Poems on Dreams and Dreaming.

I know 'tis but a Dream, yet feel more anguish Than if 'twere Truth. It has been often so: Must I die under it? Is no one near? Will no one hear these stifled groans and wake me? Samuel Taylor Coleridge

The Dream of a Lover

Anonymous Late Medieval Lyric

Benedicite! whate dreamed I this nyght? Methought the worlde was turnyd up so downe The sun, the moone had lost their force and lyght, The sea also drowned both toure and towne. Yet more marvel how that I heard the sounde Of onys voice saying: beare in thy mynd, Thi lady hath forgotten to be kynd.

In a goodly nyght, as yn my bede I laye

Anonymous Late Medieval Lyric

In a goodly nyght, as yn my bede I laye plesantlye slepyng, thys dreme I hade: to me ther came a creature bryghter þen þe day, whyche comfortyd my sprytes þat were a-fore full sadde. To beholde hur person, God knowys my hart was glade, for hur swete vysage lyke Venus gold ytt shone; to speke to hur I was ryght sore aferde,—d but when I waked ther was I alone.

Then when she sawe þat I lay soo styll, full softely she drew vnto my beddes syde; she bade me showe hur what was my wyll & my request ytt shuld not be denyed. With þat she kyst me, but & I shulde haue be dede, I cowde not speke my sprytes were soo ferre gone; for verrey shame my face a-wey I wryede, but when I a-woke ther was but I alone.

Then speke I, goodly woordes to hur said: 'I beseche your noblenes on me to have some grace. To aproche to your presence I was sumwhat aferde; bat causys me now to turne awey my face.' 'Nay, sir,' quod she 'as towchyng thys case, I perdone yow, my owne dere harte, anon.' With bat I toke hur softely, & swetly dyd hur basse, but when I awoke ther was but I alone.

Then said she to me, 'O my dere harte, may I content yn any wyse your mynde?' 'Ye, God knowys,' said I, 'through louys darte my harte for-euer to haue ye do me bynde. Yow be my comforth; I haue you most yn mynde; haue on me petye & lett me not Þis mone.' 'Leve', said she, 'þis mournyng; I wyll not be vnkynd.' But when I a-woke ther was but I alone.

I prayed hur hartely þat she wolde come to bede; she said she was content to doo me pleasure. I know not wheder I was alyve or dede so glad I was to haue þat goodly treasure. I kyssed hur, I bassed hur, owt of all mesure; the more I kyssyde hur, þe more hur bewty shone. To serue hur, to please hur, Þat tyme I dyd me deuer; but when I a-woke ther was but I alone.

Suche goodly sportes all nygt endured I vnto þe morow Þat day cam to sprynge. Soo glade I was of my dreme, verely, that in my slepe londe I be-gane to synge. And when I a-woke, by Hevyn Kynge, I wete after hur, & she was gone: I had no-thyng but my pylowe yn my armys lyyng.— For when I a-woke ther was but I alone.

Sonnet 43

William Shakespeare

When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see, For all the day they view things unrespected; But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee, And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed. Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright, How would thy shadow's form form happy show To the clear day with thy much clearer light, When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so! How would, I say, mine eyes be blessed made By looking on thee in the living day, When in dead night thy fair imperfect shade Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay! All days are nights to see till I see thee,

And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me.

The Dream

John Donne

Dear love, for nothing less than thee Would I have broke this happy dream; It was a theme For reason, much too strong for fantasy, Therefore thou wak'd'st me wisely; yet My dream thou brok'st not, but continued'st it. Thou art so true that thoughts of thee suffice To make dreams truths, and fables histories; Enter these arms, for since thou thought'st it best, Not to dream all my dream, let's act the rest.

As lightning, or a taper's light, Thine eyes, and not thy noise wak'd me; Yet I thought thee (For thou lovest truth) an angel, at first sight; But when I saw thou sawest my heart, And knew'st my thoughts, beyond an angel's art, When thou knew'st what I dreamt, when thou knew'st when Excess of joy would wake me, and cam'st then, I must confess, it could not choose but be

Coming and staying show'd thee, thee, But rising makes me doubt, that now

Profane, to think thee any thing but thee.

Thou art not thou. That love is weak where fear's as strong as he; 'Tis not all spirit, pure and brave, If mixture it of fear, shame, honour have; Perchance as torches, which must ready be, Men light and put out, so thou deal'st with me; Thou cam'st to kindle, goest to come; then I Will dream that hope again, but else would die.

A Dream

William Blake

Once a dream did weave a shade O'er my angel-guarded bed, That an emmet lost its way Where on grass methought I lay.

Troubled, wildered, and forlorn, Dark, benighted, travel-worn, Over many a tangle spray, All heart-broke, I heard her say:

'Oh my children! do they cry, Do they hear their father sigh? Now they look abroad to see, Now return and weep for me.'

Pitying, I dropped a tear: But I saw a glow-worm near, Who replied, 'What wailing wight Calls the watchman of the night?

'I am set to light the ground, While the beetle goes his round: Follow now the beetle's hum; Little wanderer, hie thee home!

A Dream Within a Dream

Edgar Allen Poe

Take this kiss upon the brow! And, in parting from you now, Thus much let me avow — You are not wrong, who deem That my days have been a dream; Yet if hope has flown away In a night, or in a day, In a vision, or in none, Is it therefore the less gone? All that we see or seem Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar Of a surf-tormented shore, And I hold within my hand Grains of the golden sand — How few! yet how they creep Through my fingers to the deep, While I weep — while I weep! O God! Can I not grasp Them with a tighter clasp? O God! can I not save One from the pitiless wave? Is all that we see or seem But a dream within a dream?

Crocodile King

Christina Rossetti

Hear now a curious dream I dreamed last night Each word whereof is weighed and sifted truth. I stood beside Euphrates while it swelled Like overflowing Jordan in its youth: It waxed and coloured sensibly to sight; Till out of myriad pregnant waves there welled Young crocodiles, a gaunt blunt-featured crew, Fresh-hatched perhaps and daubed with birthday dew. The rest if I should tell, I fear my friend My closest friend would deem the facts untrue; And therefore it were wisely left untold; Yet if you will, why, hear it to the end.

Each crocodile was girt with massive gold And polished stones that with their wearers grew: But one there was who waxed beyond the rest, Wore kinglier girdle and a kingly crown, Whilst crowns and orbs and sceptres starred his breast. All gleamed compact and green with scale on scale, But special burnishment adorned his mail And special terror weighed upon his frown; His punier brethren quaked before his tail, Broad as a rafter, potent as a flail. So he grew lord and master of his kin: But who shall tell the tale of all their woes? An execrable appetite arose,

He battened on them, crunched, and sucked them in. He knew no law, he feared no binding law, But ground them with inexorable jaw: The luscious fat distilled upon his chin, Exuded from his nostrils and his eyes, While still like hungry death he fed his maw; Till every minor crocodile being dead And buried too, himself gorged to the full, He slept with breath oppressed and unstrung claw. Oh marvel passing strange which next I saw: In sleep he dwindled to the common size, And all the empire faded from his coat. Then from far off a wingèd vessel came, Swift as a swallow, subtle as a flame: I know not what it bore of freight or host. But white it was as an avenging ghost. It levelled strong Euphrates in its course; Supreme vet weightless as an idle mote It seemed to tame the waters without force Till not a murmur swelled or billow beat: Lo, as the purple shadow swept the sands, The prudent crocodile rose on his feet And shed appropriate tears and wrung his hands. What can it mean? you ask. I answer not For meaning, but myself must echo, What? And tell it as I saw it on the spot.

We dream—it is good we are dreaming—

Emily Dickinson

We dream—it is good we are dreaming— It would hurt us—were we awake— But since it is playing—kill us, And we are playing—shriek—

What harm? Men die—externally— It is a truth—of Blood— But we—are dying in Drama— And Drama—is never dead—

Cautious—We jar each other— And either—open the eyesLest the Phantasm—prove the Mistake— And the livid Surprise

Cool us to Shafts of Granite— With just an Age—and Name— And perhaps a phrase in Egyptian— It's prudenter—to dream—

Sunday, 4 A.M.

Elizabeth Bishop

An endless and flooded dreamland, lying low, cross- and wheel-studded like a tick-tack-toe. At the right, ancillary, 'Mary" 's close and blue. Which Mary? Aunt Mary? Tall Mary Stearns I knew?

The old kitchen knife box, full of rusty nails, is at the left. A high vox humana somewhere wails:

The gray horse needs shoeing! It's always the same! What are you doing, there, beyond the frame?

If you're the donor, you might do that much! Turn on the light. Turn over. On the bed a smutch-black-and-gold gesso on the altered cloth. The cat jumps to the window; in his mouth's a moth.

Dream dream confronting, now the cupboard's bare. The cat's gone a-hunting. The brook feels for the stair.

The world seldom changes, but the wet foot dangles

until a bird arranges two notes at right angles.

Dream 2

Eileen Myles

the car had a cover over it and it was over the wheels and it hurt my ass and I couldn't sleep. It seems I should move, go forward now I was wandering through the jungle anywhere on earth but I was a woman in bed in New York and how many people have died in wild places dreaming you were still in bed would you know. Travel well I said to my dog when she went on her journey thinking of a cheap movie I've thought this was an urn turning this was on water this was flat but now I see light between the trees I see water trickling through stone this is not made of language but energy that will stop when I die the dream dies too one bolt

my dream about being white

Lucille Clifton

hey music and me only white, hair a flutter of fall leaves circling my perfect line of a nose, no lips, no behind, hey white me and i'm wearing white history but there's no future in those clothes so i take them off and wake up dancing.

Concordance [Working backward in sleep]

Mei-mei Berssenbrugge

Working backward in sleep, the last thing you numbed to is what wakes you.

What if that image were Eros as words?

What would it be like if you contemplated my words and I felt you?

Animals, an owl, frog, open their eyes, and a mirror forms on the ground.

When insight comes in a dream, and events the next day illuminate it, this begins your streaming consciousness, synchronicity, asymptotic lines of the flights of concordances.

An owl opens its eyes in deep woods.

For the first time, I write and you don't know me.

Milkweed I touch floats.

As My Life is a Dream Chungmi Kim

I painted a phoenix in bright colors cut it in nine pieces and cooked it in a pot at the mountaintop. I stirred it as if cranking reels of a movie. Unraveled were a series of faces in mosaic.

Kurosawa appeared. He asked me what my story was about. Tongue-tied, I could not answer. He handed me a token with a silvery eagle engraved, ready to fly.

How real I thought everything was in my dream!

In my waking hour, I see the remnant of the war between my head and heart.

Now in cease-fire, my chest is filled with the fresh breeze of serenity. I begin to breathe gently as my story is unraveled like in a movie.

No longer haunted, my love of God soars as I see my guardian angel smile in the clear blue sky, transforming to one gigantic phoenix.

My wandering in the wilderness of the mind has taught me a little wisdom. I believe my dreams are real as my life is a dream.

The Rapture of My Dark Dream

Edna St Vincent Millay

When the tree-sparrows with no sound through the pearl-pale air Of dawn, down the apple-branches, stair by stair, With utmost, unforgettable, elegance and grace Descended to the bare ground (never bare Of small strewn seeds For forced-down flyers at this treacherous time of year), And richly and sweetly twittered there, I pressed my forehead to the window, butting the cold glass Till I feared it might break, disturbing the sparrows, so let the moment pass When I had hoped to recapture the rapture of my dark dream; I had heard as I awoke my own voice thinly scream, "Where? in what street? (I knew the city) did they attack You, bound for home?" You were, of course, not there. And I of course wept, remembering where I last had met you Yet clawed with desperate nails at the sliding dream, screaming not to lose, since I cannot forget you. I felt the hot tears come; Streaming with useless tears, which make the ears roar and the eyelids swell, My blind face sought the window-sill To cry on--frozen mourning melted by sly sleep, Slapping hard-bought repose with quick successive blows until it whimper and outright weep. The tide pulls twice a day, The sunlit and the moonlit tides Drag the rough ledge away And bring back seaweed, little else besides. Oh, do not weep these tears salter than the flung spray!--Weepers are the sea's brides... I mean this the drowning way.