

**Perception, 1990, volume 19, pages 831-832**

Reviews: *The multiplicity of dreams: memory, imagination and consciousness* by H T Hunt; Yale University Press, Newhaven, CT, 1989, 271 pages

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Books about dreaming range from the 'how to transform your life in no time at all' variety, through psychoanalytic interpretation, to modern cognitive theory—usually with very little overlap between them. In this new book, Hunt attempts to span the entire range of ideas in explaining the multiple forms of dream experience.

Dream research has arrived at a hiatus, claims Hunt. The previous optimism that REM research would 'explain it all' has given way to a deconstruction of dream psychology in which all the major descriptive, theoretical, and research approaches are equally open to question. Throughout the book he contrasts two main approaches, based on saying 'yes' or 'no' to the central question—do dreams have intrinsic meaning? To put it another way—do symbolic processes operate within the dream (and if so are they verbal, visual, or kinesthetic) or does the dream only seem to afford rich meaning because the inherently disorganised contents are interpreted as a story on waking? The question is important not only for theory but also for the big business of dream interpretation and dream work.

'Semantic froth' is all it is according to those who answer 'no'; such as the 19th-century mechanist Robert. Modern successors include Foulkes and, of course, Crick and Mitchison with their neural net approach. But such repeated denials of meaning imply to Hunt that, even for these researchers, meaning is the fundamental question.

Starting from this dichotomy, Hunt goes on to consider cognitive science versus organismic -holistic cognition, Freud versus Jung, and representational versus presentational symbolism; the dream as perception or as imagery, the centrality or irrelevance of the REM state and of psychoanalytic theory. It is within this framework that he reviews, though not always in a way that is easy to follow, recent dream research. It is only by interaction and juxtaposition that we can make a science out of dream psychology, he argues.

Gradually Hunt elaborates his thesis that there are multiple forms of dream. Of special interest are claims of prophetic or telepathic dreams. Here he does not try to answer the vexed question of whether such things actually occur, but simply bemoans the lack of systematic research to find out. Then there are lucid dreams; those in which you know during the dream that you are dreaming and can even take control of the events. This kind of control is

found in many shamanic systems and is also claimed to increase with meditation training. Here, as in other parts of the book, Hunt illustrates the points with his own dream accounts from the dream diary he has kept for many years.

A three-dimensional 'dream diamond' is the result of this categorisation. Hunt argues that dream research has by-passed the Linnaean stage and we need to return to it. However, I did not find this diamond, with its dimensions of 'vividness' and 'degree of symbolic differentiation' and its four faces, either very clear or helpful.

The book ends with Hunt's 'synesthetic model of becoming aware'. Consciousness emerges top-down in the putting together of information from the various senses, rather than just being a matter of computation.

Although Hunt provides an exciting mix of ideas and some useful study of narrative structures and the relevance of imagery and visuospatial aspects of dreams, it is clear that a true synthesis of the 'multiplicity of dreams' is still a long way off.

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