

The Dream: 4,000 Years of Theory and Practice. Nancy Parsifal-Charles. West Cornwall, Connecticut: Locust Hill Press, 2 vols., 1986, 576 pages, \$59.95 hard.

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Unlike most reference-works—however useful and well-prepared—*The Dream* by Nancy Parsifal-Charles never makes for tedious reading; in fact, the 700-plus entries of this “Critical, Descriptive, and Encyclopedic Bibliography” are so fascinating that most readers will wish even the longest reviews—generally less than three pages—were longer. The stated purpose of *The Dream* is ambitious: to present the first “single comprehensive volume on the body of knowledge relating the many approaches to dreams and dream interpretation.” But Parsifal-Charles goes far in filling the void she identifies, admirably using her academic background in comparative literature to consolidate the isolated disciplines that study dreams. However, because *The Dream* intends to interest both lay and professional readers, it is unfortunate that she failed to append a glossary of significant terms. Still, she does sometimes define key terms—such as “oneiric” and “dream incubation”—and the subject index lists both dream dictionaries and dream handbooks. Because she organizes her material alphabetically, another flaw is the lack of cross-referencing; nevertheless, as Parsifal-Charles intends, the thorough, careful, and imaginative subject index truly “serves as the key to this bibliography,” and achieves much the same effect as cross-referencing. In no way, then, do these minor shortcomings undermine the impressive scope of this insightful, freshly written work, which ranges from literary and critical works to theoretical and practical studies to up-to-date scientific research.

First, because her scope excludes all but books and monographs, Parsifal-Charles reviews many nonfiction accounts of dreams by literary figures, though not their imaginative uses of dreams. Still, despite no references to such creative dream-visions as Chaucer’s “Book of the Duchess,” Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan,” and Mark Strand’s “The Kite,” Parsifal-Charles unearths many lesser known accounts of dreams by Borges, Emerson, and Kerouac; in addition, she annotates a handful of therapeutic children’s stories such as Natalie Babbitt’s *The Something*. However novel these works may be, the main contributions from the literary world are books of criticism that, with unequal success, analyze the works and lives of literary figures in relation to various theories of dreaming. For example, according to Parsifal-Charles, Lucina Gabbard’s *The Dream Structure of Pinter’s Plays* argues that dramas like *The Room* escape obscurity when read as expressions of Freud’s ideas about the latent and manifest content of dreams. But whereas Leon Edel’s *Stuff of Sleep and Dreams* receives praise for its insights about Joyce, Woolf, Auden, and Cather, P.W. Martin’s study of Jung, Eliot, and Toynbee gets labeled “a risky venture” that “fails to measure up to the reader’s anticipation.”

If *The Dream* notes many interesting literary studies, the bulk of the entries cover work by Freudians and Jungians, ethnopsychiatrists, and clinicians. Parsifal-Charles concisely assembles the major ideas on dreams of not only Freud and Jung, but also their followers

and competing theorists—including Adler, Rank, Jacobi, Jones, Brill, and Von Franz. Impressively, despite the lack of formal cross-references, Parsifal-Charles does a solid job of interrelating and discriminating between these important figures. She also clearly evaluates the attempts in cross-cultural dreamwork. In particular, she expresses special relief at the rising reputation of George Devereux, whose *Reality and Dream* she calls “a classic.” In addition to these more scholarly investigations inspired by Freud and Jung, *The Dream* reviews several clinical sources, notably James A. Hall’s *Jungian Dream Interpretation*, which, though intended for psychiatrists and analysts, is so well-written Parsifal-Charles recommends it to nonspecialists as well.

All these clearly presented entries make good introductions to the authors’ work and should prove especially useful to general readers. What makes the bibliography most useful to professionals, however, is that it mentions much recent innovative research. Most significant, Parsifal-Charles dwells at length on the controversial REM research of David Foulkes, devoting five pages to his career. She also analyzes potentially significant studies involving female psychology—studies relating dreams to pregnancy, menopause, menstruation, and feminist archetypes. She even finds room for the methodologically marred but intriguing thesis of a Dominican College senior, in which the researcher, Jill Gregory, tried scientifically to compile statistics about her own dreams.

Though the thorough scope of *The Dream* is impressive, what most distinguishes the work is its clear, direct style. Despite occasionally unconventional punctuation and awkward parallelism, the writing of *The Dream* is engaging. Readers can trust a writer like Parsifal-Charles who, while trying to be objective, so readily reveals her biases and confesses her weaknesses. For instance, when annotating David Foulkes’s *A Grammar of Dreams*, she judges the work “brilliant” but “seductively presented,” and goes on to confess “a built in bias against all efforts made to quantitatively measure such amorphous qualities as emotion, the mind, the psyche, or even the dream.” This bias follows from her statement in the Preface that research such as REM lab experiments “cannot and will not explain fully the dream and its meaning to man.” Another strength of her style is that she admits her lack of authority when she needs to. “Bachelard’s excursion into the elements,” for instance, “moves too obscurely for [Parsifal-Charles’s] limited intellect.” Moreover, in the entry on Rolf R. Loehrich’s *Oneirics and Psychosomatics*, not only does she “confess” her inability “to judge the theory of Dr. Loehrich”; she also states, “I am not certain that I even understand it.” So, while the author has tried to be objective, she sensibly realizes that “only the reviewer or reader” can judge the success of her critical evaluations. But no matter what prejudices any reader may have, all readers will agree not only that *The Dream* is comprehensive and readable, but also that Parsifal-Charles’s commitment to her subject is exemplary, for as she says, “the dream is the important thing.”