

## Reflection Statement

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty," – that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Romanticist, John Keats' words, encapsulate the essence of poetry as centred on nature; that it is so perfect and pure because it offers no deception or facades – a stark contrast to humanity. Indeed, Keats acknowledges the sublime power of nature in shaping human character. Through poetry, this worship and celebration of the natural world, together with an appreciation of pantheism, and the inextricable link between nature and humanity through emotion and spirituality, transcend time. The cathartic value of such poetry is just as relevant today. This was the thematic impetus for my suite of poetry, which offers my readers both a historical and contemporary insight into this link. My poems emulate and echo the styles of great writers over time, culminating in my own poetic style and conceptually linking my individual works. I derived a deep sense of satisfaction in creating this collection, largely attributed to the artistic indulgence of sharing my love of the poets and their works with my audience, who discover not only the styles of each artist and the movements associated with their poetry, but holistically, the power of naturalistic poetry in capturing the beauty and the formative quality of nature.

It was through the Area of Study in the English Advanced course that I experienced how literature enables self-discovery, and this sparked my desire to create poetry that induced a desire to discover, in others. I became aware, early in my writing process, that the sophisticated intricacies of emulating the distinctive stylistic qualities of great poets may not be understood by all, in an academic sense. Thus, different audiences will appreciate the poetry in different ways; the different interpretations will lead to diverse self-discovery. For those without prior knowledge of the poets and their styles, appreciation lies in discovering these poetic styles for the first time, and it is my ambition that it will inspire the same passion that drives me to read such great writers. Furthermore, I was encouraged by

the realisation that the main target audience -those who have prior knowledge of the authors whose styles I am celebrating -would appreciate these very intricacies, and understand the elegiac approach to celebrating the works of the poets, and the congruent cathartic process of discovery. This shared appreciation of the poets, between the audience, and myself enhances the communicative nature of the poetry.

Each poem, whilst unique, complements the refinement and sophistication of others, as conceptual literary techniques are common across the different forms. For example, learning to write in Robert Frost's simplistic linguistic style paradoxically helped prevent poems with more complex language, particularly the Shakespearean sonnets, from becoming overtly convoluted. I learnt from Frost's poetry that the beautiful intricacy of the themes of his poetry is enhanced by his use of 'plain' language. Likewise, my work in the English Extension 1 course on Sylvia Plath, and my understanding and knowledge of how the contextual forces of the cold war era shaped her poetry, allowed me to further encapsulate her style, and reinforced the importance of appreciating the context of each poet when emulating their style; this became an integral part of my research process.

My final poem showcases my own unique style – it is a personal and intimate piece, which resonates with the influences of the greats who inspired me. For example, my calculated exploitation of metre in my synoptic poem, *When Dawn Cracks the Black Glass of Night*, to create flow and emphasise specific phrases, was inspired by Frost who, often described as a metricist, believed he "*would sooner write free verse as play tennis with the net down.*" Likewise, the ability to write consistently in a chosen metre was a skill I struggled with prior to the developmental process. Writing the Shakespearean sonnets encouraged me to fully appreciate how iambic pentameter was integral to his sonnet form. Equipped with this genuine understanding of the importance of metre in reflecting content and mood meant that I was able to shape it confidently to fit my purpose.

Discovering an appreciation for the significance of structure as well as language and form in my poetry was a key developmental process. The mood of a poem is fundamentally dependent on the way in which it is structured. The first poem I wrote, "*Ode on a Storm*", evolved within the strict parameters of an English Ode. The rhyme pattern helps guide the reader and thus, thematic 'structure' is achieved through the delicate interplay between meter and rhyme. Ironically, this understanding enabled me to compose "*Mist*" – my free verse poem – the seeming 'lack' of structure beautifully reflects the nature of mist itself – it cannot be harnessed nor controlled, but rather develops and morphs, mirrored by the poem's thematic structure.

The most important element of the developmental process however, was my research into the common themes regarding the relationship between nature and man, particularly regarding the use of pathetic fallacy. My understanding of the power of pathetic fallacy began during my study of Dickinson in the Preliminary Advanced course, and was furthered by my study of Ted Hughes as an additional text in the Extension 1 course. This involved researching language features that are commonly used in poet's works to explore nature, such as personification and pathetic fallacy, as of Autumn in Keats' "*To Autumn*", or natural metaphors for emotion, as in Dickinson's "*Hope Is The Thing With Feathers*". It also involved research of the abstract nature of the chosen phenomena that I have been able to capture, particularly through images and videos; perhaps most importantly by immersing myself. This immersion in nature renewed my passion for poeticising its beauty; immortalising the moment, and through emotional discovery, provided a deeper understanding of how natural phenomena are inextricably linked to mood and emotions.

In my final poem, I wished to outline the duality of a romanticised perception of nature with a postmodern representation. This was aided by my research into the different representations of nature by each poet. This is seen through the likeness to Dickinson in terms of representing nature through mood, language and pathetic fallacy, personification. However, there is also a more postmodern representation like that of Hughes and Plath that juxtaposes such classical representations. This is most clearly evidenced where the romantic representation of beauty in nature, through the motif *"The Sun will spread its soft, warm light"*, is drawn from my Keats inspired representation of the storm through personifying it as a beautiful goddess in *"Ode on A Storm"*. This representation juxtaposes with personification of night in *"Fear planned the vale it would benight"*, outlining a postmodern representation of nature as violent and instinctive, a concept I drew from my Hughes style poem, *"The Lion"*.

Although I had the preconceived perception that a writer's context dictates their form, I discovered that it is also true that the context of reception is equally significant in the reader's appreciation. I learnt how Frost's simplistic style was consistent with his life working on the land and consequentially, his perspectives on the elegance of simplicity, through the Advanced English course. Likewise, research into Paterson's ballads furthered my passion for the Australian natural landscape, and I discovered that this passion moulded my interpretation of his ballads. I realised that poetic interpretation is moulded as much by the reader, as it by the writer, and that whilst the poet's relationship with the land is formative to their writing, the reader's relationship with their natural surrounding correspondingly influences their interpretation. It was enlightening to realise that my work, though written with a specific intention, would hold unique meaning to every reader. This led to the self-discovery that my relationship with nature was similarly formative, and not only forms the core of my writing, but influences my reading of other poets' works.

Crafting my poetry suite was both cathartic and revelatory. I have learnt from and appreciated some of the greatest poets; Keats, Frost, Dickinson, Shakespeare, Plath, Hughes and Paterson – my celebration and emulation of their art have helped me to discover my own style. My original intention was to emulate the style of each artist in order to poeticise a natural phenomenon that embodies an emotion, believing the result would be an suite of highly contrasting poems. However, as my writing progressed, I discovered that there was commonality in the core skills of capturing the rhythm and aesthetics of the English language. Thus, my intention shifted to exploring the different approaches to crafting poetry through researching and emulating the styles of many poets, and using the concepts and skills that were common between writers to form my own style, in a synoptic poem. This resulted in the most rewarding experience of the research and writing process; the realisation that the synoptic poem exemplified that, although many great poets influenced my style, it was this development process that made it unique and distinctive. It is an extension of me and my relationship with the natural world.

Total: 1500 Words