

Shrink Rap Radio #199, March 13, 2009. The Secret History of Dreaming

Dr. David Van Nuys, aka “Dr. Dave” interviews Robert Moss
(transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Jo Kelly)

Excerpt: *“I like the saying of the Aborigines of my late native country, that the big stories are hunting us. The big stories are hunting us; picture predators hunting and sniffing and stalking in the bush, looking for the right person to jump on. I think it’s like that with the big dreams. I mean although I’m talking about Active Dreaming, and conscious techniques for exploring, I suspect that in a way the big self and the big dream is stalking the little self and the little every day dreamer; and the question is how do we spend time in the right kind of liminal territory where we can easily be found. To think that we are hunting the big dream or the big story is like the mouse thinking it’s hunting the cat. The big story or the big dream is actually after us.”*

Introduction: That was the voice of my delightful guest, **Robert Moss**. Robert Moss is the pioneer of Active Dreaming, an original synthesis of shamanism and modern dream work. Born in Australia, he survived three near-death experiences in childhood. He leads popular seminars all over the world, including a three-year training for teachers of Active Dreaming and a lively online dream school. A former lecturer in ancient history at the Australian National University, he is a best-selling novelist, journalist and independent scholar. His seven books on dreaming and imagination include: *Conscious Dreaming, Dreamgates, The Three “Only” Things: Tapping the Power of Dreams, Coincidence and Imagination, and The Secret History of Dreaming.*

His website is www.mossdreams.com and also check out his blog at www.mossdreams.blogspot.com/

Robert will be the keynote speaker at the upcoming International Association for The Study of Dreams annual conference on June 26-30, 2009 at the Wyndham Hotel near Chicago’s O’Hare Airport. The conference website is www.asdreams.org/2009/

You don’t have to be a member of the organization to attend; and you don’t have to be a professional to join the organization. It’s really there for anyone and everyone who is passionate about the topic of dreaming. Plus, they have a wonderful newsletter and a variety of online dream events that members can participate in. Their website is www.asdreams.org.

Dr. Dave: Robert Moss, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Moss: Good to be rapping with you David.

Dr. Dave: I'm so pleased to finally have the chance to interview you! You might remember my coming up to you at your book talk at Copperfields Books in Sebastopol, California.

Moss: Yes you were loitering with intent there on the sidewalk there.

Dr. Dave: That's right; I approached you about an interview then but you were in the midst of a book tour, and so we had to put this interview off for a month or two.

Moss: Well the time is always now, except when the time is go; that's one of my personal mantras. So I guess the time is go.

Dr. Dave: OK. Well I have to say I was very impressed by your presentation at Copperfields, and I've since learned that you are going to be the keynote speaker at the upcoming International Association for the Study of Dreams annual conference which will be held in Chicago this June – and we can go over the details of that at the end of our interview.

Let's start off with a bit about your background, and how you were called to make the study of dreams a central part of your life's work.

Moss: Well it starts in my native Australia. I'm just a boy from the bush, as you know David (laughing); and there are two senses in which my Australian boyhood is central to what I teach, what I do, and what I understand about dreaming.

The first is that I grew up of course in a country with a very old indigenous tradition of dreaming – the Aboriginal tradition – the Aborigines maintain that our personal dreams can take us into the Dream Time – the space beyond this world where we have access to ancestral wisdom, perhaps have access to healing and creativity, the place you want to be. So there is that tradition; and although I am no expert on Aborigines, part of that lives in my bones I guess by osmosis, and I have had some interesting run-ins – positive run-ins – with Aborigines in the course of my life.

The second thing is I was a kid who was very challenged by life threatening illnesses as a kid. Today we might call some of those illnesses near death

experiences – we didn't have that phrase when I was a kid – a doctor said about one of these things “oh he died and he came back, didn't he”. Anyway I had three life threatening experiences in these crises of illness, and in the course of those experiences my dreams were very helpful. I had the sense of having gone to a world beyond this one, so I had the sense of knowing that there are realities beyond the ordinary one. I also learned that dreams can be healing.

So my approach to dreams starts in my childhood, and it gathered force in my adult life when I started living on a farm in upstate New York and started dreaming in an old language I did not know, which turned out to be an archaic form of the Mohawk Indian language. So I found myself needing to learn something about indigenous dream practices from an indigenous American people. From that my sense of what matters changed profoundly, and I developed an approach to dreams and dreaming that I carry on teaching today.

Dr. Dave: Yes in fact you have developed an approach that you call Active Dreaming. Maybe you can tell us about that.

Moss: Well the phrase is a provocation of course, because many of us – including many of us who value dreams – think of dreams as essentially a passive state. We go to sleep and a dream comes upon us, and of course that is part of the story of night dreams. But Active Dreaming has two senses. The first is that we can be active about entering the dream space; we can learn to be conscious or lucid dreamers in various ways. The techniques of lucid dreaming are well understood. The Active Dreaming approach goes a bit beyond that in the sense that we learn to embark upon conscious wide awake dream travels. For example we learn to go back into the space of a remembered dream: perhaps to confront an adversary and go beyond it, perhaps to dialogue with someone inside the dream, perhaps to gather more information, or simply to go on with the adventure.

But the second application of the term Active Dreaming is even more important. We want to be active with our dreams. We want to derive action plans. We want to evolve strategies that will help us bring guidance, healing, energy, direction from the dream space into regular life; and we want a good way of talking about our dreams to other people that can bring dreams into the family, into the friendship, into the community, into the workplace. So I have developed a simple technique I call the Lightning Dreamwork Process, or the Lightning Dreamwork Game which enables us to do something fun with a dream in 10 minutes or less, with just about anyone just about

anywhere; and help each other to decide on an action plan that will carry the dream over into the rest of our life.

Dr. Dave: Well that sounds fascinating. Is the Lightning Dreamwork Process something you can describe in less than 10 minutes?

Moss: I certainly can (laughing). I've described it in a couple of my books but I'm happy to go through it now. There are four key steps.

The first is you encourage the dreamer to tell his or her story as clearly as possible. That sounds rather obvious, but in fact there is such power in learning to tell our story simply and clearly: without background, without self analysis, "just give us the facts" as Mr Jung used to say. Give us the facts of the dream, and tell them well, and hold your audience. So that is step one: we encourage each other to tell the story, and give it title, and we hold the space, and do not suffer interruptions while someone is telling the story.

Step two is for the friend or partner to ask three basic questions. As a matter of fact you sneak in a number of sub questions, but the three basic questions are these.

Number one, what are your feelings about the dream? First, feelings on coming out of the dream are your best immediate guidance to how to work with it. Second, reality check – which has two aspects: what do you recognize from this dream in the rest of your life, including your dream life.

Number two, could any part of this manifest in the future? Because from my point of view we always want to look for possible advisories on the future in our dream; something that mainstream western analysis still tends not to do.

Number three, what do you want to know? Or if you had an intention last night, how does the dream relate to your intention?

So those are the three questions.

And then phase three – there are only four steps – step three is to play the "if it were my dream" game. I didn't invent that protocol of course, Monty Ormond gifted us with that, and it was a great contribution from a great man. We say to each other if it were my dream (or if it were my life, we might be talking about a coincidence rather than a sleep dream) if it were my dream I would think about such and such. And as you know, we can say anything we like at that point as long as we are polite; and as long as we make it clear we

are speaking from our own perspective, and not projecting this onto the dreamer and trying to confine the dreamer within our analysis. So, very important to learn to talk that way.

And finally step four – and here is one of the most important contributions here – we want an action plan. So step four is always to come up with an action plan. You dream of the color red: OK are you going to wear the color red, are you going to meditate on the color red, what are you going to do with the color red. You dream of a funny word: OK hit the search engine online to check out the word, try it out on people who know more languages than you. You dream of your ex: what are you going to do about that? Do something to cut the tie, get in touch with them again, look out for the person coming into your life who may resemble your ex? You have something which has narrative value or image value: are you going to write something from your dream, are you going to craft or paint something from your dream?

We are always looking for an action that will bring some energy or some juice from the dream. The action of course might involve further Active Dreaming. You dream something that is unresolved or unfinished: your action plan might need to be to go back inside that dream in a conscious dream journey when appropriate; to go beyond a terror, or an obstacle, or simply to finish the unfinished dream. So those are all examples of deriving an action plan from a dream that will move a dream simply from verbal analysis to some kind of embodiment. And what we always try to do when we are playing the process is we come up with a snapper, as Mark Twain would say; or a bumper sticker if you are into bumper stickers; a personal phrase, or slogan, or one liner that will carry some insight from the dream with it so we can hold it.

Dr. Dave: Oh I love that idea. You have really created a synthesis of modern dream work and shamanism. I heard you say on tape that the word shaman actually means “one who dreams”, at least in some languages. Do I have that right?

Moss: Well that’s not the original meaning of the Tungus Buryat Mongolian word shaman; but in the western hemisphere the word we translate as shaman very often turns out to mean literally one who dreams. In the Mohawk language for example which I had to study because of my dreams, the word we translate as shaman – but it also means doctor or healer, be it noted – is atetshents which means literally one who dreams, implying one who dreams profusely, one who can dream for the benefit of others, one who can heal in their dreams. So in the western hemisphere – and there are

various names for the shaman, and they mean different things – but a very common word for the shaman especially in North America translates as dreamer, or one who dreams.

Dr. Dave: Great. Now some of the techniques that you teach in your work are dream incubation, dream re-entry, and dream tracking. Maybe you could describe your approach to dream incubation?

Moss: This is of course an ancient process. Dream incubation involves asking your dreams for guidance and opening a space where healing or guidance is possible. In the ancient dream sanctuaries, which of course continue to operate in various societies, you might go through quite a long physical journey in order to be ready to be received into the place of sacred dreaming, or sacred sleep. In the Esculapian model in the ancient Mediterranean where people sought healing for over a thousand years, you might make a long and perilous journey to the dream sanctuary. Then you go through a cleansing which is designed not only to clean you up physically and to scrub out your energy field, but to help you to shift your regular mental attitude so you are ready to enter a deeper space. You would be shown images of how dreaming and prayer have been valid before, and then you are psyched and revved up for a sacred encounter during the night.

In our modern stripped down process we may dispense with a lot of that stuff, and the simplest version might simply be to write as clearly as you can an intention for the night. And that intention must have juice and energy, it can't just be a chore, you want to ask for something that matters to you. You may want to ask for energy or healing or creative inspiration; and you may ask in those terms – “I ask for healing tonight”, or “I open myself and my creative source”. You might need guidance on a particular problem: “I would like guidance on this publishing deal”; I mean I'm speaking about myself now. I've received the most specific, practical guidance influencing practical decisions of great importance to my own survival in this way. Writing down a request for specific guidance and then acting upon it.

Dr. Dave: Yes, I was actually going to ask you if you had a dream incubation example from your own life.

Moss: Well let me give you a personal one; it's terribly practical. I was thinking about it today because I have been thinking about my publishing relationships today. So *Conscious Dreaming*, the first of my seven books on my Active Dreaming approach. *Conscious Dreaming*, I went away and I just wrote it; I didn't ask permission. I had a powerful agent at the time and he was keen on the idea but I just went away and wrote it; which was a break

from my normal mode of somebody who has been a successful professional writer just to go and write a book because he has got to do it. So I come back, and my agent likes the book and he identifies the right publisher and he asks a great deal of money; and the publisher is floored by the amount of money the very successful New York agent is asking, basically says “go away we don’t pay that kind of money for dream books” (laughing). And my agent is saying, well I want to shop the book around and auction it. And I’m troubled; I feel that he has found the right publisher and I can’t think about the money thing because I didn’t write the book with money in mind.

So I ask for a dream, David. In my dream I am in my car and I need gas, and I’m at a gas station; and it’s a period Esso gas station – the pump is feminine, slightly rounded, very attractive – and I want to pull up and I can’t stop; the engine is overcharging, overcharging. I have to back up with some difficulty; I’m having a hard time getting the nozzle into the gas tank (laughing) and getting the hose to work; and I notice the numbers are going up very slowly on the pump. At the end of the dream I’ve got all the gas I need, and I’ve taken off, and I feel great, and I’m ready for the journey; and I wake up feeling very cheerful. Now if I were a Freudian I would go somewhere with the problems with the hose and the tank.

Dr. Dave: Yes (laughing).

Moss: Fortunately I’m not a Freudian; there are Freudian dreams of course, but fortunately I wasn’t a Freudian with this dream. I understood that for me the gas is about the money, it’s about the resources. We get to recognize our own symbology; and for me dreams of gas stations usually have to do with money and resources.

Dr. Dave: Ahah.

Moss: And I go through my own process, and I summarize this with you. I do it by myself; and the last part is writing a one liner. Well I wrote a sort of two liner. Thinking about the dream, I wrote a two liner which was something like this: I’m overcharging; I’ve got to back up, it will take some finesse to get it together but I will have all the gas I need for the journey. Having done that analysis, I call my agent, I tell him the dream, I tell him the one liner, and I give him my instructions: go back to the original editor, it will take finesse, the numbers won’t be great, but we’ll be fine. So he goes back to the editor, we have to accept less money than she offered because she’s not thrilled about the way this has been handled. And David, there is a sequel.

Nine months later I am at the Embarcadero Cinema in San Francisco, travelling on the tab of my new publisher with whom I have made the deal because of the dream; and I have a date with a columnist who likes to take interesting authors to see a movie and then have a conversation afterwards. We go and see the reissue of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* with Catherine Deneuve, which as you may remember is a Freudian hoot. Every time a wine bottle is decorked, nudge nudge, that's all about sex. Every time an umbrella goes up or down, nudge nudge, that's all about sex. So I am laughing at this Freudian movie, and then there is this scene where the hero of the movie realizes his dream – which is to own a period Esso gas station. And David, nine months after my dream incubation I am looking at the gas station from my dream, on the screen of the Embarcadero Cinema, on book tour paid for by the publisher with whom I made a deal, because of the dream I asked for.

Dr. Dave: That's a great story. I just love it when those kinds of things happen, and I know you do (laughing).

Moss: It doesn't always happen, but sometimes you luck out, and that for me, that lives in my mind – it's a story which has that loop; you know that sequel, there is a nice conclusion. You love that when you live long enough to experience that. But I love it in my personal life, and I often go back to it in my mind as an example of how dreams can give us the most practical, necessary advice in a way that we can hear it.

Dr. Dave: Yes. Now you also talk about dream re-entry, and maybe there is again, a story from your own life where dream re-entry served you.

Moss: Well here's a simple story about dream re-entry, from the early period when I was first living in the United States. Now I grew up in Australia. Australia does not have bears, not native bears; we have koalas and they are cute, they are not actually bears. My European ancestors knew the bear, but I don't remember ever dreaming of the bear in an important way until I started living in North America.

When I started living here I would dream recurringly that a bear – a colossal bear, huge – was in my space. The bear was not attacking me but the bear was so much bigger than me that I would feel nervous, and fearful. And eventually I did to myself what I would do to anybody else who told me such a thing: I said to myself, Robert, you have to go back into the dream, confront the bear and find out why it's in your space.

So I am sitting in an easy chair, I'm not using drumming or any of the things we use in the workshops, I am just using the energy that is in the dream – the energy is some fear too – to get back inside the dream, and I am there right away. It doesn't take any particular effort of the imagination; I just resolve to step back into the dream. Sitting in the easy chair with the curtains closed, and the phone shut off; and I'm right there.

There bear is not cute – I can smell it, and it's rank it's feral, it's huge, I can see the claws – and I do not want to fulfil my resolution and step up to it but I force myself to do so. So in my conscious dream re-entry I step up to the bear, and the bear wraps its enormous arms around me, and it does not crush my ribcage, and suddenly we are the same size. Oh that feels better. And the bear wants me to look down at the heart area, and I look down to the heart center, and I notice something that is amazing to me. I notice that there is something like an umbilical that links my heart to the heart of the bear. There is some kind of energy flowing back and forth between our hearts; and I see in a reason I cannot comprehend the bear and I are joined at the heart. And the bear indicates, not in words but with what I translate into words, the bear indicates something like: call on me for healing and I will show you what you need to heal for yourself and others. And this was the origin of a great gift.

When I hold healing circles, or dreaming circles devoted to healing – and almost all of them are, in one way or another – we call the bear into the room; we sing a Mohawk shaman song that summons medicine bear Okwari into the space.

I learnt something which won't be unfamiliar to you or to other dreamers; I learnt that sometimes what we fear in our dreams is the power that is waiting for us that requires us to brave up and step beyond our ordinary understanding in order to receive it. So the gift of that dream re-entry was to recognize a connection, and mobilize that connection, and be able to draw upon that connection that would not have been available unless I had found the courage to go back into the dream and confront what was initially fearful.

Dr. Dave: Well it seems to me that you have a very good, active imagination in order to be able to enter back into the dream that vividly. What do you tell people who don't seem to possess that skill?

Moss: Well there are techniques that you can use. I think it is always important to go back with the energy. I myself am not able to re-enter any and every dream. I try to re-enter some dreams and I do not succeed, unless I use techniques including the shamanic drumming that I use in the

workshops for example, if I use that I tend to do better. I tend to do better with some dreams if I am working with a circle of people, as I often do. I cannot re-enter each and every dream of my own to the full extent; you want to go with the energy. But I do find that shamanic drumming – and I have recorded a shamanic drumming CD of my own, specifically for dream re-entry and for dream travel – I find that that helps: it helps to focus your intention, and it helps to screen out distractions, it helps to silence those nay saying parts of the mind that tend to get in the way, and it accelerates the journey. So I would recommend for anybody who wants to try this and finds that they can't simply do it by making it their intention to do it, to experiment with using shamanic drumming; and you can do that with a CD.

Dr. Dave: Yes; and I will put a link to your website where they can get that CD in my shownotes as well.

Now you mention dream travel which you also travel as dream tracking. That's a very shamanistic idea, isn't it?

Moss: It is a shamanistic idea; but I've found that whether we want to get into shamanism or not, it is not that difficult for us to enter each other's psychic or dream space. We should do that with permission. And tracking is a method of entering someone else's space in order to do some good.

My first ASD, now IASD (International Association for the Study of Dreams) conference – the first one when I was a presenter, back in University of Leiden in Netherlands in 1994 – I introduced these methods of dream re-entry and tracking. And there were two Freudians from the Sigmund Freud Institute of Frankfurt, who chased me through the room where we had 150 or 200 people doing this, yelling at me “how did you do that? Stop, stop, shaman, shaman! Stop, stop, how did you do that?” I said what are you talking about? They said, “We were right inside each other's dream space. We were right in the same space, in a shared dream space, had amazing experiences; we don't understand how this is possible”.

Of course Sigmund believed in telepathy, but they believed that they had been in exactly the same space. A shared space in the dreaming, using the drumming, and with the focussed intention to explore certain territory together. One of them had provided the portal by telling part of a dream but not all of it; the other had seen the rest of the dream that he had not been told; and both of them had proceeded from that entry point to go to landscapes beyond what either knew about or had discussed, and they had gone together.

I think it's an open secret, we have the ability, we are connected, we have the ability to travel together in dreaming, in conscious dream journeys – we do it unconsciously at night – sometimes our dreams overlap and interweave.

To embark upon the discipline or the practice of tracking, yes it's a shamanic thing, and yet it's a sort of colloquial, everyday human thing. We have the ability to enter each other's space and support each other, get information for each other and facilitate healing; and we can make that a practice.

Dr. Dave: Well it's very inspiring to get that message from you, both on tape and in your most recent book – which we'll get to – I assure you I am planning to get to that. I have been listening to one of your tapes which I purchased at an International Association for the Study of Dreams conference a few years ago. One of the things you say there is that people need to take their dreams more literally, and their lives more symbolically.

Moss: Right. I am a symbolist about everything that happens to me in the everyday world, David. I look at everything as if it might have symbolic meaning; obviously the messages are not of equal importance – if you thought they were you would go nuts. But I have the same attitude that the French poet Baudelaire had when he wrote about life as “walking through a forest of living symbols that are looking at you”. The behavior of those birds, the vanity plate on the car in front of me, the email coming through at that moment; incidents large and small speak to me of a larger reality, and hint at a deeper order of things.

I think the relationship between dreaming and coincidence, or signs from the world might be stated like this. There are big dreams and little dreams obviously – there are dreams that are just processing and just products of the personal unconscious in a limited way – but in the interesting dreams we often seem to be travelling. We are travelling somewhere beyond our ordinary realm, we are maybe travelling to other dimensions of the real, we might be travelling to the past or future, or we might be receiving visitations from those who don't seem to be confined by Newtonian physics. Through coincidence it's as if the forces of the deeper reality come pushing, or probing, or tickling through the veils or walls of our ordinary understanding to bring us awake.

So a dreamer needs to be working and playing in both realms: both with dreams of the night, or dreams of a visionary kind where you are travelling beyond your ordinary circumstances; and with the coincidences or signs or symbolic pop-ups from the world, which give you a life of symbols all around you.

As a matter of fact when you look at how human cultures across history have worked with dreams, and worked with signs or coincidence they have never really drawn a huge line between the two. The famous Artemidorus – the ancient Greek interpreter of dreams, whose title Freud borrowed – Freud borrowed the title the interpretation of dreams from Artemidorus, Artemidorus was a famous dream interpreter of the second century. Among Artemidorus's lost books was a book on bird watching; bird watching being one of the favourite human ways across time and cultures of monitoring coincidence, signs, portents, symbols from the world.

So reading dreams and reading signs from the world about you, in most human cultures, are things that have been done together; and that's my own approach. I spend at least as much time in the course of a day looking at what's going on around me in the waking world with an eye to it's symbolism, as I do working with night dreams.

Dr. Dave: I love this expression: symbolic pop-ups in life (laughing). I love that.

On that tape you do talk about the universal distinction between big and little dreams that you just mentioned. I've been keeping a dream journal off and on for about 30 years myself, and have had only a few big dreams. What can I, or we, do to bring forth more of the big dreams; because I love them when they happen.

Moss: Interesting question isn't it. I think so much of it is about being open – and you are undoubtedly open, you have been working on a dream journal for a long time, you are a questing adventurous guy, you've got a questing mind, I think you've been open – I think there are things that we cannot push.

I like the saying of the Aborigines of my late native country, that the big stories are hunting us. The big stories are hunting us; picture predators hunting and sniffing and stalking in the bush, looking for the right person to jump on. I think it's like that with the big dreams. I mean although I'm talking about Active Dreaming, and conscious techniques for exploring, I suspect that in a way the big self and the big dream is stalking the little self and the little every day dreamer; and the question is how do we spend time in the right kind of liminal territory where we can easily be found. To think that we are hunting the big dream or the big story is like the mouse thinking it's hunting the cat. The big story or the big dream is actually after us. So the quest is putting ourselves in the space where it can be found.

Now I must say since I spend a lot of my time leading circles and workshops and trainings, that there is an accelerating factor involved when you've got a bunch of active, lively dreamers together; you've got that group energy cracking, things happen faster. So I'm now talking about the situation where you are set up for conscious dreaming and conscious journeys because you have got a group energy working with you. So I would say that possibly working with the right circle, spending more time with the right circle of dreamers who can generate the right kind of energy and can agree on the right kinds of intention could be very helpful.

Just last night we did a very simple exercise, one of my regular gatherings I simply said let's journey to a healing place; and I described what a healing place for my own dream life would be like. A place on a headland surrounded on three sides by water with the crashing of the waves, and how you access that house and how you find certain rooms in that house. I wasn't leading a guided meditation; I wasn't trying to drive people into my dream space, I was simply goading them to open their own. And in rather a short period of time, David, in this spontaneous way people had some huge experiences of conscious dreaming in the course of which some found themselves rediscovering locales they had encountered in previous spontaneous dreams and visions, which now had a space where they could be more easily explored.

So I guess I am saying although you might need to wait for the big dream to jump on you, you can probably accelerate the process by doing more work with a group of dreamers who generate the right kind of energy.

Dr. Dave: OK, thank you.

Well I think it is time for us to talk about your latest book, *The Secret History of Dreaming*. Now why do you call it a "secret" history?

Moss: Well the inner dimension of history in the sense that my book tackles it is not something that we are taught in our schools, it's not something we find in most histories or biographies, it's not something that the media is prepared to entertain by and large; and therefore in a sense it has been kept secret from us. It's not really secret; the sources are there, the goad to explore this is there in our own nightly dreams and our visionary experiences, and our experiences of coincidences; but none the less, I know of no book quite like my *Secret History of Dreaming* in our culture. I mean I simply don't. It's the first attempt at writing the inner dimension of history: how dreams and dreaming – in the expansive sense, including visions, active

imagination, the study of coincidence – how these things have driven great lives, and great events across every sector of the human adventure for as far back as we can trace.

Starting with the baked clay tablets of Mesopotamia and the very first dream report – one of the first works of literature – recorded by a female reader of the tablets whose name survives: Geshtin-anna, writing *The Dream of Dumuzi*, part of the cycle of Inanna, 5000 years ago.

So across that sweep of history – and I did start out as a history professor, and I think he wanted to come out and play with me in this book.

Dr. Dave: Yes. (laughing)

Moss: I like sources, I like documents, I like footnotes, I like it to be entertaining but I like to check the sources. So I let the history professor out to revisit some famous episodes from history and to surface some much less well known aspects of history.

For example, how many people know – in terms of the history of women as well as the history of dreaming – that we have the transcripts of 415 dreams of a young Spanish noblewoman in Madrid, from three years 1587 to 1590 in the time of the Spanish Armada. That's an almost incredible source, virtually unknown to anyone outside a small group of historians of medieval Renaissance Spain, that was waiting to be looked at. How many people know that we can track a writer's life almost day by day in relation to his dreams from the dream journals of Graham Greene – a famous and popular English novelist, wonderful entertainer – who kept a dream journal every day of his life, along with writing 500 words plus a day.

So I've tried to look at the connection between dreams and dreaming, and interesting lives and interesting breakthroughs, and of course I've dismissed some of the well known dream stories. We've heard for example that Einstein's Theory of Relativity came from his dreams. There is no evidence of that. What there is evidence for, is that he woke up with the solution; there is no evidence that he had the dream. So I've kept the sceptical scholar's approach, as well as the Active Dreamer's approach in evaluating the sources.

Dr. Dave: Yes; it's secret in a way; I mean *The Secret History of Dreaming* is secret in the sense that so much of what you describe there I've not encountered anywhere else, and I have read a lot of books about dreaming;

so you are right, you have really dug up some very fascinating historical information.

In your book you describe yourself as a dream archaeologist. What do you mean by that term?

Moss: Well it does require digging (laughing) so there is a direct connection there. Archaeology is the study of the first and primal things; that's what the word means. I mean it involves digging, I mean it may involve digging after the first and primal important things.

I suggest that the tools of the dream archaeologist include: an ability to make connections between things other people haven't connected; an ability to revisit or re-enter the circumstances of people in a different time through the active imagination, and understand from the inside – having exhausted the documents and scholarly sources – then to go inside to practice scholarly time travel if you like, and imagine yourself in the situation, in the skin of someone in a different time to understand how that works. These are some of the components. The dream archaeologist has to combine the tools of a scholar, a detective and a shaman (laughing) to do his stuff; and I hope to see more people emerge who can do that.

Dr. Dave: Yes. Well as I've mentioned your book is filled with interesting stories that I've not encountered elsewhere, for example you relate how Freud missed a potentially life saving health warning in one of his dreams. Can you tell us that story?

Moss: This is a tragic story; and I'm astonished that so far, as far as I've been able to track, there is only one published source in the English language in an old issue of *Dreaming* – the IASD magazine that refers to it. The spade work was done by an Argentine oncologist who is also a Freudian psychiatrist. He compared the details of Freud's famous Irma dream – this is the dream that Freud says founded his method, his analysis of his dream involving a patient called Irma in 1895 – he actually put it on a plaque as the foundation of his method. The Argentine oncologist compared Freud's description of the symptoms of a female patient in his dream with the symptoms of Freud's own oral cancer, diagnosed and studied 28 years later (those medical records are in the Library of Congress).

In summary: in Freud's famous Irma dream which occupies 20 plus pages of his *Interpretation of Dreams*, he describes himself as opening the mouth of a woman patient like a dentist, and examining horrible scabs, discolorations etc inside her mouth, and looking at something like a prosthesis – more than

dentures – something like a prosthesis in her lower jaw. And there was a lot more detail. Freud worked this dream over and over, but he never really paused to say could this part of it relate to me, the dreamer? He never stopped to say could this relate to me. He did note that the patient had no dental problems that he was aware of, and he was puzzled by that. He thought he cracked the code of the dream; but he missed something rather important because 28 years later he developed the same, apparently almost identical pattern of scabs, discoloration etc in his mouth with the oral cancer that killed him; and had to be fitted with a prosthesis which made it very difficult for him to open his mouth and chew and talk for the last horrible years of his life.

So it seems possible, indeed probable, that Freud missed early warning of the disease that killed him. If that is possible, the discussion then would center on whether this was precognitive or prodromic – 28 years early advisory or something – or whether it was what could be called a tumor marker as if the very first cell of his cancer already present is telegraphing through the dream how it could develop. Either way, there is a tremendous study which we need to undertake, given this material, as to whether Freud missed the diagnosis. If so, that's not only tragic in his life, but it really is a commentary on the limitations of the Freudian method.

Dr. Dave: Even though it wasn't his dream?

Moss: It was his dream. It's his dream. I'm sorry I have to get this clear; he's analysing his own dream and in his dream Irma is a character. Irma was his patient – it is Freud analysing his own dream.

Dr. Dave: Oh, OK.

Moss: And I must say in praise of Freud – people sometimes are surprised to find me softer on Freud than they expect – one of the great things about Freud is that he spent so much time analysing his own dreams, as in this case he sometimes misses the messages for himself in his own dreams.

No this is his own dream; it's his own dream of Irma, not Irma's dream.

Dr. Dave: OK, I missed that. You probably said that.

I know you are very interested in coincidence, and you recount the relationship of the physicist Wolfgang Pauli and Carl Jung, and how it led to Jung's theory of synchronicity. Can you take us through that a bit?

Moss: Oh this is wonderful. And here is a case where fascinating documents are becoming available and we are just beginning to realize the riches they contain. We now have in English the essential correspondence between Jung and Pauli – not the entire correspondence, there is a mass of Pauli correspondence. He lived in the days when scientists communicated by writing letters the old fashioned way, and there are thousands of his letters that have not yet been properly scanned even in the German language, in archives in Switzerland.

Anyway Pauli – a younger physicist, one of the founders of quantum mechanics, a Nobel Prize winner – originally came to Jung for help because he had had a breakdown. Pauli was a mass of roiling emotions, conflicted identities etc, and as a matter of fact his life history gave rise to what you will find in the dictionaries described as the Pauli effect. He tended to blow things up. My chapter on him is called *The Man Who Blew Things Up*. It's an example of mind affecting matter of the most interesting kind. For example, he arrives at Princeton and a cyclotron, an expensive new cyclotron just installed, blows up. And no-one is in any doubt that it's Pauli's presence in the field that has led to this explosion. If that sounds amazing, look at the details of the Pauli effect on equipment.

So Pauli is a mass of roiling emotions and his own life is a demonstration quite often of the remarkable extent to which mind and emotion can affect physical reality around him. He comes to Jung for help in the circumstances of a breakdown; Jung hands him off initially to a female assistant but then Jung comes in personally. Pauli and Jung exchange letters over 25 years, containing from Pauli's side hundreds and hundreds of dreams; over a thousand dreams just in the first 18 months.

So we see two minds intermeshing and working together on what they agreed was *the* problem of the time for both their disciplines, psychology and physics, which was the relationship between mind and matter; seeking the one world, the *unos mundos* theory. Jung is working towards what becomes his theory of synchronicity; Pauli is assisting him with that. Pauli didn't like the word synchronicity, which Jung coined largely because he was fed up with people saying "it's only a coincidence", or dismissing coincidence.

I don't like the word synchronicity much either; it sounds respectable, it sounds smart, it sounds academic, but all it means is things happening at the same time. And as Pauli observed with his characteristic bluntness to Jung: coincidence is about more than things happening at the same time. Coincidence can play out in a sequence over days or weeks or longer; life rhymes; things come up again and again and again and you begin to notice a

pattern. So, “things happening in the same moment” is not the critical definition of meaningful coincidence.

Pauli wanted to introduce the term isomorphy; I’m afraid it’s not a flyer, I’ve tried it on various people (laughing) but nobody seems to be willing to swallow it. It’s actually a better technical term, meaning things that have the same shape, maybe turning up in different forms or different environments; but I’m afraid it is not going to travel.

Anyway, the fertile dialogue in which Pauli and Jung worked on synchronicity theory and much else, is a fascinating study in how creative minds can work together; and in this case in addressing something no less important than the interweaving of mind and matter at every level of our multi-dimensional universe.

Dr. Dave: Interesting. Having recently watched the HBO series on John Adams I was really fascinated by your account of the dream sharing that went on between John Adams and Dr. Benjamin Rush; and Rush’s dream about a reconciliation between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Can you take us through that story?

Moss: I enjoyed the HBO series, but unfortunately they deleted the dreams (laughs).

Dr. Dave: They did! (laughing) There was no mention.

Moss: That’s another example of why the history of dreaming is a secret history, the central importance of dreaming is routinely deleted.

So here we have John Adams, the second President of the United States, and here we have Dr. Benjamin Rush, another signer of the declaration of independence; two Founding Fathers, who are both avid and prolific dreamers, and they make a deal. The deal comes after Adams has stepped down from the White House – but they make a deal to swap dreams: you write me a dream and I’ll write you one back. So they are sending each other dreams back and forth. In the course of this you begin to notice that dreams influenced Adams when he was President of the United States. You will begin to notice how these dreams affected the second president’s attitude towards national and international affairs. For example he wants to know about the French Revolution and how it will affect the United States; and he dreams he is trying to lecture the French on the principles of democracy in front of the former royal Palace of Versailles, and he is howled down by a

mob of devouring beasts who want to tear him limb from limb; so after that he is not too optimistic about the French Revolution.

So actually when you study the correspondence, which is voluminous and not reflected in the biographies at all, really, you begin to notice how dreams affected the thinking of the second president. Pretty interesting.

But the most remarkable dream is a dream sent by Dr. Rush from Philadelphia to Adams in Quincy, Massachusetts in his retirement, in which Rush says he dreamed he was shown a history of the future of the United States. He calls it a future history of the United States; he's talking about a history of things that haven't happened yet – fascinating. On the page that he is reading he sees that Adams and Jefferson (the third president) – they have had a falling out – are reconciled, and that their correspondence becomes exemplary (for those studying the conditions for democracy). And he reads also that Adams and Jefferson die within a short time of each other, a long way into the future.

Well Adams and Jefferson were reconciled – the dream account may have played a part in making Adams willing to reconcile with Jefferson – and their correspondence did become exemplary. And this is absolutely fascinating: 17 years after the dream report, Adams and Jefferson died within hours of each other on the same day, July 4th 1826. So you could contend that this letter from one of the Founding Fathers, Dr. Rush, contained long range precognition – 17 year precognition – of the death of Adams and Jefferson on the same day.

Dr. Dave: Even without that dream: the fact that they die on the same day, and that it's the 4th July, the date of the signing of the Declaration of Independence; talk about synchronicity, or isomorphism. (laughs)

Moss: Yes, there is definitely something going on there. Jefferson delayed his death; the accounts tell us that he is hearing bells and he is asking is it July 4th yet, and it's not, and he holds on. He wants to die on July 4th. And there is another fascinating twist: I read that Adams's last words, or close to last words were "Mr Jefferson is alive"; implying that he saw Jefferson after Jefferson died and felt his presence close at hand. So there is a heck of a lot going on there.

Dr. Dave: Yes, I'll say. I was also fascinated by your story of Colonel Harold Dickson, who I had never heard of, and his dream in the 1930s that led to a huge oil strike in Kuwait.

Moss: Yes. I had once been bumped up to first class on a plane and I thought this looks good; but then I had a this 400 pound guy spilling over his seat next to me, and he turned out to be in the oil business. He was asking me what do I do, and finally I volunteered that I teach people how to dream. What the hell good is that? He says. I said, oh you're in the oil business? And I proceeded to tell him the story I'm going to summarize now, and it got his fullest attention.

So back in 1937 there is a Brit called Harold Dickson recently retired as British Political Agent in Kuwait, living in retirement. He wakes from a dream in the middle of the night, he gets his wife to write it down, and in his dream he sees a sand storm in the desert, it opens a crater under a strange solitary tree, in the crater he finds a mummy, the mummy's shrouds blow away, a beautiful woman is revealed, he takes her home and cleans her up, and she gives him an ancient coin. That's a summary of the key dream.

He goes the next day to a woman who is good on reading dreams. She is a Bedouin woman, he had a Bedouin foster mother, he has a close relationship with the Bedouin or the Bedou. She says "I know that tree, it is in the Burqan hills. Go there and dig up the ancient treasure, that's what the dream is telling you to do". So Colonel Dickson goes to the directors of the Kuwait Oil Company. They know he is not a New Age flake, he is Colonel Dickson; and he persuades them to move one of their drilling rigs from the dry hole that they are exploring up into the Burqan hills. Early the following year, 1938, they strike a gusher; and this is what is known as Burqan Number One, a great oil field, one of the greatest oil discoveries in history. It is the foundation of Kuwait's great oil wealth, and therefore distantly of the Gulf War. But between Colonel Dickson and the Gulf War there is something called World War II; and during World War II petroleum derived from this field was a major factor in giving the allies the ability to fight Hitler.

So this is no mean incident in the history of everything, and it is one of those things that is directly driven by a dream; and not just one dream, but a practice of dreaming. You see the Colonel was in the habit of having his dreams recorded. His wife, who was no dummy, not a submissive woman at all, but she was there to help him record his dreams, and he was in the habit of taking action from his dreams and getting a second opinion when appropriate. So it's not just one of those old chestnuts about a dream that supposedly led to such and such; Colonel Dickson was not only a prolific and gifted precognitive dreamer and dream scout; he had a practice. He recorded the dreams whatever inconvenient hour they came at, he got a second opinion, and he took action.

Dr. Dave: Great story. I also loved your stories about the role of dream inspiration in the lives of various musicians such as Johnny Cash, and *The Ring of Fire*.

Moss: Oh yes. Well you could say that Johnny Cash's life was saved by dreams. He was a melancholy man, he had a sad and tragic life; his brother died so horribly early on. His dreams guided him, and his wife and cohort and companion and songwriter, June; they helped them through. His dreams of his brother who had died in a horrible accident early on, and wanted to be a preacher man; his brother appearing to him again and again and again and guiding him on. His dream of the correct musical arrangement for what became his great hit, hearing what he called Mexican trumpets playing and then bringing in the mariachi trumpets, and completely opening up the whole field of country and western – which had been really averse to anything except the most basic instrumentation. He has dreams that enabled he and the woman who became his wife to work together, and draw on their inspiration. It's an incredible story of how dreams can get you through.

Dr. Dave: Yes. My favourite Beatles songs are *Yesterday* and *Let it Be*, both written by Paul McCartney, and evidently dreams were implicated in both of those.

Moss: Well they are both directly dream inspired, according to Paul himself. He woke up hearing a whole orchestra playing *Yesterday* and initially did not realise that it was a new song. Then trying to figure out where he had heard it before, he realized he had heard it nowhere except in the dream; he did not have the words so he went around singing “scrambled eggs” for a while, “scrambled eggs” until he got the lyrics and then he had *Yesterday*. In the case of *Let it Be* it was a visitation with his departed mother that seeded that dream.

The Beatles are a pretty good case study of the influence of dreaming on popular music. I particularly like what John Lennon said about it: he said the best songs are the ones that make you get up in the middle of the night to write them down, so that you can go back to sleep. That is so true.

In the book as you have read it – so often when we look at the moment of creative breakthrough it's in this in between zone. You either wake in the middle of the night and you have something with you, or you are drifting in an in between state and it comes to you. This liminal state, this solution state is a place where so much creativity in the arts, and in science, and elsewhere has come from.

Dr. Dave: One of the things that struck me, somewhere I think towards the beginning of the book, you talked about – there is a space during the night, where some of us of a certain age will wake up, well before we want to wake up, somewhere in the middle of the night, and have a difficult time getting back to sleep. You kind of reframed that, saying that in previous times that was sort of a valued space.

Moss: I think this is one of the most elementary things about our relationship with sleep and dreaming that is so often missed. We assume that it is natural and desirable for us to lie down, go to sleep and stay in bed for 7 hours, or 8 hours or whatever we think is the appropriate span. This is not the way that humans have slept throughout most of our evolution. This pattern has only become the norm since the introduction of good artificial lighting maybe 150 years ago, and it is still not the norm for many people who do not live in modern urbanized society.

For most of our evolution on the planet, however long we think that something called Homo sapiens has been around, we have not had one period of sleep typically. Typically we have had two or three sleeps, divided by periods of doing something other than sleeping. They might be periods of activity; they might be periods of drifting or sharing dreams or whatever. The historians of sleep – and there is a lot of good work being done on this, and it is being tested and evaluated in experiments held at the National Institutes of Health and so on – suggest that the norm for humans for most of our evolution is two or three sleeps, divided as I say by periods where you are doing something else such as perhaps sharing dreams with those who are awake and around and ready to share with you.

If that has been the pattern of the human relationship with sleep and dreaming, then it's no wonder that we have difficulty trying to medicate ourselves or psych ourselves into staying in bed for 7 or 8 hours, and thinking that we are being interrupted and being disrupted and not getting our zees if we do otherwise.

I think we would be much better off if we could revert to a cycle where we are content to sleep for shorter periods, with a creative, fertile time in between where we might be just drifting and dozing and lazing, but not fretting because we are awake. I have had this relationship with sleep all my life, David, so I guess I am once again an example of paleo man surviving into the modern era.

I am simply one of those people who has never, so far as I can remember, gone to bed and slept for 7 or 8 hours. My life has always been divided into

distinct periods of sleep, and I don't mind taking naps when I can, and I love being up in the middle of the night.

Dr. Dave: OK. Well there are so many good stories in that book, but I can't ask you to give the whole book away; listeners will just have to get a copy to discover all the other wonderful accounts you have in there.

Now I understand you offer a three year training for teachers of Active Dreaming, as well as having an online dream school. What do you want to tell us about those?

Moss: Well I offer a rather wide ranging menu of workshops and other trainings all over the place.

The most important training that I lead is my training for teachers of my approach, which I call Active Dreaming. It's basically three five-day intensives normally taken over three years with homeplay assignments in between. I've written a book length manual of practice, an original manual of practice, for each level of these trainings so I take this fairly seriously. People do this not only because they want to lead workshops or classes, but because they want to master the techniques and apply them to existing practices, or bring them to organizations or institutions or community situations or corporations. People come from a wide variety of backgrounds.

The online dream courses that I lead, which are hosted by Spirituality and Health Magazine – and there are links to all of these from my website at mossdreams.com – they go so much deeper and further than I had understood you could possibly go online until I started doing it. I am actually awed by how far and fast we go in the online forums associated with these courses. I send out lessons that we have the main action is at a highly lively and fun interactive forum I am present a good deal of the time, as much as I can be. We have a process for giving each other feedback on our dreams and experiences following the Lightning Dreamwork Game, which makes it all fun and keeps it on the rails. So I am doing a lot to help midwife the rebirth of a dreaming society in our time David.

Dr. Dave: Yes you certainly are; and I am going to keep my eye out for a chance to be in one of your workshops.

Now let's talk a bit about the upcoming International Association for the Study of Dreams conference. It's going to be held June 26-30, 2009 at the Wyndham Hotel near Chicago's O'Hare Airport.

People can find a link at www.asdreams.org/2009/

Now you're the keynote speaker. Without giving it all away, what's going to be the focus of your presentation?

Moss: Well I'm going to give a lecture on *The Secret History of Dreaming*, the theme of the book, and I will essentially use stories of how dreaming – in the expansive sense, not just sleep dreams but the imagination, the vision thing, reading coincidence – have been central to mainstream history in so many areas. We have covered some of that today. That lecture will really be an incitement to recognize that this is actually fundamental to our understanding of how humans get by, how evolution and even survival are possible, and something we have to revive in our understanding in order to do better in the times ahead. Hey, we are going through a small crisis in our times; we need tools and resources to see beyond the blinders that have been afflicting us, and dreaming offers those tools and resources. So the lecture will be on the theme of the inner dimension of history, understanding that history is about the future as well as the past.

I will also give an experiential workshop called *Tapping The Power of Dreams, Coincidence and Imagination* in which we'll experience the Lightning Dreamwork Technique; we will experience playing a coincidence game and getting some immediate responses from the oracle of the world around us; and we will do an Active Imagination exercise that will create a place of vision.

Dr. Dave: Oh, that all sounds like great fun.

Well Robert Moss, thanks so much for being my guest today on Shrink Rap Radio

Moss: You're a dream host David; it was great rapping with you.

Dr. Dave: OK thank you.

Moss: You are a most genial host David, I enjoyed that greatly.