

How I Wrote “Conversations Amongst Forgotten Dreams”

by

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Based on Sally Morgan’s *My Place* (1987), this poem encapsulates the intricate bond of a mother and a daughter of Aboriginal origin. At the poem’s core are the emotions of love and longing in a journey of cultural discovery. Inspired by Morgan’s autobiographical work, the poem intertwines the axes of cultural heritage, family blood connections, and redefining Aboriginal identity while navigating a colonial world.

The poem's opening focuses on cultural transmission through everyday activities between a mother and a daughter that characterize Aboriginality. The mundane acts of sewing and drawing highlight the importance of shared activities between family members to preserve culture and ethnic identity. As in *My Place*, in the poem’s first three lines, the two women express themselves freely in an environment where Aboriginality is proudly revealed (Parhi 744). Part of Aboriginal heritage is described through “rural life” (Tsialta line 3), that is the closeness with nature and land, with which Aboriginals had a spiritual and intimate connection (Collingwood-Whittick 43). Nevertheless, the absolute “truth is not described” (Tsialta line 4), since Aboriginals were socially stigmatized about their ethnicity and in many cases did not speak about their roots (Parhi 744). What is more, orally transmitted culture (what “talking” in line 2 indicates) was common to Indigenous people contrasted to the powers of the press monopolized by the colonizers' for a long time (Collingwood-Whittick 44-45).

Another major point in the poem is the closeness and harmonious relationship of the Aboriginals with nature through words and expressions like “colorful palette” (Tzialta line 7) and “the greatness of God’s creatures” (line 8) celebrating the spiritual connection with nature. Moments of childish mischief like “pinching eggs [and] breaking nests” (Tzialta line 11) allude to Morgan’s text, demonstrating youthful defiance and innocence while connecting with nature. However, the daughter’s being scolded by her mother reveals an attempt to restore order and transmit moral values and behavioral boundaries with the mother functioning as the role model.

As the daughter progresses to maturity, the poem presents the Aboriginal reality regarding the issues of women’s social position compared to men and white women. Admittedly, the fact that the daughter undertook the role of a servant suggests a cyclical pattern, as she follows her mother's steps. It indicates the marginalization and confinement of Aboriginal women to specific lowly jobs excluding them from others and not allowing them to ascend socially (Nandana and Varsha 1981). Yet, as in *My Place*, the daughter was forcefully separated from her family, a common practice of the colonizers that highly affected Aboriginals for years (Nandana and Varsha 1981). Despite all the adversities, the daughter finally manages to reconnect with her cultural background with love and longing. The poem’s closing phrase is transferred from Morgan’s text to highlight the universal concept of humanity and equality against the racially discriminating acts of colonizers who treated Aboriginals merely as sources of labor profits (Nandana and Varsha 1984).

All things considered, this poem praises Aboriginality and acknowledges the endurance of family ties by delving into the characteristics of a mother-daughter bond. It offers an insight into issues like searching for cultural identity. At the same time,

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being close to nature is characteristically intertwined with Aboriginal identity. The poem celebrates Aboriginal culture and its resilience in the unjust world of colonization by exploring memory and reliving history through oral tradition.

Works Cited

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