Clio's Psyche

Understanding the "Why" of Culture, Current Events, History, and Society

Volume 15 Number 2 **September 2008**

The Psychology of 2008 Presidential Candidates — Part II

Oneiric Experience and Rhetoric in Obama's *Dreams from My Father*

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Introduction

The title of Barack Obama's 1995 memoir not only introduces the story's main character—his deceased father—but also signals his intention to use an emotionally evocative language of dreams in describing his relationship with that character. More than just a literary device (though it serves that purpose well), the phenomenology of dreaming provides Obama with a powerful touchstone for his probing reflections on the nature of identity,

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A Psychoanalyst's Ambivalence toward McCain and Obama

Burton Norman Seitler
Private Practice of Psychoanalysis

The Anxiety of Having to Make a Choice

The human condition is often characterized by ambivalence, with it feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. At times, the feelings of anxiety are so pervasive and so disturbing for some people that they cannot make choices, preferring instead, to be told what to do, a thesis eloquently put forth by Erich Fromm in his book, *Escape from Freedom* (1941). While at the moment I steadfastly refuse to be compelled to choose one specific candidate

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Montague Ullman (1916–2008): Dream Research Pioneer

Judith Gardiner and Paul Elovitz
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Montague Ullman, MD died from a stroke on June 7, 2008 with loved ones by his side. He was emeritus professor at Einstein College and a highly collaborative pioneer in dream work who authored over eighty professional papers and several books, including *Behavioral Changes in Patients Following Strokes* (1962). He co-authored *Working with Dreams* (1979) and *Dream Telepathy* (1973, 2nd Ed. 2003), and co-edited *The Variety of Dream Experience* (1987, 2nd Ed. 1999) and *Handbook of States of Consciousness* (1986). His books have been translated into a variety of lang-

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John F. Kennedy: Illness, War and Mortality

Kenneth Fuchsman
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As the comic character, the 2,000 year-old man, Mel Brooks was asked how he stays so young. "I fall to my knees and pray fiercely," he replied, "….my heart should not attack me." From early in his life, John Kennedy was overly familiar with his body attacking him. His experiences of sudden, serious illnesses from early childhood on and later of combat led him to be aware of life's fragility, he responded to his physical prob-

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nected to conscience. The "it was time," relates to the need for him to come home to Africa (379), as his father had wanted, connecting with his father and grandfather, accepting their fears, conflicts, and confusions, and forgiving them when he wept at their graves (429-30).

Conclusion

Barack Obama, whose wife worries that he is "something of a dreamer" (439), would have Americans dream of hope and change involving racial and political reconciliation to build a better country and world. He has lived a life of hope and change: change from Barry to Barack, from being raised "white" by whites to identifying as black, from community organizer to lawyer/politician/ legislator/presidential candidate. His geographic change took him from Honolulu to Jakarta to Honolulu to Los Angeles to New York City to Chicago to Boston to Europe to Nairobi to Home Squared and finally Chicago again. His psychological change took him from the "personal, interior journey" of his autobiography, *Dreams from My Father*, to the political policies and rhetoric of his campaign book, *The Audacity of Hope*.

His "change we can believe in" campaign slogan focuses on the people participating in the electoral process, on his being a beneficent leader who thinks of the well-being of others, and seeks to bring unity and cooperation across party and racial lines, much as he sought to bridge the worlds between his white and black families. He also presents himself as a man of sounder judgment than his opponents whom he talks of reconciling with much as he forgave his abandoning, self-centering father in the first dream.

Senator Obama's dreams, and the associations related to them from *Dreams from My Father,* cast some light not just on his unconscious, but also on the unique quality of his candidacy. His run for the presidency has prompted enormous enthusiasm and considerable, mostly unspoken, apprehension. This is partly because in an important sense he is both black and white, Christian with hints of a Muslim background, and American yet also exotic. His violation of traditional boundaries brings great hope to many who think he will bring us something new as well as together, while prompting terrifying confusion and paranoid fears in others.

The Democrat's first dream is about personal reconciliation and his second focuses on it being time, interpreted as "time" for understanding and forgiveness of his father and scary grandfather. Both involve travel by an individual whose life journey of self-discovery has taken him around the world. The two dreams, even in the unlikely case they are only literary devices, provide insight into the conflicts, mindset, and personality of the man whose search for his absent African father has led him to have conversations in his mind with him even into Obama's thirties (438). Barack Obama would like his current journey to end in the White House as our collective patriarch working to lead us to achieve the American dream.

Paul H. Elovitz, PhD, *editor of* Clio's Psyche*, has published on the dreams of historical personages such as Humphry Davy, Mary Wollstonecraft and her daughter Mary Shelly, and Robert Lewis Stevenson, as well as historical dream methodology. He studied dreams in psychoanalytic training and later with Montague Ullman (1916-2008, a pioneer in the field), ran dream workshops for years, devised a method of probing the dreams of historical and public personages, wrote various articles and chapters of books on dreams, and edited the dreams of others as a journal editor. Prior to working on Obama's dreams, he did an intense biographical and psychological portrait of the Illinois Senator, published in the fall 2008 issue of the Journal of Psychohistory. Professor Elovitz may be contacted at pelovitz@aol.com.* ❑

Montague Ullman

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uages, with his last volume, *Appreciating Dreams—A Group Approach* (1996), translated into Chinese in 2007. A recent release is Ingrid Blidberg's Swedish film, *Catch the Dream*, featuring Ullman and his dream process.

A fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Dr. Ullman was a charter fellow of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis, a life fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, and past president of the Society of Medical Psychoanalysts and the American Society for Psychical Research. He also served as president of the Parapsychological Association and

the Gardner Murphy Research Institute. In 2006, Montague Ullman was the recipient of an honorary Lifetime Achievement Award (and membership) by the International Association for the Study of Dreams, in recognition of his leadership in the dream community. He was cited, among other accomplishments, for his role as "father of the group dream work movement that has taken hold all around the world" and through his serious scientific approach, increased the credibility of the study of precognitive and telepathic dreams.

In the field of psychohistory, Ullman supported the Psychohistory Forum from its inception in 1983—his name graces our letterhead. Besides occasionally writing on dreams for this journal, in a series of workshops and individual consultation, he helped to develop the Historical Dreamwork Method, always insisting upon rigorous methodological standards.

As a result of being invited to write an extensive autobiographical essay, in his early seventies Monte (everyone called him Monte) provided a most insightful description of his family background, education, emotions, accomplishments and life in general, which we quote liberally below (See Arthur S. Berger, "Autobiographical Notes – Montague Ullman," *Lives and Letters in American Parapsychology: A Biographical History, 1850-1987*, 1988). It has enabled us to write more about his adolescence and motivation than is usually the case in memorial.

Montague Ullman was born in New York City on September 9, 1916 as the elder of two sons and first of three children to the daughter of Polish immigrants and an immigrant from Hungary who had come to America as a teenager. His father William was "generous to a fault," "a superb salesman" who "smoked heavily, drank, overate" and gambled. He built the family business manufacturing men's hats and overcoats, prior to his early death from a stroke on his forty-fourth birthday. The family moved from the Lower East Side to the Bronx to middle class respectability on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Monte's conventional mother, Nettie Eisler Ullman, "was a superb cook and baker but given to hysterical anxiety at the slightest provocation." She loved "babies and small children but didn't do so well when the child's struggles to individuate itself began." She never fully recovered from the sudden death of her husband.

The Ullman's household was not intellectual, but the parents did aspire for their children to get a good education and advance themselves. Monte reported, "as far as I could remember, I never saw my mother or father ever read a book." However, his "father's best friend" often came for Sabbath (Friday night) dinner and "did read and became the first inspirational figure" of Monte's life. He was the family doctor who was "a very comforting presence when we were ill…[who] would overcome our apprehension with the songs he made up as he examined us and the way he made us laugh." This association of laughter with healing is perhaps an ingredient in Monte's subsequent career as a healer, who had a twinkle in his eye, as he used dreams as a curative instrument. He was drawn to medicine by "family pressures as well as my own aspirations." He came to feel "at odds" with his parents, growing up "rejecting their world of bourgeois, religious, commercial values." His distance from his parents, including their staunch Republicanism, was painful but "also made it possible for me to follow my own path." His own path would lead him to being drawn to communism and, far more importantly, paranormal research.

After attending a three-year high school in New York, just before his fifteenth birthday, he enrolled in City College of New York. He reports being "bright enough to handle the work but inside I felt like the immature child I was. I wanted very much to get into medical school and to get the grades necessary for admission" but the competition was "severe." To his deep mortification, his father, who "so wanted me to become a doctor that, despite some resistance and shame on my part, he was not above using influence to ease my admission into medical school at New York University at the end of my third year at college." Though he found "the first two years at medical school" to be "difficult" there was "a deep satisfaction that came from the fascination of the subject matter and the prestige of being a medical student."

In college, extracurricular exposure to psychic phenomena oriented him to the mysteries of the unconscious realm of existence, including dream life. Just turned sixteen, he knew nothing

about psychical research and was studying hard to prepare for medical school, when a science classmate friend confided in him about his personal encounter with psychic phenomena in a series of Saturday night séances. This experience evolved into a very serious project and inspired Monte to be a psychic researcher. Sixty years later, he brought together five of the group that had participated in the séances and published an account of it in 2001 in the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research.*

In January 1939, Monte began four years of hospital training: two as an intern, one as a neurology resident, and one as a psychiatric resident at the New York State Psychiatric Institute. His background in neurology oriented him to the neurophysiology of dreaming; his practice in psychoanalysis oriented him to the metaphorical structure and healing potential of the dream, and later work in community psychiatry impressed upon him the importance of identifying and sharing the skills necessary to make dreams generally accessible.

In 1942, preparing for his psychoanalytic career, he went into personal analysis, which was interrupted when he was drafted into the Army where he served as a captain. Upon his discharge in December 1945, he opened an office for the practice of neurology and psychiatry, moving into psychoanalysis in 1946 as he completed training, and began teaching, at the New York Medical College. The 1950s solidified his three major interests: exciting new approaches to psychoanalytic thinking and practice, a growing interest in dreams, and bringing the paranormal into the mainstream of his life. Ullman terminated his private practice and left the New York Medical College in 1961 to develop a department of psychiatry at Maimonides Hospital (later Maimonides Medical Center) in Brooklyn.

In 1962 Monte Ullman established the Dream Laboratory at Maimonides with a grant obtained by Gardner Murphy that enabled the exploration of dreams and telepathy. In 1967 he also developed, and later operated, a community mental health center noteworthy for launching many innovative com-munity programs to provide preventive psychiatry. Monte's lifelong commitment to helping ordinary people, which had led him to left wing causes and to visit the Soviet health care system in 1938, informed his decisions to establish a community mental health program focused on prevention, and to develop a method of bringing the healing power of dreamwork to ordinary people.

The work of Monte and his collaborators constituted the primary source of experimental evidence that the content of dreams may be related to tele-pathy. One of the great parapsychological advances of the late twentieth century came through his use of physiological methodology for monitoring dreams. Using the EEG to record brain waves and the Rapid-Eye-Movement technique to record eye movements permitted him to discern when sleeping subjects were dreaming and for how long, prior to waking them for their dream reports.

In 1974, Monte awakened to the work of the late physicist David Bohm and developed the concept of a connection between the mystery of dreaming consciousness and Bohm's approach to still unsettled issues in quantum theory. He resigned from Maimonides to pursue his interest in dreams elsewhere. In Sweden from 1974 to 1976, he developed a group dream work process, resulting in the formation of a national society in 1990. The Dream Group Forum, followed in 2003 with the Dream Group Forum in Finland. Both groups were committed to extending dream work into the community, an undertaking based on that experiential group method Monte initiated. It proved suitable not only as a training instrument for professional therapists, but also for making dream work accessible to the interested layman.

Returning to the United States, Ullman joined the Albert Einstein College of Medicine as clinical professor of psychiatry, and the Westchester Center for the Study of Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy to teach therapists in training about his group method. He became more and more convinced that serious and effective dream work could extend beyond the consulting room into the community. Monte became known for devotion in teaching his approach to both therapists and laity internationally.

Toward the end of his life, Monte reflected upon telepathy as a mental field derived from the universal unconscious. Thus, he had meshed his work in telepathic dreaming with the connectedness of the dream group process and Bohm's theory of connectivity. He was a director of the Lif-

wynn Foundation believing that fragmentation of our unity as a species has evolved because we fail to recognize our interconnectedness. Ullman elaborated, "Our dreams are concerned with the nature of our connections with others. The history of the human race, while awake, is a history of fragmentation, of separating people and communities of people ... nationally, religiously, politically" but while asleep "our dreams are connected with the basic truth that we are all members of a single species."

Monte was a happy, charming, gentle soul who never forgot to be human. His enormous compassion and infectious humor effected people in every walk of life. Many described him as a profoundly modest man and a humanitarian who made a significant human and scientific contribution to the world. His impact on psychiatry, psychology and parapsychology is a substantial legacy reflecting his wisdom, his insight and his critical acumen.

Dr. Ullman was husband of the late Janet (Simon), father of Susan Ullman, William Ullman and Lucy Bain; grandfather of four, great-grandfather of one, brother of Bob Ullman and the late Jean Blake who died the day before he did, and companion of Judy Gardiner.

Judy B. Gardiner *has been researching and writing on the symbolism of her dreams since she retired from a twenty-year corporate career. She has been a panelist at the Association for the Study of Dreams and has lectured on her dream message—the topic of Lavender: An Entwined Adventure in Science and Spirit, her yet to be published novel. In collaboration with Montague Ullman, whose last five years she brightened, her work focuses on how dreams reveal both our internal and external environments. Ms. Gardiner also helped to contact some of those memorializing Monte. She may be contacted at Jbgardiner@aol.com.* ***Paul Elovitz, PhD,*** *may be contacted at pelovitz@aol.com.*

Save **November 1** (Saturday)
for the Psychohistory Forum's session, **"The Psychobiographical and Psychological Aspects of Election 2008,"** with presentations by **Herbert Barry** (University of Pittsburgh), **Paul Elovitz** (Ramapo College), and others

A Brilliant and Playful Listener to the Unconscious

Paul H. Elovitz
Clio's Psyche

His extraordinary abilities as a listener were key to Monte Ullman's specialness as a human being. He listened to the conscious and unconscious with rapt attention and taught others to do the same in a playful manner. The safety and playfulness of his dreamers, built into the experiential dream method, was central to its success. Adults must trust and feel secure to reveal their unconscious before others; his method guaranteed that the dreamer was in charge and could stop the process at any time. It also enticed dream group members to literally "make the dream their own"—"playing with it"—as they projected onto it and teased out its nuances. This offered new possibilities to the dreamer, to be accepted or rejected. The dream dialogue also left the dreamer totally in control of the process.

Members of dream groups knew Montague Ullman was something special. After all, here was a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst welcoming people into his home, using his first name, and working in the dream vineyards (in my personal experience illegal, illiterate grape pickers probably make more money for their labor than do most dream workers!). He did not seek to squeeze the reality of those he sought to help into some theoretic Procrustean bed, as was not uncommon in his profession. As a "recovered psychiatrist," rather than making a handsome income prescribing legal drugs to patients, he put aside the authority and prestige of psychiatry to help people come into close contact with their unconscious desires because of his belief in the healing power of dreams—when listened to rather than suppressed and repressed. He did not need the big income, office, and title to heal people. In fact, he thought these were obstacles to helping people know themselves, since they expected knowledge to come exclusively from "the doctor" rather than themselves. Monte believed the Socratic dictum "know thyself" was the key to healing.

Psychoanalytic training and experience were invaluable assets in Ullman's work with