

Into The Shadows: In Conversation with Kevin Lu

KEYWORDS

film, Jung, shadow, people, element, nosferatu, unconscious, realise, Jungian, aspect, happening, scene, therapy, life, absolutely, uncomfortable, artist, suppose, interaction, darker

SPEAKERS

Kevin Lu, Niki Harman

Niki Harman 00:02

Welcome, everyone. My name is Niki Harman and I'm the film programming here at Nottingham Contemporary. I'm joined by Professor Kevin Lu from the University of Essex, who is the head of department of psychosocial and psychoanalytic studies. And do you wanna say a little bit about your focus?

Kevin Lu 00:25

Yeah. Hi, Niki. Hi, everyone. Thanks for the invite. Really pleased to be here. Yeah, so in terms of my research interests, my main area of expertise is analytical psychology. So the psychology of Carl Gustav Jung, which also includes post-Jungian theory, so extensions of Jungian theory in the context of more contemporary debates and disciplinary boundaries. In terms of my own work, I've done quite a bit with the application of Jungian ideas to the discipline of history. I've written critiques on some post-Jungian theories including, the theory of cultural complexes, really interested in film, popular culture. So I have a few papers on that, really interested in graphic novels, and also issues of race and racial hybridity.

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Niki Harman 01:15

Okay, great, that sounds awesome. And cultural complexes, I don't think I've come across that. So it'd be great if you kind of if you can let us know a little bit about that as we go on. I'm, I don't have a background in psychology, I just have like a really avid interest in psychoanalysis. So to start off, this season of the screen at contemporary is inspired by our current exhibition Hollow Earth, which is art, caves and the subterranean imaginary. And we've taken kind of that theme, and it's called the programme is called Into the Shadows. And we've borrowed from the idea of Carl Jung of the personal shadows, the kind of what looms dark or what remains repressed within us individually or collectively, and are exploring that in 100 years of film. So starting from Jordan Peele's Us through to FW Murnau's Nosferatu. So the quote that I had in my mind when I was programming this was "that which remains unknown will appear to us as fate". And that that was the kind of Jung quote that I had, that I was kind of drawing from every time I chose a film. Could you tell us a little bit about Carl Jung, give him give us some context of him, but also what he meant by the shadow?

Kevin Lu 02:49

Sure, absolutely. I think you've provided a really great definition for for us to begin this exploration of the shadow. Carl Gustaf Jung, Swiss psychiatrist and also psychoanalyst, probably best known as a one time disciple of Sigmund Freud, but someone who actually carved out his own path, broke from the psychoanalytic movement and created I guess, his own brand of his approach to the talking therapies, which we know as analytical psychology. Although at one point, there was a real desire to name his psychology complex psychology. So it shows how important the idea of the complex and how central it is actually, to the development of his ideas. He's really known for bringing a lot of psychological ideas into the mainstream. So as you mentioned, we have ideas like the shadow, the collective unconscious, the archetypes, synchronicity, all this stems from Jung. But

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even if you look to introversion and extroversion, well, that's actually Carl Jung, when he was thinking and devising Psychological Types, which was really his response to try to understand why different psychoanalysts like himself, Freud and Alfred Adler could look at the same case, but approach in such diverse ways. And our listeners and your audience will know that this the Jung's theory of Psychological Types becomes the springboard or the foundation for the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. Yeah. And Jung was also the one who stated that there was an extension to the word association test, which then actually becomes the lie detector test. So he said there's, you know, there's a further application to this particular idea, but by that time he was so entrenched in mythology, so entrenched in his own therapeutic work that he moved away from what many might consider his focus on let's say, the psychology of consciousness and then really diving into psychology of the unconscious. So really Jung is a pioneer. A lot of his ideas find expression in the mainstream today, but also a lot of his ways of working and practicing therapeutically. So the fact that most therapists, not all, but most therapists sit across from their clients or their analysand, and well, that's a Jungian innovation, because Jung wanted people to meet in the middle ground as equals. And to realise and to trust that both individuals in this interaction are transformed together in this space. There's a sense of, of that equality and the co creation of knowledge within that space.

Niki Harman 04:36

Oh really? Ok! So yeah, because I suppose the Freudian model that I suppose Lacan kind of continued, is that you're not looking at your analyst, right? That you're looking away? And then didn't Jung call, you just reminded, I completely forgot about this, but didn't Jung call it an alchemic bath, or like there's an alchemical process between analyst and analysand?

Kevin Lu 06:05

Yeah

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Niki Harman 06:07

Because I really feel that there's a process of audience, like the film and audience, I feel like there's an alchemical process that happens when we watch a film and I think that's why Jung and, and his work with kind of archetypes as well is like such a is such a, such, like, how do I put this? It's so great to look at films through kind of his gaze, and through his kind of theories, because they're so well, they just well all psychoanalysis, but especially Jungian and cinema and cinema theory has, you know, a really good kind of bedfellows. And a lot of film theory is influenced by and dictated by psychoanalysis and psychodynamic theory.

Kevin Lu 07:03

No, no, absolutely. I mean, I completely agree. And my colleague, Professor Luke Hockley, you know, has a lot of ideas about the interaction between the audience and that which is viewed in the third space of transformation, if you will, taking from ideas of what happens in that particular process. But yeah, no, I absolutely agree. And there are so many if you will ways that we can look at that interaction, and why we're so moved by films from psychodynamic and psychoanalytic points of view. So if you think about the transaction that we're entering, right, in the good old days, when we still buy tickets, and I'm hoping people are buying tickets to the viewings that you're holding in person, there is an agreement that for these two hours for these 90 minutes, however long it is that we are going to suspend judgement, we're going to suspend reality. And we're going into this setting, allowing ourselves and opening ourselves to the possibility of being transformed through that interaction with what is actually on the screen. There's a boundary space, right? The theatre or the cinema itself, it's time limited. And then there is a return to reality. So in that ways, it shares many similarities with therapy itself, not to say that it's therapy, but there are therapeutic resonances and therapeutic means of understanding that interaction and that connection.

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Niki Harman 08:34

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, there definitely is. And that is like, it also holds it in reverence, too. So all of it could be because we, at the screen we have, it's all rep cinema. So it's all films that have been out at the very least a couple of years. So people could see it at home, all the films that we share, they could see at home. But having it on the screen and having it within a kind of darkened room with other people, it holds film in reverence. And I suppose there's a reverence with the analyst and analysand and that kind of interaction, right? Because it's not just a chat with a mate. It's like a sacred of you know, I don't think I'm being dramatic when I say both of which is somewhat like sacred space, as you said, transformation. So if I could pull it back into the shadow, specifically, like what's your kind of explanation of Jung's theory of the shadow?

Kevin Lu 09:42

Sure. So the way I teach or try to convey what Jung meant by the shadow is just to ask everyone, first and foremost, what do you hate in other people? So if we were in a room together, and you know, it was a more classroom setting, sorry, I can't break free from that. The bit about a person which we can touch on as well. And we just start listing well, what do we actually hate in other people, we hate people who are deceptive, duplicitous people who are late? Whatever it is, we start writing that down. And once we have that list, what I ask students to consider is to actually take that back, to take that projection back. Because ultimately for Jung, what we actually dislike in other people may be elements within ourselves that we dislike. So that duplicitousness, that you know, deceptiveness, it's not out there in the world, we actually have to take it back, and maybe consider, well I'm actually also capable of these ways of being these ways of acting that I find deplorable in other people. So you could say that the shadow, for the most part denotes the darker side of the personality. So things that we don't want to come to light, things that we don't acknowledge within ourselves. But equally, I think it's

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important to emphasise that for Jung, shadow can also have perhaps a more neutral and positive aspect as well, okay. Just to note that anything that has yet come to consciousness. So if we, if we think about it another way, and I think there's a great example, actually, at the end of Blue Velvet, if we see the growth of an individual at a particular moment in time, and I see a lot of students at a very crucial moment in terms of entering university. Now, at that moment, at least according to Jung, what they have the potential to become, it's already in them. It's a seed, if you will, that's growing, just waiting to come forth. But that only lies in potential. And it's really up to that person to kind of activate that potential to hear the call to nurture it, etcetera. But at that moment, what they are capable of becoming, is actually unconscious, it's potentially unknown. And therefore you could say it's in shadow. So it's not necessarily always denoting the negative side of the personality, it's that which is yet to make its way if you will, into consciousness.

Niki Harman 12:12

Did he say something about we're all born with a diamond, and we forget what it is. And so we have to kind of, our whole life's work is to figure out what it is, what our calling is?

Kevin Lu 12:25

Yeah, absolutely. And in terms of Jung's ideas on the development of the personality, which is encapsulated in this idea of individuation. And the archetypal self is this kind of penultimate image, if you will, of that which, you know, we could become and in that image of the self are both kind of the positive and negative aspects. So for Jung, the ultimate goal is wholeness, not perfection, it means making peace with your shadow and learning to live with the shadow in relationship with it. But for Jung, development is both linear and cyclical. So it's linear in the sense that there's something this ideal that's actually driving the path of individuation. So driving the tea loss, the movement, the trajectory forward, if you will. But it's cyclical in the sense that we meet these archetypal

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imperatives, these images that we project onto other people, aspects of ourselves, we constantly meet them throughout our life. But it's not the case that let's say you meet the shadow, and then well, I've dealt with that now. Time to move on.

Niki Harman 13:32
I'm healed.

Kevin Lu 13:33
Yeah, it's constant. So we meet the shadow in one guise, and then we rotate and we meet the shadow again, in a different guise. But the I think that the element to emphasise is that every time we meet the shadow, again, we meet it from a higher position, we meet it from a higher level of consciousness, which allows us to integrate the different aspects of the shadow as we move throughout the lifecycle.

Niki Harman 14:00
I haven't heard it said like that before. That's really interesting. You mentioned the end of Blue Velvet, or there's an art so I know you said at the beginning, the beginning of the zoom that might lead you down a rabbit hole. So let's go down it and what scene, which part did you mean?

Kevin Lu 14:20
The Robin. The Robin.

Niki Harman 14:23
I had that written down as well. Yeah, go ahead. Like what?

Kevin Lu 14:26
So I mean, it's a really interesting film. And like I said to you, I couldn't help but make comparisons to Mulholland Drive, even to a certain extent to Twin Peaks, because there's there's a lot of similarities, a lot of thematic resonance that's kind of, you know, occurring throughout the, you know, these various pieces of Lynch's work. It's a story of two halves. You

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have the daylight world, and you have nighttime, you have wholesome Jeffrey Beaumont, who stands in conflict or in exploration of these two aspects of themselves, that are manifested or represented by what classical Jungians would call these anima figures. So you have Sandy, representing the consciousness, the daylight world. And then you have Dorothy Vallens as this representation of that kind of darker aspect. And I think what's really intriguing and interesting is that everything is set as a mystery. And I think that's really fitting because they're both him and Sandy. Sorry, Jeffrey Beaumont and Sandy are trying to intervene and try to find ways into this darker world, right? Kind of intersect with it to kind of delve further into it. But once he begins to unravel that mystery of himself, and I think this is really about a mystery of who he is. He begins to see that well, those aspects lurking in the unconscious, those aspects of his personality that he hasn't completely dealt with, they're not peaceful figures. They're not benevolent figures. So he meets Frank, he meets gangsters he meets aggression, unbridled sexuality, aggression. And what I think he's beginning to realise throughout the film, is that there's a bit of Beaumont in Frank, and a bit of Frank in Beaumont.

Niki Harman 16:20

Yeah, sure. And doesn't he say, Sorry, I interrupted you.

Kevin Lu 16:25

Oh, no, please go ahead. Yeah.

Niki Harman 16:27

There's at some point, he says, I'm seeing something that was always hidden. And that's exactly it, right? Like he's seeing his shadow?

Kevin Lu 16:35

Sure, absolutely. I mean, when, when he's making love to Dorothy, and actually gives into that kind of violent aggression, you know, the very uncomfortable scene with

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Frank as well, you're beginning to see those fantasies merging into one. So what he's viewing through the closet is actually an aspect of himself.

Niki Harman 17:00

Yeah, and there's a cinematic element to that too, isn't it? It's like, and Frank's character is so, and Dorothy's actually, they're so hypothetical almost hyper, you know, hyper, like, characters from a fairytale. There is like almost imagined characters for these two kind of suburban kind of young people to I suppose individuate. But I do really love. I really love it. And Lynch is so good at this as well, that kind of light and dark, as you say, the kind of suburban apple pie with a kind of dark, seedy underbelly, how he kind of positions that as two sides of the same coin. And I think anyone that kind of really interrogates that kind of Americana in that way does that really well.

Kevin Lu 17:50

Yeah. And what I found interesting as well, along those lines is that initially, Jeffrey is kind of censoring everything to Sandy. So he's not telling the full story of the full picture of his investigations and actions during, you know, the nighttime world and what I love as well, you know, he's wearing a suit actually, or what was considered, quote, unquote, fancy dress, as as you know, he's, he's delving into this nighttime world. Now, at least psychologically, there's a few things happening. Everything's happening in dream. And this is where I couldn't help but make comparisons to Mulholland Drive. So the fact that Ben is asked by Frank to lip sync In Dreams, by I think it was Roy Orbison. It almost kind of sets the scene that everything is happening in the dream world, the interaction with that shadow element. Now, psychologically, are we allowed to give spoilers?

Niki Harman 18:55

I mean, I guess I think most people coming have been we can say at the beginning maybe that there are spoilers. I think a lot

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of people who have already seen it, so yeah, go on.

Kevin Lu 19:04

So I'll try to frame it in such a way that's perhaps judicious but you know, the interaction, the penultimate scene between Frank and Jeffrey Beaumont. Psychologically, it's more about the relationship that we build with that shadow element rather than ridding ourselves of that element. So, I found it actually really helpful to see that last scene. So you have this kind of gloss of what life looks like, yeah, acceptance of a shadow or beginning to live in relationship with a shadow and to realise that, again, the goal is to reach a more holistic understanding of oneself rather than perfection. So you remember, throughout the film, the robin, I think Sandy said it's representation or symbol of love. And it really kind of almost encapsulates her innocence, her naivete to a certain extent. But right at the end, the robin's actually eating a bug. And it's struggling. And that's the reality of it, that as much as you may want to have this persona or with this gloss, if you will, of the white picket fences, the colourful roses, and flowers and Jeffrey's father's okay, all is forgiven, in terms of Jeffrey's own transgressions, which you know, are revealed, that Dorothy ends up at his house and then they take her over to Sandy's. So all these kind of elements are kind of forgotten. And it's this kind of perfect story at the end, the storybook ending but then you see the robin feeding the insect which almost breaks that vision, if you will.

Niki Harman 21:01

That perfection. Yeah. And she says doesn't she about a dream, and says it's like nothing but pure kind of light and love. And that's what Jung says, right? The kind of the more the darkness is forgotten, the blacker and denser it becomes. And like that darkness is part of him by and it's that is how he can be and how we can all be whole. I think Jung said something about, I'd rather be whole than good or something. Yeah, and like when you mentioned him talking to Sandy and withholding some of the information that we

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know has happened, that again, kind of reminds me, not to keep bringing everything back to an analyst's couch, but that is kind of like that, right? Because when you're trying to figure out the truth of who you are, or people try and figure out what their reality is, no one actually knows what their reality is or what their truth is. And so when they are on the analyst's couch, sometimes they make things up like I think Žižek, the Lacanian, no the, is he Lacanian? I don't know. Yes. He is Lacanian? has like admitted to just making stuff up in analysis. So really interesting. And Jeffrey did he almost didn't seem like he knew that he wasn't he was leaving information out.

Kevin Lu 22:31

Yeah, no, no, it's very interesting. Again, for me that whole film is in dream. So it's almost kind of muddling the boundary of what's reality and what's actually happening in if you will, a dream sequence and I think, you know, Lynch does this. So well. Yeah, if I remember correctly, with Mulholland Drive, I think, you know, for me, the key moment, I think it was called the vision of silencio or the illusion of silencio ushered in this kind of shift between the perfection the search for Hollywood, that Betty's going through in the first half, until you get to the reality of her situation in the second half.

Niki Harman 23:10

Yeah. And Lost Highway as well, I think that's my favourite Lynch film. I still love that film so much. And, you know, and I like David Lynch. I don't love him like I'm not, you know, I don't have the same intense love that a lot of people do. But yeah, he does that really well. And I think like the film theorists in the 1920s, and surrealists, were so excited about film because they said, this is the perfect medium, almost the best medium to articulate our dreams. And yeah, I think filmmakers that can still do that now, you are kind of elevated into a different space. Speaking of filmmakers and dreams. I was thinking about all the filmmakers within the season, and thinking about how you can see their shadow within it without, you

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know. And how, even if the filmmaker says, this is my intention with this, or this is what I meant by this scene, they can only know so much because them making a film is like a dream. You know, and I was reading do you know Roger Ebert who was a really yeah, film critic from Chicago. Yeah, yeah. And he kind of like criticised this and he says something about it contains scenes of raw emotional energy that is easy to understand why some critics have hailed as a masterpiece, a film that is painful and moody and has to be given special consideration. And yet those very scenes of stark sexual despair are the tip off to what's wrong with the movie. So like, I know I definitely felt this and when I read it, I was like, this is exactly how I feel. They're so strong that they deserve to be in the movie that is sincere, honest and true. I don't totally agree with that. But Blue Velvet surrounds them with a story that's marred by sophomoric satire and cheap shots. The director is either denying the strength of the material or trying to diffuse it by pretending it's all part of a campy in joke. And there is this weird and he like, and with Mulholland Drive and Lost Highway, he's matured. But there is something yeah, sophomoric about the way he kind of handles the darker side and that I feel like reveals Lynch's shadow to us in a way, do you know what I mean?

Kevin Lu 25:45

Yeah, no, absolutely. And I think authorial intention or trying to recover the artist's, you know, artist's intention is an important aspect of it. Jung would criticise Freud for this, that Freud's approach to art and to interpreting art is basically psychobiography. So the neuroses, if you will of the artist is then on display in the artwork itself. Whereas Jung was really focusing on well, yes, there's that but then there's the afterlife of the art as well, that the way we interact with it gives it a life of its own. So you know, once the author or the artist creates it, it almost, is not theirs anymore. It belongs to how we interact, you know, how we interpret that, and your interpretation will be very different from mine, and so on, and so forth. So I think authorial intention is definitely one way we

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can access it. So we could be seeing shadow elements of the author, I think it's a really important aspect to delve into. But equally, that social commentary that they're providing can be shown as shadow elements within the culture itself. So that was Parasite, you know, what are we not looking at, in South Korea, this beautiful, magnificent life that the upper class lead? And what do you have, you know, at the bottom of it, just Oh, my goodness, economic inequality, you know, people completely struggling, etcetera, etcetera, housing crises, you get that sense of urgency in other films and series as well, like Squid Game.

Niki Harman 27:26

I haven't seen that yet.

Kevin Lu 27:30

So I think there's something about the authorial intention and what it shows about the individual artist, but also the commentary that they're providing on society, because for Jung, the value of the artists is that he, she, they are able to delve into the unconscious, but because of the particular skill set that they have, whatever they've done to perfect that ego strength, that container, whether it's film, whether it's sculpting, whether it's dance, whether it's music, etc, all those hours of practising your craft, and knowing your craft gives you that strong enough ego to delve into the unconscious, to not be overwhelmed by it, to take that which society doesn't know about, what is it not looking at, what is that shadow element, and to bring it back to the surface, and to put it on display for the rest of society and say, This is what we're actually missing. And I think for Jung, that's the, you know, the burden that's placed on artists, but also their kind of own unique gift. And for him, that's why so many artists aren't respected during their lifetime, because ultimately, what they pull out of the unconscious holds up a mirror to society, and if they're not ready to look at it, or if the way in which the artists is conveying that message isn't in tune with the rest of society, then they'll be looked over, but it's only years later,

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perhaps after the artist has passed away that you begin to realise the potential genius that was there.

Niki Harman 29:03

And does that and this, this actually brings us to Nosferatu really because I guess is this linked to collective unconscious because I suppose collective unconscious was a more Jungian idea than Freud, right, that talks about personal conscious, our personal unconscious and then so and then Jung brought it to our collective unconscious. So is that how they would have the kind of difference of opinion when it comes to art and artists?

Kevin Lu 29:37

Yeah, I mean, with the difference between the personal and collective unconscious I mean, when Freud revised his introductory lectures, he comes very close to postulating something very close to the collective unconscious idea, I think that was in the air, but perhaps because Jung had created that space for himself, there was a reluctance to go there, but I mean, many people would say, perhaps incorrectly and unfairly to Freud, that his notion of the unconscious only went so far and Jung's theory of the personal unconscious, so the unconscious is made up of repressed and suppressed material accumulated throughout one's lifetime. For Jung, he goes a level deeper and say, not only do we have that personal unconscious, but there's almost this shared collective memory, that a deeper level of psyche, we're all actually interconnected. There are aspects, structures, things, historical events, if you will, that happen throughout the entire lifecycle, the history of the human race. And when those events happen, they actually leave an imprint, these could be instincts that evolve, which then become more structured elements. And that is literally a you know, your definition of the contents of the collective unconscious, ie the archetypes of the collective unconscious. And one way to begin to understand what Jung meant by the archetype is just to ask yourself, what makes a human life typically human?

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What are those core elements that irrespective of culture, irrespective of difference, what are those elements that binds us together to make this life human. And for me, one way to begin to understand that is to actually look at the key events throughout the lifecycle, that irrespective of difference in culture that we all celebrate. And those are elements, if you will, of the human experience. Now, when you go through those elements, there could be typical figures that we might meet, experiences, typical experiences that we might have that could give rise to certain reactions on how we relate to that particular situation. So in that sense, for Jung, it's also archetypal in the sense that, yes, it is how we relate to the outer world. But equally, it's how we project what's inner, onto the outer world. So when we're looking at the archetypal, it's yes, it could be denoting the ways we're reacting in particular situations, but also internal conversations, internal developments that we're having, that we saw happen project that we project them onto the outer world, and then those internal conversations get played out in how we interact with other people.

Niki Harman 32:36

Yeah, that kind of that really reminds me of something that Rachel Moore, Dr. Rachel Moore who is a film theorist at Goldsmiths. She talks about the reciprocity of film. And I suppose there's definitely a through line there that it is, they are all kind of coming into our collective unconscious. And I suppose that's how you get from Nosferatu through to Jordan Peele's Us. Like they all kind of imprint on us as a collective. And that's how you kind of get to, you get from point A to point B.

Kevin Lu 33:16

Sure.

Niki Harman 33:17

Does that make sense?

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Kevin Lu 33:18

Yeah, I think what's potentially archetypal about Nosferatu is the image of the monster, the vampire, the werewolf, the zombie. And for me, it's really an indication of how neglected that part of the personality has become. And it's really a reflection of how grotesque the personality can become if we don't allow it the light of consciousness, if we don't try to interact with it, and to enter into that conversation and dialogue with that element ourselves. So whenever we meet these fantastical creatures of the darkness, etc, we're meeting that completely undeveloped aspect of ourselves that needs to be known. And I dare say that the more we interact with these elements, the less dangerous they become. But you can see then how dangerous Nosferatu and all those other monsters become because we haven't given it the light of day.

Niki Harman 34:19

Yeah, they're untethered in Us as well. Yeah, with Nosferatu as well, there's, he mentioned that there's no one can escape his destiny. And it is like the destiny is for the two to become joined again. And obviously, we know that kind of vampire trope of if they go into the light they die. But apparently before that in Dracula, he just gets damaged by the light but it was the first time FW Murnau decided that he should, the monster dies in the light, which I think is a really interesting idea especially given the kind of social context. It was made in 1922 in Germany. So that kind of beginning of the kind of Weimar era of cinema, they're super reflective on the culture and kind of looms heavy as a kind of premonition of what what is to come?

Kevin Lu 35:17

Yeah, absolutely. So again, the film from a psychological point of view that ending again, for me, it's not so much the dissipation and disappearance, but the relationship that now we then have to enter into with that darker element in ourselves. And what I found really interesting about

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Nosferatu. And this has been, you know, stated in so many different ways in so many other studies is that that shadow of sexuality, that shadow of desire, of the passions, the seduction as well. So the two scenes that really come to mind, it, she gets into this trance state, almost and opens the window, She's inviting that element, that element, perhaps that shadow element of repressed sexuality, I think, remember, there were two really, you know, pointing scenes where as this trance state's happening, she clutches her breast. So then you can begin to make those associations with the breast, you know, feeding, pleasure, sexuality, seduction, all encapsulated in the sexual pleasure that can come with a bite. There's something about the blood, the redness, if you will, you're talking about alchemy earlier, that kind of, you know, transformation and initiation into our sexual beings and our sexual bodies.

Niki Harman 36:45

And at that point, as well, you know, what is more threatening than a young woman's sexuality and sexual awareness, you know, that in itself is was kind of threatening. There's something about Nosferatu as well, in contrast to kind of other vampire films, that he's quite sad, that you kind of have empathy for him within that, don't you think?

Kevin Lu 37:14

With Orlok you mean with Count Orlok? Hmm, that's really interesting. Can you say a bit more about that?

Niki Harman 37:21

I think because he seems, because he's so markedly different. And he seems so desperate to taste what he thinks, what he thinks say I should have thought it through. I'm just thinking off the top of my head, what he thinks that they have, you know, it's a kind of wants of the other. And he's so conspicuously the other to everybody else. There's something really sad about that. And I suppose as the kind of decade goes on, you know, in the 1920s, Germany, you know, it's the

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continuation of the haves and the have nots, right. That goes absolute full circle, with a bang in Parasite and Us.

Kevin Lu 38:14

I think yeah, yeah. No, I think I understand more what you're getting at, maybe there's that desire to understand what it means and tastes like to be human. So if you are you know, the undead to a certain extent living in, you know, in these coffins, etcetera, etcetera. You know, the very fact that he wants to buy a home in Bremen, and is situated across from this couple that he idealises, perhaps there's a sense, if you will, of that unconscious element wanting and yearning, to become human, to see the light of day even if that moment of consciousness is momentary, fragmentary, fleeting.

Niki Harman 38:56

Yearning to be human, that kind of brings us on to Faces. But before we do, one thing that I that really interests me about the shadow, is kind of how almost unfashionable it is, you know, at the moment, there's so much kind of positive psychology that the idea of kind of like, looking at your own darkness and integrating it as opposed to squashing it is kind of like unfashionable in kind of our collective discourse about our own psychology, which I, which I really like, because that just pushes it into the dark even further. Yeah, you know, the kind of I suppose the kind of fashion is positive psychology, you know, is kind of you know, that the individual that everybody else is toxic, right? It's everybody else's fault. Whereas what the idea of the shadow does is that we all have it, and to be whole we need to integrate it and super interesting but you mentioned, you mentioned sorry did I interrupt, were you going to say something?

Kevin Lu 40:06

I just wanted to, you know, to build on that, I absolutely agree, it's okay to be sad, we've medicalised what sadness actually means, and what the whole personality actually means. For many, you know, therapy is based on a trick. And I'll try to

expand that.

Niki Harman 40:23

Yeah say more about that. Yeah.

Kevin Lu 40:26

So, you know, most people who go into therapy go because something goes wrong, there's something that's just not right, that propels them into therapy. That could be a symptom, like, you know, insomnia, or anxiety, whatever it is. And then once you go into the therapy, what the therapist is actually doing is playing a trick that you've come in for this, you've come in to speak to that particular symptom, what you don't know is we're actually going to look at everything else that's underpinning and supporting that particular symptom. That symptom is a manifestation of all this other stuff that we've left uncovered, the shadow elements, things that we've squashed into the closet, we push Beaumont, you know, into the closet. And that's actually the, you know, the goal of analysis and therapy as well. Look, there are methods out there and forms of, dare I say, therapy? You know, there are different options out there in terms of speaking to our mental health. And some things are actually really helpful. Because yeah, sometimes it's just about thinking a bit differently about a particular situation. And to get us back into the swing of life, you know, that's absolutely, so there's a place for that. But you can't stick a bandaid on something when you know, when the wound actually needs stitches. And that you have to go deeper and speak to all that underlying stuff to really begin to heal, if you will, that wound.

Niki Harman 42:06

Yeah, because also, some of those kind of forms of therapeutic, of therapy, if you want to call it that, don't really acknowledge an unconscious. If you knew what was wrong with you, yeah, sure, sometimes you do, you just need some coaching, you know, you struggle with presentations at work, or what have you. You know, and you can kind of get to the

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bottom of that. But the whole idea of this is we don't know it, right? We don't know our shadow, it's unknown to us. We don't necessarily know our unconscious. And so it's as yeah, I guess, yeah, trick to kind of pull it all out.

Kevin Lu 42:49

Yeah, if we don't know, sorry, Niki, if we don't know, we're doomed to repeat. We're doomed to repeat, we then get into kind of ways of being as if that's the only way of being that what it means to be human is that we can actually have a choice and step outside of that and say, you know, what, enough of that, there's a different way to be, there's a different story I can tell about me and my past.

Niki Harman 43:10

100% Yeah, absolutely. And that is kind of that quote, I read out at the beginning, that which remains unknown will appear to us as fate. That's the thing that underlines it. You know, we all think it's fated for us, but it's actually just us driving the car. It's just our unconscious. And yeah, as you say, we're doomed to repeat it. So the next film that we're gonna talk about Faces by John Cassavetes, the wonderful John Cassavetes, I feel like he's really underrated in the UK. But you know, he's super popular still in the US, and he's so influential on kind of especially independent American film of the last 50 years. And the reason I really wanted to do everything else has been kind of like, darkness and monsters and, you know, this is kind of like, middle class people just going about their days, but I'm just going to read you something that he says about his characters that links into something that Jung says. Okay, he says, my films are expressive of a culture that has had the possibility of attaining material fulfilment, whilst at the same time finding itself unable to accomplish the simple business of conducting human lives. We have been sold a bill of goods as a substitute for life, which is what you mentioned regarding Nosferatu. What is needed is reassurance and human emotions, a reevaluation of our emotional capacities. So super interesting because it's a real shift in focus because

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that's what most of his films are about. It's just the kind of intricacies of people that should have everything, are super educated, in the way they converse with each other, you can tell they're educated, or that they feel somehow that they have kind of language to be articulate. But they're, they just can't figure out how to be human, like they're basically Nosferatu still. And it kind of links in with a quote from Jung, really similar to what we talked about when he said, people will do anything, no matter how absurd, in order to avoid facing their own soul. One doesn't become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious, so that really like works well together.

Kevin Lu 45:51

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, this was the film I was referring to, when I said Niki, when I said Niki sent me down the rabbit hole. Things to say, I mean, right off the bat, the, you know, the title Faces is very interesting, because instantly look with a Jungian lens on when one thinks of the persona. So for Jung someone that is the social masks that we wear, and that we don the various roles that we play throughout life. And we, you know, we wear these masks to survive, in essence, and it's also to preserve a sense of decorum as well. So for instance, you know, I have multiple roles, right. As a lecturer, I try not to swear in front of my students. But, you know, in order to maintain that professionalism, to conduct myself a certain way I put on the mask of the teacher, but I can't be the teacher all the time. So I have different roles. So I'm a father as well. So I'm not going to lecture my kids all the time. So then there's another mask I put on so in that way, I realised that there are certain situations throughout life, you could say archetypal situation that we find ourselves in that we just need to survive. Now, for Jung, it's the persona is natural. It's a natural element, natural reaction to the way we interact with the world. The difficulty, or the problems begin is that when we actually believe that one particular persona is everything that we are, as if it's our true selves, and our identity. You see that to a certain extent with this toxic masculinity, you know,

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throughout *Faces*, so we become confused. And then we think that the persona is actually our true self. So you know, to bring in perhaps different films on the persona, the mask, you know, it gets stuck, and just becomes that aspect. What I found really challenging about *Faces* is that there's this link between the persona and the shadow. And I think that's what made for such uncomfortable watching for me particularly. Okay. So one way to approach how psychological films can be is not necessarily in the interpretation of the character is the narrative, the story arcs, etc. But, and this is something that Jung pioneered is to actually look at our own reaction to the film itself. And how uncomfortable it potentially makes us, now when things begin to get us out of our comfort zone, that we have an emotional response. I mean, we're not in the Marvel Cinematic Universe anymore folks. This is what really felt uncomfortable to me, but then made me reflect on *Wow*, this is really holding a mirror up and show me the shadow element is that to look at that, to view that kind of toxic masculinity, that conversation I believe, between Richard and Frank, you know about their old days, you know, how they're treating Jeannie, it was a really uncomfortable watch until I realise, and take a pause and ask, Well, what element is that about myself that is potentially showing me that something in my own personality that I'm actually not really looking at. And one thing I found really challenging throughout, is that we're always moving. I found myself trying to pinpoint these protean characters, they're so slippery, you know, one moment they're happy one moment, they're sad. One moment, they're aggressive. One moment, they're showing, you know, they're showing their vulnerability and ability to relate and to connect. And that, to me, it was this kind of constant flow. And it really showed that in terms of my face, my persona as an academic, I want to pinpoint I want to hold down, I want to try to understand something. But this film wasn't allowing me to do that. We were in this kind of liminal space of constantly moving, moving, moving.

Niki Harman 48:43

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Definitely not. Super uncomfortable, isn't it? So we can definitely talk about their, the way they interchange so quickly, and kind of shift like they're in an improv kind of situation. But what about the conversations between the two guys do you find so uncomfortable? If you don't mind sharing?

Kevin Lu 50:35

No, absolutely. I mean, the the proposition of just asking Jeannie how much, you know, even yes, in that particular time role she's, you know, playing a sex worker, it just seemed that in terms of our own kind of contemporary sensibilities, I can't help but take my current position located in the here and now. And to see how masculinity is presented and femininity as well, that we have these roles that he's almost holding up the mirror, look, this is the way we're treating people. This is how we're pigeonholing people. And look how, for me at least, deplorable it actually is, and yes, this, you know, this was the standard. But I think within that there is that what I would call that trickster element. That, you know, there's the subversion of power, there's different realms of power that people occupy. But again, those moments of sensitivity are almost kind of washed away in an instant. So when you find that there might be something redemptive in a particular character, in a particular interaction, like right at the last scene, where, you know, they've seen Chet, I believe it is that, you know, he's run out they're on the stairs. And even though they're so upset at each other, they're sharing a cigarette, they're passing each other a lighter, but in the next moment, they pass each other, and it's all coldness. And that's how, that's what we're left with. So there's this sense of the oppositional nature of the human experience, and how we are always, I wouldn't say necessarily in danger, but we have this proclivity to kind of move to those extremes. And it really captures just how uncomfortable life is.

Niki Harman 52:26

How it can be. Yeah, because I think, even though you know, it's 1968 and there are those kinds of really marked

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differences of the time and era and space and the really specific way, the group of men interact at Jeannies. And the way it's kind of the way they're subtly eviscerating within a quite everyday context is the thing that kind of gets me, is the thing that we have a version of that, you know, the mumblecore kind of films do that and really take from Cassavetes. And that's, you know, more contemporary, but you know, the phone conversation when he gets home and has that conversation with his wife. And it feels really strange because at once they're all, they're kind of playing with each other aren't they and kind of have that almost like feigned playfulness, or feigned intimacy between them. And then they'll just cut each other down really quickly. And it is like they're trying on costumes of like, this is what intimacy is, this is what inflicting pain is, this is what you know, and especially the kind of the way, Jeannie especially is like at the boys' table, and kind of like singing with them that I find so uncomfortable, because there are elements of that, that I see, that I see every day. You know, does that make sense?

Kevin Lu 54:02

Yeah, yeah. Which is absolutely shocking as well. And then again, just the, you know, the relationship between, you know, Richard and Jeannie that they, they share this moment, you know, they share this connection, and in the morning, he tells her, your eggs are horrible. I'm like, it's just these kind of acts of aggression. That again, it's almost on the brink of being a joke and really kind of harsh reality at the same time.

Niki Harman 54:35

Yeah, and that kind of like, and your eyelashes look ridiculous or something kind of reminds me like I don't know, whether that's kind of like it reminds me of some scenes of French New Wave, you know, and kind of later on and I suppose this is the very, very, very beginning of like, American New Wave. That kind of like dance between the jovial and the cutting is like a hyperreality. Because I'm sure some people would say like, it's kind of naturalistic. But it's like a imagined version of the

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realistic blown up. Which is really uncomfortable. And as you say, like it, there's kind of a mirror element that's really jarring. But I, but both times I've seen it, I've kind of like watched it like that, because it's so excruciating to watch but incredible.

Kevin Lu 55:38

It's one of those like, wow, I don't know if I could ever watch that again. But, you know, equally, I'm really grateful to you, but also just this fantastic series that you've put on to show a huge range of movies that touch or thematically are tied together with this aspect of the shadow. So it's been an absolute journey. I mean, I have this now I won't get rid of it. It's there. It's in the library. And, you know, it'll definitely, I think, be a point of conversation and maybe some further study in the future.

Niki Harman 56:16

Oh, awesome. I always love the idea of well, thank you for saying that. And always love the idea of converting someone to John Cassavetes as painful as he can be sometimes. So yeah, thank you ever so much for like speaking with me. It's been so much fun just to kind of hear your thoughts. Yeah, on Jung and the shadow and how we watch films, and it's just feels like there's like an infinite possibilities. Is there anything that you would suggest to the audience for us to kind of think about when we're watching these films? From a Jungian kind of perspective?

Kevin Lu 57:01

Yeah. So I think along the lines of what we're talking about in terms of Faces, and at least some possible reactions we could have, right? So I think, Jungian ideas, theories, etc, they can be really helpful for us to pinpoint, let's say, certain characters, perhaps certain role that they're playing, and maybe a psychological position or counterpoint that they play in relation to all the other characters. And, you know, it's interesting, it's potentially very enriching to do that. But I think equally, it's important not to just point out the

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archetype in the room, if you will. And that we have to look at the the deeper layers and to see things as this kind of web of interconnectedness when we're trying to understand and grapple with something. So as you say, yes, there's the interpretation. But there's the personal element, the artist's intention, the authorial intention, the societal, cultural, historical context, the potential commentary that's happening there, but also, and taking a page from therapy thinking to look at our reaction to the film, and look at what's potentially happening in that space, when we are doing the viewing, if you will, and what's the transaction that's happening, what's being elicited, what's being brought up to the surface, and to be very mindful of that element as well.

Niki Harman 58:31

Yeah, that's a really great point. And really, like a really nice way to kind of watch our next film, whether as part of this season, or the next time we go to the cinema with our friends, and kind of like using that as a framework to have a conversation afterwards is really exciting. Really enjoyable. Thank you so much for talking today it's such a pleasure to get to speak to a Jungian. I feel like it's my favourite thing to do at the moment, or it's like my thing of interest is film with psychoanalysis. So it was such a pleasure to get to speak to people that you know, know what they're talking about.

Kevin Lu 59:13

Absolutely. And thank you, Niki, you know, great suggestions. I've learned a lot. I've really enjoyed our conversation as well.

Niki Harman 59:19

Oh, awesome. Let's do it again sometime. Thank you so much. And for anyone coming to the season., tickets are now available, we're in the season, the next film is Parasite and do pre book tickets to Nosferatu because there'll be a live film score and by the incredible Minima, so that's going to be immersive film screening. Yeah, thank you again, and have a good evening.