**REAR COVER**

SELENE CALLONI WILLIAMS, writer, traveller and documentary film maker, is the author of several books and documentaries on psychology, deep ecology, shamanism, yoga, philosophy and anthropology. She is the leading proponent of symbolic-imaginal vision, founder of the Imaginal Academy institute in Switzerland, which runs the imaginal counselling and shamanic yoga school, and Voyages Illumination, which organises trips to the world’s last natural paradises, and into the soul of the world. Her ability to draw from both Eastern and Western traditions distinguishes her approach and is her source of inspiration. In the East, she studied yoga, shamanism and Buddhist meditation, and was initiated in an ancient form of shamanic yoga from which the teachings of the Mother Mantra emerge. In the West, she graduated in psychology, and was a student of renowned psychologist James Hillman.

She has published *Il discorso alla luna, Il profumo della luna* and *Lo Zen e l’arte della ribellione* with Edizioni Studio Tesi;and *James Hillman, il camino del “fare anima” e dell’ecologia profonda, Iniziazione allo Yoga Sciamanico, Le carte dei Nat e le Costellazioni Familiari, Mantra Madre, Anche gli atleti meditano, seppur di corsa,* *Il cibo del risveglio, Diverso e vincente* and *Adolescenza interrotta* with Edizioni Mediterranee.

NOBURU OKUDA DŌ is an expert in environmental medicine specialising in mankind’s relationship with nature. He has a profound knowledge of forests, and publicises Shinrin-Yoku and its health benefits in the West.

Cover illustration:

Kaii Higashiyama, *A vulnerable tree*, 1968 (the kanji symbols, designed by Luca Della Bianca, are not part of the original illustration).

**INDEX**

PART ONE

*Regeneration in nature*

Origins and benefits 11

Japanese aesthetics and Zen Buddhism 13

Imaginal thought and the thought of the heart 15

My forest 19

Nature as a therapist among the populations of forests and steppes 23

How to practice Shinrin-Yoku 27

Walking meditation 29

Standing meditation 31

Barefoot meditation 33

Sitting meditation 35

Reinventing the body in the forest 38

Contemplation of the walking skeleton 42

Meditation to awaken subtle vision 45

Kasina meditation in the forest 47

Immersion in nature while staying in the city 49

Nutrition 51

Forest baths on horseback 52

Ritual offering 54

Japanese aesthetics 55

The imaginal forest 63

The imaginal forest and effortlessness 67

The spirits of the forest 68

Imaginal dialogue 71

Thought and the imaginal state 74

Visual experiences 76

Auditory experiences 77

Olfactory experiences 78

Taste experiences 79

Tactile experiences 80

The forest has always known you and nourishes your creativity 81

The forest heals relationships 84

The pacification of your relationship with the earth 85

The pacification of your relationship with water 87

The pacification of your relationship with fire 89

The pacification of your relationship with the air 91

Stack of Zen stones 93

If I were 95

A recharge of gushing light 97

Water in the forest 99

The fifth element, the memories, habitual paths

and ancestors 101

Dialogue with the ancestors in the forest 104

*Gasshō* 107

Far away is near 109

The tea ceremony in the forest 111

Grafting the objective with the help of the forest 113

The pacification of the foundational images with the help of the forest 115

PART TWO

*OMI, One Minute Immersion*

Trees and human beings: a relationship to be rediscovered 121

White fir (*Abies alba*) 125

Maple (*Acer campestre*) 127

Agave (*Agave americana*) 129

Apricot (*Prunus armeniaca*) 131

Banana (*Musa acuminata - Musa balbisiana*) 133

Birch (*Betula alba L.*) 135

Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*) 137

Cedar (*Citrus medica - Cedrus Libani – Cedrus atlantica*) 139

Cherry (*Prunus avium*) 141

Cypresses (*Cupressus sempervirens*) 143

Strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*) 145

Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) 147

Fig tree (*Ficus L. - Ficus religiosa - Ficus benjamina*) 149

Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior L.*) 151

Incense (*Boswellia Thurifera - Boswellia Carteri*) 153

Myrrh (Commiphora molmol) 155

Myrtle (*Myrtus communis*) 157

Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) 159

Walnut (*Juglans regia*) 161

English elm (*Ulmus campestris*) 163

Pine (*Pinus pinaster Soland - Pinus silvestris L. -*

*Pinus mugo*) 165

White poplar (*Populus alba*) 167

Black poplar (*Populus nigra*) 169

Oak (*Quercus robur*) 171

Willow (*Salix sspp.)* 173

Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) 175

Sesame (*Sesamum indicum*) 177

Lime (*Tilia*) 179

Mistletoe (*Viscum album*) 181

Vine (*Vitis vinifera*) 183

**Maple (*Acer campestre*)**

In autumn, some maple varieties turn red, a colour that warned of disasters to come in antiquity. That’s why, in ancient Greek mythology, the colour red was sacred to Fobos, god of fear, who was evoked before battles. Unsurprisingly, Fobos is the son of Ares, that "merciless god" who represents the spirit of war. On a symbolic level, maple is the tree of the god of fear. However, if we look at other traditions and cultures, maple is a symbol of modesty, prudence and reserve. More generally, this tree, with its colour play in amber shades signals the changing of the seasons, the arrival of autumn. According to one of the legends of the Rising Sun, Japanese aristocrats would gather beneath the maples in autumn to sing, play and recite love poems, finding inspiration in the vermillion red of the leaves. Over time, this popular custom became established and, today, the myth is still alive and unchanged.

*Useful elements*

Sap and bark.

*Composition and properties*

Contains tannins, phytosterols and phenolic compounds, making it revitalizing and soothing for rashes of the skin. It is also recommended for treating intestinal disorders.

*Use*

Maple syrup, which is obtained from the sap of the tree, remineralises and helps prevent cellular aging; it also helps to eliminate excess fluids, and is an excellent sugar substitute. According to folk medicine, the bark decoction is suitable for treating fragile or reddened skin: apply locally or add to bathing water. Bark decoctions (about 20-30 g of dried bark) are suitable for treating dysentery and flatulence.

*Imaginal dialogue*

Maple can significantly boost creativity by dissolving insecurities that prevent it from expressing itself freely.

Consuming the syrup, the decoction, or in proximity to a maple tree, you can entrust your creative needs to the spirit of the maple, and ask for help to be more inventive in realising your projects.

**Imaginal thought and the thought of the heart**

In the West, thinkers such as Henry Corbin, James Hillman , and C.G. Jung introduced the philosophy and the imaginal psychology that, today, represents a bridge between East and West, by positing in effective ways the concept of impermanence and of the illusory nature of becoming to those of a Western tradition.

For Henry Corbin, we live in a mundus imaginalis or mundus archetypus, where all apparitions are symbols of our journey towards awakening and freedom. Beyond the dichotomy of East and West, this vision is deeply rooted in our DNA, reflecting animist belief and our ancestral past. The sense of materialism and the objectivity of things has been formed only recently in human societies, with the development of current civilization, which, as the poet Ungaretti said, "is an act of human arrogance upon nature" .

The belief in objectivity is the expression of mankind’s desire for control and power over nature. What is objective and substantial is also measurable, predictable, controllable. What incessantly appears and vanishes is not graspable, but requires the ability to perceive the invisible, to consciously cross the Great Threshold and to return.

Objectivism became imperative in our culture after the scientific revolution.

The word science comes from the Latin scientia which means "knowledge". Before the scientific revolution, science and philosophy had always been united on the same path of knowledge. In ancient Greece, the term corresponding to the current use of the word science was episteme, which indicated a knowledge beyond doubt, knowledge of which was conferred a sacred value that allowed those who possessed it to achieve wisdom. With the Enlightenment and Positivism, science lost its sacred character, and instead came to signify all those disciplines that lead to the enunciation of concepts or principles that are verifiable by means of empirical processes or experiments. Science cannot disregard the sentiment of the sacred, and gives rise to a broader knowledge than mere technical knowledge, and a greater vision than that which can be reached with the common critical mind: a supra-intellectual vision, a thought of the heart.

In more recent times, the industrial revolution made objectivism and materialism necessary. The only research that receives funding is research that is based on objective data because it leads to the ability to churn out theories and products that are repeatable on an industrial scale, and therefore functional to the market – they are marketable.

Whoever, following the example of the mystics, has a spiritual attitude and wants to walk "on the firm ground of the non-objectivity of things" , to put it in Milarepa’s words, is relegated to the margins of the system, and rendered useless for economic development.

The fact is that an economy based on technical knowledge and objective data has reached a point of crisis that allows us to predict disastrous scenarios. We must alter our vision to be able to produce new economic paradigms based on collaboration with nature, rather than on its exploitation. We must start over from the forest, from the contemplation of the forest, to be inspired.

The Shinrin-Yoku not only has a scientific basis, but favours the diffusion of a concept of science understood as episteme, that is, certain, incontrovertible knowledge, different from the simple opinion of the individual, which is verifiable, but achievable through intuition (noesis) rather than reasoning (diànoia). In other words, the Shinrin-Yoku combines science and spirituality in a unique experience of elevation through nature.

The experience of bathing in nature cannot be reproduced on an industrial scale: it is entrusted to intuition and subjectivity, yet its benefits are demonstrable.