

Reflection Statement

‘Pindar Drive: Our Unrequited Love for Ghosts’

“If all time is eternally present, all time is unredeemable” –T.S. Eliot¹

As post-modernist short fiction, Pindar Drive reimagines how time manipulates the perception of identity, leading to the rebirth of self-image. It presents the human psyche as a multi-layered consciousness that subverts the innocence of a moment, through a greater alertness of time passing. It delves into our unrequited love for the ghosts of our pasts and the ones waiting in our future. I want to re-evaluate the importance of chronology within the life writing medium, to provide a more effective means of examining the cause and effect relationship between past and future perspectives.

In acknowledging the complexity of this theory, I used a non-linear plotline. The absence of ordered sequence shows the ambiguity of identity, due to constantly changing self-image over distinguished time periods. I gained my inspiration from T.S. Eliot’s poem Burnt Norton² which affirms the “unredeemable” quality of time due to its subjectivity and lack of solid place. Thus, time (as a perpetual stream of influence) is responsible for the mental dissociation between one’s present and their figments of the past and future.

The letter is a metaphysical device. It’s not tangible for anyone but the protagonist. The main character, Douglas (Scots-Gaelic for "dark water") fathers all three voices. These are separated by age, so the letter form enabled mental communication between several divorced versions of one man. The first voice is established through using first person where:

“Slowly, s l o w l y, I sit up.”³

The italics inform the reader upon the second interaction with the voice, that the man speaking is deceased. At intervals, the voice continues as a transitionary form to connect divergent time periods. The distinction between life and death is made through the

¹ Eliot, T. S. (1941). *Burnt Norton*. London, 18th ed., Faber and Faber.

² Ibid

³ Major Work

juxtaposition of Douglas' insipid form where: "*The layer of skin stretching over my torso is like gauze, wafer thin and watery, loosely holding my organs in place*"⁴ (page 2) and the intense vibrancy leaking from the envelope in "*Words mark the cover, gently bleeding the elixir of a lifetime.*"⁵ (page 3)

The letter is written in the second voice, to show the tone of Douglas (mid 60's) reflecting upon his mid-twenties to middle-age period. The use of the pronoun "you" is to showcase the detachment between selves. This first indication of division is in the pronoun of "*your dust*"⁶ (page 4) which is deliberately ambiguous in hinting at the death of the person he is addressing. This ambiguity is resolved when the reader discovers Douglas is addressing himself, thus noting that he's aware of his impending death in a future time. This reiterates the power of speculation on present perspective.

The third voice is teenage Douglas and his initial experience with death through the loss of his father. I used short sentences and colloquialisms to convey the juvenile mindset of the teen and his coming of age experience. This is seen in "*Dad and I would go out almost every day, until he died of lung cancer in the autumn of 'eighty-six. The world was dead for a long while after that.*"⁷ (page 8).

Because my work is grounded in the paradigms of Australian surf culture as well as post-modernism, I would have it published in a regional writer's festival. The Margaret River Writer's Festival for 2018 is themed "stories that shape us". I believe my major work lends itself to the complexity of identity in "*us*" as an individual's story, in a nation of many. It is suited to my target audience of young adult to adult Australian readers, due to appeal in setting and post-modern principles. Pindar Drive's modernity is celebrated by the festival

⁴ Major Work

⁵ Major Work

⁶ Major Work

⁷ Major Work

theme, as it subverts the conventional approach to linear storytelling and traditional ideas regarding the importance of chronology on understanding.

The unique Australian coastal identity provides relevant grounds for Pindar Drive's focus on landscape. The land is integral to self-perception, as it's the birthplace of Douglas' experiences, and thus his relationship with memory. Here, the Representation and Text Module in the Year 12 English Advanced course introduced concepts such as representation in text and 'imagined landscapes'. The imaginative interpretation of a real landscape, particularly after time has passed, shows the inaccuracy of constructed truth. Alain De Botton's novel The Art of Travel⁸ explores power of liminal spaces to instigate reflection which I echoed in creating Douglas' story.

The concept of constructed truth emerged from my study of Aden Rolfe's collected poems False Nostalgia⁹. It assisted me in developing tactile imagery to capture the senses as a fragment of memory would. The book re-iterated how place triggers *episodic memory*¹⁰: a term with which I became familiar in the close study of 'Memory' as a subsection in "Psychology"¹¹ (L.M. Sdorow). It investigated 'false memory' that manifests when humans take creative license in constructing pieces of the past. This led to the Pindar Street sign motif, which signifies the trigger for movement across time periods. It's sustained as the epicentre for accumulating awareness, therefore an appropriate title for my major work. This is conveyed at the first mention of "*There was a lamp post. A dull, dissipating light glowed*

⁸ Botton, A. (2002) *The Art of Travel*, 2014 ed., Italy, Hamish Hamilton (Later published by the Penguin Group)

⁹ Rolfe, A. (2016). *False nostalgia*. 1st ed. [Place of publication not identified]: Giramondo Publishing.

¹⁰ Sdorow, L.M. (1998) *Psychology*, 4th ed. Boston, Mass McGraw Hill

about the bulb, casting an elegant tapestry of shadows across a secluded street corner."¹²

(page 3)

Its significance is epitomised at the climax of his hysteria: "*And that's all I need to see the remnants of the street sign. Pindar Drive juts sharply out of the ground. I fall apart.*"¹³ (page 11).

The title of False Nostalgia¹⁴ inspired me to categorise the letter into subheadings shown in the 'Contents' box. Each heading represents a philosophy and an image of self in Douglas' life. For example, '*Pre-emptive sadness*'¹⁵ (page 10) resulted from the idea that one can feel nostalgic in a moment before it has passed. The poems reinforce the fluidity of time and the emotional effect on the individual.

My research about setting came from works of Tim Winton including Breath¹⁶ (both the book and Simon Baker's film Breath¹⁷), Dirt Music¹⁸, Blueback¹⁹ and the landscape memoir Island Home²⁰. These novels reveal distinctive qualities of the Australian coastal landscape and the potential they have to shape and mould the individual. A particular quote that resonated with me from Island Home was "This country leans in on you. Like family. To my way of thinking, *it is* family."²¹ To think the land as a part of oneself was integral to Douglas' upbringing and his ability to see the solace and pain in his remembered, real and imagined landscapes.

¹² Major Work

¹³ Major Work

¹⁴ Rolfe, A. (2016). *False Nostalgia*. 1st ed. [Place of publication not identified]: Giramondo Publishing.

¹⁵ Major Work

¹⁶ Winton, T. (2009) *Breath*, Tim Winton Penguin Books Camberwell, Vic

¹⁷ Winton, T., Baker, S. (2018) *Breath*, Gran Via Productions, Australia

¹⁸ Winton, T. (2018). *Dirt Music*. [s.l.]: PICADOR.

¹⁹ Winton, T. (2009). *Blueback*. Melbourne: Puffin, pp.4, 5.

²⁰ Winton, T. (2017). *Island Home*. [S.l.]: PICADOR, pp.22, 23.

²¹ Ibid

Furthermore, the study of Romanticism, as a part of the Ways of Thinking module in Extension I English, supported my research. S.T. Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner²² drew my attention to the function of the albatross as a supernatural omen. I used the albatross to symbolise the sea's power and the life it would claim. It portrays nature as an almighty force and the insignificance of human life comparatively to an ancient landscape. This is a notion common to the Romantic era, and an ideology I want to communicate in the role of the landscape on individual perception. The course's mini major also improved my creative writing skills and authorial voice.

However, transitions between events that didn't follow chronological format proved a hindrance to my process. The song This is The Sea²³ (The Waterboys) was fundamental to the beginning stages of my work and later integrated in my plot line. The song is life writing in ballad form, through commenting on the individual's response to pain and subsequent healing. It helped me portray further transitional forms through music, smells and feelings that connect randomised events and their time periods.

Overall, I want to defy the notion that time is a rigid, unalterable mechanism that dictates one's ability to grow, learn or change. A person's identity is rebirthed constantly throughout their youth, middle age and most importantly in their old age. I want to highlight the ambiguity of identity and thus the potential for hope or fear to govern how humans respond to their outer world, through our past and the prospect of future experiences.

²²Coleridge, S.T. (1798). *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. New York: Appleton & Co., 1857. Print.

²³ Waterboys, The (1985) *This Is the Sea*, The Whole of the Moon: Mike Scott and the Waterboys, Island Records

Bibliography

Books

Text-Collection of Short Narratives:

- BOSTES Word Express, (2009) *Young Writers Collection Showcase*, 1st ed. Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards

This book was helpful as it provided examples and links to reflection statements. These gave me an understanding of how exemplar students went about developing their concepts, their research techniques and areas of exploration. This was particularly important in guiding my own actions and would serve as great help to other HSC students who are currently undergoing the same process.

Text-Collection of Short Narratives

- BOSTES Word Express, (2014) *Young Writers Collection Showcase*, 1st ed. Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards

This collection of short narratives (as well as other major work forms, such as critical responses) helped me to understand the structure of the major work and the flexibility involved within certain writing forms, whether they are hybrid or remain true to tradition. It was particularly useful as it allowed me insight into the quality of clever concepts and sophisticated expression, which cover a number of communicative levels, through both emotion and intellect.

Academic Text

- Demarinis, R. (2016). *Art & Craft of the Short Story*. 1st ed. Open Road Media, pp.18-20.

This book was essential to fathoming potential scenarios and the basis plot line for how the events would occur in a particular order. My story contains elements of tragedy as well as life writing and a non-linear sequence of events.

Academic Text

- Morley, D. and Neilsen, P. (2012). *The Cambridge Companion to Creative Writing*. 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.23.

This text was more essential to the structure and plot line of my story. It detailed a range of vital skills as well as language forms and techniques that I would need to check, edit and refine in order to achieve both textual integrity and a viable story line.

Academic Text

- Newman, J., Cusick, E. and La Tourette, A. (2008). *The Writer's Workbook*. [Place of publication not identified]: Arnold.

The writer's workbook was essential to developing an appropriate voice as well as writing techniques and language features that would help me to ensure the textual integrity of my major work. I utilised it mostly in the beginning phases of drafting.

Academic Text

- Sdorow, L.M. (1998) *Psychology*, 4th ed. Boston, Mass McGraw Hill

This was used to research 'episodic memory' and the ability for a person to transcend time and access their past through triggers such as sound, smell and feelings. It also investigated scientific research as evidence for identifiable memory pathways in the brain.

Poetry

Collected poems

- Rolfe, A. (2016). *False nostalgia*. 1st ed. [Place of publication not identified]: Giramondo Publishing

This source was important to both my conceptual and structural basis. It was written by the author purposefully in a way that reflected the fragmented nature of memory. This was very useful to my own writing as I saw firsthand how the form worked and began to synthesise ideas for my own 'memories' shortly afterwards. The Australian perspective and tactile imagery were also similar features to my own aspirations in the major work.

Novels

Novel (fiction)

- Thomas, D. and Davies, W. (2015). *Under Milk Wood*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Extracts of this novel were particularly helpful, as they provided good examples of internal monologue and the utilisation of unconventional practises (being extremely long and short sentences, as well as enjambment) to communicate a stream of consciousness effectively.

Novel (Non-fiction, Landscape Memoir)

- Winton, T. (2017). *Island Home*. [S.l.]: PICADOR, pp.22, 23.

This helped to develop the Australian landscape identity that is present in the setting of my story. The development of landscape was extremely important as it was the vessel for other prime aspects of my story and a transitional form that linked each divergent time period.

Novel-Fiction

- Winton, T. (2009). *Blueback*. Melbourne: Puffin, pp.4, 5.

Winton's writing carries a very strong sense of voice as well as the potential for change in characters over time. This was a concept that I considered significantly in my investigative process into characterising voices.

Novel-Fiction

- Winton, Tim. 2009, *Breath*, Tim Winton, Penguin Books Camberwell , Vic

As another one of Tim Winton's works, *Breath* was particularly important to my research component as it balanced the Australian identity and clarity in landscape, with highly confronting issues. Although my own plotline expresses confronting issues as well as the notion of death, it is the extremity and simplicity in Tim Winton's writing that makes it so impactful. In reading this novel, I was able to examine Winton's writing style as well as techniques of communication. It was particularly useful and relevant to the development of my own major work.

Articles

Scientific Article

- Dudai, Y, & Carruthers (2005) '*The Janus face of Mnemosyne*', Nature, vol. 434, no. 7033, p. 567. Available from: 10.1038/434567a. [13 February 2018].

The article had a great amount of scientific research into memory and the ability of the individual to speculate and remember events in creating a sense of identity. This was relevant to me conceptually, as it was the main driving force for my focus question. It opened up new doors for research into other texts such as T.S. Eliot's 'Burnt Norton'.

Websites

Website

- Graham, D. (2016). *Heraclitus*. [online] Plato.stanford.edu. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heraclitus/> [Accessed 16 Feb. 2018].

This website was centred on Greek philosophy and the fire and the flux theory. The unity of opposites was the main theory that I followed. Conceptually, this study was very relevant in that it helped to explain the importance of polar opposites and the interaction of both memory and speculation.

Online Article

- Livingstone, J. (1997). *Metacognition: An Overview*. [online] Gseweb.gse.buffalo.edu. Available at: <http://gseweb.gse.buffalo.edu/fas/shuell/cep564/metacog.htm> [Accessed 7 Dec. 2017].

This article dealt with the issue of metacognition and its place in learning. This was relevant to the beginnings of my research as it informed me as to how people are self-aware and notice their own thinking patterns: something which my character has to do in order to escape time constructs. The letter is a metaphorical vessel for communication across tenses.

Online Article

- Psychology Today (2018). *Dissociative Identity Disorder* (Multiple Personality Disorder) | Psychology Today. [online] Psychology Today. Available at: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/conditions/dissociative-identity-disorder-multiple-personality-disorder> [Accessed 7 Dec. 2017].

This article helped me to understand Dissociative Identity disorder and its effect on the individual. Whilst it is very important to note that the character does not have the

illness and showcases an extremely fictional response to his surroundings, it is the 'dissociation' in his memory that distinguishes his multiple perceptions of self. Understanding some characteristics of the disorder helped me to position the protagonist's uncertain worldview.

Poems

Poem

Eliot, T.S. (1930). *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. New York: Ameron.

This was a beginning text in the very early stages of my research that allowed me to appreciate and delve into creative writing forms which held accumulative and beautiful imagery through succinct language.

Poem

- Eliot, T. S. (1941). *Burnt Norton*. London, 18th ed., Faber and Faber.

This was one of the most influential works that shaped my creative writing process. Eliot covers a range of complex notions, including that of time and its irretrievable qualities. The opening prologue to my major work is heavily centred on Burnt Norton, first quartet. It allowed me to access postmodern ideals. T.S. Eliot has been a prime influencer on my major work in his unusual approach to standard social norms such as the construct of time.

Feature Films

Feature Film Script

- Kinsella, W. and Robinson, P. (1989). *Field Of Dreams*. [DVD] Directed by. CA Universal , Chicago: CA Universal.

Again, the script extract of the film contributed to the driving conceptual basis of Pindar Drive. This is embodied in the ability for possibilities to 'brush past' an individual without one being fully aware of it. It's the power of hindsight that moulds a human being and their psychological state. I embedded this as a central idea in my focus question.

Feature film

- Winton, T., Baker, S. (2018) *Breath*, Gran Via Productions, Australia

The recent viewing of the film in cinemas inspired me to look more deeply into surfing culture and the Australian landscape, which created such a strong cultural background to the plot line of the book. The cinematography also provided a vivid image of colour and sensual imagery that was the essence of my own setting to begin with from day one.

Songs

Song

- The Waterboys (1985) *This is the Sea*, Island Records

This song is a ballad, a form of life writing that allows the exploration of difficult concepts through simple language. Voice one and parts of Voice two hold the nostalgic tone as well as traces of hope. This is very essential to the main message of my story, being not so focused on the tragedy of death but the experience of life.