

Lucid dreaming for creative writing: Interviews with 26 writers

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Summary. Many creatives throughout history used their dreams (e.g. Stephen King, William Blake, Paul McCartney, Salvador Dali) to inspire their works of art. It is hypothesised that becoming lucid in those dream states can further enhance and direct creative works, and in particular, short-form fiction writing. Lucid dreams (LD) are those in which the dreamer becomes aware that they are dreaming (La Berge & Rheingold, 1990). A previous report on the use of dreams by 26 writers was analysed, after which 26 different writers were interviewed in order to identify the specific benefit of lucid dreams over non-lucid dreams for the development of literary works. Results from this study indicate that inducing LD can benefit creative writing processes by providing a starting point for a new literary piece and by helping with a current project, from problem-solving to idea generation, plot and character development, offering first-hand experience in one's own fiction, helping with the reviewing process, as well as resolving ambivalence around creative projects or one's writing practice. The objective of the future experimental study will be to test LD as a tool that can assist with different components of fiction writing. Suggestions are made here for how these components are placed in Flower and Hayes' (1980) Cognitive Process Theory of Writing.

Keywords: Lucid dreaming; dreaming; cognitive model of creative writing; creative writing

1. Introduction

Robert Louis Stevenson had "little people" in his dreams create stories in what he called "that small theatre of the brain" that he then sold to millions of people around the world. He believed these "little people," who created the plot to one of his most beloved books *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, to be more talented than him. Stevenson almost felt guilty for taking all the credit for these literary works when some "Brownie," as he called the little people in his dreams, did all the work (Barrett, 2001). However, Jorge Luis Borges said that "writing is nothing more than a *guided dream*" (Borges, 1979). Thus, to produce a piece of creative work, various cognitive tasks that involve both the subconscious and conscious processes are required.

1.1. What is Creativity?

Creativity has been defined as the ability to generate new ideas by making remote associations or pursuing unusual solutions to problems with no right answer (Benedek et al., 2020; Guildford, 1950). These novel ideas then also need to be useful to be considered creative. Mednick's (1962) definition of creativity focuses on this view of the creative process, which he defines as "the forming of associative elements into new combinations which either meet specific requirements or are in some way useful." These are the defi-

nitions that are used across domains, although instances of creativity are usually domain-specific, meaning that we cannot talk of a "creative person" without referring to a specific domain in which they are creative, such as music or writing. The present paper addresses the domain of creative writing.

1.2. What is Creative Writing?

The most widely used domain-specific model of creative writing is Flower and Hayes' (1980) Cognitive Process Theory of Writing (Figure 1), which identifies three key cognitive processes in the act of writing: generating, translating, and reviewing in a non-linear fashion. These main processes with a series of subprocesses have a hierarchical structure, such that "a given process may be called upon at any time and embedded within another process or even within another instance of itself" (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 375). The task environment, which includes the rhetorical problem (i.e. writing a novel) and text produced so far, along with the writer's long-term memory, have a vital role in these processes.

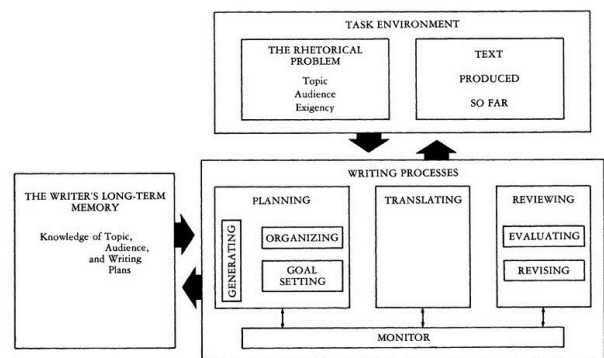


Figure 1. Flower and Hayes' (1980) Cognitive Process Theory of Writing.

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1.3. Current tools for supporting cognitive processes in writers

There are methods for supporting these processes by responding to creativity as the ability to make remote associations. For example, Ward and Lawson (2009) examine a method for *combining concepts*, defined as “merging of two concepts that have previously been separate in the writer’s mind.” The method they explore relies on computer generated random pairs of concepts, which enable writers to generate a unique, unexpected response to unusual combinations, leading them to obtain starting points for their stories. However, this method does not respond to the writer’s long-term memory, which includes their background knowledge of the concepts and plays a key role in the cognitive processes. Without a personal connection with the two distinct concepts, a writer could produce an original combination that does not satisfy the other key element of creativity: the usefulness requirement. In other words, the unusual combinations of distinct concepts with which the writer is unfamiliar might be original but rid of personal meaning and thus randomized. The same problem lies with Pea and Kurland’s (1987) suggestion for a number of “cognitive technologies” for writing, who use computer tools to support creative writing processes in the Flower and Hayes’ model.

1.4. Dreaming as a cognitive tool for writing

The creation of the weak associations required for the originality aspect of creativity has also been defined as a function of dreaming by Zadra and Stickgold (2021). Dreams put distinct concepts from an individual’s memory into new and unusual combinations; when we dream, our brains seem to preferentially search out for weak associates that create unexpected paths, instead of the obvious, strong associates sought out by our waking brains (Zadra and Stickgold, 2021). Thus, the present study hypothesises that the gap between an individual’s long-term memory and remote associations that computer generated tools present could be closed with directed dreaming. We can direct dreaming by incubating a problem or an idea before sleep, as well as by inducing lucid dreaming. LD further allows for the deliberate use of dreams in one’s writing and directing this technique in highly personalized ways for specific creative tasks.

1.5. Lucid Dreaming

A lucid dream (LD) is one in which the dreamer is aware that they are dreaming. Studies have shown that creativity is highly associated with LD and both frequent and occasional lucid dreamers scored higher on creative personality scale than did non-lucid dreamers (Blagrove and Hartnell, 1998; Blagrove & Tucker, 1994; Stumbrys and Daniels, 2010). Other studies induced lucidity for various creative purposes, from idea generation to creative problem solv-

ing (e.g. Stumbrys, 2010; Schredl & Erlacher, 2007; Barrett, 1993). Johnson (2017) explored the role of LD in creative writing and found many benefits to LD while writing a novel entitled *Breathing in Colour*. For example, she mentions the benefits of heightened visual perception, the elements of conscious attention and “staying power” of the image that contributes to better recall, in-the-dream experimentation enabled by carrying a creative task inside the lucid dream, seeking new ideas or working on current projects, and sidestepping the inner critic. She used both passive and active approaches, from simple observation of the dream to summoning a character from her novel and dialoguing with them. These findings are discussed in her 2017 book but originate in her 2007 doctoral thesis “The Role of Lucid Dreaming in the Process of Creative Writing”. The work that Johnson did included investigation of the above methods using 25 case studies, including writers, artists, and lucid dream researchers, and further experimental examination of the practical use of these methods with herself as the subject of the study. The current study is thus intended to expand on previous research and specifically focus on the use of LD in fictional writing by gathering data from writers who are both lucid and non-lucid dreamers.

To investigate the ways in which dreams in general can support creative writing, Naomi Epel’s (1993) report on the use of dreams by 26 writers has been analysed. However, dreams are unpredictable, and their benefits are spontaneous at best. Thus, it is hypothesised that lucid dreaming in particular can support creative writing processes as the practice can help direct dreams toward creative ideas and solutions. Thus, an additional 26 writers were interviewed for the purposes of identifying differences between lucid and non-lucid dreams in terms of their impact on producing a fictional piece. Implications for the cognitive model as well as a future study have been drawn in the discussion section of this paper.

2. Naomi Epel’s Interviews with 26 Writers

Naomi Epel (1993) reports on her conversations with 26 world famous writers who discussed the use of their dreams in their writing. Sally Hill (1997) conducted a qualitative analysis of those interviews for her PhD dissertation. This chapter summarises Hill’s findings and then provides a more rigorous quantitative analysis of Epel’s book than was undertaken by Hill. This is because Hill’s thesis uses multiple different categorizations that have been summarised here for the ease of understanding within a limited space. In addition, there are some inconsistencies with her analysis. For example, in the abstract, Hill states that “It was found that dreams provided starting points for creative work for nine authors”, while on page 146 she states that “Eight authors [...] reported 14 dreams that became starting points for their work.” Similarly, on page 172 she states that “dreams

Table 1. Number of writers who talked about (1) using dreams as a starting point for a new piece, (2) problem solving in dreams or using dreams to move an existing project forward, or (3) dreams that influenced their thinking about a current project or their writing in general.

Dream provided a starting point for a new creative project	Dream provided new ideas or solutions for a current project	Dream resolved ambivalence around a current project or writing practice	Did not use dreams in their writing
10	21	8	2

provided solutions to a variety of creative problems for six authors” while on page 157 she writes that “seven authors [...] discussed thirteen instances in which dreams provided solutions to artistic problems.” Thus, for the purposes of a clearer categorization as well as due to the inconsistencies in Hill’s quantitative categories and data, a new analysis was undertaken. However, overall Hill’s findings and conclusions are in accord with the analyses in this section.

2.1. What dreams do for writers

Hill concluded that “dreams appear to contribute to the creative process in two primary ways: (1) as sources of creative inspiration, implemented either through direct transcription or through more indirect processes involving conscious elaboration and development, and (2) as sources of problem solving, either through the presentation of solutions in dreams or by awakening with no memory of a dream but with an artistic solution in one’s mind.” (Hill, 1997, p. 35). Put simply, dreams helped start new creative projects or move existing ones forward. Hill also analysed those dreams that influenced a writer’s choice or course of creative projects by resolving ambivalence around those projects, rather than contributing to the content of the writing piece (Table 1).

For 10 writers, dreams served as starting points for new writing pieces. 21 writers used dreams to move an existing project forward by solving a creative problem or providing a new idea that was implemented in the work either directly or in a modified way as a way of moving the project forward. For 8 writers, dreams revealed something meaningful about the current project or writing practice in general; they provided an insight into the “why” behind a project or directed them toward a specific project, and they revealed why they write or why they write in this particular way. 2 out of the 26 writers did not use their dreams in their writing.

The following breaks down the first three categories and provides further explanation supported by examples for each category.

- a) Dreams provide starting points for new creative projects.

“The starting points are varied in nature,” (Hill, 1997, p. 99) and they provide ideas, series of ideas, story lines, visual images, and physiological experiences (see Table 1 in Appendix A). For instance, William Styron’s *Sophie’s Choice* was conceptualized in a vision proceeding a dream, laying down the groundwork for his bestselling book.
- b) Dreams provide new ideas or solutions for current projects.

“Authors report that dreams directly assist or influence work in progress by: providing dreams for inclusion in creative work, deepening the level of creative work, providing creators with new experiences and providing solutions to creative problems.” (Hill, 1997, pp. 102-103)

 - They deepen the level of creative work by raising the emotional level, providing context for the story and an

unconscious understanding of it, and allowing the author to experience the story (allowing for participation in the story). (Hill, 1997, pp. 106-107)

- They provide the writer with new experiences in terms of “feelings, thoughts and actions, insights, heightened physiological responses, and participation in situations that are impossible in waking life, new endings” (Hill, 1997, pp. 107-108; see Appendix A.1).
 - “Authors report that the solutions take various forms: endings, scenes, images, and insight.” (Hill, 1997, p. 111). Some examples include Art Spiegelman and Elmore Leonard, who report solving problems related to their writing at night. Bharati Mukherjee found the endings to her stories and the novel *Jasmine* in dreams (see Table 2 in Appendix A). Stephen King went to sleep thinking about the girl from *It*, willing a creative idea as he was stuck with the book that was already seven or eight hundred pages in. The dream took him to the junk yard from his book and provided him with a scene about leeches coming out of a refrigerator that he put in the book without changing anything about the dream. (Epel, 1993, p. 138).
- c) Dreams resolve ambivalence around creative projects or writing practice.

“Authors report that dreams influence the course of creative projects by: resolving ambivalence around the undertaking of creative projects, helping authors set priorities, and influencing the course of creative projects.” (Hill, 1997, pp. 112-113)

Dreams revealed to authors how they really felt about a current project or the desire to start a new project became clear to them in a dream. Leonard Michaels had a prophetic dream that said something about his career as a writer. The dream revealed what kind of stories Leonard writes and what he was trying to escape. Similarly, Anne Rice’s dream told her to go and write her second vampire novel. Maurice Sendak talks about dreams resolving ambivalence by helping to clarify an emotional condition: “you might have a dream where your true emotional state is revealed.” (Epel, 1993, p. 233).

2.2. What writers do with dreams

As starting points or ideas/solutions for their current projects, writers take the following elements from their dreams (see Table 2).

Plot: Writers developed their plots or found larger meaning for their narrative in dreams (see Appendix A.2), from dreaming up fresh ideas to moving the narrative forward, changing the ending, and adding new scenes that added to or shaped the plot. Gloria Naylor developed her narratives by taking her daydreams into the night dreams. Sue Grafton’s dream made her realize that she was to tell the same story from a different angle, from a different character’s point of view. Anne Rice’s dream about a woman made out of marble that filled her with fear influenced the plot of *The Queen of the Damned*.

Most of the following elements in one way or another influenced the plot of the fictional piece.

Characters: “Some assign their dreams to particular characters, who then dream those dreams in a particular work. Others create fictional experiences based on their dreams and assign those fictional experiences to particular characters.” (Hill, 1997, pp. 121-122) Some of these writers

Table 2. Number of writers who talked about using these dream elements in their writing.

Plot	Character	Setting	Emotion	Symbols
21	16	4	9	7

also developed new characters in their dreams or met their fictional characters in dreams after they had already been born on page.

- Characters appear literally:
 - with the creator (see Appendix A.3);
 - creators appear as their character
- Characters appear indirectly through emotional states that offer authors insight into their characters (see Appendix A.4).

For instance, Anne Rivers Siddons' dreams worked out the problems she had with her characters; a dream provided a scene from start to finish about what was needed to happen with a character in *Peachtree Road*. Sue Grafton dreamt whole lines of dialogue. Reynolds Price worked on his characters for several months or even years and seemed to be dreaming that character's dreams. King's dream of a hanging (see Appendix A.5) helped him create a character in his book *Salem's Lot*, whom he reworked into a vampire that hangs himself.

Settings: As with many plots, settings came either from single images or dream scenes. Anne Rice dreamt of a flooded world and people clustered on the tops of Greek temples, a dream which she put in her unpublished novel *Katherine and Jean*. Three of John Sayles' dreams turned into a film *Brother from Another Planet*, incorporating characters (people with antennas in their heads) from the first dream, the fugitive aspect from the second dream about a bigfoot wandering around Seattle, and a Harlem setting from his third dream. Robert Stone's *Outerbridge Reach* was informed by a dream image of a desolate place that he did not really understand. Art Spiegelman struggled to imagine a particular garbage pit in *Maus* where his characters were hiding, until he had a dream that provided a clear image of that pit.

Emotions and sensations: Writers recreated dream feelings, focused on strong sensations from their dreams, and responded to dream emotion. Maurice Sendak's dreams did not help him with the content of his dreams in terms of plot, movement, or even idea. Rather, they matched his work emotionally, like in the design for the opera *Hansel and Gretel*. For Sendak, dreams "raise the emotional level of what I'm doing at the moment. They add color or counterpoint to the work, acting as an almost symphonic accompaniment to what I'm doing." (Epel, 1993, p. 230)

Symbolism: Writers used the symbolism from a dream in their writing or they better understood their work through dream symbolism. Stephen King described his use of symbols from his dreams in multiple stories: "I've always used dreams the way you'd use mirrors to look at something you couldn't see head-on – the way that you use a mirror to look at your hair in the back." He believed that for all people, dreams "illustrate the answers to their problems in symbolic language." Spalding Gray's dream of a straw boy who burns up and then gets reborn features in *Swimming to Cambodia*. Gray believed that ashes in this dream were a powerful symbol and that this dream was about an identity quest. Art Spiegelman included a dream scene in *Maus* that he ended up removing, about his neighbour whose hands had been cut off as he was becoming a father. Spiegelman considered this to be a symbol of lost freedom.

2.3. How writers work with their dreams

To implement these different dream elements in their work, writers "work cognitively with dream material, editing and

shaping images, speculating about dream material, or imposing structure upon it" (Hill, 1997, p. 119). In addition, they consolidate emotions from the dream, make connections to find an underlying theme, and extract from dreams. Some authors emphasise the role of critical sensibility in reworking the dream into a piece of writing:

You have to maintain your critical sensibility and not just assume, because it was an extraordinary dream for you, that it will be a dream for other people. Because people need maps to your dreams (Allan Gurganus in Epel, 1993, pp. 96; 98-99).

As another writer explains, structure must be given to any event one wants to use in their writing, especially when it comes to dreams:

Dreams may seem chaotic, but one can always create structure. Life really doesn't have all that much structure. I mean books are really putting an awful lot of artificial structure on what often can be pretty structureless. Dreams are just another part of that experience. It's as easy to pull a structure out of a dream as it is to pull a structure out of daily life (John Nickols in Epel, 1993, p. 186).

Thus, imposing structure and working with their dreams, these writers transformed their dreams into pieces of writing by:

1. Creating or associating characters with dreams
2. Reproducing dreams literally
3. Interpreting dreams
4. Describing, changing, elaborating on, and adding to dream details
5. Making dreams more metaphoric (see Table 3 in Appendix A)

2.4. What is missing from this analysis?

Because Epel did not conduct a scientific study with writers but rather recorded her informal conversations with them, a lot of the content is not quantifiable. The present study aims to respond to this in order to obtain more rigorous results. In addition, Hill did not make a distinction that is key to the present study: between non-lucid and lucid dreams. Epel also did not seem to have made this distinction, but neither did the writers themselves. For instance, Amy Tan seems to be a lucid dreamer who can change the dream setting "by simply looking down at my feet then looking up again," but the notion of lucidity is never mentioned. As will be shown in the next section, and particularly in the discussion, distinguishing between non-lucid and lucid dreams will provide insight into the potential power of dreams as a tool for aiding creative writing.

3. Interviews with 26 Writers – Present Study

3.1. Method

26 writers, of which 19 were lucid and 7 non-lucid dreamers, were interviewed on their use of lucid and non-lucid dreams in their fictional writing, from short stories and novels to poetry, songs, and screenplays. Writers ranged in age (from early 20s to late 70s) and gender (M: 18, F: 8). Ethics approval was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology. Informed consent to take part was given by all participants.

Table 3. Number of interviewees categorised for whether they reported a specific benefit from a dream.

Dream provided a starting point for a new creative project	Dream provided new ideas or solutions for a current project	Dream resolved ambivalence around a current project or writing practice	Did not use dreams in their writing
25	17	4	0

Participants were sought via writing and dreaming groups on social media, as well as through personal connections with the author of the study. Of those who answered the call, writers were selected on the basis of their writing credibility; working and published writers were given preference, but non-professional writers were still included in the analysis. Excluded from the analysis were writers who were under a misapprehension of what LD meant, e.g., those who defined waking spiritual or other waking experiences such as daydreams as LD. Where this was the case, participants were given the standard definition of LD as set by La Berge and Rheingold (1990), and they were informed about the important distinction between dream lucidity and dream control (in that control is not necessary for a lucid state) as well as degrees of lucidity, in order to help them distinguish between their personal experiences. Nevertheless, there is still some ambiguity or uncertainty about whether some participants were clearly thinking about LD or if they confused this with other types of dream or waking experiences (e.g. hypnagogic, daydream).

Participants were asked about the way they had used dreams in their writing, the way dreams had helped them start or develop their literary works, and whether lucidity in dreams had or could have a further benefit for their writing. Specifically, they talked about whether they had used dreams for new ideas or problem solving, which elements from their dreams they had used (categorised as plots, characters, settings, emotions and sensory experiences, and symbolism), and how they had used them during their writing process.

Interviews were conducted via messages on social media, emails, phone calls, and Zoom calls. Participants were granted anonymity, but in instances where a piece of work had to be referenced, they gave their consent to be named in this paper. Results were obtained using a qualitative thematic analysis in ATLAS.ti software version 22.1.0, developed by ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH.

3.2. Results

3.2.1 What dreams do for writers

Out of 26 interviewees, 25 obtained a starting point for their next literary work from a dream, while 17 used dreams to move an existing project forward. For instance, one writer used dreams as starting points for one adult and two chil-

dren’s books and has a clear plan for his next children’s book based on a dream. 4 writers gained a meaningful insight into the choice or course of their projects or their writing practice in general. Writers wrote short stories, sequels to their novels, screenplays, and inspired many poems by both harvesting their dreams for new ideas and overcoming a writer’s block and/or moving their writing forward. Table 3 shows number of interviewees categorised for whether they reported a specific benefit from a dream.

3.2.2 What writers do with dreams

From starting points for new projects to ideas for moving the current projects forward, writers used their dreams in various ways to inspire or develop five elements of their literary pieces: plot, character, setting, emotion, and symbolism. These are discussed at length in the following subsections. From both kinds of dreamers, writers used whole plots or images/scenes/other elements that shaped or added to their plots (see Appendix B.2), characters, settings, emotions, and symbolism (see Table 4).

Non-lucid dreamers (n=7) and their use of dreams in writing are represented in Table 5.

Lucid dreamers (n=19) used elements from both their non-lucid and lucid dreams: Table 6 shows which type of dreaming contributed to the writing of the lucid dreamers. Some of the participants did not discuss isolated dreams and their contribution to their writing pieces, but they rather talked about the contribution from their dreams in general, across multiple dreams and/or creative works. Thus, the exact contribution from each type of dreaming for the lucid dream participants is not determined.

Many of the lucid dream writers utilized ideas from both their non-lucid and lucid dreams to develop fictional stories. For example, Michael Jecks, an author with a wide acclaim in the UK and abroad, used both non-lucid and lucid dreams to develop over 40 novels (see Appendix B.1). Adriana Polito used her hypnagogic vision of a boy floating around her hotel room to inspire the main plot for her novel *The World Within*. After this experience, she used a series of non-lucid and lucid dreams to develop a plot about an inter-dimensional being who pays a visit to Earth and stumbles across a human woman on the brink of sleep.

Table 4. Number of writers who used the different dream elements for their writing.

	Plot	Character	Setting	Emotion	Symbols
Dreams used in writing	22	18	18	10	5

Table 5. Number of non-lucid dreamers who discussed the different dream elements appearing in their writing.

	Plot	Character	Setting	Emotion	Symbols
Non-lucid dreams	6	2	3	3	2

Table 6. Number of lucid dreamers who discussed the different elements from lucid and non-lucid dreams appearing in their writing.

	Plot	Character	Setting	Emotion	Symbols
Non-lucid dreams	2	2	3 ¹	1	0
Lucid dreams	5	4 ²	3	2 ²	0
Mix of lucid and non-lucid dreams	9 ²	10 ²	9	4 ²	3

Note: ¹It is unclear whether one participant in this group was talking about a non-lucid or a lucid dream, ²There was ambiguity about whether one participant in this group was clearly thinking about a *lucid* dream or a different dream state/waking experience such as daydream or hypnagogia.

a) What writers do with their *non-lucid* dreams

This section will provide examples of non-lucid dreams used in writing by both kinds of dreamers, while the next section investigates lucid dreams.

Plot, Characters & Setting

Some writers dreamt whole plots while others dreamt different elements that they used in their plots. One writer uses “everything” from her dreams: “Plot, characters, setting, world physics and conflicts, even the names. I use the dream I have and think out: How did they get there? Why? What was their drive to get to this point?” Another writer used his corny but terrifying dream from high school, about escaping prison, and modified the characters and settings to inspire a novel that he is now turning into a script. One writer used dreams to directly influence 6 songs and incorporated 3 dream sequences into his literary fiction, using many dream elements, including setting, characters, and profound imagery.

Characters are inspired in various ways. Writers take new characters directly from their dreams or attribute certain dream experiences to existing literary characters. For example, one writer has a recurring dream where he discovers the superpower of flight: “As such, one of the characters in my story has a similar recurring dream, learning to fly in his sleep as he builds a spaceship in real life.”

Another writer dreamt of a drying lake and used that image of a setting to inspire a fictional story about villagers who suffer the effect of a drying lake (see Appendix B.3).

Emotion & Symbolism

Characters and settings in dreams often reflect a dreamer’s emotional state and symbolize something meaningful to the dreamer, such as Adriana Polito’s dream of a “conscious sea” (see Appendix B.4). But symbolism is found at many levels. Matt Price, a dyslexic writer, uses his dreams to translate abstract concepts into the language he can understand (see Appendix B.5). One writer uses symbolism to support his plot: “In my literature, certain symbols take on profound meaning as I develop and use those symbols over and over again. When I write a dream sequence into my story, the whole point is to give the reader a vague symbolic framework for how the story is going to unfold from beginning to end, or at the very least provide some foreshadowing for a future event.”

Moreover, the array of sensations unlike anything they perceive in the waking world, including the richness of colour, sound, and dreamers’ own internal emotions, arguably leave the most lasting impact on dreamers. Chris Morgan, Birmingham’s Poet Laureate, wrote a number of poems and short stories based on the emotional impact of his deeply symbolic dreams, such as an anxiety dream about being

lost in a hotel, flying over a playground, and being stuck in a bathroom as a young boy with people knocking on his door (see Appendix B.5).

Catherine Smith, poet and a short story writer bases much of her writing on her very symbolic and oftentimes bizarre dreams. For instance, she explains her recurring dream about not having prepared for an exam and thus causing the First World War as “in failing to prepare to learn history I somehow inadvertently was responsible for the outbreak.” She writes about this in one of her poems. She describes in detail her emotionally charged dreams that are filled with “intensity of detail,” “almost like they’re in technicolour” with “strong saturation” and thus “quite liberating”. She sees everything in her dreams so clearly that her poetry and stories feature many of these sensory details, including “the lights that were so clear, the sky was navy blue, the stars were vivid, vivid gold.”

Could lucidity in dreams further support creative writing development?

Both lucid and non-lucid dreamers were asked whether they think becoming lucid in their dreams is/can be beneficial for creative writing (table 7).

Most dreamers considered the ability to gain lucidity in their dreams very useful for further development of their stories. However, a few disagreed. Surprisingly, two of the three negative responses were from lucid dreamers. Mostly, they feared that creativity would be diminished by conscious awareness within a dream. Firstly, one writer who described herself as at her “best when my subconscious runs rampant” with her logic getting in the way of good ideas, later admitted that she never, ever lucid dreams. Thus, her concern is based on a belief alone rather than evidence from her practice. Another writer who answered “no” to the above question explained that she finds it hard to have original ideas when she becomes lucid, but then said that she usually forces herself awake as soon as she catches herself lucid dreaming as she finds the feeling of it weird. Finally, the third “no” came from a lucid dreamer who struggles to remain lucid, waking up not much after becoming lucid. Thus, his belief that lucid dreaming would not help him creatively comes from the inability to stay in the lucid

Table 7. Responses of all participants to the question of whether lucid dreaming can be beneficial to creative writing.

YES	NO	NOT SURE
22	3	1

state rather than a concern about any negative impact of LD. There was also one non-lucid dreamer who remained neutral as he did not seem interested in lucid dreaming at all. However, 22 out of 26 lucid and non-lucid dreamers expressed their interest in lucid dreaming and recognised the benefits that dreaming lucidly has or could have for their writing (see Appendix B.6).

b) What writers do with their **lucid** dreams

This section discusses lucid dreams provided by lucid dreamers to investigate the difference dream lucidity can make for writers. The benefits of LD for fiction writing, beyond the benefits of dreams in general, are multifaceted. Those who use LD for their writing benefit greatly from conscious insights into the world created by their dreaming mind: from increasing dream recall to developing characters inside LD, exploring locations and “turning up” emotions and sensory inputs, decoding the symbolism of bizarre dreams, and jumping in and out of characters, to world building and asking the dream what to write next. (see figure 2).

I think what's interesting about lucid dreaming is that it allows you to sort of take a step back and pay attention to something that you normally wouldn't and do actions that you may not have done [in a non-lucid dream]. – Antonio Zadra

Plot

The writers from this lucid dream group develop new plots or test their already-developed plots in a dream environment. Some of them employ no control over the dream, simply watching it unfold as if it were a film, while others try to direct it (see Appendix B.7). One writer tests and only slightly influences “the story being told” when he is “in the

soft plane of dreamland that's maleable to the touch” by adjusting “with a nudge or a shove, the workings to see how it plays out.” Interestingly, most of these lucid dreamers do not try to impose a great deal of control over their dreams; rather, they watch it unfold while paying attention to the details. As one writer describes it, “it was like watching a film and then writing the script.”

Owen Palmiotti, a novelist and an award-winning screenwriter/filmmaker, embarked on a 30-day journey through the lucid dream world by building on his waking ideas, reviewing them, and looking at plots from different angles and from each character's eyes. He used these different perspectives to create other substories, and generally developed his story by continuing the dream from one night to the next (see Appendix B.8). Michael Jecks engages in a similar practice of going back into the same dream and replaying it to go down alternative routes (Appendix B.8). Others used lucidity to explore the dream and better understand and remember the details from the surroundings, characters, and their own emotions.

First-hand experience – Characters, Settings, and Sensations

The ability to gain first-hand experience in a dream is reported to result in believable characters as well as vivid places that come to life on paper as they are easy to imagine and sense.

In many of my lucid dreams I used to have when I was a kid, I would regularly interact with a dream character I called Lyra. When I wrote my first novel, Dreaming Demons, I based the main character off the image I had of Lyra, and all of her emotions and how she would react to situations. – Daegon Magus

These characters are the most intriguing parts of our dreams according to Dr Antonio Zadra, who has been studying sleep and dreaming for over two decades. He has recently published a novel entitled *The Dreamkeepers* inspired by his many interactions with characters from his lucid dreams, and was interviewed on these experiences for the present study.

Just exploring the environment or asking questions you wouldn't have asked your dream character, and paying attention to their answers, I think you get a wealth of potential creative information that you probably would not have had in a non-lucid dream. –Antonio Zadra

Experiences shared by some of the writers interviewed support Zadra's statement, as they developed characters through a series of lucid dreams that revealed to them things about their characters they could not have imagined otherwise (see Appendix B.9). One screenwriter went to sleep thinking about a friend from college whom he hadn't seen in a couple of decades. His interaction with the memory of this woman turned into a feature film script (JD in Appendix B.9). Another writer invited his character into his lucid dreams and went on many Dr Who-ish adventures with him (JP in Appendix B.9). JP was surprised when he “found out” how his character “actually” looked like; writing this character for fifteen years, he imagined him visually, but a dream revealed a very different appearance. He continued developing this character in a series of lucid dreams. Novelist Daegon Magus used his dreams to further develop a character from his childhood dreams and introduce her to other characters,

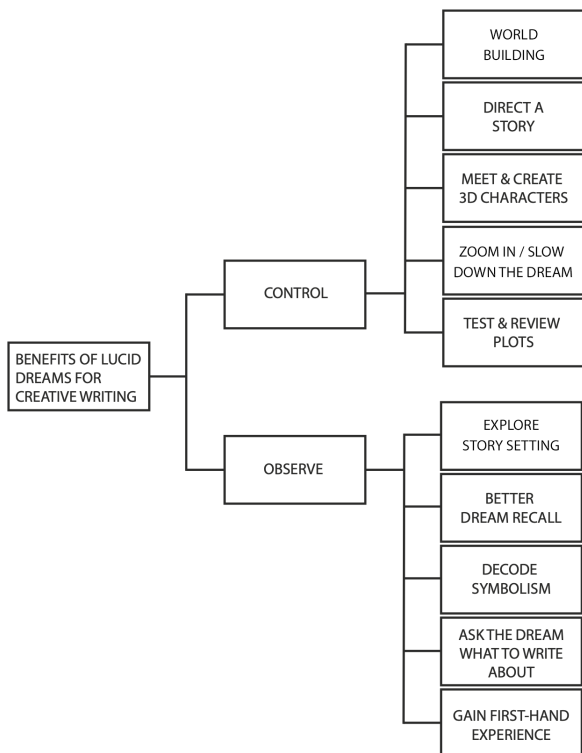


Figure 2. Twelve benefits of lucid dreaming for fictional writing, as highlighted by interviewees.

worlds, and to see how she reacts to different situations. He then had this protagonist from his novel travel to different worlds and meet a spiritual teacher, which he later incorporated into the novel (Appendix B.9).

The potential for meeting and developing realistic characters with unexpected traits in a dream is enabled by the fact that dream characters often seem self-willed and behave and speak as if they have their own sentience. This is exemplified with accounts of two writers whose lucid dream characters tried to convince them not only that they were real but also that the dream was the actual reality (Antonio Zadra and R.W. Harrison in Appendix B.10). In addition, Dr Zadra talked about an artist with whom he works, and whose characters are tasked with creating his artwork in his lucid dreams. However, these characters refuse to draw for him, break down in tears, or give him a puzzle which meaning he must decode in order to get a painting (see Appendix B.10).

Similarly, settings explored in lucid dreams offer more detail and tangible material to navigate than non-lucid dreams. As she plays with the laws of physics in order to create extraordinary new worlds, Adriana Polito claims that her descriptions of places are better when she describes them straight out of lucid dreams: "I think it's because I've been there. So I can describe it really well, because I've walked it." Owen Palmiotti "teleported" to 1763, the year in which his novel was based, to explore the setting and step into the shoes of his protagonist (Appendix B.11). Michael Stephenson uses a technique of "slowing down" a dream to focus on the details of the setting or to experience the environment through all senses, producing synaesthesia – a perceptual phenomenon allowing one to experience one of their senses through another, such as hearing colours or tasting music (Appendix B.11).

Decoding the Symbolism

The above techniques and awareness of the act of dreaming allow writers to "zoom in" on the story in all its details, but also in all its meaning. For instance, Owen Palmiotti created a story after multiple visits to a dream that made no sense to him at first. "I had a dream of numbers and letters flying at me. And I didn't understand what it was until I jumped back into the dream a few times over a few weeks." Similarly, another writer managed to reveal the symbolism of his two-part dream by becoming lucid in the second dream and continuing the story until the message unfolded (JRS in Appendix B.12). Another writer used a lucid dream image of a minotaur in a labyrinth which she turned into a story about "somebody ironically trapped in a dream state through their mental health issues, who needs help escaping this labyrinth, which is their own mind and their own traumas."

3.3. Resolving ambivalence around current projects or writing practice

Apart from a direct contribution to the content of their writing, dreams have resolved ambivalence around creative projects or their writing practice for some of these writers. Catherine Smith found that the repeating symbolism of leaving babies on buses in her dreams reflects her relationship with creativity, telling her she should get back to writing (see Appendix B.13). In addition, dreams sometimes reveal an idea for the story that one *should* write. A stuntman and fresh writer struggled with his writing until a dream revealed

an authentic topic for him to write about, telling him that he was writing the wrong story and revealing the story that only he could write (Matt Price in Appendix B.13).

Lucid dreamers don't have to wait for that one dream that may never come on its own, like non-lucid dreamers do. A writer who has been using lucid dreams mostly for his character development said that he recently got into a habit of asking the dream to reveal what he should write (JP in Appendix B.13). He uses the common techniques such as the mnemonic induction for lucid dreaming (MILD) and sets an intention for the dream to answer this perhaps most important question of one's writing practice, the question of authenticity.

Catherine Smith's insights as to whether dreaming and, in particular, lucid dreaming could benefit creative writing come from years of experience teaching creative writing to others. Not only could it help her understand the symbolism of her own dreams better and use this to escape procrastination, but she also sees LD as a valuable tool for writers to find their creativity and bring authenticity to their writing. In a way, she believes that LD could break the mechanisms of commercial writing for mass markets and bring some soul into the creative writing industry by revealing why a story should exist and *how only you could have written it* (Appendix B.13).

3.4. Writing Development

Just like the authors Epel interviewed, some of these writers reproduced dreams literally but most adapted certain elements from their dreams to create a fictional story. One writer truncates a lot of the elements out of a dream to fit his songs, "including only the most essential elements." However, for his stories, he includes "as many elements as possible, because I feel like they are somehow relevant to my interpretation of the meaning of the dream." Other writers find the meaning of their dream stories after the fact. One writer wakes up with a memory of the dream and then wonders about the places and people in the dream scenario, crafting her story while awake (EG in Appendix B.14). Two writers changed a lot of their dreams, embellished a lot, and added characters to turn their dreams into whole books, while one writer wrote down her dreams exactly as they were. Chris Morgan took a story straight out of a dream, yet it ended up taking only a paragraph of the story he wrote. Kali Vicci Ravel used her dream about a serial killer and a woman in a world in which no one ages and changed the relationship between her dream characters but kept the meaning of the plot (Appendix B.14). Balancing between the two, Catherine Smith actively fights her inner editor while trying to write down the most important elements of the dream first thing in the morning without any "editorial" input or questioning (Appendix B.14). Most of the writers either practice writing down some key thoughts from the dream as soon as they wake up or believe this to be an effective practice that they want to pick up. However, of those interviewed, the lucid dreamers seem to be better at this practice than the non-lucid ones.

Lucid dreamers further develop their stories not just on paper, but also in other dreams, as discussed in the previous sections. They use a combination of waking and dreaming techniques to originate, develop, and review their writing pieces.

4. Discussion

This research sought to explore whether dreams and, in particular, lucid dreams can be used as a tool for fictional writing. The findings from interviews with 26 writers conducted by Epel and the 26 writers interviewed for this study confirm the hypothesised benefit of dreams in creative writing, and indicate that lucid dreams can provide additional benefits. Writers have used their dreams to inspire and develop plots, characters, settings, symbolism, and emotional structure of their stories, as well as to influence the choice and course of their creative works. Lucid dreamers have taken this a few steps further, showing the numerous benefits of lucid dreaming over non-lucid dreaming.

4.1. Lucid dreams vs non-lucid dreams for writing

The on-command and first-hand experiences that lucid dreamers have result in benefits above those of non-lucid dreams, involving characters, settings, and the emotional and symbolic nature of the dream, as well as general and contextual narrative. Describing a world which one has walked instead of a world only imagined in one's head results in believable places and characters and engaging plots. The writer of *Sophie's Choice* William Styron stated that "the so-called magic of fiction is to lure the reader into a state of believing. Believing that all this unbelievable stuff actually happened." (Epel, 1993, p. 274). Therefore, LD can be a valuable tool for creating characters with their own sentience as well as believable worlds.

Most importantly, becoming lucid in one's dream could allow the writer to search for their authentic story. The main premise of this study was that dreams can help creators write more authentically and that lucid dreams can help navigate towards this goal. Not only have writers found in a dream the symbolism with individual meaning that revealed their next story, but they also learned about *what they should be writing and why*.

4.2. Are there any dangers to inducing lucid dreaming?

A minority of participants voiced their concerns about lucidity interfering with the creativity of dreams or with the natural processes of dreaming. Such worries about the disruption of sleep function and the blurring of reality/fantasy boundaries have been discussed in two opinion papers. Vallat and Ruby (2019) argue that the possible adverse effect of LD induction on sleep and health might outweigh its alleged benefits, mainly in that LD alter sleep integrity and lead to poorer sleep quality by producing a hybrid state of consciousness between waking and sleep. They fear that this hybrid state enables a disruption of REM function in emotional regulation and memory consolidation, which are hypothesised as the main functions of sleep, leading to various health risks. Soffer-Dudek (2020) adds another caution to the discussion – the possibly disrupted reality/fantasy boundaries. However, he discusses various studies that have shown increased mental health in lucid dreamers, such as increased resilience to traumatic stress as well as enhanced desirable personality traits.

A 2018 study tested the correlation between lucid dreams and sleep quality (Schadow, Schredl, Rieger, and Göritz). They found that the negative effect of lucid dreams on sleep quality disappeared when nightmare frequency was con-

trolled, suggesting that lucid dreamers' disposition to nightmares impact their sleep quality rather than lucid dreaming itself. Similarly, instead of relating to LD itself, poor sleep quality might be associated with induction methods used to produce lucid dreams, such as the wake-back-to-bed technique that requires dreamers to wake up before their normal waking-up time, stay up for a short period of time, and then go back to sleep. In addition, Zadra does not believe that lucid dreaming puts the processes responsible for the function of sleep at risk. He argues that nothing significant changes in the makeup of the dream, but that lucidity only gives us a "cognitive push".

The neurochemistry of the brain when we sleep is very different from wakefulness. Even though in lucid dreaming we believe that maybe parts of your frontal cortex get reactivated, so you have more critical thinking, planning abilities, a bit more reasoning, these executive functions that usually are absent [in sleep], this doesn't change the fact that your norepinephrine levels are low, your serotonin levels are low also. The overall background in which your brain is bathing, that doesn't change. You just have these areas that come in and give you this cognitive push.
– Antonio Zadra

Importantly, even if lucidity could interfere with the function of sleep, Soffer-Dudek and Zadra share a belief that these adverse effects are unlikely as most lucid dreamers "sacrifice" only a small portion of their sleep cycles to lucidity.

People need to remember that you're not going to be lucid for two and a half hours every night of your life. Even really good lucid dreamers will probably only spend their last REM period of the night lucid, not the 3-4 preceding ones. So up to the extent that you are altering whatever, it's a very small slice. It's like someone who eats super well all the time and then says: well, I'm gonna have this one square of chocolate, will that undo my years of training? No, just have the damn chocolate and enjoy it, it's not like you're eating that all the time. It's the same with lucid dreaming. – Antonio Zadra

Further, Zadra opposes the idea that lucid dreaming induction contributes to the blurring of reality/fantasy boundaries. "As I used to tell my students: if you're not sure whether you're dreaming or not, you're dreaming. Unless you need medication, when you're awake, you don't have those kinds of confusions, not for very long sustained periods." Zadra also dismissed some of the claims surrounding the dangers of lucid dreaming for creativity. As his own examples with self-willed characters as well as examples other writers interviewed for this study evidence, the creative dream will unfold as it will even when we are lucid, thus not being entirely subject to our lucidity. As Zadra states, "the creativity comes from the answers you get, and that doesn't change, that's not under your purview."

4.3. Implications for the Cognitive Model

It was hypothesised that lucid dreaming induction and various methods within lucid dreams could support certain processes described in the most widely used cognitive model of creative writing (Figure 3). The 26 interviewed writers claimed many benefits of dreaming which are relevant to these processes, including the process of reviewing. The

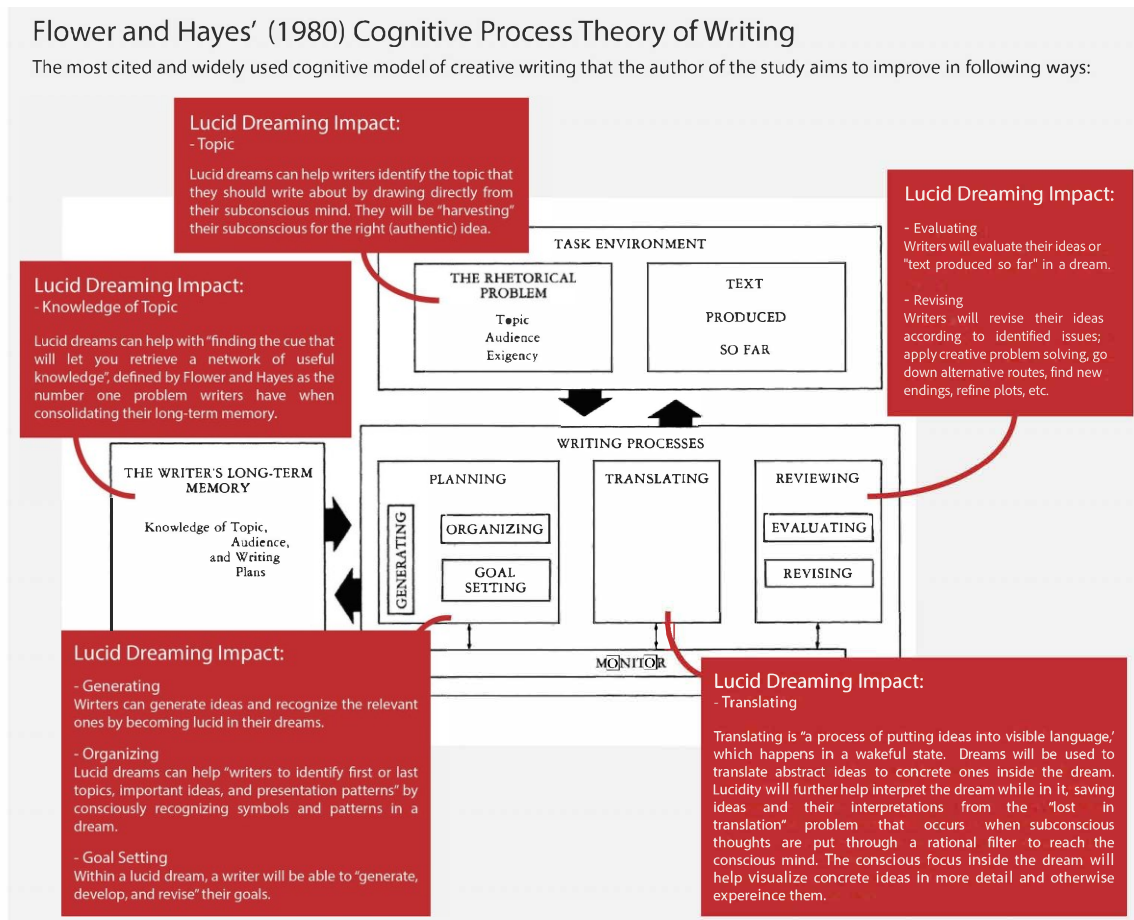


Figure 3. The Role of Lucid Dreaming in the Flower and Hayes' Cognitive Process Theory of Writing.

following are the components of the model that appear to be affected by dreaming:

- Planning – dreams generate new ideas, organize them, and help writers set priorities and goals by revealing what they should write next (e.g. Appendix B.1; B.2; B.3; B.4; Antonio Zadra and R.W. Harrison in B.9; B.10).
- Translating – this is a process of translating language into written words. However, a process of turning open-ended ideas into concrete concepts, termed "concretization", has been defined as an essential component of artistic creativity (Kushnir & Orkibi, 2021). In this sense, translating also happens in dreams for some writers, as they decode abstract concepts in their waking heads and turn them into concrete images or sensations in the dream (e.g. Matt Price in Appendix B.5). Arguably, this is also what happens when one incubates a problem and solves it in a dream.
- Reviewing: by bringing their protagonists into a lucid dream, recreating the story setting, or going down alternative routes, writers evaluate the text produced so far, so as to test their ideas and revise them "in real time" (Antonio Zadra and MT in Appendix B.7; Owen Palmiotti and Michael Jecks in B.8).

It is worth noting that the dreaming writer must collaborate with their waking self to establish this cycle of non-linear processes and develop a creative story. Creativity has been defined as essentially a combination of two necessary factors: originality and usefulness or task-appropriateness (Barron, 1955; Hennessey & Amabile, 2010; Simonton, 2012;

Stein, 1953; Runco and Jaeger, 2012; Mumford, 2003; Wallia, 2019). Originality can certainly come from dreams and can even be nurtured through dreams. However, the usefulness or the quality of a creative piece determined by the recognition from the peers in one's field is one of the two key ingredients in producing a *good story*.

Finally, on the basis of the findings here a revision of the model can be proposed. As voiced by Catherine Smith, a creative writing instructor, the search for an authentic idea is often abandoned for the appeal to mass markets. Authenticity, or the idea that 'only I could write this', lays within every one of us, just like the potential for creativity resides inside each of us. The search for it should thus also be a universal process which comes before the writing itself begins, somewhere around the process of generating and goal setting, and could be revisited throughout the writing process to keep one "on track". No detailed revision to the model in this regard is proposed in this paper due to the complexity of the task and the space constraint of this paper. However, this revision will be considered during an experiment with writers that follows this paper, and which involves the teaching of LD induction to writers.

4.4. What's next?

The proposed experiment will include guided instructions that will incorporate key fictional writing elements, as well as LD induction training. Unlike other studies, this experiment will not focus only on the combining concepts exercise or

character development or creation of a new world. Rather, participants will be instructed to explore their dream and find those elements that they personally can use in their story. This is because, as evidenced in these interviews, some writers' dreams contain vivid imagery and lack characters, while others have strong characters without the intensity of sensory inputs, and so on. We all dream differently, and thus we can all take different elements from our dreams, whether they are fully fleshed-out characters or symbolic, abstract imagery or a simple emotion or feeling, such as of being chased. The experiment will focus on exploring those strong elements in each individual's dream and will take advantage of whatever creative input a participant can get for *themselves*, placing an emphasis on finding the story only they can write.

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Appendix A

A.1

When I write I fall into a state where I access all of that. I'm still trying to capture that feeling of standing up there and putting up my hands and calling down the rain (Anne Rice in Epel, p. 214).

And the fear and the horror that rose up in me from the information about this vicious creature in the room with the child created such heart-thumping and sweating that I immediately started cataloguing my physical symptoms so that later, in describing Kinsey in a moment of great terror, I could use that information (Sue Grafton in Epel, p. 61).

A.2

Finding a shape for the story was enormously satisfying. I wrote twenty-two pages and then boiled it down to three and a half pages. Partly because of the requirements of the composer but also it was such a joy to have been given this kernel of something and then to develop it and to find its larger meaning (Allan Gurganus in Epel, p. 95).

A.3

You know it's funny, Scratch, a black character in King's Oak, showed up in one of my dreams (Anne Rivers Siddons in Epel, p. 240)

It was a pitch black night and I was with Claudia, the child vampire (Anne Rice in Epel, p. 217).

A.4

I don't normally see my characters in dreams exactly as they appear in a book, but I do experience a similar kind of feeling or emotion, something that gives me new insight into the questions that I'm asking of these characters. (Amy Tan in Epel, p. 285)

A.5

It was a dream where I came up a hill and there was a gallows on top of this hill with birds all flying around it. There

was a hangman there. He had died, not by having his neck broken, but by strangulation. I could tell because his face was all puffy and purple. And as I came close to him he opened his eyes, reached his hands out and grabbed me. (Stephen King in Epel, p. 135)

Table A-2. (Table 7 in Hill, 1997, p. 200).

Dreams Used for Problem-Solving

Author	Dream Name	Genre
Jack Prelutsky	Ending	Poems
Stephen King	Ending	Novel
	Setting	Novel
	Ending	Novels (2)
Amy Tan	Ending	Novel
Anne Rivers Siddons	Climax	Novel
	Resolution	Novel
	Character Function	Novel
Isabel Allende	Metaphor	Novel
	Tone	Novel
Art Spiegelman	Narrative flow	Comic Book
	Visualization	Comic Book

Table A-1. (Table 5 in Hill, 1997, p. 200).

Dreams as Starting Points

Author	Dream Name	Genre
Arthur Spiegelman	Tin Can Man	Comic Strip
	Nazi Party	Comic Strip
Maurice Sendak	Mother and Child	Illustrated Book
John Sayles	Assholes	Movie
	Bigfoot	
	Alien	
James W. Hall	Premature Burial	Poem
	Dark Carriage	Poem
Jack Prelutsky	Vegetable Man	Poem
	Elephant Ball	Poem
	Musical Garden	Poem
Reynolds Price	Closet Crucifixion	Poem
Clive Barker	Strawberries	Short Story
Allan Gurganus	Wings	Short Story

Table A-3. (Table 9 in Hill, 1997, p. 202).

<u>Other Dreams</u>		
Author	Dream Name	Genre
New Experiences		
Maya Angelou		Experiment
Bharati Mukherjee	Wings	Metaphor
Sue Grafton	Monster Dog	Physical symptoms
Ann Rice	Flying	Deepens sensuous aspects
Mysteries		
Robert Stone	Outerbridge	Evocative image
Character Development		
Anne Rivers Siddons	Scratch	Function
Amy Tan	Insight	Emotional Level
Maurice Sendak	Opera	Raise emotions
Monitor Process		
Isabel Allende	Grandmother	Monitor process
Maya Angelou	Arc de Triomphe	Monitor process
	Small Town	Monitor process
Establish Priorities		
Ann Rice	Flying	
	Typewriter	Confirm project
Maurice Sendak		Resolve ambivalence
Amy Tan		Set priorities
Reflect Creative Process		
John Barth	Subtitles	Dictation
James W. Hall	Words	Lecture
James W. Hall	Morgue	Book tour
Leonard Michaels	Tongue	Style
Ann Rice	Lestat	Character

Appendix B

B.1

I've had new ideas completely isolated from previous writings and stories come to me in a dream and I've had tons of smoothing out of troubles I've had with scripts or outlines, or relationships, or scenes, or dialogue, etc from lucid and non-lucid dreaming. – James Croak

Out of the total of my books I would say that two have started because of lucid dreams, but many have been affected by dreaming while I have been in the middle of a book. – Michael Jecks

As well as the full novel ideas, I have been fortunate to dream up fresh ideas for my novels. I have always assumed that if the novel is on my mind when I go to bed, my dream can progress on from what is already in my thoughts. – SS

B.2

For my three books, I have dreamt the whole plot including characters, places, even emotions as my dreams often play out like a full-blown movie. – SS

I dream movies, I swear it. Main characters that aren't me, new species, and its own story line. I get everything. Plot, characters, setting, in world physics and conflicts, even the names. – EG

The dream laid out the scenario (robots everywhere, having to hide from them), the main love triangle, how the hero and heroine met, and some elements of how the robots worked, all in one key scene. – Kali Vicci Ravel

I did a poem when I was about 15, I was sitting on a beach on the west of Ireland, and I could hear this, I could feel the ground trembling. And there was the shouting and screaming, all of a sudden, a horse went right over my head. With this chap on it bareback, wild hair, and that comes back as a dream. And he went straight into the sea, on the horse. And that comes back a lot. [...] But in that dream, I'm with the horse and the rider swimming next to him. And I can see my face in the eye of the horse. [...] I can still remember the horse coming out of the sea. And you know, when all those bits of water like diamonds, you know how you can almost stop as it comes out of the water and just seeing that... – Mike Stephenson

B.3

There was one particular one that I had. If you can imagine a pond or something as dried up, and there's just the weeds and they're like, the stems of white from where they've been under the water. I had that dream that was about a river that dried off, or something, and I wrote a story on that. But then it ended up going into like a novella size really and it was about the lake draining. – WG

B.4

There's a reoccurring dream I have of going to a place that looks a little bit like Sicily. There's like a big hotel there and there's a beach. And there's like a massive back sort of conscious sea that almost looks like a tsunami, but it's moving really, really slowly. But it's like a living, breathing kind of conscious thing. And it can speed up

if the people that are needed are scared or have trepidation, you know, the sea reflects the emotion, which I think, I think that's quite common in dreams anyway, that the water reflects emotion. – Adriana Polito

B.5

Having a background in dyslexia, my whole life has been about problem solving. You know, having to try and translate what I was learning into my own language, translate it in a kinesthetic way. [...] We think that if you dream about a fish, it means that X, Y, and Z and actually, I think we tailor our meaning to whatever a fish is, whatever a bicycle is. And we have our own language, internal language dialogue, that connects and associates emotion to a concept, or a feeling or whatever, and that we then use as our own internal universal sort of symbolic language, that we then utilise to sort of navigate through meaning and problem solving. – Matt Price

I've always written a lot of poems. And the first one I wrote about a dream was one of my recurrent dreams, an anxiety dream about a hotel. And not being able to find my room, not being able to find the correct floor, the lifts have been problematic. And so I wrote a fairly surreal poem about that, which appeared only a few years ago. And my most recent story had three of my own dreams in it. – Chris Morgan

"I'm dreaming of a large hotel I know I've stayed in but I can't quite remember the name of. All large hotels are the same in that you can spend hours walking all the way round a floor before finding your own room or the lift. And the stairs are always hidden.

So I'm walking along a stuffy corridor with no windows. Eventually it makes me turn left, but still no windows. Lights go on and off. The corridor is narrower now. I can see that all the doors are without numbers, just a couple of small holes at head height where the number should be.

The lucid dreaming part of me knows this is all about anxiety. But I'm not anxious, am I? I'm just turning left again and again in a dim, narrowing corridor with plenty of doors to rooms but no numbers. Where's the worry in that? Perhaps I should open one of the doors and it will immediately become my room.

Suddenly I'm in a lift which seems to be going up. I press buttons for "stop" and "down". The lift continues going up slowly. All the buttons for floors are labelled "5". I press one at random and the lift stops. The door opens onto darkness, which I don't fancy, and eventually closes again. I remain inside it. Why do we always choose light instead of dark?

I notice now that this is a brightly-lit lift with mirrors all round, none of them reflecting me or my anxiety.

Jump-cut and I'm running along a carpeted corridor. I keep on having to slow to turn left. And now the corridor is soggy underfoot and I'm splashing through marsh, and when I look at the walls I can see there are shadowy trees on both sides of the path I'm following. Not very Tunisian. Their roots cross the path and I trip over one. I feel myself staggering for several paces before I fall. With a big splash I land and turn over, so I am lying on my back with water over me. Will I drown? No, the water

seems to have gone, or at least receded. I don't feel at all wet.

Then, as I look up, I notice that a tree is growing out of my chest or stomach. I'm not good on trees but it looks just like the trees on either side. It seems to be a couple of metres in height, though it doesn't hurt me. And I can feel my roots digging themselves into the soft ground beneath.

I raise my head while I can and look about me. Every tree in the forest is growing out of the body of a young woman.

You can have no idea of the terror this creates inside me, as I wake up." – Excerpt from "Satin Dreams", a short story by Chris Morgan

SPRINGTIME IN THE HOUSE OF ESCHER by Chris Morgan

*The hotel is a hollow square;
random room numbers; vengeful
lifts. I tramp the carpeted
corridors by night (or by day:
no windows) seeing no-one, but
ascending gradually to a summit
of anxiety. Round each corner
is cigarette smoke, diffusing.*

*Walls and carpet (I can touch
all three) are Laura Ashley bulbs,
forty watt, frequently flickering,
so patterns change, live, fly off.
I search for you, for your room,
for the key, for an exit. Mirrors
confront me without reflecting
my concern or my state of mind.*

*Sometimes I am in your room,
massaging, looking up or down at you
as you change your clothes, your face,
draw yourself drawing yourself; or
sleep to dream serially between
glancing at the illuminated alarm
clock on the bedside table, which
signals the end of each dreamtime.*

*The hotel dreams it is infinite,
but still expanding, rooms dividing
like cells, into cells, growing
smaller beds, fewer hangers, noisier
plumbing. Replicating wallpaper,
curtains and pictures, same
programme on each channel; always
use room service; never leave me!*

*Sometimes the room holds several
beds on walls and ceiling, and when
the man comes in to wake us up
and pretends to draw the curtains
you hide your face but put out
on your bedside table a photo
of you taken in the spring,
when you smiled and still had hair.*

*Perhaps I should step through the
mirror, open any door or my eyes,
risk a lift to the outer world.
Or turn over to see the clock
before sliding back into chasing/being*

*chased along cunning corridors,
through treacle and past obstacles,
as blossom falls from seasonal trees.*

*Sometimes the hotel dreams of me,
or you, but it has no escape routes,
cannot awake, must forever circulate
on its own spring-carpet moebius trip.*

A delicious sense of health and freedom suffused my being — as though I'd become a wind gust magically endowed with awareness. And what awareness it was: I felt more clear-headed than ever before — as though I'd awakened from a lifelong drugged stupor. My sleeping body blazed with a cold, pale fire, emanating from within. Waves of light rippled across my face, making it flicker like candles. The strangest thing was the fire's color: an uncanny color not found in any Earthly color-chart or rainbow. It was crystal-clear, beautiful — and utterly alien. The bedding and other objects in the room also glowed with this unnatural light, but more faintly and steadily than I. For one thing, I felt wide-awake — more than awake, even. For another, my sensory impressions were unlike anything I'd ever experienced before. Curious, I slid through the wall — passing layers of stone, wooden studs, and plasterboard. I floated into a garden below and saw threads of colored light along tree trunks. — JS

B.6

I know that I have dreamt up fascinating concepts and ideas while asleep, which have massively impressed me, and which have left a lasting influence - and which I have completely lost and forgotten in a matter of minutes after waking! If there was a way to dream lucidly and then fix that dream in my mind so that I can save it long enough to get to my keyboard, I have no doubt that it would - or could - be as important as conscious planning/plotting. — Michael Jecks

I'm sure that it would be a very useful tool for developing stories and characterisation. While sitting back and planning/plotting while awake and conscious is very effective for me, lucid dreaming may well offer a different approach that would add significantly to the process of creating stories. — Michael Jecks

If I could consistently enter into an LD to run a simulation on how my story would develop, I would definitely do it. — Daegon Magnus

If it was possible, sure. I tried to focus more on the feelings than the details of the dream since dreams get weird and have things with individual meaning to us. Someone else could have the exact same dream and it mean nothing to them. But yeah I'd go back and try to find out why I was in the labor camp, what caused the blast for the escape, how did John become a crime boss, and why did it make sense to go to him for help? — Ken Collins

Typically when I become lucid, my imagination gets stunted, and I invariably wake up not too much later. One exception being my Mountain Witch (song) dream, in which I was lucid. — JRS

I'm at my best when my subconscious runs rampant. My logic gets in the way of good ideas. I don't lucid dream, ever. — Elisha Grant

I can lucid dream, but I find it hard to have original ideas. I can only think about things I've been thinking about while awake. My non-lucid dream ideas are more original, and then my waking mind figures out how to make sense of them. [...] Tbh, when I catch myself lucid dreaming, I usually just force my eyelids open and wake myself up. It feels weird - like typing with gloves on - but I can do it. — Kali Vicci Ravel

I don't know. I do a fine job of that in my waking life. I'm a virtual idea-factory! — Travis Seppala

B.7

Over the years, what I tried to do increasingly in my lucid dreams was to actively explore my surroundings. So if I was in a building I would step outside. And I was curious to see what is there outside, what season it is early winter or summer, are there trees, is there traffic, who else is there, is there someone I know, is it warm... Now I still try to use lucid dreaming to work out plot points or ideas or see if it connects in any way to what I'm trying to write or do. — Antonio Zadra

Many times I know it's a dream but then I sort of direct and jump in and out as a character. It's just the way I've always dreamed. At least 3 times I woke up in the middle of the night, loved the dream but wasn't done with it. I went back to sleep and back to the dream. I have repeated a dream and like a director thought: let's do this instead, knowing it was a dream. I've made notes on some things and didn't write short stories but rather formatted them closer to essays or poems. The jumping in and out of participation and directing or just observing is how my mind seems to have always worked at night. — MT

B.8

I started for like a 30 day period every night, I would think about what I wanted to continue to dream. And I then entered the REM sleep cycle, I was able to kind of build upon where I left off. Each day was segued into the next sequence. Sometimes I would spend more time going over and reviewing where I was up to that point. And then I would only add a little bit more to it. [...] What's kind of cool about the lucid dreaming concept too, is you're looking at it from different angles, you're re-evaluating it from a day-to-day sequence, so I was really thorough by entering my dream state where I kind of manipulate and control and I would do it from different angles, I would do it from the different eyes, from each character. With lucid dreaming, you can look at it from literally every angle and be able to see what other substories you can pull from it, because I feel like the more substories are there, the more layers to the onion, the better. — Owen Palmiotti

It's about getting inspiration for a plot hole, giving me a new direction, a slight change to structure, or a fresh character who can change the mood or plot. [...] I've been able to go back to the dream to continue it (occasionally), although more often I think I've returned to the same start-point and replayed the same dream sequence. I have gone down alternative routes sometimes - not terribly often, sadly. — Michael Jecks

B.9

If you take a look at my novel, you'll recognize a lot of dream related elements, but you'll soon recognize one key character who's a direct adaptation from a character in my dreams, who has no bearing, as far as I can tell, to anyone in my waking environment. – Antonio Zadra

I looked up and saw the moon and decided to summon Clay. Clay is a character of mine who I've been writing about for about 15 years [...] So I know him well. [...] A door appeared and he stepped out. The first thing that surprised me was how he looked, which was both similar and quite different than how I've always imagined him. – JP

In many of my lucid dreams I used to have when I was a kid I would regularly interact with a dream character I called Lyra. When I wrote my first novel, I based the main character off the image I had of Lyra, and all of her emotions and how she would react to situations. – Daegon Goldau Magus

I lucid-dreamed to make her come to life again, engage in banter, tried recreate a person I had not thought about for a half century. She comes alive in the script, a larger character than real life. – JD

I looked up and saw the moon and decided to summon Clay. Clay is a character of mine who I've been writing about for about 15 years, though the most recent 'Stars of Clay' story is the first that has been developed this far. So I know him very well. However, before this dream, I had never thought to summon him before, though he did appear to me a few months ago in another dream where I was trying to summon my spirit guide Sam. A door appeared and he stepped out. The first thing that surprised me was how he looked, which was both similar and quite different than how I've always imagined him. I've always seen him as how I look, but here he appeared like a mixture of me and a young Peter Capaldi. Capaldi played Dr. Who, a television character which the most recent version of Clay was heavily influenced by. We both went back through the door and I became a third person observer of a very doctor who-ish adventure. – JP

Contact with other non-physical entities is one of the strongest elements I have also incorporated into the main plot points. [...] I will sometimes use settings that I have been to during an LD. For example, in Dreaming Demons, Alex Jones (Lyra) has an encounter with a dream being who teaches her how to properly lucid dream and explore different worlds within the astral plane. It turns out that this being is the Goetic demon/spirit Toratsah (Astaroth) who is teaching her these skills which she will eventually put to use in a war that is being fought in the non-physical planes. – Daegon Goldau Magus

B.10

I had him as dream characters to do drawings for him. He does these lucid dreams but again the answers he gets from his dream characters are very unpredictable put it that way. He had this one gentleman he asked: look, here's a piece of paper and a pencil, would you mind doing a drawing for me? And the guy goes: oh, no no no, I can't. And Dave said: well why not? He goes: I'm from

Czechoslovakia. Now Dave was able to find a weird associations between the colours of his clothing and the Czech flag, but again completely unexpected. He had this one woman who said: oh no problem, and then she gave this whole story of how she had taken drawing lessons as a kid and that she was actually very good at drawing. Then the drawing she gives him is just a series of letters and numbers, and so Dave complains in the dream and says well this isn't the drawing. She goes: Yes, it is but you have to figure out the key. Right, so there's a key to unlock what these codes mean. – Antonio Zadra

My intrigue is always from the perspective that I don't know what this or any other dream character, for that matter, will say or do next in my dream, even in my lucid dreams. But they're created by my brain, so my brain knows because whatever words are coming out of their mouth my brain has decided those are the words. But I had no idea. So, this always interests me like when I asked dream characters questions or when they say something perplexing, you're kinda surprising yourself, that's how I like to think about it. Because your brain is doing this but is keeping a lot of material outside of your immediate awareness. So this character tried to convince me that this lucid dream wasn't a dream. I had later dreams where I asked them if he ever dreamt. He insisted that he did, and that in some respects I was also character in his dreams, even though he sometimes agreed that he was a character in mine but that we both had these realities. – Antonio Zadra

I had written the first two books of a supernatural trilogy several years ago but was getting nowhere with the third book. I had started it, but only had one or two chapters written. I had major writer's block with it, so shelved it for a year and worked on other projects. One night, I had a nightmare where I was "trapped" in the dream and couldn't wake up. In the dream, my best friend kept telling me that the dream was actually reality and what I thought was real life was a dream. It was terrifying because every time I told him that was impossible, that my wife and son were real, etc., he would say no, they're a creation of your dream. This is what's real. [...] that nightmare I had directly inspired the plot of my third book, "Onyx Nightmare". – R.W. Harrison

B.11

The story is about going back in time, and then creating that footprint, like the butterfly effect, where the second you step foot in 1763, you start changing things. You're no longer Benjamin Man Ray from St. Augustine, Florida in modern day, you're now the founding father who saved George Washington in the crossing of the Delaware. And you're now this pivotal figure in American history. – Owen Palmiotti

When I'm lucid I go with it and see what happens. Sometimes it can be a familiar place and then sometimes it can be very unfamiliar, or an unfamiliar thing that's happening. I'm very aware of a setting, a smell, or colour. I can bring that back up again. As a memory, you know, when I write something. And others are always thinking, how do you remember the detail? Because with a dream, you know when you have some control, you can almost slow it down and you could almost stop it. [...] I've done that in

a dream where you almost make it like synaesthesia. I'm quite surprised at myself thinking in the dream, now what would it be if that colour sounded or smelled or... what sound would that make? – Mike Stephenson

SYNAESTHESIA (by Mike Stephenson)

I hear the alphabet in raindrops
words fall in a summer shower
and when the last word drips and stops
I breathe an antiphon of red poppy flower.

Sunlight smells of shadow
sounds tremble pink, green and blue.
At night I can only hear yellow
and the stars; the stars taste of you.

Your hands sing in alto
my fingers entwine in hum baritone
our footsteps leave traces in Day-Glo
lips buzz a bumble bee drone.

Everything is electro chemical chatter
how we absorb and perceive; does it matter?

B.12

I climbed to a tower on a high mountain. There was some sort of gathering or party at the bottom of the tower, almost like it was a ball. They asked me "are you here to see the Seer?" and I was like "yeah." They pointed to the top of the tower and said "she's up there." So I went to the roof of the tower and saw the whole world, a vast desert. The seer was there, waiting for me, and she said something to the effect of "you're not ready for what I have to show you." And the dream ended there. On a separate night, I dreamt that I was at the ball at the bottom of the tower, waiting. I recognized the setting and went lucid. Remembering the other dream, and the seer, I lucidly went to the roof of the tower to meet her. She was waiting for me, this time with a large crystal chalice full of water, and she said "drink." It was the cleanest, coldest, most refreshing water I've ever experienced. Once I drank it, I fell out of lucidity. From there things got pretty bizarre. She had me pour the water over the side of the tower. When I did, blood poured out of the chalice, and ran in a torrent down the mountain side into the desert down below. The blood formed a river across the land, and the desert became fertile, and plants grew from the river and turned the desert into a jungle. The seer turned to me and said "with a little sacrifice, you can save a dying world." – JRS

B.13

I'm constantly leaving babies on buses; I can't tell you the number of babies I've left. So I think that dreams are kind of flagging up some insecurity or fear or guilt or shame or whatever. And that, you know, for writers I speak to, that's an interesting jumping off point. [...] I think for a lot of people, psychologically we're interested in what does that dream say about our subconscious? What does that dream say about the thing that we're worried about, that we didn't even realise that we're worried about? I think, for me, the baby on the bus is my creativity, and I keep

abandoning my creativity. So I'm getting to that stage now, and that's why I feel so guilty and awful, and nobody must know. Because it's about not nurturing the thing that you should nurture. And had I not had those dreams, I think, I wouldn't have been made aware of that, and then try to explore them in fiction or poetry. – Cathrine Smith

I had this dream. And I thought, what do I really want to do? And I wasn't being truthful to myself and doing what I really wanted to write about. I was just sort of fudging it, and just there doing what I thought I shouldn't be doing. And actually, I really wanted to write about something more important. So in the stunt industry, there's sort of a boys club. So there's a group of people that control the flow of the work, and they keep it all to themselves and their family and their friends. And I wanted to write about that. So that's what I really wanted to do. So I had this dream, and the dream was about, you should do that. And so it was about truth, and not being fake and not being authentic. I woke up with that complete certainty. It was like I dived into a cool lake. And I got out with clarity and certainty. – Matt Price

As for asking for a dream about what to write, this is only something I had started doing a few days before seeing your post. I would lay to sleep and repeat the affirmation asking for a dream to show me how the next episode should go. I had just finished a four part series about their journey to Atlantis. – JP

I have been thinking for a while, my process feels a bit stale. Why do I procrastinate so much? And just thinking, this [lucid dreaming] could be a really good tool for me. But I think it could help in my teaching as well, because I always have stressed the role of the subconscious and how it's a really valuable tool, and that we shouldn't be too hung up about trying to analyse everything and focus so much on the craft that we don't think about the WHO ARE WE and why. Now, why are we doing this? Why are we writing this and what is it that we want to write about? [...] There are so many books on craft and technique and whatever. And actually, I think what there needs to be is more about how and why the stories come about, rather than just like the seven plot points, list of characterization, blah, blah, blah, you can learn all that stuff. You can buy any decent book or go on a course or whatever. But I think what people would like to know is how can I become more creative? [...] If we accept that everybody has the capacity to become creative, and to use their creativity, how do I find mine? Where is it? Where is it? How can I get to it? And how can I write the stories and poems that only I can write? [...] Why does this story exist? And why could only I have written it? I think that's the thing. And I think that's where dreams are very handy. Because dreams are truly individual and experience, you know, we've experienced mass group experiences, haven't we, we've experienced lockdown. We've experienced the news, we've experienced, you know, all these group experiences, but dreams are completely individual. – Cathrine Smith

B.14

I write down everything. First and foremost. Everything. As soon as I wake up. Then I develop from there. Add backstories, cut out the stuff that doesn't make sense,

and sit on the story for upwards of weeks while I get it fully fleshed out and the details of a broader story filled in because I'll usually only have a few very vivid scenes. Then I find a place to start. Because my dreams never start in the beginning. I use the dream I have and think out. How did they get there? Why? What was their drive to get to this point? – EG

The plot I eventually worked out is about a world in which no one really ages. Everything is comic book or cartoon time. Like, it feels like time's passing, but you think back and you had three tenth birthdays or went to senior prom five different times. For the people in the world, this is hard to think about. In the world, a serial killer is stalking a young woman. When he finds her, he's able to awaken something in her and time begins passing normally. [...] I think the heart of it will be a friend of the young woman's, who loves her (maybe romantically). He has the same struggle as the serial killer - these women they need are trapped in the same body and cannot exist at the same time. – Kali Vicci Ravel

As soon as you wake up, and you've had a dream, have a notebook to hand and without thinking about it, or analysing, just write down everything you can remember. And don't let that sort of critical editorial capacity interrupt. [...] So what I tried to do is not let my inner editor get in between the material that I could remember. I started with really, really rough notes, really rough, just single words, images, a couple of words here and there. I just plunk down any old, rough description. Because as soon as you start picking it up and making it into nice sentences and things, I think that compromises the force of the images you just experienced. The next stage was to make this more dramatic, because you know, as a writer, your job is to create drama and tension. So that probably came in the second or third editing. I would sort of hand write a very rough first draft, and then and only then transfer it to the laptop. Because with me, if I start typing too quickly, my inner editor is thinking: is it getting good? No, that's a boring word. That's a bit of a cliché, blah, blah, which says something about the freedom of just scribbling. – Catherine Smith