Sleep Paralysis

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SLEEP PARALYSIS

by

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Conventional movies tend to reflect the dominant ideology of the culture in which they were made. Movie making is a major industry in the United States and has tremendous influence over viewers, helping to shape images that emphasize established norms and roles in American society. Hollywood, as a microcosm of a larger patriarchal Western culture, perpetuates cultural values that define acceptable behavior for women. The moving image evolved from photography at the end of the 19th century. At the same time, psychoanalytic theory was born. Film eventually emerged as a male dominated industry, while psychoanalytic theory reinforced the idea that women are inherently passive, and feminist or assertive tendencies are abnormal. Women who chose a nontraditional path that bypassed domestic life (wife and motherhood) and/or included independence (sexual, reproductive, financial, intellectual, etc.) could conveniently be diagnosed as mentally ill. Female protagonists in movies have been routinely punished and subjected to an unhappy ending or reprogrammed to conform in order to live happily ever after. Because experimental filmmakers don’t aspire to make blockbusters, they are less concerned with appealing to a mass audience. They can thus be critical of their own culture without worrying about repercussions in the box office. Experimental films often lack narrative coherence and language. Like dreams, they tend to concentrate on visual image. One type of experimental filmmaking consists of collecting images from pre-existing works and re-editing the images into a compilation. This is called associational montage. Sleep Paralysis is an experimental film utilizing associational montage. Like a dream, it is layered with meaning. The film presents a collection of images of women appropriated from several decades of cinema. The characters in the film represent the universal female protagonist, the filmmaker herself, and anyone who opts to reject conformity. The film is meant to suggest a waking nightmare. Sleeping is a metaphor for lack of consciousness/awareness. As the Greek philosopher Heraclitus suggested, most of humankind is just as unconscious of what they do while they are awake as they are of what they do while asleep. The title “Sleep Paralysis” refers to a psychological and physiological condition in which a person becomes trapped in limbo between waking life and deep sleep. The victim is intensely cognizant of impending, nightmarish danger, but lacks the control to take action because of an inability to move or speak.
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DVD copy of the film ....................................................................................attached
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: Context

"Resistance is futile. You will be assimilated."

Sleep Paralysis is a film about oppression. The current cultural climate in our post-911 America has been compared to George Orwell’s 1984, with The Office of Information Awareness and The Patriot Act reminiscent of Big Brother and the Thought Police. Our Commander in Chief claims “you’re either with us or against us” and fear is used as a form of social control. We are under great pressure to conform, to accept what we are told, to avoid questioning authority. Americans become complicit in their own subjection by allowing the administration to remove their civil liberties and practically outlaw any type of dissent. Like other forms of mass media, conventional movies can be used as propaganda, utilizing “the fear appeal” to convey messages and direct the conduct of the general population. Playing on deep-seated fears, “the propagandist seeks to change the way people understand an issue or situation, for the purpose of changing their actions and expectations in ways that are desirable to the interest group.”1 Sleep Paralysis examines the oppression of women by scrutinizing a standard plot formula that has been repeated over and over again in Hollywood cinema.

Hollywood is a male-dominated industry. In February 2004, the 76th Annual Academy Awards featured the first American female director (Sofia Coppola) ever to be nominated for an Oscar (for Lost in Translation). Four other films that received various

1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propaganda
Oscar nominations (Monster, Thirteen, Whale Rider, and Something’s Gotta Give) were also directed by women, and one other (American Splendor) co-directed by a woman.\(^2\)

But the Best Director trophy has never been awarded to a woman. The majority of film directors in Hollywood are men. In 2001, an activist group of female filmmakers - an offshoot of the Guerrilla Girls called Alice Locas- protested at the Academy Awards as well as at the Sundance Film Festival, displaying stickers that claimed: “The U.S. Senate is more progressive than Hollywood. Female Senators: 9%. Female Directors: 4%.”\(^3\)

Even the first narrative film director, Alice Guy (who directed numerous shorts as well as features between 1896-1920)\(^4\), is often notably absent from film studies textbooks... and sadly, the average movie-goer has never heard of her.

Generally, women involved in the film industry in Hollywood are in front of the camera, not behind it. But even A-list actresses complain that the roles are limited.

Frances McDormand, who received an Oscar for best leading actress in 1997 for her role in Fargo (1996), made a public plea during her acceptance speech to encourage writers and directors to create more interesting roles for female actresses. Historically, characters for women typically fit into two polarized categories: the wife/mother (representing innocence, obedience, and nurturing) or the femme fatale (representing independence, sexuality and evil).

These stereotypes have evolved from Western folklore. The two most important women in the bible are The Virgin Mary, revered for giving birth to the Savior, and Eve, responsible for bringing evil into the world. And in Greek mythology, it was Pandora who unleashed calamity unto humankind. Both Eve and Pandora disobeyed male

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\(^1\) Torneo, Erin. “The F-Factor- Women: Where It’s At” The Independent, March 2004
authority, resulting in eternal suffering. Both Eve and Pandora sought to discover knowledge and experiences beyond the scope of their limited existence. On film, "rarely is a woman, let alone a wife, permitted to explode against the inequities of her situation or embark on her own journey of liberation." Could this be because male filmmakers choose to portray images of women that reflect their own insecurities and fantasies?

"What else might we expect in a society that for centuries has taught young children, both female and male, that a MALE deity created the universe and all that is in it, produced MAN in his own divine image – and then, as an afterthought, created woman, to obediently help man in his endeavors?" And thus the moral of these ancient stories continues to be repeated and perpetuated on film, reinforcing the idea that women are somehow inferior and must not overstep their boundaries in a patriarchal society.

In the Bible, "it was decreed by God that woman must submit to the dominance of man. This creation legend... allows us to comprehend the role that contemporary religions have played in the initial and continual oppression and subjugation of women." Simone de Beauvoir, author of The Second Sex, comments: "Man enjoys the great advantage of having a god endorse the code he writes; and since man exercises a sovereign authority over women it is especially fortunate that this authority has been vested in him by the Supreme Being... the fear of God will therefore repress any impulse towards revolt in the downtrodden female."

Like Eve and Pandora, the curious or independent woman character in conventional feature films (particularly in the thriller or horror genres) often finds herself...

7 Ibid.
in a predicament of uncovering dangerous secrets or discovering information that puts her (and/or others) in peril. “Quite often the female protagonist is endowed with the necessary curiosity and desire to know but is revealed as impotent in terms of the actual ability to uncover the secret or attain the knowledge she desires.”8 If she comes to possess new knowledge, she is either in jeopardy or no one believes her. This plot formula mimics the Greek myth of Cassandra, who was gifted with the power of prophecy, but cursed with the powerlessness to persuade others of the truth of her statements.

“Narrative structure produces an insistence on situating the woman as the agent of the gaze, as investigator...the one for whom ‘the secret beyond the door’ is really at stake.”9 Our film heroines typically threaten the established patriarchal authority and thus are shown to undergo a series of punishing experiences before they are eventually reprogrammed to conform to a more traditional passive and subordinate role, or suffer an unhappy ending. “Women, by the logistics of film production and the laws of Western society, generally emerge as the projects of male values.”10 The female characters in these films “are the vehicle of men’s fantasies, the ‘anima’ of the collective male unconscious, and the scapegoat of men’s fears.”11

The moving image evolved from photography at the end of the 19th century - the same time psychoanalytic theory was emerging and the early feminist movements were budding, with suffragists were actively campaigning for right to vote. Like the movie industry, the medical profession (via psychoanalysis) reinforced the idea that the ideal woman is inherently passive, and feminist or assertive tendencies are abnormal. “The

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9 Doane, Mary Anne. *The Desire to Desire*, p.134.
10 Haskell, Molly. *From Reverence to Rape*, p. 39.
doctor was the judge who condemned or acquitted...the master of truth...science was expanded and applied to the moral qualities of the female hysteric, making her the focus of social control through medicine. It was the job of the doctor and hygienist to keep this 'dangerous' element of society under a medical gaze."\(^{12}\) Women who chose a nontraditional path that bypassed domestic life (wife and motherhood) and/or included independence (sexual, reproductive, financial, intellectual, etc.) could conveniently be diagnosed as mentally ill. “First person accounts by women who were institutionalized in insane asylums... suggest that incarceration in a mental hospital was used as one means of forcing conformity onto women.”\(^ {13}\) Both conventional filmmaking and conventional medicine have been used to restrain women by shaping cultural values, defining “acceptable” female behavior, and stigmatizing or punishing women who fail to meet the norm.

Over 400 feature films about medicine were catalogued in Michael Shortland’s 1989 book *Medicine and Film: A Checklist, Survey, and Research Resource*. Over 90% of the films listed “were made in Hollywood for a predominantly American market,”\(^ {14}\) and none of them included topics of psychiatry, psychoanalysis or psychotherapy.\(^ {15}\) The majority of doctor roles in these movies are played by men. Women are either nurses or patients who need to be “cured.” The male then is in the position of authority and power. “These feature films have a strong tendency to medicalize what in different contexts would be seen as social, political, or interpersonal relationships. Their power to transpose

\(^{13}\) ibid, p. 6.
\(^{14}\) ibid, p. 1.
the problems of the home to those of the hospital – to show, for example, how rebellious
women are tamed by medical therapy – cannot be underestimated.”16 The assertive
woman is made passive and vulnerable by having to undress for physical examination, by
sedative, anesthesia or hypnosis, or by restraint. She goes from the gazer/the one looking
(for knowledge, freedom, etc.) to the object of the gaze/one being looked at (by the
doctor). “The doctor/patient relation is a quite specific one… which unrelentingly draws
together power, knowledge, the body, and the psyche in the context of an institution.
Therein lies its force in convincing the woman that her way of looking is ill.”

Sleep Paralysis is a ten minute experimental film montage compiled of images
appropriated from several decades of conventional cinema. Evoking a filmic nightmare,
the work features a composite of female protagonists confined and oppressed within the
context of the medical institution. The filmmaker seeks to examine her own traumatic
experiences and personal fears, the victimization of the female protagonist in film and
Western history, and the power of Hollywood to perpetuate established cultural norms
and encourage conformity in the larger patriarchal society.

16 Ibid, p. 8.
CHAPTER II
Style and Structure

“And I brought you nightmares”

“Movies reflect or imply the dominant beliefs of a society, its ideology... Avant-garde films, however, tend to question orthodox beliefs.”\(^{17}\) Avant-garde, or “experimental” films, are usually made by a single individual on a very low budget. These films are made for personal expression rather than profit. “They generally do not aim to please audiences in the usual ways and often aim to startle, if not shock.”\(^{18}\)

An experimental filmmaker may shoot her own imagery or she may opt to appropriate footage from the collective unconscious of film history. “Influenced by the films they have seen... filmmakers may use parts of an existing film or whole films in new ways... take a variety of footage... and re-edit it to create compilation films that... often take a critical stance toward the culture that supplies their imagery.”\(^{19}\)

This type of filmmaking is called associational montage. Pioneered by the Soviets in the 1920’s, the style focuses on editing and how the meanings of images can be manipulated depending on what they are juxtaposed with. One of my earliest influences was Bruce Conner’s \textit{A Movie} (1958), which I perceived to be essentially a filmic collage. Having dabbled in two-dimensional collage, it was easy for me to make the jump to montage. My process consists basically of collecting thematically related imagery and sound, then assembling the pieces into a loose narrative or social message. Other works

\(^{18}\) Ibid, p. 333.
\(^{19}\) Ibid, p. 335.
that inspired me include Gunvor Nelson’s *Schmeerguntz* (1965), which contrasts found footage of feminine glamour with home movies depicting the grim reality of domestic life; Matthias Mueller’s *Home Stories* (1990), which re-edits Douglas Sirk films from the 1950’s to expose the entrapment of the housewife; and Peter Tscherkassky’s *Outer Space* (1999), which scrutinizes a disturbing scene from *The Entity* and expands it through optical printing and multiple exposures. Works which utilize appropriated footage force the viewer to rethink the original imagery by placing it in a new context. “ Appropriation draws attention to the mechanism of perception.”

Associational montage films may lack narrative coherence. The filmmaker "juxtaposes loosely connected images to suggest an emotion or concept". The montage is intended to be thematic, metaphorical, evocative, or poetic. The filmmaker often avoids language or dialogue, relying on the image to convey her message. In this way, associational montage films are similar to dreams. “In both film and dreams, it is not the plot which impresses the viewer so much; rather, numerous dynamic visual details” capture the attention of the viewer and demand psychological participation, allowing a temporary suspension of disbelief of implausible events, impossible time or improbable space, and delaying analysis and interpretation until the film or dream is over.

The “overpowering element of dreams may be their elusive meanings, which generally lie just beyond our reach. Fantastic ideas linked together in an illogical

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20 Stark, Jeff. “Steal This Again,” *Slack* Sept/Oct 1993
sequence contracts sharply with the normal flow of ideas inherent in the conscious mental processes.”23 Film can mimic dreams by transforming common imagery into metaphor. “In cinema, symbolization has a more direct function related to the aesthetic unity of the film as a whole; its main goal is to suffuse the representability of the motion picture image with a poetic impact and to assure its deeper metaphorical meaning.”24 Films, like dreams, also tend to portray archetypal characters, universal themes and common experiences. “The pantheon of archetypal characters in ever-recurring situations...does...reflect the collective psyche, the collective fears and aspirations, neuroses and nightmares of the average American.”25 Sleep Paralysis gleans frequently repeated stereotypical images of “women in jeopardy” from the archives of cinematic history, creating a filmic nightmare that preys on the common fears of powerless and vulnerability, and comments on the struggle of individualism against the pressure to conform.

The process of creating a film is not unlike the development of a dream. Recent experiences, repressed memories, and imagery from the collective unconscious may all provide impetus for ideas which that emerge via creative expression as art or subconscious catharsis through dreaming. Films, like dreams, may contain many levels of meaning. A filmmaker, like a dreamer, may displace painful or disagreeable feelings from herself to a substitute character. Film images, like dream images are symbols representing ideas. The viewer, like the dreamer, attempts to understand and interpret the images upon recollection.

CHAPTER III

Content

"Some of them want to abuse you"

Sleep paralysis refers to a condition or sleep disorder in which the sleeper is trapped in a purgatory between waking life and being asleep, the mind is active and hallucinating while the body is unable to move. The sleeper experiences an ominous feeling of impending doom, particularly someone lurking nearby to do her harm. She feels certain that if only she could scream or move, she could fend off the danger.

Every work of art is in some way at least partly autobiographical. This film has several references to my own personal experience. In addition to suffering from the condition of sleep paralysis, I am a woman in a field traditionally dominated by men. I have been subjected to misogynist situations and people. I have a medical phobia. I hate hospitals, I hate needles. I associate medical environments with being poked, prodded and dehumanized. As a child, I underwent a battery of tests after suffering episodic seizures. They were never able to determine a cause. When describing the physical and psychological experience of the seizures, I likened the feeling to what I imagine electric shock therapy must be like: inability to control your mind or body - a complete sense of powerlessness. As an adult, I was traumatized by a serious car accident- first from being trapped inside the overturned car, then from being immobilized on a gurney for several
hours due to a neck injury. I dislike restraint, violation, and loss of control. I live a non-traditional lifestyle that does not include marriage or motherhood. I create art that criticizes the current administration. I make films that question the patriarchal authority. I could be any one of the characters in *Sleep Paralysis*.

The film begins with a murky academy leader countdown intermingled with brief images: women walking zombie-like with arms outstretched, one running down a hall, another clutching her heart. An eye dilates. The frame, unstable, drifts from side to side. A close-up shows a woman’s face. The eyes open. On the soundtrack, a female voice (Olivia de Havilland from *Snake Pit*, 1948) can be heard counting backwards as one does after being anesthetized. A male voice coaches her. She begins to drift off. The title flutters across the screen, barely perceptible at times. The male takes over: “Thoughts are coming to your mind now. You’re going back.” The voice over suggests this unseen woman is being hypnotized. We see a young girl (Fairuza Balk in *Return to Oz*, 1985) being strapped to a gurney. “Why do you have to tie me down?” she asks, as a Bjork song from *Dancer in the Dark*, 1999 fades in. It sounds like a music box. In a point of view shot, we watch an orderly pull a gurney through a door. Bjork’s lyrics begin: “Black night is falling…” as a woman (Joan Crawford in *The Possessed*, 1947) resists medical staff attempting to restrain her. “The sun is gone, too bad…” Bjork melodically sings in her lullaby, as Janine Turner (from *The Ambulance*, 1990) screams “Stop it! Stop it!” at the disembodied hand groping at her hair. We see Annette Bening’s face (from *In Dreams*, 1998) struggling, as the witch from Disney’s *Snow White* (1937) warns: “One taste of the poisoned apple, and the victim’s eyes will close forever…in the sleeping death.” We cut to a shot of a girl’s hand holding, then dropping an apple. This scene, also
from In Dreams, alludes to Eve, the fall of humankind, and the reason we suffer/are being punished now. “The innocent are dreaming…” croons Bjork, as Linda Blair from The Exorcist (1973) rolls by on another gurney. Eve has ushered in Satan in a purely coincidental accident of editing. Now Doris Day pipes in. “You gave me sedative! You did... How could you?” she complains to James Stewart offscreen, from Hitchcock’s The Man Who Knew Too Much (1956). Bjork finishes her sentence: “As you should sleepyhead... sleepyhead... sleepyhead” while a groggy Genevieve Bujold (Coma, 1978) passes out and the camera tracks back in an overhead shot. “Let go of me, let go!” continues Doris Day in a sound bridge to the next shot, where Lee Grant (Visiting Hours, 1982) moves down the corridor toward surgery. A masked male doctor prepares the syringe. The shadows from the solarization create a disturbing clown-like smile across his face. “I guarantee you, this will clear her head,” a male voice asserts. “Please don’t put me to sleep,” begs Jamie Lee Curtis (Halloween 2, 1978). A doctor and nurses loom above her. “Take it easy.” someone says. “Try to relax. This will help you sleep.” Jamie cringes. We see a close-up of the injection. A dazed patient (from the television program E.R.) gazes around, then closes her eyes. “If I sleep, I’ll never wake up.” Marilyn Hassett claims (from The Other Side of the Mountain, 1975). A flashlight examines the pupils of unconscious Meryl Streep (Postcards From the Edge, 1980), then Annette Bening in In Dreams, then an unnamed patient in The Surgeon (1994). An eerie music begins to creep in. Olivia de Havilland lies lifeless on her pillow. “She’s asleep now. Thank God.” offscreen voices proclaim from Nightmare on Elmstreet (1984). Psychedelic imagery is superimposed with leader countdown. Abstract circles follow a printout of brainwaves. “Dreams appear like a coded puzzle.” states a psychologist character from Suture (1993).
Madeline Stowe gets her eyes examined in Blink (1993). An awake and frightened Olivia de glances around her. “We’ll just put them over your ears and draw all those bad dreams right out of your head” a male voice assures her. “And when you wake up, you’ll never be bothered by them again.” Nurses tell her to relax, then a headset is placed around her temples and something is jammed into her mouth. “Along with a cure, comes a loss of affect, a kind of emotional flattening, a diminished creativity and imagination” an authoritative voice over speaks, as Marilyn Hassett (The Bell Jar, 1979) undergoes electric shock. Then Jessica Lange’s body convulses (Frances, 1982). The voice over cues us from Nightmare on Elm Street: “She’s going into deep sleep now. Her heart rate is a little high...that’s just due to anxiety. Otherwise, she’s nicely relaxed.” Linda Blair cringes against her head in a vice. Lee Grant’s voice cries “No...No.No.No.No.No...” A robot female has her new eyes implanted (Dead and Buried, 1981). “Unable to control our minds and our bodies, in sleep, we become vulnerable,” a male doctor asserts. “Please don’t put me to sleep!” repeats Jamie Lee. An unknown actress awakens with electrodes attached to her head. “They were right. It’s painless.” claims a female voice (from Invasion of the Bodysnatchers, 1978) “We can’t make it without sleep.” A series of women are transported down hallways on gurneys. Then Linda Hamilton (in Terminator 2, 1991) is tied down to the bed, and Kathleen Quinlan screams (in I Never Promised You a Rose Garden, 1977). Natalie Wood (The Cracker Factory, 1979) struggles against her restraints. “I went to sleep, Miles, and it happened.” says a bodysnatched woman from Invasion of the Bodysnatchers (1956). Natalie finally lays back, confused. “We may think that we have lived through what we just dreamed of. We may wonder if we are now still dreaming” narrates the male psychologist from
Suture. More brainwaves print out. Madeline Stowe has her eyes checked again. A clock ticks, a bell chimes. Katharine Ross (The Stepford Wives, 1975) glides eerily down the supermarket aisle. “She’s in R.E.M.s now. She’s definitely dreaming now. It’s a good one, too” injects the sleep disorder specialist from Nightmare on Elm Street. As Katharine’s face approaches the camera in a close-up, a woman asks “What’s she doing now? Is she asleep or awake?” An eye opens. Sigourney Weaver evaluates herself in the mirror. (Snow White, a Tale of Terror, 1997) “The secrets of who you are and what has made you run away from yourself, all these secrets are buried in your brain. But you don’t want to look at them. The human being very often doesn’t want to know the truth about himself because he thinks it will make himself sick, so he makes himself sicker trying to forget” states the Freudian doctor from Spellbound (1945). Maura Tierney strikes out against her reflected image (Oxygen, 1999). De Havilland awakens, screaming. The lone survivor of Elm Street awakens screaming, then turns off her alarm. Joseph Cotten lectures Teresa Wright in Shadow of a Doubt (1943) over the image of reprogrammed, robot version of Katharine Ross’ character in The Stepford Wives:

“You think you know something, don’t you? You think you’re the clever little girl who knows something. There’s so much you don’t know. So much. What do you know really? You’re just an ordinary little girl living in an ordinary little town. You wake up every morning of your life and you know perfectly well that there’s nothing in the world to trouble you. You go through your ordinary little day, and at night you sleep your untroubled ordinary little sleep filled with peaceful, stupid dreams. And I brought you nightmares. Or did I? Or was it a silly little inexpert little lie? You live in a dream. You’re a sleepwalker. Blind. Wake up, Charlie! Use your wits. Learn something!”

We see a contact lens inserted into an eye. Maura Tierney uses eyedrops, then wipes her eyes. The teenage girl from Elm Street opens her medicine cabinet. A decorative butterfly suggests a metamorphosis. She pulls out a bottle of pills: Stay Awake – Fast Acting.
As Joseph Cotten finishes his speech, an eye emerges on the screen, and Radiohead fades in: “Wake, from your sleep. You’re drying all your tears. Today we escape, we escape.” Penelope Cruz from *Vanilla Sky* encourages: “Open your eyes!” and Gillian Anderson (X-Files) opens her eyes. The academy leader counts backwards to “Start” and fades out to the sound of a clock alarm. A flash frame of “Splice Here” hints to the viewer to begin again, with a new attentiveness.
“Formalism is the idea that art should be stylized and imaginative in such a way as to express the artist’s vision and ideas. Formalism de-emphasizes content (the subject of the story) and instead focuses on presentation and manipulation of the medium – the form.” 26 In Sleep Paralysis, the filmmaker makes use of multiple layers of image, sound and meaning. Even the photographic processes (exposure, solarization) and the method of presentation (projection) have double entendres. The edited imagery is first solarized, then textured with photograms. Solarization, “a reversal of gradation in a photographic image obtained by intense or continued exposure.”27 The filmmaker utilizes this technique to “expose” a “dark” aspect of society and bright it “into the light.” Photograms create a more literal, physical layering. The filmmaker places objects between the light source and the negative, so that during exposure, the light passes through these materials before reaching the raw stock, leaving ghostly shadows of texture on top of the image. To emphasize the sense of entrapment of the characters, mesh and lace suggest netting or webs in which the women are framed or caught. Photogrammed feathers and the occasional loss of focus allude to the fleeting quality of a dream. The

framing of the image is deliberately manipulated to make the image appear to float around on the billowing fabric screens.

The three diaphanous screens each consist of a different translucent fabrics intended to represent fragility of the characters as well as the ethereality of dreaming. Additionally, the sheerness is reminiscent of a woman’s negligee sleepwear, the mesh and white suggest the sterile bandage gauze and stark white hospital sheets of the institution, and the movement of the fabric in the breeze allows the image to appear and disappear like a phantom or apparition, elusive and intangible.

Beyond the diffusion screens, a larger image is projected along the back wall. The installation alludes to Plato’s allegory of the cave. The projector substitutes for the fire, conventional moviemakers are the puppet showmen, their films are the “shadows of reality” and the viewers are the prisoners. It is the filmmaker’s intention to show that the images are reflections of reality, and that an individual’s interpretation of reality can be manipulated by the puppeteers. Once a viewer becomes aware of the manipulation, she can opt to reject it. The film is a call for social action, for at least a recognition rather than repression of the pattern and message of the imagery. Hopefully, the images are disturbing enough that they will not soon be forgotten. Ideally, the viewer would choose to wake from her own sleepwalking and observe life with a new awareness. Unfortunately, this awareness includes a realization of a darker reality. The shadow represents the dark side of the psyche, the personal unconscious that we abhor, deny, and repress. It is a “projection,” an externalization or displacement of responsibility, attributing one’s own feelings to others as a self-defense mechanism against the anxiety those feelings evoke. Cinema is “man’s ongoing historical drive to manifest his
consciousness outside of his mind, in front of his eyes." It is a form of innocuous purging of the horrors that the imagination can conjure up. But the public consumption of these fantasies has very real results. Viewers understand that there is a moral to be learned. Women comprehend that their behavior is being scrutinized and that they are encouraged to conform to traditional roles rather than to embrace individualism or express dissent. The fact that this disturbing imagery is so oft repeated in so many different movies illustrates a dark side of the collective as well as the personal unconscious. Sometimes being enlightened means letting in the dark.

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The X Files: Episode 32: “One Breath,” directed by R.W. Goodwin, first aired on November 11, 1994
Music

“Scatterheart” by Bjork, from Selmasongs: Dancer in the Dark (2000)

“Exit Music (For a Film)” by Radiohead, from OK Computer (1997)
In partial fulfillment of the degree of Masters of Fine Arts, a dvd of the thesis project Sleep Paralysis has been deposited at the Department of Fine Arts.

Approved by:

[Signatures]

[Names]

[Date: 4/22/04]

Date