

Symbiosis and
harmony with the
landscape in the
poems of judith wright
and samuel...



It is through the concept symbiosis and harmony with the landscape that Judith Wright effectively presents a positive experiences between individuals and their environment. These notions are most transparent through her poems, *South of My Days* and *Flame-Tree in a Quarry*, of which publication dates span from 1942-1970. Furthermore, Samuel Taylor Coleridge consistently and evocatively expands upon the notion of harmony with the landscape to demonstrate the encounters between people and their environment through “ *This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison*”.

Judith Wright’s “ *South of My Days*” and Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “ *This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison*” both present personas who feel an intrinsic connection with the landscape, one so deep that they become symbiotic in harmony, and this is demonstrated through the real, remembered, and imagined environments. The character of Old Dan within *South of My Days* acts as a representation of the influence of the remembered landscape, and how it continues to affect individuals into the present, “ *Seventy years of stories he clutches round his bones. / Seventy summers are hived in him like old honey.*” Metaphor physically connects Old Dan with the landscape as they become one, and the anaphora of “ *seventy summers*” reinforces the length of this inextricable attachment. Old Dan’s interdependence with his country engenders his ability to manipulate its physicality, “ *Hardly to be believed that summer/ will thrust... its hot face in here to tell another yarn-/ a story old Dan can spin into a blanket against the winter.*” Wright personifies the summer to exemplify the relationship between Dan and the Australian landscape, who utilizes his remembered and imagined summer environment to shield himself from the harshness of his current winter.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's persona in *This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison* experiences a similar phenomenon, as he can connect to nature through his imagined landscapes, "A delight/ Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad/ As I myself were there!" The tonal shift that evidently occurs within this stanza, from morose and melancholic to joyful, further represents the happiness that arises from his correspondence with the environment. The real landscape is just as effective in portraying a symbiotic relationship between people and their naturalistic worlds, as Wright's persona figuratively refers to it as a physical and biological connection, "part of my blood's country", and Coleridge explores this through Charles Lamb, "my friend/ Struck with deep joy may stand.../ Silent with swimming sense." Sibilance reinforces the calming effect of the naturalistic surroundings upon the individual and emotive language depicts the absolute harmony between him and the landscape.

A notion of absolute symbiosis between people and the landscape is one further explored through Wright's poetry, and in particular, within *Flame-Tree in a Quarry*. Coleridge's *This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison* presents this also, through his persona and discussion of the real, remembered, and imagined naturalistic environments. Just as "South of My Days" represents this connection through physical attachment, so does *Flame-Tree in a Quarry*, through figurative language, "Flesh of the world's delight/ Voice of the world's desire." The utilization of the word "flesh", repeated from the previous stanza, further reinforces the tangible and inextricable link between Wright's persona and the skeletal landscape. The four-line stanza continues with, "I drink you with my sight/ and I am filled with fire." The full rhyme

demonstrates the tonal shift that has occurred in the poem, from morose to joyful, and it is a change that distinctly mirrors the one within *This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison*. Through metaphor, Wright suggests that the persona consumes the Australian landscape, which is reflective of society's consumption of the land and why only a symbolic tree in the quarry remains. This, as well as the utilization of first-person, further indicates the symbiotic relationship between the persona and the environment, as the persona exhibits a deep level of understanding regarding the landscape. The repetitive biblical allusions fabricated within *Flame Tree in a Quarry*, including consistent referencing of "flesh" and "fire", illuminates the parallels between the text and *This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison*. The persona of Coleridge's poem views his imagined landscape as a paradise, and thus the relationship he maintains with it is one of perfect harmony, "Now, my friends emerge/ Beneath the wide wide Heaven." The persona's joy at interacting with nature extends to his remembered experiences, exhibited through exclamation, "I watch'd/ Some broad and sunny leaf, and lov'd to see/ The shadow of the leaf and stem above/ Dappling its sunshine!" Contrastingly, Wright's persona has a much more realistic and unromantic approach to the landscape, however still experiences a positive understanding of it, "Out of the very wound/ springs up this scarlet breath." Kinesthetic imagery depicts the absolute resilience of the Australian landscape as the symbolic "wound", the quarry, comes alive with "scarlet breath", reflecting the very real and tangible relationship between the persona and this previously broken environment.

In conclusion, both Judith Wright and Samuel Taylor Coleridge distinctly represent the relationships between people and the landscape pertaining to symbiotic and harmonious experiences.