

This article was downloaded by: [Washington University in St Louis]

On: 23 August 2013, At: 09:30

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ujun20>

### Picture This...

Timothy J. Fox

Published online: 13 Aug 2013.

To cite this article: Timothy J. Fox (2013) Picture This..., Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche, 7:3, 77-82

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19342039.2013.813240>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

## REVIEWS

### Picture This . . .

TIMOTHY J. FOX

Review of: Eric Sandweiss, *The Day in Its Color: Charles Cushman's Photographic Journey Through a Vanishing America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 152 color photos and other illustrations.



Main St., Poseyville, Indiana, 1945 (Charles W. Cushman Collection: Indiana University Archives)

In multiple trips between 1938 and 1969, amateur photographer Charles Cushman<sup>1</sup> (1896–1972) crisscrossed the United States —“Maine to San Diego . . . Vancouver to Miami”—logging half a million miles and taking about 14,500 photographs with his Contax IIA 35 mm camera (Sandweiss 2012, 11).

Early on, his subjects were mostly prosaic: black-and-white images of “the standard tourist repertory of wilderness scenery,” as author and historian Eric Sandweiss writes in his latest book, *The Day in Its Color: Charles Cushman's Photographic Journey Through a Vanishing America* (68). As Cushman's

odyssey continued, however, his camera sought more sophisticated images of sometimes vibrant, sometimes fading Main Streets; forlorn theatres offering “adults only” fare like *Burning Question: Victims of the New Sex Craze*; and the crumbling remains of San Francisco’s Palace of Fine Arts. Notably for

be “an artificial process . . . hiding its artifice behind the allure of realism” (Sandweiss 2012, 110–111). In comparison stood the stark black-and-white images of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) photographers, whose work exhibited a “tension between social criticism, economic reportage, and pictorial



Garrick Theatre, St. Louis, Missouri, 1949

(Charles W. Cushman Collection: Indiana University Archives)

Cushman’s time, and fortunately for ours, most of his photos were rendered in “living” color (12).

Color film was in its infancy when Cushman started his travels. Introduced by the Eastman Kodak Corporation in 1936, the new technology was initially shunned by professional photographers who judged it to

patriotism” (65) while creating “our eventual visual memory of the Depression” (68). There were economic considerations as well: color film was too costly for most amateurs. But Cushman was not like most amateurs. His father-in-law, Joseph Hamilton, was “head of information” for the WPA and uncle to novelist John Steinbeck, giving Cushman’s

story literary as well as historical significance. More importantly, however, Cushman's photographs show that he was clearly a talented photographer with an "obsession," in Sandweiss's words, for showing "the world as it appeared before him" (72).

Of course, our view of black-and-white versus color photography is much different today. Black-and-white has been largely relegated to the art gallery, whereas the "real" world is awash with color images on television, in magazines, and across the Internet. To illustrate the power of the contemporary view, Sandweiss started his presentation promoting *The Day in Its Color* by projecting two photographs of a familiar local landmark. Both were virtually identical, save for one important element: the first was in black and white, the second in color. Which, he asked, is the older image? Invariably, the audience would identify the black-and-white image as the older of the two. But Sandweiss had played a trick: the color photograph was one of Cushman's, dating to the 1940s or 1950s, whereas the black-and-white photograph had been taken just before the presentation. "Looking at the photographs confounds the unspoken visual grammar that teaches us to recognize in black-and-white images something that is 'past,'" he writes, "and in color ones something familiar and accessible" (2012, 12).

Sandweiss's "unspoken visual grammar" is the power behind what I call the "postmodern archetype." Neither as elemental nor as universal as Jung's archetypes of persona, anima, animus, shadow, or the Self, it is an archetype that has been learned and created in the West with each newsreel viewed, each magazine read, each image posted on the Web. However, as Christopher Hauke has documented in his book *Jung and the Postmodern: The Interpretations of Realities*, "postmodern" is

an extremely loaded and elastic term that "seems to free-float across texts as a qualifier or an adjective for most things you care to name," from film and music to architecture and literature (2000, 23). I call this archetype "postmodern" for two reasons. First, because it is the result of a shared visual culture that was virtually unfathomable in the first half of the twentieth century and literally inescapable in the latter half, roughly the years of Cushman's travels; second, because of its concern with authenticity and "the social construction of reality," to borrow the title of sociologists Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's seminal book (1966). Unlike those WPA photographers with their worries about "the allure of realism," we see color photographs exhibiting a "familiar and accessible" present-day reality and black-and-white photos as presenting either an artist's personal vision or a documentarian's view of the past. To paraphrase Sandweiss, like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), we have stepped out of the farmhouse and "into the many-hued Land of Oz" (2012, 11). Unlike Dorothy, however, we will likely never return.

Charles Cushman, born and raised in tiny Poseyville, Indiana, studied English at Indiana University. After a stint in the Navy, he became a salesman for the Addressograph Company. Addressograph made machines that could quickly address thousands of letters for businesses, allowing companies to create the illusion of sending "personalized" mass mailings decades before mail merge. "At Addressograph, Cushman found his niche as an agent in the process of bridging the mechanical and the personal. A better description of the talent required of a photographer might not be found" (Sandweiss 2012, 34).

In 1922, Cushman joined the staff of the *LaSalle Business Bulletin*, a monthly newsletter published by Chicago's LaSalle Extension

University. His work at the *Bulletin* and another publication, *Your Money*, a few years later, articulated a new America of consumerism, well-regulated markets, and a unified “national character”: “The editors [of the *Bulletin*] sought a language for instructing a wide audience on the relationship of the economy to everyday life among a nation of people who presumably shared, for all their variety, a common set of values and cultural reference points” (Sandweiss 2012, 40).

With a “common set of values and cultural reference points” assumed, Cushman and his colleagues at the *LaSalle Business Bulletin* and *Your Money* helped set the stage for a postmodern archetype that resonates with the idea of the cultural complex. In the Introduction to their 2004 collection of essays *The Cultural Complex: Contemporary Jungian Perspectives on Psyche and Society*, Thomas Singer and Samuel L. Kimbles write that “cultural complexes can be thought of arising out of the cultural unconscious as it interacts with both the archetypal and personal realms of the psyche and the broader outer world arena of schools, communities, media, and all the other forms of cultural and group life” (4). In his essay “Archetypal Defenses of the Group Spirit,” Singer writes further that cultural complexes “function in that intermediate realm between the personal and archetypal level of the psyche, partaking of both but also being absolutely unique in that their content and activity is the bridge and link between the individual, society, and the archetypal realms” (2004, 20). In short, “[o]ne can think of cultural complexes as the fundamental building blocks and content of an inner sociology” (22).

Thanks to Sandweiss’s masterful research working with scant and disparate biographical sources, *The Day in Its Color* re-creates as much of Cushman’s “inner sociology” and personality

as we are likely to get. However, while Sandweiss suggests that a subconscious force, “something powerful—operating both from without and within the man—motivated this singular, thirty-year quest” (2012, 14), we should be wary of confusing that “something powerful” with the larger, graver cultural complexes behind the political movements and mass atrocities that concern Singer, Kimbles, and other contributors to their book. Although Cushman’s images may be a “reminder of our own mortality” (15), the cultural complexes that shape their expression are not literal matters of life and death. Instead, they are shadows of the comfortable narrative of “urban order” we use to make the decline of Main Streets and the rise of skyscrapers appear inevitable rather than the result of the choices made for reasons of economy or expediency. This narrative allows us to rationalize changes to the urban environment that destroy the built and natural landscape, separate us from one another, and contribute to what François Lyotard termed “the postmodern condition” (1984). In each photograph, Cushman captures a cultural phenomenon, “a place lit for one moment by a brilliant flash of recall, only to fade once again into obscurity to which we as a society have since consigned it” (Sandweiss 2012, 13).

That said, Cushman did encounter at least one literal “matter of life and death” that not only contributed to the development of his personality, and personal complexes, but also motivated his travels and photography. Sandweiss explains:

On the night of March 19, [1943,] Charles sat working in his study on the third floor of the . . . house on Kenwood. Jean [his wife] called to him from below. Walking to the head of the stairs, he recalled, he heard her say “something about going away.” As he turned back toward his desk she followed



him. “The next thing I heard two revolver shots,” Cushman later said. Both bullets hit him in the head. As he collapsed, Jean turned the gun on herself, firing a shot into her mouth. (2012, 119–120)

Charles obviously survived the shooting—as did Jean. In fact, in an instance of synchronicity, following Jean’s murder/suicide

beginning of the long second act of their marriage,” Sandweiss writes:

We can ... question whether Jean’s decision that evening was really the product of ... perverse devotion (“I didn’t want to leave without him” [she had said after the shooting]), or was it in fact a deliberate act motivated by some



**Jean Cushman, Morton Arboretum, Chicago, 1950**

(Charles W. Cushman Collection: Indiana University Archives)

attempt he brought her to the Rogers Sanitarium in Oconomowic, Wisconsin, “a town that four years earlier had hosted the world premiere of the film adaptation of ... L. Frank Baum’s novel, *The Wizard of Oz*” (Sandweiss 2012, 126). Despite the shooting and her depression, Jean seems to have accompanied Charles on all of his travels; she occasionally appears in the photographs, her face contorted, possibly the result of that bullet to her mouth. Calling the shooting “the

terrible resentment, some hatred for what he had done in the past. Could her actions suggest as much about his personality and deeds as they do hers? Each speculative path, regardless of [its] final destination, leads ... to the common realization that Jean’s depression ... colored Cushman’s view of the world as surely as did his own rural roots, or his business and journalism training. (125)

Going further, he speculates that Cushman’s photos “for a fractional second, ... opened

onto an escape route—away from pain, from worry” (125).

How might photography create such an “escape route”? Consider the process of “taking” a picture. As the vernacular suggests, photography is a willful act; the photographer chooses the scene, picks the angle, waits for the light, and so on. In this sense, he or she enacts the role of ego, controlling the presentation of the image. Then the shutter snaps. In that instance, the illusion is created that a real, living scene has been captured and frozen in time. Aside from fading or discoloring with age, the thing itself, the photograph, will never change. Outside the realm of the photograph, however, the scene lives on, evolving as signs fade, wives age, and buildings decay. The photographer, in this case Cushman, has indeed “taken” something—the scene’s energy, its life force, its ability to change—but, at the same time, he has *given* something greater. The image is now a symbol, capable of having as many meanings as it has viewers owing to its interaction with each individual’s consciousness, personal unconscious, cultural unconscious, and the collective unconscious. Through this process, Cushman transforms from “amateur photographer” to “artist.” He would be pleased to know that the symbolic power of his images will now continue to grow, thanks to the photographs presented in this remarkable—and beautiful—book.

#### ENDNOTE

1. Charles W. Cushman’s entire photograph collection is indexed and catalogued online at <http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/cushman/>.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books.

Hauke, Christopher. 2000. *Jung and the post-modern: The interpretation of realities*. London: Routledge.

Liotard, Jean François. 1984. *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge. Theory and history of literature*, Vol. 10. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Singer, Thomas. 2004. Archetypal defenses of the group spirit. In *The cultural complex: Contemporary Jungian perspectives on psyche and society*, eds. Thomas Singer and Samuel Kimbles. New York: Routledge.

Singer, Thomas, and Samuel Kimbles, eds. 2004. *The cultural complex: Contemporary Jungian perspectives on psyche and society*. New York: Routledge.

TIMOTHY J. FOX is Marketing and Communications Coordinator for the Washington University School of Law in St. Louis, Missouri. He holds a BA in Psychology and an MA in English Literature, both from the University of Missouri-Columbia. He is co-author (with Duane R. Sneddeker) of *From the Palaces to the Pike: Visions of the 1904 World’s Fair* (Missouri Historical Society Press, 1997), a photographic tour of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. He has been a professional writer and editor for nearly twenty years, with reviews and articles appearing in various publications. *Correspondence*: [tjfstlouis66@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tjfstlouis66@sbcglobal.net).

#### ABSTRACT

Eric Sandweiss’s *The Day in Its Color: Charles Cushman’s Photographic Journey Through a Vanishing America* collects more than 145 color images by amateur photographer Charles Cushman. Between 1938 and 1969, Cushman crisscrossed the United States multiple times, capturing on film a rapidly disappearing American landscape. Sandweiss works from scant biographical sources to masterfully recreate the lives of Cushman, his troubled wife, Jean, and other members of their family. The book explores what drove Cushman on his three-decade odyssey. This review proposes the influence of a postmodern archetype and cultural complexes to explain Cushman’s motivations.

#### KEY WORDS

cultural complex, Charles Cushman, C. G. Jung, Samuel Kimbles, photography, Thomas Singer, postmodern