

# Post Card

Saturday January 29, 2005

Peter Skrzynecki



# Stanza 1

Why send a post card instead of a letter? What is their purpose and context?

Much later than his other poetry. This is the last in *Immigrant Chronicle*.

Saturday, January 29, 2005  
Post Card

Simple object, yet in this case it triggers an unexpected response.

A post card sent by a friend

The use of "Haunts" so early in the poem suggests that the post card is notable and has significance for Peter because of its connotations of ghosts or unwanted lingering ideas.

Haunts me

Since it's arrival -

Post card is from Poland and depicts the old part of the city of Warsaw.

*Warsaw: Panorama of the Old Town.*

He requests I show it

A friend has sent it and has selected it so that the Peter can show it to his parents because it would remind them of where they came from.

To my parents.

# Stanza 2

Red buses on a bridge

Emerging from a corner –

High-rise flats and something

Like a park border

The river with its concrete pylons.

The sky's the brightest shade.

A simple description of the photo on the post card

There is nothing extraordinary in the picture: "The sky's the brightest shade."

# Stanza 3

Warsaw, Old Town,  
I never knew **you**  
Except in third person -  
**Great city**  
That bombs destroyed  
Its people massacred  
Or exiled - **You** survived  
In the minds  
**Of a dying generation**  
**Half a world away.**  
They shelter **you**  
And defend the patterns  
Of **your** remaking,  
Condemn **your** politics,  
Cherish **your** old religion  
And drink to freedom  
Under the **White Eagle's** flag.

Before this, Peter had not considered the city as anything except for distant and detached from his new life in the third person, but now he addresses the city directly in **second person**

Great city - large in size, great as in historic, great as in the influence it has had on the Skrzynecki family.

Destroyed by bombs, killed citizens or forced them to leave, Peter's perspective on the distant city.

The city remained a strong part of the adults who migrated - they remembered. They are, however, a "dying generation", and Peter and other immigrants who grew up in Australia have "forgot my first Polish word."

The older immigrants, like Feliks Skrzynecki, defend their homeland against those who would criticise it.

Despite the communist rule, they cherish the old country and old religion of Catholicism.

Strong symbolism of the White Eagle - the white on the Polish flag - freedom on the flag itself.

# Stanza 4

For the moment,  
I repeat, I never knew you,  
Let me be.  
I've seen red buses  
Elsewhere  
And all rivers have  
An obstinate glare.  
My father  
Will be proud  
Of your domes and towers,  
My mother  
Will speak of her  
Beloved Ukraine  
What's my choice  
To be?

Peter reveals his conflict – he is trying to ignore the pull of his heritage – the scene on the post card is common and should be easy to resist

Parents will be happy to be reminded of their homeland, they are old enough to remember, and have a connection to, their heritage.

Peter has no identity – he is urged to link to a culture and heritage he has no recollection of, unlike his parents. Rhetorical question – pleads as to what he should do.

# Stanza 5

I can give you

The recognition

Of eyesight and praise.

What more

Do you want

Besides

The gift of despair?

Peter can see what the city offers and he can admire it (like a tourist), but he is confused and angry that it appears to want more from him than he is prepared or able to give.

This is an extended personification of the city, and of his heritage, and he is under its authority/

Second rhetorical question – reinforces Peter's conflict and acknowledges his connection to the old world of his parents is to acknowledge that it is something he has lost (denial).

# Stanza 6

I stare

At the photograph

And refuse to answer

The voices

Of red gables

And a cloudless sky.

Attention is brought back to the postcard which stimulates the poet's reflection on his heritage.

The post card has asked the question (personification) but Peter refuses to answer them.

# Stanza 7

On the river's bank

A lone tree

Whispers:

“We will meet

Before you die.”

Peter is confronted by the inevitable; he cannot ignore the fact of his heritage.

Increasing use of enjambment throughout the poem indicates ideas of being rushed; short of breath; the end of a race; end of a journey; end of life?

The physical structure of the poem also resembles an erratic heartbeat. Culminates in this final stanza – calmness; content.



# Notes

- ▶ Recurring theme throughout all poems – relationships between migrants' former countries and their experiences of their new homeland, and the difference between the older and younger generations' experience of that relationship.
  - ▶ Peter cannot ignore his heritage, though he feels little connection to it.
  - ▶ The post card becomes personified throughout the poem; from an object given by a friend, to the post card coming to life and speaking, like a friend.
  - ▶ Key word: haunts. Captures precisely the ambiguous experience of being irresistibly drawn to the card and what it portrays, while finding its appeal disturbing rather than consoling or exciting.
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