

# Tim winton and zohra saed essay



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Many authors use their literary works as an outlet for their personal feeling and opinions on issues present within their cultures, history and personal lives. Zohra Saed's poems, *Nomad's Market: Flushing Queens* and *What the Scar Revealed*, published in 2003, both address issues that she finds significant in her Afghani refugee context. Tim Winton uses his short stories, *Big World* and *Reunion*, published in 2005, to express his feelings on changes within the Australian culture and our values. These authors have used their texts to question the changes that have occurred within their own lives and cultures and whether these changes have had negative or positive consequences. These ideas revolve around personal and cultural identity as well as the value of personal freedom.

In her poem, *Nomad's Market: Flushing Queens*, Zohra Saed talks of how she has freedom in her life in the USA, but her fellow Muslim women back in the Middle East are being oppressed. The use of simile in the line "they keep their eyes averted and carry themselves as if being arranged in a marriage," is used to emphasise a very significant transgression against personal freedom, arranged marriage. In this, she is trying to express how, in the same way as freedom is taken in an arranged marriage, freedom taken in the rest of their lives as well. This is shown in the line "There is no dancing here." In this poem, Saed is expressing her opposition to the denial of freedom for her sister Muslims in the most basic areas of life and her gratitude for the freedom she now has in hers.

In Tim Winton's short story, *Big World*, he explores the idea of freedom as an integral part of the Australian culture and his own life as a 'full-blooded' Australian. He uses colloquial language in the line "...pissing off north to find

some blue sky,” to highlight the importance of personal freedom. Winton is expressing through the Australian vernacular that without freedom of movement, speech and thought we would not truly be Australian; that our culture and society revolves around this idea that we are entitled to personal freedom. In this way, Winton is showing that freedom is one of the fundamentals of life and that without it, we are not truly human, but just beasts of burden subject to another’s yoke.

Both of these texts address the importance of personal freedom in the author’s life. They both talk of how they are thankful for the freedom they possess in their own lives. The difference is that Winton expresses freedom as an integral part of what makes us human while Saed shows it as something to aspire to and earn, not something that is just given out. This reflects their personal context. Winton was born into a country where individuals get emotionally disturbed if anyone infringes on what they see to be their basic rights. Saed on the other hand, comes from a culture where her gender is considered second class. Her family also fled their homeland for the safety of the US, fighting to earn their freedom.

What the Scar Revealed is used by Saed to talk of the effect moving to a foreign country and culture has had on her life. She describes how she felt her cultural identity was being replaced by Western culture, “...misplaced and glorified behind plates of glass...” In the last line however, Saed goes against this. She uses a metaphor, “...the lost city in her navel unwinds itself from swirls of skin...” to show that she has not lost her culture, but that she carries it around with her, that it is an integral part of herself and nothing can change that fact. In this way, Saed has shown the reader that while our

circumstances may change, what makes us who we are will never change unless we let it.

Tim Winton's *Reunion* explores the loss of fundamental values within a culture. He is responding to what he sees as the corruption of classic Australian ideals and values. In the story the characters travel to a house where "On the cold barbeque were a few wizened chops and prawns." In this line, the cold barbeque symbolises the Australian culture. In an environment where it should have been heated up and surrounded by people, it is cold and abandoned. This is used to show that, in Winton's mind, Australia has lost many of the values within our society that makes us the down-to-earth, affable and pragmatic people we see ourselves as. All that is left he says, is a cold impersonal shell of what we once were. In this way, Winton is using this story to communicate the loss of what he sees to be key values in the Australian Identity and psyche, resulting in a negative change within our culture.

Both *What the Scar Revealed* and *Big World* explore issues relating to culture and identity. They both show that it is our culture that, in a large part, defines who we become, for better or for ill. The difference between the two is the level they are talking on. Saed is focused on a personal level while Winton writes mainly on a national scale. This is not altogether surprising. Saed has had to deal with growing up a foreigner. She has been surrounded by conflicting cultures her whole life and thus focuses on the effects on the individual. Winton on the other hand is an Australian living in Australia. He grew up watching Australian culture leaving the principles of 'mateship' and 'a fair go'.

These texts all explore issues and values close to the hearts of Zohra and Winton. The two main issues explored are the values of freedom and a cultural identity. While they explore the same issues, it is their differing contexts that have shaped the way in which they both present the issues and derived their values from them. As such, it seems that despite thousands of miles and millennia of tradition between cultures and peoples, in the end we all value basic principles in life. The only real difference is that our interpretations of said values.