

## Flying in Dreams

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People start dreaming vividly, on average, at about 9 years of age. Very young children experience REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, but their dreams lack intensity. Lucid dreaming means the dreamer is aware that he or she is dreaming, and can learn to influence the direction of the dream narrative. A dream about flying is lucid dreaming. It includes the incremental development of skills from one dream to the next. If you fly in your dreams, for example, during lucid dreaming you would guide yourself in the techniques of flying. You would learn to shift your center of gravity to the chest and back areas, and to move your arms as though they were wings. In flying, you move the arm and shoulder muscles upwards, lifting yourself off the ground. The dreamer must have confidence and be able to concentrate. Sometimes it helps to get a running start. Once airborne, you can teach yourself to navigate, to change altitudes, to turn around circling, diving, getting closer to the landscape or an object, and swooping up and away from things. There may be trees, forests, mountains, hills, towns, people. There may be water towers, cities, rivers, streets. For me there was always a landscape below and an inviting horizon beyond.

My first flying dream occurred when I was 12 years old. Earlier that day I wore a new pale yellow dress with an empire waistline. The fabric was a smooth cotton sateen and the dress was somewhat mod in style. I was on the front porch of our house on Fourth Street, and the door was open to let in the occasional June breeze. Across from our house there was an alley that ran down from Fifth Street, starting near the laundromat a block away, going past the back of the butcher shop and stopping at the Fourth Street intersection before continuing for another block or so to the playground. An Amish man was riding down the alley on a horse and buggy. When he stopped his rig at the intersection, I went over to look at the horse and the man said he would take me for a ride. My mother watched us through the screen door, smiling. She came out, drying her hands with a dishtowel and I asked her about going for a ride. Yes, she said, but don't go too far away. We trotted along in friendly silence down Manor Street, which was a narrow hilly street adjacent to our own, and like the rest of the neighborhood it was lined with small brick row houses and shops. We were in the roadway, in the open air, and the buggy seats were elevated. From my seat, I could see more of Manor Street than I ever had noticed the hundreds of times I had walked down it before. I experienced small moments of euphoria. When we reached the Thrifty Supermarket at the bottom of the hill, the man suggested it was time for me to go back. I thanked him, got down from the buggy, and walked home.

That night I dreamt I met Jesus at the mailbox on Manor Street. He was in a buggy and offered me a ride. When I got up on the seat, the buggy took off into the air and we flew down Manor Street. I had the same feeling of unfettered freedom in the dream that I had earlier that day during the ride, only greater. During the dream I decided to pay no attention to Jesus and simply enjoy the experience of flying.

After that, I began to dream about flying regularly. Often I would enter the dream mid-flight soaring over an idyllic country scene. I remember green hills and a scattering of trees. I learned how to maneuver, how to speed up and slow down, and how to fly low to the ground, examining the scenery or objects below without touching the ground. I learned how to land easily and how to take off without a hitch. The sky was always blue, and I was always concentrating. The concentration sharpened my enjoyment of the dream. Perhaps it was in knowing that I had skill and power and could go wherever I wanted, in whatever landscape I chose. Sometimes I looked down over cities, and sometimes I could see the curve of the world on the horizon. Occasionally I went too high, higher than enormous mountain ranges, and at these times the exhilaration threatened to overwhelm me and I brought myself down. Whatever scene was before me, it was clear that flying meant entering a landscape.

The dreams continued through high school and into college. Things in life became complicated. People died, I had sex, I took drugs, I left home, still flying. Eventually there were other people on the ground and in the sky and some of them were in pursuit. I began flying away from the countryside, around and through complex arrangements of tall buildings. I had to fly fast enough to escape my pursuers, or sometimes find my way out of a maze of power plants and major public works. There were sewage treatment plants, hydroelectric facilities, and clusters of round water towers that seemed to have been constructed too close together. Flying became dangerous but by that time I was a very skilled dreamer. Then the dreams stopped.

### Landscapes and Scenery

Landscape themes in painting and photography often refer to the ideas of ownership, and of bringing order to the wilderness. The idea of nature as beautiful is an idea about looking. Looking is possessing. Landscape as actual place, as in national parks or formal gardens, denotes stewardship and conservation rather than use. It seems based on the belief that nature is chaos. People who live in nature are a part of the wilderness. The need for order becomes evident.

Driving through Yosemite National Park in California affords the traveller plenty of opportunity to stop along the way and look at the magnificent scenery from pleasing vantage points. People almost always take pictures at these designated stops along the roadside. Vistas provide a psychological and physical barrier between the viewer and the place viewed. The practice of looking at natural scenery as a form of recreation changes the relationship of humans to nature and brings us out of nature into the logic of possession (order). The placement of a horizon line plays a key role in vistas by delineating the dichotomy between order and chaos. Every scene becomes a photograph (or a painting).

### Yosemite Valley, California

1. *Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul alike.* -- John Muir, naturalist and founding member of the Sierra Club, *The Yosemite* (1912)

2. Yosemite Valley's first residents were Native Americans who inhabited the region perhaps as long as 7,000 to 10,000 years ago. By the time non-Native Americans entered the Yosemite region in the mid-19th century, the valley was inhabited by the Southern Sierra Miwok.

Early references to Yosemite Valley by non-Indian explorers began appearing in the 1830s and 1840s. In 1848, the discovery of gold brought scores of outside gold seekers to the Sierra Nevada. By 1851, thousands of miners had appropriated Indian lands, which quickly resulted in the Mariposa Indian War. In an attempt to capture a group of Yosemite Indians, the state-sanctioned Mariposa Battalion entered Yosemite Valley on March 27, 1851.

Word of Yosemite's beauty gradually spread, and in 1855, the first party of tourists arrived. Nine years later, a group of influential Californians persuaded the federal government to grant Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove to the state as the first public preserve.

-- source: <http://www.americanparknetwork.com/parkininfo/yo/history/>

3. Taming the Wild West

On June 30, 1864, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Yosemite Land Grant bill, giving 39,200 acres of federal land encompassing Yosemite Valley to the state of California for public enjoyment and preservation. The creation of the first national park took place during the disruptions of the American Civil War at a time when a devastating series of "Indian Wars" was being waged to subdue Indian autonomy. Thus the startling landscapes of Yosemite, substantially an outcome of Indian systems of land use, were proposed for conservation by the very same settlers who, twelve years previously, had waged the "Mariposa Indian War" against the area's indigenous people—the Miwok. The main proponent of the park, LaFayette Burnell, who led the Mariposa Battalion and professed a "take-no-prisoners" approach to the Miwok, wanted to "sweep the territory of any scattered bands that might infest it." Once the Park was established, it was run by the U.S. Army for the next 52 years before being taken over by the National Parks Service.

The Miwok petitioned the U.S. government in 1890. They called for compensation for their losses and denounced the managers of the park. "The valley is cut up completely with dusty, sandy roads leading from the hotels of the white in every direction... All seem to come only to hunt money... The valley has been taken away from us [for] a pleasure ground...." Their pleas were ignored and further evictions of remnant Miwok settlements were made in 1906, 1929 and as late as 1969.

What the Miwok had noted was that the national parks, set up to preserve "wilderness" regions "unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations" were also designed with a profit motive. Indeed, the first parks of Yosemite and Yellowstone, were created largely as a result of pressure from the railway-building lobby, which sought to increase the numbers of fare-paying passengers

by routing their tracks near scenic sites for what today we have reinvented as “eco-tourism.”

--source: [http://www.unesco.org/courier/2001\\_07/uk/planet.htm](http://www.unesco.org/courier/2001_07/uk/planet.htm)

4. [Renowned landscape photographer Ansel] Adams was often criticized for not including humans in his photographs and for representing an idealized wilderness that no longer exists. However, it is in large part thanks to Adams that these pristine areas have been protected for years to come.

Why was Ansel Adams revered by Americans as no other artist or conservationist has been? William Turnage explains: "More than any other influential American of his epoch, Adams believed in both the possibility and the probability of humankind living in harmony and balance with its environment.

Adams first visited Yosemite in 1916 - only 2 years after John Muir's death and 3 months before the founding of the National Park Service - and was transfixed by the beautiful valley. In 1919, at age 17, he had his first contact with the Sierra Club. Adams' interest in photography grew and often brought him up to the mountains accompanied by a mule laden with photographic gear and supplies.

In 1927, Adams participated in the Club's annual outing, known as the High Trip, and, the next year, he became the Club's official trip photographer. In 1930 he became assistant manager of the outings which consisted of month-long excursions of up to 200 people. Adams also got involved politically in the Club, suggesting proposals for improving parks and wilderness, and soon became known as both an artist and defender of Yosemite. In 1934, Adams was elected as a member of the Board of Directors of the Sierra Club.

--source: [http://www.sierraclub.org/ansel\\_adams/about.asp](http://www.sierraclub.org/ansel_adams/about.asp)

### Flying through a Landscape

Recently, I had another flying dream. It was unexpected, if that can be said about a dream - and it was fun. I seem to have retained most of my lucid dreaming skills from years ago. The landscape was like one of the early dreamscapes - pastoral, with green hills, trees here and there, a blue sky, and an ever-changing horizon. The morning after the dream I sat up in bed with a cup of coffee, waking up gradually as I always do. I remembered the dream with pleasure and wondered why it was recurring now. My eyes fell on the small oil painting on the wall opposite the bed. The painting is a landscape. In the foreground on the left of the painting is a forest, with a road running along the edge of it. The road zigzags to a group of tiny houses and then past a small village on the right encircled by trees. Beyond the ring of trees are more houses and soft hills. The painter was not especially accomplished, however, and I have never been able to read correctly what is beyond the hills. It is either snow-covered mountain peaks in the misty distance, or it is peaks formed by white clouds in a windy blue sky.



Landscape, artist unknown, nd