

# Theme of Loneliness in Tim Winton's *Shallows*: A Psychological Study

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## Abstract

Loneliness is a state in which a person feels disconnected from others. In this situation, whether alone or with others, a person feels emptiness. If this condition develops for an extended period, the results can be severe, both psychologically and physically. Loneliness is a severe problem in the twenty-first century, causing hardship for many people today. Many psychologists and researchers have debated the reasons and methods for breaking free. Tim Winton's *Shallows* addresses both social and psychological concerns of loneliness. The current research is an attempt to investigate not just its implications in the novel, but also its origins and solutions in real life. This study can help loners, in particular, comprehend their loneliness and discover how to overcome it. This thesis offers a critical reading of Tim Winton's first novel *Shallows* in light of Fromm's Psychoanalysis (1959). Drawing on a range of theoretical disciplines, this article probes three types of loneliness by means of a detailed study of one of Winton's core critical and abiding concerns: the ordinary experience of loneliness and its impact on characters' daily life. In addition, The purpose of this study is twofold: first, to discover to what extent the theme of loneliness is present in Tim Winton's *Shallows*, and second, to categorize this loneliness into three distinct types. The first is spiritual loneliness, a loneliness caused by having fallen out of the grace of God. The second is social loneliness, a loneliness brought about by the lack of human companionship. The third is loneliness provoked by a sense of personal failure. This article will reveal the three types and several protagonists' solutions to loneliness through Fromm's Psychoanalysis (1959), helping readers understand some of the characters' eccentric behaviors in the text while pointing out the real love and intimacy with nature, as well as building a faith that can validly solve the problem of loneliness.

**Keywords:** Loneliness, *Shallows* (Tim Winton), Eric Fromm's Psychoanalysis Theory, post-Pandemic Era, The 3 Types of Loneliness

## Introduction

Loneliness is the state of human existence. According to McMullan et al. (2020), loneliness is a subjective feeling in which a person perceives a lack of meaningful connections and

relationships. Among older persons, loneliness is linked to several detrimental health issues. For example, loneliness is associated with hearing loss (Sung et al., 2016), pain (Emerson et al., 2018), poorer perceived health (Coyle & Dugan, 2012), earlier deaths (Luo & Waite, 2014), an increase in mental health problems (Coyle & Dugan, 2012), depression (Gonyea et al., 2018), the use of opioids and benzodiazepines (Vyas et al., 2021), worsening cognition (Donovan et al., 2017) and poorer sleep (Shankar, 2020).

Since the beginning of the 20th century, loneliness has progressively been a prevalent mental state among modern people. Loneliness is considered by philosophers and literary academics to be the fundamental mode of existence and emotional state of human beings. The study of loneliness as a standalone topic has not been particularly explored in the human sciences. Books with a psychological and philosophical focus feature far too many significant theoretical positions, schools of thought, and thinkers to be disregarded. These include existentialists, hermeneutics, phenomenology, and philosophers such as Heidegger, Nietzsche, Kant, and Lacan.

Meanwhile, one of the major themes in the works of international writers has always been challenging and contemplating the idea of “loneliness”. 20th-century literature tackles loneliness head-on. Some of the most powerful portrayals of loneliness in poetry may be found in the works of poets like Coleridge, Yeats, Eliot (with pieces like “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”), and Lear (Gibson, 2000, p. 62). In these pieces, the lone figures are often glorified and romanticized. For example, Yeats imagines a character in “The Song of the Wandering Angus” who is drawn towards nature “Because a fire was in my head” and who, after catching a little trout changes into a girl who calls him by name and is taken away, comes to grips with his loneliness. Wordsworth’s “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” is another important example. Here, the exulted existence is the solitary life. The severe and unrelenting books by Graham Greene, Joseph Conrad, and Herman Melville, on the other hand, are well worth reading. These verses seem to be saying that loneliness never really goes away or comes to an end. The loneliness of repressed homosexuality is alluded to in both Tom Wakefield’s *Mates* and Radclyffe Hall’s *Well of Loneliness* (Gibson, 2000, pp. 79-85). The significant writings of this age by George Orwell also emphasize confusion and loneliness.

“Loneliness” is also an important theme in Tim Winton’s works. *Shallows* tells the story of various characters living in a spiritual desert; they are lonely, wandering, and depraved, and the story seems to show that love is the only way to help them get rid of pain.

Moreover, Tim Winton, a four-time winner of the Miles Franklin Literary Award, with his unique perception of Australian culture and a deep sense of the value of life, shows the pain of the modern mind: people are alone in the world. Tim Winton’s novels, often through a fable-type story with a very short length, very frugal ink, almost white description, write out the modern people behind the prosperity of today’s society’s unbearable loneliness and loneliness, as well as the sense of separation between people, no matter near or far. Behind the plainness of the writing style lies a thought-provoking “cardinal principle of righteousness”, which is Winton’s style (Yuanshen, 2006, p. 5). As Sahile claims, Winton’s narratives often present the themes of alienation and isolation as the consequences of modernization (Ben-Messahel, 2006, p. 62). This novel, *Shallows*, is no exception.

In *Shallows*, Winton portrays a series of loners in all shapes and sizes. Loneliness is a spiritual mark projected on the kernel of their real lives, giving these characters with very different personalities and different destinies the same psychological state and attitude of existence. To overcome persistent loneliness, Winton’s characters take various approaches to finding understanding and acceptance. Some decide to run away from rebellion and alienated

relationships, becoming loners estranged from the primitive group; some choose to search for quests, and in the quest for personal spiritual experience and spiritual enlightenment, they find the essential power and spiritual belief of survival; still others choose to bury their heads in the sand and escape reality through their work.

### Literature Review

This article explores the representation of loneliness concerning one example of how loneliness is expressed in literature. Tim Winton's novel *Shallows* is his first novel; although it has been analyzed from various perspectives, such as ecocriticism, post-ecocriticism, and even eco-feminism, there is nobody to judge it from the theme of loneliness. This article will fill this gap. His acute and intuitive knowledge of every social station allowed him to include loneliness in his epic writings effectively. He had a remarkable talent for portraying the often excruciating loneliness that children and elders experience. Quick, Fish, Queenie, Jaxie, and Fintan are only a few such examples.

### Problem Statement

Human existence is characterized by loneliness. McMullan et al. (2020) define loneliness as a subjective experience where an individual feels as though they don't have any meaningful interactions or connections. Furthermore, studies state that more than a million people commit suicide annually—more than are murdered in homicide and war combined. The disparity in wealth and the consumption of stimulants both make people more irritable. Simultaneously, the problem of religion is becoming more intense. It results in the quick destruction of the spiritual structure. However, the concept of loneliness in Fromm's psychoanalysis comes with a few shocks. Even while inevitable loneliness is awful, we may understand and learn about it through the beliefs of psychologists, rationally repressing and diminishing it. *Shallows* discloses the theme of loneliness. This research attempted to identify three types of loneliness and find the solutions to it in the novels, which shed light on loneliness in real social life.

### Objective of the Study

This study explores the three characters' eccentric behavior and the theme of loneliness in the novel *Shallows* by famous Australian writer Tim Winton. The purpose of this study is twofold: first, to discover to what extent the theme of loneliness is present in Tim Winton's *Shallows*, and second, to categorize this loneliness into three distinct types. The first is spiritual loneliness, a loneliness caused by having fallen out of the grace of God. The second is social loneliness, a loneliness brought about by the lack of human companionship. The third is loneliness provoked by a sense of personal failure. This article will reveal the three types and three protagonists' solutions to loneliness through Fromm's Psychoanalysis, helping readers understand some of the characters' eccentric behaviors in the text while pointing out the real love that can validly solve the problem of loneliness.

This study aims to help humanity regain lost faith. People do not know how to love because of the loss of faith; when people do not feel the warmth of love, they feel lonely. Therefore, regaining faith is essential for people to get rid of the spiritual crisis. In this sense, there are three implications for practice as below:

1. Highlights the effects of bereavement, missing loved ones, and social isolation on loneliness in residents to gain a better understanding of how people in long-term care felt alone.

2. Emphasizes how important it is to provide residents with a variety of social support options, and recreational activities to lessen their feelings of loneliness.
3. Establishes a framework for upcoming studies that examine and evaluate various strategies to lessen resident loneliness in daily life.

### Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it will establish the following facts that are unknown. Fromm's Psychoanalysis Theory is worth learning, and Winton's *Shallows* is worth reading. In this novel, everyone is haunted by loneliness. Simultaneously, integrating the novel text with these psychoanalytic theories is good for understanding the revelation that the author intended to show us. It not only gives readers access to the background and social customs at the beginning of the last century but also cracks a series of puzzles in life. Loneliness is not a personal, subjective psychological feeling but a crucial reality that all human beings must face objectively. Even though it could not be eradicated thoroughly, it could be restrained and relieved scientifically through learning psychological theories. In so doing, it reveals the spiritual crisis of mankind under the rapidly developing material civilization. The modern material civilization developed at the same time as a human spiritual civilization into a crisis, emptiness, anxiety, and loneliness gradually produced, just as Priest Pell, Queenie, Daniel, and nearly everyone is in a spiritual crisis, emptiness, loneliness accompanied by them, so they try to find effective ways to help themselves get rid of loneliness.

Remarkably, life is full of loneliness. This must be a feeling that everyone is having. This is a bad feeling since it makes you feel hopeless. Desperation then gives rise to thoughts of suicide and actual suicide. Therefore, it is intriguing to be able to manage this emotion. This research clarifies that a variety of things can influence people in this manner. Thus, the issue of loneliness, therefore, needs to be discussed.

### Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Fromm (1942) takes *The Fear of Freedom*, his famous work, as the starting point of his theory of loneliness. Firstly, he believes that loneliness belongs to human nature. He said, "To feel completely alone and isolated leads to mental disintegration just as physical starvation leads to death" (p. 19). Secondly, loneliness is the most terrible. "While in so far as he is an animal he is most afraid of dying, in so far as he is a man he is most afraid of being utterly alone" (Fromm, 1959, p. 35). For children, "a child, afraid of being "abandoned" by his parents because he is aware of experiences which to them individually are taboo, will, in addition to the socially normal repression" (Fromm, 1959, p. 36). Thirdly, modern people still feel lonely. Even though the political system of democracy and freedom has been practiced for many years, "the modern persons who have escaped the medieval yokes that both protect and limit humans, have not achieved the freedom which can give full play to their personalities (including their intelligence, emotions, and potentials). Freedom brings independence and reason to people but leads to loneliness simultaneously." Fromm wrote in *The Art of Love*: "Man—of all ages and cultures—is confronted with the solution of the same question: the question of how to overcome separateness, how to achieve union, how to transcend one's own life and find atonement" (Fromm, 2000, p. 9). However, the answer to this question varies. "The question can be answered by animal worship, by human sacrifice or military conquest, by indulgence in luxury, by ascetic renunciation, by obsessional work, by artistic creation, by the love of God, and by the love of Man" (Fromm, 2000, p. 9).

**Term: Loneliness**

Loneliness is a feeling that every person may have experienced. There are three essential key characteristics of loneliness: it is the result of deficiencies in a person's social relationships, it is a subjective experience, and it is unpleasant and distressing (Victor, Scambler, Bond, 2009, pp. 42-43). Numerous studies have linked feelings of loneliness to psychological factors such as low social competence, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and suicidal feelings (Heinrich & Gullone, 2006 via Bevin, 2011, p. 50)

Fromm's theory of loneliness tells us that humans are spiritual beings who desire ultimate care and are extremely dependent on spiritual support. It is a combination of soul and flesh, potential and reality, life and death. His soul is not immortal even though he always tries to surpass his flesh; he has unlimited potential, but crucial reality confronts him, often making him deeply helpless. His immortal spirit can be inherited by descendants from generation to generation, but he cannot escape from the cage of death. This inborn and inextricable contradiction, deeply rooted in human existence, creates loneliness. Therefore, loneliness is not a personal subjective psychological feeling but a crucial reality that all human beings must face objectively. Loneliness cannot be eradicated, but our ancestors have used philosophy to build a strong spiritual structure to resist and control it; it has been in peace for a long time. However, this balanced mode has been broken since the development of science and technology in modern times. Science and industry are promptly destroying the human spiritual world. This is the riddle of modern people's spiritual crisis. Based on the discussion, this study utilizes the loneliness concept to view Winton's *Shallows*.

**Discussion****Spiritual loneliness**

Spiritual loneliness results from the individual being out of reach of God's grace. The loneliness of the characters of Tim Winton is never the loneliness of doubt or of being unable to put trust in an omnipotent God; theirs is the loneliness of having, because of some mortal sin, fallen out of the grace of God. The solution to their loneliness is often quite simple: they must confess their sins and repent of them. Often the characters can regain their spiritual tranquility, but only after they have proven themselves worthy of being forgiven.

Their loneliness stems from the fact that they are, because of mortal sin, temporarily out of the grace of God. Their spiritual loneliness and anguish are that loneliness and anguish born of their inability to renounce a sinful way of life or to overcome the greed that keeps them out of the reach of God's grace.

The best example of spiritual loneliness in the novels of Tim Winton is that endured by William Pell, one of the protagonists of *Shallows*. Pell was born with an obsession with being good, pure, and fulfilled with the grace of God. At the very beginning of the novel, Winton introduces him to the reader in the following manner

A tiny wren alights on a branch before him, turns its head, and is gone, the branch not even vibrating under its weight. Pell marvels at the delicacy of it, thanks God for it, and moves on with his memories and thoughts. An irony is upon him. A hundred years ago, he muses, these blankets I'm carrying would have been laced with typhoid, and here I am, a century later, still bringing them blankets. He guffaws humourlessly and sighs. Well, they need blankets now, he thinks, so I bring them, that's all. (p. 14)

For Pell, as a priest, being pure and clean is not easy. All his life is one constant struggle. William Pell was a complete loner, alone and isolated for most of his life, with no parents, children, or wife. He wants to be good, pure, and filled with the grace of God. With a humble heart, he has been warming the town and its people. The recent years are filled with spiritual anguish and loneliness for Pell.

Moreover, Pell witnessed many things about the people of the town in his parsonage, where the power of his supplies, memories, prayers, and stores was hidden. Under this roof he had witnessed people trusting, people doubting, people coming here to vent their doubts, they doubted themselves, the existence of God, doubting the existence of existence. the malevolent calm in the faces whose minds and spirits had gone warmly stagnant and grown a water skin upon which his words were only insects dancing (p. 186). The first human beings came from nature and walked with it, with a simple, warm, and fully human nature, and with the growth of experience and material development, the spiritual world of mankind shriveled and dried up in the materialistic world. The proximity to nature is transformed into the worship of material things, people are gradually alienated from nature, and beautiful and pure humanity is gradually lost. People feel confused and lonely in the blind pursuit of material things, and in the plight of loneliness, they are entangled and struggling, trying to return to the original fullness and beauty of human nature.

Loneliness pervades Winton's novel *The Shallows*. Pell is alone on a spiritual plateau, pursuing the meaning of existence and the place of faith; the humble heart and love he inherited from his father. He is alone in a self-constructed world, living life on his terms; since 1929, Coupar has seen Pell driving a van loaded with Pustling's money. Pell drove the van to distribute goods-blankets, food, medicine, books, Bibles, toys, clothes (p. 115) and single-handedly went against the Pustling clan, delivering necessities to the poor, "playing Santa Claus", and, with his own loving and humble heart, doing the same as his father. With a heart full of love and humility, like his father, he is a "fine man" (p. 88) and takes the charity alone (p. 88). To stop Pustling from using the church as some kind of financial cover, a means of tax fraud. He was stopping the church from serving the Pustling clan with land purchases and development.

Pell is alone in his spiritual world holding on to behaviors that others cannot understand, expressing his unique perception of society in a world of desolation and materialism. Loneliness follows everyone around as everyone seeks relief. Whether it is a flood or a fire, Pell leaves his comfortable, peaceful life with a sacred sense of duty to help the poor regardless of the loss; when Pell has to retire and leave, Pell recalls with overwhelming despair and helplessness the most pristine dependence on him. He treats others kindly, and in his unselfish amount of silent giving, he practices his value and dignity and also injects a strong warmth into the lonely world.

### **Social Loneliness**

Social loneliness is caused by the lack of human companionship. The four categories examined in this study under the title of social loneliness were: (1) loneliness after the failure of a love affair. (2) loneliness after the death of a loved one. (3) loneliness of temporary separation. and (4) the loneliness of not belonging socially. Queenie is alone in a world full of people. She is the one who experiences all the four types. Her mother left after giving birth to her, and her grandmother died when she was ten. In school, she was the one who was laughed at. After marriage, Queenie becomes an environmentalist; her husband does not understand her, causing an estrangement between them. She is a woman of high moral standards and cannot bring herself to become one of them. She cannot become one of them, and in the



social world into which her husband has taken her, she is unable to find anyone with her set of moral standards.

Queenie is a fifth-generation heir to the Coupar family, but Queenie switches from being a descendant of whalers to being a whale protector, there are other similar examples of irony throughout the novel to set up the theme of loving and protecting nature to reflect the author's environmentalist ideology. Also, Cleve is lonely. When Queenie first meets Cleve, Cleve is going through "a sad string of failures", and it is Queenie who "tossed her thick hair and snatched him up in her loneliness" (25). From the moment she was born, it was constant work for him to remain in isolation (p. 96).

Loneliness due to temporary separation is the mildest. but the most common type of loneliness found in the writings of Tim Winton. Generally, the person who is suffering from this type of loneliness is willing to do anything within his power to bring the individual for whom he or she is lonely back to his or her presence. One of the lonelinesses that shows up quite often in *Shallows* is the loneliness the individual feels shortly before or after the separation from his/her loved ones.

Death appears fairly frequently in Winton's books despite not being a theme in and of itself. After the loss of a loved one, a person may experience a particular kind of loneliness. It is the loneliness they feel because of their impending irreversible separation. In the Coupars, both the first and second generations committed suicide. The fourth generation, Daniel Coupar, often feels the loneliness of not being wanted.

The loneliness of temporary separation is quite prevalent in *Shallows*; of all degrees of loneliness in the novel, this is the mildest one. Sometimes, it causes tears and heartaches, but it is never the bitter loneliness of a broken love affair or the mournful loneliness of death. Because of its mild nature, it is the easiest to cure. These are just a few of the numerous instances of social isolation that may be discovered throughout Winton's *Shallows*. Although Winton does not concentrate on the subject of loneliness on purpose, he is a realist, and reality includes loneliness very much.

### **Personal Failure**

Loneliness is the main tone of *The Shallows*. The third type of loneliness that is examined in this study is the loneliness of personal failure. Ever since Nathaniel Coupar, a character of the first generation of the Coupar family, worked as a whaler, his heart was filled with endless loneliness, and the only way to get rid of his loneliness was to resort to his diary and come to the black cave of the beach to escape the cruelty of reality. Nathaniel Coupar, in his own words, is the son of a respectable debtor, fool runaway to the sea, observer chiefly, whaler, survivor, smuggler, shop-broker, and latterly a farmer, a husband, ogre it seems (p. 168). About all this, he never communicates it to the closest of all - his wife. His wife fears him, his cries in the night, and his burning tempers. His son and daughters fear his presence, and no one understands him. He chose suicide to end his life. According to Ben-Messahel, Tim Winton's characters then endeavor to burrow into an imaginative world they may find hard to escape from. They are lonely souls lost among the crowd; they become an islet in their country of the mind. (p. 65)

There are men in Winton's works who carve out a lonely life for themselves due to a lack of a higher purpose in life. Realizing they have wasted their entire life and not accomplished anything great or honorable makes them feel alone. This story holds that having a great vocation and pursuing it with honor and dignity is necessary for happiness in life. The result of giving up on a worthwhile goal in life is sorrow and loneliness—the loneliness that comes

with being a failure. *Shallows* teach us that man ought to live a noble life and devote himself to a noble profession. Everything else is incidental.

Nathaniel Coupar was not the only suicide in the entire Coupar family. During the 150 years of this stormy urbanization, five generations of the Coupa family were at the cusp of the times, from Nathaniel Coupar who left home as a whaler at a young age and suffered condemnation from his heart alone at sea in loneliness. His son, Martin Coupar, with a heart bigger than the sky and a life thinner than paper, shot himself penniless in 1920.

The third generation, Daniel Coupar, lost his parents when he was young. For the next several years, Daniel Coupar worked everywhere. Worked on the road, on boats, docks, whaling stations, wagons, and trains. A savings was soon made. In the summer of 1931, he met Maureen. In the winter of 1932, he organized a confrontation with the Pustlings, who used the money to buy out the city's newspapers and take control of the church, leaving Coupar alone. Alienated from his new wife, for many years he was trapped in total isolation, and he isolated himself in endless loneliness. During the 34 years of his marriage, he rarely interacted with his wife, bearing alone and also subjecting his wife to bitterness from life, and his daughter, who was also a young child, returned at the age of 17 to give birth to Queenie and left, and in 1966 his wife, Maureen, fell over a waterfall and passed away, leaving the 10-year-old Queenie and Daniel Coupar to live with each other on the farm in Wirrup Hill. Queenie inherited and "betrayed" his family's history: he inherited the "strong and mostly honest and capable of good" (p. 264) character of the Coupar family; he inherited the Coupar family's broad arms and strong body; the fifth generation Coupar Queenie grew up without parental care, and in her own words was "alone in the world" (p. 12).

Daniel felt like a failure. He savored these moments, then, and tried not to think of the intimacies he had denied his wife, denied himself, those millions of things he had left unsaid (p. 83). People often feel the loneliness of not being wanted. One of the most common complaints among the characters in the novels of Winton is that nobody loves them, that nobody wants them.

The loneliness of not belonging socially is one of the most frustrating emotions in the characters in *Shallows*. These are individuals who, because of their moral code or because of their social upbringing, do not fit socially into the accepted pattern of life practiced by those with whom they find themselves associated. They are individuals who are out of their element. These people are unable to accustom themselves to the pattern of life practiced by the people with whom they live and because of this, they suffer from the loneliness of not being accepted socially in the society they live in.

Another category of lonely characterization in Winton's novels is "whalers". Most of these people are unidentified, non-existent, and of low social status; some of them are convicts, and they spend their lives drifting and turbulent on the wandering fringes of society. Such people in *Shallows* are whalers. In his Journal, Nathaniel Couper, as a whaler, depicts the loneliness of whalers.

In June 1831, Nathaniel Couper was a watchman in a whaling party; whaler Nowles had his fingers cut off, "The dogs' howl is not unlike poor Nowles" (p. 66). He was ordered to have his fingers cut off to avoid capsizing the ship, "the night is filled with the squirmings and moanings of poor Nowles in the bunk above. How lonely is the sound of a man in pain! There is nothing more solitary; it cannot be shared, and a man is isolated in his sea, the swirling rip-current that is pain. Nowles tosses and pitches his way in the dark" (p. 37). One week later, Nowles is dead and is buried at sea, Churling was also "haggard and pale, like a man whose soul has left him" (p. 108), disoriented and miserable. This sad appearance caused Nathaniel Coupar to



“recoil from him, revile him” (p. 108). He wanted to speak and tried to communicate with Nathaniel Coupar, to communicate the inner struggle, the restlessness, the conscience he was suffering, and the loneliness. But, in the end, not a word was spoken. For the whalers, brawling, drinking, and drunkenness was the norm. Each man lived in his closed little world of loneliness, isolation, apathy, and despair, living a life of “filth, and hopeless barbarity” (p. 157).

The loneliness, savagery, and despair of the whalers can be glimpsed in the diary of Churling, a whaler who died in some conflict with the natives, leaving behind a diary:

‘Eugene Andrew Churling

Lost.

The sand on this beach was once white.

Myself also. And I thought I might tell him my  
friend but he is faraway and can not listen.

He is lost in the Heavens and the Heavens is  
lost to me.

Flesh. Blood. Sol.

Good thing Mother is in Heaven and I to Hell  
for now I will not meet face her over this.

For I am the animal.’ (p. 123)

In addition to Churling’s loneliness, among the rest of the companion crew, Hale had not wanted to speak to Nathaniel Coupar in recent days. He has twice called Nathaniel “High and Holy” as though in jest, though there seems to be some sincerity behind this humour (p. 137). Doan and Smithson, who had always been reluctant to talk to each other, did not say a word. Perhaps the loneliness of extreme youth was Churling’s source of despair (p. 137). After taking the lunatic Bale into the bush, Finn’s crew returns without him an hour later. They have left him to his insane nature. In addition to the indifference among human beings, who treated life as if it were nothing, there was extreme loneliness on the part of the whaler Nathaniel Couper, who, on July 3, 1831, found a clean, dry, and well-formed cave. He was happy to find this shelter where he could have his solitude all to himself, “It had a rare quality I could not for a moment identify. Then I realized that the air inside was pure, that it did not reek of boiled flesh and fly-blown skeletons. I sat inside, observing the smooth grey walls” (p. 136). Here, he could endure solitude alone and escape the sense of despair brought on by whaling. However, whalers are exceptionally cruel to whales, with calves breaching from their mothers’ bellies. Whalers wade in and out of their intestines, and on the beaches lie the decaying carcasses of whales, the sand having been polluted with whale oil and turned blue. Gulls swarm over the ragged skeletons that lie like hulks in the shallows (p. 109). Nathaniel Coupar showed in his journal that he was not interested in whales and did such poor job as a lookout in the whaling fleet, where he kept a diary. Complaining that cruelty to the whales had dehumanized them and made them animals, “We have become animals. No – they. Filth, and hopeless barbarity” (p. 157). In the end, the whalers were punished, some thrown into the sea by the sperm whales in their final fury. The four crewmen who abandoned the ship and fled fought and were brutally partially eaten. Nathaniel Coupar did not join in the killing of the whales without becoming so cruel as to participate in it, and thus escaped and became the sole survivor.

Those who are alienated from nature and turn their backs on it will become cruel and turn into emotionally displaced people who will get nature’s revenge, and all the rest of the people who were involved in the whaling party, except for Nathaniel Coupar, who observed it as a

bystander, all of them died and were coldly, cruelly discarded or dismembered. Just as the “sperm whale was dismantled like a salvaged vessel” (p. 42). The author is also implying that humans should stop killing and be kind to the inhabitants of the earth, that humans are the “other” that has taken over the space of the whales, and that the whales themselves are the owners of this space. The only way out for humans is to be kind to nature. Otherwise, we will be like the whalers of 150 years ago who were subjected to the vengeance of nature.

### **Solution to Loneliness**

In Fromm's Psychoanalysis, there is a wrong orientation of social personality named positive-orientation, which means showing love and senses spontaneously. He points out that only mature and sound love is the best solution to people's loneliness. Love means the connection with other people, however, in Fromm's view, not all the forms of people's connection could be called “love”. Both the masochisms who succumb to others to get rid of loneliness and the sadists who seem to be dictators that force other people into their parts lose their independence and integrity in the connection with others: Such a kind of connection is not a mature and rational form of love. Real love should be established on the base of equality and freedom. Fromm sums up the elements of real love: care, responsibility, respect, and understanding. Meanwhile, “giving” is an indispensable precondition. These factors affect each other and will be congregated in mature persons.

Therefore, love based on the true meaning is the correct way to eliminate the human sense of loneliness. It is equally important to find the roots of loneliness in the process of people's growth to avoid increasing loneliness. From the perspective of Fromm's Psychoanalysis, to fulfill the need for finding roots and the need for love is particularly necessary.

### **Intimacy to Nature**

As Fromm (2001) claims, the emergence of religion and the individuation and self-awareness of man are strongly related. It appears that when man became more self-aware, he also began to feel alone and different from other people. Mankind evolved the tremendous yearning to be one with the world and to stop being separate as a result of this experience, which causes intense anxiety. He tried to get back to where he had come from and reunite with nature for hundreds of thousands of years. He desired to be free of the weight of being a human, of being aware of both the outside world and himself, and to once more be one with the animals and the trees. He made numerous attempts to bring this union together (p. 147). In his works, Winton has portrayed many people who are shrouded in loneliness, whose lives are tormented by loneliness, some of whom have been searching for the source of their souls all their lives, and some of whom are trapped in the temptation of material things and feel empty and confused. In the end, they return to the vast nature, where they are enlightened, purified, and sublimated. As Ben-Messahel remarks, “Spiritual experience is central to the writer's imagination; the characters are often caught up in the realm of the surreal or spiritual, so that they are able to escape both personal isolation and their weaknesses, to reach out to the natural element as a means of survival” (p. 215).

Daniel Coupar's house on Wurrup Hill, after 18 months of drought, welcomes torrential rain, which makes him meditate and purify in the rain; Queenie, after his upheaval of “leaving” and returning, finds herself in the sound of whales returning to the beach. The Coupar family loves to be close to nature, and this is especially true for Queenie Coupar. The climate on Wurrup Hill is closely related to Queenie, and since Cleve “stole Queenie from him. Since then, it had not rained” (p. 21). Daniel Coupar, “Sitting on the solitary green tuft by the bore, he

remembered Queenie swimming through bracken mimicking the sounds of the windmill and the songs of the whales. She was an amphibian-child, skinny, shiny-skinned, shimmying through bodies of water and vegetation” (p. 76). Nature was her spiritual home, her spiritual solace. She loved the turquoise grass, listening to the sighs of the wind, Queenie listening to the movement in the ferns; she loved its stiff greenery and had spent hours, days, lying amongst the fronds, hearing the wind-shivers (p. 24). As a child, she loved to climb up to the windmill to see the whales in the bay surfacing and spouting a nitrous spray. From the heights of the farm’s holly trees, she had imagined how the whales were “God-appointed messengers” (p. 24). She talked and communicated with the animals with genuine love. She was truly in tune with nature. In nature, she felt the bliss of solitude and the fullness of self. Although she was not blessed by her parents in her childhood, she had a knack for communicating with nature, which gave her a humble heart, a love of life, and a love of living, and she thrived under the blessing of her grandparents. Queenie loved swimming and, like Grandma, loved the freedom in the water. The light green light of the water reminded her of the colors of the Wurrup fish and her light blue dreams. In the pool and the surf she felt strong, quick, and graceful (p. 132).

Queenie grew up collecting thousands of shells with Daniel Coupar, wandering along the beach below picking over shore-scum, and finding things from worlds away (p. 77). She always remembered those dreams of whales lurching up across the paddocks, spiracle whistling like the wind in the eaves, to bring a sign from God (p. 153). Queenie swam naked at Angelus Beach on cold days, spoke to dolphins and heard God in the seashells, and had a fear of thunder and lightning, which made her seem eccentric to all (p. 16). As Queenie takes Cleve back to his home on Wurrup Hill, Queenie travels up the gully to find the waterfall that means so much to her (p. 27). In nature, she does not need her husband’s definition or acceptance but releases herself with abandon and blossoms into an abundant life. In the mystery of nature, life is solitary.

Nature is pure and forgiving in Winton's writing, and she accepts the wandering, exploring human being with a big heart. Daniel Coupar, too, could only feel his presence in nature, and in his childhood days at school, he longed for holidays and the freedoms of the farm, the hill, the sea, the intricacies of dried watercourses, the deep occasional shadows of whales moving offshore (p. 90). In the ruins on Wurrup Hill, the natural place that always gave Coupar a sense of perspective, Coupar always went over there to meditate and ponder. As Ben-Messahel remarks, His characters meander through isolation, a time–space that absorbs them and provides them with a sense of completeness as they are taken up by dreams, meditation, and contemplation. (p. 71)

In the time-traveling narrative, that solitude finds its habitat in the vastness of cosmic space. Coupar is alone. He sits and stands in that mysterious land of earth and remembers the history of the Coupar family beside the fire of life, with his voice, face, and smile, constituting a narrative of solitude about writing and remembrance, missing and releasing. He has freed himself from loneliness by being in close contact with nature for years and years.

Daniel Coupar in *Shallows* is deeply rooted in the land. He contemplates the meaning of life and the destination of his faith in nature, and only by integrating himself into nature can he feel the quietness and fulfillment of his heart. He thinks and explores in solitude in nature, completes the pursuit of faith as well as life in nature, and realizes the roundness of the natural world in his contact with nature. He was able to perceive the unusualness of the natural climate and deeply appreciated the suffering of nature due to the existence of human

beings, calling out “How long will the land mourn, and the grass of every field wither? For the wickedness of those who dwell in it the beasts and the birds are swept away” (p. 78).

People feel lonely and confused in the hustle and bustle of the material world, and only by returning to nature can they calm their minds and look for a spiritual home and a home to embrace. The distorted human nature in the materialistic world can only be refilled and purified in nature. Initially, human beings came from nature and walked with nature, and their humanity was simple, warm, and full. With the growth of experience and material development, the spiritual world of human beings shriveled and dried up in the materialistic world. The closeness to nature is transformed into the worship of material things. People are gradually alienated from nature, and their beautiful, pure humanity is gradually lost. People feel confused and lonely in their blind pursuit of material things, and they are entangled in the plight of loneliness. Struggling to return to the original fullness and beauty of human nature.

### Love and Humility

According to Fromm, the basis for our need to love lies in the experience of separateness and the resulting need to overcome the anxiety of separateness by the experience of union (Fromm, 2000, p. 59). Unwilling to be alone, people try to break free from the shackles of loneliness and breathe in the warmth by practicing. Love is a natural element that men and women need to overcome their alienation and isolation in the empty life of their own: ‘Why is it so hard to love? To be loved? To fulfil the law?’ (Winton, 1984, p. 256). Daniel Coupar’s questions address the history of the Coupars and the despair at being all alone, all at one with a bleak future. (Ben-Messahel, 2006, p. 59) As Fromm (2000) claims, love is a power that produces love (p. 29).

Love connects people and enables lonely people to find solace in their hearts amid helplessness. As Fromm (2000) claims, “Love is an active power in man; a power which breaks through the walls which separate man from his fellow men” (p. 25). Winton also depicts a selfless giving out of love in the novel. This kind of generous giving is like warm sunshine shining into the lonely person’s lonely heart and warming the harsh reality of society. In terms of narrative mode, *Shallows* intends to break the confinement of time and space and to use the grandiose name of extensive love and humility as a metaphor for the dialectic and eternity of all things; however, if we go a little bit closer, we will find that there is also a kind of love like a dark surge under the theme of loneliness. It is the love of kinship and a caring love beneath the surface of the loneliness of people being so far away from each other.

We learn from Cleve that “the Coupars have been a proud family.’ He thought: They have not loved. Plenty of passion, only no love” (p. 24). Through the novel, we can find out that the whole Coupar family lives in endless loneliness. While in fact, we can see the love of the Coupar family everywhere, only that this love is sometimes silent. For example, when Daniel Coupar’s mother talks about his father, there is a kind of adoring love. Calling Martin Coupar “a Coupar’s Coupar” (p.91); Grandmother’s love for her granddaughter, Queenie, can be seen when Maureen cries when she dreams bad things about Queenie. And the details of Queenie’s departure from the farm: when Queenie is about to leave the farm, Queenie pretends to go back to get the bags, when in fact he is trying to protect Coupar’s pride by trying to privately invite him to come to town for a little stay. And although Daniel Coupar says, “Piss off, I’m busy” (p. 28), he actually “did not want the young people to go; he would have shamed them into staying” (p. 28). As well as the tears with which Coupar taught Queenie to swim, sometimes between desperate struggles she saw the tears glistening on his

face as he rowed (p. 209). From the “cruel” love of her grandfather, who “tossed her overside and rowed toward the shore” (p. 173).

On top of that, when Coupar was picking Queenie up from school, he realized that some of his classmates were teasing Queenie; at that time, he wanted to turn into a woman himself to help her with the embarrassment, “wished I was a woman, myself, that day. Maybe if I were a woman it would’ve been easier for you” (p. 98), Coupar wanted to take all the pain for Queenie, “God, I’d take her pain, her life’s pain upon myself, her confusion even, if only you’d give her understanding now. I could suffer anything for that and die without waste and tragedy. I’d be nothing. Less. For that” (p. 264).

Then again, Daniel Coupar had “shake this town by the ears, seize people’s imaginations and make them see and act” (p. 187). Coupar had a great love and responsibility for the town as a whole. Coupar, with a sense of divine responsibility, left his comfortable and peaceful life and helped those who came to him in desperation during the Great Depression, regardless of the cost, to get through the difficult natural stages of their lives. He said, “times I wish God’d made it easier for me to live with Him. Wish I could stop everything and start again, feed everyone, heal everyone, make everyone see and understand like I thought I could when I was a younger, better man” (p. 99). He had led the people of his town in a march against hunger and against real estate. They had great love in their hearts to take on the responsibility of protecting the town.

In short, we can understand that the Coupar family has love, great love. This silent love, humility, strength, and kindness is the medicine against all loneliness and indifference. The Coupars keep love in their hearts, as Coupar complains, “Why is it so hard to love? To be loved? To fulfil the law” (p. 267). They have a great love in their hearts to protect the town, as Marks says to Queenie “look after this town and put a match to it” (p. 243).

In addition to the Coupars, there is also the great love of Pell, who holds the blankets, which his father likewise held a hundred years ago, to give warmth to these people who need them. For example, Pell’s train loaded with goods, dressed as Santa Claus, distributed items to the poor. Even Staats, who craves respect and seeks to defend the Angelus whaling industry, fulfills an obligation left to him by his father on his deathbed – providing free booze for Dick and Darcy, two elderly men. Marion Lowell, having made her way into high society, was generous and gave to the community. She helps Pell to leave Pustling’s control in a special way. In a selfish way to satisfy her vanity, she attempts to escape the bonds of loneliness and achieve a sense of balance and fulfillment.

Also, strangers and the love with which Dick and Darcy support and warm each other, Dick and Darcy, whether they are gay or twins, warm each other in their old age, showing “each other the places where skin is missing from their knuckles and where barnacles have torn their hard old palms” (p. 74). They have a never-ending supply of fish to fish for and endless amounts of wine (the wine was an obligation that Staats had taken over from his father to provide the two old men with their drinks free of charge) and grew old with each other. They leaned against the pillar, which had been nailed up a few years ago to protect them from the wind, and there was occasional warmth on the cold earth; it was through this little bit of warmth between people that people dared to live.

### **Finding and Conclusion**

Loneliness is one of the twenty-first century’s social concerns. Despite having all their money and conveniences, most people today are unhappy. “Today’s man is a mass man. He is extremely “socialized”, but he is also quite lonely” (Fromm, 1989, p. 33). People can die

because of loneliness. People's number of friends has increased since communication has become easier. It's not a case of being isolated. It is a matter of loneliness, as it is well known that loneliness is an interior experience that has nothing to do with whether or not there are people around. It emanates from within.

Through analyzing Winton's *Shallows*, it can be found that Winton demonstrates the lonely environment and state of human existence, and at the same time, he also expresses his wishes and exploration in his works. Loneliness is the mark of Winton's novels, in particular, *Shallows* is soaked with the loneliness and despondency of human beings in the empty spiritual world. Winton contemplates the loneliness of human existence with prudence and a heavy sense of responsibility and records a group of characters who are deeply trapped in the fate of loneliness. They are either engulfed by great material temptations and reduced to slavery in the material world, becoming alien existences, or confined to a small space and enclosed in the world of self, losing the ability to communicate and interact with others or alone in the isolated spiritual realm, exploring new horizons in the realm of loneliness. Whether they are people who have lost their true nature in spirit and flesh or people who have put themselves outside the secular society and immersed themselves in the world of self-will and pure spirituality, they are all struggling and exploring the predicament of loneliness. People seek tolerance and understanding in the broad and deep embrace of nature to enrich their dry spiritual world.

Textual evidences show that the love and intimacy of nature help characters to find their 'authentic' self. According to Fromm "the only thing that could save humanity from its own soul-destroying loneliness is the individual's ability to inhabit what came to be known as the 'authentic' self. If you achieved authenticity, you would be rewarded with the inner peace necessary to become a free agent who is happy to do unto others as you would have others do unto you" (Quoted in Friedman, 2013). As Ben-Messahel claims, Love consequently emerges as a hubris and a nemesis—a torturing but soothing and fulfilling natural element. Love is, in fact, a constant state of siege, a beleaguered well of emotions (p. 48).

Meanwhile, people try to talk to others with their emotions, melt the wall of human isolation in the warmth of latent love, and overcome endless loneliness in love. With profound humanistic concern, Winton depicts the different degrees of loneliness imprinted in the souls of modern people as well as their life aspirations of searching and exploring loneliness. His creations point to reality, and he hopes that people should not lose themselves in the purely material dimension but should enrich their will and emotion, communicate with others authentically, live authentically in nature, break through the barriers and shackles of loneliness in the world of humility and love, and find the true nature of life. The novel concentrates on the theme of loneliness, which is a problem that many individuals face in real life. As a result, readers tend to connect with the characters' loneliness. The issue addressed in this study can help to understand the problem, its causes, and possible solutions. It can aid in catharsis and can be useful in the art of dealing with loneliness. Loneliness in life must be avoided because it can be dangerous and lead to serious actions such as suicide.

### Further Research Proposed

This study aims to study not only its implications in the novel but also to explore its causes and ways to deal with it in real life. This research can be helpful especially for loners to understand their loneliness and recognize how it can be overcome. Moreover, drawing on a framework afforded by the convergence of Fromm's series theories, this study illuminates under-explored facets of Winton's fictional texts and further extends and contributes to our



understanding of the literary oeuvre of one of the most significant Australian contemporary writers. In addition, Winton's other works are worthy of further research to find more loneliness types and more methods to solve this common problem of human beings.

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