

# Dream Appreciation

Vol. 4 No. 4  
Fall 1999

**For the composer, the notes on the page come alive when they are played. For the dreamer, the pictures in the dream are the notes that have to come alive.**

## SETTING WORDS TO THE MUSIC OF DREAMS

By MONTAGUE ULLMAN, M.D.

We have two recurring states of consciousness—ordinary waking consciousness and dreaming consciousness. The trick is how to connect one to the other. After all, we are the same person awake or asleep and dreaming.

Or are we?

The problem is we speak two different languages in these two different states.

Awake we rely mainly on words to get us from here to there in a world made up of people and objects. We have something to say and we say it. In the dream we rely mainly on pictures. There is something that needs saying, but it is be-

\* From a new book in progress.

ing said to us in a world of people and objects of our own creation. We are bereft of that comforting feeling of having some degree of control over what we wish to say or not say.

That degree of volitional control is absent in the dream. There, at best, we are reactive to what is being said to us from some inner domain where the laws and limitations of waking life do not apply. The distinction between the observer and the observed, so characteristic of waking life, is blurred. We are both at the same time in the dream.

The task of integrating these two states presents problems. Aside from the form of the communication, there is also a difference in the nature of what is being communicated. We will have a good deal to say about the nature of these differences as we go along. For the time being I will just note what I consider to be the major one. Awake our communication to others or to ourselves is often tinged (sometimes more than

tinged) with expediency. Dreams manage to consistently and insistently get at the truth. If it weren't for that distinction, there would be no point in writing books on dreams.

Some dreams are so transparent that we immediately grasp their connection to our waking life. More often the dreamer needs help in working through the differences in form and content of the two states before that connection comes alive. Perhaps a musical analogy can help.

It generally takes two people to write a song, the composer and the lyricist. Let the first be the dream and the latter be the dreamer. The music wells up from some inner creative source in the composer. The lyricist searches for the words that are just the right fit for the feelings conveyed by the music. We end up not just with words and not just with music, but with a song set to music.

For the dreamer, as for the musician, the music

*Continued on page 2*

### Inside this issue . . .

A dream grows in Sweden.....	3
Leadership Training planned for November.....	4
The <i>Variety of Dream Experience</i> in 2nd edition....	4
Apothogems and other insights.....	4
Open Letter to the Dream Group Forum.....	5
Dreamworkers' Corner	
Healing dream work with cancer patients.....	7
Dream work comparison questionnaire.....	7

## SETTING WORDS TO THE MUSIC OF DREAMS

*Continued from page 1* comes by itself rising to the surface from that inner creative source. Words have to be formed to fit the music, not the other way around. They, too, have to come from an inner creative source if they are to fit in so natural a way as to make it seem the two were destined to be together from the beginning.

I recall, on leaving the theater after seeing South Pacific, I had the feeling the lyricist didn't write the lyrics, he just pulled them out of the air. They were there ready to be formed so that a song could be born.

There is another aspect to this analogy that is pertinent to dreams. When the words and music come together in this way, a new song enters the public domain as a gift to others. The song is socialized. It can now be sung and enjoyed by others. In the case of a dream shared in a group, a new felt insight is born. Not only is it of benefit to the dreamer, it is also a gift to others in the group who shared in the birthing process and who benefitted as participants in the healing process. Healing is a two-way street. The members of the group have been accessories to the dreamer

who is the lyricist in charge.

For the composer, the notes on the page come alive when they are played. For the dreamer, the pictures in the dream are the notes that have to come alive. As notes are the indicators of musical melody, the pictures are the indicators of potential metaphorical references to the emotional life of the dreamer. The developments of the moving visual metaphors of the dream convey the melodic line of the dream.

The group members start with the same notes as the dreamer and, in a variety of ways, help the dreamer find the right words for the song. Just as the right words for the music are cast in song, the right words for the pictures in the dream are cast in metaphorical meaning.

There are two skills the dreamer and any helpers to the dream have to develop. They have to learn how to appreciate the way metaphorical imagery conveys feelings (the musical ear of the composer) and to find the right words to express those feelings (the poetry of the lyricist).

The image realized as metaphor is the poem set to music. I refer to this process as dream appre-

ciation because, just as a musical effect goes deeper than anything that can be conveyed by ordinary language, so the metaphorical power of the dream goes deeper than our verbal interpretations. The verbal meanings that occur to us in working with dream imagery are the only tools needed to help the metaphorical image do what it is supposed to do, namely create a felt metaphorical impact.

All that anyone can do is to help the dreamer find the song that goes with the given music provided by the dream imagery. When these come together, either for the dreamer or the musician, what we are left with is a satisfying experience that words alone cannot capture. Something dormant has come to life in a way that promises to bear more fruit in the future. Both bring us to the edge of discovery. Both bring us closer to our own humanity. In both we are the creator and the audience to our own creation. In both a wider audience can benefit from what we have created.

To sum up: Asleep and dreaming, we resort to a sensory-like pictorial experience to express to ourselves whatever feeling tones are surfacing at the

moment. We use the resulting imagery in a metaphorical way, to do what metaphors do so gracefully, to express feelings coming into being that have not yet found their proper place in our lives. For that to come about with the very original metaphorical representations in the dream, the dreamer often needs help to clear the way for the images to find their way back into the waking life of the dreamer. For that to happen, they have to be socialized by discovering their connection to the relevant recent and past context of the dreamer's life.

The use of ordinary discourse in uncovering these linkages is a tool but not the answer in itself. Like the lyricist we have to seek out the proper words to the music in the poetry of a song. In the case of the dream, that means we have to re-metaphorize the dream. The end point to dream work is closer to another metaphor than it is to an interpretation in an ordinary sense.

In one dream the metaphorical succession of pictures in the dream was re-metaphorized with the dream depicting the *artful dodges* the dreamer resorted to in order to main-

*Continued on page 6*

## A DREAM GROWS IN SWEDEN . . .

By MONTAGUE ULLMAN, M.D.

In September, 1974, my wife Janet and I left for Sweden for what turned out to be an experience which, in a way that had not been anticipated, gave a new and exciting direction to my life. I discussed this in detail in the Winter, 1997 issue of *Dream Appreciation*, and will recap that briefly to let you know how that work is evolving.

Back then another analyst from the States and I were teaching psychopathology and psychotherapy to a group of students, most of whom were doing graduate work at the Psychological Institute of Gothenberg University. (The group also included a student in the social studies program, another in the philosophy of science program and a psychiatrist.) There was no clinical tract at the Institute at the time. The students eventually created their own institute, the Institute for Psychodynamic Psychotherapy, and it was here that most of the courses were given.

My co-worker and I shared the courses, with my share including an ongoing course on dreams. That gave me the opportunity to teach about dreams the way I had always wanted to — experientially. It was also very much of a challenge to me to work our the ground rules for

maintaining a classroom atmosphere while at the same time inviting the students to delve into their own unconscious domain through the medium of their dreams.

I had to counter their

---

***I had to work out the safety features and get across my conviction that learning how to dialogue with a dream was the best way of helping a dreamer recover the relevant associations.***

---

expectations of safe learning based on their reading of Freud and ensuing theoretical discussions with one involving some measure of self-exposure. I had to work out the safety features and get across my conviction that learning how to dialogue with a dream was the best way of helping a dreamer recover the relevant associations.

My first effort in this direction was to indicate that no grades would be involved and that no one would have to share a dream if they did not wish to do so. While not as fully thought out at the time, they embodied the basic ideas of chapters III, IV and V of my book, *Appreciating Dreams*. The process itself was not as carefully structured as it now is. There was much learning on my part as we got on with the course.

Sweden is a small country (the population approximately the same as New York City). Word that I was giving a course on dreams in Gothenberg soon reached Stockholm, with the result

enough invitations to continue this work to keep me busy there for from four to six weeks twice a year. Initially they were from various hospitals and training centers but gradually included more and more lay groups. A good deal of my time was spent on training leaders to do experiential dream group work.

Two things followed from these visits. Some groups had repeated exposure to the leadership training. The other was that groups began to form in almost every major city in Sweden, from Lund and Malmo in the south to Luleå and Boden in the far north.

Several things aside from my growing excitement about the work made this expansion possible:

1. There was a great deal of emphasis on and support for adult education in Sweden during the period that I worked there. Any group of 10 adults interested in a particular subject and who had an accredited teacher available could have most of the expenses for the course paid for, leaving only a small portion for the participants to pay.

2. In 1974 when I first came to Sweden, psychiatric care was mainly drug-oriented. Psycho-

*Continued on page 4*

that a group of analysts on the faculty of the Holistic Psychoanalytic Society were soon making the trip from Stockholm to Gothenberg for three hours of dream work every Saturday.

Before the year was up, I had been invited to lecture on dreams in several hospital settings. I so enjoyed living and teaching in Sweden (a welcome relief from the administrative duties at the Maimonides Medical Center), that I managed to stay on until April, 1976.

On my return, I resigned from my position at Maimonides and knew by then that the rest of my career was going to be devoted to further developing the experiential dream group work I had started in Sweden. Evidently the Swedes also continued their interest. From 1976 on to about 1996 I received

## A DREAM GROWS IN SWEDEN . . .

*Continued from page 3* analysis came late to Sweden. There were two small training centers in Stockholm and none in Gothenberg, the second largest city. The psychotherapy that did exist was mostly practiced by psychologists and social workers. In one hospital where I lectured before a group of psychiatrists, they had no previous exposure to dream work. Fortunately, this situation has changed in the past 15 years as the government set standards for training in psychotherapy.

3. Because of the relatively small number of professionals engaged in psychotherapy in the 1970s, there was a greater tendency for them to know each other. Networking was easy and resulted in the gradual expansion of interest

in the work I was doing.

4. Like most Swedes, the people I worked with had a mastery of English. For the few who were not so proficient, my books on dreams were available in Swedish.

5. Finally, in teaching the process, I was not up against an entrenched ideology in opposition to my efforts to deprofessionalize dream work.

There has also been some support for dream group work at a political level. In Zetterberg a member of the Swedish Parliament had been seeking government funding to explore the mental health preventive potential of dream sharing groups. In 1991 she arranged for me to meet with several members of Parliament to explore this possi-

bility.

In spring, 1990, eleven Swedes who had had extensive training with me over the years — and who were all well versed in the process — came together to form a society, the Dream Group Forum (Drömgrupps Forum) to train others and to launch an educational program to extend dream work into the community. In addition to the founders, there are now over 70 students at different levels of the training program. They have also initiated a newsletter, Dröm Dialog, to keep members

### VARIETY OF DREAM EXPERIENCE NOW IN 2ND EDITION

*Variety of Dream Experience* edited by Montague Ullman and Claire Limmer shows how the versatility of dreams — their intrinsic creativity and their healing potential — extends beyond their clinical usefulness.

The second edition, which has been updated and adds new chapters and new information on the group process, offers examples of how dream work has been successfully extended into the public domain.

The *Variety of Dream Experience* will expand your ways of looking at and working with dreams. Available through SUNY Press at [www.sunypress.edu](http://www.sunypress.edu) □

informed of current developments. I have been invited to attend the tenth anniversary meeting of the Forum to be held in Växjö, a city in the south of Sweden, in April of next year. On page 5 is an open letter to the Dröm Dialog outlining a vision for the next decade. □

### APOTHOGEMS AND OTHER INSIGHTS

What is spiritual about dream work is its truth-telling nature. \* \* \*

Dreams arise out of an incorruptible core of being, something that we all have regardless of whether we ever learn to acknowledge and honor it. \* \* \*

Interpretation is to dreams as mathematics is to music. It plays a necessary structural role, but it does not capture the essence. \* \* \*

One cannot dislike a dreamer who with courage and honesty works on a dream. This is so regardless of any negative first impressions. \* \* \*

Metaphor speaks from the heart. Words often speak from anywhere except the heart. \* \* \*

The true translation of a metaphor is not an interpretation but a meta-metaphor, one that reaches a higher level both of specificity and inclusiveness. □

### LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

A Leadership Training Workshop in group dream work will take place at Monte's home November 5-7. This experiential three-day workshop will cover the underlying premises and key principles on which Monte's group dream work is based. It will explore in depth the kinds of problems that occur at each stage of the process as well as the technique of leading a group.

Even if you have attended one of Monte's Leadership Workshops before, this can be a helpful way to "fine tune" the process.

DATE: November 5, 6, and 7  
PLACE: 55 Orlando Ave.  
Ardsley, New York 10502

These workshops fill up quickly, so for information or to register call Monte Ullman at: (914) 693-0156.

## OPEN LETTER TO THE DREAM GROUP FORUM

Where will the Dream Group Forum be at the close of the next decade? To answer that question, we first have to see where you have been.

You have laid the foundation for something that is unique and, in my opinion, terribly important. You have created the first institution for the training of leaders to engage in group dream work in the community in a serious and effective way. This has been largely due to the hard work and devotion of the founders of the organization and a handful of others who offered to help. For all this I wish to commend you and express my personal gratification.

In this communication, I want to map out the direction I hope the D.G.F. will take in the future. Before doing this, however, I want to share a concern of mine that comes out of my experience with the psychoanalytic movement in the United States. I grew up with that movement and believe I can speak objectively about it.

Psychoanalysis has lost considerable ground in recent years. Two factors built into the way it was institutionalized account for the fact that it has been overshadowed by the many other modes of therapy that have sprung up. The first was the cult-like, almost religious adherence to Freud

as the founder of psychoanalysis. What was lost sight of was that depth psychology was an evolving, growing organism, and there had to be new psychological space into which it could grow.

Many of Freud's original followers left him for that reason.

When I returned from overseas in 1945 to continue my psychoanalytic training, four groups had split off from the orthodox Freudian group.

In search of a freer intellectual atmosphere, the American Academy of Psychoanalysis was formed (of which I was a Founding Charter Fellow). That was a step in the right direction, providing the rich new input of thinkers like Harry Stack Sullivan, Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, Abraham Kardiner, Clara Thompson, Bernard Robbins and William V. Silverberg.

But in my view, the Academy had from a flaw. The occurrence and treatment of emotional disorders was also a social problem, and it was the responsibility of professionals to recognize it as such. That meant reaching out to the public in a collaborative effort to

evolve preventive strategies that might reduce the growing number of psychiatric casualties. I have over the years tried to alert my colleagues to this responsibility, but to no avail.

---

***Dreaming is a natural healing system, analogous in every way to our immune system, circulatory system, etc. This is the message I hope I have taught.***

---

The reason for this brief historical review is to alert you to the danger of ending up in the same way several decades from now as an organized group of privately practicing dream group workers. That alone will not succeed in bringing the rich healing potential of dreams to the attention of the community. It won't reach the younger generations through the educational system. It won't reach other target populations in need of help — the older population, drug addicts, incest survivors, prisoners and, of course, the general population in search of deeper truths about their own subjectivity.

How many people in Sweden are aware of the message Poul Bjerre left them: ***Dreaming is a natural healing system, analogous in every way to our immune system, circulatory system, etc.*** This is the message I hope I have taught. In one way or an-

other, a concerted effort has to be made to leave that message at everyone's doorstep.

The D.G.F. should take pride in the fact that at this time in history, Sweden is the only country in the world where this dream could be realized. You have everything going for you — you have well-trained leaders from many different professions and skills, you have at least one and probably several friends in the Swedish Parliament, you have several hundreds of people who already have had some experience with dream work, and you have members with contact with the media. In short, you have everything you need to transform this dream into a reality.

To put it simply, you have a unique opportunity to transform at least one member of the dream-deprived family of nations into one where the creativity, imagination and power of the truth as embedded features of dream imagery are available to all. Some of you have worked hard to do this, but it can't be accomplished by the sporadic efforts of a few. This was obviously among the original goals of the D.G.F., but it is obvious it will need the concerted effort of every member to reach it. You have available to you a process designed to be in the

*Continued on page 6*

## SETTING WORDS TO THE MUSIC OF DREAMS

*Continued from page 2*  
tain himself as the *invisible man*. That was experienced by the composer of the dream as the proper fit of lyrics to the music. It is the composer as the only lyricist of his own dream who knows when the proper fit is reached. While a dream as *nachtmusic* can stand alone, the addition of the lyrics is a necessary enrichment for the daytime

appreciation of the dreamer primarily and of the daytime audience (the helpers), as well.

Just as words and music are qualitatively distinct forms of expression that can come together in a unified experience, the nature of this distinction is of great importance in understanding the problem the dreamer has awake in trying to connect with the night time experience of

the dream.

It should be obvious by now that I am fond of analogies. The one I find most apt with regard to this distinction I am going to borrow from physics. I refer to the fact that although the electron is some kind of unified entity, it can only be known to us in one of its two possible manifestations, either as a particle or a wave, depending on the context in which it is observed.

By the same token, waking consciousness experiences the world in its discreteness, while dreaming consciousness experiences this same world in its interconnectedness. The first accepts the world as made up of discrete objects and represents an obligatory way of relating to a world seen as such. The second is not a learned accommodation to such a world, but is there from the beginning as a natural felt sense of the interconnectedness of all that exists. It has the character of a deeper underlying domain registering the subjective rewards and costs of adapting to a world of objects.

What is happening to our organismic potential as a consequence of this adaptation? What has been the cost of our human po-

tential for the technological gains we have made since the Industrial Revolution?

If a certain level of objectifying the world is necessary in the course of the evolution of any society, have we carried this to such a self-defeating extent that we have become objects to each other? Have our technological gains in designing objects of destruction so far outpaced our capacity for moral growth that ours and future generations will continue to live under a cloud — a mushroom cloud?

You can see from this projection where our dreaming psyche might have a very extended agenda to ponder. We, as individual human beings, are faced with what filters down to us as conscious or unconscious moral choices at every turn throughout our lives.

Bette Davis once said, "Old age is not for sissies." She might as well have extended that to every age. If we were to pay more attention to our dream life from an early age on, we might evolve a greater sensitivity to the moral issues that confront us. We have the intrinsic honesty of the dreaming psyche to help us. □

## OPEN LETTER TO D.G.F

*Continued from page 5*  
hands of the layman. You have everything in place but one to successfully undertake this task. That one thing is some organizational restructuring to give equal status to these two educational goals — to train leaders and to alert the public to the importance of dream work.

How to bring about this systematic change I have to leave in your hands. I can only stress the fact that some change is necessary if you are to make these two goals co-equal. You have succeeded in the first. The task for the coming decade is to succeed in the second.

You have a wide range of talent and experience among your membership. There should be enough members who can be mobilized into a cohesive group,

section or whatever administrative arrangement you deem necessary to see real movement in the direction I am suggesting. You and you alone are in a position to introduce dream work into the family, the school, the clergy, the business world and the various professions. It won't be easy.

Dreams in the current era are, unfortunately, counter-cultural in the honesty with which they expose not only personal tensions but social tensions as well.

It will take manpower, dedication and the skillful use of mass media to get this project underway. The soil has been prepared and all is in readiness for a sturdy tree of dreams to grow in Sweden. I wish with all my heart that you succeed.

— Monte



DREAMWORKERS' CORNER

## HEALING DREAM WORK WITH CANCER PATIENTS

BY WENDY PANNIER

Dreams play a prominent role in the lives of many cancer patients, from pre-diagnosis to remission or death.

Recently I was doing a workshop with a group of cancer patients who said they didn't remember their dreams — or at least thought so until we started talking. Then they started remembering.

"Oh my goodness," one woman exclaimed. "Now I understand what that dream meant."

A few months before diagnosis she dreamed of a former colleague she had not seen in many years. He was comforting her and telling her everything was going to be all right.

In the dream she felt wonderfully safe and at peace, although when she awoke she felt guilty. She wondered if something had happened to this man, if the dream meant she was going to have an affair, etc.

As we discussed how many cancer patients dream about their cancer before it is diagnosed, she realized that this man was one of the only people she knew who had had an experience with cancer: his father had died from it. She was able to look at the dream from the positive perspective from which

she had dreamed it. She even decided to use this as a healing visualization.

In my ongoing groups with cancer patients, one had a dream of visiting a barn-like building that was partially burned out. Despite the damage, she liked all of the things on the ground floor — toys, dolls, books and antiques. She was repeatedly drawn to these things and wanted to take them, but she felt guilty about this and said it wasn't right.

There was also an upper room where everything was pristine and contemporary. She looked in but said she wanted to go back to the ground level where she felt more comfortable.

At the time she was dealing with the decision to end her treatment and the question of whether or not she should return to work. She said really wanted to stay home and play, which she decided to do as we worked on her dream.

Over subsequent weeks the group saw how happy that decision made her. While working on the dream, however, we had also helped her look at the metaphorical possibilities of the upper room. She told us it was something she was very uncomfortable with, although she

sensed she would be spending time there. She died 15 months later.

Other cancer patients have dreams that indicate

the healing process. In my groups dreamers have had images of flowers, green plants, young animals or of

*Continued on page 8*

### DREAM WORK COMPARISON QUESTIONNAIRE

James A. Hall, M.D., a long-time friend and colleague of Monte's wrote:

*"While reading Dream Appreciation I found myself wondering how work on dreams in one of your groups compares to individual work on dreams in a Freudian or Jungian way, the two schools of psychoanalysis that have most emphasized dream work."*

He suggested a brief questionnaire, shown below, to compare the experience in a dream appreciation group with older, more traditional uses of dreams in psychotherapy.

We encourage readers to take a moment to answer his three questions and return these to Dr. Hall by fax (214-369-2359) or e-mail ([doctorhall@prodigy.net](mailto:doctorhall@prodigy.net)) along with any other comments you may have. Thanks!

I am or have been in a dream appreciation group and I am or have been in individual psychotherapy that uses dreams. My individual therapy was (check one)

- Freudian type  
 Jungian type  
 Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

I find / found the approach to my dreams in the dream appreciation group (circle one number):

- 1 = very helpful / meaningful  
 2 = moderately helpful / meaningful  
 3 = neutral / don't know / undecided  
 4 = moderately unhelpful  
 5 = very unhelpful / unmeaningful

I find / found work on dreams in my individual therapy (circle one number):

- 1 = very helpful / meaningful  
 2 = moderately helpful / meaningful  
 3 = neutral / don't know / undecided  
 4 = moderately unhelpful  
 5 = very unhelpful / unmeaningful

*Dream Appreciation*  
c/o Wendy Pannier, Editor  
105 Taylor Lane  
Kennett Square, PA 19348

---

## HEALING DREAM WORK WITH CANCER PATIENTS

*Continued from page 7*  
hair growing back. Sometimes when there is a change in physical appearance, dreams can help with integrating a new body image.

One woman, a breast cancer survivor, had a dream she wanted to share even though she didn't need our help with the interpretation.

She dreamed she saw a woman admiring herself in a mirror. At first as she observed this she thought the woman was being narcissistic. Then she saw how appreciative the woman was of her body, how she enjoyed and savored it. Then she realized that the woman was her-

self, and that she was truly learning to love herself — and her body — after her mastectomy.

Another woman shared a number of dreams with the group over a period of months. The woman was an incest survivor and had multiple handicaps, in addition to breast cancer. She had had numerous surgeries for these multiple medical problems. Because of the complex nature of her issues, she was in therapy as well as attending the dream group.

An initial dream she shared had to do with being in the dark and being held down. Despite many unpleasant images such as

being strapped down on a table, gagging and not being able to breath, there were also people holding her head and telling her everything was going to be all right.

Another very poignant dream was of her deceased grandfather, who had been one of the few people in her life she felt had loved her.

This young woman had a strong need for the safety and discovery factors ensured by Monte's process and benefited from work on both of those dreams. None of us realized how much. A few weeks later she shared a dream that surprised our group — and transformed the dreamer. I'll share it with you next issue. □

*Dream Appreciation* is published quarterly for people interested in working with dreams and the group process developed by Dr. Montague Ullman.

Comments, suggestions, questions and letters are welcome. Contact the Editor, Wendy Pannier, by phone at (610) 925-0758, by fax at (610) 925-0759, or by writing 105 Taylor Lane, Kennett Square, PA 19348. Our e-mail address is <dreams@kennett.net>.

We encourage you to share this information with others, as long as proper credit is given.

---