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Night Life: The Interpretation of Dreams. Liam Hudson. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986, 184 pages, $19.95.

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It is likely that Liam Hudson's *Night Life: The Interpretation of Dreams* will meet resistance from many professional psychologists, for as a piece of research it is flawed: first, Hudson often documents sources so obscurely readers cannot tell where he starts using secondary material; second, he often refers to the "enemies" of the dream as "they" without saying who "they" are; and third—what is most troubling to researchers—Hudson often develops his case through speculative metaphors, not verifiable facts. However, Hudson's intended audience includes not just the narrow field of professionals; he appeals "to an audience that is at heart broadly psychological: to those for whom the dream is inherently an object of fascination; to those eager to know how the imagination manages, against all odds, to subvert the dull tramp of habit." For these audiences—and those fellow psychologists who realize their discipline is at heart hermeneutic (i.e., concerned with meaning)—Hudson offers here both a clear historical survey of competing approaches to dream interpretation and also a method that provocatively synthesizes them by drawing on not just either dream reports or laboratory experiments, but these sources and poems, novels, diagrams, and the dreamer's biography as well.

In his survey of dream interpretation, Hudson centers on four strands of development. First, he describes "an ancient text," Artemidorus' *Oneirocritica*, a study written in the second century A.D. that argues both "that dreams are propositions about the future" and that the interpreter's aim is to distinguish between likely and unlikely interpretations. In an essential way, Hudson points out, this theory differs little from the second one, Freud's: like the ancient approach, Freud's approach is a "porthole theory"; whereas the ancient approach looks into the future, Freud's looks into the past. Freud's dream theory—which Hudson lucidly diagrams—depends on the relation between the latent dream, which is too offensive to be recognized, and the manifest dream, the "dream-work" that manifests a form the censor will acknowledge. As Jung said, the problem with Freud's theory as an approach for interpretation is that the path of free association—Freud's basic technique—leads away from the dream itself to the dreamer's neuroses. In contrast, Jung's approach, the third Hudson describes, focuses on the dream itself, as if it were a text. But as Hudson shows in juxtaposing Freud's and Jung's differing views of Jung's dream of two skulls, their theories fail to identify which interpretations are correct. The fourth approach, that of behaviorists and of brain physiologists, overcomes this flexibility of interpretation by contending that dreams have no real meaning at all. For example, Hudson critically observes, proponents of the "brain-stem" or "bottom-up" view of dreaming, such as Crick and Mitchison, argue that in effect the brain dreams in order to forget: during REM sleep, the brain stem "bombards the cerebral cortex with the random bangs that

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'damp down' or 'tune out' the network's undesirable links." Finally, then, having fleshed out these conflicting views of dream interpretation, Hudson proceeds in the rest of the study to outline a method that reconciles both poetic and scientific materials.

Through his method, Hudson tries to locate the discipline of dream interpretation between natural sciences on one hand and liberal arts such as biography, history, and criticism on the other. Nevertheless, though he does find room in his method (especially in chapter 10) for lab experiments on dreaming and sleep, Hudson builds his theory from the approach of Jung, the interpreter most scorned by the scientifically inclined. Because it treats the dream as a self-contained text, Jung's approach neatly leads to Hudson's technique of interpreting the ambiguity of dreams the way literary criticism interprets the ambiguity of poems. As with poems, with dreams

> A complete interpretation consists in the identification of the text's pertinent ambiguities and contradictions, in plotting out their connections, and in the delineation, too, of the centrally placed area of doubt, in which analysis peters out and empathy takes over.

This association of dreams and poetry is commonplace enough, but what makes it remarkable here is the brilliant way Hudson substantiates his theory: not only does he offer an exhaustive, compelling reading of a Rilke sonnet, but he also adds his own adept interpretations to those of Freud and Jung of Jung's dream of the skulls. Consequently, he persuasively demonstrates that, like a symbolically rich poem such as Rilke's, a single dream can simultaneously admit several possible interpretations.

In addition, it is impressive how in the interpretations of both Jung's dream and Rilke's poem Hudson applies bits of biography to illuminate the texts. But Hudson is wrong to distinguish his method from that of literary critics, who, he claims, believe that interpretation should "focus exclusively on the Work, ignoring the Life completely." While this belief was a dominant "article of faith" under the influence of New Criticism, it has been passé for twenty years. In fact, while constructing his theory Hudson could have found help from several recent excellent works of literary interpretation that blend psychological, biographical, and critical approaches: to name just two, Richard J. Onorato's *The Character of the Poet: Wordworth in "The Prelude"* (1971), and David R. Saliba's *A Psychology of Fear: The Nightmare Formula of Edgar Allan Poe* (1980). If some readers regret the lack of scientific evidence, none should be disappointed by Hudson's stimulating ideas and vivid style.