Chapter 1
The Cultural Psychology of Motion Pictures: Dreams that Money Can Buy

Introduction

Cinema is a form of mass communication, and thus, might be considered a somewhat superficial enterprise. Nevertheless, there is much in this medium that is complex and psychologically interesting. If there is one word that has been associated with motion pictures since their inception it would be "entertainment." There are serious movies and edifying movies and movies that teach and promote ideologies or beliefs. But generally speaking, we go to the movies to be entertained, to be amused, enthralled, and diverted from the issues of everyday life. And it is this very capacity to effectively deliver entertainment—bypassing our critical faculties—that make movies so powerfully influential for better and for worse, in ways that we may not even be aware of. Consider what Shakespeare taught us in what is widely regarded as his best play—*Hamlet.* Here, Shakespeare helps us to gain insight into the process of what is actually involved in our entertainment. Hamlet's dialogue with the players highlights three possible forms of entertainment: as history, comedy and tragedy. In the play within the play he famously makes his intentions clear, asserting, "The play's the thing/wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King." But theater and film also have the capacity to capture consciousness as well as conscience. Both conscience and consciousness are essential factors as they constitute the foundation of what we call the cultural psychology of the cinema— or what may be thought of as the social dream. How entertainment can reach our conscience and affect our consciousness will become the leitmotif (the cinematic techniques) and "heavy" motifs (the impact of the content conveyed by means of those techniques) throughout. We begin by tackling the question of how cinema's evolution enabled movies to create an ever more palpable illusion of 'reality' for viewers, holding them captive in the artificial worlds that films create. After all, our conception of reality is not based exclusively on what our senses tell us, it is also what takes place in our heads—specifically in our imagination and the associations that surface in our memory. And films have brilliantly succeeded in getting into our heads. As Richard Aberdeen puts it: "Film gives us the dreams we never

had, the dreams we yet await. …Film's overwhelming images invite a return to that state in which the ego dissolves" (Eberwein 1984).

By the canny (or uncanny) use of such techniques as flashbacks and flash-forwards, jump cuts and montages, the technicians of cinema have been able to imitate to some extent the way memory works and how emotion alters the way we perceive the external world. But movies have also proven to be remarkably efficient vehicles in duplicating dreams. Indeed, surrealists like Salvador Dali and Luis Bunuel were among the first to exploit the use of film to create dreams on the screen (think of the iconic image of a razor slitting an eyeball in *Un Chien Andalou*). Bunuel has stated that film seems expressly designed for exploring the subconscious, noting that the images, as in dreams, can appear and disappear through 'dissolves' and fade-outs while the laws of time and space are routinely violated (Brunel 1972).

Movie experts and students of psychology alike have long observed the similarity between the state of dreaming and the state of the viewer's mind watching a movie. "An analogy between cinema and dreaming has long been drawn, film appearing to us as dream-like, while our dreams are experienced—at least to our waking minds—like movies," observes Elizabeth Cowie, a British film scholar. Even though we are conscious when we sit in a theater, she says, we are still in a passive position—"immobile, silent and … attuned to only those stimuli arising from the film performance… oblivious to other events around us, while the exigencies of reality, and the demand to test for reality, are placed in abeyance" (Cowie 2003).

But we will also look at the ways in which film has become a means of recording and transmitting the collective dreams of culture and society—what Roland Barthes called "collective representations"—whether or not the filmmakers understand what those dreams are. We will then proceed to examine a sampling of the cinematic dreams that have haunted our collective unconscious over the past several decades and focus on three of the principle types of characters or archetypes that have figured prominently in these dreams, indeed, have effectively defined what the dreams are really about.[1]

Pinpointing the origin of cinema is more difficult than might be imagined. It depends largely on which invention you identify as the first movie making device. Some scholars choose the camera obscura used by Renaissance painters. Others favor a device known as a phenakistoscope, a spindle viewer invented by a Belgian physicist in 1832 or opt for the zoetrope invented a year later by a British mathematician. More weight probably should be given to Edison's kinescope, which was introduced at the Chicago Exposition of 1893. To operate the device you dropped a nickel into a slot, triggering a small motor that allowed you to peer through a magnifying glass and watch a girl dancing or boys fighting. Your nickel bought

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[1] Our use of the terms 'collective unconscious' is not meant to imply that a Jungian approach. However, for the purpose of this discussion it is a convenient and apt description of the kind of social dream that films can embody.

you half a minute of entertainment. However rudimentary, these devices all had one thing in common: the capacity to create the illusion of movement out of a sped-up sequence of still images.

Psychology in the Cinema

The Lay of the Land and the Flow of the Stream

Early Psychological Views of Cinema

Just exactly how films can operate on our minds was a question that psychologists were already grappling with in the early part of the twentieth century notwithstanding Freud's belief that it was impossible to "graphically represent the abstract nature of our thinking in a respectable form." (Freud rebuffed offers to write a photoplay on several occasions, even turning down an offer of $100,000 from Samuel Goldwyn, a fortune at the time.) Modern cinema and psychoanalysis both emerged around the same time. Freud and Joseph Breuer's pioneering *Studies on Hysteria* was published in the same year (1895) that the Lumière brothers were screening films they had produced using their new 'cinematograph.' The two explorations had a great deal in common. Freud and Brueur were investigating the phenomena of hysterical fits among patients at Salptrière hospital, examining behavior that they characterized as 'automatism'—spontaneous verbal or motor behavior or acts performed unconsciously. Meanwhile the Lumieres were bringing the inanimate to life on screen—or at least the representation of life—in a jerky, uncoordinated manner that recalled the uncoordinated movements of the patients Freud and Breur were observing. The new medium illustrated what Freud called the uncanny—a juxtaposition of the familiar and the strange, the animated and the lifeless.

It appears likely that the first experiment to assess the impact of film on the spectator was conducted in 1916 by the eminent Harvard psychologist Edwin Boring. In his "picture-test" viewers composed of children and adults of both sexes were presented with a one minute scene from an Edison film entitled *Van Bibber's Experiment.* The clip depicted a confrontation between a "gentleman and a burglar." The test was designed to measure the accuracy of reporting by the viewers—what they retained of what they saw. A sex difference in suggestibility emerged from the study especially among the adults: "The men exceed the women in range of report, range of knowledge, accuracy of report, assurance (and) reliability of assurance…" The results led Boring to conclude that "in general the men appear to be superior as witnesses to both women and boys, whereas between women and girls and between girls and boys there is a much less striking difference." He did not hazard a guess as to why men were so much superior reporters; perhaps men were more susceptible to the new medium than women or responded to the subject matter more enthusiastically. It would have been interesting to learn

whether a similar 'picture-test' showing two women in a domestic situation would have yielded the same results (Boring 1916).

Munsterberg on Film

If Boring was in the vanguard of psychologists examining the influence of film it is safe to say that the German philosopher Hugo Munsterberg is the medium's first significant critic and analyst. Munsterberg's seminal contribution is found in an almost forgotten monograph published in 1916 called simply *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*. Not content with being a critic, Munsterberg flirted with filmmaking himself. In 1916 he approached Paramount Pictures with "material for a series of psychological test demonstrations in moving-picture form," noting that movies "have stirred up a very considerable interest for mental life in many cities." As an example of what he meant, he proposed to present the Montessori educational system in a cinematic form. If he were in charge of film studios, he wrote, they would specialize in particular categories because otherwise how were audiences to know what they were getting when they walked into a movie theater? "I think the greatest trouble in the moving-picture world today is the lack of discrimination and differentiation," he wrote, attributing "the crude state of the moving-picture industry" to this inconsistency. Instead he favored "a clean division of labor" among production companies (Munsterberger 1922, p. 125). History has shown that he proved more prescient in his role as critic than he did at postulating a viable business model for Hollywood.

It should be pointed out that Munsterberg had no interest in the way in which cinema might embody a social dream. In what is arguably his most famous statement he declared: "The story of the subconscious mind can be told in three words: there is none" (Munsterberg 1909, p. 125). Munsterberg's inner philosopher, his daughter Margaret wrote, never allowed the inner scientist the final say on any problem of real life (Munsterberg 1922, p. 283). If the philosopher didn't believe in the existence of a subconscious no scientific data to the contrary was going to cause him to change his mind. So it follows that in his consideration of the cinema he didn't take any interest in the way in which it affected a part of the mind that wasn't immediately accessible to our awareness. According to the critic Giuliana Bruno, Munsterberg conceived of psychic life "as a mechanism to be unraveled—a technology of sorts" that led him to recognize "the psychic function of the film apparatus." Bruno writes that he regarded cinema as an "actual 'projection' of the mind." Our minds, he believed, acted like screens in which a motion picture was rolling whether the subject was awake or asleep (Bruno 2009, p. 190–191).

All the same, his pioneering study on the nascent medium provides us with valuable insights about the ways in which films do in fact infiltrate and embody our individual and collective dreams. He foresaw—correctly—that film had the potential of uniting the sensibilities of both the highbrow and the lowbrow and characterized the directors and screenwriters as photo poets who "recognize the special demands of the art" (Munsterberg 1922, p. 283). It is a tribute

to Munsterberg that he was willing to credit cinema as an art, not as a mere novelty. "What we need for this study is evidently, first, an insight into the means by which the moving pictures impress us and appeal to us," he wrote. "Not the physical means and technical devices are in question, but the mental means. What psychological factors are involved when we watch the happenings on the screen? But secondly, we must ask what characterizes the independence of an art, what constitutes the conditions under which the works of a special art stand. The first inquiry is psychological, the second esthetic; the two belong intimately together" (Munsterberg 1916, p. 21).

In his monograph the philosopher tackles the subject of film in two basic ways. First he considers the influence of film through its technology and cinematic techniques—what he terms 'processes of perception and attention'—developed by early masters like D. W. Griffiths. Second, he examines the impact of these processes on the spectator in terms of his or her "interest, memory, imagination, suggestion, and emotion" (Munsterberg 1916, p. 40). Whatever the limitations of Munsterberg's outlook—we are all constrained by our time and place, after all—his views stand up to scrutiny even now. He is similarly perceptive when it comes to the impact these technologies and techniques have on the viewer's

Emotion was central to Munsterberg's theory of film. It represented an "inner venture" and "an intimate voyage—a tour of the emotions." Motion pictures were composed of "emotion pictures" and provided the psychic terrain in which feeling could be navigated "and charged cinema with the 'moving' power of emotion" (Bruno 2009, p. 191). Depending on the context, Bruno writes, the audience will interpret the same shot of a facial expression with different emotional responses. One might, for example, "project" onto the same expression sadness or joy, love or hate, hunger or satisfaction. The test of a filmmaker's ability to reach his audience was the effective use cinematic techniques as "a form of empathy" (Bruno 2009, p. 102).

How do Movies Operate on the Consciousness?

In Munsterberg's view, the success of the motion picture is directly related to the processes of the mind. The objective world, he maintains, shapes and molds the mind; the mind in turn uses the stuff of the external world to develop "memory, ideas and imaginative ideas" and then "in the moving pictures they become reality." He goes on to say: "The mind concentrates itself on a special detail in its act of attention; and in the close-up of the moving pictures this inner state is objectified. The mind is filled with emotions; and by means of the camera the whole scenery echoes them" (Munsterberg 1916, p. 21). The mind perceives the world on the screen in a different manner than it does the external world. "We perceive the movement; and yet we perceive it as something which has not its independent character as an outer world process, because our mind has built it up from single pictures rapidly following one another. We perceive things in their plastic depth; and yet again the depth is not that of the outer world. We are aware of its unreality

and of the pictorial flatness of the impressions" (Munsterberg 1916, p. 21). In other words, the spectator becomes a collaborator of the filmmaker. We understand that what we are seeing on the screen is not objective reality but "a product of our own mind which binds the pictures together." The illusion of movement results from a dynamic between our perceptions and the deployment of the technical repertoire of the filmmaker. Consider, for example, the close-up. "The attention turns to detailed points in the outer world and ignores everything else: the photoplay is doing exactly this when in the close-up a detail is enlarged and everything else disappears." His assessment remained valid even as films developed over the years. Roger Manvell, a noted British critic, said almost the same thing in the 1950 s long after film was a nascent art form: *"One of the first tests of filmmaking is the degree to which the camera is used to assist the spectator to select what there is to see, that is, when the camera is used to help interpret the action"* (Manvell 1955, p. 23).

The ways in which the camera is used to shape the spectator's movie-going experience, as described by Munsterberg, informs the next part of our discussion.

The Techniques

In Munsterberg's scheme there are five principal techniques that filmmakers make use of to produce their movie magic: depth, composition, movement, the close-up, and what he calls the cut-back. To this list we also need to add sound, an innovation that didn't come about until several years after the monograph was published.

Depth, or rather its illusion, provided cinema with much of its effectiveness—so much so that "some minds are struck by it as the chief power in the impressions from the screen." Munsterberg compares the impact of depth as conveyed by film with depth as perceived by theater audiences. (The theater, for obvious reasons, was the medium closest to the film.) He cites the poet Rachel Lindsay who wrote that "the little far off people on the old-fashioned speaking stage do not appeal to the plastic sense" with anywhere the same impact as the "dumb giants in high sculptural relief" on the screen. Of course, the 'dumb giants' on the screen would find their voice soon enough with the introduction of the talkies, a development that Munsterberg didn't live to see. All the same viewers were not deceived; they certainly didn't mistake the depth of a scene they were watching on the screen with "true depth and fullness," but on the other hand, they were perfectly content to be taken in. This illusory reality "brings our mind into a peculiar complex state; and we shall see that this plays a not unimportant part in the mental make-up of the whole photoplay" (Munsterberg 1916, p. 40). (When Munsterberg refers to the photoplay he means the film as a whole and not just the screenplay).

Depth is only an attribute of space; how it is used by the filmmaker to evoke a mood, establish character, and advance the plot is another matter entirely. (I am using the term filmmaker as a convenient term to refer to the director, cinematographer, and film editor, all of whom play a role in determining the shots that wind up in the final footage.) This brings up the "problem" of pictorial composition. As Marvell observes: "Composition can, either consciously or unconsciously, greatly affect the attitude of the audience to what is going on in the story" (Manvell 1955, p. 31).

Unlike the problem of depth, which can be easily ignored by audiences, Munsterberg wrote, movement "forces itself on every spectator." Explaining motion in film is "the chief task which the psychologist must meet"—essentially resting on his ability to account for the complex mental process that creates the impression of movement from a series of still images. The mind is fooled into perceiving motion, a happy illusion. At the same time, the philosopher points out, the spectator also realizes that the actors' movements are not continuous; we see a hand reach for a gun and then the gun is in his hand and yet the interruption doesn't trouble us at all.

Filmmakers have other tricks up their sleeves in addition to the use of depth and movement to make audiences sit up and pay attention. They also know how to employ the close-up to optimal effect. "An unusual face, a queer dress, a gorgeous costume, or a surprising lack of costume, a quaint piece of decoration, may attract our mind and even hold it spellbound for a while." What was a small detail on the screen, easily overlooked, can be made to fill the entire screen, obliterating everything else, so that we have no choice but to focus on it. In underscoring the importance of the technique Munsterberg once again uses the theater as a basis for comparison: "*The close-up has objectified in our world of perception our mental act of attention and by it has furnished art with a means which far transcends the power of any theater stage*" (Munsterberg 1916, p. 56).

The last technique that Munsterberg examines in his discussion of the power of the film is what he calls the cut- back and what we now refer to as a flashback. Noting that the cut-back may have "many variations and serve many purposes," he is mainly concerned with the flashback as "an objectification of our memory function." He believes that the cut-back and the close-up are complementary or parallel functions. "In the one we recognize the mental act of attending; in the other we must recognize the mental act of remembering." Here again the film has an advantage over the theater where mental states can be suggested but seldom shown. *"It is as if reality has lost its own continuous connection and become shaped by the demands of our soul."* The film has reversed the natural order: the external world has become "molded in accordance with our fleeting turns of attention or with our passing memory ideas" (Munsterberg 1916, p. 89).

The introduction of sound revolutionized the development of the new medium. The first commercial film with fully synchronized sound was shown in New York in 1923. "The film owes its power to the mobility of its images combined with the selective use of sound, and its aesthetic derives from this," Manvell writes. "Its poetry lies in the richest use of these potentialities by the artist, as the power of literary poetry derives from the potentialities of words used in the service of emotional experience." (Manvell 1955, p. 91–92) Sound—excuse the pun—amplified the illusion of reality on the screen, making it in Manvell's words "an extension of our own world," something the silent film could never be. (The strength of silent film was principally found in its depiction of fantasy, its other-worldliness.) While sound can represent reality, the British critic goes on to say, it is also "a highly artificial form of expression which the artist can control at every point" (Manvell 1955, p. 35).

Psychological Component

As I stated earlier, the spectator is a silent, but not necessarily passive, collaborator of the filmmaker. If the spectator isn't engaged nothing on the screen is going to have much of an impact. In Munsterberg's theory, the filmmaker is deliberately trying to fool the audience but the audience is in on the game, indeed, wouldn't have it any other way. As Gregory Bateson puts it in his essay "Steps to an Ecology of the Mind," "Conjurors and painters of the trompe d'oeil could concentrate on acquiring a virtuosity whose only reward is reached after the viewer detects that he has been deceived and is forced to smile or marvel at the skill of the deceiver. Hollywood filmmakers spend millions of dollars to increase the reality of a shadow" (Bateson, 182).

So "depth and movement alike come to us in the moving picture world, not as hard facts but as a mixture…. They are present and yet they are not in the things. We invest the impressions with them" (Munsterberg 1916, p. 4).

If we consider both the "outcome of esthetic analysis" and "psychological research," Munsterberg writes, than it is possible to combine the results of both into what he calls a unified principle that he defines thusly: "*the photoplay tells us the human story by overcoming the forms of the outer world, namely, space, time, and causality, and by adjusting the events to the forms of the inner world, namely, attention, memory, imagination, and emotion.*"

We will now turn to the ways in which the actions of the inner world can enhance the effectiveness of a representation of the outer one.

Munsterberg is like a visionary who has seen the future and the future is cinema. Here he is extolling the power of the medium in almost ecstatic terms: "*The massive outer world has lost its weight, it has been freed from space, time, and causality, and it has been clothed in the forms of our own consciousness. The mind has triumphed over matter and the pictures. It is a superb enjoyment which no other art can furnish us*" (Munsterberg 1916, p. 173).

How does our mind achieve this remarkable triumph over matter and the pictures when it is the pictures that are the very source of that triumph? Consider: Although we may suspend our disbelief when we walk into a movie theater that doesn't mean that we relinquish our identities. We come to each film armed with our memories and our imagination. The film has the capacity to stir *our* memories (sometimes of a previous film we've seen no less than memories of our own experiences). And, as Richard Eberwein points out, it also has a capacity to bring us into "greater contact with a character's mental life" because of the way that film resembles individual dreams while simultaneously having the ability to evoke a social dream. "To this screen we bring memories of how we experience the rapid jumps, incoherent connections, and ambiguities of our own dreams. They serve as constitutive psychic coordinates helping us to follow through the dreamer's experience…In this sense, our involvement in the filmic dream seems to be part of a collective dream experience" (Eberwein, 54).

At the same time through its use of flashbacks (cut-backs in Munsterberg's parlance) a film can also evoke the memories of the *characters*. "Memory breaks into

present events by bringing up pictures of the past…" Similarly, film goads and provokes the imagination, heightening expectations or even imposing a narrative on the film that might not be what the director originally intended. For the characters, however, "the imagination anticipates the future or overcomes reality by fancies and dreams." Film is uniquely able to mimic the mental processes—the way in which "our mind is drawn hither and thither"—by showing "intertwined scenes everything which our mind embraces" (Munsterberg 1916, p. 171).

Munsterberg argues that filmmakers have managed to abolish time or at least manipulate it so that it can be attenuated, compressed, or chopped up into bits and pieces, served up on screen at intervals when they're likely to pack the most punch. "The temporal element has disappeared, the one action irradiates in all directions," Munsterberg avers although he's quick to add a qualification, noting that the technique can be overdone, especially "if the scene changes too often and no movement is carried on without a break." As an example, he notes that at the end of *Carmen*, starring the legendary Theda Bara, the scene changes no less than 170 times in ten minutes, an average of a little more than three seconds for each scene, which, he admits introduces "an element of nervousness." When Munsterberg talks about time he is really talking about cause and effect or more simply, the concept of causality. The film makes a mockery of causality by interrupting one series of events on screen with another series of events that don't immediately lead to the consequences they would have in the real world. "A movement is started, but before the cause brings results another scene has taken its place. What this new scene brings may be an effect for which we saw no causes." As a result, different objects can fill the same space, a physical impossibility in the world we have left behind when we entered the theater. "It is as if the resistance of the material world had disappeared and the substances could penetrate one another." You're unlikely to find someone who buys a ticket to a movie because he wants to "experience this superiority to all physical laws." But that, says Munsterberg, is what he is really doing (Munsterberg 1916, p. 185).

Munsterberg seems to understand that the movies don't quite cause time to disappear as much as they play havoc with our sense of time by speeding it up or slowing it down. Films have a particular rhythm; in that respect they are similar to music, a point made by the director Ingmar Bergman (who pointed out that the film has more in common with music than it does with the novel in spite of the fact that both usually rely on narrative). "The melody and rhythms belong together," Munsterberg writes, observing that "as in painting not every color combination suits every subject… so the photoplay must bring action and pictorial expression into perfect harmony." The images "*roll on with the ease of musical tones*" (Munsterberg 1916, p. 176). Manvell agrees: "Because the film as a whole takes the form of a succession of many different shots, the timing as well as the order of the shots must be considered. Just as variation of rhythm in music has a great effect on the listener, so the tempo of the cutting of a film affects the audience." The rhythm of the film depends largely on the film editor. Indeed, in his study *The Technique of Film Editing* the director Karl Reisz contends that the

development of a true principle of editing helped the medium discover its real powers. (Manvell 1955, p. 26).

That films are free to leave the "world of space and time" behind and dispense with causality, Munsterberg writes, doesn't mean that films aren't bound by certain laws in much the same way that music is governed by rules of harmony, melody and rhythm. These rules are established by rigid esthetic criteria, he argues. In music "everything is completely controlled by esthetic necessities." Even a creative genius can't get away from "the iron rule that his work must show complete unity in itself. "Film, too, for all freedom it permits filmmaker to play with "the physical forms of space, time, and causality," if not escape them completely, "does not mean any liberation from this esthetic bondage…" (Munsterberg 1916, p. 184).

Anticipating the current argument about multitasking—whether it's possible to attend to or effectively carry out several different tasks simultaneously—-Munsterberg notes that the psychologists of his day were debating the question. Could the mind "devote itself to several groups of ideas at the same time" or was it a "rapid alteration" of attention? In either case, he maintains that "this awareness of contrasting situations, this interchange of diverging experiences in the soul, can never be embodied except in the photoplay." This brings him to the idea of association. The scenes on the screen trigger a mental process by means of suggestion. A suggested idea, he says, takes root in our mind in much the same way that ideas do that are inspired by memory or the imagination. When we see a landscape depicted on the screen, for example, it can evoke any number of associated ideas based on the memories and fantasies that already exist in our minds. While the filmmaker controls what we see on the screen we are in control of how we perceive and react to the images and sequences. The suggestion, he writes, is "forced on us" but what we do with that suggestion is another matter entirely. The "outer perception," is not just a starting point but "a controlling influence" so that we never mistake the associated idea "as our creation but as something to which we have to submit." Taken to an extreme, the film acts as a hypnotizer, keeping us spellbound in the theater or at the very least keeping us in a "in a state of heightened suggestibility." Once again we are straying in the direction of the dream and the idea that film is a medium which invites its audience to share the dream it presents. "*It is as if reality has lost its own continuous connection and become shaped by the demands of our soul*" (Munsterberg 1916, p. 95).

What really excites Munsterberg—and spurs him to make such impassioned declarations—is the film's capacity to connect a variety of "parallel currents" on the screen and in the minds of the spectators. (With its multitude of links the Internet has a similar property.) We may be confined in a single room, he writes, but every phone call we receive in that room brings news of the outside world. Film provides us with that same sense of interplay and connection. "There is no limit to the number of threads which may be interwoven. A complex intrigue may demand cooperation at half a dozen spots, and we look now into one, now into another, and never have the impression that they come one after another." Once again he is eager to show us how the film can abolish the temporal element and sabotage our traditional conception of causality.

The juxtaposition of images or the rapid succession of images and scenes that Munsterberg is talking about is now referred to as a montage. The foremost proponent of the montage was the great Russian director Sergei Eisenstein. "At its simplest," says Manvell, the theory of montage boiled down to "the axiom that, in editing, one plus one equals not two, but two plus; in other words, that the total effect t of a series of shots purposefully placed in sequence is the creation in the audience of an entirely new train of thought and feeling, different from anything that could arise out of those shots seen as a number of separate units" (Manvell 1955, p. 191–192). Montage, as opposed to mere representation, Eisenstein contended, "obliges spectators themselves to create" and arouses emotions in a way that a film that simply conveyed information cannot (Eisenstein 1943). In effect, Eisenstein is advancing the same argument that Munsterberg does when he refers to 'emotion pictures.'(Eisenstein propagated his theory in a 1923 essay called *The Montage of Attractions*). But credit for the use of montage (or free association if you will) belongs to the pioneering French filmmaker George Melies who believed that every image on the screen "possessed the element of magic." (And he should know; he was also a magician by trade). By splicing in parts of different films, clever editing and altering scenes to create "illusion of magical transformation, appearance and disappearance," he was able to turn a human into an animal, or separate a man from his head and track them as they went on their separate ways. "He could make anything happen at all so long as it didn't violate the laws of everyday life." So at the end of the film man and head would be reunited. "Melies sensed or knew that fantasy and magic, like dreams and nonsense language, have a structure and logic of their own, and to deviate from them is a sure way to lose an audience" (Sklar 1994, p. 137). Here again we can see the resemblance between film and dreams. The unconscious seems to make liberal use of montages—it's possible that every dream *is* a montage—and the filmmaker is simply tapping into the same emotions and associations that fuel our dreams.

In the final chapters of the monograph Munsterberg turns his attention to the emotional impact of the medium. It is safe to say that today's audiences, growing up with TV and accustomed to watching video on the Web, are not quite so strongly affected by the film as the audiences of Munsterberg's time. He notes that "neurasthenic" spectators were known to experience hallucinations and "illusions" after watching a movie and remarks on the "strange fascination" of film that could induce audiences—especially among the "rural population"—to applaud "a happy turn of the melodramatic pictures." Movies also had "a profound effect on fantasy life," writes Robert Sklar in his book *Movie-Made America*. These cinematic fantasies "provided rich materials for dreams about sexual partners, settings and passions far removed from the reality of one's environment" (Sklar 1994, p. 307). Sklar isn't quite as alarmed by the potentially pernicious effect of film on audiences as Munsterberg who warns: "…it is evident that such a penetrating influence must be fraught with dangers." When one thinks of the impact of Nazi propaganda films like Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935) it's hard to say that Munsterberg was exaggerating. The Nazi propaganda machine was run by a great film admirer, Joseph Goebbels who was especially impressed by

Hollywood films and adopted many of their techniques for his own malign ends. (Color films enthralled him even though most politicians of the time who used film to disseminate their messages found them too unreliable.) Although he disdained detective movies and comedy reviews, he was fascinated by documentaries, appropriating their cinematic vocabulary to create the illusion of veracity, most notably in the notorious anti-Semitic film *Jud Süss* (1940), a box office sensation across Germany and Europe, based on a novel by Lion Feuchtwanger.

In spite of these 'dangers,' Munsterberg insists that the depiction of emotions (and by extension the evocation of emotions in the spectators) "must be the central aim of the photoplay" (Munsterberg 1916, p. 66). Words are not necessary for film to achieve its effect (recall that he's writing before the advent of talkies) since "the actor whom we see on the screen can hold our attention only by what he is doing and his actions gain meaning and unity for us through the feelings and emotions which control them." The film sets in motion a kind of feedback loop in which the actors display emotions on the screen, stirring emotions in the audience which may, of course, be entirely different. By the same token the emotions evoked in the spectator may color how he or she reacts to the film. Here's how the author puts it: "If we start from the emotions of the audience, we can say that the pain and the joy which the spectator feels are really projected to the screen, projected both into the portraits of the persons and into the pictures of the scenery and background into which the personal emotions radiate" (Munsterberg 1916, p. 83).

Dream Language

We have seen that the 'language' of film is very similar to and may have borrowed from dreams. This language consists of montages, flashbacks, and close-ups and it is characterized by the abolition of the temporal element and the subversion of causality. Let us now try to examine more closely what the language of dreams consists of and how it differs from the languages of logic, mathematics, and software programs. Leave aside for the time being the controversy as to whether dreams have a psychological function. (I suspect, though, that dreaming performs a very useful psychological function by helping us understand and resolve our problems.) The languages we use in our waking life and that we rely on to keep our computers running require rules. These rules allow users to produce statements in a limitless number of variations that can be understood on one or more levels, literally or implied. Such languages rely on symbols whose meanings transcend the symbol that represents them. The word 'chair' stands for a real chair even though it doesn't convey anything particularly chair like in terms of its appearance or sound. (In computers the symbols consist of two numbers—1 and 0). We call these languages discursive languages. By contrast, in the privacy of our minds, when we tell ourselves stories or engage in reveries or dream we are using a distinctly different kind of language which we call nondiscursive. That isn't to say that nondiscursive languages don't have a given set of rules or a lexicon of sorts—they do—but they do not use symbols in such an abstract manner.

Nondiscursive languages tend to favor metaphors, similes and analogies. But where we are most likely to find the use of nondiscursive languages is in myths, folklore, fairy tales—and dreams. Symbols in nondiscursive languages may be pan-cultural insofar as they are found in many different cultures (Not surprisingly, the sun and moon have been deified by any number of cultures.) But symbols can also be culturally specific like flags and logos; the cross, the swastika and hammer and sickle are cases in point. Finally, symbols can be accidental or idiosyncratic in that they are more personal. Individual dreams tend to be filled with accidental and deeply personal symbols (Rieber 1997, p. 110–111).

Some film theorists believe that our way of perceiving and absorbing the images we see up on the screen and those we see in our dreams at night both have their origin in the way that we as young children navigated the world, relying on visual and sensory experiences without regard for logic of space or time—which is to say, in a nondiscursive language. Cinema, in their reading, can lead the viewer "into a dreamlike world where regression is possible and where one senses a unity with the external world" (Eberwein 1984, p. 24–25). In other words, we are reverting to a childhood state of consciousness, if not unconsciousness, when we sit in a movie theater: "Given the replication of the dreamlike state in the viewing process, our sense of ego differentiation is at first heightened: those characters up there on the screen are 'not-me.' … That is, the dreamlike film, the film as sensed and perceived as being like a dream, brings us back to a state…in which we are more susceptible to the loss of ego, and, hence, to identification with those characters who are 'not-me'" (Eberwein 1984, p. 41).

The use of discursive and nondiscursive languages is not discreet nor is there a firewall between their domains. Sleeping and waking are bipolar elements that the human organism needs in order to develop an ability to exist cognitively, affectively, and volitionally as well as to assimilate diverse sensory experiences. Communication between these two polar states—being asleep and being awake—takes place in both nondiscursive and discursive dialects. Human knowledge is a continuum that moves between these two states while daydreaming represents an intermediate state which shares attributes of both poles (Rieber 1997, p. 111).

What I call 'knowledge' isn't exclusively confined to the intellect. In addition to cognition, minds also are a crucible of emotions and instincts. Dreams share these components to varying degrees so that one dream might be influenced by an individual's emotional problems whereas another might yield a solution to a vexing work-related problem. A society also responds both affectively as well as cognitively to sensory input. Scientific and technological knowledge is the domain of cognition, transmitted by means of documentaries, nonfiction, and academic papers. (Mathematics is a good example; the same equation or algorithm can be understood by a mathematician anywhere in the world.) But society also dreams, so to speak, through its artistic expression. That expression takes the form of intrasocietal nondiscursive communication. And like individual dreams, society's can be used—intentionally or unconsciously—to present and resolve conflicts (Rieber 1997, p. 111).

The act of dreaming functions as a kind of symbolic process, revealing not only an individual's intellectual and emotional development but also involving the play of imagination and the state of his or her physical and mental health. Dreams can often be serous experiments whose outcome depends on an understanding of the dream language—e.g., its symbols and images. There are seldom one-to-one correspondences where each symbol has an easily identifiable counterpart in real life. Instead, a symbol's meaning usually involves a dynamic complex rather than a simple entity. It is a part of a Gestalt pattern. Human nature attempts to transcend culture and actualize itself by self-examination and criticism, a dialectic process developed in the waking state by means of objective discursive introspection. In the sleeping state, however, this process takes place when we dream—using nondiscursive images (Rieber 199, p. 111–112).

Films and dreams have something else in common: their evanescence. "Like dreams, the screen resists physical scrutiny; touch it and it breaks," writes Robert T. Eberwein in his book *Film & the Dream Screen A Sleep and a Forgetting,* "If we want to retrieve the images from dreams or cinema, we must rely on memory. In both cases, we must be content with fragments—the images left in our minds of what we experienced" (Eberwein 1984, p. 23). While they may offer "us a momentary triumph over our isolation from the world," films also exert a spell that is difficult to break when the movie is over, as he points out: "…reentry into reality after we awake from the dream or conclude our viewing of the film plunges us back into our alienation from our perceptions" (Eberwein 1984, p. 23).

The types of social dreams can vary widely and almost invariably depend on the cultural context. Social dreams certainly don't require film to express them. For instance, the dramas of Sophocles and Euripides represented the social dreams of ancient Greece and B.F. Skinner in *Walden Two* represents the social dream of a psychologist as realized in a fictional ideal community. Myths and dreams expose ideas by means of images. Because social dreams express anxieties, prejudices, and desires that often are not articulated—or cannot find adequate expression in words (e.g., discursive language) film may prove the best medium for exposing the dreams to the light of day (Rieber 1997, p. 108).

"Film language" is something of an oxymoron since language is antithetical to film. The spectator receives images on the screen, watches the actors, observes their behavior and facial expressions, registers the background music, and understands what's happening. Movie going is an act of inference. (Dialogue may or may not be necessary to comprehension.) It is in that sense that films are illiterate events. But if we consider film language as a kind of dream language we can draw some valuable insights about these social dreams.

The Dreams that Money Can Buy

I've stated that films can function as social dreams that express the dilemmas and anxieties of a culture; by the same token interaction with the culture can affect the dreams of the individual filmmaker. We can think of the culture as a dream

machine or factory. Those creators who are able to benefit from the fruits of this machine can produce works with the power and the resonance to bring unconscious longings and fears of their audiences to the surface.

Film factories are most closely associated with Hollywood. The major production studios were interested in two things: entertainment and the bottom line. Exploration of the psyche was largely left to the avant garde films—what film critic Philip Sitney in his seminal history of the genre *Visionary Films* called 'trance films'—that enjoyed something of a golden age in the 1940s and 1950s. According to Sitney, trance films were "an erotic quest" and its quest figure was "either a dreamer or in a mad or a visionary state." In their investigation of the unconscious these films broke taboos that the big studios would never address— homosexuality in Kenneth Anger's *Fireworks* (1947), masturbation in Stan Brackhage's *Flesh of the Morning* (1966), and the premonition of and desire for death in Maya Deran and Alexander Hammid's *Meshes of the Afternoon* in which the end of the dream also represents the end of the life of the dreamer (Sklar 1994, p. 307).

Perhaps no trance film exemplifies the interaction between the artist and the dream machine than the aptly titled *Dreams That Money Can Buy*, a 1947 film which is both about dreams and is in its own way a dream itself. It is difficult to think of any dream that relies so much on the nondiscursive language of a dream. The film is the creation of the German modernist artist Hans Richter. He didn't start out as a filmmaker but rather as a painter strongly influenced by surrealism and Dada. However, many of the same preoccupations and themes that informed his painting found their way into his moviemaking as well. "But even if I recognized film as a form of expression independent of painting, I still felt how closely related these two arts were," Richter wrote, "Problems of the one seemed to touch on the other…Roads lead from painting to film and from film back to art…Film was not only a region for a painter's experiments, but a part of modern art, the expression of a new total experience" (Richter 1965, p. 35).

In service of his vision Richter marshaled new photographic and technical skills such as extreme boom shots, zoom shots, enlargements, photo montage, extreme angles, transparency and negative, and multiple exposures (von Hofscker 1998, p. 129). Richter wasn't just trying to be a virtuoso with the camera. Here's how Richter put it: "The technical liberation of the camera is intimately interrelated with psychological, social, economic and aesthetic problems" (Richter 1965, p. 46).

Richter was particularly interested in the effects of juxtaposing elements that didn't logically fit together—just as dreams do. "Richter's method was to establish relationships between similar and similar actions by improbable association," noted critic Marion von Hofscker. "Movement from frame to frame is continuous and their associations are surprising." In one of his earlier films, for example, a scene showing two men shaking hands abruptly changes into two boxers shaking hands. In another sequence, the moon's surface is transformed into a man's bald head. In a series of rapid cuts we are shown legs pedaling a bike, a child kicking, a small plane flying, a high diver and a pigeon in flight—a series of associations

that are meant to duplicate the kind of phenomenon we experience in our dreams every night (von Hofscker 1998, p. 138). In his 1927–1928 film *Inflation* Richter limited his imagery to depicting two objects: paper money (German marks) and the owner of that money. The German mark expands in size as the number of zeroes increase until there are more zeroes than can fit on the screen. It is a simple but biting comment on the out of control inflation that destroyed the economy in Weimer Germany earlier in the decade. It is also a salient example of a social dream (von Hofscker 1998, p. 127). Richter employed a similar montage technique in his use of sound which he believed ought to enjoy a role equal to that of the visual images. One soundtrack featured music from a barrel organ, spoken words, and unintelligible phrases played in short intervals and in rapid succession (von Hofscker 1998, p. 139).

What Richter was hoping to do in film was break away from, even revolt against, traditional narrative forms of theater and the nineteenth century novel. "We expect stories from film, not only because we are so conditioned by experience; we even 'invent' stories if none are offered. The flow of images will always 'make' a story, because our perception and imagination work that way, even if abstract form follows on abstract form" (Richter 1965, p. 114). The process Richter is describing is similar to the way in which we try to make stories (sense) out of our dreams.

Richter realized that the film was a medium uniquely capable of duplicating the form and feeling of a dream, noting that "the use of the magic qualities of the film to create the original state of the dream,—the complete liberation from the conventional story and its chronology…in which the object is taken out of its conventional context and is put into new relationships, creating in that way a new content altogether" (Richter 1965, p. 47).

Dreams That Money Can Buy is the result of an extraordinary collaboration; actually it's composed of several 'dreams' conceived of and realized by some of the twentieth century's most celebrated artists. "Since 1925 I had had many discussions with (Ferdnand) Leger about a film-project," Richter wrote regarding the film's genesis. During a stroll through lower Manhattan Leger suggested a film which would be entitled *Folklore d l'Americaine*. "In Grand street we found what we had in mind: miles of bridal gowns on both sides of the street. A love story between 2 wax mannequins!…and so my film Dreams that Money can buy began." He rounded up old friends from "beloved but bereaved Europe"—Leger, Max Ernst, Alexander Calder, Yves Tanguay, Marc el Duchamp, Jean Cocteau, Man Ray, and Jean Arp. "And so a very un-warlike document grew in the midst of war through the cooperation of 2 Americans, 2 Frenchmen and 2 Germans,—in the then cultural center of the free world." They shot the film on a shoestring budget, using a condemned building in Manhattan's garment center as their studio. They could only work on weekends or at nights since Richter was otherwise occupied in his day job as Professor of City College (Richter 1965, p. 114).

On one level *The Dreams That Money Can Buy* bears a resemblance to a detective story. (Ever since Freud, of course, psychiatrists and therapists have been acting in the role of detectives trying to unravel the meaning of their patients'

fantasies and dreams.) But any attempt on the spectator's part to find a traditional narrative is doomed to failure. That is not the point. The protagonist (to use the word loosely) is memorably named Joe Narcissus, an utterly unmemorable man, who has to figure out how to pay for the rent on a room he's just leased. But when he looks in the mirror (as Narcissus is wont to do) he discovers that he can visualize the images and thoughts running through his mind—voila! He now knows how he'll pay the rent. "If you can look inside yourself," he tells himself, "you can look inside anyone!" He will put his unique talent to use in the service of others by selling them dreams. This is the set-up for the seven dream sequences that follow: *Desire* (directed by Max Ernst); *The Girl with the Prefabricated Heart* (directed and written by Fernand Léger); *Ruth, Roses and Revolvers* (directed and written by Man Ray); *Discs* (written by Marcel Duchamp); *Ballet* (written and directed by Alexander Calder); *Circus* (written by Calder); and *Narcissus* (written and directed by Richter). The sequences make little or no effort to hook the viewer with a traditional narrative. In *Desire*, for example, a couple Mr. and Mrs. A. come into Joe's office. Mr. A. is an accountant—and that's the problem says his wife. His mind is like "a double entry column; no virtues, no vices." And no dreams she could have added. He is desperately in need of a dream, one "with practical values to widen his horizons, heighten ambitions, maybe a raise in salary." Joe finds a dream for Mr. A. using a collection of art images cut out of magazines—a woman reclining in bed; a woman sitting on an old man's lap; a woman being shot by an animal-headed man; a red liquid passing through water, and a melting wax figure of a woman—as the source material for the accountant's dream. These images are transformed into the sort of dream that Mr. A. could only dream about. Leaves fall to the ground beside a red curtain. As a woman in white reclines on a red-curtained four-poster bed a small golden ball rises into her mouth and drops down from it with every breath she takes. Finally she swallows one of the balls and falls asleep. Bars suddenly separate her bed from the viewer. A man watches from behind the bars as if he can visualize her dream in which both nightingales and calves' hooves have an important part to play. But it turns out that the man isn't watching her dream; he is a part of it—but that doesn't mean that he has any idea of what he's doing there and so he 'telephones' her to discover what's going on. In a voiceover she informs him that "they talked about love and pleasure"—and who could ask for a better dream than that? Then her telephone falls to the floor. A misty smoke enshrouds her and Mr. A's dream is over.

In the second dream that Joe sells, two store window mannequins—inspired by Richter and Leger's sighting on Grand Street—conduct a kind of mechanical romance accompanied by a song written by John Latouche and sung by Libby Holman and Josh White, called "The Girl with the Pre-Fabricated Heart." Subsequent dreams become even more abstract with contributions from Man Ray and Duchamp. One dream consists of a 'ballet' of billiard balls on wires conceived of and realized by Calder. The final dream appropriately enough takes the form of a psychoanalytical session as seen through the disturbing—and distorting—lens of the unconscious. *The Dreams that Money Can Buy* is actually a dream within a dream within a dream. The first dream belongs to Joe Narcissus, the purveyor of

dreams. The second dream is the dreams of the customer who buys them from Joe. The third dream is the 'dream' of the audience watching it.

As the distinguished film critic Siegfried Kracaeur observed, "Modern art, as it appears in this film, intertwines the region of pure forms with the virgin forest of the human soul. What lies between—the vast middle sphere of conventional life—is tacitly omitted or overtly attacked. Both the Leger and Richter episodes are very explicit in defiance of our mechanical civilization." In this respect this movie, which is predicated on dreams and presents the bewildering, noncausal nature of dreams, is also, at least in part, a social dream insofar as it is a critique of a mechanistic society, in Kracauer's words, "which smothers the expression of love and creative spontaneity." That, he says, explains why modern artists like those recruited for the film are so preoccupied with "unconscious urges" and why dream imagery comported so well with their surrealistic and Dada roots. Kracauer cites the superimposition of the female nudes and Duchamp's "rarified movements" and the juxtaposition of a primitive mask and "a sort of ram's horn" with Calder's mobiles. "And in the Max Ernst sequence the turmoil of sex so radically upsets the nineteenth century interiors that they seem on the point of disintegrating-scattered elements predestined to be reborn with non-objective textures" (Richter 1965, p.118–119). The power of *The Dreams That Money Can Buy* lies principally in its canny use of associations. Even a philosopher with an aversion to the subconscious would understand why Richter's work represents a breakthrough—but also a dead end. Dreams can also be a bore except for the dreamer. Films are most successful at embodying and transmitting social dreams when they tell a compelling story. In other words, they almost go out of their way not to entertain. Trance films were solipsistic "expressions of psychic interiors" which like dreams, required audiences to interpret rather than to enjoy them (Sklar 1994, p. 307).

The Social Dream

Psychological phenomena—self, agency, emotions, sexuality, perception, cognition, memory—do not arise exclusively within the individual. They also need to be considered within the context of the larger culture. We all operate in an environment that consists of various institutions, artifacts, and cultural concepts. Psychological processes are always at work as people conduct their activities or respond to these institutions and concepts. These psychological processes assume particular form and content. In other words, people mold their psychology in congruence with or reaction to certain macro cultural factors. A struggle is constantly taking place among groups to direct (control) macro cultural factors in their interest. Whoever dominates this struggle dominates the form that cultural factors take, and by extension the corresponding form that psychological processes take. Consequently, it would be a mistake to think of psychology only in personal terms when it is also a cultural and political phenomenon. So what we see happening is a kind of feedback loop in which psychological phenomena are then objectified in the culture and transmitted to individuals as they participate in the culture. The

ways in which the sense of self, romantic love and pathologies like schizophrenia, become objectified cultural phenomena help define society. Individuals draw upon these cultural-psychological factors to define and understand themselves—just as they draw upon standards of beauty, dress, and status.

What is less clear is whether a social or collective dream is still capable of embodying or representing a nation or a region, the way that German cinema did, for instance, in the 1920s and 1930s. That films could be distinctively 'French' or 'Italian' or 'British' was probably true to some extent through the 1950 s, as Martha Leites and Nathan Wolfenstein tried to argue in their 1950 book *Movies: A Psychological Study,* but globalization has made such generalizations and stereotypes a more problematic exercise as Sklar explains in his own book about American films: "American movie presented American myths and American dreams, homegrown for native audiences, yet only man-made borders, kept them from conquering the world" (Sklar 1994, p. 212). Those borders have been disappearing ever since.

So how is this interaction between the culture and the individual expressed in a social dream—a social dream that takes the particular form of a film? Like psychoanalysis, film has long been preoccupied with identity and the fragile sense of self. Jean Cocteau's *Orpheus* (1950), for instance, explores the tenuous border between reality and imagination. In Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966) a nurse played by Bibi Andersson becomes one with her patient played by Liv Ullmann. The viewer is drawn into Bergman's dream so that it becomes our dream to an extent as well. In one interview Bergman has called all of his films his 'dreams.' "The reality we experience today is in fact as absurd, as horrible, and as obtrusive as our dreams," he told an interviewer, "We are as defenseless before it as we are in our dreams. And one is strongly aware, I think, that there are no boundaries between dream and reality today" (Peter Cowie, Swweden 2, cited by John Simon, Ingmar Bergman Directs (NY: Harcourt Brace, Jovanovich, 1972) 239. In another context, the director declared, "When film is not a document, it is a dream…No form of art goes beyond ordinary consciousness as film does, straight to our emotions, deep in the twilight room of the soul" (Bergman 1960, p. 73).

But while a filmmaker's work might tap into his dreams for inspiration or even be conceived as equivalent to a 'dream,' it doesn't invariably follow that the filmmaker is aware what the dream is, on an individual level and certainly not on a collective level. Artists working in any medium usually do not consciously try to represent a social dream in their work and often don't realize that they have done so except in retrospect. More often other people can recognize that a work has greater resonance than its creator. And that's probably for the best: if the artist were aware that he was trying to convey a social dream he'd probably be paralyzed or else produce a work that was attenuated or polemical.

In some cases the social dream as projected by film (literally and metaphorically) can have a beneficial effect. During the bleak days of the Depression, for instance, films were able to knit society together "by their capacity to create unifying myths and dreams." In spite of clergymen in backwater towns who railed against "sin on the silver screen," the academic, media and literary elites of

their day regarded filmmakers "with considerably more respect, awe and envy" since they were in "the possession of the power to create the nation's myths and dreams" (Sklar 1994, p. 159).

The question of identity has always made for a powerful social dream, especially during periods characterized by upheaval, social, economic, and cultural. A case in point is Sybil, the purportedly true life story of a woman with multiple personality, which appeared first in book form in 1973 and then as a TV movie of the week in 1975 with Sally Field as the title character and Joanne Woodward as her psychiatrist. The authors Flora Schrieber and Cornelia Wilbur, Sybil's psychiatrist, maintained that Sybil's condition was a result of early childhood trauma although the evidence was shaky at best and fabricated at worst. (Sybil's real name was Shirley Mason.) A psychological oddity, so bizarre and rare that it was barely mentioned in most textbooks before 1973, multiple personality disorder suddenly acquired respectability and acceptance in the aftermath of Sybil in her various incarnations, eventually making its debut in the 1980 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health which classified it as an important disorder. The number of cases and therapists specializing in the treatment of MPD escalated quickly and so did the number of personalities that victims claimed. (One therapist identified over 1,000 personalities in one patient, not all of them human). With its emphasis on childhood sexual abuse it also spawned two other related obsessive phenomena: one was the belief that people were being adversely affected by buried memories and the other was that only by reawakening those memories through hypnosis was recovery possible. Together, the three phenomena constitute what I term "a trinity of affinity." It is hardly surprising that these phenomena arose in the wake of the 1960 s (a time of intense tumult) and the early 1970s, when in the aftermath of Vietnam and Watergate all authority and institutions were being challenged. America's own sense of identity was being shaken like never before. In the decades that followed the Sybil myth lost much (but not all) of its appeal, supplanted by other social dreams. It's true that several memoirs have appeared whose authors claim to have suffered from MPD, but they haven't sparked the kind of media publicity or spawned a similarly ersatz therapeutic movement as the original Sybil did.[2] A remake of the TV movie in 2007 barely caused a blip on the media's radar screen. However, with the economic downturn that the US began to suffer in 2008, we can reasonably expect to see more films that are centered about problems of identity. So many Americans, after all, especially men, have identified their lives so closely with their work that when they lose their jobs they often find themselves at a loss, unable any longer to figure out their place or purpose as husband, father or as a productive member of society.

Sybil was not a horror film per se but it had a lot in common with the genre in suggesting the possibility of monsters lurking within us. Horror films work even when we know that what we are seeing on the screen isn't 'real.' Gregory Bateson, for instance, observed that there are two types of messages or signals—those that

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[2] For a more detailed discussion of the Sybil case please see my book *The Bifurcation of the Self* published by Springer in 2006.

are untrue or not meant and those that denote signals that do not exist. In his essay "Steps to the Ecology of the Mind," he cites the example of a viewer struck by terror as he cringes from a spear thrown in his direction in a 3-D film or feels

that he's plunging from a cliff to his death in a nightmare. Neither spear nor cliff exist, Bateson points out, and the viewer and the dreamer (at least on waking) understands as much, recognizing that the images don't denote what they signify, but nonetheless the fear is real (Bateson 1972, p. 118). Otherwise horror films wouldn't have the impact they do. And if a horror film didn't produce thrills and terror (much like a roller-coaster ride) what would be the point of making it?

Certainly horror and thriller films have had a field day excavating the recesses of the mind for things we'd rather not acknowledge. The monster elicits a "visceral response of revulsion and disgust," observes Donald Campbell in his essay on the Italian horror filmmaker Dario Argento. Campbell contends that this revulsion can be traced to adolescence, observing that adolescence is characterized by a pull–push relationship in which hormonal and psychological changes are pushing the adolescent toward adulthood while he or she is being pulled in a regressive direction towards childhood in which infantile fears and anxieties about survival and omnipotent fantasies of triumph over loss, death and castration predominate (Campbell 2003).

Campbell focuses on what he calls 'body horror'—those horror films in which monsters emerge out of normal human beings. Think of all the 'normal' people in movies who, having been bit by vampires and savored the taste of blood, turn into vampires themselves. Or consider Brian DePalma's *Carrie* (1976) which depicts in an exaggerated manner the fear and disgust that menstruation arouses. Rouben Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931) is another example of body horror where the protagonist by means of a drug turns into a monster. At the same time these body horror films also evoke social dreams that touch on issues related to the stability of identity. It isn't the monster outside of us that we are so afraid of but the monster that we fear we could become.

Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) succeeded in terrifying their audiences and are no doubt responsible for countless troubling dreams. Each in its own way expresses a social dream, albeit a terrifying one. The *Stepford Wives* (1975) and its tepid sequel *Return of the Stepford Wives* (2004) are horror films of a different kind, exemplifying not so much the inequalities between the sexes as the actual struggle and conflict. The social dream in these films warns of disintegration of the family as well as of the blurring of male and female roles (Rieber 1997, p. 128).

The Western is a genre where the social dream is often explicit, tapping into myths that still resonate in the U.S.—the myth of self-reliance, the myth of an undiscovered natural paradise and the myth of boundless freedom. "Since Birth of a Nation American films have returned again and again to the basic problem of human conduct and the establishment of law and order in a new and widely scattered society," Manvell writes in his consideration of the Western classic *The Oxbow Incident* (1943), "These have often proved wonderful subjects for films— the westering of the pioneers, the dawn of the concept of justice in remote regions,

and the outbreak of gang or mob violence in the rural and urban areas" (Manvell 1955, p. 146). The Western exerted such an influence over the popular imagination that some directors who'd grown up far from America tried their hand at it, most notably the Italians who invented a subgenre all of their own—the spaghetti Western. Its most famous exponent Sergio Leone was attracted to the Western because, he said, "the west was made by violent, uncomplicated men, and it is this strength and simplicity that I try to recapture in my pictures." In *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968) Leone cast Henry Fonda against type as the villainous enforcer for a railroad tycoon. The story is a scathing take on capitalist exploitation which takes the form of a struggle over water, in this case a piece of land near Flagstone, Arizona called—appropriately—Sweetwater. It is the only source of water in a region where a railroad will be constructed. Water suddenly becomes valuable because it will be needed for the steam engines that empower locomotives. Leone's film was only one of a slew of Westerns about the epic struggle over resources (often pitting ranchers against cattlemen). The director also earned worldwide box office success for his Dollar trilogy: *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964), *For a Few Dollars More* a year later and most famously, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly,* which followed in 1966. The plot of *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, set during the Civil War, focused on three gunslingers who are after a cache of hidden Confederate gold and featured a young Clint Eastwood as a mysterious lone gunman with a lightning fast draw. It embodied two dreams at once, both of them integral to Americans' mythical—and mystical—association with the land and its resources. The first is the belief that if one looks hard enough there are always riches waiting to be found (in whatever form or currency) and the second is the conviction of being rescued by the savior who comes from out of nowhere, a hero who has integrity, a gun and a good aim. Probably no film illustrated the obsessive and illusory—and finally tragic—quest for hidden wealth than *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* (1948) which starred Humphrey Bogart. In that film a savior never appears.

If Westerns hearken back to the social dreams that have shaped America science fiction often plays on the fears and anxieties of the present (usually dressed up as the future.) Superman emerged as a comic book hero in 1938 on the verge of World War II (before being incarnated in a TV series and in movies beginning in 1978). However, the quest for an Ubermensch—the superior individual of Nietzsche who has the rational and emotional capacity and volitional need to transcend the problems of society—has been a social dream of any number of societies (Rieber 1997). It can be argued that Superman reveals a major flaw in the American national character because it relies on magical thinking, a hope for the superman magic and the belief that we have license to do something without taking full responsibility for our actions. Americans seem to be looking for the hero who will save them, and they are ready to pay any amount of money for the gimmick, the product or the shortcut to get it without a full-hearted effort. The social dreams of our times seem to be screaming out, proclaiming this problem to us, but whether anyone is listening is another question (Rieber 1997, p. 130–131). If anything, that old superman magic is more prevalent than ever given the increasing

number of super heroes that recent films have appropriated from graphic novels: Spiderman, Batman, and Ironman to name just three of the cinematic saviors to have made their appearance on the big screen. If they haven't achieved superman magic exactly there is no disputing that they are responsible for creating box office magic, which says something about how deeply entrenched this particular social dream remains.

The recent resurgence of the vampire on TV, film, and in books (along with zombies) suggests that another form of social dream is emerging. The meaning of this particular dream, however, isn't quite as easily interpreted as one might assume. Vampires have never gone away, of course; they have surfaced in any number of cultures since Vlad the Impaler and vampires have been making regular appearances on American and international screens. The film adaptation of *Interview with a Vampire*, based on Anne Rice's novel, was a big hit in 1994. But why are they experiencing such a huge comeback now? 2008 was a banner year for vampires. That year saw the publication of *Breaking Dawn,* the final installment of Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series; it sold 1.3 million copies in the first 24 h. That was followed by the launch of HBO's wildly successful new series *True Blood*, the Swedish film *Let the Right One In* (whose plot revolved around preadolescent vampires) and finally the release of the film adaptation of *Twilight.* Both the HBO the Twilight series have attracted huge numbers of ardent young fans, especially prepubescent and teenage girls. These vampires are sanitized; the vampire who falls in love with the human girl is too nice to bite. Desire is suppressed in favor of a dreamy romanticism, which undoubtedly explains its exceptional popularity for its target demographic. A year later the sequel *New Moon* broke box office records—and still no sex. The conventional explanation for the hold that vampires have on the imagination can be found in *Soul of a Popular Culture* by Mary Kittleson. "Symbolically, we can imagine vampires as unconscious energy that sucks us dry of the will essential to desire life…At the same time, predatory impulses are an integral part of our human biological history" (Kittleson 1998). Unlike humans, vampires cast no shadows, she points out. Formulating her argument in Jungian terms, she argues that the culture has to do its 'collective shadow work' in order to evolve. "Culturally, the vampire's presence may be beckoning our society to kill off the adolescent conception of ourselves as innocent heroes and heroines who desire only the best for the world" (Kittleson 1998). But is this really the social dream that the vampire resurrection embodies? Most of the vampires who are enjoying popularity these days depart from the traditional conception of the vampire; far from being monstrous or evil, they are increasingly depicted as young, strong and sensual beings. Even the vampires in *True Blood* are a different breed. To be sure, in contrast to the vampires in Twilight and *New Moon* who show such extraordinary, these Bayou vampires have no compunction about indulging in either sex with humans or slaking their thirst on human blood (although they often rely on a synthetic substitute). Nonetheless, they are presented as a kind of ethnic minority, stigmatized, and subject to prejudice, but nonetheless are tolerated to some degree by the humans they live among. These examples suggest that it might be possible to give a more optimistic reading of

the vampire's new incarnations. Maybe the social dream that vampires represent indicate a greater tolerance for diversity, especially among the young, where ethnic, cultural, and religious differences or sexual orientation are no longer seen as threatening in sharp contrast to the attitudes of older generations.

The question as to whether horror films (or programs on TV) can cause nightmares (infiltrating our actual dreams in other words) hasn't been well studied. But, as Margaret Talbot points out in an article on nightmares for The New Yorker, movies do have an influence on "our sense of what nightmares generally look and feel like…from the surreal dreamscape that Salvador Dali designed for Alfred Hitchcock's 'Spellbound' to the twisted fantasies of David Lynch." She goes on to say, "Such cinematic sequences succeed better than most nightmare studies do in recreating what it feels like to be transfixed by frightening images that are screened in the projection room of one's mind." The relationship can work in reverse, too: "if filmmakers draw on nightmares, their films, in turn, sometimes give us bad dreams." In a study published in 2000, children who had nightmares frequently cited a program they'd seen on TV. Some studies have tracked the types of nightmares people have experienced over the last century "and found that dreams of the bogeyman were common in the twenties; dreams of ghosts, devils, and witches reigned in the fifties and sixties, and those of movie villains predominated in the nineties." Both Freddy Krueger of the *Friday the 13th* series of movies and the evil Voldemort from the Harry Potter novels and movies have made regular appearances in the nightmares of children interviewed for a study conducted by the Dream and Nightmare Laboratory at Sacre-Coeur Hospital in Montreal, but whether they have any lasting or negative influence is unknown (Talbot 2009).

Nightmares are by no means confined to horror films. Apocalyptic scenarios are also commonly found in science fiction films. Although 2008 may have been a banner year for vampire flicks, it was also the year that saw the remake of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, which was originally released in 1951. But the remake was a dud whereas the earlier version was powerfully evocative. The social dream that the 1951 film expressed has been superseded by other more resonant dreams in the intervening years. The original version was simultaneously reassuring and terrifying—reassuring because it seemed to offer a possible resolution to the conflict between the US and the USSR that had the potential of blowing humanity to smithereens and terrifying because it suggested that we needed extraterrestrial intervention to keep us from doing so. Godzilla represented a similar social dream. The Japanese monster made its initial appearance in 1954 in the first of dozens of films and remakes. A fearsome prehistoric creature, Godzilla is the result of a mutation caused by radiation from the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He can even deliver a powerful thermonuclear death ray from his mouth.

In dreams we often envision and 'try out' future scenarios. They are a way of exploring best and worst case possibilities. Science fiction films have a similar role to play when they offer visions or versions of future societies, more often than not dystopian ones. *Rollerball* (1975), for instance, is a film reminiscent both in theme and content of *1984* and *Brave New World* in that it presents an alternative world order; it is set in 2018 where the world is controlled by six corporations.

The authorities promote a game called Rollerball which is intended to allow the population to let out its aggressions. The fear of technology run amok, a variation of the Frankenstein myth, is also a recurrent social dream, one that has probably never been more dramatically illustrated than by the malevolent computer Hal in Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). (Rieber 1997, p. 127).

Logan's Run (1976) plays upon America's obsession with youth and beauty; the inhabitants of a high-tech Edenic cocoon (established in the aftermath of some worldwide catastrophe, possibly nuclear war) enjoy a hedonistic existence until they reach the age of thirty at which point they are exterminated in an elaborate ritual. Old age is not only stigmatized, it is abolished. The *Handmaid's Tale* (1990), based on Margaret Atwood's novel, offers another dystopian vision set in the near future, but in this case the world has been devastated by pollution as well as war with the result that 99 % of the female population has been rendered sterile and the surviving population has fallen under the rule of barren misogynistic couples who use ritualized violence to impose their will. The handmaids of the title are concubines who are recruited to serve them. A similar social dream—inspired by the fear that humans will be reduced to eking out a living in a despoiled environment—manifests itself in *Children of Men* (2006) in which all women have apparently become sterile and the human race is poised on the brink of disappearing forever until one African immigrant turns up pregnant. The gnawing fear that humans will drive themselves to the brink by their own negligence and greed finds grim expression in the 1973 *Soylent Green* in which overpopulation is to blame for depleting the planet's resources, resulting in widespread impoverishment and such a scarcity of food that fruit and vegetables become rare and highly prized. The storyline hinges on the mysterious green wafers that the majority of people rely on for sustenance. The wafers turn out to be made out of humans: here the tools of mass production are marshaled in service of cannibalism. The persistence of the dystopian social dream can also be seen in the 2009 film *The Road* (based on a novel by Cormic McCarthy) which recounts the odyssey of a father and his son to survive in a world that has been laid waste by some catastrophe. What kind of catastrophe—whether a nuclear war or environmental disaster—is never specified. It probably doesn't matter: the message is that as much as you may fear impending catastrophe maybe you'd do better to worry about what comes afterwards. An ancient calendar—in this case the Mayan—also provided the inspiration for another 2009 disaster film 2012, which left audiences a mere three years to prepare for the world's end.

Impending catastrophe has often served as a catalyst for filmmakers to produce some of the most powerful social dreams on celluloid. Take, for example, the German films that appeared after the cataclysm of the First World War. The national trauma "led to the haunted film, preoccupied with masochism, sadism and death," writes Manvell. These films also reduced the role of the individual, no doubt reflecting the sense of powerlessness that people felt after defeat. "The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari was of this kind; the medieval, the Gothic, the corpse-laden, dream-laden world of legend and fantasy gave the designer rather than the actor his chance" (Manvell 1955, p. 44). In his groundbreaking study of German expressionist films *From Caligari to Hitler,* Siegfried Kracauser declared, "It is my

contention that through an analysis of the German films deep psychological dispositions predominant in Germany from 1918 to 1933 can be exposed—dispositions which influenced the course of events during that time and which will have to be redeemed with in the post-Hitler era" (Kracauer 1947, p. 154).

The Cabinet of Caligari (1919) is a horror story which plays on the delusions of its narrator Francis who relates his investigation of the seemingly unhinged Dr. Caligari. The story is told through a series of flashbacks. In Francis' account Caligari is the orchestrator of a traveling act featuring his somnambulist slave Cesare. He promises that Cesare will answer any question. When Francis' friend Alan asks him how long he will have to live the slave tells him he will die by dawn—as he does. It turns out that Caligari and Cesare have been implicated in several murders in the German countryside. Eventually Cesare is killed and Caligari—revealed as the director of an insane asylum—is unmasked as a pathological murderer. But we learn that what we've been shown is not what happened; Francis is an unreliable narrator; indeed, he is a patient and Dr. Caligari is no madman but the physician who is trying to cure him. Here we see an exemplary example of a social dream—and a precognitive one at that, as Kracauer has pointed out, since it wouldn't be long before Germany itself became a virtual insane asylum whose insane director, far from treating delusions, propagated them.

(*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* was one of a string of pioneering expressionist films released by the UFA Film AG under the Weimer government. The company began in 1917. It boasted such seminal directors as Fritz Lang and F.W. Murnau. Aside from *Caligari*, its fame rests on such films as *Dr. Mabuse* (1922), *Metropolis* (1927), and *The Blue Angel* (1930) starring the incomparable Marlene Dietrich in her first talkie. By the end of the 1920s, however, the studio had come under the control of an industrialist sympathetic to the Nazis. (UFA became a propaganda machine, churning out anti-Semitic films that helped pave the way for Hitler's rise to power in 1932)

Film Versions of Psychologists

Dr. Caligrai is only one of a long line of cinematic shrinks. Psychiatrists have been appearing as characters in film for almost as long as film has been around as a popular medium. How they've been portrayed over the years says a great deal about how the society of the day regarded (or disregarded) them. (The first film about psychoanalysis—G.W. Pabst's 1926 *Secrets of a Soul*—was written by Karl Abraham, an associate of Freud's and used a variety of superimpositions and distortions of images to hint at the confusion in the protagonist's mind.) A Maryland psychiatrist named Irving Schneider has come up with a classification system of celluloid psychiatrists based on three types: Dr. Dippy, Dr. Evil, and Dr. Wonderful. Schneider begins his study with the 1906 film *Dr. Dippy's Sanitarium* in which four patients chase an attendant out of a sanitarium. The harried patients eventually return to the hospital where they are soothed by the eponymous Dr. Dippy who eschews drugs in favor of pies. Dr. Dippy obviously is the buffoon, an

innocuously comic character and an easy mark. A psychiatrist of a distinctly different sort emerges in D. W. Griffith's 1908 *The Criminal Hypnotist* in which an evil doctor puts a woman under a trance so that he can steal her father's money, a plot thwarted a 'mind specialist'—the heroic kind of psychiatrist Schneider categorizes as Dr. Wonderful. Caligari is, of course, Dr. Evil. His successors include the homicidal psychiatrist in Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945), the staff of the asylum (especially Nurse Ratched) in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), and the transvestite psychiatrist played by Michael Caine in *Dressed to Kill* (1980). *Spellbound* represents a shift toward a more sophisticated (if still sensationalized) portrayal of the profession. Its famous dream sequences were designed by Salvador Dalí, the dean of surrealists. The titles serve as a kind of tutorial for viewers. "Our story deals with psychoanalysis," the prefatory titles declare, which is described as "the method by which modern science treats the emotional problems of the sane. The analyst seeks only to induce the patient to talk about his hidden problems, to open the locked doors of his mind. Once the complexes that have been disturbing the patient are uncovered and interpreted, the illness and confusion disappear… and the devils of unreason are driven from the human soul" (Bower 1987, p. 188).

Dr. Wonderful shows up as the compassionate Dr. Berger in *Ordinary People* (1980). Of the 200 or so films Schneider surveyed he found a greater number of Dr. Dippy's (35 %) followed by Dr. Wonderful's (22 %) with Dr. Evil trailing behind (15%). Schneider admitted, though, that had he included exploitation and horror films Dr. Evil would have racked up a greater tally (Bower 1987, p. 189). Here we can see the power of the 'emotion pictures' that Munsterberg wrote about. The capacity to project emotions is, of course, not limited to film (or any other medium). As a phenomenon it is often (too often) seen in politics and represents what Psychology Professor Paul Bloom calls 'emotional contagion' where people feed off of and influence the emotions of others. This happens frequently in darkened theaters. It also happened at Nazi rallies at Nuremberg.

Schneider isn't alone in his attempt to categorize psychiatrists on screen. Krin Gabbard (a literature professor) and Glen O. Gabbard (a psychoanalyst) have also investigated the subject in their book *Psychiatry and the Cinema* (University of Chicago Press, 1999). Elaborating on Schneider's scheme, they divide psychiatric films into three historical periods. The first period extends from the Dr. Dippy's of the one-reelers of the early 1900 s to the escaped lunatics of the mid-1960s. For the most part, the authors contend, the profession was seldom treated seriously. Dr. Wonderful's of this period, they write, "were little more than glorified guidance counselors" who helped achieve "a consoling resolution" to the plot (Bower 1987, p. 189). This period was followed by what they call the 'Golden Age of psychiatry in the cinema," beginning with *The Three Faces of Eve* (1957) and culminating in 1962 with several films, most significantly *David and Lisa*, which is considered one of the most realistic depictions of psychiatry. The third period, beginning in 1963, is a much darker one in which negative portrayals of shrinks predominate. They are "often associated with society's false values and shown to be inept or malevolent"—a sharp break from the 1950s "fantasy of social harmony and better

living through psychiatry" (an idealized conception to which psychiatry itself contributed). Undoubtedly, the anti-institutional, anti-authority fervor of the 1960s fueled the trend which, the Gabbards say, began to ebb only with the release of *Ordinary People*. The Gabbards reserve a special place in their universe of celluloid psychiatrists for the works of Woody Allen and Paul Mzursky, both of whom, while treating the profession with humor, nonetheless depict psychiatrists as generally humane and occasionally the source of valuable advice.

They argue that the depiction of the stereotype can be "double-edged in which 'good' and 'bad' psychiatrists are paired together. They also introduce another type—the 'faceless' psychiatrist who has "few, if any, identifying traits," citing as examples the neutral psychiatrist of *Fear Strikes Out* (1957) about the baseball player Jim Piersall and the off-screen psychiatrist in *Diary of a Mad Housewife* (1970). If the portrayal of many male psychiatrists in film is less than flattering, female psychiatrists generally come off even worse. Beginning in the 1940 s, the Gabbards maintain, female psychiatrists are either seen as corrupt or as "inadequate as women" and susceptible to seduction by their male patients (in a reversal of the classic transference).

The ambivalence of filmmakers toward psychiatrists is hardly surprising. Their audiences felt similarly conflicted. "Awe at their perceived ability to unscramble the mysterious workings of the mind is mixed with contempt for their limitations and disappointment with their failure to solve complex problems," notes Bruce Bower in his 1987 Science article. Psychotherapists are perceived as superior on the one hand but also envied and feared on the other, which prompts people (and filmmakers) to ridicule them and try to "put them in their place" (Bower 1987, p. 189).

Psychiatrists offer only one example of the kinds of stereotypes that filmmakers have exploited, promoted, and foisted on their audiences. The same interchange of cultural-psychological factors that gave us Dr. Dippy, Dr. Evil, and Dr. Wonderful also found expression in a system of social archetypes, stereotypes, and role models who epitomized those standards of beauty, dress and status. And there was no more powerful medium to dramatize these archetypes and stereotypes than the film. An elaborate production base was established in California to generate films that functioned as a means to show people social norms and customs, how they were to behave and what things were desirable to buy and own—in general films showed forms of life to which audiences, sitting in dark, palatial theaters must aspire. Each film becomes a lesson in how people were to define and understand themselves. Here the cultural dream machine is providing the dreams (in advertising as well as in the biological sense) for the audiences.

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