

Judith wright essay sample

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



Poetry provides a deeper understanding of multiple ideas, and stimulates our mind in ways other mediums cannot, bringing forth undiluted emotion directly from the poet's mind. Our ability to think and react to stimuli in a poem depends on the poet's feelings toward the text and how they express this through the light and dark imagery in their poems, the structure in which the author chooses to write their ideas in and simply the love an author conveys through their work. Judith Wright, an Australian poet and environmentalist expresses these thoughts with her 1950's poems 'Sanctuary' and 'South of My Days,' which both tell of the Australian landscape and Wright's thoughts and feelings on the country she grew up in.

Judith Wright presents vivid and forward-thinking imagery in her poems, using light and dark tones (both figuratively and literally) to communicate her feelings toward the environment. 'Sanctuary' and 'South of My Days' both predominately convey darker imagery, with 'Sanctuary's' 'flat skins pinned to the road' and the 'black-frost night' of 'South of My Days.' Wright's message of the possible doomed future we seem to be taking ourselves into is unusual for the 1950's time of writing – people of the time were more lenient in littering and pollution than today. The light and dark imagery in 'Sanctuary' confirm this theory of an Australia being lured away from its roots. The 'axe new-boy' cutting down the 'old-gnome tree' represents the uninformed Australia not altering its approach towards the environment. This is in stark contrast with 'South of My Days' which describes the old Australia with 'low trees blue-leaved and olive' and 'the slope of medlar and crab apple.' These lighter images suggest that Wright is telling the reader there is still a chance for redemption, that Australia can

return to its roots. 'Sanctuary' takes part in this as well, but in a more subtle way; whenever nature is mentioned in a positive light, enjambment loops the sentences together elegantly and without pause, much like nature itself

The light and dark imagery in Wright's two poems show that the poet is providing us with a deeper knowledge of her ideas, wanting us to be delighted in her work but also take heed the warnings she presents, both clearly and subtly. Wright's love and care of Australia is evident in her work. Her knowledge of the land shows this, and is most evident in 'South of My Days.' The foliage is described by name - the 'medlar,' 'crab-apple' and 'rambler roses' of the poem are typical of the New-England area 'South of My Days' takes place in. The numerous mentions of landmarks in the area like 'McIntyre' and 'Hungry Hill' reinforce this idea. Wright also talks of 'Dan,' an old man that tells of his days as a cattle drover. His relaxed language and age change the pace of the poem from a moody telling of the harshness of the Australian winter and its 'bony slopes' to the scorching summer filled with bushrangers like 'Thunderbolt.' The stories Dan tells is the Australia Wright knows and loves, and it isn't perfect either - the 'yellow boy' dying in hard mud and the 'three hundred head of a thousand' show this; however, the Australia in 'South of My Days' is a far cry from the one portrayed in 'Sanctuary,' which presents a country with old Australian values long gone.

Wright asks numerous questions in this poem - 'What has that sign (sanctuary) have to do with you?' While this is a rhetorical question, it still makes the reader question their values, and further engages them in the deadly world of 'Sanctuary.' The way Wright presents her non-nationalistic

view of Australia is unique in that it can be truthful and horrific but still interesting at the same time. The pleasure the reader derives from this, coupled with Wright's knowledge of the Australian landscape makes something that's similar but different to other Australian poems. Wright's two poems are similar in that they both use largely the same language and structure. A free verse layout encompasses 'Sanctuary' and 'South of My Days,' and mostly disregards rhythmical pattern or rhyme, instead opting for the previously aforementioned vivid imagery, enjambment to convey nature in its many forms and numerous onomatopoeic instances such as 'voltage' in 'Sanctuary' and 'hisses' in 'South of My Days,' to give the reader a more personal auditory experience to engage them in the world the poem is in; at the time of writing for both 'Sanctuary' and 'South of My Days,' Wright had hearing issues, and expressing these sounds she knew through words helped her make the experience of reading her poems more authentic.

This unique formatting reflects Wright and her political and environmental standing – it follows its own set of rules that are specific to what the poet has in mind, a more open and longer form of writing that fits the Australian setting perfectly, allows the stories of Dan in 'South of My Days' to tell his stories in his casual manner and permits the cumulative use of similes like 'tense bearer of messages' and 'dangerous knife-edge' in 'Sanctuary.' Although Wright uses a similar structure in both of her poems, there are some differences – as well as being longer in length, 'South of My Days' also forgoes rhyme of any sort, opting instead for alliteration like 'back-log breaks' to add additional description and clarity to an object. 'Sanctuary' also differs from 'South of My Days' in that it is more cryptic in its approach

- while ' South of My Days' provides straightforward storytelling with names of locales and people, ' Sanctuary' is less straightforward, not being specific and letting the reader's imagination take over.

The free verse structure of the two poems enables Wright to make her work unique, and by extension makes the experience more enjoyable to the reader and gives information on the Australian landscape either in a more prose-oriented manner or with a more classical poetic approach, providing more than what the reader initially sees. Judith Wright shows in her poems ' Sanctuary' and ' South of My Days' that poems can provide a reader with insight into the world they have lovingly crafted through numerous days, months and even years. The love and intelligence poured into Wright's two poems further reinforces the idea that we read poetry to further our knowledge in a topic but also suggests that a reader can enjoy the experience at the same time.