Awakening From a Dream

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AWAKENING FROM A DREAM

by

Liam Reading

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for a Degree with Honors
(Studio Art)

The Honors College
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ABSTRACT

I have created a hand-bound book of copper etchings and poetry called *Awakening From A Dream*. This project consists of over thirty handmade, printed, and illuminated plates that symbolize an introspective journey through the mind and out the other side. What begins with a looming existential dread transforms into an acceptance for the patterns of creation and destruction. Self-pity and fear of facing the unknown are met with delving deep into the recesses of the mind in order to reconcile my waking life with my nightmares. This is a process of overcoming heartbreak and depression, and becoming self-actualized. In no way does this mark an ending point on this path, but it does mark the beginning of recognizing the struggle, and learning to be empathetic with myself and the world around me. I use a medium of pure black line-work combined with illuminating line-work in the tradition of Blake and Dali among others. My work identifies with the skeptical modernism of a century ago, but evolves and cross breeds with an overarching sense of romanticism and transcendentalism that runs through my work. What begins with a cynical rejection of the condition of mankind, ends with a symbiosis with nature and a philosophy analogous to philosophies of Kant and Thoreau, culminating with the assertion that pure divine love permeates throughout all nature and humanity.
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Awakening From A Dream is a handmade book of intaglio etchings and photopolymer plates of poetry compiled to form an conceptual narrative of my mental processes taking place over the past several years. I came to decide on creating this project through a natural evolution of my surrealist work responding to the medium of etching. I have been writing poetry since high school and drawing for as long as I can remember, and my process really started accelerating in college. This really only shows the tip of the iceberg, but is representative of my transformation of consciousness that has been pivotal for me to learn and grow from. Much of my writing has been inspired by musical artists like Bob Dylan, Pink Floyd, various hip hop artists, as well as mystics and poets including Rumi, Gibran, Coleridge, and Poe. I admire contemporary psychedelic rock and folk musicians like Tame Impala and the fleet foxes, but the true influences of this project come from my personal relationships with others, the world, and especially with myself.

This project has been years in the making and marks the longest, most arduous and ambitious project I’ve ever created to date, and its roots of conception reach far back into my creative upbringing. What made me fall through the rabbit hole of art back as a teenager was the wonder and mystery surrounding the genre of surrealism, pioneered by figures like Salvador Dali and Max Ernst in the 20th century. Like these artists who dabbled with psychic automatism and tapped into the chaos of the subconscious to find beauty and order, I too derive much of my inspiration from dream realms. I often free associate my poetry as well as the subjects of my etchings, and derive much of my sym-
bolic conceptualization from classical references, the internet, and hand taken photographs. It’s important to point out the distinction that my work isn’t purely abstract, but instead contains elements of descriptive realism with inherent traces of figure, landscape, and symbolic narrative elements. Creating these plates has been a largely internal process of exploring what resides in the deep recesses of my psyche, and doubles as a form of catharsis. Creating this work has been a form of recovering my mental state and overcoming mental trauma stemming from a lack of self-love and purpose. The way I once viewed myself stemmed from deep seated insecurities and frustrations with myself and the world, stuck in a seemingly inescapable rut of idle self pity. But if anything has saved me from my own destructive patterns, it has been the creative process, and this is where *Awakening From A Dream* arises from.

I decided to create a book because I’ve always wanted to be a writer and illustrator since I was in the first grade. I remember my first book I wrote and drew was called *Monzog Monsters*, which told the tail of aliens who came to earth from planet Monzog deep in the outer reaches of the universe. It has been probably over a decade since my last illustrated book, and this is a way of addressing an old childhood dream of mine. I wanted to go through the process of hand printing my own book of etchings and poems and experience a deeply personal laborious method of printmaking in order to further appreciate the digitally automated and expedited contemporary printing processes, This is my way of channeling into an ancient art form in the tradition of Blake, Gibran, Goya, and Rembrandt, transcribing my soul onto paper and contributing to the tradition through my unique lens and style.
The idea for this project arose organically over time. My first idea was to illustrate a strict narrative I had written about a girl based off my late cousin Lyla. Originally my book would show her journey to overcome the isolation of her rare condition of Trisomy-18 and help to unite humans with nature. After illustrating an intaglio etching of this plate, I realized that this process wasn’t working for me because the medium of etching lends itself to a different way of working. Rather than adhering to text to make illustrations, I much prefer the excitement of manifesting my etchings without a definitive endpoint in mind, to see how they naturally evolve. My first etching was sparse and forced, but after this I decided to trust my intuition and set my hand and mind free from guidelines as a form of creative liberation. As a result, my project changed into a highly interpretive internal journey towards self-actualization. Upon making this distinction my output in the print studio greatly increased and I was able to create dense work rich with lines and surrealist narratives that can both stand on themselves and work as a cohesive unit. My imagery ranges from pre conceptualized figurative imagery, to psychic amalgamations of subconscious symbolism juxtaposed together and made coherent through detailed line work and a hatching cross contour technique. However, my intaglio etchings arise spontaneously with virtually no preparatory drawings. This stems from my philosophy of illustrating with a pen rather than a pencil which could be erased. There is a certain power and permanence achieved by drawing with pen, and a certain graphic impact that only pure black and white is capable of achieving.

This project began by creating stand alone etchings that were never meant to be shown together. But as I approach the end of my time in University, I’ve realized that I want to compile and showcase my best work to document the process of transformation
I’ve been on, rising up from depression to reach towards my highest self. It’s important to look back at where I came from, and each plate emblematizes the turbulent and varying mental states I have been in, especially as it pertains to self-love, my relationships with people and nature, and reconciling my feelings of depression, inadequacy, and distrust in the human condition. My original theme has persisted to show of a progression from an isolated prisoner mentality towards an awakened and empowered state of being that I hope to carry on as I enter the real world, awake and enlivened by the moment.
I have been working to gain fluency in the intaglio and photopolymer mediums of printmaking. Through delving into this particular mode of image-making, I have been devoted to the process of making two dimensional line work emerge from the page to create a story and ignite a feeling and meaning in those who choose to view my work. I have created countless sketches and poems now lost in old shelves of notebooks, but this project has been different. I wanted to create something with meaning that stands the test of time; something for me to look back on and be proud of. The challenge has been distilling the random chaos of my subconscious into something that can be read from start to finish and appreciated for shedding insight on the human condition. I can’t think of a more important shift than going from focusing on the have nots of life to appreciating the love and beauty even if life doesn’t work out the way we expect, which it never does. This is my journey and process, and it always circles back towards believing in myself and keeping faith in the magic of the universe. Now distilling these vital feelings into an intimate handmade book of etchings becomes the challenge, and in my way an ode to the human condition at this moment. I believe we all must wake up from our habits of indifference and align with what is calling out in our hearts to reach our full potential as people and a community. In a large sense, we are ignoring the impact we have on the planet, our communities, our families and ourselves. The process of creating this book, and the message behind it is to wake up from a numb and passionless existence of pain in order to find what we’re truly passionate about that can allow us to transcend without losing touch with our roots.
Creating this hand-bound book of illustrative copper intaglio etchings alongside poetry documenting my internal transformation towards a more awakened and enlivened state of being has been a process spanning several years and hundreds of hours. Over the last few years my perception of the world and our human purpose existing as a part of it has been altered dramatically. There are, however, a couple of threads that have helped to weave together my journey and sense of self, purpose, and adventure. These practices include writing and drawing, which alongside painting have proven to be the core creative elements which run through my creative practice. Through these pursuits I aim to express my thoughts about humanity and our place in nature. I see how fortunate we are for being alive and a part of this miraculous cosmic web of being, and also recognize how often our potential is squandered by self neglect, fear, hatred and indifference. Through my work, I hope to show the long and winding journey, through dreamlike states, realms of magic and symbolism, back into nature and reality. This is a process which starts in confusion, chaos, duality and depression, and evolves into gratitude, empathy, self-love, and empowerment.

Through my use of language and lines my emergence from indecision and anguish towards a trajectory of empowerment. My poetry is often lyrical and resonates through song and music. I believe in the human potential to create beauty, rhythm and connectedness through forms of expression, which thus makes us an instinctual part of this reality we have come to seem so separate from. My work explores the existential concept of humanity feeling isolated from the rest of reality, without a purpose; an ego implanted in a sac of flesh that is perceiving an outside world. This feeling of loneliness, depression and isolation was my reality for quite a while, and learning to break free and
document my changes has proven to be a worthwhile endeavor and is culminating as a physical artifact as *Awakening From A Dream* which points to the moment of realization that there are multitudes of realities waiting in the depths of the human condition.
LITERATURE REVIEW

This project fits into a broader cultural framework by continuing in the tradition of works like Ram Dass’s *Be Here Now*, Eckhart Tolle’s *The Power Of Now*, Gibran’s *The Prophet*, Lewis Carol’s *Alice in Wonderland*, and William Blake’s *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. I consider what I have made to be more a work of visual art than of literature. The text progresses in its own way that is separate yet parallel, and now intertwined with the imagery since both mediums of expression transform from a melancholy hopeless pessimism to a figurative rebirth and a new outlook that is more aligned with nature and true creative freedom. I experimented with text formatting, changing the size and spacing of the text for emphasis. This was much inspired by *Be Here Now* by Ram Dass. “You can’t get away from the day because: it’s in your head! That you’re trying to get away from… And the only way to get away is to change your head! Simple as that! You want to change your environment? Change your head!! It’s all the ecstatic moment!” (Das 33). The journey of this book shows the inward development of a yogi on the path to liberation, love, and purposeful interconnection with the beyond, which is essentially what my work entails minus the formal religious aspect.

I identify with the teachings of Eckhart Tolle as well as Alan Watts and their propagation of western ideologies particularly related to the dissolution of ego. As Tolle writes in *The Power of Now*, “Only the present can free you of the past. More time cannot free you of time” (Tolle 75). I feel as though the age we’re living in is becoming aloof, withdrawn, and addicted to various forms of stimulus. With all the distractions of technology, and the ecological crisis in full effect, now is an important time to wake up and
realize the impact we have on the planet, starting with our relationships with those around us and especially oneself. This is why I chose to explore this message, because change starts within myself. In A New Earth Tolle writes “Living up to an image that you have of yourself or that other people have of you is inauthentic living” (Tolle 59). This profound work has helped me understand the human condition in the world right now. He explains how most humans and cultures have an individual and collective pain body of heavy burdensome recollections of past experiences that haunt and weigh us down, keeping us from liberation. My work relates to this by attempting to dissolve this pain body in order to operate at a higher frequency of gratitude, abundance, and pure consciousness.

The first plate is one that I made two years ago and is my earliest plate featured in this book. This shows a depressed and slouching man sitting in front of an archway with a thundering storm cloud overhead, and a castle tower over his head and through the archway. Much of my art is illustrative ‘metaphorical realism’, a term coined by the inspiring painter Vladimir Kush (Kush 69). The symbol of the archway is for the gates of the mind, and the edges are reduced to rubble to suggest a deteriorating sense of self and border identification. The structures of the psyche still exist in the distance, like the castle walls we build consisting of our defense mechanisms that separate us from each other. I created this etching thinking of a line of poetry I wrote that reads “Torment comes in torrents, forming storms above the fortress” (Figure XX). I will talk of the writing in my book sparingly, but in the text plate that begins with “Recognize a love beyond ourselves” I ask

“Why dwell in realms of pain, envy, and solitude when everything is made from this immaterial source? Essential and invisible to the eye. We always have it because we are it, but we trick ourselves/ With nauseating mind riddles, convincing ourselves of love’s nonexistence/ We deny
our hearts in exchange for brooding minds/ Built like medieval castles
guarded by moats/ Trodden by forgotten grievances/ Beaten into archways
and dungeons of our own devising.” (Reading 19)

I quote from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s *The Little Prince* where the fox says “And now
here is my secret, a very simple secret; it is only with the heart that one can see rightly,
what is essential is invisible to the eye” (Saint-Exupéry 73). The Little Prince deals with
the same sort of grieving many of us have experienced when he realizes that his vain rose
that he tried to protect is lying about her uniqueness. As humans, we are inclined to build
our walls and protect our conceptions of reality by guarding them with our minds. This
work is dedicated to learning to trust in my heart that the universe will work out the way
it’s supposed to, because our experiences further the development of our consciousness
beyond the material realm. It often seems like a constant battle to keep the mind from
going in the way of instinct and intuition that expands and permeates from out our cen-
ter into everything we do.

My writing and visual art stems from an empirical sense that knowledge comes
from the nature of our experiences rather than pure logic. I refute Rene Descartes’ theory
that the mind and the body are distinct entities because I believe that dualism is quite
problematic and leads to a fatal divide purpose. There are a few advancements in the im-
portance of thought that Descartes proposes such as the connection of thinking and being
as well as the assertion that thoughts create our reality. As Gombay quotes Descartes, “If
you would be a real seeker after truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life you
doubt, as far as possible, all things” (Gombay 144). My work is ultimately about seeking
our own truth, which is essentially what Descartes is about, not to mention his line draw-
ings depicting the human eye and the connection our brain’s connection to the pineal
gland, known informally as the third eye. I interviewed Rick Strassman, the author of

*DMT: The Spirit Molecule* for a podcast I made about psychedelics and religious experience. He is a new age philosopher and researcher and believer that the pineal gland serves as a gateway for the soul to enter and leave the body upon birth and death by initiating a dreamlike experience into other realms of consciousness. In the introduction to DMT:

The Spirit Molecule, Strassman explains,

“Descartes, for example, believed the pineal was the "seat of the soul," and both Western and Eastern mystical traditions place our highest spiritual center within its confines. I therefore wondered if excessive pineal DMT production was involved in naturally occurring ‘psychedelic’ states. These might include birth, death and near-death, psychosis, and mystical experiences” (Strassman xv).

My work is influenced by these natural dreamlike states of consciousness that some believe are the next frontier of exploration in order for humans to evolve as a species and wake up from these vicious cycles of mindless destruction. The territory where science meets art and spirituality is fertile ground for the discovery of other entities that exist beyond our normal day to day conscious awareness. I believe that harnessing the teachings of these mystical entities inside ourselves will lead us on the path towards a sustainable future. As society has progressed there has been a devaluation of visionary shamanic teachings and instead a strict emphasis on scientific methodology. However, I believe there must be a merger of science and mysticism in order to instill the empirical findings of our world with a deeper cultural meaning of our existence on this planet.

The next page of my book talks of being trapped in my own mind, and how experience suffers. As Alan Watts said in *The Wisdom of Insecurity*,

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“To remain stable is to refrain from trying to separate yourself from a pain because you know that you cannot. Running away from fear is fear, fighting pain is pain, trying to be brave is being scared. If the mind is in pain, the mind is pain. The thinker has no other form than his thought. There is no escape” (Watts 151).

He also explains how absurd it is to live in one's own mind and ignore the present moment because this is being ignorant of reality. He states,

“What we have forgotten is that thoughts and words are conventions, and that it is fatal to take conventions too seriously. A convention is a social convenience, as, for example, money ... but it is absurd to take money too seriously, to confuse it with real wealth ... In somewhat the same way, thoughts, ideas and words are "coins" for real things” (Watts 47).

Watts was legendary for taking westernized ideologies taken from Taoist principles to contemplate upon the vicious cycles the mind is capable of. What strikes me with particular vigor and resonance is considering the give and take of yin and yang, and how in thinking of being brave we often become stricken with cowardice and paralysis. When I think about working, I often become filled with dread, which is a classic example of how my mind psyches me out of living my full potential. Today especially, living in the world of a million distractions, it is easy to become derailed, and influenced by so much media that we can often lose sight of who we really are in our heart of hearts. Lao-Tzu reminds us in the Tao Te Ching, “Gravity is the root of lightness/ Stillness is the master of passion/ The Sage travels all day/ But does not leave the baggage-cart/ When surrounded by magnificent scenery/ Remains calm and still”(Lao-Tzu 26). When we rampantly consume, this desensitizes us to the intricacies of life. Humans desire love, but it is important to remain at peace amidst all the beauty because love can turn to pain and anguish when expectations go unfulfilled. To revel in the beauty of the present and resonate on a level
of wonder and gratitude seems to be a far better alternative than dwelling on relentless and hollow tortured thoughts that eat away the passion of being.

I begin my work with a dismal tone, writing “The world drained of magic… My visions dwindle” (Reading 7). In Prufrock, Eliot classically asks with a cynical almost facetious modernist tone, “Do I dare/ Disturb the universe? In a minute there is time/ For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse” (Eliot 3). Eliot is a prime example of the crisis facing modernity which grew out of advancements in technology during the industrial revolution around World War I. This ideology rejects the Romantic notions of Enlightenment reasoning that faith and positivism will result in progress towards reaching the sublime and ideal. This is an all too familiar notion set into effect by Baconian beliefs that human scientific reason will lead to truth.

In the beginning of the 20th century, an era I heavily resonate with, artists and writers became skeptical of Romanticism because they saw the insidious degradation of human values in the fast pace world where humanity seems to fall to the wayside in exchange for building wealth. Around this time everything was changing, and film was born. For the first time ever, time could be captured and projected in sequence, and artists were compelled to readdress what it meant to create still media. Picasso and Braque rejected classicism in exchange for a rigorous cubist methodology that collapsed the picture plane, and drew attention to the flatness of the plane to shatter any prior illusions (Brenson 12).

By the 1920s, Raoul Hausmann was founding the Dada movement in Berlin, Germany, which just so happens to be the origin of the Zerkall etching paper that I have used to print my book. He was a pioneer of the photomontage collaging technique, sourcing
the elements of his compositions from mass media printings. I reference this in my etchings and their amalgamated imagery from various pictorial references and often jumbled with no specific meaning besides what the viewer summons from their own experience. This technique shows up in my prints “Edge of Eternity” and “Death And The Snake Charmer” which show a jumbled and chaotic composition ripe with subconscious subliminal symbolism. The photopolymer technique can be seen as a 21st century version of simply collecting cutting and pasting scraps of magazine and newspaper from the street to create compositions. In a way I am doing this, yet etching my intaglios in order to return back to a mode of craftsmanship that once existed in the prints of Gustave Dore. Like Hausman’s friend, Kurt Schwitters, Hausmann often referenced the use of detritus to create a dynamic alchemy of repurposed material that was once considered to be “low art” or simply trash. The collage made into a gelatin print titled ABCD is a self-portrait photograph of Hausmann crying out with his teeth clenched on the first four letters of the English alphabet (Biro 33). There is a cyborg-esque crimson monocle superimposed on top of his left eye to reflect the dehumanization happening to people confined to the age of industry who inhabit the post WWI devastation. Haussmann actively redefines the roll of language by creating cluttered messes that both mean nothing, and mean everything simultaneously since this work is highly dependent on the viewer’s hermeneutic interpretation. Hausmann was deeply influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche’s ideas that “the total character of the world, however, is in all eternity chaos--in the sense not of a lack of necessity but a lack of order, arrangement, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever names there are for our aesthetic anthropomorphisms” (Nietzsche 183). To Hausmann and many other Dadaists working alongside him, the world was void of an essential truth. The notions of
human enlightenment and the forged path of Western progress towards a utopian state were reduced to mere ashes and rubble. The objective of Dadaism became building a new ideological system based on critical absurdist values rather than a precarious belief in human rationality that was bringing the world into a hellish arena of clashing bureaucratic egotism.

Keeping these radical traditions of a hundred years ago in the back of my mind, I have always gravitated towards a mode of surrealism. My work falls more in line with Dali in that the subject matter and symbolic significance in my etchings may seem randomly sourced from my subconscious, I do have a devotion to craft and fascination for rendering meticulously and realistically. Dali was known to have an obsession with the fine paint handling of Vermeer. Dali has said “Drawing is the honesty of the art. There is no possibility of cheating. It is either good or bad” (Dali 38). Which is a rather radical notion which many modern artists try and negate, but I have to agree. I have always been drawn to perfecting my technique, but as we know “Have no fear of perfection - you’ll never reach it” (Dali 145). The work which still hangs in my bedroom is *The Persistence of Memory*, which implements the paranoiac-critical method to create a kind of painted dream photograph. While Dali sights melting camembert cheese as the inspiration for his melting clocks, people often associate this image with Einstein’s theory of Relativity, as time can bend and is no longer concrete. Our perception of time changes in the dream-state, and this concept is only beginning to be explored.

I have always admired the influence of Salvador Dali for his brilliant oil paintings and drawings of amalgamated dream-like works of surrealism emblematic of portraying
realms of subconscious activity. Virtually all his work has some sort of connection to human anatomy and landscape with varying degrees of abstraction. In *The Secret Life of Salvador Dali*, Dali wrote, “In the evening I held long and exhaustive imaginary conversations with Freud; he came home with me once and stayed all night clinging to the curtains of my room in the Hotel Saucher” (Dali 139). Several years after his most famous painting *The Persistence of Memory*, Dali would go on to meet Freud, and later paint *Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee around a Pomegranate One Minute Before Awakening*. The psychoanalytic practices of Freud parallel Dali’s conception of this work which shows the “The consequence of the instantaneousness of a chance event which causes the sleeper to wake up” (Dali 143). Legend has it that Dali would sit in the sun and daydream holding a spoon with a bowl in his lap, and as soon as he fell asleep the spoon would drop and awaken him. This sudden jolt towards wakefulness would allow the dream to be remembered and he’d derive artistic inspiration to further his pursuits of surrealism. Learning this story inspired me to dive into the realm of dreams, and *Awakening From A Dream* is a result of this pilgrimage.

Freud conceptualized the subconscious in *The Interpretation of Dreams*:

“Properly speaking, the unconscious is the real psychic; its inner nature is just as unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is just as imperfectly reported to us through the data of consciousness as is the external world through the indications of our sensory organs” (Freud 18). He viewed the subconscious as a vast reservoir constituting most of our minds. Dali took Freud’s dream interpretation methods to heart, and began painting his dreams. As Freud further states, “Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive and will come forth later in uglier ways” (Freud 104). Dali believed that
expressing his dreams was a means of liberation involved in destruction and creation. As Dali states, “Surrealism is destructive, but it destroys only what it considers to be shackles limiting our vision” (Dali 283).

It is important to make the distinction that my work isn’t purely abstract, but contains elements of descriptive realism with inherent traces of figure, landscape, and symbolic narrative elements. Creating these plates has been a largely internal process of exploring what resides in the deep recesses of my psyche as a form of catharsis.

Emotionally, the process of making this work has been a form of recovering my mental state and overcoming mental trauma stemming from a lack of self-love. The way I used to view myself was very insecure and frustrated, stuck in a rut of idle self-pity. But if anything has saved me from my own destructive patterns, it has been the creative process, and this is from where this project arises.

All plates are made of copper. My work spans the last several years of college, and consists virtually exclusively of line-work. The intaglio method of printmaking is a fairly ancient art, originating around the time of the renaissance in the late 1400s, and solidified as a true artistic medium by the early 17th century by figures like Rembrandt. The feeling and process of etching small finely carved trenches into a solid plate of metal is satisfying and substantial. The lines are drawn by needle through a thin acrylic ground covering the plate, before submerging the copper into a ferric chloride mordant which dissolves the exposed lines leaving grooves in the plate to later hold ink in. I remember gazing into an etching by Albrecht Durer whose title alludes me. I was still in high school and on a field trip to the Colby Museum of Art, and I must have spent an hour examining the meticulous detail he achieved via the etched line. The outcome seemed so perfectly
illusionistic, the rendered human forms of antiquity exquisitely contoured with line after line of hatching to create value that showed the nuanced curves of skin, as well as deep black values of shadows between objects. There is something powerful about black and white imagery, and my work has gravitated towards shading with the line, in other words, creating illusions using just black and just white.

My intaglio etchings are composed of thousands of hand drawn lines, then bitten into copper, and printed on light paper, literally creating boundaries; differences between light and dark that we can try to make sense of and interpret to tell a story. The story I’m telling isn’t strictly narrative or chronological, but deeply meaningful to me personally, and hopefully beyond me. As the founder of Pink Floyd and one of my creative idols, Syd Barrett, once put it, “I think it’s good if a song has more than one meaning. Maybe that kind of song can reach far more people” (Palacios 78). Barrett wrote the legendary album titled Piper at the Gates of Dawn in 1967 when he was my age, just 21. I mention this work as pivotal in my development as an artist because it shows how infinite the realms of art, music, and experience can be, and encourages artists to experiment with abnormal techniques and mediums. Barrett was known for taking a zippo lighter and sliding it along the fretboard to create alien-like sounds. During 1967, Barrett began his mental decline into drug induced insanity, was abandoned by his band mates, and lived the rest of his life at his mother’s house suffering from schizophrenia. Syd was only able to tread the line between creative genius and insanity for a short while, but left one of the largest musical legacies that’s ever existed, and virtually created a new genre of music. The creation of my thesis is a way for me to stay sane, come to terms with what it means for me to
be alive as a creative individual and find my balance between the dark and light sides of existing.

My book serves as an abstract allegorical tale of the human psyche, particularly centered on my own mental experiences. I hope to carry on the legacy of illustrators like Aldous Beardsley, Gustave Dore, Edward Gorey, Maurice Sendak, and creators of illuminated texts and mythologies like William Blake. My work aligns with both the Romantic Movement and surrealism. After the enlightenment, artists challenged the ideas of rationality, reason, and order being the primary means of art making. Instead there became an emphasis on using our senses, emotions and feelings to understand and experience the world around us. Blake has become known as the “Father of Romanticism” for creating his art and poetry based on prophetic visions of the real and eternal world. He expressed multitudes and rejected traditional Christian ideology by asserting that imagination was the true body of God. Blake experimented largely with illuminated printing by combining etching with water coloring, a practice I am carrying on today. “First the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul is to be expunged: this I shall do by printing in the infernal method by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away and displaying the infinite which was hid” (Blake 14).

The intaglio etching technique I am implementing is, however, different from Blake’s since he chose to etch in relief. He would etch away the background like a woodcut, leaving the image standing in relief. To do this, he drew and wrote with an acid resistant liquid which he left to dry, and then exposed the copper plate to acid leaving the images and text, and biting away the background. The images and text were written and
drawn in reverse. He would make prints and then hand illuminate the pages with watercolors, a medium just starting to become available at the time in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Sung 165).

Blake has said a few things that have truly impacted me over the years. Sung quotes Blake, “To see the world in a grain of sand, and to see heaven in a wild flower, hold infinity in the palm of your hands, and eternity in an hour” (Sung 143). These lines truly capture the capabilities of the mind to create its own reality, getting lost in the grandeur of life like a fascinated child seeing with new eyes and an active imagination. This has spawned some of my existentialist sentiments of how there is no true meaning of life yet we all make our own purpose and how our mindset and experiences influence our view of life. Art inspires art, and ideas often snowball and progress into concepts and expressions that never could have been conceived of by the originator. A few hundreds of years ago, Blake was in essence talking about how the ego’s clutter of human trivialities can deceive us from realizing the eternal nature of life and the divine realm beyond our physical flesh.

Aldous Huxley, an author who has also inspired me profoundly, and was himself inspired by Blake, talked of the infinite nature of seemingly mundane objects, such as the endless folds of cloth depicted by countless artists with oils and brushes. Huxley describes even a simple chair as radiating with life while he was under the influence of a psychoactive drug called mescaline (REFERENCE). Ideas like these have inspired other authors, researchers and visionaries to explore the realms of the human mind in order to tap into our true potential without the restraints that society breeds.
The final statement from Blake which greatly influenced my work states: “He who desires, but acts not, breeds pestilence” (Blake 13). This correlates with the mentality that inspired me to create *Awakening From a Dream*. It is easy to have ideas of sublime grandeur and visions, but if they can’t be articulated, it is all in vain, and only pertains to oneself. Without acting, or actively drawing, writing, printmaking, etc. it is impossible to create an impact. I want to wake up from my idle dreams and create something that can be shown to generations to come. However futile that may seem, I believe that it is important to leave traces of oneself and one’s soul for others to meditate on in order to expand the collective consciousness and further our capacity for empathy and understanding of humans, animals and our environment as a whole. This is my way of connecting with the world.
METHODOLOGY

The methodologies behind the making of this project have been laborious and painstaking. The rigors of creating a hand-editioned book are unparalleled to anything I’ve accomplished or attempted prior, and therefore more satisfying. I have partaken in this because it feels as though I’m engaging in an ancient practice, yet the techniques are safe and in a sense highly modern. To create my plates of text, I laminated a photopolymer film onto a copper plate. A polymer is a long chain of molecules, and the photopolymer films have the potential to link together prior to exposure to UV light. The exposure begins the polymerization process which links these molecules into long durable polymer chains. Once the film is exposed to the UV light from a piece of machinery called an Olix Light Integrator, part of the film layer becomes hardened in the non-image area. All my plates require a two-step exposure to the UV light. The first of which is an exposure of 20 light units (a way to measure exposure time and intensity) of an aquatint screen layer. This is essentially a dot pattern similar to what images in newspapers are composed of, except this layer is all black. After the copper plate has been hand sanded, scrubbed with comet, washed with water and lemon juice, squigeyed and blotted with a paper towel, and degreased to prevent oxidation from occurring on the surface, the plate is then laminated with the photopolymer film, heat set, and left to cure for 24 hours. The next day, the plate with the lamination layer is placed on a Teaneck Graphics Vacuum System which works in conjunction with the light system. A glass door is opened and the plate is placed inside a vacuum chamber.
I composed my text on illustrator and printed off a photo positive which is essentially black text printed on clear plastic. The laminated plate is placed in the vacuum chamber which insures everything stays put. First, the aquatint layer is placed face down, emulsion to emulsion, over the laminated plate. The vacuum is sealed shut and light is blasted through the glass, creating a microscopic dot pattern in the film layer which creates a black tone. After this commences, the photo positives containing text is placed over the same plate, carefully aligned, and blasted with UV light once again. The areas that are printed black block the light from hardening the photopolymer beneath, thus keeping that area soft, while the clear areas around the text is hardened, which will eventually result in a raised surface layer containing no information.

I created continuous tone exposers for my plates, but in most cases there was no tone since the text was purely black and white. Once the two exposures were completed, I started the developing process of the film which starts by mixing a developing solution of 10 grams of powdered sodium carbonate to 1 liter of 68 degree Fahrenheit water. The shiny surface layer of plastic film was removed from the plate, and the remaining plate and film layer were placed in the solution for 9 minutes. When the time was up, the plate was gently washed with water, sprayed with vinegar to stop the developing process, washed with water again, and then carefully blotted with paper towels and heat set with a hand dryer. The resulting plate contained the text and was ready to print after a 24 hour curing period.

The whole photopolymer process is quite magical and modern, yet finicky, and I find it to be slightly less personally satisfying than creating intaglio plates. This process begins with a copper plate. The edges are then beveled with a file, and then the surface is
sanded with a hand sander, roughening the surface for an acrylic ground to adhere to. The plate is then degreased with lemon juice and comet, squigged and dried to prevent oxidation. After this a black acrylic ground is poured onto the plate in a flow coat, creating a thin layer on the surface of the copper. When this is dry, I then begin the etching process which I find to be the most invigorating. All my plates contain pure lines, and virtually all of my tone is created through the accumulation of cross hatching. I often have a concept, but let the piece evolve overtime by adding new elements, symbols, and figures where I see fit. My work oscillates between scenes of nature, portraits, and amalgamated dreamscapes with varying themes and tone. Each plate is a process of creative evolution in and of itself. One all the lines are scratched through the acrylic layer, the plate is then dipped into a vat of mordant (ferric chloride) which corrodes the copper where the lines have been etched. Most of my plates are etched in one bite of about 45 minutes in the mordant. Then the plates are washed and placed in a vat of stripping solution which removes the acrylic ground layer, leaving just the copper plate with the bitten line-work. The etching paper is torn into strips measuring 10”x28” and soaked in water to let the fibers soften and expand to easier receive ink. The plates are then carded with carbon black Akua water based ink and wiped down with newsprint until the ink only exists in the bitten line-work. From there, a template of newsprint and pencil drawn dimensions of the circumference of the paper and plates are placed on the steel bed of the printing press, followed by a piece of plastic mylar. The inked plates are placed in position atop the template and mylar, then the paper is taken out of the water, blotted, and carefully draped over the plates which are printed 4 at a time. Three blankets cover the top of the paper and plates, and
the whole lot is run under a steel cylinder that rotates and applies pressure. The plate creates a perceptible indentation in the paper, and then the prints are dry and ready for illuminating and binding.

I have created a small edition of illuminated texts existing as two bound books and one unfolded display piece. These are varied editions, and will differ in coloration and slightly in order. Since my first edition is all I have to hold in my hands and examine at the moment, this product will be discussed.

The contents include 24 intaglio plates, 8 photopolymer plates of text, a couple hand inscribed sheets of vellum, a handmade paper from a local Maine papermaker named Dragonfly Studio. The paper contains bits of flower petals and the string I used to bind it is the same maroon color of blood. In the process of sewing the binding thread, I stabbed the tip of my finger, and my dried blood can be found on the vellum and also helping to illuminate some of my contained etchings.
ANALYSIS

In the beginning of *Awakening From A Dream* I depict myself in a very dark self portrait of heavily bitten lines titled “Repressed Self” (Figure 2). This image represents the brooding mind and embodies a self image of anger, as my bottom lip is agape and my bottom teeth are showing, as if there is a lack of understanding and acceptance of self and circumstance. I then dive inside the subconscious and depict a series of rather busy and chaotic dreamscape etchings. The concept of the Void, or vacuum is present in these. Like a black hole in outer space that has an intense darkness and gravitational pull stronger than that of the sun, in the print “Edge of Eternity” a sunflower grows on the edge of a cliff as an anthropomorphized sun peaks out from behind (Figure 11). There is a castle in the sky on a planet, referencing the previous print in sequence, and symbolizing how intangible the concrete notions of our mind’s deceptions can seem, so vivid yet millions of miles away in outer space. There is a door behind the sun with a face in it to reference Huxley’s *Doors of Perception*, which actually begins with the famous Blake quote “If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is: Infinite” (Blake 13). Blake continues to express, “For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro’ narrow chinks of his cavern.” (Blake 14). A man sits on the leaf of the sunflower and casts a fishing rod into the waters of the subconscious to see what might bite, before falling off a cliff (Figure 11). Wandering hermits with all their belongings on a stick and sack thrown over their shoulders walk to the edge of the abyss, and contemplate where to go next upon reaching the end of the earth; the answer can only be inward.
My print “The Broken Hourglass” features the castle in the distance, and a man peering through a long wall of archways. He sees a woman hourglass that has shattered at the bottom as pyramids pour out from the sand (Figure 5). This represents the knowledge to be gained from breaking the shackles of time peering into the inner dream world to seek ancient knowledge. This image in particular is inspired by the extravagant etchings John Tenniel, who first illustrated Alice In Wonderland and Through The Looking Glass. The face of the hourglass is even referenced from a depiction of Alice: “And what is the use of a book,” thought Alice, “without pictures or conversations?” (Carroll 1). Journeying through the ancient archway is in essence my ode to Alice’s falling through the rabbit hole and finding a world of imagination on the other side. But my internal dreamscape begins as dismal and desolate. First we are met with a depiction of an endless trench. People are isolated and silhouetted, addressing the void and some are jumping in, others trying to get out. This represents a divide in the mind disrupting unity. It can be easy to focus on this and be consumed by its pull, and in jumping in one loses oneself.

The print “Primal Energy” contains an eagle holding snakes flying over a human-esque Chimp with a frog in the foreground and chaotic lines in the back (Figure 8). This represents pure survival among a chaotic animalistic realm of subhuman ideals yet innate within us. Frog as my spirit animal, and I have seen myself in them for a long time. They conserve their energy and acclimate to their environment. Many amphibian species have gone extinct in recent years due to a fungal infection that literally eats their skin, and I empathize with the frog’s being, and feel as though it symbolizes the world’s ecological state of crisis. The chimp is rendered with a rather dismal expression similar to my first self-portrait. It is chosen because its DNA is 98% identical to ours, and represents how
humans are animals connected with every other life form on this planet. We may feel isolated, yet a part of us is contained in each other. And the eagle quarreling with the serpents represents the ideology of survival of the fittest, reminding the viewer of the constant state of war much of existence perpetuates. Especially as the symbol of America, it is a bit of an ode to where I came from and have grown to be critical of. Upon reading Herman Hesse’s Siddhartha I was taken by his account of Buddha meditating by the river and envisioning himself one at a time as all the different animals in the world, in order to gain a more universal perspective and empathy. I am channeling this notion here. I believe it’s important to get over ourselves as being the most important entities in the world. As my friend Sylvia put it, “we are a very small part of the universe, like dandelions who just happen to be conscious.” I am involved in a process of shedding the mind structures that don’t serve me, and realizing who I am again after losing myself. The next pages are devoted to finding myself again and awakening from the torment of self pity and a loveless existence.

The two-page spreads entitled “Self Realization” and “Starry Eye” are self-portraits, the first of my eye in the palm of my hand and the next of my eye with a galaxy in my pupil (Figures 21 and 22). These represent a recognition of self and acknowledging my own consciousness and potential. The plate, “Death and the Snake Charmer” is a full immersion inward into the divine chaotic realm (Figure 13). A central lamenting figure kneels in oblivion holding a severed head representing the culmination of ego death. Serpents wind in and out of bodies, elixirs pour and ghosts soar through the picture plane to show temptation and mystery. Contemplative figures drop the sands of time from their hands forming mountains and pyramids. A snake charmer plays his woodwind to three
cobras emerging from ceramic pots. This reference is pulled from a Salvador Dali watercolor painting called “Snake Charmer” which combines tightly rendered illustrative work with loose watercolor, and helped to inspire the aesthetic of my project. This shows human tendency to want to control nature amidst the chaos.

The print entitled “Innocence” is referenced from a picture I took of my good friend Caroline in Sunkhaze Wildlife refuge (Figure 9). As she bends down and reaches into the water, there are winding snakes and serpent monsters writhing beneath her. This print is among my most graphically successful and inspired also by some of MC Escher’s illusions. It shows the innocence we have for what lurks beneath the surface, but also the courage to address the danger in order to discover truth.

Then comes the fully submerged body, “The Octopus Void” entangled with octopus tentacles being sucked into the dark demon void (Figure 10). I made this plate to show the internal battle that we face. What inspired this was an experience in the Sacred Valley of Peru during my first real ayahuasca experience. Upon taking this profound substance, I was at first confronted with the internal darkness of the void and octopus demons seemed to engulf my organs. After minutes that felt like ages of this, I noticed a pulsing red light in the corner of my periphery. This light represented both love and pain to me, and I realized that in any given moment of life I usually choose to turn away from this light out of fear of opening up old wounds and making them raw again. But I had no choice but to turn towards the red light since the only alternative was the creature infested darkness. Upon focusing on the crimson glow, the energy enveloped my whole body and the only way I can come close to describing it is feeling like entering into an energetic
womb of light dancing with liveliness. The spirit of the brewed ayahuasca vines were inside me and communicating without language, through visions of spirits spiraling towards the infinite light, their only purpose to expand and grow. It was a sudden process of accepting myself and shedding the mental weight that doesn’t serve me anymore.

The print, “Wizard Spirit Guide”, shows a spirit guide with the pulsing red heart exposed, wading through the water with a staff as universes are spawning around his head (Figure 18). The sun and the moon are embracing above, and trees and mushrooms grow from a head-shaped island in the distance. This represents the immersion in the dream world, and the acceptance and surrender of letting go of control in order to put life back in the hands of universe, or some kind of higher power.

The intaglio etching “Jim Fox The Aura Reader” a depiction of trees and mushrooms growing with old wizard-like men sitting on them, and growing in size (Figure 14). The portrait at the top of the piece is based off Jim Fox, who read my aura right as I was initially experiencing my heartbreak. He literally stumbled out of the woods in Acadia near Jordan Pond, and performed reiki where he pulled negative energy from me, and told me my aura is “a flicker of indigo” which is rare and means a purity of intuition and openness. This happened only minutes after I was crying with deep and heavy existential despair, but this encounter helped to re-ingrain my faith that everything is in its right place even if it doesn’t always seem so. The beauty of nature is all around us, and music and art can be found everywhere, there is no lack. It just all depends on keeping our ears and eyes, hearts and mind open and learning to listen and see in new ways as the world changes.
My plates, “Branching Out” and “Ascension” have similar meanings. The first shows a person tangled in roots reaching out into the branches of the tree forming from his mind (Figure 17). Its paired images shows an ascension of a body up into the forest canopy (Figure 15). Both symbolize the recognition of our symbiosis with nature, and our surrender to it, keeping the faith that we are very much a part of this world. The text plate beginning with “Blessed sacred rude awakening” and ends with “No one needs to wipe your eyes to realize how your feeling heart supplies your fleeting mind with what it means to be alive”(Figure 16). I etched an anatomical heart where the veins form a symbolic heart (Figure 20). After etching this plate, and then left it inside the ferric chloride mordant and let the plate open bite to form unpredictable tones. I did this to symbolize the opening of my heart, and the symbolic change that comes from pure acceptance of whatever happens.

In my text plate starting with “Dreamers” I say “I’m getting feelings again Like what I felt as a child (Figure 23). After a numbing respite from Freedom, Thaw is coming… Slowly remembering my waking dreams of eternal wonder.” The plate next to this text entitled “Chaos and Divine Order” is a female sleeping in chaotic line-work, but over her head her hair spirals into a Fibonacci spiral to symbolize our innate ability to recognize divine order (Figure 24).

“Death and Creation” then depicts an image of a dancing skeleton playing the flute and shaking a maraca (Figure 26). There are galaxies spiraling out from the sound. This embodies death as a creative force, surrendering and reveling in the newness of the moment. Then comes a girl’s face with leaves of hands growing from her forehead to show the dreamer and lover witnessing the eternal state. I follow this with a text plate that
reads “I mustn’t cover up the artist inside of me, Lulled by the flames of a passionate love!”

“Eternal Womb” is a plate of the womb floating weightlessly in outer space as the sun shines down on this sort of human planet (Figure 28). This is the only plate I chose to print sideways to symbolize a new shift in consciousness, and a rebirth with new infinite possibilities. We are the universe flowering, becoming aware of itself. My last text plate ends with an original affirmation “I am real, I am human, I am worthy, powerful, divine, I am loved” (Figure 29).
I finish the book with a series of three self-portraits. In the first of these, “Balance Between Man and Nature” I am suspended with my internal organs showing (Figure 30). I am levitating between a side of nature and a side of manmade cities, graveyards and industrial smoke and sludge. Behind me is an upside-down aura of a butterfly chrysalis the moment it is emerging from its sleep. I created this to remind myself of the transformation that has happened inside and to keep balance between my human roots and my being a part of nature. Then there is a plate of naked human figures emerging from a boy’s steady stare as he talks to serpents and dragons (Figure 31). This symbolizes a newfound bravery to interact with our demons in more productive ways and integrate with our imagination. Instead of being confined by the riddle of life, we must see with new eyes and interact with our source energy while we recognize a love beyond ourselves and far greater than any one being. The following plate, “Symbiosis” shows organic plant and fungi life emerging from a cross section of the human brain, showing how aligning myself with nature is the ultimate way to release my creativity once dark mind structures have been eradicated (Figure 32). This plate is also an ode to harmonizing and reducing our impact on the environment to live in a wholesome and sustainable way. The book ends with a traditional self portrait, “New Self” that has been hand illuminated with a rainbow of different colors in the skin (Figure 33). This is my largest plate, and is a bleed print, meaning that it is larger than the paper and bleeds off the edge. This is symbolic to show that there are no boundaries to my creative pursuits going forward. This process has
told of the transformation that I have undergone, and it all centers around my own per-
ception of myself and how I fit into this world, not as an isolated entity, but as a part of
everything, awakening from the fabric of dream to reintegrate into the world as a produc-
tive individual unburdened by the weight of pure solitude and depression. The journey is
never over, but spreading awareness of the human condition, and choosing to seek out the
lightness of being has been a noble pursuit in my ongoing healing process to be the best
person I am capable of being with self-love, empathy, and a willingness to see life with
an open mind
AWAKENING FROM A DREAM
Prisoner, tired and alone in the unforgiving night.
The world is like a dungeon; dry stone wept with subterranean tears,
Ripe with vivid spears, trembling on the cold hardened floors.
You are a poor child again, besides a strange swimming pool.

Working up the courage to jump into the primordial swamp.

I hope the demons don't infest your nest for the rest of time.
This life is like an interstellar trek to show you what's best kept in mind.

Infinite sorrow stretches through the darkness...
But you are the earth and sky vibrating between ecstasy and tragedy.
Dancing is a structured form of freaking out...
Our light feet make sand tonight
The sea crushed shells bite my skin,
So tenderly tossed and wet like a kiss.

Sprinklers and sparklers on summer days,
Lost and found in the eternal haze
Longing for a mother's loving gaze
Nothing is ever quite the same,
Raw, innocent, with nothing to blame.

Fellow travelers,
See through the smog of existence
To love's triumph over the half-forgotten sky.
In rainbows over eternal seas,
Her soul escapes naked from teary eyes.

Ages ago, long before this vapid technology descended upon our cursed psyches,
Ancient tracked the stars, guided by the universe inside of them.
Life becomes more than just a cliché incipient, pounded into desert dirt,
Turning bones to dust and trees to ash...
Runaway children, dance in the mist of revolution!
Soles of feet jump with elated mischief!
Swinging on vines of growth to the music of our waking dream;
Without violence, atomic bombs explode in reverse,
Returning into the liquid heart.
Deep in the trenches of utter despair there is no escape.
From the permeating wraith of darkness.
There are places where witches cry with terror, abandoning me
Like wind that never returns to the lungs.
Left to drown beside my sinking ship that once moved with such swift adoration
For the vitalizing mysteries of life.
Now I wait to die, mornings spent submerged beneath the surface
As demons ravage my absent body and mind.
Unaware of refuge from the tumultuous seas,
The void writhes in all her terrible glory.

Life is but a meaningless trance, half awake and aloof,
Clumsily dancing to the intoxicating chants of reverberating hollow promises.
False prophets preaching, governments failing, resources dwindling, glaciers melting,
Humans killing and polluting the world and each other.
People are seen only for their surface value;
Sexuality, gender, appearance,
Race and status.
A masked persona made of cheap and brittle plastic,
Excrement of forsaken factories strewn across the streets,
World reflecting mind, littered like social media in the new age of internet
Disconnected interconnection,
People reduced to numbers,
The world drained of magic.
Everything will soon be forgotten amidst the rubble
Of mental illness and deteriorating intuition.
The carnage of lives lived for nothing:
Piles up in landfill and seeps through the dreams of youth's naive with hope.
When laughter turns to sadness and people disappear,
I can not help but feel worthless and unworthy of love.
My visions dwindle, my notebook empties,
Lost focus projected on futile and conceit of a dissolute reality
Devoid of resonant meaning
Trapped within the confines of my fleeting mind.

Torment comes in torrents forming storms
above the fortress... The Starving Artist walks along the margin
between anguish and the sacred harvest.
Blood was split from the cages of ancestral hearts, pulsating on ships destined for
tomorrows. Now is not the time to wallow in sorrow, not when music reverberates
in bone marrow, and swallows sing to the skies, sunset eyes, can love exist in time?
Castle in the sky, love is all there ever is or was, so don’t pass it by...
Shiva and Kali dance in eternal cycles,
wrangling their arms and chanting their songs of death and birth.
How have we found ourselves on this earth? Awaken from our slumbering sleep
and reach our heaven haven deep. Touch the wind that kisses our eyes, and pray to god
my soul to keep. Through the shadow of weeping grief, through the dark I’ll find you,
haunting something soft and sweet.

When is human passion composed of more than drowsy spirits?
Beneath the vapid veil and lore of night,
We dance on the edge of heaven praying to death on his throne

In absence there is presence
The eye’s pupil is void yet allows us to experience multitudes,
Human beings interwoven in the heart of the world,
Longing to be guided by fascination yet unfastened to material.
Searching for soul, that was here all along.

In dreams we return to the dimension children inhabit in waking life.
Nature forms a cornucopia around us as we dance with all the souls we’ve ever loved,
Growing like cosmic music and spiraling light expanding and pulsating to the rhythms
of infinite growth

Phantoms and anthems
Banter and jargon
Talk of apocalypses in the garden

Debustions illusions,
Prisons and prisons,
Fusions, decisions,
And nuclear fusions

Take me to your deepest well
Where the creeping demons fell.
Show me how it is you live.
What’s it mean to be a kid?
Take me where your heart resides.
What’s it mean to be alive?
Take me where your garden grows,
Past your many friends and foes.
Learn to live with resonance,
Reinstate any hesitance.
Each breath contains the gift of life.
In each step we skilfully lift the strife.
Blessed
Sacred
Rude awakening
Take me where you stood shaking
Journey through her Rivers quaking

Open up to visions
Weaking

Shed the sober mask
Of the opera
And unstrap your bones
From the operating table

Unite your mind upon
The great divide
Look up to the spheres above
And cry

A flower blooming in the night,
Tears sweet like nectar, warm with light

No one needs to wipe your eyes
To realize how your feeling heart
Supplies your fleeting mind
With what it means
To be alive
Recognize
A LOVE
BEYOND OURSELVES,
THAT CAN NEVER VANISH
EVEN WHEN SOMEONE UP AND LEAVES,
BECAUSE EVERYTHING THAT HAS EVER LIVED HAS BEEN MADE OF IT.
WHY FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL DOORWAYS BETWEEN LOVERS?
WHY DWELL IN REALMS OF PAIN, ENVY, AND SOLITUDE.
WHEN EVERYTHING IS MADE FROM THIS INMATERIAL SOURCE? ESSENTIAL AND INVISIBLE TO THE EYE.

WE ALWAYS HAVE IT BECAUSE WE ARE IT, BUT WE TRICK OURSELVES
WITH SOLARIZING MIND PUZZLES, CONVINCING OURSELVES OF LOVE’S NONEXISTENCE.
WE DENY OUR HEARTS IN EXCHANGE FOR BROOKED MINDS,
BUILT LIKE MEDIEVAL CASTLES GUARDED BY MOATS,
TROUBLED BY FORGOTTEN CRISEYANCES.
BEATEN INTO ARCHWAYS AND DUNGEONS OF OUR OWN DEVISING.
ENDURING AND SOLIDIFYING THOUGHTS OF THE HUMAN CONDITION.
DISCONNECT OURSELVES FROM EVERY LIFE FORM, SEPARATION, ISOLATION, ISOLATION,
DISEMONSTRATING, LAMINATING. SHE WAS NEVER SUPPOSED TO LEAVE YOUR CASTLE,
BUT SHE LEFT TO EXPLORE THE WORLDS AND FIND THE EDGE OF THE EARTH.
AND NOW HER SPIRIT WHISPERS TO YOU IN ACHING DREAMS, CHANNELING YOUR ENERGY INTO YOUR LOSS.
FUSCING ON THE CHANCE...!

A SERPENT AWAKENS WITHIN ME, UNCOILING AND SHEDDING THE SKIN OF SLOMMER
STIRRING BENEATH MY HEART CENTER AT THE ROOT OF BEING.

WE ARE THE UNIVERSE FLOWERING, BECOMING AWARE OF ITSELF.

THERE ARE NO MISTAKES UNDER THE SUN AND MOON,
THE RAINY SKY CIRCULATES AND BEARS LIFE AND PERSPECTIVE TO US ALL.
TENDING THE SACRED FIRES, FLOWERS OF PULSING SPIRIT AURAS PURE TO INDIGO,
FLICKERING RAINBOWS ERUPTING FROM OUT THE OPEN CHRYSTALHEM;
CHRYSLIS,
OF VIVID ROSE RED BESIDES A DEEP GREEN, SPROUTING SKY ORANGES,
YOKE YELLOW-S,
AND EGG SHELL BLUES, ALAS!
ALL THE SHADES OF DEEP VIOLET IN NATURE
BLACK AND WHITE NEVER EXISTED ON THE LIGHT SPECTRUM AT ALL,
ONLY IN THE MATERI AL REALM DO THESE POLARITIES BECOME PERCEPTIBLE.
EVERYTHING HAS A SOURCE ENERGY, A REVERBERATION MOVING WITH ENTHUSIASM
AND PURPOSE THAT LANGUAGE WILL NEVER BE CAPABLE OF EXPLAINING.
DREAMERS
CALLING OUT THROUGH THE WORMHOLES
NEAR CEILING FANS TEAMING WITH CATERPILLARS
RIPE FOR CHANGE
WRITHING BEHIND WINDOWS IN BLUE BEDROOMS
HUNKERED OVER BUNK BED DOORS;
PASSEWAYS TO YOUR ETERNAL DREAM!

Revolutionaries, lay down your weapons,
and follow the rainbows that appear
through the
dark valleys of pain.
For all great journeys begin
With uncertainty, and rain...

I'M GETTING FEELINGS AGAIN
LIKE WHAT I FELT AS A CHILD.
AFTER A NUMBING RESPITE FROM FREEDOM, THE THAW IS COMING...
SLOWLY REMEMBERING MY WAKING DREAMS OF ETERNAL WONDER.

Starry-Eyed dreamer with eyes open wide
Faerie mermaid dragonfly
It's only hello, and never goodbye
Magic angel spirit guide
Full moon forest
Dancing light
We make it through the
Hardest nights
Costa Rican shadow moon
I'll see you soon
Shrink or grow to any size
And dance away like butterflies
Frogs and flies of paradise
Dancing in the sweet goodnight

57
Upon my birth,
The dirt and earth
Opened up a chasm.
I fell into an endless well,
My body ached and spasmed.
Through cavernous doors
Under hazardous woods of yore,
I met with Father Time,
As he led me through the walls of blood
That lined my mind.
Through arteries of art and mud,
I mustn’t cover up the artist inside of me,
Lulled by the flames of a passionate lovel
To reach a rippling creek and see my reaction from above.
Unsheath myself of burdened clothes and heavy dreams.
Heaven seems to sing in a dimension just beyond reach.
So I step into thy sacred creek
And am instantly swept off my feet.
Nothing is concrete within this dream
of shoreless waters sweet.
To drift along on my back to the rhythm of the darkened skies,
I close my eyes and let the tide guide me through the arches wide;
To where the garden lies.
Reflections of memories refraction,
Create illusions that never actually happened.
They try telling me my dreams are just imagined,
But I believe my dreams are real,
For why else would
I have them?
To be present without preconceptions or fatal judgments.
Is freedom to feel all the colors,
light, sound, aliens, dimensions, encounters with spirits,
great grandmothers and ghosts ask, "What are you grateful for?"

Curly haired soulful longing eyes,
Pure intense pleasure, feeling love,
Creating, motivation to revitalize
And be forever in this moment.

Womb to tomb
Room to room
Sun and moon
Fan and door
No more waiting
For our souls to bloom

Free the spirit from the mundane!
Peer cut from your shuttered cave at the storm-torn world.

There is a passage through the storm.
Growth, bloom, release, green shadow of earth (over moon, season of eclipse).
Protect and nurture our planted seeds
Rainbow in hand, we are so much more than previously expected...
Phenomenic light passes through the mind's darkness,
Times of hardship lead to new growth and light.
There is always a way to day.

Step back and feel the shifts and symphonies,
Deep breaths, harmony, inner flow.
Relief, let go, surrender,
Our battles no longer waged in the flesh.

Our desires and dreams must recreate the world.
A loveless existence burning up in the forest fire gates of dawn.

Blood in our hearts, sweat pours from our pores and pools around our eternal dance
I am real, I am human, I am worthy, powerful, divine.

I am loved
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AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY

Liam Reading is a painter, printmaker, writer, and musician from Bangor, Maine. After receiving a scholarship to study visual artist in Colorado, Liam has since studied at Haystack Mountain school of Crafts, The Rhode Island School of Design, and is graduating from the University of Maine in Orono with a BFA in Studio Art. Liam has been commissioned to paint murals in the Bangor area, landing commissions from the Stephen and Tabatha King foundation, Studio Linear, and Dorothea Dix Psychiatric Center. He has also painted murals abroad in Peru, Costa Rica, and Thailand. Liam has worked as a photo editor, canvasser, and a freelance artist rendering album covers, shirts, tattoo designs, promotions, portraits, landscapes, and surrealist art in varying mediums. His work explores human consciousness and our relationship with nature in a drastically changing world. After graduation Liam plans on traveling, painting, illustrating and writing stories, and creating music and films along the way.