PHOTOGRAPHY AND INTERIORITY

Photography and Interiority

Dreaming With A Camera

Sharon Bedard

Abstract

We encounter our own subjectivity as we come up against the external world and we approach that world through the structuring medium of our own unique idiom.

We are accustomed to considering “thinking” as a cognitive function alone. We believe creativity to be an elusive act. Yet creativity is a form of thinking expressed through activities unbound by secondary process thought and logic. We are bodily rooted in the world and our affective states inform all of our experiences. These experiences are accessible through many forms of attention, not all of them conscious; yet all of these forms employ their own “thinking” processes governed by their own unique characteristics. Our dream life shows us the staging of our inner life and provides visual experiences and settings that reflect a form of thinking outside of consciousness and secondary process cognition. Photography can provide another such form of thinking. A practice of attention to our dreams will inform the attention we are capable of bringing to bear on these other forms of “thinking” – painting, writing and photography. Thinking takes on an entirely different connotation. Creativity becomes a thoughtful act.

Photography and Interiority

Dreaming With A Camera

I have brought along these cameras. This one is an old black box with an ornate art-deco face. It's a Brownie Junior six-16 and it was made between 1934 and 1942. I have it because it belonged to my father. This camera seemed a good place to begin. I was able to download a manual for how to use it from the internet and when I saw the manual cover it felt immediately familiar, as a childhood book does when it is rediscovered. Familiarity and absence are part of what initiated this project.

I could never tell what it was about photography that drew my father. I think sometimes it was the excitement of technology as cameras and gadgets changed. I wonder if it was the distance that a camera seemed to provide while simultaneously drawing the photographer, my father, into the scene. He predominantly took pictures of family, friends and large gatherings of people. Sometimes I wonder if he was recording memory. Often he was producing something he could later offer to others.

I have several of his old cameras now. I also have his movie camera and projector. It used 8mm film and gave us all endless hours of entertainment – after the fact. It is a rare privilege from my era, which was pre-video cam, to be able to see myself moving as a child. Sometimes my father would set out his screen and projector in the backyard and we would watch ourselves under the night sky, large bowls of popcorn and juice nearby. Of course all of the neighborhood kids would be out on their back porch watching us as well. These were perhaps my first understandings of the exteriority of

certain kinds of audiences and certain kinds of images. Photography is an unusual kind of exchange between others and oneself.

It is perhaps this mixture of experiences that tempers my early feelings about being photographed. I grew to hate being the subject at the lens end of the camera. It is a curious form of exposed privacy that many of those photos captured as I sat reading, or playing monopoly or splashing around in our plastic pool. Those old photos also documented the shifting and changing relationships between my brother and cousin and I, between my mother and her sister. It is harder to grasp the places of my father as he was so often only in the picture by means of his camera and his photographer's impulse. His brief and direct appearances therefore, mark interesting moments as to what he wanted to be photographed doing or whom he wanted to be photographed with. These photographs ***of*** him show moments when his relationship to people or things was no longer mediated by the camera and when he was no longer subtly hidden from view.

These were not self-portraits he had composed and stepped into, he had given the camera over to someone else who would take their own photograph of him and would stamp that image with their own impressions. Yet this relinquishment of his camera is of interest to me. To some extent he had imagined himself into a scene that he had agreed to allow someone else to take. Does he ever just become the subject? I sometimes believe he was more subjectively present when he was taking the photograph. For me, his photographer sense was always there whether he was directly in the photograph or not. To be a subject in a photograph when one takes photographs

oneself, requires a suspension of something; a kind of willingly giving up of one's own idiomatic structuring of an image, in order to lend oneself to another's creation. Perhaps this is why I came to dislike being photographed in my youth. It eventually became intrusive yes, but I suspect that too often I came to feel that I had to give something up in order to lend myself to this other's subjectivity and documentation.

Even though he was infrequently photographed, most of the time you know and meet my father through his subject matter; by the framing and composition, or the emotional tone of the image. Sometimes there are actual glimpses of him when his shadow falls across the subject of the image and you know that he is there, that his attention to composition has slipped and he has forgotten to scan the image inside the lens to make sure that his shadow does not intrude.

All of this is background and localizes perhaps where the idea started for me that photography is relational. The exteriority of relationships is often depicted in family photographs and so often audiences are also exterior, whether they are family members or backyard friends. It is harder to discern the relational quality or audience of a photograph when it is not about people.

I have become more interested recently in the interiority of photography. The photographer is always there in the creation of the image. The imagination clearly expresses itself in this creative process, but there is more than imagination at work in

some images. There is a relationship between self and scene that can be more than the use of a mechanical device to capture quickly an elusive subject matter. There is perhaps an “other” in me; that casts that scene through the creation of the photograph and as the photographer I inhabit that scene. I am an audience to that “other” in me; and you eventually, may also be an audience. A photograph then is a form of reclamation of my own subjectivity through the action of photography without having to directly appear within the image itself.

I seldom photograph people and I have wondered why. It is in part because obtaining their consent is a complicated process. If you do it before the photograph is taken something of the spontaneity is lost; and if you do it after the photograph is taken, people do not always like what your photo shows. It is not unlike using excerpts from a client’s session to illustrate some point you are trying to make. It can be a horrible violation of privacy and a use of their experience that they themselves have not consented to. I have come to realize that there are other means of evoking relationships.

I inhabit photographs, this I understand. I do not always know which ones at the moment when I am taking them, but I know it when I look at them later. Certain images stand out for me and I recognize something through the sensations I experience when I later look back into those photographs.

I have brought these cameras because for me a camera is like a book. If you love them

you are acutely aware of the sensory experiences that accompany interacting with a book – weight, touch, texture, smell and sound. How is a camera like a book? It also has weight and texture and sound. The front of this old camera is beautifully ornate and to hold it is to appreciate the texture of the case and the physical awkwardness of using it. To be a subject for such a camera would be a long and slow process. Modern cameras have cleaner lines because technology has made us conscious of efficiency and options, complexity and weight. There is still an effort in the digital age not to draw too far from the look of a film camera. These two cameras are similar in many ways though one uses film and the other a small flash card. Yet, when you are looking through any lens, the world that appears is your own no matter what the camera body looks like from the outside.

Regardless of the camera I use there is a single sound that I associate with photography. Perhaps it is because it occurs so intimately close to my ear. It is the sound when the world goes black and there is a moment when sight is disrupted. It is the moment when the camera takes over where my eyes have been. This sound is surrounded by absolute bodily quiet. I stop my breath and movement. Such stillness is of course never absolute – but it is as near as possible. The shutter clicks open and closed in that metaphor of “a blink of an eye”, my eye. The world is restored and I exhale and feel the muscles of my body return to a looser tone. It is a strange suspension. It is with this reanimation of movement that I understand how bodily expressed photography is. It is more that walking to a site, or scanning my surround from gutter or stream to sky or building; more than peering into darkened corners or

looking at highlights and shadows or sitting in a café watching people walk by. These are of course physical acts. But it is the moment of the photograph itself that is exquisitely embodied and worthy of attention. Body begins to encompass more than just the action of taking a photograph; it includes the sensory world you are embedded in at the moment when you release the shutter. It is the inter-animation of that inner and outer sensory world that expresses itself in a photograph. It is this kind of photograph that I am interested in and that I wish to talk about.

These reveries and associations are some of what my thinking about photography as a physical, emotional and psychological event are embedded in.

It also seems important to situate this discussion within a psychoanalytic context. I am going to set out some thoughts about why I think photography as a means of expression is also a medium of attention; and that this attention is of the quality and kind that we find in dream activity. Photography can be a form of thinking visually about one's self. In order to settle my thinking about photography in a psychodynamic domain it has made the most sense to me to look closely at dreaming as a paradigm for a certain kind of thinking, and Freud's theories about dreaming as a certain kind of approach.

I am not really interested in developing "photo therapy" or "photographic analysis". I am interested in how to think about ***some*** photography as a form of psychic activity, and how to approach this activity from the angle and receptivity that we bring to bear on dreams, their particular mode of thinking and our associations to them. The theory of

dreams rests upon a dynamic understanding of our psychic life, and of our psyche as embodied. I am approaching photography with the intention of situating it within that belief and that approach.

It seems best then to continue by outlining what I think about dreaming. I am not wedded to any one idea yet and my best approach is from a variety of thinking and experiential viewpoints.

I will begin with Freud.

“At bottom, dreams are nothing other than a particular form of thinking, made possible by the conditions of the state of sleep. It is the dream-work which creates that form, and it alone is the essence of dreaming – the explanation of its peculiar nature”. (Freud, 1973, fn 506-507)

If dream-work creates the form of thinking that we know as dreaming, and this thinking is conditioned by the state of sleep; then I would like to extend the possibility of other forms of thinking, conditioned by other modes of suspended conscious activity. For example: daydreaming and phantasy are already forms with which we are familiar. They occur during waking states but not necessarily completely conscious states. It will be important as I proceed to get clearer on what it is about sleeping that provides the necessary conditions for dreaming and to consider whether these conditions can be

seen to prevail in other forms of thinking.

I believe writing, photography and other expressions of creativity could also be forms of thinking. I say ***could*** because I am not trying to encompass all writing or all photography. I believe that there are some necessary conditions that need to be present in order for these forms to qualify as dream-like modes of thinking. What conditions then would make these forms of thinking possible; and what kind of corollary "dream-work" would create these forms? What would this "work" be that would constitute the essence of these forms? In other words, could there be other forms of dream-work-like activity that would facilitate these other varieties of thinking and expression? What would be the limits and peculiarities of these other forms?

Jonathan Lear points out that to "understand the meaning of a dream, we have to know more than what the latent content is, we have to know how that content gets itself expressed in the dreamer's whirl of psychic activity". If we consider the latent activity the story "behind the scenes" then we need to ask how this form of thinking in dreams endows a dream with the idiosyncratic meaning that it has for the individual. Both the content and the thinking are idiomatic. Lear goes on to say that while it is important to understand how dreaming endows a dream with the meaning it has for an individual, "all of this can be of use only if it helps [the dreamer] acquire the ability to recognize that very same dream activity as it is alive in the here-and-now." (Lear, 2005, 103)

Part of the useful activity of dreaming, is that it provides us with something to associate

to after the fact. The usefulness of a dream further requires the activity of attention that attention reserved to dreaming alone?

The unconscious is more than a reservoir for repressed or disavowed experience. If dreaming is a form of thinking then a dream is not just a courier arriving with a coded package from elsewhere. The dream is also the courier carrying the package in a uniquely courier like way and the courier is every bit as interesting and significant as the package.

What seems important about these considerations is manifold. If we accustom ourselves to the habit of attending to our dreams and the task of following our capacity to associate, and of allowing our mind to wander over these associations; what attitude are we creating within the context of our lived life? I am reminded of a client who allowed me to read a paper she wrote about a playground object built for young children's play. While writing about herself sitting looking at this "bobble toy" she described within her paper the various thoughts and questions and associations she had to this object. I was most struck by the freely moving essence of her thoughts, where they took her in terms of the direction of her paper and researches and the lively sense of humour that played out in her writing. When I gave her the paper back I told her it had been a delight to read and that I could see how her willingness to take her dreams seriously – and her practice of following her own associations, had put her in good stead for following her thoughts and ideas within her paper. I do believe that her subtle humour is also linked to this flexibility of mind demonstrated by her shifting

attention and freely associated activity of thought.

If we accustom ourselves to the habit of attending to our dreams, we also prepare ourselves for the ability to see these activities in the here and now. Now, what does that mean really? Well, in part it means that we can see our idiom, to reference Christopher Bollas (Bollas, 1987, 1-10; Bollas, 1989 7-22), at play within the context of our daily activities. Those moments when we can see – and become aware – of the action of our unconscious structure playing itself out in an interaction, reaction, interpretation or understanding of some life event. But, it may also mean something more than acting out this core solution. It may mean, as Lear suggests, an attention to the whirl of our psychic activity and the fluidity with which psychic energy slides across different modalities of psychic work; and how that psychic activity gets itself expressed. It is the "how of getting itself expressed" that I am pursuing here. This attempt to know ourselves "live" as we show ourselves in the stream of day-to-day living is the ongoing effect of our practiced attention to unconscious life. Freud is excellent in explaining why a dreamer's dreams are uniquely idiosyncratic. It is the effort and form of that attention that we bring to bear upon psychic activity as it appears in our day-to-day life that I believe is important as well.

What this viewpoint also offers is the possibility that our psychic energy may slide across different forms of psychic work and imbue them with the potential of expressing our own idiom in multiple and multi faceted ways. Dream-work is a specific and special expression of one form of this psychic work enabled by the state of sleep. But, we are

human beings with multi modal forms of expression. Nowhere is this more developed that in the writings of Daniel Stern. (Stern, 1985).

What I believe that Stern offers is a doorway to other modalities for the various expressions of the potential that Freud introduced and developed within his theory of dream-work. As human beings we exist within a network of multi modal forms of awareness of our individual experiences and there are corresponding expressions of these forms of awareness. What does this mean?

We often experience things in varied states of consciousness, but when consciousness is not the prevailing state of awareness we may not take note of this information of experience and our idiomatic way of ordering and structuring it; unless we can condition ourselves to take notice through other forms of attention which may not be conscious at all. If we apply Freud's concept of the sliding of energy and attention across associations to Stern's concept of multi-modal awareness of events, then we can begin to consider the possibility of the other forms of "dream-work" at play within the expression of our psychic life as it is always present in the here and now of daily living. Can attention to other modalities open access to self experience? Can understanding as it is expressed within a dream and the form of attention that a dream requires be employed as a model for the development of other modes of thinking, apprehension and understanding?

The habit of attending to our dreams and the task of following our capacity to associate,

and our ability to allow our mind to wander over these associations; show us a glimpse of ourselves as we are. It may also inculcate an attitude of attention, as it did in my client. It may also infuse our other activities with the same lively sense of attention and curiosity and flexibility.

What would then be the conditions that would facilitate these other forms of thinking? We can proceed via their general characteristics and then move into the particular qualities of these forms as they will lend their unique qualities and limitations to the mode of expression under their governance.

General Characteristics – Necessary Conditions

Suspension of conscious awareness

Withdrawal of conscious intention

Withdrawal of concern for clarity or consequences

Withdrawal of external interactions

Freedom to range over one's personal associations and connections

Freedom from impingement

Specific Qualities:

Writing

Language and its link to unconscious meaning and affect

Sound

Photography

Visual

Visible

Sensory

All activity that is carried out in a conscious state can be subject to the logic of secondary process thinking and judgment and intentionality. If it can be true, as Jung suggested, that a habit or practice of active imagination can allow us access to our unconscious life(Dallett, 1985); and more importantly, if our habit of attention to our dreams and to the practice of following our associations conditions us to an attitude of receptivity, to the suspension of judgment and to the loosening of secondary process logic; then why is it not possible to pursue certain expressive activities closer to the order of freedom conditioned by sleep? Even in a waking state it is possible to re-enter a dream with its telling. Freud's evenly suspended attention(Freud, 1912, 154-155; Freud, 1913, 179; Freud, 1923a, 239), his first principle for the client to say all(Freud,

1912, 155-158; Freud, 1913, 180); Thomas Ogden's description of reverie(Ogden, 1997, 105-133; Ogden, 1997, 155-197; Ogden, 2005, 15-46) and Wilfred Bion's approach to his clients without memory or desire(Bion, 1994); all testify to our capacity to approach this receptivity from the direction of a conscious state without the absolute necessity of sleep.

So, how can we dream while we are awake? What forms of activity help us to preserve the boundary between our conscious and unconscious life while affording us glimpses of that unconscious life at play in the here-and-now?

I would like you to consider what your current thoughts about photography as an activity are. What do you think that the person taking a photograph is doing when they are standing with that small box held up in front of them? What is a picture? What is it a picture of? Is it accurate? Is it static?

As much as possible I would like you to begin to reconsider what a person might be up to when they are photographing and what the potential of photography is as a medium for grasping aspects of the self that are ordinarily not within view – except perhaps within a dream. What is the relationship between the photograph, the subject and the content of the image? Who is the subject? What is the relationship between what is visual and what is visible?

In her paper "Notes on symbol formation", (Segal, 1979), Hanna Segal suggested that

there was more to the creation of symbols than a defensive use of repression. She was referring to the early psychoanalytic belief that when a desire had to be given up because of conflict and was repressed, that desire could still express itself in a symbolic way. The object of desire that had to be given up was subsequently replaced by a symbol. Segal wanted to consider the possibility that there was a continuous development from this early archaic symbol formation through to the adult's capacity to use symbols in self-expression, communication, discovery and creativity. (Segal, 1979, 162) Her approach was to suggest that we consider symbolizing as a "three-term relation … [meaning, a relationship between] the thing symbolized, the thing functioning as a symbol and [the] person for whom the one represents the other". In psychological terms, symbolism would be a relationship between the ego, the object, and the symbol. (Segal, 1979, 163) I think the introduction of the word relationship, is essentially important.

If we overlay this three term relationship with my earlier question regarding the photograph, the subject and the content of the image, we may begin to approach the play of a relationship between the photographer and the world; both inner and outer. When I began to consider the relational quality of symbolization I began to reconsider what the relationship was that was being expressed in a photograph. So often it is easy to mistake the content of the image as the subject matter under consideration, as the "thing itself". So often this is true.

I am considering a different sort of photograph and what the unconscious of the

photographer is thinking. In fact, what is the photographer thinking about the contents of his or her inner life and how is that “swirl of psychic activity” about to get itself thought through the photograph?

Bion said that thinking develops to contain thoughts. (Bion, 1994, 83) In this way a photograph exists as a thought the photographer is in the act of thinking. A photograph both thinks and contains the thought. What I would like you to consider is that the symbolization of the photograph as a “thing in itself” is the depiction of the photographer’s inner world of objects and desires.

Sometime over the Christmas holidays I read Patricia Hampl’s book *Blue Arabesque A Search for the Sublime*. Her book is a long reflection on the immediate and arresting impact of a painting by Matisse that she found herself rushing by while on her way to meet a friend in the Art Institute of Chicago. This is one of the things she had to say about the experience: “I suppose it was the first time I saw the elements of a painting, took in, without knowing the word, the composition, in other words the thought, of a painting. Not simply the thought as of some object, but the thinking of the painting, the galvanizing sense of an act of cognition occurring, unfinished but decisive, right there on the canvass. The painting – maybe any painting – was only apparently static … “. (Hampl, 2006, 15)

This “act of cognition occurring, unfinished but decisive” is at the heart of dreaming. Our thoughts are making forays into the world through the particular form of thinking

that is a dream. I am arguing for a sense that a photograph, a painting or certain forms of writing and reverie are also forms for thinking thoughts. These thoughts are unfinished and only momentarily decisive, and yet are forever in dialogue with each other; between aspects of the self and between the self and the outside world.

Hampl's word "decisive" also sent me off looking for an essay by Henri Cartier- Bresson. Henri Cartier-Bresson published a collection of his photographs and a short essay in 1952. The title of the collection was *The Decisive Moment*. (Cartier-Bresson, 1952, unpaginated) In his oft quoted definition of that decisive moment he said: "… photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of the precise organization of forms which give that event its proper expression". (Cartier-Bresson, 1952, unpaginated) In other words, the act of cognition that recognizes the form of the scene is spontaneous, decisive and arrests the photographer in a momentary attention to the outside world.

When I was finally able to track down a copy of his book and was able to read the entire essay it was the paragraph immediately following the passage above that seemed an important elaboration. Cartier-Bresson went on to say that: "… through the act of living, the discovery of oneself is made concurrently with the discovery of the world around us which can mold us, but which can also be affected by us. A balance must be established between these two worlds – the one inside us and the one outside us. As the result of a constant reciprocal process, both these worlds come to form a single one. And it is this world that we must communicate". (Cartier-Bresson, 1952, unpaginated) It

is what lies before the “eye”, to be used by the “I” in its expressiveness that establishes the form of thinking that is photography.

I would like you to consider something else that Hampl expressed: “A painting must depict the act of seeing, not the object seen. Even if that object represents an entire exotic world, it must pass through the veil of the self to be realized – mind/heart/soul …” must be engaged. (Hampl, 2006, 27) Eventually Hampl states that she does not want the skills of the artist – but rather – the artist’s attitude. She wanted to look not at the *thing* but at the mind beholding and rendering itself in this act of attention. (Hampl, 2006, 27-28)

It is the mind during an act of attention producing a form of thought as a bridge between external and internal reality, between unknown and newly available, between the interior “other” and self-awareness; that I am trying to depict. I found these passages related and helpful in what I am trying to say about certain forms of photography.

As human beings we are never free from the task of negotiating our passions, phantasies, desires and anxieties. We must regularly order our internal objects and form meaningful and rewarding relationships with our external ones. There are certain activities that assist in the ordering, bridging and communicating of these relationships and interrelationships.

For those of us and for our clients, whose creativity is somewhat hampered by a

reliance on defensive splitting, we become incapable of a lively use of symbolization. The symbol becomes locked to the object it is meant to represent. The properties, aliveness and flexibility of the symbol itself are lost – it has "become" the object. What is needed is a symbol that "represents" the object, so that the symbol's own qualities and characteristics remain intact and useful. (Segal, 1979, 168) Hanna Segal believed that when this "symbolic relation [had] been established a projection could occur on to substances in the external world such as paint, plasticine, clay (Segal, 1979, 168) and I would add the plastic arts. These are then available for use by the ego as a means of communication and creativity.

With this in mind we may begin to wonder what a photograph is. We may look beyond the content of the image and into the "thinking process" of the photograph itself as it communicates something from outside of awareness into visual form; and as it forms a relationship between what is unavailable internally and what is before the eye to be used for symbolic expression. These symbols are not only used in conversation with the external world – they are first and foremost available for communication between dimensions of the self.

Hanna Segal argued that the capacity to communicate with oneself through the use of symbols was the basis for verbal thinking – our sub vocal capacity to communicate with our self by means of words. Symbol formation governs our capacity to communicate. She pointed out that: "Not all internal communication is verbal thinking, but all verbal thinking is an internal communication by means of symbols – words". (Segal, 1979, 169)

Hans Loewald would not necessarily see words in this way and I would like to return to this thought later on. (Loewald, 1978)

Not all internal communication is verbal and our dream life demonstrates that our thinking occurs within a visual medium as well. Photography is generative: it is not capturing something out there so much as producing a relationship between out there and in here.

Pre symbolic thinking is concrete – we have all experienced our own incapacity to form associations, or our client's response to our invitation to say something about what they think about the "chair" in their dream.

The response - it's just a chair – arrests conversation between aspects of the self and between the subject and the external other. Only when the symbol ceases to be equated with the object can a symbol become both representational and available as itself as well. The chair is a chair that can also mean rest, waiting, stillness or exhaustion.

As therapists we want to encourage this conversation and assist in the emergence of multiple dimensions of self experience.

We are assisting a person to develop their capacity to have conversations between aspects of themselves, between their conscious self and an internal "Other". We are

asking them to attend to this “Other” interlocutor within them. We are also offering ourselves as a participant in their conversation with the rest of the world by allowing our self to be used as an object both out there and in there in their internal world and we agree to be a doorway between the two.

There is a generative process at play when “thinking” is assisted in making links between previously “unthought knowns”, (Bollas, 1987) that are then available for thought and brought into awareness. I do not yet say consciousness because I believe that consciousness is approached through the experience of free association; an activity of mind that further bridges what is just emerging into awareness in one mode of thought and assisting it into another. This seems to me when language is most delicately and precariously balanced.[1]

In his book “The Interpersonal World of the Infant”, (Stern, 1985) Daniel Stern evokes a sense of the emergent self with this question: “what about the process itself – the very experience of making the leaps and creating relations between previously unrelated events or forming particular organizations or consolidating sensorimotor schemas”? (Stern, 1985, 45) When diverse experiences are in some way associated, assimilated or connected, we experience self-organization as it emerges. It is a tangible moment. Who of you has not stood before a painting, a span of landscape or listened to a piece of music – and not experienced an exquisite moment of “sense” in an Aristotelian way –

[1] This bridging of two modes of thought through association is something I would like to explore further. I will return to this idea later in the paper when I come to discuss what Hans Loewald describes as aliveness in the link between primary process thinking and the language used to express it.

that “sense” of something other and more and reliant on the experience; and our own interaction and singular participation with that moment and within it.

Reading Daniel Stern again was exciting for me because I felt like I was tumbling into a way of thinking about photography that as an activity is often misleading; because it appears to be exclusively visually based and static. I wanted a way to think outside of that delimiting parameter. I wanted a way to describe the experience of taking a photograph that could encompass the many dimensions of self that are actually involved: sensation, memory, symbolization, organization and emotional resonance.

I would like to describe first, Stern’s discussion of amodal and cross-modal perception as I have pirated them for my own purposes here. This is not Stern, but my use of Stern. Stern describes amodal perception as the capacity to take information received in one sensory modality and somehow to translate it into another sensory modality. (Stern, 1985, 51) Stern refers to Aristotle’s observation of a unity of the senses. Our sixth sense is that capacity to apperceive those qualities of sensation that do not belong to one sense alone and are therefore primary – for example -intensity, motion, rest, unity, form, time and number. (Stern, 1985, 154) These sensations are not the properties of any one sense organ.

We may for example register the intensity of a piece of music or a scream, the intensity of heat, the intensity of pressure on our skin or the intensity of internal sensation and pressure on our organs that accompanies a good laugh. Intensity can be amodally

perceived and recognized across different sense receptors.

How does this apply to our purposes here? Some time ago I sat in a dark movie theatre with my partner watching a documentary called “The March of the Penguins”. It was, among other things, a visual feast set in motion by cinematic photography and a keen attention to relationships. Behind us sat a couple, obscured by the surrounding darkness. At various moments during the film they would gasp – ohh, ohhhhh, oh! I cannot capture here the nuances of those oh’s and ah’s, the small moans or gleeful sighs – except to reproduce them for you. I began to wonder about the auditory and physical responses to these evocative images. After a while I began to sit in my own body with a bit more awareness. I am not a moaner – so I could rely on the couple behind me to provide the auditory effects – but, I could feel the changing tensions and positions of my own body as well as the emotional pressures in my chest, abdomen and throat; the alterations in my heart rate and body temperature and the various forms of tension in my legs and spine and back. What was going on? Well, we were all watching the same documentary, and we were all responding amodally to what was presumably a visual medium. We all knew what we were seeing through the various organizing principles of our bodies and we were able to translate these images into a variety of kinesthetic, temporal, auditory and energetic responses. These various perceptual experiences posses a perceptual unity. We knew something and we did not just know it through our eyes.

This is useful as a way of considering the taking and viewing of a photograph. At a level

outside of awareness, Stern is suggesting that the experience of finding a cross-modal match would feel like finding a correspondence, or of imbuing a present and immediate experience with something familiar or prior. (Stern, 1985, 52-53) I think of it as pouring an internal experience into an external form whose shape matches the shape of what I am experiencing and trying to express. Only certain external forms will do and only those internal experiences that find a match will bridge the moment from out of awareness into awareness; and only my later reflections and associations and emotional resonance will bring them more fully into consciousness. These background experiences can move into the foreground when an evocative modal experience draws on multi modal expressions of that experience.

When I am wandering along a lakeshore and for no apparent conscious reason become completely still, drop my centre of gravity, raise my camera rapidly accompanied by a background sound of waves sluicing across rocks, have a sharp intake of breath, pause, see the world go dark because the shutter has released and the image goes black, see the world inside my small lens come back into view and exhale in one long breath – I appear to have taken a picture. It took at most thirty seconds. It took all of me to accomplish it. Twenty odd years later when I look at that photo my breath still catches and a feeling of stillness and near silence wash over me. (Plate 1)

When I play with that image on my computer in Photoshop – liquefy it, run my fingers through it through the medium of my mouse, watch it blur and reshape on the screen as the water did when it slid over the stones on the lakeshore – it is not just a photograph –

it is the visceral and sensory experience that lies between this photograph and my intimate relationship to it. I experience that photograph through all of the sensations that were at play when I took it. That is how I knew the experience then and how it comes back to me now through the medium of my own image and my own body. (Plate 2)

A photographic image is not static if these visceral experiences are alive within it. My responsiveness to it, or your responsiveness to it for that matter, will prevent any kind of stasis in the image and the image itself will change over time.

Now, potentially you come to look at my photograph.

If intensity is an amodal experience, meaning not locked to one sensory perception, then how would that exist as an organization - what would that be like in you? You are before that photograph. What are your own varied registrations of it?

When I show you the second photograph there may be a moment when you grasp the image before the thought arrives that they are related. Perhaps you laugh. There is a release of breath and you feel a relaxation in your chest and shoulders, your body sags slightly and the balance of your weight shifts as you sit in your chair, a certain tension slips through your feet and into the ground. You would be responding to that image amodally, with something that is already in you, and between you and my photograph; there is a match between your own varied registrations of the intensity within the image.

There is a cross-modal organization of your sensations and potentially you become aware of your own self state as it begins to emerge.

I would like to try and say something as well about the self state that can be expressed in a photograph. In order to do that, I would like to employ another of Stern's ideas. Stern describes "vitality affects" as those forms of feelings inextricably involved with all of the vital processes of life. (Stern, 1985, 54) These forms arrive in dynamic and kinesthetic experiences. Words like: surging, fading away, fleetingness, explosiveness, crescendo and decrescendo, bursting, falling asleep, and waking into awareness, capture these vital experiences. What characterizes these vital affects is the dimension of their intensity of sensation as a function of time. (Stern, 1985, 57) Loosely speaking, we are considering the form that this intensity takes during the passage of time - their shape; through the medium of our sensory experience. What would a vitality affect look like visually and sensorially?

If I sit on the sharp rocks by the side of a lake on a windy day and watch the movement of the wind as it expresses itself through the movement of water and the collision of the water with the irregular shape of a shoreline – and I myself am bodily buffeted by the same wind, overridden by the crash of air on my ears and the wet spray of the water on my skin and camera lens – what picture would I take as I encounter this brief world? Am I myself calm? If I am still between the break of the waves, poised and waiting, if I know the wave by the approaching sound and the feel of the wind moving through my hair, and if I regulate my breathing to correspond to the waves – what am I really

photographing – the waves, the wind, my breathing or the regulation of my being as it encounters a somewhat regular yet unpredictable world? When the spray flies up and water droplets separate from the mass of water – am I also surging up into the air – excited by the collision of myself with the world and the possibility of momentarily and fleetingly grasping the experience before it slides away? (Plate 3)

Stern stated that if “a variety of diverse sensory experiences with similar activation contours can be yoked - that is, they can be experienced as correspondent” they create an organization of experience. (Stern, 1985, 58)

The sound, my breathing and not breathing, the rise and fall of my heart rate, what I see as the waves approach and crash – these all express similar activation contours. They are all in my photograph, as is the state of my body and excitement and my capturing it before it slips away.

Vitality affects imbue our feeling states with form. By form I am referencing something that I do not think Stern was necessarily meaning. By form I mean the tangible reference point of a photograph. Stern points out that the first organizations of our experience concern the body: “its coherence, its actions, its inner feeling states, and the memory of all these”. (Stern, 1985, 46) As adults we have developed out of these earliest experiences and in many ways they are no longer available in the modes in which we first experienced them if we privilege only our verbal representations. The written and spoken depictions of my experience of taking a photograph take several

sentences to convey what my body experiences in multiple modes within a matter of seconds and which my camera captures. Yet to a certain extent these earliest modes of knowing are still available through experiences that allow us to enter into other states – as say my camera did.

This is an exciting possibility when applied to self awareness as accessed through photography. An experience registered visually can be rendered intact as an activation contour experienced simultaneously through other sensory modalities.

I believe language and by extension writing can also be employed cross modally. As humans our capacity for metaphor, whether through poetry or the visual arts; relies on our ability to transpose information amodally (Stern, 1985, 155,) and on our capacity to use symbols in an alive and vital way.

As part of past workshops we asked participants to try and write some of their thoughts and responses to their own photographs. We also asked them to participate in a group setting and to be willing to respond to other people's images and to be open to other people's responses to their work. In his paper "Primary Process, Secondary Process and Language", (Loewald, 2000, 1978) Loewald insisted on the affective link between words, language and primary process experience. Our earliest experiences are a wash of sound, cadence, rhythm and tone, as words are carried to us. (Loewald, 2000, 185)

Stern has argued that with the privileging of language we are cut off from those earliest

modes of knowing that are based in the body. I have always bristled at this without quite knowing why and without being able to respond to this challenge to language. I believe now that I have a beginning response. Language does not reside exclusively in words. What Loewald is suggesting is that our first experiences of language were not with the words themselves.

Language arrives to the ear within the context of a relationship and on the cadence, rhythm, colour and tone of the "other" speaking. It arrives physically and it is received bodily. The soothing tone of the other will wash over the agitated body of the child and the warmth of that sound and the other's breath will match the warmth of bodily touch and caress. The irregular giggle and laugh of the other, their small gusts of air, will join the tiny spasms of pleasure in the chest and body of the infant as it experiences the vibrations of its own laugh within its own chest. The shattering sound of the yell of the other, the disruption or explosion of physical contact and the vibrations of the air crash into the toddler's body as all of the nervous system of the toddler responds. These then are our earliest experiences of language. These are amodal.

When words are linked to these amodal experiences they are intimately associated with the body. If we believe that the body is minded and the mind bodied, then to argue that language is separate from bodily experience is a curious exercise. How exactly is language conveyed and received if not through relationship and through the medium of speech which is a bodily act? The separation of language from body is a defensive form of splitting.

In what feels to me like an echo of Stern talking about bodily sensations, Loewald is offering a similar rendition of the experience of language. Stephen Mitchell (Mitchell, 2000) took up Loewald's thread when he stated that the "most important distinction is not between preverbal and verbal, or between primary and secondary process, but between the *ways* in which language operates in these two developmental eras and levels of mental organization." (Mitchell, 2000, 7-8) The meaningful distinction is between "a developmental era when words as sounds, are embedded in a global, dense undifferentiated experience, and a later era, when the semantic features of language have taken precedence over its sensual, affective features". (Mitchell, 2000, 8) Loewald asks: what happens to the primary process experience of language after language has become harnessed for secondary process purposes? (Loewald, 1978, 200, 203) I wonder if it is possible to write or speak in such a way as to tap into and incorporate these earlier experiences. Or put the other way, can we animate our writing and speaking with the energy and vitality inherent in the primary process experience of words and language? Loewald would ask "How alive is that link"? (Loewald, 1978, 196, 197) Language, writing and I believe photography are links between these realms. (Loewald, 1978, 188, 190, 197, 200, 203)

To return to Stern for a moment: activation contours – rushes, surges, decrescendos, can be abstracted from one kind of behavior and can exist in amodal form so that it can be applied to another kind of behavior or mental process. (Stern, 1985, 57-58)

What is present in a photograph is intimately connected to what and how I say something about it, how I am taken by my associations and where; and I can animate my writing with the same vitality that is present when I breathe and speak. When I write I regularly read what I write out loud because I think the physicality of the act alters what I can write and because I believe it approaches a conversational tone with myself and later with you.

I ask people to write and to talk to each other about their photographs with the same sense that I ask people to speak in therapy. When a client tells us a dream we ask them to try to re-enter the dream - by which we mean we want them to let slip the usual ordering of secondary process thinking so as to speak as closely as possible to their experience of the dream. The experience of the dream is not the same as telling the dream's manifest story.

Now, I would like to return to photography and speak about these images in a manner stimulated by James Grotstein and Christopher Bollas. In his book Who *is the Dreamer Who Dreams the Dream* (Grotstein, 2000), Grotstein is approaching dreaming as the staging of the dream by the "Ineffable Subject of the Unconscious" who is never known directly but who is forever creating metaphoric reflections of itself through symptoms and dreams in order to communicate to the "phenomenal subject" - the I as I know myself. (Grotstein, 2000, x) Grotstein refers to this Ineffable Subject of the Unconscious as the "Stranger within Thee". (Grotstein, 2000, xvi)

In an interesting photographic metaphor and as another elaboration of what Patricia Hampl had to say about Matisse's painting, Grotstein says:

We forget that we must subjectively "format" the data of our observations with a priori categorizations. Just as a film emulsion catches the rays of light and transforms them into corresponding photographic images, so the images we form and internalize are modified by the subjective emulsions of our internal world, which render these data into personalized subjective experiences prior to their ultimate objectification. … We process our experiences from inherent and continuing mental formatting". (Grotstein, 2000, xxi)

For Grotstein and for Bollas a dream is the staging of that subjective emulsion. In his chapter "At the Other's Play: To Dream", (Bollas, 1987) I think Bollas offers a way to think about dreaming and for me a way to think about a photograph and the thinking of photography. Bollas' "aesthetic function of the ego" is akin to Grotstein's subjective emulsion.

Much of Bollas' chapter is on how the unconscious ego - the "Other" in us, establishes a dream environment composed of imagery in order to lead the self into a dramatic experience. What is offered in the dream is a place or theatre, for the interplay of this self and "Other". It is not just the text of the dream that is of importance - it is the actual experience of the dream where it is dreamt. Now that may seem to be an obvious thing to say. Yet as therapists we are often caught looking for the associational currents that

underlie the manifest content of the dream. Bollas points out: “Dream thoughts do not constitute a dream experience. The dream experience is a conditional event, it cannot occur without the creation of a dream setting. The setting is the world of thought and wish transformed into the imagery of place”. (Bollas, 1987, 71) For Bollas, as for Grotstein, there is an “Other” – whether it is Gorstein’s “Ineffable Subject of the Unconscious” or Bollas’ “unconscious ego performing its aesthetic function”. (Bollas, 1987, 76, 79)

There is an “Other” in us who handles us within the dream place and structure. Thought and the imagery of place are inextricably linked. In a dream we are the ego’s subject. Over time it is the setting of our dreams that we can begin to attend to. Within the theatre setting of the dream we can ask; is it a place we must yield to or resist, can we linger or must we escape, are the dreams experienced in impossible settings, is the setting so busy as to prevent experiences from being really registered or understood, (Bollas, 1987, 73) does the setting trap us, eject us, hold us or exclude us? The focus almost shifts from the action and story of the dream to the setting.

A photograph is another such setting. How we compose a photograph can render a form of thinking into a location of place. This “Other” in me can settle something of my self into the visual form that is a photograph. That form is experiential and lively.

For me the “Other” is present in the act of writing as well. Reading and writing are inextricably linked, as I have read other writers state many times. Often they are

referring to reading the works of others. I am referring to the act of reading one's own work out loud to oneself. There is of course the benefit of noticing that the interplay of thoughts and associations that occur in one's own mind have somehow been lost or are not conveyed to the page with sufficient clarity. This often leaves the outside reader at a disadvantage.

But, I am also beginning to think that there is an internal other who appears as a participant in the act of writing. To be engaged this "Other" must be read to and written from. In order to achieve this, a conversation must occur. Reading out loud to oneself requires the activation of a number of sensory experiences – sub vocal, vocal, breath, sound, oral sensation and auditory attention. I believe this facilitates what Loewald meant by the link between the primary process experience of language and the secondary process of harnessing it. The activity of free association requires that we enter a receptive state. In order to keep that link alive and lively, there must be a circulation of sound, thought and language in an intimate way. So yes, I do talk to myself.

Let me return to photography. In order to think about and use photography we need to be able to make a paradigm shift. We can begin to notice in our own photographs and in the photographs our clients might bring, whether or not there are recurrent images, settings, personages or personifications. Let us try to consider what Freud did when he set out the basic synthetic processes of dreams – condensation, displacement, symbolization and secondary elaboration, as well as instances of speech. A

photograph is a visibly visual artifact. I know that sounds redundant – but a dream is visual without being visible. What can we attend to in a photograph that would permit us to do what Freud did with dreams?

What would we wish to consider as synthetic functions within a photograph. What about setting, framing, population, depth of field, intensity or motion, and yes speech and language?

Setting – what is the setting or theatre of the image – is it expansive, crowded, interior, exterior, open, or contained?

Framing – how does the image hold, contain or exclude the subject? Are they inside or outside of the focus – are they part of the scene and how? Are they looking on - from up close or from a distance? Are they in the image physically – is it a literal self portrait?

Population – this does not just refer to people – it could be a stand of trees. Who or what is in the image, are they moving or stationary, are they caught off guard, is it staged, what relationships exist between the elements of the image?

Depth-of-Field – how experience near or distant is the photo and does it lead to or from something? Is the area of attention close by and in focus or are areas of interest left a blur? What is going on in the background and how does it relate to the foreground?

Intensity and Motion – what vital forces are being expressed - diminution, receding, surging? Is the subject above or below the setting? Which part of the image is in motion relative to the photographer? Does anything obscure or enhance the area of focus?

Speech – speech appears as words, text and icons embedded within the image. Speech goes on between people in photos, and although there may be no sounds, the expressions and postures of the subjects carry the conversation. There is also likely a conversation in progress between the photographer and their subject that may show itself in the tone of the image.

In considering photography from the angle of dreams and photography as a means of thinking; eventually we must consider the ways in which we might approach a conversation about a photograph and the ways in which associations might occur. The synthetic functions of a photograph are those elements that provide the syntax for thinking visually. The visual elements show the forms of relatedness within the image and can help us in considering what is contained, what is juxtaposed, what is occurring, included or omitted; all the possibilities that we hold open in our approach to a dream. More important are the associations that reanimate the image.

I took this photograph on an early fall morning while I was out walking with my partner. In the cool morning air and the rising fog I was kneeling on the ground passing my

camera over the landscape. Just looking, I took several images within the span of about thirty seconds – just clicking and turning and clicking and turning. There were about five shots. This one affected me and so I played with it a bit to enhance the image. Then I left it for several weeks. (Plate 4)

Some time during one of the CTP lectures on Freud my thoughts began to drift. I don't remember what the lecturer was saying but this picture came into my mind along with the thought "I know what this is, it's the body. The body from up close when the focus blurs and the edges of features soften".

My associations went further into a sense of satisfaction – I could see something of what I had been thinking about contained within the photograph. I had thought my associations ended with the realization of the body but they also encompassed the satisfaction of the body when it comes to rest and when thinking can pause because it is no longer needed. I felt assured that photographs summon diffuse associational states.

I would also say that I am not certain that it is necessary for a photograph to evoke associations in order for it to be useful. I believe photographs can also carry bodily states; and that to look back into the photograph can evoke that same state, those same sensations that were present when it was composed. The two images that I showed earlier – the photograph of the water's edge and the Photoshop rendering – contain and express emotional states for me. I had those photographs in my office for a

while and one day one of my clients astutely pointed out that the one seemed calm and the other turbulent. I think Photoshop helped me reveal the underlying state of the original image. (Plate 1 and Plate 2)

I believe sometimes, as with dreams, that associations may be difficult to come to. Sometimes a photograph may show something that may not be commented on. I say may not rather than can not, because I am suggesting that perhaps there is something in the image that may not be approached directly. The lack of associations may not be due to concreteness of thinking or to a conflation of the symbol and the symbolized, may not be due to a return of the repressed for which we have yet to build a context, may not be due to resistance. Rather, the absence of associations may be a response from one part of the self to another part of the self; revealed yet private. Winnicott referred to this dimension of the self as the “incommunicado core”. (Winnicott, 1988, 187) This part of the self is expressed and seen but is not to be approached; neither spoken to nor of. Winnicott said that there is a joy in being hidden but that it is a disaster not to be found. (Winnicott, 1988, 186) A photograph then may find what may not be said.

Winnicott further said that this “incommunicado core” belongs to being alive. (Winnicott, 1988, 192) Perhaps we could think of this core self as a gesture in the making, the first gesture of spontaneity discovered over and over again. That is a moment of creativity. It would seem to me in keeping to Winnicott’s faith in paradox if I suggested that the first gesture of spontaneity could be rediscovered freshly with each new attempt because

that is what creativity is: a fresh gesture, a refusal to remain with what is given and an excitement with the possibilities of the world.

A photograph then can be the outcome of what Thomas Ogden describes as unconscious “understanding work”. (Ogden, 1997, fn 1 188) This is an understanding that gains shape and form through the photograph, but it may never be worded or made conscious. As Ogden points out, if there were no unconscious “understanding work” standing in relation to the unconscious “dream- work”, we would have to believe that only those dreams that we remember have value. (Ogden, 1997, fn 1 188) I have had the photograph of the waterside for over twenty years, and although I know that it expresses something deeply understood, I have never been able nor felt that I needed to put that sense into words. My conversation with that first image occurred through the creation of the second while I was playing in Photoshop.

In this way we can begin to approach a conversation with the “Other” who has managed the setting of the photograph in order to invite an interplay between this “Other” and the self. We can begin to see how a person reveals their relationship to themselves, how their photographs handle them as an object and how the person relates to themselves as an object for their own consideration.

Photography then is a vital enterprise, an enlivening of a conversation between our subjective self and our self as we are handled, cast and revealed through our “Other’s” aesthetic and idiom. There is a staggering potential in a photograph if we can

remember that it is our relationship to ourselves and the world that we are endeavoring to capture and that the image is not static if we can reanimate it with how we were there when we took it, and where we are here when we look at it again. Where I as object was held within the “Other’s” creation of the photographic experience, I as subject contain that “Other” in what I say about that experience when I return to it.

We live in a culture where we are constantly assailed by information and visual stimuli. Patricia Hampl argues that the “inability to limit the flow of reality into the mind is one of the definitions of madness”. (Hampl, 2006, 108) Bion would argue that the dream exists in part to maintain the barrier between the unconscious and the conscious mind. (Bion, 1994, 17, 27) Donna Bassin, in recasting Walter Benjamin, wrote: “It takes practice to lose one’s way in a city; to allow oneself the freedom of le flanneur, who could … aimlessly stroll … browsing and considering equally the trash and commodities of cultural products. Walter Benjamin was concerned with understanding how the self comes to recognize its own experience of subjectivity by reading the objects of its culture. To stroll and browse is to maximize our encounters with these potentially evocative objects”. (Bassin, 2002, 299-300; Bassin, 1999, 5-20) This is an interesting echo of Freud who in 1912 wrote that “the most successful cases are those in which one proceeds, as it were, aimlessly, and allows oneself to be overtaken by any surprises, always presenting … an open mind, free from any expectations”. (Freud, 1912, 114)

It is necessary to suspend a certain kind of intention to occupy this attitude of receptivity and it is also necessary to hold a certain attitude and orientation to the experience. What impressions the mind and body receives from without must be met from within by a state of unfocused awareness. We know this state as therapists and as practiced clients.

We encounter our own subjectivity as we come up against the external world and we approach that world through the structuring medium of our own unique idiom. We are wanderers, interested in the world and our self within it. A sustained practice of attention as we begin to learn through attention to our dreams will begin to inform the attention we are capable of bringing to bear on other forms of "thinking" – painting, writing and photography. We have many forms of awareness, not all of them conscious. We are sensorially and bodily rooted in our experiences. The vitality of our affective states informs all of our experience and is accessible through multiple routes. Our dream life shows us the staging of our internal experience by an "Other" in us that can take our conscious ego as its subject and provide visual experiences and settings that reflect a form of thinking outside of consciousness and secondary process cognition. Thinking takes on an entirely different connotation. A photograph becomes an unusual thought.

Reference Plates

Plate 1

Plate 2

Plate 3

Plate 4

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