

## La Belle Dame Sans Merci – (The Beautiful Lady Without Mercy)

Written by John Keats in 1819. 2 years before the poem, his brother died, and 2 years after he dies of tuberculosis. He falls in love with but cannot marry his neighbour, Fanny Brawne.

4 line stanzas, or ballad structure, with ABCB rhyming structure (regular structure) – typically a sad poem, with a tragic ending.

*'the sedge has withered from the lake, and no birds sing'* – It is autumn, and the fact that no birds sing is a warning that something is wrong.

*'I see a lily on thy brow'* – He is near death, flower imagery here represents death. He is in the liminal setting between life and death.

Repetition of *'faery'* – archaic language

*'I set her on my pacing steed'* – phallic imagery. Shows love is intoxicating.

Alliteration (sense of warning) – *'roots of relish sweet', 'honey wild'* and *'manna-dew'* (heavenly allusion, food is from the Bible) – She is drugging him. He should be getting a sense of warning here that this is not normal, but he is not – again reinforces how intoxicating love can be.

She took him to her *'elfin grot'*, and she had *'wild, wild eyes'* (repetition) – She is clearly some other worldly character.

*'Pale kings', 'Pale warriors, death-pale were they all'* (death imagery) – repetition of pale – shows death follows everyone who encounters this mysterious character. **Links to the poet's life – death surrounds him.**

**His brother died 2 years before this poem, and he dies 2 years after due to tuberculosis.**

*'I awoke and found me here, on the cold hill's side'* – Either emotionally or physically trapped there, he is so hurt that she has left him. Can be a bit strange to a modern audience – trapped on a hill?

*'alone and palely loitering'* – same line in 1<sup>st</sup> stanza and last, cyclical structure (he answered the narrators question from the beginning) – highlights repeated cycle of emotions that love can bring – shows it is both intoxicating and extremely dangerous.

## My Last Duchess

Written by Robert Browning in 1842, set in 1564.

It's a dramatic monologue (one speaker throughout) in one long stanza – reflects the long-winded speech style used by the Duke.

Has heroic rhyming couplets with lots of enjambment, which disrupts the rhyming created – shows he is a rule breaker.

Iambic Pentameter (10 syllables per line, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> syllable stressed) – poem mimics natural speech, which also reveals the Duke's frustration. Lots of caesura throughout – Duke is calculating – controls what he says and what the listener hears.

*'That's my last Duchess painted on the wall'* – Use of noun *'that's'* is objectifying and dehumanising the woman. Use of possessive pronoun *'my'* – he thinks he owns her, again dehumanising her. He uses the adjective *'last'* to describe the Duchess, hinting that this was not his only one, creating a sinister undertone, as the reader is left wondering what happened to her. The fact that she is *'painted on the wall'* shows she is fixed and immovable, always in his possession.

*'that spot of joy'* – She is forever preserved behind the curtains.

*'the faint half-flush that dies along her throat'* – foreboding, she is killed. Contrast between life and death.

*'my gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name'* (metaphor) again reinforces the fact that he thinks he owns her.

*'I choose never to stoop'* – Irony, although he says he doesn't pay too much attention or *'stoop'*, he kills her.

*'I gave commands, then all smiles stopped altogether'* (sibilance) – Duke tells the emissary (marriage organiser). Quite sinister – he talks about how he murdered his last wife, yet wants another one.

Repetition of rhetorical questions used throughout the poem – shows how controlling he is.

*'Taming a seahorse'* – What he is saying he is going to do to the daughter of the powerful family he is going to marry, and foreshows that he may even kill her like he did his last wife.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Date

Written by Wendy Cope in 2011, she is an Oxford graduate.

2 poems connected together. ABCB rhyming structure.

Regular 4 line stanzas (quatrains) – Confined, constricted; not a fluid connection like between a couple.

Enjambment used near the end of the poem to show increasing anxiety – reflects realistic thoughts about people's worry about what the other person thinks of them.

Internal monologue.

Tone is uneasy and awkward

*'my brow was acceptably high'* – Wants him to get the impression she is intelligent.

*'I said I liked classical music. It wasn't exactly a lie'* – Theme of deceit within relationships.

*'I couldn't care less what they play'* – Use of colloquial language *'couldn't care less'* contrasts with high-brow setting.

*'Where are we?'* – Rhetorical question highlights they are lost in their attraction for one another. Uses *'we'* – shows he feels he is much closer to her than before.

Both show stereotypical worries, like stressing about their looks.

Both have similar lines and phrases – compatible. Their thoughts are similar but not aligned with one another – yet!

## Valentine

Written by Carol Ann Duffy in 1993. She was a former poet laureate, and is known for writing unconventional poems. She is lesbian, and being gay was frowned upon – being from this marginalised society is reflected in her poems.

It is a monologue, in first person perspective and free-verse. Often directly addresses the reader throughout. No rhyme – implies that love is passionate, wild and even chaotic. Emotions cannot be governed, but should be free flowing, much like the structure Duffy utilises.

*'Not a red rose or a satin heart'* *'Not a cute card or kissogram'* – Anaphora, repetition of negatives anchors the metaphor. Contrast to what people traditionally think love is represented by.

*'I give you an onion. It is a moon wrapped in brown paper'* – Uses this metaphor throughout poem, in contrast to what people traditionally think love is represented by. *'moon'* is a romantic symbol, and it being *'wrapped in brown paper'* shows it is strong, but fragile – just like a relationship.

*'It promises light'* *'possessive and faithful'* – Shows that love can bring good things into a person's life.

*'light'* shows long-lasting/everlasting hope of relationship.

*'like the careful undressing of love'* (simile) – sexual image.

*'It will blind you with tears'* (metaphor) *'a wobbling photo of grief'* (simile) – negative things that love can bring. Can be in reality or symbolically, that an onion can make you cry – like the pitfalls in a relationship.

*'Lethal'* – One word line emphasises the danger of love.

*'cling to your knife'* (violent imagery) – Represents brutality of love. Ends the poem on *'knife'* – uncomfortable, sinister feeling in reader. Shows the power that love can have on an individual.

## i wanna be yours

Written by John Cooper Clarke in 1983. He is a performance, punk poet.

3 stanzas in ABABCCC rhyming. Lack of punctuation connotes playfulness and creates a carefree tone. Full of rhyme and rhythm – suggests the strength of his desire and strength. As a result of no punctuation, there is enjambment – suggests that love can make someone breathless.

*'let me be your vacuum cleaner breathing in your dust'* – Use of utilitarian, normal household items – makes it relatable to a wider audience. Close and intimate.

*'i wanna be yours'* – Her object, shows his desire to be with her and help her.

*'dreamboat'* – Inspiring, creative and fun person.

*'teddy bear' 'electric heater'* – comforter, affectionate, supportive and warm.

*'i don't care'* – Humble

*'deep devotion'* (alliteration) – Highlights desire and passion to be with her.

## **Love's Dog**

Written by Jen Hadfield in 2008. It is a post-modern poem (intertextuality used to reference other works of literature – e.g. Alice in Wonderland). It speaks to her 'the effort and deliberation of love' – took inspiration from Edwin Morgan's poem.

16 line poem of eight anaphoric couplets. Enjambement throughout is an outpouring of emotion – reader becomes breathless, highlighting the difficulties of love. Rhyme scheme fragmented and unpredictable – love is an uncontrollable force; it breaks down towards the end – reflects struggles of love.

*'What I love about love is its diagnosis'* – Finding out about love.

*'What I hate about love is its prognosis'* – How long it will last and what's the outcome; divorce rates the highest it's ever been – love is no longer 'forever'.

*'What I love about love is its Eat-me/Drink-me'* – Sharing and being kind. Literary allusion to Alice in Wonderland.

*'What I love about love is its doubloons'* – Literary allusion to Treasure Island – love should be treasured.

*'What I hate about love is its boil-wash'* – Cleaning the mess up at the end.

*'What I hate about love is its sick parrot'* – Conveys uselessness of love at the end of a relationship. A common phrase 'sick as a parrot' – reflects the misery after relationship breaks down, much like the rhyme scheme by the end.

## **She Walks in Beauty**

Written by Lord Byron in 1814. He was one of the leading poets of a group known as the Romantics – a general artistic movement which dominated the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century – and it was about the recognition of the senses and personal emotion, that the heart was more powerful than the mind and an understanding of the deep power of nature. Lord Byron was referred to as 'mad, bad and dangerous to know', and he was a womaniser. Poem inspired by Byron's first view of his cousin's wife, Anne Wilmot. He was so overwhelmed by her beauty, that he wrote this poem a few hours afterwards.

ABABAB perfect rhyme scheme with consistent iambic tetrameter creates a pleasant, song-like feel.

*'like the night of cloudless climes and starry skies'* – (Simile with double alliteration) conveys the epic and endless beauty of this woman – awe-inspiring.

*'One shade the more, one ray the less'* – (Double antithesis) A perfectly balanced line (same amount of syllables either side of the comma). Symbolises the perfect balance of her beauty – nothing should change.

*'Where thoughts serenely sweet express'* – (sibilance) Assuming thoughts are as perfect as physical beauty.

*'So soft, so calm, yet eloquent'* – (listing) Repetition of 'so' intensifies his awe-inspiring tone.

*'all that's best of dark and bright'* – (Antithesis/juxtaposition) She's mysterious, but perfect to him.

*'every raven tress' 'in her aspect and her eyes'* – Lots of face description throughout the poem. Adds superficiality to love – it's love at first sight, is it even love? What about her personality?

*'A heart whose love is innocent!'* – Ends on an exclamation, he conveys an exuberant, awe-inspiring tone, conveying perfection.

## **A Complaint**

Written by William Wordsworth in 1807. Poem is thought to be about his friend Coleridge. He struggled with his opium addiction, and he eventually moved away – the physical and emotional separation is explored in the poem. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge were pioneers of the Romantic movement.

Caesura breaks up many of the lines to symbolise the breakdown of the relationship – e.g. in *'There is a change – and I am poor'*. Consistent rhyme scheme ABABCC.

Repetition of *'poor'* on the first and last lines of the poem – cyclical structure. Metaphorically the loss of the relationship made him poor.

*'A fountain at my fond heart's door'* – (fricatives) Lots of water imagery throughout the poem. Compares his relationship to a fountain, a status symbol at the time, which is supposed to be flowing and everlasting – he is reminiscing on the positives of the relationship.

*'flow'* – (repetition) Highlights how natural the relationship was.

*'Blest was I then all bliss above!'* (exclamation and plosive alliteration) – Conveys passion.

*'that consecrated fount of murmuring, sparkling, living love'* – (religious language, triplet) Religious language shows love was positive. Shows the intimacy of the relationship – love is personified to convey the emotional influence on the speaker's life.

*'A comfortless and hidden well'* – Shows depth of friendship, yet the fact that there is no friendship – a sad reality for the poet.

*'What matter?'* – Has a dejected tone.

*'the waters sleep in silence and obscurity'* – Contrast from beginning of poem where it was flowing, and the stagnancy of the water implies the friendship has lost its vibrancy.

### **Neutral Tones**

Written by Thomas Hardy in 1867 before his marriage and published in 1898 after his marriage. Reflects breakdown of Hardy's relationship to his wife, Emma Gifford, in 1874. Throughout his lifetime, his treatment of women was intensely problematic and fraught with conflict. His wife felt increasingly estranged from Hardy because of his romantic attachments to several other young women. The cynicism of the poem reflects the unhappy, sometimes tragic themes of his novels.

Traditional rhyme used. Tetrameter also used but inconsistently – echoes the uncomfortable feeling between the two people in the poem, with cyclical structure that connotes the doomed relationship.

*'winter day'* – (bleak imagery) Poem opens with bleak imagery, which functions symbolically to represent the end of the speaker's relationship.

*'starving sod'* – (sibilance) Personification of the earth shows emotions of the writer are like the barren months of winter.

*'ash'* trees and *'gray'* leaves – (colour imagery) reflects faded strength of the poet's relationship with his wife.

Smile was the *'deadeast'* – (superlative) thing – death imagery. *'Alive enough to have the strength to die'* – (oxymoron). *'a grin of bitterness'* (juxtaposition). These phrases reflect the fact that their future relationship was not very strong or close.

*'like an ominous bird a-wing'* – (simile) Sinister bird imagery creates an uncomfortable feeling in the reader. Poem starts and ends with the Sun linked with God.

### **Sonnet 43**

Written by Elizabeth Barrett Browning in 1850. Barrett Browning married poet Robert Browning (My Last Duchess) against her father's will, and the sonnets she wrote were dedicated to him. She was a religious poet.

This is a Petrarchan Sonnet. Using this form, she is adhering to the common theme of sonnets – shows the godly form of perfect love. Has a perfect rhyme scheme. Whole poem is a list – allows Barrett Browning to maintain pace – has a breathless, excited tone.

*'Let me count the ways!'* – Exclamation shows desire to express her love.

*'depth and breadth and height'* – (assonance with depth and breadth, polysyndeton (repetition of and))

Maintains pace and conveys enjambment – love is overflowing from the line.

*'by sun and candlelight'* – (light imagery) Daytime and night time – unending love no matter the time.

*'I love thee freely'* – (anaphora of I love thee) 'freely' suggests love is boundless and liberating. Repeated use of pronoun 'thee' highlighting centrality of her lover.

*'my childhood's faith' 'I seemed to lose'* – She lost her faith – innocence.

*'breath, smiles, tears, of all my life!'* – (repetition) Exclamation reflects breathless tone.

*'if God choose, I shall but love thee better after death'* – Most emotive lines of the whole sonnet, power enhanced when it is left at the end. Ends poem on death - sense of love bridging beyond death, shows a transition through life and beyond, the love is eternal.

## **The Manhunt**

Written by Simon Armitage, the current poet laureate, in 2008. He wrote the poem after seeing a documentary about soldiers, and the poem is about Eddie – a UN peacekeeper, who was shot in the Bosnian War (92-94). This poem is realistic about the ups and downs of love.

Poem is written in pairs of lines – reflecting that Eddie and Laura are a couple. There is some rhyme – shows they are not quite together, but Laura is making an effort. Enjambment throughout – movement of the women through the body searching – reflects her determination. Use of capitals is only at the start of a new sentence, changes the rules – reflects their difference, their struggles and their togetherness.

*'passionate nights and intimate days'* – their relationship was positive at the start.

*'frozen river, which ran through the face'* – (fricatives) A scar which damaged his feelings and stopped them from flowing.

*'damaged, porcelain collar-bone'* – (plosives) Slows down the delivery, with the comma echoing her slow rediscovery of him. 'porcelain' suggests fragility of him both physically and mentally.

*'parachute silk of his punctured lung'* – (plosives) Expensive material torn – his lung cannot inflate again.

*'the foetus of metal'* – The bullet has been found, and it is sitting there, growing – like a tumor that continues to grow, the emotional pain is growing and poisons him.

*'unexploded mine'* – metaphor for Eddie's anxieties – the psychological effects of being in a war.

## **Nettles**

Written by Vernon Scannell, a British formalist poet, in 1980. He served in the army during WW2, and the extended metaphor of nettles used throughout is symbolic of the soldier's pain always growing back and how he wants to protect his son from the barbaric side of humanity – but he can't.

The poem is written in a single verse with regular rhyming being broken by enjambment, which highlights his lack of control when he unleashes his anger. It has iambic pentameter, which mimics the ordered or meticulous march of soldiers in war.

*'My son'* – possessive pronoun indicates he wants to protect him.

*'White blisters beaded on his tender skin'* – The antithesis with plosive alliteration highlights the pain and disfigurement.

*'watery grin'* – Oxymoron between crying and smiling shows their love and affection for each other. The father is comforting his son.

*'I took my billhook, honed the blade' 'slashed in fury with it'* – Violent imagery; the love he has for his son causes him to lash out at his personal trauma, the extended metaphor of the nettles, which may have

affected his relationship with his son.

*'Till not a nettle' 'stood upright'* – Alliteration highlights how quick and deliberate he was.

*'My son would often feel the sharp wounds again'* – Cyclical structure reflects futility; he cannot protect his son forever, and he cannot stop his pain from returning.

Affectionate language throughout, e.g. 'soothed' and 'Bed' and 'watery grin'.

## **One Flesh**

Written by Elizabeth Jennings, a traditionalist, in 1966. It is a lyric poem, and she made it clear her poems were about Roman Catholicism and not autobiographical.

Poem is written in regular stanzas, which emphasises how bound together they have been. Enjambement throughout breaks up the regular rhyme, making it sound more conversational – a flowing of thoughts.

Caesura is used throughout, e.g. 'He with a book, keeping the light on late' – emphasises the separation between the 2 people. Has a poignant tone. Rhyme scheme changes in the last stanza

*'the book he holds unread, her eyes fixed on the shadows overhead.'* – Both doing different things, they are together but separate in their thoughts.

*'tossed up like flotsam from a former passion'* – Simile; their passion for love used to be there, but now it's just the remnants left after their passionate storm years ago.

*'Strangely apart yet strangely close together'* – Repetition highlights how the narrator cannot understand how they are in a relationship.

*'silence' 'like a thread to hold'* – Simile emphasises fragility of their silence. 'to hold' suggests that they either value it, or it shows the gap between them.

*'time itself's a feather touching them gently'* – Connotes a sense of death; are they simply just waiting for death?

*'has now grown cold?'* – Twist at the end; it is the narrator's parents. Ends on a rhetorical question – the narrator cannot understand the relationship – it has become extinguished.

## **A Child to his Sick Grandfather**

Written by Joanna Baillie in 1790. She was a Scottish poet who was famous as a woman poet – writing when woman poets were not common.

8 sestets with regular rhyme scheme throughout represents the reliability, security and loving nature of the relationship; also reflects monotony or bleakness of death. Regular rhyme until the end where there is half rhyme – reflects finality. A lyric poem or elegy.

*'old and frail' 'stocked legs'* – reflects fragility.

*'How lank and thin your beard hangs down!'* – Exclamation; awe-inspired tone, but also in shock and distress at the decline of his grandfather.

*'I love my own dad'* – Simple sentence with the possessive pronoun reflects purity of love.

*'You will not die and leave us then?'* – Rhetorical question – poignant, highlights naivety.

*'I'll lead you'* – Use of personal pronouns highlights role reversal; now the grandfather is being taken care of by the child.

*'cunning greedy fox'* – Fox going to hen's den is a metaphor for death. This sinister story resonates with death.

*'eyes begin to wink' 'You do not hear me, dad.'* – Euphemism for death – his story sets the grandfather to the ultimate sleep. Poem ends on this – quite a sad ending.

## **My Father Would Not Show Us**

Written by Ingrid de Kok in 1988. She was a South-African poet who lived through apartheid. The narrator in the poem is recalling her childhood with her father's death. The death of a generation of father's who could not show their emotions (apartheid).

Irregular rhyme, meter and stanza length signify the disruption caused by losing a parent. 3 short stanzas at the beginning reflect speaker's stilted, uncomfortable emotions.

*'My father's face five days dead'* – enjambment and monosyllabic line is harsh, reflects the brutal reality of death.

*'It's cold in here'* – Literally the morgue, but perhaps also a metaphor for their distant relationship.

*'a louder, braver place'* – Comparative adjectives reveal the speaker's regrets at what could have been.

*'My father would not show us how to die.'* – Suggests cowardice, or perhaps that the father was shielding his children from the harsh reality of illness and death.

*'My father could not show us how to die.'* – Anaphora but a change of modal verbs from 'would' to 'could' is a more sympathetic account of the father who found it hard to express emotions openly, perhaps relating to apartheid.

*'without one call or word or name, face to the wall, he lay'* – Bitter tone and enjambement suggests speaker's emotions and sadness to failures of her father. Definitive end highlights father's emotional unavailability.