

Poet's notes for *Respite*

The basic premise of the poem is light as a respite from a Truth or truths we want to hide from. Whilst most would assume that light is a respite from darkness, I am identifying Truth as the enemy lurking in the darkness. The concept of Truth here is the truth or truths about us corporately and individually that we would rather not recognise or identify with.

The first stanza references the God of Genesis creating light and "curating" darkness into one half of a day. I have long liked the irony of darkness still invading the light of day with shadows. I am establishing the theme that humans have long replicated God by deifying their ability to create circumstances that best suit them, if you like, remaking God in our own image. I have also referenced pop-culture through an amalgam of the Superman idioms of Action comics and Joni Mitchell's song "Sex Kills". We weaponize Truth as a means to achieve our own desire goals of power, status etc. By replicating God's creation of Light, we take charge of our world.

The second stanza reveals more about the meaning I am attaching to Truth. The lamps of the exhibition and the table candle in "Still Life" are referenced as devices we use to keep Truth from threatening us. I am also alluding to humans' penchant for diminishing Earth's resources as being, at best, a holding pattern. The respite of light that we think of as buying us space in the darkness is actually buying us time more than space. While we are busy filling the space where our attention is, behind us, our silhouettes are revealing the truth anyway.

The third stanza references Tamworth and its fixation on being leaders in street lighting, now translated into the use of solar lighting of Scott Road and the pathway beside the Peel River. I have used the Lindsay lithograph as an illustration of an eternal scene of human relationships being played out in the pools of light provided by street lighting. As the lovers move through the reach of each light, different scenes are illuminated in snapshot of a longer story - theirs certainly but one that has been repeated through human history. I return to the theme of limited resources to tie it to previous stanzas.

The final stanza is a summary.

This is a more complex poem than I usually write, made so by the need to include referencing to the theme, the antiquities, the art works and Tamworth. As the poem will be displayed for some time, I wanted it to have layers which could be uncovered gradually, at several passes. Hopefully the referencing will provide some allure for readers to do that. As someone with a strong environmental and ecological collection of sensibilities, it's only natural some will percolate from what I write.

The Tamworth based director and thespian Daniel Gillett, describes the appreciation of a poem as being like passing through a herb garden and being brushed by the various herbs. As you pass through, you get wafts of thyme, basil, coriander etc but at the end, the individual scents become less important as the fact you just smell nice. Hopefully you will enjoy that experience.

- Peter Langston