

Hardship and resilience within cloudstreet



The unique language features of the *Cloudstreet* (1991), as well as Tim Winton's characterization and inclusion of contextual elements of Australian history, ultimately create a novel that is embedded within Australian society and is of everlasting value. This is pertinent to the exploration of themes such as poverty and hardship, and the resilient fight for hope and optimism despite such difficulty.

Winton's portrayal of the Aussie Battler, through the Pickles and Lambs and in particular his characterization of Sam and Oriel, greatly appeals to an Australian audience as something that they can ultimately relate to. The poverty and hardship that both the Pickles and Lambs face over the twenty-year course of the text are highlighted through Winton's use of saga, as the extreme length of the tribulation is made known. The struggles of the Lambs and Pickles reflect the difficulties of all Australians following WWI, the Great Depression, and WWII, as many Australian families were forced to leave their farms and their old lives in search of employment in the city to avoid destitution. The value of *Cloudstreet* as a novel is thus reassured as it appeals to the stories and difficulties of those whose experiences resemble the Lambs and the Pickles. Although Sam is fortunate enough to live in the city and have a job working at the mint, his impulsive and gambling nature ensures that he and his family continue to live through penury, "There's no money, love. We haven't got a nail to hang our arses on." The metaphor of "haven't got a nail to hang our arses on" exemplifies the brutality of the hardship and poverty that the Pickles family is facing, and the use of dry humor reflects the Australian way of coping with it. Profanity also achieves this same effect and identifies the immense impact of ongoing indigence

upon Sam's character through, " I didn't go through a fuckin' depression and a war to see my children turn their nose up at food." Oriel's childhood hardship, unlike Sam's, had less to do with food and money and more to do with being strong in the wake of her family's death, " My father remarried after my mother died... they had a whole squad of babies after they married... I brought them up... I raised her family." Oriel reflects upon the long-lasting impact of her personal struggles with a nostalgic and pensive tone, demonstrating its significant influence upon her life and later relationships with her own family members, especially as a mother. Winton has characterized Oriel as stoic, but masking a fragile and pained interior, and this comes through with her quiet reminiscence upon an undoubtedly terrible time in her life.

Just as Winton explores poverty and hardship, so too does he present a fight for hope, resilience and optimism despite difficulty, and this is most clearly evident through his characterization of Oriel and Lester Lamb. Lester compares the Lambs' poverty to that of the Pickles' but determines the distinct difference between their resilience and resolve, " They're broke, darl. They're poor as us. And lazy- look at ' em, waiting for the boat to come in." An Australian idiom demonstrates the Lambs' refusal to allow the hardship to overcome them and Winton implements Australian vernacular to further characterize them as stereotypical " Aussie Battlers", ensuring their relatability and significance to an Australian audience. Lester's hope and optimism materializes into an ingenious idea, " We'll use the front room out there for a shop. God knows there's enough room. It won't hurt us to use some of it for enterprise." It is Oriel's strength of character, however, that is

ultimately displayed after she takes on Lester's plan, " Even if you couldn't see those meaty little arms and the sexless ashen bob and the sensible boots on her... there wasn't a chance you'd escape the sound of her sending the family about its business. People started to call her the sergeant major and they observed the way the shop came to life at the sound of her drill yell." The war analogy demonstrates the effect of tribulations upon Oriel's personality, as well as representing the long-lasting impact of living through multiple wars on the Australian identity. This can be further recognized through Winton's utilization of saga, which illuminates the length of the hardship that Australia faced and emphasizes the optimism and resilience that is embedded into Australian culture.

Hence, the nature of poverty and hardship, and the resilience of the Pickles and the Lamb families is one distinctly explored within Tim Winton's Cloudstreet.