

A Path With Heart

Stephen Witty, prod., *Where We Are: Jungian Analysts in the 21st Century*
Colorado Springs: InnerVision FilmWorks,
2006, DVD, 57 minutes.

REVIEWED BY BARBARA FRIEDMAN

When I threw the I Ching a few years ago, looking for advice about a prospective move to Denver, the oracle advised me that the move would offer the opportunity to join a supportive, powerful, and deeply spiritual community.

The oracle was describing the Denver analytic community, which is the focus of Dr. Stephen Witty's film, *Where We Are: Jungian Analysts in the 21st Century*.

This 57-minute piece is an important documentary about a group of remarkable people and the journey each of them took to become a Jungian analyst. The film establishes that theirs was a path of individuation where becoming an analyst was not the goal in itself—the goal was the desire to find meaning. It was the call of the Self that drew each of these people into analytic training and that continues to motivate their life choices and their work with their clients.

The movie spins out an oral history (National Public Radio's *StoryCorps* project comes to mind) as the Denver analysts describe the experiences that drew them to the work of Carl Jung and what becoming an analyst meant to each of them. The authenticity of their commitment to conscious differentiation and growth becomes apparent as they wrestle with Dr. Witty's penetrating questions about how Jung's theory fits their work, what their areas of exploration and risk-taking are,



and how their work with their clients has changed over the years.

In a world increasingly dominated by spin, greed, and power it is good to find people who are following a path with heart. These analysts honor our Hermetic heritage. They are boundary-crossers heralding messages from the other side. They express their conviction that it is important to listen to dreams, images, synchronicities, and other voices that bring in the new and help to destabilize the old. Decades of working with the unconscious have humbled these people. They express their respect for the guidance of *the other* in the process of self-actualization, and how they have gradually relinquished any sense of superiority, arrogance, or the notion that one can control or rush the process along. The movie's message provides a welcome balance to the collective defensive pull toward concretism, over-intellectualization, and splitting. Their focus on the meaning- and soul-making capability of the symbolic and internal world is as critical, if not more critical, today than it was in Jung's lifetime.

The film's dialogue reveals an admirable belief in and dedication to the anxiety-producing tension of pluralism. The analysts Dr. Witty interviewed resist falling into the seductive security of fundamentalism, a trap that much of our population, liberals and conservatives alike, seem unaware of and unable to resist. These analysts hold this tension even among the divisions within the Jungian community. They illuminate the absurdity of defining oneself as a classical Jungian, a developmentalist or an archetypalist, or of limiting oneself to a focus on a rational theory or mysticism, on regressive work, transference, or the transcendent function — as though any of these approaches could be separated from the rest. The message of

the film is refreshingly unifying, capturing something our community will do well to remember today — how the unifying voice of the Self calls us to question the belief systems we hold most dear.

The spirit of the Denver group is contagious. Colleagues who attended the film's premiere at the spring inter-regional meeting in Boulder, Colorado, told me that there wasn't a dry eye in the house. The folks I spoke with said that the spirit of the people shown in the film stirred them and reminded them of why they had become analysts. When I watched this film, I found that it reawakened my adventurous frontier spirit, a spirit like Jung's in which one is not only willing but compelled to pioneer across the boundaries — even those imposed by Jungian theory itself. I came away with renewed courage and energy to hazard the exploration of new territory, to be a trailblazer.

The DVD of the film includes some additional special selections: an interview with Dr. Witty, three analysts sharing their dreams, a brief discussion about work in the psychoid realm by Jeff Raff, and an interview with Gary Toub about his sand tray work. Through these additional pieces the analysts generously let us into a private space where we catch a glimpse of their personal relationships with the goal-directed force of the Self. The creativity produced by this relationship is individual and imbued with personal meaning and, at the same time, results in a vibrant diversity that enlivens the entire community. Dr. Witty told me the film was sparked by an intuition, and he has learned over the years to respect and amplify his intuitions. Making the film was an attempt to understand the power of the Jungian experience. He said the movie is "a kind of valentine to Denver — giving something back and expressing my

love for the people and the experience they helped me to have.”

I decided not to move to Denver, and I have mourned not being a part of this group — a regret you will understand when you see the movie. But we all are part of this group. We have all made a pledge to individuate, to be risk-takers — to make a bold attempt. We courageously investigate the unknown realms of the unconscious, cull the dark aspects of our shadow, and risk change. Soul making is the mission of the entire community of Jungian analysts, scholars, and analysands of which we are all so fortunate to be a part. As I imagine Taoist scholar Gary Toub, the co-coordinator of training for the C. G. Jung Institute of Colorado might say, we are all connected, and thus we share in their path. Speaking of the Denver group, Dr. Witty said, “Carl Jung’s writings and his spirit had reached deep inside us and

changed our lives.... We also had in common that we are among those carrying forward Jung’s ideas into the new century.” His words are true of all of us in the universal community of Jungians.

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