



# WORKING WITH DREAMS

*Self-Understanding, Problem-Solving and Enriched  
Creativity Through Dream Appreciation*

MONTAGUE ULLMAN, M.D.  
& NAN ZIMMERMAN





# WORKING WITH DREAMS

---

Montague Ullman, M.D.  
and  
Nan Zimmerman



THE AQUARIAN PRESS

First published 1979 by Jeremy Tarcher Inc., 9110 Sunset Blvd.,  
Los Angeles, CA 90069

This edition published 1987

© 1979 by Montague Ullman and Nan Zimmerman. All rights  
reserved. Published by arrangement with Eleanor Friede Books  
Inc., New York.

*All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or  
utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical,  
including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and  
retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Publisher.*

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Ullman, Montague  
Working with dreams.

1. Dreams

I. Title	II. Zimmerman, Nan
154.6'3	BF1078

ISBN 0-85030-612-4

*The Aquarian Press is part of the Thorsons Publishing Group,  
Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN8 2RQ, England.*

Printed in Great Britain by Woolnough Bookbinding Limited,  
Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire.

3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

# WORKING WITH DREAMS

*To all who by sharing their dreams  
deepened our appreciation of dreams*

# Acknowledgments

We are deeply grateful to many people, more than we can mention by name, who helped in various ways in the preparation of this book. Our heartfelt thanks go  
to the dreamers whose dreams appear in this book;  
to our respective spouses, Janet and Howard, who, each in their own way and with much selfless energy, helped us see the book through completion;  
to Richard Jones, Allan Rechtschaffen, Doris Bartlett, and John Sunderland, who were kind enough to read the manuscript, or portions of it, and make helpful suggestions;  
to Laura A. Dale for her careful check of the proofs;  
to Hadley Smith for her help with the typing, her concern, and her encouragement;  
to Eleanor Friede for rescuing this book from oblivion and for arranging for us to work with Jeanne Bernkopf, whose editorial judgment and general good sense account for a good many of whatever virtues this book may have.

The authors also wish to acknowledge the kind permission of the



publishers of the Swedish magazine *Ord & Bild* to quote from *Tre kvinnors drömmar*, as translated for us by Ulla Löfgren; of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., for permission to quote from *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* by Carl G. Jung; and of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., for permission to quote from Wallace Stevens, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," copyright 1923 by Wallace Stevens, renewed 1951 by Wallace Stevens, from *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*.

*The Dream is a law to itself; and as well quarrel with  
a rainbow for showing, or for not showing, a secondary  
arch.*

*The Dream knows best, and the Dream, I say again,  
is the responsible party.*

De Quincey



# WORKING WITH DREAMS

# Contents

FOREWORD BY RICHARD M. JONES	<i>1</i>
MONTAGUE ULLMAN'S INTRODUCTION	<i>5</i>
NAN ZIMMERMAN'S INTRODUCTION	<i>15</i>
1. What's in a Dream?	<i>20</i>
2. A Backward Glance	<i>34</i>
3. From Freud On	<i>47</i>
4. Psyche Asleep	<i>64</i>
5. The Way a Dream Is	<i>81</i>
6. Guidelines to Dream Work	<i>92</i>
7. Picturing Our Predicaments	<i>117</i>
8. Dispelling Self-Deception	<i>132</i>
9. A Family That Dreamed Together	<i>148</i>

10. The Dream and Society	183
11. Dream Appreciation in Public	203
12. Dreams People Share	221
13. On the Practical and the Problematic	243
14. A One-Year Journey	265
15. Dreaming Across Space and Time	294
16. Toward a Greater Appreciation of Dreams	315
NOTES	321
INDEX	325



# Foreword

There are probably about a dozen people in the world who know everything that is known about the psychology of dreams and dreaming. Montague Ullman is surely one (he may be the first) of these. His many books and professional articles contain some of the most original contributions to our knowledge of these subjects as have been made in the last quarter century. Nor have these contributions been limited to a particular esoteric niche in theory, or in laboratory research or in clinical practice. He has been equally prolific as a theorist *and* as an investigator *and* as a clinician *and* as a teacher of theorists, investigators, and clinicians.

It may therefore come as a shock to some of his colleagues that Monte Ullman had the senior hand in the writing of this down-to-earth book, whose primary objective is to restore to the everyday authors of dreams a sense of their native authority over them. It is a demystifying book; healthily and happily so. It will persuade you that if you want to learn how



to appreciate and learn from your dreams there are some straightforward ways of doing so. These ways require some effort and some courage, and, sometimes, some friends; but they do not require any expert knowledge of dream theory, of dream research, or of clinical technique—nor do they require the help of anyone who possesses expertise in any of these specialties.

It once occurred to me, when writing one of my own articles on dreams, to say: "Analyzing a dream is like investigating air; very important for meteorological research, but not much of a way to enjoy a spring morning." I said this partly out of exasperation, because, at the time, the knowledgeable literature on dreams was exhausted on theories and methods of analysis and clinical interpretation. Nothing existed then on how to appreciate, enjoy, and learn from dreams—as we appreciate, enjoy, and learn from related functions of human imagination in responding to literature and poetry. The book before you corrects this deficiency in spades, and I am grateful to the authors for having so thoroughly removed this erstwhile source of personal irritation.

Ullman and Zimmerman's work will stand alone for a long time: It speaks with an authority which needs not, and does not, proclaim itself; for all the simplicity of its prose, there is not an antiintellectual line in it; it is devoid of zealotry. In practicing the arts of dream appreciation, as Ullman and Zimmerman describe and illustrate them, the dreamer either learns something that he didn't know he knew, or he doesn't. That's all. But what a world of new visions on the meaningfulness of dreams is opened by this economy of purpose!

Don't be misled by the simplicity of the chapter headings. "A Backward Glance" is as comprehensive a history of how humans have responded to dreams as exists. Whole books on the subject cover no more material. "What's in a Dream?"



answers almost all of the questions that almost any contemporary person could think to ask about dreams. "Psyche Asleep" does the same with respect to dreaming. "The Way a Dream Is" presents a phenomenological view of the dreamed dream which reawakens the truth of the old saw that a dream unappreciated is like a letter unopened.

"Guidelines to Dream Work," "Picturing Our Predicaments," and "Dispelling Self-Deception" constitute the pragmatic how-to-do-it core of the book, wherein we are instructed in the fundamentals of the art: how to recall dreams, how to record dreams, and how to enlist them in the refreshment, enrichment, and expansion of our waking lives. Nothing is left to the reader's naked imagination in any of this. Not a principle is enunciated, not a method is suggested, not a concept is introduced, not a category advanced that is not lavishly illustrated from the common world of appreciated dreams.

Not only do persons become stunted by dysfunctional myths; so do societies. And in "The Dream and Society," "Dream Appreciation in Public," and "Dreams People Share," notwithstanding their ascientific posture, the authors make an exceedingly valuable contribution to a social science of dreams. For too long, since Freud succeeded in earning scientific legitimacy for the study of dreams, has this legitimacy been tacitly assumed to be restricted to the private enterprises of the consulting room. Perhaps, because dreams have proven to be so rich in potential personal value within these confines, it has not occurred to us to ask if dreams may also have potential public values. Thus we have failed to explore the educational and recreative benefits that may accrue to reflection on dreams in ordinary communal settings. For example, a woman who dreams of herself as a cow will, in her efforts to appreciate the dream, likely gain some fresh perspectives on her personal development; she will also likely



be hard pressed to ignore the social stereotype which provided the dream its analogy. But so are the friends with whose respectful efforts she might have been helped to arrive at these fresh perspectives, likely to share in them by way of raised consciousness (personal and social) on the realities of sexism. In pointing to this "bidirectionality" of some dream images ("inwardly, to some unfinished bit of emotional business that is unique to ourselves; and outwardly, to some unsolved problems in the society of which we are a part"), and further, in describing a simple process by which small groups of students, friends, or family members may mutually perceive these bidirectionalities, Ullman and Zimmerman have gone a very long way toward meeting a memorable injunction stated in 1966 by Roger Bastide: "Freud repersonalized the dream; now we must resocialize it."

Some words on the special contributions to the book of its coauthor: while Ullman is a seasoned psychoanalyst and a world-renowned expert on dreams, Zimmerman is a writer and a teacher. In the realm of dream work, she is a non-professional—a gifted and experienced one, to be sure, but still not a professional. Not only does she not claim more, she revels in her nonprofessional status and shows how much she knows about dream work in her own very persuasive chapters. Nothing could have more effectively carried the book's main message, that professional authority is not an essential ingredient to the art of dream appreciation, than this unusual duality of authorship.

RICHARD M. JONES, Ph.D.  
author of  
*The New Psychology of Dreaming*

# Montague Ullman's Introduction

A number of years ago I set out to write a book about dreams meant for anyone interested in the subject. I had always had a strong theoretical interest in dreams, felt challenged and excited when working with them in my clinical practice, and as time went on I became more and more convinced that the skills involved in understanding them could be shared with people who had no professional background. My head was filled with thoughts and ideas about dreams and dreaming that I had accumulated for almost three decades and so the words, pages, and chapters came easily even though, up to now, my writing had been confined to short communications to scientific and clinical journals.

I was convinced I was writing a book about dreams for the layman. A chance encounter with Nan Zimmerman showed me otherwise.

I met Nan in Virginia where she and her husband, Howard, were attending the same convention I was, a meeting of



the Parapsychological Association. At one of those small, informal gatherings that provide relief from the concentrated scientific input, the subject of dreams came up and it soon became apparent that Nan had as lively an interest in dreams as I did. She had had a dream the night before and was anxious to share it to learn how I worked with dreams. She seemed so serious about this that, despite the informality of the atmosphere and the presence of others, I began working with her to help her find the answer, not from me, but from somewhere within herself. Nan was a very willing subject. Then and there we pursued her dream imagery back to the immediate life situation that led to it. I was pleased and so was she. I thought that was the end of the matter.

But dream work has a slightly addictive quality to it and Nan was hooked. The following morning, as we were on our way to another session of the convention, she had a new dream to tell me about. By the time we reached the meeting we had established some of the important connections between the imagery and her life.

The convention came to an end. Nan and Howard went home to Virginia and I to New York. We parted with my encouraging her to work on her dreams and to feel free to write if she needed help. Nan responded by writing frequently and frankly about her dreams. I found this an opportunity to test my ideas of how to get across to someone else my thoughts about dreams and how to work with them. But Nan was more than a dreamer catching on to her own dreams. She began to read extensively and familiarized herself with dream literature. And she soon was clarifying, simplifying, criticizing, and adding to what I was tossing at her. She gradually moved from the role of disciple (and at times, I am afraid, guinea pig) to that of a valued colleague.

Our working together gave me a fresh new perspective on the few chapters I had already written and led ultimately to