

BEING DREAMT

By Katherine Savage

Sometimes dissonance sneaks up on you like a shy child wanting a hug, but at other times, the child gleefully turns a spurting hose on your shocked and screaming face. After reading Martin Shaw's notion of being actively dreamt by the Earth¹, I knew I'd been soaked to the soul, but the shock arose from realizing I understood this experience, while still clinging to the traditional understandings of who and what does our dreaming. Welcome to dissonance—the discomfort of disconnection between truth and belief.

Martin is Director of the Westcountry School of Myth and Story—a writer, teacher and mythologist. Being dreamt was his experience, and that of many before him who have lived with their ear close to the earth. The idea is that if you keep your ear there long enough and tune in, you overhear the dreams of a planet. In what aboriginal teachers call Wild Land Dreaming, we are connected to a particular place as its spirit enters our earthly mother, who is gestating us while walking the land. Our bodies return this spirit when we enter the earth again. More than our 'I' dreams, these are our collective ruminations drawn into the immense imagination of the Earth itself.

I have studied this idea in the words of others, their experiences so compelling as to take the shape of a belief system. But until recently, being dreamt by an animate Earth had not been my experience, at least not one I could bring into my awareness. If asked, I would have declared myself the dreamer and testified my dream world was the not-real, non-place I visit with my body action suspended, to work out what is difficult during my day and see what is of value to bring back to my wakefulness. That it had a function, with me as director of its scape and scripts, had not made it real—only useful.

That was before, and explains the feeling I have now of being doused by his words. For I have recently fulfilled a 30-year longing to move to a particular planetary place where I feel ample resonance with my surroundings. Acting on this dream has satisfied a long-held question of whether the desire to make these mountains and this river my home was a frivolous wish for scenery or a deep soul need for reconnection with the Earth. With the prodding of dissonance from Martin's words, the question leapt up to splash me in the face . . . *whose dream was it, to bring myself here?*

Whether by stealth or a soaking, behind many of our 'noooo . . . ' responses is an invitation to move through our reasons for resistance, so that we can arrive in the more comfortable and life-giving space of 'yessss . . . ' Tension begs for release, tears ask for mending, dissonance longs for resonance. In my case, 'no' was the rigid idea that my dreams belong to me, and 'yes' the realization I was already on the journey from being the dreamer, to being dreamt.

¹ Dr. Martin Shaw, "Small Gods," <http://drmartinshaw.com/essays/>

Intuition and rational thinking are frequently squaring off in me to find their foot-hold and build empires in their name. But increasingly as I age, the territories of real and not-real lose their purchase. I am more inclined to yield to mystery than dissect it. I expect this is developmental, as I'm in the life stage of turning to face the mystery of passing my body and spirit back to the planet. I actively wonder, for example, if that final letting go of breath is somehow like turning my body over to sleep each night, or like how I once eased a baby into the world by sheathing the sword I was using to fight the frightful pain of her birth. Letting go of the reins in other words, like we do in dreaming.

I see in these experiences that the body's wisdom in what to do sometimes requires the thinking mind to get out of its way. If surrendering surety of what is real and what is not helps me open to that way of knowing and prepares me for dying, I am inclined to yield. I want to build a foot-bridge between the empires of thinking and feeling, so that commerce is commonplace and there are fewer impediments to travel. From the sub-conscious knowing I have been dreamt back to the territory where I believe I have not, the question to help me span this chasm is simple, but big: *How is it possible that I have been dreamt by this place?*

When I first stepped into it, I knew from experience to wait for that predictable anthropocentric answer to come out posturing for a satisfied pat on its head. Without artfully reshaping it into a keystone that includes benefits to the more-than-human world, there would be no resonance. As anticipated, species superiority spoke of my deserving this place of power and beauty in which I now reside. The manifestation of this planet's best dreams is naturally the most evolved creature, and its lavishly appointed environs a just reward. But given our nightmarish effects, a sagacious planet would not have dreamed me here for a pretentious display of my supreme species capabilities.

So moving on . . . but not quite. I find, in my outright rejection of species preeminence, a 'however.' I do, as a human, have capacities which enable me to critically consider my beliefs. The one keeping me from understanding myself to be dreamt, is that there is no-thing other than me doing my dreaming. Yet I know from questing into my potentialities for being magical, that humans can develop the skills of dreaming with awareness (lucid dreaming), and by doing so, we enhance our capacity to think about our thinking (meta-cognition). This means dreaming is one manifestation of our distinguishing ability as a species to self-reflect, and *to know that we know* we are dreaming brings this dark-time gift into the light of 'real.' Dreaming, therefore, happens along a continuum of consciousness that merges the purposes of our waking and sleeping experiences.

And through my rational thinking, I begin to find my way in to the truth of my experience. Because the events that soften reality's boundaries and open continuums of wakefulness seem to be purposed, they could be viewed as an invitation from a source of wisdom deeper than our own. Here is where faith that *there is* a 'something' wiser than us, is helpful. When we allow that intelligence to speak to and through us, we are nudged to a more generative point of view,

an enlarged state of being. We can, through dreaming, become a decidedly more helpful species.

Therefore, I've already begun the journey to understanding I am dreamt, by viewing my dreams as intentionally meaningful. The trip is cut short however, if I continue to view that expedition of enrichment as a dream inspired by me, for only me. My short trip, when collected and bundled up with everyone else's, is now manifesting as less time on the planet for our species. Too frequently we fail to display the good of our dreaming, and may be leaving because of it. What could transpire if we came to understand that the purpose of dreaming was not to solicit our 'I's' to work out personal dramas, but for the collective 'we' to tap into the wisdom of that which created us for the benefit of all? Could we see how to stay on the planet, and do it?

If meaning to our creation was intended, then before our manifestation there was a dream of what we could and should be—the Creator's dream. We know from our enlarged understanding of dreaming abilities, that the Creator has not stopped dreaming of and through us. In giving us the ability to self-reflect, the Creator devised a way by which to continue fomenting the original energy which gave birth not only to us, but to everything and all there is. Through us, the Creator is still evolving what can be made of matter that energetically and enthusiastically explodes.

As a human with my particular attributes, I have been an expression of the planet's reverie for 58 years, the possibility of human form for 24 years prior, and the raw stuff of dreams from which forms are made since that primordial explosion of intense temperatures and density at time's beginning. I have been imagined and re-imagined unimaginable times, and then given form.

And throughout these many forms, the Creator dreams. In some of these forms, the capacity to know one is dreaming is given, and in some not, but in all forms there is the expression of a beautiful dream. This planet is the most beautiful dream of dreams. All forms of it are part of the landscape in which the Creator works out the volatile tensions of what to be. All dream with the Creator under the dark of night sky, to experience the universe opening to the unending mystery of what we are and could be. All vision with the Creator in the dark of the underground, to witness the promise of decay and the seed that falls into it. All feel the molten core of the dark center fueling life from the inside. All give over their separateness to invite the dark of dream-time in and let it have its way, to be made again.

Of all these forms, who is to say which is more evolved? A rock knows how to be fully rock, while a human depends on having its waking life barriers removed by sleep to know how to be fully human. Still, in whatever way we are endowed with its matter, the Earth makes its dream clear: all forms are to rise up to be their authentic manifestations of what was imagined, and then fall back into the reverie of the planet to be dreamed again.

My own attempts at embodiment look like this: when I encounter species kin who are difficult, I gain height with mountains ridging up my spine. Dissolution is in this: when I experience

material threats to safety and security, I flow through their expectations of stress with the river in my veins. Undoubtedly, the revelations in how to be a planetary citizen will continue, but others of my kind have seen for some time the effects of a sensual planet claiming me in love. They are witnessing the dream of this place emanating from me in choices made and not made, as I orient through its landscape, following the song-lines Black Mountain Spirit and Toe River Spirit lay down. Because of the wildness here, its dream roars loudly enough through me for others to imagine they hear dreaming of their own earthscape. For even in the places where humans have striven to keep the natural world from becoming what it wants to be, the Earth continues to dream. Though we mute its voice with our activity, nature never stops itself from dreaming, then becoming, and dreaming again.

Looking back over 30 years of longing to live here, it is possible now to see how I was also longed for. Each time I drove away, I was given dissonance so that I would understand the dreams of a particular place are not to be dismissed. When I trusted the spirits of this place and moved to be close to them, I was given the resonance of orienting my life from their emanations in the earthscape features. They sing ceaselessly of the Earth's dream – that I know the natural world to be my only true home

Hear now the story of how my experiences with a place were transformed, artful stroke by stroke, into a keystone that bridges truth and belief. May it help you turn the notes of the dreams of your place into a song-line by which to orient your human life.

Verse 1

Take a thought that comes to you in a particular place in the natural world, where you find yourself saying for example, 'It is beautiful here.' Remember this later and think it would be nice to return.

Verse 2

When a free weekend appears, visit it again. Sit in the place where you became aware of its beauty, and experience the affirmation of your view. Wander a bit in its landscape and regard its features. See that they make a room, where there is a chair for you. Pick up a rock that fixes itself to your eye and pocket it. Upon leaving, linger, and hear yourself tell the place goodbye.

On days when humans have narrowed your day with their shallow lives, feel the rock in your pocket and conjure the place. Feel your body loosen its grip on this world. Have the thought that you can perhaps suffer a return, because you are less *of it* now.

Verse 3

Stretch open the predictability of having your days' activities dictated by others, by X'ing out the weekend of your return. After signifying your intent to be in charge of what you do, turn it over to the place when you arrive. On its agenda is your rest and play. Play looks like meeting the invitations of its features to interact with them—a dance of call

and respond. Rest looks like sinking your body into a hollowed out place that was surely made just for you.

Back home, you wish that your bed was this place, and drag your pillow and blankets outside at night in search of its kin. You wish that your play felt less like achievement, and you had no need of alcohol to access it.

Verse 4

Bring into your awareness that how well you get through your days is contingent upon whether there is an X'd out weekend on your calendar. Upon arrival at the place, you feel greeted just by having planned to greet it. You note the rush of relief from not being betrayed—it is still there and still beautiful—followed by the flush of gratitude through your eyes.

When the place is at your back and you are walking away, note your resignation falter, as if you have been found at fault in your turning. The thought speaks itself—*what if the day comes when I do not leave?*

Verse 5

As your time and familiarity with the place increase, you feel the features begin to conspire. There is the art of objects arranged as has been communicated to your hands, the art of your body's movements as has been choreographed by the earthscape features.

Back home, there is a change in your dreams—the return of childhood dreams in which you flew, and of adult dreams in which you succumbed. Now you fly higher, and the place is the landscape of your flight. You transcend the unresolvable threats to life and limb: you ask the snake to bite, you want the tornado to whirl and whip you.

Verse 6

Despair at the forecast of rain or snow for your X'd weekend becomes determination to acquire whatever accoutrements to the human body are needed to greet the weather that will come, despite your love of comfort.

You find yourself craving big weather, of being spun by the planet, of yielding to and celebrating your impermanence. Your X becomes a $\sqrt{\quad}$.

Verse 7

Weekends at the place become week-long, and you hear yourself telling others you cannot come to their event, because it coincides with your trip to the place. You want them to know how important the place is to you. You realize you are no longer visiting, but pilgrimaging. As you kneel there with gratitude, you know this posture to be worship. You feel increased. You understand its holiness was not made so by your gratitude, but has always been.

On your home altar, you place the ever increasing number of gifts offered there—a feather of transcendence, a bone of grounding, a rock or twist of wood immortalizing flow.

Verse 8

Then the day arrives, of no arrival and departure. You understand you are in conversation with the place whether you are there or here. This conversation, the one you thought you started when you said the place was beautiful, was actually your response. The place itself had designs on you from the beginning, to move its pulsing energy through your body until you knew yourself to be claimed. The metaphors you thought you had made of how it *is* there, were its medial messages until you understood the literal life of the place in you. It is not, and never was, something you brought home in your pocket and put on your altar. It is the Earth itself becoming your blood and bone.

Then you know.

You, my friend, have been dreamt.