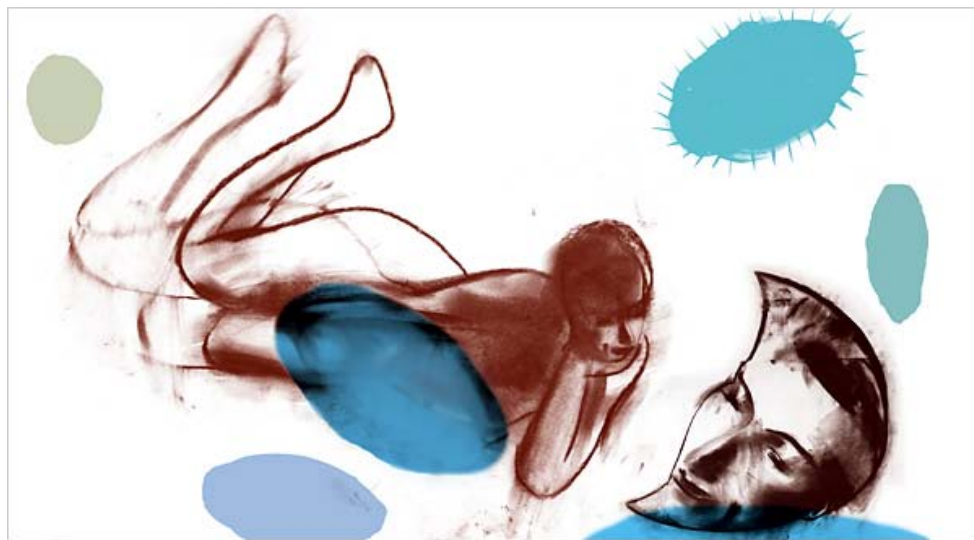


Living Your Dreams, in a Manner of Speaking



Vivienne Flesher

By STEPHANIE ROSENBLOOM
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THE kiss you share with the exquisite stranger is electric, deep and seemingly endless — that is until you open an eye and see drool on your pillow.



Yari Film Group

DON'T PINCH ME In "The Good Night," Martin Freeman plays a man who dreams to escape reality.

If only you could have slept long enough to consummate the seduction. Then again, you had no idea you were dreaming. Besides, you cannot control the nightly ride on the wings of your subconscious. Or can you?

Maybe, if you learn to practice "lucid dreaming," a state in which a sleeping person becomes aware he or she is dreaming and may even be able to direct the action. Those who regularly experience the phenomenon say that like the physics-defying characters in "The Matrix," they are able to generate or manipulate the fantastical events that unfold. They can fly without wings, play instruments they never

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learned, go bowling with T. S. Eliot — and, yes, indulge sexual fantasies.

It is likely some people have always had such dreams, said Jayne Gackenbach, a professor of [psychology](#) at Grant MacEwan College in Edmonton, Alberta, who conducts research into lucid dreaming. But the esoteric practice, which has been acknowledged in the West since at least 1867, seems on the verge of becoming much better known.

A film exploring its allure, “The Good Night,” written and directed by Jake Paltrow and starring his sister, Gwyneth, Penélope Cruz and Martin Freeman, is opening Oct. 5. Depressed by his waking life, the film’s main character is determined to master the art of lucid dreaming to escape to an inspiring, sensual unreality with a lacquer-lipped knockout. “What I find myself most attracted to are things that can actually occur,” Mr. Paltrow said in an interview. “There’s really nothing in this movie that couldn’t happen.”

For those wishing to become lucid dreamers, a nine-and-a-half-day instructional retreat, “Dreaming and Awakening: Lucid Dreaming, Consciousness and Dream Yoga,” is scheduled to begin Oct. 1 in Hawaii. Don’t want to pay the airfare? On Oct. 3, an online chat about lucid dreaming takes place, part of the PsiberDreaming conference of the International Association for the Study of Dreams. There are new and soon-to-be published books, like “Lucid Dreaming for Beginners: Simple Techniques for Creating Interactive Dreams” (Llewellyn Publications) and “Between the Gates: Lucid Dreaming, Astral Projection and the Body of Light in Western Esotericism” (Weiser Books).

“It has gone from this very obscure type of dream to being discussed at the various dream and consciousness conferences,” Dr. Gackenbach said.

But it is not only dream experts discussing the topic. Two filmmakers described their lucid dreaming earlier this year. Michel Gondry, who directed “Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind,” described for The Guardian lucid dreams in which “I generally end up having sex with the first girl I can find.” Guillermo del Toro, the director of “Pan’s Labyrinth,” mentioned his lucid dreaming on the [National Public Radio](#) program “Fresh Air.” “Pan’s Labyrinth” brings to life a twiggly mythological creature (a faun) he encountered in lucid dreams as a boy; the film won an Oscar this year for its surrealistic makeup.

Other films, including “Waking Life” and “Vanilla Sky,” have woven lucid dreaming into their plots. So have television series like “Alias,” “Star Trek” and “Ed” (Daryl Hall and John Oates make an appearance in Ed’s dream). Novelists including [Stephen King](#), William Boyd and Graham Joyce have written about lucid dreaming, and the Verve, a British rock band, sang about it in “Catching the Butterfly.”

“Lucid dream” is the name of pop and jazz CDs, small businesses, modern artworks, even a sex toy.

Still, many people have never heard of it. Established sleep researchers say lucid dreaming is occasionally reported by subjects, though it is difficult to validate scientifically. “Yes, lucid dreaming exists,” said Dr. Rodney Radtke, the medical director of the [Sleep Disorders Center](#) at [Duke University](#). “Yes, people certainly can, within their dream, realize ‘this is just a dream’ and continue to participate.”

“Do I believe that someone could potentially alter or interact with their dreams in such a way that they could change the dream? Yes,” he said. “Do I think that you could essentially design a dream — ‘Oh, I want to go to Honolulu and have this big hunk hit on me?’ It’s a bit of a stretch. But I can’t say it can’t happen.”

He added: “Only in New York or California do they worry about this stuff.”

Stephen LaBerge, a psychophysiological and the founder of the Lucidity Institute



Stylish controversy

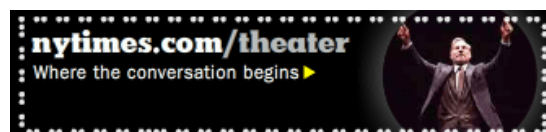
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(lucidity.com), conducts lucid dream research and teaches people to do it.

“It’s kind of fun to do the impossible,” Dr. LaBerge said. “Fly. Dream sex. That’s what everybody likes to do. There’s also the possibility of creative problem-solving, overcoming nightmares and anxieties, learning more about yourself.”

A student at Stanford University, where Dr. LaBerge conducted much of his research, wrote in The Stanford Daily: “In one of my earliest experiences with lucidity, I announced to an auditorium full of people that I was their god (wasn’t I?). When they did not respond deferentially, I used telekinesis to send one of them flying across the room.”

It can be particularly appealing to those who have nightmares, as it allows them to realize while still asleep that they are just dreaming.

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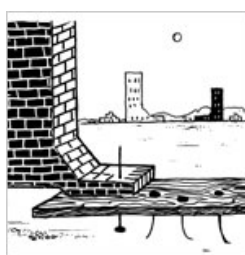



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