National College of Ireland

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Leaving Certificate: English Notes
Paper 2

A.C Bradley discusses MACBETH and LADY MACEBTH

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are both fired by the same passion of ambition and are quite alike. The disposition of each is high, proud and commanding. They support and love one another and also suffer together. They are the two great terrible figures who dwarf all the remaining characters in the drama. Both inspire the feeling of awe.

Their attitudes towards the projected murder of Duncan are quite different and produce equally different effects. At the beginning of the play both are equally important. However, as the play progresses she retires more and more into the background.

Macbeth is a more complex character; cousin of a King, mild, just and beloved. He is introduced to us as a general of extraordinary powers who has covered himself with glory in putting down a rebellion and repelling the invasion of a foreign army. In these conflicts he showed great personal courage, a quality which he continues to display throughout the drama in regard to all dangers. We imagine him as a great warrior, somewhat masterful, rough and abrupt, a man to inspire admiration. He was thought honest, he was trusted, Macduff, a man of the highest integrity 'loved him well'.
At the same time he was exceedingly ambitious. His marriage to a highly ambitious woman would have strengthened him. When we see him at the beginning of the play, his ambition has further been stimulated by his remarkable powers and merit. It now becomes a passion. His conscious or reflective mind moves in the realm of success and failure while his inner being is convulsed by consequences. 'His courage is frightful. He strides from crime to crime, though his soul never ceases to bar his advance with shapes of terror or to clamour in his ears that he is murdering his peace and casting away his eternal jewel'. Macbeth's imagination is excitable and intense. What appals him is always the image of his own guilty heart or bloody deed.

Macbeth kills Duncan almost as if it were an appalling duty. When the murder is complete there is no sense of glory only a horror. As the instant it is finished its futility is revealed to Macbeth. As he staggers from the scene he mutters in despair: 'Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou could'st'. From this moment on Macbeth lives in a state of mental torment. Shakespeare presents a fascinating, engrossing, psychological spectacle of Macbeth as the play continues. The heart sickness which comes from Macbeth's perception of the futility of his crime, and which never leaves him for long, is not his habitual state. His consciousness of guilt is stronger in him than the consciousness of failure. He has made a mortal war on his own soul and is in a perpetual agony of restlessness which forbids him to droop and pine. His mind is 'full of scorpions'. He cannot sleep. There is a fever in his blood which urges him to ceaseless action in the search for oblivion. Also his strong ambition, love of power, instinct of self-assertion is much too potent to permit him to resign his kingship, even in spirit. The forces which impelled him to aim at the crown reassert themselves and the result is frightening. His sleepless torture, he tells himself, is nothing but a sense of insecurity and fear of retaliation. He believes that if he were safe it would vanish. So he searches for the cause of his fear and his eye falls on Banquo who becomes his first victim. However, even after Banquo is dead and his ghost conquered, that inner torture is unassuaged. It then becomes Macduff that spoils his sleep and the Witches confirm that he is right to fear him. The apparitions show him Banquo's children as Kings and the 'inward fever' returns. All conscience and pity leaves him at this stage and 'the whole flood of evil in his nature is now let loose. He becomes an open tyrant, dreaded by

everyone about him, and a terror to his country.
However at the end he never totally loses our sympathy. ‘There still remains something sublime in the defiance with which, even when cheated of his last hope, he faces earth and hell and heaven’. He realises he has thrown away ‘that which should accompany old age.. honour, love obedience, troops of friends’. Act4 scene3 line24/25 ‘In the very depths a gleam of his native love of goodness, and with it a touch of tragic grandeur rests upon him. The evil he has desperately embraced continues to madden or to wither his inmost heart.’

Banquo

1. Character introduced 1:2
   Reported information
   ‘Our Captains’

2. First meeting 1:3
   Face to face with ‘withered’ creatures ‘who look not …….’ L40/41

3. He observes Macbeth’s reaction to witches
   ‘Why do you start and seem to fear/ Things that do sound so fair?’ l50/51
   ‘rapt’

4. Curious about witches but sceptical about prophecies

5. Macbeth and Banquo meet Duncan 1:4

   ‘Worthiest cousin’ l 24
   ‘Nobel Banquo’ l 29

6. Banquo and Duncan arrive at castle 1:6
   What does he notice?
   What themes touched on here?

7. Banquo and Fleance together 2:1
   He passes torch to him. Significance? Protecting Fleance from the darkness, also passing lineage to him.
   Pathetic fallacy… ‘There’s husbandry in heaven. The candles are all spent.’. Quote?

   ‘A heavy…..’

8. Disturbed mind, trusts in God, asks for help from angels.
   Shows he is strong willed, principled, honest, and has an untouched will.
   AC Bradley ‘poison has begun to work’

9. Macbeth joins Banquo l 18
   Banquo: dreamt of 'Weird Sisters' trusts Macbeth
   Macbeth: 'I think not of them'!!

10. Macbeth's proposal! L 25
    'If you cleave…'
    Banquo's retort: 'So I lose nothing…..' l 27
    Significance of this?

    - Banquo fears a treasonable proposal
    - He has no intention of accepting it
    - No fear of showing Macbeth what is on his mind

11. Duncan's murder
    Banquo stays silent for 40 lines listening to Macbeth's story unfold

Questions:

- ***Is Banquo an innocent grieving lord?***
- ***Is Fr Garnet a bad man in the eyes of the Court and King James?***
- ***16 century history depicts Fleance as ancestor of King James***
- ***What of our suspicions of Banquo?***
- ***If Shakespeare is a 'closet' Catholic as is suggested, what implication does that have on what he is implying in the porter scene?***

BANQUO

Banquo is an important character in the play *Macbeth* as he forms a strong contrast to Macbeth. It is important to note the effect the encounter with the witches has on him. This episode causes a change to take place in his character.

We first here of Banquo, in Act l Sc 2. He is with Macbeth fighting a battle against Sweno of Norway and Mc Donald of Scotland. Duncan refers to them as "Our Captain", L34. We meet him in Sc. 3 where he comes face to face with the "withered" characters who "look wot like th'inhabitants o' the earth" L40/41. Initially they do not speak to him. Banquo observes the effect their words have on Macbeth. He sees him "start" as if in fear and comments on how he seems " rapt withal ." L51-57.

He then bids the witches to prophecy to him if they know the future. Macbeth observes that "He chide (rebuked) the Sisters /When first they put the name King upon me, /And bade them speak to him." Act 3:1 L 58ff.
In this soliloquy we clearly see Macbeth's fear of Banquo. "Our fears in Banquo stick deep….There is none but he whose being I do fear." L 49-51.

Macbeth is very aware of Banquo's noble qualities. He acknowledges him as fearless, wise, valiant, bold and ambitious. We see his composure when the witches disappear, unlike Macbeth who is openly displays a feverish anxiety to know more. Banquo is only amazed.

Macbeth and Banquo join Duncan in Act 1:3. He welcomes both with kindest expressions of gratitude and promises of favours to come. Macbeth receives noble reward. Banquo is said by the king to have "no less deserved" to be honoured but receives mere thanks. L30.

In Scene 6 Banquo arrives with Duncan to Macbeth's castle with a free and open heart. He notices the birds, "This guest of summer,/ The temple-haunting martlet" has made his bed here, commenting, that they are only inclined to breath where " The air is delicate." L3-9.

As they enter the castle the skies begin to darken. (Pathetic fallacy) The blackness of a moonless, starless night oppresses him, but also something else….

"A heavy summons lies like lead upon me
And yet I would not sleep. Merciful Powers,
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts of nature
Give way to repose!" L6-10

Banquo is deeply disturbed by the workings of his subconscious mind. However, he trusts in God and asks for help from the angels. He has the will to avoid what he knows is wrong and to seek supernatural aid in doing so. When Macbeth arrives he admits that he "dreamt last night of the Three Weird Sisters." 2:1 L20. Banquo's will is still untouched, he would repel the "cursed thoughts" which bring a sense of guilt with them. The Shakespearean critic A. C. Bradley suggests that at this point "the poison has begun to work." Macbeth's reply "I think not of them" and his invitation to Banquo to speak more about it at a later time is interesting. Is Macbeth trying to free himself from suspicion if murder does happen by appearing quite indifferent to the predictions? When he suggests to Banquo "If you cleave to my consent…"L 25 perhaps he feels that on discovery of the murder, Banquo cannot fail to suspect him and thinks it safer to prepare to come to some understanding with him. Banquo's reply "So I lose none/ In seeking to augment it.." L 27-30 highlights some important issues.

1. he possibly fears a treasonable proposal
2. he has no intention of accepting it
3. he has no fear in showing Macbeth what is on his mind

Duncan's murder.

Banquo chastises Lady Macbeth saying that Duncan's death would be " Too cruel anywhere." At this stage he possibly suspects Macbeth but remains silent for forty lines as he watches Macbeth and listens as the story unfolds. Is Banquo an innocent grieving Lord? He admits that" fears and scruples shake us." 2:3 L31. He says that he stands ready and "Against the unrivaled pretence I fight of treasonable malice."L130. However he alone of all the Lord's knew of the prophecies but he has said nothing about them. He has acquiesced in Machetes accession and in the official theory that Duncan's sons had bribed the guards to murder him. Unlike Macduff, he was present ay Scone for Macbeth's investiture. In Act 3:1 we see that he has already yielded to evil – "hush no more" – as he tries to shut it out of his mind. He still is an honourable and fearless man because he has no intention of acting to bring about the fulfillment of the prophecy.

Macbeth leaves on most readers a profound impression of the misery of a guilty conscience and the retribution of crime. Shakespeare shows the incalculability of evil i.e. "that in meddling with it human beings do they no not what." A.C. Bradley. The soul, he seems to feel, is a thing of inconceivable delicacy that when you introduce into it, or suffer to develop in it any change, and particularly the change called evil, you can form only the vaguest idea of the reaction you will provoke. All you can be sure of is that it will not be what you expected, and that you cannot possibly escape it.

Mary Carroll

KINGSHIP IN MACBETH

Medieval society regarded its King as a direct representative of God and so therefore to rebel against a king was to rebel against God. The whole welfare of the state rested on his character. His powers were God-given and the moral order and stability of the state depended on good leadership. When Macbeth

> '…broke ope
> The Lord's anointed temple and stole thence
> The life o' the building.' 2:3

He cut off 'the spring, the head,' 'the very source' of life not just from Duncan's sons but also from the whole state. The moral order of the state was upturned and the forces of evil were loosed on Scotland.

According to Shakespeare the qualities of a good king were: - ' justice, verity temp'rance, stableness, /Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness, / Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude,' Act4: 3. Duncan had these in abundance. He had loyal, brave soldiers ready to die for him on the battlefield. They fight not one but two battles to protect his rule. Their dedication was a tribute to his kingdom. We see him exercise justice when he punishes the traitor Cawdor with execution and swiftly rewards Macbeth and Banquo with praise and promotion. He shows compassion to one of his injured soldiers when he sends him off to have his wounds tended. He shows humility by visiting Macbeth's castle and generousity as he bestows a gift of a diamond on Lady Macbeth. Duncan placed great trust in his Thanes and appreciated their loyalty. It was this trusting nature, which lead to his downfall. Having been betrayed once by the Thane of Cawdor he acknowledged that 'There's no art to find the mind's construction in the face.' He finally makes a fatal error in judgement by placing his trust in Macbeth, the new Thane of Cawdor.

King Edward of England is the epitome of goodness, a saintly king. Although never actually present in the play his presence is strongly felt. Malcom tells Macduff that he has powers of healing, which have been inherited from his predecessors. This gift is bestowed on him by God: 'Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand.' Act4: 3 Many come to him to be cured, the 'ulscerous' and 'pitiful', and his 'healing benediction' cures them all. He also has a 'heavenly gift of prophecy,' and the many blessed gifts associated with his monarchy are a mark of his extreme virtue.

Macbeth is the antithesis of this great king. Firstly he places his trust in the ambiguous prophesies of the witches. This brave, loyal captain is 'rapt' by their words. The final prophecy, 'All hail Macbeth, that shall be king hereafter' leaves Macbeth with a very chilling thought. He asks himself "Why do I yield to that suggestion whose horrid doth unfix my hair and make my seated heart knock at my ribs against the seat of nature? Macbeth takes the throne by force and unleashes a reign of terror on Scotland. The powers of evil and darkness engulf the land. Macbeth is now the embodiment of all that is not kingly. He is 'luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful, sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin that has a name.' His reign brings him no joy or fulfillment. He lies in 'restless ecstasy'. his mind is 'full of scorpions'. He is tormented by insecurity. He feels powerless to hold onto his kingship, it like grains of sand slipping through his bloodstained hands.

From this it is evident that to be a king requires more than just a throne. One must embody the God-given graces to rule. And so what of the Prince of Cumberland? Is Scotland in safe hands once the “Hound of Hell’ is no more? Malcom, the rightful heir to the throne, possesses many of his father’s virtues. However his shrewd judgement, evident when he flees to England after the treasonous murder of his father, suggests he will not be deceived. He has strong leadership qualities, he has not remained idle in England but has an army ready to return to Scotland with him to avenge the usurper. He also forcefully tests Macduff’s loyalty, determined not to make the same mistakes as his father. From this scene Shakespeare brings Malcom into prominence. He is seen in command of his armies, directing operations and devising strategies. It is Malcom’s brilliant tactic to disguise the full strength of his forces by having his soldiers carry branches before them. In his last speech, his language is reminiscent of his royal father. He generously rewards the loyalty of his nobles by making them earls. He promises to restore order and good government to Scotland and he calls on the grace of God to do so.

We see that Malcolm understands the essence of kingship. He is the son of a gracious father and a queen mother who was ‘more often on her knees than on her feet’. Goodness and light have overthrown the force of evil and darkness and we feel, yes, Scotland is in safe hands.

'The Poetry of Elizabeth Bishop appeals to the modern reader for many reasons'. Discuss with reference to the poems on your Leaving Cert Course, examining her thematic approach and stylistic presentation.

Elizabeth Bishop's poetry most definitely appeals to the modern reader as her poems are honest, minutely observant, and masterly etched. I love the human touch in her poems and especially how she brings out the extraordinary in the very mundane moments of life. As Tom Paulin suggests in his article 'The Poet's Poet' (Irish Times Sept. 11th 2004) 'she is one of the most formally perfect poets of the second half of the 20th century'. She combines a fine tuned sense of poetic formality with a delicate lightness of phrase. Thus she delights both the purist and the modern reader.

Bishop's poetry tends to focus on one moment in time. However, each event or moment acts as a catalyst for deep personal reflection. My religion teacher once quoted Socrates saying that 'the unexamined life is not worth living' and this, in my opinion, is one thing Bishop cannot be accused of. I loved her cinematic eye for detail which led her to reflection and then to epiphany! 'Her natural, direct, and intimate speaking voice' (Tom Paulin) speaks volumes to us today as it did when she first penned her poems.

Not being a driver and definitely not into fishing I was ready to write Elizabeth Bishop off and hopefully find some other poets more appealing! However, I was quite surprised that she hooked me in! She really helped me to appreciate simplicity and like Sylvia Plath recognise those 'spasmodic tricks of radiance' as the miracles they are! 'The Fish' and 'The Filling Station' are perfect examples of this. Isn't this something we all long for and hope to experience?

Bishop does not shy away from the dirty, ugly side of life. Her descriptions are a minutia of detail, gradually accumulated to present vivid pictures of the exotic and the simple. She deconstructs the image in front of her in order to capture each element necessary so that we can appreciate it in its entirety. The moment she catches this 'tremendous fish' all 'battered and venerable and homely' is a perfect snapshot. Her cinematic, enjambed lines takes us around this fish as she zooms in on particular aspects. The skin 'hung in strips like ancient wallpaper'. She certainly does not romanticize her catch! He was 'speckled with barnacles' and 'infested with tiny white sea lice'.

Furthermore, and possibly most evidently, her description of 'The Filling Station', 'Oil-soaked, oil permeated', presents a very 'dirty' filling station. Everything seems 'impregnated' with dirt and oil and grease. Again her cinematic technique is evident as she pans around the station, sharpening her focus on the father and sons who are 'all quite thoroughly dirty'. Her observational eye constructs vivid images, complex metaphors and intricate symbols which enliven her poetry and make me feel like I am there catching the fish or filling up my long wished for car on my road trip of a lifetime!

The descriptive nature of Bishop's poems, appear at first to be about a moment in time, however both of these poems take us on a journey, allowing her to convey the extraordinary in the ordinary. 'The filling Station' is dirty almost revolting to begin with but as she draws us from the 'black translucency' of the exterior to the wickerwork, begonia and embroidered dopily she begins to discover that despite appearances love and beauty can always be found. Although they are 'grease impregnated', 'hirsute' and 'dim' they are there for a reason. Someone put them there, someone looks after them all and Bishop realises and we with her that 'Somebody loves us all'. This journey creates an epiphany which changes an everyday moment into something exceptional.

Likewise, in 'The Fish' this 'tremendous' fish begins as 'battered' and 'homely' with its 'frightening gills' and 'skin like ancient wallpaper'. However, this journey is subtler. Bishop moves from an external examination of the fish to his 'shiny entrails' and then into his eyes!

However, he remains … the fish. Her connection and resulting empathy only occurs as she notices hi past triumphs in his ‘five old pieces of fish line’, his ‘medals with their ribbons’. ‘She stare[s] and stare[s]’ and realises that she too has fought and won many battles. Two survivors – ‘Victory’- fill up the ‘little rented boat’ and the mundane is transformed into something magical! She presents us with a gift; that in the most ordinary, grimy places beauty can be found. No matter how ‘homely’ or ‘dirty’ we may be… ‘Somebody loves us all’.

‘The Prodigal’ on the other hand presents us with a picture of someone who is unloved and most definitely does not love themselves! Bishop’s formality is evident in this double sonnet which focuses on the lowest and ugliest part of man’s life. The allusive title draws us into the moment in the parable where the young man is at his lowest and has lost everything. Her keen eye for detail is again evident in this poem as she powerfully recreates the mire in which ‘The Prodigal’ lives. ‘The brown enormous odour’ of the ‘glass smooth dung’ synaesthetically evokes his living quarters, the foul, pervasive odour really gets up our nose! This double sonnet reflects the redemptive journey of the young man who is also a surrogate for Bishop herself. In typical sonnet format, a problem is raised in the octet: the prodigal is homeless, an outsider, living in squalid circumstances. As the sun rises in the sestet, ‘glaz[ing] the barnyard mud with red’ we expect a resolution. Pathetic fallacy suggests there may be an epiphany for the prodigal. That he may realise the awfulness of his situation and change. But no! This moment of ephemeral natural beauty contrasts with the ugliness of the *'glass-smooth dung'* and only appears to have the effect of making the exiled prodigal son resigned to a further period of anguish and loneliness among the pigs, so that *‘he thought he almost might endure his exile yet another year or more.’*

However, the phrase *'almost might'* gives us a glimmer of hope helping us deal with the bathos of the situation, looks beyond present endurance and anticipates the final lines of the poem. The difficult journey to recovery from any addiction is emphasised with the need for a second sonnet as the problem continues. A poignant scene of animal domesticity is created as the farm animals settle down for the night. However, the prodigal is isolated from the ‘safe and companionable’ animals in the barn. The drudgery of his work is emphasised by cacophony as he is seen ‘*Carrying a bucket along a slimy board’*

Nature again intervenes positively in the prodigal's life, this time in the shape of the bats. The *'uncertain staggering flight'* of these repulsive creatures on their journey home to their nests affects the prodigal and he experiences *'shuddering insights, beyond his control'*. If blind bats can make their way home, then the prodigal too can find his way. Thus the poem ends on an optimistic, though ambiguous, note as ‘*it took him a long time*
finally to make his mind up to go home.’

The outcast has eventually decided, or will eventually decide, to return home. For the prodigal *'home'* is both the family he abandoned and the society of his fellow human beings from which he has been excluded by his alcoholism. In the final movement of the first sonnet we saw how the prodigal temporarily escaped from the awful reality of his situation through drinking-bouts. Now at last he rejects endurance as an adequate response to his exile and makes up his mind to go home. In the gospel story this decision comes to the prodigal son quickly and without any agonising. But for Bishop's prodigal it only comes *'finally'* as a result of *'shuddering insights'*. The adjectives *'staggering and shuddering'* hint at the effects of excessive drinking. Bishop’s cinematic portrayal of this troubled journey to recovery is fascinating but what I love about this poem is that the shape itself tells the story. The first 14 lines observe the octave/sestet of the Petrarchan sonnet form and also the quatrain/ couplet (4/4/4/2) of the Shakespearian sonnet form. The second sonnet introduces an innovative septet/septet division. The regular form and the irregular rhyme-scheme break in iambic pentameter may reflect the conflict in the mind of the prodigal (and

of Bishop) as he attempts to restore some order to his disordered life. Perhaps it also reflects the chaotic lack of order and control that the alcoholic feels. This poem concludes on an optimistic note, encouraging us all that we can escape our 'pigsty' and move out into the sunlight.
'Sestina' another heavily formalised poem is a stringently controlled expression of raw emotion. Sestina is composed of six, six line verses followed by an envoy. The same six words, 'house', 'grandmother', 'child', 'stove', 'almanac' and 'tears' echo in each verse. Although written in the third person the poem is a personal memoir recalling Bishop's early childhood. 'The September rain' and 'failing blight' of the opening stanza establishes an elegiac mood. The repressed sorrow and grief of both child and grandmother rain down and satiate this poem. This poem is very similar in perspective to 'First Death in Nova Scotia', suggesting that Bishop meditated and reflected over many years, to eventually recreate the consciousness of a child facing the awfulness of loss and their capacity to have fun in the midst of dreadful sorrow.
From the opening stanza we witness the repressed emotion that pervades this poem, as laughter and talking 'hide[s] her tears'. Pathetic fallacy links her tears to the 'rain that beats on the roof of the house' in the second stanza. The rainfall becomes symbolic of Bishop's innate sadness, palpable throughout the poem. I love the cryptic word play especially in the 'envoy' where all six key words make their final punch! My favourite…'Time to plant tears' reflecting the seasonal, yearly bursts of grief as one remembers those who are no longer with us.
Bishop's poetry is full of dramatic energy and intensely visual. It creates a unique feeling of timelessness. Her poetry is easily accessible for a modern audience and even though 'a line will take us hours, it does not seem a moment's thought, our stitching and unstitching has been nought (W.B. Yeats).

Mary Carroll

The Prodigal Elizabeth Bishop

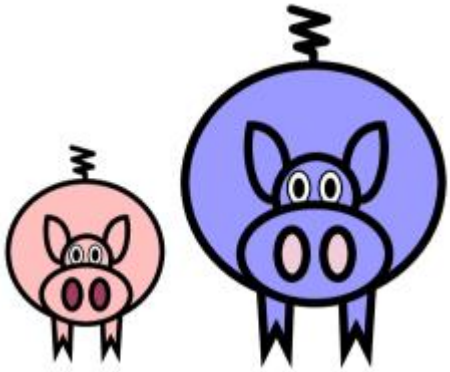
This double sonnet focuses on the lowest and ugliest part of a man's life. It revolves around the concept of human alienation and is full of pain. The focus in the narrative Helen Vendler suggests that the biblical character is a surrogate for Bishop herself, permanently exiled(but against her will)from a permanent home(her father died when she was 8months old and her mother was permanently committed to a hospital for the insane when she was 5 years old). Like the prodigal she sought comfort for her problem in alcohol.
Bishop focuses on a significant part of the parable of The Prodigal Son, not the happy ending but on the ugliest and most depraved part of the young man's life- his time spent as a swineherd after he had lost his inheritance.
The Prodigal is a double sonnet with an irregular rhyme scheme in both. The first 14 lines observe the octave/sestet of the Petrarchan sonnet form and also the quatrain/ couplet (4/4/4/2) of the Shakespearian sonnet form. The second sonnet introduces an innovative septet/septet division. The regular form and the irregular rhyme-scheme may reflect the conflict in the mind of the prodigal (and of Bishop) as he attempts to restore some order to his disordered life. Perhaps it also reflects the chaotic lack of order and control that the alcoholic feels.
The opening quatrain brilliantly captures through synaesthesia the foul, pervasive odour and its source. The sensuous images create a harrowing picture. The adjectives 'plastered' and 'glass smooth' emphasise how thickly the animal excrement is caked on the walls and how compacted it is. The prodigal's pathetic situations powerfully evoked though the

disgusting descriptions. The setting is not so much revolting in itself as in its unsuitability as a human habitation. It emphasises how low the prodigal has sunk that he should be reduced to such a bestial existence.

The focus in the second quatrain switches to the pigs themselves and a relationship is established between them and their minder

The pigs' eyes follow the prodigal's movements. They are not over-awed by his human presence (*'self-righteous'*) and willingly accept him, *'cheerful stare'*, in their domain. Sadly, the prodigal is so lonely, *'sickening'*, for human contact that he reaches out and touches the sow that *'always ate her young'*. Both, in fact, are prodigals in different ways - they have self-indulgently eaten up their futures.

The opening octet of a sonnet usually introduces a problem which is then resolved in the sestet. Where is the problem in this octet? The key to answering this is in the title. The allusion to the Biblical parable tells us that the prodigal has hit rock bottom, has lost everything. Working with pigs would be the lowest a Jewish man could fall.



There is probably no animal as disgusting to Jewish sensitivities as the pig. It's not just because it may not be eaten: there are plenty of other animals that aren't kosher either, but none of them arouse as much disgust as the pig. Colloquially, the pig is the ultimate symbol of loathing; when you say that someone "acted like a *chazir* [pig]," it suggests that he or she did something unusually abominable. Indeed, many people think of pork, ham, bacon, etc., as the most unkosher foods there are.

The adversative (expressing contrariety, opposition, or antithesis) *'But'* switches attention to the prodigal himself. We are told of his furtive, secretive, solitary drinking-bouts in an attempt to drown his loneliness and compensate for human alienation. The beams of the rising sun transform the mundane world of the farmyard.

> *the sunrise glazed the barnyard mud with red;*
> *the burning puddles seemed to reassure.*

Pathetic fallacy suggests there maybe an epiphany for the prodigal and he may realise the awfulness of his situation and change. But no! This moment of ephemeral natural beauty contrasts with the ugliness of the *'glass-smooth dung'* and only appears to have the effect of making the exiled prodigal son resigned to a further period of anguish and loneliness among the pigs.

> *And then he thought he almost might endure his exile yet another year or more.*

However, the phrase *'almost might'* looks beyond present endurance and

anticipates the final lines of the poem. The difficult journey to recovery from any addiction as emphasised with the need for a second sonnet as the problem continues.

The opening line of the second sonnet is ambivalent.

But evenings the first star came to warn.

Superficially the star warns the prodigal that his human master will soon come to check his stock and stable them for the night. However, there is also the suggestion of the Biblical star which guided the shepherds and the wise men to the 'home' (ironically a stable) of their spiritual master in Bethlehem. Thus the star may represent, on a deeper level, a divine warning to the prodigal that it is time for him to set out on his journey home. There is a touching scene of animal domesticity (reminiscent of the stable in Bethlehem) as the farm animals settle down for the night.

the cows and horses in the barn
beneath their overhanging clouds of hay,
with pitchforks, faint forked lightnings, catching light,
safe and companionable as in the Ark.
The pigs stuck out their little feet and snored.

The double metaphor vividly captures the cosy surroundings. The farmer goes home to his wife and Noah had his wife to keep him company in the Ark. Sadly the prodigal has only the pigs for company. Significantly, there is no conversation with the farmer, further evidence of the prodigal's alienation from the world of humans. The scene ends with the lantern carried by the departing farmer (pacing) casting a moving circle of light on the mud in the stable-yard, just as the sun, nature's lantern, had done in the morning.

As in the first sonnet, the final focus is on the prodigal. The drudgery of his work is emphasised by cacophony

Carrying a bucket along a slimy board

Nature again intervenes positively in the prodigal's life, this time in the shape of the bats. The *'uncertain staggering flight'* of these repulsive creatures on their journey home to their nests affects the prodigal and he experiences *'shuddering insights, beyond his control'*. If blind bats can make their way home then the prodigal too can find his way. Thus the poem ends on an optimistic, though ambiguous, note.

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The outcast has eventually decided, or will eventually decide, to return home. For the prodigal *'home'* is both the family he abandoned and the society of his fellow human beings from which he has been excluded by his alcoholism. In the final movement of the first sonnet we saw how the prodigal temporarily escaped from the awful reality of his situation through drinking-bouts. Now at last he rejects endurance as an adequate response to his exile and makes up his mind to go home. In the gospel story this decision comes to the prodigal son quickly and without any agonising. But for Bishop's prodigal it only comes *'finally'* as a result of *'shuddering insights'*. The adjectives *'staggering and*

shuddering' hint at the effects of excessive drinking.

Nature is used very effectively by Bishop to advance the theme of **The Prodigal**. In the first sonnet living nature, the pigs, emphasises the squalid lifestyle of the prodigal. Then inanimate nature - the beams of the early sun - inspires him to patient endurance. In the second sonnet the poet builds up a cosy picture of animal domesticity from which the prodigal is excluded. In the final lines of the poem living nature, the bats inspire the prodigal's decision finally to go home.

In the parable of the prodigal son Elizabeth Bishop discovered a metaphor for her own pathetic condition as an abuser of alcohol - the isolation, the deception (of self and others), and the aspirations left unfulfilled. However, the Biblical story is also a source of hope for the poet. While her version of the parable mercilessly describes a flawed human being debased to the level of animals by alcohol abuse, it also describes how the prodigal finally finds the courage to rise above his wretched condition and re-join the human race. On a broader level the prodigal represents all human beings who find themselves rejected by society because of some weakness in their nature which they must struggle to overcome. It is important to emphasise that **The Prodigal** concludes on an optimistic note - the outcast will eventually succeed in returning home.

Mary Carroll

Seamus Heaney

John Devitt's account of Heaney as 'an archaeologist of language… which claims our attention by its personal urgencies and its responsiveness to the currents of the times' is clearly evident in the selection of poems selected for our Leaving Certificate course. His poetry is a delicately crafted record of clear and vivid observations and intense feelings. Heaney has a very strong sense of place and the people who populate these places are a strong and forceful presence in his poems. The familiar landscape of the Irish bog had according to Heaney 'a strange assuaging effect' on him (*Preoccupations* p.54) and was to become a powerful motif for his poetry. The tensions between love and loneliness are sensually presented, inviting us into the intimacy of his personal life. According to The Royal Swedish Academy Heaney was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature 'for an authorship filled with lyrical beauty and ethical depth which brings out the miracles of the ordinary day and the living past.' He is arguably the most popular contemporary Irish poet whose poetry has a universal significance and his extraordinary gift of language is easily accessible to a contemporary audience.

Haney's images are crafted from the ordinary, the common place; rusted iron, an anvil, bogland, a bike. He infuses these with a vivid imagination and gathers possibilities around them, threading them to particular situations and settings, associating them with other images, until a moment of epiphany or insight evolves.

The Forge is a particular example of a master at work. A carefully crafted sonnet, recording a changing way of life, from horse to car, also reveals a growing awareness of the mystery of the creative process. It becomes a poem about poetry and the sacred nature of art. In 1957 E. Estyn Evans, warned 'that knowledge of ways of life that have altered little for centuries is passing away'. Heaney wanted to preserve in the present, in literature, the customs and crafts of the past. The 'door into the dark', signals an awareness of mystery and complexities, to which we the reader are excluded. The speaker of the poem finds himself shut out of the process of creation inside the smithy but is fascinated by the cacophonous sounds emanating from within and the occasional brilliance of the sights he glimpses 'The unpredictable fantail of sparks'. Like the blacksmith, Heaney 'expends' himself teasing the raw materials of his craft into 'shape and music'. The anvil positioned in the middle of the forge, is located too at the centre of the poem. 'Hidden from view as it is, the anvil takes on magical and elusive properties', according to the critic Thomas Foster. It becomes 'horned as a unicorn', a fabulous, mythical creature of legend, serving as 'an altar' where the smith celebrates the rites of his mystery, the smith himself becoming the priest of a lost religion. We admire the wonder of his skill and the mystery and sacredness of art that can 'beat real iron out', that can 'work the bellows'. Does the sestet of the poem suggest that the craft of the poet is as out of place in modern society as that of the blacksmith? Heaney assails our senses in this poem with the sights and sounds of the forge. The language is visual, aural and tactile. The 'fantail of sparks' bursts forth before our eyes; the cacophonous sound of 'the hammered anvil's short pitched ring' and the onomatopoeic 'hiss' as the 'new shoe toughens in water' amalgamate to re create for us the mystery of a lost tradition, alive in the much respected work of this master craftsman.

Heaney began his poetic career with a resolution to 'dig' with his pen and this delving into the darkness is realized in his poem Bogland. Heaney had been reading about the

American frontier and understood how mythically important the west was for the American consciousness. In his essay Feeling into Words in Preoccupations Heaney writes: '…the best moments are those when your mind seems to implode and words and images rush of their own accord into the vortex. Which happened to me once when the line "we have no prairies" drifted into my head at bedtime, and loosened a fall of images that constitute the poem Bogland'? He had a need to make congruence between memory and bogland and our 'national consciousness'. Bogland contrasts two very different landscapes, with a double exposure effect. There is a cinematic effect created in the opening stanza in the image of the prairies slicing 'a big sun at evening'. Likewise, 'our unfenced country' is evocative, as John Devitt suggests 'not only of bogland but also of the open range, another standard visual motif in western.' Words such as 'horizon',' pioneers' camped' have essentially the same resonance. There is a tone of awe and wonder in the amazing preservative properties of the bog; the past, the poem and the bog open up to reveal a hidden history. The digging for turf becomes a metaphor for the Irish people and their digging into the past and discovering more about themselves, layer by layer. The critic Edna Longley says that Bogland is 'door into the dark rich places of the human psyche'.

Tollund Man continues the bog metaphor, however unlike Bogland.this bog poem is in Heaney's own words, 'complicated by Jutland bog burials'. It filled him with a 'completely new sensation, one of fear.*' Feeling into Words.* The incredible photographs discovered by Heaney in P.V. Glob's book *The Bog People*, provided him with a historical framework in which he confronts the difficult period of modern unrest. Heaney finds it difficult to confront the Troubles directly and in this poem he presents a point of view that the distance between iron –age Denmark and modern Ireland is a very short one. The bog and its capacity for preservation, is also the ground which is 'kind', a receptacle of a former culture, a treasured memory-store, witch keeps the past alive. The language of the poem is spare and simple, evoking the innocence and gentleness of the Tollund Man. The tone is reverential; silence and stillness are called for. Extraordinary power and force is created in the final two stanzas of section one where Heaney recreates the deep intimate union between the Earth Goddess and the Tollund Man. Heaney, quoting P.V.Glob, says in Preoccupations that 'This mother Goddess needed new bridegrooms each winter to bed with her in her sacred place, in the bog, to ensure the renewal and fertility of the territory in the spring'. The second section of the poem forms a connection between the iron-age sacrifices and the violent history of Northern Ireland. In *Preoccupations* Heaney relates this to the tradition of Irish political martyrdom. He says 'the unforgettable photographs of these victims blended in my mind with photographs of atrocities, past and present, in the long rites of Irish political and religious struggles.'
This poem is a prayer that something would become of the bodies of people killed in these struggles, 'some kind of new peace or resolution', according to Heaney. As the sacrificed body of Tollund Man germinated into spring, so too, the poem wants a similar flowering to come from the violence in the present.

The Constable Calls also highlights the tensions in Northern Ireland. The images present in the poem suggest fear and intimidation felt by the child who stands before the 'boot of the law'. Words such as 'fat black handlegrips', 'cooked back', 'holster', 'revolver butt', 'spring', and 'ticked' all suggest an undercurrent of fear and violence. There is a tense, brooding atmosphere in this poem which highlights the oppressed lives of the people of Northern Ireland at the time, held in check by 'Arithmetic and fear'. The last line of the poem 'And the bicycle ticked, ticked, ticked.' suggests that the tension in the poem is ready to explode as it did in 1969.

Heaney develops the tension that exists between love and the loneliness of separation in his intensely personal love poems. Past and present, love and loss come together playfully in his risky, zoomorphic poem The Skunk. Heaney was separated from his wife in the mid-seventies when he was briefly working in California. The Skunk in this poem is immediately feminized and is a regular nocturnal visitor. The run-on-lines create a sense of urgency as Heaney waits expectantly for his night time visitor. This poem assails our senses: the soft light on the verandah creates the ambiance, the 'tang of eucalyptus' fills the air, the taste of wine fills our mouth and the memory of his wife's smell from the cold pillow heightens the sense of loss. In the final stanza of this poem the time-frame shifts from past to present, or more precisely to 'last night'. We find ourselves as 'voyeurs' in the stark intimacy of real people. We hear the erotic 'sootfall' of her clothes, a 'barely audible prelude to physical love'. John Devitt.

(Insert any other poems you chose but I would recommend Postscript and The Underground. See notes attached)

Heaney's poetry is sensitive and sympathetic. His poetry emanates from an intensely personal space. It is clear that what he writes about has been lived through and tinged with loneliness or filled with love. His poetry is a celebration of people and place. The well-crafted phrases, on the other hand, reflect the poet's ability, not merely to record objects, situations, or events, but to reflect on them to the point where they almost materialise before our eyes in striking aural, visual and tactile passages.

Mary Carroll

W.B. YEATS

Yeats lived in a time of extraordinary change and his poetry explores a powerful series of tensions between youth and age, order and chaos. He explores conflicts, both at a personal and national level, in a direct and compelling manner. He was a man, as Seamus Heaney described, never simply 'content to live', who spoke with an authoritative voice and a commanding tone. His poetry is full of questions, revealing a man who was sensitive to the world around him, voicing criticism, anger, admiration, nostalgia, advice and opinion. He encountered his world with intellectual vigour while always remaining true to his heart.

Political conflict

Yeats was frequently disillusioned with Ireland, as is apparent in September 1913. Yeats protests furiously at the materialistic and vulgar values of the merchant classes, in contrast with the heroism and idealism of the patriots of the past. The events which inspired this poem were the failure to raise money for an art gallery to house the Hugh Lane collection and the Lockout in 1913 of the workers by the employers led by W.M. Murphy, one of the captains of Irish industry. The polar opposites of the poem are O'Leary (one of the founder members of the Fenians and friend of Yeats) and the Catholic Nationalists. To Yeats, the latter were more concerned with the acquisition of personal wealth than with the establishment of a nation. Yeats was disappointed that a group who were taking the lead economically could not do so culturally. He scorns and satirizes the middle-class piety and the philistine culture of Ireland; September 1913, that has 'dried the marrow from the bone'. O'Leary, the dignified patriot, represents the perfect blend of courage and learning. He placed prime importance on the cultural life of the nation and had a strong appreciation of art and culture yet was physically daring, sacrificing himself for his country. Yeats' opinion however, was to change. These very people, derided for their lack of passion had now 'resigned' their part 'In the casual comedy' and had 'changed utterly'. Easter 1916 recognises that heroic, self sacrificing patriotism was not dead. (quote) It is not however a single-minded celebration of what the leaders of The Rising had done. This event, though heroic was also tragic. It was, in Yeats' eyes, the birth of a 'terrible beauty' achieved at the expense of life. This haunting juxtaposition highlights Yeats' conflicting and paradoxical responses to this event. The rhetorical questions of the final stanza reveal the poet's uncertainties about the process of revolution. Yeats was not in favour of militant behaviour but had always desired that Ireland be self-governed and seeing the Irish population rouse themselves and resign their part in the 'casual comedy' gave him cause to sympathise and honour their heroism.

Conflict between youth and old age.

Yeats often became melancholic as a result of his awareness of the brevity of life. This is clearly evident in his doleful reflection in The Wild Swans at Colle. His heart is 'sore' as he observes these 'brilliant creatures,' which function as a symbol for the poet. They represent his youth which is now long behind him. He states passively that 'The nineteenth autumn has come upon me', the years weighing heavily upon him, in contrast to the swans which are active and powerful, they 'mount' and 'scatter', rising from the lake to wheel above him 'in great broken rings.'. Yeats observes something timeless in the swans and sees the

permanent presence of beauty that they embody. They symbolise that which is eternal for Yeats in contrast to the autumnal surroundings to which Yeats feels inextricably linked. Sailing to Byzantium is another poem dealing with the issues of growing old in a changed world. Yeats feels no part of this vibrant country, a 'country for old men'. The opening stanza presents a dramatic affirmation of youth where the young are in 'one another's arms' mesmerised by the 'sensual music' of love. There are conflicting claims presented between the younger generations who live in a sensual world and the more sedate singing of the old scarecrow, reincarnated into the eternal art form of the golden bird. The movement from scarecrow to golden bird represents the central theme of Sailing to Byzantium, escaping the imperfect physical, sensual world to the ideal world of art. The bird has transcended the decay and infirmities of the transitory world; it may claim to be superior to the 'Fish, flesh, or fowl,' who have been 'begotten, born' but must also die. The poem gathers its tension through the dramatic conflict between passion and wisdom. However though wisdom conquers, its victory is almost Pyrrhic (victory gained at too great a cost). The poet has sailed to Byzantium, but his heart, 'sick with desire', is full of Ireland and he cannot speak of the natural world without celebrating it. Yeats opts for the rather cold mechanical song of the golden bird but it doesn't quite match the passionate, vibrant music of the young. The richness of nature is so powerfully evoked in the first stanza that, by contrast, the world of art described in the last stanza, seems tame, cold and uninspiring. As Ellmann suggests 'such a fate could only satisfy Yeats momentarily. Having sailed to Byzantium, he was ready to re-embark.'(From the Man and the Mask.) Yeats had pursued wisdom and that pursuit had changed everything. Returning from his voyage he would find a 'new intensity' in 'all visible and tangible things'. Ibid. Yeats himself regarded this as a bitter poem but Eavan Boland argues that it is 'an immortal fury against the tragedy of decay and the inevitability of death'.
In a letter to his friend Olivia Shakespeare he wrote, 'I am tired and in a rage at being old. I am all I ever was and much more but an enemy has bound me and twisted me so I can plan and think as I never could but no longer achieve all I plan and think.' But Yeats' 'pugnacious thrust never deserted him'. (Heaney, Finders Keepers) so much so, at the age of 74, 'here at life's end' he prays for 'an old man's frenzy,' He courageously wished to 'remake' himself. His 'old man's eagle mind' still wishing to 'pierce the clouds'. An Acre of Grass.

Conflict between order and chaos

Another major and significant conflict in Yeats' work is between order and chaos. Yeats admired the aristocratic tradition of 18th century Ireland. The world of the Great House was aligned to his own sense of identity. He felt very much at home in Lady Gregory's house at Coole. As Heaney points out, he was a 'mythologizer of aristocratic ceremony and grace' ibid. Yeats believed the Anglo Irish Ascendancy had a duty to set an example of gracious and cultured living. This is evident in his elegy for Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz. The graceful living of Lissadell is beautifully evoked in the opening images: 'The light of evening, Lissadell, /Great windows open to the south, /two girls in silk kimonos, both/Beautiful, one gazelle.' Yeats creates an elegant and graceful picture here. The transition from the refined, elegant youth of the girls to their turbulent adult lives is graphically portrayed, as a 'raving autumn[which] shears/Blossom from the summer's wreath;' Autumn is personified as a violent reaper, stripping away the youthful beauty of the girls. Their political activism as much as the passing years are responsible for their 'withered old and skeleton gaunt' appearance. The poem laments the passing of such an

ideal world in the woman's futile attempt to find 'Some vague Utopia'! (Yeats at his arrogant best!). The 'conflagration' at the end of the poem points to the destruction of the traditional values that were cradled in places such as Lissadell.
Chaos, the birth of 'Mere anarchy' is graphically depicted in Yeats' masterpiece The Second Coming. It is a stark, terrifying and prophetic vision of a disintegrating social order with burgeoning evil born and 'loosed upon the world'. Images of the 'blood-dimmed tide' and the 'rough beast' slouching 'towards Bethlehem' show how troubled the poet is by the increasing violence and annihilation of cultural and aristocratic values. This poem is situated in the midst of great historical upheaval; World War I, the Russian Revolution, the collapse of the great Empires, the Irish War of Independence and the uprooting of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. In his major prose work entitled A Vision, Yeats outlines his theory of history. He believed that each major historical period, lasting approximately two thousand years, would be overthrown by some massive upheaval. He is predicting the violent, cataclysmic end of the Christian era. The collapse of civilization is dramatically conveyed in the active, force-filled words of the opening stanza. The 'gyre' is spinning chaotically out of control. The 'falcon', metaphorically representing Christian civilization, has lost contact with the essence of Christ's teachings, 'the falconer'. Very soon 'the blood –dimmed tide' will engulf the world in a wave of anarchy. The terrible desert beast, the antithesis of innocence, represents the violent, apocalyptic events that will end the Christian era in a cataclysmic wave of violence and devastation. This poem presents a nihilistic vision of a world without justice, reason and order. It is a frightening prospect and still today a realistic one.

Yeats did attempt to resolve some conflicts in his poems but in many cases he had to accept that such a synthesis was not always possible let alone probable. He did remain in contact with the world, however imperfect it seemed, and encountered it with his complex temperament that could whisper of grace, youth and beauty or clamour against injustice, old-age and decay. Perhaps we should be grateful that many conflicts were never resolved, for it was they that evoked his most difficult struggles and his most poignant poetry, granting him 'an old man's frenzy'.

Sylvia Plath

Sylvia Plath was born in 1932 in Boston, Massachusetts and died a brief thirty years later in 1963. Her Journals which she begun writing in 1950 open with a quotation from the poet W. B. Yeats. He states: 'we only begin to live when we conceive life as a tragedy ….' It is true to say of Plath that in her short thirty years she certainly lived and produced a volume of work which only gained the respect it deserved posthumously. For her life was always 'shifting, flowing, melting. …..like quicksand… hopeless from the start.' ***The Journals.*** Many people find the work of Plath depressing. Certainly she herself was prevalent to extraordinary mood swings, she contemplated and attempted suicide, she underwent electroconvulsive therapy, she had psychiatric help, she most certainly was depressed many times in her life. But what is fascinating about her work is as Ted Hughes said in his Forward to ***The Journals*** (1982) is that 'Her real self showed in her writing….When a real self finds language and manages to speak, surely it is a dazzling event.' Hughes continues 'It is important to distinguish between a work that is trying to reach an artistic form using a real event as its basis and a documentary of some event that did happen.' Plath basis her work on real events but takes us on incredible imaginative journey. Like the poet Emily Dickinson her poems are mindscapes which present a rich tapestry of pain and suffering. Her poems reflect the intensity of despair and one can only admire a genius who stays and understands.

Plath was most concerned with her identity as a writer. She lived in a time when there were significant curtailments imposed by society on women. There were particular expectations of the role of women in the 1950's. The world of poet and motherhood were as Eavan Boland was to suggest 'almost magnetically opposed' ***(Object Lessons)***. Yet Plath

Longed for both. It was a novelty in the 60's to write about pregnancy and birth. Plath did and did so in a most exciting, delicate voice. ***Morning Song*** is a perfect example of her struggle to fuse the two. The opening simile reflects her joy as she celebrates the new life within her, precious like 'gold', a timepiece, ticking its way to birth! The baby arrives, entering this world with a primal, elemental 'bald cry'. This is an unusual Aubade as we see the mother's life is shadowed by the child's arrival. What I love about this poem is Plath's honesty as she recreates the vulnerability of first time parents as she finds herself standing 'round blankly as walls' 'in a drafty museum' She compares her new-born to a 'New statue'. Initially this appears a stark, lifeless image but when we reflect a little more we see a statue as something delicate, precious, something to be admired and protected. However, she is soon enriched by the joy of love as 'All night' she listens to its 'moth breath' as it 'Flickers among the flat pink roses.' And with 'One cry' she 'stumble(s) from bed, cow heavy' to respond. How does she get to this stage? The answer can be found in her most powerfully striking simile where she compares herself to a 'cloud that distils a mirror to reflect its own slow effacement at the winds hand' There is a striking difference between the immobility of the parents in stanza two and the warm domestic reality of stanza five.

Her poem ***Child*** also reflects the simple pleasures she derives from her child. His 'clear eye is the one absolutely beautiful thing' that she longs to fill with the beauty of the world. At the same time she feels an underlying threat to the child's safety and this distresses her.

Like most poets Plath struggles at times to find inspiration and searches for poetic vision. Her despondency at the lack of inspiration is expressed in ***Black Rook in Rainy Weather***. The poet is surrounded by wintry bleakness and paints a psychic landscape for her audience. There is a strong association between poet's mood and the scene evoked. She desires 'some backtalk/From the mute sky'. A quiet longing is felt here, a longing for the miracle that will transform this bleakness into something radiant. That miracle is the creative impulse, that spark of the imagination that will change the ordinary into the extraordinary. Her despondent mood is lifted as she sees that 'spasmodic /Tricks of radiance' which can be called miracles occur. And she awaits once again 'that rare, random descent.'

An intense interest in what appears on the surface and what is hidden underneath fascinated Plath. In her poem ***Mirror*** the depths hide something frightening and sinister, something to be avoided but which
one cannot escape. Her mirror is a mirror in which each reader sees his or her own concerns reflected. For Plath it is a mirror belonging to a woman whose soul is troubled and tortured, as 'Faces and darkness separate us over and over.' Her dual identity as poet and mother are reflected in this poem. She tries to come to terms with the social pressures to reconcile the competing of artistic and domestic life. She feels her younger self is 'drowned'. She is caught between past and future. Something frightening, dark, terrible and true 'Rises toward her day after day'. Does this represent her fear of growing old? Or perhaps it is her fear of her troubled, divided self.

The apparent calm of the mirror as it 'simply meditates the opposite wall', is reflected in the opening stanzas of her masterpiece ***Elm***. Yet again the hidden terrors surface as she talks. Plath's language is remarkably simple and direct. However her imagery in this poem is richly evocative. We are taken on a journey deep into the subconscious. Plath said of this poem that it contained 'the stigma of selfhood.' Colour is important and symbolic in her work and we see shadings of her most prevalent colours here. The sinister elements of **black** are prevalent in ***Elm,*** it knows 'the bottom' with its 'great tap root', it feels the shadowy presence of love which escapes it into the night. She is 'terrified by the dark thing / That sleeps in (her)'. The colour black elucidates her anger, depression and fear of destruction, of annihilation. **White** too is symbolically sinister. The 'merciless' moon represents coldness, it is associated with fertility but is 'barren', it cannot create life. There is a surreal, hallucinatory quality to her imagery and symbolism in this poem.
The poem begins with the Elm as narrator addressing the poet. Both are compelled to explore great depths. The absence of love haunts the poet and as the poem progresses the Elm taunts her about this. As we move into the sixth tercet the Elm speaks for the poet. My red filaments burn and stand a hand of wires.' At this stage the distinction between the 'you' of the poem and the Elm become blurred. The external violence creates inner turmoil. Both Elm and poet are 'inhabited by a cry.' A cry that nightly 'laps out /Looking with its hooks for something to love.' Expressed here are the most open and intense feelings, which originate from the deepest self. This 'dark thing', this internal malignancy, conjures a silent inward terror. ***Elm*** is a richly textured poem, designed to evoke an understanding of the despair and frustration felt as a result of the loss of love, and the stigma of selfhood, that awful fear of being oneself, of being imbued with those 'slow faults / That kill, that kill, that kill.'

Plath's landscapes and seascapes are mostly a backdrop to the mood of the poet. What fascinates me about her poem ***Finisterre*** is the final stanza which paints a perfect picture postcard of the westernmost tip of Brittany. If you or I were to visit this tourist resort we would see the eclectic mixture of stalls selling postcards, trinkets, and pancakes, a myriad of colours bustling with the energy of any tourist resort. But not Plath. In contrast to the last stanza the first three are dark. The 'black /Admonitory cliffs' are 'knuckled and rheumatic'. Her vista is bleak and desolate. The waves are 'whitened by the faces of the drowned.' The sea is a pounding force 'exploding' around her. It is a bottomless void. The mist holds the 'Souls' of the dead and as she walks 'among them' she feels herself almost suffocated as they stuff her 'mouth with cotton.' When she walks free she is 'beaded with tears.' This poem is a powerful and startling psychic landscape.

Martin Booth says that Plath's poetry 'has a beautiful weirdness to it, an inviting malevolence, that the world is dark…. And it seeks to set a mood as much as tell you something concrete.' This is what makes her poetry fascinating. Plath's world is undoubtedly dark. At times it is 'only temporary' ***Arrival of the Bee Box*** but finally it became an overwhelming 'ceiling without a star'.

Mary Carroll

Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin

Lucina Schynning in Silence of the Nicht

- Desolation and isolation permeates this poem. This, however, is not a negative quality. ENC is not troubled by solitude.
- Poem is a celebration of escape and a retreat from the hectic world.
- Nature is celebrated and is therapeutic
- Horrors of history evident in stanza 3, referred to in a harrowing metaphor as 'waves of darkness'
- The sorrow of history is evident as she refers to Cromwell and the destruction and chaos caused in our country in the 17 th century
- Historical reference:

The title of the poem refers to 'The Birth of the Antichrist', a poem written by Scottish poet William Dunbar, (the poems opening lines are a direct translation from this poem). Cromwell was our Antichrist as he persecuted the Irish Catholics. The poem looks at our journey out of the darkness of Cromwellian times, seeing at last the 'sky growing through the hole in the roof.'

- Feminine perspective:

Woman in this poem is not passive. She is independent, acting on their own.
Not stereotypical in any way.

Death and Engines

- Lyric poem which addresses us directly giving us an insight into speaker's state of mind, perception and feelings. There is no sentimentality in this poem.
- Stanza 2 presents a desolate and broken image of runway and plane. As a passenger seeing this burn out engine you would be unnerved as you attempt to land as you are faced with the possibility of could happen and what remains after it does!
- Stark contrast of white (snow) and black (darkness) highlight this.
- A sense of helplessness and despair of the 'lonely pilot' is palpable
- The poem reflects on the inescapability of death and of what remains of us when we are gone.
- Two personal experiences influence this poem. In an interview, she tells us that she 'needed a poem to express [her] fear of death.' She saw the plane in Orly airport as she was returning home from Rome when her father was dangerously ill. A few months later she saw a car lying in the side of the road in Dublin and realised it belonged to her friends. She tells us that she spent an anxious half an hour before discovering them safe in hospital. (Stanza 4) In Stanza 3 the verb 'cornered' shows

us that the poet has awoken to the certainty of death. ‘Time and life’ cross marking our deathday. There is no sentimentality in this poem just an acknowledgement that death is an intrinsic part of life.

- Death of loved ones is very painful. What I love about this poem is enmeshed in the final traumatic stanza of someone crashing down a blind alley. ‘You will be scattered like wreckage, the pieces everyone a different shape will spin and lodge in the hearts of all who love you.’ Each jigsaw piece that makes up who we are will be part of someone’s remembering! A wonderful way to think of the end. Lyric poem

Street

- It is a dramatic narrative, strange, surreal, memorable
- A poem that is incident rich yet told quietly
- It is a quiet, introspective, enigmatic poem
- Fairy tale context to poem. It reminds me of ‘Little Red Ridinghood’
- Poem
- is inconclusive, very much part of impressionistic influences.
- Is she the seducer?
- Is he the predator?
- She leaves the door open he just ‘fell in love with the butcher’s daughter’
- She passed by in ‘white trousers’ but the we hear she was ‘dangling a knife on a ring on her belt’
- Again, we meet a woman in an interesting, unusual controlling or vulnerable situation.
- A fantastic impressionistic painting by ENC

Firemen’s Lift

- Poetic recreation of her mother’s spiritual ascent to a place beyond the clouds
- Check out painting: ‘ The Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven’, Correggio
- Focus in on humanity of Our Lady
- Distinct physical force required to aid ascension.
- Poem celebrates the female body
- While visiting the nursing home Ni C is reminded of visit to Cathedral with her mother
- Young nurses lifting and moving her mother remind her of the Angels in painting
- This is a love poem to her mother and to community spirit
- Cloud is a common image in her poetry and here it represents: boundary, threshold, doorway, border, crossing.

To Niall Woods and Xenya Ostrovskaia……

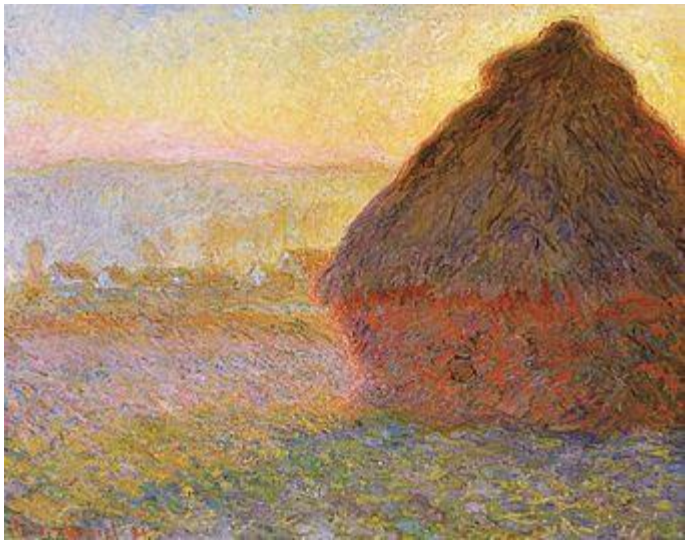
- The poem looks at the nature of story itself
- In this poem love is seen as a reward for noble efforts.
- All the stories have someone journeying from home and overcoming ordeals.
- She casts her son in heroic mode
- She is suggesting that love comes to all who adventure and persevere.
- Poem celebrates the romantic notion that love is forever, as each story ends with a marriage and a promise to live happily ever after.

The King of Ireland and the Enchanters Daughter

- The King of Ireland's Son sets out to find the Enchanter of the Black Back-Lands and meets the Enchanter's daughter, Fedelma. His adventures lead him to the Land of the Mist, the Town of the Red Castle, and the worlds of Gilly of the Goatskin, the Hags of the Long Teeth, Princess Flame-of-Wine, and the Giant Crom Duv. This is a true Irish wonder tale: a coming of age story of the youngest son of the King of Ireland who sets off on an impossible quest. The stories weave together, stories within stories, in a fantastic tapestry of humour, poetry, action and adventure. Perfect for reading aloud at bedtime, generations of children have loved Padraic Colum's unmatched storytelling.
- The poem looks at the nature of story itself as there are truths in folk tales and fairy tales.
- Morpheus, in ‘A Midsummer Nights Dream’, says: ‘Things need not have happened to be true. Tales and dreams are shadow truths that will endure when mere facts are dust and ashes, and forgot’

Impressionistic poet

- **Impressionism** is a 19th-century art movement that originated with a group of Paris-based artists. Their independent exhibitions brought them to prominence during the 1870s and 1880s, in spite of harsh opposition from the conventional art community in France. The name of the style derives from the title of a Claude Monet work, *Impression, soleil levant* (*Impression, Sunrise*), which provoked the critic Louis Leroy to coin the term in a satirical review published in the Parisian newspaper *Le Charivari*.



- Impressionist painting characteristics include relatively small, thin, yet visible brush strokes, open composition, emphasis on accurate depiction of light in its changing qualities (often accentuating the effects of the passage of time), ordinary subject matter, inclusion of *movement* as a crucial element of human perception and experience, and unusual visual angles. The development of Impressionism in the visual arts was soon followed by analogous styles in other media that became known as impressionist music and impressionist literature.
- The term Impressionism has also been used to describe works of literature in which a few select details suffice to convey the sensory impressions of an incident or scene. Impressionist literature is closely related to Symbolism, with its major exemplars being Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, and Verlaine. Authors such as Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence, and Joseph Conrad have written works that are Impressionistic in the way that they describe, rather than interpret, the impressions, sensations and emotions that constitute a character's mental life.

Eilean Ni Chuilleanain's demanding subject matter and formidable style can prove challenging.

Eilean Ni Chuilleanain's themes are diverse, she addresses the topics of history, religion and nature. However through her intricate use of language and engaging poetic devices her poetry and message can be understood. She offers an insight into her personal life in poems such as 'Death and Engines,' 'Fireman's Lift,' and 'The Bend in the Road,' this aids our engagement with her work as we are offered a glimpse into a slice of her life.

'Death and Engines,' is a grim cold and harsh narrative. It explores a universal theme, the inevitability of death. Ni Chuilleanain's approach to this striking and at times disturbing topic is both engaging and interesting. In her explanatory notes on the poem she indicates that two events inspired the writing of this poem, her father's illness and the discovery of her friend's car that had been obviously involved in a car crash. She also shares with her readers the fact that she suffers from a fear of flying, this information helps her readers to understand the poem on a more meaningful level. Ni Chuilleanain is unequivocally a poet who wishes to include her readers on her poetic journey. She uses dramatic sensuous imagery to depict the scene. This is inviting and engaging to the reader.

‘The back half of a plane black on the snow, nobody near it, Tubular, burnt out and frozen.’ As the plane makes it’s second attempt to land at Paris airport, Ni Chuilleanain notices this plane inspiring her to think ‘how light your death is.’ Later in the poem she describes ‘a man with a bloody face sitting up in bed conversing cheerfully through cut lips.’ This is a striking, compelling image. This man has been involved in an accident however this time he has been fortunate, he has survived. He is surrounded by ‘images of relief,’ like ‘hospital pyjamas’ however Ni Chuilleanain warns, ‘these will fail you sometime.’ This simple, accessible language is a harsh, chilling universally appealing warning. At some point we will all be forced to confront death.

Death also provides the subject matter for ‘Fireman’s Lift,’ the poem is a touching mother and daughter poem recounting a visit Ni Chuilleanain enjoyed with her mother to Parma cathedral where they marvelled at Correggio’s infamous fresco. The tone is intimate and personal, ‘I was standing beside you looking up,’ through the use of personal pronouns, Ni Chuilleanain invites her readers to come on the journey with her and her mother to Italy. Through the use of compelling, mesmeric imagery, she carefully conjures her fascination at the magnificent work of art ‘Where the church splits wide open to admit celestial choirs.’ Ni Chuilleanain admits that this is a cheering up poem, the message is comforting and consoling for anyone who has suffered loss. The word ‘cradle,’ captures the gentleness, compassion and protective nature of the angels and the nurses who cared for her mother at the time of her death. The poem ends on am image of love and loss, something we all can relate to but also conjures a sense of comfort and consolation. Heaven can sometimes be an obscure place, we do not really know where it is. The identification of heaven as a place in the clouds is reassuring. The Virgin Mary is on the brink of entering heaven, so too is Ni Chuilleanain’s mother. ‘She came to the edge of the cloud.’

Like ‘Fireman’s Lift,’ ‘The Bend in the Road,’ is also a memory poem dealing with the issue of death. The setting and the moment the poem describes is universally relatable, proving that Ni Chuilleanain is an inclusive poet. The use of personal pronouns offer a personal, intimate and revealing tone. Her child is sick during a car journey, they stop the car near a tree shaped like ‘a cat’s tail,’ it ‘waited too.’ Here Ni Chuilleanain’s style is humorous but also precise. Movingly and poignantly the poet is inspired to think about the loved ones who have become ill and have died since the first time the family stopped at this ‘bend in the road,’ she alludes to ‘the one cumulus cloud in a perfect sky.’ Her memories are strikingly compared to this cloud, as like a cloud’s shape our memories change over time. ‘This is the place of their presence: in the tree, in the air.’

Some imagery recurs in Ni Chuilleanain’s poetry, making it instantly recognisable and familiar. ‘Translation,’ in my opinion is her best poem. It a poignant yet powerful narrative depicting loneliness, hardship and cruelty suffered by the Magdalenes. At the end of the poem the poet creates a compelling yet familiar image, the Magdaelene’s voice imagines her and her fellow inmates rising in a great cloud of steam from the grave. This cloud like the one alluded to in ‘The Bend in the Road,’ serves as a powerful symbol, however in this context, the cloud is a shameful reminder of the whole Magdalene affair and of the nation’s need to tell and retell their story. We must never allow anything like this to ever happen again. The subject matter for this poem is incredibly interesting and Ni Chuilleaneain approaches the topic with sensitivity but also portrays a brutal honesty. It must be admired. Stanza one vividly sets the scene where the remains of one hundred and fifty women are being exhumed. ‘The soil frayed and sifted evens the score,’ the tone and language here illustrate resentment but also is suggestive of the women who were treated with such inhumane cruelty getting their own back. Their lives were obliterated, their identities stolen from them and the imagery used of a glance being ‘bleached out,’ conjures an image a statue of the virgin Mary that looks down on the Magdalene’s at work from

where it hands high above them on the laundry wall. Yet the image's paint has been whitened and bleached by the 'White light,' pouring in through the windows and the steam and chemicals rising from the sins. It's 'glance,' offers no 'relief' or religious consolation to these women who were cruelly and inhumanely treated. Finally Ni Chuilleaneain feels that this women are receiving some kind of justice, 'Until every pocket in her skull blared with the note – Allow us to hear it sharp as an infant's cry.' The Magadalene is empowered to speak in this poem, to tell of the torture, pain and humiliation she suffered. 'Washed clean of idiom the baked crust of words that make my temporary name A parasite that grew in me.' Ni Chuilleaneain bravely commands us to listen and compares the Magdalene's voice to a sharp infant's cry, horribly we assume that this was a familiar sound from inside the laundry.

'Street' while dealing with a very different topic to 'Translation,' is a short dramatic narrative, that too explores female empowerment but also female vulnerability. The 'butcher's daughter,' strides confidently home from work, with a knife 'dangling,' from a 'ring on her belt,' one could perhaps say this women is strong , powerful and untouchable. However Ni Chuilleneain masterfully creates an ominous atmosphere of threat and danger surrounding this women. 'One day he followed her down the slanting lane at the back of the shambles.' I felt like I was at the cinema. I genuinely wanted to know how this unconventional love story unfolded. Did the mysterious man follow the butcher's daughter upstairs? What happened next? Eilean Ni Chuilleanain's intriguing creation of tension, suspense and mystery coupled with memorable, compelling imagery painted a cinematic picture of intense and uncomfortable fascination.

Eilean Ni Chuilleanain mastry of language vividly and graphically offers us a unique insight into her dominant themes of love, family and the treatment and depiction of females. We are introduced to Eilean Ni Chuilleanain through her poetry. By reading it we feel as if we know her. She cleverly uses her compelling love for her family and her passion for history to carefully construct a tapestry of rich, inviting poetry which is a pleasure to read.

In another essay you may wish to refer to Lucina Schynning in Silence of the Nicht:
The speaker is 'reading' her 'book in a ruin by a sour candle without roast meat or music,' this sensuous imagery indicates a quiet contentment with a simplistic, medieval lifestyle. The book however takes on a sinister significance and becomes diseased as a 'Plague of beetles,' seemingly crawl out of the 'spines of books'. Despite a turbulent past suggested by the repetition of 'Plague,' 'Cromwell's,' presence in Ireland and the reference to the eerie, threatening 'shadowing pale faces', the narrator is content to wash in 'cold' orange water which has 'dipped between cresses'. Here Ni Chuilleanain sensuously depicts Ireland's turbulent historical past. Yet she masterfully merges this theme with her unadorned love for nature. She believes in the ultimate power of nature to comfort, console and heal. The 'sheepdogs embrace', her is a loving and welcoming image. The 'chirp of the stream running', is a fitting soundtrack for which the poem to end on. It is a resounding example of triumph over adversity.

Hopkins Poetry

Original, effervescent, powerfully aesthetic, celebratory and at times terribly complex is how I would describe Hopkins' poetry. It is important to catch the essence of his poem rather than try to figure out what every line means. Encountering Hopkins should be a felt experience and an intellectual and imaginative journey. As a young man Hopkins was struck by a passage from Wordsworth who said that 'each scene in nature has in it a power of awakening, in every beholder of sensibility, an impression peculiar to itself such as no other scene can exactly call up. This may be called the heart or character of that scene'. This inspired the young Hopkins and we can see the beginnings of what he termed 'inscape' emerging here. He, according to F.R. Levis, aimed to get as much out of his words as possible, unhampered by the rules of syntax and common usage. He calls for a strong intellectual effort from his readers and we in turn gain much pleasure. We have to abandon our preconceived notions about poetry in order to immerse ourselves in the experience. 'Take breath and read it with the ears', he urges.
Hopkins is famous and renowned for his unique and unusual style. He was very interested in language, rhythm and the different meanings and sounds of words. He enjoyed making up his own words and mixing two together. His priority was expressing what he wanted to and he moulded words to his own liking. 'Sprung rhythm' was how he described his unique style, a rhythm that springs or flows naturally from the poet like plants spring from the soil. Instead of the usual practice of alternating between stressed and unstressed syllables, Hopkins had groups of stressed and unstressed syllables together, which he believed help bring to his poems "the natural rhythm of speech." "God's Grandeur" is a great example of "sprung rhythm." Instead of always alternating stressed and unstressed syllables (TA-dum-TA-dum-TA-dum), as is the fashion in much poetry, Hopkins used groups of stressed and unstressed syllables (TA-TA-TA-dum-dum-TA-TA). This Sonnet is a vivid and marvellous account of God's greatness. According to Hopkins in the quatrain 'the world is charged with the grandeur of God'. It's electrified, powered and energised by God. He's our 'charger'!!! It's like a lightening flash, a 'shining from shook foil'. Although Hopkins is referring to gold or silver hammered or rolled into a thin sheet we can easily imagine it if we think of a roll of tinfoil with the sun reflecting on it as we shake it out! Though written in 1877 we can easily associate with the imagery in this quatrain. Assonance, alliteration and onomatopoeic sound effects assail our senses and we can definitely 'read it with our ears.' The quatrain changes dramatically and the monosyllabic question is abrupt and startling: why do we not do God's will? Maybe this is where you will disconnect from the poem but if you examine it closely you will see that this is an environmental challenge from a generation well before global warming or any concerns about ecological, environmental issues!! In the last four lines of the octet he asks why we 'sear', 'blear', 'smear' and 'smudge' this wonderful planet? Despite our destructive tendencies 'nature is never spent'. It constantly renews itself and 'the dearest freshness deep down things' renews the planet, 'a hopeful dawn succeeding dark dusk' (Norman White, Hopkins biographer) charged by the essence that is Divine.

"Inscape" and "instress" are words coined by Hopkins to describe his poetic goals. "Inscape" is the unique inner landscape of anything on earth: the unique essence or inner nature of a person, place, thing, or event, especially depicted in poetry or a work of art. He believed that to show this inner landscape, through words, was to show God. "Instress" is the glue that holds the "inscape" together or the energy that sustains an inscape. For Hopkins, it was another way of saying "God." For Hopkins God also meant "liveliness," excitement, vitality, and the natural world.

Both Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnets were written as love poems so we see in Hopkins sonnets, his love for God and Nature in ‘Spring’, ‘As Kingfisher’s Catch Fire, Dragonflies Draw Flame’, ‘God’s Grandeur’ and ‘The Windhover’. The typical Petrarchan rhyme scheme is ABBA ABBA CDE CDE. Hopkins uses this sonnet shape often however he puts his own original mark on it. Notice the meter of ‘The Windhover’! He uses iambic pentameter in the first line then we move into his typical sprung rhythm.

*I **caught** this **morn**ing **morn**ing's **min**ion, **king**-*
*dom of **day**light's **dauph**in, dapple-**dawn**-drawn **Fal**con, in his **rid**ing*

As you can see, there are five stressed syllables on each line. The first line is actually in iambic pentameter, which is what you'd expect from a normal, traditional Petrarchan sonnet. However, that first line is also quite original as the word "king- / dom," is broken up across the first two lines. Then, the second line breaks into Hopkins's sprung rhythm: even though that second line is way longer than the first, it still only has five stressed syllables, so it fits the more natural-sounding meter that Hopkins was going for.

Hopkins takes traditional forms and then reinvents them. He takes something that we all take for granted—like a bird in flight—and describes it using new and unexpected language that makes us re-think all of our perceptions. He wants to pack meaning into every nook and cranny in the poem, including the meter.

Lots of new words are born every day. It’s impossible to say how many have been created. Human beings want to express themselves, and to be able to understand others. And we keep looking for fun and exciting ways to do it. Rap is a perfect example of this with its playful use of language, and its introduction of new words and speech. Rappers continually come up with new and interesting ways of expressing ideas. Once you get going with Hopkins’ poetry you will see how it flows. His poetry shows us that we can push language to the limits, be free to use it and bend it, and stop being afraid of it. Not all of Hopkins's words were so complicated. He made up the word "firefolk" to talk about stars, "bloomfall" to talk about flowers falling, “windhover” to describe a kestrel and "unleaving" to talk about how trees lose their leaves. His kennings create a condensed image, a powerful visual tool. Hopkins believes ‘The Windhover’ was ‘the best thing [he] ever wrote’! He is absolutely fascinated by the power and majesty of the falcon. Ellipses (leaving out a word) conveys the strength and intensity of his feelings, giving a sense of energy and overflowing enthusiasm. Enjambment fulfils the same purpose and the opening octet pulsates with his awe of this bird. It is ‘daylight’s dauphin, dapple dawn- drawn Falcon’. (ellipses and kenning here) The present continuous verbs ‘riding, rolling, striding, wimpling wing, gliding’ draws our eyes upwards and we are there with him admiring this ‘morning’s minion’! An episode of Planet Earth before our eyes! Having created the inscape of this experience he turns to the instress. God is the glue here, the energy ‘a billion times told lovlier’, his ‘chevalier’. Nature always points to the essence of beauty: that which ‘charged’ it.

‘Spring’, ‘Pied Beauty’ and ‘Inversnaid’ continue in a similar vein. Spring is one of Hopkins most famous poems. Elizabeth Bishop says that it has an ‘emotional rushing effect’, an octet with no stopping it!! Eight enjambed lines proving his premise that ‘Nothing is so beautiful as Spring’! (Take a bit of time here and reflect on how you feel about the evenings getting longer, the day you fell a warmer air on your face as you walk to school. The flowers popping up, the birds singing and the trees budding! Summer is on its way Spring announces! Personal reflection here will help essay!!)

All of this ‘juice and all this joy’ draws him into a prelapsarian reflection as he recalls ‘A strain of the earth’s sweet being in the beginning in Eden garden. –‘ Inversion (inverting words, putting them in the wrong order) creates an original and fresh use of language. His prayer is that we don’t not lose our innocence and stray away from God.

A song of praise continues I ‘Pied Beauty’: ‘Glory be to God for dappled things –‘ especially

in nature. Believe it or not it is a sonnet! A curtal sonnet as a Hopkins called it! 10 ½ lines instead of 14! In contrast to ‘Spring’ man and nature are in harmony here. The poem begins and ends in praise as Hopkins celebrates diversity and difference, especially in nature. The poem is packed with Hopkin’s unique style: Kennings – ‘couple -colour’, ‘chestnut- falls’, ‘father’s forth’, Enjambment and ellipses all combine to create a meditation on the glory of God in creation.

‘Inversnaid’ was written in 1881 after a visit to Scotland which left a deep impression on him. His colloquialisms ‘burn’, ‘degged’ and ‘beadbonny’ add colour and interest to the poem and keeps his language original. Compound words and ellipses create a wonderful painting. We see ‘The darksome burn…rollrock highroad roaring down’ and ‘A windpuff bonnet of fawn fróth’ turn and ‘twindle’ (twist and dwindle) over the ‘pitchblack’ pool. The imagery of the opening stanza is striking. The stream is first described as looking like the back of a horse with its mane streaming out as it gallops down a road, wide enough to look like a ‘highroad'. Its colour is also brown in its turbulence, like a horse, though it is more the particular shape of the water, its inscape, that fascinates Hopkins. So the foam is like a horse's hair, but just as if combed or ‘fluted' (here having an architectural meaning of fine lines cut into stone to give pattern). It’s is as if Hopkins had a video camera with him as he takes us from the stream to the edge of the path ‘that the brook threads through’ to the ferns and the ‘ash [tree] that sits over the burn’

The last stanza is striking in its absence of imagery. There is a rhetorical question and a wish, but the words mean exactly what they say. After the complexity and precision of the earlier stanzas, the contrast is striking. We too wonder what the world would be like ‘bereft of wet and wilderness’! he ends again with what could be a prayer of the 21st century environmentalist: ‘O let them be left, wilderness and wet: Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet’.

Hopkins poetry thus far has celebrated nature and God’s presence therein. The Terrible Sonnets tell a very different story. I love these sonnets because none of us, not even Hopkins, can escape a day when we feel ‘wretch[ed] and just want to crawl into bed so that this day will end. This is how he feels in ‘No Worst, there is None, Pitched Past pitch of Grief’. The plosive alliteration echoes the despair at the heart of this Sonnet of Desolation. Reality is seen as a continuous movement towards extreme pain. Hopkins has been thrown over the edge, hurled into the pitch dark. This is a great cry of spiritual desolation and psychological torment, the dark night of the soul. There is a feeling of terrifying isolation and the tone is deep in human despair. The opening statement is bleak, offering no consolation: ‘No worst, there is none’. As long as we live there may also be more suffering in store for us!! During Hopkins final years he encountered a period of deep spiritual, mental and physical suffering. His prayer to Mary evokes pathos as we feel his despair. His cries are the music of torment. The octet continues, introducing herd -like imagery. Does he feel as if he is ‘hudddled’, caught in the middle of a herd with no possible escape? Or perhaps driven with the herd, not knowing where he is going? Or maybe he is trying to lose himself among the herd? All we can say is that ‘his wrenching of words into unheard of collusions, into compressions that echoed his own wretched self’ paint a hellish, nightmarish scene, one which he does not awaken from. Michael Paul Gallagher S.J. in his sermon to mark Hopkins centenary.

The sestet paints a dramatic psychic landscape ‘O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed.’ Hopkins believes that no man van measure or fathom the depths of human despair. Those who have never been plunged beyond comfort, who have never had to struggle to retain a precarious grip on sanity will fail to sympathise or understand, according to Hopkins. The intensity of this suffering cannot be borne for long and we must ‘creep, wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind,’. The only comfort in

this Terrible Sonnet is that ‘life death does end’ sleep will end the most miserable day.
This poem reminds me of an interview given by Brian Keenan when he was released after four and a half years as a hostage in the Lebanon.
‘Hostage is a crucifying aloneness. It is a silent, screaming slide into the bowels of ultimate despair. Hostage is a man hanging by his fingernails over the edge of chaos, feeling his fingers slowly straightening. Hostage is the humiliating stripping away of every sense and fiber of body and mind and spirit that make us what we are. Hostage is a mutant creation filled with fear, self-loathing, guilt and death-wishing. But he is a man, a rare, unique and beautiful creation of which these things are no part.’ -Brian Keenan
‘I Wake and Feel the Fell of Dark not Day’ continues the story of his psychological anguish and torment. Darkness and oppression overwhelm him. There is a mood of hopelessness throughout this poem right from the outset as Hopkins ‘wake[s]and feel[s] the fell of dark not day’. Sleep did not give the poet rest. Instead he and his heart have endured ‘black hours’. One cannot imagine ‘what sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!’. Here is a man lost in the dark, ‘hours, ..years… life’, isolated, abandoned, his ‘cries like dead letters sent’. In the sestet Hopkins zooms in on himself and his self-loathing is palpable: ‘I am gall, I am heartburn.’, bitter and acidic! And it is God’s punishment. His suffering is caused by having to live with himself! What a hopeless, helpless picture this paints. His soul has been tainted by his body and this fills him with disgust. However, his final words focus on the pain of other souls who may be ‘but worse’. One cannot help but empathise with a man who has experienced such terrifying internal suffering.
So what do you make of Gerard Manley Hopkins? Were you surprised by his work? Did you find yourself at first lost with his kennings, inversions, compound words, sprung rhythm, inscape and instress but then suddenly you were submersed in the musicality and the poems became a felt experience? I hope so! Complex but worth it!
Seamus Heaney says that Hopkins is a poet who brings you to your senses. The reader sees and hears the “hereness-and -nowness” of the moment. So I hope you have enjoyed the ‘heareness and ‘nownesss’ of all the moments of Hopkins poetry.

Mary Carroll

Hopkins

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Rap is a perfect example of this with its playful use of language, and its introduction of new words and speech. Rappers continually come up with new and interesting ways of expressing ideas.

Once you get going with Hopkins’ poetry you will see how it flows. His poetry shows us that we can push language to the limits, be free to use it and bend it, and stop being afraid of it.

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Ellipses: (leaving out a word) conveys the strength and intensity of his feelings and gives a sense of energy and overflowing enthusiasm. Enjambment fulfils the same purpose.

Inversion: (inverting words, putting them in the wrong order) creates an original and fresh use of language

Alliteration and assonance: links words together, creating a pleasant, musical sound.
Colloquialisms: Adds colour and interest and keeps language original.
Onomatopoeia: creates realistic sounds and assails our senses
Imagery: Appeals to our senses, creates vivid pictures.
Kenning: A word invention in which two ideas are joined to form a condensed image e.g. ‘windhover’ for kestrel
Petrarchan sonnet: Rhyme scheme ABBA ABBA CDE CDE Hopkins uses this sonnet shape often however he puts his own original mark on it. Both Petrarchan and

Shakespearean sonnets were written as love poems so we see in Hopkins sonnets, his love for God and Nature in ‘Spring’, ‘As Kingfisher’s Catch Fire, Dragonflies Draw Flame’, ‘God’s Grandeur’ and ‘The Windhover’. Notice the meter of the later! He uses iambic pentameter in the first line then we move into his typical sprung rhythm.

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COMPARITIVE STUDIES

When embarking on Comparative Studies it is important to differentiate between your approach to studying Single Text and Comparative Texts. Single Text involves close reading whereas in Comparative Texts you read for the general storyline. In both you must study character and plot but in Comparative Studies you focus on ***KEY MOMENTS*** from your three texts. Your study should be ***MODE*** based i.e.
Theme/Issues, Cultural context, Vision and viewpoint and you are expected to analyze, contrast and compare moments from your texts under these headings. You must **not** summarize your texts. Remember to compare means to look at similarities and differences. You are invited to "interact with the different worlds encountered and to make discriminations and evaluations."P.71 Draft Guidelines.

THEME/ISSUES

In this section you are expected to focus on the central message presented by the writer and then to look at how the authors of your other texts treat the same message. For example: War/Violence, Power, Love, Revenge, National Identity/Racism, Isolation, Loneliness, Communication. Do they treat the theme similarly or differently? You should also consider both positive and negative aspects of your chosen theme. How are the main issues of the theme introduced to the audience?
Are they immediately obvious or are they perhaps more subtle? Notice how the issues are developed. Who are the important characters in this development? How and where do the complications arise? How do the characters react to these situations? Always look at similarities and differences. What brings the theme to a climax in each text? What resolution do they arrive at? What insights are given at the conclusion? Is the story left open-ended and what effect does this have on the reader?

CULTURAL CONTEXT

Cultural context refers to the world of the text, the type of society we see represented in the society we are reading. We must enter "into the world of the text and get some insight and feel for the cultural texture of the world created." P 71 Draft Guidelines. Look at how the main characters live, their values and beliefs and their day-to-day rituals. What is this world like for the men, women and children who populate the story? Are men or women the dominant force? Are children protected and innocent or are they exposed to great hardship? In what country is the text set? What are the similarities and differences between these settings? What decade/century is featured? What are the social and economic circumstances of the texts? How does the cultural context affect the happiness, fulfillment, frustration, and misery of the main characters? Look at the following list and chose about ***FIVE*** aspects to focus your answer on.

Historical period.
Place.
Social customs, traditions, rituals.
Class structures: upper, middle-class, working-class and the effect, if any, they have on the characters in this society.
Money, power, wealth: who are the powerful/ wealthy people? Are they male or religious?
Religious beliefs and values: evident in lifestyles, values, attitudes toward sex and marriage.
Work ethos in society.
Political situation.
Effects of poverty: helplessness, disease, desperation, violence, honour, pride.

VISION AND VIEWPOINT

This mode deals with the general vision and viewpoint of the author, director or dramatist. This study should incorporate what kind of impression of life the author portrays for the reader. Whether the overall vision is positive/ negative. Is life seen as hope-filled or is the viewpoint hopeless or full of despair? What meaning of life presented to us, the audience, in this text? Sometimes our author has a very moralistic perspective. It is essential to remember that it is the ***author's vision and viewpoint*** that you are expected to deal with in this section.

Having outlined the point of view show where the author presents this, then compare and contrast this with your other texts. You can then examine the characters that are essential to displaying the author's viewpoint.

You could examine whether the vision of the text is relevant today. Is there a final moment of redemption in the texts?

A FINAL NOTE

It is essential in Comparative Studies that you use the language of comparison and that you continue to weave your texts together. Linking phrases are so important, such as; similarly, as in, texts are linked… typical of both… a corresponding moment…however, unlike…

Do not tell the story of the text. Marks are awarded for discussion of similarities and contrasts related to the modes of comparison being question.

Mary Carrol

The Poetry of Elizabeth Bishop appeals to the modern reader for many reasons'. Discuss with reference to the poems on your Leaving Cert Course, examining her thematic approach and stylistic presentation.

Elizabeth Bishop's poetry most definitely appeals to the modern reader as her poems are honest, minutely observant, and masterly etched. I love the human touch in her poems and especially how she brings out the extraordinary in the very mundane moments of life. As Tom Paulin suggests in his article 'The Poet's Poet' (Irish Times Sept. 11th 2004) 'she is one of the most formally perfect poets of the second half of the 20th century'. She combines a fine tuned sense of poetic formality with a delicate lightness of phrase. Thus she delights both the purist and the modern reader.
Bishop's poetry tends to focus on one moment in time. However, each event or moment acts as a catalyst for deep personal reflection. My religion teacher once quoted Socrates saying that 'the unexamined life is not worth living' and this, in my opinion, is one thing Bishop cannot be accused of. I loved her cinematic eye for detail which led her to reflection and then to epiphany! 'Her natural, direct, and intimate speaking voice' (Tom Paulin) speaks volumes to us today as it did when she first penned her poems. Not being a driver and definitely not into fishing I was ready to write Elizabeth Bishop off and hopefully find some other poets more appealing! However, I was quite surprised that she hooked me in! She really helped me to appreciate simplicity and like Sylvia Plath recognise those 'spasmodic tricks of radiance' as the miracles they are! 'The Fish' and 'The Filling Station' are perfect examples of this. Isn't this something we all long for and hope to experience?
Bishop does not shy away from the dirty, ugly side of life. Her descriptions are a minutia of detail, gradually accumulated to present vivid pictures of the exotic and the simple. She deconstructs the image in front of her in order to capture each element necessary so that we can appreciate it in its entirety. The moment she catches this 'tremendous fish' all 'battered and venerable and homely' is a perfect snapshot. Her cinematic, enjambed lines takes us around this fish as she zooms in on particular aspects. The skin 'hung in strips like ancient wallpaper'. She certainly does not romanticize her catch! He was 'speckled with barnacles' and 'infested with tiny white sea lice'.
Furthermore, and possibly most evidently, her description of 'The Filling Station', 'Oil-soaked, oil permeated', presents a very 'dirty' filling station. Everything seems 'impregnated' with dirt and oil and grease. Again her cinematic technique is evident as she pans around the station, sharpening her focus on the father and sons who are 'all quite thoroughly dirty'. Her observational eye constructs vivid images, complex metaphors and intricate symbols which enliven her poetry and make me feel like I am there catching the fish or filling up my long wished for car on my road trip of a lifetime!
The descriptive nature of Bishop's poems, appear at first to be about a moment in time, however both of these poems take us on a journey, allowing her to convey the extraordinary in the ordinary. 'The filling Station' is dirty almost revolting to begin with but as she draws us from the 'black translucency' of the exterior to the wickerwork, begonia and embroidered dopily she begins to discover that despite appearances love and beauty can always be found. Although they are 'grease impregnated', 'hirsute' and 'dim' they are there for a reason. Someone put them there, someone looks after them

all and Bishop realises and we with her that ‘Somebody loves us all’. This journey creates an epiphany which changes an everyday moment into something exceptional. Likewise, in ‘The Fish’ this ‘tremendous’ fish begins as ‘battered’ and ‘homely’ with its ‘frightening gills’ and ‘skin like ancient wallpaper’. However, this journey is subtler. Bishop moves from an external examination of the fish to his ‘shiny entrails’ and then into his eyes! However, he remains … the fish. Her connection and resulting empathy only occurs as she notices hi past triumphs in his ‘five old pieces of fish line’, his ‘medals with their ribbons’. ‘She stare[s] and stare[s]’ and realises that she too has fought and won many battles. Two survivors – ‘Victory’- fill up the ‘little rented boat’ and the mundane is transformed into something magical! She presents us with a gift; that in the most ordinary, grimy places beauty can be found. No matter how ‘homely’ or ‘dirty’ we may be… ‘Somebody loves us all’.

‘The Prodigal’ on the other hand presents us with a picture of someone who is unloved and most definitely does not love themselves! Bishop’s formality is evident in this double sonnet which focuses on the lowest and ugliest part of man’s life. The allusive title draws us into the moment in the parable where the young man is at his lowest and has lost everything. Her keen eye for detail is again evident in this poem as she powerfully recreates the mire in which ‘The Prodigal’ lives. ‘The brown enormous odour’ of the ‘glass smooth dung’ synaesthetically evokes his living quarters, the foul, pervasive odour really gets up our nose! This double sonnet reflects the redemptive journey of the young man who is also a surrogate for Bishop herself. In typical sonnet format, a problem is raised in the octet: the prodigal is homeless, an outsider, living in squalid circumstances. As the sun rises in the sestet, ‘glaz[ing] the barnyard mud with red’ we expect a resolution. Pathetic fallacy suggests there may be an epiphany for the prodigal. That he may realise the awfulness of his situation and change. But no! This moment of ephemeral natural beauty contrasts with the ugliness of the *'glass-smooth dung'* and only appears to have the effect of making the exiled prodigal son resigned to a further period of anguish and loneliness among the pigs, so that *‘he thought he almost might endure his exile yet another year or more.’*

However, the phrase *'almost might'* gives us a glimmer of hope helping us deal with the bathos of the situation, looks beyond present endurance and anticipates the final lines of the poem. The difficult journey to recovery from any addiction is emphasised with the need for a second sonnet as the problem continues. A poignant scene of animal domesticity is created as the farm animals settle down for the night. However, the prodigal is isolated from the ‘safe and companionable’ animals in the barn. The drudgery of his work is emphasised by cacophony as he is seen ‘*Carrying a bucket along a slimy board’*

Nature again intervenes positively in the prodigal's life, this time in the shape of the bats. The *'uncertain staggering flight'* of these repulsive creatures on their journey home to their nests affects the prodigal and he experiences *'shuddering insights, beyond his control'*. If blind bats can make their way home, then the prodigal too can find his way. Thus the poem ends on an optimistic, though ambiguous, note as ‘*it took him a long time*

finally to make his mind up to go home.’

The outcast has eventually decided, or will eventually decide, to return home. For the prodigal *'home'* is both the family he abandoned and the society of his fellow human

beings from which he has been excluded by his alcoholism. In the final movement of the first sonnet we saw how the prodigal temporarily escaped from the awful reality of his situation through drinking-bouts. Now at last he rejects endurance as an adequate response to his exile and makes up his mind to go home. In the gospel story this decision comes to the prodigal son quickly and without any agonising. But for Bishop's prodigal it only comes *'finally'* as a result of *'shuddering insights'*. The adjectives *'staggering and shuddering'* hint at the effects of excessive drinking. Bishop's cinematic portrayal of this troubled journey to recovery is fascinating but what I love about this poem is that the shape itself tells the story. The first 14 lines observe the octave/sestet of the Petrarchan sonnet form and also the quatrain/ couplet (4/4/4/2) of the Shakespearian sonnet form. The second sonnet introduces an innovative septet/septet division. The regular form and the irregular rhyme-scheme break in iambic pentameter may reflect the conflict in the mind of the prodigal (and of Bishop) as he attempts to restore some order to his disordered life. Perhaps it also reflects the chaotic lack of order and control that the alcoholic feels. This poem concludes on an optimistic note, encouraging us all that we can escape our 'pigsty' and move out into the sunlight.
'Sestina' another heavily formalised poem is a stringently controlled expression of raw emotion. Sestina is composed of six, six line verses followed by an envoy. The same six words, 'house', 'grandmother', 'child', 'stove', 'almanac' and 'tears' echo in each verse. Although written in the third person the poem is a personal memoir recalling Bishop's early childhood. 'The September rain' and 'failing blight' of the opening stanza establishes an elegiac mood. The repressed sorrow and grief of both child and grandmother rain down and satiate this poem. This poem is very similar in perspective to 'First Death in Nova Scotia', suggesting that Bishop meditated and reflected over many years, to eventually recreate the consciousness of a child facing the awfulness of loss and their capacity to have fun in the midst of dreadful sorrow.
From the opening stanza we witness the repressed emotion that pervades this poem, as laughter and talking 'hide[s] her tears'. Pathetic fallacy links her tears to the 'rain that beats on the roof of the house' in the second stanza. The rainfall becomes symbolic of Bishop's innate sadness, palpable throughout the poem. I love the cryptic word play especially in the 'envoy' where all six key words make their final punch! My favourite…'Time to plant tears' reflecting the seasonal, yearly bursts of grief as one remembers those who are no longer with us.
Bishop's poetry is full of dramatic energy and intensely visual. It creates a unique feeling of timelessness. Her poetry is easily accessible for a modern audience and even though 'a line will take us hours, it does not seem a moment's thought, our stitching and unstitching has been nought (W.B. Yeats).

Mary Carroll

Metaphysical Poetry

John Donne, whose poetic reputation languished before he was rediscovered in the early part of the twentieth century, is remembered today as the leading exponent of a style of verse known as “metaphysical poetry,” which flourished in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. (Other great metaphysical poets include Andrew Marvell, Robert Herrick, and George Herbert.) Metaphysical poetry typically employs unusual verse forms, complex figures of speech applied to elaborate and surprising metaphorical conceits, and learned themes discussed according to eccentric and unexpected chains of reasoning. Donne’s poetry exhibits each of these characteristics. His jarring, unusual meters; his proclivity for abstract puns and double entendres; his often bizarre metaphors (in one poem he compares love to a carnivorous fish; in another he pleads with God to make him pure by raping him); and his process of oblique reasoning are all characteristic traits of the metaphysicals, unified in Donne as in no other poet.

Donne is valuable not simply as a representative writer but also as a highly unique one. He was a man of contradictions: As a minister in the Anglican Church, Donne possessed a deep spirituality that informed his writing throughout his life; but as a man, Donne possessed a carnal lust for life, sensation, and experience. He is both a great religious poet and a great erotic poet, and perhaps no other writer (with the possible exception of Herbert) strove as hard to unify and express such incongruous, mutually discordant passions. In his best poems, Donne mixes the discourses of the physical and the spiritual; over the course of his career, Donne gave sublime expression to both realms.

His conflicting proclivities often cause Donne to contradict himself. (For example, in one poem he writes, “Death be not proud, though some have called thee / Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so.” Yet in another, he writes, “Death I recant, and say, unsaid by me / Whate’er hath slipped, that might diminish thee.”) However, his contradictions are representative of the powerful contrary forces at work in his poetry and in his soul, rather than of sloppy thinking or inconsistency. Donne, who lived a generation after Shakespeare, took advantage of his divided nature to become the greatest metaphysical poet of the seventeenth century; among the poets of inner conflict, he is one of the greatest of all time.

John Donne

Donne (1572-1631) is a remarkable, experimental and daring poet. He belongs to the Metaphysical group of poets whose work is taken up with ingenious arguments, unconventional imagery and powerful language. His poetry assails his audience with audacious wit and intensity that is as fascinating today as it was four hundred years ago.

The language and themes of Metaphysical poetry are dramatic and complex. They draw their themes from the world of natural science, astronomy, philosophy and theology. Their poems are exercises in logical argument which demand a real alertness from their readers. The sophisticated paradox in '***Batter my Heart Three Personed God'*** pushes language to its limits. Donne address God, asking to be 'imprisoned' because 'I /unless you enthral me, never shall be free/ Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.' This violent language is as startling today as it was in the 17th centaury. The dramatic and unconventional use of sexual imagery, to 'ravish' ironically in order to purify, is typical of the Metaphysical school of poets. Samuel Johnson suggested that Metaphysical poetry at its worst was 'heterogeneous (dissimilar) ideas …. yoked by violence together.' Donne has often been labelled with this criticism, however Metaphysical poetry has also been referred to as a muscular and exciting body of work and this is clearly evident in his poetry.

Typical of Metaphysical poetry, the openings of Donne's poems are immediate, arresting and often startling. '***The Sun Rising'*** is a perfect example of this. Written in the format of an aubade, one expects a reverent address to the sun, honouring it as a source of light and life. However, in a very dramatic statement Donne irrevently mocks and derides the sun: 'Busy old fool, unruly sun'. He launches a dismissive and insulting attack on this 'Saucy pedantic wretch'. The opening line if '***The Flea'*** is similarly dramatic. It is as if we are in the middle of a sermon, being admonished by a preacher to 'mark but this….and mark in this'. This however is no place for a preacher as Donne cunningly sets about seducing his lover!

Donne's consistent wit implies a quickness of intellect. It surprises and startles its audience with unexpected ideas, logical argument and remarkable comparisons. '***The Flea'*** is a daring exercise in creative wit! Poems about fleas were popular in the 16th and 17th centaury and were usually of a bawdy and humorous nature. Donne's treatment of this genre is certainly original. He presents a series of ingenious, outlandish arguments with the sole purpose of enabling his lover overcome her reluctance to his sexual advances.

His first argument is based on the premise that the flea has sucked both their blood which has now mingled with that of the fleas. Donne would like to enjoy the same physical union with his beloved. He suggests that it is very 'little' that he asks of her.

He envies the flea that has enjoyed her even before 'it woo'.

His second argument is outlandish yet ingenious. The woman is about to kill the flea. He pleads with her to save its life arguing that because of the mingling of bloods the flea is 'you and I' and so by killing the flea she will be guilty of three major offences. She will commit murder, killing the poet: suicide, 'self-murder'; and 'sacrilege' as the flea is now the sacred 'marriage temple' of lover and beloved!

His argument is unsuccessful; his beloved has triumphantly disproved his theory. He notes that she 'Find'st not thyself, nor me the weaker now,'! However, Donne, the master of rebut, cleverly shifts his argument and agrees that just as neither he nor she suffered from the death of the flea, she will not lose her honour' if she 'yield'st' to him'. Donne's emotional and intellectual intensity is clearly evident here. '***The Flea'*** is a love poem, though not in the traditional sense. It engages the reader with its humorous conceit. Rather than romanticising his beloved he respects and engages her intellect.

Conceit is at the heart of Metaphysical poetry and the most famous of all conceits is developed in his tender love poem '***A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning.'*** Donne wishes to comfort his wife as he embarks on a long journey. Their grief is great and he desires to assure that they will be able to overcome this sadness. He concentrates on the spiritual aspect of their love in this poem and in the final three stanzas suggests that their souls 'As stiff twin compasses are two'. Using mathematical imagery, he compares her soul to 'the fixed foot' which does not move 'but doth if the other do.' There is a strong inter-dependency between the two. When 'the other far doth roam' the fixed foot 'leans and hearkens after it.' The lovers remain linked. The outer leg of the compass 'obliquely' runs and 'makes me end, where I begun.' making a full circle, reuniting the lovers when his journey is done.

The tender tone of ***'A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning'*** is echoed in the opening lines of '***The Dream***.' Once again we are invited into the intimacy of the lover's bed. It is a very surreal moment as the poet awakens or is awoken from an erotic dream. He wishes to continue the emotional intensity, making it a reality! Although the tone is similar to '***A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning'*** the dramatic content is comparable to '***The Flea***.' Donne wishes to enjoy making love to his beloved. He believes she woke him deliberately so that he would not 'dream all' his 'dream'. And so she enters his arms and they 'act the rest'. This however is not the full story and like The Flea we feel some of Donne's unease. An element of doubt and disappointment arises in the third stanza as the poet, now alone, is fully awake. He is uncertain about his lover's intentions and feelings. He searches for reassurance at the end of the poem and once again his imagery has a strong sexual innuendo. The image is based on the theory that a used torch flares up more easily than a new one. She quenches his 'torch' so that he will be more easily aroused when she next comes but it all depends on whether she returns. If she returns he will once again be happy otherwise he 'would die'. His direct language in this poem explores the intimacy and uncertainties at the heart of their relationship.

After the death of his beloved Anne, the content of Donne's poetry changes but his direct language and striking imagery remain. The Holy Sonnets reflect a deeply troubled soul searching for God's forgiveness. He dreads the idea of dying as he detested the thought of the physical corruption of the body. This idea is developed in one of the Divine Meditations '***At the Round Earths Imagined Corners'***. In the octet he yearns for Judgement Day to arrive while he is still alive so as to avoid the physical corruption of the body and 'never taste death's woe'. This is based on the theological belief found in The Book of Revelations. On reflection however he changes his mind. The sestet reveals a deeply troubled soul in search of forgiveness. Donne realises that at this stage it will be too late 'to ask abundance of thy grace'. The poet begs that 'here on this lowly ground' God will teach him how to repent.

The profound internal crisis Donne experiences is further outlined in '***Batter my Heart Three Personsed God.'*** His deep anxiety is rooted in an overwhelming sense of guilt. He has a deep desire to be free from the tyranny of sin. The language of this poem is again direct, powerful and physical. He wishes God to 'batter', 'breath', 'bend', 'break', 'blow', and 'burn' him. The plosive 'b' sound enhances the urgency of his request. The poem is argumentative in style and is satiated with Donne's unique wit. The idea of arguing with God is quite unconventional even today. His argument is based on three conceits. He compares God to tinsmith who must destroy his creation in order to 'make (him) new'. His second conceit likens God to a deposed ruler and he to a 'usurped town' whose soul has been 'captived and proves weak and untrue'. The final image is of a soul 'bethroed' to God's 'enemy'. Donne's request for God to 'divorce' him from this relationship is certainly an unconventional interpretation of a spiritual relationship with God. Donne's profound longing for salvation is powerfully evoked in the paradox of the final two lines. He will only be 'ever chaste' if God will 'ravish' him.

Donne's poetry has been described as intelligent, immediate and engaging. He greatly extended the scope and subject matter of poetic imagery and introduced a new tone to English love poetry. His work is as energising and refreshing today as it was in the 17th century.

Mary Carroll