallel and one foot length apart, gaze into the infinite, the horizon, and good posture. Then Susana had us all sit down. She had to verbally peel some people off the walls so they would come in closer and truly form part of the circle and not hide off in the corners. Introductions were in order - name, occupation, and why you were in the workshop. Susana instructed us before we began and various times throughout to retain the posture, alignment, and relaxed face and gaze we had attained in the integrative breath. As we went around, Susana skillfully springboarded off some people's comments to go into explaining a few things about the method.

We all stood up and I lead them in some simple stretching exercises and then Susana guided them in some self-observation exercises as they walked around the room. She asked them to be aware of such things as breathing, posture, gaze, and unnecessary tensions. She guided them to breath in through nose and out through mouth. They were then thrown into quick velocity and direction changes, waking them up, getting their awareness piqued. (The smallness of the space became quite apparent as they struggled to not bump into one another.)

Susana moved them quickly into some emotional effector pattern work, guiding them first to lie on the floor and bring awareness to their breathing. Then she instructed them to one at a time began with a quick inhalation through the nose followed by an out breath in saccades through the mouth. There were so many that each just got a little taste. Susana had me help guide some individuals. It was important that she work one at a time to start because with so many people, it is harder to make sure you are aware of any potential emotional "popping" in the participants. Also, in the first encounters with *Alba Emoting*, the participants, of course, need a lot of guidance and direction since there are so many specific details to each emotional effector pattern.

Just as Susana suggests in working with these patterns, she began with only

the breath and then, if the person did not induce from just the breath instructions, or if they were holding back the corresponding physiological responses out of nervousness, tension, or uncertainty, she would give them some directions on the facial expressions, and lastly, on the posture and tension/relaxation, approach/retreat characteristics of the given psychophysiological pattern. If the breathing pattern is done correctly, with abdominal breathing and clear attentive instructions, it is very likely the other physiological aspects will come along naturally, as well as, often, the subjective feeling. Yet this usually takes a great deal of training and physical preparation work.

In this particular instance, I noticed a lot of parasitic tensions in the participants, especially in the face and shoulders. Also I noticed the tendency to not let ALL the air out before taking in another breath, which is essential in this pattern. Susana stresses that it is a fundamentally expiratory pattern. There was a tendency to breath the air out with a "hoo hoo hoo" instead of a "ha ha ha" as she had guided them to. On the out breath there were also often throat tensions and a nervous tendency to force the air out instead of letting it come out. Many would begin breathing out AND in through the mouth instead of in through the nose. Very few induced and many still weren't sure of which emotion the pattern was. It was clear they needed work on abdominal breathing and relaxation. I felt they also needed to learn to play a little and feel comfortable together, since many did not know each other.

Susana had them get up gently and slowly afterwards, first rolling over on their sides, then into caracol, and then rolling up slowly; each one taking all the time s/he needed. Then we all sat in a circle and commented some on what had been experienced. Some mentioned feeling sadness. She spoke with them a little and drew the two patterns they had worked with on the board, without naming any emotion. They needed to find that on their own through induction. She also stressed the importance of relaxation and letting all the air out on the second pattern.

We then took a 15 minute break in which Susana, as we had already been advised, had to leave to pick up some people at the airport. So I was left alone with the participants for the remainder of the session. Eek!! First time, so I just dove right in and tried to relax and have fun. And it worked! After the break, I led them in some work, as I had planned, dealing with posture, muscle tension and relaxation, and breath control and awareness. One thing that worked well was doing a lot of pair work. As we worked with posture, I had pairs take turns watching and imitating their partner and then their partner watching this reflection; then they switched and then talked about their observations a little. This I had taken from experiences I have had with Feldenkrais work.

Then I had them do muscle tension isolations as they walked around the room, they would tense the body parts I called out and continue walking. This is almost always used in Alba Emoting preparation work. Then I had them play facial muscle isolation tensions in pairs, using the mirror game so popular in acting classes. I called out a facial part and the one who was at that time guiding had to tense that part in some way as their partner reflected this. If they had found the walking muscle

isolation tensions difficult, they found this even MORE challenging. I kept having to remind them to tense ONLY the part I mentioned. It was quite a struggle for them as other parts of their face kept wanting to engage. Another of the challenges was not laughing. I was glad that they were having fun- I even laughed with them a little- but I did remind them that concentration and muscle control and awareness were very important in this work. I then let them just go crazy and have more fun with it by letting the switched leaders of the pair do whatever they wanted, adding arms and upper body gestures and voice after I had led them through most all the facial muscles. At that point, they really looked like a bunch of gleeful, silly children in a playground.

"To laugh you have to be able to exhale and take another breath in quick succession. We know from kinesiology and other body therapies such as Hakomi that to take a breath means to feel one's emotions, that when we wish not to feel, we stop breathing and hold our breath instead."

-Clarisa Pinkola Estes

Women Who Run With Wolves

"Most of us are shallow breathers. Why don't we let the breath connect with the lower gut? Why is this natural biological pattern circumvented so easily?"

-Gary C. Hopper,

acting professor participating in an Alba Emoting workshop

Notice how when one wants to try to hide or avoid a rising emotion, s/he tends to change or block the breath from falling into the natural pattern which physiologically corresponds to the psychological reality of their emotional state? For example, one might hold their breath to stifle laughter, or count to ten and breath calmly in through the nose and out through the mouth to quell their rage. How many times are we reprimanded early on for expressing our emotions fully and purely? How long do you imagine it really takes to teach the child to breath shallowly and incompletely? As has been known for centuries by some cultures and is scientifically clearly proven by the studies which led Dr. Susana Bloch to create Alba Emoting, breath control is the fastest emergency brake on any emotion metaphorically running downhill ready to hit and destroy the most wonderfully landscaped socially acceptable lawn. We pull up that emergency brake because that "out of control" emotion threatens to expose all the weeds hidden by the well-groomed shrubs. Which weeds would be called flowers in another language, cherished as beautiful in a child's eyes?

Such things had come to mind as I watched the participants struggle with the first pattern at the beginning of the session. So, considering the importance in emotional work, and especially in Alba Emoting, of full abdominal breathing, of consciously letting the breath reach down into the depths of our "gut" and pull back up with it what it will, as a door that may possibly lead to our closetful of skeletons, I spent the last part of the practical work in this first session on breath awareness and control. I had them observe their breathing individually and focus on relaxation as they

lay on the floor. Assuring that the breath was in through the nose, out through the mouth, I asked them to put one hand on their abdomen and one on their ribs and try to breath into the lowest part of their abdomen. We did some work with different rhythms of respiration, in in 8, out in 8; in in 5, out in 10; in in 10, out in 5; etc... Then I had them work in pairs, one sitting up observing the others breathing by having one hand on their abdomen, and later, one on the chest, to insure the chest only moved minimally, if at all, and that the diaphragm was allowing the air in and pushing it out. Only a couple of men really didn't seem to make any progress towards lowering their breathing from their chest to their abdomen. Some others had trouble, but most could breath abdominally a few times, or at least understand the difference, by the end of the session.

We closed the session with them filling out a form asking them such things as their expectations of the course, fielding questions and comments, advising them not to practice the pattern they were introduced to today, but yes to practice the abdominal breathing, muscle isolations, and postural work if they felt like it. The most common questions that night were- Why did the eyes always have to be open in the exercises? Were they all supposed to have the same emotional reaction to the session? What rhythm is correct for the neutral breath? What emotion was the one they were learning the pattern for today? . . . I realized later that my best answer to all of these might have been, "Just trust us, you will see," but, as is my habit, I gave some answers to the first three questions and completely refused even giving any hints on the last question. That was for them to discover through the pattern work.

I said that where and how the eyes were looking was essential because each emotion has a different type of gaze, focus, direction. Susana explained to them later that the eyes being closed puts them into an interior space, a different space from the outward expression of emotion or the necessary interaction with the group and instructor

As far as emotional responses, I said that at the beginning, it was very likely people would have different responses, but that, yes, the correct execution of the patterns would eventually lead them all to the same basic emotion. I stressed that there was no such thing as in incorrect response in the initial work; we were opening up new ways of tapping primordial things, so it was likely to shake quite a few different things loose at first. Susana elaborated on this more in the following session, explaining that when connecting to the breath, people could often have initial responses of fear or sadness, overwhelming responses to being in contact with something so pure and real without any external stimulus. When learning to abdominally breath, one can often click into their most present emotion in a deer way.

I said that, as far as the neutral breath was concerned, that was a very individual thing; it is as long as it takes for the individual to comfortably take in all the air, pause, and let all the air out, and pause again before taking in the next breath. I ended with suggesting they journal about their experiences every day, as it would serve them incredibly now and later.





There were also many confusions as to exactly how to do the pattern. They were all good mistakes, though. They helped us clarify what we were trying to do.

The first person was to face front in neutral and then inhale quickly through the nose and then exhale in saccades with an unvoiced "ha ha ha" through the mouth as they slowly turned towards the person beside them. As they finished their breath, the next person was to begin the pattern facing front, etc. . . The first person was to do 3 step-out breaths (meaning three calm neutral breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth with the gaze towards the infinite, healthy posture, and no facial expression) immediately following their one pattern breath.

I noticed most ALL had a lot of difficulty clicking into this pattern. There were still a lot of tensions in their shoulders and face, and a tendency to force the air out. In the discussion following this game, Susana asked them what they saw and experienced. She asked if it had really been joy. Most said they were able to note tensions in themselves and others, but that it was at least clear to them now that the pattern was that of joy. During the game, she had stopped them often to comment on obvious mistakes, such as the eyes being OPEN and not closing slightly with the smile, or inhaling through the mouth and exhaling through the nose. At such times, she had them all try on these mistakes to feel the difference. As we discussed the game, many said the difference had been very clear to them.

*"I laughed so hard I cried."*

Susana then moved them gently on to the third pattern. She did this work one on one at first and then two at a time, with the others observing. She instructed them to breath in through the nose in saccades and let the breath out through the mouth in a long exhalation. Working one on one as we did of course left no doubt as to for which emotion the pattern was in the minds of those who had yet to try on the pattern. In fact, some got quite nervous as their turn came closer because they did not want to cry in front of all the others. "You all are so funny," Susana commented, "You pay all this money to come to this workshop every night, and then you say, ' Oh no, I don't want to do this, I don't want to go there, I'll hold back.'" Most all induced some, but I did see much intentional and unintentional holding back. They were scared, nervous, and impressed.

(as remembered by author)

Susana - "Okay, begin breathing in in saccades through your nose and out through your mouth, like a sigh. . . . Good, now relax your body and let it feel heavy and be drawn down as you breath out."

(Participant begins to cry, her lip is quivering and her face turning red.)

Susana- "Just let the breath guide you, let it out."

(Susana works with her some more moments and then instructs her to step-out)

Susana- "Okay, now breath in calmly through the nose and out through the mouth, look up at me, sit up straight, touch you face. . . come on, touch your face."

Participant- "I can't, my hands are asleep, I can't feel them."

Susana - "What?"

Participant- "My hands are asleep. This is what always happens to me when I start to cry. My hands fall asleep and my lips and chin too. They are all asleep."

(Susana helped her step-out further by having her do the joy pattern. She had everyone in the class join in the joy pattern with her to help her. Susana later explained that sometimes it is necessary to do an opposing pattern if the step-out does not initially completely step the person out. This participant explained later that she is at this point in her life in a very depressed period. The pattern clicked here right into her base emotion of late. She also commented after the class that she felt fully stepped out, clean.)

"When I ignore or suppress my feelings, they come out in frightening, sometimes destructive ways. I need to honor them. . . whatever they are."

-Anne Wilson Schaef

Various other participants commented on their hands or arms falling asleep. I found this very interesting, not having heard of that in the groups of actors I had worked with before. I asked Susana what she suspected that came from. She said hyperventilation can cause that; that is, incorrect reproduction of the pattern. I began formulating another theory on that, which I expressed at the time and have continued wondering about. It seemed to me that those that had body parts falling asleep in this session were people who seemed to be holding back, people who seemed afraid of letting go into their sobs, people blocking themselves. It made sense to me that someone whose flow of emotion was blocked would have their blood flow blocked as well. Poor circulation of emotion, poor circulation of blood. Psychological blocks manifesting in physical blocks. Fear of fulling expressing an emotion leading to shallow breathing or not letting ALL the air out on the exhalation. I myself noticed that in the crying pattern, I click in most right when I reach that point where I run out of air completely, where I have let it ALL be sighed out. Perhaps many are avoiding that point where they intuitively know they will click and thus they don't let ALL the air out and they over oxygenate their system. I have yet to have this theory proven.

*Saying what we mean and meaning what we say:*

At one point in the work, someone mentioned feeling "angustiada", anguished, and so arose the discussion of what was the difference between sad and anguished. Susana had 2 participants do an improvisation, one playing an anguished person and one a sad person. It did not matter that these were psychologists, not actors, it was immediately clear the difference between the two. Anguish was obviously more tense, nervous, afraid. Sadness is typified by slowness, no desire to move or do anything, heavy. This was one example of how she continued to try to get them to define the emotions they were describing, to be clear and precise. We all began to realize how unclear most people are on which emotions are which, how difficult it is for people to talk about emotions, naming them, describing their manifestations and so on. They also realized that if they really focused on it and thought about it, they could begin to figure it out.

*Each individual door takes a different key to unlock it.*

I noticed that for each person, it was different which aspect of the pattern finally made it click for them. With the sadness pattern, some keys were-

- Relaxing the shoulders
- Letting the gaze be downward
- Letting ALL the air out
- Letting the brow rise in a sort of sparrow shape
- Relaxing into the exhalation

One participant said that in his pair work on breath observation the previous day, his partner had told him that he did not let ALL the air out when he exhaled, and then today he realized how incredibly important that was. Some mentioned that another of the participants looked like he was laughing a little in the initial laughter pattern work of the session, but not letting the breath take him further; that it seemed he was blocking himself. Perhaps he simply had not found the key to unlock his laughter fully yet.

Most had at least a trickle of sorrow induced by the second pattern, and some had more intense experiences. Some mentioned how affected they felt watching the others work. They would feel sad seeing the other sad, or scared because they knew that might happen to them next. The energy in the room palpably changed during this work, getting heavier and quieter.

We discussed the work of the day some more. Susana mentioned the extreme importance of some kind of stepping out after psychotherapy sessions as she had heard of so many patients leaving their doctor's office just wrecked, unable to do anything, so out of it that could be hit by a car crossing the street. This is the psychotherapist's responsibility. After some more mental babble on the subject, we ended the session by trying on some belly laughs again and then fully stepping out with the integrative breath.

### *Stepping Out the Social Way:*

After the session, some of us went out for drinks down the road, soft drinks, that is. I think one person may have gotten a beer. We really just wanted to talk. For some reason, we all started talking about metaphysical experiences - our own personal ghost stories and other contacts with the not-so-rationally-explainable dimensions of every day life. I said how with the science of today, many of these metaphysical things were now being proven and explained, yet were clearly still just as mystical and spiritual. Quantum physics, for example, was bridging the gap between science and spirituality

One participant pointed out to us how much our conversation really had to do with Alba Emoting. He suggested that this topic had obviously been sparked somehow by our experiences of something powerful and mysterious, something of a fourth dimension really, being explained and comprehended scientifically, and still being just as powerful and moving - the Realm of Emotions. The untouchable touched, the unexplainable, explained and systemetized, yet retaining its mystical nature. The delicacy with which such things must be handled became very clear to us that night. And somehow, over our ginger ales and Fantas, we entered into an unspoken pact to handle one another, and this method, with care as we gently opened these newly discovered doors together.

"We lie awake at night willing the darkness to part and show us a vision. . .  
On a night like this, hands and faces hot, we can believe that tomorrow will show us angels in jars and that the well-known woods will suddenly reveal another path."  
-Jeanette Winterson, The Passion

### *Day 3- Seeing Red*

I led them in a lot of tension work this day. Having them walk with whole body tense and then direct a sound and movement at another participant and then continue. I worked with them some specifically on tension isolations of eyes and jaw. I had them tense while lieing down and notice how their breathing changed. They had to make sure they did not hold their breath when they tensed up. I realized later that I did a little too much tension work with them in the warm-up. I didn't contrast it enough with relaxation work so they could rest. Some were already worn out before the pattern work. I forget that I am not working with trained actors used to this kind of physical training.

We began with a short discussion in which Susana asked them to define a basic emotion. They were a little stumped. She said, what are the characteristics of a basic emotion. Some answers were - adaptive, pure, universal, "recondita". She then asked them to define what an emotion was. She again shared her concepts of the three aspects of emotions- physiological , expressive, and. subjective. She spoke of the difference between feelings and emotions, the difference being only in duration

and intensity. There are phasic and tonic emotions, she explained. There are those that we feel in the moment, we express and process them, and they pass- phasic. Then there are those we stay stuck in for a longer period of time- tonic. A tonic of sadness is depression, of anger is bitterness, of fear is anxiety. One very important thing she pointed out was that emotions are responses to stimuli - inner or outer, and that they are necessary for survival. The parent responds to the infant with tenderness and that insures the infant's survival. Fear makes one flee or hide from danger. Anger inspires self-defense and defense of territory. Etc. . .

"What you know in your head will not sustain you in moments of crisis. . . confidence comes from body awareness, knowing what you feel in the moment." Marion Woodman

She then asked them to get in 2 lines against perpendicular walls. They played Pass the Breath again, but this time with new variations. Each one breathed in sharply through nose facing front and out sharply through nose facing the person next to them. Then they did it again, but adding a breath - one breath forward, one to next person and with focused tense eyes. The third time, they did one breath forward, one as they turned their head and focused their eyes, and last one to the next person with tension in the body too. (The Pass the Breath the day before with joy was sitting down- today it was standing up.) This really helped them see how breath naturally leads into the facial and postural patterns. They are like building blocks that naturally fit together.

#### *Greeting through Gritting Teeth:*

The next exercise was more fun, and more challenging. They lined up in two groups on parallel walls this time. Susana had them line up by height so they would each be across from someone more or less their height. The instructions were to begin the pattern -always starting with the BREATH- while standing and looking at your partner across the room. Then they were both supposed to walk towards one another, still in the pattern, meet in the middle of the room and say, "Good day," without losing the pattern.

The first few had a great deal of trouble saying "Good day" without laughing. They obviously had not induced. Most lacked tension in their bodies, and sometimes the eyes were closing in a squinting sort of way instead of tensing into a focused intense stare aimed at the target for attack. Being blinded with rage is really being able to see nothing except the offender, the eyes narrow to only include it, like the sights on a gun. Susana explained to them that anger is the impulse to kill. It is a healthy normal response to defending one's territory or oneself, basically. It is a very natural, instinctive, necessary response. When one's anger is building, they are preparing to attack and kill. This perspective helped many catch on to the physiology for anger better, such as the forward moving tension in the entire body.

"A fury whose intensity she hasn't felt for months is rising in her, positioning itself to attack the vocal chords and the eyes."

-Norma Jean Harris (Sheila Ballantyne)

### *Monkey See, Monkey Do:*

The results were powerful. I myself had to work very hard to stay in neutral, breathing calmly and relaxing my facial muscles. That is one thing all *Alba Emoting* participants and instructors have to watch out for - the emotional contagion effect can really suck observers in while others are working the pattern. This can be exhausting and dangerous. The goal is to CHOOSE when to enter and when to exit, to not just be swept away by it. Watching the participants tremble, sweat, turn red and growl "Good day" to one another may have been absurdly funny on one level, but on a deeper level, it affected me in my jaw beginning to tense, my eyes narrow, my heart rate accelerate, and my thighs and buttocks tensing as I watched the staged stand off. As anyone who goes to theatre regularly knows, a show full of intense anger and fear is often almost as exhausting to some audience members as to the actor; because many audience members have somehow experienced the rage and fear with the actor, their bodies tensing and responding in a natural mimicking towards which most animals have a tendency.

### *Body Memory, Emotional Memory- Psychophysiological Synchrony:*

"When we respect our anger and deal with it, we discover doors that were not obvious before." Anne Wilson Schaefer

Many began to have images and memories in this session when they entered the pattern. As they clicked into the expressive (i.e. facial, postural) and the physiological (i.e. breathing, heart rate, body temperature), the subjective feeling began to come into play. Though some people have only the sensation of the subjective feeling, others sometimes have memories or images.

One participant mentioned how he remembered the last play he was in, in which he had to kill his mother. In one performance, he really clicked into the rage and it frightened him quite a good deal. He said that is just how he felt today working the pattern and that that moment in that one performance came back to him. Another mentioned that she had had a flashback of when her house was robbed while she was in it. She said she had tried to work it through in therapy, but had never been able to get back to that moment and process it. She said that today she felt she was finally able to be back in that moment again.

Susana seemed to be focusing a lot on this idea of memories and images. I pointed out that it was fine if the person just had sensations. Many, such as I, generally feel more sensations and rarely see images or have memories. The goal is not necessarily to recall or have images. It seems to be a very personal thing, the tendency to mainly have sensations or images, a more visual or sensory person.

Many mistakenly feel they're doing it wrong if they don't have images. Susana supported this, saying it was natural to have one or both responses.

### *Shifting Shades and Hues, Searching for Pure Red::*

"We are told as adults that our anger must be appropriate, nonoffensive, justified, and expressed in the right way. What a joke. Trying to girdle my feelings is like trying to tie down the wind." -Anne Wilson Schaef

Although all at least had an inkling of a feeling of rage in this exercise and many induced intensely, various ones had trouble and were clearly blocking themselves. Some of the same ones who could not relax completely yesterday to let go into the sobbing could not tense completely on this day's session. Their arms and/or legs were apparently drooping with lack of energy and tension. Some had their hands falling asleep again- this for me was more proof to my theory that blocking emotions blocks the flow of blood through the extremities.

One participant very clearly had a lot of fear of her anger and was unknowingly mixing the emotions into a blended pattern. So Susana had me demonstrate the anger pattern and then the fear pattern so they could see the difference. She then worked some individually with this participant on the fear pattern so she could try to clean fear out of her anger. She made some progress, but obviously still had a lot of fear. This participant later commented that she feels she has strong fear mixed with every emotion. This was born out apparently in the pattern work to come as well.

Others had sadness or fear or even disgust mixed in with anger. Due to this, many had a tendency to try to avoid feeling or expressing anger. Most began to take consciousness of these personal emotional mixes. Some even began to discuss where they felt this aversion to feeling and expressing their anger had come from.

One explained that he felt he had fully processed his anger intellectually before, but not physically. He felt that this session connected him physically and cleaned him out the rest of the way, deepening the experience from a purely mental processing to a visceral processing. Another said he had always had a lot of fear of expressing his anger. In therapy, he had tried to process this, but every time he tried to pull up fear, he would feel disgust. He said that today he was able to see that and physically separate them and start to enter pure anger. He felt he got further in this one session to cleaning that out than in all his previous therapy sessions.

### *Stepping Out:*

That night, after the usual all class step-out with the integrative breath, a slightly larger group of us went out for drinks. After such an intense session, there were a few more beers this time, but still mostly soft drinks. Some french fries and hot dogs too- defending themselves had really worked up an appetite. The talk was lighter that night, mostly dirty jokes. They were just trying to relax and, they joked, prepare themselves to work on the erotic pattern the next day. They tried to get me to tell them



if they would be working on the erotic pattern the next day or not, and I said that Susana did not tell me until the day of, and, even if I did know, I wouldn't tell them. They were obviously eager to move into a more relaxed "enjoyable" emotion. They would just have to be patient and wait and see.

#### *Day 4- Lullabies and Sweet Sounds, The Air Softens*

"Often, as children, it was not just our feelings of anger, rage, sadness, or pouting that were stifled. We were told to be quiet and equally commanded to suppress our feelings of excitement, joy, creativity, imagination, giggles, laughter, and happiness. Strangely enough, we have found that it is not possible to suppress some feelings and not others. When we push down anger, joy goes with it. When we push down rage, tenderness goes with it."

- Anne Wilson Schaef

On this day, I entered only with the knowledge that Susana was planning on mainly working one of the relaxed patterns we had yet to do. They were very worn out from the work the day before so to go into the final tense pattern much might push them over the edge of exhaustion. So I warmed them up with a group massage circle to start. Then we did the integrative breath and a silly 16 count shake-out exercise. I did do some tension/relaxation isolations as we walked around the room, letting them guide; I would tap one of them and they would call out a body part. We did the usual breath and posture awareness work as well, moving into some pair stretching exercises.

One of the most fruitful aspects of this day's warm-up was a neutral mirror game. In it, one had to get as neutral as possible in a standing position. Then the mirror partner looked at them and mirrored their expression, stance, and posture as well as they could. They switched and then discussed what they noticed in the other that was particularly neutral or not neutral, pointing out where the other might be holding unnecessary tensions.

Following this, I instructed them to slowly fill up with air like balloons until they were full and floating. They deflated as they let the air out, just as a balloon would, smoothly slowly sinking to the floor. Once on the floor, I guided them in some relaxing visualization work, imagining themselves in a warm tub or on a warm beach, as they wished. Many closed their eyes, so I told them they were open-eyed looking at something that interested them- the clouds, the stars, a tree moving in the wind above them, whatever they chose. I wanted to stress that this was an externally not internally focused relaxed state. The eyes were to be relaxed and open. I asked them to note any changes in their breathing as they relaxed, to observe their breathing, not change it. Susana and I went around checking for tensions in their bodies, telling them to try to relax as much as possible.

Susana then took over and directed them to begin breathing gently in through

the nose and out through the nose in even calm breaths, with the exhalation slightly longer than the inhalation. They began all together, still on the floor in this relaxed state. We both went around the room correcting individuals. Many were so relaxed that they were sleepy-eyed, so Susana told them to imagine, as in the warm-up, that they were seeing something before them so they should each have a relaxed focused gaze. She told them to let their head tilt from side to side, with the neck very relaxed. They found this difficult to do, uncomfortable, on the floor lying down as they were. She also guided them to let a gentle smile play across their faces. As is quite common, there were odd tensions in the mouth when they attempted this smile, demonstrating the difficulty of relaxing completely into the breath. While still lying down, she told them they could move or caress themselves if they wished. Many moved their arms into an open-palmed gesture. Others caressed their chest or face. Next she had them all sit up slowly, while still in the pattern, and look at one another, letting the head tilt (which proved MUCH easier sitting upright) and allowing gestures towards one another. Susana then began to sing a lullaby and encouraged others to join in or hum.

We then performed the Step-Out and got in a circle to discuss what had happened. Most all induced into tenderness. Some reached more a state of internal personal peace, harmony, and relaxation without that outward, social impulse inherent in tenderness; the impulse towards others. Again we got into defining the terms more clearly, what is the difference between feeling peaceful and feeling tenderness? Many commented on having images, mostly of their own children as babies, of siblings, or of nature. In the second part, when they were sitting up, many commented that they had impulses to hug another participant, pinch their cheeks, or hold someone, or that they felt strong affection for virtual strangers in the class.

"Miré a ella. . . y me enamoré de ella."

"Vi a mi hija, pero muy guagita, chiquitita. Y me dio mucha ternura, me ensoñé. Y se me nublaron los ojos, y me sentí muy bien, muy bien. Después, me dio ganas de abrazar a alguien."

During the discussion, we could feel that tenderness still floated in the air, having permeated the room. The change in breath changes the movement of the air in the room; the change in body temperature changes the temperature in the room; all the individual physiological changes affect the physical surroundings and the atmosphere. Susana mentioned that tenderness is the only emotional pattern in which there is a significant, though small, slowing down of the heart rate.

After a short pause, we played some emotional games. First, in groups of three, each person with two patterns personally chosen, we went improvising nonverbal interaction, switching from one pattern to another as Susana called out "1" or "2." This was challenging and enjoyable. We then commented on the game, had a question-answer session, and did a full Step-out together.

## *Day 5- Those Bedroom Eyes*

Susana said she wanted a short warm-up today because there was a lot to be covered. So we just did the integrative breath, some stretching, and posture and breath consciousness work. Susana then segued right into a game. She told them to continue walking around the room, and when she clapped, they were to all stand in two lines on perpendicular walls, facing the wall. Then they were to turn only their heads as quickly as possible when she clapped. After this, she had them do this one at a time. She had them number off 1-16, and when she called out their number they were to respond as instructed above, looking at Susana or me, and then return to facing the wall slowly. She called out the numbers quickly and at random, pushing them to be sharp and aware, awake and responsive.

Then she moved into adding elements of the pattern she was focusing on. She asked them to do the same and in addition to open the mouth and eyes widely, tense the entire body, and turn whole body from waist up, not just the head. She went through the numbers various times, stressing concentration and alertness, and then had them begin walking around the room again, in a relaxed, neutral state. When she clapped, they were all to do what they had been doing previously on the wall. They did this various times, and she had them freeze a few of times. In a couple of freezes, she had them breath in sharply in irregular inhalations, telling them not to breath out much. Finally they were to relax, and we did a group Step-Out.

We did not work further with this pattern because Susana finds it a disagreeable, exhausting, and dangerous one. She just wanted them to get a taste of it so they could begin to identify it. I always stress the importance of at least touching on it since so many of us live with a tonic of fear - anxiety - in today's society that I find it incredibly helpful to begin to identify the characteristics of fear so we can begin to see it for what it is.

"Many of us have been afraid for so long that we don't label our feelings fear.

We're so used to feeling upset and anxious. It feels *normal*."

-Melody Beattie

### *The Temperature Rises:*

After a little more stretching out and relaxation, she told them to slowly make their way to the floor, focusing on breath and relaxation. She asked them to lie down with their knees bent up. Then she guided them to do some hip exercises, hips up and down, and around in circles. She described the breath of the final pattern to be worked, telling them they were going to work on it 2 or 3 at a time, as she advised and guided them. She slowly made her way through the entire group, instructing a few at a time to breath in and out through the mouth slightly quicker than normal, with the mouth dropped open and the jaw relaxed into a slight open smile. She also lead them towards letting the eyes unfocus, the hips move, and the head tilt back slightly, thus exposing the neck.

The results were moving. I truly had to focus on staying in neutral and not

instinctually mirroring any part of this enticing pattern. Still, my skin tingled in response to the heat hanging in the air and the sounds of heavy breathing. It is disconcerting to feel such things with no customary external stimulus provoking such reactions. As Susana worked through the participants, I wandered around and made sure that those yet to try it on were in neutral and to see how those attempting the pattern were doing. I touched the corners of their mouths, trying to help ease them into that slight smile and kept reminding them not to close their eyes. Susana told them to step themselves out immediately if they began to feel worn out or dizzy. Then they could return to the pattern if they wanted. Whether the dirty jokes a couple of nights before had primed them or not, the breathing pattern seemed to be doing them right into an erotic space.

As I myself experienced in my first *Alba Emoting* Workshop, Susana then decided next to have the participants switch back and forth between the tenderness and the erotic patterns so they could feel the difference as well as the effect of switching from one to the other. This is a very effective tactic. Most said the difference was quite obvious and, interestingly, many said that switching back and forth made the erotic feeling each time more intense. The tenderness pattern seemed to feed into, and simultaneously give a refreshing break from, the erotic pattern. Many men had images during the work with this pattern, though few women did. Women seemed to have more sensations than images. Many men also said that they had the first signs of erections:

"Senti inicio de ereccion, de impulso sexual, muchas imagenes y sobre todo, como, energia, como ganas de tocar, expresarlo. Y me subio la temperatura del cuerpo. Ahora estoy sudando. Eso, y quede, como, con ganas de reirme, un bienestar."

Various participants had fear mixed in with the erotic pattern. One person said her hands fell asleep and many were trembling, though not necessarily with fear obviously. It was impressive. Some were uncomfortable about expressing such feelings without external stimulus in the company of so many people, many of whom were strangers to them. Others said they felt fear because of certain past experiences, and still others said they simply had fear of loss of control, of chaos, of letting go into the emotion, and letting themselves go over the edge. It is that fear that keeps one too tense to let the full wave of the orgasm overtake her, that linear fear of drowning in the strong circular flow of the magnet-like pull of the undertow.

"For years I have endeavoured to calm an impetuous tide -- laboring to make my feelings take an orderly course -- it was striving against the stream."

- Mary Wollstonecraft

(as tape recorded and transcribed by author)

Participante- Me empecé a- como no podía contactarme con el resto. Entonces empieza esta cosa cuando empiezo a desesperar, empiezo a angustiarse, me dio susto, como, el descontrol, yo creo que tiene que ver con algo mío. El descontrol me produce mucho susto. . . en general, no sé, como en mi vida. Yo creo que eso fue en cambio, en ternura, eso me relajaba. . . tal vez llegó en un momento en que no estaba, así que me empecé a asustar. Pero ese miedo, como, . . . antes de . . .

Susana- Antes de?

Participante- de dejarse llevar.

Susana- Claro, eso es el punto de no vuelta.

(Risa general)

While we were all in a circle commenting, Susana suddenly said, "Just look at each other, look at your faces." We giggled because although we had stepped out, there was still that "well-loved" sheen glistening on their faces and some who had not stepped out so completely still had those bedroom eyes. We had, as in many previous sessions, worked by dimming twilight instead of turning on the harsh fluorescent lights for the second half of the session. So we sat there in a circle in the soothing comfort of somewhat sensual shadows and spoke of loving feelings, both erotic and tender.

#### *More Emotional Games:*

After a short break, we did some improvisations in which we went up three at a time, each with a different emotion, to improvise a non-verbal scene. They learned how difficult it is to stay in a pattern when confronted with a partner in a contrary pattern. Those performing faced the soft light that poured in from the hall so we could see them a little more. This view of silhouetted figures interacting and the effect of intimacy created by the low light were very appropriate. The scenes were both challenging and amusing, an enjoyable way to wrap up our work.

#### *Circle of Final Comments:*

We then closed this final session by going around and speaking of how we had felt about the whole week, if we felt our expectations had been met or not and why. I was impressed by the fact that almost all are very enthusiastic about continuing in *Alba Emoting* training so they can apply it to their psychotherapy work, and many would like to eventually teach it. (The responses were so positive that a small group of us are now meeting weekly to continue training.)

"We have generally been taught that feelings are bad. They aren't logical or rational. They are unruly, messy, unpredictable, and often intense. How wonderful to have such a range of expression!" -Anne Wilson Schaef

(tape recorded and transcribed comments of participants)

"Estoy contento por haber asesinado durante 5 días la razón. Es maravilloso en realidad. Yo siempre fue muy racional y por ende, sentía bastante poco, o disfrutaba bastante poco de las emociones, o las tenía muy mezclada. Y durante esta semana, me ha servido como un trabajo de introspección, de diferenciar, me ha servido mucho para diferenciar las diferentes emociones y lo que yo justificaba racionalmente no tenía nada que ver con lo que realmente pasaba con las emociones. Y eso me ha servido darme cuenta."

"Lo otro que me reafirmo son algunas cosas que yo ??? en mí, que son ciertos sentimientos que me cuestan mucho traerlos a manejarlos, los tengo muy reprimido, entonces me sirvió mucho como para poder saber cuáles son los sentimientos que tengo más presentes, y los que tengo más ocultos. Eso para mí, me sirvió un montón. Y poder saber que los puedo manejar, me da como esa visión, que los sentimientos no me pueden pasar por arriba ahora, que sino que tengo la posibilidad de manejarlos. Yo me dedico hacer clases y creo que a mí me va a servir mucho tanto para mí como para poder ver a la gente, digamos, al resto de la gente. Yo no voy a hacer terapia, no soy psicóloga, pero estoy puesto en este mundo con un montón de gente a mi entorno que están viva, que están pasando cosas también. Entonces para mí personalmente es superimportante. Y me encantaría poder seguir aprender bien esto."

"Para que sea como bien cortito- Me pasa que cuando veo a todos hablando, yo estaba, aparte de escuchando, armando lo que yo quería decir y llegue aquí y es muy complicado. Muy complicado porque tengo hartas imágenes, y cuando me parecen muchas imágenes, tengo la sensación de estar en una obra de teatro muy entretenedora. . . . La sensación mía es que vine y me entregaron una cajita con herramientas así. Y que todavía no la he abierto, esto es mi sensación. Pero que sí, me mostraron el catálogo y que me explicaron muy bien y que lo hice, y que por primera vez leí un catálogo tan bien. Así que me voy con este catálogo por la casa y voy a abrir la cajita de herramientas porque tengo muchas ganas de hacerlo."

*Stepping Out Together One More Time, All Together Now- Pizza and Playgrounds:*

After our last session, the whole group went out for pizza at Gigino's, an entertaining restaurant in Plaza Brasil, one of Santiago's oldest most character-filled neighborhoods. Before the others had made it up to the upstairs section, where we had an entire room all to ourselves, I and a few participants noticed the issue of how we were all going to fit comfortably with the tables as they were. The night before

we had noticed that having the tables side by side in a line really segregated the group because we could only see those directly next to and across from us. To make the set-up more conducive to a shared group experience, we rearranged the tables several times until we created a LARGE square table where everyone could comfortably see and hear everyone else.

The pizza eating was spiced with thanks and cheers for Susana and all those who had organized and worked to make the workshop possible, excitement for future training in *Alba Emoting*, and silly jokes (a few of which I did not catch due them being based either on a Chilean language pun or a reference to psychology texts or terms, but the laughter was contagious so it didn't matter). We ate and conversed and laughed with such gusto that we kept the kitchen open late as we asked for more pizza. Our wonderful waiter continued to serve us until long after the hour they were accustomed to close. At one point as he tried to explain to us that the kitchen was closing so he was not sure if they could make us another pizza, Susana, busy conversing with someone, misheard him and "What, they have run out of ham?!" she cried with a humorous mixture of fear and anger. We all almost fell over laughing.

About eight of us continued the stepping out party after the meal by playing in Plaza Brasil's playground for about another hour, joyfully regressing to the simplicity of pure childhood joy. We giggled sillily and threw ourselves enthusiastically from slide to swing to see-saw. I noticed at one point that while most of us were playing that two were actually still trying to have an intellectual conversation about the past week's work. The rest of us decided this was just not appropriate and urged them to join in, searching for a more ludic meaning with us in striving to find equilibrium on the seesaw, with one standing in the middle and two others shifted their weights at the ends. . .

We continue in a sort of balancing act since having finished this work together, searching in our lives and work for more and more clarity about that magic point where we see the brain and body, the mind and emotions meet and demonstrate they were never separate, but always integrated. Seeking to understand that natural balance of breath, posture, and face which necessarily taps into the heart and mind, bringing us in some way back to ourselves, back to an ancient knowing.

A small group of us have been meeting weekly since then, participating in preparatory and pattern training, theoretical study, discussion of possible future applications, and playing. This workshop sparked something and the fire is slowly starting to grow and spread. I commit to helping tend to the flames as they grow, and try to help secure that they do not burn those too quickly drawn by the fire's beauty and strength to touch the warm colors, not recognizing the power to harm which they contain. The fire sways and dances, let us go search for more wood to feed it.

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