

A drive in the country

Peter Skrzynecki

Stanza 1

Lowercase letters in title foreshadow momentary freedom and break from rules, but singular 'drive' indicates the irregularity and fleeting nature of freedom

A drive in the country

At Blue Hole

'Blue' – imagery of calmness and peace;
juxtaposed with 'Hole'

The verb "stood" is repeated several times – a pause in the journey; a rest

I stood by the water's edge

Represents the freedom Peter wishes for

And watched how swallows swam

Through the air –

Wild ducks moving away

In the weeds

To their nests in the hollows

Symbolic of how Peter feels; empty and trapped

Of blackberries and reeds.

Stanza 2

Observer isolated in nature

I stood on a rock

By the roots of a willow -

Saw how leaves

Bent their ears to the ground.

Gum trees shed

Their bark to the wind

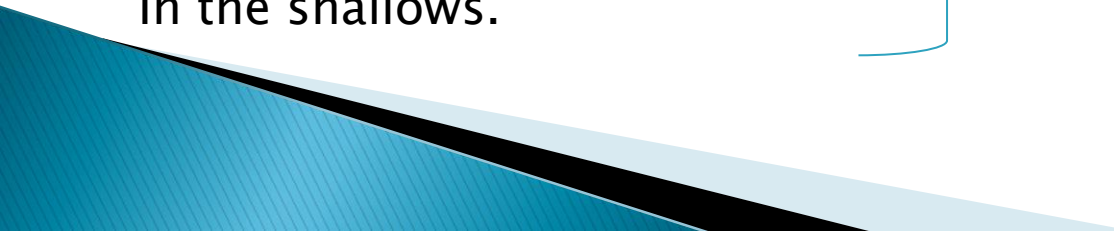
And she-oaks dipped their hands

In the shallows.

Personification of nature

A rare use of punctuation mid-verse. Full stop represents the idea of giving pause; resting - calming influence of nature

Nature is connected "ears to the ground", "bark to the wind", "hands in the shallows"; Peter is the one isolated and disassociated with the world around him.



Stanza 3

A chain and rope

Hung down from a tree -

Over the water for children to swing from.

Juxtaposes peaceful imagery from previous stanza - trapped; tied up; death.

And I thought of gallows

Negative perspective - juxtaposes positivity of children playing with Peter's view of "gallows".

To which dead men return

At noon or in darkness

To wait for a crowd.

Waiting to return to anonymity

Stanza 4

And **still I kept looking**

Back to the road -

Away from Blue Hole

And the **miles yet to go:**

Thinking of the room

Where an alarm clock was set

And tomorrow already there.

Observation continues

The journey continues – away from calmness and peace experienced in this brief pause.

Punctuation – semicolon suggests an order, a list, back to a life of following rules and routines

Back to depressing and mundane regularity

Stanza 5

But only the soft call
Of swallows and wild ducks
Replied to my thoughts
Through the streamers
Of blue light.

Peter's negativity is not met with an reply; it is not worth entertaining these thoughts. The freedom of the swallows and ducks is not reduced because of his thoughts - why is his freedom reduced by others?

Stanza 6

Alone; lonely; his family and community from previous poems are also gone.

I spoke to myself

Suffocating in life; emotionally and mentally exhausted

Like a man who is dying

And walks away from a road

Walks away...towards what? Life? Death? Happiness? Sadness? Destination unknown.

That runs only one way.

Quite existential: questions the purpose of living.

Notes

- ▶ A pause from a drive in the country takes the speaker away from his preoccupations and the demands of his time.
- ▶ Away from the tedious regularity of life: “of the room / Where an alarm clock was set / And tomorrow was already there”.
- ▶ Experiences the beauty of nature, noting the freedom of swallows on their physical journey as they “swam / Through the air”.
- ▶ Peter is detached from the freedom; he is only observing it and wishing it for himself.
- ▶ He observes the connections in nature “leaves / Bent their ears to the ground. / Gum trees shed / Their bark to wind”, while Peter “stood on a rock”.
- ▶ Beauty of nature is juxtaposed with Peter’s negative thinking – he sees a child’s swing as a gallows.
- ▶ The journey continues on in the end, with “miles yet to go.”
- ▶ **THE MOMENTS ARE IN THE WAITING → concept of journeys**