

Poetic Lessons. Poetry In/From the Classroom



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Introduction. The Man-Moth's Tear.

In her poem "The Man-Moth," Elizabeth Bishop grants readers what I believe to be one of the most genuine poetic moments I have ever experienced. In the last lines of the poem, the Man-Moth, "all dark pupil", in a formidable act of generosity, hands you a tear, "his only possession" which he will swallow were you not to pay attention. The subtle strangeness of this creature whose human vulnerability sails along a poem made of "subways of cement" and "artificial tunnels" envelops us all, and, like him, we too "dream recurrent dreams" and push our small heads through round clean openings in search of light. And yet, as Bishop's incisive eye recalls, the Man-Moth's delicacy is mundane, its rare exquisiteness terribly banal, its presence easily disregarded, its tear indolently dismissed.

When I was given the chance to be in charge of the Poetry subject in the academic year 2014-15, I met the challenge as all challenges are to be met: with unending enthusiasm and a considerable degree of fear. On this occasion, to my responsibility as a teacher of literature I had to add my responsibility as a poet plus the accumulated frustration I carried on my shoulders from my previous incursions in poetry teaching via other literature subjects. A feeling that I failed to convey to my students the mundane, banal and exquisite composite that poetry is asphyxiated me. I was mortified by the feeling that I did not succeed in making them *see* the Man-Moth's tear. Thus, how could I expect them to take it, explore it, accept it and love it?

My main objective when facing this subject was twofold: first, to make poetry approachable, to bring it down from its insurmountable pedestal and, in this way –and that links with my second objective– to turn reading poetry into a pleasurable experience, close to all of us. Poetry does not lie elsewhere, in some remote and often inaccessible place, but rather, poetry is everywhere, we only need to set our poetic eyes in motion in order to make it visible, in order to accept the tear that the Man-Moth of Bishop's poem is generously handing to us. It was clear to me that in order to move beyond the historiographical tyranny of literary movements and the constraints of authorship, the poem had to be the centre of our sessions. But how could I turn the poem into the supreme and unquestionable centre of the sessions, liberated from its authorial ties and free to be *itself* outside fixed critical temporalities? The course needed, after all, a structure; it needed to be shaped into units. I did not want the subject to fall into the amorphous label of "Poetry Samples". I started to re-read poems with a structuring eye and *they* provided me with the answer: themes. In other words, I could perceive a persistent recurrence of themes, regardless of temporal and spatial demarcations in the poems I was re-reading. Therefore, I decided to divide the course into eight thematic units (Unit 1. *Introduction. Experiencing*

Poetry: Language, Rhythm, Imagery; Unit 2. *Love / Death / Eroticism*; Unit 3. *Nature Vs City*; Unit 4. *Political Poetry: Resistance; Appropriating the Classics; Gender Stance; Postcolonialism*; Unit 5. *Spaces / Objects*; Unit 6. *Family: Childhood Memories; Intergenerational Connections; Home*; Unit 7. *Voyages: Exile; Foreign Landscapes; Geographies of the Mind*; Unit 8. *Unclassified Material*). Each unit consisted of a collection of poems from diverse authors from different times and geographical locations. Why these themes? Why these poems? Academic discourse fails me –my justification via this field, I know well, can be easily debunked–; I am certain that I can only justify my choice poetically, and so, once again, I resort to Elizabeth Bishop and proclaim that “the choice is never wide and never free” (Elizabeth Bishop, “Questions of Travel”) which, in truth, means that my thematic division and poetry selection is subservient to personal whims, unrecognized idolatries and an inveterate devotion to the poetic art.

I would like to add that in an attempt to enhance the personal experience of poetry, the course was complemented with the reading of three essays by three renowned poets: Seamus Heaney’s and Derek Walcott’s Nobel Prize speeches –“Crediting Poetry” and “The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory”, respectively– and Eavan Boland’s “The Woman Poet: Her Dilemma”, a chapter from her beautiful poetic memoir, *Object Lessons*, whose title was the inspiration for the title of this book. Speaking of inspiration, I also included chapter eight, “Inspiration”, from Octavio Paz’s *The Bow and the Lyre*. No one has balanced critical insight with emotional perception better than Paz in his lucid unravelling of the “secret” of inspiration.

I am writing this introduction with the power that, for once, time has given me: the subject has been taught and the results could not have possibly been better. Hence, as I am writing these lines, I know that my students have *seen* the Man-Moth’s tear and have accepted it with all its implications. The outcome is this book: *Poetic Lessons. Poetry In/From the Classroom*, the ultimate truth that they have drank the cool tear from underground springs that the Man-Moth offered them. *Poetic Lessons* are not *my* lessons; *Poetic Lessons* are *their* lessons. In a Man-Moth manner, they have generously bequeathed their poetry to us, this most magic and yet banal phenomenon that poetry is.

Esther Pujolràs Noguer

Life through a Glass

Jéssica Arévalo

Introduction

During our first Poetry lesson I realized how little I knew about poetry. The fact is that I decided to take up this course because I had always been afraid of poetry; I loved it, but I did not really know how to approach it. Our teacher, Esther, challenged us to think about what Poetry was and, at that moment, I did not really know what to give as an answer. Now I believe I have a better idea of what it means to me.

In High School we were taught the most important rhetorical devices so we could read poetry. We learned about rhythm and the different types of poems – however, I did not like it, it was too theoretical. I saw it as an obligation, something I had to do in order to pass and be able to go to University. I wish it had been something I did for pleasure but, unfortunately, it was not. In my free time, I would write poems locked in my bedroom. It felt right, I could taste the freedom in my words and the pencil could not stop moving, ideas sparkling from my mind into my numerous notebooks. Nobody ever knew about it. I think they still do not know anything about my writing, I'm still afraid of it. Nevertheless, somehow something has changed in me. Now I feel more comfortable with poems and I think I am absolutely prepared for the challenge. I remember reading poetry in the past; it was so embarrassing I could not do it properly. The other students would laugh at you and, obviously, if you did it right, you were the teacher's pet. So, all these different reasons brought me to feel uncomfortable and confused about poetry.

Now, however, I love reading poems aloud. It is an experience that moves me and makes me feel different. When a poem touches me, it feels right to free those written words and create beautiful sounds to accompany them.

In relation to specific poems I can say that I will never forget, what to me the most beautiful lines ever written are:

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to Time thou grow'st.
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee. (Shakespeare, Sonnet 18)

Shakespeare changed me. He opened my eyes to Poetry and thanks to his Sonnets I realized about the power words can exert on people.

Nevertheless, there has been a poem that has become my new companion since I first read it in class – 'Her Kind' by Anne Sexton. I completely relate to this poem since it is an absolute shout for power and strength. When we were working with it in class I had just been through a really tough moment in my life; I was down and my self-esteem had almost disappeared. Nonetheless, as I read it, something broke out inside of me; I was ready to change my mentality.

This poetry collection is an opportunity for me to put into words what I have been going through and what I have experienced lately. Each of the poems presented here incorporate images and situations that are absolutely personal and real – the need to relieve myself gave way to a beautiful compilation of poems that will always remind me of the many situations that we all have to face in life. I must also highlight that I have added different images to my poems in order to depict the feelings that these words transmit.

I believe there is a poem for each moment in your life. Poetry can change you; it can make you feel good, sad, strong, weak or anything that you want to feel. Poetry embraces you and accepts you with all your strengths and weaknesses. Poetry is everywhere; in the street, in movies, in songs, in our hearts and our minds. It is an experience that every human being should have the opportunity to undergo.

I have divided my poems in units; these units are the ones we have been working with in class – Love, Death and Eroticism; Nature vs City; Political Poetry; Spaces and Objects; Family and finally Voyages.

UNIT 2: Love, Death and Eroticism

I am who I am

Nothing on earth could ever make me forget,
When summer brought you to my tedious life again
Smiles, tears, memories, endless regrets,
Persephone forced our souls into this delicious pain.

Darkness hits the cracking windows at night,
And I know our end is near, then we must part,
Love is ephemeral sweetheart; that I cannot deny
But our souls are forever here, united in one heart.

I'm trying to keep still, relaxed in this windy calm,
Rocking trees, sunny nights, shiny sky;
I must confess; thanks to you I am who I am

Hand in hand, while we walk you kiss my palms
Don't you dare leaving this path, or else I should die,
I must confess; thanks to you I am who I am

Healing Heart

He saw me when I left, he watched me walk away,
But said nothing to stop me, nothing to help it.
Eyes locked in silence, arms crossed in anger,
He just stood there, I should've known he wouldn't care.
Sun, moon and stars watched me wither,
Heart sinking ,drowning, dying in the winds of winter
Weeping, drying and starting again
Days and nights of suffering and quiescent pain.

A lullaby woke me up one morning,
An ethereal song that stopped my mourning.
He was gone, I knew for sure,
He was gone, but I had found my cure.

He saw me when I left, he watched me run away,
But this time, he said goodbye.
Eyes locked in silence, arms crossed in anger,
He didn't stand there, did he care?
Nothing happened, I continued to wither,
Heart sinking ,drowning, dying in the winds of winter
Weeping, drying and starting again
Weeks and months of suffering and frightful pain.

UNIT 3: Nature Vs City

English Cage

Your crowded roads became my home,
Dusty streets, grey evenings but always alone.
You filled my life with a frenetic peace,
Empty nights, packed pubs, falling leaves.

I became a drunken of your sweet beverage,
Couldn't escape this graceful alluring bondage.
You caught me in your arms, took me by surprise
On a chilly evening, at Victoria Station, holding me tight.

Never thought it would last that long,
Seconds, hours, days, months.
Your grey smog filling my journey,
Crowds of empty faces, sad, lonely.

My mother told me to go back home,
This wasn't my place, I knew for sure.
I suffered rain and snow, sun and wind, nights of cold.
I didn't know where I belonged, I didn't know where in the world,
But I knew London wasn't the place where I would grow.

Hostalets d'en Bas

A stone stuck in my sole, white scratches all around my legs.
Dirty hands, beautiful tanned arms, sweaty palms.
My face shines because of the sun, now it's gone,
but it will come back.
I step on a rock, I fall, but I get up again.
It is the essence of this journey: to keep moving forward.
The green woods surround me, and I feel I don't want to leave anymore.
I came here with a goal: to become part of this natural world.
They told me it would happen: we would fall in love,
With nature and this cherished land,
the land of the dreamers, of the lost souls.
I cannot move, my legs begin to fail,
my knees are stuck and will not answer my orders.
It does not matter, does it? This was what I wanted: fresh air, to start again.
Waterfalls whispering in front of us, we cannot see them yet,
but we know they are there, waiting for our feet to step on their gleaming waters.
Cross that brook, jump, get wet.
It feels so good, but please, keep walking straight ahead.



UNIT 4: Political Poetry

When we were Thrown away

Doors sealed, windows cracked, lips pursed.
Years of joy, hardship, smiles and tears
wasted, thrown away because of a coin or a paper.

You didn't see it coming, the police howling,
cars parked, people crowding the street.
And you sobbing, holding on your beloved history.

They take your soul, your mind and your heart
together with your past, present and future.
They cut your wings, so you won't be able to fly.

They rejoice and swim in your tears,
take your withered flowers and plant them
in their corrupted gardens, for their wives and husbands.

Hands tied, tongues locked in golden cages
Eyes staring at each other in pain and defiance,

As a snake facing its delicious dinner, they say.

Mother, father and son abandon their home,
Forced to watch it disappear behind their backs
saying goodbye to their only hope.

What are we going to do now?
Those bad men took my bed, my toys and made me cry.
Ignorant souls, they will never pay back.

Nests destroyed, sticks burned, stones thrown.
Birds fly away from trees, as they are cut down
by human tenderness and justice.

They will never come back, home is not home anymore.
It's theirs, empty, cold and strange,
we don't want it back, it smells of their rotten minds.

Boxes and cloths are our home now,
the dog barks, they are coming again, we will not be able to stay.
And that's our life, running here and there, because of a Bank.

Empowering

If you think you can beat me,
Try it then.

If you think you are better,
I don't care.

I will rise, fly and leave you behind,
I will not fail.

And if you think you can destroy me,
Go ahead.

I'm here, waiting. Come on, do it already!
Women like me are fighters, stronger than you imagine.
And if you think you can downgrade me, try it.
I will just stare at you, smiling, rejoicing in your ignorance.
People like you make me grow stronger, higher, deeper, closer.



UNIT 5: Spaces and Objects

The Lying Ring

Shiny, sparkling stone,
It doesn't make sense, does it?
Something so beautiful and helpless,
Meaningless, cruel, cold-blooded.
Do not look at me like that,
I despise you because of what you did to me.
You made a vow,
I thought of our precious future,
You, embracing my finger, kissing me tight.
But promises are that, promises.
Gone away with the wind,
Words do not stay, but I know something for sure:
Only poetry can promise things,
Only poetry can grant me eternity.

Your Bed is Calling Me

Your bed is calling me, like the night
I feel so sleepy; I'm closing my eyes;
Through your windows I can see the light,
And I'm feeling the speed in which time flies.

Dirty sheets, makeup staining the cushion
And filling the air is our flavour;
Making me believe in this illusion
broken bed legs, scratched bed head, our savior.

Your bed seems to be calling my name,
J, E, S, S....
Staring at me, watching my face;
I want to lie down, I should confess.

UNIT 6: Family: Childhood Memories; Intergenerational Connections; Home

Mother

You took my hand when I most needed it,
Cleaned my tears away, hugged me tight and loved me high.
You, that have been there from the very first moment,
Understood what I was going through, sang me lullabies,
Held me in your lovely arms, suffocated my pain, and made me laugh.

I can't imagine life without you, mother.
You, that cared for me since you knew I was there, alive.
You that gave everything to make me happy and see me smile,
You, strong woman, free soul, loving being, beautiful mind.
Grow old, like we all do, but you stay the same, love growing stronger.

You are the waters of the springs that run down my mountains,
The curtains that hide the sun when it shines too bright on my face
And it doesn't let me see my way.
You are the moon and the stars, the bridges that allow me to cross rivers,
You are my beginning, my middle and my end. My mother, nothing else I can say.

Summer dreams

And every time I heard that song
the smell of summer came to my mind.
The sky would play tricks on us – we couldn't reach it, but we tried.
We were young, adventurous, careless and free.
We didn't care about the future; we just wanted to fly,
like phoenixes with their golden feathers.
I felt joy burning in my eyes - it was the sun shining over me.
French, Italian, English; it didn't matter to us, we spoke all languages and none at all. The
languages of the heart. Never to be forgotten, never to be gone.
And that song has never stopped playing.
It's still in my mind and my heart, sounding, stuck on replay.
It is so real I still feel it, smell it, see it; I can almost touch it but I can't attain it anymore.
Smiles and tears shape my memories, teenagers playing adult games.
No responsibilities, no worries, just happiness, joy and love.
I can't believe it's all gone now.
I can't believe I won't live it again.
Well, actually I will. In my memory it will always be alive, those summer nights, mornings,
eternal fights against our pillows.
And I see those children running around, fireworks in the sand, water moving us.
It is as if I was standing there, staring at myself, living my life.
Smiles and tears shape my memories, adults playing children games. That's who we are.

UNIT 7: Voyages: Exile, Foreign Landscapes, Geographies of the Mind.

I saw it clear

I saw it clear, turquoise, salmon, lilac, green;
Petrified trees, notched hills, no wind.
Moving branches in busting forests, could it be?
This was my mind, playing tricks on me.
I woke up and saw it clear.

I saw it clear, dreams flying away.
Escaping my imagination, racing faster than my legs,
Grazing my fingers, running through my veins.
men, women, children, playing games.
I wanted to be there, but I couldn't, I saw it clear.

I saw it clear, blurred images that I couldn't touch.
Mountains, rivers, beaches, treasured lands.
I stretched my arms but nothing happened,
I couldn't still reach it, it was unattainable, elusive.
I opened my eyes and saw it clear: dreams are dreams, not real.

Taking a Plane to Nowhere

I took a plane, it was going nowhere.
I took it because I wanted to see the world, travel.
Life was being bad to me; I had nothing else to do here.
So I took a plane to nowhere, where I could find myself.

I jumped off the plane somewhere,
Hand luggage, backpack and running shoes.
I jumped off the bus, somewhere too.
I began to run, filling my lungs with every step I took.

I took a train somewhere else too,
I moved from city to city, leaving my footprints behind.
I took a train to nowhere, somewhere where I could hide.
Hide from nothing and from everything at the same time.

I took a plane back to my country,
I couldn't really call it home.
Home was my backpack, the plane, the bus, the train.
I went where my heart belonged, that was home.

UNIT 8: Unclassified Material

Sugar Balloon

Melting on my hands,
sun softening it,
I took it by the handle,
so I wouldn't stain my hands.
Delicious essence,
Sweetness surrounding my tongue and lips.
I touched it once again,
softer than before,
the sun had worked hard on it.
Dripping through my fingers,
I had to lick it fast,
So it wouldn't fall on my tartar skirt.
A million bubbles exploded in my mouth,
It is a feeling I cannot describe anymore:
I love strawberry ice-cream.



Thoughts

Solitude,
Only us.
Running here alone,
Here on our own.
Loneliness

Happiness,
You said.
Smile for me,
And I will faint.
Joyful.

Comfort,
Hug me.
Take me there,
Nothing will be real.
Dreaming.

Courage,
Just that.
Bravery and strength
Together in one heart.
Dedication.

Conclusion

Poetry has helped me to become more aware of what is going on around me. Since I learned in depth about it, I realized that it is just something we all can do; it is a matter of feelings and inspiration.

As I wrote each one of my poems I realized every time more that the tone of my poetry is melancholic and I would even call it pessimistic. I suppose that the events that have shaped my identity have been positive and negative; nevertheless, the most recent events have been rather negative and, therefore, they have influenced my writing.

On the other hand, even though the tone is melancholic and rather gloomy, it does not mean that the whole collection follows that pattern. There are poems about memories and happy moments, poems about strength and power and poems with positive outcomes.

I would finally like to say that this has been a great experience and I have enjoyed every moment of it. The lessons have been interesting and delightful and I have learned many things about poetry. It has definitely been a fantastic subject.

Francesca Blanch Serrat

Preface



Poetry and I have always been close. However, our relationship has not been one of mutual understanding. I have always considered poetry to be far superior to me than my capacity to appreciate it, but I have enjoyed every second of the struggle. I have read the Romantics and fallen in love with the second generation. I hate that I love Byron so much, I only read Keats when I feel prepared to lose all sense of my present reality, and I need a lot of strength to dwell on Shelley's words. My Spanish Literature teacher taught me to love the Spanish speaking poets, I fell in love with analysis; I discovered that by having a pencil in my hand when facing a poetic work of art, I could extract everything it had to offer me, and this brings me an absolute satisfaction. I cannot read poetry without that pencil - It goes through me like a song on the radio, I miss all its power, I cannot possibly digest it.

Even though since I was very young I liked to consider myself a writer, I never dared to try and write poetry. This is my first time. When the opportunity was given to me, I did not hesitate to take it. I thought that, even if I consider myself quite simplistic and not gifted with poetic powers, trying would be so much fun. I have discovered it was not only fun but also cathartic. It helped me cope with the demons I was fighting. Anxiety and depression haunted me, heartbreak and the pressure of the whole world on my shoulders. But be it therapy, personal will and strength or the medication I take, I have gotten out of that pit. And poetry, every Tuesday and Thursday of the last months, and you, Esther, have given me wings. I not only could breathe, finally, after all this time; now I love breathing, I see every little thing more clearly. I have lived every second of this with every cell in my body and every string of my soul. Poetry has helped me

regain happiness, find joy. Smile. Live.

These past months, I have read a wide range of poets, themes and styles I had never been in touch before. I have met an army of poetical voices, a hundred messages and calls, a thousand of images that are now forever part of me. All I knew about poetry before has proved to be anecdotic, compared to all I had to learn. I have opened myself to poetry. Now I have paperback copies of my new favourite authors all around in my bedroom, Carol-Ann Duffy, Sylvia Plath, Clementine von Radics... and an endless list of titles I cannot wait to have. If I had to choose one poem, I must confess it is Lady Lazarus: "Out of the ash I rise with my red hair and I eat men like air". It presses my chest with empowerment, with emotion, with a need to be expressed and read aloud and screamed and tattooed and written in red over the walls. I cannot have enough poems about women written by women. And perhaps this is why the collection you have in your hands is what it is.

The poems on these pages are from deep down my chest. I know one must not mistake the poetical voice for the poem, but here, the poetical voice is truly me (excluding only "Automat" and "Witch"). Poetry, in this particular exercise, has been therapy, and there is no possible therapy without truth. I have written about everything I hold most dear. I have been surprised to discover myself writing things I did not know I felt. In "You", I couldn't bring myself to write her name, and I still can't believe my anger is as raw as to type on the blank page that I believe you lied to yourself. I had so much fun writing "My Bed" and "Vindication of Meg March", the latter because it is very difficult for me to rhyme, and working of this poem was an exercise to prove myself that I could. About "Depression", I thought and thought about the details, the images, the many ways in which I could convey the emptiness, but in the end, I realised this was truly how depression felt, and there it is. The theme of my relationship keeps coming up, as well as the issue of my depression, but how could it be otherwise? This is me, Francesca Blanch, at 22. Hopefully it is a closed chapter.

All it is left for me to say is that I wish you enjoy reading my poems as much as I enjoyed writing them, and to thank you for giving me this opportunity to discover myself. This is exactly what University is supposed to be. To change lives, and widen minds. Thank you so much.

Love, death, eroticism



Alicante

Five hours and a half, changing landscape.

Sea, shining with crystals, orange trees,

a land kissed by Persephone's return.

Then dull buildings, decay. Dry, arid barren soil.

Demeter in mourning.

But the mother-goddess sadness is not my own,

Because you are there, waiting for me in the platform

Copper hair, bonny complexion, two tiny moles on your left iris.

Warm against my body, you hold me with strong arms

You want me here, you want me here.

The exhilaration I feel makes my soul buzz.

I am a ghost, the shadow of who I used to be.

I have given too much of myself to you.

Now I am left with ephemeral memories, with nothing tangible,

Nothing real. No future tense and barely a present one.

And that is all I can repeat in the long hours of darkness

When the pain takes hold of my breath

and the tears burn in my eyes.

Nothing, nothing, nothing.



You

I remember the warmth of your body, like coal.

You sighed in your sleep, moving, looking for me, longing for me.

Perhaps you didn't know you wanted me,

But your body spoke for you. Your eyes told tales

I burnt to read. You were home to me.

Embraced, in the middle of night, I admired my still heart,

The comfort that soothed desire.

It felt so natural to shift and accommodate your body against mine,

Our lips tempting each other, your breath with mine, your heat all mine.

Our bodies worked in perfect communion,

the flatness of my chest against the roundness of yours,

your hips, your thighs, your eyes locked with mine.

I wished to make you abandon yourself with the tips of my fingers

To reach for the bottom of your soul, where it is dark and swollen.

Where you never allowed me to go.

Nature vs. City



In My Defense God me Defend

I stand on faery ground.
The wind cutting, the young sun rising,
Everything my gaze falls upon, I dare call it home.
The cold is so familiar to your old grey bones,
Monumental bodies of a magnificent history.
Strong cheekbones of darkened stone, your
Lips cut by the freezing breath.
Your dark alleys find your wide avenues,
Green carpets where seagulls rest, coexisting
With rosy smiling faces, morning drunkards,
tourists and proud students.
You are both ancient and new, my old friend.
You are not a sister, you are not a mother,
Not mine, anyway. You are a familiar figure, strong,
Severe, wise, a stranger, admired.
Walking on your skin is like greeting a recurrent daydream.
When your eyes clear and there are no more tears
For the fallen brothers you lost in the South,
True beauty explodes in every corner of my beloved city.
Your sky is just like your flag, the purest blue, the most intense
Shade, dancing, furious, victorious in the freezing wind.



Witch

Green roots emerging from the wet fertile soil,
Building up slowly, but unstoppable.
They go up strong, unbreakable
Drawing shadows with their bodies, they coil
Around the frenetic urgencies of the girl.
They surround her musings, wrap her dreams
In tender ivy leaves, and they swirl
Up her spine till she trembles and shudders
While she collects the whispers in reams
In a chaotic frenzy of creativity before the intruders
Can find her enchanted forest of virgin twigs
And as she falls asleep she picks
The first of the poppies whose blood she drinks.

Political Poetry



68

Sisters, wake up, be careful with your silky tights.

Take a paintbrush, help me with that.

Dani asks for coffee! Well, tell him to go get it himself, doesn't he have hands?

(De Gaulle in on the radio) Shouting and booing we shut him up.

Nanterre is up in arms, and soon the Sorbonne will come to help;

Hundreds of workers are also on strike. They join our marches.

There's smoke, but we won't stop singing La Internationale.

I hear the police, I see the fire. My ears buzz, and we sing louder.

C'est la lutte finale / Groupons-nous et demain /

L'Internationale / Sera le genre humain.

We are famished and accept gratefully the meals the immigrant mothers brought us.

The Latin Quarter is on fire, but we will not give up.

Hand in hand, jaws clenched, wide smiles.

We will fight our war with our bare hands and our swollen knees,

Our voices high, our words uncensored.

If my mother saw me, she would probably faint,

But I will tell my daughter, and she will not believe I did this.

C'est la lutte finale / Groupons-nous et demain /

L'Internationale / Sera le genre humain.



The Motherland

She felt the terror in her skin before she heard the shouting outside

She stood there, numb, when the soldiers came in.

She closed her eyes, and her mind, and imagined it was not real.

It was a nightmare, only a nightmare.

When hours later she tried to get up from the bloodied bed,

Her insides felt torn apart, and she fell to her knees, dry tears

And silent shrieks, trembling hands scratching her thighs.

My daughter, I could not save you.

My daughter, I could not comfort you.

They chant their anthems, and raise their arms,

They call my name. *For Liberty, for Patria, for the motherland!*

They called me Marianne, they put a Phrygian cap on me,

They painted me guiding them towards freedom.

All that bloodshed in my name.

Their voices resonated in my ears.

The blood of my daughters and my sons was in my mouth.

They erected a colossal statue next to the water.

In my hand, there was a torch. *"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free".*

The tired, the poor and the huddled masses arrived, but the doors were closed.

They wander endlessly through my streets.
They sleep in my arms, and they breathe the polluted air
Until their bodies give up and I see them close their eyes.

They call me Mother Africa,
Chubby and smiling, sensuous and maternal.
My daughters see them, standing to fight each other.
Sibling against sibling, neighbour against neighbour.
I see the mothers lose their sons, the wives lose their husbands.
I see them lose themselves on a bloodied bed.
My daughters, I could not save you.
My daughters, I could not comfort you.

Spaces, objects



Automat, or Every Night

Every night she sits on this chair
The offensive lights behind her
The violent rushing of the cars muffled by the glass panes.

She orders coffee
Wraps the cup between her trembling hands
She doesn't seem to notice the liquid
Cooling, still, flavourless.

She stays until it's closing time,
Then disappears into the foggy dusk,
Leaving the coffee, untouched, on her table.

She will come again tomorrow
And the day after that
She will order a coffee; and will wait for it to pass.



Lipstick

My mother always carefully applied it before leaving home.
A few drops of perfume and one of her many shades of red or pink,
She kissed me goodbye and I thought she smelled nice.
When I was little I always wanted to be a grown up
To wear high heels, nice clothes, glasses to read and to paint
My lips red.
A woman in red is invincible, and I always wanted to experience that.
To be memorable, and fierce, yet kind. Strong, and powerful.
I wanted to smile with the colour of blood, blood pumping
The colour of passion, a passion for life, a passion for words.
My mother would not allow me to touch her make-up.
Yet, after saying good night, I would stand in front of the mirror
And try the different colours and glosses, freeing my dark curls
To fall on my bony shoulders, and I would pretend I was a
Journalist, or a professor giving an interview, or a successful writer
Discussing my last best seller.
And here I stand now, lips red as blood, surrounded by
Towers made of the dreams I used only to play with.
A woman in red with the world at her feet.

Childhood memories, home



Sissi

I remember sitting on our couch,
My hands on my cheeks, shiny eyes,
Lost in the images projected on the tv screen.

Romy Schneider would smile at me,
And together we would miss all her siblings,
Her tender parents, the loving life she was leaving behind.

At the sight of the long dresses, my heart would skip a beat.
The beauty, the power. Her long hair, her kind eyes, her
Eternal smile. Her face like an angel's.

I cried when she was crowned. I wanted to be like her,
To be with her, to wear those dresses, to hold all these
responsibilities, all that in her hands,
Never losing that beautiful smile.
Assertive, strong, resolute, kind, sweet, enchanting.
To possess it all. And those dresses, those dresses.



Vindication of Meg March

Meg, sweet, correct and maternal Meg.

You lack Jo's temper and enthusiasm,
Her resistance clashing against Amy's unstoppable ambition
Beth's devotedness and resignation upon the chasm
And Marmee's untamed, dutiful nature and decision.

The scholars may doubt your importance
Some even look upon you with disdain
What good can a woman like you do in an article?
You are not an early feminist ideal, you don't complain.
You don't end up opening a school, dying or marrying Laurie (whimsical).
Instead you marry for love a good man and become a dutiful wife
You bear two beautiful children, (female compliance was rife!)
You spend your days working in the house and garden
And making jam. (Please Meg, that is enough jam).

You were not my favourite, I must confess
I loved Jo the most, to nobody's surprise
But then I grew up and learnt, could you guess?
There is a bit of knowledge in each one of the March girls.
You were not perfect, as Alcott had written.

Beautiful Meg, you wanted the attention.
But who doesn't, and we don't ask for redemption!

We are all free to decide who we want to be
And this is the lesson most powerful to me
I learnt it from you, and I will never forget.
Thank you for showing me such valuable truth, Meg.

Voyages, home



The Sisterhood

I met my friends when I wasn't looking for them.
I met them in many places, all around the globe
All different, and all loyal, all kind and comforting.
When I needed them the most, they were there
On the other side of the screen, day and night.
I wish I could pack my suitcase and escape from this room.
Go to Norway, go to Las Acores, to Frankfurt,
to Alexandria: Virginia, or Wherever Catherine is staying right now.
I have this friend, George, who holds the same darkness as me
In his chest, and he writes songs to escape his demons.
I like it when he tells me what shade of grey is the sky in London that day.
I have learnt from them that all of us have our demons and our ghosts,
And that kindness and friendship knows no frontiers and no limits.
I wish I could visit you all, walk to your doors, knock, sit on your beds
Laughing with you, cuddling your cats, meeting your fiancé,
Discussing gender and sociology in relation to football, learning
How to play the guitar, suffering the stifling heat in Coimbra.
But somehow you don't need to travel, to travel.
Somehow I feel the buzz, the cold, the melancholy, the excitement
When you tell me about it.
I like to call us The Sisterhood. We send each other postcards, bits

Of memories, pieces of our heart, back and forth.
I have them all around my bedrooms, my friends, my sisters.

I am part of you as you are part of me. I carry you with me
And you carry me with you.



Home

Sometimes

I envy the migratory birds

Who can travel year after year

From one half of my heart to the other.

Others



My bed

There are beds, and then there is my bed.

I have slept in many,

Big beds, small beds, thick beds, thin beds,

Comfortable beds, deadly beds, the floor, couches, cars.

I have slept alone, curled up in one side.

I have slept with you, your hands around my arms,

Pulling them to your chest, soft, warm, a dream.

I have slept through in aeroplanes, in trains, in London

And Napoli and Paris.

I have slept in Edinburgh, a bed made from the worst nightmares

Of the hundred students who had lied on it before me.

I have slept in my best friend's bed, in her brother's bed,

In my sister's bed, my aunt's bed.

I have slept through tears, through laughter, through anxiety,

Through excitement, through depression. I have feared being awake.

I have been terrified of the moments after the shocking realisation

That I was still alive.

But from all the beds, from all the floors, from all the thrill of your body

Against mine and your lips next to mine, from all the cities and all

The moods, nothing, nowhere, nobody compares to my bed.

And that is why, here, today, before the blank page, with this

Single audience in front of us, I take you, my bed, to be my bed.

I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad times, in sickness
And in health. I will love you and honour you all the days of my life.

With this poem I thee wed, with my tired body I thee worship,
and with all my worldly dreams I thee endow.



Depression

(I can't breathe)

Laura Calvo

Introduction

In our first session of the course, I defined poetry as the deepest way one can express their feelings. Even though I have not abandoned this definition, throughout the course I have learned that poetry is not only that; poetry is the most intimate way of expressing life. Through poetry you can experience more emotions than I ever imagined. Poetry can empower you and it can destroy you emotionally. With poetry you can be yourself.

I have never been passionate about poetry; I have been passionate about some poems, but not poetry as a whole. I have always liked it, yes, but when I was in school it was never my favorite part of literature. I did not like the pressure of having to understand everything even when it was said in hard words, and I hated the pressure of having to memorize all the “poetic devices” such as rhythm, metaphors, alliteration, simile, etc. Sometimes it was fun, but most of the time it just was like being tested about how much of it all I could memorize. It was something mechanical and I could not find passion in it. I started feeling passionate about some poems when I studied the Romantics at school, I liked Becket and Espronceda, Rosalía de Castro, and later on I fell in love with Lorca, Machado and other great Spanish poets we studied. However, it was not a hobby of mine to read them at home. The closest I was to reading poetry was when I listened to Leonard Cohen’s songs, something I got from my father, and I tried to follow the song while reading the lyrics.

Then, I do not remember exactly how it started; I began to love everything about the British culture: its language, its literature, its history, and its traditions. Through the personal study of some of my favorite authors I ended up discovering the Romantic and the Victorian poets. Thanks to it I found one of my favorite poems to this day: *The Lady of Shalott* by Tennyson. I have always loved Arthurian myths and it was so easy to fall into this poem that I even started memorizing it. Finally I went to university and little by little I discovered more poets, British and American. Still, poetry was not a passion of mine.

It was not until this course that I understood how much fun poetry can be, and how much it can bring to my person spiritually. Poetry is not something mechanical anymore, poetry is self-discovery and wisdom, poetry is challenge and excitement, poetry can be political or not, poetry can turn something as simple as a red wheelbarrow into an unbelievable experience. I understood that poetry is not knowing the rhythm and how many “poetic devices” it has;

through this course I enjoyed finding out what the poem tries to convey, what it tries to make the reader understand. I have discovered more authors than in my whole life before, from places I never thought I would learn about, and I have relished every single poem we have studied. I have even enjoyed writing poetry too, something I never thought possible. I think, finally, I have started to be passionate about poetry

There are many poems that I really have loved during the course; however, I think the ones that had made a greater impact on me are “Her Kind” by Anne Sexton, “Four Women” by Nina Simone, and “Lady Lazarus” by Sylvia Plath. It is inevitable to see a pattern in them; I am especially interested in gender and political poetry. I loved “Her Kind” because it really made me feel like I could be the one writing it. I felt like it expressed my feelings perfectly and I could relate to it personally. Furthermore, with her poem, Anne Sexton has inspired me to write one of the poems of my collection, the power that ran through my veins when I first read it was the same I felt when I wrote my poem. I liked “Four Women” because it made me see beyond myself. I have known the reality of African American women for a long time, but the overpowering words that Simone transmits through her poem, and especially through her voice, made me realize how alive history is. I could experience the rebellion that she conveys in the poem, and it made me understand more than many years studying did. Even though I already knew “Lady Lazarus” before the course started, studying it in class made me like it even more. First of all because I could understand it better, and second of all because I felt much more empowered by it than ever. Once again history and rebellion clash into words and Sylvia Plath makes me feel like I am myself being reborn out of the ash, ready to eat men like air, ready to rebel the system that has oppressed us for so long.

Through these three poems I felt female power from another perspective, and I enjoyed it deeply. These poems will be forever three of my favorite ones, and from here I know I will be able to discover and love more poetry, from here I know I will be able to keep untouched this new passion and I have even discovered that I like to put my own soul into poetic language.

Mourning

The day I knew I died
I waited in the darkness
And I felt lost in the calm

The day I knew I died
I saw your long ominous curls
And your dazzling golden hair

The day I knew I died
I feared for my heart
And the pain you would bring

The day I knew I died
I burned to feel your skin
And I mourned your touch

The day I knew I died
I saw nothing in your eyes
And I felt rotten inside

When I heard the stillness of your heart
I knew I died

Untitled

What's a kiss in the darkness,

if it means nothing to you.

What's a caress in the night,

if it is done with spite.

What is a smile in your eyes

if it is only but lies.

Nature vs. The City

Morning Sun

of the city waking up. It knocks on your window,
surrounded by the noise, and enters uninvited,
in the way the sun ascends, crawls between the sheets
There is a certain beauty, and urges you to rise.

It is in these moments,

of little happiness,

that I forget my demons,

and

I

only

know

the calm.

The Cove

The sand burns under your feet
and the sun strikes with all its heat
But none of it matters when you are here
Because the only thing you need to hear
Is the beating of the waves
And the crying of the caves
Breathe in, breathe out
Inside the water without doubt
The blood runs angry in your veins
As the current rips you of your pains.
The soft caress of the sea
Encourages you to flee.
To flee your anxiety and torment
And just inhale the salt scent
That brings you memories of a tender age
And you forget the oppressive cage
That lives inside your chest
And never lets you rest.
The pines cradle the little shore
And they let you scream your roar.
That deep howl which rips your heart
And you write it like its art
In the depths of crystal crests
And you wear it like a vest
Here the breeze breathes
The echo of distant birds
That grabs your horrors and visions

and kills them into extinction.

Political Poetry

Mesogeios Thalassa

Water

Salt

Drowning

Bodies

Water

Salt

Drowning

Souls

The sea of civilization,
the cradle of myth,
the penalties of migration,
the choking and writhing.

Water

Salt

Drowning

Numbers

Water

Salt

Drowning

Boats

The calmness of cries,
the swinging of desperation,
the blindness of the wise,
the cold and starvation.

Water
Salt
Drowning
Waste

Water
Salt
Drowning
Dead.

The sea cries blood
for her sons and daughters,
who joined the exhausted soldiers;
Forgotten.

The Calling

You think you own me?

Think better

You think you have any right upon me?

Think twice

I am anger

You don't own me

You can't touch me

I will burn you

I will crush you

I am fire

They are coming

All of them

My veteran sisters

They will not hesitate

I am rage

Circe is coming

To eat your last breath

To transform you into something

That deserves more my sympathy

I am destruction

Medusa is coming

To stone your perdition

To bite your insolence

And stop your heartbeat

I am vengeance

Arachne is coming

To spin your ruin

And sew your abuses

And her legs will drag you

I am danger

Lilith is coming

To seduce your destruction

To sink your pulse

and to rip your tears apart.

I am wrath

Vivien is coming

To entomb you alive

There will be no compassion

No mercy, no remorse

I am fury

Morgan is coming

To burn your skin

And stab your arrogance

She is wearing her deadly crown

I am inferno

I am calling my sisters

The rest of them, all of them

They are coming for revenge
We are not going to rest until we are satisfied
We are not afraid of you any more
We are death.

View from a Balcony

There, impassible, a castle full of itself.
The sun reflects its silhouette, when it sets.
The turrets, sturdy, protect its historical nature
And the main tower, proud, observes its dominion.

It fills my mind with roars
of battles born and gone.
Its immortal spear
Intrudes my chest
And leaves a burning hunger.
It's stayed in my dreams for decades
And for decades it will stay.
Its solid walls protect me
And embrace my inventive ego
That imagines itself inside
The ruthless fortress,
Escorted by the people
Who used to breathe its stones.

How can something made for war
Bring such calmness to my soul?

The Dagger

It stares at me from its privileged place,

Sharp and delicate

A bright pointy threat

Prepared to mend my wounds.

“In nomine domini” it reads,

And in the name of its mistress it works.

Medieval miniatures and a red cross

Disguise its true reign.

Trembling hands grab its handle

And its power starts to run through my blood.

I breathe all mine fire out

And my dagger accompanies me into battle.

Tutankhamun was murdered and Caligula was a dick

When I was little I used to be afraid of the darkness,
You -two years, eight months, sixteen days and six hours my older - knew.
Every night I went to your room, crying because I couldn't sleep,
And, patiently, you would let me stay with you.
I'd jump inside your sheets, my teddy bear asphyxiated in my arms,
And you would then start to calm me down.
Since you were the older one,
 the one who was already studying grown up stuff,
you would tell me all you learned at school,
and history was always my favourite subject.

You told me about Mesopotamia and how civilizations were born
You told me of the Egyptians and their magnificent pyramids
You told me about the Greeks and their great taste in cheese
You told me about the Romans and how they conquered the world
You told me about kings and queens, about unbelievable voyages and cruel wars.
You told me that Tutankhamun was murdered by his family.
You told me that Cleopatra was more intelligent than all her contemporaries,
 But that history had mistaken her for another person.
You told me that Homer had written about the greatest war in history,
 And that some dude lost himself while going back home.
You told me that Augustus became immortal and that Caligula was a dick-

Wait, what does dick mean, is it an ugly word? You know mum doesn't like it when we swear.

Don't worry about that know, it just means that he was not nice. I mean, he made his horse a senator...

I love horses!

Yes, I know you do, I know you do.(You kiss my forehead and you continue with your story)

You told me about Attila and the Huns, and how the world trembled at their sight

You told me about the English and that king who killed his wives

What a horrible person, he shouldn't be allowed to rule!

That's not how it worked, sadly indeed

You told me of the Titanic and its glory and how it didn't work so well

No, Laura, Jack and Rose weren't there in real life

You told me of the Spanish Civil War and how joy became grey

You told me of worldwide wars that filled the world with ash

And the burning pain of cold nights

You told me of the French revolutions, and how people fought for their freedom

How the poor stood up and ate the Earth they so long had hungered for.

You told me that humankind, for good or for bad, had built history with fire.

The sound of drums filled my ears with glorious serenades to those times gone by.

The eternal flame,

-Born in the depths of the Euphrates

And fed with the souls of the immortal.-

Filled my mind with images of times I never lived, but I lived at its fullest.

And I listened; I listened to every word you said.

I asked questions, eager to know more, hungry to be like you, to be like them.

I wanted to become part of something one day a brother would tell his little sister about.

And I went back to sleep, my head full of new worlds, full of learning.

I used to be afraid of the darkness,
And you, big brother, knew
You gave me the power of knowledge,
And then, darkness flew.

- To my brother, from your little sister, who still
holds history as her dearest passion, which to this
day still protects her when she's afraid of the
darkness.

“I’m wondering what to read next” Matilda said

One child, one book, one story
Can change someone’s life
Matilda, with her intelligent gaze and sharp mind
Made this little girl conscious of her psyche.

Dreams of powerful eyes and witty smiles
Made her hand hold a book for the first time.
On the screen, an intelligent bright red ribbon
Made her wonder of her own possible shine.

“I’m wondering what to read next” the girl said
Holding books of possibilities
Full of stories and dreams
And of people like herself
Who gave her hope and strength to carry on.

“Caminante no hay camino”

They sound in everybody’s silence, laughter and ache,
Words choired by that old singer
Uttered first by that poetic mind
Who haunts the land and seeds its sun.

They give tenacity and hope
To feet blistered by persistence,
And fill our tired hearts
With undying resistance.

Shell and sweat
Guide our pilgrimage,
Thirst and joy
Move our legs to the next village.

It’s a long journey
But time is our friend
And those five lullabies
Linger in our strength:

“se hace camino al andar”

Memories of an Erasmus Student in the Beautiful Shitty City of Manchester”

What is the best thing about the weather?

It has undying rain

And what is the worst thing about the weather?

The sun never reigns

What do you like the most about their supermarkets?

Chocolate is a national treasure

And what do you like the least about their supermarkets?

Fish is not their pleasure

What do you like the most of their national dishes?

Potato is their talent

What do you like the least of their national dishes?

Eating healthy is a challenge

What do you like the most about their universities?

They have a week just to read

What do you like the least about their universities?

The difficulty of the subjects makes you bleed

What do you like the most about their houses?

They have the scent of times gone past

What do you like the least about their houses?

They become scary really fast.

What did you like the most about being there?

The taste of liberty

What did you like the least about being there?

The reality of responsibility

What did your heart miss the most when being there?

I really missed home

What does your heart miss the most about not being there?

I realised, when I left, that it had become my second home, and I miss it all.

Unclassified Material

A Millisecond Captured in Time

How to explain that fleeting moment when you blink and the sun bathes in your eyelashes, rejoicing from the beauty of a single fleck of life.

How to describe when a single moment of intense delicacy stays eternal in time, captured by the warmth of a bright summer twilight.

It's a Scary World in Here

First day, scared shoes
I don't know if this is the right room
This should be easier, why am I so terrified?
I think I'm going to sit in this spot
I clear my throat:
"Excuse me, do you mind if I sit here?"
"Of course not, please"
I stare at you, wary
You also look terrified,
Somehow it relaxes me
Curls of fire crown your kindness
Then you smile at me
And I know everything is going to be fine.

Last day, scared smiles
It's been hard, it's been scary
Our terrified looks have been justified
But it's been nice, it's been great,
To share my insecurities with you,
To share my good and my bad times
To share words and sentences
To share papers and assignments
To share croissants and the scent of grass.
It's been great because for four years
I've had you by my side
And thinking back on that first day,
I'm convinced I was right

Curls of strength still crown your smile,
And I know everything is going to be fine.

To my dear friend Tania, I'm so glad I got to go
through this journey by your side.

Rubén Campos

Preface

The following poems were supposed to be labelled under certain specific categories but, as I was writing them, I soon realized that most of them could fill more than one (and more than two) of those categories. So, after having tried too hard and having failed too miserably, I decided not to label them and put them in the order I thought most adequate. Since all of the poems deal in one way or another with the impossibility of communication (a fact that I strongly believe in), I'll let the readers decide whether I have done a good job or not in trying to communicate that (pun totally intended).

Although I firmly believe that we are and will forever be locked away in our minds, I do think that there is the slightest chance that someone, somewhere, writes or says or cries those words that will talk directly to the soul (although we all know that words are not precisely the most efficient agents of communication). Besides, I do think that poetry is perhaps the shape those words will take (or would take ((or have already taken))).

We might as well never know.

Persephone

There is this story about this man
Whom they say was madly in love
Whom some think came from above
To look for her in a journey far

He found the Rotten Lake
And he swam across
He fell to the Pits of Hell
And he fled untouched
He walked the Ephemeral Plains
And he emerged unscathed

For

In the darkness he sought hope,
In decay, he thought of home
But not a sound or a word
Would drive him from his goal

There he found her, at the top of the world,
Not a soul could be seen, not a word could be told
For silence had decreed
That all sound must be fed to the crows

There he approached her with careful steps,
Stillness reigned and caution spread,
For he was both sad and afraid
That she would vanish, by curse or hex

But suddenly the wind awoke
Mad with mourning and black with rage
And tore at her, and tore her to pieces

Until she became the smoke
That blows between this and that page,
And the wind then fled between the creases.

Only a tiny box remained
With a tiny note that read:

There is nothing inside

Silence

Silence,
sightless and
deaf, it screams
perhaps of hidden things
unbound.

Book of You

And lose myself in the valleys of your burrowed frown

And listen there to the echoes of lost ages,

the flapping wings of stony owls,

as they splash and drown

in rivers of tired sweat

and ragged breath.

(Then I'll wait for your sun to set.)

And watch the black

pour from your eyes and

take away the heaviest crown,

as your sigh escapes in a shy growl,

and I read the notes and count the pages

in this Book of You, where words sleep and I am never found.

Door to Summer

A door to Summer
(autumn glow)
a heart that pounds
and knocks the door
the door to Summer.

In Dreams

My breath then stops in an amber-encased gasp
and all the stars in her eyes lock into a pattern
more beautiful and more perfect
than anything the universe could ever conceive.

My hand in her hand feels her tightening grasp
as the last spasms shake my body and my thoughts.
Our hands: the only forces in existence
and between our closed palms we hold
the secret truth that lies beyond every soul.

When time awakes we let it go and it runs away
for it knows that we could catch it
if we wanted to.

But we won't. We don't need to.
We already have each other.

Time bends to our will and we give birth to the stars.

The Apple

There's an apple in your eyes
I would like to eat
with eyelashes and brows and all,
so that when I'm swallowing you
and you blink
my throat will tickle
and make me smile.

Pick your Thoughts

(to father)

Could I but pick your thoughts
like cherries from an ever ripening tree
and pin them and dissect them
as a child would a helpless frog,

I wonder, what strange things would I find
if I dared to peel their shiny surface
and for a while dwelt in their sticky glow.

Would I glimpse your fears, bloated like clots
of red, groping together in agitated silence?
Or would I find your joy still untampered,
untouched by that ugly thing that is the outside?

And if I drilled deep enough
and by chance I reached their core
Would I find an open door?
Would I find a door at all?

Years Later

He would try to remember
her face in the cold of the station,
the changing shades in her eyes,
the smoothness of her skin
against his own.

But the only thing he ever managed to recall
was a will-seeping kiss and
a shrinking heart
as the doors of the train closed
and took her away.

She never looked back.

The Godwhale

Dear Queen of Procrastination,

Today the Godwhale spoke to me through the bars with its voice that is more rumble
and said

It said that the words are not the meaning but silence is

It said

That the meaning is the emptiness that lays between
That the meaning is the sound of the thunder that does not speak
That the meaning is the hollow shape that the words steal

and said

It said

That sounds are the tool by which absence is shaped
That voices are the craftsmen without a workbench
And words are the nails to seal silence's cage

When it ended it drifted away and let me there, looking through the bars at the raining
whales and the splashes of sun and the droplets of faith as I scratched my beak against
the bars and wondered whether it had all been a dream or silence had truly spoken
through the beams.

Yours faithfully,
A Bird in its Cage

FAR

What is the furthest place you've ever been?
you asked me once in that sweet voice of yours
as we laid on the ground and I pretended not to care.

Wanting the answer to be 'you'
I dwelt in your lips just once to check
if they were as warm and red
as those of that girl I had just met.

You...

You welcomed me with eager eyes
as my tongue bent and wrapped
and- well you've always been so apt.
That other girl, perhaps I shouldn't have tapped...

You...

When our faces parted I could see
You expected an answer
'*You are not them*' I wanted to say
And your mouth closed upon mine

You...

As I had just started to speak, so that
when you opened your eyes I could see
all the things I never really wanted to be.

What is the furthest place you've ever been?
You asked me once.

Epitaph

(recovered from a bullet-ridden tombstone)

When I look through the window and see
that luxurious flowerbed we used to keep,
I realize it is now dead and I remember

You are gone.

When I rest my hand on the cover of your small bed
looking for the warmth that is now elsewhere,
I realize it is now cold and I remember

You are gone.

When I listen to the children playing outside,
I hear your voice calling my name,
I realize you'll never grow and I remember

You are gone.

And I am alone.

The Integrity of Objects

There is a town that hosts No People,
where the streets are empty
and shadows leave their footsteps.

Hollow things stare from every window,
and watch in silence these No People
as they walk and nod and talk in silence.

If you listen closely you may once hear,
the hushed rumor of their dry voices
at nightfall, when No People fill their porches.

Sometimes at day you can even glimpse
the edge of hidden shapes against the sun
as they march behind a small burning lamp
that casts no light.

(the light only of No People)

Twelve Apostles

Twelve apostles there were, not far from Gibson Steps
Twelve apostles there were, swaying still there in the ebb
(*though in fact they were only ten*)

There was one who was born missing,
an absent shape standing still among the waves
(*he's the most remembered*)

Tired Andrew leans on his staff,
performing miracles and such
(*though no one expects much*)

James the Great was the first to fall,
And now he roams between pillars of salt
(*he went down with a shy crack*)

Doubting Thomas keeps doubting
in his hands a spear holding
(*he never recovered from India*)

Mathew keeps collecting taxes,
and he keeps doing so once in an abraxas
(*though birds and fishes make no good payers*)

Poor Thadeus still thinks of Sanatruick,
although he was not there when thunder struck
(*he's afraid of dogs since then*)

Of Philip only a shadow remains,
a dark-sided rock, mystery's domain
(*he's not expected to be back soon*)

John the Boanerge was finally tamed
and his thunderous soul into a stone shaped
(*he was never much thought of anyway*)

Bartholomew fell down, his ankle twisted
A dead weight never to be lifted
(*the sea is his only worshipper now*)

Of the Broken One no one speaks much,
Yet his presence is still the strongest one
(*a name not to be called*)

Close to the shore they still stand, silent witnesses of that which was,
Preaching truths of rock and sand to those who no longer pause
(*erased and half-forgotten*)

Objects in Mirrors

(may be closer than they appear)

I found you this morning,
you were smiling in the mirror,
you seemed happy to see me
before you turned and saw it was me.

When you left I gazed at the mirror
looking for that face I once ignored,
hoping that it had somehow been stored
wishing to strike with it a new accord.

But your face never showed up,
I tried with words and even some kissing,
until I understood it would never come back,
and I drew a tired gasp.

Then I saw the words, faint like tiny ghosts,
hanging there as if tied to some reflective post:
Objects in mirrors may be closer than they appear.

Álvaro Delgado

INTRODUCTION: A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF MY EXPERIENCE WITH POETRY

On the first session of the fourth year elective Poetry in English, included in my English Studies degree, I wrote on a piece of paper that “poetry is a form of written fiction, rather short in length, sometimes with rhyme but not always and usually full of feelings and intense.” After almost four months of delighting in the reading, analyzing and creating of several poems, I must now review my first approach to the concept of poetry and see if there has been any change in it.

I would say that my view has changed in the sense that meaning has become a central part of the poetic experience, not only as a reader but also as a creator. Not wanting to undermine the importance of the form, I think now that what gives poetry its primal essence is the meaning codified by the author as well as the meaning juiced by the reader, which can and should differ from the former. Form, in my opinion, helps the process of decoding and understanding poetry, but it serves the primary objective of transmitting a feeling, a view, an opinion, a meaning in a beautiful way. The tone can be the saddest or the most uplifting but through the arrangement of words, through the musicality, which can be delicate or abrupt, it is delivered beautifully.

My first approach to poetry in English took place when I was 17 or 18. I had just started my degree in English Studies and I came across *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg. An immediate connection occurred then which lasts even today. I have reread it several times ever since, going deeper in its meaning and decoding new attachments to my own experience. A few months later I read *The Eve of St. Agnes*, by John Keats for an academic essay I had to write. The tone and imagery present in Keats’ poem could not be more different from my previous experience but it helped opening up my poetic vision and it worked very well as an example of a more classical current. In the following courses I read poetry from different ages, but I would like to highlight Modernism as a fruitful period, in terms of personal likes. I particularly enjoyed reading *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot and I guess I understood a bit of it since it meant the highest mark I got on an exam that year.

Apart from the poems we read in class this year, not only in Poetry in English but also in other subjects I took, Renaissance and Postcolonial Studies, I must confess I have not read any other poems in English on my own. I have focused though on poetry written in my mother tongue, Spanish, and I have gone through the complete collection of an unfortunately deceased relative, who was an interesting and rather experimental author.

At this point on my life, some weeks before I get my university degree, I take a look back and reflect on the five years I have spent dealing with English language and literature; the first one at home, the other four far from there. On this reflection, on what everything has meant, the experiences lived and people met, on what waits beyond and what I have left behind, I have built my personal collection, which I am glad to include here.

Grow Up

Dear sister,
Both you and I have hated the same greedy, cold-blooded bastard.
Both you and I have missed the warmth
of a tender hug, of a compassionate talk.
It was so difficult, sister, to go away from home and thrive.
Don't get me wrong, things have changed,
I've grown up.
I learnt through tears ours is not an easy family,
but I guess none is.
We've been apart for four years, sister.
Two halves split due to circumstances.
Same silent air, same cursed blood, same pain inside,
similar ghosts haunting our minds.
Now that time will reunite us
I could, should, must
offer you the only absent treat I myself crave,
trust.

Son-to-Be

His little, chubby hands try to catch a butterfly in the fragrant garden.
We delight in the views of our son playing next to the Violet Carson bush,
jumping, smelling and looking.
His golden curls shine bright under the April sun and echo our hopes, plans and fears.
His deep blue eyes mirror our love for him while the birds sing in the orange tree.
He will be good and brave, just and sensitive,
learner, lover and listener.
Passionate and ardent like you,
like a furious wave in a green ocean,
patient and kind like me,
like melting butter on a Sunday morning.
He will be the object of our devotion,
our son to-be.

Oblivion

Rosa roughly rambles round the park.
She likes her hair combed back,
eventually a braid embroidering her height.
She has a date with her elegant, armoured knight,
who has green eyes and a beautiful smile.
She hopes he will be waiting at the end of the aisle
because never before has she been so in love.
She has left some soup on the stove
or maybe it was rice, or meat or a stew.
Those loud kids better get out of her view...
Suddenly in her head she feels a bang.
Rosa is eighty, no longer young.
She cannot remember the address of her house
so she sits in the grass and smiles at a mouse.

The Catalan Realm

Let me see,
my grandad and your grandma shared same blood,
they were born in a purple and yellow and red land,
attended puppet plays and caught frogs in the mud.
They were children of the freedom and then had to stand
up and fight the bad, the evil and the black
that took over this doomed country
and filled it with thud.
He came back and hid his heart,
grew a shadow over his eyes.
She moved to another part
and made a living cooking pies
for the wealth, for the killers, for the damn gang.
And now that barely forty years have gone past
since righteousness took up,
if you honor their effort, their sacrifice,
explain to me the reasons to break this soil apart.
I must ask you, cousin,
If it is less what separates us than what makes us men,
answer me, why then?

Barcelona

Rude,
insolent city.
Exhaling people constantly
like drops of sweat.
I was welcomed yet unwelcomed
in your filthy sweet bosom.
Eight hundred kilometres
from the ruins of the ever-sleeping winter
to the promise of the sunshine,
from the comfort of the leaves falling
to the uncertain joy of life.
Just to realize that
people live,
people love,
people die
everywhere.

Deep Inside

Up the naked hill,
behind a group of yellowed and twisted beeches,
appears the brisk view of the abandoned mine
raising from the cracked soil
like a relic from a smoky time
when factories racketed,
and priests manipulated
and women wore black.
Grandad used to enter the creepy building
and descend in the dark.
He left greenness, breed and sunlight behind
and went inside the wicked hole
to scratch the womb of Earth,
then ascended with his face coal black.
Even today, when I dare to pass the run-down fence,
I admire how,
in the middle of the whirl
of rusted metal, broken glass and dry blood,
a small plump apple tree
exposes its red fruits, roots deep into the mud.

LNDN

Shall I compare thee to a winter's day?
Thou art more lovely and definitely more warm.
Snowy golden peaks were there
to say hi.
The river Thames so long dreamed of,
didn't stop his flow.
Life went on
while my eager legs
walked your narrow streets.
White light,
not the white of a sunny day,
but the white of the Milky Way
surrounded me for a few days,
made me your child,
a reborn Oliver Twist,
a Leonard Woolf passing by.
Majestic and humble,
I know you will wait for me
for I promise you:
someday my shelter you shall be.

Bed of Ashes

A clatter of blankets sliding down,
liminal metaphor
of the faded sunlight ahead,
reminder of the endless worries in her frown.
She, a tiny phoenix rising from her bed,
shy and wounded and dark
but soon strong and powerful and red,
devouring the future, the present and the past.
The mattress offers a cold comfort,
clouds of fish obscure her eyes,
a flood tears her soul apart.
She sighs thrice,
shiny eyes look over
the vast and intimate room
where all that once mattered was shared
and all was lost in doom.

April Is the Cruellest Month

Others will see
Your soft curves under the blankets
Hairy chest barely inflating
Broad cheekbones
Sour breath
Slept
Others will learn
The moles on your back
One after the other like a row of sighs
Or like a Pacific archipelago
Sunny and wild
Warm
Others will love
Your inconsistencies
The honey buried deep in your eyes
The tenderness that slips from the right corner of your mouth
The wasted heart.

Hunting Season

Flashing multicolored lights vibrate in the dense, humid air.
The nimble boy wanders shyly, surrounded by a herd of hungry predators
sharpening their teeth, messing their luxurious hair.
An asphyxiating scent of alcohol impregnates the wild landscape of the room.
The skin feels sticky with sweat, the senses excited with danger and anticipation,
the bite can come from anywhere and lead to either bliss or doom,
for there's not a tree here to hide behind, not a shadow there to trick temptation
Only the rub of exuberant bodies under the over-illumination
of the gloom.

It's hunting season and the beasts are out there.

Erotic Carnival

flex bend stretch
lust power strength
bulging tensing stroking
love loved loved man men men
muscles skin veins
flesh hair blood
smell touch taste
pushing pulling grabbing
suffocating
biceps triceps deltoid
sweet sour hot
mouthwatering
erotic cannibal vampire

In Defence of Art

All this data flying in the corners of my mind,
the books,
Virginia and Shakespeare,
Bloomsbury and Stratford.
The manifest destiny,
the rules of proper grammar and the old nouns declined,
the phonemes, morphemes, the kings and the Queen,
the effects of sexism and colonialism,
a light in the shadow that required a shadow in the light.
Literature in capital letters
delivered by heroes, iron ladies, dinosaurs and rats.
Pages, pages, hours, nightfall .
Where they worthy objects of my time?
Soon I'll be stuck.
A lot behind, only fantasies beyond.
However, I'd say art saved my life.

Tania Duarte

MY EXPERIENCE WITH POETRY

When we were asked to define poetry, I remember writing down that it was a piece of work where feelings were heightened and given priority, an expression of your deepest emotions. Many of my classmates chose to define poetry in technical terms, talking about rhythm, metrical form and rhymes instead. That is when I realized that I was probably being too sentimental and, contrary to what I had thought my whole life, perhaps poetry was something I could actually enjoy and relate to.

I learned to read at a very young age, but ever since I can remember I have always been interested in novels. Poetry never really caught my attention as a child. I did enjoy writing *rodolís* for school, but other than that, it was never my own choice to write or read poems. As a teenager, I thought it was *uncool* -although at 15 I did have a fleeting affair with poetry. It was Sant Jordi and we had to write something for our annual writing contest. I had submitted different things through the years, but when I found out that the theme was *Poetry* I decided to stay out of it. However, my Catalan teacher convinced me otherwise. At first I was upset to have to write poetry, but then I thought that maybe I could use it as a creative outlet. I ended up writing a love poem about something that I was going through at the time. Funnily enough, it landed me the second prize in the contest. Unfortunately, I would not go as far as to say that it changed the view I had of poetry at the time, but it did spark my curiosity.

Six years later, this course has made me *feel* poetry. I signed up being almost sure that I would barely enjoy it, that it would just be another subject, and I am now so glad to say that it was not the case at all. I connected with the words we were reading from the very first day and, one day at a time, this course transformed my fling with poetry into an accidental –but epic– love story. First, I fell in love with other people's words. Out of all the poems we have read over the past few months, I would highlight “Lady Lazarus” by Sylvia Plath, “Helen of Troy Does Countertop Dancing” by Margaret Atwood and “Her Kind” by Anne Sexton. They all have something in common: they are empowering poems about strong women, and perhaps that was something I needed at the time. Then, I fell in love with writing. I found something in poetry that I never thought I would. It became my shelter, my comfort zone, the treehouse I climbed to when

I thought I was drowning.

I have always said that I never know what is going on inside my head until I put pen to paper, but I never thought poetry would become my own personal therapy. Like most good things in life, the opportunity to write this collection of poems arrived right when I needed it the most and for that I am eternally grateful. Salt water may heal wounds, but poetry helps me cope with the darkest corners of my soul.

I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I enjoyed writing them.

Tania Duarte

I. LOVE, DEATH & EROTICISM

Twisted Myth

I was Persephone and all I had was the sun
when your twisted myth made me live in the dark.
I was left with nothing, the earth swallowed me up.
There was only stillness, war wounds and bright scars.

There's beauty in the ephemeral, strength in the pain,
in the way a city gleams before darkness and decay.
Even if it's momentary, it is never in vain,
but nothing's shining once the light fades away.

Now I am mourning a loss that was never mine
and all that's left is a sun that won't shine.

Checkmate

We could be happy together.
Oh boy, have I heard that before.
Stop whispering in my ear
'cause all you have is words.

You play me like a chess game
while you lie next to the queen
and you're an expert at sorry
and leaving flowers by the sink.

Stop, I don't wanna hear it.
I don't belong to you.
Aren't you ashamed
of treating me like a possession
in the name of love?
For God's sake, you don't love me.
You want me,
but I'll never be yours.
I'm not anyone's.

But don't you understand?
This is passion.
No, this is bullshit
and I want you to leave.

You'll regret this.
I could give you the world.
You can keep it.
I have my own.

Game over.
Checkmate, my love.

2. NATURE VS CITY

Salt

*"For whatever we lose (like a you or a me),
it's always ourselves we find in the sea."
- e.e. cummings*

A wise woman once said
we were all made of salt
and I didn't believe a word,
I just shook my head
and laughed.

But seven days after,
I found clouds inside my head.
I walked and walked aimlessly
until my thoughts were filled with sand.

I built castles with my misery
and destroyed them all myself.
I have no more time for shipwrecks
or salty teardrops on a shelf.

Salt water heals all wounds,
even those deep within your soul.
A wise woman once said
a long, long time ago
that we were all made of salt
and we go back to what we know.

Leaves and Towers

I was born downtown
in the midst of madness
among bright lights
and midnight danger.

Then we moved away
and switched car horns
for morning birds,
bright lights for stars
and stores for sunsets.

I love nature
and how it all follows
a certain order.
It calms my deepest fears
And fills my soul with wonder.

But I adore the city,
how its chaos matches mine.
It makes me feel so small;
like I'm not on my own
or the only one who cries.

I've shared my life with both
so I can't choose one or the other.
Half my heart belongs to the leaves,
the other half to the towers.

3. POLITICAL POETRY

Sycorax's Tempest

What?
Were you expecting a black cat?
A dead frog or a floppy hat?
Oh, my dear Prospero!
I'm just a blue eyed hag.

Look at you!
Why are you summoning me
when my name makes you shiver?

You built me from scratch
like a shipwreck that's been drowned
and you prayed and prayed at night
that I would stay underground.

Is it because I'm a witch
or because I gave birth?
Tell me, Prospero,
Don't you cast the same spells
and sleep in the same bed?

My voice belongs to the sound
of the words you put it under
but you can't escape my lightning,
wish the rain away,
or silence my thunder.

You are a powerful wizard
but you hide behind that mask
of hatred towards my magic.
It is not an irrational fear, after all,
for your end could be quite tragic.
My powers may be old and rusty,
but they can still work a classic:
I'll turn your sexist heart into stone
and let the sharks deal with your bones.

I've always been a good witch,
so don't make me come alive.

I am not your creation
or the object of your rage,
so be careful what you wish for
or you'll never sleep again.

All You Can't Be

Be honest,
but don't tell the truth.

Be smart,
but don't stand out
or they'll tear you down.

Be ambitious,
but there's a ceiling to your chances
if you're a minority.

Be powerful,
but careful if you're a woman
or you'll end up at the stake.

Working mother?
That is great!
Did you hear?
She doesn't look after her girl.
She's a careless mother
or she'd be home with her.

And if marriage isn't for you?
That's alright too!
But watch them roll their eyes
if you're not married by 32.

We live in a world
where all we do is wrong.
You're damned if you do
and you're damned if you don't,
so don't follow the rules
if they're not your own.

4. SPACES AND OBJECTS

Promise The Stars

When I was a kid I was fascinated by the universe,
I wanted to know all about the planets, the stars,
the moon, the galaxies, the sky.
(And how Peter Pan could fly so high,
but that's another story. Never mind.)

Somebody, I don't remember who,
gave me a present I still have.
It was a set of plastic stars
and a moon that glowed in the dark.
I lost most of them when we moved away,
but there is a bright star that still hangs
on one of my bedroom walls.

When I was a teenager I wrote something on it:
"With your hand in mine, we'll soar through the night
and like dozens of spaceships, we'll dance like satellites."
It wasn't about anyone in particular, really,
just a couple of lines from a song that I loved.
There is no mystery or hidden meaning,
but still today it means the world.

Sometimes at night,
when insomnia is around,
I stare at that little star
and marvel at how after so long,
it still glows in the dark.

Time's Up

You left your watch on my night table
the last time you came over.
It doesn't make a sound,
so it might as well be broken.
Maybe you froze time
when you closed the door.
Maybe your absent goodbye
made the needles stop.
Whatever the case,
I hope you know,
your watch lies side by side
with the soul that you broke.

5. FAMILY, CHILDHOOD MEMORIES, IMAGINARY CONNECTIONS AND HOME

Danny Boy

*For the boy who would never dance
from the girl who would never write poetry.*



A tiny couch underneath the telephone shelf,
Disney movies, a Willy Fog themed roller coaster.
There's a lot I remember about my childhood,
small bits and pieces, fantasies and dreams,
and he is right there in every corner.

We met before we could say a word,
Our mothers were friends, so we had no choice.
"Oh look, there's your friend, now go play."

(But I would choose you every single day.)

There's a picture I found in the back of a drawer,
we're dressed as strawberries, covered in paint.
We must have been 2 years old, perhaps less,
and our lives were already intertwined.

Our moms had a fallout when we were 6,
I remember you saying, "Now we can't be friends."
I convinced you otherwise, it made no sense.
We can still rule the world from the playground fence.

We were 11 and living in each other's rooms,
playing video games and talking about ghosts.
You wouldn't stop rambling about the damn Ouija board.

*Can we try?
Okay.*

What, no, that was a joke.
We're 15 and living away,
but we still see each other whenever there's time.
Our families wonder why we just don't date
and we roll our eyes.
We'll be like siblings until the day we die.

We're 18 and watching the last Potter film
when you turn to me, shrug and whisper,
"So, why does Harry have to die again?"
We laugh and laugh until our friends are upset.
But everything's as right as it was back then.

Now we're 21 and both reaching for the stars.
Me, through words I never thought I'd write.
You, an aerial dancer that gets to fly.
Our heads were always in the clouds
and now we touch the sky.

Courage, Dear Heart

Have courage, dear heart.
Don't let them get to you.

You'll build a throne
from the stones they throw
and watch them kill
for a pile of gold.

But none of that really matters
when you have what they don't
Magic in your veins, thick skin,
a good heart and a sharp tongue.

6. VOYAGES, EXILE, FOREIGN LANDSCAPES AND GEOGRAPHIES OF THE MIND

Home

People talk about home
like it's where you grew up,
where your family lives,
where you don't lock doors.

But home isn't a place.
It's not a house or a town.
It's the feeling you get
with those you love around.
It's the smell of that lipstick
your granny always loved,
the color of your mom's
old favorite top,
the first few notes
of your first favorite song
and the way that your dad
always hums along.

Home is where you're safe
from the world and from yourself.
Sometimes that's a room,
perhaps a couch,
maybe a friend.

Unpacking Memories

I love packing.
I love that red suitcase
and how it stays open for days
on the floor of my room,
like it's waiting to be filled
with new memories,
forged friendships
and the sound of 2 am laughter
coming from a room
down the longest hall,
with dirty floors
and creaky window stalls.

I hate unpacking.
God, I do.
I hate that red suitcase
and how it stays locked for days
on the floor of my room,
like it's waiting to explode.
I miss home when I'm away,
but coming back is bittersweet
when a thousand memories
are eager to break free.
Look at all the fun you had
and now you're back in bed.
If only you could leave again,
before reality called your name.

7. UNCLASSIFIED MATERIAL

My Anxious Heart

You listen to yourself too much.
Don't you know I can barely hear you?
You're just a whisper in a crowded room
of loud thoughts that I can't silence.

You just need to slow down.
Easy to say, but I was born a lion
and my heart is in a cage.

You have to stop over-thinking,
as if I could just turn it all off.
It's the way I'm wired, I'm afraid,
and I'll always find things to worry about.

What is on your mind?
This room is on fire and I can't put it out.
My thoughts won't stop screaming,
my lungs filled with smoke,
and I can't escape this brain
that feels nothing like home.

Laura

J. M. Barrie once wrote that fairies were too small
to have room for more than one feeling at a time.

Personally, I don't agree.
It doesn't apply to mine.

We met four years ago,
first day in a brand new world.
She said she loved crime shows
and we no longer fight alone.

She is a warrior and a lady
and everything in between.
Smart, funny, strong and brave,
a caretaker and a witch.
She switches books for swords
when the monsters are unleashed
and helps me defeat my ghosts
when they hide beneath my skin.

She's unaware of her worth
so this is just to let her know:
You are a dream of a friend,
a true gem with a beautiful soul,
and you have more light in you
than I've ever seen before.

*For the first friend I had at University,
who helped me fight crime from the couch.
This is the reminder that someday you won't need.*

Sandra Hernández

I Exist As I Am,
That Is Enough

Walt Whitman

Bits and pieces

Preface

1. Homage to the Land
2. The Hawks
3. Jesus Preaches in the Galilee
4. War Came
5. The Forgotten
6. Remnants
7. New Cities
8. (Self-)Awareness
9. The Blueberry Plant
10. I Belong

Bits and Pieces

When facing a question such as what Poetry is, I fear not to be able to answer it properly. And in fact, I cannot think of any good and intelligent response that would convey everything that Poetry is, at least for me. I remember I would learn by heart different poems during my primary school years; poems about flowers, seasons, school or animals. I liked the feeling of it and I enjoyed the idea of reciting words that rhymed and the taste they left in my mouth followed by the applause given by devoted parents to their children on St. George's Day. Poetry was fun, but this joyful relationship shifted into another more complex one when I grew up.

I was *born again* when I turned sixteen, marking the precise moment when I started to understand lucidly how diverse and intricate the world was. Virtually, I understood what was happening to me, what my new and old friendships meant, and the events that occurred throughout the world and were displayed in the news. But I felt something was lacking: emotions. My passions were barely contained; they were difficult to experience and to explain, but I needed them most since I could not separate my experiences of my outer world from those of my inner world. Yet, I could not find a way to give to my feelings and thoughts.

The flame of Poetry lightened up during my last year of *Bachillerato* through my Spanish Literature teacher, Mercè. Before meeting her, Poetry had stopped being fun to become an arduous and boring topic, almost obscure and unintelligible. With her, my literature lessons began to make sense, I could understand the poems we read, and in many cases she guided us through it, but without interfering in our way of approaching it and feeling it. She was the one and only responsible for introducing me, now as a young adult, into the world of Poetry again.

We read Spanish poets from different periods of time. I would devour poems from Lorca's *Romancero Gitano* over and over again, I would feel dizzily in love when reading Bécquer, and I enjoyed listening to myself reciting Rosalía de Castro's poems in Galician. I got to know so many poems and poets; I cannot mention them on all these pages!

That is when I grasped what Poetry was and from that moment onwards I could not let a week pass without reading Poetry. I started reading poems from my parents' library. I recall their books perfectly neat and arranged on their shelves and I would, standing on top of a chair, slide my fingers on the spines of the books while turning my head towards the floor in order to be able to read the titles and decide which collection to pick.

When I turned eighteen, now in college, I started to enjoy and appreciate Poetry in English. I discovered Shakespeare in English, the mysterious world in which Edgar Allan Poe's poems (as well as his short stories) placed me, and Walt Whitman's poems that could capture me for hours. As mentioned before, so many poems and so many poets to mention! Even translations from other exotic languages into English were also fitting for me.

I realize now that I have not actually mentioned any specific poem that made an impression on me. There are too many of them, and I dare to say that if I ever think of this again in five years' time, the list would probably be even longer. Yet, I hold in high esteem two poems especially. The first one is "Romance de la Luna" by García Lorca, the second one "O Me! O Life!" by Walt Whitman.

During the past four months I have re-discovered Poetry: new poets, new topics, new forms and new emotions. I could mention countless poems and poets, but I will reduce my list to three again. I came across Irish poet Seamus Heaney, a poet I will bear in mind from now on that writes about life as such, about people such as in "Casualty". Then, Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath's poems; the former contributed to re-define my femininity with "Her Kind", and the latter to enjoy the beauty of the language when describing simple objects such as in "Balloons". Mohja Kahf's intercultural poems that transcend frontiers, as in "My Grandmother Washes Her Feet in the Sink of the Bathrooms at Sears" or as in "Ishtar Awakens in Chicago".

Now I come to think about it, and after writing this paper, I can somehow answer the questions posed at the very beginning, what Poetry is. Poetry is a crossroads where three old and new intimate relationships are established. The first one is the reader and the poem who meet, not as foreigners, but as two good friends who have not seen each other for a while and are trying to catch up discreetly. The second one, the reader and the poet who get to know each other for the first time. The reader is an allowed intruder into the poet's life and experiences, asking for permission to enter into the poet's premises. And the third one is the reader who finds herself. In this case it is the poet and the poem that trigger this self-awareness: the brief instant in which the reader, as an epiphany, realizes that what she is reading is true, yet the reader herself, both, knew and did not know about that.

Preface

This collection of poems is my first serious attempt to display into words my feelings and ideas. I am not a writer, yet I like to note down ideas or thoughts that come to my mind, ideas and thoughts related to everyday life: pieces of news I read, stories complete strangers tell, images I see in the streets and music I listen to.

When I decided I wanted to write a collection of poems I did it because I wanted to experience Poetry myself, not as a recipient but as a *creator*. The topic I chose was *Exile, Foreign Landscapes and Geographies of the Mind*. I always regarded the topic of Exile as a very thought-provoking one. Fortunately, I have never gone through such a traumatising experience myself but I always felt certain worry towards those who suffered it. I always wondered why people would be more interested in the reasons of exile and the number of refugees (I am not saying we should not care about these, actually we should) than about the personal experiences of those people depicted in the news whose faces and eyes are dispirited and helpless.

Let's face it; there is nothing worth mentioning about exile. It is the eternal story of dispossession and the loss of human dignity: issues that seem impossible to mend. That is why in this collection I wanted to give prominence to the real victims and their stories, the only ones that suffered a war or political turmoil, the ones who were stripped from their properties and given the only option of *refugeedom*. I did not want to ponder on the cause of the problem or their political or economic consequence, which is something, sociologists or historians should care about.

This collection of poems not only convey those ideas mentioned above, but also tell a story. Therefore, the collection is organized in three main sections. Firstly, the reader will find the story of ordinary people and their everyday life. Yet, in the next poems the reader will discover a society that sees an imminent change they cannot thwart; doomed to war and the loss of everything they had up until now. And finally, the poems talk about the changes their country has undergone since their departure, the usurpation of their lives and belongings by others; yet at the same time there is space for hope and an eagerness to change the situation.

I would like the reader to think, after having a look at the poems, that by remembering those events we actually perpetuate the life of the victims, we do not relegate them to oblivion. I want the reader to understand that when we are left with nothing, only memory and acknowledgement can save people. I want the reader not to see in refugees defenceless exiles (no

doubt they are), but as the rightful people we should stand with, maybe not politically – again, this is something sociologists and historians should explain and the reader should decide whether to agree with the refugees' cause or not – but at least humanitarily.

Homage to the Land

This land has everything we need!
Spring's hesitant arrival, the fruits of the flat lands,
the smell of the unleavened bread, the heat of the fire,
the talkative women telling off the men,
and our songs and music.

This land is everything we asked for!
A storm by the sea, the realization of a first love,
the sunbeams sneaking in through the bars of a prison,
the bright green of the trees, the swallow's chirp at dawn
and our myths and houses.

This land, our Mother!
Mother of all Beginnings, Mother of all Endings too.
This land, my Mother, since you are my Mother,
I deserve life!

The Hawks

Passing strangers,
the sun has fallen asleep,
and their souls have awakened.
Those awakened souls' who eat up the silence
of the night with appetite and the aspiration of a different now,
their thoughts only broken at times by the sound of a shot gun or a siren,
the siren that marks the time when nighthawks get out of their nests and look for preys.
The hawks have come, passing stranger.

Jesus Preaches in the Galilee

Jesus came in to the Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand".

Mark 1:14.15

Oh, do not come to us, master of the Galilee,
for we have still things to do. So, steal our minutes
and the sunlight, and be gone. Do not come to us,
for we have things to do here, so, take the sand
that you want from our sea, and be gone.

Master of the Galilee, we still have things to do.
So, grab whatever breeze you want, and be gone.
Do not come to us, for we have to water the flowers
of our dead, so, take the dreams that you want
from our pockets, and be gone.

Master, don't you see! Do not freeze our history.
So, come by and leave again, for we have still
things to do here. Do not come to us, just have a cup
of tea at the shadow of our trees, chat alongside us
about whatever you want, and be gone.

Woe is me! You are still approaching, master!
So it is true what they say: that you are here to stay.
But listen, we still have things to do in our land.
Do as you wish here, but remember to be gone.

War Came

How many people do you think you've killed with one bullet?
Do you really think, you fool, that you've just killed a woman?
Just a woman and nothing else?
You think you did a great job, one bullet in one second...
and the woman's heartbeat slowed down,
and slow,
and down,
a sigh,
and silence.
But no... you did not kill only a woman!
With the rage-poisoned bullet you murdered
a mother and a father, a sister and a brother-in-law.
With your bullet you mutilated dreams
and aspirations, hopes and desires, you widowed a man,
and left a boy unborn and orphaned.
Did you think about that when you pressed the trigger?
And you think that is it?
With your bullet you widowed your own girl
and you lost a grandson. What do you think now?
You see, we are not that far apart and we are not so different after all...
But let me ask you again:
Did you just kill a woman when war came?

The Forgotten

They shall not grow old
as we shall,

And the years will not gaunt them,
as they will gaunt us
for sure,

Fate will not condemn them
as we were,
as we will be.

We will not fail to remember them
as they will fail.

Remnants

History is mocking its own victims.
It is the church or the mosque the only remaining
witnesses that confirm our very existence.
Called now refugees, we, aimless wanderers,
moving from the security of the past to future's
forthcoming uncertainty, becoming mere figures.

New Cities

On village lands, a new mall will be built. It turns out now
our village has become a city! All mayors love to open new malls,
and this one is no exception. It helps them in their campaigns, you know,
even though he could not care less about the city!
But no one thinks of the landscape. They think of it as an irrelevant issue,
the architect no doubt thought that by building a fragile
glass mall, he thought he could erase what was beneath their feet,
but they failed to notice that they can't change this landscape.
Silly them! The mayor did not notice it either.
They do not see it as we see it, and they cannot listen to it the way we do.
The secret is that the village is still intact... Can you see it?
I do, and so does this barren soil.
The mall does not blend with the landscape. Its name does not conjugate
with the sky, and its language does not love this piece of land.
They claim the city is theirs... and that there was nothing else before!
But the secret is that the village is still intact.
They cannot see it, but we do.
They thought of the landscape as an irrelevant issue,
they did not think about it when they built the colossal glass mall...
but can you see now how does the sand of the scenery
reflect on the crystalline of the new mall?
It is our sand.

(Self-)Awareness

*"I am no bird; and no net ensnares me:
I am a free human being with an independent will."*

Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre

Twenty-three past seven.
One street. Deep. Narrow.
A marching crowd. Fearless.
Raising chants and Strong heartbeats.
The iron fist of Power. Prepared.
Rubber bullet. Stone and Tear gas.
Running. A lost opportunity.
17-year-old boy. Caught and Taken.

Interrogation papers

1. Sr. Who do you think you are?
B. *I am no bird; and no net ensnares me.*
2. Sr. Why do you sing?
B. Because I do.
3. Sr. What do you sing?
B. *I am a free human being with an independent will.*

The Blueberry Plant

When they found her
and battered and torn her
apart into unrecognizable pieces,
the mighty god said: "Do not bother,
whatever you do, her right to bear fruit
will never die."

I belong

"Exile is a dream of a glorious return. Exile is a vision of revolution: Elba, not St Helena. It is an endless paradox: looking forward by always looking back."

Salman Rushdie

I belong here. You see,
the fruit from the fig is mine, the lemony from the flowers
that proclaim the spring's beginning is mine, the olives
and their essence dripping away, that is also mine.
What is mine?

Look at me. I belong here.
The salt of this sea is mine and its fish that I would take
with my hands or with my claws, the rattle of the donkey's cart
is mine, the barren soil that my father ploughed, that is also mine.
What is mine?

Listen to me. I belong here.
The rubble of the houses you destroyed is mine, and the keyhole,
and the door, and the chair and the tolling of the bell on a Friday afternoon,
my reason for leaving or returning, that is also mine.
What is mine?

I belong here. You see, all that was mine is mine:
my mispronounced name with its three syllables is mine,
and my wandering body, whether present or absent, is mine,
and my wandering soul and my unadulterated memory, it is also mine.
All that was mine is still mine.

Everyday Paranoia

Susan Kidd

My way of reading poetry during this course changed drastically. Previously, I would have always said that I preferred prose and theatre, to poetry. I would have told you that poetry is inaccessible and overly metaphorical. This was because I never related to the flowery series of images to be found within most of the poetry I had read. However, I can now say that I read poetry for fun and that it holds a deeper meaning for me. I've enjoyed being exposed to a whole range of poets, particularly those who use less abstract language, and express their thoughts in a humorous way. One of the poems that really guided me towards this view was "My Grandmother Washes her Feet in the Sink of the Bathroom at Sears". I loved that Mohja Kahf took a funny scene from her life and turned it into a commentary on different cultures. It showed me that poetry does not need to be serious to be effective; that humour can be a poet's greatest asset. This poem inspired me to look at little things that happen in life, and find ways to turn them into art. Another inspiring poem was "Inglan is a Bitch" by Linton Kwesi Johnson, and in particular I was moved by watching him perform this poem. It stood out to me because it highlighted the importance of having your own voice as a poet; regardless of where you come from or whether your English fits the standard variety. He inspired me to write using the voice inside my head, rather than trying to sound more academic or traditionally poetic.

This collection is focused upon exactly that: the voice inside my head. How it worries and panics and gets paranoid, but also how I wouldn't be myself without this niggling little voice of anxiety, fear and insecurity.

Detergent on my Toothbrush

So here's how it happened:

The full series of events in my recent near death experience

I was washing my bikini in the sink

Because the sand in Valencia gave it a funky smell

Using detergent to make it smell like berries

Instead of piss soaked sand

And being so caught up in the act of washing my bikini

I forgot to move my toothbrush

And of course, when you wash things

The detergent soapy water gets all over the rest of the sink

So later

When I go to brush my teeth

That's when I taste it:

Death

My impending doom

I rinse gargle and spit as much water as I can

But I'm pretty sure that some went down my throat

According to the internet, detergent can erode your oesophagus if you swallow it!

It can also cause damage to your intestines-

And I already have a bowel disorder.

Ok, this is it- this is the end!

Maybe I should go to the emergency room

But what if a little really isn't dangerous

I mean I don't believe that or anything

But the doctors at the emergency room would probably laugh at me

I know- I'll go to the pharmacy

That's what I did when I had that tonsil-cancer-that-turned-out-to-be-a-throat-infection thing

They'll tell me what I need to do

Drink a glass of milk?

What?

Are you mad?
I'm dying and you're recommending calcium?!
Why milk?
Any actual medical reason?
Ok, so apparently milk stops the chemicals from being absorbed by the intestines.
But just milk?
I don't need to go to the emergency room?
Um ok....
I think I need a second opinion
My mother
I'm sure she'd agree that the emergency room wouldn't be a waste of time
Seeing as I'm on death's door
She calls me a hypochondriac
I reason with her
Informing her that laundry detergent is rife with chemicals
I then inform her of potential oesophagus damage;
Also not something to be taken lightly
Your oesophagus is kind of important if you want to get food in your body
Kind of important if you don't want to die
Intestinal damage too, you know
Like toxic megacolon, have you heard of that?
She asks me if I've seen Hanna and Her Sisters
The one where Woody Allen thinks he has a brain tumour
I don't see how this is relevant though
I'm actually dying.
Good luck getting nutrients into your body with a toxic megacolon
Or an eroded oesophagus
I want one of those gravestones that says "I told you I was sick"

I Keep Expecting You to Leave

After my 21 years of painfully boyfriendless existence, finally a good one
Goodbye guys from high school who considered me undateable
Goodbye crazy Etonians
Goodbye creepy Italians
Goodbye “stop turning me on if you won’t go all the way”
Goodbye tall blonde Dane who treated females like a game
Goodbye all the guys in clubs (don’t remember your names)
Hello skinny dark haired guy who translated the Toy Story theme into Catalan

But I keep expecting you to leave
At first meeting there’s not much wrong with me
Not model, singer, gets approached in the streets hot, but maybe cute for the Pixar exhibit
Or the library
But after two months of getting to know me, why are you sticking around?
When you were a teenager, did you always imagine dating
A sunburnt, hypochondriac with a digestive condition and no bedroom skills?
If only these were attractive features in a girl

I keep expecting you to leave
You bought me a translated book of Quim Monzó for Sant Jordi
I like that you said screw tradition and got the girl a book
(Because girls can read too!)
And I was a guiri gamba who didn’t know this celebration existed
So I got you nothing

I keep expecting you to leave
I put you through shit and misread everything you say
A nutcase in every possible way
And then you make me churros

I keep expecting you to leave
You've had more girls in your life
Probably pretty and experienced and not nutcases
Not really sure how to compete with that
Don't leave yet.

Teenagers

This class has a seating arrangement

Why do teachers do this?

Some say that it will integrate us better with the other students

But haven't any of them seen Mean Girls?

Teenagers don't integrate; we form tribes

And mine is the tribe that will die because nobody mates with us

Natural selection will filter us out of existence

Some say we won't talk in class if we're away from our friends

Also wrong

Teenagers will find any excuse not to do maths

Meaning that the superior tribes with their mating rituals and shiny weapons will use for entertainment:

Us- the lowly tribe that is slowly dying out

They mock our inferior resources

And our lack of mates

I've been placed next to one of the leading tribesmen

Who knows why natural selection has favoured him

He lacks wit, strength or any physical markers of attractiveness

He asks me a question

An innocent question, to which he knows the answer

"Have you ever even kissed anyone?"

He asks loudly enough for all the other tribesmen to hear

Do I tell the truth

And admit to my fellow tribespeople that at fifteen years of age, my mating rituals have yet to succeed despite several attempts?

Or do I lie and risk being caught?

The only thing worse than failing to mate is failing to mate and then lying about it.

But at least there's a chance of success if I use my mental prowess and lie accordingly

I use the oldest lie in the book

"Yes, with someone from outside of school"

The tribesman looks sceptical

Some of his tribe mates snicker
Their tribeswomen giggle and toss their superior hair
The whole class is interested now
I look to my fellow tribe mates for help
But they look down ashamed
They know that should they defend me
They will risk having their own mating prowess called into question
That it's a tribe eat tribe world out there
And they need to lie low
I understand
I would do the same in their positions
"Who did you kiss?"
It's too late now.
The more I lie, the more of a failure I'll appear
"Come on- tell me who you kissed"
Of course I've lost this battle
Ambushed by the enemy
I put my face in my hands and wait for the jeering tribal grins to take their eyes off my failure of
a face and my unkissable lips
I wait for school to be over
Only three more years left of this daily tribal torture.

Reasons we should have rented a holiday villa LESS in the wilderness:

The wasps

I'll be honest- I came to France to sunbathe
Which is not that easy when there are wasps
Buzzing around my sun lounger
Maybe in a rental villa with fewer TREES,
There would be fewer reasons for wasps to actually be here
What if they sting me?
How am I supposed to enjoy reading in the sun when I'm worrying about being stung all the time?

That mouse that came into the kitchen cupboard

Yes, I know that theoretically we live among mice and rats, but if they're in your kitchen cupboard,
You're doing something wrong
Not that I'm scared of mice or anything
But it's a rodent with teeth and could therefore bite me
Also it's in the same cupboard as the crisps
And I don't really enjoy having to endure
This mental anguish every time I want
A handful of ready salted

That trail of ants in the kitchen

Ants in the kitchen, really?
I don't think I even need to explain why that bothers me

Psychos

Look at it from a geographical perspective
We're at least a 20 minute drive from any other houses
Should a psychopath break into the house
To try and rape/ murder us,
Nobody will hear us scream
Ponder on that before you tell me again how "lovely it is to get away from it all"
At night, I lie alone in bed, unable to move

I checked my wardrobes before bedtime
Of course, because what sane human being
Doesn't check storage spaces for psychopaths
When staying in a holiday villa?
The problem is this light outside
This is the second night in a row that the light has been turned on
And the light's sole purpose is to check for burglars
Therefore if it comes on, there's probably a HUMAN out there
Who wants to murder us or something
I lie stuck to my bed, sweating
The door is closed and the room is dark
Maybe if I'm very quiet and very still, he won't know I'm here, so therefore won't come in and murder me
Maybe it's sexist to assume he's male
But I don't have time for political correctness in an emergency like this
And I know that by trying to avoid his attention, I'm basically helping him murder my family
But I'm a human
And humans are selfish in times of need
Right now, what I need is not to be killed by that psychopath out there
Should I have watched *The Shining* before bed?
Perhaps not
But I don't think I'm being crazy or that light would never have come on
Is a girl still crazy if she acknowledges that she's being crazy?

Not Fluent

In a new country, you're like a small child
Or a person who's really dense
You say all foreign sentences slowly
And stick to the present tense

People will switch to your language
Superior in their own skills
You say "Why didn't they think I would manage?"
As a little hope each person kills

Group conversations are torture
You're always too shy to speak
Each time someone asks you a question
All you can let out is a squeak

Your books become filled up with grammar
You can never remember in speech
And your teacher begins to wonder
If you're someone they can actually teach

You worry that the world around you
Will judge you for being here
In a world where you can't speak the language
And you feel like shedding a tear

You wonder when it starts to get easy
When you will start fitting in
While your brain is hoping and praying
To summon the linguist within

There's no kettle here

My country had a chance to choose its path
To send them homewards
Tae think again
Not fans of London politeness,
We Scots chose drinking and swearing
Over proper handshakes and asking "how are you"
We deep fry our Mars Bars
And eat the stomachs of sheep
We drink Bucky in the rain
And know ye canny shove yer Granny off a bus
At times, we couldnae' be mair different fae the rest a' Britain
But doesn't sharing the same rainy spot at the top of Europe create some common ground?

I hear some English girls talking on my roof terrace in Barcelona
Girl 1 says "There's no kettle here"
Girl 2 says "I know- it's really weird. They don't drink tea here"
After nine months here; finally some people in my building who understand the importance of kettles
"Can't you just boil it in a pan", asks many a Spaniard.
And I'm afraid the answer is no.
Not when you're averaging five cups a day and it takes ten minutes to heat up water in a pan.
Tea is for breakfast, tea is for energy, tea is for calm, tea is for productivity, tea is for everything else in between
The United Kingdom
The land where everything can be solved with a cuppa
But if the milk goes in before the tea bag, you're not to be trusted
The land of the BBC and the NHS
The land where signing an email with regards secretly means "I hate you"
Where old ladies tut in disapproval over hearing news of terrorists and murderers
Where politeness and emotional repression are at their finest

Land of fish and chips and binge drinking
And complaining about the weather with our fellow Brits
The land of beautiful sarcasm in miserable times
The United Kingdom
Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and Wales
Where we all have kettles.

Temporary

A long holiday

An extended daydream

Enjoy it before you're back to reality

Back to the life that is actually yours

You'll meet so many friends from other countries

Maybe someday you can visit them all

For short periods of time

Before returning to the life that is actually yours

Maybe you'll have a romance

But it won't last of course

Get back to your own country

To date people that are actually yours

Eat, drink, repeat

Party, travel, repeat

Befriend, date, repeat

Then back to the life that is actually yours

An exchange is temporary

Just like you are

And your city will go on without you

In the place that is not actually yours

Imagine friends in your home city

Family with open arms

But yet a pounding feeling inside you

That you are missing what is actually yours

Worrying on My Rooftop Terrace

I'm worrying on my rooftop terrace

In Poble Sec

For a few reasons

Reason 1: I had an argument with my boyfriend (if I can call him that)

Reason 2: I have a poetry collection due and need to write one last poem

A collection about worrying

But it's kind of weird to think about worrying

On my rooftop terrace

In Poble Sec

There are people next to me sunbathing

In bikinis

I realise that when I'm next to people in bikinis

I'm usually not worrying

From my terrace, I can see Montjuic

It's beautiful

Like it always is

Beautiful, but it's now a part of my daily life

A life which includes worries

Is it possible to worry on a rooftop terrace?

With a view of Montjuic?

If I decide to move seats

To another side of my rooftop terrace

I end up worrying with a view of the funicular

Above green trees

Beyond the pinkish rooftops of Poble Sec

An airplane flies overhead

Because everyone wants to travel here for Summer
To escape from their everyday worries

If I worry at a different angle
I can see the top of that famous monument by the sea
Of Christopher Columbus and he's pointing
I can't see the whole monument
Just a tiny pointing man above some more rooftops
I can't see the sea but I know it's there
Close enough that I could walk
Because of course a smiling, worry-free
Holiday city like Barcelona
Has a beach

Looking along Avinguda Paral·lel
Makes me wonder what this street is paral·lel to
And why Catalan has a dot between two Ls
There are cars, buses and motorbikes everywhere
A woman sitting calmly underneath a tree
Or maybe she's not calm
Maybe she's also worrying
Maybe to observers, I look calm
There are two tourists walking past a bakery
I can tell they're British because we share the same skin
The man is wearing a cap
Probably so he doesn't burn his scalp
Guiris
Have I earned the right to use that word?
Maybe not
Wondering why Catalan has a dot between two Ls is probably a guiri thing to do

There's a guy riding a bike

Who looks like my boyfriend (if I can call him that)
I worry that it's him
Coming to Paral·lel
To break up with me after we argued
But it's not
He rides a bicing
And that guy is riding a different kind of bike
Two little children ride around on scooters
The same as children do in the UK
Except that these children aren't doing it in the rain

It's the sun that's the problem
The sun is telling me to lighten up
To tomar una cerveza
Or ir a la playa
But I don't feel like doing that
I feel like worrying
In the UK, your city worries with you
The misty, stormy commuters on the bus
The grumpy, overworked clouds in the sky
Over there, a worry is legitimate
But worries don't fit on rooftop terraces.

Annabel Pamies Mayoral

Introduction

In my teen years I was much more on numbers than on letters. In fact, I went for the scientific branch in the high school. However, I've always felt attracted to poetry, in my own tongue, though. I would write poems to my loved ones for their birthdays or special days and I really enjoyed writing them. I thought it to be a special way to express your feelings and make others feel them through words.

When I started the degree in English Studies and we started reading poetry in the second semester of the first year, I was amazed. I really enjoyed all the poems that the teacher gave us and I could not stop reading them over and over again. I wanted to know more about the poets and find other poems to read. I felt empowered reading poetry.

Throughout the degree we have been introduced to different poets and poems in many subjects and, obviously, one always enjoys some poems more than others. A poem that really marked me and with which I now identify is "Stop all the Clocks" by W.H. Auden. I felt my heart broken after reading this poem, and even more when I read it now that death is very close to a member of my family, my father. I believe it really expresses the pain one can feel when an essential person of their life dies. The persona expresses how the world is not worthy anymore by using natural elements as mere objects: "Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun", which I believe makes the poem very drastic. Furthermore, the use of imperative verbs, as "stop", "cut off", and "prevent" transmits the agony and desolation the persona is feeling. Another poem that marked me, which I discovered watching the film "In Her Shoes" (2005) is "I carry your heart with me (I carry it in)" (1952) by E.E. Cummings, which in the film is read by Cameron Diaz. It marked me because I could feel a true and deep love in its words. I like how Cummings compares the power of natural elements to the one of the addresser and their love: "and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant / and whatever a sun will always sing is you". I think that the message is very direct, and I could identify with that feeling. A feeling so intense that accompanies you everywhere you go, a feeling that is beyond everything.

This year, however, it has been really challenging for me to write poetry in English, but also very pleasing and gratifying. I would say that poetry has arrived in my life when I more needed it. Writing poetry has really helped me to go through very difficult moments with a sense of peace and relief. Writing poetry has helped me to write the feelings I couldn't express out loud. It has

provided me liberation and a connection to my deeper emotions. I'm currently in a very dark moment of my life, as I'm feeling lost and without knowing how to confront the most difficult and sad situation I have ever lived. I must say that poetry has really helped me to find myself, to support myself, and to get an inner peace. Just for that, poetry will always be present in mi life.

Therefore, the way I approached poetry when we first started this subject has changed, not because what I wrote was wrong or because I do not believe it anymore, but because my definition was incomplete. Poetry is much more powerful and complex than what I first thought. A poem can change people's lives forever. It is about conveying feelings and emotions, but it also requires the capacity to decipher these emotions and feelings in a personal way, turning them into your own. I particularly liked the poem, or song, "Four Women" by Nina Simone. I really like the way the song unites the experiences of each woman representing the lives of the first American slaves. It is as if you could see the women standing there, looking defiant to you while you read the poem. The feeling I got after reading the poem was a feeling of empowerment. It depicts strong women that after all they have gone through stand with their chins up and presenting themselves without hesitation, accepting their past and rebelling against slavery.

UNIT 2: Love/Death/Eroticism.

Endless Starts

There is no time, no **darkness** to this light,
bright as the sun you feed me with your eyes.
We have danced since the beginning of times,
nothing can ever set us apart.

I'm condemned to endless **pain** and endless starts.
Don't press so tight, box me with your arms,
as soon as you kill me, ring all the alarms.
Make a grave for us where we can assemble our hearts.

Go fast, I'm searching all around,
it's an **ephemeral** but **necessary** crash.
I see you but I can't run any fast.

Hear the sound from the ground
approaching you as a flash.
It's me, your future and your past.

My most dreamed reality

If I happen to get lost
by your hands I want to be found,
and if the wind hard blows
let it smash me to the ground.

Let the water corrode me, the sun burn me
but don't let anything from you take me,
because time has brought me where I belong
and to remain here is all I want.

My heart you have entered
to close it forever.
And now, wherever you go, I go.
Yes, you were, are, and will always be
my most dreamed reality.

UNIT 4: Political Poetry: Resistance; Appropriating the Classics; Gender Stance; Postcolonialism.

A Happy Day in the Slaughterhouse

Delicious sickness,
Captivity and suffocation,
Slaughtered without piety
Moans and supplication.
Still we accept it
And celebrate it with irony.
Erase the smiles,
Erase all colours, green, purple, pink...
But leave red, red is everywhere.
Pain is everywhere.

Honoured at Death (1947)

It's time.

They are coming

And I must die.

Panic is invading my heart.

Both sides will harm me,

What choices do I have?

I am better death than alive.

I have to pay for this, like we have always had.

We are the ones who have to hide

The ones ashamed,

The ones first to be attacked.

I could cut my wrists or be burnt alive

throw myself into a well or touch a wire.

I am better death than alive.

I'm not even granted the option to survive

Who would want me if I'm dishonoured and marked?

Conquered, appropriated, disfigured,

Raped, mutilated, and stripped.

Has my body ever been mine?

The moment has come and my fate is marked.

We are better death than alive.

UNIT 5: Spaces/Objects

Grey ghost

I've been used to by force
To your grey fog and odor.
Everywhere I go
I can find your memoir.

Addictive and dispiteous
You're proud of your income
Polluting men's souls
With every breath of joy.

I could never hate someone
As much as I hate your existence
Because you're taking his life
While I'm claiming with insistence

I've tried to beat you down,
To hide you, to kill you, to replace you by gum.
Fearing you will succeed
In adding him to the list.

How dare you to possess him?
My joy, my hero, my true love.
The eyes I look to find comfort
My roots, my whole, the hands that give me support.

No matter how many tears I drop,
How hard I try, how loud I cry.
I'll be his hands, his strength,
His voice and eyes,

I'll maintain that laugh.

And you

You will take another one.

Little Big Promise

Every time I look at it
Numerous feelings come to me,
Growing inside my heart
A sense of comfort and stability.
Generous you took my hand
Enamouring me forever.
Making me forget about the real world out there.
Empowered we hold our hands, for now we fight together.
Nothing will set us apart, you have changed my life for better
The words went directly to my heart:

Remain by me forever.
It is a small shiny promise I will keep strong tied.
Never let it fall or broke apart,
Guardians of it we are.



UNIT 6: Family: Childhood Memories; Intergenerational Connections; Home.

Keep Surfing

Wave after wave, get lost in the sea,
Where you find you balance
And forget about human beings.
That love that they told us,
It doesn't exist,
But people do love and care,
You don't have to be afraid.
It is real, you know,
Showing what you feel
Won't hurt you anymore.
That hate was gone,
I want to tell you, everything will flow.
Just keep the good they gave us
Not the broken dishes, not the shouts.
I want to lift that dark veil from your eyes
And show you the beauty of life.
Life, death, we need to accept,
But as long as we breathe, let's take the most of it.
I wish I could help you to let it be,
To free your thoughts, your fears, and your goals,
You think that you will be weak by doing so,
But there is nothing weaker than protect yourself from love.
Some people think they don't deserve it
And try to hide the scars of the past under a fake smile
Say it, shout it, say that everything was a mess.
Say it to somebody you appreciate, let it go, accept it,
Everyone has lived a hell. Let me hug you, let me kiss you,
Let me love you, I don't want to feel strange when I touch you.

I need you,
I need you in my life,
I will always need you,
I need you,
please understand,
I need you,
I love you,
I need you and you need me.

Home

A broken home

Is a home too.

Because home is not a place

But a sentiment.

In my heart I feel my home

And there, my home is united.

Everybody is there

looking at me

seeing beyond my eyes,

guarding me.

They are the energy that holds my heart

the water dropped to my burning eyes.

They are all there, forming one.

In my heart,

I feel my home.

They are my home.

Mónica Reina

April

At the sound of falling water,

A fairy was woken.

Bare feet she stepped on the floor

And tiptoeing she crossed the door.

‘What is she doing?’ people would wonder

But bare feet fairy could not care further.

She was not seen though,

Afraid of cloudy noons, everyone sheltered

But the wet grass was her end

And off she went.

‘What is she doing?’ they would say

But bare feet fairy followed her sway.

Gently she treaded on the herb

And by every cold raindrop,

Her skin was welcomed.

And by its constant sound,

Her hair was crowned.

Bare feet fairy was pronounced.

Disillusion

I did not know love back then

But I knew disillusion

It was never mine

Your betrayal

And still...

People get tired of people,

You taught me that well.

Padlocks

Like one of those wild animals from the forest,

I will run away whenever I hear someone is near.

There is a kind of force within me that pulls me back to myself

every time I try to open up,

locking me with thousands of padlocks.

A

There were many people inside,
Too many people,
And that stressed her
Because she needed people
But she could not get to anyone.

So she went out,
Streets full of people,
She needed to go somewhere,
Where?
Who?
She could not get to anyone,
She could not get anywhere.

There were many buses.
A bus would take you there,
Another would take you elsewhere.
Too many possibilities,
And yet she could not get anywhere.
Not in that moment.

So she sat on a bench
And pretended to wait.
No one would ask why
She was supposed to be waiting for a bus.
No one would question her stillness
And that comforted her.
She needed that

Some calm in a city of hurries.

So she sat on a bench

And watched people going here and there.

She longed for somewhere,

She longed for someone.

She could not go anywhere,

She could not get to anyone.

Not in that moment.

Sea

It, overwhelming

And simple

It, sane

The insanity

Inside me.

You

You are enough

Even if they make you feel there is something wrong

You are enough

Flesh and bones

And a beating heart

You

And only you

Is enough

London Is Calling

Like a good old friend is warmly receiving me,
With its colorful houses, its wide white windows and its green fields.
Not foggy or grey but sunny,
with fleeting raindrops and stubborn clouds.
As if some piece of me had lived there before,
Somehow I know, it is waiting for the other pieces to come back home.
Always ready to welcome me with acoustic guitars echoing in the streets.
London is calling and I am always listening.

I's

How do I know?

Is it when your fingers weave my fingers into constellations?

Or when you place your right wrist next to my left wrist?

And, as in a mirror,

Our bodies reflect the same beauty mark right in the same place

And we smile on such an atomic coincidence.

How do I know?

Is it when I hear your laugh while I kiss it

And my astronaut fingers walk through your skin?

Is it when you hold me

And it feels like the softest gravity?

How do I know?

Is it when your eyes stare into my eyes?

Like little galaxies about to burst

And that is when we find

That you are your own I and I am my own I

And our universes cannot blend.

How do I know?

Is it the way we enjoy watching our irises?

And suddenly,

you remember that film.

Is it, not only our eyes...

But the I's behind them?

How we know.

Esther Pujolràs

Thank You

(to Jessica, Francesca, Laura, Rubén, Álvaro, Tania, Sandra, Susan, Anabel, Mónica ... and all the brave students of "Poesia en anglès")

The unbearable benches,
the demented seating arrangement,
the heat,
the cold,
the aseptic smell of classrooms ...

All was against poetry.

And how you found it.

How you defeated boredom
and painted knowledge,
how you breathed in words
and moulded colours,
how you daydreamed futures
and carved realities,
how you twisted disappointments
and drank possibilities,
how you turned teaching
into a glittering religion.

The photograph on the front cover is by Alexandra Gieseken. A big thanks to her; I endowed her with the difficult task to "translate" my Man-Moth vision into an image. This is a home-made image, a capricious collage, the juxtaposition of two pictures - a Cadaqués wall with a moth -, in short, the indelible trace of poetry.