

**Review of *Dreams and How to Guide Them* by
Hervey de Saint-Denys. Translated by Nicholas
Fry; edited and with an introduction by Morton
Schatzman. London: Duckworth, 1982.**

Judith R. Malamud
New York City

We are fortunate finally to have an English translation of the major portion of Hervey de Saint—Denys' extraordinary account, originally published in French in 1867, of more than twenty years of experimentation with his own lucid dreams.

St. Denys' ability to recall an unbroken sequence of images no matter when he was awakened, an ability rarely observed in even the modern sleep laboratory, provided him with unusually complete data from which he formulated hypotheses about how dreams are constructed—hypotheses which are still provocative today. Saint—Denys' work with dreams pre—dated Freud's and he was apparently not attuned to the self—revelatory potential of dreams. Nevertheless, he did maintain, in contrast to the then—dominant and still widely held materialist viewpoint, that dream images are not random neurological events, but are the immediate result of one's own thoughts during sleep. His success, with certain dreams, in tracing every image and transition to associatively linked waking memories and his observation that creative processes and conscious volition can be part of even ordinary dreams, as well as lucid dreams, convinced him that all dreams could theoretically be understood as essentially continuous with waking thought, although different in form.

Saint—Denys' provision of numerous hypotheses and examples concerning links between seemingly bizarre images and ordinary thought processes may help deepen the reader's realization that dreams are not alien phenomena but, in fact, our own creations—a major step toward lucid awareness. Further, St. Denys noted many of the characteristics, intensified in the dream state, that make dreams worth attending to: heightened imagination, creativity, powers of performance and sensory acuteness; access to remote memories, spontaneity, and emotional intensity.

As Schatzman points out in his interesting introduction, Saint—Denys occasionally overgeneralized from his own experience concerning the supposed limits of dream experience. For example, he formed the misconceptions that it is invariably impossible to have an imageless dream, to experience physical pain in a dream or to dream of one's own death. Contemporary dream researchers who assert that there are limits to what can occur in dreams could take a warning from this: no matter how many dreamers report an inability to experience a certain phenomenon, one can never actually prove that the phenomenon is impossible.

Saint—Denys offered numerous instances of volitional control of dream content during lucid dreams, but noted that it is difficult to dream to order using only pre—sleep suggestion because of the tendency of the associative train of thought to stray rapidly and far from the original intended idea. His preferred techniques were based on conditioning, i.e., he repeatedly paired, during his waking hours, a particular situation with a simple stimulus which he then arranged to have presented to him while he was asleep in order to evoke images from the waking situation in his dream. For example, he took a certain perfume with him on a vacation in the Country and used it constantly. Upon his return, he had someone place a few drops of the scent on his pillow while he was asleep, and thereby succeeded, not just once but in repeated experiments, in stimulating dream images linked with impressions from the vacations. He found that he was able to use up to seven or eight different fragrances as stimuli to evoke associated ideas in his dreams, using this procedure. He even speculated that if one wishes to have pleasant dreams, one should take care to intersperse one's daily activities with pleasant impressions, which would then naturally occur in dreams due to their associative linkages!

I found this translation a pleasure to read. Morton Schatzman and Nicholas Fry have performed a real service to both novice dreamers seeking inspiration and researchers who would be interested in the wealth of hypotheses contained in this valuable work. It can be purchased from Duckworth, The Old Piano Factory, 43 Gloucester Crescent, London NW1, \$20.00 postpaid.

Original source: *Lucidity Letter Back Issues*, Vol. 2, No. 2, April, 1983, page 54.