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TRANCEPLAY REVISITED

(Experiential Trance and Interactive Drama)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tranceplay is the combination of recreational guided storytelling, such as interactive drama roleplay, with experiential trance techniques to create an affective context wherein the participant feels as if the roleplayed experience is real, at the cognitive and feeling level. As interactive drama scenarios become more complex and as they compete with the growing sophistication of computer and table top based roleplaying games, this sort of experimental experiential trance based roleplay becomes more interesting. It is certainly not common nor is it particularly mainstream, but the experimental approaches to interactive drama are quite interesting in that they do reflect a growing aspect of the interactive drama experience.

Experimental approaches to making the interactive drama play experience more realistic at an affective level are not new, the

Australian Short Sharp Scenario (SSS) freeforms of the 1980s certainly do reflect this experimental model (albeit at a more affectively limited level).

As more multi-disciplinary cross-over occurs in using interactive drama in new contexts and as more work is being done in enhancing roleplay experience, rather, the experience of roleplay, using multi-media and multi-modal methods, equipment, and technique, the crossover into the actual experience of the scenario as if it were more realistic, not only at the level of gameplay, but at the level of experience becomes a new and interesting area of research.

While it is unlikely we will see fully realized holodecks anytime soon, it is an interesting affective experience to utilize experiential trance and hyperempiric techniques to simulate and stimulate such experiences. The suspension of disbelief can be augmented within appropriate contexts so that the scenario is experienced as if it were real, appropriately real, following certain procedures to ensure a safe and pleasant roleplaying experience.

This paper has been a response to a number of queries about my work with experiential trance for recreational roleplay and has been compiled by request. It is predominately a discussion based upon my own work employing experiential focused trance (hypnotic and otherwise) toward enhancing the affective experience of guided experiences in recreational, therapeutic, entertainment, and introspective meditative contexts. The paper is a discussion of multi-disciplinary approaches to experiential trance while touching upon particular use in the context of interactive drama.

Much of this paper is based upon a series of essays I have written for the trance, hypnosis, and neurolinguistic programming practitioner community on my work with experiential trance as I have developed and taught these techniques for a number of years within a variety of contexts. A number of these essays originally appeared in post form in the *Life of Brian* blog archived online at <http://briandavidphillips.typepad.com/brian> blog in the Experiential Trance category. Much of the informal language and structure of the original discussion is preserved here. For this presentation, these essays have been topically arranged here rather than chronologically. The bibliography provides further references for those wishing to explore the subject further.

Note that some specific sources are mentioned but not fully cited in the text but are rather referenced in category collections in the bibliography. This citation format is used to preserve flow within the paper as well as original textual form.

2. TRANCEPLAY

One of the best metaphors for the tranceplay experience is as an imaginative holodeck such as the recreational computer simulations found in the *Star Trek* television programs in which the characters enter into a game world in which everything feels as if it is real – physically and affectively. With tranceplay, the experience of the holodeck is simulated using experiential focused trance or experiential hypnosis in which the mind perceives the story and events to be real and even experiences them at fully-realized sensory levels of taste, touch, hearing, sight, as well as emotionally and more but the experience is simulated and created mentally. Another literary similarity might be the recreational experiences of the characters in the film *Total Recall* or even the memory replacement and adjustments found in the film *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (albeit, less nefariously so). Of course, our goals when incorporating experiential trance with the interactive drama or other recreational guided story experience is to do so safely and within limits to enhance the experience of the roleplay or story but to do so without any interference or dangers (safeguards are easily put into place as the mistakes and problems of the film world are more cinematic than realistic – particularly when we take into account Hull's "hidden observer" phenomenon as well as the recreational context of the experience, more akin to that of the stage hypnotist's entertainment than the therapist's couch, a context that allows the mind to adapt very healthily to the experience).

2.1 TRANCEPLAY: HYPNOTIC HOLONOVELS AND GAMES AND ART (TRANCE-BASED VIRTUAL REALITY)

Discussing a response to his book on using hyperempiria/hypnosis for consensual adult sexual imagery, Dr. Don Gibbons wrote in the Hypnosis Technique Exchange:

Voila, mes amis. We have all the mastery we need right now to knock the socks off of Hollywood! We can not only guide our participants through an experience of being Harry Potter jousting on his broom, or Indiana Jones in pursuit of hidden treasure, or Juliet on her balcony, or anything else the participant would care to experience, we can also tell them how it will feel, how it will be remembered, and how much they will enjoy (and want to repeat) this kind of experience. And, just as a little child needs to be cautioned, as I was at that age, “It’s only a movie,” so that they don’t become too frightened or otherwise emotionally involved, we can caution our participants in the same way so that the experience does not affect their personality in the same way that a therapeutically-motivated one might.

Gibbons is the author of a number of books and papers on hyperempiria, to be discussed more fully later in this paper.

Take a look at the following discussions related to using hypnosis to intensify experience related to literature, games, and roleplay . . . an hypnotic holosuite a la *Star Trek*, if you will:

- http://briandavidphillips.typepad.com/brian/2004/07/vicarious_exper.html
- <http://www.briandavidphillips.com/scrypnosis/rpg.html>
- <http://www.briandavidphillips.com/scrypnosis/reality.html>
- <http://www.geocities.com/dibragerowtcom/realityr.htm>

Do keep in mind that while some of this may not jibe with one's own ideas about appropriate, the basic concepts are worth consideration.

I have used the "*vicarious memory machine*" technique on a number of times to increase a subject's experience of films, photographs, or prose fiction. For those familiar with my MP3s, the DTM Memory Machine piece at <http://www.briandavidphillips.com> is based in part on this process, albeit my personal experience has been more successful with face-to-face sessions to establish the trigger into the experience (although a few folks have reported good results with the audio recording alone . . . I would be interested in feedback from those who use it). The basic technique is to place a person into somnambulism (high imaginative involvement within a trance-based experience) and to create an affective link to the experience (for instance "the images you are watching are your own memories of an experience, or you are experiencing everything and feel everything the character is feeling" and the like), that link carries visual, auditory and sensory hallucinations including everything from kinesthetic hallucinations of feeling movement or touch and the like to taste and smell . . . full on hypersensory experience. While I do NOT recommend doing this with realistic war movies or the like, it has been done with a number of video games (for someone like me, our television is a home theatre setup with surround sound DTS and dolby and the works with a large projection screen so when you're playing a PS2 or X-Box game with an hypnotic hyperaffective link to the experience, it can be very very powerful . . . particularly when using First Person Shooter type games . . . ALWAYS have rider suggestions to remind the person THIS IS ONLY A GAME and that if at any time the experience becomes too intense they can dissociate from it easily and quickly . . . I also strongly suggest giving rider suggestions of SAFETY, COMFORT, AND PLEASANT ENJOYMENT of this UNUSUAL AND FASCINATING experience. You really don't want to repeat David Brager's initial mistake of telling someone he sees a Balrog with no safety suggestions or you might end up having to look for them under every bush in the neighborhood, not to mention the

laundry bill from cleaning their shorts. Brager first wrote of his experiments with using experiential type hypnosis with roleplaying games with an example of a negative and poorly setup experiment in which he had hypnotized a trance partner to take on the persona of a warrior and then gave the fellow the suggestion that the tree in front of him was now a Balrog. Rather than an experiential imaginary heroic battle as Brager had expected, the “warrior” turned and fled in a blind panic. Brager did not even know what a Balrog “was” at the time and he had not installed positive rider experience suggestions or safety controls to allow the trance partner to know he could terminate or tone down the experience at any time he felt uncomfortable or that it was too intense. While most people will react appropriately to suggestions within a context that is comfortable for them (many studies have backed this up), there are a few who are so gifted with trance states that they allow themselves to uncritically accept suggestions they might normally prefer not to – in that they take on the suggestions before filtering them for comfort. So, it is important to phrase things and contextualize them appropriate to the context. By creating playful rider suggestions and the like, then negative abreaktions or responses are less likely to occur. Of course, making sure the person guiding the experience is both an engaging storyteller and director as well as a competent hypnotist is also important.

ALWAYS USE SAFEWORDS AND AUTOMATIC SWITCHES TO A DETACHED EXPERIENCE OR SANCTUARY FEELING, regardless of whether or not YOU feel there would be anything untoward in the images, the participant needs to be able to stop it at any time just like *Star Trek* characters saying “*Computer, End Program.*” Engage safeties and give full control of the experience levels to the players, so to speak.

Seriously, rider safety and comfort suggestions are very important and NEVER push a person’s comfort levels. So, while it might be very interesting to you to have your significant other experience a lesbian threesome via this technique by watching the newest *Lesbian Leather Fetish Bad Girls in Bondage* video in state, if she has no bicurious interests she’s going to be pretty pissed at you for throwing the tape in.

Likewise, if you're uncomfortable with your spouse having virtual hypnotic sex with Ron Jeremy or some other porn stud then either suggest that the other performer in the video is you for the sake of the experience or DON'T use that sort of material and stick to interesting hypnotic affective experiences of the latest *National Geographic* or IMAX nature vista film. Yes, for the adult material, one really DOES feel a physical sensation . . . for all aspects of the material, what the mind sees it then creates full sensory effects to coincide. This is also true for other types of material, of course.

However, once you've got the basics down, the method is quite easy and works very well with many people. Not everyone experiences full-on hypnotic hallucinations the first go, but most will experience heightened pleasure and imaginative involvement with the material that makes it worthwhile to them.

My process is usually to start with the Phillips-Elman hypnotic induction (an adaptation of the classic Elman rapid induction that I have developed and use in my own sessions as well as teach in trainings that I conduct), that's often my default start for most trancework and then to test for imaginative involvement and critical factor bypass through an eyes-open number amnesia suggestion. "When I count to three, your eyes open and you have forgotten the number six." When I've established that they have indeed lost the number six, pop 'em back down (really, just eyes closed as they're already hooked in and having the eyes open or closed does not change that level imaginative involvement, albeit since most folks expect to close their eyes, I let them). Then I run through a series of tests and demonstrations geared toward increasing imaginative involvement and hypnotic response to suggestions specifically to elicit sensory attachment and hallucinations of various types. Sight, sound, smell, taste, the whole shebang. The baby purple fairie dragon resting on the palm of your hand is a good one in that it is cute and unusual and you can attach different senses to the illusion and build response (yes, the old stage hypnosis "bird" gag is the inspiration . . . but I like purple and I like dragons . . . they lend a magickal quality to the experience I enjoy). Once I've done these setups and built sensory response, I will

do my suggestions for the vicarious experiential memory machine which is really the visually-oriented deep trance identification experience . . . or, if you want a science fiction metaphor . . . a hypnotic holosuite . . . we don't have full-on holographic technology a la *Star Trek* yet but we can recreate the experience in our minds via trancework and that's pretty gosh-darned kool.

BTW, this isn't just appropriate to the folks looking for hyper/hypno-sex (which is what a whole bunch of folks reading my original treatment of this process were looking to get to along with the interactive drama or fully realized roleplay contexts) or to enhance their gaming or cinematic or literary experiences. It can have therapeutic or intuitive uses as well. It can be used as a form of Deep Trance Identification via visual stimulus. When working with a young man who is a competitive swimmer, I used a similar method where he brought in videos of worldclass swimmers performing the strokes he wished to work on. Using the hypnotic processes and triggers I taught him, he was able to enter state and watch the videos very intensely while experiencing muscle movements (although his body never moved) and imaginative involvement. We then did a collapse burst process whereby I counted backwards from twenty to one and with each number his imagination ran the entire series of videos in his head and he felt the entire series of muscle movements automatically with each number so it happened very quickly in his imagination but it was complete . . . when I reached the number one, his imagination took the suggestion that the entire set would burst or explode into his subconscious as a natural automatic system when actually swimming. Using the process, he was able to markedly improve his performance in competitive swimming events (albeit, he still had to practice). He now has a habit of entering state whenever he enters the pool and just enjoying the feeling of letting himself automatically complete every move and he now swims very naturally and in a far superior fashion to previous performance.

I do believe that the imaginative involvement is easier to achieve for this sort of eyes-open hypnotic experience with videos or films or video games than with photographs or prose but they are still useful.

For interactive drama, costumes and rudimentary props are very helpful in creating setpoints or handles for the mind to play off of to then create fully realized experiential imaginative experiences. For the young man who wished to improve his Tai-Chi skill levels used, I initially used a book with a photoset of a master doing all the moves and ran the process with the subject so that as he looked at every photograph in turn he could feel the process and that each move would simply occur naturally as part of an automatic response system. He could really feel his muscles reacting to the suggestion. In his class the next week, his master remarked that he had progressed in a single week well past anyone he'd seen before. To the teacher, it was suddenly as if he were performing at a level of someone who had been practicing for five years when just a couple weeks before he had been progressing at a very slow rate and was considered a rank beginner, and a slowly progressing one at that.

While this demonstrated to me that photographic sets can be used, and I've used similar approaches for other skills, when the young man moved to videos, his progress was even further. I do use a single photograph approach with this process with Tarot decks for folks wishing to explore them for intuitive imagery and the like but the endgame and goals are different so the process is more freeform and visionary (of interest to some of our readers, the Tarot Trance process I have developed is actually inspired by the fantasy novels of Piers Anthony).

For an initial experience with videogames and this sort of hypnotic conditioning, I'd suggest snowboarding or the like or say something like *Crimson Skies* on the X-Box without an opponent (then let the person experience virtual flying, assuming there are no phobic issues involved). I would not jump into a game of *Halo 2* in *Full-On Violence and Blood Bath Nightmare Extreme* difficulty mode in the first go (although once a trance partner has appropriately gained experiential trance practice and skill with appropriate controls in place that remind one that the experience is not to simulate horror or the reality of war or the like but rather to stimulate adrenalin in much the same way amusement park rides do so).

Of course, one can achieve a great deal of the same results without the difficulty of eyes-open hypnotic affective processes simply by using somnambulism and eyes-closed hypnosis with imagery . . . in much the same way many of the guided imagery scripts I've written and published in a number of forums are structured. However, I also like to play with new approaches and effects and find this to be one worth a go.

I would be VERY interested to learn how others approach this same sort of concept. I know there are a number of folks here with similar interests . . . so, it might make for an interesting discussion for all of us . . . even though our specific takes on the process or goals of the experience may be different.

I've pretty much explained the premise and spilled most of my secrets here so folks with the background should be able to find the basic concepts enough to get started on their own. If there's enough interest, perhaps I'll finally run that hypnotic roleplaying game seminar a few folks have been asking for – contact me if you're interested in further discussion or even the experience itself.

2.2 TRANCEPLAY WORKSHOPPING: IMPROVISATIONAL CREATIVE PLAYFULNESS AND HYPNOTIC INDUCTION AND IMAGERY

On 16 January 2005, the Taipei Experimental Hypnosis Workshop held a meeting with the topic of *TRANCEPLAY (Improvisational Creative Playfulness and Hypnotic Induction and Imagery)*.

The Taipei Experimental Hypnosis and Trancework Workshop is the largest English-language hypnosis practice group in Taiwan.

For this session, the workshop expanded upon some of the things we established previously with our discussion and practice in *improvisational creation of instant and rapid inductions* by delving into **Tranceplay: Improvisational Creative Playfulness and Hypnotic Induction and Imagery**.

As instructor, I reviewed the principles of instant and rapid hypnotic inductions and then we will PLAY by applying these principles in creative ways. Dave Elman once said that ANYTHING can become a hypnosis induction and we will PLAY with the truth behind that statement so we can and will create your own instant and rapid inductions and we will all share our own “creations” with the group! Once you grasp the principles, you will find it is very simple and a lot of fun! It should be very enjoyable for all of us.

In order to facilitate the idea of playfulness and creativity – the ability to improvise methods in any context – I introduced the group to a number of hypnosis training and practice games. The first two were Robert Anue’s **Zebu** playing card set for learning and practicing Ericksonian hypnosis language patterns. The second was Trevor Silvester’s **Wordweaving** game and concept which can be adapted to Ericksonian or direct approaches. Third, I taught the group a couple games of my own design for fostering improvisational and creative approaches to hypnosis. The games themselves are playful but the principles and experience can then be taken into any hypnotic context. The relevant games were **Improvise Trancercise Hypnotize** (an induction game for creating instant and rapid inductions on the spot based upon a creative challenge system), **Trance Tag** (a fast-paced imagery creation experiential game), and **Trance-based RPG** (a roleplaying game using trance experience).

2.3 VIRTUAL REALITY PREPARES SOLDIERS FOR REAL WAR

Jose Antonio Vargas has written an excellent piece for *Washington Post* on how Virtual Reality Prepares Soldiers for Real War. More and more, the military used video games - particularly first person shooters - to prepare soldiers for actual combat. More and more young men are attracted to the military because of combat video games. Many active duty soldiers compare their real life combat experiences to their gaming experiences and feel the real war work is an extension of the

gaming or at the least the gaming prepared them to react immediately in their real life encounters. The comment by retired Marine Col. Gary W. Anderson, former chief of staff of the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, that today's soldiers, having grown up with first-person shooter games long before they joined the military, are the new Spartans is very insightful and seems to be exactly part of what these young men are experiencing . . . albeit, perhaps less intentionally as in Spartan culture.

The idea that simulations hone skills is an important one, particularly given what we now know about mirror neurons which imply that even observed skills enhance observer skill use but when someone has empathy or experiential emotional involvement in the activity or simulation it becomes even more powerful. This obviously relates to what I do with experiential trance, albeit I've never worked with someone for soldiering skills or combat (actually, I would be very cautious about experiential trance methods for such training unless one follows the safety precautions I've discussed here before). Experiential trance added to gaming makes the experience seem very very real so combat games would be more realistic at not only the visual level (stereoscopic gaming helps that) but also at the emotionally experienced level.

Vicarious experience can be very powerful and experiential trance based simulations more so. I am currently unaware of anyone using experiential trance in this context but would imagine it would be helpful as long as the safeguards are in place and the experience is monitored by an appropriately qualified individual. Rider suggestions would be very important. I would not recommend that sort of program at this time unless it were designed with those riders and safeguards in mind.

3. HYPEREMPIRIA

Hyperempiria, the term, was coined by Dr. Donald Gibbons to describe the state of trance and the modality he developed to reach it.

Conceptually, many people consider hypnosis to be a relaxed state – this is erroneous but quite pervasive, even among hypnotists – but Gibbons developed a trance induction that relied upon active awareness rather than relaxation. Within this state of aware trance he found he was able to suggest physical and sensory sensations that were experienced as if they were real but within a very active context. Others consider this to be merely a form of hypnosis with a suggested awareness state. I consider hyperempiria to be a form of experiential hypnosis. However, Gibbons maintains it is substantially enough different from what is traditionally considered hypnosis to require or deserve a particular descriptive term, a conclusion I do not disagree with.

3.1 WHAT IS HYPEREMPIRIA?

On the Hypnosis Technique Exchange, the following is asked:

What the hell is hyperempiria? and what can it be used for?

While this is not a very endearing way to ask a question, here's a go at a simple and straightforward answer in my very own rambling and obtuse style.

In any case, there are a number of ways you can find some good solid high content little noise information about hyperempiria via the technique exchange list and elsewhere. Do keep in mind, that the search functions of the group may not be the best but they do work well enough to get an idea if a subject has been discussed before, especially if it's been discussed very recently such as hyperempiria (albeit, we're always happy to talk about new aspects of a topic to add to our understanding and knowledge - not so much interested in rehashing the same old same old over and over though), and barring that, Google is still pretty easy to use for most folks.

For those who might be less familiar with it, hyperempiria is a focused trance modality similar in many respects to traditional

hypnosis with hyperacuity or heightened sensory experience. Gibbons, the “hyperempiria guy” characterizes it as “hypnosis awakened” or “alert hypnosis” on his webpages and that’s a pretty fair take on it.

There are some differences in how the induction is run (rather than using relaxation or inward focusing patter as done with many of the classic hypnosis inductions, the hyperempiric induction uses sensory extension and the like and rather than using simple relaxation to tie into trance it uses heightened awareness). Personally, I feel there are other ways to achieve the same outcome but this is one very interesting approach in and of itself. I also feel that it is a form of formal focused trance just as classical formal hypnosis is, but given a tendency by some to think of hypnosis as a relaxed state, it is useful to differentiate focused trance that utilized heightened awareness with a different term. If you eliminate the idea of relaxation from the equation and consider focused trance to be “guided intensified imaginative involvement to bypass the critical factor of the conscious mind and establish appropriate selective thinking via forms of influence and suggestion through formal and informal ritual induction procedures within variable contexts for entertainment, recreational, therapeutic and educational objectives” as I do then the imaginative involvement and critical factor bypass and selective thinking via suggestion are all that really matters . . . the rest become breeds of focused trance rather than species. However, when discussing one general approach compared to another, the differentiation based upon type becomes useful . . . just as the notion of depth is useful in some ways and less useful in others. It’s all about using the models in a helpful way rather than proving the models as absolute.

In any case, hyperempiria has become something rather in fashion of late and a number of the concepts are valuable to anyone doing trancework of whatever modality.

First, go to
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HypnosisTechniqueExchange/messages> and do a search for hyperempiria and you will find a number of posts in the archives that discusses the use of this process.

Second, go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HypnosisTechniqueExchange/files/> and download the book *Hyper-Sex* by Don Gibbons, PhD, which is a discussion of use of hyperempiria for consenting adult couples both for therapeutic and recreational sexuality enhancement. However, please do not download this book unless you're actually going to read it . . . and, if you read it, you MUST send feedback to Gibbons. He was kind enough to upload it here for folks to read but only in so far as they would provide feedback as he goes through the re-editing process for the new edition. You will want to also read the various posts by Gibbons in the group's archives related to hyperempiria (he kindly posted a couple advanced articles on this and other subjects as well). Be sure to let him know how useful or not you have found the material.

Third, as you are asking specifically about hyperempiria, then I would suggest going to the horse's mouth. Don Gibbons wrote about hyperempiria formally many moons ago and his books on the subject are still considered the classics on the subject. Go to the hyperempiria pages at <http://hometown.aol.com/gibbonsdon/> and read the FAQ. You might also want to get one or the other of the seminal works by Gibbons either "*Applied Hypnosis and Hyperempiria*" or "*Experience as an Art Form*" both of which are available from [Amazon](#) and other online booksellers (albeit, I would suggest the "*Experience as an Art Form*" book would be more appropriate to your needs as your description of your experience levels and your questions implies a more basic understanding of trancework. Actually, the *Hyper-Sex* book in the files section at the Hypnosis Technique Exchange is probably even closer to your understanding levels (while it is not a general book and is intended specifically for erotic recreational or therapeutic applications, the concepts are easily applied to more vanilla pursuits).

Fourth, there are a few posts that either mention or are about hyperempiria and similar subjects on the [Life of Brian](#) blog:

- http://briandavidphillips.typepad.com/brian/2005/01/t_r_a_n_c_e_p_l.html

- http://briandavidphillips.typepad.com/brian/2004/09/hyperactivity_and.html
- http://briandavidphillips.typepad.com/brian/2003/11/sex_trance_or_h.html
- http://briandavidphillips.typepad.com/brian/2004/07/hypnosis_for_in.html
- http://briandavidphillips.typepad.com/brian/2004/12/interested_in_e.html

Fifth, read a post by Wilma Keppel on Informal Hyperempiria 101 on a couple of the general trancework discussion lists and crossposted by the author to the Hypnosis Technique Exchange and READ IT.

That seems like a full enough response to your question . . . for now.

Also, I'm working on some scripts for myself (for studying, insomnia, etc), and I'm wondering how I can induce somnambulism in myself...

Personally, I am of the persuasion that unless someone is already an experienced hypnotist who knows how to guide others into somnambulism or a natural somnambule who goes happily into somnambulism at the drop of a hat, the best route for this is to find a real live hypnotist and have them guide you into real hypnosis - not just relaxation, but the real deal - and then have 'em give a posthypnotic suggestion that makes it easy to return to the state. Gerry Kein has a wonderful protocol for establishing somnambulistic self-hypnosis that I highly recommend. To get somnambulism reliably (the key word is "reliably"), one just be an experienced and competent hypnotist. Learn to do the work, get some real training and appropriate experience. Don't just read about it, do it . . . preferably in a guided setting with a good quality competent trainer. Once you've got that, then Kein's protocol or that of another high quality teacher will take you a loooonnnng ways to consistent and reliable high-quality results.

Brian David Phillips

However, be sure to learn to walk before you start trying to fly. In my opinion.

You could also go to my webpages at <http://www.briandavidphillips.com> and learn quite a bit about focused trance, hypnosis, guided imagery, and a whole lot more. Or, join my workshop group in Taipei (in English). If you would like to take part in a formal seminar or workshop on trancelwork, hypnosis, or hyperempiria, contact me. The same goes for anyone interested in professional hypnosis, guided imagery, focused trance or entertainment hypnosis services (see my webpages for information).

3.2 HYPERACUITY AND HYPEREMPIRIA

Hyperacuity is the heightened sensitivity of the senses. This is often found in trance subjects and can be increased through the use of suggestion (a few folks have done some really interesting work with blindfolds and hearing or with sight and memory).

Hyperempira is a system based on suggestions of enhanced awareness, mind expansion, and increased alertness and sensitivity. It is often presented with a general hyperempiric induction followed by imagery of some sort.

The primary source for information on hyperempira is Don E. Gibbons who wrote the seminal works on the method.

The inductions by Gibbons are pretty straightforward. His take on “*imaginative involvement*” as a factor in hypnosis is very very much worth taking a look at.

Applied Hypnosis and Hyperempira . . . this is the most formal of his books. There are a number of example session models as well as numerous approaches for a wide range of issues.

Experience as an Art Form: Hypnosis, Hyperempiria, and the Best Me Technique . . . this one is shorter than the former and repeats the basic material. The *Best Me* approach is a

mnemonic by Gibbons for approaching issues. There are new example scripts and session models.

Hypper-Sex: The Sublime Art of Sexual Suggestion . . .

Gibbons found out that his graduate students were taking the hyperempiria approach and applying it in a way he had not thought of . . . sex and sexual fantasy . . . it always amazes me the number of folks who are professional hypnotists who have no idea this stuff can be used in an erotic context among consenting adults (I was talking once with a friend who is an experienced hypnotist and certified trainer and mentioned a twist on an erotic induction I had seen that I liked and would give a go and he was at first shocked that anyone would or could use hypnosis that way . . . then he begged me to teach him how . . . any hypnotist should be able to wrap their head around this concept and figure it out but so many think there's some magic fairy dust to the whole process). So, digressions in porn aside . . . Gibbons was a bit inspired by his students and he looked into it and "experimented" . . . this book has erotic session script models and ideas. I haven't read the entire book, it's hard to find, but I have about sixty pages of material Gibbons posted from the book at various times. If you have either of the first books, you can figure it out. It is not rocket science but it certainly is fun science.

Other than what Gibbons has written, there isn't really a lot out there on hyperempiria (aka hyper-empiria). You will find he's written a few journal papers as well but the basic book is fine.

My take is that the technique isn't difficult at all and that there are easier more straightforward ways to get the effect, once you wrap your head around it and really get a feel what you're doing, so will your subjects . . . albeit, I did enjoy reading the Gibbons material and found it provided me with several touchstones as jumping off points for playing with some interesting ideas . . . and if something inspires you to play around a bit, then it's good stuff.

3.3 MULTIMODAL HYPEREMPIRIA

More on hyperempiria . . . a process that works well for a wide variety of trancework contexts . . . therapeutic imagery and changework, simple recreational relaxation and imaginary freedom, entertainment, and more.

In an essay posted to the [Hypnosis Technique Exchange](#), Dr. Don Gibbons wrote about some very interesting therapeutic and recreational adaptations or processes for *Multimodal Hyperempiria* which incorporates imagery of film as therapeutic jumpstart. If you are unfamiliar with hyperempiria and it's applications for therapy, changework, recreation, and plain ol' entertainment, take a look at the umpteen million posts I've made on this and related subjects, starting with this simple answer to the question of [What Is Hyperempiria?](#) and that will get you started with links to other discussions with some very powerful and incredibly unique applications (all of my posts to this blog related to the topic are here). If you're unfamiliar with Gibbons, he is the man who coined the term hyperempiria and began the first formal discussion of this type of induction. While I tend to use the term in reference to highly associated suggested sensory experiences, there may be some variations in our approaches.

In any case, as part of my response to the essay by Gibbons where he discussed using a suggested sensory association into a scene from the film *Black Beauty* for a therapeutic change, I suggested some further adaptation for both therapeutic and recreational trance work . . .

Gibbons, if you have access to an X-Box or a PS2 or some other console game or computer game, you might give a variation of the film piece you did a try. First setup a posthypnotic reinduction trigger that when they begin playing the game, they will become associated to the character in the game so that they experience everything the character experiences.

Now, be sure to setup positive rider suggestions so everything is appropriately experienced as a fun game and

positive recreational activity, we don't want anyone REALLY experiencing exploding ships or zombie attacks.

I would suggest start with something simple but nonviolent to get a feel for how to handle the environment.

When playing X-Box Live, I put in my copy of *Crimson Skies* and did a session with someone to experience that game. Of course, as that game involves a LOT of flying and aerial combat I didn't want to associate anyone into real dogfights or the like that become hyper-real in hyperempirical or hyperacute hypnotic experiences, so we setup the game to dogfight mode and I ran one plane just to fly around and the subject was in the other plane and he experienced real flying and real maneuvers without the added initial stress of dodging bullets or missiles.

Obviously, never do this with someone who has a fear of flying or of heights (use hypnotherapy or the like and get rid of those issues first) albeit, it is a real eye opener as ratification of therapeutic success for those who used to have such fears to show them how successful they have been.

For the daring, once they've gone through initial experience training, you can switch to simple combat mode with suggestions that it's just a really intense and fun game just as a roller coaster is perfectly safe but very exciting.

It is very immersive and very experiential.

Of course, you could also do the visual association method with a film or video . . . with the appropriate person, have them watch the film and then associate the experiences and feelings of the subject to one character in the video . . . appropriately, of course . . . also with the positive rider suggestions. Those who wish to do modelling work could model via video in this way . . . I have used it with very good results for folks working on Tai-Chi, Aikido, swimming, dance, skiing, and running skills . . . for deep trance identification type work, it really is a wonderful tool (works with photo books as well, one young man who used a series of photos of martial arts moves felt as if his muscles had gone through intense workout after the experience) . . . for

recreation, it can be a thrilling experience . . . depending upon film choice . . . let the person being hypnotized choose the film though . . . while you may like the “artistic” and highly entertaining “*Leather Bound Bisexual Babes in Prison*” . . . your straight and decidedly non-bicurious wife may not want to be “surprised” by such an experience. :-) Very bad idea for a relationship to slip in that sort of surprise. However, there are plenty of interesting experiences that can be shared and experimented with that would be very welcome for many folks.

As I have discussed this type of an approach to trancework and exactly how to achieve it in the past, folks are free to explore the archives for more . . . I am creating a category link specifically for hyperempiric type entries to make searches more convenient as I do seem to post on this a lot . . . see Hyperempiria, Hyperacuity, and Suggested Amplified Sensory Association.

If anyone else does the videogame or film bit, please let me know. I include it in the SET (Society of Experiential Trance) curriculum and demonstrated it as part of a modelling technique in one of my recent workshops with a young man who studies Tai-Chi so at least the folks participating in that could see how it works (and interview him afterwards regarding what he felt in his body and how his muscles feel during the process - quite “worked out” as part of my process is to have him associate into the person in the video and then close his eyes and “as I count from twenty down to one, with each number I say, it feels as if you have done the entire form ten times, and at the last number, this knowledge and experience becomes a permanent part of yourself, twenty, etc.”). I haven’t taught this as a “recreational” activity . . . yet (sometimes I do regret not moving to LA as we have considered as the possibilities for certain types of workshops - even of a couples affirming nature as I present it - are limited here . . . honestly, while I LOVE a lot about living here, there is so much very kool very powerful stuff I would love to do live workshops on and share with real live persons that aren’t really possible in context here and now so I have to content myself with writing and sharing in other less immediately gratifying ways) . . . but I have done “personal” research

and the results can be quite . . . um . . . interesting. I would be very interested in the experiences of others in this regard. I know a number of you are also gamers or enjoy a good film now and again, so if you could run an “experiment” with a willing cohort, your results would be of interest. Those who use the method as a DTI technique, I would also love to hear your results. It has worked very well with the folks I’ve worked with but I would like to know how it works for others.

Of course the “*Bisexual Leather-Bound Babes in Prison*” is not something you would want to spring on your wife . . . it’s not an experience anyone should “spring” on their wives as “springing” something like that inappropriately can lead to some very very bad juju in a relationship, not to mention potentially missing “members” the next time one falls asleep :-) . . . but I am certain there are wives – and others – our there for whom a consensual experience of that type would be . . . interesting. However, such relationships are also of the non-“spring” on ‘em type.

In one of his later responses in the thread, Gibbons suggested that while the “*Bisexual Leather-Bound Babes in Prison*” experience may not be appropriate for most folks, he is certain that many men would find their wives would be a willing partner if they asked . . . as they are lying in bed together . . . whether or not their wives would like to go back and re-experience their wedding (wedding, not wedding night . . . that comes later).

While I agree with Gibbons that many wives would find this to be very worthwhile . . . it needs to be clear that one’s wife actually enjoyed the wedding before asking. Some folks may assume their wives had a wonderful wedding day but some women don’t. There are also a certain number of women who marry as part and parcel to their view that they are “settling” for this guy rather than marrying for love or other good feelings or reasons. In such a case, it might come as a shocker for the husband to discover that his wife doesn’t want to re-experience the wedding (whether or not she has now learned to love

him despite her poor reasons for marriage). If you're not absolutely certain that your wife had an incredibly wonderful experience when she married you (regardless of context or reasons for those feelings which may range from she just doesn't like you to her mother objected to the color of the dresses).

So . . . as Gibbons says . . . ask.

If your wife is less than enthusiastic, then let her choose another event to relive or imagine or experience (real or imagined events are fine). DON'T PUSH IT as that's a whole bad idea and a half.

Sometimes feelings are private, so let them stay that way. If she wants to tell you why she likes this or that experience, she will.

While I have great confidence that such an image would be fine with MY wife . . . :-). I've met some folks who have had godawful wedding experiences and even worse honeymoons. So, keep things context specific to your own relationship and experience.

For the appropriate persons . . . one could suggest reliving the wedding night but experiencing it in an even more positive, even more romantic, and much more passionate way. This can be done by future pacing to knowing the wonderful experiences in store for her or him that are now a shared past and knowing that by rekindling this passionate flame that even more wonderful experiences are in store for the future . . . and escalate those feelings, really make 'em "wow" feelings through building suggestions and even simple count ups "as I count from one to ten, with each number, feel this wonderful passion, romance, and dynamic positive feeling much more powerfully, really feel it double with each number as the love washes through you and around you within you and through you . . . one, etc." and when you get to the last number do a "ten, explode, feel your entire, body, mind, and spirit explode with joy, explode with love, explode with passion, EXPLODE, etc." or whatever. It's kind of like the recent announcements from James Cameron that he will no longer make 2D films but that all of his new movies will be produced in full stereoscopic 3D and from George Lucas that he is also producing 3D films and that beginning in 2007, he is going to re-release all of the *Star Wars* films in enhanced versions in full stereoscopic 3D . . . so too

with consensual hypnotic enhancement of positive memories . . . why settle for simply reliving an old experience when you can really relive it in a full-on raging passionate WOW experience!

Gibbons suggests that when a couple explore this process in the context of re-living a wedding, one can then note that with the love and romance at the highest possible level, one can then easily move on to the wedding night experience and re-experience it too, prefaced with what he would suggest as all the aphrodisiac enhancement that a blissful wedding experience can bring to the heart of a woman.

See my statements above regarding context and individual response to the setting. Either be sure to enhance the experience to make certain it is a positive one you are amplifying or rewrite history as a romantic imagery to emphasize the positive elements of the experience rather than the negative ones that may be in there.

Another thing you can do is a process I usually refer to as “open imagery” . . . I’ve talked about it here somewhere but can’t think of the specific reference off-hand with the description, surf the categories to find it . . . but, basically, do an open invitation to the subconscious to create a positive, romantic, passionate fantasy image that is experienced fully but which is undirected . . . the hypnotist partner simply suggests “in a moment, I will count from five to one and at the number one find yourself in a beautiful romantic passionate moment [note: you can add “with me” or leave it open, depending upon context] . . . real or imagined . . . fantasy or experienced . . . no need to think about it, your unconscious will provide a time, place, and context . . . and as you experience this moment, this special passionate loving moment or desire, passion, and raw sexual energy, allow yourself to experience it fully, feel what you feel in this fantasy, hear what you hear, smell, taste, experience everything within this special passionate moment AS IF IT IS REAL AND HAPPENING RIGHT NOW . . . as I count from five to one feel the passion and sexual energy building and building, stronger and stronger with each number, stronger than you have ever felt it before . . . five, etc.”

During the experience, the hypnotist can throw in deepening suggestions to increase the sensory depth and sensuality of the

experience. However, at no time direct the experience. Don't tell him or her what to experience, just deepen it. Then, as is often nice for many folks, after you've gone into it for awhile, throw in a "and as I count from one to five, with each number the sexual-romantic-passionate-whatever feelings increase [whatever is appropriate to the context - this is NOT a covert seduction technique, it is a consensual method for appropriate imagery within a context-specific relationship] and at the number five, explode" (there's that word again) in whatever way is appropriate for the situation. Then do the count up, explode for the big climax, then "and as you . . . relax . . . let a gentle wave of love, romance, and gentle deep relaxing love wash over you and through you as it is now time to return to the here and now . . . as I count from one to five with each number coming back to the here and now remembering this wonderful positive experience and feeling comfortable, relaxed and deeply loved . . . etc".

Then . . . shut up. IF she or he wants to talk about what exactly happened, then she or he will. If not, then shut up and let your partner have that private experience, you are reaping the benefits of the emotional experience and have provided your partner with a wonderful fantasy experience. Don't go pushing into the experience unless she or he is interested in sharing right then.

Certainly . . . never suggest other partners or the like or leave that possibility open for the imaginary experience if you're going to go all jealous on 'em later (sad but true . . . a fellow asked his wife to imagine making love with Brad Pitt and then he became rather jealous when she climaxed with Pitt in her imagination which caused him to feel that she had been cheating on him . . . it was his suggestion in the first place . . . but even if it hadn't been, treat these experiences as playful imaginary games and don't take them beyond the comfort level of both partners . . . this sort of thing should ONLY be used to strengthen your relationship not to create experiences that might weaken or destroy trust) . . . so, no "*Bisexual Leather-Bound Babes in Prison*" unless that is explicitly what both partners would be interested in and only if it's REALLY something both partners are absolutely comfortable with and be very very sure of that as there's no going back

later. If you're not sure, it means "no" . . . if there's any doubt, then "no" . . . that means stick to vanilla monogamous fantasy . . . which can still be EXTREMELY rewarding. You can always try new things later when you're more secure in the method or with your relationship. In the meantime (or, forever, if that's your preference), enjoy the possibilities of just exploring one another's joy and happiness and passion with one another.

4. EXPERIENTIAL TRANCE AND VICARIOUS EXPERIENTIAL PROCESSES FOR FULLY REALIZED EXPERIENCE

Experiential trance is any form of focused trance or hypnosis in which the subject experiences suggestions as full-range sensory events. Suggested sights, sounds, smells, touches, tastes, and more are all experienced as if they are real. I have found in my own work that if a trance partner can fully realize suggestions in this way they are more positive and long lasting in therapeutic terms and they are much more likely to engender positive recreational experiences. This is closely related to the phenomenon of focusing found in therapeutic cross-modality studies where it was found those who are more successful at FEELING their reactions to issues and ideas within their bodies are more likely to be successful in changework. However, for our purposes, experiential trance can be considered an effect of somnambulism, a "depth" of hypnotic trance in which suggestions are non-critically taken on board and accepted by the unconscious so that the experience is perceived as real. The suggestions given by a performance hypnotist are often of this nature (I have performed stage hypnosis shows of many types and normally consider such a depth the required minimum level of volunteer responsiveness).

4.1 EXPERIENTIAL HYPNOSIS

The “official” definition of *experiential* hypnosis as used by the Society of Experiential Trance (SET) is as follows:

Experiential Hypnosis . . . when the trance experience is so deep and so vivid and so powerful that a person experiences all of the suggestions as if they are happening right now!
Experiential Hypnosis relies upon Instant and Rapid Hypnosis Induction techniques that take a person from full alert consciousness to complete deep trance in a matter of a few short minutes or instantly, right then, right there, right now.
These powerful techniques can be used within any context . . . entertainment, recreation, therapy, changework . . . and more.
Any context. Learn how to instantly create deep trance phenomena and how to deepen the experience as you guide others into very vivid and very powerful trance that can lead to wonderful recreational experiences or very powerful permanent positive change. Dr. Brian David Phillips is a recognized leading internationally known expert in
Experiential Hypnosis based upon very powerful and very very fast instant and rapid deep hypnosis techniques that lead to powerfully realized and fully experienced trance states including fully experienced regression, parts therapy, and imagery so vivid it is experienced as if it is completely real . . . right now in the present moment . . . all of which can be utilized for recreation, entertainment, education, or therapeutic permanent positive change. This is the real deal. In addition to being a fully hands-on competence-based comprehensive instruction in Experiential Hypnosis, this course can lead to full certification with the Society of Experiential Trance for those who pass the final competence component. Join us.
Seating is limited. First come, first served. Don't miss out on your opportunity to learn and experience full Experiential

Hypnosis with an acknowledged master. Beginning and advanced hypnotists are all welcome.

4.2 VICARIOUS EXPERIENTIAL MEMORY MACHINE PROCESS

Vicarious Experiential Memory Machine . . . real experiences through Hypnotic Games and Films and Literature and Entertainment . . . and a whole lot more!

You want to play a game? How about if you could play a video game or watch a movie or look at a photo album or read a good story and really feel like you are really in the action . . . that what you are seeing on the screen or page is actually happening, right there, right here, right then, right now . . . to you? The ultimate virtual reality entertainment protocol may just be helped along with trancework.

Through hypnosis . . . real hypnosis, not just imagination . . . this is entirely possible. Been there, done that.

Once, on the Marknossis email list, the question of using hypnotic language within a game as well as using hypnosis as a frame for a game in order to increase the player's associated experience while playing the game came up and this happens to be something I am very interested in. I also have some modicum of experience experimenting with just this issue.

I love video games and I love games and I love hypnosis.

When I first started playing with the "Vicarious Experiential Memory Machine" games and hypnosis was one of the areas I was interested in, albeit in terms of using hypnosis to intensify the game playing experience rather than using games to induce hypnosis.

Basically, the idea behind my approach is similar to the old stage hypnosis bit with the *voodoo doll* where the subjects are hypnotized to feel and do everything they see the doll do. I then used it with television so that the subject would feel and experience everything on the screen as if it's her own memory (okay, some of the early

experiments were with adult entertainment but that's pretty intense stuff and the research was a LOT of fun).

Anyhow, I've used it with videogames as well with some good effect. However, you MUST make certain to keep a certain degree of dissociation there so that the terror of playing Doom doesn't freak a person out. You want to put in a LOT of rider suggestions of "enjoying" the experience but knowing and realizing it's just a game at all times . . . like a ride at an amusement park . . . keeping a vicarious or dissociated level within the associative experience.

I also love 3D photography (I have around fifteen or so vintage and contemporary stereocameras) and love true stereoscopic 3D gaming as well . . . add some hypnosis into the mix and that's a full-on associated experience.

Here are some articles by David Brager which deal with similar ideas (including a bit on live RPGs - which I wrote my doctoral dissertation on):

- Hypnosis with Virtual Reality -
<http://www.geocities.com/dibragerowtcom/realityr.htm>
- Adventure Roleplaying Games (Reality Replacement with Eyes Open) -
<http://www.briandavidphillips.com/scrypnosis/rpg.html>
- Reality Rendering and Temporary Replacement for Fun -
<http://www.briandavidphillips.com/scrypnosis/reality.html>

If one is considering rather than hypnosis that makes for good narrative but narrative that makes for good hypnosis, then I would suggest taking a look at the critical response to The Woman in White (book and video - albeit the book is much more satisfying than the video). When it came out in the Nineteenth Century, many folks were shaken and addicted to the hypnotic elements in the prose. There's an excellent write up on it and some nice analysis of some of the excerpts in Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain by Alison Winter.

As to some of the specifics of how I run my Vicarious Experiential Memory Machine method, the process I use is outlined in brief in a

short essay I wrote for Zali Segal's Hypnotize This! - an excellent comprehensive textbook on hypnosis - but the basic approach is pretty straightforward. You don't need the essay to understand the process as it's pretty easy for anyone with a modicum of experience at creating physical or experiential imaginative effects with hypnosis. When working with a client, I will use a standard induction set (usually Elman or something along those lines). I then establish and test for somnambulism (usually through a number-amnesia test, NOT the Elman test but something more dramatic along the lines of a stage show "forget the number seven" with eyes-open tests). I like this as it increases imaginative involvement and assures the client that something "real" is going on while training fully involved response. Then I pop 'em back into things and run the patter for the machine. Compound, test, compound. I would normally have some images to model or a video or game right then to run the process with as a deepening and training tool to increase involvement and reliable response to the process.

I have been asked if I do an induction prior to sitting a person down in front of the television or a computer. Yes, no, and maybe.

There are different routes to this. I have done an induction while the person was playing the video and I've done a setup with a post-hypnotic trigger that allows the person to go into state (imaginative involvement) on their own without the induction guiding (there are a couple MP3s for conditioning to do something to this effect on my DRTRC site at <http://www.briandavidphillips.com> which some folks use as a start-off point, not as good or as complete as real-life sessions with a qualified competent hypnotist but certainly a lot better than nothing). For certain individuals, I've also prepared videos of sports, dance, tai chi, swimming and other activities the clients wished to work on (works with other recreational videos of the more adult kind for the right sort of folks) . . . that would include an induction with trigger phrases for deepening before the clips, with audio mixed in during the clips, and in between the clips for deepening the experience.

As to doing something within the medium itself and ensuring a safe level of dissociation, I would start off as above . . . induction as part of the preset and then run the medium with reinforcement and compounding suggestions under the sound. I would suggest dropping the text-based game medium though and opt for something with live video and live audio as it's more involving. I've no doubts that a text-based adventure game would work (see some of the stuff I wrote on hypnotic hypnosis letters for some ideas of one approach, either here or on my group or in the chapter I wrote for Wendi Friesen's Hypnotize Your Lover book). Basically though, get state, train for responsiveness and follow-through to suggestions and then run with the suggestions while firing in reinforcement compounding.

Some folks doing this sort of work feel that one can increase dissociation safety for the scary material in a game or story by adding in a humorous tag at the end of a scene or via a catch-phrase from a character. If you're doing full-on experience, the scary stuff can be a bit much for some folks. Sometimes, what you might consider within tolerable range may not be for someone else and this is even more fully true when we're talking about full-on experiential trance stuff of this sort. When I took my family to see Spiderman 2, we went with a few friends. While my daughter was perfectly okay with the movie (she's ten), the son of a friend was really overwhelmed by it and his mother was partially freaked out. Imagine if she were experiencing all that stuff full-on. Some folks found the Dementors in Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (the third Harry Potter movie) to be more than they'd like to handle. Now, imagine playing a video game with those beasties coming right at ya. Kool, but needs a backdoor escape hatch. Heck, when I saw the twister scene in The Day After Tomorrow it snapped me back to my boyhood in Kansas . . . yes, Dorothy's Kansas . . . and seeing real twisters lift real houses. Imagine what someone watching the more intense scenes in Resident Evil or it's sequel Resident Evil: Apocalypse might go through . . . or, perhaps something without zombies but certainly very horrifying . . . Full Metal Jacket or any number of similar films or something like Caligula (I know, some readers are thinking to themselves, kool, but others will

note the point). Humor at the end of a scene isn't going to be enough . . . as the scary stuff is going to be experienced quite viscerally before that so by the end the damage or thrill has already happened . . . make sure you have some sort of safe word or dissociation key so that folks can pull out of the in-your-face-full-on-virtual-reality-experiential-mode anytime they wish.

By the way, only partially on topic due to the current discussion but far enough off that it won't count as self-promotion . . . but folks interested in virtual reality and stereophotography may want to join the <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/3D-StereoviewXchange> as we share our stereo 3D photos there with members from all over the globe (while most of the stuff is pretty regular mundane stuff do be forewarned that some of the images are by folks who hang out on adult film sets and are inappropriate for some viewers). I shoot with a stereo attachment on my Digital Rebel and with an old Realist and take hundreds of photos.

I have a stereovideo attachment for my camcorder as well but the flicker on the television made me abandon it. I am hopeful that the new Sharp 3D computer will bring back full-on interest in 3D and we'll see some better LCD monitor and projector options for stereopresentation.

4.3 EXPERIENTIAL TRANCE

If you can imagine it, then you can experience it . . . anything you can imagine can be powerfully felt as if it is real and happening right now via *Experiential Hypnosis* or *Experiential Trance* . . . that's right, *anything* you can imagine . . . and I mean **anything**.

As it is something I do a LOT of and will be doing much more with in future with more essays and mp3s and books and teaching . . . not to mention it is both a valuable skillset and a lot of fun . . . presented appropriately contexts for recreation, entertainment, and therapy . . . I have added a new category to *Life of Brian* . . .

Experiential Trance which covers the topic of *Experiential Hypnosis and Focused Trance*. There is some overlap with the hyperempiria, hyper-acuity, and associated sensory experience set but eventually you will see more and more on my take on experiential hypnosis which is one of my crusade areas, so to speak.

What is **Experiential Hypnosis** and what's it used for? Within Experiential Trance, anything you can imagine can be fully experienced as if it is real . . . powerfully real . . . *anything* you can imagine . . . and that means **anything**. Applications are primarily for therapy, recreation, and entertainment but the contexts it can be used for are pretty much limited only to one's imagination and ingenuity. When I teach Experiential Hypnosis I train students in both how to do it as well as how to apply it creatively with a number of examples but without locking into scripts or models but learning underlying processes behind the demonstrations or examples so they can apply it to anything they wish to . . . *anything*.

Experiential hypnosis or experiential trance is when the trance experience is so deep and so vivid and so powerful that a person experiences all of the suggestions as if they are happening right now! My take on Experiential Hypnosis relies upon Instant and Rapid Hypnosis Induction techniques that take a person from full alert consciousness to complete deep trance in a matter of a few short minutes or instantly, right then, right there, right now. These powerful techniques can be used within any context . . . entertainment, recreation, therapy, changework . . . and more. Any context. People can learn how to instantly create deep trance phenomena and how to deepen the experience as they guide others into very vivid and very powerful trance that can lead to wonderful recreational experiences or very powerful permanent positive change. I do a lot of work in this area and am well known within the hypnosis community for this particular approach or modality of experiential hypnosis and trance based upon very powerful and very very fast instant and rapid deep hypnosis techniques that lead to powerfully realized and fully experienced trance states including fully experienced regression, parts therapy, and imagery so vivid it is experienced as if it is completely

real . . . right now in the present moment . . . all of which can be utilized for recreation, entertainment, education, or therapeutic permanent positive change.

Those interested in learning the techniques can read *Life of Brian* and take any of the trainings I offer, including certification with the Society of Experiential Trance (see the Brian David Phillips Waking Dreams webpages for more information).

4.4 HYPEREMPIRIA AND EXPERIENTIAL HYPNOSIS (DIFFERENCES, SIMILARITIES, AND SAMENESS)

On a few of the email lists I belong to, there has been some discussion of the nature of hypnosis and whether or not trance or critical factor bypass are the same or different monkeys. One part of the thread has been regarding hyperempiria which gets discussed quite a bit here on the technique exchange. A disagreement has come up as to whether hyperempiria is indeed a different state than hypnosis, a specific form of experiential hypnosis but hypnosis nonetheless.

The following is an extension of my line of thought that incorporates and expands upon a few of my posts within the discussion thread.

If it makes it easier to digest . . . preface all of my responses below with “in my opinion based upon my experience and understanding” . . . those who wish to disagree are free to do so. This is my response to the topic based upon my understanding from direct experience and study. Take it or leave it.

I’m of the *hyperempiria* is a form of experiential hypnosis ilk . . . it’s merely directing the suggestions toward awareness rather than relaxation . . . at least that’s the original intention of the hyperempiric inductions. The model of doing hypnosis this way and of using a different term than hypnosis is useful to distinguish the effects from those achieved in the progressive relaxation set, but the utility and

effect is not substantially different from straightforward somnambulism-based “experiential” hypnosis as has been discussed here.

One advantage of using a different vocabulary is to avoid the baggage associated with “hypnosis” in much the same way the term “hypnotism” was coined to be more descriptive of the state (albeit, Braid regretted the term later and belatedly wished to change it to monoideism which is certainly more descriptive as hypnosis had NOTHING whatsoever to do with genuine hypnos, sleep) and to avoid the negative baggage and sloppy thinking that had grown up around “animal magnetism” and “Mesmerism.” Certainly, in recent years, a great deal of negative baggage and sloppy thinking has become associated with hypnosis so hyperempiria becomes a term that both is descriptive of the desired outcome state as well as one that has no negative associations attached to it. Some folks who might object to undergoing hypnosis will be perfectly happy to enjoy or undertake a hyperempiric experience. I will use “focused trance” with folks for much the same reasons (descriptive, associative, and legal - focused trance, like hyperempiria, is currently not regulated in most locales while hypnosis is).

When Dr. Don Gibbons started performing hyperempiric inductions (he’s the gentleman who coined the phrase and you can find his academic and practical books online . . . it never ceases to amaze me when I come across so many folks who bandy about the term hyperempiria who have never read or even given credit to the good doctor who is the originating pioneer of the techniques others are teaching . . . one woman I came across was claiming hyperempiria was some sort of access system to one’s higher self and a means for humans to communicate with spiritual beings having been given to humans via mediumship . . . uh, not really on the same page there). Go to the source and read these books: Beyond Hypnosis: Explorations in Hyperempiria, Applied Hypnosis and Hyperempiria, and Experience As An Art Form: Hypnosis, Hyperempiria, and the Best Me Technique. You will also find that Gibbons has kindly put an electronic copy of the original edition of his book on *hyperempiria for sexuality*

(therapeutic and consenting adult recreational purposes, which he is currently editing for a new, much more powerful, edition) in the files section of the Hypnosis Technique Exchange which is one of the email discussion lists I moderate . . . btw, for those unfamiliar with the term, it was Gibbons who first encouraged me to start an association for experiential hypnosis as he has followed my work as I have followed his . . . his positive opinion means a great deal to me), it was specifically to work with folks who found classic “relaxation” inductions unsettling. I respect Gibbons a great deal for what he has done and his innovation within a community that is resistant to the idea that hypnosis does not require relaxation (he was doing a great deal of his work within a community, academic and otherwise, where progressive relaxation was considered the standard and requirement for induction), but basically the effective processes are the same except that the hyperempiric induction focuses on alertness and awareness with full sensory association into the imagery. When one reads the classic inductions for hyperempiria, they read much the same as classic hypnosis inductions with the exception that they focus on alertness and sensory experience rather than relaxation and dilution of experience. They are two aspects of the same quality . . . engaged imagination, suggestion, and compliance . . . within intensified imaginative involvement to bypass the critical factor of the conscious mind in order to establish desirable selective thinking. They are both forms of focused trance and hypnosis. Of course, it is unfair to look at someone’s work and point at flaws if that is an ongoing work . . . a life’s work still in process . . . Gibbons is continually updating his ideas and theories so it is important not to take the older pieces out of context but to see them as part of a continuing chain of progress and improvement (I’ve seen some of his more recent essays and he continues to be innovative and contributes much to the field).

I have found that the same results that can be had through hyperempiria can be achieved through *experiential hypnosis* with the suggestions for full-on sensory association (which is how I get the same effects). The hyperempiric inductions or processes are not innovative as a new state but as an original route of achieving state to

increase sensory affect. They are indeed very innovative, but they provide a new construct for achieving certain effects, not a new state in and of itself.

Obviously, if you consider hypnosis to rely upon relaxation with decreased physical sensation and the like - lethargy and dullness of thought or consciousness - then hyperempiria must be something other than hypnosis in that it relies upon alertness and focus as well increased sensation . . . full-on sensory experience . . . or, as Gibbons described my take on using hypnosis to accelerate and build intense sensory affect related to imagery and the like . . . experiential hypnosis.

Of course, some folks make the erroneous assumption that hyperempiria is the same as the various *higher-self* or *ultra-height* processes or that somehow these are co-dependant . . . they are not. Certainly, they can be used in conjunction with one another, but neither depends upon the other and can be used independently (and usually are as the originators of both streams had very different and specific intentions for the processes). Any effect you can achieve in one form of hypnosis can be achieved in others . . . eyes open, waking state, eyes closed, relaxation, hyperempiric, whatever . . . because those are induction contexts . . . the key is the engagement of the imagination to bypass the critical factor and then start running your compliance patterns for suggestions, building and compounding within context to create an environment in which the desired results are achieved. It is still critical factor bypass, intensity of the imaginative involvement, and establishment of the appropriate selective thinking. It is a form of hypnosis, but different in a way that eyes-open hypnosis or waking hypnosis or relaxation hypnosis are different but they all share in the quality of being a form of trance-based critical factor bypass. Once you've got the compliance pattern, you can also pop a person back and forth through any of these so-called different forms as the critical factor bypass and engagement and intensification of the involvement of the imagination is maintained. So, I can use my modified Elman induction and guide a person into somnambulism, compound the compliance and affective responses, then go directly

into the various hyperempiric suggestions and achieve the same results. The uniqueness of hyperempiria is not in the sense of being different from hypnosis in terms of critical factor bypass but in that it is hypnosis associated with sensory phenomena and the induction set, hyperempiria is a subset of hypnosis rather than being completely unique. In my opinion. Albeit, I do agree that some forms of trance may not be “hypnosis” . . . but . . . hyperempiria is not one of those forms. At least, in my opinion.

In response to my view, some have said that they believe hypnosis includes somnambulism in its definition and that as fellow Neo-Elmanian hypnotists (a label that fits a great deal of my own hypnobias), we are constantly testing for somnambulism rather than critical factor bypass. As some folks take the root parts of the word somnambulism to be literally walking while one sleeps, they miss the historical context for why the word has been misapplied and is now generally accepted to mean something the roots have nothing to do with. I have been asked if I also test for somnambulism when inducing hyperempiria and the answer is, yes. Somnambulism is hypnosis is engagement of and intensification of imaginative involvement, critical factor bypass, and establishment of desirable selective thinking to a degree that appropriate signs are present and one has automatic compliance to suggestion.

Somnambulism has nothing to do with sleep or wakefulness. It is merely critical factor bypass and desired suggestion compliance through imaginative involvement with appropriate signs.

In my opinion, critical factor bypass is the key between trance and forms of hypnosis. In my opinion, that's it. Yes, when I induce hyperempiria, or rather, induce hyperempiric phenomena through a form of hypnosis . . . or, rather, when I do ANY form of hypnosis . . . I test for somnambulism . . . that's pretty much my standard “working state” for trancelwork . . . I may not do the same tests as in the Elman induction or elsewhere, but I test and make sure I have “state” . . . whatever that may mean.

Rather than believing, as some do, that somnambulism distinguishes hypnosis from hyperempiria, I believe somnambulism is

the same for either as hyperempiria should display the same compliance set . . . albeit, the tests will be different (rather than lethargic catalepsy, one might test for the other bits) . . . the signs of hypnosis are all present in hyperempiria . . . or, at least, they should be if one is having full effect.

At least one person in the discussion characterized somnambulism as the state everyone naturally goes through between being awake and asleep and back and that as hypnotists we guide folks through and into that state. For these folks, hyperempiria must be different from hypnosis because of the lack of sleeplike state. When Gibbons first began working with hyperempiric inductions and when he coined the term, he also characterized hypnosis as a sleeplike state that included drowsiness and relaxation rather than alert or full sensory experience. This is a fallacy that has deep historical basis but is not based upon what's actually going on – albeit, there are practical reasons to hang on to a new term to describe the hyperempiric experience and differentiate it from other forms of hypnosis or experiential hypnosis.

In any case, regardless, somnambulism as the term is used to describe certain hypnotic stages (deep trance), has nothing to do with sleep or wakefulness. One does not have to be guided into wakefulness from sleep or sleep from wakefulness to get it. The state between sleep and wakefulness is the hypnoidal state which actually has very little or nothing to do with hypnosis. It is merely the twilight state. It is a time when folks can be roused into hypnosis because of some increased susceptibility to suggestion, but it is not hypnosis in and of itself.

At least that is MY UNDERSTANDING of and my BELIEF regarding hypnosis, experiential hypnosis, hyperempiria, and somnambulism.

4.5 VICARIOUS EXPERIENCE AND REAL EXPERIENCES (OF MIRROR NEURONS AND TRANCE PROCESSES)

In the *Hypnosis Technique Exchange* there was once a heads up post about recent work on Mirror Neurons and how their discovery helps explain why we do some of the things we do.

The poster reports on a recent Public Broadcasting Service segment about a recent discovery of a set of Neurons related to socialization and learning from others. A very interesting observation they found was that this set of neuron can not tell the difference between seeing the action being done and doing the action.

See the online article at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/sciencenow/3204/01.html> and be sure to both read the background material as view the video which is quite interesting. I also enjoyed the followup material.

That is an interesting segment. Perhaps it explains why methods like ideokinesis or sense memory work for dancers, athletes, and actors or why a process like the vicarious experiential machine are effective for some folks and the mechanism for how they work (see [here](#) for related essays in the *Experiential Trance* category here at *Life of Brian*). In my own *vicarious experiential machine* (aka, *vicarious experiential memory machine*) process, one enters trance and then powerfully associates to images such as television or film or even a series of photographs and then experiences the actions or feelings of the subject as if one were performing or feeling the actions themselves.

The monkey's neurons firing when observing as if doing an action tells us the mechanism of seeing or imagining is as real as doing. When the host performed the actions he felt emotional state changes as well.

The followup study on dancers who were proficient in skill sets compared to untrained dancers watching videos of dance moves also tells us that skill levels can affect how the mechanism works . . . so, practice and imagination are important. Those who try to simply

imagine themselves proficient aren't going to be as successful as those who actually do the practice and get the physical skills. Perhaps reminding those of us who do sports or performance hypnosis or trancelwork to be sure to include actual physical skills practice along with the guided imagery and experiential trance experiences. Of course, those doing recreational, entertainment, and even erotic experiential hypnosis (such as the course I will be teaching on this subject in February) are reminded that imagined experiences are processed neurologically the same as real experiences so it is important to keep sessions clean of inadvertent negative suggestions and the like or suggested imagery that might not be pleasant or helpful in the long term.

What we can imagine, we can realize and vicarious experience is neurologically similar to lived or real experience.

That autistics tend to have "broken mirror neurons" tells us something about their experience of the world and may lead to treatments - both medical and non-medical - that will help them become more in touch with experience and empathy which allows us to adapt and socially interact as well.

Knowing there is some basis for what we do imaginatively, can help us develop more effective trance processes to help folks . . . for therapy, for sports, for recreation, for entertainment, for education, for a wide variety of context-based applications of the concepts.

Eventually this material will have very practical application, in the meantime, it is food for thought and certainly interesting to know.

5. CONCLUSION

Interactive drama is not a static artform, nor is it contextually isolated from other disciplines. Just as there are intersections with experiences in other game forms as well as literary forms, the intersection with experimental approaches to gameplay and experiential forms will continue. While experiential trance approaches to story and interactive drama is certainly not likely to become a common form, it is still quite interesting and deserving of further work.

Those with interest, may wish to explore the resources listed within the paper proper as well as the bibliography. Feel free to contact me with queries. I am always happy to discuss this aspect of experiential trance. On occasion, I do offer trainings or host events on this and related subjects as well.

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