

Conversations in the Dreamscape: A Reflection

My major work is a piece of my soul. It is a reflection of a personal journey, wherein dreams have significant personal and spiritual resonance. Within my poetry, I wanted to explore the question, ‘what are our dreams trying to tell us?’ Through researching psychology, reading vast amounts of dream-poetry, and composing my own answers to this question, I have gained insights into the form of poetry, and into myself. My major work initially manifested as a suite of poems but evolved into an intense duologue between the experiences of the individual’s awakening soul (denoted as ‘The Waker’) and those of the subconscious mind (‘The Sleeper’). This conversation utilises the language of dreams to communicate, and a sense of heightened internal awareness. Carl Jung’s theory states, ‘dreams are the psyche’s attempt to communicate important things to the individual’. My poetry was guided by this idea to become an exploration of the resonance of dreams in our waking lives, and aims to search for the meaning of our dreams as secrets whispered by the subconscious, that can be unlocked by the waking soul.

My prospective audience is young women, who are interested in the Romantic ideals of the intersection of the soul with nature, and the Romantic trope of the connection between individuals and a higher power found through nature (for contemporary pantheists). I also hope the poems inspire young women who are facing troubles with love and heartbreak to work through internal conflicts, and search for meaning in their own dreams.

My concept was found in my contemplations on the meaning and resonance of dreams to our waking selves. The significance of dreams has been a powerful idea since the birth of civilisation. Shakespeare used dreams as an important tool for foreshadowing, like King Richard III’s dream-omen of his death in battle. Shakespeare reflected the beliefs of his Elizabethan context, through these moments of divine, supernatural intervention with the subconscious. In my major work, I reshaped this idea to my context, through the use of more secular ideas, while retaining a spiritual sense of telepathic dreaming, as in the poem, ‘I Will Never Lose You’, which is answered in ‘My Premonition’.

John Donne’s metaphysical interpretation of dreaming about one’s lover in ‘The Dream’ incorporates ideas of the resonance of dreaming in the context of love. His beautiful portrayal of the moment his lover woke him from a dream he was having about her, delves deeper into

the spiritual sense of dreaming – the idea of this lovely coincidence invites a deeper consideration into the power of our subconscious minds, to have thoughts which precede our realities. I was inspired to reflect this idea throughout my work, a primary example of this being the poem, ‘I Will See You in the Dreamscape’, in which I write, ‘*Your soul visits me in my sleep at nightfall – / the moon guides you to me in sweeping beams*’, demonstrating the resonance of love with our dreaming selves.

Denise Levertov, a prominent dream-poet, asserts, ‘when the images of certain poems make one feel one is entering a real dream, it is a sign of their strength, their power’. I perceived this in Romantic writer William Blake’s poem, ‘A Dream’. The introduction, ‘*Once a dream did weave a shade*’, which personifies the dream, creates the sense that the subconscious has the power to take over the mind. This is correlated to the Romantic notion of the primary imagination, and the idea of emotion over rationality. Blake’s poem was successful in demonstrating Levertov’s claim; it invokes the sense that one is entering a dream from the start, through suggesting that the dream has taken over the mind. The subconscious taking over the resting mind became a motif in my work and generated the idea of their dialogue during this process. My poem, ‘You Are A Dream-Ghost: Melody’ is an example of this, ‘*I capitulate to the impending sleep / which folds heavily across tender eyelids. Now, subconscious may creep / into control, to converse with my soul*’. The idea of the subconscious talking to the awakening soul is intrinsic to my concept, and promotes this Romantic ideal of primary imagination.

A more modern interpretation of dreams comes in Beat poet Allen Ginsberg’s ‘Understand That This Is A Dream’, which incorporates the existentialist uncertainty of whether one is awake or asleep. The distinction between reality and dreams can often become blurred to the human mind, especially in the case of lucid dreaming, or where psychedelic drugs are involved, present in Ginsberg’s context. This concept has been explored by poets for generations and various literary movements. The poem, ‘A Dream Within A Dream’, by Edgar Allan Poe, demonstrates an early Gothic view of the existential crisis that can occur when one questions the distinction between dreams and reality. He reflects his panic for losing grip on reality, through the metaphor of sand falling into the ocean. Inspired by Poe’s questioning of reality, and his clever use of metaphor to achieve this, I wrote my poem, ‘A Memory or a Dream’. The childhood memory of finding a hermit crab on a beach was chosen as an emblem for drawing back into oneself, and losing contact with reality. Hermits can

retract into themselves and ignore the outside world, and this symbolises the way we can draw in on ourselves when we lose grip on the notion of the real world, *'I felt like the hermit / closing in on myself / questioning the outside, questioning real life.'* I chose the beach setting as an emulation of Poe's sand symbol, and transposed the concept of reality versus dreams, to memory versus dreams.

Setting is extremely significant in my work. I was led by the knowledge of crafting intersecting worlds in my poetry, gained from my study of exemplar pieces in the English Extension 1 course, including writers such as William Wordsworth, Alex Miller, Charlotte Brontë and Allen Ginsberg. This enabled me to reflect the importance of the interconnection of oneself with nature. I created this sense through the intrinsic connection that the speaker and the speaker's failed relationship has with place. The cliff-space is first introduced at the beginning of the poem, 'My Premonition'. Place is presented as essential to the speaker's relationship, *'we were back at the cliff ... / where everything begins, / and everything ends'*. This is emblematic of the importance of nature in the speaker's journey. The cliff has a view of the ocean where the ocean meet the sky (where everything begins, and everything ends – the ocean both ends and begins, as does the sky). The cliff has the higher power, granted by the cosmos, to begin and end her relationship, and life itself.

I utilised the structure of a sequence of sonnets often called the 'Corona Sequence' in my piece, 'You Are a Dream-Ghost'. I chose this to infer a sense of 'haunting' of a ghost, through the repetition of the last line of each poem as the first line of the next. Donne's 'La Corona' demonstrated the connected sense of sequenced sonnets, influencing me to utilise the same form. My sonnet sequence presents, most importantly, the motif of place. *'This place is the key to my memories'* is the first and last lines of the sequence, which demonstrates the intrinsic circular link within the sonnet sequences, and the work as a whole, to place. This is a metaphor for the importance of place in the speaker's relationship. Nature brings her back to the emotions she felt when she was with her lover, *'And the pictures it presses in my mind / overwhelm me. I feel it all again, / Like in a dream'*.

The poetic duologue ends with the destruction of this place in the poem 'My Nightmare (An Elegy to the World)'. This poem utilises the polyvalent symbol of the couple's favourite place being destroyed by civilisation to reveal how their relationship has been destroyed in her mind. The lines, *'The life here has been expelled, and we seem / to have ice between us;*

emptiness like the celeste are a direct representation of the polyvalent symbol crafted through the intersection of nature. To create a textual conversation, as demonstrated in Module A of the English Advanced course, this poem was crafted as a Neo-Romantic response to Lord Byron's poem, 'Darkness'. To reflect his context, I composed the poem in the Romantic conventions of an elegy. I transposed his ideas about the death of humanity due to evil intentions, to the downfall of humanity due to greedy intentions causing an environmental catastrophe.

Overall, my major work has been the one of the most soul-spurring, meaningful, and endearing things I have ever done, and definitely the most difficult! I am so thankful I did it – I leave the course with the most satisfaction I've ever felt.

*'The music ceased, the noontime dream,
Like dream of night, withdrew;
But Fancy, still, will sometimes deem
Her fond creation true.'*

- Emily Brontë

Reference List

- ‘Darkness’, ‘Stanzas for Music’, ‘She Walks in Beauty’ – Lord Byron
- ‘Heart of Darkness’ – Joseph Conrad
- ‘A Dream Within A Dream’ – Edgar Allan Poe
- ‘Understand That This is A Dream’ – Allen Ginsberg
- ‘King Richard III’ – William Shakespeare
- ‘The Dream’, ‘La Corona’ – John Donne
- ‘Interweaving: Reflections on the Role of Dream in the Making of Poems’ – Denise Levertov
- ‘A Dream’ – William Blake
- ‘Journey to the Stone Country’ – Alex Miller
- ‘Wuthering Heights’ – Charlotte Brontë
- ‘A Day Dream’ – Emily Brontë
- ‘The Dream Called Life’ - Edward Fitzgerald
- ‘Dream-Love’, ‘Dream-Land’ - Dante Gabriel Rossetti
- ‘Kubla Khan: or A Vision in a Dream’ – Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- ‘The First Dream’ - Billy Collins
- ‘I dream of You, to Wake’ - Christina Rossetti
- ‘The Dream’ - Lola Ridge
- ‘We dream—it is Good We Are Dreaming—’ – Emily Dickinson
- ‘He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven’ – W. B. Yeats
- ‘The Folly of Dream Interpretation’ - Patrick McNamara Ph.D.
- ‘Anthem for Doomed Youth’ – Wilfred Owen
- Sonnets – Shakespeare
- ‘The Ode Less Travelled’ – Stephen Fry
- ‘The Major Works’ – William Wordsworth