

**James Khazar**  
**Master of Fine Arts Thesis**

**IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE PROJECT *ILLUMINATED DREAMS***

**Abstract**

In this thesis I will present the *Illuminated Dreams* installation project – an interactive computer-based book of dreams. I will argue that those who interact with the project – the inter-actors – are connected, with minimal authorial mediation, to an open plane of interpretation in which they are actively engaged in experiencing Roland Barthes' structuring of myth. I will further argue that the structure of *Illuminated Dreams* proactively enables participants to freely bring their own interpretations to the allusions in dream narratives. And I will also argue that the project engages Freud's concept of the uncanny through the irrational process of consciously examining unconscious allusions for their connectedness to the waking world.

## ***Introduction***

My work emerges out of the uncanny, the double-take, out of those things which make us think twice about the meanings, intentions, and hidden connections in the world around us. My practice seeks to engage my audience with the fluid inter-connections that are all around them. I do this through works which turn viewers into more than just a passive participants, but into *inter-actors* – individuals who through their agency within the work become intimately engaged with it in both active and reactive ways, and thus modify the state of the work itself.

The subject of this thesis, *Illuminated Dreams*, is an artwork that engages its inter-actors with the fascinating allusions in dream narratives and brings them in direct contact with those allusions as floating or empty signifiers. It gives them a field of associations in which they are actively liberated to make their own interpretations. It bypasses traditional narrative forms – stories with a beginning, middle and end – and uses the intentionless narrative of dreams. It bypasses traditional illustrative forms – images with manifest connections to the narrative – with images generated by a process that explicitly circumvents those manifest connections. *Illuminated Dreams*' inter-actors are thereby freed from dealing with the dream narrator as an author who tries to dictate closed meanings on the text, but are instead connected with minimal authorial mediation to an open plane of interpretation in which they are actively engaged in experiencing Roland Barthes' structuring of myth. They are invited by the structure of *Illuminated Dreams* to freely bring their own "tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture"<sup>1</sup> into the process of interpretation. Further, in bringing the dream allusions to the connections brought by the inter-actor, *Illuminated Dreams* engages Freud's uncanny through the sometimes explicitly uncanny connections in dreams and through the irrational process of consciously examining unconscious allusions for their connectedness to the waking world.

*Illuminated Dreams* is an installation consisting of an interactive book of narratives from dreams chronicled by the artist over the last two years. The manuscript is presented as an Adobe Flash application playing on a self-contained computer system. The computer sits in the base of a stand – referred to as a lecturn<sup>2</sup> – on top of which sits a vertically oriented 24-inch diagonal 1920 by 1200 pixel resolution monitor. In front of the monitor is a mouse used to interact with the manuscript. To the sides of the monitor are speakers which playback the dream narrative that is read aloud when the page is viewed. The lecturn is at desk height; so individual viewers can sit while interacting with the book.

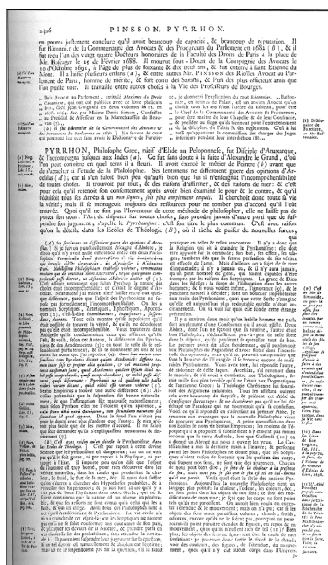
The interactive book is situated within a form resonant with medieval illuminated manuscripts. Illuminated manuscripts were developed in the early part of the Middle Ages as a form of reproduction for sacred texts. By the thirteenth century these manuscripts start to demonstrate sophisticated use of textual devices,<sup>3</sup> including glossa and marginalia. Glossae were usually commentary texts laid out between the

lines of the main text of the manuscript. In some senses they are like footnotes, but as Professor Paul Maharg says in his paper “Borne Back Ceaselessly Into the Past: Glossa, Hypertext and the Future of Legal Education:”

The likeness is clearly there, but only in a limited sense. Modern footnotes are clearly *parataxis*. They support the main text in a variety of ways, but they seldom seek to replace or argue with *taxis*. Our expectations of footnotes and their functions are based upon this subordinate role; and their place on the page (in the great majority of texts at the bottom of the page or relegated to a section at the end of a chapter or the end of the book) reflects this. The *glossae* which surround Gratian’s text [an example of glossed text], however, are quite different. They use the first person at times, they [take] many different forms... The result is not a footnote: more a critical commentary.<sup>4</sup>

This inserted text spoke with a critical and authoritative voice, often guiding the user – clergy who presented the scriptures to their flock – on the institutionally official interpretation of the text. While glossa served an institutional and exegetical function, marginalia – often a lined area on the side of the main text and filled in by the individual clergyman who used the book – served the function of localizing the commentary for the use of the presenter.

In *Illuminated Dreams* the glossa, using an authoritative voice, articulates a connection between the individual item in the narrative and a set of associated items, or allusions, not from the dream itself. The marginalia, using a first person voice, will place the dream in a personal context. The dream narrative will use a third person feminine voice and takes the position of the scripture in the manuscript. This multi-voiced concept, while resonant with Illuminated Manuscripts, is also influenced by other multi-voiced and multivalent books: Pierre Bayle’s early 18th Century *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* and Jacques Derida’s 1974 *Glas*.



Pierre Bayle’s (1647 – 1706) *Dictionnaire* began appearing in Europe in 1696 and was the most popular work of the eighteenth century;<sup>5</sup>

The content of this huge and strange, yet fascinating work is difficult to describe: history, literary criticism, theology, obscenity, and much more, in addition to philosophical treatments of toleration, the problem of evil, epistemological questions, and much more. His influence on the Enlightenment was, whether intended or not, largely subversive. Said Voltaire: “the greatest master of the art of reasoning that ever wrote, Bayle, great and wise, all systems overthrows.”<sup>6</sup>

The dictionary combines four different levels of text and notes that are defined spatially. The text of the main article is located in one broad column across the width of the page, usually at the top. That text is annotated with

bibliographic citations on either side in the margins. The main article is critically footnoted below the article in two columns. Bibliographic citations and cross references into the main article were placed in the margins of the footnotes. The critical footnotes frequently took up more room than the articles they were critiquing. Bayle makes use of a multi-column format that simultaneously presents multiple related streams of information. The antiquated format of illuminated manuscripts from the thirteenth century seems to have lived on.



Derrida *Glas* is written in (primarily) two columns, taking after Jean Genet's 1967 essay *Ce qui est resté d'un Rembrandt déchiré en petits carrés bien réguliers, et foutu aux chiottes*. Genet's essay appears on the page in two columns, reflecting his divided self after a crisis he had over Sartre<sup>7</sup>. In *Glas*, Derrida creates a "fragmented, lyrical celebration of Jean Genet's literary writings<sup>8</sup>" on the left side and a "meticulous discussion of Hegel's philosophical works, from his early writings to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Aesthetics*<sup>9</sup>" on the right. Maharg references the work in his essay on Hypertext and Glossa:

Derrida's own celebrated gloss, called *Glas*, is a good example of the form. It was printed on oversize pages using a column-structure (the English translation published by University of Nebraska Press, 1987, preserved this structure). The left-hand pages contain texts from and glosses on Hegel's conception of the family; while on the right-hand pages are Jean Genet's floral metaphors, and glosses on homosexual love. *Glas* even has a commentary: John P. Leavey, Jr, *Glossary*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1987. I do not, of course, claim that Derrida's text is a modern equivalent of the medieval gloss. Rather, it is a postmodern text, fragmented, evocative.<sup>10</sup>

What is influential in both these examples is the use of different positions of text blocks and typefaces to give a visceral quality of voice to the texts, and the parallelism of the format allows multiple ideas to float through the pages independently of each while remaining related. Juila Kristeva, in her book *Desire as Language* describes a notion of a three dimensional textual space:

These three dimensions or coordinates of dialogue are writing subject, addressee, and exterior texts. The word's status is thus defined *horizontally* (the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee) as well as *vertically* (the word in the text is oriented toward and anterior or synchronic literary corpus).<sup>11</sup>

By literally placing multiple texts side by side, Kristeva's notion of three dimensional texts suggests that there is an exponential relationship in the complexity of voices with these pages. This exponential multiplicity of voices/texts and enhanced multivalence, invites inter-actors with the text to expand their notion of how a text is situated relative to other texts, of how voices can interact to expand meaning. This multivalence is of core interest to the multiple voices used in *Illuminated Dreams*, which uses three voices in its marginalia, glossa and dream narrative texts, and further leverages the power of such multivalence with the pop-up allusions that appear when a glossa is interacted with.

## ***The Uncanny, Dreams, Databases, and Semiotics***

### **The Uncanny**

Sigmund Freud published an essay in 1919 on what he perceived as the need to investigate the subject of aesthetics from the broader perspective of all evoked emotions rather than the usual one of the perception of beauty. He takes the emotion that he sees as a subset of those emotions under the category of "fearful"<sup>12</sup> and spends the entire essay dissecting the specific set of feelings he calls *the uncanny*. He identifies that previous thinking on the subject contends that the uncanny is brought about by contact with the novel and unfamiliar, but disagrees with the narrowness of the definition and proposes that the definition be expanded to include "that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar, ... [is something that] has to be added to what is novel and unfamiliar to make it uncanny."<sup>13</sup>

Freud uses the ambiguity of the German word for the uncanny, *unheimlich*, to make an interesting case as to its ambiguous and ambivalent nature. Various translations of *unheimlich* into various languages points out this ambiguity: "un-comfortable, uneasy, gloomy, dismal, uncanny, ghastly; (of a house) haunted; (of a man) a repulsive fellow."<sup>14</sup> It also has an opposite that is not quite opposite, *heimlich*, which means belonging to the house, intimate, and homely. But *heimlich* means concealed and kept from sight as well, where *unheimlich* can mean the revelation of something that ought to have remained hidden and secret. Freud points out that:

Unheimlich is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which without being contradictory are yet different [and] thus heimlich is a word the meaning of which develops towards ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, unheimlich. Unheimlich is in some way or other a sub-species of heimlich.<sup>15</sup>

In other words, heimlich vacillates between hominess and secrecy, while unheimlich between uncanniness and the secret revealed. Freud makes a correlation between the secret and the revealed secret as being part of the familiar (one is familiar with one's own secrets) in opposition to the perceived limitation of the uncanny as reserved for the new and unfamiliar. He relates this concept to the idea of doubling, an important theme in his essay, which he divides into two senses, the doubling of the self, and the doubling of situations and locations.

On doubling of the self, Freud sites Otto Rank's *Der Doppgänger*, who makes connections with the double that has:

...reflections in mirrors, with shadows, guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and fear of death...for the double was originally an insurance against destruction to the ego, an 'energetic denial of the poser of death,' as Rank says; and probably the 'immortal' soul was the first 'double' of the body.<sup>16</sup>

On doubling of situations and locations, Freud gives examples of the coincidental repetition of numbers, such as 62 appearing several times in a single day, or of walking in circles in a strange town and encountering the same location—a red-light district—over and over. He says:

This factor of involuntary repetition which surrounds with an uncanny atmosphere what should otherwise be innocent enough, and forces upon us the idea of something fateful and inescapable where otherwise we should have spoken of 'chance' only... [B]ased upon instinctual activity and probably inherent in the very nature of the instincts [which] prepares us for the discovery that whatever reminds us of this inner repetition-compulsion is preserved as uncanny.<sup>17</sup>

Along with this flavor of the uncanny, Freud also presents a concept called the "omnipotence of thoughts,<sup>18</sup>" a variant of situational doubling through coincidence. Here, the feeling of the uncanny is brought on by the coincidental occurrence of a thought or utterance which in short time becomes true, for example where one wishes aloud that someone should die and they presently do so, causing a feeling that ones thoughts might have had a causal effect. Freud's analysis of the causes of uncanny feelings through doubling of agency and doubling of presence leads him back to:

...the old, animistic conception of the universe, which is characterized by the idea that the world was peopled with the spirits of human beings, and by the narcissistic overestimation of subjective mental processes (such as the belief in the omnipotence of thoughts, the magical practices based upon this belief, the carefully proportioned distribution of magical powers or 'mana' among various outside persons and things).<sup>19</sup>

As modern adults, Freud believes that we have a not-quite-transcended stage of emotional development he calls the animistic stage, which remains with us enough that it can be "re-activated, and that everything which now strikes us as 'uncanny' fulfils the condition of stirring those vestiges of mental activity within us and bring them into expression.<sup>20</sup>" This recognition of the uncanny as related to experiencing that which is inexplicable through rational thinking yet is familiar, is the essence of the game of ambiguous meaning between heimlich and unheimlich, between the secret and the secret revealed.

## Dreams as Uncanny

Dreams, specifically the objects and events encountered within dreams, qualify as uncanny by Freud's definitions in three ways. Through their association with the animistic and ritualistic, through their association to the ambiguous/ambivalent relationship between heimlich and unheimlich, and through the sometimes remarkable ability of dreams to confront the double of oneself, indeed, through the limitation of dreams to only allow for confrontation with a part of one's internal self or unconscious mind.

To conclude his essay on the uncanny, Freud summarizes: "An uncanny experience occurs either when repressed infantile complexes"—from the animistic stage of development in which one believes in the inanimate having a soul or "the narcissistic overestimation of subjective mental processes...have been revived by some impression, or when the primitive beliefs we have surmounted seem once more to be confirmed."<sup>21</sup> In other words, encountering an irrational event connects us to the uncanny. Dreams are inherently irrational since they defy rational analysis and can often lead to a sense of the uncanny through their associations to animistic belief systems confirmed within the reality within a dream.

Dreams may also be considered uncanny through Freud's word-play of the ambiguous/ambivalent heimlich/unheimlich pairing. When we dream we create an internal world that does not exist outside our own mental actions. These worlds are, as per Freud's numerous quoted definitions, heimlich—internal, inside, "within the four walls of (one's) house" or in this case, mind. And dreams are particularly heimlich in the secondary sense, "concealed, kept from sight." Therefore, the narration of dreams by the dreamer is inherently unheimlich, as it becomes something that was secret and hidden but has now come to light. In other words the revealed narrative of a dream is unheimlich—uncanny. Further, when a narrated dream contains an allusion that directly connects to waking reality the feeling of having encountered an animistic universe comes again to the foreground. For example, finding the allusion "Gold Coins" in *Illuminated Dreams* after having just inherited a box full would be uncanny, or finding the name "Billy Barty" and shortly thereafter learning of his death. Further still, since one can dream of oneself from both a centered, through-the-eye-of-the-viewer, point of view and through a disembodied observational point of view, the notion of the *Dopplegänger*, the doubled-self can become a presence within the dream narrative when the dream is recalled.<sup>22</sup> However, even an apparently uneventful connection, not as explicit as the recognition of direct correspondence or of a doubled self, becomes uncanny when the connections to allusions are examined simply for their connectedness to the waking world. There can be no physical or literal connections. No manifest meanings can be successfully inscribed, only those connections and meanings that we bring to the game of interpretation. That connection is magical in as much as it operates outside the bounds of conscious rational thought. By drawing connections between the allusions articulated in a narrative of the dream world and corresponding forms in the waking world, one is firmly situated in the uncanny. The waking, conscious and rational mind is in a position of facing and processing that which is unconscious and irrational. Inter-actors with *Illuminated Dreams* become directly involved in that process of connection making and engage themselves with the uncanny.

## Dreams as Narratives

Carl Jung summarized Freud's theory of the dream:

“[the dream] is an autonomous and meaningful product of psychic activity, susceptible, like all other psychic functions, of a systematic analysis. The organic sensations felt during sleep are not the cause of the dream; they play but a secondary role and furnish only elements (the material) upon which the psyche works. According to Freud the dream, like every complex psychic product, is a creation, a piece of work which has its motives, its trains of antecedent associations; and like any considered action it is the outcome of a logical process, of the competition between various tendencies and the victory of one tendency over another. Dreaming has a meaning, like everything else we do.<sup>23</sup>”

Dreams are valid narratives that have subjective meanings while at the same time they have little or no explicit or manifest meaning. The allusions within a dream narrative – the dream's objects, events and tropes – rarely carry with them their manifest meaning. A cigar is *not* just a cigar when dreamt of. It has no existence as a physical object and it has *no intended meaning*. Bert O. States puts the idea of intention and meaning in regard to dreams thusly:

Normally we don't argue whether linguistic constructions (literary texts, for example) have meaning. We might claim that one meaning is better than another or that there are contradictory meanings or no end of possible meanings, and so on. But literary texts are safely assumed to mean because they are produced by waking individuals who wouldn't bother writing unless they had something to communicate to other waking individuals, and this something is almost always referred to as meaning. The problem with dreaming is that there is no apparent receiver and hence the whole dimension of intentionality<sup>24</sup> – one of the subconditions of meaning – acquires a questionable status.<sup>25</sup>

He goes on to say that this questionability of intentionality in dreams open them up for examination:

Indeed, as Freud said, the dream itself is “a matter of no importance”; only the dream thoughts (and waking thoughts about the dream) are important, and “the faintest possibility that something [recalled by the dreamer] may have occurred in the dream shall be treated as complete certainty (1973 [1900], 5:516-17). *The dream, then, is an occasion for talking about something exterior to or beneath it.*<sup>26</sup> [my emphasis]

Lacking manifest meaning and authorial intentionality, dreams, dream narratives and the allusions within dreams are empty vessels whose referents lend themselves to the examination of their “trains of antecedent associations.”

One can begin a process of analyzing dreams without the pressure of a pre-determined meaning. Over time the process can be performed on multiple dreams, and a collection of associations between allusions and their referents is created. A constellation of associations around particular allusions can influence the associations made to other allusions and/or reinforce particular associations. For example, as in dreams in which tidal waves appear over time, the associations to the tidal wave can become more interrelated to other associations. The collection of allusions that appear repeatedly within and across dreams becomes a

tool to expand and enhance the meanings held within the collection. The collection is a kind of semiotic system, which contains an ever-expanding set of signifier (things, words, etc) and signifieds (the mental representation of a things). It is a loop that feeds back upon itself and characterizes the the collection as a process of continuous change, making it a dynamic interactive system pre-disposed towards keeping allusions freely available for multiple interpretations.

### Semiotics

In his posthumously published “Third Course of Lectures in General Linguistics<sup>27</sup>” (1911) Ferdinand Saussure, the Swiss linguist, defined a way of looking at meaning in which he took language and broke it down into a minimum unit of meaning, or a sign. A sign is made up of two components, a *signifier* and a *signified*. The *signifier* is an object such as a word, a sound, an image, a ‘thing’ of some sort. “The *signified* is not a ‘thing’, but a mental representation of a ‘thing.’<sup>28</sup>” The associative total of both is a sign. Roland Barthes states it most clearly:

Sign: Passionified Roses	
Signifier	Signified
Roses	Passion

“For what we grasp is not at all one term after the other [signifier after sign], but the correlation which unites them: there are, therefore, the signifier, the signified and the sign, which is the associative total of the first two terms. Take a bunch of

roses: I use it to *signify* my passion. Do we have here, then, only a signifier and a signified, the roses and my passion? Not even that: to put it accurately, there are here only ‘passionified’ roses. But on the plane of analysis, we do have three terms; for these roses weighted with passion perfectly and correctly allow themselves to be decomposed into roses and passion: the former and the latter existed before uniting and forming this third object, which is the sign...[T]he signifier is empty, the sign is full, it is a meaning.<sup>29</sup>”

Roland Barthes extends Saussure’s concept of the semiotic sign to what he defines as *myth*, or “a form of speech.”

In myth, we find again the tri-dimensional pattern that I have just described: the signifier, the signified and the sign. But myth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain that existed before it: it is a *second-order semiological system*. That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system becomes a mere signifier in the second.<sup>30</sup>

Language MYTH	[	1. Signifier	2. Signified
		3. Sign	
		I SIGNIFIER	II SIGNIFIED
		III SIGN	

Barthes gives two examples, first:

I am a pupil in the second form in a French *lycée*. I open my Latin grammar, and I read a sentence, borrowed from Aesop or Phaedrus: *quia ego nominor leo*. I stop and think. There is something ambiguous about this statement: on the one hand, the words in it do have a simple meaning: *because my name is lion*. And on the other hand, the sentence is evidently there in order to signify something else to me. In as much as it is addressed to me, a pupil in the second form, it tells me clearly: I am a grammatical example meant to illustrate the rule about the agreement of the predicate. ... I conclude that I am faced with a particular, greater, semiological system, since it is co-extensive with the language: there is, indeed, a signifier, but this signifier is itself formed by a sum of signs, it is in itself a first semiological system (*my name is lion*). Thereafter, the formal pattern is correctly unfolded: there is a signified (I am a grammatical example) and there is a global signification, which is none other than the correlation of the signifier and the signified: for neither the naming of the lion nor the grammatical example are given separately.<sup>31</sup>

And second:

I am at the barber's, and a copy of *Paris-Match* is offered to me. On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the *meaning* of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully server under her flag... I am therefore again faced with a greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (*a black soldier is giving the French salute*); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally, there is a presence of the signified through the signifier.

The importance of this concept of second order signification in *Illuminated Dreams* cannot be overstated. Within dreams are the allusions to referents that can be extracted from the dream's tropes, objects and events. Barthes says:

We can see here how necessary it is to distinguish the sign from the signifier: a dream, to Freud, is no more its manifest datum than its latent content: it is the functional union [the sign] of these two terms."

The dreamed of rose, the allusion in the dream, is a signifier, it is a "manifest datum." It's latent content – its signified – is grasped from the analysis of the dreamer's associations to roses. The associative total of the dreamed rose and its dreamer's associations is the sign. It lies unrevealed until examined – until it is conveyed by a discourse between the dreamer's unconscious and his or her waking self.

By connecting first order linguistic meaning to second order mythological meaning, Barthes has delineated a structure for processing dreams. Since dream allusions are intentionless signs, or at least signs of questionable intentionality, they are structurally predisposed to lend themselves to the myth system's second order signification and cannot help but be ensnared within Barthes' system of mythical signification:

We must recall that the materials of mythical speech, ... however different at the start, are reduced to a pure signifying function as soon as they are caught by myth. Myth sees in them only the same raw material; their unity is that they all come down to the status of a mere language.<sup>32</sup>

Having been “caught by myth,” the dream allusions take on a life separate from the dream narrator that belongs to the inter-actor. Further, the narrator – especially if he or she narrates the dream as it unfolds, without interpretation, as is the case with *Illuminated Dreams* – becomes not an author of the dream, but what Barthes’ calls its *scriptor*:

In complete contrast [to the Author,] the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as a predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here and now*.<sup>33</sup>

The scriptor of the dream readily becomes invisible. The performance of the reading of the text by the reader (*Illuminated Dream’s* inter-actor) overrides any ownership the scriptor may have had:

We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.<sup>34</sup>

Each inter-actor/reader brings their own individual and unique set of “tissues of quotations” from the innumerable, and therefore individualizable, centres of culture. Each is invited by the structure of *Illuminated Dreams* to do so through interacting with multiple layers of allusions and associated questions.

Dream allusions are predisposed to mythification, and the presentation of this mythification in *Illuminated Dreams* predisposes the author of the dream narrations to the role of Barthes’ scriptor. Interaction between the scriptor and reader – in *Illuminated Dreams*, the *inter-actor* – ties together Barthes’ contentions that A: “everything can be myth provided it is a discourse,<sup>35</sup>” and B: “the reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination...<sup>36</sup>” For example, when an inter-actor clicks on a glossa he or she becomes engaged with what appears, a set of free-associated allusions related to the glossa’s pointed-at item. This engagement is predisposed to mythologizing since it has an intentionless original signifier. The mythologizing process in which the inter-actor is placed, propels them towards “the space on which all the quotations” are inscribed, unencumbered by the scriptor’s text. More specifically: one clicks on the glossa “Towers are like anything that is taller than wide...” which is pointing at “a tower of chocolate cake.” A set of allusions appears connected to the tower of chocolate cake: “A Phallus,” “Stone Tower,” and “A Rook” appears overlaying the dream narrative. Rolling over “Stone Tower” invokes a pop-up box with the question “Are stones like cakes? Ever had a cake as dry as a stone? Didn’t cake flower used to be ground by stones?” Each of these relationships is actively and engagingly open to interpretation by the inter-actor, who – if they are willing to become involved with the piece – engage with each step as myth. The manifest meaning of the allusion is unavailable or irrelevant and actively engages the inter-actor in freely mythifying by bringing in their unique set of significations.

## Databases

Myth and the collection of associations derived from discourse with dream allusions creates an environment of open-ended and inter-actor owned interpretations. The performance of this interpretation also creates a structure of information that allows the signification process to be applied to that information. The information itself has a form similar to a database.

Computer databases are systems that contain data stored indexically within a defined structure or set of structures to be algorithmically processed to extract sets of existing data and combine them into new data sets. Data within a database is usually organized in tables of rows and columns, each column defining a holding place for a particular type of data, such as “sender,” “flower” or “emotion,” and each row (or *record*) defining a unique collection of instances of the types of data defined by the columns that intersect it, such as “Pat,” “rose,” and “love”. A database system also includes a processing function that allows algorithmic examinations of the database, known as *queries*, to be performed on the data stored in the database in order to extract new meaning from it. Without a querying function the database would be an inert mass of data with limited usefulness. For example, a query might examine the database for all instances of data that answer the question “How many senders use roses to represent love?” The information was not manifestly in the table – there isn’t a single row that contains the information on how many senders use roses to represent love, but is implicit and has to be extracted from the table by the query. The data in the table is also extendable and replaceable. There is no theoretical limit on the number of records a database may contain, and no theoretical limit on the number of times data may be changed within any given record. Placing such limits would significantly curtail the flexibility of the database system.

In a *relational* database system data can be related to data in other tables, so the data at “flower” – “rose” – can be related to another table of data with records pertaining to different kinds of roses. This structure is vital to the flexibility of contemporary databases and is based on theoretical research proposed by Edgar Codd in 1969.<sup>37</sup> Before his proposal, databases were based on the informational structures of existing physical systems; in fact, they are known as *flat-file* databases since they work much the same as files in an antique filing cabinet.<sup>38</sup> In a non-relational flat-file system, if one piece of data associated with another piece changes – for example a rose and its color – then all the records which contain the rose would have to be updated whenever the vendor supplying that color of rose had to substitute another color. Queries in these systems were also limited to querying one table at a time. In a relational database the color data is kept in only one table, the “Rose Colors” table, and when queries are made such as “What are the colors of roses used for all instances of the emotion love?” the result is drawn from both the Emotional Flowers table and the “Rose Colors” table, preventing the need for updating information across multiple tables. Codd’s work brought the ability to abstract data and manipulate it through the complexities of mathe-

mathematical Set Theory<sup>39</sup> – infinitely more complex than what can be done with ordinary flat-file systems. Key to this system is the fact that data can be dynamically related to other data while also remaining independent of that data.

Within both dream analysis and databases are analogs of the signification process. Database concepts can have the structure of Signifier/Signified/Sign applied to them:

<b>Sign of strong feeling to give to my heart's desire Table</b>	
<b>Signifier Column</b>	<b>Signified Column</b>
Rose	Passion
Chocolate	Passion
Bottle of Massage Oil	Lust

Like a database, the data at any given position is exchangeable. The format of the data, text, image, concept, is not relevant to the fact that it can be stored at a particular position, and needs to be stored there in order for the table to take on the full meaning of the sign. Effectively, one could generate a query such as “What signifier and signified make up the sign for objects which represent a strong feeling that I can give my heart's desire?” Rose|Passion, or Chocolate|Passion, or Bottle of Massage Oil|Lust, for examples.

The collection of dream allusions fits into this model of database as a storage for signs, and explicitly engages it in the construction of *Illuminated Dream's* storage of second, third and fourth ordered associations.<sup>40</sup> The installation is a collection of dream allusions and is, in fact, a database of those signifiers and signifieds out of which a sign is created by the inter-actor. Inter-actors carry with them Barthes' “tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.” The dream collection is made up of intentionless allusions, and gives the inter-actor ample room to carry those quotations with them while they navigate the collection. The collection is free to take on new associations and meanings, and actively and explicitly makes itself available to the inter-actor to do so. For example, when the inter-actor sees the on-screen relationship between “Stone Tower” and “Gold Coin” when traversing the plane of allusions under “tower of chocolate cake,” they are moving through a broad and minimally bounded plane on which they can bring their tissue of quotations.

*Illuminated Dreams* first-order surface of three voices and texts are supplemented by interactive second, third and forth-order systems invoked when the inter-actor clicks on a glossa. The second order consists of a layer of flow-chart-like boxes with the name of something in them associated to the first layer's glossa item. Rolling the cursor over a box, pops up another box, connected by lines with the root layer and the rolled-over box, and holding a question relating the glossa and the second order item. Clicking on a second-order item brings up a similar third-order of items. To clarify the second and third-orders, here is a specific example:

FIRST-ORDER	SECOND-ORDER	SECOND-ORDER QUESTION	THIRD-ORDER	THIRD-ORDER QUESTION
tower of chocolate cake	A Phallus	What is a tower if it isn't a phallic symbol? And melting ice cream? Is this too obvious?	XXX	When is a penis just a penis?
	Stone Tower	Are stones like cakes? Ever had a cake as dry as a stone? Didn't cake flower used to be ground by a stone?	Arthurian Knights	Who lives in towers?
			My Father	Carl Jung lived in a tower, and talked about its animistic presence. Jung is a father-figure thing. Does he look like your father?
			Gold Coin	Imagine a dream of a stone tower. What might you find inside? A Treasure?
	A Rook	Does a tower of chocolate cake remind you of a rook in a chess game? Is not the chocolate color of the cake like a black piece?	School Desk	Chess is a game you lose if you play defensively. Did you ever join the chess club at school? How did you play?

The structure above is a relational database structure. While this implementation does not explicitly use an external database, it nonetheless holds the data from which it is constructed in a table-column-row format<sup>41</sup>. Like a functional database, any data at a particular position, which as previously presented is equivalent to a semiotic signified, can be readily substituted by another signified, without changing the signifier, or column-row position for data<sup>42</sup>.

The fourth-order is accomplished through associating the second and third-ordered items with an animated illumination in the large first initial capital letter on each page, invoked by rolling over the items.

### The Free-Association Process

In *Illuminated Dreams* the second, third and fourth order glossa are generated by a personal conceptual system. The second-order is generated by taking the first-order item – “a device,” for example – and creating up to five associated second-order items by performing a modified mental process of free association.<sup>43</sup>

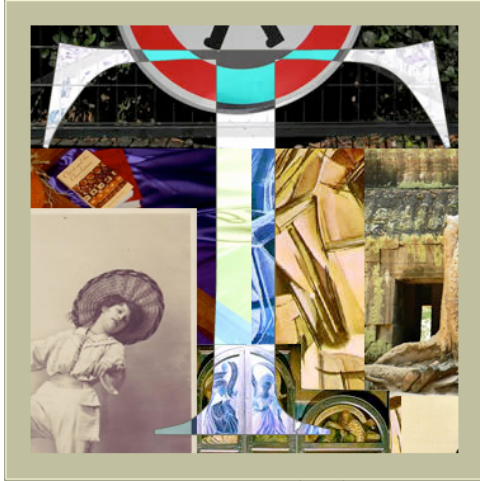
The process of free association is more than simply thinking up a bunch of images. It requires a state of mind that is open and non self-censoring. Done properly, the mental search for an association is intentionless – there is no goal towards a particular objective beyond the finding of associations. One does not look for a particular association; an association presents itself in the mind's eye without conscious intention. For example, when presented with the allusion “big oak tree”, which appears in a dream, the process brings up “A Crashed Truck,” “Freon,” “Electrodes,” and “Coffee Cup.” “A Crashed Truck” comes from an accident that I had which led me to go to a doctor who instructed in bio-feedback techniques for reducing stress – he had a large oak tree out in front of his office. “Freon” is the name of a cat I once had who is buried under the oak tree in my back yard. “Electrodes” are from the bio-feedback sessions. “Coffee Cup” is from another dream that just popped into my mind's eye – I cannot make a straight-forward association for it. The process yields even more diverse images when carried out on the first level to create a second. “Freon” originally associated with my late cat, yields “Neon,” “Ozone,” “Israel,” and “Soapstone.” “Neon” is another elemental gas, “Ozone” another late cat, “Israel” made a positive-ion (ozone) emitting device I once had that gave me vivid dreams, and “Soapstone” is what I purchased to make a marker-stone for Freon's resting place under the oak.

In the process of building associations or allusions within Illuminated Dreams, the first order “a device” free associates to “An Umbrella,” “A Leather Chair,” “A Thermometer,” and “An Alchemist's Alembic”. I cannot draw a connecting chain of thoughts between “a device” and “An Umbrella”, but it appeared in my mind's eye nevertheless. I can only speculate on its connections. “An umbrella is a kind of device,” is an insufficient explanation of its presence in my mind's eye. Perhaps it has to do with the dream device's function to dispense liquid – it may be an inversion of the dispensing process into a fending off process. This is relevant only insofar as it demonstrates the potential for exploration of any given association. “A Leather Chair” I *can* connect back to the masculine feelings connected to the dispensing of whiskey between the father and me in the dream. It harkens to smoky men's clubs in English movies from the early 40's (at least to me).

I ran the same process on the second-order items created by the above free-associational process described above had the same process run on them to create a third order of items. “A Leather Chair” generates “Corsets,” “A Straw Broom,” and “Bald Men” for example. This was done to embrace and amplify the mythological semiotic slippage of the dream narrative's allusive object.

Once the two orders were generated the relationship between the two was examined in the same way as above. A question was created which connected the two items by re-creating the mental state when finding the association, examining the link and articulating it in the form of a question in order to lead the inter-actor into the same plane of associations as the dream narrator. For example, “A Leather Chair” related to “Bald Men” leads to a question “They sit and rule the world. Are they your father?” By presenting

this question, the inter-actor is lead to draw an association between the “A Leather Chair” and “Bald Men” on a plain of interpretation similar to that of the narrator. Through the question the viewer becomes engaged in the process of the semiotic slippage and is provided with pathways in finding their own interpretations by example.



The fourth-order animated illuminations use a very specific process in the acquisition and display of its animated images. The text of the second and third order items was used as a search string in Google’s image search feature; “Leather chair straw broom” for example, or “rook school desk” (Google ignores articles like “a” and “the,” so they were left out). Eight images were chosen from the results that did *not* include images of any of the terms included in the search. The images were added to an automated animation engine that animates them inside the large illuminated capital and randomizes their z-order (the order of which image appears in front of another) and their animation cycle position. Since each image moves in

a repeating cycle<sup>44</sup> the later randomization prevents the combined cycles from repeating a pattern. This animation process creates an animation that will never appear the same way twice. The process of creating the animated illuminations is one of bricolage. Derrida refers to:

“[T]he mythopoetical virtue of bricolage. In effect, what appears most fascinating in this critical search for a new status of the discourse is the stated abandonment of all reference to a *center*, to a *subject*, to a privileged *reference*, to an origin, or to an absolute archia. <sup>45 46</sup>”

Lacking reference to *center*, *subject*, and privileged *reference*, the animated illumination’ produces literally floating signifiers within the discourse of the dream. Levi-Strauss, in his essay *The Savage Mind* compares “mythical thought” – the animistic world-view – to the process of bricolage,<sup>47</sup> which is by Freud’s definition uncanny since it can startle use with its animistic connections, with “the old, animistic conception of the universe<sup>48</sup>”. Remarkably, when the animated illuminations were being assembled, this uncanny-ness became readily apparent. When searching for images using the previously described process, images would appear from time to time that were directly related to some other item or glossa. For example, a search on “umbrella tool cabinet” turned up some images of an alligator, which was an item at another position in the same glossa, but not in the query. Also in a search on “punchinello winnebago” a clear bold image of a large umbrella without a Punchinello or a Winnebago was returned; the umbrella is similarly situated as a allusion in another part of the dream. This happened on a significant number of occasions, more than would seem to create a mere serendipitous correlation of terms. These terms relate through some underlying and unseen process embedded in Google’s search technology, which while rationally limited to a rule-based system<sup>49</sup>, seem to imply an animistic intelligence to the search engine, endowing it with a kind of spirit.

## ***Critiques and Revisions***

The current implementation of *Illuminated Dreams* presents certain problems in its attempt to provide a platform for inter-actors to freely bring their own “tissues of quotations” to the work – inasmuch as it is a closed system that provides the author’s interpretations but not those of the user. The structure *does* provide a platform in which inter-actors are invited by example to bring their interpretations. This has proven to be the case in a number of informal interviews with inter-actors at the Emergence2007 show. Melissa Fritchely who was very involved as an inter-actor with the piece, said it “got her really thinking about the possibilities for the interpretation of dreams, yours and my own.<sup>50</sup>” This is an ideal response, but there is room for improvement.

I intend to keep developing this piece, and a key component is to add the ability for inter-actors to enter their own allusions into the glossas. The first and second order allusions that appear in the boxes when you click on a glossa would initially be populated by my allusions. One box would be a data entry field into which the inter-actor would be invited to enter their own allusion. All the newly entered allusions would be kept in a database and each time the glossa is activated, a randomized set of allusions would appear in the boxes. This opens up the piece significantly and, I think, transforms it to a whole new level of effectiveness in its goal to provide an open-ended broadly multivalent, intertextual, sriptor-not-author-based experience.

The piece is also overly customized in the sense of how much work must be done to create each page. Ultimately it will be entirely database-driven and adding a new dream will simply be a matter of entering the dream text and audio, the marginalia, the glossa, and an initial set of allusions. Dream layouts will be automatically populated, and the bricolage images will be captured automatically and on the fly off of Google Image Search. There was not sufficient development time in the DANM program to create this; the labor involved is about one order of magnitude greater than that which was spent on the current version. But once completed *Illuminated Dreams* version two has the potential to be a multi-year, constantly changing and improving, work of art.

## ***Conclusion***

Version one of *Illuminated Dreams* engages its inter-actors with dream narratives, bringing them into direct contact with their floating or empty signifiers, and giving them a field of associations in which they are lead to make their own interpretations. It bypasses traditional narrative forms and uses the intentionless and frequently plot-less narrative of dreams, combined with free-association techniques and visual bricolage to create an environment that frees the inter-actor from the confining influences of the tradi-

tional dictatorial narrator /interpreter. The multivocality of the interface connects inter-actors to a plane of interpretation in which they are directly engaged in experiencing Roland Barthes' structuring of myth and invited to freely bring their own "tissues of quotations." However, the closed nature of the interaction is problematical in the limits it places on inter-actors to work with and expand these associations. Version two of *Illuminated Dreams* will address this by allowing inter-actors to enter their own allusions, which will then be used to create new combinations of allusions for other inter-actors, thus making the connection between the inter-actor and their "tissues of quotations" even more explicit and direct.

Both versions of *Illuminated Dreams* draw connections between the allusions articulated in narratives of the dream world and corresponding forms in the waking world, firmly situating one in the uncanny. The waking, conscious and rational mind of the inter-actor actively faces and processes that which is unconscious, irrational, and uncanny.

## ***Acknowledgments***

I would like to thank the members of my committee, committee chair Associate Professor Sharon Daniel, Assistant Professor Elliot Anderson, and Assistant Professor Ed Osborn, for their tireless support and invaluable contributions in creating this thesis. I am greatly in their debt.

## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> R. Barthes. "Myth Today." Mythologies. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972. Page 147.

<sup>2</sup> Lecturn: A choir desk, or reading desk, in some churches, from which the lections, or Scripture lessons, are chanted or read; hence, a reading desk.

Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary. MICRA, Inc. 06 May. 2007.  
<Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/lecturn>>.

<sup>3</sup> P. Maharg, Professor, Glasgow Graduate School of Law. 'Borne back ceaselessly into the past': Glossa, hypertext and the future of legal education. Draft of paper presented to BILETA Conference, 2006. The draft may be found at [http://zeugma.typepad.com/Maharg\\_BILETA\\_article\\_2006.doc](http://zeugma.typepad.com/Maharg_BILETA_article_2006.doc) (May 5th, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Maharg, page 15.

<sup>5</sup> T. Lennon. "Pierre Bayle." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. First published February 7th, 2003. Stable ULR: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/bayle/> (May 4th, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> G. Plunka. The Rights of Passage of Jean Genet: The Art and Aesthetics of Risk Taking. London, England: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1992. Page 120.

<sup>8</sup> J.M. Todd. "Autobiography and the Case of the Signature: Reading Derrida's Glas." Comparative Literature, Vol. 38, No. 1, (Winter, 1986), pp. 1-19.

Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0010-4124%28198624%2938%3A1%3C1%3AAATCOT%3E2.o.CO%3B2-Z> (May 4th, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Maharg, page 16 (footnote 51).

<sup>11</sup> Julia Kristeva. Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980. Page 66.

<sup>12</sup> S. Freud. "The Uncanny." Studies in Parapsychology. Ed. Philip Rieff. New York: Collier Books, Third Printing, 1966. Page 19.

<sup>13</sup> Freud, 20-21.

<sup>14</sup> Freud, 21.

<sup>15</sup> Freud, 30.

<sup>16</sup> Freud, 40.

<sup>17</sup> Freud, 43.

<sup>18</sup> Freud, 46.

<sup>19</sup> Freud, 46.

<sup>20</sup> Freud, 46.

<sup>21</sup> Freud, 55.

<sup>22</sup> I once dreamed I had died then been reborn as a paraplegic young boy, only to be brought back from the dead in my original body. At one point in the dream my returned-from-the-dead self met my paraplegic self and we both did an uncanny double-take. I am still able to recall the dream through either dream-self's point of view.

<sup>23</sup> C. Jung. "The Analysis of Dreams." Dreams. R.F.C. Hull, translator. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974. Page 3.

<sup>24</sup> Bert States adds a footnote on "intentionality" to disambiguate its meaning from the phenomenological term. "As I am using the term in the present context, intentionality means what most nonphenomenological interpreters mean by it: that idea that there is what we may call a semiotic or semantic motivation in the dream, as there is in literature..."

<sup>25</sup> Bert O. States. Dreaming and Storytelling. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993. Pages 140-141.  
Bert O. States is Professor Emeritus of Dramatic Arts at UCSB

<sup>26</sup> States, 141.

<sup>27</sup> F de Saussure. Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistics.  
Online: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/saussure.htm> (May 4th, 2007).

<sup>28</sup> Roland Barthes. Elements of Semiology. New York: Hill and Wang, 1964. Page 42.

<sup>29</sup> Roland Barthes. "Myth Today." Mythologies. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972. Page 113.

<sup>30</sup> Barthes, page 114.

<sup>31</sup> Barthes, page 115-116.

<sup>32</sup> Barthes, page 114

<sup>33</sup> Barthes, Roland "The Death of the Author." Image Music Text. New York: Hill and Wang, 1978. Page 146.

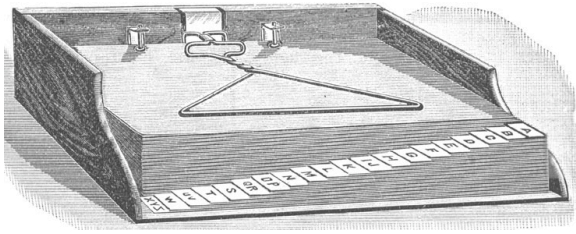
<sup>34</sup> Barthes, page 147.

<sup>35</sup> Barthes. "Myth Today." Page 109.

<sup>36</sup> Barthes. "The Death of the Author." Page 148.

<sup>37</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Database#Relational\\_model](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Database#Relational_model) (May 26th, 2007).

<sup>38</sup> At the end of the Nineteenth Century, files stored vertically in folders was not yet invented. Filing cabinets where made up of drawers in which the paperwork was stored horizontally.



<sup>39</sup> Thomas Jech. "Set Theory." [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/set-theory/). Stanford, CA: Metaphysics Research Lab, 2002. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/set-theory/> (May 27, 2007). "Set Theory is the mathematical science of the infinite...The objects of study of Set Theory are sets. As sets are fundamental objects that can be used to define all other concepts in mathematics, they are not defined in terms of more fundamental concepts. Rather, sets are introduced either informally, and are understood as something self-evident, or, as is now standard in modern mathematics, axiomatically, and their properties are postulated by the appropriate formal axioms...Using the membership relation one can derive other concepts usually associated with sets, such as unions and intersections of sets." It is from this mathematical study of set relationships that relational databases and database queries are founded.

<sup>40</sup> For more on the process for developing these orders, see the description in the section describing the *Illuminated Dreams* installation.

<sup>41</sup> Flash uses on-screen elements called "movie clips." These movie clips are kept in a "library." The library has folders which can hold arbitrary collections of movie clips. The movie clips are instantiated on the screen by placing them on frames and layers. When well structured the library's folders are equivalent to a table's column, a movie clip in the folder is equivalent to a table's row, and frames are equivalent to queries on the database. For example, there is a folder in the library called "glossa" contains all movie clips which are glossa, a movie clip in that folder called "glossa\_d1\_g1" contains all the data for that row, and the frame labeled "i3\_s1" sets up the "glossa\_d1\_g1" movie clip to show the equivalent to the query "What is the question that connects the third second order item and the first third order item?" It is also relational, since movie clips are nested inside movie clips.

<sup>42</sup> Future versions of the project will be directly database driven, which will allow for relatively easy expansion of the interactive book's content. The current version involves complex layout issues that prevent adaptation of back-end database in the available time for the project. The issues come up when the position of a glossa is close to the edge of the page or near the illuminated capital. Code must be developed that will reposition the boxes and connecting lines away from them.

<sup>43</sup> Raymond Fancher. "Commentary on The Origin and Development of Psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud (1910)." [Classics in the History of Psychology](http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Freud/Origin/commentary.htm). Christopher D. Green, editor. Toronto, York University: 1998. Stable URL: <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Freud/Origin/commentary.htm> (May 28th, 2007). "Patients in the normal waking state (but still reclining with eyes closed on the hypnotic subject's couch) were instructed to let their minds wander freely to any and all thoughts aroused by their symptoms, no matter how ridiculous seeming or anxiety arousing."

<sup>44</sup> top to bottom, bottom to top, left to right, right to left, upper left to lower right, lower right to upper left, upper right to lower left, and lower left to upper right.

<sup>45</sup> Jacques Derrida. "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourses of Human Sciences." [Writing and Difference](#). Alan Bass, translator. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. Page xvi. "*Archia* derives from the Greek *archē*, which combines the senses of a founding, original principle and of a government by one controlling principle."

<sup>46</sup> Derrida, page 286.

<sup>47</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss. [The Savage Mind](#). John and Doreen Weightman, translators. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966. Page 17.

---

<sup>48</sup> S. Freud. "The Uncanny." Studies in Parapsychology. Ed. Philip Rieff. New York: Collier Books, Third Printing, 1966. Page 19.

<sup>49</sup> The exact methodology used by Google for its image search is proprietary, but according to their web site:

Google analyzes the text on the page adjacent to the image, the image caption and dozens of other factors to determine the image content. Google also uses sophisticated algorithms to remove duplicates and ensure that the highest quality images are presented first in your results.

Perhaps somewhere in these "dozens of other factors" lies the uncanny intelligence of the machine.

<sup>50</sup> Personal interview with Melissa Fritchley June 14th, 2007.