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for Larry
from Dan

Dan Fredericksen (Professor Cornell University)

"Relationship of Filmmaking to Dreaming: Remarks
Based on Larry Jordan's 'Patricia Goes Back
to a Dream by the Doorway'."

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changed titles

3 Preliminary Remarks:

Summary

1. The connection of this paper to the "Eidos, Jung, and the Process of Self-knowledge":

which operates on several assumptions:

a) "it is important and salutary to speak also of incomprehensible things" MDR p. 300

b) "attainment of consciousness is culture in the broadest sense, and self-knowledge is therefore the heart and essence of this process" MDR p. 32

c) "education" [by and large] ... promulgates the old generalizations and says nothing about the secrets of private experience" MDR p. 330

2. That the unconscious, ^{psyche} is a by now, ^{empirically} undeniable fact and factor in the lives of everyone of us, and that the structure and dynamics of one strata of that unconscious is well-described by Jung:

(cf. Stanislas Hof Realms of the Human Unconscious ...
Beyond the Brain
The Holotropic Mind.)

3. That in investigating the unconscious we are better served by an open mind than a rationalistically-bound one, i.e., empiricism is a more productive perspective than rationalism.

[reason, like dogma of any kind, can forestall experience.]

to a Dream

the film: "Patricia Lewis Breathing by the Doorway"

foci:

I. linen

II. dog

III. tape

IV. screen

} not dealt with because of time limitation

I. 1. "by the doorway"

what does a doorway do?

1) provides a means of passage between two areas

metaphorically: two states ^{or modes} of being:

consciousness and unconsciousness

waking life and dream life

outer and inner

it is functionally equivalent to a bridge, which connects two separate spaces

what is on one side of the door can move through the door to the other side; it is precisely the door's function to allow this movement from one realm to another, between realms

2. "to a dream"

any dream,

the dream is just such a doorway - in this case, between the unconscious and consciousness

to dream is to be in the doorway between the unconscious and consciousness

3. "gives birth"

so too is the process of birth a doorway,
from intrauterine life to post-natal life

and the mother's birth canal and vagina are the crucial doorway in which this process occurs, from which new life issues forth

4.

there is, therefore, in the ensemble: woman, doorway, birth, and dream a logic — they hang together through literal and metaphoric connections, and they can be seen to imply one another in mutually resonant ways.

*1

to engage Larry Jordan's image — title in this way is to work (or play) as a critic in a manner at least analogous to the recommendation Jung made regarding dream analysis: at bottom, he said, the best we can do — the best at the level of understanding, the best at the level of therapy ... the saving and healing of souls — is to "dream the dream onward."

to "dream the dream onward" is to engage the dream empathetically, honor its own realm, honoring its own project and logic, and perhaps most fundamentally, honoring the fact that ^{the unconscious psyche has} it approached us spontaneously, usually unbidden, through the doorway of the dream.

5. In the prologue to his autobiography, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, Jung makes a claim that suggests why the dream approaches us spontaneously:

"everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation,"

and the personality, too desires to evolve out of its unconscious condition and to experience itself as a whole" p. 3

"everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation"...

"everything".... (for Jung, so much more than the return of the repressed
one very major door,

the dream is one door, through which that seeking
by the unconscious for outward manifestation can
be seen

through this door the unconscious approaches consciousness —
not, as best we can tell now, to further the purposes and
desires of consciousness (altho the dream may
sometimes do so), but rather to fulfill its own
seeking, which is outward manifestation.

6. what is it that seeks outward manifestation through
the doorway of the dream?

the fulfillment of wishes incompatible with consciousness
and conscience — a Freudian answer?

the compensation of conscious attitudes by "another
view of things", a view arising out of the
unconscious — a Jungian answer?

(1992)

a senior Jungian analyst, Edward Whitmont, has
recently proposed another alternative, based
upon our concrete experience of dreams:
and upon scholarship regarding the display of form in animals and plants.

"It would seem that dreams have a tendency to play
and dramatize — indeed, at times even to overdramatize.
They do not offer simple or rational statements

but present allegorical stories, sometimes quite weird, and even fragments or voices of almost stage-worthy plays. They play with endless variations of central themes and forms in expectation-tension, creation-destruction-recreation, or lyrical modes that remind us of dramatic art. They almost seem to take pleasure in exaggerating, embellishing, or at times grotesquely distorting their themes. * It would appear as though the intent were to have an idea or archetype incarnated by using the artist's ways of calling forth an experience that involves embodied emotion and dramatic meaning.... this dramatizing play tendency... shows the dream to be a special instance of a general trend of the life process to present itself to our perceptions through endless arrays of seemingly arbitrary, often capricious forms that do not necessarily have any practical survival value or purpose." pp 4-5

renamed

Borrowing from the biologist of animal form and behavior, Adolf Portmann, Whitmont suggests that the dream, like other natural ^{processes} biological and psychological — manifests an "exhibition" or "representation" value, which is sui generis. And this value is essentially aesthetic.

Whitmont continues =

"Dreams play the performance game even when... they serve a learning and adaptive function. They do not simply present facts for learning; they present dramatic exhibits — like ornamental horns. * Thus we can say that organismic expression of form seems not so much bent upon survival but upon play, enhanced and

made more dramatic, by survival need and threat to it, by difficulties, obstacles, challenges and crises to be overcome, creation and destruction, conflict and cooperation, and the interaction of protagonist and antagonist.

Winnicott's thesis is that 'health is the ability to play'.... p.1
 [there's one tie between the concerns of artistic creativity and psychotherapy..]

.... In play, there is something 'at play' that transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action." p. 6

What is that "something 'at play'"?

The Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, writing in Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture (1950) suggests an answer:

"In acknowledging play, you acknowledge mind, for whatever else playing is, it is not matter.... From the point of view of a world wholly determined by blind forces, play would be altogether superfluous. p. 3

So, returning to Jung's assertion that "everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation", we might elaborate by saying that the unconscious mind seeks outward manifestation because it seeks to be aware of itself playing,

to be aware of itself playing, ^{with} within its seemingly limitless possibilities.

7. One place where we experience a no-a-us with this

playing is in our dreams.

Another place where we experience it is in films such as
"Patricia Goes Back to a Dream by the Doorway"

And this will no longer surprise us, this ^{aesthetic} link between
film-making and dreaming:

Whitmont: "Artistic exhibition rather than or in addition
to survival purposefulness seems to be nature's way
of creation and manifestation". p. 6

8. The implications of these observations are profound for
the study of the relationship of filmmaking and dreaming,
and for the critical description, interpretation, and
evaluation of films.

It also suggests an essential poverty in a theoretical discourse
that dismisses or eliminates the aesthetic as an
essential quality of artistic creativity —

[≠ Derridean "free play of signifiers" because the signifiers
here are fundamentally indexical and/or iconic.]

— and that dismisses the study of creativity in
"filmmaking".

I am speaking of contemporary film theory.

We need seriously to reconsider what we might
be throwing away when we dismiss the aesthetic
as "merely aesthetic".

9. Whatever else

The dream may also be, it is first and foremost a display, ^{a show} a showing forth, of the unconscious mind at play.

The dream is one doorway through which the unconscious mind's playfulness seeks outward manifestation.

That the dream is a doorway is easily enough understood, but how is it that standing in a doorway can give birth to a dream; as Jordan imagines Patricia to do?

Let's go round the doorway one last time:

In his work, beginning with Victor Turner, the anthropologist, has written in a seminal manner about rituals of initiation into adulthood in traditional cultures. The time during which the about-to-be-initiated are separated from the world of their childhood, and not yet assimilated into the world of adults he calls a liminal time; the space where liminal time is spent (usually an isolated space) he calls liminal space. During this liminal time, in this liminal space, one is betwixt and between, no longer a child, not yet adult. Etymologically "the English" "liminality" derives from the Latin "lumen", meaning doorway or threshold. The about-to-be-initiated is in the doorway, on the threshold, between childhood and adulthood.

In 1983, Murray Stein, a Chicago Jungian analyst, in a book titled In Midlife began an equally seminal investigation of what he calls "psychological liminality". The ideas may help us understand, ^{more fully} why and how Jordan imagines that "Patricia Goes Both To a Dream by the Porchway".

"This Latin root has infiltrated psychology, where it is used to refer to a threshold between consciousness and the unconscious portions of the mind.... In the state I am calling psychological liminality, a person's sense of identity is hung in suspension.... The 'I' is caught up in a field that it cannot control, whose patterns it does not recognize as 'me':... The boundaries between 'I' and 'not-I' blur and come much closer together than is true in the era of fixed psychological identity.... So, unattached, the I 'floats' and drifts and wanders across many former boundaries and forbidden frontiers." pp. 8-9

Now listen to Larry Jordan on his own creative process:

"I prefer that the slides (images) construct themselves. This is not a romantic notion. If one is patient, and sits there with the ego subdued, the images come to life on their own. Ruesett & Starr p. 157

Paraphrasing: "The interior world erupts, starts to dance and sing. I just follows, like being on a train, looking out the window. (p. 155)

10. Two points:

a) The state of mind Jordan describes as conducive

to creative animation is one in which his sense of "I-ness" is in temporary suspension. He is in a kind of psychological liminality. To be so, he says, allows something else, some not-me, to enter his awareness as a self-animating, self-constructing, self-display.

Has he not given us an image, a reflexive image, of this tandem condition of the suspension of the ego and the animation of the unconscious in the image of Patricia in the doorway, giving birth to a dream?

b) In all this Jordan is circling around a paradoxical truth once held secret by various traditions of meditation: stillness constellates animation.

The ego, stilled (as it is in sleep and in meditation and in a least one form of artistic creativity) constellates the animation of the non-ego parts of the mind.

Thus Patricia, ^{still,} leans against the door frame. She is not going anywhere. When she is going nowhere, she gives birth to a dream.

When Jordan sets still, patiently, at his animation stand, he gives birth to images of Patricia giving birth to a dream.

Patricia's
The conditions for the birth of a dream and the birth

[cf. "suspension of wish to meaning" in "negative capability" (Keats) that allows the symbolic its own animating effect upon us]

of Jordan's film are essentially the same. //