

POEM OF THE WEEK

FROM THE CELESTIAL THEATRE

1

An introduction

A dream, nightmare, leap of faith; going down in a fiery mess; it doesn't matter, it's all okay. No one gets hurt. It's all in the imagination. The Celestial Theatre?
Picture it as you wish.

Being a poet, a writer, or an artist is a marvellous state of being. We can, in print (or your preferred medium) do whatever we like, wherever we like, with whoever we wish.

I began this piece of work, on the exploration of themes of drama (a means of self-expression and experiencing the emotions of others; the power and limits of imagination; the fluidity of identity; personhood; assumptions (beliefs and learning and Logic.

With all the above in mind, I will take a different route; linking writing a poem to perform at the Celestial Theatre. The ultimate act of creativity. I cannot do this alone. I shall introduce my cast, my Dramatis Personae, as we proceed. It begins with one: the writer/poet/artist/singer.

This is a construct, a piece of fiction; a poetic piece of fiction. It has the qualities of fiction; narrative, and characters; it is illusive, illusionary (things are or are not what they seem), allusive (meanings by suggestion), and elusive (contains principles or qualities that evade simplistic characterisation). Delusive? Delusionary? Definitely not! We seek the Truth, the Whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth!

A dream, nightmare, leap of faith;
going down in a fiery mess;
it doesn't matter, it's all okay.
No one gets hurt.

It's all in the imagination.
The Celestial Theatre?
Picture it wherever, however,

whenever, as you wish.

The Colosseum?
Also imaginary;
A place where fools
Or heroes fight.

2

CONQUERING THE COLOSSEUM
(THE PERFORMANCE OF A LIFETIME)

DRAMATIS PERSONAE
(People in my dreams, my head, my narrative)

“All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women are merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.”

(from *As You Like It*, spoken by Jaques)
BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
A brief flirtation with imagination. A scene opens.

Experience the thrill, the thrall;
The sense of power, privilege
And utter abandon; come hell,
Come glory. Life or death!

Walk with me, if you wish;
need not be far; could catch a bus,
take the tour, don’t have a car.
Chauffeur driven, have the fare?

You could go far. Where was I?
Ah, yes; life or death; every street scrap.
Every battle, challenge, hours of training,
Has brought you to this; your ultimate challenge.

The orbiter goes around the outer suburbs of Christchurch city.
A scenic ride, comfortable; sit back and let your imagination flow.
Hear the thunderous applause of the crowd, hungry for blood;
Does it scare you, or inspire you?

What’s this ‘you’ business, and this babble about a bus?
Talk about life and death, the noise of the crowd.
Is this a joke? Do you take me for a fool?

I know my history, I went to school.

A fool, sir; no never. What did you learn at school?
I remember very little of it. School milk at morning break,
Still at a reasonable temperature. Singing 'God Save the Queen'.
An outpost of the British Empire.

Riding in a bus? A perfectly reasonable suggestion.
Creativity is like a drug. When it kicks in, I can be anyone;
An ageing gladiator in the Colosseum, for instance.
The pinnacle of a bloodied career. Live or die,

I will be remembered; as the closest thing to immortality.
Gods of the arena? Far too bloody? Hail the freaking Emperor.
Are we conquering the Colosseum? One last time?
No, I'm not complaining. Why should I?

Walk with me, talk with me; don't need to try
to be witty or wise. Share a moment, no fuss.
Did I mention, we could take a bus?

(back at the Celestial Theatre)

3

This narrative is about people,
The people (person/identity) they have
Been conditioned to be, the person/identity
They feel they are; the person/identity they want to be.

It is people who act, perform, and create;
It's a human activity.
It is people who want, seek, and pretend,
To be a better human.

Thus the two subjects are identified.
Being a person (or personhood)
And 'identity', a slippery subject
At the best of times.

Do you believe that you know yourself?
You can predict with certainty how
Would you respond in every given situation?
I cannot admit such certainty.

There are too many “me’s”; too many selves;
Talking, discussing, arguing; forever arguing.
The self-certainty of youth against my older self;
Always seems to end in an argument, so tiring.

I’m vain. I always try to pick my best, or at least,
my Better ‘self’; try to make the occasion a memorable event.
Sound familiar? Have a few ‘selves’ yourself? Be not embarrassed.
I believe such a state of affairs is true for us all.

Identity is an ongoing evaluation of circumstance or opportunity;
An instinctive re-assessment and an adaptation of behaviour.
Personhood is, I believe, a deliberate choice.
It involves contemplation, planning, and preparation.

It is the self we want the world to see, and respond to.
It develops in small steps; a small change, then testing it.
It’s what human beings do; test a hypothesis; take a risk.

4

Of, assumptions, beliefs and learning

It’s about me, you, the neighbour next door;
A Facebook friend thousands of miles away.
It is the being-a-person thing,
I’ve always found it to be the most challenging.

People assume things. Assume, an interesting word;
Interesting idea; or a worthy warning.
Assume? Makes an ass out of u and me!
The assumption is a trap. A belief without evidence.

Draw a picture, and plot a narrative. Facts? They don't matter.
Does the end justify the means? Do you have a general idea
Of what the end is? Do you not?
Buzzing around in your brain like a wasp.

It is the being-a-person thing,
I’ve always found it to be the most challenging.
The nagging doubt of “Who am I”,
“Who do I want to be”, and “Would I be happier”?

Generally, only can be tested by “try it and see”.
A touch of “fake it until you make it”, if not have a plan B.
The point is, that one can play the stage anywhere, any time;
One doesn't need an “other” for an audience;

We're wrapped up inside ourselves, ready to pounce,
Criticise, tear apart; leave one bloodied and torn.
Pardon, wait a moment, what am I saying?
It's simple, it's sad; we are our own most critical audience.

I pause, is that universally true, or a self-judgement?
This is true of creative people. I include myself in that category.
too many voices in their heads, or so they say.
“Voices in the head”, is a form of madness, isn't it?

Is it “normality” you seek? Jolly apple trees!
‘Twas as an apple that started this whole Adam/Eve thing,
Wasn't it? (and talking snakes). Getting Freudian? Not normal!
Do you want your logic linear and predictable? $A = B$, $B = C$;

5

A must be equal to C.

Is it? Exactly, in general principle, the closest in approximation?
(The colour's not the same; did they run out of that paint?)
‘Twould seem that we are not predisposed to consider the bigger picture.
(why do we buy such big television sets?) Just asking!

We get caught up in the petty detail (what was the colour of her dress?
Was she wearing a dress? Oh dear, what will the neighbours say?)
What will the neighbours say? Will they care? (They must!)
Has anyone asked the neighbours about their cares and priorities?

You “poets” piss me off. Playing with words,
twisting them into new shapes.
Things are what they are. Men are men,
women are women; children are children

(to be seen and not heard?),
I didn't say that, don't twist my words.
(Wars are wars?
Men are born to be slaughtered?).

Didn't say that!! (What are you saying?)

ENOUGH!! This debate is fruitless.
It adds nothing to my exploration.

It's in my head, between conflicting "me's",
generations apart; Will they never sleep?
This brings us back to the "being-a-person thing",
Suggestion? "We", singularly or collectively,

ARE HUMAN BEINGS, HOMO SAPIENS, PERSONS, PEOPLE

2

HUMAN BEINGS, HOMO SAPIENS, PERSONS, PEOPLE

are the total of people
We have met, admired,
studied, conflicted with,
loved, lost, and lusted for.

Peter Piper picked a pickled pepper.

Relevance? None. A touch of spontaneity.
A touch of something elusive. Creativity?
You could term it as such, it doesn't matter much.
You know what to look for. Assonance, word patterns,

Onomatopoeia, that subtle hint of music;
Repetition, rhyming patterns, rhyme - yes, no?
Does it flow like a river, flowing down to the sea;
Or rush, water tumbling over stones, swirling,

A result of too much rain?

Too much pain, unable to restrain emotions;
They flood out, on no sense of order, reckless and raw;
Close the door, breathe deeply, and take a moment, to think;
Slow down, and take stock; this will not do, this emotional state.

Moderation seems an unusual destination for beings
Strung between opposite and equal extremes, at least
We assume they are. Love/Hate. Peace/War.
Construction/Desolation. It is our assumption

that they are equal and opposite.

On those assumptions, we base our actions & our behaviours.
Call it "Free Will". Does anybody see a problem here,
a glitch in the system? No? I'll continue.
As I was saying, moderation seems an unusual destination.

Should we manage to reach that point
of balance, how long could it last?
We are EMOTIONAL beings!
Emotions drive us in many ways.

That is why actors/actresses study
their characters with care;
To choose when to embrace, and when to scare.
Emotions are complex and multi-layered

live in the consciousness
and Dwell in the subconscious.
Dark, mutinous, raw
and revelling; they hide.

4

Having fun? Pulling us apart?
I hope you don't lose pieces;
Are you going to put us
back together again?

Fear not, Mon Ami; I mean no harm.
I'm asking questions, and suggesting answers.
If you want your "15 minutes of fame*",
Go for it.

Sing, dance, and tell a joke
(that's what jokers do).
Perhaps, you could take a nap
(remember to return it)

while I continue.

The "human being", is emotional (a red flag),
creative (or destructive);

Operate on assumptions;
Or is trapped in petty detail;

insecure yet wanting more.
Did I suggest that this was a bad thing?
No. It's our desire for a re-creation that gives hope.
Did I mention our capacity to learn?

Leslie D Bush
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* 15 minutes of fame is short-lived media publicity or celebrity of an individual or phenomenon. The expression was inspired by Andy Warhol's words "In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes", which appeared in the program for a 1968 exhibition of his work at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, Sweden. Wikipedia