

eating memories in the real world (Ray Bradbury spoiler)

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 25 Jun 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2695>

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William Ansley — 25 Jun 2001, 23:13

Warning! I have a spoiler for a Ray Bradbury short story at the end of this message.

At 1:19 PM -0400 6/24/01, BraveSaintCroix at aol.com wrote:

The thing about the New Sun book that had always bugged me was the whole concept of getting a person's memories by eating a piece of them. Perhaps silly in context with some of the other miracles in the book, but it always seemed ridiculous to me. (It also bugged me in Herbert's later Dune books that a clone, or ghola, could have its original's memories from just a few cells. . .) Anyway, maybe this has already been discussed, but I found an interesting article in a book of "fantastic facts" that pertains to it:

During experiments conducted in 1962 at the University of Michigan, scientists successfully extracted memory from one animal and transferred it to another.

...

The implication of these experiments is that memory can be transferred from one being to another somatically as well as experimentally.

. . . Fascinating.

-Steve

At 10:27 AM +0100 6/25/01, Joshua A. Solomon wrote:
evidence summarised below:

<http://iubio.bio.indiana.edu/R24652-28994-/Network-News/bionet/cellbiol/9310.newsml>

Even though Joshua provided us all with a wonderfully apropos link to a discussion of this very question among real neurobiologists (well, at least one of them is) I think that the gist of what you will find if you follow his link bears repeating. To wit, these memory transfer experiments did not prove to be reproducible. Therefore there is every reason to doubt that this phenomenon actually exists. I quote from the discussion linked to by Joshua Solomon below:

The most recent reference to the whole memory-transfer business that I could find was in _Basic Neurochemistry_, 4th edition, Siegel et al., eds., Raven Press, NY, 1989. p. 924.
In it, Bernard Agranoff writes, "The claims in the 1960s of memory transfer via injection of RNA or of protein have long since subsided for want of evidence."

...

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There have been SF stories based specifically on this research (I can remember one definite example, anyway, even though I cannot bring the author or title to mind at this moment*) but they are almost certainly all as inaccurate as stories that portray Mercury as having the same side always facing the sun.

William Ansley

*It involved a giant, mutant planaria eating a young boy and then coming to the breakfast table (as a blob) and asking for french toast in the boy's voice or something similar. The last line was a direct rip-off of the last line of a famous Ray Bradbury story involving a man whose skeleton was removed.