

ON *INCEPTION* AND THE CINEMATIC DEPICTION OF  
DREAMS:

***"Are we still in the game???"***

Freud famously declared that bringing a patient's relatives into the office was as disruptive to the analytic process as 'spitting into the surgical field'. One expects he would have thought it was as contrary to the lapidary purity of psychoanalysis to use dreams in any other fashion than interpreting them.

Despite the founding father's *obiter dictum*, psychotherapists from diverse backgrounds have developed innovative approaches to dreams beyond mere interpretation. These are grounded in the implicit assumption that waiting for a patient to produce a dream makes as much sense as keeping a computer off until it decides to turn itself on.

Methods of orchestrating, provoking, and parsing dreams include re-enacting dreams in psychodrama; teaching patients to induce and record dreams; 'waking dream' work, in which the patient is guided through conscious continuation of a dream. 'Image rehearsal' and 'lucid dreaming' techniques supposedly enable patients to consciously alter repetitive traumatic dream imagery, or manipulate dreams 'from the inside'.

Popular cinema has always been inflected by that obscure feedback loop which joins creator to viewer. Cultural preoccupations are constantly being received, processed and projected back to us by filmmakers, in scenarios of variable accuracy. Scientific developments are subject to the same cybernetic, notably in the speculative genres.

*Inception*(2010), conceived and directed by Christopher Nolan, refracts current conceptions about dreams -- particularly lucid dreaming -- through Hollywood's idiosyncratic prism. It's the most technically accomplished

and lucrative 'dream' picture ever made; nearly half a billion dollars at the box office, still counting.

Cinema has busily depicted dreams since its own inception. A familiar silent screen trope was the revelation at the end of a film that what one had thought was real was in fact --"only a dream". The mise-en-scene and the narrative structure of such pictures were 'natural'. The plot in, then the dream was linear, the tale told through an already standardized vocabulary of camera, lighting, music, et cetera. A case in point is J. Charles Hayden's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1920). Hayden's version ended with the discovery that the bizarre tale actually comprised Dr. Jekyll's dream.

The few attempts to mimic the dream's unsettling alterity were crude. A notable exception was Buster Keaton's short, *The Playhouse* (1921). It began with a vaudeville performance dreamed by Keaton, in which he played every character on stage and in the audience. The special effects were exceptional for its day; the sequence remains a comic masterpiece.

Dreams figured prominently in G.W. Pabst's *Secrets of a Soul* (1926), the first cinematic portrayal of psychoanalysis. The analysand's nightmare of stabbing his wife, and its therapeutic interpretation were crucial to the cure of his impotence. (Nightmares with a terrified awakening were familiar before *Secrets of a Soul*. They thrive in every genre of Hollywood and world cinema to this day.)

As movies became more sophisticated, visual and aural strategies evolved to portray dreams: *inter alia* blurred focus; canted camera angles; eery music; echoes and other distortions of speech; slow motion; the chiaroscuro play of light and shadow; jump cuts; fun-house mirror effects, et cetera. These devices flourished in mainstream and experimental cinema (the latter conspicuously influenced by Expressionism, Surrealism, and Dada). By now, they are the *lingua franca* of dream portrayal.

In *Psychiatry and the Cinema*, (1) Krin and Glen Gabbard describe the psychotherapist's value as a narrative facilitator. Analysts function as a "ficelle" (Henry James' *aperçu*: a ficelle is the web of strings controlling a marionette). Therapy promotes the recovery of past events through flashbacks; spectacular revelations about dark deeds and hidden motives; dramatic confrontations with the therapist, et cetera.

A cinematic dream offers screenwriters another distinctive ficelle. In distorted or realistic flashbacks, dreams promote narrative progress and power; revisit or reveal past trauma. The dreamer's emotions upon awakening are characteristically intense -- joy, anxiety, horror -- exerting a strong dramatic impact upon the viewer.

Freud called dreams the 'royal road' to the unconscious. I propose that cinema cannot travel that road. For the unconscious is accessible *only through its traces* -- jokes; slips of the pen or tongue; uncanny feelings with or without obvious cause -- and dreams. (The very act of waking from a dream frequently evokes fleeting intimations of the uncanny.) What one recalls of dreams has always already been subjected to the elaborations of the secondary process, grounded in the realm of the real.

The cinematic apparatus is fundamentally incapable of reproducing the extraordinary *andere lokalitat* of the unconscious. In this mysterious realm, primary process operations nightly generate a conflation of compression; condensation; displacement; extravagant absurdities; *mise en scenes* which mime reality, or are extravagantly bizarre; category collision; dissociation of affect from content; simultaneous layering of time, place, and person. These are tacitly accepted within the dream world. But the conscious mind's unsuccessful struggle to reconstruct that terrain is analogous to the plight of Plato's chained prisoners, unable to apprehend who or what casts the shadows flickering on the wall before them.

In this respect, a cinematic dream *sui generis* can only be a "dream-like" *simulacrum* of the dream space. At its most artful, the simulacrum captures something of the hypnogogic quality of a dream remnant which has escaped censorship. Curiously, credible dream simulacra are in fact uncommon in mainstream cinema, and are rarely found in the cinematic simulacrum of psychotherapy.

Hypnogogic elements are native to much experimental/surrealist cinema; (e.g. *The Andalusian Dog* {1929}; *Meshes of the Afternoon* {1943}; also figure prominently in contemporary video art {viz; by Bill Viola, Joan Jonas, Joan Logue, et cetera}). But the most powerful oneiric shots and sequences are often to be found across the entire spectrum of popular genres -- not only in horror and science fiction movies, where one would expect to discover them, but in comedies, musicals, westerns, crime pictures, et cetera. One underscores that these potent oneiric moments usually do **not** occur in dream depictions, but emerge elsewhere, *en passant*, seemingly gratuitous:(2)

In *Psycho* (1960), as Lila Crane climbs to the Bates house, it seems to rise and mysteriously float towards her through a series of magisterial tracking shots.

In the 1978 remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, one briefly glimpses a derelict with a pug-like dog. Later, a horde of the converted pursues a "normal" couple. In their midst is the pug dog, its body now topped by the gibbering head of its hobo master. No explanation for this nightmarish apparition is provided. No mutation like it ever appears again. The dog-man chimera is simply *there*, a supremely disturbing example of oneiric category collision.

In *The Red Shoes'* (1948) eponymous ballet, a young woman is cursed to dance herself to death. Torn newspapers whirl around her on a barren DiChirico

street. Jump cut -- and the pages have coalesced into a literal "newspaper man". The unearthly hybrid draws her into a languorous pas-de-deux, then blows apart and away.

An entire movie seldom consists of a single dream or an assemblage of dream sequences. The lack arguably stems from a conviction of mainstream filmmakers that the fragmentation and disjointedness of dreams pose a fundamental threat to the profitable pleasures of smooth narrative flow.

The few films which do consist of an extended dream or dream-like state, such as *Jacobs Ladder* (1976) and *Vanilla Sky* (1991), have never met with significant box-office success. But *Inception* has garnered formidable profit; won critical praise for its brilliant special effects, and a puzzle-box construction which supposedly defies traditional narrative practise. It's also been lauded in lay and professional circles as the most authentic replication of dreaming ever lensed. One nevertheless has serious doubts about just how untraditional *Inception's* narrative really is, as well as the accuracy of its representation of the dream's "other place". Of which more presently.

*Inception* joins a subgenre of horror and science films in which dreams are infiltrated and manipulated through science or witchcraft, with fair or foul intent. Movies like the *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise (1986 et seq), *Dreamscape* (1984) and *The Cell* (2000)(3) necessarily contain a wealth of dreams. However, these are unconvincing simulacra, with linear plots and traditional narrative strategies.

*Inception* is Christopher Nolan's sixth feature film. His typical protagonists are outsiders in the mode of film noir's existentially unmoored heroes. In *Following* (1998), a schizoid young writer trails strangers with the avowed

purpose of gathering material, but really to experience a semblance of intimacy from the shadows. *Memento's* (2000) hero suffers anterograde amnesia due to brain trauma sustained during a robbery in which his wife was murdered. His inability to sustain a future to mourn her loss entraps him in a permanent state of grief.

In *The Prestige* (2006), two obsessed magicians are locked in a deadly struggle to own a famous illusion. *The Dark Knight's* (2008) Batman has grown dispirited with his divided life; embittered by having to play the role of lone vigilante in a corrupted city.

*Inception's* sullied hero is Dom Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio), a scientific genius gone rogue. The nature of his research is never specified -- neuroscience? quantum theory? computer graphics? One knows his expertise must run very deep. For, reprising Fifties sci-fi classics, Cobb's mentor (Michael Caine) is an affably eccentric coot in obligatory academic tweeds, with cryptic equations scrawled across his blackboard. He also has an obligatory brainy and beautiful daughter/assistant, Mal. Mal married Cobb, and became his accomplice in an underhanded adaptation of her father's work.

The film is set in a cyberpunk future, where mega-corporations vie for global hegemony, and industrial espionage prospers. Grotty hackers of William Gibson's "necromancer" novels 'jack' their projections into virtual reality at extreme peril, in aid of filching intelligence from Oz-like data citadels. In *Inception's* future, 'extractors' like Cobb load themselves with unique drugs, and invade the dreams of corporate honchos to steal their secrets. Meanwhile, the besieged moguls have learned how to protect their unconscious info-fortresses with virtual hit men.

Cobb is on the run, accused of murdering Mal. He cannot return to America and his two children. Formerly an ace 'extractor', he lost his edge after her death. His criminal status and ruined finances have left him adrift,

willing to take on questionable work.

Saito, a Japanese oligarch (Ken Watanabe), offers Cobb to use his influence to nullify Cobb's charges, so he can go home. In exchange, Saito wants Cobb to undertake an "inception" -- inserting an idea into a dream which will proliferate like a virus, and change motivation in the waking world. (Cobb is one of the few to accomplish this difficult, dangerous task.)

Saito's target is Robert Fischer, scion of his arch-rival with whom he has been engaged in a bruising contest for control of the world's energy markets. Fischer senior and junior have been on bad terms for years. The father has just died. Robert is about to fly his coffin from Sydney to Los Angeles for burial, then take over the Fischer empire. Saito wants Cobb to plant in Robert's dreams the desire to sell off the corporation, so he can pursue his own ventures -- thus making Saito the world's energy czar.

Inception is not only perilous in itself. Fischer has packed his psyche with an especially nasty corps of virtual 'bodyguards'. As in standard heist films, Cobb assembles a team of specialists to penetrate the deepest layers of Fischer's sleeping mind: a chemist who compounds sedative cocktails; an actor/mercenary who shape-shifts within dreams; an "architect" who constructs dreams beforehand. Saito insists on joining them.

The flight to Los Angeles lasts ten hours, precisely the time needed for Fischer's inception. Saito fills a commercial jet with his own people; situates Fisher and Cobb's team in secluded first class. Cobb slips Fischer a super-mickey; the team members sedate themselves and descend into a dizzying regress of a dream -- a dream within a dream -- and a dream within that dream.

At each of three dream levels time stretches out ever further, escalating the risk of becoming enmeshed and losing one's hold on reality. As life insurance, one team member is left behind at each level to set off a preprogrammed "kick", signaling those below to awaken

successively into the level above, thence into reality. Split second timing is crucial to the enterprise. Otherwise, one may drop into the deepest dream stratum -- a Dantesque *terra incognita* where time extends indefinitely, and one could be stranded for some part of forever.

The inception process can also be compromised if intense personal experienced 'bleed' into the dream constructs. Only Cobb knows that his despair over his wife's demise poses an enormous risk to everyone, but gulls himself into believing he can preserve his steely control.

One learns Cobb previously carried out a flawed inception with Mal, which trapped them in the dream netherworld for fifty years. When he succeeded in bringing them back, Mal believed they were still asleep. According to Nolan's 'rules', suicide during inception induces transportation to another dream space or consciousness. Mal's fatal jump from a hotel room was thus 'accidental': she believed it would convince Cobb that 'killing' himself would return him to the contented oblivion in which they had been living for half a century.

Inevitably Cobb's problems invade Fisher's dream scenario: Mal's angry simulacrum materializes, hell bent on destroying the inception so Cobb can stay with her in their timeless cocoon. The plot unfolds simultaneously in each dreamscape. Fisher is persuaded that his father wanted him to be his own man. Cobb rejects Mal's pleas to stay with her, in order to grieve her death and rejoin his children. Saito's mortal wound from a virtual gunshot in one dream reality plummets him into the limbo space. He spends nearly a lifetime there until Cobb rescues him. All awaken just as they land in LA, mission accomplished.

Akin to a movie monster's exposure as a ludicrous 'man in a rubber suit', cumbersome explanations of 'how we got here' threaten the's science-fiction film reality effect. In this regard, Cobb's rat-a-tat exposition of *Inception's* neuroscience to his new architect is especially tedious.

What genuine dream neuroscience the film does contemplate (notably about lucid dreaming) has already caused a deal of overheated academic debate -- as did *The Matrix*' (1999) speculations about virtual reality.(4) One recalls Leonard Nimoy's acerbic reply to questions about singularity theory at a convention of physicists: "I'm an actor, not Mr. Spock."

In any case, whatever validity science-fiction science possesses is frequently altered or sacrificed by the demand to make an entertaining, profitable picture. When accuracy collides with narrative necessity, depend upon it, the latter always triumphs. This is no bad thing in fine work like *Memento*.(5) *Inception*'s cinematic technology is indeed astonishing. But its neuroscience is highly questionable, its dreams mere high-tech exercises. Although entertaining the first time around, Nolan's simulacra contain nothing of the ephemeral vestiges of authentic dreaming, nor do they reflect the dreamwork's idiosyncratic potency.(6) In several viewings, I have not discovered a single moment with the oneiric force of the dog-man chimera from *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

Another reviewer observed that *Inception*'s major shortcoming is that its stakes are too small. In *Memento*, the hero's anterograde amnesia has profoundly tragic consequences. Leonard Shelby is unable to mourn his wife because he cannot hold on to new memories needed to grieve. His inability to go forward in time deprives him of the ability to repair his psychic wounds, affirm a core identity, and construct a viable if fragile future.

Shelby's condition is the lynchpin of a neurological tragedy along classic Aristotelian lines. The viewer is immediately drawn into *Memento*'s intricate plot, with its double converging timelines; intensely engaged in 'working' with Shelby to fathom the consequences of his cerebral injury. One experiences pity, awe, and catharsis as Shelby struggles to cope with the devastating limitations imposed by his psychic fragmentation.

Compared with *Memento*, *Inception*'s shallow neuroscience drives a banal narrative, embedded in technical razzmatazz. The hero's quest to reunite with his abandoned children is a perennial bathetic bromide. Lost children especially pervade Spielberg's work (rarely to his benefit). Why Cobb's youngsters can't be taken by their grandfather to join Cobb in a country that bans extradition, is another of the film's many inconsistencies.

Cobb undertakes the heist film's archetypical 'last job' to help the leader of a corrupt multinational corporation eliminate a major competitor. Saito's scheme to dismantle the Fischer empire through Cobb's skills echoes the wicked plots of greedy capitalists which have been crowding screens for years.

But *Inception* invites us to believe its three principals all undergo profound intrapsychic transformations during the journey into Fischer's psyche. Cobb rescues Saito from the oneiric purgatory where he's been stranded for dream decades. The industrialist has morphed into a senescent Zen master, sorrowfully contemplating a wasted life pursuing wealth and power, only to become immured in lonely regret. However, reawakened into that very life, Saito shows not a jot of insight. He's rapacious and unprincipled as ever.

Robert Fischer awakens with the healing recognition that his father, unable to show love while alive, always cared deeply for his son; and hoped his death would free Robert from the yoke of running the Fischer conglomerate. But that recognition has been implanted; is utterly fraudulent. Given the repeatedly underscored uncertainties of the inception process, one is justified in wondering if Fischer's sea-change will last.

Finally, *Inception* insinuates that the mission has enabled Cobb to accept his role in Mal's death, so that -- like *Memento*'s hero -- he can begin mourning her. Near the close of the film, Mal's dream clone entreats Cobb to stay with her in oneiric limbo forever. Cobb realizes she is

only a palid shadow of 'herself'; abandons her so he can work through his grief and join his children. Whether the conscious Cobb will actually be able to undertake effective mourning is a vexed question.

And like Saito, Cobb suffers no pang of conscience about his work's inherent wickedness. The mission's success has augmented Saito's capability to wreak even greater havoc upon humanity and the ecosphere. Did Nolan seek to plant 'seeds' in the viewer's mind about the doubtfulness of the protagonists' insights, and Saito's evil use of the inception process?

The director's oeuvre possesses considerable intellectual depth. But he has never tendered the critique of greedy multinational corporate capitalism embedded in important science fiction films like *Alien* (1970), *Soylent Green* (1973), *Rollerball* (1975), and *Blade Runner* (1982). Nolan's pictures have no ideological bias. Whatever their manifest content, they are essentially character driven interrogations of complex intrapsychic conflicts.

But for argument's sake, let us assume for a moment that Nolan *did* indeed intend to waken the viewer to the sinister implications of inception. A cascade of eye-popping, clamorous special effects submerges any prospect of contemplating such subtleties. One is further distracted by the blare of Hans Zimmer uncharacteristically mediocre score. (Zimmer alternates between interminable repetition of several brassed-up chords, and the hectic orchestral grizzling which has pervaded action genres at least since the "24" television series.)

Beyond *Inception*'s uninspiring narrative, one simply doesn't care much about the characters, particularly Leonardo DiCaprio's Cobb. Guy Pearce is riveting as *Memento*'s cerebrally challenged hero. Pearce not only was working with a script infinitely more gripping than *Inception*'s. He's always been superb in radically different roles. DiCaprio was a gifted child actor, but his

talents have veered wildly since he achieved mega-celebrity status.

Even during the current recession, star actors still own clout enough to subvert fine scripts and a director's skill. DiCaprio was disastrous as the psychotic ex-federal agent of *Shutter Island* (2010); striking as *The Departed*'s (2006) psychotic undercover agent. Perhaps brilliant -- and celebrated -- directors like Martin Scorsese are able to bring out his best qualities.

Ken Watanabe (Saito), Cillian Murphy (Fischer), and Marion Cotillard (Mal) do as much as can be done with cartoonish characters. Others in the cast are serviceable, except *Juno*'s (2008) Ellen Page, who seems to have wandered off the set of *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) to play *Inception*'s vapid dream architect.

The film needs serious cutting, particularly in the hackneyed action sequences that proceed simultaneously at each dream level. The first level reprises every stale car chase since *Bullitt* (1968) and *The French Connection* (1971). *Mission Impossible* meets *The Matrix* at level two, in gravity-defying chop-socky combat, ending in the mandatory elevator drop to Level 3. Here Cobb and his cohort invade an arctic fortress and battle armed opponents on skies and in snowmobiles -- an intentional allusion to several pictures in the James Bond canon. Time indeed stretches out endlessly for the stranded viewer as well as the characters. Perhaps Nolan wanted to impress the notion of expanding temporality upon our backsides.

*Inception* is saturated with other allusions to other movies, a prevalent filmmaking practice since the Eighties. Citing film classics may aim at conferring the cachet of excellence upon a mediocre talent by association; or establishing the director's credibility as a film scholar *manque*. Nolan's mastery of the medium and familiarity with film history are well established. Perhaps he wanted *Inception*'s allusions to stimulate free associations; accentuate the film's bewildering hall of mirrors design;

and augment its sensory and conceptual overload. Unfortunately, *Inception's* citations are so intrusive and clumsy as to actually impede viewer engagement.

The film's conclusion is even more shopworn. Every dream extractor carries a 'totem' to determine whether he's awake or still sleeping. Cobb's totem is a spinning top. If it topples, he has returned to reality. If it keeps spinning, he slumbers on. In the film's final sequence the camera pans away from Cobb and his children, to the top/totem beginning to wobble -- then jumps to black. Nolan thus asks the viewer to wonder if *Inception* has always been and remains Cobb's dream, from which he has yet to revive.

One is not entertainingly teased and bewildered by the ending, rather irritated by a trite 'he's baaaaack!!' contrivance. It's unworthy of Nolan, and curtails the film's guilty pleasures. (Each time I saw *Inception*, the wobbling top was greeted with substantive derisive hooting.)

But *Inception* itself is one prolonged, convoluted contrivance; a moderately entertaining summer blockbuster which upon repeated viewings, is revealed as a prosaic Potemkin village. The special effects quickly wax tedious. The vacuous narrative displays its seams and stitches -- like the man in a monster suit.

I have saved the best for last, vis-a-vis the dilemma of representing the unrepresentable in the uneasy dreams of cinema. Over forty years David Cronenberg's sizable body of horror and science fiction work has most consistently captured the ineffable 'otherness' of dream remnants, *inter alia* in *Videodrome* (1963), *The Fly* (1966), and *Scanners* (1981).

Film scholars nominate Cronenberg as progenitor and grandmaster of the 'body-horror' genre, in which the body and its constituents are horrifically defamiliarized and reinvented. A superb example is the chimera created by the fusion of inventor Seth Brundle's already hideous human/fly

hybrid with his transporter device, to create a monstrous and pitiful 'brundlepod'.

Cronenberg's neglected *tour de force*, *eXistenZ* (2002), comes closest to replicating an entire dream. The director deftly intimates that *eXistenZ*' culture is consumed with video-gaming. Rival corporations spend millions inventing new games and protecting them from theft.

A group of devotees has gathered to beta-test *eXistenZ*, the first game to interconnect its participants through a neural net. After the induction of a dream state, the players transform into rival game corporation workers and assassins, or terrorists who believe games like *eXistenZ* insidiously usurp reality, and aim to destroy them and their creators.

Identities and roles shift radically through descending levels of a plot far exceeding *Inception* in cunning, complexity, and arresting confusion. One of many extraordinary hypnogogic sequences is set in the canteen of a run-down factory, where bio-mechanical game pods are assembled from slimy chunks of mutated fish and reptiles. The protagonist is told by a fellow conspirator to order 'the daily special'. It's a loathsome stew from which he fishes out bones, teeth, and sinew to assemble a revolting, bizarrely fascinating 'gristle gun'.

The game ends when the terrorists triumph. The players awaken and begin evaluating *eXistenZ*. The couple who were the game's heroes, reveal they are in fact real anti-game terrorists. They gun down the inventors, as players run for cover. The terrorists find one of them cowering in a toilet stall. *ExistenZ* ends with his petrified question: **"Are we still in the game???"**

To the extent that cinema is can emulate the dreamwork, we are definitively in Cronenberg's game; most certainly not in *Inception*'s barren facsimile. *Tant pis*.

#### REFERENCES

1. *Psychiatry and the Cinema*. Gabbard K, Gabbard G. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

2. These examples inevitably reflect a degree of subjective bias. Preference or prejudice about a film's hypnogogic validity is influenced by many factors, including each viewer's own unique experience of waking from dreams.

One warns against gauging the authenticity of an oneiric sequence solely on the basis of its 'creepiness' or 'scariness'. What is terrifying will not necessarily register as authentically dream-like, in the sense of my argument. Impressive, but unfrightening oneiric material is plentiful in other genres, e.g., *The Red Shoe's* 'newspaper man'.

3. In *Dreamscape* (1984), advanced neuroscience is used to insert the hero into debilitating nightmares suffered by a US President who hopes to end the threat of nuclear holocaust. A hawkish defense secretary, detesting the President's peace initiatives, employs a psychic psychopath to murder the President and would-be rescuer within the 'dreamscape'.

In *The Nightmare on Elm Street* series, a hideously disfigured revenant invades the dreams of teenagers, and slaughters them gruesomely. The franchise's heroes and heroines always acquire the ability to enter a menaced friend's dream world and destroy the monster, albeit temporarily.

In *The Cell* (2000), another highneurotech invention enables a gifted child therapist to treat troubled youngsters by entering their dreams. She is asked by police to infiltrate the mind of a comatose serial killer, to discover where he his last living victim has been hidden.

4. E.g., dreams have recognizable stages, but *Inception's*

levels hardly correspond to the levels of actual sleep. REM and non-REM cycles, et cetera. The ability to exercise lucid control of dreams is much more limited than the film implies. Cobb's sententious claim that one never knows where one has come from at the beginning of a dream is manifestly untrue. In many dreams, one frequently 'knows' *within the context of the dream* where one has been.

5. Shelby's coping skills far exceed those of anterograde amnesia victims. He uses an elaborate system of prompts to constantly reconstrue his circumstances -- 'updates' tattooed on his body, copious notes and polaroid shots. He relates skilfully with others despite the continuous erasure of their identities. His pursuit of his wife's killer has probably lasted several years, during which he has driven to new locales; made adequate living arrangements, and performed other complex tasks far beyond the capabilities of patients with the disorder.

6. In *Inception's* dreams, the close up of a trembling glass regularly introduces eruptions explosions, quakes or fluds. This sort of prelude to catastrophe is a staple of the disaster genre. In fact, it very barely appears in real dreams. it is another of Nolan's ersatz 'dreamlike' devices, diminishing rather than enhancing intimations of the oneiric.

Harvey Roy Greenberg MD  
320 West 86<sup>th</sup> Street,  
New York City, NY 10024  
212 595 5220  
[www.doctorgreenberg.net](http://www.doctorgreenberg.net)