Eduqas Anthology
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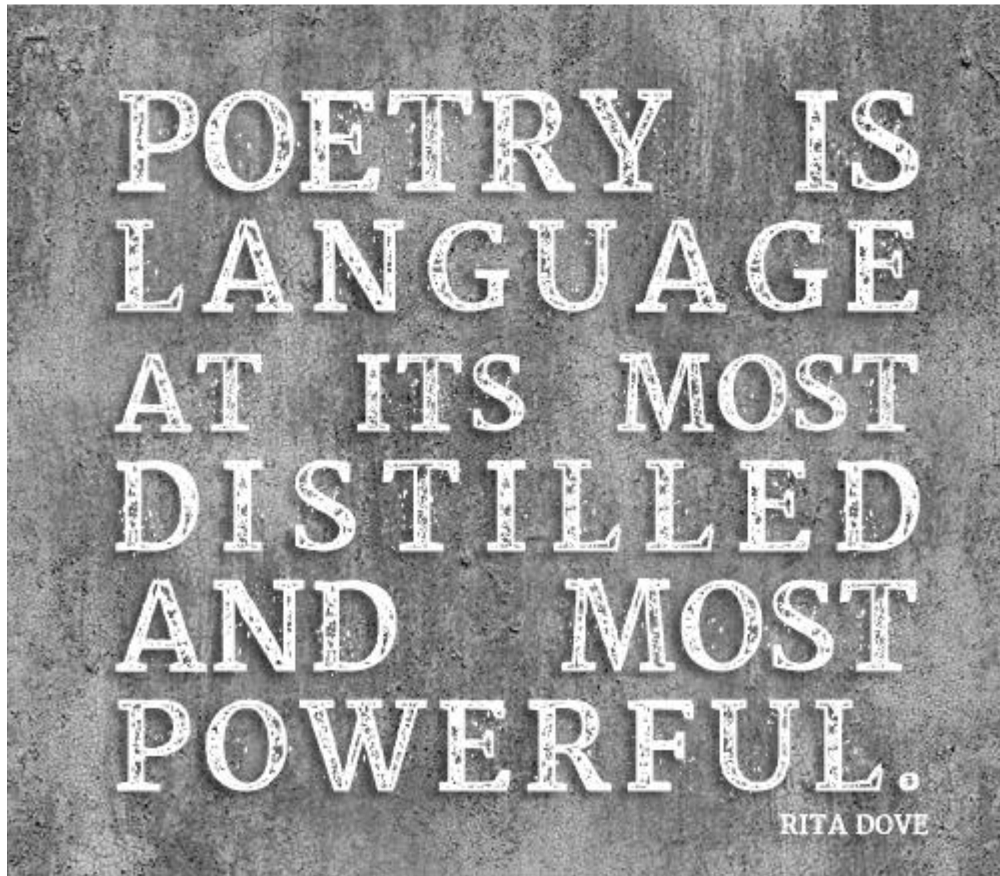

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How to use this booklet

As you read each article, use the discussion questions at the end to consider:

- How is this relevant to the poem it refers directly to, but perhaps the other poems of the anthology too?
- How could I apply what I have just read to particular poems or ideas explored?
-
- Which particular line of the poem could be used as an example to explore these ideas? Why that line?
- How is that particular poet informed by or linked to the other poets of the anthology? Would it be possible to interconnect them in some way?
- How might the poet react to your interpretation? Does your evaluation of the poem align with the poet's ideas?

Rosa Inocencio Smith 12:00 PM / March 6, 2016

https://www.theatlantic.com/notes/2016/03/elizabeth-barrett-browning-birthday/472377/

A Luminous Consciousness

Today, March 6, is the 210th birthday of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who is also half of one of literary history's most beloved power couples. Harriet Waters Preston wrote of Elizabeth's life in the June 1899 issue of *The Atlantic*:

> An active girl until she was fifteen … she received at that age an injury to the spine, one of whose results was the pulmonary disorder which made her an invalid for life, and of which she had almost died before the world ever heard of her name. She never grew in bodily stature after that time, but nothing could arrest the growth of the mind which her fragile frame barely sufficed to contain. She absorbed knowledge, in her seclusion, as naturally as a plant absorbs moisture and aliment from the most unlikely-looking soil; transmuting what she appropriated, with plant like unconsciousness, into colour, fragrance, and wonderful intricacies of form. … She possessed within her own luminous consciousness the irrefragable evidence of things unseen.

Meanwhile, Preston continues, though Elizabeth's father supported her work and published some of her early poems himself, he allowed her little freedom and "made no secret of his conviction that her thoughts 'ought to be in the next world.'" Elizabeth spent the first decades of her adult life cloistered in her room in London, studying classical literature, writing her poems and letters, and waiting to die.

Which is why her 1846 marriage to Robert Browning is worth remembering on her birthday.

As she wrote in *Sonnets from the Portuguese,* she saw their love as a kind of transmutation, the death of her old self that she'd long been expecting and the birth of another, happier, higher one. Love, writing, and transcendence were nearly synonymous for this couple; their relationship began in January 1845—when Robert wrote to say "I love your verses with all my heart, dear Miss Barrett"—and continued in letters throughout that year. In September of 1846, they eloped to Italy, fleeing Elizabeth's disapproving father. And in 1850, Elizabeth published *Sonnets from the Portuguese*—the story of a transformative love affair, disguised as a translation.

My personal favourite from the sonnet sequence imagines the two poets in a kind of private afterlife, between death and heaven:

When our two souls stand up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break into fire
At either curved point,—what bitter wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
Be here contented? Think! In mounting higher,
The angels would press on us and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth, Belovëd,—where the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit

A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

And there's an echo of that poem in this one from Marion Pelton Guild, published in the September 1900 issue of *The Atlantic*, where she addresses the couple as immortal inspiration for poets—and lovers—everywhere:

O mated souls, that through the blissful deeps
Of heaven on heaven wing your ethereal way ...
Know ye how all the world of lovers heaps
Its garlands on the living words that aye
The holy passion of your vows shall say
Till Song itself to gray oblivion creeps? ...

Your white ideal, crowned with the truth, remains
Steadfast amid the shock of baser things;
Your love the golden seal of witness brings
To Nature's charter pure, whereto man strains.

Robert and Elizabeth's letters are collected here at Project Gutenberg, where you can also find all of her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*.

- **What simile does the writer use to describe Barrett Browning's attitude to learning?**
- **What did her father mean when he stated that her thoughts 'ought to be in the next world?'**
- **Why might Barrett Browning have published her poetry as translations and not initially admitted that they were her own work?**
- **How does this article give us an insight into Sonnet 43?**

https://www.laphamsquarterly.org/roundtable/emily-dickinson-reading-list

An Emily Dickinson Reading List (excerpts)

Imagining book recommendations from a life of letters.

By Jaime Fuller

MONDAY, AUGUST 13, 2018

As much as Emily Dickinson is falsely portrayed as a recluse, her letters and reading habits show that she was constantly absorbing the world and transposing it into her poetry between dashes. For all of those who have ever thought, "I wish a dead poet could recommend books to me" (this is probably a short list of people), here is a reading list drawn from some of the writers and books Dickinson mentioned most in her letters, or according to those who knew her.

Thomas Wentworth Higginson

After Dickinson died in 1886, Thomas Wentworth Higginson—an abolitionist who, like Robert Gould, commanded a black regiment in South Carolina during the Civil War—described their decades-long correspondence in *The Atlantic*. She first wrote to him after he published lessons for young authors in the same magazine. Her short note began, "Are you too deeply occupied to say if my Verse is alive?" Over the years, the pair often swapped reading recommendations. She sent him a copy of *Daniel Deronda*, telling him that "to abstain from [the book] is hard." (A picture of Mary Ann Evans hung in Dickinson's room, and she often gushed about how much she loved the woman who wrote under the pen name George Eliot.) He, in turn, recommended the short story "Circumstance," written by another one of the female authors he championed, Harriet Prescott Spofford.

After devouring it, she wrote him that "it followed me in the dark, so I avoided her." In the same letter, she spoke of Whitman: "I never read his book, but was told that it was disgraceful." She also often read Higginson's own work. His first book, *Outdoor Papers*, she told him "is still as distinct as Paradise…It was Mansions – Nations – Kinsmen – too – to me." Dickinson was perhaps flattering him a bit—she often did so, as Brenda Wineapple notes in *White Heat: The Friendship of Emily Dickinson and Thomas Wentworth Higginson*. But she kept reading his work and commenting on it. After the poet died, her own work was finally published, thanks in part to Higginson, who oversaw the death of many of the dashes essential to her art. It took decades before the public saw her words in the same pristine condition as Higginson did as they were first sent to him in the post.

The Complete Works of Shakespeare

After her eye troubles, potentially the result of inflammation from iritis, ended in 1865, Dickinson told several friends that she broke her reading fast with Shakespeare. "While Shakespeare remains," she wrote to Higginson, "Literature is firm." She lived at a time when few women were encouraged to read the playwright; as one writer put it, according to *Emily Dickinson's Shakespeare*, abstaining might "keep out of the mind some rare and happy thoughts," but it also "will keep out of the heart an unholy influence." Less than perturbed by the dangers, Dickinson kept reading. Her niece Martha Dickinson Bianchi once wrote of Emily's reading habits: "Shakespeare always and forever; Othello her chosen villain, with Macbeth familiar as the neighbours and Lear driven into exile as vivid as if occurring on the hills before her door." The Dickinson family's copy of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* backs her up when you tally up the marginalia within; *Othello* is marked up the most. On page 292 of Volume 5—which is dog-eared—the part in Act III where Othello says,

> I will deny thee nothing:
> Whereon, I do beseech thee, grant me this,
> To leave me but a little to myself.

is highlighted in pencil. In one of the last letters she ever wrote, Dickinson quoted *Romeo and Juliet* to her aunt: "'I do remember an Apothecary,' said that sweeter Robin than Shakespeare, was a loved paragraph which has lain on my Pillow all Winter…"

The Bible

The Word was the well Dickinson drew from most. She received her first Bible from her father at age thirteen, after years of attending services with her Calvinist family at Amherst's First Congregational Church. She told Higginson in 1840 that her father "did not wish [his children] to read anything but the Bible." However, she eventually stopped going to church, preferring not to profess her faith in public, as required by the times. The religious text that underpinned the waves of revival undulating across the country stuck around, however, if not as a guide, at least as literary fodder, reappearing in her letters and verse. "Excuse my quoting from the Scripture," she wrote to her Amherst Academy friend Abiah Root on September 10, 1845, near the beginning of her teenage religious rebellion, "for it was so handy in this case I couldn't get along very well without it." Her personal copy of the Bible, available to view online, is filled with evidence of Emily's hand. Half a page in Job has been clipped out, disappearing the lines near "Hath the rain a father? Or who hath begotten the drops of dew?" and "Behold, I am of small account; What shall I answer thee? I lay my hand upon my mouth." A flower was once pressed between the pages of Psalms, and page 241 of the Revelation of St. John the Divine has been dog-eared.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

"Should anybody where you go, talk of Mrs Browning," Dickinson wrote to *Springfield Republican* editor Samuel Bowles before his trip to Italy in 1862, "you must hear for us, and if you touch her grave, put one hand on the head, for me—her unmentioned mourner." Dickinson unsurprisingly vacuumed up contemporary verse, enjoying near peers who had published when she had not. Elizabeth Barrett Browning was perhaps her favourite, judging from the fact that a portrait of the poet hung in her room. In fact, she had more than one portrait, as she told Higginson: "Have you the portrait of Mrs Browning? Persons sent me three – If you had none, will you have mine?" Dickinson praised Barrett Browning in her work: "I went to thank her," for example, imagines a trip to her idol's grave, and, after the poet died in 1861, she wrote, "Silver perished with her tongue."

- **Which four texts are listed as key influences over Dickinson?**
- **What is an abolitionist?**
- **What did Dickinson do when she read the bible?**
- **Who did Dickinson have a picture of in her room?**
- **How we might see the influence of one of these people/texts I Dickinson's poem, Ass Imperceptibly as Grief?**

Rita Dove on Creating Realities in Language

Interviewer: *[00:00:06]* I saw some of the research we did for you that you had written, begun a novel. In the second grade.

RD: *[00:00:13]* I did. I did.

Interviewer: *[00:00:17]* Did you ever finish it? *[00:00:17][0.0]*

RD: It wasn't that kind of novel. What happened was this. We have these spelling lessons. I don't know if they still do it the way they used to do it but you get 20 words a week. You had to learn how to spell them. The last three were always, kind of, the same word but the past participle and you know some kind of verb that changed, and our Teacher would make us do the homework in class so that we would do it, actually, so I would finish it early, and I was just sitting there, twiddling my thumbs. I started writing each week a little chapter of a novel using all 20 words from the spelling list. And it was, it was a game I was playing with myself, the last three words were particularly challenging because they were all the same word, just different verb tenses, but because of that, I actually began to look forward to my spelling homework because I want to finish it quickly so I could write this chapter so- it was about robots taking over the earth, I called it Chaos because that's exactly what it was. Really chaos. But it was fun and I think that I started writing at that point. The idea that the language itself could lead you along just as well as in a prescribed plot. Was thrilling to me. Really. And I have had such examples of from relatives, from the community, from my minister. All of these examples of the power of language. That with the right inflection how you can persuade and create realities from language- that the idea of being able to write language that way and to create a story was just immensely exciting to me. *[00:02:29][132.6]*

- **How does Dove describe her writing habit as a child?**

- **What does she say language can do?**

- **How do we see evidence of this in Cozy Apologia?**

An Excerpt: Rita Dove on compiling the Penguin Anthology of 20th century American Poetry

Interviewer: *[00:02:32]* As Dove took on a major challenge sorting through a hundred years of poems to create the new Penguin Anthology of 20th Century American Poetry how to capture such a broad and varied portrait of the country's literary life. Dove says she let the poets themselves be her guide. *[00:02:51][18.6]*

RD: *[00:02:52]* I began with the ones that you kind of expect, you know. You know the Robert Frosts and and Elizabeth Bishop and people like that. And then I listened to who they were reading who they were talking to, and began to fan out that way which made a big mess. Of course. But. It was a lively mess. OK and. I-. *[00:03:17][24.8]*

Interviewer: *[00:03:17]* Was it poets or poems that you were more focussed on? *[00:03:20][3.4]*

RD: *[00:03:21]* In the beginning I went in with poets but then it became. Poems. Great poems which somehow encapsulated some energy that -that meant- that made an impact and moved the century forward. *[00:03:34][12.8]*

Interviewer: *[00:03:35]* Well in fact in the introduction you write about Changes in America throughout this time right. All kinds of things happening in this century that poetry responded to. *[00:03:43][8.8]*

RD: *[00:03:44]* Right. And I think what are the things that people tend to forget is that poets do write out of life. It isn't some set piece that then gets put up on the shelf but that the impetus, the real instigation for poetry is everything that's happening around us. *[00:04:02][18.3]*

Interviewer/Narrator: *[00:04:03]* As she collected the poems, Dove began to see relationships or conversations between poets of different generations. For example, this passage from Alice Dunbar's poem, 'I sit and sew' laments a woman's limited role in serving her country during World War One:. *[00:04:20][16.7]*

RD: *[00:04:20]* 'the little useless scene, the idle Patch. Why dream I hear beneath my homely thatch? When there they lie in sodden mud and rain, pitifully calling me. The quick ones and the slain, You need me, Christ: it is no rosy a dream that beckons me. This pretty futile scene, it stifles me. God. Must I sit and sew.' I mean that's really kind of, amazingly powerful. *[00:04:50][29.7]*

Interviewer/narrator:: *[00:04:51]* Dove then heard a kind of echo, twenty years later in this poem by Randall Jarell, who did serve in the Army during World War 2. *[00:04:59][8.1]*

RD: *[00:05:00]* 'The death of the Ball Turret Gunner. From my mother's sleep I fell into the state. And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur

froze. Six miles from Earth loosed from its dream of life. I woke to Black Flag and the nightmare fighters when I died, they washed me out of the turret, with a hose.' It rhymes but differently; it's very quiet. Until that last line which just kind of knocks you back. And so they both achieved this effect from different ways and they could have been, you know, talking to each other in an interesting way. *[00:05:42][41.7]*

interviewer/Narrator: *[00:05:43]* In our own poems, Dove has long been interested in history, especially in characters who may have been left out of the mainstream narrative. *[00:05:50][6.8]*

RD: *[00:05:51]* Claudette Colvin was one of the many African-American women- she was a girl at that time- who was arrested in Montgomery for not obeying the segregation laws. She was not chosen to be the test case. Rosa Parks was. And I'll read you a little bit from the from the endings called Claudette Colvin goes to work. 'So ugly, so fat, so dumb, so greasy. What do we have to do to make God love us? Mama was a maid. My daddy mowed lawns like a boy. And I'm the crazy girl off the bus. The one who wrote in class she was going to be president.' I am fascinated by those characters who who don't make it into the history books but-. *[00:06:37][46.6]*

Interviewer: *[00:06:39]* Why is that do you think? *[00:06:40][0.8]*

RD: *[00:06:40]* You know I do think, it comes from two sources: one of them is the fact that I was a very shy child, and so I was always sitting quietly on the sidelines, watching other people. The other thing comes from, I think being both a woman and being African-American and seeing ordinary people doing uncommonly brave things. without recognition, for that kind of bravery or tenacity. *[00:06:40][0.0]*

- **Dove finds similarities in the form of poems when she creates the anthology. Are there any two poems that you find have a similar form in the anthology, and how?**
- **Who is Claudette Colvin?**
- **What is Dove fascinated by?**
- **How does this inform our understanding of Cozy Apologia?**

For Book's Sake http://forbookssake.net/2013/05/01/carol-ann-duffy-as-poet-laureate/

Carol Ann Duffy does not exactly fit the bill of a Royal poet. She is outspoken, direct and irreverent; her poems cover everything from politics to sex, adultery to knife crime. And yet, on 1st May 2013, Duffy will have been Poet Laureate for four years.

In these four years she has made her position clear: she is a people's poet, accessible and inviting. This accessibility has won her some critics, but it has also secured her position as one of Britain's most widely read poets – and our first female Laureate.

Reading Carol Ann Duffy is refreshing. Although her poems contain beautiful imagery and imaginative phrasing, she doesn't hide what she's saying behind flowery metaphors and complicated language. In her love poem, ***~~Valentine~~***, Duffy writes:

'I am trying to be truthful'

This sums up much of Duffy's poetry. She is a writer preoccupied with **truth**. It's a theme which crops up in her poems, over and over, from her exclamation 'But people have always lied!' in ***~~The Legend~~*** (1990) to her sonnet ***~~Politics~~*** (2012). Duffy is known for writing the truth even when it is uncomfortable and unwelcome.

This outspoken nature may have been a part of what prevented her from being named Poet Laureate in 1999, when **Andrew Motion** was given the title. At the time, Carol Ann Duffy, a strong favourite for the role, said that she would not have accepted it anyway, for personal reasons.

There was debate as to why she wasn't chosen. **Jeanette Winterson** wrote: 'the word in the newspapers was that **Tony Blair** didn't want a lesbian. Perhaps not, perhaps a woman would have been difficult enough.'

Whether this is true or not, a quick look at the history of Poet Laureates shows it had been an entirely male-dominated role. It's impossible to believe that in almost 400 years, there wasn't a woman poet who was worthy.

With such a rich range of female talent, from **Elizabeth Barrett Browning** and **Christina Rossetti** to **U. A. Fanthorpe**, the omission of a female Laureate was undeniably glaring.

In 2009, Duffy was offered the position. She said part of the reason she accepted was because she believed it was time a woman was made Laureate: 'I look upon it as a recognition of the great women poets we now have writing.'

The Laureate-ship's entirely male back catalogue reflects the gender imbalance in poetry, and writing in general, with female writers woefully underrepresented and under-promoted. Duffy described the older male poets she encountered early in her career as ' both incredibly patronising and incredibly randy. If they weren't patting you on the head, they were patting you on the bum.' This is, Duffy insists in the same interview, no longer the case. She feels **gender equality** has been reached in the world of poetry: 'There are a lot of women poets now, and their work is accepted and respected.'

Much of Duffy's success can be attributed to her **accessibility.** In the place of complex, alienating language, she chooses words which are inclusive and easy to relate to. And she does it with distinctive style. Who else could get away with a line like 'my lips numb as a two hour snog' (***The Captain of the 1964 Top of the Form Team***)?

Katherine Howard @saysmiss

With Duffy, it just works. Yet this apparent simplicity hides a deep complexity – she gets inside feelings and implants them in her readers. She probably summed it up best herself when she said 'I like to use simple words but in a complicated way.'

So how does a poet so preoccupied with truthfulness handle the role of Laureate?

When asked how she felt about writing to order, Duffy stressed that she had been assured she would not be made to write anything she didn't want to.

<u>She said, rather beautifully</u>: 'I would find it difficult to write a poem that wasn't a genuine event in language… I wouldn't produce or publish anything that didn't seem to be authentically true to myself as a poet.' Then, in rather more Duffy-esque fashion, she said that if she didn't feel inspired by an official commission, 'I'd ignore it.'

Since she became Laureate, Duffy remains undeniably Duffy. In *Politics*, her first official piece as Laureate, she rages 'your promises Latin, feedback, static, gibberish'. Her focus on truth is as clear now as it ever was.

In *Hillsborough*, she writes of 'the slandered dead', and describes truth as 'the sweet silver song of the lark'. In *Big Ask* she tackles the failure of politicians to answer key questions: 'Guantanamo Bay – how many detained?' and 'Extraordinary Rendition – give me some names'.

Her official commissions seem determinedly focused away from the world of officialdom. ***Rings***, written for the **Royal Wedding** in 2011, is a simple love poem, focusing only on the two people in love, with no hint of who they could be.

<u>Translating the British, 2012</u>, written for the **Olympics**, refers to the banking crisis – 'We've had our pockets picked/the soft white hands of bankers' – although it also echoes Cameron: 'We are on our marks/ We are all in this together'.

The Bees is Duffy's first published collection as Poet Laureate. There is less of the heady sensuality of ***<u>Selling Manhattan</u>*** and ***Mean Time***, perhaps also less of the outspoken feminism of ***<u>The World's Wife</u>***.

What there's more of, though, is politics, and the place of the individual in society. Perhaps this is to be expected from the ways in which Duffy's world has had to change since she took on the role. There are also, however, deeply personal and reflective poems.

Despite her original misgivings about taking on the role, and the depressingly long time it took to get a woman into the position, in the last four years Carol Ann Duffy has shown that she is an ideal Laureate for our times: non-traditional, outspoken and engaging.

Even for those who don't like her, or who don't like poetry, Duffy is capable of provoking and inspiring debate. People feel able to comment on her and discuss her, and perhaps that is what this role should now be about.

The Laureate needed in this day and age is one who will make the people sit up, take notice, and start a discussion around poetry. As Duffy herself writes in ***Scheherazade**, The Bees*:

'Dumb was as good as dead; better to utter.'

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- **What does irreverent mean?**
- **Consider Duffy's comments around gender equality in poetry. To what extent do you agree that there is equality in poetry, or literature?**
- **Give an example from Valentine when Duffy uses 'simple words in a complicated way.'**
- **Consider the examples given in the article of poetry Duffy has written in her role as Poet Laureate. Is poetry too personal to write poetry on request in this way?**

Carol Ann Duffy interview (excerpts)

Teenagers rate her poetry as second only to Shakespeare's and, like the Bard, love colours much of her work. Yet in matters of the heart, Carol Ann Duffy admits she is no expert.

Carol Ann Duffy photographed in Wales, 2010 Photo: Laura Hynd

By John Preston

12:45PM BST 11 May 2010

On Being Poet Laureate

It’s been a year since Duffy was appointed Poet Laureate, the first woman to do the job. She’s also the first openly bisexual laureate, but anyone inclined to dismiss her appointment as tokenism clearly hasn’t read her work. Although Duffy insists that she doesn’t ‘sieve the news for poetry’ – the phrase comes from another early poem of hers – she's already proved to be the first laureate in a long while capable of writing public verse that doesn’t make you want to snigger or scoff. She’s written poems about the death of the First World War veteran Harry Patch, about MPs’ expenses and, most recently, about David Beckham. Her poem about Beckham’s injured foot did something that might hitherto have been considered impossible – it yoked together Beckham and Achilles without seeming pretentious. At the same time, her more private poetry, such as her award-winning collection *Rapture*, is sensual, moving and strikingly original.

Life, she says, hasn’t changed that much since she became laureate, although she’s plainly more visible than she was. ‘I’m certainly more aware of when to put a poem into the public domain and when not to, than I was before. ‘One of the things she has tried to do as laureate is encourage interest in other contemporary poets, of whom there are a great many good ones, she insists. ‘I see being Poet Laureate as a kind of honour on behalf of all poets. It’s certainly not because I’m the Best Poet, because there are better poets out there.’ Is she sure about that?

On her childhood

In a terrific phrase, Duffy once described childhood as being like ‘a long greenhouse where everything is growing’. Her own childhood was spent in the Gorbals in Glasgow, briefly, and then in Stafford. Her parents were Roman Catholic socialists and she was the oldest of five children.

Her earliest memory is of her parents having a party when she was 18 months old. ‘I woke up and all the coats and hats had been put on the bed. I was trying people’s hats on. I can remember the smell of perfume on the fur coats and them lying on the bed.’ She was, she says, a tomboyish child. ‘I was very like William in the *Just William* books.’ She was also a voracious reader, collecting her four brothers’ library tickets so she could take out as many books as possible. ‘I was telling my daughter, Ella, the other day how I used to go out on my horse. An imaginary horse, not a real one. I used to ride it to the library, tie it up outside and go in.’

On writing

'

Does she always have a poem on the go? 'I have periods when I don't write. Well… I suppose I am always writing because I do a lot of children's poetry. But that's more like paddling than swimming to me. I always carry a notebook.' She shows it to me. Her handwriting is looping and exuberant, yet also orderly, the lines running straight across the page. It's oddly similar to her hair which is billowing and curly, but neatly trimmed.
'When I've started a poem, I won't leave it until I've finished it. I'll get through six, seven, eight drafts. Whatever it takes.' And what about the pleasure when she's finished a poem? 'The pleasure comes from trying to make a poem live. The most beautiful poem is always the one you're writing.'

- **What does tokenism mean?**
- **What three things make Duffy unique as Poet Laureate, according to Preston?**
- **What has Duffy written about as Laureate?**
- **Why might we want to record history in poetry?**
- **What sort of child was Duffy?**
- **Reading Duffy's description of the writing process, how might this feed into our interpretation of Valentine?**

Lord Byron

by Ellen Castelow

'Mad, bad and dangerous to know'. That is how Lady Caroline Lamb described her lover George Gordon Noel, sixth Baron Byron and one of the greatest Romantic poets in English literature.

As famous for his scandalous private life as for his work, Byron was born on 22nd January 1788 in London and inherited the title Baron Byron from his great uncle at the age of 10. He endured a chaotic childhood in Aberdeen, brought up by his schizophrenic mother and an abusive nurse. These experiences, plus the fact that he was born with a club foot, may have had something to do with his constant need to be loved, expressed through his many affairs with both men and women.

He was educated at Harrow School and Trinity College, Cambridge. It was at Harrow that he experienced his first love affairs with both sexes. In 1803 at the age of 15 he fell madly in love with his cousin, Mary Chaworth, who did not return his feelings. This unrequited passion was the basis for his works 'Hills of Annesley' and 'The Adieu'.

Whilst at Trinity he experimented with love, discovered politics and fell into debt (his mother said he had a "reckless disregard for money"). When he turned 21 he took up his seat in the House of Lords; however the restless Byron left England the following year for a two-year European tour with his great friend, John Cam Hobhouse. He visited Greece for the first time and fell in love with both the country and the people. Byron arrived back in England in 1811 just as his mother died. Whilst on tour he had begun work on the poem 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage', a partly autobiographical account of a young man's travels abroad. The first part of the work was published to great acclaim. Byron became famous overnight and was much sought after in Regency London society. His celebrity was such his future wife Annabella Milbanke called it 'Byromania'.

In 1812, Byron embarked on a affair with the passionate, eccentric – and married – Lady Caroline Lamb. The scandal shocked the British public. He also had affairs with Lady Oxford, Lady Frances Webster and also, very probably, with his married half-sister, Augusta Leigh.

In 1814 Augusta gave birth to a daughter. The child took her father's surname of Leigh but gossip was rife that the baby girl's father was in fact Byron. Perhaps in an attempt to recover his reputation, the following year Byron married Annabella Milbanke, with whom he had a daughter Augusta Ada. Because of Byron's many affairs, the rumours of his bisexuality (homosexuality was illegal at this time) and the scandal surrounding his relationship with Augusta, the couple separated shortly after the birth of their child.

Annabella, Lady Byron

In April 1816 Byron fled England, leaving behind a failed marriage, notorious affairs and mounting debts. He spent that summer at Lake Geneva with the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, his wife Mary and Mary's half sister Claire Clairmont, with whom Byron had had an affair whilst in London. Claire was an attractive, lively and voluptuous brunette and the couple rekindled their affair. In 1817 she returned to London and gave birth to their daughter, Allegra.

Byron travelled on to Italy. In Venice he had more affairs, with Marianna Segati, his landlord's wife and Margarita Cogni, wife of a Venetian baker.

The sale of Newstead Abbey for £94,500 in the autumn of 1818 cleared Byron's debts and left him with a generous income.

By now, Byron's life of debauchery had aged him well beyond his years. However in 1819, he began an affair with the Countess Teresa Guiccioli, only 19 years old and married to a man nearly three times her age. The two became inseparable; Byron moved in with her in 1820.

Teresa Guiccioli

It was during this period in Italy that Byron wrote some of his most famous works, including 'Beppo', 'The Prophecy of Dante' and the satiric poem 'Don Juan', which he never finished. By now Byron's illegitimate daughter Allegra had arrived in Italy, sent by her mother Claire to be with her father. Byron sent her away to be educated at a convent near Ravenna, where she died in April 1822. Later that same year Byron also lost his friend Shelley who died when his boat, the Don Juan, went down at sea. His earlier travels had left Byron with a great passion for Greece. He supported the Greek war for independence from the Turks and in 1823 left Genoa to travel to Cephalonia to become involved. He spent £4000 refitting the Greek fleet and in December 1823 sailed to Messolonghi, where he took command of a Greek unit of fighters. His health began to deteriorate and in February 1824, he fell ill. He never recovered and he died at Missolonghi on April 19th.

His death was mourned throughout Greece where he was revered as a national hero. His body was brought back to England to be buried in Westminster Abbey but this was refused on account of his "questionable morality". He is buried at his ancestral home Newstead Abbey, in Nottinghamshire.

- **How was Byron's childhood difficult?**
- **How might we describe Lord Byron's personality from reading this article?**
- **How might Byron have felt as a result of his growing reputation?**
- **When thinking of She Walks in Beauty, to what extent do we feel it was based upon Byron's experience of love?**

Into the dark water: Philip Hoare on the life and death of Wilfred Owen (excerpts) by Philip Hoare

Poetry

In peace and wartime, the poet found solace and sensuality in swimming. A new film marking the centenary of his death explores the refuges he sought away from the battlefield

'The sparkling cold' … a scene from *I Was a Dark Star Always.* Photograph: Philip Hoare / John Hansard Gallery

I spent my childhood holidays in Torquay, but I'd forgotten how blue its waters were. Meadfoot beach arcs around the bay, looking out to a single, sharp rock in the distance, angular, as if driven from the sky into the sea. In the years before the first world war, the teenage Wilfred Owen spent his own summers on this beach. He'd always loved the water. His father taught him to swim; Tom Owen was a railway clerk in Shrewsbury, but on his days off he'd dress up as a captain and wander Liverpool's docks. Once he brought home four Lascars; Wilfred and his brother Harold remembered their bare brown feet beneath the tea table.

Wilfred knew where his future lay. His heroes had been drawn to this turquoise sea: Percy Shelley, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Oscar Wilde. In the summer of 1911, he made the pilgrimage to nearby Teignmouth, where John Keats had stayed in 1818.

The sea embodied Owen's ambitions, both literary and sensual. It would bear him up and carry him away. He read Wilde and Yeats, loved his favourite green suit and grew his hair floppy and long. In the summer of 1914, his youthful prospects took a decadent turn. Having failed to get into college, he found himself in southern France, acting as a tutor to an artistic family. He met his first real live poet: Laurent Tailhade, an opium addict and anarchist who'd declared a terrorist bomb in Paris to be a beautiful gesture. Tailhade "slobbered over" Owen, who accepted the compliment. As his biographer Dominic Hibberd notes, this strange meeting would invest his work with its power; like Tailhade, he would find art in disaster. As he wrote of swimming in mountain pools in jagged pararhymes, he believed he was doing in poetry what modernist composers were doing in music.

War came like a stain. He would not fight for king and country, but for poetry. He enlisted in the Artists Rifles; 'If I fall, I shall fall mightily. I shall be with Perseus and Icarus, whom I loved; and not with Fritz, whom I do not hate.'

The reality, when he met it, was shocking. At the western front he found a terrifying beach where fetid water swilled in craters so deep that his men stole lifejackets from cross-Channel ferries to save themselves from drowning. Tanks – called land ships – surfed the mud; gas-masked soldiers peered out of trenches through subaquatic periscopes. It was a new, unnatural history, fearfully evoked in "Dulce et Decorum Est".

Thrown in the air by an explosion, he fell to earth, transformed anew. Shell shocked, he was sent to Netley hospital, a vast Victorian establishment overlooking Southampton Water. "I cannot quite believe myself back in England in this unknown region," he protested. He imagined that he had swum there.

Benjamin Britten, a pacifist and conscientious objector, pre-empted the revival by adapting Owen's poems in his 1962 *War Requiem* (staged this month by the ENO). Britten's opera – and later, Derek Jarman's 1989 Aids-era film version – drew on the homoeroticism in Owen's work. But the true nature of his sexuality remains as fluid as the sea in which he swam. After Owen's death, his brother Harold inked out or tore entire pages from the poet's letters and destroyed his

only diary. Written in 1918, it would have given us vital insights into Owen's last year, when he not only wrote some of the most powerful poems of 20th century literature, but also became part of what we would see as a gay literary circle.

The last thing he did when he left England in August 1918 was to swim off Folkestone beach. Throughout his military career he had managed to satisfy his passion for swimming – from Yorkshire rivers to Scottish municipal pools - telling his beloved mother, Susan, that "it never fails to give me a Greek feeling of energy and elemental life". If there was any doubt that Owen equated swimming with a potent sensuality, it is dispelled by this deliberate, final act.

Two months later, Owen led his men into action in northern France. It was the last battle of the war; peace was imminent. At Ors, where only months before they had swum naked in the Sambre-Oise canal, retreating German soldiers flooded the land. At 5.45 on the morning of 4 November, Owen and his company tried to cross a canal in the face of ferocious enemy fire. They breasted the surf of bullets, as he had written in "Spring Offensive", his last poem, with its final line, "Why speak they not of comrades that went under?"

Owen was seen encouraging his boys as they assembled rafts on the side of the canal. There are conflicting reports about what happened next. One claims he was still on the bank when he was shot; the other that he was on a raft.

In the village cemetery nearby, his name is cut into Portland stone, rather than written on water. The church bells are tolling. On 11 November, as her parish rang in the Armistice, Susan Owen received the telegram. Her son had died far from home. But in this peaceful place, with its lush fields and its gently flowing canal, I feel strangely happy for him. As if, at any moment, a short, sturdy young man with dark grey eyes might pad across to that same bank and, leaving his clothes in a pile on the grass, lower himself in, too.

- **What does solace mean?**
- **Who were Owen's key heroes?**
- **Why did Owen enlist for the war?**
- **Why might his brother have destroyed Owen's only diary?**
- **Where do we see this ongoing theme of water as either comforting or overwhelming in Dulce et Decorum Est?**
- **What did Owen mean by, 'Why speak they not of comrades that went under?'**

Rupert Brooke's Obituary in *The Times*:

Rupert Brooke died on April 23 (coincidentally, the traditional observance of St. George's Day, and the birthday of Shakespeare), 1915. On Monday, April 26, 1915, his obituary appeared in *The Times*: "Death of Mr. Rupert Brooke. Sustroke at Lemnos. We regret to record the death, on April 23, Lemnos, from the effects of sunstroke, of Rupert Brooke, the poet, a sub-lieutenant in the Royal Naval Division."

The obituary continues: "W.S.C. (Winston Churchill)" writes: -- "Rupert Brooke is dead . . . [his] life has closed at the moment when it seemed to have reached its springtime." W.S.C. was, of course, Winston Spencer Churchill. Churchill's portion of the obituary (a eulogy) takes up a little less than half of the total, and is sandwiched between the copy writer's general announcement and later biographical sketch of Brooke (the "copy writer" was probably Edward Marsh, the editor of *Georgian Poetry* , a close friend of Brooke's, and soon to become his literary executor). Although, on the surface, the Churchill obituary is a tribute to a promising young poet, it's impossible not to sense in the eulogy an underlying political agenda -- especially when considered in the historical context of the Dardanelles campaign which Churchill had helped to conceive and to which he had sent Brooke as part of his own Royal Naval Division (RND). The obituary of Rupert Brooke written by Winston Churchill follows:

Rupert Brooke is dead. A telegram from the Admiral at Lemnos tells us that this life has closed at the moment when it seemed to have reached its springtime. A voice had become audible, a note had been struck, more true, more thrilling, more able to do justice to the nobility of our youth in arms engaged in this present war, than any other more able to express their thoughts of self-surrender, and with a power to carry comfort to those who watch them so intently from afar. The voice has been swiftly stilled. Only the echoes and the memory remain; but they will linger.

During the last few months of his life, months of preparation in gallant comradeship and open air, the poet-soldier told with all the simple force of genius the sorrow of youth about to die, and the sure triumphant consolations of a sincere and valiant spirit. He expected to die: he was willing to die for the dear England whose beauty and majesty he knew: and he advanced towards the brink in perfect serenity, with absolute conviction of the rightness of his country's cause and a heart devoid of hate for fellow-men.

The thoughts to which he gave expression in the very few incomparable war sonnets which he has left behind will be shared by many thousands of young men moving resolutely and blithely forward in this, the hardest, the cruellest, and the least-rewarded of all the wars that men have fought. They are a whole history and revelation of Rupert Brooke himself. Joyous, fearless, versatile, deeply instructed, with classic symmetry of mind and body, ruled by high undoubting purpose, he was all that one would wish England's noblest sons to be in the days when no sacrifice but the most precious is acceptable, and the most precious is that which is most freely proffered.

In September 1914, Churchill offered Brooke a commission in the RND, and within a month sub lieutenant Brooke participated in the evacuation of Antwerp. Back in England over the Christmas holidays, Brooke wrote his famous "war sonnets" (particularly Brooke's sonnet "V. The Soldier," the sonnet that Dean Inge had read at the pulpit of St. Paul's on Easter Sunday). Churchill ends this paragraph: "The voice has been swiftly stilled. Only the echoes and the memory remain; but they will linger." Ironically, Churchill's eulogy would help establish and reinforce the Rupert Brooke myth. While Churchill's eulogy helped further the Brooke mystique, his superlatives worked both ways and likewise helped doom Brooke's reputation by overpraising his "war sonnets" and overvaluing his (supposed) selfless example and sacrifice.

In February, Brooke joined the Division's Hood Battalion in preparation for the landings at Gallipoli. Passing through Egypt on his way to Gallipoli, Brooke suffered sunstroke and dysentery. Off Lemnos he

contracted blood poisoning from an insect bite on his lip and died two days before the landings. Churchill cabled his brother John "endeavour if your duties allow, to attend Rupert Brooke's funeral on my behalf. We shall not see his like again." With the Gallipoli landings taking place at the very moment he was writing Brooke's obituary, Churchill was also "comfort[ing] "those who watch[ed] so intently from afar" For one, Prime Minister Asquith whose son Arthur (Oc) was part of the RND. The Dardenelles campaign finally succumbed to inter-service quarreling and Turkish tenacity, and after a quarter-million casualties, the Allies evacuated the Gallipoli beaches in October of 1915. Churchill tendered his resignation on November 11, 1915 (Armistice Day minus three years). Perhaps the political connection in Churchill's eulogy of Rupert Brooke is merely coincidence . . . just as it's coincidence that a column appealing for more recruits follows immediately after it.

Anthem for Doomed Youth
Writers and Literature of The Great War, 1914-1918

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- **What is a eulogy?**
- **How did Brooke die? Why is this ironic?**
- **What does the fact that Churchill wrote an excerpt for Brooke' obituary tell us about the writer?**
- **How does the second paragraph of Churchill's account correlate to Soldier?**
- **To what extent do you think Brooke died a) as he would have hoped at war and b) a hero?**

Thomas Hardy

https://humanism.org.uk/humanism/the-humanist-tradition/19th-century-freethinkers/thomas-hardy/

Not many people have two graves, though the famous novelist and poet, Thomas Hardy, has. His body is buried in Westminster Abbey, next to another great writer, Charles Dickens. But his heart lies in the churchyard at Stinsford, a tiny village in the Dorset countryside which he loved so much, and which he wrote about so well in his " Wessex novels". He is also one of the most important English poets of the last hundred years.

His father, and grandfather, used to sing and play in the choirs and bands that provided music for the church services. Young Hardy enjoyed music and grew up in this atmosphere of simple worship. As an adult, however, he encountered the challenges to dogmatic religious belief that were sweeping England, sparked by books such as Darwin's Origin of Species and the new "higher criticism" of the Bible. Hardy slowly moved from the Christian teachings of his boyhood to become a thoughtful, questioning agnostic. Later in life he wrote: "My pages show harmony of view with Charles Darwin, T H Huxley, Herbert Spencer, David Hume, John Stuart Mill and others …" It was through such wide reading, and his personal experience of life (which included tragic events in the lives of friends), that he came to reject belief in the Christian concept of a personal, loving God. However, Hardy did not like labels and never joined any of the early humanist or rationalist associations.

His viewpoint is well expressed in these two comments about him:

"Hardy reflected Nietzsche's agonised cry that 'God is dead', in his novels. His view of life was that since there is no God to give meaning to life, Man is alone in the Universe, no better and no worse than other creatures who live or have lived for a brief moment on this speck called Earth. The Universe is neither malevolent or benevolent; it is simply indifferent …" J Clipper in Study Guide on The Return of the Native (Bantam)

"In some men such a belief would lead to cynicism and sterility. In Hardy it leads to pity for his fellow human beings, interest in the natural world, and love of being alive … Life itself for us is its own justification." New English Library English Language and Literature

Hardy's novels are often tragic. He sometimes uses phrases like "guardian angels" or the "President of the Immortals" or refers to "Fate", which can give the impression of a belief in the supernatural. But, as an (self-)educated agnostic at the turn of the century, he cannot have believed literally in any of these, and seems to have used them as metaphors for his sometimes rather pessimistic view of life and its possibilities for his victim-characters such as Tess Durbeyfield or Michael Henchard. He also wrote, in The Mayor of Casterbridge, that "character is fate" and this seems closer to his view of reality – that we are responsible for our own lives and "fates", something that all humanists believe.

Hardy wrote hundreds of poems. In a number of them he explores deep questions about the existence of God. One is called God's Funeral; in another, A Philosophical Fantasy, he humorously shows his doubt as to how he should address God:

"Such I ask you, Sir or Madam
(I know no more than Adam,

Call you 'It', if you'll excuse me?)..."

Hardy's poem, The Convergence of the Twain, describes dramatically how the great liner Titanic and the iceberg each moved across hundreds of miles of ocean to collide. Hardy makes us think about the idea of "Fate", the power of natural forces, and whether this was an accident or a planned "Act of God". In The History of English Literature Legouis and Cazamian say that his poems show us his "manifold consciousness of human misery, the moving and metaphysical realisation of an unknown God and an impassive universe, and abhorrence of war". This last quality is shown in a short poem simply called Christmas: 1924:

"'Peace upon earth!' was said.
We sing it,
And pay a million priests to bring it.
After two thousand years of mass
We've got as far as poison-gas."

But this disillusionment with organised religion is not what has gained him his world-wide acclaim and his memorial in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey. It is the warm humanity and humour of his writing, the compassion which he evokes in us towards the characters in his stories, and his deep love of the beauty of the English countryside. In a moving poem called Afterwards he hoped that after he "had been stilled at last" people would remember how he used to enjoy the new green leaves in the Spring, watching the hawk perch on a tree or a hedgehog crossing the grass, and how he would stand "watching the mysteries of the full-starred heavens", and that they would say, "He was a man who used to notice such things."

His poems are often read at humanist funerals. He wrote about death in a very humanist way, with no vision of a Christian afterlife, simply offering the hope of being remembered by others or surviving in one's children or as a part of nature:

"I am the family face;
Flesh perishes, I live on...
The eternal thing in man
That heeds no call to die." (Heredity)

- **Why does Hardy have two graves?**
- **What does agnostic mean?**
- **Based upon this opinion, to what extent is the dead soldier in Wife in London a victim of Fate?**
- **How did Hardy hope we were remembered after death, if not welcomed by God in Heaven?**
- **Do you think that Hardy would be happy that his final resting place is Westminster Abbey? Why/why not?**

Katherine Howard @saysmiss

Transcript of interview with Simon Armitage about Manhunt, BBC Teach

When you say war poetry these days, people tend to presume that you're talking about the points of the First World War. They're the last generation of trained writers and trained soldiers. I've never been involved in a war. I'm not a soldier. I'm probably am a bit of a coward, so my route then into writing about conflict was to talk to other people about their experiences and to listen to their testimonies.

This poem is written through the experiences of a soldier called Eddy. A bullet had entered the side of his face. The bullet had ricocheted around inside his body. He wanted to talk about these injuries and the way that they damaged his body and damaged his mind. But the point was actually written from the point of view of Eddie's wife Laura and she's trying to find her husband, the real nature of him. and she's exploring that by following the course that this bullet has taken through his body.

A lot of the imagery in the poem and the language in the poem is borrowed from military vocabulary. A lot of sort of military ideas and words become metaphors for things going on in the body and also things going on in the mind.

I use the word foetus which I think is quite a surprising word. When you come across it, I was trying to always get that moment of shock when the bullet is actually located there.

A lot of people who've come back from war have real issues with their temper. Their nerves are shredded: when she talks about unexploded mines, I think you could almost say that she's trying to diffuse him. One thing I'm very conscious of with this kind of poem is a responsibility to people's lives. I mean, these are real people, who've been involved in real conflicts, where people have been injured and died and have killed people as well. There's a sense that you are writing elegies, that you're writing memorials to people.

- **How does Armitage set about gaining an insight into the impact of war?**
- **Give three examples of vocabulary from manhunt that is borrowed from military vocabulary, as Armitage mentions. Explain your choices.**
- **Why is the word 'foetus' shocking? Why did Armitage deliberately set out to shock at that point of the poem?**
- **What does diffuse mean? How could Eddie's wife 'diffuse' him?**
- **What responsibility did Armitage have by using other people's stories to write his poem?**

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POETRY INTERVIEW | OWEN SHEERS

Carl Griffin: Why was the story of *Pink Mist*, your new book about young soldiers, written as a poem and not a novel or short story?

Owen Sheers: *Pink Mist* was originally commissioned by BBC Radio 4 as a five-part drama to be broadcast across a week in March 2012. To a certain extent it was this episodic format and the prospect of writing for a medium in which the spoken voice has greater weight, which led me to tell the stories of Arthur, Hads and Taff through poetry. But there were other reasons too, which grew more from the nature of the material I'd gathered in my interviews with wounded soldiers.

CG: Your play *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* is based upon the experiences of injured service personnel (who make up the majority of the cast). Why did you feel there was more to tell?

OS: I'd already dealt with the issues of psychologically and physically wounded soldiers in *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* In the wake of that production, however, I still felt I had many untold stories to tell, especially from the women in these young men's lives – the mothers, wives and girlfriends. And I also still had things I wanted to say. It was very important in *Charlie F.* to create a play which responded to what the soldiers in the cast thought, felt and experienced. In *Pink Mist*, however, I had greater freedom to explore the subjects in my own way and to move into fictional territory to get closer, in that paradoxical way of literature, to the truths I wanted expressed.

I also wanted to write into a British tradition of conflict poetry – from Y Gododdin, through Wilfred Owen and, perhaps most significantly, David Jones.

CG: Hasn't War poetry been 'done to death'?

OS: We have a history on these islands of remembering and trying to understand the consequences of war in verse, and I suppose I wanted *Pink Mist* to continue that in some way.

On a more personal level I also felt *Pink Mist* was an opportunity to move fully into a style of writing I've been approaching for many years now through other projects across poetry, fiction and theatre. A form of story-telling that was lyrical and musical and yet also documentary and narrative too; a kind of dramatic reportage in verse. It's a style with which I'd like to continue experimenting, because it feels very natural to me but also because, in the wake of projects like *Pink Mist, Charlie F., The Passion* and *Calon,* I've become interested in the concept of the writer as a conduit for other voices beyond their own; in using poetry and theatre to bridge the distances that appear to be ever widening in our society.

CG: Considering *The Heath*, and now *Pink Mist*, what do you think the long poem gives the reader that the one-page poem doesn't? Aren't you worried readers will get bored, and what about the widely held point of view, though maybe not held by your influences, that poetry should be a snapshot?

OS: If a reader gets bored then that is the fault of the writer, not the form. As to the 'widely held' idea, I'd be interested to know just how widely held it is. The only 'shoulds' in poetry are that it shouldn't be prose, and it should be good.

The long poem offers the opportunity to create a more sustained lyric voice and to immerse a reader deeper into the world of a character or place. Think of Alice Oswald's 'Dart' or Adam Foulds's 'The Broken Word'. These are pieces which maintain the penetrative power, economy and elliptic narratives of poetry, but which also adopt elements of the lasting resonance of the novel. I love lyric poetry but the way ideas are inlaid across a work are very different in a longer poem. And as for snapshots – a long poem can still be full of them, it's just that they'll have the opportunity to speak to each other and to be invested with a slowly gathered meaning rather than an essence or metaphoric suggestion left hanging in the air.

Owen Sheers' new book Pink Mist*, a mash-up of poetry and drama, out this month, is reviewed elsewhere in this edition.*

- **Look up the meaning of Pink Mist. How does that give you an insight into the side of war that Sheers wants to show with his poetry?**
- **What other works has Sheers produced that explore ideas of conflict?**
- **Is the interviewer right? To what extent will we always have material to inspire war poetry?**
- **In Mametz Wood, how do we see 'suggestion left hanging in the air'? What do the final lines hint at about the soldiers?**

Poetry Foundation: William Blake (excerpts)

Poet, painter, engraver, and visionary William Blake worked to bring about a change both in the social order and in the minds of men. Though in his lifetime his work was largely neglected or dismissed, he is now considered one of the leading lights of English poetry, and his work has only grown in popularity. In his *Life of William Blake* (1863) Alexander Gilchrist warned his readers that Blake "neither wrote nor drew for the many, hardly for work'y-day men at all, rather for children and angels; himself 'a divine child,' whose playthings were sun, moon, and stars, the heavens and the earth." Yet Blake himself believed that his writings were of national importance and that they could be understood by a majority of his peers. Far from being an isolated mystic, Blake lived and worked in the teeming metropolis of London at a time of great social and political change that profoundly influenced his writing. In addition to being considered one of the most visionary of English poets and one of the great progenitors of English Romanticism, his visual artwork is highly regarded around the world.

Blake was born on November 28, 1757. Unlike many well-known writers of his day, Blake was born into a family of moderate means. His father, James, was a hosier, and the family lived at 28 Broad Street in London in an unpretentious but "respectable" neighbourhood. In all, seven children were born to James and Catherine Harmitage Blake, but only five survived infancy. Blake seems to have been closest to his youngest brother, Robert, who died young. By all accounts Blake had a pleasant and peaceful childhood, made even more pleasant by skipping any formal schooling. As a young boy he wandered the streets of London and could easily escape to the surrounding countryside.

One incident at this time affected Blake deeply. In June of 1780 riots broke out in London incited by the anti-Catholic preaching of Lord Byron (George Gordon) and by resistance to continued war against the American colonists. Houses, churches, and prisons were burned by uncontrollable mobs bent on destruction. On one evening, whether by design or by accident, Blake found himself at the front of the mob that burned Newgate prison. These images of violent destruction and unbridled revolution gave Blake powerful material for works such as *Europe* (1794) and *America* (1793).
Of more concern to Blake was the deteriorating health of his favourite brother, Robert. Blake tended to his brother in his illness and according to Gilchrist watched the spirit of his brother escape his body in his death: "At the last solemn moment, the visionary eyes beheld the released spirit ascend heaven ward through the matter-of-fact ceiling, 'clapping its hands for joy.'"

Blake always felt the spirit of Robert lived with him. He even announced that it was Robert who informed him how to illustrate his poems in "illuminated writing." Blake's technique was to produce his text and design on a copper plate with an impervious liquid. The plate was then dipped in acid so that the text and design remained in relief. That plate could be used to print on paper, and the final copy would be then hand coloured.

After experimenting with this method in a series of aphorisms entitled *There is No Natural Religion* and *All Religions are One* (1788?), Blake designed the series of plates for the poems entitled *Songs of Innocence* and dated the title page 1789. Blake continued to experiment with the process of illuminated writing and in 1794 combined the early poems with companion poems entitled *Songs of Experience*. The title page of the combined set announces that the poems show "the two Contrary States of the Human Soul."
The two states of innocence and experience are not always clearly separate in the poems, and one can see signs of both states in many poems. The companion poems titled "Holy Thursday" are on the same subject,

the forced marching of poor children to St. Paul's Cathedral in London. The speaker in the state of innocence approves warmly of the progression of children:

'Twas on a Holy Thursday their innocent faces clean
The children walking two & two in red & blue & green
Grey headed beadles walkd before with wands as white as snow
Till into the high dome of Pauls they like Thames waters flow[.]
The brutal irony is that in this world of truly "innocent" children there are evil men who repress the children, round them up like herd of cattle, and force them to show their piety. In this state of innocence, experience is very much present.

If experience has a way of creeping into the world of innocence, innocence also has a way of creeping into experience. The golden land where the "sun does shine" and the "rain does fall" is a land of bountiful goodness and innocence. But even here in this blessed land, there are children starving. The sharp contrast between the two conditions makes the social commentary all the more striking and supplies the energy of the poem.

The "Proverbs of Hell" are clearly designed to shock the reader out of his commonplace notion of what is good and what is evil:

Prisons are built with stones of Law,
Brothels with bricks of Religion.
The pride of the peacock is the glory of God.
The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.
The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.
The nakedness of woman is the work of God.
It is the oppressive nature of church and state that has created the repulsive prisons and brothels. Sexual energy is not an inherent evil, but the repression of that energy is. The preachers of morality fail to understand that God is in all things, including the sexual nature of men and women.

Very little of Blake's poetry of the 1790s was known to the general public. His reputation as an artist was mixed. Response to his art ranged from praise to derision, but he did gain some fame as an engraver. His commissions did not produce much in the way of income, but Blake never seems to have been discouraged. In 1799 Blake wrote to George Cumberland, "I laugh at Fortune & Go on & on."

- **What is a visionary?**
- **Where did Blake grow up and why might this be relevant?**
- **What incident affected Blake and how might we see this in his poetry?**
- **What was unusual about his collection of poetry, Innocence and Experience?**
- **What does the collection of poems explore?**
- **What links can we make between the extract of 'Proverbs of Hell' and 'London?**
- **How does this help us to understand three key messages of London? Explain your choices.**

The Relationship between Man and Animal in Ted Hughes' Poems

Li Yudi

Ted Hughes, who obtained the fame of Poet Laureate in 1984, totally had 8 major collections that represented a great variety of forms and subjects during his life. Among them, it's the series of animal images that established his fame of "animal poet" or "nature poet". His special subject matters and bold style made his poems quite different from other contemporary poets. Had been living near the wide moorland and spending a great time on fishing and hunting, he had been attracted by beauty and power of nature since his childhood. However, his feelings towards animals were more than pure appreciation. As a perspective and thoughtful poet, he not only vividly portrayed an animal world in his poems, but also revealed his philosophical thoughts. Between human beings and animals, there are several complex and profound relationships. Apparently, Hughes was inspecting animals in the wild nature, but by deeper analysis of the relationship between animals and human beings, we can find that actually he was expressing his mystical beliefs on human beings through those animals.

2. MAN AND ANIMAL

2.1 Man expects to acquire animal power In 1957, Ted Hughes published his first poem collection The Hawk in the Rain, by which he established his statue as a modern poet in England, and in which his fascination to animal's beauty and power was fully expressed. In Poetry Today: A Critical Guide to British Poetry Thwaite wrote that this is a work "concentrates on physical vividness of a mimetic turbulent world of predatory animals and primitive violence."(56) And in this world, human beings are so weak and helpless that they are in awe of the animals as well as deeply admire them. One of his representative poem entitled "The Hawk in the Rain" opens with the description of "I" walking across a ploughed field in the rain: "I drown in the drumming ploughland, I drag up Heel after heel from the swallowing of the earth's mouth, From clay that clutches my each step to the ankle With the habit of the dogged grave,... " A man is stepping forward in a ploughland while struggling with the rain and the clay that try to swallow him like "dogged grave". Words like "drag up", "clutches", "each step" and "habit" indicate that for man, in such a cruel circumstance, it is not just a walk across a ploughland, but a lifelong journey. And soon there is another stanza makes the contrasting situation of the hawk: "...but the hawk Effortlessly at height hangs his still eye." The hawk revolves in the high sky, coolly looking at man's desperate struggle against the force of nature. The image of the hawk is like an ambassador of the nature, and under his masterful command, man's struggle is doomed and weightless. In his second collection Lupercal(1960), his presentation of the animal world is franker and crueller. In "Hawk Roosting", the

poet plunged into the hawk's head, and recorded its monologue that is imbued with confidence and arrogance. "There is no sophistry in my body", and as a hawk, "My manners are just tearing off heads", because "I hold Creation in my foot". By far the power of the hawk has extended to be able to master the whole creation, while contrast to it, this power can never be acquired by human beings. Like the hawk, Hughes tends to choose animals least likely to be befriended by man as his subject matter, such as jaguar, pike, and crow. "It is their rich, instinctual life of feeling and action that most fascinates the poet. His most frequent response to the life of nature seems to be a mixture of awe and fear."(King, 117) The freedom, energy and power of these animals can easily arouse man's admiration. In front of animals, man is too timid. How many miseries both from physical and spiritual must have been reduced if man is as strong as animals to endure the cruelty in this merciless modern world! In another word, by means of the impressive description and contrasts, Hughes cried out man's inner voice in their heart that they are eager to be powerful, just like these animals.

2.2 Animals reflects man Ted Hughes was often be criticized by some of the criticisms for his apparently deliberate bloody adjectives and trudging phrases that could remind readers as the characters of dictators or Fascists. Indeed, animals in his poems are brutal, primitive, and completely different from human life; however, in the wild nature, "Survival of the fittest" has been universally acknowledged as the rule of living. As far as this is concerned, neither the hawk's tearing off heads nor does the pike's killing his companions seem reasonable. In fact, Hughes' view has always been wider than the simple labelling of him as "violent poet". His apparently concerns with violence is not admiration, but an exploration of the battle of man's response towards life. It includes two levels. On the one hand, during the process of hundreds of thousands years of evolution, man became civilized, intellectual and rational, and in the society they are constrained by a series of laws and social norms. Having been bounded since they were born; their instinct and primordial side as animals finally have to be broke out in a violent way. This is vividly expressed in Hughes' animal poems.

- **What attracted a young Hughes to nature?**
- **In Hughes poetry, are humans powerful or weak in comparison to animals? Why is this?**
- **What does imbued mean?**
- **How does Hughes think mean think of nature, according to the writer?**
- **How does Hughes think men have become less like animals over time?**
- **How does this help us to understand the messages behind Hawk Roosting?**

- **LordByron.org: Thomas Medwin writes the Life of Byron, in which he details Shelley's experiences of bullying at Eton.**

But to return to Zion House, and perhaps I have dwelt long enough on the first epoch of the life of the Poet. I was removed to a public school, with only one regret—to part from him; and Shelley shortly afterwards was sent to Eton. So much did we mutually hate Sion House, that we never alluded to it in after life; nor shall I have much to say about Eton. The *pure* system of fagging was here, as it still is, carried on in all its rankness; and, as it is the maxim of jurisprudence, that custom makes law—that tradition stands in the place of, and has the force of law—has continued to defy all attempts to put it down. By the way, in one of the military colleges, hardly a year ago, a young man was rolled up in a snow-ball, and left in his room during the time the other cadets were at church. The consequence was, that though restored to animation, he still is, and is likely to remain all his life, a cripple. The authorities, to whom an appeal was made against this barbarous treatment, refused to interfere. says, "refusing to fag at Eton, was treated with revolting cruelty by masters and boys. This roused, instead of taming his spirit, and he rejected the duty of obedience, when it was enforced by menaces and punishment."

"To aversion to the society of his fellow-creatures, such as he found them, collected together in societies, where one egged on the other to acts of tyranny, was joined the deepest sympathy and compassion; while the attachment he felt to individuals, and the admiration with which he regarded their prowess and virtue, led him to entertain a high opinion of the perfectibility of human nature; and he believed that all could reach the highest grade of moral improvement, did not the customs and prejudices of society foster evil passions and excuse evil actions."

That the masters would not listen to his complaints, if he made any, I readily believe; and the senior boys no doubt resented, as contumacy, and infringement of their rights, Shelley's solitary resistance to them, and visited him with condign punishment. It has been said that he headed a conspiracy against this odious and degrading custom, but I have enquired of some Etonians, his contemporaries, and find that there is no foundation for the report. Indeed, what could a conspiracy of the junior boys, however extensive, effect by against a body so much their superiors in age and physical force?

Tyranny produces tyranny, in common minds; and it is well known in schools, that those boys who have been the most fagged, become the greatest oppressors; not so Shelley: he says:—

> And then I clasped my hands, and looked around,
>
> But none was near to mark my streaming eyes,
>
> Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground;
>
> So without shame I spake—"I will be wise
>
> And just and free—and mild—if in me lies
>
> Such power: for I grow weary to behold

The selfish and the strong still tyrannize,

Without reproach or check.

Revolt of Islam.

The boy, so delicately organized, with so nervous a temperament, under the influence of a chronic melancholy, whose genius was a sort of malady; this child, so strong and yet so feeble, suffered in every way. Like the martyrs, who smiled in the midst of torture, he sought refuge in his own thoughts, in the heaven of his own soul, and perhaps this inward life aided him in his search after those mysteries to which he afterwards clung with a faith so unshaken.

It is well known how few boys profit much by these great public schools, especially by Eton, the most aristocratic of them all. He says—

Nothing that my tyrants knew or taught

I cared to learn.

Glossary:

Fagging: when younger pupils do minor chores for a senior pupil.

Tyranny: cruel, unreasonable, or arbitrary use of power or control.

- **How does Medwin describe Shelley's school days?**
- **Why did teachers not intervene with the bullying at Eton?**
- **What sort of child was Shelley, perhaps as a result of this treatment?**
- **What similarities can you find between the extract of Revolt of Islam and Ozymandias?**
- **How might these experiences help us to understand the depiction of power in Ozymandias?**

https://creativeyatra.com/culture/celebrating-poetry-imtiaz-dharker-extremely-important-poet-times/

Celebrating the poetry of Imtiaz Dharker, an extremely important poet of our times (excerpts)

Literature

By Nandini Varma

Jul 01, 2019 *The focus of this article is to celebrate the poetry that she has gifted to us, through her beautiful self-designed books and her powerful public readings.*

We are not learning if we're not devouring; and if we're not devouring, we're perhaps not reaching out enough. Poems speak both ways—not just through the writer, but also through their receivers. Of the many beautiful ways that I was introduced to more poetry over the last few years, I am most thankful for being introduced to Imtiaz Dharker's works. My first real conversation with her poetry was through her neat set of poems that appeared in *Nine Indian Women Poets*, edited by Eunice D'Souza, and the second was through her book *The Terrorist at My Table*.

Beyond labels of identity

Imtiaz Dharker famously describes herself as someone who "grew up a Muslim Calvinist in a Lahori household in Glasgow and was adopted by India and married into Wales." Therefore, she creates no space for labels that limit the idea of an identity and the idea of a home. Rather, her words allow the finding of them in moments lived, experienced, and sometimes even imagined.

Dharker writes this in her poem "I need". What name do we give to this and that moment then, moments in which we've lived but which we couldn't call a country?

Dynamism in Dharker's poetry

Poet Arundhati Subramaniam, in a beautiful essay titled "The Smell of Coffee and the Taste of Olives…", captures Dharker's poetry perfectly when she writes, "Meeting Imtiaz Dharker is a little like reading her poetry. The approach is understated; the tone sophisticated without being mannered, quiet without being bland, impassioned without being dogmatic; the conversation uncluttered and precise, willing to turn exploratory, but never given to unguarded self-revelation."

I have never met Imtiaz Dharker in real life, yet I think I have met her—when she is on her way to finding women who have sprung from scattered "pomegranate seeds" that slip out into the garden, who are coming back with their hair undone; or when she catches Bombay/Mumbai in all its duality, "wear[ing] two names", offering calling cards with both hands; or when she follows the girl encountered through strange recurrences, one who wore red ribbons in her hair, tied perfect bows out of them, and "emerged out of chaos/poised."
Dharker's poems carry beautiful rhythms, which do not dilute the power of her words but walk hand in hand with them. They sit in unexpected corners, elevating the greater sense of beauty and mystery in her poems and adding dynamism into the reading of them.

They need to be read out loud then, whether you read them when sitting in a room alone, with only the murmur of the breeze, or when you stand surrounded by friends whose chitter-chatter is finally coming to an end as they wait for you to show them the world that Dharker created for us to enter into.

"These are the times we live in"

Dharker's poems sometimes portray the vastness of the universe held in small liberations, and at other times, they inform us of moments of violence that one needs liberation from. For instance, in the series of poems titled "These are the times we live in", she writes about a terrifying erasure of identity and truth in these times. In another poem "A Century Later", she shows us what courage looks like in the face of real terror, when she takes us through spaces that have displaced those from marginal sections, like the little girls here for whom school becomes a battleground:

"…every step to class, a step into the firing-line.
Here is the target, fine skin at the temple,
cheek still rounded from being fifteen.

Surrendered, surrounded, she
takes the bullet in the head

and walks on."
In her poem "Purdah I", which can be found in many anthologies, she sharply comments on the system of *purdah*, the veil that is given to a woman to keep her away from *shame*.

"One day they said she was old enough to learn some shame.
She found it came quite naturally.

Purdah is a kind of safety.
The body finds a place to hide.
The cloth fans out against the skin
much like the earth falls
on coffins after they put the dead men in."
Dharker has appeared for several readings, on the radio and on big stages, sharing incredibly important voices from history through her poetry. She has been a fellow at the Royal Society of Literature. She has published 6 full-length books of poems, each carrying her own illustrations. Recently, she was awarded the UK Poet Laureateship, and when one reflects on her contribution to poetry, one can only nod and say, "about time". However, we also need to ask ourselves—how much of this contribution are we honouring if we aren't reading Dharker enough today?
Imtiaz Dharker is an exceptionally important poet of our times, asking important questions—"who put a gun in my hand/and took away my land?… Who led me/Who stroked my head/sang me to sleep/Who fed me/Whose hand should I bite?/ Who made me?"—and we all *need* to read her.

- **Why doesn't Dharker believe in labels for people?**
- **How might have Dharker's upbringing contributed to Living Space?**
- **That does dynamism mean?**
- **Would you agree that Living Space 'do(es) not dilute the power of (her) words…'?**
- **What could we learn about society from this interpretation?**

Katherine Howard @saysmiss

https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/apr/14/seamus-heaney-helps-heal-wounds-ireland-border-brexit

Seamus Heaney's words heal wounds reopened on Ireland's border

Celebrations of the 80th anniversary of the late poet's birth are helping to defuse old tensions aggravated by Brexit

Rory Carroll

Seamus Heaney at home in Dublin in 2007. He would have been 80 this weekend. Photograph: Eamonn McCabe/The Observer

Brexit has reopened old wounds and old questions, making Northern Ireland wary of its anniversaries. This year is the centenary of the Anglo-Irish war that led to the partitioning of Ireland and the 50th anniversary of the start of the Troubles – historical events that now carry the air of unfinished business amid renewed contention over the border and national identity.

Power sharing between nationalists and unionists has collapsed. Sinn Féin seeks a referendum on Irish unification, while the Democratic Unionist party seeks to unravel the European Union membership that is threaded into the peace process. The Good Friday agreement – signed 21 years ago last week – is wilting.

This weekend, however, Northern Ireland is able to celebrate one anniversary that transcends borders and unites political foes. It would have been Seamus Heaney's 80th birthday. "It's a time for celebration of the man – of everything in his life and work," said Glenn Patterson, the novelist. "Seamus was endlessly inquiring and endlessly engaged. His life teaches us to not see geography as a barrier."

Actors, writers and musicians gathered on Saturday in the village of Bellaghy, near the late poet's birthplace and childhood home in County Derry, to celebrate the anniversary.

HomePlace, a visitor centre dedicated to the Nobel laureate, organised performances by the Codetta choir, the US composer Mohammed Fairouz, and the Serbian viola player Milena Simovic, along with readings by the *Line of Duty* actor Adrian Dunbar.

Heaney, who died aged 74 in 2013, was from a Catholic and nationalist background, an identity manifest in his famous line: "Be advised my passport's green. No glass of ours was ever raised to toast the Queen". But poems like Death of a Naturalist, Digging and Mid-Term Break tapped into a humanity which cut across the political divide and enchanted readers around the world.

After a week when the UK's stalled attempt to leave the European Union pitted nationalists against unionists, leaders from both sides found reason to quote Heaney.

Jeffrey Donaldson, the DUP MP, tweeted condolences to RTE's Brussels correspondent, Tony Connelly, upon the death of his mother by citing from the poem Clearances: "I remembered her

head bent towards my head, Her breath in mine, our fluent dipping knives – Never closer the whole rest of our lives." And the former Sinn Féin leader, Gerry Adams, re-tweeted an excerpt from the poem North. "Compose in darkness. Expect aurora borealis in the long foray but no cascade of light."

Heaney grew up amid profound divisions – Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and unionist, south and north, Irish and British, Gaelic and English – but found connection and metaphor in the rhythms, sights and smells of a rural childhood, as expressed in an oft-quoted line from his 1987 volume *The Haw Lantern*: "Two buckets were easier carried than one/I grew up in between."

Hailed as Ireland's greatest poet since WB Yeats, Heaney won the 1995 Nobel prize for literature for "works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth". Many of his poems dealt with borders between farms, counties and countries, but they can offer respite from angst over Brexit and the backstop, said Brian McCormick, a nephew of Heaney who manages HomePlace.

"When people step through our doors, whatever is going on in the outside world, they can leave it. We do become an oasis. We're seen as a neutral space. There's a tranquillity within the building."

The centre, built on the site of a fortified former Royal Ulster Constabulary station, features photos, personal artefacts and recordings of Heaney, who is buried in a nearby graveyard. The DUP leader, Arlene Foster, and the then Sinn Féin leader, Martin McGuinness, attended its opening in 2016, a rare display of bipartisanship before power-sharing collapsed. The centre has drawn more than 75,000 visitors and revived Bellaghy, which now boasts a Poets Corner cafe and a housing development called Poets Walk. It seems inoculated to Northern Ireland's political toxicity.

Bellaghy is seen as a nationalist stronghold – home of IRA hunger strikers and a leader of the INLA paramilitary group. Sinn Féin election posters advocating Irish unity adorn lampposts. "My family wouldn't shop in this village on principle," said one man, a Presbyterian. "But our church group visits HomePlace. Heaney is just as much ours as theirs."

Pauline Scullion, 54, a Bellaghy resident, agreed. "Everyone can buy into Heaney. It doesn't matter who you are or what you are." Her husband, Shane Hughes, 53, says the centre casts a spell over visitors. "It's about literature. I've never heard anyone in this place mention Brexit."

Heaney's open personality touched people as much as his work, said Patterson, who runs the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry at Queen's University Belfast. "One of the things that set him apart was the degree to which he was able to forge that personal connection."

The centre features videos of Prince Charles, Stephen Fry, Bono and others reciting Heaney poems. Bill Clinton recites a segment from The Cure at Troy, a poem widely cited in the glow of the 1998 Good Friday agreement:

"History says, Don't hope
On this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up,
And hope and history rhyme."

Katherine Howard @saysmiss

- **What did Seamus Heaney teach us about geography?**
- **What does it mean to be a nationalist?**
- **During the troubles in Ireland, both the nationalists and unionists quote Heaney. What does that imply about the poet?**
- **How did Heaney's poetry not take sides?**
- **'hope and history rhyme.' Except they don't: what does Heaney mean by this line?**

https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/how-close-were-shelley-and-keats-1.775374

How close were Shelley and Keats?

Fri, Nov 20, 2009, 00:00

For all their being yoked together in the minds of the public, the two are quite different poets, and were critical of one another's work, writes **MATTHEW SWEENEY**

KEATS AND Shelley were not friends. Well, they saw a fair bit of each other in 1817, before Shelley left England, but as fellow poet Leigh Hunt said: "Keats did not take to Shelley as kindly as Shelley did to him." They were quite critical of each other's work, too, initially at least. Shelly wrote to Keats, after reading his first publication *Endymion*, admonishing him: "In poetry I have sought to avoid system and mannerism." Keats replied tartly: "You might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore." For all their being yoked together in the mind of the public, they are quite different poets. Shelley was an idealist, interested in politics and philosophy. His wife, Mary Shelley, added a note to Shelley's mythical long poem *Prometheus Unbound*: "Shelley believed that mankind had only to will that there would be no evil, and there would be none." There is often a great sweep to his poetry – *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* begins like this: "The awful shadow of some unseen Power / Floats though unseen among us." Indeed! His passionately indignant response to the Peterloo massacre of 1819, *The Mask of Anarchy*, included these lines very early on:
"I met Murder on the way –
He had a face like Castlereagh –
Very smooth he looked, yet grim
Seven bloodhounds followed him.
All were fat, and well they might
Be in admirable plight,
For one by one, and two by two,
He tossed them human hearts to chew
Which from his wide cloak he drew."
His last poem, published posthumously, the terza rima, Dante-influenced *The Triumph of Life*, earned these words in a review by the critic Hazlitt: "The poem entitled *The Triumph of Life*is in fact a new and terrific Dance of Death." When Keats died a year before him, Shelley produced a pastoral elegy, *Adonais*, modelled on Greek poems of the second century BC. It includes some stunning writing, such as:
"Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments."
His famous sonnet, *Ozymandias*, is one of the most loved poems in the language – and, unbelievably, emerged from a writing game where Shelley, Keats and Leigh Hunt proposed a sonnet on a set subject, the Nile.
I cannot leave Shelley without mentioning his great affinity with the natural world – look at his swooping *Ode to the West Wind*and the wonderfully inventive yet exact *The Cloud*, where a cloud speaks:
"I wield the flail of the lashing hail
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,

And laugh as I pass in thunder.
I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast"
Any young poet could learn from that.
KEATS WAS AFTER a more unobtrusive poetry that had no palpable design on the reader. His work is known for the startling accuracy of its imagery, and his talent for evoking atmosphere. The poem that propelled him to attention was the deft sonnet *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, with its terrific ending:
"Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific – and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise –
Silent, upon a peak in Darien."
Despite the notice this poem attracted, Keats had a rocky ride at the beginning. Endymion got some harsh reviews. *The Quarterly Review*, for example, described it as: "Cockney poetry; which may be defined to consist of the most incongruous ideas in the most uncouth language." Things improved, fortunately, and Keats went on to write in the spring of 1819 the dense, rich odes that made his name: *Ode to Psyche, Ode to a Nightingale, Ode on a Grecian Urn, Ode on Melancholy*, and the slightly later *To Autumn*:
"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the
thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core"
It was another kind of poem, however, that released these – that shook him out of a melancholy that had left him listless the previous winter. I'm speaking of the spooky vampire ballad *La Belle Dame sans Merci*that begins with:
"O, what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?"
Note the telling adverb – and later on, when the knight has a vision of previous victims of the femme fatale, this is pointed out again:
"I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all"
Bram Stoker clearly drew on this to create the female vampires in *Dracula*. Keats has another vampire poem, *Lamia*, an exuberant narrative written in slinky rhyming couplets, where a young man falls in love with a supernatural woman, who at the beginning of the poem is in the form of a beautiful snake, and entreats the god Hermes to release her:
"I was a woman, let me have once more
A woman's shape, and charming as before.
I love a youth of Corinth – O the bliss!
Give me my woman's form, and place me
where he is."
Hermes does, and it turns out bad, but the poem is a sizzling read. Check it out.

- **What does magnanimity mean?**
- **In what way did Shelley believe than mankind were capable of controlling power?**
- **What was Keats' involvement with the creation of Ozymandias?**
- **How was Keats' work different in giving a social or political message?**
- **What is an ode?**
- **How do these ideas helps us to understand To Autumn?**

Philip Larkin exhibition in Hull offers fresh insights into poet's life

Hundreds of personal items gathered for city of culture show that does not shy away from darker sides of his personality

Hannah Ellis-Petersen

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Philip Larkin: New Eyes Each Year is an exhibition at the University of Hull's Brynmor Jones library. Photograph: Philip Larkin Archive

Philip Larkin is many things to many people; to some a bleakly beautiful poet with a razor-sharp wit, to others a womanising misogynist whose casual racism is unforgivable.

It is into this morally complex minefield that a new exhibition, held in Hull's Brynmor Jones library where he was famously the librarian, has waded, offering a new perspective on Larkin, one of the city's most treasured cultural figures.

The exhibition, opened as part of Hull city of culture 2017, has gathered together hundreds of personal items from Larkin's life, from his book collection to his clothes, ornaments from his office and home, unseen photographs, notes and doodles and objects belonging to his many lovers, to piece together a new and fascinating picture of the poet's life.

Most of the objects were originally in Larkin's home and have never been seen in public before. It is an exhibition that does not shy away from the complex, darker sides of Larkin's personality. On display is the small figurine of Hitler, given to the poet by his Nazi-sympathiser father who once took Larkin to a Nuremberg Rally.

Curator Anna Farthing with a figure of Adolf Hitler that belonged to Sydney Larkin, Philip's father. Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

The women in his life, particularly Monica Jones, Maeve Brennan and Betty Mackereth, feature prominently in the show as well, directly addressing the often despicable way that Larkin treated them – how he struggled with intimacy his whole life – but also how biographers and historians have often dismissed them simply as "mystic muses", rather than acknowledging the active roles they often played as his editors.

"The challenge is always to not judge, and present the story in a way with lots of perspectives and hooks so people can make their own minds up," said exhibition curator Anna Farthing. "I've had lots of different reactions to him as I've started to get to know him, from complete respect to being appalled."

Larkin’s own library of books from his home is on display, and Farthing emphasised how fascinating it had been to look through the books, all of which were filled with scribbles and newspaper cuttings, pressed flowers and dedications, and she described each as a “casket in its own right”.

They also prove revealing. A copy of his novel Jill, given to Jones who was his longtime lover, is inscribed at the front: “To Monica, with love and thanks for helping make it decent, ie literate.”

Larkin’s lover, Monica Jones. Photograph: Philip Larkin archive

Farthing pointed out the significance of these words. “There is so much about the women in Larkin’s life being his muse – well, they were human beings in their own right,” she said. “Yet here you can see she wasn’t his muse, she was his editor. All the evidence suggests he sends her drafts of his work, he’s constantly asking for her opinion. In her copy of The Whitsun Weddings, he writes a dedication in the front of it for her and inside the book there’s a draft of a poem, which has Tippex all over it. So what we are seeing here is working documents that they shared.”

Jones’s lipstick, her dress and objects of hers that were in Larkin’s house are also on display as part of the show, as well as what Farthing described as one of the most “heartbreaking” finds: unused dress patterns for small children, suggesting that she may have held out hope that she would be able to get Larkin to commit to her fully and start a family.

The show also offers a rare insight into Larkin’s own tortured relationship with his appearance. He was fixated on it, and the show displays both his clothes – beige trousers, bright red shirts and thick black glasses – as well as the many pictures he took of himself. Larkin would weigh himself twice a day on two different sets of weighing scales, and the exhibition displays quotes revealing the depth of his self-loathing.

Farthing said it was one of the biggest revelations in her research. “People presume that men don’t care about their body image and it’s a side of Larkin’s character that has been neglected,” she said.

Philip Larkin: ‘His poetry is so clean and clear and his life was such a mess.’ Photograph: Philip Larkin archive

“And maybe it’s because I’m a woman that I can see it instantly in his own neuroses. You just have to read his words: ‘my trousers seem to have been made for a much bigger creature, probably an elephant’ or ‘I staggered away from the table dreading my next encounter with the scales’. Those are not the words we expect to hear from Larkin, yet he was a man who had a real struggle with his own image.”

Larkin’s love of jazz is widely known and the show has a backing soundtrack of jazz, both in a nod to this passion but also to give a slinky rhythm to the show.

“The thing about libraries is that all sorts of things happen in the stacks,” said Farthing. “So we want people to go into the small corners and the nooks and crannies of this exhibition and have an

experience with another human – that sounds suggestive but what I mean is, have a little chat, ask questions. Larkin found all his lovers in libraries."

For Farthing, the exhibition is about exploring a side of Larkin that goes against expectation. The theme throughout is pink, which was Larkin's favourite colour, and it focuses in on the scribblings, the unpublished thoughts and scratched out writings that are never seen in his sparse, clean poems. At the end of the show, people are also invited to pen their own letter to Larkin, which will then be pinned on to the wall.

"I think what I have taken away most from putting on this exhibition is that it seems extraordinary that he produced the work because the poetry is so clean and clear and his life was such a mess," said Farthing. "He's clearly a narcissist with a borderline personality disorder, but to have achieved work that is so human and engaging and continually relevant, it seems that he did it despite his demons, not because of them."

- **Name three of the most interesting items of this exhibition, that you feel offer an insight into the type of person Philip Larkin was. Explain your choices.**
- **What is a muse?**
- **Larkin kept things, such as newspaper cuttings, flowers and dedications. What does this tell us about him?**
- **Why did Larkin take so many pictures of himself?**
- **Where did Larkin spend a lot of him time?**
- **How does this help us to understand Afternoons?**

How Wordsworth and Coleridge shaped each other (excerpts)

When they met, Wordsworth was weak and Coleridge was strong; by the end of the year this was to be reversed.

BYFRANCES WILSON

The book begins, however, with the most famous arrival in literary history. Having walked from Nether Stowey to Racedown, the West Dorset home of the Wordsworths, Coleridge leaps over the gate and bounds through the field to where William and Dorothy are working in their garden. He is 24 and nearly famous; Dorothy is 25 and on the run; Wordsworth is 27 and pregnant with poetic genius: bliss it was to be alive that dawn but to be young was very heaven. Except that 1797 was neither bliss for Wordsworth and Coleridge nor very heaven – the friendship that evolved was the prelude to a tragedy, and Nicolson is alert to the fault-lines.

When they met, Wordsworth was weak and Coleridge was strong; by the end of the year this was to be reversed. The Wordsworth whom Coleridge discovered in Racedown was recovering from a breakdown: having returned from Revolutionary France where he had sired a daughter, he was now living, in a mock-up of the French family he had abandoned, with his sister and the five-year-old son of a friend. Coleridge, meanwhile, effectively abandoned his own wife and child in order to devote himself full time to Wordsworth-worship.

He would later move his family to the Lakes in order to be on Wordsworth's native soil, but the Wordsworths now moved to Alfoxden, two miles from Nether Stowey, to be nearer to Coleridge. "Walks extend for miles over the hilltops," Dorothy wrote of their new home, and it was on these walks that *Lyrical Ballads* was born.

The "driving and revolutionary force of this year", Nicolson says, was the idea that "poetry was not an aspect of civilisation but a challenge to it; not decorative but subversive, a pleasure beyond politeness". A "lyrical ballad", Nicolson explains in a brilliant analysis of the poems, combines "the storytelling and quick rhythms of the ballad with the close emotional focus and intensity of lyric poetry". Using the language of everyday speech, Coleridge would describe the supernatural world and Wordsworth the natural world.

The year belonged to Coleridge: he was the genius of the heath and oakwoods of this corner of Somerset where the Ancient Mariner was born, and it was his glistening eye that made Nether Stowey the centre of connectivity. Coleridge's project was to bring together "a small company of chosen individuals" whose task was to rejuvenate the poetry and politics of the age: these included Charles Lamb, whose sister had recently lost her reason and murdered their mother; John Thelwall, hero of the 1794 Treason Trials; and the young William Hazlitt, described by Coleridge as "singularly repulsive; brow-hanging, shoe-contemplative, strange". Heaven knows where they all slept in the miniscule Coleridge cottage but each member of the circle was, as Nicolson points out, already on the edge of madness. It is hardly surprising that this dishevelled crew, walking, talking, arguing in all weathers and at all times of day and night, attracted the attention of the government, which assumed they were spies.

Every glimpse of Coleridge is charming but none more so than when we see him in his garden up to his waist in weeds, explaining to Thelwall that weeds too are entitled to their liberty: "I thought it unfair in me to prejudice the soil towards roses and strawberries." It is hard to catch the charm

of Wordsworth, but Nicolson offers some different perspectives: Wordsworth, he reminds us, was something of a dandy in his silk waistcoats and embroidered coats, and his face, as Hazlitt noticed, was "inclined to laughter around the mouth". His laugh, when it came, apparently sounded lecherous. What Nicolson shows us is the setting into stone of the Wordsworthian ego. The image of the all-powerful poet, he suggests, is caught by Coleridge in the demonic figure of Kubla Khan.

Lyrical Ballads opened with a voyage out – the Ancient Mariner bursting into frozen seas – and closed with Wordsworth returning after five years to the view above Tintern Abbey on the River Wye. The most striking feature of the sublime "Lines Written Above Tintern Abbey", Nicolson suggests, is the absence of Coleridge, whose guidance had ensured that Wordsworth arrived at his destination. Inverting this pattern, *The Making of Poetry* opens with a destination and closes with a sea-voyage: the Wordsworths and Coleridge on the packet boat to Germany in September 1798, having deposited *Lyrical Ballads* with a radical Bristol publisher.

While Coleridge is captivating his audience on deck, Wordsworth is suffering from seasickness down below. Their paths have forked and their footsteps, from now on, will diverge. Adam Nicolson has shown us, in this subtle and masterly book, the cost of the making of poetry.

- **How did Coleridge and Worxsworth meet?**
- **What had happened to Wordsworth before this point?**
- **What does sired mean?**
- **What did they view poetry's purpose as?**
- **How did their poetry differ?**
- **What did Drorthy and William Wordsworth, and Coleridge do, often at all ties of day?**
- **How does this help us to understand the ideas within the Prelude?**

https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/may/03/hunt-next-poet-laureate-imtiaz-dharker-carol-ann-duffy

Hunt for next poet laureate still on as Imtiaz Dharker says no to job

Pakistani-born British poet declines ‘huge honour’ as speculation switches to remaining contenders to succeed Carol Ann Duffy

Alison Flood

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‘The poems won’ … Imtiaz Dharker, who has withdrawn from contention for the post of poet laureate. Photograph: Eamonn McCabe/The Guardian

The acclaimed poet Imtiaz Dharker has turned down the poet laureateship, the highest honour in British poetry, citing a need to focus on her writing – and despite reports that she was set to be named as the next holder of the position.

“I had to weigh the privacy I need to write poems against the demands of a public role. The poems won,” Dharker, who was born in Pakistan and grew up in Glasgow, said. “It was a huge honour to be considered for the role of poet laureate and I have been overwhelmed by the messages of support and encouragement from all over the world.”

Although it was reported by the Sunday Times last week that Dharker was due to be announced as laureate this month, the Guardian understands that no formal offer has been made to or accepted by any candidate for the laureateship, and that the selection process is still under way, with Dharker giving way to other contenders on Friday.

The laureateship is not known for bringing the muse of poetry to its incumbents. Andrew Motion, who was laureate from 1999 to 2009, called the role “very, very damaging to my work”, saying while still in post: “I dried up completely about five years ago and can’t write anything except to commission.” The public-facing position grants an annual stipend of £5,750 – used by the current laureate, Carol Ann Duffy, to fund a new poetry prize – and, traditionally, a “butt of sack”, equivalent to roughly 600 bottles of sherry.

Last November, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport convened a panel of experts to make recommendations about who should succeed Duffy after her 10-year tenure as laureate ends. But with Duffy having now completed her final project as laureate – a collection by various poets responding to the collapse in the insect population – and with the 10th anniversary of her laureateship having passed on 1 May, the DCMS has been silent about who will take up her laurels, a delay that is being blamed on the government’s preoccupation with other issues.

A DCMS spokeswoman said on Friday: “The recommendations of an independent panel have been considered in the usual way. An appointment has not yet been confirmed.”

The expert panel’s shortlist of potential successors was believed to include Dharker, who is widely studied for GCSE and A-level and who reads to more than 25,000 students each year through the

Poetry Live! schools programme. Other contenders are rumoured include Daljit Nagra, Simon Armitage, Lemn Sissay, Alice Oswald and Jackie Kay – although Kay, who is Scottish makar, has effectively said she is not an option for the role. She told the Guardianlast November: “I don’t think the powers that be would want to combine the two.”

Wendy Cope and Benjamin Zephaniah have both emphatically ruled themselves out. Cope said: “If it’s a competition, it is one that many poets have no interest in winning.” Zephaniah said: “I have absolutely no interest in this job. I won’t work for them. They oppress me, they upset me, and they are not worthy.”

Armitage has been more positive, writing in the Guardian that “the laureateship should be the highest office in poetry and that the laureate should be the guardian of those ideals”. Nagra said on Friday he had not yet been approached.

Oswald, a highly respected name, has potentially signalled a lack of interest in the laureateship by throwing her hat into the ring for the UK’s second most prestigious poetry position: the Oxford professor of poetry. Currently held by Armitage, the role is voted on by Oxford graduates. Potential candidates must propose themselves, and then gather together 50 supporting nominations by 9 May to stand in the election.

Out of the running? Alice Oswald, who has put herself forward as a contender for the Oxford professor of poetry role. Photograph: Jim Wileman/The Guardian

Oswald is up against the Australian poet John Leonard and the Canadian-British poet Todd Swift. She would be Oxford’s first female professor of poetry. Although Ruth Padel was elected to the position in 2009, she resigned nine days later after claims that she had tipped off journalists about allegations of sexual harassment made against her rival for the post, Derek Walcott.

Oxford English faculty board chair professor Ros Ballaster said the professor of poetry position was “an unusual but important one”. “Each new professor brings their own wisdom, interests and viewpoint to the lectures they deliver, but they always offer a platform for wider conversations about the place of poetry in society and culture,” said Ballaster. “We hope not only to appoint an outstanding individual to represent poetry in the heart of learning, but also to stimulate lively debate and new encounters with a diverse range of voices.”

Ballaster hailed Oxford’s “transparent, open and simple” election process – which stands in direct contrast to the appointment of the laureate. A public announcement about the position has been promised by “early May” – or as soon as Theresa May’s office finds time to sign off on it. One observer told the Guardian: “I don’t think the poet laureate is very high up her list of concerns at the moment.”

- **What is the role of Poet Laureate and what responsibilities does the person in the role hold?**
- **Which of the anthology poets have held Poet Laureate?**
- **Why might Dharker have not wanted the role?**
- **How has poetry and the role of poets perhaps changed throughout history?**
- **As a society, what do we use poetry for?**