

Developing Lucid Dreaming in the Netherlands: A Personal Account



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Introduction

Some time ago, when Mr. Roger Ripert invited me to give a presentation at a meeting of the European Association for the Study of Dreams (EASD), I hesitated to accept. Of course, I was honored. Yet, despite receiving several invitations over the years, I had always distanced myself from seminars and congresses. I hope the reasons for this will become clear during my presentation.

Still, I want to begin by sharing the primary reason for my initial reluctance. I often asked myself: *What new perspective could I possibly bring to the field of lucid dreaming?* I am merely a lucid dreamer, like so many of you, without access to scientific resources or the ability to conduct formal research.

Although I had published some articles and a book on the subject, it never felt like sufficient grounds to hold a lecture. Then it struck me—this invitation provided an opportunity. It allowed me to express some long-held thoughts and experiences. By describing what I've encountered in the Netherlands, I could not only clarify my own position, but also give voice to many anonymous lucid dreamers in other countries—those without access to dreamer networks or scientific support. I believe many individuals, like myself, have carried the lucid dreaming torch alone, without mental or financial backing. I will return to this later. I also saw this talk as a chance to share my ambivalence about lucid dream research itself.

So, be warned: the title of this lecture may be a bit misleading. Now—on to the story.

Preliminary Peak Experiences



It was over twenty years ago when I, like so many other college-student hippies, found myself in search of another reality. The fifties had been too dull for the sixties, and something had to change. So I started smoking hashish—and about a year later, I tried LSD. I remember that first experiment very clearly. Much like my first lucid dream years afterward, it was a peak experience. My friends and I had escaped to the countryside, hoping that a natural setting would enhance the effects. Half an hour after we took the pills, most of them started behaving oddly. I, on the other hand, still felt perfectly normal. After an hour had passed, the difference was clear: they were all tripping, and I wasn't. Frustrated, I wandered off and stood alone on a small hill. Then, suddenly, I became angry. "I want to enter the LSD mood!" I said to myself. I closed my eyes and repeated that intention. When I opened them, the world had changed. It was dreamlike, surreal.

I won't go into all the details here—they don't matter much in this context. What does matter is how it ended. Most of the day had been pleasant, even magical, but as evening came it started to rain. Somewhere along the way, we found a motorway that looked like it had been built just for us—not a single car in sight. Some of my friends danced on it.

Then, all of a sudden, I had a thought: "That road is *real*. Of course cars can pass by. What if a car is coming now? We wouldn't see it until it's too late to move..." That jolt of reality pulled me out of the experience completely. I closed my eyes, opened them, and everything snapped back to "normal." I felt rational again—grounded. I took charge and got my friends off the road. What intrigued me most about the experience wasn't the LSD, but the fact that both the *start* and the *end* of the altered state seemed to be triggered not by the drug itself, but by my own intention. That same sense of volition would later mark many of my lucid dream experiences. Still, not all experiments went so smoothly. On one occasion, during another LSD trip, something unexpected happened. I was exhausted at the end of the night and lay down in bed. As I relaxed, I suddenly felt my body separate—and there I was, floating near the ceiling, looking down at myself. I realized, with a shock, that *that person* down there was *me*. But the moment I had that realization, I was instantly back in my body. That was the last time I experimented with LSD. It raised too many fears, too many questions. Back then, all I really wanted was to have fun.

Dream Power



The years passed. I pushed the above experiences to the back of my mind and turned my attention to other things. I immersed myself in child psychology and the sociology of organizations. Around the same time, I took up karate and began dabbling in meditation. I read Castaneda's books too—but his "separate reality" never appealed to me. It all felt too contrived, too theatrical. Then, in 1976, Ann Faraday's *Dream Power* landed in my hands. That changed everything.

Until then, I hadn't paid much attention to my dreams. Sure, the ones where Buddha made an appearance had stayed with me, but I never kept a dream journal, never explored their meaning. But Faraday offered simple, practical advice for recalling dreams, and I decided to try it. To my surprise, my dream memory improved rapidly. And then—one night—I realized I was dreaming. Just like that. I wasn't afraid. Quite the opposite—it was exhilarating. I couldn't stop talking about it. I told everyone I knew, whether they cared or not. Years later, some of my friends confessed they'd been a bit annoyed by my enthusiasm. Understandable. If you haven't had the experience yourself, it's hard to grasp why someone would get so excited about a dream.

Still, despite all my talking, I couldn't truly share what I felt. As the lucid dreams increased in frequency, so did the sense of isolation. Each time I found myself in that lucid state, I was thrilled. Most of the time, I chased after the same pleasure I enjoyed most in waking life—sex. Meanwhile, I read everything I could find. Garfield, Green... Both wrote excellent descriptions of lucid dreaming, but they didn't answer the deeper questions that kept surfacing. *What exactly is this state? What can you do with it?* I had the growing sense that scientific research had stalled. That it was skimming the surface, avoiding the core.

The Nonimpact of Research

Then came LaBerge's book. At last, some real scientific work on lucid dreaming! I was thrilled. In my naïveté, I thought Dutch psychologists would be just as enthusiastic. I imagined them jumping up from their desks, exclaiming, "*Finally! Proof!*" That didn't happen. I approached some psychologists I knew, referenced LaBerge's work, tried to explain the significance. But the response was... silence. Or skepticism. Or worse, polite disinterest. Some of them had never even heard of it. Others dismissed it outright. One researcher, after a long sigh, told me that lucid dreaming sounded like nonsense to him. It was a hard pill to swallow. I knew there were research centers in the Netherlands studying sleep, so I called around—tried to speak to the right people. But lucid dreaming? They weren't interested. Of course, who was I to challenge them? I didn't have an academic position. After finishing my studies, I hadn't been able to find work in my field. I had shifted into management training and educational counseling. Still, I had never lost my curiosity. So I kept reading. Kept dreaming. And I tried to bridge the gap between the science and the public. I wrote articles. I paid to print and distribute them myself. I compiled a small bundle of reprints from international research, thinking maybe—just maybe—someone out there might care.

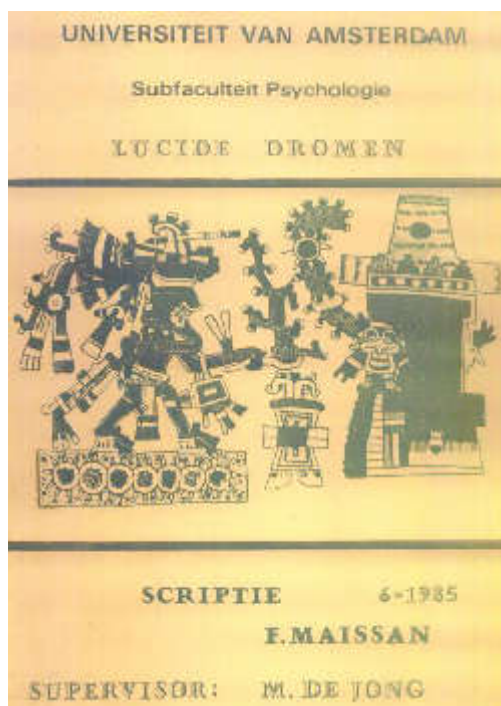
Discovering Saint-Denys

In the middle of all this activity, I stumbled upon a name I'd never heard before: Marquis d'Hervey de Saint-Denys. Apparently, he had written a book about lucid dreaming... in 1867! I was intrigued. I *had* to read it. I contacted Dr. Eli Meijer from Utrecht University—he had access to academic libraries, and I hoped he could help me track it down. While I waited, I continued searching on my own. Eventually, I found a 1964 reprint edited by Claude Tchou. Then something unexpected happened. A few weeks later, Dr. Meijer handed me a copy of the original 1867 edition. It turned out the Utrecht University Library had it in its collection all along, but neither the library staff nor Dr. Meijer seemed to realize how valuable it was. So—they just lent it to me. Once home, I sat down and compared the original with the reprint. And there it was: an appendix missing in the 1964 edition. Almost every researcher I knew cited only the reprint, without mentioning that it was incomplete. Suddenly, I realized I had stumbled on something important. I called Dr. Morton Schatzman—he had published an abbreviated English version of the book. He, too, was surprised. And from that point on, the mechanism kicked in. When you make a discovery like that, everyone suddenly wants to talk to you. I took advantage of the moment. Not for ego, but for information. That's what I was always after—access to information. Which, believe me, wasn't easy to get. Soon I was in touch with *Lucidity Letter*, with Paul Tholey, with *Oniros*, and others. I became a familiar voice on the phone line—and yes, the phone bills reflected that. But the real work had only just begun. It took another year before I was able to publish my findings in *Lucidity Letter*, and I invited Dr. Meijer to be listed as co-author. A gesture of goodwill, and gratitude.

Impact on the Netherlands

Despite all the energy I poured into it, my attempts to interest the Dutch scientific community led nowhere. Nothing. No invitations, no collaborations—not even a proper conversation. And as of December 1992, nothing had changed. Maybe things would shift when the ASD and the Lucidity Association held their conferences in the Netherlands in 1994. One could hope. You probably know Frederik van Eeden—he's often celebrated as a pioneer in lucid dreaming. But here in the Netherlands, he hasn't been a help. Quite the opposite, in fact. Van Eeden spent much of his energy trying to prove the existence of an afterlife. That association—between lucid dreaming and spiritualism—cast a long shadow. The scientific world here wanted no part of it.

After his death, lucid dreaming was basically locked away in a dusty drawer labeled "esoterica." It took until 1985 for the topic to reappear. That year, psychology student Franz Maissan wrote a dissertation on lucid dreaming.



In a personal conversation, he told me his professors weren't thrilled with his choice. "Not scientific enough," they said. That didn't stop one of those same professors from publishing a book on dream research in 1991—and quoting Maissan extensively. Yes, opportunism lives a long life. To give you another example of how lucid dreaming is regarded here: in 1987, a newspaper article about Maissan's research appeared... on the children's page. The authors—two psychologists—used pseudonyms. They were afraid of damaging their scientific reputations. Not long after the first European lucid dreaming meeting in Frankfurt (also in 1987), a Dutch physician wrote a

scathing newspaper column mocking the entire event. He referenced Van Eeden's old work and concluded, with a smug tone, that there was "nothing new under the sun." Still, I didn't give up. I placed an advertisement in a national paper, asking people who had experienced lucid dreams to contact me. The response was overwhelming. But out of all those replies, only five people had actually had lucid dreams—and even they turned out to be quite inexperienced. world...

New Directions

By this time, everything I had read and experienced had begun to reshape my view of lucid dreaming. It wasn't just about the thrill anymore. I started noticing different levels within the lucid state. I began using it in a self-therapeutic way—trying to face fears, resolve internal conflicts. The dreams were becoming more than play. At the same time, letters began to arrive. Mostly from ordinary Dutch readers—people with little to no experience, or just starting out. They asked questions. They wanted to share. They wanted connection. And so, I tried to offer what little support I could. But I should emphasize again: I wasn't backed by any institute. I had no funding. No subsidies, no academic position. Just a home phone and a growing stack of paper.

It made me wonder how many other people around the world were in similar situations—carrying the lucid dream vehicle forward on their own. How many could afford the memberships, the seminars, the journal subscriptions? How many could pay for travel and phone calls? When my book came out, the response was modest. From the “New Age” scene—nothing. Not a single reaction. Apparently, my more grounded, psychological approach didn’t sit well with those communities. Maybe they found it threatening. In the book, I described lucid dreams as travels through a subjective mental landscape. Not as journeys into some higher spiritual dimension. Don’t get me wrong—I don’t exclude the possibility that there’s more to existence than we currently understand. But I prefer the path of doubt. The path of investigation. To me, esoteric ideas about otherworldly travel or parallel dimensions create a kind of helplessness. In that model, you—the dreamer—are passive. The demons or spirits come from “somewhere else,” often connected to the world of the dead. What power does the individual have in such a model? Not much, I’m afraid. And I don’t want to dream that way.

Criticism of Lucid Dream Research

It saddens me that the Netherlands contributes nothing—*nothing*—in terms of scientific research on lucid dreaming. As long as leading Dutch scientists remain silent, the average Dutch person will never hear about it. And even if they do, they’ll quickly discover it isn’t taken seriously by any academic institute. So they shrug it off. And that’s a real loss. I believe spreading lucid dreaming research across

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different countries would benefit the field as a whole. Right now, the research hubs are limited to a handful of countries—France, the U.S., the U.K., Germany. What about Hungary? Russia? Morocco? South Africa? I’ve never seen a single report or study from those places. So much for an “international” network. LaBerge wrote that we should encourage psychologists, neurologists, and psychophysicists to search for connections between measurable brain activity and subjective experience. He’s right. But the reality is: that call has only been answered in a few corners of the world. Still—despite all my complaints—I

end this with hope. I hope you will keep dreaming lucidly. I hope you’ll keep questioning. And most of all—Please, whatever you do—**Don’t stop.**

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Editor's Note: The following References list has been rearranged to conform to the North American practices that are the standard in this publication.

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