

www.asdreams.org

Fall 2019

DREAMTIME

M A G A Z I N E



Inside This Issue

- Kate Adams
- Mark Blagrove and Julia Lockheart
- Alaya Dannu
- Lisa Rigge
- And a Full 2019 Conference Wrap Up!



A Scientific Journey in IASD:

From Lab Dreaming to Dream Groups to Art and Empathy

Mark Blagrove and Julia Lockheart



Mark Blagrove is Professor of Psychology at Swansea University, Wales, and Director of the Sleep Laboratory at Swansea University. Dr Julia Lockheart is Senior Lecturer at Swansea College of Art, University of Wales Trinity St David, and Associate Lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London. Their collaboration can be seen on the website DreamsID.com.

During the wonderful Rolduc conference I (Mark Blagrove) was asked to write an article describing how a sleep scientist got involved in an arts science collaboration, with artist Julia Lockheart, and the role of IASD in that. It's a long story!

I first joined what was the Association for the Study of Dreams in 1989, and went to my first ASD conference that year, in London. I had just finished my PhD, on the relationship of dream content to waking life cognition. Before that I had studied experimental psychology as part of my Natural Sciences degree at Cambridge, and had got very interested in dreaming. The London conference was wonderful, meeting so many famous scientists, including Ros Cartwright, Ernest Hartmann, Milton Kramer and Allan Hobson. I remember Allan at the Dream Ball with a costume of a sheet with neurons drawn on it. ASD, and later IASD, had and still has the largest number of dreaming scientists of any conference. This is one of many reasons why I and other researchers come back year after year; I have been at all conferences apart from one, since then.

That conference was fun, even for me, a hard-nosed scientist; but I think there was a separation at that time between some scientists and the rest of the conference. Attendees did come together socially at the Dream Ball, and then the Dream Hike further brought the conference together (Thanks, Alan Siegel, for leading many of these.), and I started to bring bottles of single malt scotch so we could all have scotch tasting together, in about 1998. But I remember two incidents that really brought the conference together. One was the Keynote by Mark Solms at the Santa Cruz conference in 1999, which enthused so many attendees with work suggesting a neuroscientific basis for dreams depicting personal motivations and wishes, and with Milton Kramer praising the discussion between Solms and so many

in the audience. The background to the second incident was that the scientists generally didn't go to experiential sessions back then. So it was eye-opening when Milton Kramer emerged from a Gayle Delaney workshop session and told many of us that Gayle's exploration of a single dream was done so well, and so carefully, leading to so much information and insight about and for the dream sharer.

Eventually, we were to have scientist Michael Schredl running one of the morning dream groups. I also came to do so, but by an unexpected route. I had started to attend morning dream groups at the conference, partly to see what could be done with such dream content that in work-life research circumstances I was coding and turning into numbers. And following a paper on belief in precognitive dreams that I had written with well-known sceptic Chris French, I was also interested in confabulation, how we can turn any text, such as horoscopes and Tarot cards, into something meaningful to oneself. And so at the 2008 Montreal conference I attended a morning dream group run by Art Funkhouser, who combines Ullman and Jungian methods in a wonderfully supportive and gentle manner.

At one of the mornings that week no-one had a dream except me, but mine was short, and too bizarre to have any sense. So I told it as no other dream was available. In the dream my wife was giving me a collection of two or three CDs, like a gift. The top one had a self-portrait by Rembrandt, with a big floppy hat. In the group we could find little sense in the dream until someone asked whether the hat is like a professor's hat. From there the dream became very meaningful and very poignant. I had just been promoted to Professor (hence



the hat) and Head of Department at my University, and over the previous few years my wife and I had had two children, gifts. Further, amongst many other memory sources and associations, there was the realisation near the end of the dream group of the association to REMbrandt! And that the Rembrandts was the group that sang the theme to the sitcom Friends. I am very grateful to Art for running the group so well, and to the other group members, and over the following years I started to run dream groups at IASD and at my University and elsewhere. Nowadays, and for the future, several researchers are attending or holding dream groups at the annual IASD conference.

Until these events my aim at the Swansea University Sleep Laboratory had been to study dream content using the numerical coding of dreams, such as quantifying emotions in dreams, or by investigating why some people have more nightmares than others, or more lucid dreams. I then conducted much work on the dream-lag effect, following Tore Nielsen's papers on this, in which there is a 5-7 day delayed incorporation of waking life events into dreams, as well as the less controversial 1-2 day more immediate incorporation of waking life events into dreams, termed day-residues by Freud. Work on the dream-lag requires dream reports, collected at home or in the sleep lab, to be compared to waking life diary records of the dreamer from the 10 days before the dream occurred, so that incorporations of waking life experiences into dreams can be identified.

My experiences of dream groups, however, led me to a different question. What if, after the dream is coded for an experiment, it is returned to the dreamer and discussed in an open-ended way, asking where its components might have come from, and what sense the dreamer could make of the dream. I used the Ullman technique in doing this, and then published papers (with PhD student Chris Edwards) on the outcomes of these Ullman discussions, including comparing the insight outcomes of discussions of dreams with discussions of waking life events, and comparing outcomes of discussions of REM dreams, non-REM dreams, and daydreams. Outcomes were assessed by Clara Hill's Gains from Dream Interpretation questionnaire. Making the transition from highly controlled, often physiology-related studies of sleep and dreaming, to work on how the dreamer, with the help of others, makes sense of the dream, would not have occurred without the eclectic mixture of disciplines and wonderful people that I met and meet at IASD.

I was so enthused with the work on discussing dreams using the Ullman technique that when, in the Summer of 2016, the British Science Association held its annual British Science Festival in Swansea, I wanted to propose an evening session of the public coming to an open event in which I would discuss the dreams of anyone attending. The Festival wanted to have a night-themed event in an educational and tourist attraction tropical-rainforest centre in Swansea; it is a striking glass-sided large pyramidal building. I talked this idea over with artist Julia Lockheart, who suggested that she could quickly paint each dream while the discussion of it occurred. We agreed that each dreamer would then be given the painting, so as to enable them to further consider the dream at home, and across time, after the event. On the evening, the event was magical, with dim light, trees everywhere, and various arts based science exhibits and performances. We (Julia and I) were sat at a table at the top of the spiralling path up through the rainforest, and with a large screen behind us, on which was live-projected a film of the painting as it was being made. The only downside to the event was the number of cockroaches

that emerged! So as to make a further connection with the science of dreaming, Julia painted each dream onto pages she tore from Freud's book *The Interpretation of Dreams*. We obtained the kind permission of the publishers (Wordsworth Editions, Hertfordshire, UK) to do this, using the first English translation of the book.

We named our science art collaboration DreamsID (Dreams Illustrated and Discussed, or Dreams Interpreted and Drawn; with reference also to Freud's notion of the id). We started performing at various places, such as conferences, art galleries, science festivals, the Freud Museum London, Los Angeles, Paris, and recently at the IASD Conference in Rolduc. Discussions of a dream are held in public, each lasting 50 – 60 minutes, with the painting produced in that time. When the dream sharer first tells their dream, Julia uses its narrative structure (for example, number of scenes), and environmental features and presence of objects, to select pages from Freud's book, by identifying visually relevant shapes in the paragraphs and text, including any footnotes. This then structures the painting. The audience members can watch the painting process on a large screen, which is positioned directly behind Mark and the dream sharer. After the dream is told several times, and Mark has clarified visual and plot details of the dream (for example, colours, shapes, ages and genders), the audience joins in with the discussion of the dream, following Ullman's method for this. They also see and comment on the final painting at the end.

While the painting is being made, Julia incorporates relevant words from the page into the painting. As these words are not spotted when the pages are chosen it is eerie how relevant these words can be, and it adds to the magic of the painting that words written by Freud (albeit in German) become part of the artwork, almost like free-association. We get audiences of up to about 80 people at these events, with dream sharers booking in advance for the one hour slots. Paintings from the collaboration can be seen on the Gallery page of the website DreamsID.com.

Once the project had occurred for two years our aim was being fulfilled. We were providing discussions and artworks that provide some insight for the lives of the dream sharers. But then we started to notice the effects these dreams and discussions were having on us, and on some audience members, and realised that this dream sharing was evoking empathy towards the dream sharer. The dream sharer was speedily disclosing aspects of their life, and we and the audience were partly seeing the world from their perspective, and having some understanding of their emotions. This resulted in our paper on the effects of dream sharing on empathy, published in June 2019 in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology*.

As an example of the artworks being produced through this collaboration, the painting reproduced with this article is of a dream told in the DreamsID session at the Rolduc 2019 IASD conference. We thank the dreamer for sharing it. The dream is of being the first human to speak to dolphins, of being able



to communicate the name of the sun, and to count to two with the dolphin, but of not being able to communicate about a wheat field, because it relates to the harvest, and to the seasons, which would not be known to dolphins. We are very grateful to the dream sharer, and to the audience, for such a wonderful conference session. We also have much gratitude to IASD, as IASD has resulted in a very worthwhile scientific journey of the first author of this article across 30 years, from statistics of coded dream variables to now include sense-making about dream content, and which now includes both authors of this article widening that work to the empathic social impact of dream sharing and of sharing art inspired by and depicting dreams.

Mark Blagrove studied experimental psychology as part of his Natural Sciences degree at Cambridge University; he then researched the relationship of dream content to waking life cognition for his PhD at Brunel University, London. He researches the relationship of sleep and dreaming with cognition, memory and emotion. Mark is a past-President of IASD and is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society.

Dr Julia Lockheart studied BA Fine Art at Central St Martins School of Art, London and MA Fine Art at Manchester Metropolitan University. She researched the relationship between writing and collaboration in arts education for her PhD at Goldsmiths, University of London. As part of the DreamsID collaboration she is interested in the relationship between dreaming, art and empathy. Julia is a Fellow of the RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce).