Review of "Dreams for Self-Discovery" by William R. Stimson

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"Dreams for Self –Discovery" is a detailed, eloquent and interesting book by Dr. Stimson on how dream work following Montague Ullman's (2006) "dream appreciation" procedure can bring about significant self-realisation; for the individuals who share and discuss their own dreams and other dream group participants. The "dream appreciation" method involves consideration of a recent dream and how aspects of the dream experience may connect with one's prior experiences from waking life. The method was originally designed for use in a non-therapeutic context (Ullman, 2006).

"Dreams for Self-Discovery" is a well-structured work which moves from an exploration of the author's early experiences and how they relate to one of his particularly important dreams, to presentations of significant self-discoveries that were realised by dream group participants during discussions following Ullman's (2006) procedure. The author emphasised the diverse backgrounds of the participants, who shared an interest in dream exploration. He depicted the honesty with which individuals approached the dream discussions and how dream work using Ullman's technique allowed dreamers to contemplate significant issues and find personally relevant understandings with the help of others. Interestingly, the author emphasised instances when working with a dream led to self-discoveries for dream group members who did not have the dream, an aspect of the procedure which Ullman downplayed in "Appreciating Dreams" (2006). This is a useful consideration for dream practitioners and researchers that use this technique.

Dr Stimson qualified the many significant realisations that group members experienced in the reported dream discussions by providing some examples of dream work which did not result in significant insights. This highlighted an important point to the reader; discussion of one's dreams does not always lead to profound discoveries about the self or one's situation.

Whilst full dream discussion transcripts are not presented, the author quoted from different stages of dream work to reflect the order of the "dream appreciation" procedure, this allows the reader to comprehend the different phases of the technique. Descriptions and analyses of the dream work sessions are clear and well explained. Additionally, Dr. Stimson provided useful quotes and analysis of the occasional, inappropriate questions or projections dream group members made during certain dream discussions, which serves to educate the reader about what can hinder the "dream appreciation" process.

The author described "delayed orchestrations" or novel understandings about dreams that were shared and discussed, that were experienced by dreamers in the days after working with their dreams. The author also offered some of his own projections as "delayed orchestrations" relating to dreams that he were not his own, which is not part of the conventional dream appreciation technique. The purpose of Dr. Stimson's inclusion of "delayed orchestrations" for dream work in this manner could have been to show how it can take longer than one session to understand important aspects of some dreams. To illustrate this point; the author presented dream work with one dream, which took place on two separate occasions in which the dreamer obtained more self-understanding through working with the dream a second time, thus emphasising the depth and complexity of dream experiences.

"Dreams for Self-Discovery" provides useful illustrations of the dream appreciation process in action and an honest, coherent argument that dream work following this process can lead to important realisations, facilitate decision-making, improve well-being and benefit communities. It is a novel and informative addition to the dream work literature and useful for dream work practitioners, dream researchers and those with an interest in the exploration of dreams.

References

Stimson, W. R. (2018). Dreams for self-discovery. North Charleston, South Carolina: CreateSpace.

Ullman, M. (2006). Appreciating Dreams. Cosmo-On-Demand Books.

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