

"Control Your Dreams", By Jayne I. Gackenbach and Jane Bosveld, New York: Harper and Row, 1989.

**Reviewed by
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Over the past ten to fifteen years a staggering number of popular books have been written about dreams. Despite this fact -- or perhaps because of it -- new titles continue to sell well. People seem especially interested in a phenomenon of which they have first hand experience. They are curious about what goes on "in the mind" or "in the brain" when we dream.

Many readers who were at first primarily interested in what dreams "mean", have more recently become aware of the actual varieties of dreaming as a process in its own right -- from nightmares to lucid dreaming to dreams of spiritual or psychic healing.

Unfortunately, however, after whetting the appetite of their readership, popular dream books seem to be at an intellectual standstill. Although there is a vast store of knowledge about dreaming to be found in the many academic books, research articles and theoretical papers, these generally presuppose a fair amount of background knowledge.

So it would seem that a large gap exists between the popular "how-to" genre and the more academic treatments of dreaming -- a gap which has not yet been bridged with any real success. Enter Gackenbach and Bosveld whose book *Control Your Dreams* may be just what is needed at this point to bridge that gap.

Written in a style that is brisk and straightforward, *Control Your Dreams* is at once engaging and packed with information. The trendy cover, appealing to the lucrative New Age market, belies the well- organized, carefully researched, and surprisingly detailed work that lies within.

Its title, too, is somewhat deceptive, for while Gackenbach and Bosveld certainly examine at length the potential for controlling both lucid and non-lucid dreams, they do not devote most of their 203 pages to the popular advocacy of "control" and indeed offer some needed cautions. Rather, the theme of control is woven into a smoothly worded fabric that carries us easily from an historical overview of dreaming to contemporary research on lucid dreams and their creative and healing potentials, without overwhelming the reader with dates, technical jargon, or statistics.

Herein, perhaps, lies a weakness of the book as well as its strength, for in attempting to bridge the gap between the popular and the academic, *Control Your Dreams* must have a foot in each camp, and so, by definition, can truly belong to neither. Many neophytes will find the sheer diversity of the research and theories (including Gackenbach's own work) overwhelming while some academics could become scornful of the chatty manner

in which their work is depicted. However, those who value a genuine syntheses of the practical and the theoretical should be delighted.

Control Your Dreams is divided into two parts. Part One, "The Journey Begins" consists of six chapters that introduce lucid dreaming in the context of a history of the study of dreaming. Here are detailed discussions of historical pioneers such as Van Eeden and St. Denys -- two central figures often overlooked in the popular "how-to" books. They are treated in sufficient detail such that they can be reintroduced later without a jolt, while alerting the reader to the importance of detailed observational treatment of dream lucidity aside from any contemporary theoretical or applied agendas.

We also find clear instructions for working with dreams from such notables in the field as Garfield, Ullman, and Delaney, as well as a detailed account of the West German psychologist Paul Tholey's method for inducing lucid dreams.

There are also examples of Tholey's practical application of this state for training athletes. His method includes many of the features of waking imaging training but places much importance on "dissolving the established boundaries between the mind and the body" in lucid dreams, such that the individual is at one with the environment. This state of "single-minded absorption" may also be found in meditators at "moments of intense realization".

Another example of the practical application of lucid dreams in the waking world is found in the presentation on Fariba Bogzaran, an artist who draws on those dreams for creative inspiration. Bogzaran was sufficiently impressed by her lucid dreams, in which she "sees" a completed work of art, to change her style of painting.

The final four chapters in Part Two, "Biology and Consciousness", present the concept of dream lucidity not as an isolated phenomenon but rather as part of a continuum of related states of consciousness stretching into the waking world. This presentation is what makes the book unique and somewhat controversial. Gackenbach and Bosveld draw numerous and illuminating connections between lucid dreaming and various other states of consciousness. There are abundant examples to illustrate the phenomenological similarities among lucid dreaming, out-of-body experience, near-death experience, spiritual healing and especially meditation. It is the latter that may cause discomfort for some readers, since the key to the comparison is the potential development of lucid dreaming, in the Transcendental Meditation tradition of Maharishi Mahesh Yoga, to what is termed "Witnessing" -- a detached, observational, non-controlling version.

For many, TM and the Maharishi conjure up thoughts of, at best, a cultish social movement and at worst, opportunism. Gackenbach and Bosveld have, however, anticipated some negative reaction and in Chapter 7 acknowledge that "Although such criticism is by no means uncommon it has been more often levelled at the movement than at the technique." Indeed, it is without question the technique and TM sponsored research

on waking meditation and dream witnessing that are essential here. Don't look for an extended apology, however. The authors make it clear that it is research sponsored by the TM movement that has provided the vast majority of the scientific data on meditation and in turn, on its relation to lucid dreaming: "In the past twenty years, TM scientists have amassed more than 300 research studies from more than 160 independent institutions in 27 countries. . ." and while "Initially their scientific studies lacked adequate controls", TM scientists now "are by and large putting out work that is methodologically sophisticated and reputable." Because meditation is such a personal and private affair, it is extremely difficult to get experienced meditators from disciplines other than TM to take part in scientific research. In this regard, while the case for the research contribution of TM is well made, the authors by and large manage to avoid a tone of proselytizing.

Gackenbach's research on the cognitive bases of lucid dreaming and meditation is especially important in establishing a badly needed continuity between these transformative states and the workings of the ordinary mind. She reports findings that show lucid dreamers and witnessing dreamers to have unusually developed spatial skills. These include especially good physical balance and an ability to solve embedded figures, block designs and imagery rotation tests. While in other hands this work would become technical, Gackenbach and Bosveld again manage to appeal to the popular imagination by including several sample test items in Chapter 9.

In short, while the treatment of TM may offend some and certainly warrants critical attention, this readable integration of a vast range of material should justifiably appeal to the many.