

# A Journey Of Belonging: Tim Winton's Novels Explored

J. Deepthi John<sup>1</sup>, Dr. M. Vaijo Latha<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D Research Scholar, Registration number: 17213164012012  
Department of English, Scott Christian college (Autonomous) Nagercoil Affiliated to  
Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli, 627 012

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of English, Aringar Anna College, Aralvaimozhi Affiliated  
to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli, 627 012

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## Abstract

Tim Winton, a renowned Australian author who explores themes of place, land, and identity in his novels, possesses a unique and complex perspective on Australian culture. Winton is both a literary figure and a widely recognized writer, utilizing colloquial language and demonstrating a deep understanding of ecology as he seeks a profound connection to his surroundings. His captivating novels vividly bring Australia, its rich history, diverse people, and deep desires to life. Beginning from a specific location in Perth, Western Australia during the 1940s to the 1960s, Winton's storytelling encompasses a broad and intimate portrayal of everyday life in Australia. Cloudstreet, one of his notable works, beautifully captures the essence of individuals, landscapes, and rhythms that have captured the imagination of readers around the world. Through a combination of relatable moments and elements of surrealism, this article delves into the yearning for belonging experienced by the characters in select novels by Tim Winton.

**Keywords:** culture, identity, language, ecology.

## Introduction

Timothy John Winton, an Australian writer, was born on the 4th of August in 1960. He has written brief stories, novels, picture books, and non-fiction works. In 1997, he was honored as a Living Treasure by the National Trust of Australia, and he has been the recipient of the prestigious Miles Franklin Award four times. Bioregionalism is a way of comprehending a location based on its natural surroundings and the individuals' relationship with it. The concept emerged from the environmental movement and pertains to the move away from arbitrary political boundaries and towards an understanding of place based on naturally defined limits like ecosystems and watersheds. A bioregional outlook involves paying closer attention to the distinctive biological characteristics of a location and cultivating an appreciation for the natural world and our interconnectedness with it. As Kirkpatrick Sale states, "It is any part of the earth's surface whose natural boundaries are determined by natural characteristics rather than human dictates distinguishable from other areas by particular attributes of flora fauna, water climate, soil, and landforms, and by the human settlements and cultures those attributes have given rise

to” (55). Kylie Crane feels that the novel proposes a perspective on music that eventually offers reconciliation to the alienation of man’s identity between nature and culture.

The novel *Dirt Music* by Tim Winton explores the theme of music as a means to connect and reconcile different aspects of life such as emotions, history, and the natural world. The author introduces two fictional places, White Point and Coronation Gulf, located in the northern region. By doing so, Winton creates a unique space that allows for a fresh interpretation of the concept of place. In the collection of critical essays titled "Tim Winton: Critical Essays," Lyn Jacob examines the tensions, gaps, and contradictions in Winton's writing, challenging readers and literary critics to move beyond simplistic labels such as nostalgic or conservative, religious or gendered. His writing style combines informality and poetry, capturing the essence of contemporary Australian life, particularly its coastal landscapes and the sense of the sublime found in the horizontal expanse. The novel "Shallows" describes the history of whaling in Western Australia, where it was eventually stopped by the local population. It is important to note that this book is distinct from "Eyrie." Bioregionalism emerges as a solution to bridge the gap between nature and culture, emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between the two. Bioregionalism is a social movement that aims to revive environmentally sustainable and culturally diverse communities within specific geographic regions, promoting a sense of place and community. Writers try to bring “the bioregional imagination” (Milne 3). This is the base of studying geographical terrain and a terrain of consciousness. Peter Berg says that a bioregion “refers both to geographical terrain and a terrain of consciousness - to a place and the ideas that have developed about how to live in that place” (36). He also feels that a human dimension is required here and says, “The final boundaries of a bioregion are best described by the people who have lived within it, through human recognition of the realities of living-in place” (36).

Tim Winton’s *The Turning* is a collection of short tales published in 2004. It predominantly revolves around the quaint town of Angelus located in Western Australia. The story of *The Turning* span multiple decades, delving into the lives of various individuals who are closely connected to Vic Lang and his family. In the early 1970s, Vic Lang, along with his parents Bob and Carol, and his infant sister, move to Angelus after his father accepts a job as a police officer. Angelus was once a bustling whaling town, but both the town and its industry are now in decline. As Vic settles into this new environment during his early twenties, he starts to sense that something is not right. A deep fear takes hold of him as his father grows distant and turns to alcohol. Long, Clear View and Fog recount this period from Vic's and Bob's perspectives respectively, portraying the impact of drugs, racial tensions, and pervasive police corruption on the Lang family, despite their best efforts. Overall, the stories in *The Turning* depict the traumatic transformation experienced by the people of Angelus. While Angelus is a fictional town, its fate closely mirrors that of numerous small communities in Western Australia.

The story *The Turning* explores how social concerns become personal by focusing on the difficulties faced by various communities. Author Tim Winton highlights the idea that when entering new phases of life, we may leave behind the places and people that hold significance to us. Winton's novels often capture the essence of the Australian landscape, as seen through the protagonist Abel Jackson's close relationship with his mother, Dora. Dora is an advocate

for protecting the bay and preserving the environment, and Winton emphasizes the importance of the seascape and landscape throughout the narrative. Abel himself is deeply connected to the land he calls home, expressing that he would wither and die if he were separated from it. The presence of a majestic groper fish, referred to as Blue-black, serves as an inspiration in their efforts. This fish has the remarkable ability to change its colour from green to brown and can adopt several other colour patterns. While a ruthless character named Costello threatens the ocean, Dora and Abel strive to protect the bay. The concept of rein habitation is explored through the connection between dwelling and a sense of place, incorporating cultural and ecological perspectives. Abel's aspiration to become a Marine Biologist reflects his desire to preserve his beloved land.

Tim Winton expresses the feeling of Abel as “I miss you terribly. But no, I’m not lonely. This land is a kind of friend to me” (Blueback 71). Later on, the world becomes interloped, and the people become greedy. Some wealthy business people decide to turn Longboat beach into a resort. People say he takes whatever he sees. Costello is too greedy and takes everything from the sea. Dora was conscious of her land. Even though the businessman gives her gifts, she does not accept them. She was firm in her ideas. She does not want to leave her land till her death, as Martin Hiedegger says, “not admiring nature but consciously giving importance to nature”. Dora recovers her place. *Dirt Music* (2001), *The Riders* (1994), and *That Eye, The Sky* (1986) are all part of an Australian literary tradition concerned with the themes of land and identity. Everything he writes is loved by readers and is in high demand. Despite this, it is not easy reading. Like a song, Winton’s language has its unique beat. He transforms the slang of Australia, those unpolished phrases, into spoken poetry. The ocean, rivers, lakes, and everything in, on, and close to them are Winton’s constant sources of inspiration. In *Cloudstreet*, the Swan River in Perth, Western Australia, is the body of water, and in Winton’s language, one can hear the waves, the wind blowing through the trees, the quiet of the heat, and the rowboats paddles. The river connects people, families, pets, the environment, and even the country. It is the mainstay, the monster, which has existed from the beginning of human history and will continue to exist when it is over. The Lambs and the Pickles are the two families who’s narrative *Cloudstreet* appears to be. Both are working class and poor; they were raised in the country but were compelled to go to Perth to live on a huge continent. The Lambs have always been pious, but their religion has been severely tested so that they could not be more unlike. They now fight to find meaning, comprehend why things occur, and their place in the universe since God is the issue, not the answer. The Lambs confront this ambiguity with diligence and tenacity. They are afraid of losing control and being unable to manage their fortunes. This is why they do not completely comprehend their neighbours. The Pickles family put much stock in good fortune. They do not believe they have any control over anything, and their reliance is on luck, good or bad.

The novel *Cloudstreet* is about people attempting to ascertain their identities and place within the group while residing together. When Quick Lamb’s favourite brother Fish nearly drowns, he feels terrible and vows to live out this remorse. Fish needs Quick to love him as much as he can because of the accident, but Quick is kept apart from his brother because of his guilt. Oriel, Fish’s mother, is the only one who desires to offer him affection. Oriel punishes

herself by exiling herself to the afterlife because Fish no longer recognizes her following the incident. Fish's mother, Oriel, is the only one who truly desires to offer him affection. Oriel punishes herself by being sent to live in a tent in the backyard after the accident, which makes Fish no longer recognize her. The Pickles' situation is the same. Daughter Rose is left to care for her parents and siblings because of an alcoholic mother and a gambler father. She begins to learn how to cook but starves herself psychologically and physically.

Belonging is a major issue because most individuals immigrate here from somewhere else. In a sense, humans reside in a huge continent of a home where people cohabitate with people they do not know, do not quite comprehend and do not particularly like. Winton evokes strong emotions in us while doing it in a language that is both hilarious and tragic, with much heart at its core. Down in the yard at Cloudstreet, down there in the halls and channels of time Fish and the pig exchange glances “. . . But I can't read your face. I stare back at you in the puddles on the chilly ground, I'm waiting in your long monastic breath, I travel back to these moments to wonder at what you're feeling and come away with nothing but the knowledge of how it will be in the end. 'You're coming to me, Fish, and all you might have been, all you could have hoped for . . . No shadows, no ugliness, no hurting, no falling down angry. Your turn is coming. (CS 529-30)

The impact of Costello's overfishing is a significant theme in the novel *Blueback*. The ecology begins to suffer from Costello's irresponsible actions and the ongoing overfishing in Longboat Bay. *Blueback* has greed as a major topic. Costello is a cruel and opportunistic figure in contrast to Dora and Abel. He plunders Longboat Bay and the canals, taking more fish than he should and doing so without concern for the ecosystem's fragility or official regulations. Longboat Bay's surroundings are taken care of and nurtured by Abel and Dora. Soon after, Abel discovers that “nothing in nature is as cruel and savage as a greedy human being” (BB 87) Jerra loves to fish, and in *An Open Swimmer*, it is revealed that she had the plot to remove a pearl from a massive whale's head. He intended to catch a similar species on his own after seeing many whales butchered in horrific ways. In *Shallows*, Queenie states that cooperation and communication between species are essential for humanity's future (Winton, *Shallows* 48). The way Jerra feels and is drawn to these animals has changed. Jerra grabs a large turrum fish in the boat as a little child and refuses to let it be cut up. There should be a turrum. Right whales were captured in protected harbours off the coasts of Australia and New Zealand during the breeding season in the winter. In 1805, Sydney was the departure port for the first whaling ships owned by Australia.

Jerra depicts the modern man who works hard and lives in a metropolis. The elderly guy in the story, who leads a modest existence in a village by the sea, stands in for the indigenous and traditional system. Winton contrasts these two ideas through the two characters, Jerra and the elderly man. At the story's end, Jerra returns to his Kombi, opens the fuel tank, and puts a match in it before accelerating. Winton uses this finding to claim that the locals and their way of life are superior to that of the modern man. Tim Winton's compressed materialism, an aesthetic fascination with instances of anoxia, or the restriction of oxygen to the brain, is evidence of the bodily impacts of empire. This analysis will explore how the novel by Winton challenges the traditional divisions between regions by addressing the disparities in

development commonly associated with the Global South using a perspective of materialism. Winton presents the idea of an empire as a network of connections that are more reliant on intangible elements in the atmosphere rather than national or physical boundaries, thus bridging the North-South divide. By examining how Winton's novels tackle airborne issues and defy rigid notions of growth and economic stability.

Winton shows how uneven development, traditionally associated with the Global South, might be brought to bear when considering how issues of class, race, environment, and mental health affect Western Australia, the region of Winton's concern. This breath-related formalism is theorized as compressed materialism. Winton uses a breath-related formalism theorized as a compressed material to demonstrate how uneven development, traditionally associated with the Global South, might be considered when analysing how class, race, environment, and mental health issues affect Western Australia, the area of Winton's concern. Winton demonstrates a readiness to consider empire as a set of relations not constrained by national or territorial borders by demonstrating how a conceptual North-South division functions internally to a nation in the Global North. Winton's regions are more specific and intimate. Winton's novels display an aesthetic fascination with breathlessness, particularly when it results in a lack of oxygen reaching the brain. Each crisis combines a scientific explanation of anoxic effects with a philosophical reflection on the hereafter, even if people experience cerebral hypoxia in diverse ways (drowning, chronic lung disease, erotic asphyxiation).

Breath gives Winton the proper tools to maintain the rigour of his conflation of hallucination, based on natural science, and revelation, based on heavenly inspiration. Winton responds to various situations with this formal indeterminacy, including the exclusion of Indigenous Australians from Australia's colonial history, the effects of fish poaching and land mining for asbestos and bauxite, and the eroticization of (self) asphyxiation. The ways in which Winton's novels interact with the political awareness of Australia's Global South are affected by his formal interest in pneumatic materialism. Therefore pneumas, a common, formal aspect of materialist theology, produce precisely such circumstances. *Cloudstreet*, which purports to be the account of a house by that name and the two working-class families who reside there, is notable for its emphasis on mistaken perception. The majority of the main characters in the story are either Pickles or Lamb family members, and the plot is spread out among various central figures. Through irregular vignettes, the story portrays the ups and downs of the family nearly apart lives over twenty years after tracing the time before they start living together. Due to Winton's free indirect speech, there are many individuals whose consciousness we float in and out of. As a result, the narration centres on a single first-person narrator, whose sporadic foregrounding shows that there is a narrative goal behind the meandering narratives of this family.

Winton's anoxic passages mesh with a literary framework. It is a system based on compressed materialism, in which spirituality is derived from a materialist understanding of how breathing influences human perception. A network of transversal approaches to Australia's Global South is developed when pneumatic materialism is identified in Winton's works, which has consequences beyond a basic aesthetic response to his form. Silvia Olives and Dr Suresh

Frederick in Land as “Terrain of the Conscious” in David Malouf’s *Fly Away Peter* feels that “...the politics of a place or the ethics of the environment can be acted upon only when one can view the landscapes for what it is and not for what humans want it to be” (225). They also claim that “the environment is not just a physical land, but it is the ‘terrain of conscious’, the only way humans can rightly claim a landscape is to know the land well enough to find their own self and the society from the land they are in” (225). This is true for every nation, but especially for Australia, given its complicated histories of exploitation, oppression, and mining.

### **Conclusion**

The novel *The Riders* support a certain type of Australian identity rooted in Anglo-Celtic culture. By contrasting Australia and Ireland, Winton constructs a version of Australian identity that values purity, delicacy, and practicality and crafts a fresh narrative of belonging. The novel also underscores the deep connection Australians have with their surroundings and how their sense of place and self-contribute to a strong sense of identity among Winton's characters. Bioregionalism is a framework for considering a location based on its natural environment and the relationship between people and that environment. When individuals observe a decline in ocean currents and tidal patterns, their concerns about whales’ increase. Without whales, the ocean is often seen as being at great risk. People find it captivating to witness the emergence of whales at the ocean's surface. Whale scape represents a place where residents coexist with the whales that frequently visit the shoreline.

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