ENVISIONING *the* DREAM *through* ART *and* SCIENCE

~ With 100 Digitally Imaged Dreams ~

Robert G. Kunzendorf and James W. Veatch

University of Massachusetts Lowell

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(with 100 digitally imaged dreams)

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To our daughters

Jennifer and Rebecca

Emily and Kathryn

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> We are all at the mercy of the dream and we owe it to ourselves to submit its power to the waking state.
>
> from Editorial by Jacques-André Boiffard, Paul Eluard, & Roger Vitrac in *La Révolution Surréaliste,* No. 1, December 1924 (translated and reproduced in Patrick Waldberg's *Surrealism,* Thames and Hudson, London 1965, p. 47)

An Interdisciplinary Experiment on Dream Imagery

This research monograph is the product of an interdisciplinary experiment—a psychological experiment and an artistic experiment—focused on dream imagery. Inspired by the psychological problem of studying other minds, we asked 100 art students to create digital images of the critical scenes from one of their dreams, and we correlated their personality traits and their emotions with visual

aspects of their 100 digitized dreams—all 100 of which are reproduced in this monograph. Most of our correlational findings point to relationships that are readily observed in exemplary digital images of artists' dreams, but are not discoverable in those same artists' verbal descriptions of their dreams. Inspired additionally by surrealist art's penetration of the boundaries between dream and reality, we instructed the artists in our experiment to make a surrealistic collage out of their dream's critical scenes. At least two of the resulting collages, as readers will see, penetrate such boundaries well enough to capture the surreality displayed in actual works of surrealist art.

One of our two primary goals in publishing this monograph is to visually capture—to envision—why it is that dreams are so fascinating. As psychologists, as artists, as dreamers, we can sometimes be amazed that our dreams are products of our own minds, given how creative, how bizarre, how perplexing, how disturbing they can seem in comparison with the conscious contents of our wakeful

minds. We wonder what such dreams mean, what they tell us about our true selves, what they symbolize. In one effort to resolve our wonderment, Freud (1899/1913) theorized that dream symbols serve to disguise taboo wishes, which are repressed into unconscious recesses of the mind during wakefulness but are resurrected during sleep. In another theoretical effort, Jung (1964) posited that symbolic dreams are archetypal fantasies giving visual and symbolic form to inherited instincts. And in Kunzendorf's (2007b) more recent effort, the latent level of meaning in symbolic dreams is to be found not in an unconscious wish nor in an inherited instinct, but in the emotion that is consciously underlying symbolic dreams and is visually pictured by those dreams. Parts of our artistic experiment are inspired by Jung's approach to dream symbolism, and parts of our psychological experiment are inspired by Kunzendorf's approach. The second of our two primary goals, however, is to inspire and to enable other researchers to uncover statistical associations between our art students' personality traits and visible

characteristics of their digitized dreams, no matter what the researchers' theoretical inclinations may be.

Because all the contents of this monograph ultimately come back to our interdisciplinary experiment, we begin with a section describing pertinent details of our experimental method. The subsequent section focuses on the role of dream imagery in surrealist art, and leads into our presentation of the two surrealistic collages resulting from our artistic experiment. The final section delves into the relation of visual dream features to emotion and personality—as documented by our statistical analyses of all 100 dreams, and as illustrated by particular dreams. The appendix contains each artist's digitally imaged dream, each artist's description and interpretations of his or her dream, plus each artist's scores on Kunzendorf, Hartmann, Cohen, and Cutler's Short Form of the Boundary Questionnaire and on the depression, anxiety, hostility, and somatization scales of Derogatis' Brief Symptom Inventory. We conclude by listing our references and by indexing visual elements in the 100 digitized dream images.

Experimental Methods

Over a 5-year period, we instructed the UMass Lowell art students in each semester's Digital Imaging course to create a series of digital images representing one of their dreams and, in addition, to create a surrealist collage from the images. Specifically, we instructed them to select one of their own dreams—one which they could readily remember the details of and would be willing to go public with. And based on Newtson and Engquist's (1976) finding that the narrative structure of a movie is conveyed by those movie frames wherein critical changes in action occur, we further instructed them to re-experience this dream from beginning to end in their mind's eye, to note the "dream frames" containing critical changes in action, and to create a digital image resembling each dream frame. We told them that their digital images could include extracts of their own artistic and photographic images, old or new, and their modifications of non-copyrighted electronic images extracted from open sources on the internet.

The students were given 4 weeks to complete the frames of their digitally imaged dream, which they knew would be graded on technical merit, then 1 week to transform their dream frames into a surrealistic collage, which they knew would be graded on technical and artistic merit. By letting students know that their dream frames would be graded only on technical merit, we sought to minimize any demand characteristic that might encourage them to embellish dream content rather than reproduce it.

After their digital dream images and surrealist collages were handed in and graded, we invited the art students to participate in an IRB-approved research project on dreams and, in consideration for our instruction on visual narrative, asked them to grant us license to reproduce their digital images without any personal identifiers. To the one-hundred-thirty art students who gave us their written consent, we distributed a 6-page research booklet, which they had an hour to complete. Atop the booklet's first page was this instruction:

In words, describe the dream you used in your digital images. (Don't describe your digital images. Rather, describe the story expressed by the dream.) Describe the dream from beginning to end—even if it is bizarre or it doesn't make much sense as a story.

For readers who wonder about the accuracy of memory for dreams, we call attention, first, to Arkin, Toth, Baker, and Hastey's (1970) research showing that the content of sleep-talkers' vocalizations during REM sleep and the content of their dream memories after waking up are highly concordant. Second, long-term-memory research by Bahrick, Bahrick, and Wittlinger (1975) has shown that memorable visual information can still be accurately remembered decades after its encoding.

The booklet's second page instructed the participating art student to write down his or her interpretation of the dream's meaning. Next, based on Kunzendorf's (2007b) evidence that

intense emotion experienced for any reason during a dream tends to be pictured by the dream and to give the dream an added level of "symbolic" meaning, the third page contained the following instruction:

> After following this page's instructions for five minutes or so, you should write a second interpretation of your dream. Before you generate your second interpretation, however, you should engage in the process of intensifying the underlying emotion in your dream. In order to do this, you should first identify the underlying emotion or major emotional concern in your dream. Subsequently, you should try to feel the identified emotion and gradually intensify it. As you feel the emotion more and more intensely, notice any thought or imagery or self-talk that the intensified emotion brings to mind. Keep intensifying the emotion and noticing all that it brings to mind, for a few minutes, until the meaning of the emotion is clarified. Next, re-interpret your dream, based on the

meaning of its underlying emotion. Finally, write down your re-interpretation.

The fourth page asked the art student to record the dream's underlying emotion or emotional concern, a symbolic element in the dream, a hard-to-interpret element in the dream, how long ago he or she first had the dream, how long ago he or she last had the dream, and how many times he or she had the dream. The fifth page contained Kunzendorf, Hartmann, Cohen, and Cutler's (1997) Short Form of the Boundary Questionnaire—asking the art students to rate 18 items from Hartmann's (1991) Boundary Questionnaire on a 0-4 scale, and measuring whether they have "thick" boundaries between cognition and emotion, perception and imagination, daydreaming and dreaming, or whether they have "thin" boundaries like those which surrealist artists presumably have. The sixth page contained a modified version of Derogatis's (1983) Brief Symptom Inventory or BSI—asking the art students to rate the BSI's 53 symptoms on a 0-4 scale, but to rate how much each symptom bothered them during the preceding

month (rather than the preceding week).

After excluding dreams with incomplete questionnaires or inadequate artwork, we asked two recent recipients of the B.A. in psychology from UMass Lowell—Chris Smith and Glenn Erickson—to examine 100 dreams' digitized scenes along with their verbal descriptions, and to rate each dream on fifteen rating scales designed to measure visual aspects of the dream. On the first scale, Chris and Glenn rated each digitized dream's *surrealism* on a 6-point metric ranging from "1 = realistic items realistically arranged" to "6 = surreal items or bizarre combination of items." On five of the scales, they rated whether each digitized dream represented a particular scape–*pastoral*, *urban*, *subterranean*, *underwater,* or *other-worldly* (*another planet, heaven*, e.g.,)—on a 6-point metric ranging, in the first instance, from "1 = no pastoral scape" to "6 = definitely a pastoral scape." On three of the scales, they rated whether each digitized dream contained a particular atmosphere—*blue sky, stormy sky,* or *nighttime sky*—on a

6-point metric ranging, for example, from "1 = no stormy sky" to "6 = definitely a stormy sky." On four of the scales, they rated each digitized dream's color densities—*blueness, redness, yellowness,* and *greenness*—on a 6-point metric ranging, in the latter case, from "1 = no greenish features" to "6 = many greenish features." On the two final scales measuring form factors, they rated each digitized dream on a *color predominating over form* scale ranging from "1 = no color predominating over form" to "mostly color predominating over form," and rated each digitized dream on an *evil human form* scale ranging from "1 = no evil human figure" to "6 = definitely an evil human figure." Chris's and Glenn's inter-rater reliabilities are highly significant ($p < .001$) for all but the scale measuring *subterranean scape.* The mean inter-rater reliability coefficient for the other fourteen scales is .57, with a standard deviation of .10. For each of the 100 digitized dreams, we calculated the mean of Chris's and Glenn's ratings on each of the fifteen scales. Then, using those mean ratings, we calculated correlations between fourteen

of the scales measuring visual aspects of the 100 digitized dreams and four of the BSI scales measuring psychopathological symptoms in the 100 dreamers. Our decision to focus on just four BSI scales—the Anxiety scale measuring *fear*-related psychopathology, the Depression scale measuring *sadness*-related psychopathology, the Hostility scale measuring *anger*-related psychopathology, and the Somatization scale measuring *emotionally repressive* psychopathology—was based on Kunzendorf's (2007b) analysis of the evidence connecting dream content and emotion. In addition, we calculated the correlation between the scale measuring surrealist aspects of the 100 digitized dreams and the questionnaire measuring thinness of boundaries in the the100 dreamers—a correlation which we will discuss further as we turn our attention now to our artistic experiment on the relationships between surrealist art and dreaming.

Artistic Experiment:

Surrealism and the Boundaries between Subconscious Dreaming and Reality

Our artistic experiment pursues two empirical predictions and one demonstrable expectation regarding surrealist artworks and dream images, specifically the 100 dream images digitized by our research participants. First, given surrealism's penetration of the boundaries between dream and reality, we predict that those digitized dreams rated by our judges to be more *surreal* ought to come from dreamers with *thin boundaries* between perceptual reality and imagination, between wakeful imagination and dreaming, and between conscious representation and subconscious impulse. Second, given surrealism's quest to discover archetypal manifestations of subconscious impulses, we predict that the contents of our 100 digitized dreams ought to include archetypal imagery found in surrealist art: in particular, archetypal images manifesting death-related fears (Kunzendorf, 2007a). And third, given

surrealism's use of collage both in its literature and in its art, we expect that some of the collages constructed from the digitized dream scenes ought to be compelling works of surrealist art. As readers will see, our predictions and expectation are borne out in our experiment.

Penetration of the Boundaries between Dream and Reality

The artistic goal of penetrating the boundaries between dream and reality is set forth in the *First Surrealist Manifesto,* wherein Breton (1924/1965) expresses his belief "in the future resolution of these two states—outwardly so contradictory—which are dream and reality, into a sort of absolute reality, a *surreality*" (p. 70). Botz-Borenstein (2007) further expounds on this surrealist goal:

> To produce surreality means to create a new reason able to penetrate into a "reality more true than reality" (to use a phrase by Timbaud). The surrealist idea to free itself from the tyranny of logic signified to free oneself from the "inferior" consciousness as it exists in

> our waking life. Logic needed to be deconstructed into a dream logic. (p. 108)

And quoting Blanchot (1974), Botz-Borenstein (2007) associates surrealist dream logic with "a certain point of the mind from where life and death, the real and the imaginary, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, the high and low no longer appear as contradictory" (p. 105).

Recent research suggests that dreams are more surreal, and daydreams more dreamlike, in people who exhibit penetrable or *thin* boundaries on Hartmann's (1991) Boundary Questionnaire. Kunzendorf, Hartmann, Cohen, and Cutler's (1997) Short Form of the Boundary Questionnaire, which we employed in our current experiment, includes the following items indicative of *thinness*:

item #1. My feelings blend into one another.
item #4. I spend a lot of time daydreaming, fantasizing, or in reverie.
item #9. A good parent has to be a bit of a child, too.
item #10. I can easily imagine myself as an animal or what it might be like to be an animal.

item #13. In my dreams, people sometimes merge into each other or become other people.

item #15. There are no sharp dividing lines between normal people, people with problems and people who are considered psychotic or crazy.

item #18. I have had the experience of someone calling me or speaking my name and not being sure whether it was really happening or whether I was imagining it.

Accordingly, the more surreal dreams and daydreams that are reported in recent research come from people with thin boundaries between different emotions, between thinking and daydreaming, between adulthood and childhood, between humanness and beasthood, between self and other, between different dream objects, between normal people and crazy people, and—of course—between reality and imagination. In reviewing this research literature, Hartmann and Kunzendorf (2006-2007) point to studies demonstrating that thinner scores on the Boundary Questionnaire are associated with dream contents (and daydream contents) which independent raters deem visually more bizarre and emotionally

more expressive—possibly, more surreal (Hartmann, Elkin, & Garg, 1991; Hartmann & Kunzendorf, 2005-2006; Hartmann, Rosen, & Rand, 1998; Kunzendorf, Hartmann, Cohen, & Cutler, 1997; Schredl, Kleinferchner, & Gell, 1996). And in research suggesting that thin boundaries are linked not only to bizarrely creative or "surreal" dreams but also to artistically expressive activities, Schredl and Erlacher (2007) discovered that the frequency of creative dreaming correlates positively both with thinner boundaries and with engagement in painting and other creative arts.

In our current artistic experiment, this suggested connection between artists with thin boundaries and dreams with surreal contents is confirmed. For our 100 art students and their digitized dreams, the correlation between the *thinness* of students' scores on the Short Form of the Boundary Questionnaire and the independently rated *surrealism* of their digitized dreams is statistically significant, $r = .29$, $p < .01$. Four of the digitized dreams in this monograph provide us with illustrative and compelling

examples of the two tails of this correlational finding. Illustrating one tail are **Dreams #48** and **#97**, which were dreamt and digitized by two artists with *thin* boundaries and were rated high on *surrealism* by our judges. **Dream #48** illustrates "dream logic" through its depiction of bees that buzz because they are operating buzz saws. **Dream #97** illustrates such surrealist logic though its depiction of amorphous redness in all its scenes—in the hallway, in the cathedral windows, in the sky below and the sky above—which makes the disparate contents of the scenes "no longer appear as contradictory." Illustrating the other tail are **Dreams #64** and **#72**, which were dreamt and digitized by two artists with *thick* boundaries and were rated low on our judges' *surrealism* scale. These two dreams, in addition to lacking *surreality,* depict a seemingly impenetrable boundary and a dreamer who wakes up as soon as the boundary is crossed. In **Dream #64**, the boundary is pictured as both a concrete wall and a chain-link fence, and in **Dream #72**, the boundary is pictured as a cliff. Interestingly, both **Dream #72** from

the thicker tail of our correlation and **Dream #97** from the thinner tail are also visual illustrations of Kunzendorf, Francis, Ward, Cohen, Cutler, Walsh, and Berenson's (1996-1997) finding that fear of heights comes from imagining and fearing that one might fall from a height, irrespective of whether one has ever fallen before or not. But most importantly, both our statistical correlation and our four illustrative examples confirm that surrealist dreams are associated with thin boundaries, as we predicted.

Quest for Archetypal Manifestations of Subconscious Impulses

Surrealism's quest to discover the archetypal manifestations of subconscious impulses is duly noted and discussed by Post (1988):

> Surrealists [believed] that the only self of any importance was to be found in the instinctual unconscious….The discovery of an innate inner symbolic language at once personal and universal was a principal goal of Surrealism. (p. 183)

Similarly, in discussing the role of the dream within surrealist film, Botz-Bornstein (2007) alludes to "the archetypal structure beneath the literal…level" and to "the faceless man" as one of surrealism's symbolic archetypes (p. 106). The psychological relationship between unconscious instincts and symbolic archetypes is described most compellingly in the writings of Carl Gustav Jung, and the archetypal symbol of the faceless man is deciphered most compellingly in the writings of Ernest Becker. So, before we consider digitized dreams and surrealist artworks with the archetypal symbol of the faceless man, let us consider the insightful writings of Jung and Becker.

According to Jung (1964), the *archetype* is a generic visual representation of an innate instinct, not an innate visual symbol per se:

> What we properly call instincts are physiological urges, and are perceived by the senses. But at the same time, they also manifest themselves in fantasies and often

> reveal their presence only by symbolic images. These manifestations are what I call the archetypes…whose presence cannot be explained by anything in the individual's own life and which seem to be aboriginal, innate, and inherited shapes of the human mind….The term "archetype" is often misunderstood as meaning certain definite mythological images or motifs. But these are nothing more than conscious representations; it would be absurd to assume that such variable representations could be inherited. The archetype is [an instinctual] tendency to form such representations of a motif—representations that can vary a great deal in detail without losing their basic pattern. (pp. 57-58)

The surrealist artist Hérold (1947) exhibited an implicit understanding of the Jungian archetype, when he asserted that "Imagination is also what is, but unknown" (translated and quoted by Alquié,

1965, p. 125).

Two of the archetypal symbols that commonly appear in surrealist art and in dream imagery are *the faceless man* and *the animal-headed man*. After googling "faceless man archetype," we clicked on the first web address <http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_the_faceless_man_archetype> and read the following interpretation:

> The Faceless Man, the Eternal Stranger, represents the archetype of Death, the personification of the ultimate boundary of knowable human existence. Consider the cowled figure of the grim reaper, or the faceless third spirit in "A Christmas Carol."

The archetype of the faceless man and the archetype of the animal-headed man have been most compellingly deciphered, however, by the existential anthropologist Becker (1975), who explains why both facelessness and animality serve as symbolic manifestations of human death anxiety: